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# COMMUNITY AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN BASIC EDUCATION IN RURAL GHANA

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# COMMUNITY AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN BASIC EDUCATION IN RURAL GHANA

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**Doctor of Education**

By


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# Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I give thanks to God for His guidance, strength, and grace throughout this doctoral journey. The path to completing this PhD has not always been easy, and there have been moments of emotional and personal difficulty. Through these challenges, I found the resilience to persevere, and for that I am deeply grateful.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Doctor Ingrid and Doctor Marta, for their invaluable guidance, encouragement, and support throughout my doctoral studies. Their expertise, constructive feedback, and commitment to my academic development have greatly enriched this research and contributed significantly to my growth as a scholar.

I am also deeply grateful to my host supervisors in the Netherlands for welcoming me to their institution during my research stay. Their generosity, mentorship, and willingness to involve me in their academic community greatly enhanced my doctoral experience. I particularly appreciate your contribution to the scoping review article, including me in the LEARN research group and engaging me with fellow doctoral researchers. These experiences broadened my academic perspective, strengthened my research skills, and fostered valuable professional relationships.

My sincere appreciation goes to Professor Issah Mohammed of the University for Development Studies, Ghana, for hosting me during my research stay and for his tremendous support throughout the fieldwork process. I am especially grateful for his assistance in refining the interview guides, providing valuable methodological insights, and facilitating access to the

Ministry of Education, local communities, and key stakeholders. His support was instrumental in the successful completion of the fieldwork component of this study.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Professor Sharon Wolf of the University of Pennsylvania for her exceptional mentorship and support during my visiting scholar appointment. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to be hosted at one of the world's leading universities and to be integrated into her research laboratory. Through this experience, I gained invaluable exposure to high-quality research, contributed to projects involving data coding and analysis, and co-authored academic publications. These experiences have profoundly shaped my development as a researcher and expanded my professional horizons.

I am grateful to the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona for providing me with the opportunity to pursue doctoral studies and for awarding me Erasmus+ mobility funding, which enabled my research stays in the Netherlands and Ghana. These international experiences significantly enriched my academic training, strengthened my research capacity, and increased the visibility and impact of my work.

I would also like to thank all the participants who generously shared their time, experiences, and perspectives for this research. Without their willingness to participate, this study would not have been possible.

Finally, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my family. To my father and siblings, thank you for your unwavering support, encouragement, and sacrifices throughout my years in Barcelona. Your belief in me sustained me during difficult moments and motivated me to continue pursuing my goals. This achievement is as much yours as it is mine. To everyone who has contributed, directly or indirectly, to this journey, I offer my sincere thanks.

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# List of Abbreviations

4As – Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability, and Adaptability (Right-to-Education Framework)

APE – Asociación Comunal para la Educación (Community Association for Education)

BECE – Basic Education Certificate Examination

DA – District Assembly

EFA – Education for All

ERIC – Education Resources Information Center

FCUBE – Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education

GES – Ghana Education Service

GOG – Government of Ghana

IEP – Individualised Education Plan

ILO – International Labour Organization

MDGs – Millennium Development Goals

MoE – Ministry of Education

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

NORAD – Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PRISMA – Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses

PTA – Parent–Teacher Association

SBM – School-Based Management

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

SMC – School Management Committee

SMCs – School Management Committees

SPAM – School Performance Appraisal Management

SPIP – School Improvement Planning and Implementation Process

SPP – School Performance Plan

SSA – Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

UN – United Nations

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund

VEC – Village Education Committee

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# Abstract

This study examines how parents and community members in rural northern Ghana perceive and value education, how these perceptions influence the priority given to children's schooling, and how parents and communities participate in supporting quality primary education. Despite Ghana's policy commitments to universal basic education and decentralised school governance, persistent disparities in rural educational outcomes suggest a disconnect between policy intentions and local realities. The study also examines conditions that facilitate or constrain involvement and considers strategies suggested by teachers and headteachers for strengthening participation.

The study was conducted in four public basic schools across two rural communities in the Tolon District of northern Ghana. Located within a social constructionist and interpretivist orientation, it employed a qualitative multiple-case study design with 46 participants comprising 12 parents, 10 community members, 12 teachers, four headteachers and eight children. Data were generated through interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Existing perspectives on parental involvement, decentralisation and quality education, together with findings from the scoping review, informed interpretation without functioning as fixed categories.

The findings show that parents and community members generally value education highly, associating it with knowledge, future opportunities, economic advancement, moral and social development, family wellbeing and community progress. However, strong aspirations did not always translate into similar forms or levels of participation. Parents supported children through direct homework assistance where possible, but also through encouragement, supervision, provision of materials, organisation of study time and mobilisation of support from siblings,

relatives and other knowledgeable people. Home-based support could therefore be relational, adaptive and distributed. At school and community levels, involvement included resource mobilisation, infrastructure support, monitoring, school meetings, advocacy and practical problem-solving. Participation was stronger in locally manageable activities than in curriculum, classroom instruction and formal teacher employment, revealing a distinction between participation, influence and authority.

Involvement was also shaped by financial hardship, farming and livelihood demands, limited formal education, language, transport, household responsibilities and access to educational resources. These constraints often affected parents' practical capacity to act on their educational aspirations rather than indicating low educational interest. The study therefore concludes that parental and community involvement is best understood as a contextually shaped process in which educational motivation, practical capacity, opportunities for participation and authority do not always align. Strengthening involvement requires recognition of existing forms of support, attention to material and livelihood constraints, accessible school–community relationships and meaningful opportunities for participation, while maintaining the responsibility of schools, educational authorities and government for providing quality basic education.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

This study was conducted in two rural areas in the northern region of Ghana to unravel parents' and community members' perceptions of education and their specific roles in quality education. The topic at hand emerged from my personal experience during my national service as a teacher in a rural area. The school where I was posted had only three classroom blocks with overcrowded classes, often with more than 50 students in each classroom. It was disheartening to observe that primary school children had to work before and after school to feed themselves and their families. Consequently, these pupils had little time to study and often did not concentrate in class. When extra classes were organised for free, attendance was negligible. It was not uncommon to find only two or three students passing the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) to be admitted to secondary school. This experience led me to question what constrains parent and community involvement in their children's education and the school activities in rural communities.

The significance of community and parental involvement in primary schools, particularly in rural areas, has received considerable scholarly attention (Carolan-Silva, 2011; Gilliam, 2021; Green, 2021). Community engagement in schools is essential for enhancing educational quality and improving student outcomes in these rural areas, which face unique challenges such as limited resources, geographical isolation, and socio-economic barriers (Green, 2021; Jeter-Twilley et al., 2007; Kendall, 2007; Louis & Gordon, 2009). Community members and parents generally view improvements in student outcomes positively and often believe these improvements have wide-reaching benefits, not just for the child but also for the family, neighbourhood, and society at large, including reductions in absenteeism, loitering, and social vices in the community (Afful-Broni & Sekyi, 2014; Kendall, 2007). The active involvement

of parents and the broader community is crucial in bridging gaps in educational provision and fostering a supportive environment for learning. Without this support, many children will not have access to educational resources, which are already scarce in rural schools, such as school desks, books, and chalk. Despite their own limited resources, these communities often provide support to address some of the resource constraints faced by schools (Kgosidialwa, 2010; Ram, 2018).

Research indicates that active family and community involvement in schooling is associated with improved student performance, positive behavioural outcomes, and higher attendance and engagement (Epstein et. al, 2009). This involvement provides support beyond the classroom, helping students perceive education as meaningful and personally relevant (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 2017). Studies show that when families and communities invest in children's education, students are more likely to develop foundational skills in literacy and numeracy and cultivate positive attitudes toward lifelong learning (Cheung et al., 2018; Vasilyeva et al., 2018; Vasoya & Vansdadiya, 2023). In many Ghanaian communities, particularly in rural and underserved areas, active engagement by parents and local leaders significantly improves educational access, retention rates, and academic performance among primary school students (Anlimachie et al., 2022; Chowa et al., 2013).

Furthermore, community and parental involvement have the potential to enhance educational quality and address local challenges in education (Dunne et al., 2007; Ghanney, 2016; Kendall, 2007). Through collaborative efforts, these stakeholders contribute resources and support that can supplement formal education, especially where schools face constraints (Chacha & Tangi, 2023). A scoping review conducted for this thesis, detailed in Chapter 2, found that in rural

areas, parents and community members contribute most to infrastructure support, finances, attending meetings, teacher supervision, and providing incentives for teachers.

Ghana's commitment to achieving universal primary education aligns with the need to bridge educational equity gaps, particularly in rural areas. Policies such as the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), the Education Capitation Grant, and the School Feeding Program have been implemented to increase educational access and alleviate poverty in these communities (Nudzor, 2012; Salifu et al., 2018). However, challenges such as school dropout, low educational attainment, and poor academic performance persist (Bukari et al., 2015). These issues are especially pronounced in rural areas, where absenteeism, truancy, and high dropout rates remain prevalent (Imoro, 2009). Economic pressures in rural communities often compel families to prioritise immediate survival over education. Drajea and O'Sullivan (2014) identify the economic struggles of uneducated parents who rely on their children's labour, thereby contributing to high dropout rates. This sentiment is echoed by Namukwaya & Kibirige (2019), who observe that schooling is sometimes seen as conflicting with essential household responsibilities. As one community member explained:

*"It is the girls who collect water to be used by the household; they have to work with their mothers to find food, and they must cook. And the boys are responsible for taking care of the family flock. It is good to have every child in school, but how about the work? Where will the food come from if everyone went to school?"* (Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2019, p. 510).

In the northern region of Ghana, these challenges are compounded by historical and cultural factors. Amagnya (2020) argues that the delayed introduction of Western-style education has negatively influenced the region's general attitude towards schooling. Bradley (2000) similarly highlights that poverty, conflict over limited resources, traditional beliefs, and religious practices all affect schooling in Northern Ghana. Donkor (2010) indicated that these rural

parents attach greater importance to their cultural beliefs and therefore prioritise investing in cultural practices, such as funerals, weddings, and naming ceremonies, rather than in their children's education.

Further findings from Amagnya (2020) reveal that during the rainy season, children are frequently withdrawn from school to work on family farms. Although irrigation systems have been introduced to support dry-season farming, many families now engage children in farming year-round, undermining their school attendance and performance. These patterns illustrate how economic survival and cultural practices can limit parental investment in formal education.

Case (2009) observes that some rural parents send their children to school primarily to relieve themselves of child responsibilities rather than out of a belief in the transformative power of education. Others view schooling as a temporary activity or pastime rather than as a meaningful path to socio-economic mobility. Donkor (2010) adds that for some families, parental involvement begins and ends with simply enrolling their children in school, with minimal follow-up or engagement thereafter. Similarly, Ram (2018) found that in certain households, parents leave educational decisions entirely to their children, including whether to continue their schooling. This makes it important to understand rural communities' specific socio-economic realities that affect their involvement in their children's education.

The limited participation of parents and community members in rural areas has been associated with poor academic outcomes and weakened school support systems (Donkor & Waek, 2018). Research emphasises that strong connections among home, school, and community have been shown to positively influence student success, as children learn not only from teachers but also from family members and community figures (Epstein, 2001).

Taken together, these strands of literature reveal important empirical and conceptual gaps in current knowledge about parental and community involvement in education in Ghana.

Ghanaian studies such as Chowa, Masa, and Tucker (2013) and Wolf and McCoy (2019) have examined parental involvement primarily in relation to measurable educational outcomes, including academic performance, school readiness, socioeconomic conditions, and parental investment. Other studies, including Kabay, Wolf, and Yoshikawa (2017) and Bartoli, Joshi, and Wolf (2022), provide valuable insights into parents' perceptions of education and their engagement in children's learning but are situated primarily within urban or early childhood education contexts. Rural Ghanaian research, such as Ghanney (2020), has extended the literature to rural basic education but has focused considerably on formal mechanisms of school participation, particularly Parent–Teacher Associations and School Management Committees. Consequently, less is known about how rural parents and wider community members understand and value education, the priority they attach to schooling within their everyday social and economic circumstances, and the different ways in which they support quality education across home, school, and community settings.

The scoping review presented in Chapter 2 further identified limited attention to the perspectives of children and wider community members in research on parental and community involvement in rural education. The broader school–family partnership literature similarly indicates that research has concentrated predominantly on adults, particularly parents and school personnel, while students' perspectives have received comparatively limited attention (Zhang et al., 2024). Research by Ahmed et al. (2022), conducted in rural Pakistan, demonstrates the analytical value of examining children's perceptions of parental involvement. However, whereas Ahmed et al. focused specifically on children's perceptions of their parents' involvement, the present study incorporates children's accounts within a broader investigation of parental and community involvement in quality education in rural northern Ghana. Children's perspectives are therefore used to illuminate how parental and household support is experienced

in everyday academic and non-academic activities rather than positioning children as the principal focus of the study.

The present study responds to these gaps by examining the perceptions, values, and everyday involvement practices of parents and community members in two rural communities in northern Ghana. It also draws on the perspectives of teachers, headteachers, and children to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how parental and community involvement is understood, practised, observed, and experienced across home, school, and community settings. Importantly, the study does not interpret limited participation in formal school activities automatically as evidence that rural parents or community members are uninterested in education. Instead, it examines involvement within the economic, cultural, social, and institutional conditions of rural life, including the opportunities available to parents and community members to participate meaningfully in children's education**.** In doing so, the study extends existing understandings of parental and community involvement beyond formal school participation by showing how rural perceptions, values, everyday responsibilities, and contextual conditions shape the different forms of educational support provided to children.

Accordingly, the analytical focus of this study is on the relationship between how rural parents and community members perceive and value education and the forms of involvement through which they support quality education. Perceptions and values capture how participants understand education, the meanings they attach to it, and the priority they give to children's schooling. Involvement concerns the practical forms of support provided within the home, school, and wider community. The rural context provides the economic, cultural, social, and institutional conditions within which these forms of participation occur. Parent–Teacher Associations and School Management Committees are examined as formal avenues of school-level participation, while children's perspectives provide insight into how parental and

household support is experienced in everyday life. Through this approach, the study broadens understanding of parental and community involvement beyond attendance at formal school activities to include the diverse ways in which rural families and communities contribute to children's education.

## Contribution of the Study

This study contributes to research on rural education by broadening the understanding of parental and community involvement in quality primary education. It shows that involvement should not be understood only through visible school-based activities such as attending meetings, helping with homework, volunteering, visiting the school, or taking part in formal decision-making. In rural northern Ghana, parents and community members also support children's education through moral guidance, cultural learning, encouragement, financial and material support, communal labour, supervision, and everyday concern for children's behaviour and learning. The findings therefore show that parents' visibility in formal school activities is not always a complete measure of their involvement in their children's education.

Rural northern Ghana provides an important context for understanding this issue because formal structures for school and community participation, especially Parent–Teacher Associations and School Management Committees, operate alongside poverty, farming responsibilities, low adult literacy, limited school resources, and cultural expectations (Amagnya, 2020; Bradley, 2000; Donkor, 2010; Ghanney, 2016; Ghana Education Service [GES], 2012; Nudzor, 2014). These conditions influence when, how, and to what extent parents and community members can participate in education. The study therefore shows how formal expectations of parental and community involvement are interpreted and practised within the everyday realities of rural families and communities.

Conceptually, the study contributes to discussions about how established theories of parental involvement apply in rural and resource-constrained settings. Models such as those developed

by Epstein (1995, 2001) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) place considerable attention on activities such as communication with schools, homework support, volunteering, school visits, and participation in decision-making. These forms of involvement are important, but the findings of this study show that they do not fully capture all the ways parents and communities support education in rural settings. Parents may have limited literacy, little time, farming responsibilities, or limited access to formal school spaces, but they may still support their children through encouragement, moral guidance, supervision, cultural learning, material provision, and everyday household responsibilities. The study therefore extends the understanding of parental involvement beyond activities that are easily seen within the school to include forms of support that take place within the home and wider community.

The study also contributes by showing the importance of examining parents and community members together. Much of the literature on educational involvement focuses mainly on parents, while wider community members are often given less attention (Oduro et al., 2026). In this study, community members contribute to education through school management, financial and material support, communal labour, teacher monitoring, local leadership, and support for children's behaviour and learning environment. This shows that children's education in rural communities is not supported only by individual parents and schools. It can also be a shared community responsibility involving parents, local leaders, school structures, and other community members.

A further contribution comes from what children's perspectives reveal about parental and household involvement. Children's accounts help to show how educational support is experienced by those who receive it. Ahmed et al. (2022) demonstrate the value of children's perspectives in understanding parental involvement in rural Pakistan. The present study differs by including children's accounts within a wider investigation of both parental and community

involvement in quality education in rural northern Ghana. Children's perspectives help to explain how support is experienced in everyday life, including homework assistance, encouragement, learning materials, moral guidance, cultural learning, domestic responsibilities, and supervision. Their accounts therefore provide an important way of comparing what adults say they provide with how children experience that support in practice.

The study also challenges the view that limited participation in formal school activities means that rural parents and communities are not interested in education. The findings show that parents and community members value education, but their ability to participate is shaped by economic hardship, farming responsibilities, literacy levels, cultural expectations, institutional accessibility, and the opportunities available for meaningful participation (Amagnya, 2020; Case, 2009; Donkor, 2010; Drajea & O'Sullivan, 2014; Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2019; Ram, 2018). The study therefore makes an important distinction between parents' willingness to support education and their ability or opportunity to take part in formal school activities.

The study also contributes to discussions on decentralisation and school governance by examining how Parent–Teacher Associations and School Management Committees operate in rural communities. These structures are intended to provide parents and community members with opportunities to participate in school decision-making and support school improvement. However, the study shows that the existence of these structures does not automatically mean that all parents and community members are able to participate equally or meaningfully. Their participation is influenced by local conditions, relationships, access, literacy, and the way these structures operate in practice.

Finally, the study provides useful practical insights for policymakers, educators, school leaders, and community leaders. By identifying both the forms of support already present in rural communities and the barriers that limit participation, the findings can help inform approaches

that are more sensitive to local realities. Policies and school practices should recognise not only formal involvement in school activities but also the less visible forms of support that parents and communities provide at home and within the community.

Although the findings are based on two rural communities in the Tolon District of northern Ghana, the study offers broader insights for understanding parental and community involvement in other rural and marginalised settings where formal expectations of participation may not always match local economic, cultural, and social realities. The contribution of the study therefore lies not only in describing what parents and communities do, but also in showing how involvement is shaped by context and why educational participation must be understood in relation to the everyday realities of rural families and communities.

## 1.1 Overall Objective

The main objective of this research was to understand the perceptions and values of community members and parents towards education and their involvement in quality education in primary schools in rural areas.

Specific objectives

To understand the perceptions and values of community members and parents on education in rural Ghana.

To explore how the perceptions of community members and parents influence their prioritisation of education.

To identify how community members and parents participate in the quality of primary education in rural Ghana.

To examine the barriers or facilitators to parents' and community involvement in primary education in rural Ghana.

Lastly, to suggest other possible strategies which might effectively increase community and parent involvement in primary education in rural Ghana.

## 1.2 Research Questions

How do community members and parents in rural Ghana perceive and value education?

How do community members' and parents' perceptions of education influence how they prioritise education in rural Ghana?

How do community members and parents participate in quality education in primary schools in rural Ghana?

What are the barriers or facilitators to community members' and parents' involvement in education in rural Ghana?

What possible strategies might effectively increase community and parent involvement in primary education in rural Ghana?

Importance of the Study

This study is important because it examines how national expectations for parental and community participation in education are experienced within the everyday realities of rural communities in Ghana. Although Ghana has introduced policies and structures to expand access to basic education and strengthen local participation through Parent–Teacher Associations and School Management Committees, participation in rural communities is often shaped by poverty, farming responsibilities, low adult literacy, cultural expectations, limited school resources, and access to formal decision-making spaces (GES, 2012; Nudzor, 2012, 2014; Amagnya, 2020; Bradley, 2000; Donkor, 2010). Understanding these realities is important for developing more context-sensitive and inclusive approaches to quality basic education.

Previous research has examined parental and community involvement using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, as also shown in the scoping review presented in Chapter 2. These studies provide important evidence about different forms and outcomes of involvement.

However, there remains a need to better understand how parents and wider community members in rural settings perceive and value education, how these perceptions influence their involvement, and how their support is practised across the home, school, and community. Examining these issues in depth is important because involvement may take different forms depending on the social, cultural, economic, and institutional conditions of rural communities.Formal indicators such as meeting attendance, school visits, homework support, examination performance, and infrastructure provision are useful for showing patterns and levels of participation. However, they may not fully explain the meanings, motivations, experiences, and contextual factors that shape how parents and community members support children's education. An in-depth qualitative study therefore provides an opportunity to explore these issues from the perspectives of those directly involved and to understand less visible forms of support, including encouragement, moral guidance, cultural learning, supervision, material support, and informal community support.

The study is also important for understanding how decentralisation and school governance operate in practice. Although PTAs and SMCs are intended to provide opportunities for parents and community members to participate in school affairs, it is important to understand how these structures are experienced in rural settings and whether they support meaningful participation, shared responsibility, and community voice. Drawing on the perspectives of parents, community members, teachers, headteachers, and children provides a broader understanding of how involvement is practised, experienced, supported, and constrained across different settings.

Finally, a better understanding of these issues can help policymakers, educators, school leaders, and community leaders develop approaches that respond more closely to the circumstances of rural families and communities. This is important for strengthening school–family–community

relationships and supporting more inclusive approaches to quality basic education in rural Ghana.

# Chapter 2: Conceptualising Parent and Community Involvement in Quality Education in Rural Areas: A Literature Review

This chapter examines how parents and community members understand education and how their involvement contributes to quality education in rural contexts. It establishes the conceptual and empirical foundations that guide the study and reviews the literature relevant to the research questions presented in Chapter One.

The chapter draws on literature concerning rurality, perceptions and beliefs about education, quality education, decentralisation, and parental and community involvement. It also incorporates findings from a scoping review that synthesised international and African literature on parent and community involvement in rural education. The scoping review addressed Research Questions Three and Four and has been published. For the purposes of this thesis, relevant sections of the published review have been reorganised and integrated into this chapter to ensure coherence with the wider objectives of the study. Although the organisation of the material differs from the published article, the substantive content of the review remains unchanged.

The concepts and perspectives discussed in this chapter perform different but related roles within the study. Rurality provides the context for understanding the social, economic, cultural, livelihood and institutional conditions within which education takes place. The discussion of perceptions and beliefs provides the basis for examining how parents and community members understand, value and prioritise education. Quality education establishes the wider educational conditions and dimensions to which parental and community participation may contribute. Decentralisation provides the governance perspective for examining participation, voice, accountability, influence and decision-making within structures such as Parent–Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs).

Within the discussion of parental involvement, Epstein's framework is used to understand the different forms that parental involvement may take, while Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's framework help explain factors such as parents' role beliefs, invitations to participate, motivation and perceived capacity to support their children's education. These perspectives are used to support the interpretation of parental involvement rather than as fixed categories into which all forms of involvement must fit.

The scoping review complements these perspectives by identifying the main areas of quality education in which parents and community members have been found to participate in rural settings, together with the facilitators and barriers that shape this involvement. The areas identified through the review provide sensitising and organising concepts for examining the empirical findings rather than a fixed framework into which all participants' experiences are forced.

The chapter begins by examining rurality and its relevance to education, establishing the context within which the study is situated. It then reviews literature on parents' and community members' perceptions and beliefs about education and how these may influence the priority given to children's schooling. This is followed by a discussion of quality education and the particular challenges involved in providing quality education in rural settings.

The chapter subsequently considers decentralisation in education, with particular attention to its development in Ghana and to formal mechanisms for parent and community participation such as PTAs and SMCs. It then examines the concepts of parent and community involvement and the perspectives used to understand their forms and motivations. The final part of the chapter presents the approach and findings of the scoping review, including the areas of quality education in which parent and community participation has been reported, the facilitators and

barriers affecting involvement, and the gaps in the literature that provide the basis for the present empirical study.

## Rurality

The term *rural* does not have a single agreed-upon definition. Researchers and policymakers define rural areas differently depending on the purpose of the study and the context (Childs et al., 2022; Nelson et al., 2021). In many countries, rural areas are defined by population size, population density, and distance from large towns or cities. For example, the United States (U.S.) Census Bureau defines rural areas as all places not classified as urban, typically those with fewer than 2,500 people (Ratcliffe et al., 2016). While this type of definition is useful for statistical comparison, it does not always capture the social and economic realities of rural communities.

Studies comparing different countries show that there is no single way to define rural areas. Du Plessis et al. (2002) explain that countries use different population limits and geographic measures to classify rural places. This means that what is considered rural in one country may not be considered rural in another. Hart et al. (2005) also point out that how rural areas are defined can affect government planning and funding decisions, including where schools and health services are located.

More recent research suggests that rural areas should not be understood only by numbers and geography. Instead, rurality should also include social, economic, and institutional conditions (Nelson et al., 2021). In many developing countries, rural communities often have limited access to quality education, healthcare, transport, and digital services, and they experience higher levels of poverty and fewer employment opportunities (World Bank, 2018). These conditions shape how families live and how children experience schooling.

Rural communities often have strong social relationships, shared traditions, and close family connections (Putnam, 2000). These social ties can encourage cooperation and mutual support among community members. However, strong traditions can also influence how families make decisions about children's roles, household work, and schooling.

At the same time, many rural communities face practical challenges. These include long distances to schools, poor road networks, limited school facilities, shortages of trained teachers, and fewer learning materials (Mulkeen, 2006). Many parents in rural areas may not have completed formal education themselves, which can make it difficult for them to support their children academically, even when they value education highly.

Understanding rural settings is important because schools in rural areas operate under different conditions than those in urban areas. Rural schools may have fewer teachers, combined grade classrooms, limited textbooks, and fewer opportunities for extracurricular activities (Mulkeen, 2006). As a result, education policies designed for urban schools may not always work well in rural areas.

Rural family life also affects how parents and communities support education. In many rural households, children are expected to help with farming, household chores, or small-scale trading. These responsibilities can reduce the time children spend in school or studying at home (Kremer & Holla, 2009). Cultural practices and community expectations may also influence school attendance and parental involvement. For this reason, educational research must consider the daily realities of rural families when analysing participation in schooling.

Researchers also note that unclear or inconsistent definitions of rural areas can affect how research findings are interpreted and how policies are developed (Hart et al., 2005; Nelson et al., 2021). A clear understanding of the rural context helps ensure that educational interventions are relevant and effective.

In this study, rurality is understood not only as a physical location but also as a social and economic environment that influences how parents and community members support education. Rural communities in northern Ghana face challenges such as poverty, limited access to schools and learning materials, and low adult literacy levels. These conditions affect how families prioritise education and how they participate in school activities.

Focusing on rural communities allows this study to better understand how parents balance education with household responsibilities, farming activities, and cultural expectations (Kremer & Holla, 2009). It also helps explain why community support for schools may look different from what is commonly expected in urban areas.

By carefully examining rural settings, this study aims to provide useful insights for educators, policymakers, and community leaders seeking to improve educational quality and access in underserved areas. Understanding rural realities enables the design of policies and school practices that respond to local needs and strengthen collaboration among schools, families, and communities.

## 2.1 Perceptions and Beliefs about Education

Parents' and community members' perceptions and beliefs are important for understanding the place of education in rural life. Perceptions refer to how people understand education and what they believe it can contribute to children's lives. Beliefs refer to their ideas about the purpose of education, the qualities associated with being educated, and the responsibilities of parents, communities, and schools. Values concern the importance attached to the different benefits of education. These concepts are closely connected because the meanings people attach to education may influence the importance they give to children's schooling.

Education does not have one fixed meaning across rural communities. It may be understood as a route to employment and economic security, a source of knowledge and confidence, a means

of developing good character, or an investment in the future of the child, family, and community. Several of these meanings may exist within the same family or community. However, the importance attached to each may differ according to parents' educational experiences, rural livelihoods, cultural and religious beliefs, gender expectations, and the opportunities associated with formal education.

This section first examines the meanings that rural parents and communities attach to education. It then considers how cultural and religious beliefs may shape these meanings before examining how perceptions and beliefs may relate to the priority given to children's education.

## Meanings Rural Parents and Communities Attach to Education

Across the studies reviewed, rural parents commonly described education as something that could improve children's lives. However, the particular benefits they associated with education differed across contexts. Some parents place greater emphasis on employment and economic security, while others focus on knowledge, confidence, moral development, independence, and contribution to family and community life.

In several rural settings, education is understood as a pathway to employment and a more secure future. Baker (1989) reported that rural parents in Peru and Sri Lanka associated education with opportunities for government employment, teaching positions, regular salaries, pensions, and job security. In rural China, parents similarly viewed educational qualifications as a means through which children could gain access to employment and opportunities outside their communities (Kong, 2010). Sarkar & Chakraborty (2023) also found positive perceptions of education among respondents with different levels of formal education in a rural community in India. Those with more formal education placed greater emphasis on academic achievement and employment opportunities, while those with little or no formal education often wanted their children to gain opportunities that had not been available to them.

Across these studies, education was generally associated with the possibility of a better future. However, what constitutes a better future differed across contexts. For some parents, it meant obtaining secure employment, while for others it meant becoming economically independent, accessing opportunities outside the community, or avoiding the difficulties associated with insecure livelihoods. The economic meaning attached to education is therefore connected to the kinds of security and progress that parents believe schooling may make possible.

Other studies show that parents value education for the knowledge and abilities it develops rather than only for future employment. Baker (1989) found that some rural parents valued education because it enabled children to read, write, calculate, understand information, and avoid being deceived. Kong (2010) similarly reported that rural parents associated education with knowledge, confidence, openness, and the ability to make informed decisions. From this perspective, education is important not only because it may lead to employment, but also because it enables people to understand their surroundings, communicate with others, solve problems, and manage everyday life.

The literature therefore presents different but related meanings of education. Some parents emphasise future outcomes such as employment, income, and qualifications, while others place greater importance on literacy, knowledge, confidence, judgement, and practical ability. These understandings are not necessarily separate. Parents may value knowledge because it can improve employment opportunities, while also valuing employment because it may provide independence, dignity, and economic security.

A further meaning concerns moral and character development. Some rural parents understand education as involving shared but different responsibilities between the home and school. Schools may be expected to provide formal academic knowledge, while parents and families take responsibility for developing children's discipline, respect, behaviour, and moral character.

Sarkar & Chakraborty (2023), for example, found that some parents regarded intellectual development as mainly the responsibility of schools, while moral guidance and early behavioural training were viewed as family responsibilities.

Other parents expect schools to contribute to both academic learning and children's wider development. Under this view, schools are expected not only to provide academic knowledge and qualifications but also to reinforce discipline, values, practical abilities, and good behaviour. Sarkar & Chakraborty (2023) found broad agreement that education should contribute to children's character and overall development, although parents questioned whether schools gave sufficient attention to individual talents and practical preparation for life.

These findings show that the responsibilities of the home and school may be understood in different ways. Some parents may regard moral development as mainly a family responsibility and academic instruction as mainly a school responsibility, while others may expect schools to contribute to both. The distinction between home and school responsibilities was also not absolute. Parents may take primary responsibility for moral guidance while still expecting teachers to reinforce discipline, respect, and responsible behaviour. Education may therefore be understood as a broader process involving academic learning, family guidance, and social development.

This broader understanding is also reflected in Matengu, Korkeamäki, and Cleghorn's (2019) study of Indigenous parents in rural Namibia. Parents understood meaningful education as preparing children to function within both their Indigenous community and the modern world. They valued knowledge and independence but also wanted education to remain connected to their culture and social environment. Their concerns did not represent a rejection of education. Rather, they questioned whether the available schooling was sufficiently relevant to the lives and futures of their children.

The literature also distinguishes between education as a means of individual advancement and education as a resource for family and community wellbeing. Kong (2010) found that educated children were expected to improve their own opportunities while also supporting parents and siblings through knowledge, advice, and financial resources. Matengu, Korkeamäki, and Cleghorn (2019) similarly found that education was valued for personal development and for enabling individuals to contribute to their communities.

Individual advancement and collective responsibility may therefore coexist within parents' understandings of education. Rural parents may want children to become independent and successful while also expecting them to support their families and contribute to community development. Education may consequently be understood as a means of improving the individual child's future while also strengthening the wellbeing of families and communities.

The literature further shows that valuing education does not necessarily mean that parents approve of every aspect of formal schooling. Parents may believe strongly in education while questioning whether schools provide the knowledge, skills, values, and opportunities that children need. Sarkar & Chakraborty (2023) found concerns that schools placed considerable emphasis on academic achievement but gave less attention to individual talents and practical life skills. Matengu, Korkeamäki, and Cleghorn (2019) similarly found that parents questioned the cultural relevance of the education available to their children and whether it adequately prepared them for their future.

This distinction is important because positive perceptions of education can exist alongside criticism of the education system. Parents may consider education essential while remaining dissatisfied with the quality, relevance, or content of the schooling available to their children. Such criticism should therefore not automatically be interpreted as a lack of interest in

education. It may instead reflect parents' own understanding of what meaningful education should provide.

Evidence from Ghana also demonstrates the importance parents attach to education while showing that these understandings are situated within particular social and economic circumstances. Donkor (2010), for example, examined educational values among predominantly low-income parents in the Weija community and found that parents' attitudes towards and support for education were connected to culture, economic circumstances, parental education, family structure, family size, and competing priorities. Amagnya (2020), drawing on evidence from the Builsa District of northern Ghana, similarly showed that local historical, social, and economic conditions shaped people's attitudes and concerns regarding education. These studies reinforce the importance of examining the meanings attached to education within their particular contexts rather than assuming that rural parents and communities understand education in the same way.

## Cultural and Religious Beliefs about Education

Cultural and religious beliefs may also shape how parents and community members understand education and the importance they attach to it. These beliefs can influence ideas about morality, discipline, family responsibility, gender roles, and children's future lives. However, culture and religion should not be viewed simply as either supporting or limiting education. Their relationship with schooling may vary across families and communities.

Religious beliefs may strengthen educational aspirations where schooling is associated with discipline, responsibility, morality, and a better future for children. Tabe-Ojong & Nshakira-Rukundo (2021), for example, found that stronger religious commitment was associated with higher parental educational aspirations in rural Kenya. This suggests that religious commitment and formal education do not necessarily exist in opposition to each other.

At the same time, differences in educational participation among religious communities should not be attributed to religion alone. Alesina et al. (2023) show that educational differences are also connected to remoteness, limited infrastructure, historical inequalities, and unequal access to formal schooling. These wider conditions are important because what may appear to be a religious difference in educational participation may also reflect unequal opportunities and access to education.

Cultural beliefs may similarly shape parents' expectations concerning children's education. Iddy (2023) found that parental views of girls' education in rural Tanzania were changing, although household responsibilities, marriage expectations, and gender roles continued to influence educational decisions. Such findings show that cultural beliefs are not necessarily fixed. Families may continue to value particular cultural responsibilities while also placing increasing importance on formal education.

Ghanaian research similarly indicates that educational attitudes and support are shaped by interactions between cultural values, family circumstances, and social and economic conditions (Amagnya, 2020; Donkor, 2010). Cultural and religious beliefs may therefore provide reasons for supporting schooling, coexist with formal education, or create competing responsibilities depending on how families understand morality, gender roles, household responsibilities, and children's futures.

The present study therefore considers how parents and community members understand the relationship between culture, religion, and education, including whether these beliefs support, coexist with, or compete with the importance attached to children's schooling.

## From Perceptions and Beliefs to Educational Prioritisation

Understanding what education means to parents and community members is closely related to understanding the priority they give to children's schooling. Educational prioritisation refers to

the importance attached to education when families and communities make decisions concerning enrolment, attendance, progression, learning materials, children's time, household responsibilities, and other competing needs.

The meanings attached to education may provide reasons for prioritising it. Parents and community members who understand education as providing employment opportunities, knowledge, confidence, discipline, independence, family wellbeing, or community development may have strong reasons for supporting children's schooling. Donkor (2010), for example, showed that Ghanaian parents' educational values and priorities were connected to the support they provided for their children.

However, positive perceptions of education do not necessarily result in the same level or form of educational support. Parents may value education strongly while facing poverty, farming responsibilities, school-related costs, time pressures, or other household obligations. Amagnya (2020) and Martey et al. (2022) show that educational participation in Ghana is shaped by wider social, economic, and household conditions. The meanings parents attach to education may therefore provide reasons for prioritising schooling, while their circumstances influence how far that priority can be expressed in practice.

Educational priority may also be expressed in different ways. Chowa et. al. (2013) distinguish between home-based and school-based parental involvement in Ghana. Parents may demonstrate the importance they attach to schooling by enrolling children, encouraging them to learn, monitoring attendance, providing learning materials, and supporting continued schooling. Wider community members may express educational priority through leadership, collective support, school governance, and resource mobilisation. Thus, parents and community members may attach similar importance to education while expressing that importance differently because their roles, resources, and opportunities are not the same.

Cultural and religious beliefs may also be connected to educational prioritisation. They may strengthen support for education where schooling is associated with morality, discipline, responsibility, and family progress. At the same time, competing demands may arise where household duties, gender expectations, cultural obligations, or religious activities require children's time or family resources. Educational prioritisation therefore involves choices made within the wider circumstances of family and community life rather than simply whether people believe education is important.

Overall, the literature shows that rural parents and community members may understand education in several interconnected ways. Education may be viewed as a pathway to employment and economic security, a means of acquiring knowledge and confidence, a source of moral and character development, a route to independence, and a resource for family and community wellbeing. These meanings are not necessarily mutually exclusive and may coexist within the same family or community.

The literature further suggests that the meanings attached to education may provide important reasons for prioritising children's schooling. However, valuing education and being able to act on that value are not necessarily the same. The ways in which educational priorities are expressed may be shaped by household resources, rural livelihoods, family responsibilities, cultural and religious beliefs, educational experience, and access to opportunities.

Although existing international and Ghanaian literature provides important insights into rural parents' attitudes towards education, educational participation, and the conditions affecting parental support, less is known about how parents and wider community members in rural northern Ghana themselves understand the meaning and benefits of education and how these understandings relate to the priority they give to children's schooling. In particular, limited attention has been given to how parents and community members themselves describe what it

means to be educated and what education contributes to children, families, and communities within their particular rural context. The present study addresses this gap through the accounts of parents and community members in the study communities.

## 2.2 Overview of Quality Education

### Definitions and the evolution

The word ‘quality’ is used across various fields to signify a distinct understanding and interest. It is commonly used in the sales industry, where intense competition drives marketers and producers to leverage quality to attract clients and gain recognition. However, in the context of education, quality encompasses a diverse range of concepts and dimensions to be explained. Historically, quality in education was measured by gross enrolment rates at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, focusing on the number of students who could attend school (UNICEF 1999). It was not until the Jomtien Conference sponsored by the World Bank and the United Nations that the concept of quality education, especially at the basic level, was expanded and redefined. The agreement established at the conference included fighting poverty, promoting human rights, protecting the environment and controlling population growth (UNICEF 1999).

Over the following years, various dimensions surfaced to define quality education. Quality education is a subjective and controversial concept with no uniform definition, although most of the definitions are highly interrelated (Chapman & Adams, 2002; Cheng & Cheung, 1997; UNICEF, 2014). Understanding differs among individuals, and therefore, various indicators are employed to define and assess quality education.

## Quality education through a human rights perspective

For the purpose of this study, I will utilise a framework drawn from the human rights perspective and then narrow it to the school context. The United Nations (UN) has found quality education as a principal goal to transform the world by 2030. By quality education, the UN implies ‘‘equitable and standard education for all that will promote lifelong learning and the urge to gather knowledge’’ (Leverage Edu, 2021). This implies that quality education is a human right that should be accessible to everyone, regardless of their location (UNESCO & UNICEF, 2007). This is aimed at minimising the disparities and inequities that have historically plagued education in terms of access and quality. This aim is to ensure that vulnerable populations, including poor children, disabled and indigenous communities, can access education. In this context of human rights, Tomaševski (2001) stated that the right to education should encompass the 4A´S: accessibility, availability, acceptability, and adaptability. With availability, Tomasevski meant that schools must be provided and located in every place where people reside. If the government is unable to fulfil social and economic rights, individuals or non-state actors should be allowed to establish a school (Tomasevski, 2001). This suggests that rural communities should be able to construct their own schools, with either the government providing funding or the community managing and funding the school itself, provided it meets the standard of a quality education. However, recognising community participation does not remove the state’s primary responsibility for ensuring that education is available. Here, quality refers to the presence of sufficient educational resources, including schools, teachers, and learning materials, ensuring that educational institutions are adequately equipped to provide quality education. In this study, I will explore the contribution of parents and community members to schools. Availability is relevant to this study because parents and community members may contribute labour, materials, financial resources, school facilities, or other forms of support that improve the conditions in which teaching and learning take place.

Regarding access, Tomasevski (2001) argued that basic education should be freely accessible and compulsory for every child. Quality, in this sense, encompasses the ease with which students can access educational opportunities, including physical access to schools, the availability of learning materials, and the removal of barriers that might prevent students from attending school (Sebu, 2023). Accessibility is particularly relevant to the present study because poverty, distance, transportation, household responsibilities, farming activities, and the availability of school materials may affect children's ability to participate consistently in schooling. Parent and community involvement may help address some of these difficulties, but the presence of such support does not eliminate the wider structural barriers affecting rural education.

An important part of the framework is acceptability. She emphasised that education must not only be available and accessible but also of good quality. She also closely associated acceptability with quality education, arguing that the structure and meaning of education must be acceptable to both parents and children, relevant, culturally suitable, and respectful of individual freedom (Tomasevski, 2001). Acceptability is relevant to this study because parents and community members may hold particular expectations about the knowledge, behaviour, values, language, and cultural relevance that education should provide. Their perceptions of meaningful education can therefore contribute to understanding whether schooling is regarded as appropriate and relevant within the rural communities studied.

Adaptability refers to the ability of educational systems to adjust to the diverse needs of students and the changing demands of society (Tomasevski, 2001). This is, in part, a challenge in rural areas where there is no electricity to power computers, making it more difficult for students to adapt to modern learning methods that use machine learning and technology. Adaptability is

also relevant where schools need to respond to local languages, rural livelihoods, cultural conditions, and the practical circumstances of children and families. This does not mean that formal education should simply reproduce every local practice, but that educational provision should be sufficiently responsive to learners' contexts while maintaining appropriate educational standards.

To situate this framework within the African context, this study also draws on Article 11 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Human Rights Law in Africa, 2012). This Charter affirms that every child has the right to education, and it obliges state parties to:

Provide free and compulsory basic education for all children.

Progressively expand access to secondary and higher education based on capacity and ability.

Take special measures to ensure access for disadvantaged groups, including girls, children with disabilities, pregnant learners, and children from rural or indigenous communities.

Recognise the role of parents and communities in establishing and managing schools, provided these meet state-approved standards.

The Charter emphasises that education should promote personality development, respect African values, and prepare children for responsible life in a free society, fostering understanding, tolerance, and friendship. These elements strongly align with Tomasevski's 4A framework:

**Availability** → Provision of free basic education and expansion to higher levels.

**Accessibility** → Special measures for marginalised and rural learners.

**Acceptability** → Education that is culturally relevant and respectful of African identity.

**Adaptability** → Recognition of community-led initiatives that respond to local needs.

By embedding this African legal instrument into the study, it ensures that the discussion of quality education reflects not only universal human rights principles but also region-specific commitments and cultural contexts that directly impact rural education in Africa.

In addition, Article 15 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child prohibits child labour and economic exploitation that may interfere with a child's education (Human Rights Law in Africa, 2012). It specifically requires that children be protected from work that is hazardous, interferes with their health, physical, mental, moral, or social development, or impedes their attendance at school. This provision is particularly relevant in rural African contexts, where children are often engaged in agricultural labour, domestic work, or informal-sector activities that compete with schooling. Participation in household or livelihood activities should not automatically be equated with harmful child labour. Such activities may also form part of children's social, cultural, moral, and livelihood learning. The concern for quality education arises where these responsibilities become excessive or interfere with school attendance, study, learning, or wellbeing. Addressing child labour is therefore not only a child protection issue but also a prerequisite for achieving quality education as defined by UNICEF, ensuring that children are free to attend school regularly, learn effectively, and participate fully without the burden of economic exploitation.

In this study, the human rights perspective provides a broad conceptual foundation for understanding quality education. The principles of availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability demonstrate that quality education involves more than school enrolment or academic outcomes. However, the 4As are not used as fixed analytical categories for organising the empirical findings. Rather, they provide a broader understanding of why access, resources, relevance, participation, and responsiveness to rural circumstances important dimensions of educational quality are.

## Quality education in the school context

Beyond the human rights context, quality education can also be explained in terms of the technical core of the school. That is what is involved and makes the school effective or of quality. These definitions, espoused by other researchers, focus on school-related aspects and their constituents (stakeholders). Chapman & Adams (2002) defined quality education as simply achieving ¨the inputs (number of teachers, amount of teacher training, number of textbooks), processes (amount of direct instructional time, extent of textbook), outputs (test scores, graduation rate) and outcomes (performance in subsequent employment) ¨ (p. 2). Cheng & Tam (1997) indicated that the ¨set of elements in the inputs, processes and outputs must satisfy the requirements and expectations of the strategic constituents (parents, policymakers, school management committees and teachers) (p. 23). This indicates that quality education may be based on school-based management (that can include stakeholder participation involving the community and parents) through decentralisation in education (Cheng & Cheung, 1997).

## Challenges in delivering Quality education in rural areas

In rural settings, providing quality education is both challenging and essential. According to the OECD (2021), access to high-quality education in rural areas is one of the essential elements of local economic development and enables rural communities to adjust to the fast-growing environment, while not having access increases the risk of widening the rural-urban gap.

Rural areas usually witness a lack of (high-quality) schools and teachers, limited pedagogical materials, poor school infrastructure, and irregular school attendance, resulting in lower educational achievements (ILO, 2017). Quality education equips children with the knowledge and skills to improve their livelihoods and contribute to the development of their communities. For example, in Tanzania, providing quality education to marginalised populations has been directly linked to rural development (Pesha, 2016). Studies have highlighted similar challenges that continue to plague rural areas. Teachers, as the primary contributors to quality education,

are often not attracted to rural schools. These schools are deprived of many essential resources needed to encourage teachers to accept or stay in these positions. Provisions such as accommodation, classroom facilities, and incentives are critical concerns for teachers considering rural postings (Plessis, 2019).

According to Plessis (2019), teachers who remain in these areas are often from rural backgrounds, as it is challenging to find teachers who can adapt easily to the realities of rural life. Teachers have noted that rural areas pose significant obstacles to their career advancement, and even school principals find it difficult to recruit teachers who are well-suited to these environments. This has resulted in less-qualified teachers remaining in rural schools, leading to low educational performance. Additionally, teachers in rural areas often experience delayed and inadequate pay. Hedges (2002) highlighted the reluctance of newly trained teachers to accept rural positions, stating, "There is a fear among newly trained teachers with a modern, individualistic outlook that if you spend too much time in an isolated village without access to further education, you become a 'village man'. This sentiment reflects the perception of rural life held by urban dwellers. (p.364)

Curriculum issues further complicate the delivery of quality education. According to Alspaugh (1998), "learners from rural schools are offered fewer educational opportunities than learners in urban schools". In research conducted by Plessis (2019), a parent emphasised that "if we want teaching and learning to improve, more emphasis must be placed on curriculum delivery because it is the lifeblood of schools" (p. 5). However, rural areas often face significant resource constraints that hinder effective curriculum implementation. For instance, essential resources such as space, electricity, running water, proper toilet facilities, and textbooks are frequently unavailable, yet they are critical for effective teaching and learning (Wedekind et al., 2006).

This highlights how inadequate infrastructure and facilities in rural areas pose systemic challenges, impacting the overall delivery of quality education.

Many rural schools also lack curricula adapted to their local contexts, creating further barriers to effective learning. For education to be relevant and effective in rural areas, it is crucial to adapt curricula to reflect local realities, involve the community, align with traditional values, and simplify teaching and training methods (Peacock, 1995). This understanding is crucial for ensuring that education effectively meets the unique needs of rural communities.

These challenges demonstrate why the rural context discussed earlier in this chapter is important for understanding quality education. Poverty, livelihoods, infrastructure, educational resources, teacher availability, and local conditions may influence both the provision of education and the possibilities for parent and community involvement.

The challenges in delivering quality education have highlighted the need to involve stakeholders in its development. Recognising that the community, parents, and schools are integral to addressing local needs through decentralisation, this study aims to identify their specific involvement (in terms of contributions and roles) in ensuring the effective delivery of quality education.

This understanding provides the transition to decentralisation, which explains the formal structures and opportunities through which parents and community members may participate in school affairs, and subsequently to the scoping review, which identifies the specific elements of quality education for which their involvement has been reported.

## 2.3 Decentralisation in Education

### Concept and evolution

The centrality of power and control, and its impact on the equitable distribution of resources and effective policy implementation, spark conversations about decentralisation. Historically,

decentralisation has been a significant topic in political and economic systems but has been less applied in education. Although it gained traction in the Global North, its implementation in the Global South developed more gradually.

Decentralisation in education gained greater recognition in the Global South in the early 2000s (Channa, 2014). Many of these countries adopted decentralisation, but the approach differed in terms of who made decisions and the level of power devolved in decision-making.

Channa (2014) distinguished between two forms of decision-making power in education: decentralisation to local government and decentralisation to the school. The first form is defined as the transfer of authority for decision-making, finance, and management to quasi-autonomous units of local government, particularly in education (Litvack and Seddon 1999). The second form, often referred to as school-based management (SBM), is a type of decentralisation that identifies the individual school as the primary unit of improvement and relies on the distribution of decision-making authority as the main mechanism to stimulate improvement (Malen et al., 1990, p. 291, found in Channa, 2014). Proponents of the second form argue that it empowers rural communities and schools to have greater control and ownership.

Channa (2014) further added that decentralisation enables the making of relevant decisions and enhances accountability. By relevance, Channa (2014) meant that communities could select approaches aligned with their specific needs and preferences, which governments may not always address. This helps reduce the concentration of power among elites and empowers schools and local governments to deliver quality education. Channa (2014) referred to accountability as empowering parents and community members to monitor, supervise, and directly address concerns about the education system. This will consider rural parents and community members as owners of the school, motivating them to get involved.

However, the existence of decentralised structures does not necessarily mean that meaningful decision-making power has been transferred to parents and communities. Participation may range from receiving information and attending meetings to being consulted, contributing to implementation, influencing decisions, or exercising formal authority. Decentralisation is therefore concerned not only with whether parents and community members participate, but also with the depth and influence of that participation.

This distinction is important to the present study. Parents and community members may participate in PTAs, SMCs, school meetings, resource mobilisation, monitoring, and other school activities, but these forms of participation may involve different levels of voice and authority. Decentralisation therefore provides the governance perspective for examining how far their involvement extends beyond participation to actual influence over school decisions.

## Ghanaian Context

Since Ghana's independence, successive governments have practised decentralisation by transferring power to local people. However, this decentralisation has often been ineffective. A more robust form of decentralisation was introduced in 1988 during the military regime (Alam & Koranteng, 2015). This decentralisation model was a combination of devolution (the transfer of decision-making and governance to local authorities) and deconcentration (administrative and service-delivery functions performed by subnational agencies) (Alam & Koranteng, 2015). In education, overlapping responsibilities between local governments and the Ghana Education Service (GES) created significant challenges. For instance, local governments were tasked with building, equipping, and maintaining primary and secondary schools. However, the same responsibilities were assigned to the GES, which controlled financial resources (Ghana Education Act 506 of 1995, 1995). This resulted in funds not being released to local governments to enable them to execute their functions effectively (Alam & Koranteng, 2015).

Consequently, local governments played a minimal role in providing basic public services, such as water, sewage, electricity, health, education, and roads, which were largely managed through deconcentrated agencies (Alam & Koranteng, 2015).

In 2000, the Government of Ghana introduced reforms to make basic education accountable to local-level authorities. These reforms transferred development and operational responsibilities from the central government to districts, emphasising self-regulation mechanisms through grassroots school communities (Nudzor, 2014).

This reform established a relationship between schools and communities through Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs). The creation of PTAs and SMCs aimed to enhance school accountability and foster stronger school-community relations, enabling communities to monitor and engage with schools effectively. Both SMCs and PTAs share similar objectives but differ in their characteristics, membership, meetings, and funding sources (Ghanney, 2016).

These formal structures are particularly relevant to this study because they provide recognised avenues through which parents and community members may participate in basic education in Ghana. They also provide an important connection between decentralisation and the wider question of the areas in which parents and community members may contribute to educational provision.

## Decentralisation and quality education

Quality education may hinge on decentralisation. Cheng & Tam's (1997) definition of quality education indicated that the ¨set of elements in the inputs, processes and outputs must satisfy the requirements and expectations of the strategic constituents (parents, policymakers, school management committees and teachers) This indicates that quality education may be based on school-based management (that can include stakeholder participation involving the community

and parents) through decentralisation in education (Cheng & Cheung, 1997). However, other scholars have refuted that school-based management has a direct impact on quality education and student improvement (Caldwell, 2005). Nevertheless, UNICEF (1999) has proposed decentralisation as a means to achieve quality education for all in its State of the World Children Report, because decentralisation will collectively organise and develop institutions that are close to children and families

Discussions and policies on quality education are all directed towards the best interests of children to improve learner achievement. According to OECD (2021) and UNICEF (2014), this is dependent on robust community-based school systems supported by community members and local governments.

This has resulted in many discussions and programs to involve the community and parents in primary education with the objective of improving the quality of education (Kendall, 2007). Kendall (2007) further indicated that these programs have created formal structures such as School Committees and Parent-Teacher Associations, where parents and community members can play active roles in enacting their involvement. Building on this relationship between decentralisation, quality education and stakeholder participation, the scoping review examined the specific elements of quality education in which parents and community members participate in rural areas.

This review focused on identifying the elements of quality education through which parents and community members can enact their involvement. It began by exploring what international bodies have highlighted regarding elements of quality education, then identifying the elements that are relevant and applicable in the African context, drawing on perspectives advanced in the literature. These elements provide the basis for this study to examine the specific roles that parents and community members play in their children's schooling. Building on the

understanding of stakeholder participation through decentralisation discussed above, the scoping review asks: How do parents and community members engage in quality education in rural areas? Based on this understanding, the study aimed to identify elements of quality education and determine which of these elements have implications for community and parental participation.

The UNDP (2000) has identified five elements of quality education: learner support at home, content of education, learning environment, learning process and educational outcomes. In this regard, they explained that learners must be healthy, well-nourished and supported by their families and communities; the learning environment must be safe and healthy with adequate resources and facilities; educational content should be relevant to learners; teaching methods should be presented in a well-managed classroom, and learning outcomes should result in participation in society. The Norwegian agency for development, Norad.no (2015), listed six similar key elements: the teacher and the teaching methods, educational content, learning environment, school management, preconditions for pupils and funding and organisation. These elements have generally been adopted by some researchers when assessing the quality of education in basic education (Thinley, 2021).

Given this, which of the elements of quality education, as enlisted by UNICEF and NORAD, can communities and parents enact their involvement? According to a study conducted by Kendall (2007) in Kenya, parental and community involvement in schools affect the quality of education in many ways: ¨providing an oversight of school budgeting and teacher attendance and performance; managing student attendance and homework; providing resources (labour, money, etc.) for school buildings, teacher hiring, and other school infrastructure and services; and advocating at local and national levels for changes that may improve educational access, retention, and completion" (pp.704). Furthermore, the findings of Sumarsono et al. (2016)

reveal similar areas in which parents and communities participate in improving the quality of education in basic schools. These are learning content, students' affairs, facilities and infrastructure, school management, finance, and school personnel. These elements are related and align with both UNICEF's and NORAD's descriptions of quality education.

Drawing these strands of literature together provided the conceptual basis for the scoping review to examine parent and community involvement across six areas: learner support, educational content, learning environment, school management, finance, and school personnel. These six areas represent the elements through which parent and community involvement in quality education is examined in this thesis.

Having identified the areas where parents and communities can or do participate in quality education, the scoping review seeks to determine what literature says about the elements of quality education that communities and parents take part in rural areas. There has been a rapid increase among researchers in the interest of parental involvement and the quality of education of their children, leading to several literature reviews, meta-analyses, and rapid and systematic reviews. Several meta-analyses and systematic reviews have been done on the relationship between parent involvement and student academic achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2005, 2007; Sénéchal & Young, 2008), parent and teachers' interactions in primary schools (Honingh et al., 2020) and family-school connections (Semke & Sheridan, 2011). Many of these studies and research based on involvement and partnerships have focused extensively on urban settings (Jeynes, 2005; Reynolds, 2001; Semke & Sheridan, 2011). However, reviews rarely focused on primary education/school, with the study population including community members and parents in the rural areas. In addition, scoping reviews which have been conducted on primary education/basic schools have focused on play pedagogies in kindergarten education (Pyle et al., 2017), physical education teachers from 1990 to 2017 (McEvoy et al., 2015),

international mindedness and related concepts in music education (Norman, 2022). All have centred in the urban areas as well.

Therefore, a scoping review analysing literature on the element of quality education in rural areas is important. This review expands this growing body of work by mapping out the roles, barriers, and facilitators related to community and parental involvement in quality education. Using internationally recognised frameworks from UNICEF and NORAD, it categorises participation across six key elements: learner support, learning environment, curriculum, school management, personnel, and finances. Unlike previous scoping reviews of parental and community member involvement, this review focuses specifically on rural primary education, adopts a broader definition of stakeholder participation, and aims to bridge the empirical and policy-relevant gaps in the literature. In doing so, this review not only identifies research gaps but also clarifies the scope and distribution of evidence, offers comparative insights across countries and continents, and informs future interventions based on community-school partnerships. Arksey & O'Malley (2005, p. 21) identified four possible reasons for conducting a scoping review: (1) to examine the extent, range and nature of research activity, (2) to determine the value of undertaking a full systematic review, (3) to summarise and disseminate research findings, and (4) to identify research gaps in the existing literature. This scoping review aims to pinpoint research gaps in quality education in primary schools, focusing on aspects where community members and parents in rural areas can participate, and to explore what inhibits and facilitates their involvement.

The elements and conditions identified through this review subsequently informed the empirical phase of the study, in which the experiences and practices of parents and community members in the selected rural Ghanaian communities were examined.

## 2.4 Parent and Community Involvement

### Parent involvement

Parental involvement in education refers to parents' active engagement in their children's learning processes, both at home and in school. It is a dynamic, multi-dimensional concept that encompasses various forms of participation aimed at supporting academic success and overall development. Georgiou (1997) defines parental involvement as complex behaviours demonstrating parents' commitment to their children's education, ranging from direct academic support to fostering a conducive home environment. This concept emphasises the critical role of parents in shaping children's educational outcomes through their engagement and support.

Epstein (1997) widely recognised framework outlines six key types of parental involvement: (1) parenting, which involves creating a home environment supportive of learning; (2) communication, focusing on effective two-way exchanges between parents and schools; (3) volunteering, including active participation in school activities; (4) learning at home, such as assisting with homework and reinforcing academic concepts; (5) decision-making, which involves parents participating in school governance structures; and (6) collaboration with the community to enhance educational resources. These categories reflect the breadth of ways parents can contribute to their children's education, highlighting the interplay between home, school, and community contexts.

In this study, Epstein's framework is used to help understand the forms that parental involvement may take. For example, parents may support children's learning at home, communicate with teachers, participate in school activities, contribute to decision-making, or collaborate with others in the community. The framework is not used as a fixed set of categories into which all empirical findings must fit. Rather, it provides an interpretive perspective for understanding the different forms through which parents enact their involvement.

Hornby & Witte, (2010) further expand on this concept by defining parental involvement as the degree to which parents actively participate in school-related activities and collaborate with teachers to enhance educational outcomes. This perspective underscores the importance of strong relationships between schools and families, emphasising mutual respect, effective communication, and trust as foundational elements of successful engagement. Similarly, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) conceptualise parental involvement as a psychological construct driven by parents' beliefs in their ability to influence their children's education (sense of efficacy) and their perceptions of invitations or opportunities to participate in school activities.

Whereas Epstein's framework helps identify the forms that parental involvement may take, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's framework helps explain why parents may become involved and why their capacity to participate may vary. In the present study, this perspective is particularly useful for considering parents' role beliefs, invitations from schools and teachers, motivation, and perceived ability to support their children's education.

This distinction is important because limited participation in a particular activity does not necessarily indicate that parents place little value on education. Parents may value and prioritise their children's schooling while differences in confidence, knowledge, resources, time, or opportunities affect the ways in which they are able to participate**.**

The context of parental involvement varies across cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds, and the Ghanaian perspective provides unique insights. Ghanney (2016) integrates Epstein's framework into the Ghanaian educational landscape, emphasising the cultural significance of extended families in shaping children's educational experiences. Ghanney (2016) applied Epstein's framework within the Ghanaian educational context and highlighted the importance of extended family members in children's educational experiences. In this context, the term

‘parent’ may extend beyond biological parents to include grandparents, older siblings and other caregivers, reflecting a broader communal approach to education. Parental involvement may therefore include basic decisions, such as sending children to school, engaging them at home, and participating in Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs). However, barriers such as literacy challenges, socioeconomic constraints, and traditional gender roles significantly affect the extent of involvement.

These contextual differences are important to the present study because the forms of involvement described in established parental-involvement frameworks may be expressed differently within rural Ghanaian families and communities. Epstein and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler are therefore used as interpretive perspectives rather than as assumptions about how rural Ghanaian parents should participate.

The scoping-review elements and these parental-involvement frameworks also serve different purposes in the study. The six elements identified through the scoping review indicate the areas in which parent and community involvement related to quality education may occur, while Epstein helps interpret the forms that parental involvement takes within those areas, and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler help explain some of the factors shaping parents’ participation.

## Community involvement

A community is defined as a group of people with shared interests or goals. Bray, (2001) presents communities into three distinct types. The first is the geographic community, defined by the residential location of its members, such as a village or district. The second classification is ethnic, racial, and religious communities, where membership is determined by ethnic, racial, or religious affiliations that often transcend geographical boundaries. The third type comprises communities founded on shared family or educational concerns, such as parents’ associations and similar bodies focused on students’ welfare.

Community involvement is generally defined as the participation of community members in planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating activities related to education. According to Pryor (2005) it mobilises social capital by fostering collaborative efforts among stakeholders to address educational challenges. Nishimura (2019) highlights that involving the community is important for school management, especially in developing countries; it supports resource provision, accountability, and governance, helping with limited resources and enhancing transparency. According to Russell (2009) the School Management Committee is the most common avenue for parents and communities in developing countries to participate in schools. He also added that other practices, such as the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), are common in African countries, while the Associacion Communal para la Educacion (APE) is mainly found in Latin American countries. Sliwka & Istance (2006) also reviewed international practices of community involvement in school management. From their review, structures and avenues for community involvement in primary schools in developed countries typically involve parents or school councils as governing bodies, playing important roles in the decision-making and management of schools. This is evident in many OECD countries with formal structures such as parent associations, parents' councils (elected bodies of parents), and school councils consisting of parent councils and teacher representatives, which generally hold significant influence, especially in shaping local curricula, determining budgets, and participating in the recruitment and selection of teachers. They discussed some structures and functions of parents and communities in primary schools in some OECD countries.

In Denmark, the essential management of schools involves the parent association and the school governing board. The school governing board sets the guidelines, approves the budget, and makes decisions on curriculum and staffing.

In England, schools enjoy considerable autonomy in their decision-making processes. Each school has an adverse governing body composed of volunteer governors, parent governors elected by parents, staff governors selected by the school staff, and additional community members appointed by the governing body. The parent and local communities bear significant responsibilities through these governing bodies. The governing board oversees the budget, curriculum decisions, and the communication of exam results to parents. They also develop action plans, manage staff appointments, and handle staff appraisals and grievances.

In Finland, decentralisation at the local level has led to an increasing number of parents engaging in school development, as the Basic Education Act 1999 mandates cooperation with parents. In Slovakia, the parents' association, as an independent organisation, provides feedback on learning and teaching to schools and may also contribute to financial resources. Elected school boards, comprising parents and community representatives, oversee school management and staff activities, with parents actively involved in shaping school profiles. In Japan, recent policies aim to enhance the involvement of parents and the community in school management. Provisions have been made for the establishment of community schools which cater to local needs. These schools are co-managed by community representatives recruited through an open application process.

The global south should not be overlooked, as decentralisation exists in various forms, including community and parental participation. In Uganda, decentralisation at the local level requires every public primary school to have a school management committee responsible for the school's overall management. Additionally, most schools have parent-teacher associations representing parents and teachers (Suzuki, 2002). A similar system exists in Gambia, where the government mandates that Parent Teacher Associations (PTAS) be established in all schools to participate in managing financial resources and to have a voice in school decisions regarding

development projects such as school gardens and fundraising activities, recruitment of staff, and the maintenance of school buildings and grounds. The school committee members (SMCs), comprising students, parents from the PTA, and staff, ensure the efficient management of all school activities and report issues requiring resolution to the wider PTA. In India, the initiative to universalise primary education led to the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) legislation, which mandates community involvement. The aim is to democratise education in rural areas, ensuring that parents and local communities play a central role in school functioning. The Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009 seeks to improve school infrastructure and teacher-pupil ratios, as well as to empower School Management Committees (SMCs) or Village Education Committees (VECs) in some regions, with the potential to transform rural public education (Sharma et al., 2016).

These international examples demonstrate that community involvement may occur through different structures and may include activities related to school management, educational resources, finance, infrastructure, personnel, monitoring, and decision-making. These areas correspond with several of the areas identified through the scoping review as areas in which parents and communities may contribute to quality education.

While existing studies highlight the potential of decentralisation policies and community structures to support local participation, the form that community involvement takes may vary across social and educational contexts. The present study therefore examines how community involvement is enacted within the selected rural Ghanaian communities.

## Community Involvement in Ghana

Traditionally, local elites and community leaders in Ghana have played a significant role in establishing schools, especially during the colonial era. Their contributions included providing labour and resources, which helped create schools that were eventually incorporated into the

formal educational system (Essuman, 2019). In modern times, these leaders, particularly chiefs and elders in rural areas, continue to influence education by advocating for improved facilities and ensuring adequate teacher deployment (Hirose, 2011). Community involvement in Ghana's education system is formalised through structures such as School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). These bodies provide formal avenues for participation in school governance and decision-making; for instance, they are responsible for setting priorities, monitoring school performance, and mobilising community resources (Ghana Education Service SMC, 2012). PTAs work alongside SMCs, focusing on student welfare and organising funding for school projects. These participatory mechanisms align with Ghana's education decentralisation policy, which seeks to empower communities by bringing decision-making processes closer to local levels and fostering collaboration between various stakeholders to enhance educational outcomes (Ghanney, 2016). While these structures have shown promise in promoting collaboration, studies suggest varying levels of effectiveness in rural areas due to disparities in capacity and resource availability. The present study examines how these structures perform their roles within the selected rural Ghanaian schools and communities.

## School management committees and parent-teacher association functions

Both SMCs and PTAs have similar objectives but have different characteristics in terms of their objectives, membership, meetings, and source of funding.

The SMC is mandated to engage in the following activities (p. 15) (Ghana Education Service, 2012):

- Participate in establishing priorities and setting goals and developing strategies for school improvement

•Regularly encourage parents and other community members to participate in the school's improvement planning and implementation processes (SPIP)

• Review schools' progress in implementing the SPIP with their headteachers

•Support the development of team and leadership skills for both teachers and learners in schools

•Implement mechanisms to hold headteachers and staff accountable for progress toward the goals set out in the SPIP

•Contribute to the development of the SPIP SMC.

Executive members are composed of the following (p. 19) (Ghana Education Service, 2012):

• District Director of Education or representative

• DA representative (assembly members)

•Unit committee (administrative units under the DA) representative

•Chief's representative

• PTA representative

•Headteacher

• Two members of the teaching staff

•Co-opted members to perform specific functions (optional

On the other hand, PTAs have the following objectives and memberships (p. 29) (Ghana Education Service, 2012):

• To promote the welfare of children and youths at home, at school, and in the community, through a strong linkage

• To assist in income-generating activities to provide some basic needs for the school

- To raise the standards of children at home • To secure adequate by-laws for the care and protection of children • To bring into closer relation the home and the school, so that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently regarding the education of their children
- To develop between educators and the general public such united efforts that will secure for all children the highest advantages in physical.

The formal responsibilities assigned to PTAs and SMCs illustrate the opportunities provided for parent and community participation in Ghanaian basic schools, including learner support, school management, finance, the learning environment and school personnel. These responsibilities provide an important policy and institutional context for examining how involvement is enacted within the rural schools in this study and how reported practices relate to the areas identified through the scoping review.

## Method for the scoping review.

A scoping review provides a "preliminary assessment of the potential size and scope of available research literature. It aims to identify the nature and extent of research evidence (usually including ongoing research)" (Grant & Booth, 2009, p. 101). A scoping review aims to rapidly map evidence that underpins a research topic or a particular area (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). This study sought to clarify the nature of elements of quality education that communities and parents contribute to in rural primary schools, disseminate the findings and reveal gaps. This scoping review adopted the five-stage framework of Arksey and O'Malley (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005): 1) identifying the research questions, 2) identifying relevant studies, 3) selecting studies, 4) charting the data, and 5) collating, summarising, and reporting results. (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p. 22). With limited and scant research on community and parent involvement in achieving quality education in rural primary schools, this framework was

particularly appropriate. It allowed us to thoroughly examine the extent and nature of existing evidence while highlighting gaps that future research could address.

## Identifying the Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

(1) In which elements of the quality of education do the community members and parents participate in rural areas? Under this question, the review analyses the (a) methods employed in each study and also looks at elements of quality of education by (b) the number of available studies per element and (c) by country. I then report on the community's and parents' findings regarding each component of quality education.

(2) What hinders or facilitates community members' and parental involvement in the quality of education in rural areas? The second question explores the obstacles to and facilitators of family and parental involvement that exist in rural areas based on the analysis of the reviewed studies.

## Identifying relevant studies.

The search strategy was based on predefined keywords to gather articles for the review. These keywords are commonly used by researchers in their studies. First, a search was conducted on Google Scholar to identify similar or related keywords in articles. These related keywords were then used to search for articles for the study. As shown in **Table 1,** there are four sets of keywords arranged in columns, with the Boolean operator OR used within each column, and the operator AND used to connect the columns of the four sets. **Table 2** displays the combined keywords from Table 1, illustrating how they were entered into each database and the results obtained, with the search limited to the years 2006-2025.

**Table 1. Keyword categories used in the search strategy**

| → AND → | → AND → | → AND ← | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| KEYWORDS 1 | KEYWORDS 2 | KEYWORDS3 | KEYWORDS4 | |
| Community participation | Parent participation | Primary education/school | Rural areas | ↓OR |
| Community involvement | Parent involvement | Basic education/school | | ↑ |
| Community engagement | Parent engagement | | | |

**Table 2. Summary of search results across three academic databases.**

| Search keywords | Database search (number of articles retrieved and years searched) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ERIC | EDUCATION DATABASE (PROQUEST) | WEB OF SCIENCE |
| "Community Participation" Or "Community Involvement" And "Parent Participation" Or "Parent Involvement "And "Primary Education" Or "Basic Education" And "Rural Areas" | 3942 (2006- 2021) | 8363 (2006- 2021) | |
| Communt*engagement and parent* engagement and primary school or basic school and rural areas | (-) | (-) | 89 (2006-2021) |
| Communit*involvement and parent* involvement and primary school or basic school and rural areas | (-) | (-) | 286 |
| ("Community Participation" OR "Community Involvement" OR "Community engagement") AND ("Parent Participation" OR "Parent Involvement" OR "Parent Engagement") AND ("Primary Education" OR "Basic Education OR "Primary schools") AND ("Rural Areas" OR "Rural" OR "Rural School") | 523(2022-2025) | (-) | 544(2022-2025) |

Legend:

Table 2 shows the number of articles retrieved using different keyword search combinations

across three academic databases: ERIC, Education Database (ProQuest), and Web of Science, covering publications from 2006 to 2025. Each search string used Boolean operators and truncation (e.g., involvement) to expand the search and find studies relevant to community and parent involvement in rural primary education. The dash (–) indicates where data were not retrieved or not applicable for that specific search term in the given database.

## Study selection

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to the records identified through the searches**.** The initial search covered a 15-year period from 2006 to 2021, and an updated search extended the coverage to 2025**.** This period aimed to help us retrieve studies conducted in rural areas that focus on the limited research regarding quality education. Beginning in 2006, we were able to capture literature produced after the *Education for All (EFA)* Global Monitoring Reports and during the transition toward the *Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)*, when parental and community involvement became central to international debates on access, equity, and quality in primary education. This starting point ensured that the review reflected contemporary educational systems and frameworks**.** The study encompassed all international literature focusing on rural schools and parent/community involvement. The review selected only empirical studies to ensure that the findings were grounded in observed practices and evidence on how community members and parents are involved in quality education in rural areas. As shown in Table 3**,** no publication-type filters were applied during the academic database searches. The database searches therefore retrieved potentially relevant records across the publication categories indexed by the databases, including peer-reviewed articles, educational books, reports, dissertations, scientific magazines, professional magazines, presentations, minutes, and other sources. This decision was made to maximise the breadth and contextual depth of the available evidence and to avoid inadvertently excluding relevant empirical research

solely because of its publication format. However, retrieval through the databases did not automatically result in inclusion in the review. All retrieved records were screened against the same eligibility criteria, and only sources reporting relevant empirical research were retained. Only publications written in English were included. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods empirical studies were eligible for inclusion, regardless of the country in which they were conducted**.**

The focus was on rural areas, parent and community involvement, barriers, facilitators, primary or basic schools, parents, community members, students, board of directors, school management council (SMC), and other stakeholders. Schools with existing or ongoing programmes/interventions were excluded to clearly identify what parents and community members do in their communities. However, studies that compared schools with intervention programmes to those without were included. In this review, "rural" was defined using internationally recognised frameworks (OECD, 2011) as areas with low population density, limited access to infrastructure and services, and socioeconomic disadvantages. Across the included studies (Europe, North America, sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia), these characteristics were consistently observed, with local differences in terminology or in the emphasis placed on agricultural dependence or resource constraints. All selected studies focused on rural areas that were socially and economically deprived, ensuring comparability across contexts.

The search was conducted across three databases: These three databases mentioned above offer broad coverage of peer-reviewed journals and other resources in the fields of education and the social sciences. The search was updated in ERIC databases and Web of Science to include the period from 2022 to 2025. This aimed to identify current findings and developments related to community and parent involvement in rural primary schools. We limited our search to educational materials within the databases and excluded all unrelated materials and research

from other disciplines. This restriction narrowed our results to the key papers included in the search databases.

In addition to the academic database searches, a separate supplementary search was conducted to identify relevant grey literature and other empirical studies that might not have been indexed in the selected databases. Grey literature in this review referred to relevant research materials identified outside the selected academic databases, particularly materials produced or disseminated through institutional, organisational, governmental, and other research-related sources. The supplementary search also involved examining the reference lists of included and closely related studies to identify relevant literature that had not been retrieved through the database searches. Studies identified through the grey-literature, reference-list, and other manual searches were subjected to the same inclusion and exclusion criteria as records retrieved through the academic databases.

**Table 3: Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

| Criteria | Inclusion | Exclusion |
|---|---|---|
| Database | Eric, educational database web of science, separate grey-literature searches, reference-list searches, and other relevant manual searches | Sources that could not be retrieved or assessed |
| Timeframe | 2006-2025 | Studies published before 2006 |
| Publication types | No publication-type filters were applied during the academic database searches. Potentially relevant records were retrieved across the publication categories indexed by the databases. | |
| Types of studies | Empirical studies | Non-empirical sources or publications that did not present relevant empirical findings |
| Focus | Rural areas, parents, community involvement, barriers, facilitators, primary and basic schools, disadvantaged schools, quality of education | Urban areas, sub-urban schools, Universities, secondary schools, health problems, private schools, schools with intervention programs |
| Language | English | Other languages |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Target population | Teachers, parents, headteachers and teachers SMC'S, community members, district directors, students, NGO's | Participants or populations unrelated to rural primary or basic education |

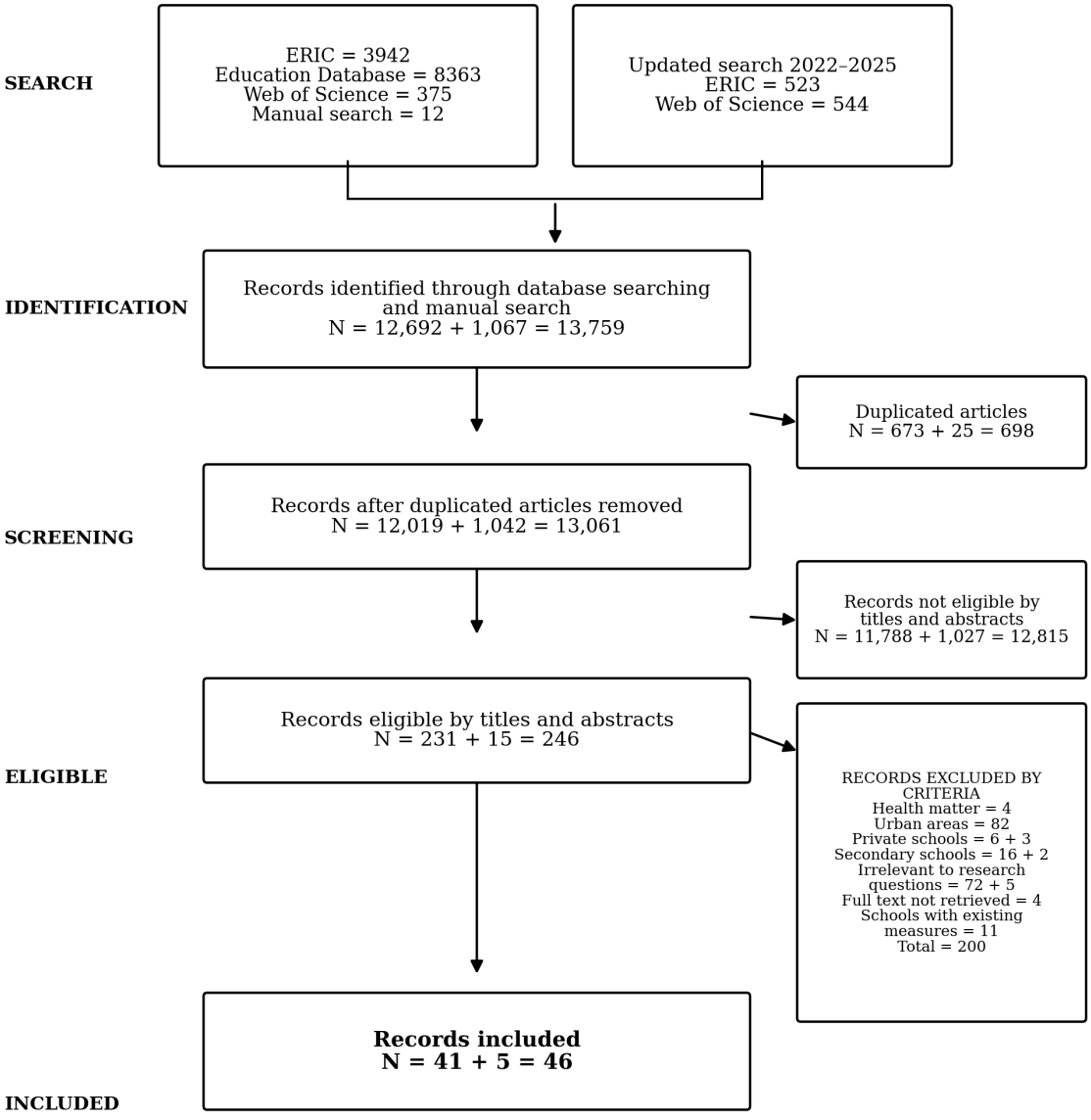
**Legend**

Table 3 illustrates the inclusion and exclusion criteria that guided the study selection process in this review. The criteria helped ensure the relevance of the studies included in the final analysis. Although the database searches were deliberately broad, the final inclusion of a source depended on its relevance to the review questions and its reporting of empirical research.

We relied on the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) statement (Moher et al., n.d.) for the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Figure 1 shows the study selection process, including procedures for database searching, text screening, and selecting eligible articles for inclusion. The initial database search was conducted in May 2021. ERIC and the education databases were searched across all available categories. For the Web of Science database, I refined the categories of disciplines at the search stage to include educational research, anthropology, educational sciences, social sciences, and interdisciplinary fields. I imported all the articles (titles and citations) into Mendeley. Using the software, I employed the "check duplicate" function to identify all duplicated articles and subsequently deleted them. Additionally, I conducted a manual review of titles, volumes, pages, and authors to remove any hidden duplicates. The total number of articles retrieved from the databases was 12680. To capture the most recent literature, the search was updated to cover the period from 2022 to 2025, using ERIC and Web of Science with the same keywords and refinements. This update yielded 1067 records (523 from ERIC and 544 from Web of Science). 12 were from the grey or manual search.

In total, the combined searches produced 13759 records. After removing 698 duplicates, 13061 records remained. The titles and abstracts of these records were screened against the eligibility criteria. Screening of titles and abstracts resulted in the exclusion of 12,815 irrelevant articles, leaving 246 full-text articles for assessment. Of these, 200 were excluded because they focused on urban or secondary contexts, private schools, were irrelevant to the research questions, or the full text was unavailable. Ultimately, 46 studies were included in the final review (41 from 2006–2021 and 5 from 2022–2025). All authors agreed on the keywords and search terms used for the literature search**.** Initially, ERIC and the Education Database were selected as the two databases for the review. The fourth author recommended including an additional database to broaden the search and reduce the risk of missing relevant studies. Following the discussion, all authors agreed to include Web of Science as the third database. The first author conducted the database searches, screened titles and abstracts, reviewed full texts, and selected eligible studies. The second and third authors reviewed all 46 included studies to confirm that they met the inclusion criteria**.** Any questions concerning the eligibility of a study were discussed among the authors until agreement was reached. The first author drafted the manuscript with contributions from the second, third, and fourth authors.

**FIG 1. Flowchart diagram of the screening and selection procedure** (Moher et al., n.d.)




## Data Charting

As described by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), this approach is a "descriptive-analytical" method within the narrative tradition, serving as a common analytical framework that collects standard information applied to all the primary studies reviewed (p. 26) (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Additionally, they stated that data charting should often include a mixture of general

information about the research and specific facts (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). However, deciding which categories to add to the chart is up to the researcher (Daudt et al., 2013). In this paper, the categories included author, year, country, methodology, participants, elements of quality education, barriers, facilitators, the purpose of the research, and the research result. Data were charted using Excel, and detailed information on the data chart can be found in the supplementary material ("S1 Table").

**"S1 Table" Overview of data on included articles.**

**Legend**

**S1 Table** presents the categories used to chart data from the reviewed studies. A summary of key study details, including author, year, country, methodology, and participants, is included here, along with elements of quality education, barriers, facilitators, the purpose of the research, and the results of the research.

**Collating, Summarising and Reporting the Results**

In line with Arksey and O'Malley's framework, this is the fifth part of the scoping review process (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The following section summarises, reports on, and discusses the findings of the 46 studies. This part addressed the two questions at hand. We sought to analyse reviewed studies by identifying themes related to quality education and displaying the countries in which these studies have been conducted. We settled on themes used by Sumarsono et al. (2016) because Kendall (2007) focuses more on parent and community collective function in the school, but themes from the study by Sumarsono et al. (2016) can analyse parents' individual function at home as well as the parent and community collective function in the school. Secondly, the themes identified in Sumarsono et al.'s (2016) study significantly overlap with widely accepted concepts in the context of quality education and stakeholder participation, making them relevant to the choice of this study. Furthermore, the

themes presented by the former are similar to the elements of quality education from UNICEF AND NORAD that are taken as a starting point in this study, and these frameworks are internationally recognised and align closely with the multidimensional view of quality education adopted in this review. The following themes were used for the review, as shown in **Table 4**. Learner affairs/support at home, education/learning content, learning environment, school management, finance, and school personnel management. Additionally, Russell's decision points were incorporated as subthemes under certain elements because they were identified through practices observed in studies on stakeholder involvement in quality education and aligned with the main themes, thereby complementing and expanding the thematic categories in a structured manner (Russell, 2009). Decision points were curriculum development, setting class hours and calendar, maintaining and building school facilities, supplying and buying school materials, attending meetings, setting goals and development plan, teacher training activities, recruitment and termination of teachers, supervising and evaluating teachers and lastly, teacher incentives and payment of salaries. We discussed the literature to report the findings on how communities and parents were involved in the quality of education. The second question also addressed the number of studies conducted on barriers and facilitators. Here, after reviewing the studies, themes were developed to report the findings.

**Table 4: Themes of Quality Education and Community/Parent Involvement**

| Theme | Sub-theme(s) | Description |
|---|---|---|
| Learner Affairs/Support at Home | - Academic activities at home<br>- Non-academic activities at home<br>- Parents' interest in children's advancement | Focuses on parental involvement in supporting academic activities, non-academic activities, and overall interest in children's educational growth. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Educational Content | - Resource personnel<br>- Curriculum development | Involvement of parents and community members in providing resources, assisting with curriculum, and contributing cultural knowledge. |
| Learning Environment | - Maintaining and building school facilities<br>- Sanitation and wellbeing<br>- Supplying and buying school materials | Participation in maintaining the physical environment, creating a safe and healthy learning space, and supporting material provision. |
| School Management | - Attending meetings<br>- Setting goals and development plans<br>- Decision-making | Community and parent involvement in school management through attending meetings, setting goals, and making key decisions. |
| Finance | - Fundraising<br>- Teacher incentives and salaries | Financial contributions to support school activities, teacher incentives, and salary supplementation in rural settings. |
| School Personnel Management | - Teacher training activities<br>- Recruitment and termination of teachers<br>- Supervision and evaluation of teachers | Community and parent roles in supporting teacher training, involvement in hiring processes, and holding teachers accountable. |

Legend

Table 4 summarises the main themes and sub-themes identified in the literature on community and parent involvement in quality education. These areas provide an organising structure for examining how parents and community members contribute to different dimensions of education in rural settings.

## Results

### *Distribution by continents*

The figure 2 hereafter shows that the majority of reviewed articles on the elements of quality education were conducted in North America (United States of America, 13; Canada, 1; Guatemala, 1) and Africa (Ghana, 4; South Africa, 2; Malawi, 1; Ethiopia, 2; Zimbabwe, 1; Kenya, 1; and Botswana, 2). One study was carried out in each of the other continents: Europe (Romania), South America (Paraguay), and Oceania (New Zealand). Additionally, five articles were found in Asia (China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and India). In total, 36 articles focus on the elements of quality education. See ("S1 Table").

**Fig 2**: **Distribution of Included Studies by Continent.**

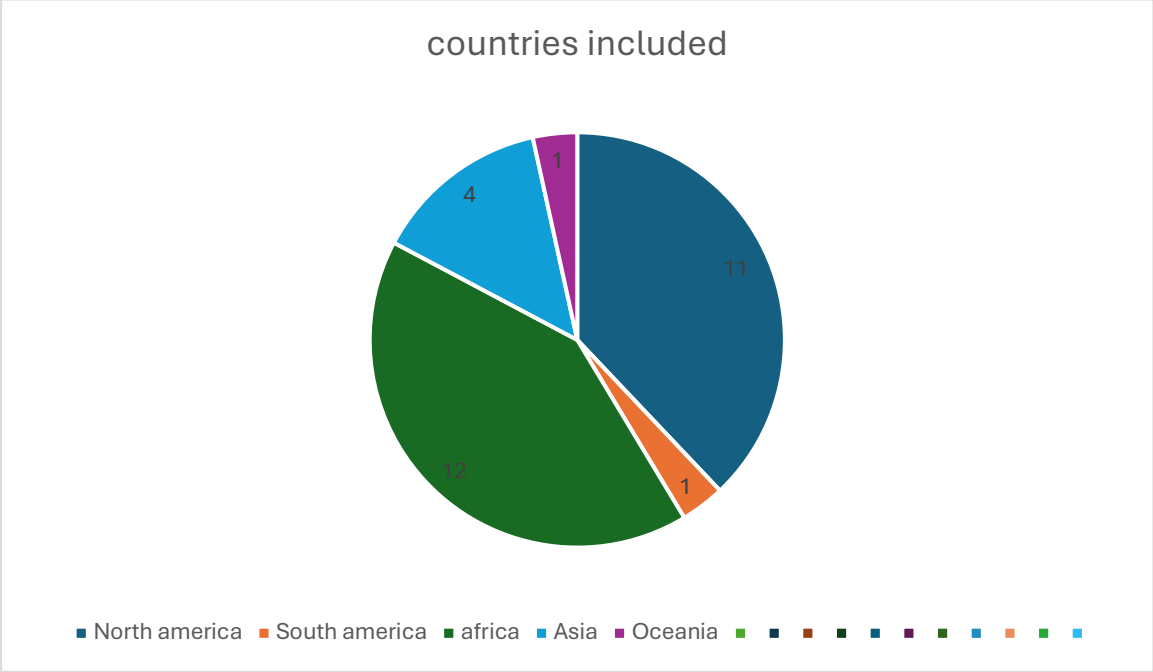



**Figure 2** shows the distribution of studies by continent, highlighting the global representation of research on community and parent involvement in rural education.

*Participants and data collection methods from the various studies*

The review analysed the methodology used in the studies to determine the trend in parent and community involvement. The participants and data collection methods were analysed, and the results showed that 36 studies included parents as participants. 14 studies listed parents only as their participants, while 11 studies involved parents and SMC/PTA/community members. In these studies, SMC/PTA represented the community members in the villages. Six out of the 10 studies randomly selected community members from the villages to participate, aiming to gather their views and perspectives on parent and community involvement. Teachers and/or headteachers appeared in 27 articles (with either parent and teacher/headteacher (7) or parent, teacher/headteacher and SMC/PTA/community members (10), or teacher and students (1) or teachers and headteachers only (5), or parent, teacher/headteacher and student (1), or headteacher/teacher, school governing boards/learners (1), or headteacher/teacher, SMC/PTA, community member (1), or parent, Village Education Committee (VEC) and teacher/headteacher (1)). Only four articles included primary school students as participants. The most common data collection tool employed is the individual interview (cited in 37 articles), with a few instances of pair or focus group discussions (cited in 14 articles). Surveys and questionnaires were also employed (10 articles). Document analysis (14) and observation (6) were found to pair with other data collection tools mentioned above (interviews, surveys, focus groups, questionnaires). See Table 5 or (See "S1 Table" for the entire data chart).

**Table 5.**

**Participants and data collection methods**

| AUTHOR/YEAR OF PUBLICATION/LOCATION | POPULATION | DATA COLLECTION | RESEARCH APPROACH |
|---|---|---|---|

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Donkor, A, k & Waek. I., B. (2019) Ghana | SMC, headteachers, teachers, executive members, community leaders and, members, parents, and GES OFFICIALS | Survey, school management committee/parent teacher association (SMC/PTA) meetings, minutes, attendance records of parents to meetings/ visitor's book staff appraisal, logbooks, teacher's attendance books | MIXED METHOD |
| Taniguchi, k &Hirakawaa, Y. (2016) Malawi | 15Headteachers, 30 SMC and PTA, parents of grade 6pupils, community members, parents | focus group and interviews | qualitative |
| Nishimura, M. 2019. Kenya | Teachers, headteachers, local NGO staff, district education officer, SMC, Parents, and volunteer | Survey, semi-structured interviews, focus group, observation | |
| Munje, P & Mncube, V. 2018 South Africa | 9Teachers and 3principals | Interviews and focus groups, | Interpretist paradigm (case study, qualitative |
| Preston, Jane P. MacPhee, Mary M. Roach O'Keefe, Alaina (2019) Canada | 66 kindergarten teachers | survey (close and open-ended questions) | |
| Marin, Diana-Crina Bocoş, Muşata (2017) Romania | parents | family involvement questionnaire assessed through home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and home school conferencing. | quantitative method |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jefferson, Antwan (2015) USA | 21 community members,5 school professionals and 7 family members | interviews (street interview, in person and group interviews), telephone calls to the district's office of family involvement, secondary data from community, formal school district research review | ethnographic approach |
| Hornby, Garry Witte, Chrystal (2010) Newzealand | 19 principals, one deputy principal and two board of trustees | Structured interviews | |
| jennifer swift morgan (2006) ETHIOPIA | teachers and administrators, male community members/parents, female community members/parents, primary school students, SMC'S OR PTA'S and education officers. | | qualitative methods |
| Ishihara-Brito, Reiko (2013) Guatemala | 63 parents | semi-structured interviews, | |
| Narwana, Kamlesh (2015) India | Parents, sarpanch of the village, ex-presidents, and ex-secretary of the village education committee (VEC), female and scheduled castes, members of VEC'S, teachers and | survey-primary, semi-structured questionnaires (interviews and open-ended questions), secondary data from documents and records | mixed method, case study |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | School education committee (SMC'S) | | |
| Vigo Arrazola, Begoña Soriano Bozalongo, Juana (2015) Spain | teachers | Participant observation in classroom and schools, informal conversations, and analyses of documents. | ethnographic approach |
| Chikoko, vitallis (2008) Zimbabwe | parent governors (chairperson, treasurer, and a committee member) school heads, teachers | interviews, documents including meetings, circulars, and information charts. | Interpretive naturalistic approach, qualitative |
| Renth, BethBuckley, Phillip Puchner, Laurel (2015) USA | 26 parents | standard achievement test results, interviews (open-ended questions and semi-structured format), discipline reports and attendance record, May 2013 AIMS web scores. | phenological exploration-mixed methods |
| Annie younger and Lexie Grudnoff(2017) New Zealand | 5 boards of trustee chairpersons of primary schools in low decile south Auckland | individual, face to face semi structured interviews | exploratory, qualitative |
| Jane P. preston (2013) Canada | 17 participants (5 school council members (SCM), 3 Teachers, 9 Community members. | semi-structured individual interviews, observational fieldnotes. | constructivist orientation, qualitative |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| la quandra Sharone Stevenson (2014) USA | third grade teachers (12) third grade parents (15) | direct observation, participant observation, interviews audio visual materials 2. qualitative based survey with open-ended questions and interviews. 3 secondary sources (electronic databases, publications, printed articles, government reports, PTA data, papers. | Case study., qualitative |
| Linda Williams (2008) USA | 10 Teachers from kindergarten to third grades, 10 parents from kindergarten to third grades. | interview and focus group discussion | interpretive case study, qualitative. |
| Melissa N. Peterson (2008) USA | parents who participate in the parent room, parents who participate in school activities, parent involvement assistant(staff), the principal, school counsellors, and program facilitator | Interviews, observation, structured interviews | ethnography, qualitative. |
| Peggy A. Kong. (2008) China. | 33 students from grades 6, 33 parents from grades 6, Principal, English, maths, and Chinese grades 6 teachers. | in-depth participation, observation, in-depth interviews, informal interviews, and secondary data. | ethnographic approach |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tishsha Hopson (2010) USA | 6 parents from 3 schools each, from grade 6-8 | Interviews, focus groups, field notes | case study., qualitative |
| Claudette C. Thomas-Lester (2018) USA | 7 Teachers in the elementary school | Open-ended interview questions, documents from school parent liaison | case study., qualitative |
| Sandra Elaine Cheairs (2015) USA | 275 parents of 5th grade level, 15 teachers and 5 administrators | online survey (open ended questions | mixed method |
| Amy Hurst Case (2009) USA | 12 parents with children in grade 3,4 and 5. | in-depth interviews. Open ended | qualitative method |
| Keinyatse T. Kgosidialwa (2010) Botswana | 16 parents, teachers | in-depth interviews guided by semi-structured questionnaire., pupils progress reports. | Case study, interpretist paradigm - qualitative |
| Tamara J. place (2013) USA | 4 parents who had a child in kindergarten, first grade or second grade. | individual interview guide (open ended) focus group | case study, constructivist paradigm, qualitative |
| Rosalind Reyes Meno Ram (2018) USA. | 10 Parents | interviews (semi-structured interviews) | multiple case study approach, qualitative |
| Dana Griffin and John P. Galassi | 29 parents | focus group discussions | qualitative methods |
| Lydia and pansiri 2011 Botswana | parents | five point and two-point Likert scale | quantitative method |
| jamhar and hastuti 2019 Indonesia | parents | interview | qualitative method |
| chowdhury & Afrin 2019 Bangladesh | SMC and PTA parent's members, assistant teachers, headteachers | focus group discussions, semi structured interview | qualitative methods |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Haines 2012 South Africa | SGB chairperson, educator, parents, learners | interviews, document review and observations | qualitative methods |
| carolin-silva 2011 Paraguay | parent and teachers | interviews, document analysis | qualitative method |
| bediako 2011 Ghana | PTA, SMC, community members, chiefs, assembly men, head teachers, community participation coordinator, supervisors, teachers | closed questionnaire, interview, document reviews | mixed method, |
| Essuman and akyeampong 2011Ghana | SMC, PTA, Teachers | semi-structured interviews, informal and unstructured interviews, minutes from PTA and SMC | qualitative methods |
| bekoe et al. 2013 Ghana | headteachers, teachers, SMC, PTA executive members, community members | questionnaire | quantitative method |
| Sharma et al. 2016 India | SMC, PTA OR Mothers group, government educational officials | focus group discussions and in-depth interviews | qualitative methods |
| Mitzy rodriguez-kufner 2016 USA | parents | interviews, document analysis | qualitative method |
| Matshe 2014 south Africa | officials, principals, teachers, learners' chairpersons of school governing bodies | document analysis, interviews, and observations | qualitative method |
| Shim, J. M. (2018) USA | parents | interviews | qualitative method |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| pansiri et Bulawa 2013 bostwana | public school headteachers | questionnaires | quantitative method |
| Abraha 2022 Ethiopia | Teachers, parents, school principals | Interview and focus group discussions | Qualitative method |
| Ngozwana,Machobane, Chauke & Lepholletse, 2024 South Africa | 4 focus groups(15 participants each in 3 schools, 13 in 4th school); parents of children in rural primary schools | Focus groups discussions | qualitative |
| Ahned et al. 2024 Pakistan | 12 arents(6mothers, 6 fathers), ages 30-555: low socio-economic rural families | Semi-strucutred interviews | Qualitative method |
| Diaz et al. 2024 USA | Latinx parents, students' community practitioners | Focus groups and interviews | Qualitative method |
| Eberhardt, D. K. (2024) USA | Teachers | Semi-structured | Qualitative method |

## 2.5 Elements of Quality Education

### Student or Learner's Affairs at home

Parent participation in students' affairs at home was reflected in three main areas: academic activities, non-academic activities, and parents' interest in children's advancement. The literature also provided limited evidence of wider community members supporting children's learning within the home and community environment.

#### *Academic activities at home*

This subtheme discussed parents' involvement in school-related activities that the child brings home. I found twenty-one articles that explored the type of academic assistance rural parents offer their children at home. Across these studies, parents' involvement took both direct and

indirect forms, including helping with homework, reading with children, monitoring schoolwork, providing emotional encouragement, establishing study routines, creating time for learning, and seeking assistance from relatives or other community members. However, the extent and form of this involvement varied according to parents' educational backgrounds, literacy levels, household resources, available time, and access to people who could provide academic assistance

The research revealed that most parents considered their involvement in educational matters outside school as the only way they could support their children's education (Ram, 2018; Rodriguez-Kufner, 2016). Common activities included helping with homework, reading to children, encouraging independent reading, establishing home routines, and assisting them in understanding academic tasks. (Abraha, 2022; Eberhardt, 2024; Ram, 2018). For example, some parents established regular evening reading periods, read labels with their children, and provided materials for drawing and painting (Place, 2013). These findings indicate that parental academic involvement was not limited to completing homework but also included creating home conditions that encouraged children to learn.

Similar patterns were observed in other rural contexts, where parents supervised homework and provided emotional encouragement but sometimes struggled to understand new or unfamiliar curriculum content (Ngozwana et al., 2024; Seleka & Masoabi, 2024). In Bangladesh, literate parents assisted with reading, checked results, reviewed exam scripts, and solved math problems, whereas those in remote or illiterate communities depended on extended families for support (Ahmed et al., 2024; Chowdhury & Afrin, 2019). These findings indicate that parents' inability to provide direct instructional assistance did not necessarily mean that they were uninterested in their children's learning. In some cases, parents responded to their own

educational limitations by drawing on the knowledge of relatives, neighbours, and other members of the household.

Other studies reported that parents assisted learning by reading to children from early childhood, holding homework discussions, and creating regular study schedules (Case, 2009; Ishihara-Brito, 2013; Jamhar & Hastuti, 2019; Stevenson, 2014). Some parents also relieved children from household chores so they could study (Kong et al., 2008; Rodriguez-Kufner, 2016; Swift-Morgan, n.d.). However, illiteracy limited many parents' ability to assist directly, leading some to seek neighbours' help or more educated relatives (Erlendsdóttir et al., 2022; Rodriguez-Kufner, 2016).

The literature also revealed an important contrast in how household responsibilities affected children's learning. While some parents reduced children's household duties to create time for schoolwork, several studies showed that children in poor rural households were burdened with chores or livestock care, which reduced time for homework (Haines, 2012; Munje & Mncube, 2018). Household work therefore operated differently across families: in some households, it was deliberately managed to support formal learning, whereas in others, it competed directly with children's academic responsibilities.

Children's accounts by Swift-Morgan (2006) and Haines (2012) provided additional insight into how parental involvement was experienced. Learners described receiving encouragement, homework assistance, attendance monitoring, protected study time, and support from relatives or educated community members. However, some also experienced parental monitoring as pressure and reported that domestic responsibilities and parents' limited time or literacy restricted the assistance available at home. These perspectives show that children generally valued parental support, although its meaning and effects differed across household circumstances. It provided an important complement to adult accounts of parental involvement.

The literature further demonstrates that academic support need not be confined to conventional school-related activities. For example, immigrant families in rural Oregon used their cultural and linguistic resources to foster bilingual development, showing that extended families can enhance rather than hinder learning (Díaz Lara et al., 2024). This finding broadens the understanding of academic support beyond conventional homework assistance. It shows that families may contribute to learning through linguistic, cultural, and relational resources that are not always recognised by schools as formal parental involvement.

Despite these efforts, teachers and headteachers in some studies expressed dissatisfaction with parental involvement in academic activities, noting that parents were often occupied with household duties, employment and childcare responsibilities. (Chowdhury & Afrin, 2019; Pansiri & Bulawa, 2013; Thomas-Lester, 2017). Parents tended to participate more in extracurricular events, such as sports, than in schoolwork (Stevenson, 2014). Likewise, other studies observed generally low participation in home-based educational activities (Carolan-Silva, 2011; Marin & Bocoş, 2017).

Overall, the literature shows that rural parents supported academic learning through both direct and indirect forms of involvement, although their participation was shaped by literacy, household resources, and competing livelihood responsibilities. Children's accounts generally confirmed the value of this support but also revealed pressures and constraints that were less visible in adult perspectives. However, because only a small number of studies directly represented children's experiences, understanding how children themselves perceive and experience parental support remains an important area for further investigation.

### *Non-academic activities at home*

These are activities undertaken at home or within the community that may have indirect educational value. Compared with academic activities, non-academic forms of parental

involvement received limited attention in the reviewed literature, with only six studies addressing this area.

Across these studies, parents and families supported children's broader development through cultural, social, recreational, and practical activities. These included participation in community service, church programmes, health-related activities, and cultural traditions (Case, 2009; Ngozwana et al., 2024). Parents also transmitted Indigenous knowledge, cultural values, and locally relevant skills that were not usually taught through formal schoolwork (Abraha, 2022; Ram, 2018). Other forms of involvement included playing board games, visiting libraries, and involving children in everyday activities such as farming and cooking (Ahmed et al., 2024; Place, 2013). Taken together, these findings show that parental involvement extended beyond homework and direct academic assistance to support children's cultural identity, practical competence, social development, and preparation for everyday life. However, the limited number of studies suggests that these contributions have received less attention, possibly because parental involvement is commonly defined and measured through formal academic and school-based activities.

### *Parent's interest in children's advancement*

Besides the academic and non-academic activities at home, interest in children's advancement and development promotes the quality of education (Sumarsono et al., 2016). Ten articles examined this sub-theme to analyse parents' interest in children's advancement. Across these studies, parents demonstrated their interest by expressing their love of learning, fostering good study habits, and demanding information about children's progress (Ahmed et al., 2024; Stevenson, 2014). In South Africa, parents expressed a strong desire to see their children excel, even when they could not directly assist with academic work and sought regular updates from teachers (Ngozwana et al., 2024). Similarly, parents encouraged children to value education

despite their own limited literacy or inability to assist with homework (Carolan-Silva, 2011; Abraha, 2022).

Other parents showed their interest and commitment by encouraging them to be confident, express their opinions openly, ask questions in class, and handle challenging situations (Ram, 2018). Some parents reviewed their children's books and monitored their progress (Ishihara-Brito, 2013; Jamhar & Hastuti, 2019). While others regarded their involvement as important for children's educational success and social development (Hopson, 2010; Kgosidialwa, 2010). Similarly, in rural communities in the U.S., even immigrant parents who faced systemic barriers to full involvement in schooling found ways to support their children's educational and social development through participation in extracurricular activities and community events (Díaz Lara et al., 2024). Some emphasised the importance of education for their children's future by explaining how they felt inferior to urban residents and advising their children to be attentive in class (Kong et al., 2008; Place, 2013).

In contrast, some studies found that parents placed greater responsibility on children to decide whether to continue schooling or drop out (Ahmed et al., 2024; Ishihara-Brito, 2013; Kong et al., 2008). In many cases, this occurred where families were preoccupied with poverty, survival, and limited resources or where the immediate benefits of education were uncertain (Ahmed et al., 2024; Ngozwana et al., 2024). Such circumstances could weaken children's educational aspirations and reduce sustained parental follow-up.

Taken together, the findings show that parental interest was expressed through encouragement, monitoring, emotional support, and aspirations for children's future success, even when parents could not provide direct academic assistance. Conversely, reduced involvement or the transfer of educational responsibility to children should not automatically be interpreted as a lack of care; it may also reflect poverty, limited literacy, competing livelihood demands, and parents'

understandings of their educational roles. The literature therefore reveals a distinction between valuing children's educational advancement and having the capacity to support that advancement consistently in particular ways.

### *Community participation at home*

Community participation in children's education within the home environment received very limited attention in the reviewed literature. Only one reported that some individuals from the community assisted with children's affairs at home. Data from one study reported that some committed individuals accepted responsibility for visiting students' homes to ensure that everyone attended school (Sharma et al., 2016). Furthermore, some civil organisations, composed of village youths who have completed diplomas and degrees, took on the responsibility of guiding, teaching, and engaging students in school-related matters. These acts by motivational individuals and civil organisations depict the concern that community Members have for the future of children.

## Educational Content

Fifteen articles examined parent and community involvement in educational content. Three subthemes were identified: parents and community members as resource personnel, involvement in curriculum development, and participation in setting class hours and the school calendar.

### *Parents and Community as Resource Personnel*

The review identified eight articles that examined community and parents as resource personnel in classroom settings. For example, research revealed that some parents were involved in the classroom as a resource by helping with musical, dramatic, or cultural performances (Hornby & Witte, 2010). In some communities, parents were actively engaged in similar extracurricular activities, supporting school plays, festivals, and musical events, further enhancing children's

social learning experiences (Ngozwana et al., 2024). In some schools, parents assisted teachers in the classroom during the painting and art sessions (Peterson, 2008).

Similarly, other studies reported that the majority of parents sacrificed their time to assist teachers and students with educational activities (Case, 2009; Ram, 2018; Stevenson, 2014). Likewise, other research found that parents accepted the invitation to engage with students in class by giving accounts of their life, reading to students and volunteering (Preston, 2013). Furthermore, one study showed that parents and community members acted as resources by imparting their traditional and cultural skills to the schoolchildren (Haines, 2012). However, another study evinced that community members did not avail themselves of imparting knowledge and skills about the area's culture and occupations (Asare, 2011). Taken together, the reviewed studies demonstrate that parents and community members contributed to educational content through their time, experiences, cultural knowledge, and practical skills. However, their participation was uneven, suggesting that community knowledge was more likely to be used where schools actively invited and recognised parents and community members as valuable educational resources.

### *Curriculum development*

This was to discuss parents and community members having their voices heard in the curriculum that should be part of what their children are studying. Seven articles were explored under this sub-theme. For instance, one study found that parents were actively involved in curriculum development that could be employed at home, working together with teachers in schools to ameliorate the educational development of children (Marin & Bocoş, 2017). Similarly, in some rural settings, parents worked collaboratively with teachers to ensure that the curriculum was practical and accessible, adapting it to the specific needs of their children and community (Ngozwana et al., 2024).

Similarly, another study reported that some parents assisted with literacy and numeracy and preparing teaching materials (Hornby & Witte, 2010). In other areas, parents with educational backgrounds played a key role in providing supplementary materials and resources to aid classroom learning, which further enriched the curriculum (Abraha, 2022). These were parents who could read and write. Teachers, on the other hand, were willing to engage parents in school activities. For instance, 82% of teachers were willing to collaborate in non-Opportunity scholarship schools (non-OSP) with parents and community members in discussing teaching and learning in school (Nishimura, 2019). In several instances, teachers also reported that parental involvement was critical to their own teaching practices, helping them refine lessons and incorporate community perspectives into the curriculum (Díaz Lara et al., 2024). In another study, parents were concerned with the student's academic performance and therefore made sure that the curriculum was structured to prepare children to pass the Kenyan Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE). This was so because parents were responsible for the payment of the salary of teachers due to delays and inadequate payment by the government (Nishimura, 2019).

Although some findings show parents' and community members' participation in school curriculum matters, most studies indicate otherwise. In many rural schools, teachers reported that parents were unwilling to discuss curriculum issues or children's performance, and none assisted with classroom duties (Chikoko, 2008; Jamhar & Hastuti, 2019; Pansiri & Bulawa, 2013). Other studies similarly found no cooperation in lesson development or instruction (Nishimura, 2019; Swift-Morgan, n.d.) One teacher remarked, "There is no viable role for a parent in the classroom," while others said, "Parents are not educated", "have nothing to contribute to the teaching lesson" (Swift-Morgan, n.d., p. 354). Overall, most rural parents remained uninvolved in curriculum activities.

Taken together, the findings show that parental and community involvement in curriculum development was limited and uneven. Participation was more likely where parents were literate, were invited by teachers, or possessed sufficient influence within the school. In contrast, many parents were excluded or considered curriculum development to be the responsibility of teachers and education authorities. Thus, parents' limited curriculum involvement reflected not only their willingness or educational background but also whether schools recognised and created opportunities for their knowledge and perspectives to inform educational content.

### *Setting class hours and calendar*

None of the literature reviewed showed community and parent setting class hours and calendars for the schools.

## Learning Environment

In this review, the learning environment refers to the physical and material conditions that support safe, healthy, and conducive learning, including school facilities, sanitation, infrastructure, and learning resources. Three subthemes were identified: maintaining and building school facilities, sanitation and wellbeing, and supplying and purchasing school materials.

### *Maintaining and building of school facilities*

Eighteen articles discussed community and parent support in maintaining and building of school facilities. All the findings revealed that the community and parents supported the schools by supplying labour and building materials for the building and maintenance of schools (Asare, 2011; Bekoe et al., 2013; Carolan-Silva, 2011; Chowdhury & Afrin, 2019; A. K. Donkor & Waek, 2018; Essuman & Akyeampong, 2011; Ishihara-Brito, 2013; Nishimura, 2019; Peterson, 2008; Preston, 2013; Stevenson, 2014; Swift-Morgan, n.d.; Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016).

For example, in southern Ethiopia, community members and parents supported by supplying labour and materials for infrastructure projects (Swift-Morgan, n.d.). Similarly, parents and community members in rural settings sacrificed their time and limited resources to make the school environment conducive to learning, often volunteering to support classroom construction and sanitation repairs (Ngozwana et al., 2024). One father remarked, "We are willing to give whatever we can to support the school… we are very poor, but we can lend our labour and materials" (Swift-Morgan, n.d., p. 352). Community participation included collecting and transporting building materials and preparing food for labourers.

Comparable efforts were reported across regions. In Pakistan, community-led initiatives for school infrastructure faced financial challenges, yet parents continued to offer labour for toilet construction and classroom maintenance (Ahmed et al., 2024). In Guatemala, despite illiteracy and post-war hardship, parents improved learning conditions by providing labour and preparing meals for children (Ishihara-Brito, 2013). Likewise, in Paraguay, parents' commissions ensured school development through the provision of labour and materials (Carolan-Silva, 2011). However, in Ethiopia, poverty limited material contributions, shifting infrastructure responsibilities to community leaders and external organisations (Abraha, 2022).

Community volunteerism also involved the contribution of specialised skills. In some communities, carpentry, electrical work, driving, and other practical skills were provided voluntarily for school projects. Parents also contributed labour and materials to build facilities such as snack stands and broadcasting towers for student activities (Preston, 2013). Among rural immigrant families in the U.S., parents also engaged in school improvement, though their participation was constrained by time and resources (Díaz Lara et al., 2024).

The level of participation also varied between schools. In high-achieving schools in Malawi, parents maintained desks, repaired teachers' houses, and supported conducive learning

conditions, whereas low-achieving schools struggled to mobilise funds for facility repairs (Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016). Studies in northern Ghana similarly reported relatively low levels of parental assistance, although building and maintaining school facilities continued to receive some community support despite widespread poverty (Donkor & Waek, 2018).

Taken together, the studies reveal a consistent pattern of parental and community involvement in school infrastructure through labour, materials, practical skills, and other locally available resources. However, the level of contribution differed according to poverty, available skills, time, and the capacity of schools and communities to mobilise support. These findings show that communities played an important role in creating and maintaining conducive learning environments. At the same time, their contributions often supplemented resources and responsibilities that formal education authorities were unable to provide fully.

### *Sanitation and Wellbeing*

Parents and community members also contributed to maintaining clean, safe, and supportive school environments. Research neconducted indicates that parents used their "knowledge in gardening to construct a garden on the former early child playground for students' perusal during ¨science, physical education and other instructions tied to the outside environment" (Peterson, 2008, p. 79). Others weeded and cut tall grasses around the school building because children were not old enough (Kgosidialwa, 2010). Rural communities have shown resilience in maintaining their surroundings despite limited resources, often relying on volunteer labour to sustain safe and hygienic school grounds (Abraha, 2022).

Similarly, some parents acquired new benches for the school to make the environment friendly for the children (Ram, 2018). Other contributions included cleaning the school, replacing broken windowpanes and taps, repairing door locks and furniture, painting school facilities, constructing toilets, and supplying furniture. (Asare, 2011; Essuman & Akyeampong, 2011; Haines, 2012). Although these activities were sometimes small in scale, they demonstrated

parents' willingness to create an environment that supported children's learning and wellbeing where schools lacked adequate formal resources.

The reviewed studies further showed that parental and community participation in maintaining school infrastructure was closely connected to children's health, safety, and welfare (Ahmed et al., 2024; Sharma et al., 2016). The findings indicate that parents and community members contributed to sanitation and wellbeing mainly through voluntary labour, maintenance, environmental cleaning, and the provision or repair of essential facilities. However, their participation was often shaped by the limited resources available within rural communities.

### *Supplying and buying school materials*

Four studies were reviewed under this subtheme. All of them suggested that the community and parents provided teaching and education material (Asare, 2011; Bekoe et al., 2013; Kong et al., 2008). For example, in China, with parents' inability to support their children at home, some rural parents adopted a strategy by ¨equipping children with new and proper materials such as pens and books to make the physical environment friendly" (Kong et al., 2008). In rural Malawi, some parents attempted to provide books or basic resources to support learning at home, but the majority could not be due to poverty (Erlendsdóttir et al., 2022). Their inability to supply resources or materials meant that children had little to work with outside the classroom. These studies show that the provision of educational materials was an important but uneven form of parental involvement. Some parents compensated for their limited ability to assist with schoolwork by purchasing learning materials, while others valued such support but lacked the financial capacity to provide it.

## School Management

This aspect is achieved by parents and community members participating in school committees, parents forming being active in the community of parents, and participating in school activities (Sumarsono et al., 2016). Three sub-themes were reviewed on school management: attending meetings, setting goals and development plans and decision-making involvement.

### *Attending meetings*

I found eighteen articles focusing on parents and community members attending meetings in rural schools. Parents and community members often participate in activities such as (Parent Teacher Organisation) PTO meetings, SMC meetings, conferences, open house events, music performances, class outings, book fairs, Parent nights, extracurricular sports, dance, and tutoring (Ahmed et al., 2024; Asare, 2011; Carolan-Silva, 2011; Chowdhury & Afrin, 2019; Hopson, 2010; Hornby & Witte, 2010; Ishihara-Brito, 2013; Ngozwana et al., 2024; Nishimura, 2019; Preston, 2013; Ram, 2018; Stevenson, 2014).

However, some studies reported that attendance at meetings and training sessions was low. Some parents signed the attendance register and left without participating fully in the discussions (Sharma et al., 2016; Swift-Morgan, n.d.). Similar patterns were identified in other rural settings, where work commitments, transportation and logistical difficulties, and limited understanding of the purpose of meetings reduced meaningful participation (Abraha, 2022; Díaz Lara et al., 2024). In certain schools, there was no organised parent group through which parents could participate collectively (Rodriguez-Kufner, 2016). The evidence therefore reveals an important distinction between being present at meetings and participating meaningfully in school management**.** The studies show that school meetings were a common area of parental and community participation in school management, although the level of involvement varied across rural contexts. Participation ranged from regular contribution to discussions to limited

or irregular attendance, often shaped by livelihood demands and how schools organised opportunities for involvement.

### *Setting goals and development plan*

I found thirteen articles that explored this subtheme, which focuses on community and parental involvement in school development and improvement. The review revealed that parents and community members actively engaged in school management through Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs) (Hornby & Witte, 2010; Nishimura, 2018; Swift-Morgan, n.d.; Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016). PTAs were the primary channel for parental participation (Stevenson, 2014). For instance, among the 22 schools examined by Hornby and Witte (2010), 17 had PTAs where parents discussed school matters. Through SMCs, PTAs, and parent commissions, parents and community members participated in identifying school needs, setting goals, and developing improvement plans. In high-achieving schools, they contributed to constructing, implementing, and evaluating School Improvement Programmes (Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016). Parent commissions also participated in defining school goals and identifying institutional needs Swift-Morgan, n.d.). In some contexts, community members collaborated with District and Educational Directorates to address school improvement issues such as enrollment and attendance (Asare, 2011; Carolan-Silva, 2011;), while SMCs developed retention plans to ensure full enrollment (Sharma et al., 2016). Parents and community members also engaged in developing school policies, setting priorities, and financial planning, thereby enhancing school management and overall educational quality (Ahmed et al., 2024; Essuman & Akyeampong, 2011; Ngozwana et al., 2024).

Teachers often initiate meetings with parents to discuss academic performance, school attendance, pupil behaviour, and irregular attendance (Nishimura, 2018). Other meetings, including goal-setting conferences, individualised education plan (IEP) meetings, and parent-

teacher-child discussions, fostered collaboration and strengthened school programs (Hornby & Witte, 2010). In rural contexts, proactive participation in SMC/PTA meetings facilitated school planning, infrastructure development, and student support programs (Abraha, 2022; Díaz Lara et al., 2024). Parents also served on school governing bodies, finance committees, and disciplinary, security, and safety committees, where their contributions enhanced school functionality, discipline, and effective use of funds (Haines, 2012). Although some parents joined Parent Teacher Organisations (PTO), and advisory councils that influenced policy and safety decisions, others remained uninvolved due to poverty and cultural perceptions of school authority. Overall, the literature underscores that sustained collaboration between schools, parents, and communities is vital for effective school development and improvement.

### *Decision-Making*

Fourteen articles examined the community's and parents' involvement in decision-making in rural areas. Most of the studies reported some form of participation in school decisions through PTAs, SMCs, parent commissions, governing bodies, and other school–community structures (Asare, 2011; Carolan-Silva, 2011; Case, 2009; Chikoko, 2008; A. K. Donkor & Waek, 2018; Essuman & Akyeampong, 2011; Haines, 2012; Hornby & Witte, 2010b; Jefferson, 2015; Nishimura, 2019; Swift-Morgan, n.d.; Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016). Their participation included defending the location of schools and seeking government support, securing financial contributions, and contributing to the appointment of teachers(Carolan-Silva, 2011; Chikoko, 2008; Essuman, Ato Akyeampong, n.d.; Nishimura, 2019; Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016).

However, participation was not consistent across schools. Some parents and community members were reluctant to participate in school management, hold school personnel accountable, or address financial misconduct. In low-achieving schools, parents often “passively listened to the headteachers” rather than contributing actively to discussions (Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016, p. 494). Hornby & Witte (2010) noted that five out of 22 schools

lacked PTAs or SMCs, while Case (2009) reported that five of twelve participants were not involved in any decision-making.

Other studies showed that some parents felt excluded from the structures intended to represent them. Parents stated that "Parent Teacher Organisation (PTO) was not for everyone…." and believed PTOs were closer to teachers and administration (Stevenson, 2014, p. 83). Some parents did not regard service on school advisory committees as a form of community involvement, while meetings with school directors received limited attention from families (Jefferson, 2015; Preston, 2013). Although some parents were satisfied with decisions made by schools, others believed that they had little opportunity to influence those decisions (Place, 2013). National regulations and school practices also restricted parental and community authority. Parent governors in several schools believed their participation was unnecessary because decisions concerning administration, class size, and discipline were controlled by national regulations (Chikoko, 2008). Jamhar & Hastuti (2019) similarly found that participants were not involved in decisions concerning curriculum or educational matters, while the schools acknowledged that they did not collaborate with community associations. In another setting, parents' commissions were maintained at a distance from school management, further restricting their contribution to decision-making (Chowdhury & Afrin, 2019).

These studies identify decision-making as an element of school management in which parents and community members participated, particularly regarding finances, school development, government support, and certain personnel matters. However, their involvement ranged from active contribution to passive attendance or complete exclusion, and formal membership did not always provide influence over final decisions. This subtheme informed the examination of whether parents' and community members' participation in rural Ghana was limited to consultation or extended to influencing school decisions and contributing to their

implementation, and whether the extent of that influence differed across areas of school management.

## Financial Aspect

Eighteen articles examined this element of quality education, focusing on how parents and community members provided financial support through mobilising, raising, and allocating funds for educational and developmental activities. Across the reviewed studies, many rural parents and community members endeavoured to support their schools financially. Swift-Morgan (2006) found that all participants identified financial contributions as a primary form of parental and community support, while interviews with school heads in Chikoko (2008) study showed that financial matters were central to school–parent partnerships.

For example, Nishimura (2018) reported that "the small and remote schools… mobilise a relatively high amount of money from parents to hire teachers" (p. 401). Because government salaries were low or delayed, parents also made "per student cash payment to the school… to supplement salaries for teachers and other personnel" (Nishimura, 2018, p. 403). Similarly, as greater financial responsibility shifted to local communities, parents became the main funding source (Chikoko, 2008). Parent commissions also raised funds through local festivals and petitions to government agencies (Carolan-Silva, 2011).

Parents and community members used several locally organised approaches to raise funds. These included community auction sales (Preston, 2013), school-operated shops (Peterson, 2008), and contributions collected through PTAs (Case, 2009). The funds supported field trips, sports, cultural and academic competitions, end-of-year award functions, and school-development projects (Essuman & Akyeampong, 2011; Haines, 2012). Other studies found that financial contributions were directed toward pressing needs such as classroom materials, infrastructure, extracurricular activities, emergency repairs, and learning resources where

regular school budgets were insufficient (Abraha, 2022; Ahmed et al., 2024; Díaz Lara et al., 2024; Ngozwana et al., 2024).

However, the level of financial participation varied across schools and communities. Taniguchi and Hirakawa (2016) observed that although parents in high- and low-achieving schools had similar socioeconomic backgrounds, parents in high-achieving schools were more successful in mobilising resources for teacher recruitment, extra classes, mock examinations, and school development. This contrast suggests that financial participation was shaped not only by household income but also by the capacity of schools and community structures to organise collective support. Poverty nevertheless restricted the ability of some parents to contribute, even where they valued education, while a small number were reported to be unwilling or indifferent despite requests from the school (Haines, 2012; Nishimura, 2018; Swift-Morgan, n.d.; Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016). The studies identify financial support as an important but uneven element of parental and community participation in quality education. Contributions included direct payments, fundraising, support for teacher remuneration, financing school activities, and responding to urgent material and infrastructural needs. A common pattern was that rural families and communities used their limited resources to address gaps in formal school funding; however, their capacity to do so differed according to poverty and the organisational strength of school–community structures. The findings also raise a critical concern that reliance on community financing may transfer substantial educational responsibilities to economically disadvantaged households and widen inequalities between communities with different resource-mobilisation capacities. This element informed the examination of how parents and community members in rural Ghana mobilised and contributed financial resources, the educational purposes for which those resources were used, and the economic and institutional conditions that enabled or constrained their participation.

## School Personnel Management

Four sub-themes were analysed under the school personnel management. These are: training activities organised by the cooperation between the schools and committees (PTA, community members, parents), hiring and firing of teachers, supervising and evaluating teachers and lastly, providing teacher incentives and payment of salaries.

### *Teacher training activities*

Only two articles examined parent or community involvement in teacher-training activities, indicating that this area has received relatively little attention in the literature. Parental involvement in teacher training activities is a relatively underexplored area, with limited research available on the subject. Ram (2018) highlights an example in which parents actively organised and directed teacher training programs within schools, demonstrating their engagement in professional development. In contrast, Hornby & Witte (2010) reported that, when parents were interviewed about their involvement in teacher professional development sessions, 17 schools indicated that parents had not been involved. Only four schools reported that such involvement had occurred, and it had been done when pupils had diabetes, autism, Asperger's syndrome, and dyslexia. Importantly, these activities took place only when specific needs arose and were not part of continuous professional development. These studies showed that parental and community participation in teacher training was uncommon and largely needs-based. This subtheme informed the examination of whether parents and community members in rural Ghana contributed to teacher development and the circumstances under which such participation occurred.

### *Recruitment and termination of teachers*

Three articles examined this subtheme. Nishimura (2019) and Taniguchi & Hirakawa (2016) reported some parental and community involvement in teacher recruitment. In contrast, Chikoko (2008) found that parents were not involved in teacher appointments but could raise

concerns with headteachers about poor teacher performance, learner discipline, or declining instructional quality. The evidence therefore suggests that parents and community members generally had limited influence over the teachers appointed to rural schools.

The studies showed that participation in teacher recruitment was limited and varied across contexts, while none of the reviewed studies clearly reported parental or community involvement in terminating teachers. The studies also provided little detail about whether involvement in recruitment meant consultation, nomination, financing, or actual appointment authority. This subtheme informed the examination of whether parents and community members in rural Ghana participated in teacher recruitment or dismissal, or whether their role was limited to communicating staffing needs and concerns about teacher performance.

*Supervision and evaluation of teachers.*

I found eight articles that explored parents' and community members' involvement under this sub-theme. The review showed that PTA and SMCs were involved in supervising, evaluating, and holding teachers accountable (Bekoe et al., 2013; Carolan-Silva, 2011; Chikoko, 2008; Chowdhury & Afrin, 2019; Essuman & Akyeampong, 2011; Nishimura, 2019; Sharma et al., 2016; Swift-Morgan, n.d.; Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016). The articles examined reveal that in some schools PTA executives and SMC monitored teachers by sneaking into the classroom to inspect their attendance and punctuality and then reporting to the headteachers (Chowdhury & Afrin, 2019; Essuman & Akyeampong, 2011; Sharma et al., 2016). Parents and community representatives also held teachers accountable for school budgets and suspected financial misconduct (Carolan-Silva, 2011).

However, such participation was not consistent across rural settings. Donkor & Waek (2018) found that some PTAs and SMCs lacked the knowledge and capacity required to monitor teachers effectively. Nevertheless, parents and community members were generally concerned

about teachers' attendance, attentiveness to pupils, commitment to teaching, and the quality of instruction.

The examined studies showed that parental and community participation focused more on informal monitoring and accountability than on formal teacher evaluation. Their involvement was most visible in monitoring attendance, punctuality, conduct, and resource use, but was limited by technical knowledge and institutional authority. This subtheme informed the examination of whether and how parents and community members in rural Ghana monitored teachers and the conditions that enabled or restricted their involvement.

### *Teacher incentives and payment of salaries*

Six articles explored teacher incentives and payment salaries by parents and community members. This element of quality education was in the form of supplementing salaries and payment of salaries during delays (Essuman & Akyeampong, 2011; Nishimura, 2019; Swift-Morgan, n.d.; Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016), providing accommodation (Asare, 2011; Essuman & Akyeampong, 2011; Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016), providing foodstuffs and giving them lands for farms (Asare, 2011), rewarding hardworking teachers (Nishimura, 2019), and lastly limiting classroom size and valuing teachers (Bekoe et al., 2013).

The studies show that parental and community participation extended to supporting teachers' welfare, motivation, and retention, particularly where formal salary payments and other institutional support were inadequate or delayed. This subtheme informed the examination of whether and how parents and community members in rural Ghana supported teachers financially and materially and the circumstances that shaped such contribution.

## 2.6 Facilitators of Community and Parent Involvement in Rural Areas

## Communication

Communication is a crucial factor in promoting parent and community involvement in basic education. According to Preston et al. (2019), teachers used various written communication strategies including newsletters, blogs, emails, handouts, and personal notes, to inform and engage parents. Additionally, half of the teachers surveyed in the study reported communicating with parents via telephone. Hornby & Witte (2010) emphasised the importance of clear communication about school complaint procedures and flexible scheduling of parent-teacher interviews in promoting parent involvement. Parents enacted their involvement through various forms of communication, such as telephone calls, notes, appointments, emails, text messages and informal contact during pickups (Hornby & Witte, 2010).

Effective communication also enabled parents to express their concerns and feelings and helped schools establish more open relationships with families (Vigo Arrazola & Soriano Bozalongo, 2015). Cheairs (2016) found that teachers, parents, and administrators regarded communication as the principal facilitator of parental involvement. Teachers supported this communication by sending written information home, organising conferences, and holding open-house activities within the community.

The studies show that accessible, regular, and flexible communication strengthened the exchange of information and created opportunities for parents to express concerns and participate in school activities. However, much of the evidence involved written or technology-based communication, raising questions about its accessibility in rural contexts characterised by limited literacy, language differences, and restricted access to digital resources. This theme informed the examination of the communication methods used between schools, parents, and community members in rural Ghana and the conditions that enabled or constrained their effectiveness

## Motivation and engaging activities

Research indicates that motivation plays a crucial role in enhancing parents' and community members' involvement in schools. According to a study, teachers motivate parents to participate in activities such as sharing their talent and stories with students, volunteering, and participating in field trips and theme-based events (Preston et al., 2019). Teacher-led plans also encouraged families to take greater initiative in organising and participating in school activities(Vigo Arrazola & Soriano Bozalongo, 2015).

A close working relationship between teachers and parents, facilitated through the PTA, also increased parent involvement (Eberhardt, 2024; Hornby & Witte, 2010). Teachers also reported that parents' regular participation in school events strengthened school–family partnerships (Cheairs, 2016; Younger & Grudnoff, 2017). Direct invitations from principals and teachers serving on school boards further encouraged parents to become involved (Younger & Grudnoff, 2017). Parents identified that appreciation from school staff as a significant motivator for community members to participate in PTA meetings (Swift-Morgan, n.d.). In one community, the school director's efforts to motivate residents to contribute labour and resources resulted in the establishment of a new school (Swift-Morgan, n.d.). Schools also encouraged broader participation by engaging chiefs, graduates, religious organisations, and local politicians in school activities and development initiatives (Nishimura, 2019).

The studies show that parents and community members were more likely to participate when schools invited them directly, valued their contributions, and provided meaningful activities through which they could become involved. This theme informed the examination of the strategies and school–community activities that encouraged parental and community participation in rural Ghana.

## Respect and trust

Respect and trust are important constituents of parent and community participation. An SMC member describes trust as the ‘‘spirit of togetherness’’ (Nishimura, 2019). Teachers’ efforts in their students’ success on final exams foster trust in the community (Nishimura, 2019). Similarly, teachers’ attitudes toward parents and their recognition of community contributions influenced whether parents felt respected and willing to become involved (Swift-Morgan, n.d.). Respect was also demonstrated when schools recognised families’ circumstances and incorporated local culture into educational activities. For example, in the “Litera school, when specific projects were prepared, the teachers considered the situations of the children, families and the curriculum” (Vigo Arrazola & Soriano Bozalongo, 2015, pp 331) Such practices helped parents feel that their knowledge, experiences, and cultural backgrounds were valued by the school. The studies suggest that participation increased where school–community relationships were characterised by respect, recognition, and confidence in teachers. This theme informed the examination of how respect and trust shaped parents’ and community members’ willingness to participate in quality education in rural Ghana.

## Training

Four studies examined training as a facilitator of parental involvement. Hornby & Witte (2010) reported that teachers discussed available training support during PTA meetings and referred parents to ‘‘specialists who visit the school such as social workers, nurses, special education teachers’’ (pp.775). Swift-Morgan (2006) found that teachers adopted measures such as family education through documents, tutorial sessions or lectures on subjects such as the emotional education of children and key issues for parents and stressed mothers. Cheairs (2016) reported that teachers organised classes for parents on how to teach different subjects. This guidance increased involvement by helping parents feel included in the educational process. Peterson

(2008) concurred and asserted that the empowerment of the parents, funding, and the Friday counselling sessions given to parents in the ´parent room' increased their participation.

The studies indicate that training strengthened participation by developing parents' knowledge, confidence, and capacity to support children's education. However, the limited number of studies suggests that parent training has received considerably less attention than communication and school-based engagement. This theme informed the examination of whether parents and community members in rural Ghana received training or guidance and how such support shaped their participation in children's education.

## 2.7 Barriers to Community and Parent Involvement in Quality Education

### Illiteracy/limited education

Illiteracy is conceived as one of the principal barriers that militate against parent and community participation in quality education in rural areas. A parent who is incapable of reading and writing is unable to assist their children in academic activities both at home and in school (Matshe, 2014). Illiteracy instils fear and a lack of confidence in parents to enact their involvement in school activities and their children's academic success (Chowdhury & Afrin, 2019; Younger & Grudnoff, 2017).

According to one teacher, the only contribution of some parents was to bring their children to school, with "no follow-up or check-up on their homework... because some are uneducated and, as such, they don't know how to help the learners study at home or do their homework." A parent similarly stated:

"I don't want to lie to you, I don't do anything about it. In fact, I don't know how to assist my child... I just ask [them] to look at [their] book, but I don't have any means to help. I didn't go to school" (Munje & Mncube, 2018, p.87).

Similarly, low-income parents were willing to assist their children, but they were uncertain about the ways to aid them in becoming successful (Chikoko, 2008; Renth et al., 2015). Place, 2013) likewise reported that parents lacked the knowledge to appreciate the specific curricular information to help with homework (Place, 2013). Other studies also noted that parents were candid about their disinclination and acknowledged their reticence, stemming from a lack of understanding and an inability to be involved in their children's education (Carolan-Silva, 2011; Matshe, 2014).

Limited education also affected participation in school management structures. One study observed that the SMC and VEC had limited knowledge of their duties and responsibilities, as the majority of them were landless agricultural labourers and daily wage workers, making it challenging to entrust them with certain powers (Donkor & Waek, 2018; Narwana, 2015). This limited knowledge discouraged parents and community members from holding positions such as secretaries in the SMC (Matshe, 2014).

Furthermore, research has shown that the language employed in meetings exacerbates parents' and community members' lack of comprehension in school matters (Donkor & Waek, 2018; Preston et al., 2019; Younger & Grudnoff, 2017). For example, a study found that most SMC and VEC reported that the capacity training they received was of little assistance and difficult to recall (Narwana, 2015). In addition, some parents complained that the new curriculum differs from the old one and therefore find it difficult to comprehend (Kgosidialwa, 2010). Additional studies have also confirmed that parents with low literacy struggle to engage in school meetings or follow instructions from teachers and committees, limiting their ability to contribute meaningfully to school activities and decision-making (Abraha, 2022; Ahmed et al., 2024; Díaz Lara et al., 2024; Ngozwana et al., 2024).

The studies show that limited literacy restricted both home-based academic assistance and participation in formal school structures. However, the evidence also indicates that an inability to provide direct academic support did not necessarily reflect a lack of interest in children's education. This theme informed the examination of how parents' and community members' educational backgrounds, confidence, and understanding of school processes shaped their participation in rural Ghana.

## Lack of time

Approximately ten studies identified lack of time as a barrier to parental and community involvement. Many parents and community members interviewed reported that their work schedule inhibited them from participating in school activities (Case, 2009; Place, 2013; Preston et al., 2019; Renth et al., 2015; Younger & Grudnoff, 2017). According to Younger & Grudnoff (2017), many parents had inconsistent work schedules, including working day and night, having more than one job and long work hours. Also, during planting and harvest seasons, most parents and community members spent all their time on the farms and returned home late and exhausted (Chikoko, 2008; Kgosidialwa, 2010). Furthermore, parents with large families do babysit their kids at home during the day (Chowdhury & Afrin, 2019; Renth et al., 2015; Younger & Grudnoff, 2017). These hindrances and other commitments to sports clubs, churches and other community activities limited their involvement in school and home activities of their children's education (Lydia & Pansiri, 2011; Thomas-Lester, 2017). The studies show that limited participation was often linked to competing employment, farming, caregiving, and community responsibilities rather than a lack of interest in education. This theme informed the examination of how livelihood demands and family responsibilities affected the time available for parents and community members to participate in education in rural Ghana.

## Poverty

Poverty was another factor that impeded parents' involvement in the quality of education. The reviewed papers revealed that most of the children were living with grandparents and parents who were unemployed (Matshe, 2014; Munje & Mncube, 2018; Renth et al., 2015). Consequently, unemployment caused most parents to focus on family matters rather than their children's education (Munje & Mncube, 2018). For instance, one parent said, "It was difficult for the family to know what is going on in the school because the family did not have internet to check grades (progress)… no money to buy gas to take children back to school and library''(Renth et al., 2015).

This affected the student's esteem. The school's facilities were in bad condition and in need, and soliciting help from parents to purchase those shortages meant asking too much (Haines, 2012). Their economic situation affected their involvement in school activities and the students' esteem (Bekoe et al., 2013; Carolan-Silva, 2011; Donkor & Waek, 2018; Ishihara-Brito, 2013). Additional studies reported that parents in low-income rural areas were often unable to contribute financially or provide learning materials, limiting their engagement in both school programs and homework support (Abraha, 2022; Ahmed et al., 2024; Ishihara-Brito, 2013; Ngozwana et al., 2024). Economic constraints also limited parents' ability to attend school meetings or volunteer, further reducing their participation in school development activities (Díaz Lara et al., 2024). The studies consistently show that poverty restricted parents' participation by limiting access to money, transportation, learning materials, digital resources, and time for school activities. However, the extent and form of this constraint varied: some parents could not contribute financially but continued to encourage their children or support schools through non-financial means, while others became less connected to school activities because meeting immediate household needs took priority. Limited financial participation

should therefore not automatically be interpreted as a lack of interest in children's education. This theme informed the examination of how household economic conditions shaped the forms and extent of parental and community participation in rural Ghana.

## Lack of respect and cultural barriers

Lack of respect affected most parents from dedicating their time to involve themselves with the schools and teachers. Narwana (2015), Shim (2018), and Williams (2009) concurred that teachers sometimes perceived rural parents as inferior and presented themselves as superior, leading to the rejection of parents' proposals and decisions being made without their input. Thomas-Lester (2017) similarly found that schools were culturally unresponsive to poor families. Hierarchical structures such as caste, class, and gender also impeded participation (Sharma et al., 2016). Narwana (2015) found that teachers were largely associated with particular castes and that school authorities placed little value on community participation. Individuals from upper castes declined to select people from lower castes for positions on SMCs and VECs, although most pupils came from lower-caste families. The studies show that unequal power relations and culturally unresponsive school practices discouraged parents and community members from expressing their views or participating in school structures. Unlike barriers arising mainly from families' limited time or resources, these constraints were also produced by how schools and social hierarchies recognised or failed to recognise community members. This theme informed the examination of how respect, cultural norms, and power relations shaped parental and community participation in rural Ghana.

## Institutional barriers

Institutional barriers significantly hindered parent and community participation in the educational system. Parents and community members often felt deprived of access to information and opportunities for participation, which limited their involvement in school activities (Jefferson, 2015; Lydia & Pansiri, 2011; Preston et al., 2019). Procedures and policies in place discourage parent involvement, with many participants stating they are only encouraged to drop off their children and not enter classrooms (Jefferson, 2015; Lydia & Pansiri, 2011; Preston et al., 2019).

The bureaucratic structures within PTAs also prevented some parents from becoming actively involved. According to Lydia & Pansiri (2011), 68% of parents surveyed cited a lack of task assignments as the reason for their non-participation. This suggests that institutions partly restricted effective parental and community involvement by failing to provide clear responsibilities and accessible opportunities for participation. The studies show a similar pattern in which school procedures, restricted access to information, and the absence of clearly defined roles limited participation. However, unlike barriers related to parents' literacy, poverty, or time, these constraints arose mainly from how schools organised and controlled opportunities for involvement. This theme informed the examination of how school policies, leadership practices, access to information, and participation structures enabled or restricted parents' and community members' involvement in rural Ghana.

## Discussion/gaps/conclusion

This scoping review examined the elements of quality education in which parents and community members participated in rural primary and basic school settings, together with the facilitators and barriers shaping that participation. Although the search produced a large body of literature, only 46 studies from 18 countries met the inclusion criteria, and 13 were conducted in the United States. The distribution of studies was therefore geographically uneven, with some

national and regional contexts receiving considerably more attention than others. This unevenness is important because parental and community participation is shaped by the organisation of education systems, cultural expectations, economic conditions, and the authority assigned to local stakeholders.

The reviewed studies also differed in the stakeholders they examined. Approximately thirty-six studies included parents, while fewer focused specifically on community members or examined parents and community members together. Studies from developed contexts generally gave greater attention to individual parental involvement, including communication with teachers, homework assistance, volunteering, and participation in school events. In contrast, studies from developing contexts more frequently described collective involvement through extended families, community leaders, religious organisations, PTAs, SMCs, and other local structures. This distinction was not consistent across every study, but it suggests that research focused mainly on parents may overlook the broader community relationships through which rural schools receive labour, knowledge, resources, and organisational support.

Across the six elements of quality education, parents and community members participated most visibly in learner support at home, the learning environment, school management, finance, and support for teachers. Their contributions included encouraging and supervising children's learning, providing materials, constructing and maintaining school facilities, attending meetings, contributing to school-development plans, mobilising funds, monitoring teachers, and supporting teachers' welfare. Similar forms of practical and material participation appeared across different rural contexts, although the extent of involvement varied according to household resources, school leadership, and the capacity of school–community structures to organise participation.

In contrast, participation was less frequently reported in curriculum development, setting class hours and school calendars, teacher training, teacher recruitment and termination, and other areas requiring professional expertise or formal institutional authority. Even where PTAs, SMCs, parent commissions, or governing bodies existed, membership did not always translate into influence over school decisions. In some contexts, parents contributed actively to planning and implementation, while in others they attended meetings, received information, or expressed concerns without influencing the final decision. The literature therefore indicates that participation operated along a continuum, ranging from being informed and consulted to contributing ideas, supporting implementation, and exercising some influence over school actions.

The findings further show that participation was shaped by the interaction between family circumstances and institutional practices. Communication, direct invitations, respectful relationships, trust, recognition, motivation, and training encouraged parents and community members to participate. Conversely, poverty, limited literacy, livelihood demands, lack of time, cultural hierarchies, disrespect, and restricted access to information limited their involvement. These barriers often overlapped. For example, parents might value education but lack the literacy required to assist with homework, the financial resources to contribute to school projects, or the time to attend meetings because of farming and caregiving responsibilities. Limited or less visible participation should therefore not automatically be interpreted as a lack of interest in children's education.

The review also reveals a tension between community responsibility and institutional responsibility. In many rural settings, parents and communities used their limited resources to provide classrooms, learning materials, teacher accommodation, salary supplements, and other services that formal education authorities did not provide adequately or on time. These

contributions demonstrated commitment to education, but reliance on local financing and voluntary labour could place substantial responsibilities on disadvantaged communities. It could also contribute to inequalities between schools because communities differed in their ability to mobilise money, skills, and external support.

Children's direct perspectives received considerably less attention than those of parents, teachers, headteachers, and committee members. Where children's accounts were included, they showed that parental support could involve encouragement, homework assistance, monitoring, protected study time, and support from relatives. However, children also described pressure, domestic responsibilities, and limitations arising from parents' literacy, time, and economic circumstances. Their accounts demonstrate that the meaning and effects of parental involvement cannot be understood fully through adult perspectives alone.

Overall, the review shows that parental and community involvement in quality education was neither uniform nor adequately represented by a simple distinction between involved and uninvolved families. Participation differed according to the element of quality education, the issue under consideration, the stakeholder involved, and the social and institutional context. Parents and communities generally had more visible roles in practical and locally managed activities than in curriculum, personnel, and other areas controlled by professional or governmental authorities.

### *Conclusions*

This scoping review synthesised the available evidence on how parents and community members participate in quality education in rural primary-school settings and identified important empirical and policy-relevant gaps in the literature. Empirically, the review consolidated fragmented findings from 46 studies to reveal six interconnected elements of quality education: learner support, curriculum, learning environment, management, finance, and personnel. It shows that community and parental involvement are not limited to home-

based activities but extend to school-based activities. Policy-wise, the synthesis indicates the importance of inclusive and decentralised education governance that recognises local realities and creates meaningful opportunities for parent and community participation. The evidence highlights the need for policies that formally integrate parents and community members into decision-making and capacity-building initiatives. By doing so, the review provides a foundational evidence base for future empirical studies and policy reforms aimed at improving educational quality and equity in rural areas.

### *Limitation*

By confining our search of studies to English-language sources, we narrow the scope of our investigation, thereby excluding insights from non-English sources. This decision may hinder our ability to encompass a comprehensive global perspective, particularly in regions with pertinent experience in decentralising education to local levels. While Sliwka & Istance's (2006) study sheds light on local inclusion in primary schools in most OECD countries and elucidates practices and challenges faced by parents and stakeholders' voices, our study's linguistic constraints failed to capture most of these countries, preventing us from providing a nuanced analysis for the observed gaps in countries practising a decentralised system.

Furthermore, restricting the review to rural settings limited the number of eligible studies and reduced opportunities for comparison with urban contexts operating under similar decentralised education arrangements. Lastly, limiting the academic database search to three databases may have resulted in relevant studies being missed.

Although existing studies provide valuable insight into parental and community involvement in education, they tend to focus primarily on adult perspectives, particularly those of parents, teachers, and school authorities. As a result, there is limited understanding of how children themselves perceive, experience, and interpret different forms of support within their home and community environments, especially in rural contexts.

### *Gap*

The review identified several related gaps. Research on parental and community involvement remains geographically uneven, with limited attention to rural primary and basic education in African contexts. Existing studies have also focused more strongly on parents than on wider community actors and collective forms of participation, while children's direct perspectives on the support they receive remain underrepresented.

Attention to the elements of quality education has also been uneven, particularly regarding curriculum development, school personnel management, and formal decision-making authority. Consequently, it remains unclear whether participation through structures such as PTAs and SMCs extends beyond consultation to influence over school actions and how social, economic, cultural, and institutional conditions shape that participation.

These gaps established the need for a context-sensitive study examining how parents and community members participate in different elements of quality education and the conditions that enable or constrain their involvement. The present study addressed these gaps by drawing on the perspectives of parents, community members, children, teachers, and headteachers in rural Northern Ghana

# Chapter 3: Methodology

This study examines how parents and community members in rural northern Ghana perceive education and how they participate in quality education within local school systems. The research seeks to understand the reported, experienced, and documented forms of involvement as well as the meanings, beliefs, social processes, and power relations that shape how participation is constructed, negotiated, and constrained in everyday school–community interactions. Issues of voice, authority, professional boundaries, cultural norms, and governance structures play a central role in shaping who participates, how participation occurs, and whose knowledge is valued within rural schooling contexts. These dynamics cannot be adequately captured through numerical indicators alone and require interpretive engagement with participants' lived experiences.

A qualitative approach is therefore appropriate because the study explores subjective meanings, socially embedded practices, and relational processes rather than measurable variables. The research engages with complex rural realities, including language diversity, livelihood pressures, traditional authority structures, and informal governance arrangements, which demand flexible and context-sensitive inquiry. The study is further grounded in a social constructionist and interpretivist framework that views knowledge as socially produced and contextually situated, making qualitative inquiry methodologically and epistemologically coherent. In addition, rural community voices and children's perspectives remain underrepresented in Ghanaian education research, reinforcing the need for an approach that foregrounds participant voice and depth of understanding.

Research does not happen in a vacuum. It is not straightforward, and there is no single way of conducting a study. Researchers have a range of choices in designing a study. However, conducting meaningful research requires a systematic, rigorous, and well-thought-out plan.

Researchers cannot rely on lay interpretations of events to establish evidence; instead, they seek evidence carefully and systematically (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). This necessity underscores the importance of methodology in research. Methodology refers to the overall approach used to conduct a study. It encompasses research philosophy, research design, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) explain, the methodological choices must be carefully aligned with the nature of the research problem, the researcher's philosophical worldview, and the intended outcomes. This study examines parental and community involvement in supporting quality education in rural areas of northern Ghana. The choice of a qualitative approach is informed by both scholarly literature and the researcher's professional experience during national service as a teacher in a rural community. During this period, I found that persistent socio-economic constraints limited parents' and community involvement in primary education and reduced children's available time for studies. Witnessing firsthand the challenges of overcrowded classrooms, limited resources, absenteeism, and poor academic performance made it clear that understanding the social construction of educational experiences requires more than statistical analysis; it requires a deep exploration of subjective realities.

To make an informed choice of research design, it is essential to align with a specific philosophical assumption. Different approaches yield different types of evidence, and these assumptions guide the choice of data collection and analysis methods (Ghanney, 2016). This alignment rests on assumptions about social reality (ontology) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology).

According to Hitchcock & Hughes (1995, p. 21), "ontological assumptions determine how researchers view the nature of reality. For instance, social reality may be seen as either objectively real and independent of individuals or as socially constructed through human

interactions and language". The former perspective aligns with positivism, while the latter aligns with constructionism. My study adopts a social constructionist perspective, which holds that knowledge and reality are constructed through interaction and shared meanings (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Crotty, 1998). This perspective is critical for understanding how rural parents and communities define and enact their roles in education. Given that parental involvement is influenced by socio-cultural norms, historical contexts, and local power structures, a constructionist approach enables me to examine these dynamics through the voices of those directly involved (Crotty, 1998). This viewpoint is particularly pertinent in rural Ghana, where local customs, traditions, and collective experience shape educational practices and community involvement. My lived experience in these communities reinforces the notion that reality is co-created: parents, teachers, and community leaders each contribute to a shared understanding of what quality education should look like.

As Creswell & Creswell (2018) explain, the constructivist worldview emphasises the participants' subjective meanings and the importance of context in shaping their experiences. Similarly, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) highlight that constructionism asserts that individuals actively create knowledge through dialogue, shared practices, and social interactions.

Epistemologically, the study recognised that knowledge was developed through interaction between the researcher and the participants. Participants' accounts were not treated as neutral reports of a single objective reality but as interpretations shaped by their experiences and positions within the school and community. The inclusion of different stakeholder groups made it possible to examine areas of agreement as well as differences in how educational involvement was understood and experienced.

The study was also located within an interpretivist paradigm, which seeks to understand social phenomena from the perspectives of the people who experience them. Interpretivism was appropriate because the study aimed to understand the meanings parents and community members attached to education, how they understood their responsibilities, and how social, cultural, economic, and institutional conditions shaped their participation. Rather than imposing a predetermined definition of involvement, the study sought to interpret how participants themselves described and explained it.

The social constructionist and interpretivist positioning therefore supported the use of a qualitative research design. Interviews, focus-group discussions, and documentary analysis enabled the study to explore multiple perspectives and examine how meanings of education and involvement were constructed, negotiated, and sometimes contested among stakeholders. Throughout this process, I remained aware that my previous experience in rural education and my interactions with participants could influence the production and interpretation of knowledge. This influence was addressed through reflexive engagement, comparison of accounts across stakeholder groups, and repeated examination of the data.

## Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

The choice of a qualitative research design in my thesis is driven by the need to explore the lived experiences of parents and community members in rural Ghana and how these experiences influence their involvement in primary education. Qualitative research is well-suited for studies that delve into complex human interactions, social behaviours, and cultural norms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As Creswell (1998, p. 15) defines it, qualitative research is *"an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore social or human problems."* This definition aligns perfectly with my objective of uncovering how local practices, attitudes and beliefs influence educational participation.

Given my personal journey from my national service experience to my return to research, I have witnessed how parental engagement is not a one-size-fits-all phenomenon but is deeply linked to local socio-economic realities and cultural practices. In rural Ghana, where resource constraints and traditional values often influence educational decisions, a quantitative approach would fail to capture the nuance and contextual depth that qualitative methods provide. This research design enables me to gather rich, descriptive data that reflects the diverse voices and experiences of those involved in education. It allows me to document the personal stories, struggles, and triumphs of parents, teachers, and community leaders as they navigate a challenging educational landscape (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Moreover, qualitative research offers the flexibility to adapt to the unexpected insights that emerge during fieldwork. During my visits to rural schools, I observed not only the challenges, such as overcrowded classrooms and resource limitations, but also the innovative ways in which communities mobilise support to improve educational outcomes. This adaptive capacity is a significant advantage over rigid quantitative methods and is crucial for understanding the complex interplay of factors that influence parental and community involvement in education (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015).

Furthermore, this qualitative approach aligns with the constructivist epistemology, which asserts that knowledge is co-constructed through interactions between the researcher and the participants (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). By engaging directly with parents, teachers, and community members, I ensured that the findings of this research were grounded in the real-life experiences and perspectives of those who live and work in rural Ghana. This co-creation of knowledge not only enhanced the study's credibility but also ensured that the resulting insights truly reflected the community's values and aspirations.

## Case Study

A case study is an empirical research design that allows for in-depth exploration of a bounded system within its real-life context. It operates under constructivist and interpretive assumptions that acknowledge the complexity and contextuality of social phenomena (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). The approach facilitates a holistic understanding of a case through multiple data collection methods, including interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and document analysis, enabling the researcher to capture participants' meanings and contextual influences (Best & Kahn, 2006). Yin (2018) defines a case as a unit of analysis that may include individuals, groups, organisations, or communities examined in relation to a particular phenomenon. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) further note that case studies provide detailed, fine-grained insight into complex educational settings.

In this study, the phenomenon examined was parental and community involvement in selected rural public basic schools in Northern Ghana. The boundaries of the case include the school environment, surrounding community contexts, and stakeholder interactions within a defined period of fieldwork. A multiple-case study design was adopted to allow comparison across several rural school contexts while preserving the depth of each site.

The embedded participant groups within the cases included parents, community members, teachers, headteachers, and pupils, examined in relation to their experiences, practices, and perceptions of educational involvement. Data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and document review to enhance credibility through triangulation and to capture multiple perspectives on the phenomenon.

The case study approach is appropriate because it enables in-depth examination of how participation in education is shaped by local conditions, cultural expectations, and institutional

practices within rural Ghana (Ghanney, 2016). It allows for detailed exploration of how stakeholders interpret their roles and responsibilities within school–community relationships. Previous studies have successfully employed case study approaches to examine parental and community involvement in rural education contexts. For example, Ghanney (2016) explored community perceptions of education in rural Ghana, while Haines (2012) and Kgosidialwa (2010) examined school–community partnerships in rural South Africa. These studies demonstrate the value of case study designs for capturing contextualised educational experiences and social dynamics.

Although the findings were not intended to be statistically generalisable, the detailed description of the cases, participants, and study contexts enables readers to assess the possible transferability of the findings to comparable rural educational settings.

## 3.1 Participants and location of the study

Participants were purposively selected from four public basic schools across two villages in the Tolon District of Northern Ghana. The study involved 46 participants from five stakeholder groups**,** as follows:

- 12 parents selected with the assistance of PTA chairpersons and headteachers.
- 10 community members who were members of the School Management Committees;
- 4 headteachers from the selected schools.
- 12 teachers (three per school) who participated in focus group discussions.
- 8 students (two from each school) selected to provide insights into their experiences with parental involvement in their education.

The adequacy of the participant group was determined by the qualitative purpose and bounded multiple-case design of the study rather than by statistical representativeness. The 46 participants were purposively selected because their roles and experiences were directly

relevant to the research questions. They represented five differently positioned stakeholder groups—parents, community members, teachers, headteachers, and children—across four schools and two rural communities. This composition enabled the study to examine parental and community involvement from multiple perspectives and to compare areas of convergence and divergence within and across the cases. The interviews and focus group discussions generated detailed accounts of participants' experiences, while the reviewed school documents provided complementary contextual evidence. In all, the diversity of participants, depth of the accounts, and coverage of the school–community contexts provided sufficient information richness to address the research questions. The study did not seek statistical representativeness or generalisation beyond the selected cases

### 3.1.1 Region and the District

The selected location for this study is the northern region of Ghana. This area is distinguished by a greater concentration of villages. The abundance of villages, coupled with their limited resources and low socio-economic background, provides a rich context for examining the aims of this research. This context enables a comprehensive exploration of the specific social and economic dynamics within these communities, particularly regarding their perceptions of education and their involvement in their children's education. Therefore, conducting the study in this region not only aligns with the research objectives but also enhances the depth and relevance of the findings.

According to the (Ghana Statistical Service, GSS) (2021) census data, the Northern region has the largest illiterate population, with approximately 1,072,926 people aged 6 years and older. The illiterate population in the urban and rural areas is 377,191 and 695,735, respectively. Specifically, the illiterate population in the 6 to 14 age group, who have either never attended or are currently not attending school, amounts to approximately 165,000 children. Furthermore,

around 83.4% of illiterate children have a parent who is also illiterate. Notably, the northern region is home to the highest number of individuals who are both multidimensionally poor and illiterate, totalling 652,959. The dimensions of multidimensional poverty are living conditions (electricity, housing assets, overcrowding, cooking fuel, and drinking water), education (attendance, attainment, and school lag) and health (insurance coverage and nutrition).

The Tolon District was selected as the location where the target schools and participants were chosen. The Tolon District Assembly was established in 2012 by the LI. 2142, with Tolon as its district capital. It shares boundaries with Kumbungu to the North, North Gonja to the West, Central Gonja to the South, and Sagnarigu Districts to the East. It also covers a total land area of 1353.66sq. km. Generally, the Tolon District has two main settlement patterns. The linear settlement, where most of the communities and houses are said to be along White Volta or trunk road linking Tolon and Nyankpala, and the nuclear settlement, where villages or houses are said to be clustered. The District Directorate of Education of Tolon has five educational circuits, namely, Nyankpala, Tolon, Tali, Kasuyili, and Lungbunga. The district is among those in the country with serious deprivation and records one of the lowest literacy levels in the Northern Region. The 2010 PHC, for instance, indicates that Tolon has 73.8% of the population who are not literate in any language as compared to the regional percentage of 62.5 (Tolon District Assembly 2019). The population of this district is about 118,101 people.Ghana Statistical Service (2021), People living in the urban and rural towns are 25,726 and 92,375, respectively. The illiteracy population 6 years and older is approximately 66,159 people. Some of the key development issues from the district data are: High incidence of poverty, Incidence of child malnutrition and maternal mortality, Poor road network, High illiteracy rate, Limited access to potable water supply and prevalence of open defecation, Over-reliance on rain-fed agriculture, Insufficient spatial plans for land use management, Inadequate school infrastructure, Bushfires,

Limited access to quality health care, Limited capacity and opportunity for revenue mobilisation, Growing incidents of child marriage, Teenage pregnancy and accompanying school dropouts, Increasing demand for household water supply, Weak capacity for sports development and management, Gender disparities in access to economic opportunities, Limited supply of raw materials for local industries from local sources. Upon careful consideration of the key developmental issues at hand, it is apparent that this district is intricately aligned with the domain of this research. As such, it serves as a highly suitable location for conducting our study. By choosing this district, we can effectively address and investigate the specific research objectives that we aim to explore.

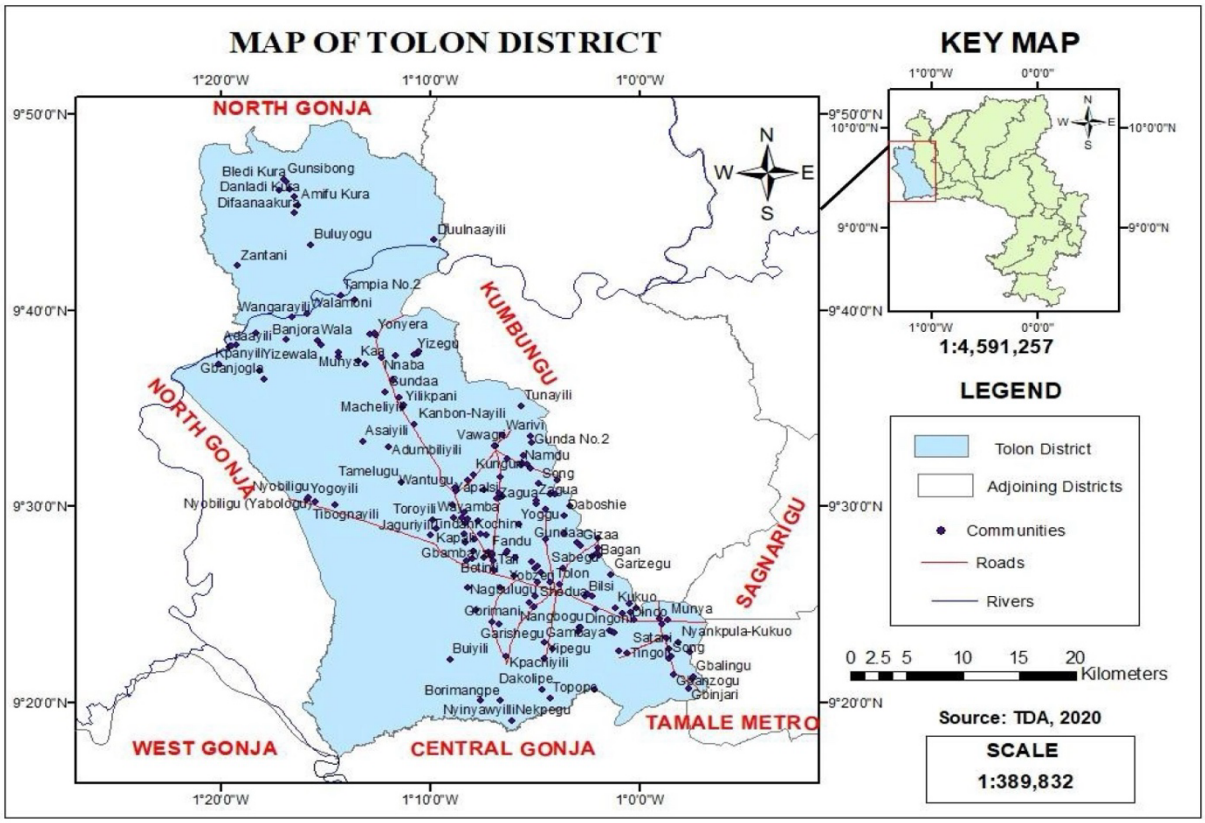



Figure 3. Study Area Map: Tolon District, Northern Region, Ghana

### 3.1.2 Research Team, Field Access, and Positionality

This study was conducted with the support of a small field research team made up of three university-affiliated research assistants who were connected to my host supervisor during my

exchange period. These research assistants were selected because they were from the region in which the study was conducted, were familiar with the cultural context, and spoke Dagbani, the predominant local language used by many of the participants. Their local knowledge and language competence were important in facilitating community entry, arranging meetings with schools and participants, and supporting communication during fieldwork. The team members had prior experience as research assistants and had also worked in educational settings, making them well-suited to support a school-based qualitative study. Before the fieldwork began, I oriented the team to the study's purpose, participant categories, interview procedures, ethical expectations, and the importance of asking questions consistently and respectfully across all sites.

The roles of the research assistants were primarily supportive and facilitative rather than interpretive or decision-making. Specifically, they assisted with contacting schools and participants, arranging interview schedules, clarifying the study's purpose in the local language where necessary, and supporting communication during interviews with participants who preferred Dagbani. In some interviews, especially with parents and School Management Committee members, they helped explain questions in Dagbani and clarified participants' responses when direct communication in English was not possible. Their role was therefore important in reducing linguistic barriers and strengthening participants' comfort during the interviews. However, the overall direction of the study, the framing of the interview guides, the conduct of the research, and the final interpretation of the data remained under my responsibility as the lead researcher.

Access to the field was negotiated through formal institutional channels. Together with my host supervisor, we first visited the Ministry of Education in the Northern region, which then gave us the go-ahead to contact the District Director of Education. We then met the District Director

of Education in the Tolon District to explain the purpose of the study and seek permission to engage schools in the district. The District Director welcomed the study and provided a list of schools, along with headteachers' contact information, to facilitate entry into the field. He also informed school headteachers about the research in advance so that they would be aware of our visits and the general purpose of the study. This formal entry process was important in a context where access to schools and participants often requires approval from district-level educational authorities. At the same time, I recognise that gaining access through official gatekeepers may have influenced which schools were more easily reachable and which participants were approached first. For this reason, the role of gatekeepers was treated as both a practical necessity and a methodological consideration in the study.

The schools were selected from rural areas within the district with the assistance of the District Director of Education, who identified schools that were both rural and accessible for field visits. A criterion-based purposive approach guided the selection rather than an attempt to obtain a statistically representative group of schools. Before field access was negotiated, the eligibility criteria had been established. The schools had to be public basic schools located in rural communities, include the stakeholder groups relevant to the study, and provide suitable contexts for addressing the research questions. Practical accessibility was also considered because the fieldwork had to be completed within the available time and mobility conditions. The District Director facilitated institutional access and identified potentially eligible schools, while I assessed whether the recommended schools met the predetermined criteria. The selected schools were not assumed to represent, or to be identical to, all rural schools in the Tolon District. Rather, they were treated as information-rich cases that satisfied the study's eligibility criteria and provided access to participants with direct experience of parental and community involvement in education (Palinkas et al., 2015). The inclusion of four schools across two rural

communities also provided opportunities to examine similarities and differences across more than one school–community context

While this process facilitated the logistics of data collection and ensured that the study could be carried out within the time and mobility constraints of fieldwork, schools that were more familiar to, visible to, or readily accessible through the District Directorate may have been more likely to become available for consideration. Consequently, other eligible rural schools that could have provided different experiences may not have been included. This possibility is acknowledged as a limitation of the case-selection process. However, every selected school satisfied the predetermined criteria and provided the school–community settings and stakeholder perspectives required to address the research questions.

To reduce the influence of a single source of information or a single institutional perspective, the study included multiple participant groups across four schools and two rural communities, namely parents, community members serving on School Management Committees, headteachers, teachers, and students. This multi-perspective design deepened the inquiry and enabled triangulation across participant categories. The District Director's involvement was limited to facilitating institutional access, providing information about potentially eligible schools, and assisting with initial communication with the headteachers. Although the District Director assisted with access to the participating headteachers, he did not attend the interviews or focus group discussions, influence the questions asked, or participate in the analysis and interpretation of the findings. The inclusion of different participant groups and documentary evidence enabled the comparison of converging and diverging accounts within and across the four cases.

My own position in the research also shaped the study and required sustained reflexive attention. I occupied a complex insider-outsider position throughout the research process. I am

Ghanaian and had prior experience teaching in a rural school during my national service, which gave me familiarity with some of the structural realities of rural education and helped me approach the study with empathy and contextual sensitivity. At the same time, I was not from the Tolon District or from the specific linguistic and cultural context of the participants, and I did not speak Dagbani. In that sense, I was also an outsider who depended on local mediators for language and for initial community entry. In addition, my status as an exchange student affiliated with a university and as a researcher from outside the district may have shaped participants' perceptions of me and their responses during the interviews.

This positionality created both strengths and challenges. On the one hand, being Ghanaian and having prior rural teaching experience enabled me to appreciate the broader educational realities that framed participants' views. On the other hand, my external status, academic affiliation, and association with local educational authorities may have encouraged some participants to view the research as important, thereby increasing their willingness to participate. However, it may also have encouraged socially desirable responses or prompted participants to present their communities, schools, or educational practices in more favourable ways. Rather than treating these dynamics as methodological weaknesses to be hidden, this study recognises them as part of the social production of qualitative data and addresses them through reflexive practice, careful interviewing, and triangulation across sources.

Throughout the fieldwork and analysis, I remained attentive to the possibility that my prior experiences and assumptions about rural education could influence the questions I emphasised, the interpretations I made, or the meanings I attached to participants' accounts. My previous teaching experience had made poverty, inadequate school resources, children's livelihood responsibilities, and limited visible parental participation particularly noticeable to me. However, participants' accounts required me to reconsider any assumption that limited visible

participation necessarily represented a lack of interest in education. Their accounts drew attention to strong educational aspirations and forms of home and community support that were not always visible through formal school activities.

To reduce this risk, I used semi-structured interview guides, engaged participants from different categories, compared responses across groups and sites, and revisited the data repeatedly during analysis to distinguish participants' meanings from my prior expectations. I also drew on the support of local research assistants to clarify context-specific expressions and meanings without allowing them to determine the overall analytical direction of the study. In this way, reflexivity was not treated as a brief personal statement but as an ongoing methodological practice that informed how the data were generated, interpreted, and represented.

### 3.1.3 Selection of schools for the study

In selecting schools for the study, I first sought institutional approval and guidance from the District Director of Education in the Tolon District. I explained that the study required public basic schools located in rural areas of the district and involving different categories of participants, including parents, community members, headteachers, teachers, and students. The selection process followed a series of related stages to ensure that the selected schools were relevant to the research purpose. First, the study's school-selection criteria were established before the schools were approached. To be considered, a school had to be a public basic school located in a rural community within the Tolon District, provide access to the stakeholder groups required for the study, and offer a suitable context for examining parental and community involvement in quality education. The school also had to be practically accessible because the fieldwork required repeated visits and coordination with several participant groups.

With the support of the District Director, a list of schools in the district and the contact details of their headteachers were made available to facilitate communication and planning. The

District Director also informed the headteachers about the study before our visits, which eased entry into the schools. This constituted the second stage of the process, during which institutional access was established, and potentially eligible schools were identified from the information provided by the District Directorate.

The schools were purposively selected from rural communities and considered suitable for addressing the research questions and were practically accessible for data collection. Accessibility was an important consideration because the fieldwork required repeated movement across schools and coordination with several participant groups. From the schools made available for consideration, four schools that met the established criteria were selected. The selection was therefore based not only on accessibility but also on the schools' relevance to the research questions and their capacity to provide access to participants with direct experience of parental and community involvement in education.

Four public basic schools were ultimately selected across two rural towns in the Tolon District. The decision to include four schools was guided by the need to achieve sufficient breadth of perspectives within a manageable qualitative study. Rather than relying on a single school, the inclusion of four schools strengthened the contextual richness of the data and reduced overreliance on one site.

Two rural towns were selected to broaden the community context of the study and to ensure that the findings were not limited to only one rural community. Within each town, two schools were selected so that no single school would be considered fully representative of the educational experiences of the entire town. Selecting two schools in each town enabled capturing a wider range of school- and community-based perspectives within the same local setting, while keeping the fieldwork feasible for in-depth engagement with parents, community

members, teachers, headteachers, and students. This arrangement also enabled comparisons between the two schools within each town and across the two rural contexts.

The selected schools were not assumed to be identical to, or statistically representative of, all rural schools in the Tolon District. Rather, they were selected as information-rich cases that met the established criteria and provided suitable settings for an in-depth examination of the phenomenon. Each selected school and its surrounding community formed a school–community case within the multiple-case study.

To protect confidentiality, the selected sites are anonymised in the study as Village 1 and Village 2. The four schools are identified as Schools A, B, C, and D. School A and School B were located in Village 1, while School C and School D were located in Village 2.

Although the support of the District Director was helpful in identifying schools and legitimising the research process, I recognise that this gatekeeping role may have shaped which schools were more likely to become available for inclusion in the study. Schools that were more visible to, familiar to, or readily accessible through the District Directorate may have been more likely to be identified. Consequently, other eligible rural schools that might have provided different experiences may not have been included.

Nevertheless, the District Director's recommendations did not replace the established selection criteria. All four selected schools met the requirements of the study and provided access to the school–community contexts and stakeholder groups needed to address the research questions. The possibility of gatekeeper influence is therefore acknowledged as a limitation of the case-selection process, rather than as evidence that the selected cases were unsuitable for the study**.**

The use of four schools across two rural communities and the inclusion of multiple participant categories helped generate a broader and more nuanced understanding of parental and community involvement in quality education in rural Ghana. Within the selected cases,

evidence was obtained from parents, community members, teachers, headteachers, students, and relevant school documents. This enabled the study to compare converging and diverging perspectives rather than relying on the account of one school or stakeholder group.

**Table 6.** Village and school selection

| Village | School |
|---|---|
| Village 1 | School A |
| | School B |
| Village 2 | School C |
| | School D |

Following the selection process, each school and its surrounding community was treated as a distinct school–community case. Contextual information about the cases was obtained from interviews with the headteachers and from the school administrative and archival information made available during the fieldwork. The profiles describe the schools' histories, levels of education offered, enrolment, staffing, classroom facilities, governance structures, and principal challenges. These descriptions provide the contextual information necessary for understanding the cases and interpreting the findings. To protect confidentiality, the schools are identified as Schools A, B, C, and D, while the two study locations are identified as Community 1 and Community 2.

### *School A, Community 1*

School A was a public primary school that initially began through the voluntary efforts of parents and community members. The Government of Ghana later absorbed the school into the public education system, constructed permanent school buildings, and relocated it to its present site. Following an increase in enrolment, a second school block was created in 2007, leading to the establishment of the school in its present form. At the time of the study, the school participated in the Ghana School Feeding Programme and reported gradual improvements in its academic performance.

The school offered education from Kindergarten One and Kindergarten Two to Primary Six. It had a total enrolment of 606 pupils, consisting of 216 kindergarten pupils and 390 primary pupils. The kindergarten population comprised 103 boys and 113 girls, while the primary population comprised 197 boys and 193 girls. The school had nine teachers, including four male and five female teachers.

School A had eight classrooms, consisting of two kindergarten classrooms and six classrooms serving Primary One to Primary Six. Although the school had a pipe-borne water system, the system was not functioning because of damaged pipelines. The school therefore depended mainly on harvested rainwater. Electricity was available, although payment of the electricity bills presented a continuing financial challenge. The school also had a library, which simultaneously served as the staff common room, and a computer laboratory.

Both a Parent–Teacher Association and a School Management Committee operated in the school. The PTA had recently been restructured and new executives had been selected. The SMC included a chairperson, vice-chairperson, organiser, women's representative, and the headteacher, who served as secretary. These structures provided formal channels through which parents and community members could discuss school concerns and contribute to school activities.

The school's principal challenge was the high number of pupils relative to the number of teachers and classrooms. Large class sizes increased teachers' workloads and made it difficult for them to mark pupils' exercises and provide regular and timely feedback. Teachers sometimes reduced the number of exercises given because of the workload. Although parents and community members participated through the PTA and contributed to activities such as moral education during school assemblies, overcrowding continued to place pressure on teaching and instructional delivery.

*School B, Community 1*

School B was established in September 2004 as a public model school. It initially operated with three classes but subsequently expanded to provide the complete primary-school cycle. A Junior High School section was also established but was managed separately from the primary school. The primary school offered education from Kindergarten One and Kindergarten Two to Primary Six. At the time of the study, it had approximately 875 pupils, comprising 535 boys and 340 girls. The school had 17 teachers, consisting of 10 male and seven female teachers.

The school had six permanent classrooms serving Primary One to Primary Six and two classrooms serving Kindergarten One and Kindergarten Two. Because of overcrowding, three additional pavilion classrooms had been provided by Right to Play to accommodate some of the upper-primary classes, particularly Primary Five and Primary Six.

The school harvested rainwater in a polytank during the rainy season but experienced serious water shortages during the dry season. Electricity was available in all classrooms. However, the school did not have a library or computer laboratory. The absence of these facilities restricted pupils' access to supplementary reading materials and opportunities for computer-supported learning.

School B had active PTA and SMC structures with elected executives who met periodically and supported school management. These structures provided opportunities for parents and community representatives to participate in discussions concerning school development, facilities, pupils' welfare, and other school needs.

The principal challenges affecting the school included inadequate furniture, seasonal water shortages, and overcrowded classrooms. The shortage of furniture resulted in some pupils sitting on the floor during lessons. Although the additional pavilion classrooms reduced some of the pressure on the permanent classrooms, overcrowding remained a challenge affecting teaching and learning.

### *School C, Community 2*

School C was a long-established public basic school founded in 1957 by the Government of Ghana. According to the school's archival information, it began with 39 pupils, consisting of 20 boys and 19 girls, and operated initially with three classrooms. The school expanded considerably over time and had become one of the larger public basic schools included in the study.

The school offered education from Kindergarten One to Primary Six, with two streams—A and B—at each grade level. At the time of the study, the school had approximately 869 pupils, consisting of 409 boys and 460 girls. It had 32 teachers, of whom 18 were female.

School C had 16 classrooms, together with an office and a store. Pipelines had been installed to provide pipe-borne water, but water did not flow through them reliably. Pupils and staff therefore depended on borehole water and water obtained from a nearby dam. The school was connected to the national electricity grid but did not have a library or computer room.

The school had both a PTA and an SMC. The PTA consisted of approximately 10 to 12 members, including the headteacher, who served as secretary, the PTA chairperson, a representative of the traditional chief, an assembly member, a religious representative, parents, and other community representatives. The SMC had a broadly similar structure, although membership was not necessarily restricted to people with children enrolled in the school. Membership was also informed by individuals' demonstrated commitment to education and community development.

The school experienced several challenges that affected teaching, learning, and community participation. It had approximately 120 pieces of furniture for a pupil population of more than 800, resulting in a substantial shortage of desks and seating. Other challenges included deteriorating classrooms, inadequate textbooks, limited teaching and learning materials required under the Standards-Based Curriculum, the absence of a computer laboratory, and an

unreliable water supply. The school also lacked teacher accommodation. As a result, some teachers travelled long distances to school, which occasionally contributed to lateness and reduced instructional time.

### *School D, Community 2*

School D was established in September 2012 under the Government of Ghana's Model School initiative. Its infrastructure was provided by World Vision in partnership with the Government of Ghana. The school initially served children from the immediate community and neighbouring rural communities. In 2019, a Junior High School section was added following approval from the District Assembly in response to increasing enrolment and the need to improve access to junior high education within the area.

School D was a public District Assembly school offering education from kindergarten to Junior High School. Complete enrolment information for the primary section was not available in the information obtained during the fieldwork. The Junior High School section had 81 pupils, comprising 43 boys and 38 girls. It had nine teachers, consisting of seven male and two female teachers. The staffing figures obtained related to the Junior High School section, while complete teacher information for the primary section was not available.

The school had eight classrooms shared between its primary and junior high sections. It did not have a clean or reliable water supply and depended mainly on untreated water from a nearby dam. Although electricity had recently been extended to the surrounding community, the school itself was not connected to electricity. This limited its ability to integrate information and communication technologies into teaching and learning. The school possessed some ICT equipment, including televisions, but the equipment could not be used effectively without electricity. A computer room was not available, and no separate library facility was identified in the information obtained during the fieldwork.

The school had functional PTA and SMC structures. The SMC contributed to governance, decision-making, and support for school management, while the PTA worked with the school on educational and developmental concerns. The headteacher served as secretary to the SMC.

The school's principal challenges included the lack of electricity and clean water, inadequate furniture, insufficient textbooks and curriculum materials, and the absence of teacher accommodation. The lack of accommodation required some teachers to commute over long distances and sometimes contributed to lateness. School personnel also reported limited parental provision of school uniforms and learning materials and inadequate support in accompanying younger children to school. These conditions affected teaching, learning, pupils' welfare, and the nature of school–family relationships.

### 3.1.4 Selection of Parents

The selection of parents was facilitated by the PTA chairpersons and headteachers, who were familiar with most of the parents at the selected schools. In total, 12 parents were purposively selected for the study, with 3 parents drawn from each of the 4 schools. The target participants were parents of children enrolled in the selected schools. The table below presents the selected parents, their schools, and their communities.

This approach is consistent with purposive sampling in qualitative research, which involves selecting participants who possess particular knowledge, experience, or characteristics relevant to the research (Patton, 2015). In this study, parents with children enrolled in the selected schools were considered best positioned to reflect on their involvement in their children's education, both at home and at school. In addition, parents were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate, as well as on the specific criterion that they had previously had a child complete the school and still had another child enrolled there. This criterion was important because it ensured that participants had longer-term engagement with

the school system and could therefore provide more reflective and informed accounts of parental involvement. The criterion also enabled the parents to reflect on their experiences with the schools over time rather than only on recent or short-term interactions.

The decision to select three parents from each school was informed by the structure of the study across two towns. By selecting three parents from each of the two schools in a town, each town contributed six parents, thereby providing balanced coverage of parental perspectives within each community. This was important because the study sought to understand parental involvement not only at the level of individual schools but also within the broader context of each rural town. Including six parents from each town helped ensure that parental views were not concentrated in only one school and allowed the study to capture a wider range of experiences within each school-community context. At the same time, the number remained manageable within the broader qualitative design of the study, which also included teachers, headteachers, community members, and students.

The headteachers and PTA chairpersons identified parents who could be reached on the day of the study. Given the time frame of the fieldwork and the ethical importance of voluntary participation, availability and willingness were key considerations in the selection process. Availability and willingness are widely recognised as important criteria in qualitative participant selection, particularly in rural contexts where logistical and time-related constraints may affect recruitment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Furthermore, the involvement of headteachers and PTA chairpersons helped to build community trust and ensured that the recruitment process remained respectful and culturally appropriate (Edwards & Holland, 2013). The assistance of headteachers and PTA chairpersons was used because they had local knowledge of families connected to the schools and could help identify parents who met the established eligibility criteria. They were asked to identify potentially eligible parents based on

their sustained experience with the school rather than specifically selecting parents who were active members of the PTA, regularly involved in school activities, or known to hold favourable views of the school. Their role was limited to facilitating initial contact. Each parent received information about the study and made an independent and voluntary decision about participation. The headteachers and PTA chairpersons were not present during the interviews and did not influence the questions asked or the responses provided by the parents.

This recruitment approach was practically and culturally appropriate for gaining access to parents in the selected rural communities, particularly because there was no independent sampling frame containing reliable contact information for all parents who met the study criteria. The involvement of locally recognised school representatives also helped establish trust and facilitated respectful entry into the communities.

Nevertheless, relying on headteachers and PTA chairpersons may have increased the likelihood that parents who were more visible, accessible, familiar to school personnel, or connected to school activities were approached. Parents who had minimal contact with the schools, were less visible to school personnel, or were unavailable during the fieldwork may therefore have been underrepresented.

Recruiting parents from four schools and two rural communities broadened the contextual coverage of the study, but it did not remove the possible influence of using the same gatekeeper-assisted recruitment process across all sites. Alternative approaches, such as open community invitations, household-based recruitment, or recruitment through community organisations independent of the schools, might have provided additional access to less-visible parents. These approaches were not used in the present study, and this is acknowledged as a limitation of the parent-selection process.

At the same time, the parents who participated did not present uniform or entirely favourable accounts. Their descriptions reflected different levels and forms of involvement and included concerns about school communication, financial expectations, school practices, resource limitations, and the economic and livelihood conditions that constrained their participation. The presence of these varied and critical accounts indicates that the recruitment process did not restrict participation to parents who portrayed the schools positively or agreed consistently with school authorities. However, the inclusion of critical perspectives does not establish that the perspectives of parents with the least contact with the schools were fully represented. The possible limitation therefore relates more directly to the underrepresentation of less-visible and less-connected parents than to an absence of critical parental perspectives within the data.

The adequacy of the 12 parents was considered in relation to their direct and sustained experience with the selected schools, their distribution across all four school–community cases, and the depth and relevance of the accounts they provided. The parents also formed part of a wider participant group of 46 people comprising community members, teachers, headteachers, and children. Comparing the parental accounts with those of the other stakeholder groups and with relevant school documents enabled the study to identify areas of convergence, difference, and tension. The 12 parents were therefore considered sufficient to provide information-rich evidence for addressing the research questions within the four selected cases, rather than to represent statistically all parents in the communities or the wider district.

**Table 7.** Parents' selection

| Village | School | Parent |
|---|---|---|
| Village 1 | School A | Parent 1 |
| | | Parent 2 |
| | | Parent 3 |
| | School B | Parent 4 |
| | | Parent 5 |
| | | Parent 6 |
| Village 2 | School C | Parent 7 |
| | | Parent 8 |
| | | Parent 9 |
| | School D | Parent 10 |
| | | Parent 11 |
| | | Parent 12 |

### 3.1.5 Selection of the community members

In this study, the selected community members were representatives of the School Management Committees (SMCs). The SMC is one of the key interventions designed to promote effective community partnership and involvement in the education delivery system (Addae-Boahene & Arkorful, 1999). According to the Ghana Education Service (GES) Handbook on *SMC/PTA Roles* (Ghana Education Service, 2001, pp. 9-11), each basic school's SMC should include:

The Municipal or District Director of Education, or a representative (ex-officio member)

The headteacher

A District or Municipal Assembly representative (usually an assembly member)

A unit committee representative

A representative appointed by the chief of the town or village

A representative from the Education Unit

Two members of the teaching staff (one each from the primary and junior high school levels)

A past pupil and/or students' association representative

A representative of the PTA

Additional members co-opted on an ad hoc basis for specific tasks

The selection of SMC members was essential because they play a critical role in ensuring children are enrolled and remain in school and in overseeing the assignment of qualified teachers. Their involvement directly impacts the delivery and quality of education, making them key participants in this study. SMC members' responsibilities, as outlined in the GES Handbook, highlight their relevance in understanding community engagement and the challenges faced in school governance.

Although the goal was to include all SMC members listed in the GES Handbook, this was not fully achieved due to practical challenges. Headteachers reported that they could not assemble all members, and even in their usual meetings, they don't get them all to be present. The documents received from the headteachers confirmed the attendance of only some members. During the data collection process, the headteachers assisted in selecting the SMC members. The selection was made from the membership of the formally constituted SMC and PTA bodies rather than from the wider community. The headteachers also ensured that key people, particularly the SMC chairperson and the PTA chairperson or PTA representative serving on the SMC, were included from each school. These individuals had direct knowledge of committee meetings, school–community activities, decision-making processes, and the concerns raised by parents and community members.

Initially, the plan was to conduct focus groups with 6 SMC members per school. However, in most schools, only two or three SMC members participated. The SMC members were unavailable due to their busy schedules, particularly with farming activities. In one of the towns,

we had a chief who was an SMC member who attended a session. In total, ten (10) participants took part in the study.

This was a limitation, as the required number we wanted for each school fell short. However, we were able to retrieve the information we wanted since all those who were present were the key people in the meetings, which gave us all the input that we wanted. Although fewer members participated than originally planned, the inclusion of the SMC and PTA chairpersons ensured that the discussions included participants with leadership responsibilities and sustained knowledge of the activities of these bodies. Their participation did not represent every community perspective, but it provided information directly relevant to the study's questions about school governance and community involvement.

We did not include the headteachers and teachers in the SMC/PTA discussion because they had similar questions related to their roles. Although the headteachers were not part of the group, they were at their offices during the discussions with the SMC. At one of the schools, a headteacher intervened to address a question that the community members felt had no relevance to them. The headteacher was able to point out what they had been doing regarding the question that was asked.

### 3.1.6 Selection of the teachers and headteachers.

The headteachers from each school were purposefully selected because they are at the helm of affairs in the administration of the school. Teachers were selected because they have direct information about students' performance and well-being and have direct contact with parents. Four headteachers participated in the study, that is, one from each of the four schools. The selection of the headteachers and the teachers was made with the assistance of the district director of education and the headteachers, respectively. This is because of the nature of the district director of education role; he interacts with virtually all district education stakeholders

(Ghana Education Service, 2001; Ghanney, 2016). Twelve teachers participated in the study, with three teachers selected from each of the four schools. All teachers in the selected schools were considered capable of providing relevant classroom perspectives because their professional responsibilities involved teaching pupils and interacting with families. The headteachers assisted in selecting three teachers from the existing teaching staff of each school. The selection was not based on the assumption that these teachers were more knowledgeable, more involved, or more supportive of the school than their colleagues.

Three teachers were included from each school to ensure equal representation of the four school cases and to create small focus-group discussions in which every participant had sufficient opportunity to contribute. The researcher explained the study directly to the selected teachers, and participation was voluntary. The headteachers were not present during the discussions and did not influence the questions asked or the responses provided.

Because the headteachers assisted with the selection, their involvement may have influenced which teachers were approached. However, the teachers provided both favourable and critical accounts, and their perspectives were compared with those of parents, community members, children, headteachers, and the school documents. The teacher accounts were therefore treated as the perspectives of the participating teachers rather than as statistically representative of every teacher in the selected schools.

The Table below shows the headteachers and the teachers in the various schools.

Table 8 presents the headteachers and teachers' selection

| Village | School | Headteachers | Teacher |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Village 1** | School A | Head 1 | Teacher 1 |
| | | | Teacher 2 |
| | | | Teacher 3 |
| | School B | Head 2 | Teacher 4 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Teacher 5 |
| | | | Teacher 6 |
| **Village 2** | School C | Head 3 | Teacher 7 |
| | | | Teacher 8 |
| | | | Teacher 9 |
| | School D | Head 4 | Teacher 10 |
| | | | Teacher 11 |
| | | | Teacher 12 |

### 3.1.7 Selection of the students

In Ghana, the education system is divided into three parts: basic education, secondary education and tertiary education. Basic education is divided into kindergarten, primary level (lower and upper primary), and junior secondary level. Basic education lasts 12 years (4-15 years). The kindergarten lasts for 2 years (4-6 years), the primary level lasts for 6 years (6-11 years), and, lastly, the junior high school lasts for 3 years (12-15 years) (Ministry of Education, 2013). Students in basic schools are also important to the study. They helped us to comprehend their perception of their parents' attitude towards their education at home. Two students were selected from each school. Two children of the parents selected as participants were included in the study. This was done with the assistance of the headteachers.

The Table below shows the location, schools, participants, age, class and gender.

Table 9. Children, age and schools' selection

| **Village** | **School** | **Pupil** | **Age** | **Class** | **Gender** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | A | 1 | 14 | 5 | male |
| | A | 2 | 11 | 3 | male |
| | B | 3 | 14 | 6 | female |
| | B | 4 | 12 | 6 | female |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2** | C | 5 | 13 | 6 | female |
| | C | 6 | 11 | 3 | male |
| | D | 7 | 14 | 4 | male |
| | D | 8 | 11 | 3 | female |

## 3.2 Information Collection Plan Design

### 3.2.1 Language, Interpretation, and Communication in the Field

This section outlined the research design adopted for the study. I discussed the approach taken to the research questions. In determining the data collection methods, I considered my research questions and the methods and instruments that best helped me elicit the information. The data collection methods I used were interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary searches. Language was a significant methodological consideration in this study. Many of the parents and community members in the selected communities were more comfortable speaking Dagbani than English. Because I did not speak Dagbani fluently, the support of the research assistants was necessary during the fieldwork, particularly in interviews and discussions involving participants who preferred to speak in the local language. Their role included helping to explain the study, clarifying questions, interpreting participants' responses, and supporting communication between the participants and me.

Participants were allowed to respond in Dagbani when they were more comfortable communicating in the local language. During the interviews and focus-group discussions, the research assistants interpreted the questions and participants' responses, which enabled me to ask follow-up questions and seek clarification where necessary. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission so that the original discussions could be retained for subsequent translation and transcription.

The use of local-language support strengthened the study by allowing participants to express themselves in a language that was natural and meaningful to them. This supported more comfortable communication and enabled participants to explain their experiences in greater detail. At the same time, I recognised that interpretation is not a neutral or mechanical act. Moving between Dagbani and English could shape how the questions were understood and how participants' responses were communicated. For this reason, the research assistants were oriented to the purpose of the study, the interview questions, and the importance of communicating participants' meanings as accurately and completely as possible.

Although I did not speak Dagbani fluently, I remained actively engaged during the interviews by listening to the interpreted responses, observing the interactions and participants' non-verbal cues, and requesting further probing or clarification through the research assistants where necessary. I also discussed important meanings and culturally specific expressions with the research assistants during and after the interviews to reduce the likelihood of misunderstanding. In this way, language mediation was treated as an important methodological process requiring consistency, care, and reflexive attention.

Following the fieldwork, the Dagbani audio recordings were initially given to a translator for translation and transcription into English. However, my review of the resulting transcripts showed that the interviews had not been transcribed in sufficient detail. Some sections of the recordings had been omitted, and responses expressed differently by individual participants had sometimes been condensed or presented as though the participants had given the same response. The initial transcripts therefore did not adequately preserve the detail and variation contained in the original interviews and were not relied upon for the final analysis.

A different translator was subsequently engaged to work directly from the original audio recordings. During his review, he identified that substantial parts of the interviews had not been

included in the initial transcripts. He therefore worked with two additional individuals who had experience in transcription, competence in Dagbani and English, and familiarity with the local context and cultural background. The three worked from the original recordings to produce fuller English transcripts, ensuring that previously omitted information was captured and that the contributions of individual participants were recorded separately rather than combined into generalised or repetitive summaries.

This replacement process strengthened the completeness and contextual accuracy of the transcripts because the team returned to the original recordings and included individuals who understood the language and the cultural context in which participants' statements were made. A formal back-translation procedure was not undertaken. Therefore, although the retranslation and transcription process addressed the omissions and excessive summarisation identified in the initial transcripts, the possibility that some linguistic or cultural nuance changed during translation from spoken Dagbani into written English cannot be entirely excluded. This was considered when interpreting culturally specific expressions and participants' meanings.

### 3.2.2 Selection and justification of the instruments or strategies of data collection

#### *Interview*

Interviewing is one of the most important ways to collect qualitative data and is especially useful for biographies, phenomenological studies, ethnographic research, and case studies. According to Kvale (1996), a qualitative research interview is a process where knowledge is created through the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee.

In this study, interviews were valuable because they generated detailed accounts of participants' experiences, perspectives and forms of involvement. This approach supported a deeper understanding of the meanings participants attached to their experiences (Kvale, 1996).

When conducting an interview, one must understand that the purpose is to find out what is in or on someone's mind. The purpose of the open-ended interview is not to impose things on someone's mind (for example, the interviewer's preconceived categories for organising the world) but to access the perspective of the person being interviewed (Patton, 1990, p. 278). The research should give the interviewer the freedom to let the participant speak without interference. It is important that the interviewer does not guide the participant toward giving answers the researcher wants to hear. The interviewer should avoid expressing opinions and should let the participant know that there will be no judgment.

The best way to collect data is to record the interview if the participant agrees. If recording is not possible, the interviewer should take notes during the interview and expand on them right after, while the details are still fresh (Best & Kahn, 2006).

According to Kvale (1996), a good interviewer is not only knowledgeable about the topic but also skilled in communication and interaction. The researcher should create a comfortable environment where participants feel free to speak openly.

There is some debate about using more than one interviewer. Having two interviewers can be helpful because one can observe or transcribe details that the other might miss while asking questions. When two interviewers are present, they should clearly explain their roles to the participants. Since I was not the only one conducting the interview, my team members and I introduced ourselves to explain each person's role and the reason we were both present.

### *Focus group discussion*

It is an interaction within a group that addresses an issue introduced by an interviewer, yielding a collective rather than an individual view (Cohen et al., 2000). Because they focus on a particular issue, they yield insights that might not otherwise be available in a straightforward interview (Morgan, 1988). According to Clarke (1992), "the object is to get high-quality data

in a social context where people can consider their views in the context of views of others" (p. 22). The interaction between the interviewees in my research will yield valuable information, and it is easier for them to open up when they do not feel that they are on a hot seat.

*Document research*

Documents are useful in rendering more visible the phenomenon under study (Prior, 2003). It enables researchers to reach inaccessible persons or subjects. Bogdan & Biklen (2007) use the term 'document' to refer to material such as photographs, videos, films, memos, letters, diaries, clinical cases, records, and memorabilia of all sorts that can be used as supplementary information in a case study whose main data are participant observation or interviewing. It is useful for the study, as it will enable the researcher to access relevant information that could not be obtained through interviews and documentary searches. Before data collection commenced, ethical issues relating to participant information, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and consent were carefully addressed. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement, their right to decline participation or withdraw at any time, and the measures taken to protect their confidentiality. Verbal consent was obtained prior to each interview and discussion. A full explanation of the ethical procedures, including the rationale for the use of verbal consent, is provided later in Section 3.4.

### 3.2.3 Description of the process of elaboration and validation of the instruments

*Focus group*

I developed a two-stage design for the focus group sessions for each case-study school. The first was conducted with respondents from the SMC and PTAs (community members) in each case-study school. The headteacher informed the community members **o**f the day, time and location for the interview. The head teachers managed to get 2 or 3 participants at each school, except at one school, where only 1 showed up. The community members were 8 in total.

We spent two days conducting such interviews across all four schools. The office of the head teachers was prepared for the interviews. The language that we employed with the community members' interview was Dagbani. In one of the schools, we did not meet the community members when we arrived. The headteacher was also not around because he had been called to engage in an impromptu meeting. We called the headteacher and made another arrangement with him to get us all the community members for the interview. Community members were willing to participate and indicated that research has helped their community, citing previous NGO research and its contributions.

The second focus group were the teachers in each case study school. Three teachers were selected in each school for the focus group. The focus group with the teachers was conducted in a room that was meant for a computer classroom (ICT), but because there was none, it was currently used as a staff room. English was used for the discussion. The teachers contributed effectively as they found the situation or current circumstance of parents' and children's education to be worrying and, therefore, were ready to give us all the information we wanted.

Before the focus group discussion began, certain ethical dilemmas were addressed to ensure informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. I made sure the participants understood the reason why they were participating in the groups and made it clear that they were not obliged to take part. I then sought their permission to audio-record the interview, which they gladly granted. Open-ended questions were used. The local language of the region was used during the interview with the community members. I had my team members who assisted with the interview because I do not speak or understand the language.

### *Headteachers interviews*

Headteachers are very important in the study as they are at the helm of affairs in the school, and they cannot be eliminated. Four headteachers were purposefully selected and interviewed individually on parent and community involvement in the school, the facilitator, the barriers to parent and community members' involvement, and, lastly, their suggestions for improvement. The headteachers were interviewed in their offices. The head teachers were the first point of contact in all the schools after the district director had given us permission to conduct the fieldwork. We had their telephone numbers from the district director. Calls were made to schedule appointments before visiting each school. We made ourselves known to the headteachers, introduced our project to them, and explained the need for the research and how it would help the school and the community. Together with the heads, we therefore decided on a day and time that were convenient and would not coincide with any activities. We were able to finalise the dates and times for the interviews. I made sure they understood the reason for their participation in the research and made it clear that they were not obliged to take part. I then sought their permission to audio-record the interview, which they gladly granted. Open-ended questions were used. We conducted our interviews in English, as we assumed they were all literate.

## Parent interview

The reason for conducting one-to-one interviews with parents is centred on the belief that they could come up with a deeper understanding of education and their involvement in their children's education. Semi-structured interviews are widely used in qualitative research for this purpose, as they allow in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and provide respondents with the flexibility to express themselves openly (Gill et al., 2008). The headteachers were the first point of contact. We presented our proposal to them so they would know how many parents we wanted for the research. The head teacher assisted us in selecting

all parents in each school. In each school, 3 parents were selected, for a total of 12 parents across the four schools. The majority of the parents were farmers. The headteachers, with the assistance of the parent-teacher association (PTA) chairmen, had informed all the parents that they would be available for the interviews. Engaging school authorities and PTA members in participant recruitment enhances trust, facilitates access, and aligns with ethical practices in qualitative community-based research (Edwards & Holland, 2013).

The interviews with the parents were done in two days. Each day, we interviewed the parents of children at the two schools. The parents were organised, and they even showed up earlier than we expected. In one of the towns, we couldn't finish with the parents early, so when we went to another school in the same town, the parents had come and left. The headteacher wanted to call them back when we returned, but they failed to answer, so we scheduled another day that was convenient for them. We got back, interviewed them, and offered our sincere apology for not showing up on time. These were some limitations we encountered, but we hopefully surmounted them. Logistical challenges like these are common in fieldwork and require flexibility, patience, and sensitivity to participants' time and context (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The parents were interviewed at the head teacher's office. They came one after the other. They were not bored as they waited patiently for us to finish with one before the next parent came. We apologised for the inconvenience and the wasted time, as they could have used that time for other important things. We informed them of the interview duration and sought their permission to audio-record the sessions to obtain an accurate, complete record of each interview. Obtaining informed consent and explaining the purpose and process of recording are essential ethical practices in qualitative research (Orb et al., 2001).

I also adopted a conversational style, which allowed the participant to be at liberty to express his/her mind. This approach aligns with the nature of semi-structured interviews, which

prioritise rapport-building and participant comfort to elicit authentic responses (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The interviews were semi-structured, using open-ended questions, which enabled respondents to articulate their individual views on their involvement and perceptions. The interview was conducted in the local language, which is Dagbani, since most of them were illiterate. Conducting interviews in participants' native language improves comprehension, comfort, and cultural relevance, especially in rural settings (Squires, 2009).

**Children Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with children in the various schools. This method was appropriate because it allowed flexibility and gave children the opportunity to describe their experiences in their own words. It also allowed the researcher to use prompts and clarifying questions where necessary, especially because children may sometimes need additional support to express their views clearly (Gill et al., 2008; Punch, 2002).

Before the interviews were conducted, parental consent was obtained, and the children were also asked for their assent to participate in the study. The purpose of the study was explained to the children in simple and age-appropriate language. The children were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could choose not to answer any question or stop the interview at any time. They were also told that there were no right or wrong answers and that the study was interested in their own experiences and views. To protect confidentiality, children's names were not used in reporting the findings, and identifying details were removed.

Although English is the official language in Ghana, local languages are commonly used in everyday communication, particularly in rural communities. Many children in these communities are more comfortable expressing themselves in their local language than in English. Since the researcher was not fluent in the local language, a local research assistant supported communication during the interviews. The assistant helped ensure that the children understood the questions and could express their views clearly in a language with which they

were comfortable. This support was used to facilitate communication, not to influence or direct the children's responses.

In all the primary schools, there were no designated staff rooms, and teachers conducted most of their work in their respective classrooms. Consequently, rooms that were initially intended for computer laboratories and libraries were being used as gathering spaces for marking scripts and holding meetings. These same spaces were also used as venues for interviewing the children. The spaces were provided by the headteachers and were familiar to the children, which helped reduce discomfort and supported a more context-sensitive interview process (Greig et al., 2011).

During the interviews, we observed that some children tried to peep through or come closer to see what was going on, as if they also wanted to take part in the study. Although this did not disrupt the interview process, we wanted to maintain focus and protect the privacy of the children who were being interviewed. Therefore, steps were taken to ensure that other children did not come too close to the interview area. This helped minimise interruptions, maintain attention during the interviews, and protect the confidentiality of the children's responses (Christensen & James, 2008).

The interviews were conducted in a calm and familiar school environment, with attention to the children's comfort, privacy, and freedom to express their own views. The questions and prompts were kept open-ended so that children could describe their experiences without being led toward particular answers. This arrangement was important because the purpose of the interviews was to understand children's own perspectives on parental involvement at home. Therefore, the interview process was designed to give children space to speak for themselves while also ensuring that the setting remained appropriate for conducting research with children in a school context.

*Document Analysis*

During my field visits to various schools, I collected critical information by engaging with the headteachers. I requested access to their official meeting record books, specifically those documenting Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, School Management Committee (SMC) meetings, and other general community engagement sessions. With their permission, I photographed the records to capture detailed accounts of discussions, attendance, contributions, and challenges.

After gathering the data, I undertook the following steps to organise and analyse the documents effectively:

I meticulously reviewed each photograph and categorised the content by date, meeting type (PTA, SMC, or general school meeting), and school location (Nyankpala or Tolon). This step ensured chronological clarity and provided a structured timeline of events and decisions. I compiled the information into detailed tables to highlight key elements, including:

Participants: I listed all individuals, such as PTA Chairs, SMC members, teachers, parents, and headteachers.

Key Issues and Discussions: I summarised the primary topics addressed during each meeting.

Contributions: I documented tangible and intangible contributions made by parents and community members, such as financial support, infrastructure maintenance, and volunteer efforts.

Challenges and Limitations: I identified the challenges faced by the schools and limitations in achieving set goals, such as inconsistent parental involvement, financial hardship, and infrastructural deficits.

Through the organised tables, I analysed recurring themes and patterns to understand the

specific roles that parents and community members play in supporting the schools. This included:

Contributions:

Evidence of parental contributions, such as payments for exam fees, maintenance of facilities, and support for extra classes.

Roles:

The active participation of parents in school governance through PTA and SMC meetings, their efforts to improve educational standards, and their advocacy for better learning conditions.

Challenges:

Repeated difficulties, such as unpaid dues, low attendance at meetings, and failure to sustain infrastructure projects due to financial constraints or lack of follow-through.

The documented evidence from these meetings provided a robust foundation to complement my thesis, particularly in validating the roles and challenges of parental and community involvement in education. The insights gained helped to:

Prove the roles that parents and community members claim to fulfil, such as financial support and advocacy for better school conditions.

Highlight the gaps between stated commitments and actual contributions, emphasising where parental and community engagement fall short.

Offer a contextual understanding of the systemic issues facing rural schools, including poverty, infrastructural neglect, and inconsistent parental participation. See in the Appendix D

## 3.3 Analyses

Data analysis began immediately after the interviews were completed and followed a systematic and iterative process. Audio recordings from interviews conducted with parents, community members, and children were translated from Dagbani into English with the support of a translator and local research assistants and subsequently transcribed. Interviews conducted with teachers and headteachers who were already in English were transcribed directly by the researcher. This process ensured accuracy and enhanced familiarity with the data. Only the final, detailed English transcripts produced from the original Dagbani recordings were used in the analysis. The incomplete transcripts prepared by the initial translator were excluded from the final dataset.

Following transcription, the data were organised systematically. Each participant's responses were aligned with the corresponding interview questions, allowing for clear identification of responses across participants and facilitating comparison within and across participant groups. The data were then grouped according to participant categories, including parents, teachers, headteachers, children, and community members. Each transcript was assigned its relevant participant identification code. The school code was retained only to preserve the context in which each account was provided, rather than to undertake a formal comparison or ranking of the four schools.

The analysis was guided by the research questions and informed by both inductive and deductive approaches. Initially, I engaged in close reading of the transcripts to become familiar with the data and to identify emerging patterns. Open coding was then conducted, where meaningful segments of text were labelled based on their content. These codes were subsequently grouped into broader categories, and themes were developed through an iterative process of comparison and refinement. The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's reflexive

thematic-analysis approach, involving familiarisation with the data, initial coding, development of potential themes, review and refinement of themes, definition and naming of themes, and presentation of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021).

The coding was conducted manually by me as the sole analyst. Each transcript was read several times, and meaningful sections were assigned initial descriptive or interpretive codes. As additional transcripts were analysed, some codes were combined, separated, renamed, or refined to represent participants' meanings more accurately. Related codes were then grouped into broader categories, from which patterns of shared meaning were developed into themes. Manual coding enabled me to remain closely engaged with the complete transcripts and the contexts in which participants made their statements.

The inductive approach was applied particularly to Research Questions One and Two because these questions sought to understand how parents and community members themselves perceived and valued education. For Research Question One, participants' statements describing education as acquiring knowledge, solving everyday problems, developing discipline and confidence, obtaining future employment, and improving family circumstances were initially assigned descriptive codes. Related codes were then grouped into categories such as knowledge and problem-solving, discipline and cognitive development, and future opportunities and intergenerational mobility. These categories were subsequently developed into the themes used to present participants' understandings and values regarding education.

For Research Question Two, participants' statements concerning girls' education, protection from teenage pregnancy and other social risks, observations of successful educated people, access to employment and improved livelihoods, dissatisfaction with aspects of the current education system, and the contributions of religion and culture were coded according to the meanings expressed in the transcripts. Related codes were grouped into themes concerning

changing attitudes towards education, education as protection and future opportunity, critical acceptance of the current education system, education as a pathway to success, and the complementary roles of education, religion, and culture. These themes helped explain how participants' perceptions and beliefs shaped the priority they gave to children's education.

Although the overall analysis followed reflexive thematic analysis, the balance between inductive and deductive reasoning differed according to the research question. The inductive approach was particularly important for Research Questions One and Two, as described above, because these questions sought to understand parents' and community members' own meanings, beliefs, and educational priorities. The deductive component came mainly from the findings of the scoping review and was used more directly for the questions concerning forms of involvement and the conditions shaping that involvement.

For Research Question Three, the six areas identified through the scoping review provided the main deductive points of reference for examining how parents and community members participated in quality education. These areas were learner support at home, educational content, the learning environment, school management, finance, and school personnel management. For example, accounts concerning homework assistance, encouragement, supervision, and support from siblings or relatives were examined in relation to learner support at home. Participation in PTA and SMC activities was considered in relation to school management. Contributions towards classrooms, furniture, water, repairs, and other school facilities were examined in relation to the learning environment. Financial contributions, levies, and fundraising were considered under finance, while accounts concerning teacher monitoring, accommodation, welfare, and other support were examined in relation to school personnel management.

For Research Question Four, the deductive component drew on the barriers and facilitators identified through the scoping review. These provided points of comparison for examining the conditions that enabled or constrained parent and community involvement in the study communities. For example, accounts were examined in relation to issues identified in the review, such as communication between schools and families, invitations and opportunities to participate, motivation, literacy and educational background, poverty, time and livelihood demand, trust, access to resources, training, and institutional opportunities for participation. However, the analysis remained open to barriers and facilitators that operated differently in the rural Ghanaian context or that had not been clearly identified in the scoping review.

Research Question Five was analysed somewhat differently. The possible strategies for improving parent and community involvement were developed mainly inductively from the responses of teachers and headteachers, who were specifically asked to suggest ways in which involvement could be strengthened. Their responses were therefore coded according to the strategies they proposed rather than being placed into predetermined strategy categories. During interpretation, however, the proposed strategies were considered alongside the barriers and facilitators identified in Research Question Four and the broader areas of involvement identified through the scoping review. This helped to show which problems or conditions the suggested strategies were intended to address.

The scoping-review findings were used as sensitising and organising concepts rather than as a fixed codebook into which every account had to fit. Open coding allowed participants' locally situated meanings and practices to be identified before relevant findings were considered in relation to the broader review-derived areas, barriers, and facilitators. Accounts that did not fit neatly within the existing concepts were retained and examined for additional meanings and categories. The inductive and deductive approaches therefore worked together: the inductive

analysis preserved participants' meanings, while the deductive analysis enabled those meanings and practices to be examined in relation to the findings of the scoping review and the research questions.

This process reduced the risk of confirmatory coding. Findings were not accepted merely because they corresponded with the scoping review. Attention was also given to accounts that confirmed, extended, differed from, or complicated the literature. For example, while the scoping review identified learner support at home as an important area of involvement, the empirical findings showed that some parents who could not provide direct academic assistance arranged support through older siblings, educated relatives, or neighbours. Parents also supported children through encouragement, supervision, personal sacrifice, and other forms of support that were not always visible through direct homework assistance.

The analysis was conducted in stages across participant groups. The children's responses were analysed first in relation to Research Question Three. Through the coding and theme-development process, their accounts were organised around academic and non-academic activities at home. Subsequently, the responses from teachers and headteachers were analysed, focusing on Research Questions Three, Four, and Five, which examined the roles of parents and communities in quality education, as well as the facilitators, barriers, and potential strategies for improving involvement.

Finally, the responses from parents and community members were analysed with a focus on Research Questions One, Two, and Three. Similar responses were grouped together, and patterns were identified across participants. Themes were then developed to capture shared meanings and variations in perspectives. Throughout the analysis process, I continuously referred to the research questions and the framework developed from the scoping review to ensure coherence between the data, interpretation, and the study's objectives.

After the initial analysis of each participant group, responses were compared where participants had discussed the same or closely related issues. For Research Questions One and Two, the accounts of parents and community members were examined to identify shared meanings and variations in their perceptions of education. For Research Question Three, the perspectives of parents, community members, children, teachers, and headteachers were compared where they addressed the same areas of involvement. For Research Question Four, the accounts relating to barriers and facilitators were examined across the relevant participant groups where these issues arose. For Research Question Five, the strategies suggested by teachers and headteachers were compared to identify areas of agreement, difference, and complementarity. These comparisons were used to deepen the interpretation of the findings rather than to rank participant groups or determine which perspective was correct.

The available PTA, SMC, and School Performance Appraisal Meeting documents were reviewed in relation to relevant developing categories and themes. The documents were not treated as automatically proving participants' statements. Instead, they provided contextual evidence that sometimes supported, clarified, or complicated accounts obtained through interviews and focus-group discussions.

To enhance the rigour of the analysis, I engaged in repeated reading of the transcripts, compared responses across participant groups, and paid attention to both converging and diverging perspectives. This iterative and reflexive process ensured that the findings were grounded in participants' accounts while also maintaining analytical depth and consistency.

I also reflected on how my previous rural teaching experience and the findings developed through the scoping review could influence what I noticed and prioritised during coding. Quotations were retained and presented in the findings chapters to demonstrate the connection between participants' accounts and the interpretations developed from them. Reflexive

attention was therefore maintained throughout the movement from initial codes to categories, themes, and the final interpretation of the findings.

## 3.4 Ethical Considerations

### Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the University for Development Studies Institutional Review Board (UDSIRB), Ghana, before the commencement of data collection. Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the research proposal and the associated consent procedures. In addition to institutional ethical approval, administrative permission to conduct the study in the selected public basic schools was obtained from the Tolon District Directorate of Education. The District Directorate facilitated access to the selected schools and headteachers; however, this administrative permission was separate from the ethical approval granted by UDSIRB.

### Informed Consent and Assent

Verbal informed consent was obtained from all adult participants, while parental permission and children's verbal assent were obtained separately for the children. This approach was taken to accommodate the cultural and contextual sensitivities of rural Ghana, where signing documents can create discomfort because of literacy barriers or cultural norms. Before each interview or focus-group discussion began, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, what their participation involved, the use of audio recording, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to decline any question or withdraw without consequences. The granting of verbal consent, parental permission, and children's assent was audio-recorded before the substantive questions began.

## Process for Obtaining Verbal Consent and Assent from Different Participant Groups

**Parents:** For parents, many of whom were farmers with varying literacy levels, I recognised that requesting a signature might cause hesitation or distrust. To ensure their comfort and full understanding of the research, I verbally explained **t**he purpose of the study, their role, and what participation would entail in the local language, Dagbani. They were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any consequences. I allowed sufficient time for parents to ask questions and ensured that they were comfortable with the process. Verbal consent was then obtained and audio-recorded before the interview continued**,** without requiring them to sign any forms.

**Children:** Verbal permission was first obtained from each child's parent or guardian before the child was invited to participate. Parental permission did not automatically require the child to participate. Additional steps were taken to ensure that the children understood the research and their participation. A child-friendly explanation of the study was provided in simple, age-appropriate language. The local language was used where necessary to ensure that each child understood what participation involved.

Each child was informed that participation was voluntary, that they could decline to answer any question, and that they could stop the interview at any time without consequences. After confirming that the child understood the explanation and wished to participate, the researcher obtained the child's verbal assent and audio-recorded it before the interview began. This procedure distinguished the parent's or guardian's permission from the child's independent agreement to participate.

**Headteachers:** For the headteachers, who were key administrative figures in the schools, the consent process was more formal but still verbal. I had written permission from the District Director of Education to contact the headteachers. During the interview, I also explained the purpose of the research in their schools and their right to withdraw at any time. The consent form was read aloud to them in English, as they were literate and familiar with the educational system and research processes. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to decline questions or withdraw at any time. The headteachers were encouraged to ask questions and were provided with detailed explanations about how the research would be conducted in their schools. After confirming their willingness to participate, their verbal consent was audio-recorded before the interview began.

**Teachers:** Before each focus-group discussion, the purpose of the study, the discussion procedures, and the use of audio recording were explained to the teachers in English. They were informed that participation was voluntary, that they could decline to answer any question or withdraw without consequences, and that their individual comments would not be attributed to them by name. They were also informed that the headteachers would not be present during the discussions. After questions had been addressed, each teacher's verbal consent was obtained and audio-recorded before the discussion began.

**Community Members (SMCs):** Community members who were interviewed held roles on the School Management Committees and Parent–Teacher Associations. Their process was similar to that of the parents. The consent information was read aloud in Dagbani to ensure that all members understood the research goals, their involvement, the use of audio recording, and their right to withdraw. The community members were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could opt out at any time without any repercussions.

Since the SMC and PTA representatives were community leaders and respected individuals, I ensured that they had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and clarify any concerns about the research. Verbal consent was obtained and audio-recorded before the discussions began**,** without requiring signatures that might have caused unnecessary discomfort.

## Anonymity and Confidentiality

The data collected during the research **were** anonymised to protect the identity of all participants. Anonymisation was carried out through the following measures:

During data collection, participants were assigned identification codes, such as “Parent 1,” “Teacher 3,” “Headteacher 2,” " Student 4” and “SMC 1,” instead of using their names. The real names of the schools and communities were replaced in the transcripts, analysis, and reporting with generalised labels such as Schools A–D and Community 1–2.

For reporting and analysis, pseudonyms or generalised labels were used to ensure that individual participants could not be identified. Responses from participants were grouped and analysed thematically, meaning that personal information was not presented in ways that could readily lead to participant identification. This was particularly important in the small rural communities, where individuals could potentially be recognised through indirect contextual details.

Quotations were attributed only through participant and school codes. Potentially identifying information was removed or generalised where its inclusion could reveal a participant, school, or community. Participants were also informed that the information they provided would be treated confidentially and used only for the research and related academic reporting.

## Data Handling and Security

Throughout the project’s life cycle, from data collection to reporting, the following practices were employed to ensure that personal data were handled with care and in accordance with

ethical standards. Participants were informed about the confidentiality of their data and the anonymisation process. Verbal consent **or assent** was obtained, and all data collected were treated confidentially from the outset.

During transcription and analysis, names and specific school or community locations were removed or replaced with participant and site codes. Only anonymised and coded information was used in the thesis, reports, and publications, ensuring that participants could not readily be identified from the findings. Quotations were attributed to anonymous codes rather than names or other direct identifiers.

The audio recordings, translated and English-language transcripts, recorded consent and assent, and other research materials retained by the researcher were stored on an encrypted and password-protected laptop. The use of encryption and password protection restricted unauthorised access to the research data. Files were organised using participant codes rather than participants' names.

The raw recordings and transcripts were not stored in publicly accessible locations, and anonymised material was used when presenting or reporting the findings. Anonymised research data will be retained securely for the period required by the approving institution. At the end of the required retention period, original recordings and any raw materials containing potentially identifying information will be securely destroyed.

## 3.5 Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness was considered throughout the research process to strengthen the quality and integrity of the qualitative findings. Attention was given to credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. These criteria were addressed through the use of multiple participant perspectives, careful documentation of the research process, reflexive engagement, and detailed presentation of the study context.

## Credibility

Credibility concerns whether the findings provide a credible representation of participants' experiences and meanings. The study included parents, community members, children, teachers, and headteachers, who occupied different positions within the school–community relationship. Their accounts were examined together to identify areas of agreement, difference, and complementarity rather than relying on the perspective of one participant group.

Information was collected through individual interviews, focus-group discussions, and document review. Where PTA, SMC, and School Performance Appraisal Meeting records were available, they provided supplementary contextual evidence concerning issues reported by participants. These documents were not treated as proving participants' accounts but were used to support, clarify, or complicate relevant findings.

Credibility was further supported through repeated reading of the transcripts, follow-up probing and clarification during interviews, and attention to both favourable and critical accounts. The analysis did not exclude responses that differed from dominant patterns or from the categories identified through the scoping review. Quotations from participants were included in the findings chapters to demonstrate how the interpretations were grounded in the data.

## Dependability

Dependability was supported by providing a transparent description of how the study was conducted. This included explaining the philosophical positioning, multiple-case design, selection of schools and participants, role of gatekeepers, data-collection procedures, use of research assistants, language mediation, transcription and translation process, and stages of manual thematic analysis.

The same interview guides and general procedures were used for participants within each stakeholder category, while follow-up questions were used where clarification was required.

The research questions guided the organisation and analysis of the data. Explaining how the analysis moved from transcripts to codes, categories, and themes allows readers to understand how the findings were developed.

## Confirmability

Confirmability concerns the extent to which the findings are grounded in participants' accounts rather than being determined solely by the researcher's assumptions. As the sole analyst, I repeatedly returned to the complete transcripts to check that the codes, themes, interpretations, and selected quotations remained connected to the contexts in which participants made their statements.

I also considered accounts that contradicted or complicated commonly expressed views. For example, teachers and headteachers sometimes interpreted limited school attendance as weak parental involvement, while parents explained how poverty, farming, family responsibilities, and livelihood demands affected their participation. Retaining these different interpretations reduced the risk of presenting only one institutional perspective.

Reflexivity was also used throughout the study. I considered how my previous rural teaching experience, Ghanaian identity, status as a researcher affiliated with a foreign university, limited fluency in Dagbani, and prior knowledge from the scoping review could shape the questions I emphasised and the meanings I prioritised during analysis. These influences were acknowledged and examined rather than treated as completely removable from the research process.

## Transferability

The study did not seek statistical generalisation to every rural school or community in Ghana. Instead, detailed descriptions of the Tolon District, the two rural communities, the four selected

schools, participant groups, recruitment process, school facilities, livelihoods, language context, and school–community governance structures were provided.

These contextual descriptions allow readers to determine whether the findings may be relevant to other rural educational settings with comparable social, economic, cultural, and institutional conditions. The boundaries of the four cases and the limitations of the selection and recruitment processes were also stated so that the scope of the findings could be judged appropriately.

Taken together, the use of multiple stakeholder perspectives, supplementary documentary evidence, repeated engagement with the transcripts, attention to converging and diverging accounts, reflexive analysis, and detailed contextual description strengthened the trustworthiness of the study. These procedures do not imply that the study was free from limitations; rather, they demonstrate the steps taken to produce interpretations that were transparent, contextually grounded, and responsive to participants' accounts

# Chapter 4: Perceptions of Parents and Community Members on Education and Its Impact in Prioritising Education

This chapter examines how parents and community members understand and value education and how these perceptions shape the prioritisation of children's schooling. Understanding these meanings is important because the value attached to education can influence the decisions families make about children's schooling, although positive attitudes do not necessarily translate into the same forms or levels of involvement.

The chapter addresses Research Questions One and Two. It first examines participants' understandings of education, followed by their attitudes and beliefs towards schooling, their views of the current education system, and their perceptions of education as a pathway to success. It also considers how religion and culture interact with educational values and priorities.

## 4.1 Community and parent understanding of education

When parents and community members were invited to articulate their understanding of education, three interrelated subthemes emerged: **(**i) knowledge acquisition and problem-solving**,** (ii) future opportunities and intergenerational mobility**,** and (iii**)** discipline and cognitive and social development. Together, these themes show that participants understood education as more than formal schooling or certification. They associated it with practical knowledge, future possibilities and the broader development of the individual.

### Knowledge Acquisition and Problem-Solving

Most participants understood education primarily as a means of acquiring knowledge and practical abilities that could be applied to everyday life. They associated education with

reasoning, solving problems, understanding information and participating more effectively in society. As one parent explained:

"My understanding of education is seeking knowledge in order to solve a problem or seek a solution to a problem" (Parent5, School B)

An SMC member placed greater emphasis on its social dimension:

"Education is all about seeking knowledge and understanding of socialisation" (SMC 1, School C).

These accounts reveal a common emphasis on knowledge, but they also show variation in what participants believed that knowledge enabled people to do. For some, its value lay in solving practical problems, while others emphasised communication, social interaction and participation in society.

For some parents, the meaning of education was also shaped by personal experiences of having had limited educational opportunities. One participant reflected:

> Education is fundamentally about the pursuit of knowledge, and we parents who have not been able to achieve much in terms of education find ourselves regretting it today, as some of our fellow parents are currently reaping the benefits of education due to their ability to further their studies in the past. (Parent 8, School C).

This account is important because the value of education was assessed through lived comparison. The participant contrasted her own circumstances with those of people who had continued their education, making missed educational opportunities part of how she understood the usefulness of schooling.

Within the rural northern Ghanaian context, knowledge was therefore valued not simply as an academic outcome but as a practical resource. Participants connected education with understanding information, communicating effectively, making informed decisions and responding to everyday problems. Their accounts suggest that education was valued partly because it increased a person's capacity to navigate circumstances that might otherwise create dependence or vulnerability.

These findings are consistent with Kong (2010), who found that rural parents associated education with knowledge, confidence and informed decision-making, and with Liu et al. (2024), who similarly reported that rural parents valued literacy, communication and practical abilities developed through education. The present findings mainly confirm these patterns while showing how parents and community members in rural northern Ghana connected useful knowledge with everyday problem-solving, participation in social life and reflection on missed educational opportunities.

## Future Opportunities and Intergenerational Mobility

Other parents highlighted the future opportunities that education provides, arguing that without schooling, individuals face limited life chances. Parents and community members associated education with independence, upward mobility, and the ability to support family members in adulthood. Education was therefore seen as reducing long-term dependency on parents and community networks while enabling individuals to fulfil family and social responsibilities.

A community member stated that:

"To my understanding, education is an institution that enables the learner to be independent and able to support his or her parents in the future" (SMC 1, School A).

This account shows that independence was not understood purely in individual terms. Educational success was expected to strengthen the learner's own position while also enabling them to fulfil obligations towards parents and family members.

Some participants associated education with economic and personal advancement. They described education through an investment metaphor:

A parent remarked:

"Education is like a business that involves investing in yourself so that one day you can become a better person in the future" (Parent 1, School A).

The business comparison shows that the participant understood education as a long-term investment. Families and learners may have to commit time, effort, and resources before the benefits become visible. The expected return was also broader than employment or income. The phrase "become a better person" suggests personal growth, greater independence, and improvement in life.

This reveals an important pattern in the findings. Future opportunity was understood in both personal and collective terms. Becoming educated was expected to improve the learner's circumstances, but the benefits were also expected to extend to parents and other family members. Educational success was therefore not viewed only as leaving hardship behind or achieving personal goals. It also involved maintaining responsibility towards the family.

Participants nevertheless placed emphasis on different aspects of future opportunity. Some focused on independence and supporting parents, while others stressed personal improvement, investment, or achieving one's dreams. These views were related but not identical. They show that parents and community members were not a uniform group, even though they generally valued education as a means of improving the future.

In the rural northern Ghanaian context of the study, participants never indicated that they rejected agriculture or discouraged their children from farming. They viewed education as capable of expanding children's options beyond the livelihood opportunities immediately available within their communities.

This understanding is consistent with Baker's (1989) finding that rural parents often viewed education as a route to employment, regular income, and economic security. Matengu et al. (2019) similarly showed that changing livelihood opportunities could increase the value rural families attached to formal education. Yang and Shin (2008) found that some rural parents compared education to planting seeds that would later produce a harvest, reflecting the belief that educational benefits require patience and continued investment.

The present study confirms the importance of future opportunity but adds an important dimension: participants understood educational advancement not only as personal mobility but also as intergenerational responsibility**.** Becoming educated was expected to increase a child's capacity to support parents, strengthen family wellbeing and contribute to the wider community.

## Discipline and Cognitive and Social Development

Parents and community members recognised education as a process that cultivates discipline, cognitive development, and social competence. Many participants emphasised self-discipline as a foundational attribute that enables students to remain focused, committed, and goal-oriented. Parents described their own active role in supporting discipline, including ensuring regular school attendance and monitoring children's engagement with learning. They believed that disciplined educational habits could prepare children for future responsibilities and leadership roles. A parent noted:

> Education is all about self-discipline. As a parent, you must ensure your child attends school, even if it means physically persuading them. This will ensure that their attention is focused on achieving a higher quality education and becoming tomorrow's leaders. (Parent 10, School D)

This account presents discipline as both a condition for education and an expected outcome of education. The child was expected to develop self-discipline through schooling, but the parent was also considered responsible for ensuring that the child attended school and remained focused. The reference to "physically persuading" the child reflects the importance the participant placed on firm parental guidance and regular school attendance. Discipline was therefore understood not only as controlling behaviour but also as helping children remain committed to their education and future goals. Other participants emphasised cognitive and social development: A parent mentioned:

"Education is very good for the children, especially when it enhances their level of thinking and socialising to become future leaders of tomorrow" (Parent 5, School B).

A deeper pattern within the accounts is that participants did not separate intellectual, moral, and social development. Improved thinking, self-discipline, good behaviour, social interaction, and leadership were presented as closely connected. An educated person was therefore not understood simply as someone who could read, write, pass examinations, or obtain a certificate. Participants also expected that person to behave responsibly, relate well with others, make sound decisions, and contribute positively to society.

The accounts also reveal that participants did not draw a clear boundary between the responsibilities of parents and schools. Parents were expected to encourage attendance, provide guidance, and help children develop discipline, while formal education was expected to strengthen both thinking and behaviour. The development of the child was therefore understood

as a shared process involving the home and the school rather than as two completely separate areas of responsibility.

This finding is consistent with Liu et al. (2024), who found that rural parents valued academic development alongside respect, discipline, and good character. Yang and Shin (2008) similarly reported that parents valued healthy development, positive behaviour, and good daily habits. Sarkar and Chakraborty (2023) also found that parents expected education to contribute to children's character and overall development.

The present study adds detail from rural northern Ghana by showing that participants understood discipline, thinking, social competence, behaviour, and leadership as connected outcomes rather than separate benefits of education. Education was expected to prepare children not only to succeed academically but also to become responsible people who could relate well with others and undertake future family and community roles.

## Synthesis of Community and Parent Understandings of Education

Taken together, the findings show that parents and community members understood education in three closely related ways: as useful knowledge for navigating everyday life, a pathway to future opportunity and intergenerational advancement, and a means of developing disciplined, capable and socially responsible individuals. Although participants differed in the benefits they emphasised, their accounts consistently placed substantial value on education.

The predominantly positive language used by participants should nevertheless be interpreted cautiously because education carries considerable social value and the findings are based on self-reported accounts. However, participants frequently grounded their views in specific experiences, including regret over missed schooling, observations of other people's educational advancement, family expectations and everyday applications of knowledge. Their accounts

therefore provide more than general statements that education is “important”; they show why education was considered valuable and what participants expected it to make possible**.**

## 4.2 Attitudes and beliefs towards education

When parents and community members were asked to describe the attitudes and beliefs of people in their communities towards education, most participants reported generally positive views. They also described changes in how education was understood and supported, particularly in relation to girls’ education, parental responsibility, cooperation with schools, future opportunities, and community development. These patterns show that attitudes were not simply positive or negative. They were shaped by participants’ experiences, the examples they observed in their communities, and the opportunities they believed education could provide.

### Changing Attitudes towards Girls’ Education

Most participants described a shift in community attitudes towards girls’ education. They contrasted current views with earlier expectations that girls should remain primarily within the home, undertake domestic responsibilities and prepare for marriage. Participants reported growing recognition of girls’ right to schooling and of the possible consequences when families were unable to support their education. A parent asserted that:

> “The attitude and beliefs that parents and the community hold towards Education largely focus on supporting children, especially girls. Nowadays, if parents fail to meet their children's educational needs—such as providing textbooks, pens, and pencils—they may resort to begging outside for assistance. Older youths who are uneducated (illiterate) or who have failed to achieve their educational goals can mislead these children, luring them into sexual activities, which may result in teenage pregnancy. Boys, on the other hand, might engage in behaviours such as drug abuse (Cannabis or Marijuana)”. (Parent 4, School B)

This account presents educational support as an active parental responsibility involving both material provision and protection from circumstances that could interrupt schooling. It also reveals a gendered understanding of educational risk. Girls were discussed primarily in relation to sexual relationships and teenage pregnancy, whereas risks facing boys were associated with drug use and other forms of misconduct. Growing support for girls' education therefore coexisted with continuing gendered expectations concerning behaviour, sexuality and social responsibility.

The participants also indicated that people in these communities have witnessed social vices committed by truant and school dropout children, as well as the detrimental effects they have inflicted on their families and the community. They believed that education could help children avoid behaviours such as drug abuse, theft, early sexual activity, and other forms of social misconduct.

Participants more generally associated education with helping children avoid harmful behaviour and develop into responsible adults. Education was consequently valued not only for academic achievement or future employment, but also for its perceived protective, moral and developmental functions.

The finding is consistent with Alesina et al. (2023), who showed that gender roles and social expectations can influence girls' educational opportunities. However, the present study demonstrates an important coexistence of change and continuity. Participants reported greater acceptance of girls' education, yet some of the reasons given for supporting girls continued to be framed through protection, sexuality and appropriate behaviour. Increased support for schooling therefore did not necessarily mean that all underlying gender expectations had disappeared.

## Growing Parental and Community Support

Some participants also reported that parents had become more active and interested in their children's schooling than in the past. One parent observed that it was now becoming more common for parents to visit schools and discuss their children's performance with teachers. This reported change suggests that positive attitudes towards education were beginning to be expressed through greater parental attention to what occurred at school, rather than only through enrolling children or providing educational materials. One parent observed:

> The parents and the community members are dedicated and committed to their children, especially regarding their well-being and future prospects. Some parents even go to the school to interrogate the teachers about how their children are being taught in class and the benefits of schooling, just to be satisfied that their children are on the right path. (Parent 5, School B)

This account indicates the parents were not just accepting whatever the school provided**.** By visiting the school and questioning teachers, they reportedly sought information about the quality and value of their children's education. The participant's use of the word "interrogate" suggests a strong desire for explanation and reassurance that schooling was benefiting the children. This indicates an emerging concern not only with school attendance but also with what children were learning and whether education was leading them in a positive direction.

In addition, an SMC member reported that the people in this community have been providing significant support to the teachers to help their children receive a good education.

"As of today, we know that education is our mainstay, and we are determined to cooperate with teachers to promote Education". (SMC 5, School C*)*

The two accounts reflect different but complementary expressions of support. Parent 5 emphasised individual parents visiting the school and asking questions about teaching, whereas the SMC member emphasised collective cooperation with teachers. This variation suggests that growing support was expressed through both family-level monitoring and community-level partnership. However, these were reported practices and should not be interpreted as evidence that all parents or community members were equally involved.

A deeper pattern is that participants' understanding of parental responsibility appeared to extend beyond paying educational expenses or ensuring attendance. It included seeking information, monitoring educational progress, cooperating with teachers and showing concern about the direction of children's schooling. However, these were reported practices and should not be interpreted as indicating that all parents or community members participated to the same extent.

This finding supports Donkor's (2010) argument that the value attached to education can influence parental support. The present study adds detail by showing that stronger educational commitment could also involve active interest in what schools provide and whether children benefit.

## Attitudes Shaped by Visible Educational Benefits

One participant mentioned that her friend told her that she would strive to ensure that her children achieve the highest level of education because it is the only path to freedom from poverty. Others have also been investing massively in their children's education and will go the extra mile to ensure their children achieve higher levels. She explained:

> A friend of mine told me that, as a mother, I believe that when my children achieve a higher education in future, I will also benefit a lot from it. I will do my best to get them to the tertiary level. (Parent 11, School D)

This account shows that the anticipated benefits of education extended beyond the individual child. Educational advancement was expected to improve the child's future while also strengthening the wellbeing of the family. The commitment to tertiary education was therefore connected not only to individual achievement but also to expectations of future intergenerational support.

Another parent explained that seeing other parents benefit after supporting their children had strengthened her own belief in education.

"Honestly, I believe a lot in education because I have seen a lot of colleague parents benefit a lot from education after investing massively into their children." (Parent 2, School A)

This suggests that educational attitudes were shaped by comparisons with other families' experiences. When the benefits of schooling became visible in the lives of relatives, neighbours, or other parents, education appeared to be a more credible investment.

Although these participants shared the view that visible success strengthened belief in education, they emphasised different forms of benefit. Parent 11 focused on the future support a mother might receive from educated children. Another parent focused on observing the benefits experienced by other families. These variations show that attitudes were reinforced through family expectations, community comparison, and examples within the household.

The underlying pattern is important. Participants did not form their views about education only through general messages that schooling was valuable. Their beliefs were also shaped by outcomes they could observe. Visible educational success provided practical evidence that investing in children's schooling could produce benefits for individuals and their families.

Donkor (2010) showed that the value parents place on education can influence their willingness to support their children. The present study adds an explanation of how that value may itself be formed and reinforced. Parents' confidence in education was reinforced when they observed

educational outcomes that they considered meaningful in the lives of their own children, other families, and members of the wider community.

This indicates that educational success operated as a visible social influence within the study communities. The achievements of one child or family could strengthen the expectations of others, making education not only an individual pathway but also a visible example of what might be possible for other families.

## Education, Rural Livelihoods, and Community Development

The SMCs who represent community members in this study also mentioned changes they have observed in the communities and in people's regard for education. They indicated that the community survives by farming, which is their main occupation. However, they have realised that without education, they cannot even have plentiful yields in their agricultural production to endure economic hardships. In addition, they have seen the contributions of educated people in this community to the development of these villages. One SMC member stated:

> "In the olden days, farming was our mainstay, which helped a lot, but as things stand today, we have come to realise that Education is our mainstay and without Education, we can't withstand the current hardship of our modern economy*."* (SMC 5, School C*)*

Another SMC member explained:

"Most of the children who were enrolled in school have now graduated and have been supportive of this community's development. So, we have a good perception of education in this community." (SMC 6, School D)

These accounts identify two related reasons for increasing the value attached to education. The first concerns adaptation to changing economic conditions, whereas the second concerns the visible contribution of educated people to their communities. Education was therefore

understood both as a means of expanding individual opportunities and as a resource capable of strengthening family and community wellbeing.

Importantly, participants did not present education and farming as mutually exclusive. They did not suggest that children had to reject agriculture or rural life in order to become educated. Rather, their accounts indicate a recognition that dependence on farming alone might provide insufficient security under changing economic conditions. Education was therefore valued for the additional knowledge, skills and opportunities it could provide.

This finding adds nuance to the common assumption that rural families value education principally because they want children to leave agriculture and obtain salaried employment. In the present study, participants did not necessarily understand educational advancement as movement away from rural life. Rather, education was seen as expanding the choices available to young people and strengthening their capacity to respond to changing social and economic conditions.

Donkor (2010) found that the value parents attach to education can influence the support they provide. The present study further shows that this value may be reinforced when the benefits of education become visible within the community itself. Educational value was therefore shaped not only by expectations of future employment but also by evidence that educated people could support families and contribute to community development.

## Positive Aspirations and Uncertainty about Further Education

Despite the predominantly positive attitude toward education, some participants expressed concern that many families see high school as the highest level of education they aspire for their children. Few young people in the community were seen entering tertiary education. Students and parents in the community seem to be comfortable after graduating from high school. A parent said:

“From our perspective as parents, the education system is inadequate, and the highest level of education a child can achieve is merely SHS; beyond that, there is nothing else.” (Parent 12, School D)

This account reveals an important tension between valuing education and believing that continued educational progression is realistically achievable. Parents may strongly support schooling while still perceiving tertiary education as financially difficult, inaccessible, or unlikely to produce sufficient returns. In circumstances where relatively few young people progress beyond SHS, that level may become normalised as a realistic educational endpoint.

Two of the SMCs at school B highlighted the negative attitudes of members of the community who do not attach much importance to education, citing illiteracy as a primary cause for a portion of them. They further indicated that others in the community lament the unemployment rate in the country, as many educated children resort to gambling and other social vices. This does not convince them to invest in education or to exhibit positive attitudes towards it.

> A lot of community members don’t really understand how great and important education is. Some parents in the community don’t really regard education because some of them are not even educated. So, it’s only a handful of members who prioritise the importance of education. (School B, SMC 4)

Another SMC member focused on the effect of unemployment. The participant explained that when community members saw educated young people remaining unemployed, becoming dependent on their families, or engaging in harmful behaviour, they questioned whether further educational investment would produce meaningful benefits.

> The negative feeling a lot of community members have about education is about the unemployed youth we have today. Some feel that a lot of uneducated youth are jobless, and therefore, it baffles their minds as to whether they should invest in their child. Most of them might end up unemployed. Some youth also end up becoming drug addicts, and some also involve themselves in petty theft and armed robbery. (School B, SMC 5)

These accounts provide different explanations for uncertainty about education. SMC Member 4 viewed limited parental education and understanding as the main problem. In contrast, SMC Member 5 connected negative attitudes with unemployment and the failure of education to produce visible economic progress. These differences are important because they show that community members did not agree on why some families gave education less priority.

The second explanation also challenges the idea that uncertain attitudes result only from ignorance or a lack of educational values. Some families may question further investment because they have seen educated young people struggle to find employment. Their caution may therefore be based on observed economic outcomes rather than a rejection of schooling.

A clear pattern appears when these findings are considered together with the earlier accounts of visible educational success. When parents saw educated children supporting their families or communities, their confidence in education increased. When they saw educated young people remaining unemployed, their confidence could weaken. The same process of social observation could therefore produce either stronger support or greater uncertainty.

Educational attitudes were therefore not fixed. They could be reinforced or questioned as families interpreted the experiences of people around them.

This finding is consistent with Issahaku and Asoma (2023), who found that some families in northern Ghana regarded education beyond SHS as costly and sometimes weighed further educational expenditure against alternative household investments. The present study extends this finding by showing that decisions about further education were also informed by the outcomes families observed among educated young people within their own social environments.

Reluctance to support education beyond SHS should therefore not automatically be interpreted as lack of ambition, ignorance or cultural resistance. For some households, it may reflect an

attempt to reconcile strong educational aspirations with limited financial resources, the costs of tertiary education and uncertainty about employment.

This is one of the more significant findings in the chapter. It demonstrates that strong belief in education can coexist with constrained educational investment**.** Parents may regard education as important while simultaneously limiting how far they can support it when the costs of further education are high and its expected returns are uncertain.

## Participants' own attitudes and beliefs in education

The preceding sections examined participants' descriptions of educational attitudes and changes within their wider communities. The study also explored participants' own attitudes towards their children's education, allowing a distinction to be made between what they observed among others and how they positioned themselves personally.

The majority of parents who discussed their own attitudes expressed strong support for their children's education. Some mothers described this support through everyday guidance and assistance. One parent explained:

"Well, as a mother, I try my best to guide and assist them in every way I can so that it will help shape their future." (Parent 11, School D)

This account shows that the participant understood educational support as part of her parental responsibility. Her positive attitude was expressed through practical guidance directed towards her child's future rather than by leaving educational responsibility entirely to the school.

Other parents explained their positive attitudes in terms of the benefits they associated with education: A Parent mentioned that

"Well, I hold a positive belief in education because the benefits are limitless, and children and parents continue to benefit as long as they are all committed to education". (Parent 1, School A*)*

Another parent provided a particularly concrete example of how a child's education had already benefited the household:

> My attitudes and beliefs regarding education is that my children have benefited from going to school and sometimes I try to access my phone, maybe I might want to make a call due to my level of education I am not really good in the usage of our modern mobile phones, but with the education, my children are receiving there are able to assist me on how to use the phone to do a lot of things on my own, and it motivates me a lot to help and support them achieve a higher education to become future leaders. (Parent 5, School B)

The second account gives a practical example of how education benefited both the child and the parent. The child's ability to assist the parent with a mobile phone made the value of education visible in everyday family life. This immediate benefit strengthened the parent's motivation to support the child's further education.

Participants therefore expressed positive attitudes for different but related reasons. Parent 11 emphasised parental guidance and the child's future development, Parent 1 emphasised the broader benefits of educational commitment, and Parent 5 described a direct benefit already experienced within the household. These differences show that parental attitudes were sustained by both future aspirations and present experience.

The distinction between participants' perceptions of their communities and their own attitudes is important. Earlier accounts showed that participants recognised uncertainty, weaker commitment and doubts about further educational investment among some community members. When discussing themselves, however, most positioned education positively and described ways in which they sought to support their own children. Participants therefore did

not simply describe a changing educational climate among others; many presented themselves as personally participating in that broader shift towards stronger educational commitment.

At the same time, these accounts are self-reported and should not be treated as direct evidence that stated attitudes always translated into the same level of educational involvement. This distinction becomes particularly important in the subsequent chapters, where participants' reported forms of involvement and the constraints affecting their ability to act on their educational aspirations are examined in greater detail.

## 4.3 Views on The Current Education System

Parents and community members were asked to share their views about the current education system. Most participants believed that the system had improved compared with the education available in the past. They spoke about greater access to schooling, increased literacy, the use of technology, progression to higher education, and improved confidence among children. However, their views were not entirely positive. Some participants also raised concerns about digital distractions, changes in school discipline, limited English-language understanding, and current teaching methods. These different views show that participants did not simply accept or reject the current education system. They valued the opportunities it provided while also questioning some aspects of its quality and effects.

### Perceived Improvements in the Education System

Participants frequently referred to technology as one indication of educational progress. Some parents observed that their children had developed skills in using mobile phones and other modern technologies that were unavailable to many adults when they were growing up. One parent explained:

*"*The usage of mobile phones has made it easier to send money to children in Senior High School (SHS) and check up on them*" (*Parent 4, School B*).*

Another parent described how children's education had enabled them to assist adults within the household:

> The current education system has been a significant improvement for my children, helping them achieve a lot. After all, in the olden days, there were no schools, which made it difficult for me to cope with some of the modern devices used at the time. (Parent 5, School B)

These accounts show that parents judged educational improvement partly through the practical abilities' children brought into the home. Technology enabled parents to maintain contact and provide financial support to children studying away from home, while children's growing technological knowledge could also assist parents who had received little formal schooling. In this sense, technology strengthened the connection between home and school, especially where distance made direct contact difficult. This is particularly significant because the benefits of education were not experienced only by the learner. Knowledge acquired through schooling could circulate within the household, creating a two-way relationship in which parents supported children's education while children also helped parents navigate aspects of contemporary life.

### Literacy, Educational Progress, and Future Opportunity

Many parents emphasised that the current education system has enabled their children to perform and achieve better than before. They acknowledge how the current system has reduced illiteracy and paved the way for a successful future for their children. As a result, children are able to further their education to the highest level. One parent said:

“As one respondent shared, “The current system of Education is driving a lot of illiteracy away from rural communities” (Parent 12, School D)

Another described the progress of her own children:

“The current education system is far better because two of my children are already at university (UDS), and they wouldn’t have been able to achieve that without the current education system.” (Parent 10, School D)

These accounts show that participants assessed the education system through changes they could observe in their families and communities. Reduced illiteracy represented broader community progress, while progression to university provided a particularly concrete example of opportunities available to a younger generation.

Parent 10’s account is particularly important because her judgement was based on the educational progress of her own children. University attendance made the benefits of the current system real and visible within the family. Educational improvement was therefore understood through lived experience rather than only through government policies or official claims.

The participants again emphasised different signs of progress. One focused on the wider effect of education on people’s lives, another on reduced illiteracy, while Parent 10 focused on the university progression of two children. These differences show that participants judged improvement through both community-level change and personal family experience.

In rural northern Ghana, where many adults had limited access to formal education, children’s movement from basic school to Senior High School and university represented an important change between generations. The current education system was valued because it appeared to offer children opportunities that had not been available to many of their parents.

The findings therefore suggest that confidence in the current education system was strengthened when educational progress could be observed in tangible ways. Participants did not judge the

system only through policies, enrolment figures or examinations; they also considered whether children were becoming literate, progressing further and acquiring abilities that could improve their lives and those of their families.

## Improved Resources, Motivation, and Confidence

Respondents observed that education in the past was difficult due to limited resources and a lack of motivation. In contrast, the current system offers better opportunities and support, making students more confident. One parent explained:

> Well, as an individual, I have experienced education a bit in the olden days, and as you can see, education in the olden days was extremely difficult because there were no resources for us to use in achieving knowledge but with the current education system we have in place now I can testify that it would be easier for our children to achieve quality education with the help of we the parents and the teachers. (Parent 1, School A)

An SMC member focused on changes in children's confidence and wider community development:

"The current education system is indeed the ideal system that has improved many children, especially their confidence. And there is massive change and development here in our community". (SMC 1, School A)

These accounts show that participants viewed educational progress as involving more than increased school enrolment. They also pointed to better learning opportunities, stronger motivation, improved confidence, and changes within the community.

Parent 1 also placed responsibility on both parents and teachers. The participant believed that the improved education system could provide better opportunities, but children would benefit fully only through cooperation between families and schools. Educational progress was

therefore understood as requiring shared support rather than depending on the school system alone.

The emphasis on confidence is also important. Participants appeared to judge education by whether children could communicate, participate, use knowledge, and face the future with greater confidence. In the study communities, education was therefore valued for both academic progress and personal development. Although the participants generally viewed the current system positively, they emphasised different signs of improvement. Parent 1 focused on the availability of resources and shared support from parents and teachers. Parent 9 stressed motivation and seriousness, while SMC Member 1 focused on children's confidence and wider community development. These differences show that participants did not judge educational progress through one measure alone.

Some parents highlighted how the current educational system has motivated parents to actively support their children's learning. Parents emphasised their commitment to ensuring children achieve success, with one parent stating:

*"*The current education system has laid a very good path for the future of our children, and every neighbour wants their child to be educated" (Parent 5, School B*).*

This statement suggests that improvements in education had strengthened community expectations about schooling. As more children gained access to education and progressed further, schooling increasingly became viewed as a normal and desirable path for children. This does not mean that every family had the same resources or level of involvement, but it shows that education had gained an important place in participants' hopes for the next generation.

The finding adds that participants judged the current system through both material and personal changes. Improved resources were important, but so were motivation, confidence, family support, and visible community development. Educational improvement was therefore

understood as a combination of better opportunities and changes in children's abilities and aspirations.

## Concerns about the Education System

Despite their generally positive views, parents and community members also identified concerns about the current education system. These concerns related to technology, discipline, language development, understanding, and teaching methods. Their accounts show that support for the current system was not without criticism. Participants could recognise educational improvements while still questioning particular changes within the system.

### *Changes in School Discipline*

Another participant mentioned the elimination of the use of canes in beating children who are not performing well in the current education system.

> Honestly, I have tasted a part of education in the olden days before, and when I was in class, I never liked the idea of a teacher using canes or shouting at us, which has been revised as of today's education." (Parent 2, School A).

Discipline in schools has shifted from harsh methods, such as caning, to more constructive approaches. While some viewed this as a positive change, others reflected on how discipline was enforced in the past.

> Well, my opinion is that some parents are happy with the current education system. Still, there are some amendments that the parents would have loved to see because, in the olden days, teachers were allowed to use canes to discipline students, which was quite good because it really helped a lot. Still, as a parent, I am not insinuating that teachers should physically use canes on students, but if the GES would allow teachers to frighten students with canes, at least it would help a lot, in my opinion. (SMC5, School C)

These accounts show that participants did not hold one shared view about discipline. Parent 2 associated the current system with a move away from fear, shouting, and physical punishment. SMC Member 5, however, believed that the loss of older disciplinary methods had reduced teachers' authority.

The difference reflects a wider tension over what good discipline should look like. Participants valued children's wellbeing, but some also worried that less severe discipline might lead to weaker control and reduced seriousness among learners. Their views were shaped by their own experiences of schooling and by changing ideas about how children should be guided.

In the Ghanaian context, this finding shows that educational reform is judged not only by access and academic results but also by whether schools are perceived to foster respectful and responsible behaviour. Parents and community members expected the education system to find ways to maintain discipline without fully returning to the harsh practices of the past.

This variation is important because it shows that community views about educational improvement were not uniform. The removal of caning represented progress for some participants but a loss of authority for others. The finding therefore reveals an unresolved tension between protecting children from harsh punishment and maintaining the level of discipline that some adults associated with effective learning.

### *Digital Opportunities and New Risks*

Despite the positive feedback and impact of the current education system, some parents and community members highlighted its negatives and challenges. The increased accessibility of technology has introduced distractions such as cyber activities and exposure to inappropriate content like pornography.

One respondent remarked,

“The current education system has negatively influenced youth through activities like watching pornographic content and cyber distractions” (Parent 4, School B)

This account shows that participants viewed technology as having both benefits and risks. Mobile phones and digital knowledge helped families communicate, send money, and learn new skills, but access to digital content also created concerns about distraction and children’s behaviour.

The concern was therefore not a rejection of technology. Rather, it reflected uncertainty about how children could gain the benefits of digital access while being protected from content and activities considered harmful. This reveals a tension between educational modernisation and the need for responsible digital use. In the study communities, technology was therefore viewed as a new area in which parents and schools needed to provide guidance. This finding adds that participants judged technological progress not only by children’s ability to use digital devices but also by how responsibly they used them.

### *English-Language Ability and Understanding*

A community member noted that the current system still needs improvement, despite past improvements. They highlighted the students' lack of English fluency. A Community member stated that:

“The current education system is quite effective for children; however, I have a concern: some young people struggle to speak English fluently. While some can read and understand, others can read but do not comprehend.” (SMC 2, School A)

This account distinguishes between the ability to read words and the ability to understand their meaning. The participant therefore judged educational quality not only through literacy but also through comprehension and communication.

The concern is important because it draws attention to the difference between access to schooling and meaningful learning**.** Increased participation in education was regarded positively, but participants also expected schooling to produce comprehension and practical competence

### *Concerns about Teaching Methods*

Some participants felt that the old education system offered better teaching methods that helped students understand better. A community member explained that:

"The old education system is much better than the current education system because it affects their methodological way of teaching the students to understand better" (SMC 6, School C)

The concern about teaching methods, together with the concern about English comprehension, shows that parents and community members were paying attention to the quality of children's learning. Their assessment of the system went beyond whether schools existed or children attended. They also considered whether children could understand lessons, communicate confidently, and apply what they learned.

This view also shows variation among participants. While many participants believed that the present education system was better than the previous system, SMC Member 6 believed that earlier teaching methods supported better understanding. Participants therefore did not agree that every change within the current system represented improvement.

The deeper issue raised by these accounts is the difference between access to education and the quality of learning. Participants appreciated increased educational opportunities, but they also expected teaching to produce understanding, confidence, and practical ability.

Overall, the findings indicate that rural parents and community members largely perceive the current education system as an improvement over the past, particularly in relation to access, reduced illiteracy, exposure to technology, progression to higher education, and children's

growing confidence. However, this positive perception is not unconditional. Participants also identify emerging concerns related to digital distractions, children's exposure to inappropriate online content, weakening discipline, limited English fluency, and uncertainty about whether current teaching methods promote deep understanding. These mixed views show that participants were not simply accepting educational changes without question. They assessed the current system according to its effects on children's learning, behaviour, communication, future opportunities, and family life. Their position can therefore be understood as one of critical support: they valued the progress made but also identified areas requiring improvement. Support for formal schooling did not therefore mean complete acceptance of every aspect of the education system. Parents and community members valued the current system because it had created opportunities that were previously limited, but they also expected schooling to prepare children for responsible adulthood, employment, moral development, practical life, and community contribution.

The finding adds to the understanding of rural communities by showing that they were not resistant to educational modernisation. Instead, they evaluated educational change according to whether it provided meaningful learning while also supporting responsible behaviour and local expectations.

The current system appears to have improved availability and access, especially by expanding schooling opportunities and exposing children to modern skills. However, participants' concerns suggest that acceptability and adaptability remain important issues. For education to be meaningful in these rural communities, it must not only provide access to schooling but also respond to local expectations regarding moral formation, effective teaching, language development, safe use of technology, and preparation for changing rural livelihoods.

The main contribution of this section is that participants judged the current educational system through practical outcomes rather than enrolment alone. They considered whether children understood what they learned, used technology responsibly, communicated confidently, behaved well, and applied education within their families and communities.

Although some positive descriptions may reflect the socially accepted view that education should be supported, participants also openly criticised discipline, teaching methods, language development, and digital risks. This shows that their accounts were not entirely shaped by a desire to present the education system positively.

## 4.4 Education as key to success

When participants were asked about whether education leads to success, the majority of respondents highlighted education's transformative role in improving lives, fostering economic opportunities, and driving societal progress.

Respondents widely recognised education as a pathway to success. Education was seen as essential not only for formal employment but also for traditional occupations like farming. Parents expressed their commitment to ensuring their children receive quality education, recognising its long-term benefits. Respondents remarked that:

"Education is the key to success, and it has a lot of benefits attached to it as well" (Parent 8, School C).

"Education is still the key to success because it has positively impacted a lot of lives" (SMC 5, School C).

Although participants repeatedly described education as the "key to success", they did not all define success in the same way. Some associated it with employment and improved living conditions, while others connected it with knowledge, independence, technology, improved

livelihoods, family support, and community development. Success was therefore understood as both personal progress and the ability to contribute to the wellbeing of others.

Some participants believed that education had become important for farming because of technological changes. One parent explained that:

"Without education, we can't even farm nowadays because of the technology that is being used today" (Parent 5, School B).

This meaning is important in the northern Ghanaian context, where farming remains central to rural livelihoods, but families must also respond to changing economic and technological demands. Educational success did not necessarily mean obtaining an office job or rejecting rural life. It could also mean gaining the knowledge and skills required to improve existing livelihoods and manage changing conditions.

Laube (2016) similarly found that formal education and professional careers had become important models of success among young people, parents, teachers, and community leaders in northern Ghana. However, limited educational resources, funding, and employment opportunities often frustrated these aspirations. The present study adds that participants did not understand success only as obtaining professional employment or leaving rural life. They also saw education as useful for improving farming, understanding technology, supporting families, and contributing to community development.

Many parents linked education with children's future success and with their own fulfilment as parents. Some reflected on their limited educational opportunities and explained how these experiences influenced the support they gave to their children. One parent remarked,

*"*Education is key because I wish I had also been an educated parent, looking at its benefits, and that is why I have enrolled my children in schools to achieve better education" (Parent 7, School C).

This account connects belief with action. The participant's regret about missed educational opportunities strengthened the decision to enrol the children in school. Education was prioritised because the parent wanted the children to avoid some of the limitations experienced in the parent's own life.

An SMC member added:

"I have witnessed a lot of parents who have invested their resources for the betterment of their children's education, and it has paid off positively" (SMC 1, School A).

Visible results also influenced educational priorities. When parents saw another family's investment in education producing positive outcomes, they became more confident that supporting schooling was worthwhile. The value attached to education was therefore strengthened through personal experience and observation of other families rather than through general statements about education alone.

Donkor (2010) found that culture, economic circumstances, competing priorities, parental educational levels, family structure, and family size influenced the value Ghanaian parents placed on schooling and the support they provided. The present study adds an explanation of how this value could be strengthened: parents drew on personal regret, their children's progress, and the visible success of other families when deciding to enrol children and invest in their education.

Some parents who reflected on the question of whether education is key to success mentioned the technological and societal advancements it brings, enhancing the quality of life for individuals and communities. They acknowledged that education prepares individuals to adapt to technological changes and knowledge gained through education was seen as beneficial in all aspects of life. A parent explained:

“Education has enhanced our way of living and a lot of things in our lives, especially technology” (Parent 9, School C)

An SMC member stated:

“When you acquire knowledge, it helps you in all aspects of your life. So, education is really the key to success” (SMC 8, School D)

These responses show that education was valued for its practical usefulness and not only for obtaining certificates or formal employment. Participants believed that education could help people use technology, make informed decisions, improve their work, and participate more effectively in modern society.

Participants nevertheless emphasised different aspects of educational success. Some focused on employment and improved living conditions, while others discussed farming, technology, independence, family support, or community development. These differences show that parents and community members were not a uniform group, even though they generally agreed that education could improve people’s lives.

Taken together, the findings show that participants understood educational success in multidimensional terms. Employment and economic mobility were important, but they existed alongside expectations of independence, technological competence, improved rural livelihoods, family responsibility and community contribution.

However, confidence in education as a route to success was not unconditional. As shown earlier in the chapter, unemployment among educated young people, the costs of further education and limited progression beyond SHS created uncertainty for some families. Education could therefore be strongly valued while its expected returns were simultaneously questioned.

This tension is consistent with Issahaku and Asoma (2024), who found that financial constraints, parental pressure, teenage pregnancy, and the lower cost of marriage compared with tertiary education influenced education and marriage decisions among rural SHS graduates

in northern Ghana. Their findings show that educational aspirations may be strong while the costs and uncertain returns of further education limit the choices available to families.

The contribution of this section is therefore not simply that rural parents regarded education as a “key to success.” Rather, it shows what success meant to them. Success encompassed employment, personal development, improved rural livelihoods, technological ability, family support and contribution to community life. It also remained subject to uncertainty when the outcomes participants associated with successful education were not visible.

## 4.5 Perspectives on the Role of Religion, Culture, and Education

Parents’ and community members’ views were sought to understand whether the community perceived their religion and cultural background as more valuable than education, and how this affected their prioritisation of education.

When parents and community members were asked whether their cultural and religious beliefs take precedence over education, only a small number indicated that religion and cultural obligations are more essential. However, the majority reported that education is either more important than or equally important as their religious and cultural obligations."

Parents who prioritise their culture and religious beliefs over education note that cultural and religious obligations are vital for moral development. They indicated that these beliefs instil moral values by shaping children’s behaviour and enriching their understanding of their history.

One SMC member stated that:

"Both education and religious and cultural obligations help in the upbringing of the child, but religion helps more in shaping the behaviour of the child." (SMC 7, School D)

A parent similarly explained that:

"Our religion and cultural activities are key to success than education because they contribute a lot to the moral value of our children, enabling them to live as good examples for their younger ones." (Parent 4, school B)

These responses show that the few participants who placed religion and culture above formal education did so because they associated them with moral formation. For these participants, success was not understood only in terms of schooling, employment, or academic progression. It also involved becoming disciplined, respectful, morally upright, and socially responsible.

The difference between participants was therefore partly related to how they defined success. Those who placed greater importance on religion and culture focused mainly on morality and behaviour, while those who prioritised formal education placed greater emphasis on knowledge, opportunity, and preparation for the future. Their position reflected a different understanding of success rather than a complete rejection of formal education.

In a different cultural setting, Reese et al. (1995) found that family values related to respect, morality, responsibility, and proper behaviour did not necessarily conflict with formal schooling and could, under some conditions, support children's educational development. Although that study concerned Latino families and cannot be directly transferred to northern Ghana, it supports the wider point that strong cultural values do not automatically prevent participation in formal education.

In the study communities, participants connected children's upbringing with the shared responsibilities of families, religious groups, communities, and schools. Religion and culture were valued for their moral guidance, while formal education offered knowledge and future opportunities. The main difference between participants concerned which of these contributions should receive greater importance.

## Religion as Supporting Formal Education

Other parents mentioned religion as the main vehicle for the foundation and introduction of education in the country.

> Well, looking at the existence of Christians and Islamic sects today, we see that they have contributed significantly to the improvement of education. Christians have built churches and schools in place, while Muslims have also built mosques and schools in place, all for the sake of making education a strong pillar for the future of our children. (Parent 1, School A)

This account shows that religion was not always viewed as competing with formal education. The participant associated Christian and Muslim institutions with the development of schools and educational opportunities. Religious commitment could therefore provide a reason for supporting formal education.

Research on Islamic education in Ghana supports this relationship. Owusu-Ansah and Zagoon-Sayeed (2025) explain that the Islamic Education Unit under the Ghana Education Service was established to combine secular and Islamic learning. The present study adds the views of rural parents and community members, who saw religious institutions not only as sources of faith and morality but also as contributors to formal education.

## Religion, Culture and Education as Complementary

Many participants highlighted the complementary roles of formal education and religious and cultural obligations and stressed their interconnectedness and equal levels of success. A community member stated that:

"I think religious education and cultural obligation are the same because they both help in the development of the child." (SMC 8, School D)

A parent explained that

“Religious and cultural obligation [are] the key to success, but it’s not more than education. They all fall in line with one another in terms of acquiring knowledge” (Parent 5, School B). Another community member said:

"Religious and cultural obligations cannot be the key to success more than education, but they are just like a coin. Education cannot exist without them, and vice versa. They all go in line with one another. **(**SMC 5, School C**)**

The coin comparison expresses a relationship of connection rather than competition. These participants believed that education without moral guidance would be incomplete, while religion and culture without formal education might not fully prepare children for modern social and economic life. Prioritising formal education did not therefore require families to abandon their religious or cultural values.

Research from rural Kenya also found that membership in religious institutions and high levels of religiosity was associated with stronger parental educational aspirations, particularly for girls (Tabe-Ojong & Nshakira-Rukundo, 2021). Although the Kenyan setting is different from northern Ghana and the study did not establish that religion caused higher aspirations, it supports the argument that religious commitment can exist alongside, and sometimes strengthen, educational aspirations.

Other participants considered formal education more important than religion and culture because of its wider contribution to children’s futures. An SMC member opined:

> Education is far more balanced than religious and cultural education, although I am not neglecting the fact that religious and cultural education. However, education lays the foundation for the community's cultural and religious practices. For that matter, I see education as the future of our children. (SMC 1, School A)

A parent stated:

"Education has a lot more moral lessons attached to it than our Religious and cultural obligations." (Parent 8, School C*)*

These participants did not completely dismiss religion or culture. Instead, they believed that formal education had become more important for understanding modern life, gaining knowledge, and creating future opportunities. Their accounts show a change in priority rather than the complete removal of religious and cultural commitments.

The findings therefore reveal meaningful variation rather than one uniform community position. Some participants prioritised religion and culture for moral development, others emphasised complementarity, and others gave greater priority to formal education.

This variation is analytically important because it prevents parents and community members from being treated as one homogeneous group. Strong religious or cultural commitments did not produce the same educational position among all participants.

Donkor et al. (2013) found that traditional cultural practices could restrict parental support for formal education in the particular Ghanaian community they examined. The present study provides a more mixed picture. Although a few participants placed religion and culture above education, many viewed them as complementary or believed that religious and cultural values strengthened children's educational development. Religion and culture therefore did not function only as barriers; they could also provide moral reasons for supporting schooling.

Alesina et al. (2023) found differences in intergenerational educational mobility among religious groups across Africa. However, they also showed that historical inequalities, location, migration, and limited infrastructure were connected with these differences. Their findings caution against explaining educational differences only through religious beliefs. In the present study, participants' religious identities did not automatically determine whether they supported

formal education; their views were also shaped by expected benefits, community experience, and the role religious institutions played in education.

Overall, the relationship between education, religion, and culture was not simply one of competition. Participants differed in the importance they assigned to each, but most believed that they could contribute together to children's development.

The contribution of this study is that strong religious and cultural commitments did not automatically result in a low priority for formal education. In many accounts, morality, discipline, religious values, and cultural responsibilities became additional reasons for supporting schooling. Educational prioritisation therefore involved balancing formal education with religious and cultural expectations rather than choosing one and completely rejecting the others.

## Participants' perception and beliefs as Influences on Educational Prioritisation

Many parents expressed that education has transformed their lives and enabled them to make independent decisions, suggesting that their beliefs align with prioritising education. For example, one respondent highlighted how education empowered the youth to resist forced marriages, a traditional practice that previously limited personal freedom.

> In the olden days, there were instances where a young girl was forcefully married to an older person, which was not right. Education has enabled the youth to realise that they can make their own decisions. Some people look to their colleagues' parents to witness the standards their children have set in education, and therefore, they also… put in their best to push their own children to achieve the same feat. (Parent 4, School B)

This account shows two ways in which perceptions influenced educational prioritisation. First, the participant viewed education as giving young people greater knowledge and confidence to question forced marriage and participate in decisions about their futures. Second, parents were

encouraged when they observed the educational progress of children in other families. Education was therefore prioritised both as a source of personal choice and as a visible pathway to a better future.

This meaning is important in the northern Ghanaian context, where decisions about marriage and young people's futures may involve parents and wider family relationships. The participant believed that education could give young people a stronger voice within these relationships. This does not mean that education removed family or cultural influence, but that it could increase young people's understanding of their choices and their ability to participate in decisions affecting them.

De Groot et al. (2018) found that child marriage among women in northern Ghana was associated with a lower likelihood of believing that their own actions could influence their lives. Issahaku and Asoma (2024) also found that financial constraints, parental pressure, teenage pregnancy, peer influence, and the relative costs of marriage and tertiary education shaped education and marriage choices among rural SHS graduates in northern Ghana.

These studies show that marriage and education decisions in northern Ghana are shaped by family, social, and economic conditions. The present study adds parents' own perception that education could strengthen young people's knowledge and ability to participate in decisions affecting their futures. The findings do not prove that education prevents forced marriage, but they show why some parents viewed schooling as a source of protection and personal choice.

One SMC chairman in school C shared their experience of serving as an assembly member for eight years, attributing this achievement to their educational background. He said:

> Education has improved our lives in so many ways. Because of my educational background, I was able to travel from the north to the Ashanti Mampong to serve as an

> assembly member for 8 years, and I wouldn't have been able to achieve that feat without the presence of Education. (SMC 5, School C)

The participant's own experience provided practical evidence of education's value. Education was prioritised because it was associated with mobility, leadership, and the ability to serve beyond the immediate community. Personal experience therefore turned a general belief about education into a stronger commitment to schooling.

Parents often described how their religious and cultural beliefs even motivate them to prioritise education. A mother noted that education teaches children to socialise and exhibit courtesy, which aligns with their community's cultural and religious expectations. For her, education complements and enhances these values, so she prioritises it.

> My belief as a mother is that children are being taught how to socialise themselves in the community, especially when it comes to courtesy, and for that matter, it contributes a lot to their future and guides them on how to become better people. (Parent 11 school D)

Some respondents emphasised how education helps interpret cultural and moral values in the modern era.

"Education has influenced a lot more than our social and cultural experiences because, without education, some cultural and moral values cannot be interpreted looking at the era we live in today." (Parent 9, School C)

These accounts show that some parents prioritised education because it supported values they already considered important. Schooling was expected to develop courtesy, social responsibility, discipline, and moral understanding. Religion and culture therefore influenced educational prioritisation by shaping the kind of person parents expected education to produce.

Participants believed that education could help children understand and practise moral and cultural values under changing social conditions. This interpretation is more strongly supported by the evidence than claiming that education automatically strengthened cultural identity.

This relationship is similar to Reese et al.'s (1995) finding that cultural values relating to respect, morality, and family responsibility could complement children's adaptation to formal schooling. However, the present study differs by showing how rural northern Ghanaian parents connected these values directly with their reasons for prioritising education.

Several parents observed that the visible benefits of education in their community had changed their attitudes toward how they prioritised schooling for their children:

An SMC member credited much of the community's development to successful local individuals who achieved success through education. He opined that:

> As a community member, I have greatly benefited from education, particularly because the borehole projects that provide us with good drinking water were established and funded by individuals who have excelled academically. Even toilets and healthcare units are included in this improvement. Therefore, I can confidently say that education has positively impacted the community, including my family and me. (SMC 1, School A)

A parent shared how they established a poultry farm and trained 127 girls in the district to make soap and detergents, attributing their success to education.

These accounts broaden the meaning of educational success. Participants did not judge education only through certificates, employment, or individual income. They also considered whether educated people provided water, healthcare facilities, businesses, affordable products, and skills training. Educational success was therefore understood as involving a responsibility

to improve the wider community. All these examples illustrate how education benefits individuals and uplifts entire communities.

In the study communities, visible development projects made the value of education easier to recognise. When educated people used their knowledge and resources to address local needs, education became a shared community benefit rather than only a personal achievement. Such examples could encourage other parents to give schooling greater priority.

Laube (2016) showed that ideas of success in northern Ghana combined formal educational aspirations with local forms of social recognition. The present study adds specific examples of how community contribution shaped educational prioritisation. Boreholes, healthcare facilities, small businesses, affordable products, and skills training became visible evidence that education could benefit the whole community.

Other parents are motivated by observing their children's achievements. One respondent noted that seeing other parents' children succeed academically encouraged them to push their own children to achieve the same success.

Lastly, a parent discussed how education was relegated to the background in these rural communities, while emphasising its transformative impact on the mind.

> Observing the situation in rural areas, many parents are not particularly interested in allowing their children to pursue education. However, given the progress that education has brought to the community, I can now see and confirm that a greater number of parents are enrolling their children in school. (Parent 1, School A)

This account shows that educational prioritisation is changing over time. Some parents may have previously given limited attention to schooling, but the visible progress associated with education has encouraged greater enrolment and support. This suggests that rural people’s

prioritisation of education is not fixed. It is shaped by experience, observation, community development, and changing perceptions of what education can achieve.

Together, the findings show that educational prioritisation was shaped by several interconnected influences. Participants drew on personal experience, the educational progress of other families, expectations about children's future opportunities, religious and cultural values, economic conditions and visible community benefits when deciding how much importance to attach to schooling.

Parents could therefore support the same educational activity for different reasons. One might prioritise education because of expected employment, another because of personal independence, another because of moral development, and another because of anticipated family or community benefits.

The main contribution is not simply that parents and community members valued education. Rather, the findings explain how that value developed and how it became connected to educational decisions. Educational priorities were strengthened when participants could connect schooling with outcomes they regarded as meaningful but could also become uncertain when costs were high or the expected benefits of further education were not visible.

## Conclusion

Chapter 4 has shown that parents and community members generally placed substantial value on education, but the meanings they attached to it were diverse. Education was associated with practical knowledge, employment, independence, improved livelihoods, technological competence, moral and social development, family wellbeing and community progress. Participants therefore did not define educational success in a single way.

The findings also show that educational attitudes and priorities were shaped by personal experience and by the outcomes participants observed around them. Visible educational

success, including children's progression, improved livelihoods and contributions by educated community members, often strengthened confidence in schooling. Conversely, unemployment, high educational costs and limited progression beyond SHS created uncertainty about how far educational investment could realistically continue. Strong belief in education could therefore coexist with practical limits on educational support.

An important contribution of this chapter is that religion and culture did not operate mainly as barriers to formal education. Although a few participants placed greater importance on religious and cultural obligations, many viewed education, religion, and culture as complementary. Moral values, discipline, cultural responsibility, and religious beliefs often became additional reasons for supporting children's schooling.

The chapter therefore moves beyond the simple conclusion that rural parents either value or do not value education. It shows that educational priorities were socially formed through personal experience, family and community observation, changing livelihood conditions, and the outcomes participants believed education could produce. Strong educational beliefs could exist alongside practical limits on how far families were able to support schooling. These findings provide the basis for Chapter 5, which examines the specific ways in which parents and community members participated in supporting quality education at home and at school.

# Chapter 5: Parental and Community Involvement in Elements of Quality Education

This chapter examines the areas of quality education in which parents and community members participate in rural contexts. It focuses on two main forms of involvement: home involvement and school involvement. The organisation of this chapter is informed by the elements of quality education identified in the scoping review, particularly learner support at home, school management, finance, learning environment, and school personnel support. Data are drawn from interviews with parents, children, teachers, community members, and headteachers.

Home involvement encompasses parents' engagement in both academic and non-academic activities, their interest in children's education, and the community's role in supporting learning at home. The perspectives of parents, children, and community members are presented to show how involvement is understood and practised in everyday contexts. Children's perspectives are included to provide first-hand insight into the support they receive at home and to better understand how parental involvement is experienced from their viewpoint.

School involvement examines the main areas in which parents and community members engage within schools. This includes their roles in supporting school activities and participating in school-related processes. The perspectives of headteachers, parents, and community members are used to provide a comprehensive understanding of how involvement is organised and experienced at the school level. The chapter is also read in relation to the scoping review framework. The findings are used to examine whether the forms of involvement identified in the literature, learner support at home, educational content, school management, finance, learning environment, and school personnel management, are reflected in the rural Ghanaian context, and whether additional forms of involvement emerge from participants' accounts.

## 5.1 Home Involvement

### 5.1.1 Academic Activities at Home

*Parents' Responses*

The study sought to understand the nature of academic activities children bring home from school from the parents' perspectives.

Homework was the most frequently mentioned activity, with parents emphasising its importance for reinforcing problem-solving skills and understanding topics taught in school. One parent stated:

"They bring their homework from school so that we can assist and guide them on how to solve them with the help of neighbouring relatives who are well-educated." (Parent 4, School B)

Another parent mentioned:

"Well, the teachers give them homework in order to help them with problem-solving skills." (Parent 1, School A)

Parents reported that the most common subjects for academic activities brought home are mathematics, the local dialect, and English.

"Most of the academic activities they bring back from school are the local dialect and mathematics." (Parent 11, School D)

"Mostly, the academic activities they bring back from school are mathematics and the English language." (Parent 6, School B)

Some parents also mentioned that children bring home academic activities covering various subject areas that they were unable to grasp in class, so their parents can assist them at home.

> "Most of the activities my children bring back from school are the ones that involve topics that they are being taught in class, and they are unable to capture or understand

them properly, so they bring them home for me to assist them or involve someone who is highly educated than me." (Parent 2, School A)

These accounts show that homework was the most frequently reported academic activity through which school learning continued within the home. Parents referred particularly to mathematics, English, the local language, and activities involving topics children found difficult to understand. Homework therefore provided an important point of connection between what children were learning at school and the support available to them within their households and wider family networks.

The prominence of mathematics, English, and the local language also provides contextual detail about the academic areas in which parents encountered children's schoolwork. The inclusion of the local language is particularly important because it shows that academic support at home was not limited to subjects delivered through English. The linguistic knowledge available within the family could provide a resource through which some parents participated in children's formal learning, although the extent of this support varied among households.

The present finding is broadly consistent with the scoping review in identifying homework and other academic tasks as important areas of home-based learning. The scoping review reported homework, reading, and mathematics-related activities among the academic areas in which rural parents supported their children (Abraha, 2022; Eberhardt, 2024; Ram, 2018; Ahmed et al., 2024; Chowdhury & Afrin, 2019). In the present study, parents provided more specific accounts of the schoolwork children brought home, identifying homework particularly in mathematics, English, and the local language, as well as activities relating to topics children had difficulty understanding in class. The findings therefore support the scoping review's

identification of homework as an important area of home-based academic involvement, while adding contextual detail about the subjects encountered within the study communities.

*Parents' support in academic activities at home*

The study further examined how parents supported children with these academic activities at home. The findings reveal that some parents with some level of education try to assist their children. A parent claimed that:

"With the little educational background I have, I am able to assist them with their homework." (Parent 9, School C)

These accounts are important because they show that parents in the study communities were not uniformly without formal education or incapable of providing academic assistance. Some rural parents possessed sufficient educational knowledge to engage directly with their children's schoolwork.

For these parents, their own educational experience became a resource that could be used within the household. The scoping review similarly found that parents that were educated were able to assist children directly with reading, homework, mathematics problems, examination results, and other academic activities (Ahmed et al., 2024; Chowdhury & Afrin, 2019). The present study therefore confirms that direct academic assistance also occurs among some parents in the rural Ghanaian study communities, while highlighting variation in educational capacity within the category of rural parents itself.

However, not all parents were able to provide direct academic assistance. Several parents seek help from neighbours, older siblings, or others with higher levels of education to guide their children when they are unable to provide direct support. A parent stated:

"I try to assist them in every way I can, but sometimes when I am unable to assist them, I would rather engage them with a nearby neighbour who is highly educated than me to assist them." (Parent 1, School A)

Another explained:

"I am not educated, so all I do is involve the older siblings to guide and assist them in their academic activities at home so that they can help each other grow, especially the young ones" (Parent 5, School B).

These accounts show that an inability to provide direct instructional assistance did not necessarily end parental involvement. Some parents remained involved by identifying people in their families or communities who had the knowledge to help their children. Older siblings, relatives, and educated neighbours therefore became part of the academic support available to some children.

This pattern is consistent with the scoping review, which found that parents with limited literacy in some rural settings sought help from extended family members, neighbours, and other more educated people when they were unable to assist children directly (Ahmed et al., 2024; Chowdhury & Afrin, 2019; Erlendsdóttir et al., 2022; Rodriguez-Kufner, 2016). The review consequently showed that parents' inability to provide direct instructional assistance did not necessarily indicate a lack of interest in their children's learning.

The present findings give this pattern further contextual meaning. In the study communities, academic support could be shared across family and neighbourhood relationships rather than depending exclusively on the individual parent's educational knowledge. A parent could remain involved by recognising that a child needed assistance, identifying someone with greater academic knowledge, and ensuring that the child received that support. Parental involvement therefore included both providing assistance personally and facilitating assistance through others.

This finding also adds contextual depth to Epstein's (1997) concept of learning at home. While the framework recognises family involvement in children's home learning, the findings from

this study show that such involvement may be organised collectively. The person providing the academic explanation was not always the parent; older siblings, relatives, and neighbours could become part of the learning-support relationship.

The only assistance some parents could give their children is to keep reminding them to complete homework before engaging in other activities. A parent explained:

"I try to remind them to do their homework before engaging in their house chores." (Parent 7, School C)

This account shows that parental involvement at home also included managing children's time and daily routines. By reminding children to complete homework before engaging in household chores, parents created time and priority for schoolwork even when they could not assist directly with its academic content.

This finding corresponds with the scoping review, where establishing study routines, protecting time for learning, supervising homework, and managing children's household responsibilities were identified as forms of home-based academic support (Case, 2009; Kong et al., 2008; Rodriguez-Kufner, 2016). The review also showed that household responsibilities could operate differently across families: some parents deliberately organised chores around schoolwork, while in other household's chores competed with children's study time.

The Ghanaian findings therefore suggest that academic involvement should not be understood only in terms of whether a parent can explain mathematics, English, or another subject. Managing study time, reminding children to complete assignments, and giving schoolwork priority within household routines were also ways through which parents participated in their children's learning.

Some parents, particularly those who are uneducated, either do not assist or only provide minimal support.

"As an uneducated person, I find it very difficult to assist and support my children's homework." (Parent 8, School C)

This account demonstrates that limited formal education could restrict direct academic support. However, the findings also show that parents with limited education did not respond in exactly the same way. Some sought assistance from siblings or neighbours, some relied mainly on reminders and supervision, while others experienced greater difficulty in providing support.

This variation reflects the scoping review, which identified limited literacy as an important constraint on direct homework assistance but also found that some parents responded by using available family and community resources rather than withdrawing completely from their children's learning.

Together, the findings show substantial variation in how parents supported children's academic activities at home. Parents with sufficient educational knowledge could provide direct assistance, while others supported learning indirectly by involving older siblings, relatives or educated neighbours. Some parents who could not assist with academic content nevertheless monitored homework completion and organised household routines so that schoolwork was completed before other responsibilities. However, some parents experienced considerable difficulty providing academic support, showing that limited formal education did not produce one uniform response.

The important distinction is therefore between limited capacity for direct instruction and an absence of involvement. For some parents, limited educational knowledge changed the form of their participation rather than eliminating it. Academic support could extend beyond the individual parent to wider family and neighbourhood relationships, with parents remaining

involved by identifying assistance, monitoring children's work and protecting time for study. At the same time, not all households had equal access to these forms of support.

These findings broadly confirm the scoping review's identification of direct and indirect forms of learner support at home while adding contextual detail from rural northern Ghana. Some parents possessed sufficient formal education to provide direct academic assistance, whereas others drew on siblings, relatives and educated neighbours. Home-based academic involvement was therefore sometimes distributed across wider family and community relationships rather than resting exclusively with the individual parent.

### *Difficulties in assisting with homework*

Parents were also asked about the difficulties they experienced when supporting the academic activities their children brought home from school. Several parents reported that limited or no formal education restricted their ability to assist directly with homework. One parent explained:

"As I mentioned earlier, I am not educated at all, and when there is nobody to assist them, it baffles me a lot." (Parent 5, School B)

This account shows that limited formal education could constrain parents' ability to engage directly with the academic content of homework. The participant's concern is also important because difficulty providing academic assistance should not automatically be interpreted as lack of interest. In this case, the parent wanted the child to receive support but was limited both by personal educational knowledge and by the absence of another knowledgeable person who could assist.

This finding is consistent with the scoping review, which identified limited parental education as a constraint on direct homework assistance and also showed that some parents responded by

seeking support from more educated relatives, neighbours or other household members (Chowdhury & Afrin, 2019; Munje & Mncube, 2018; Rodriguez-Kufner, 2016).

The issue was therefore not simply whether parents were involved, but whether they had access to the educational knowledge required for the particular form of assistance their children needed. Parents also reported financial, material and infrastructural difficulties that affected home learning, including limited access to learning materials and reliable electricity. These difficulties are examined in greater depth in Chapter 6, where limited education, economic constraints and infrastructural conditions are analysed as barriers shaping parental and community involvement.

### 5.1.2 *Non-Academic Activities at Home*

The study examined the non-academic activities parents engage their children in at home and within the community. Analysis of parents' responses revealed several key themes, including household chores, vocational training and income-generating activities, participation in religious studies, the development of life skills and moral values, and engagement in cultural and traditional practices.

#### *Household Chores*

Household chores are the most commonly mentioned non-academic activities, with a clear gender division in tasks. These are words from parents:

"The female children do their house chores while the male children sweep and weed around the house." (Parent 7, School C)

"I try to engage them in house chores so that they can be perfect in cooking and other house-related activities." (Parent 11, School D)

These accounts suggest that household work was understood by some parents not simply as work that children were required to perform, but also as preparation for responsibilities they

were expected to undertake later in life. In this sense, household activities carried a learning function within the family.

At the same time, the gendered allocation of tasks is important. Boys and girls were sometimes exposed to different forms of practical learning, showing that non-academic involvement was also shaped by gender expectations. Household activities therefore transmitted useful skills while also reflecting differentiated expectations about children's future roles.

### *Farming and Agricultural Work*

Many parents reported involving their children in farming, particularly on weekends and during school holidays, reflecting the rural economic context. One parent noted:

> Well, I engage them in farming and other non-academic activities as well when they come back from school. However, farming has become very stressful these days, and the yields are no longer as good as they used to be after each farming season (Parent 5, School B)

In the rural context of the study, farming represented more than a household chore. It exposed children to an important livelihood activity within their communities. Parental involvement therefore included transmitting practical knowledge associated with the economic life of the household and community.

The scoping review similarly identified farming and cooking among the everyday activities through which rural parents supported children's practical development (Ahmed et al., 2024; Place, 2013). It also found that parents transmitted locally relevant knowledge and skills that were not normally taught through formal schoolwork (Abraha, 2022; Ram, 2018).

In these study communities, farming was not simply an extracurricular activity; it was embedded in the livelihood system within which families lived. Children's learning at home consequently included knowledge relevant to both schooling and rural economic life.

### *Vocational Training and Income-Generating Activities*

Some parents involve their children in vocational or entrepreneurial activities to build skills and contribute to household income. One parent stated:

"Apart from academic activities, I engage them in sole proprietorship business such as selling creams and pomade and also take them to places where they can learn tailoring (apprenticeship)." (Parent 3, School A)

Another explained:

"Well, I engage them in animal husbandry and also weaving of Kente fabrics." (Parent 12, School D)

These activities extend the meaning of parental support beyond academic achievement. Parents were also exposing children to skills that could have practical and economic value, including trading, tailoring, animal husbandry, and weaving. Rather than seeing formal schooling and livelihood preparation as entirely separate, these parents appeared to support children's development through both school-based education and locally available practical learning.

These findings extend the scoping review. Although the review identified practical activities such as farming and cooking, the Ghanaian accounts provide a broader range of livelihood-oriented activities, including apprenticeship, small-scale trading, animal husbandry, and weaving. These findings therefore add specificity to how non-academic involvement operates within a rural northern Ghanaian economy.

The finding also supports the wider pattern in the scoping review that non-academic involvement may involve locally relevant skills and cultural knowledge that are not usually recognised through formal measures of parental participation.

### *Religious Studies*

A few parents engage their children in religious education, particularly in the evenings: A parent stated:

"I engage them in Islamic studies at night; apart from that, nothing else." (Parent 2, School A)

This account shows that some families considered religious learning part of children's development outside formal schooling. In such households, education at home included not only school-related academic activities but also religious knowledge and training.

This finding is broadly consistent with the scoping review, which identified church programmes and other socially and culturally embedded activities among the non-academic forms of family involvement reported in rural communities (Case, 2009; Ngozwana et al., 2024).

The present study adds a specifically northern Ghanaian expression of this pattern through Islamic studies. It also connects with the Chapter 4 finding that participants did not necessarily view religion and formal education as competing systems. Here, those beliefs are reflected in reported household practices, with religious learning coexisting alongside formal schooling.

### *Life Skills and Moral Development*

Parents prioritise teaching their children essential life skills and moral values to prepare them for the future. One parent explained:

"I try to teach them a lot of things I learned when I was at their age so that it can be of help when they grow up in the future." (Parent 7, School C)

Another parent

"Well, God has blessed me with only female children, so I try my best to give them the best advice and engage them in any activity that will help shape their future as young girls." (Parent 11, School D)

These responses show that some parents understood their educational responsibility in intergenerational terms. Knowledge and experience acquired by adults were passed to children because parents believed these would be useful later in life. Parental involvement therefore involved not only supporting present school performance but also preparing children for future responsibilities.

These accounts broaden the meaning of educational support beyond formal academic assistance. Learning was also understood to occur through family experience, moral instruction, practical responsibility and preparation for adulthood.

The scoping review similarly found that parents transmitted cultural values, Indigenous knowledge, practical competence, and locally relevant skills (Abraha, 2022; Ram, 2018). However, non-academic involvement received much less research attention than homework and formal school-related participation.

The present findings therefore confirm the existence of these less-formal forms of involvement while extending the evidence by showing the range of moral, livelihood, domestic, religious, and vocational learning that parents regarded as part of children's development.

### *Engagement in Cultural and Traditional Activities*

Some parents involve their children in cultural activities to instil a sense of identity and tradition. One parent stated:

"I engage them in festival activities such as the 'fire festival,' which is only celebrated once in every festive season here in the Northern Region." (Parent 3, School A)

Another explained:

"I teach them a lot about our cultural and moral values that will help them in the future." (Parent 8, School C)

These accounts show that cultural transmission was another form of parental involvement. Participation in festivals and instruction in cultural and moral values provided opportunities for children to learn practices and meanings connected with their community identity.

This is consistent with the scoping review, where parents were reported to transmit cultural traditions, Indigenous knowledge, and locally relevant knowledge that was not generally part of formal schoolwork (Abraha, 2022; Case, 2009; Ngozwana et al., 2024; Ram, 2018).

The Ghanaian findings add contextual specificity by showing the actual cultural practices through which this occurred, including participation in the Fire Festival and explicit teaching

of cultural and moral values. This demonstrates how cultural learning was enacted within family life and not just a claim that culture matters.

In all, parents described non-academic involvement through household responsibilities, farming, vocational activities, religious studies, moral guidance, cultural practices, and practical preparation for adult life.

The scoping review found considerably less research on non-academic home involvement than on academic support, although the studies identified cultural, religious, social and practical forms of learning.

The present study therefore confirms and extends the scoping-review findings. It confirms that parental involvement extends beyond homework to cultural, religious and practical forms of learning, while adding a broad range of locally embedded activities including farming, animal husbandry, small-scale trading, tailoring, Kente weaving, Islamic studies, household responsibilities, festival participation, moral guidance and preparation for future family and livelihood roles.

The findings also complicate a simple interpretation of these activities as uniformly beneficial. Household and vocational responsibilities were sometimes gendered, meaning that boys and girls could be exposed to different types of practical knowledge and future expectations. Thus, non-academic involvement simultaneously transmitted useful skills and reflected existing social expectations within families.

In all, the findings show that there was not always a clear separation between academic and non-academic learning in everyday family life. Parents supported children's development not only through formal school-related activities but also through household responsibilities, farming, vocational skills, moral guidance, religious learning and cultural practices. Viewed in relation to the broader understanding of parental involvement developed in Chapter 2, these

findings show that learner support at home can extend well beyond homework assistance. In the rural northern Ghanaian context, important forms of learning were embedded within family relationships, livelihood activities, religious practice and cultural life. A narrow focus on homework, school visits, meeting attendance or financial contributions would therefore overlook significant forms of parental educational involvement. Viewed in relation to Epstein's concept of learning at home, these findings broaden the forms of activity through which home learning may occur. In the study communities, support extended beyond homework and school-related academic tasks to livelihood preparation, moral guidance, religious learning, cultural transmission and practical responsibilities.

### 5.1.3 *Parental Interest in Children's Education*

The study examined what motivated parents to support their children's education, how they expressed their interest, and the sacrifices they reported making or being willing to make to support children's educational progress.

#### *Sources of Motivation*

Parents expressed being motivated by the success of professionals and public figures and therefore want their children to follow suit. One parent explained:

"What motivates me specifically is when I look at those who work in the financial sector, such as the bank. I also want my children to work in the banks one day." (Parent 4, School B)

Other parents were encouraged when their children performed well, and teachers gave them positive feedback. One parent stated:

"When I observe my children closely and also get positive reports from their schoolteachers about their performances, it motivates me to push them further and provide for their needs that will boost their knowledge in terms of education." (Parent 5, School B)

These accounts show that parents' interest was strengthened by what they could see around them. The success of educated people gave some parents an idea of what they wanted for their own children, while good reports from school gave others confidence that their children were making progress.

This connects with Chapter 4, where visible educational benefits were found to strengthen the value parents attached to schooling. The present findings show how those beliefs could translate into parental action: observed success and positive school feedback encouraged some parents to provide support and expect further educational progression.

The scoping review found similar patterns. Parents in earlier rural studies showed interest by encouraging children, monitoring progress, asking teachers for information, and expressing hopes for their children's future (Ahmed et al., 2024; Ngozwana et al., 2024; Stevenson, 2014). The present study therefore confirms the scoping review's finding that parents' hopes for their children's futures can motivate involvement while adding a clear connection between those hopes, visible professional success, and children's own educational progress.

Viewed in relation to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's parental-involvement model, these findings indicate that parents' motivation was connected to their beliefs about the value of education and the role they could play in supporting children's future achievement.

### *How Parents Express Their Interest*

Parents expressed their interest through several reported practices, including attending school meetings, providing educational materials, encouraging children and discussing the benefits of education. One parent explained:

"I try to attend PTA meetings, and I try to make sure that I provide them with the essential materials they need in order to be able to achieve their education." (Parent 2, School A)

Another parent described encouraging children to stay focused on education:

“I motivate my children in so many ways, in as much that I advise them about the benefits of education as well as making promises to them that will put their focus entirely on education.” (Parent 8, School C)

These accounts show that parental interest was expressed through both words and actions. Some parents encouraged their children and discussed the value of education, while others provided materials or attended school meetings. Parental interest therefore took both school-facing and home-based forms.

Parents’ accounts also connected educational encouragement with advice about behaviour and future responsibility. For some parents, supporting education therefore included both academic encouragement and guidance about the kind of person the child should become.

This is important because parents did not separate academic success from behaviour and personal development. For some parents, supporting education also meant advising children about good behaviour, responsibility, and the kind of future they should work towards.

The scoping review similarly found that parental interest could be shown through encouragement, good study habits, monitoring progress, emotional support, and hopes for children’s future success (Ahmed et al., 2024; Ram, 2018; Stevenson, 2014).

The present findings confirm these forms of involvement but also show that parents in the study communities combined academic encouragement with moral guidance and the provision of practical school needs. Their interest in education was therefore linked to both the child's academic progress and the child’s wider development.

### *Willingness to Sacrifice for Children’s Education*

Parents were also asked about the sacrifices they were willing to make for their children’s education. Most parents expressed their readiness to make significant sacrifices for their children’s education:

"Yes, I am willing to sacrifice everything just to make them achieve my dream of looking at them become bank managers in the future." (Parent 4, School B)

Some parents described sacrifices they had already made. A farmer explained:

"Well, as a farmer, I sell the little farm produce or livestock (sheep and goats) I have in my possession, especially when there are no financial ways out to support me in helping my children." (Parent 5, School B)

Another parent described supporting an older child and being willing to do the same for the younger children:

"I made a lot of sacrifices, especially for my eldest son, who is now a teacher at Wulensi District, and I am willing to do the same for his younger siblings in the house." (Parent 7, School C)

The accounts distinguish between expressed willingness and reported material sacrifice. Parent 4 used strong language to communicate the importance attached to the child's future, whereas Parent 5 described a specific practice, selling farm produce or livestock to meet educational needs. Because these resources formed part of household livelihoods, directing them towards educational expenses involved balancing schooling needs against other potential household uses.

The present study extends the scoping review by showing a direct material expression of parental commitment: some parents reported using farm produce, livestock and other household resources to support children's education. This is particularly significant within the rural northern Ghanaian context because these resources formed part of household livelihoods rather than simply disposable assets.

Some parents also said that poverty, farming needs, or lack of money could limit what they were able to sacrifice. These difficulties are examined in detail in Chapter 6 because they relate more directly to barriers to parental involvement.

Taken together, the findings show that parental interest was expressed through multiple forms of involvement. Parents described aspirations for their children's futures, encouragement, responses to school performance, attendance at meetings, provision of educational needs and, in some cases, the use of household livelihood resources to support schooling. Motivation was strengthened both by visible examples of educational success and by evidence that their own children were progressing.

An important distinction, however, is between educational interest and the capacity to act on that interest. Parents could attach substantial value to education while differing in the resources, knowledge and opportunities available to support it. Limited visible participation should therefore not automatically be interpreted as limited educational interest, although the findings do not imply that all parents were equally engaged. The economic and livelihood constraints affecting parents' capacity to act on their aspirations are examined more fully in Chapter 6.

Viewed in relation to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model, the findings show how parents' beliefs about education, expectations for their children and perceptions of their own role could motivate involvement. The rural Ghanaian evidence adds that such motivation could be expressed not only through encouragement and school participation but also through the allocation of livelihood resources, including farm produce and livestock, to children's schooling.

### 5.1.4 Community Support for Learning at Home

The study examined how community members supported children's learning outside the school. Participants described support from traditional leaders, former students, educated

community members, professionals and political leaders. The support included protecting children's study time, responding to educational concerns, occasional peer tutoring, mentoring, and activities aimed at motivating children to take education seriously.

### *Support from Traditional Leadership*

Community members described the chief as an important person in supporting children's education. Participants explained that the chief could respond to educational concerns and use his authority to create conditions that supported children's learning.

One community member stated:

"Our late chief had time to visit schools and houses that had educated children living in them to listen to their worries and relay them to the government." (SMC 5, School C)

Another participant explained:

"The chief banned all sorts of night jams to ensure children stayed at home to study at night." (SMC 3, School B)

These accounts show that community support did not always involve teaching children directly. The chief supported learning by trying to protect children's study time and by listening to educational concerns from families and schools. In this case, community leadership helped to create conditions that allowed children to study at home.

The banning of night activities is particularly important in the rural northern Ghanaian context because it shows how traditional authority could be used to support education outside the school. The chief was not helping children with homework himself, but he used his position in the community to reduce activities that could interfere with study time.

Participants also reported that chiefs supported cultural activities. For example, one community member stated that:

“The chief also organises cultural dance events to preserve culture and entertain the youth.” (SMC 2, School A)

This shows that community support also included children’s cultural development. It connects with the earlier finding on non-academic activities, where learning at home included cultural knowledge and values as well as formal schoolwork.

The scoping review found only one study that clearly reported community participation in children’s affairs at home. In Sharma et al. (2016), some community members visited children’s homes to encourage school attendance, while educated village youths and civil organisations guided and taught students.

The present study therefore agrees with the scoping review that people outside the immediate family can support children’s education. However, it extends this finding by showing another form of community support: traditional leaders could use their local authority to protect study time and respond to educational concerns.

### *Peer Tutoring and Additional Academic Support*

Participants were also asked whether community members organised study groups, peer tutoring or extra classes for children. Several participants reported that such organised programmes were not currently common in their communities. One participant stated:

“We don’t have such groups in this community, but I have witnessed such groups about twenty years ago." (SMC 5, School C)

However, another community member described an example in which former students supported children preparing for examinations:

"Some old students who have benefited massively from education organise peer-tutoring programs for school children who were about to write their basic education exams." (SMC 2, School A)

These accounts show that direct academic support from the wider community was uneven. Organised tutoring was not described as a regular activity across the communities, although there were examples of former students helping children, particularly when they were preparing for important examinations.

This finding both agrees with and extends the scoping review. Like Sharma et al. (2016), the present study found that educated community members could provide direct academic support to children. However, the Ghanaian findings show that this support was not always regular or formally organised. It could depend on former students or particular community members taking the initiative.

This difference is important. Community support was therefore present, but direct teaching was less established than other forms of support such as encouragement, leadership and motivation.

### *Role Models and Motivation*

The findings also revealed that a few educated people and those in high authority who hail from the village have served as role models and mentors in the community. They encourage students to take their education seriously so they can reach high positions or achieve success in the future. One participant explained:

"We do have community members who serve as role models, but they are not many." (SMC 2, School A)

Another community member described a more organised example of motivational support

"Our current MP, a native of this community, organises a yearly quiz competition with prizes to motivate students." (SMC 8, School D)

These accounts show another form of community involvement that was different from direct teaching. Successful community members could encourage children by providing examples of what education might help them achieve. The yearly quiz competition went further by turning this encouragement into an activity that rewarded children for academic effort.

This connects with Section 5.1.3, where parents reported being motivated by successful professionals and public figures. At the community level, successful individuals could similarly serve as visible examples for children and encourage them to take schooling seriously.

In the rural Ghanaian context, this is important because successful people from the same community may make educational success appear more achievable to children. They are not distant examples; they are people who come from the same local setting.

These findings show that community members understood educational support in different ways. Supporting children did not always mean teaching school subjects. It could also mean protecting study time, encouraging children, serving as a role model, organising educational activities, or responding to families' educational concerns.

Viewed in relation to Epstein's emphasis on family–school–community collaboration, the findings show that responsibility for children's learning extended beyond parents and teachers to traditional leaders, former students and other community members.

Overall, community support for children's learning took different forms in the study communities. Traditional leaders supported learning by responding to educational concerns and protecting children's study time. Former students sometimes provided direct academic help, while educated community members and professionals served as role models. Community leaders and other prominent people also supported motivational and cultural activities.

The findings therefore show that community participation was stronger in some forms than others. Direct and organised academic support, such as regular tutoring or study groups, was limited, while support through leadership, motivation and local role models was more visible in participants' accounts.

Taken together, the findings show that community support for learning operated through both direct and indirect forms. Direct academic support was relatively limited and included

occasional tutoring by former students. Indirect support was more visible and included traditional leaders protecting study time and responding to educational concerns, successful community members serving as role models, and local leaders organising motivational activities.

The findings extend the scoping review by showing that community participation in children's learning may be organised through locally embedded social and leadership structures. In the study communities, the chief's authority, former students' educational experience, and the visibility of successful community members all became resources that could support children's learning and aspirations.

### 5.1.5 Children's perspectives on parental involvement at home

Children's perspectives were included to understand how parental involvement was experienced by those directly receiving support. Individual interviews with children provided insight into how parents and other household members supported homework, other academic activities and non-academic learning at home.

#### *Children's Experiences of Homework Support*

The study first investigates parents' support of children's homework. Some pupils reported that their parents and families provide some support, especially when their homework is difficult. Five pupils reported being assisted by parents or relatives. An 11-year-old pupil from School A stated:

"My parents help me with my homework when I find it difficult to understand". (Pupil 1, School A)

The findings also mention siblings' contributions to homework. Some children indicated that their brothers were instrumental in helping them with their homework. This is because parents are unable to assist with their homework due to illiteracy and time constraints. This was highlighted by a 13-year-old pupil in school B:

“My parents always ask my brother, who has completed junior high school, to help me with my homework when I am unable to do it. This is because my parents are illiterate”. (Pupil 3, school B)

These accounts support the findings reported earlier by parents. Homework support did not always come directly from the parent. In some households, parents arranged for an older sibling or another educated family member to assist the child.

This finding confirms the scoping review, which found that parents with limited education sometimes relied on relatives or other educated people to assist children with academic work (Ahmed et al., 2024; Chowdhury & Afrin, 2019; Erlendsdóttir et al., 2022; Rodriguez-Kufner, 2016).

The children’s accounts add an important perspective because they show how this arrangement was experienced by the child. Viewed in relation to Epstein’s concept of learning at home, parental involvement did not always require the parent to provide academic instruction personally; it could also involve ensuring that another household member was available to provide the needed help.

### *Differences in the Level of Homework Support*

Children’s experiences were not the same across households. While some reported receiving help from parents or relatives, others said they received little or no direct assistance with homework. One pupil stated:

“They don’t assist me with my homework”. (Pupil 7, School D)

This account shows that direct homework support was not available to every child. Although parents may support education in other ways, the child’s account should also be recognised as evidence of genuine variation in the level of direct academic assistance available across households.

The children's accounts therefore complicate any simple picture of rural parents as either "involved" or "not involved". Some children received direct support, some received support through siblings or relatives, while others reported little direct help with homework.

This aligns with the scoping review, which found that children's experiences of parental support differed according to household circumstances. Some children received homework assistance and encouragement, while others experienced limits related to parents' literacy, time, and household responsibilities.

The contribution of the present study is that it shows this variation directly through children's voices in rural northern Ghana. This is important because relying only on adults' accounts may not fully show how parental involvement is experienced by children themselves.

### *Parents Using Children's Notes to Provide Support*

The data further indicate that parents' expertise in assisting their children was limited, and they therefore needed to refer to the notes before helping them. Parents' understanding of the new curriculum was a huge challenge, so they had to consult their child's notes to understand what their child was taught in order to assist them. One student stated:

"They refer to the notes or work examples before they can help." (Pupil 8, school D)

This is an important form of involvement. It shows that some parents did not simply stop helping when they were unsure about the schoolwork. Instead, they used the child's notes or examples to understand the task before trying to assist. This finding adds useful detail to the scoping review. Previous studies reported that parents sometimes struggled with unfamiliar academic content (Ngozwana et al., 2024; Seleka & Masoabi, 2024). The present finding shows one way in which a parent could respond to this difficulty: by using the child's notes and previous examples as a guide.

In the Ghanaian study context, this shows that parents' academic knowledge was not simply present or absent. Some parents could provide support after first using school materials to understand what the child was expected to do**.**

### *Children's Views of Parents' Difficulties in Providing Homework Support*

A follow-up question on whether parents face struggles in assisting their children with their homework. The data initially reveal that Pupils 1 and 2 highlight their parents' active support in their homework. Regarding the struggles, Pupil 1 indicated that their parents do not face any difficulties in assisting them; however, Pupil 2 suggests that his parents have some difficulty with his education, although they are willing and try their best when he has difficulty with his homework. While some parents had no problem helping with homework, others were trying their best to assist their children, and the struggle was huge. A child said that:

My parents do not have any struggle in assisting me. (Pupil 1, School A)

The findings again reveal limited support, due to constraints that hinder parental support. Responses from 4 pupils in three different rural schools described their parents' struggles as due to lack of education, lack of examples or notes for reference and busy schedules. One student voiced that:

"Yes, they have struggled because they are not educated and also because of their busy schedules." (Pupil 2, School A)

Other students indicated during the interview that their parents and family members were educators, and as a result, they did not struggle with homework assistance or support. This is where parents extend a helping hand to neighbours or extended family members to assist their children when they fail to do so.

"No, my uncles are teachers, so they assist me as well." (Pupil 3, School B)

Children therefore described different household capacities for homework support. Some reported parents who could assist without difficulty, others described constraints related to parental education and time, while some benefited from educated relatives. These accounts reinforce the earlier finding that the availability of academic support depended not only on parental interest but also on the educational knowledge and support networks available within the household.

Overall, children's accounts confirm several forms of homework support described by parents while also revealing important variation. Some children received direct parental assistance, others relied on siblings or educated relatives, some described parents using notes or examples before helping, and others reported little direct homework support. The inclusion of children's voices therefore strengthens the analysis by showing how these different arrangements were experienced by the children themselves rather than relying only on adult accounts.

### *Additional Academic Support Beyond Homework*

Children also described forms of academic support beyond direct homework assistance, including additional teaching, provision of learning materials, encouragement to study, checking schoolwork, asking about learning, and visiting the school to monitor progress.

#### Supplemental Teaching at Home

Some children reported that their parents provided additional teaching at home or asked questions about what they had learned. One pupil explained:

"My parents support my studies at home by teaching me extra classes in various subjects that help me excel. This personalised approach allows me to gain a deeper understanding of the material." (Pupil 1, School A).

Another child reported that parents sometimes asked questions using the child's notebook.

“Sometimes, they will ask questions from my notebook to reinforce my learning and ensure I grasp the concepts we discussed in class. This practice has significantly improved my confidence." (Pupil 8, School D).

These accounts show that some parents took an active role in reinforcing school learning beyond responding to homework difficulties. Support included additional teaching, reviewing notebooks and asking questions about previously taught material. Children interpreted these practices as forms of parental involvement in their learning.

The finding also shows that academic support did not always require advanced subject knowledge. Some parents used the child’s own school materials as a basis for questioning and reinforcement. This extends the earlier homework finding by showing a more continuous form of monitoring and engagement with children’s learning.

**Provision of Learning Materials and Study Time**

Children also described parents providing books and encouraging them to study outside school hours. One pupil stated:

> My parents will buy me all the supplementary books that I need in school. They do that because they cannot assist me with my homework. However, they encourage me to ask my teachers for help when I struggle with complex concepts. (Pupil 7, School D)

This account is particularly important because the parent’s limited ability to provide direct academic help did not result in the absence of involvement. Instead, the parent supported learning in another way by providing books and encouraging the child to seek help from teachers.

This confirms the scoping review’s finding that parents may provide educational materials even when their ability to assist directly with academic work is limited.

However, the present study extends this finding by showing, from the child's perspective, that material provision was the parents' way of supporting the child when direct teaching was difficult. The parent was therefore not simply "uninvolved"; the form of involvement changed according to what the parent was able to provide.

The account again illustrates the distinction between limited capacity for direct teaching and an absence of educational support.

In this context, academic support could therefore combine household provision with assistance from teachers or other more knowledgeable people rather than depending entirely on the parent's own academic knowledge.

**Allocation of Study Time and Encouragement of Discipline**

Children also described parents encouraging them to use particular times for studying. One pupil explained:

"They tell me to read my books on weekends…" (Pupil 5, School C)

Another reported:

"They also suggest that I engage in night studies during the week…" (Pupil 6, School C)

These accounts show that parents supported learning by organising children's time and encouraging regular study. This type of involvement did not require parents to understand the academic content. Instead, they supported learning by creating expectations about when children should study.

The scoping review also found that parents supported children through study routines, protected learning time, encouragement, and supervision.

The Ghanaian findings therefore confirm the review but provide a clearer example of how these routines worked in everyday family life. Weekend reading and night study were practical ways through which some parents tried to give education a place within children's daily routines.

This also connects with the earlier community finding where a chief restricted night activities so that children could study. At both household and community levels, protecting time for learning emerged as a form of educational support.

These findings show that parental involvement could include guiding children towards regular study habits rather than teaching academic content directly.

This is a useful Ghanaian contribution because parental involvement may be missed if it is measured only by whether parents personally teach homework. Organising time, reminding children to study, and expecting them to take schooling seriously were also recognised by children as forms of support.

**Monitoring Children's Academic Progress**

Children also reported that parents checked their academic progress in different ways. These included reviewing exercise books and test papers, asking what children had learned, and seeking help from more knowledgeable people when they could not understand school records themselves. One pupil explained:

"My parents asked me to bring my exercise books and text papers so they could see them". (Pupil 3, School B)

Another child stated:

"They always ask for my books to see my performance even though they are not educated." (Pupil 2, School A)

These accounts are important because they show that limited formal education did not always prevent parents from monitoring their children's progress. A parent might not be able to explain the academic content but could still ask to see exercise books, test papers, or other schoolwork.

Some children also reported that parents sought assistance from educated people to understand examination results or schoolwork.

“They seek interpretation from those educated with my exam papers.” (Pupil 7, School D)

These accounts show that limited formal education did not necessarily prevent parents from monitoring progress. Some asked to see books and test papers, while others sought help from more educated people to interpret results that they could not understand themselves. Monitoring could therefore be direct or mediated through other knowledgeable people.

**Asking Children About School and Visiting the School**

Parental monitoring was not limited to checking books at home. Some children reported that parents asked them what they had learned at school. One pupil state

“They do ask me what I learnt from school.” (Pupil 6, School C)

Lastly, some parents visit the school to check the attendance of their children and find out if the child is truly studying.

“My parents check my progress by visiting the school to find out my learning. They also check my attendance to ensure that I’m in school.” (Pupil 1, School A)

This shows a connection between home-based and school-based involvement. Parents could monitor education at home by asking questions and checking books, but they could also go to the school to confirm attendance and find out how the child was progressing.

The finding is important because it shows that parental monitoring crossed the boundary between home and school. Parents were not always dependent on information provided by the child; some sought information directly from the school.

These practices also show that home-based monitoring and communication with the school could occur together rather than as completely separate forms of involvement.

### *Children's Perceptions of Parental Interest*

The study also explored parents' interest in their children's education. This was to assess parents' commitment and satisfaction regarding their children's education.

Responses from four students in schools A and D indicated that parents provided all the necessary resources and fulfilled all the requests they required related to education. One pupil explained:

"Yes, they do, because they always make sure they provide what I need to study". (Pupil 1, School A)

Another pupil stated:

"Yes, they always give me whatever I ask of them concerning my school". (Pupil 7, School D)

These accounts show that children recognised the provision of educational needs as a sign of parental interest. From their perspective, parental commitment was not shown only through helping with schoolwork but also through making sure that they had what they needed to continue learning.

In addition, some parents in schools C and D showed their interest by giving them material and financial assistance and, lastly, always encouraging them to value education. One student said:

Yes, they encourage me to take my education seriously. (Pupil 5, School C)

Another one stated:

Yes, they give me some money for school and some of the books I need for school. (Pupil 6, School C)

These findings show that children experienced parental interest in different forms. Some recognised interest through encouragement, while others recognised it through books, money, and the provision of school needs. Parental interest was therefore both emotional and practical.

This is broadly consistent with the earlier accounts from parents, who described their interest through encouragement, educational aspirations, provision of school materials, and willingness to support their children's future.

The agreement between parents' and children's accounts strengthens the finding that parental interest in the study communities was expressed in ways that went beyond direct homework assistance. Children themselves recognised encouragement and material provision as important forms of parental support.

The scoping review similarly found that parental interest in children's advancement could be expressed through encouragement, concern about progress, monitoring, provision of support, and hopes for future success.

The present finding therefore confirms the scoping review. However, it adds an important perspective because these forms of interest are described directly by the children who received the support. This is especially important because children's voices were limited in much of the literature reviewed.

However, the two pupils interviewed in School B did not identify any particular form of parental interest when responding to this question.

The absence of a reported example should not automatically be equated with parental disinterest, but it does show that visible expressions of parental support were not reported consistently across households. Some children readily identified encouragement or material support, while others did not identify a specific form when asked

This variation complicates any general claim that all parents in the study communities were equally involved. Children's experiences differed across households, and the forms of parental interest that were visible to children were not the same in every family.

Including children's accounts therefore shows that what parents regard as supportive involvement may not always be experienced or recognised in the same way by children.

The main contribution here is that parental interest should not be judged only by direct academic assistance. From the children's perspective, providing for school needs, buying books, giving money, and encouraging them to take education seriously were also meaningful signs that their parents valued their education**.**

*Non-academic activity at home*

The study also provides insight into non-academic activities that parents teach their children at home to help them learn and become knowledgeable. The responses reveal that parents taught their children personal care, such as bathing, cleaning, dressing, and eating. Children were also taught how to cook and keep the house clean. A child stated:

"They teach me how to cook and how to keep the house clean." (Pupil 2, School A)

Another one explained:

"Apart from schoolwork at home, they also teach me in the house. They also teach me how to do things on my own, e.g., Bathing, dressing, and cleaning the compound." (Pupil 8, School D*)*

These accounts show that children experienced learning at home as broader than school subjects. Parents also taught practical skills that helped children care for themselves, contribute to household life, and become more independent.

This finding is broadly consistent with the earlier accounts from parents, who described household chores and practical activities as part of preparing children for future responsibilities. Children's accounts therefore support the parent findings by showing that these activities were also recognised by children as things they were being taught at home.

The scoping review also found that non-academic involvement included practical and everyday activities such as cooking, farming, cultural practices, community activities, and the passing on of local knowledge and values.

The Ghanaian findings therefore confirm the scoping review but provide more detail about the everyday skills children learned within the household, including personal care, cooking, cleaning, and learning to do things independently.

This extends the meaning of parental involvement beyond academic support. Parents were involved not only in preparing children for school but also in preparing them for everyday life and future responsibilities.

Children were also asked about their participation in cultural and community activities with their parents. Several children reported being taken to community events such as festivals where they could observe and learn local cultural practices. The children also confirmed that there was no library in the community. One child said:

They take us to festivals and fairs to learn about the local culture and traditions occasionally. (Pupil 1, School A)

However, not every child had this experience. Another stated:

My parents never took me to any event. (Pupil 5, School C)

These contrasting accounts show that cultural involvement was not experienced equally across households. Some children were introduced to local traditions through festivals and community events, while others reported no such involvement.

This variation is important because it prevents rural families from being presented as a uniform group. Even within the same wider cultural setting, parents differed in the non-academic experiences they provided for their children. The scoping review found that some rural families involved children in cultural traditions, Indigenous or local knowledge, religious activities, and other forms of community life.

The present study confirms this pattern but adds children's own experiences of cultural learning in rural northern Ghana. Festivals and local events became one way through which some children learned about their cultural identity outside formal schooling.

These accounts further show that children experienced learning across different settings, including school, household responsibilities and participation in cultural and community life. Children also reported the absence of a community library. The implications of limited access to educational resources are examined further in Chapter 6.

Taken together, children's accounts broadly supported many of the forms of involvement described by parents, including homework assistance, encouragement, provision of educational materials, monitoring, practical life-skills teaching and participation in cultural activities. However, children also revealed important variation. Some received direct academic help, others relied on siblings or educated relatives, some experienced mainly material or motivational support, and others reported little direct assistance.

The inclusion of children's voices therefore adds an important dimension to the analysis. It provides evidence not only of what parents reported doing, but also of how those practices were experienced by children. In several areas, parent and child accounts converged, particularly around indirect homework support, provision of materials, study routines and practical learning. At the same time, children's reports of limited or absent support in some households prevent the findings from presenting parental involvement as uniformly strong.

Viewed in relation to Epstein's concept of learning at home, the findings show that parental involvement took multiple forms, including direct teaching, supervision, provision of materials, study routines, monitoring and mobilisation of support from other family members. The rural Ghanaian evidence further shows that home learning could involve a wider network of siblings,

relatives, teachers and other educated people rather than depending exclusively on the parent–child relationship.

## 5.2 School Involvement

The school-based involvement section examines parental and community participation in educational content, the learning environment, school management, finance and school personnel management. These areas, identified through the scoping review, provide the organising structure for examining where participation occurred and the extent to which parents and community members were able to contribute. The perspectives of parents and community members are considered separately from those of teachers and headteachers where appropriate.

### 5.2.1 Parents' and Community Members' Perspectives on School-Based Involvement

*Educational content*

The study examined whether parents and the community acted as resource personnel, are involved in curriculum development, assist school personnel, and make key decisions.

**Resource personnel in the classroom**

Questions were asked to determine whether parents assist teachers in the classroom as mentors or teach local skills and community history.

The findings revealed that community members and parents do not directly get involved in classroom matters or support teachers. They were only concerned about students' attendance in the classroom. These participants occasionally visit classrooms to observe teaching.

"We try our best to visit the classrooms once in a while just to also have an experience of what the teachers are teaching." (SMC 7, School D)

This account shows that classroom visits occurred, but the purpose was mainly to become familiar with what was happening rather than to assist with teaching. The community members'

role was therefore closer to monitoring or showing interest than acting as instructional resource persons.

Many of the participants indicated they only raised concerns and provided suggestions on classroom activities during PTA/SMC meetings. They mentioned that they have nothing to do in the classroom and that the classroom belongs to the teachers, so all that they can do is provide donations to motivate teachers and support the infrastructure. They express their support at the meetings.

A parent described using PTA meetings to express concerns about the education of the children.

"I usually assist the teachers through sharing my ideas during meetings (PTA) organised by the school, and I also donate money when the need arises to support the school." (Parent 1, School A)

These accounts show that parents and community members did not completely separate themselves from matters concerning teaching and learning. They expressed concerns, shared ideas, attended meetings, and provided resources. However, these forms of involvement took place mainly outside the classroom.

The findings therefore show a difference between supporting teaching and taking part directly in teaching. Parents and community members supported the work of teachers, but they were rarely involved in delivering lessons or contributing their knowledge and skills during classroom instruction.

The classroom was mainly viewed as the professional space of teachers, while parents and community members saw themselves as supporters, advisers, monitors, and providers of resources.

This division of responsibility limited opportunities for parents and community members to contribute local knowledge, cultural practices, occupational skills and community history to classroom learning. Their limited classroom participation did not necessarily indicate an

absence of useful knowledge or educational interest; rather, direct instruction did not appear to be widely understood as part of their accepted role.

The finding broadly agrees with Asare (2011), who found that community members in Ghana were often hesitant to share their local knowledge and skills within schools. However, it differs from studies in which parents and community members were invited to contribute directly to classroom learning by sharing cultural knowledge, practical skills, personal experiences, music, arts, reading activities, and local history (Haines, 2012; Preston, 2013; Ram, 2018).

The contrast suggests that participation depended not only on whether community members possessed useful knowledge, but also on whether schools recognised that knowledge and created opportunities for it to enter classroom practice. In the present study, regular invitations or established roles for parents and community members as classroom resource persons were rarely reported.

Viewed through the study's decentralisation perspective, PTA and SMC structures created opportunities for parents and community members to raise concerns, share ideas and contribute resources. However, participation in educational content remained largely consultative. Parents and community members could comment on teaching and learning, but formal authority over curriculum content, classroom instruction and teaching methods remained primarily with teachers and education authorities. Formal participation therefore did not automatically translate into shared authority over instructional matters.

Other parents and community members highlighted challenges such as financial and time constraints and a lack of education as hindrances to visiting the classrooms. One community member stated:

"Some complain that they don't have the financial means, while others say that they are educated and lack the knowledge to assist the teachers together with their families." (SMC 3, School B)

A Parent opined:

"Honestly, I don’t involve myself with the teachers who teach them at school due to lack of time." (Parent 3, School A)

These accounts show that the way participants understood their roles was not the only reason for limited classroom involvement. Personal circumstances, including lack of time, limited education, and financial difficulties, also affected their ability to engage with teachers and classroom activities. These barriers are examined in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Overall, the findings show a clear distinction between supporting instruction and participating directly in instruction. Parents and community members attended meetings, monitored pupils, raised concerns, contributed resources and occasionally visited classrooms, but rarely participated directly in teaching. Their involvement in educational content was therefore present but predominantly indirect.

The findings also show that the boundary around classroom participation was shaped by both institutional opportunity and locally understood responsibilities. Parents and community members generally regarded classroom instruction as the work of trained teachers, while schools rarely appeared to provide established opportunities for community knowledge to enter formal teaching.

Viewed through decentralisation, this reveals an important distinction between participation and authority. Parents and community members could contribute views about teaching and learning, but they had little direct influence over what was taught or how instruction was delivered.

**Curriculum development**

The study also explored parent and community involvement in the school's curriculum. Both parents and community members mentioned that they have never been involved in what the

students learn in the school. This is beyond them, and this does not come up in their meetings. Although some parents sometimes suggest that local traditions should be included in school teaching, these suggestions rarely affect what is officially taught. Curriculum content and learning materials are decided by central authorities, leaving communities with very limited voice. This shows a top-down decision-making system that does not strongly consider local knowledge or community values. One parent explained:

> Well, I am not educated, so I don't take part in any decision regarding what they learn, but what I do is that I try my best to talk to the teachers always to prioritise the future of my children so that they can go far and achieve higher in education. (Parent 2, School A)

A community member similarly stated:

"We, the community members, have no hand in deciding what the children learn in school, but we try our best to visit the school often to check up on the teachers." (SMC 3, School B)

These accounts show a difference between supporting children's education and having influence over the curriculum. Although participants did not take part in deciding what was taught, they still communicated with teachers, visited the school, and showed concern for children's progress. Their limited curriculum involvement should therefore not be understood as a lack of interest in education.

The finding agrees with the scoping review, which found that parental and community involvement in curriculum development was generally limited and uneven. Chikoko (2008), Jamhar and Hastuti (2019), and Pansiri and Bulawa (2013) similarly reported that parents rarely discussed curriculum matters or assisted with classroom activities. However, other studies found that parents collaborated with teachers to make learning more practical and relevant to

children's needs or contributed materials and community perspectives to teaching (Marin & Bocoş, 2017; Ngozwana et al., 2024; Díaz Lara et al., 2024).

The present study therefore confirms the common pattern of limited participation but differs from settings where schools invited parents and community members to contribute to curriculum matters. It also extends the scoping review by showing that curriculum development was not normally discussed within the PTA and SMC meetings described by participants. These structures allowed parents and community members to raise general school concerns, but not to shape what pupils were formally taught.

Limited local input may reduce opportunities to connect formal learning with children's culture, language, livelihoods, and everyday experiences. This does not necessarily mean that the formal curriculum is of poor quality. Rather, it shows that useful community knowledge may not be fully included in school learning.

This has an important meaning in rural northern Ghana. Parents and community members possess knowledge of farming, local traditions, religion, community history, and rural livelihoods. However, this knowledge appeared to be passed on mainly through family and community life rather than through formal curriculum planning. Children may therefore learn local knowledge outside school while following a curriculum decided mainly by education authorities inside school.

From a decentralisation perspective, the findings show that PTA and SMC structures provided opportunities for participation in general school matters but little authority over curriculum decisions. Parents and community members could support, advise and monitor the school, but their influence over formal curriculum content remained minimal.

The main contribution of this finding is the distinction between valuing children's education and having the power to shape what they learn. Parents and community members showed concern for education, but they had little recognised influence over formal curriculum content.

**Infrastructural projects in the schools**

The data highlights varying degrees of parental involvement in school development. While some parents have actively participated in initiatives to support schools, others have not yet engaged but have expressed willingness to do so in the future. The majority of the parents actively supported and made tangible contributions to improving the school environment. They provided cleaning supplies and pooled resources for infrastructure projects at the schools. A parent explained:

"As parents, we have contributed to the schools by buying brooms and cutlasses to help clean the school in order to protect the children from snake bites and other harmful insects and animals as well." (Parent 4, School B)

Another parent stated:

"Not all the parents are able to contribute in order to develop the school infrastructure, but we, the parents, come together and give out the little we have to develop the school." (Parent 5, School B)

Parents also mentioned projects such as the construction of classrooms and boreholes to provide safe drinking water.

"Most of the infrastructural projects include building more classrooms and a borehole for a good source of drinking water." (Parent 3, School A)

These responses show that parents' infrastructural contributions were often shaped by what they could afford and what the school urgently needed. Contributions such as brooms, cutlasses, classroom maintenance, boreholes, and cleaning activities may appear modest, but they were

significant in schools where basic facilities were inadequate. Parents' involvement, therefore, reflected both care for children's safety and a practical response to the material conditions of rural schooling. The findings also show the importance of collective action. Individual parents might not have been able to undertake a large project, but they could combine their limited resources to meet particular school needs.

Some parents have not yet participated in any projects but express readiness to contribute when needed.

These responses suggest that a lack of participation in infrastructure projects should not always be interpreted as a lack of interest. In some cases, parents may not have contributed because no specific project had been announced, because they were not directly mobilised, or because they lacked the financial capacity to contribute regularly. This again shows that parental involvement depends not only on willingness but also on opportunity, communication, mobilisation, and household economic capacity.

Community members mentioned that parents and other community members have made significant contributions to improving school infrastructure, although their efforts vary in scope and scale. The initiatives include building, maintaining, and securing school facilities to enhance the learning environment for students. The findings revealed examples of completed and ongoing projects undertaken by parents and the community, and the appeals made to the district to help with the construction of classrooms.

A community member explained:

"The chief allocates land space for us, the community members, to support in building walls and preserving the school lands for future projects and infrastructure. We also plant trees around the school environment to make it look more attractive." (SMC 7, School D*)*

Similarly, one PTA chairperson stated:

"As the PTA chairman, I have engaged parents in assisting the school with donations. Last year, parents donated money to purchase cement and sea sand to help maintain the classroom grounds for students." (SMC 1, School A)

These accounts show that community involvement was not limited to giving money. It included land allocation, materials, environmental care, collective organisation, and the mobilisation of parents through PTA and SMC structures.

Another SMC member described how community advocacy led to classroom construction:

> "At first, the children used to sit under trees because there were no classrooms. The community members came out in their numbers to appeal to the district assembly. After a lot of effort, six-unit classrooms were built for the community." (SMC 3, School B)

While several projects have been completed, parents and community members face limitations in sustaining such efforts. Some projects, such as classroom construction, require intervention from local authorities. Schools rely on donations and community collaboration, which may not always be sufficient for larger projects. Despite these challenges, communities express readiness to undertake additional initiatives: A community member said that:

"We still have future plans of helping the school." (SMC 2, School A)

These accounts show that community involvement in infrastructure was not limited to direct financial contributions. It also included land allocation, advocacy with district authorities, donations of materials and labour, environmental care, and mobilisation through PTA and SMC structures. The example of appealing to the District Assembly is particularly important because it shows that rural communities sometimes act as advocates for state support when local resources are insufficient. In this sense, parents and community members contribute not only by building or paying, but also by mobilising external support for school development.

Documentary evidence from PTA and SMC meeting records supports these interview findings. The records show that parents and community members discussed and contributed to school maintenance, windows and washrooms, urinal construction, classroom flooring, furniture, electricity, school security, and erosion control. For example, one PTA record showed that parents agreed to pay two cedis each for the maintenance of school windows and washrooms after theft of school property. Another record showed that PTA dues were used for a DVD deck and urinal maintenance, while parents also discussed monthly contributions toward electricity. In another meeting, parents agreed to contribute 5 cedis per child toward classroom flooring, while later records showed that about 1,155 cedis had been collected for maintenance, although some parents had not yet paid.

The documentary records also show that parents and community members were involved in identifying infrastructural problems and proposing solutions. For instance, records from a PTA meeting noted concerns about people using the kindergarten (KG) block for defecation, careless riding through the school compound, the need for ramps, and erosion caused by road construction. Parents suggested that PTA executives meet with the watchman, discuss the construction of ramps, and mobilise community labour to dig gravel and fill eroded areas. This confirms that parental and community involvement extended beyond financial contributions to include problem identification, collective deliberation, and voluntary labour.

However, the findings also show that community infrastructural support was limited by poverty and inconsistent contributions. While several projects were completed or initiated, some were delayed, suspended, or left incomplete because parents could not contribute enough. For example, the documentary records show that in one of the schools, the construction of urinal pits was discussed but later suspended, and other records noted incomplete maintenance

payments. This suggests that parents and community members were willing to support school infrastructure, but their ability to sustain such support was constrained by financial hardship.

Infrastructural involvement was therefore both significant and constrained. Parents and community members contributed money, labour, materials, land, maintenance, environmental care and advocacy, but larger projects frequently exceeded local financial capacity and required support from the District Assembly or other external actors.

This broadly confirms the scoping review, which found that rural parents and community members contribute labour, money, materials and practical skills to school infrastructure (Ahmed et al., 2024; Carolan-Silva, 2011; Donkor & Waek, 2018; Ngozwana et al., 2024; Preston, 2013). The present study adds evidence of land allocation by traditional leaders, collective problem-solving through PTA and SMC structures, and community advocacy directed towards government authorities.

These contributions supported important conditions for educational quality by improving the availability of safer, healthier and more suitable spaces for teaching and learning. Classrooms, drinking water, sanitation, secure facilities and maintained school grounds directly affected the conditions in which pupils participated in schooling.

The rural northern Ghanaian context gives these contributions particular meaning. Parents and community members were responding to basic and immediate needs, including children studying under trees, exposure to snakes and harmful animals, lack of drinking water, damaged school grounds, poor sanitation, and theft of school property. Their involvement was therefore practical and closely connected to the daily conditions of schooling.

Viewed through decentralisation, parents, chiefs, PTAs and SMCs participated in identifying needs, mobilising local resources and implementing smaller projects. However, authority and resources for major capital projects remained largely with the District Assembly and other

public authorities. Local participation therefore complemented rather than replaced state responsibility for adequate school infrastructure.

In all, parents and community members contributed to school infrastructure through money, labour, materials, land, maintenance, environmental care, problem identification and advocacy. Participation was strongest in locally manageable activities such as cleaning, repairs, small levies and communal labour, while major projects often required external government support. The contribution of this finding is therefore broader than financial support alone. Parents and community members acted as maintainers, organisers, problem-solvers, advocates and mobilisers of external assistance. At the same time, the scale of their participation remained closely tied to household resources and the institutional support available for larger projects.

### *School Management*

Parents and community members showed varying levels of involvement in school management (goal setting and development planning).

Parents and community members frequently use PTA and SMC meetings as the primary channels to communicate with school authorities by sharing their concerns and ideas.

Parents explained that they participated in school management primarily by attending PTA meetings. One parent stated:

"The school sometimes organises PTA meetings on behalf of the school's development, and the father of the children attends these meetings to get involved in the school's development." (Parent 3, School A)

Another parent explained:

"I try my best to attend PTA meetings; sometimes, if I am not able to attend, my husband tries his best to attend." (Parent 11, School D)

Similarly, another parent stated:

"As parents, we communicate to the school authorities through the PTA meetings we attend, and therefore, our concerns are implemented as well." (Parent 10, School D)

These accounts show that PTA meetings functioned as important spaces for communication between parents and schools. Through these meetings, parents were able to raise concerns, receive information, and contribute to discussions on school development. This confirms the findings of Asare (2011), Carolan-Silva (2011), and Chowdhury and Afrin (2019), who found that PTA and SMC meetings serve as major channels through which rural parents and community members express concerns and participate in school management.

However, the findings also suggest that attendance at meetings did not always mean equal or meaningful participation. The statement that “the father of the children attends” and another parent’s explanation that her husband attends when she cannot attend point to the gendered nature of participation in school management. These responses suggest that fathers may often represent households in formal school meetings, even though mothers may be deeply involved in children’s daily care and learning at home. This raises an important issue about whose voices are most visible in formal decision-making spaces.

Parents and community members also contributed to goal setting and development planning by offering ideas to improve school operations and the learning environment. Their contributions included identifying school needs, discussing essential resources such as furniture, books, and learning materials, and providing feedback during PTA and SMC meetings. One parent explained:

"Here in the rural areas, the schools don’t have adequate learning materials, so we as parents join our ideas together to support their well-being, especially by buying furniture to support the school children." (Parent 7, School C)

Another parent stated:

"There are instances where some parents argue about the payment of PTA dues and exam fees, which is suggested by teachers to boost the education of our children." (Parent 8, School C)

These responses show that participation in school management was often centred on practical school needs, including furniture, learning materials, fees, and resource mobilisation. In the rural Ghanaian context, this reflects the immediate material needs facing some schools and the role parents and community members play in trying to address them.

The findings agree with the scoping review and earlier studies showing that PTA and SMC structures provide important channels for communication, planning and practical school improvement (Asare, 2011; Haines, 2012; Hornby & Witte, 2010). In the present study, however, participation was often centred on immediate material and operational needs rather than broader strategic educational planning.

Parents and community members also indicated that they were involved in some decision-making processes. Headteachers appeared to allow parents to share their thoughts and concerns during meetings. Two parents from the same school explained:

"Well, they engage us, the parents, in decision-making all the time." (Parent 12, School D)

"Parents take part in decision-making, but very few of these decisions are implemented by the teachers." (Parent 10, School D)

These responses reveal both participation and limitation. On the one hand, parents felt that they were given opportunities to speak and contribute ideas. On the other hand, the concern that “very few” decisions were implemented suggests that their involvement may not always translate into actual influence. This means that participation in decision-making should be understood as uneven. Parents may be invited to meetings and allowed to express views, but this does not necessarily mean that their suggestions are acted upon or that they have authority over final decisions.

Viewed through decentralisation, these accounts reveal an important distinction between consultation and influence. Parents could attend meetings and contribute ideas, but participation did not necessarily mean that their suggestions were implemented or that they shared authority over final decisions**.**

Documentary evidence from PTA, SMC, and SPAM meeting records supports this interpretation. The records show that parents and community members participated in discussions on PTA dues, examination fees, furniture, classroom maintenance, school security, electricity, learning materials, pupil attendance, discipline, teacher attendance, and pupils' performance. In some records, parents agreed to make financial contributions toward extra classes, school maintenance, urinal construction, classroom flooring, electricity, and security. Other records show that parents raised concerns about poor attendance, lack of textbooks, school theft, erosion, reckless riding through the school compound, and the need for improved communication between parents and teachers. These records confirm that parents and community members were involved in school management in practical and visible ways.

The documentary evidence also raises an important gender issue in school management. Across several records, formal leadership and agenda-setting roles appeared to be held mainly by PTA chairmen, SMC chairmen, headteachers, imams, and male parent speakers. Women were not entirely absent, as some female teachers and mothers contributed to discussions on children's welfare, feeding, notebooks, illness, and school performance. However, women appeared less visible in executive leadership and agenda-setting roles. This suggests that PTA and SMC meetings were important decision-making spaces, but they may also have reflected gendered patterns of authority within the community.

This matters because school-level decisions are not gender-neutral. Issues such as attendance, discipline, learning materials, pupil welfare, girls' participation, domestic responsibilities,

safety, teenage pregnancy, and home-based learning support may affect boys and girls differently. This pattern raises an important question about whose experiences are most visible within school-governance discussions. Attendance alone therefore does not establish equal participation; it is also necessary to consider who speaks, who holds leadership roles and whose concerns enter formal decision-making.

Overall parents and community members participated visibly in school management through PTA and SMC meetings, identification of school needs, resource mobilisation, practical problem-solving and some decision-making. Documentary records corroborated these accounts by showing discussions and actions concerning maintenance, furniture, learning materials, security, attendance, discipline and other immediate school needs.

However, participation did not necessarily translate into equal influence. Parents could attend meetings, express concerns and contribute ideas without those ideas necessarily being implemented. Formal leadership and agenda-setting also appeared to be gendered, with men more visible in several executive and speaking roles. Participation in school management should therefore be assessed not only by attendance, but also by whose voices are heard and the extent to which community input influences decisions.

Viewed through decentralisation, the findings distinguish clearly between consultation and shared authority. PTA and SMC structures created meaningful opportunities for local participation, but influence remained uneven. The rural Ghanaian evidence therefore shows that school-management involvement was both active and bounded: parents and community members contributed substantially to practical school development while having more limited control over final decisions.

### 5.2.2 Teachers' and Headteachers' Perspectives on Parent and Community Involvement in School-Based Quality Education

This section examines teachers' and headteachers' perspectives on parental and community participation in curriculum development, the learning environment, school governance, financial support and school personnel management. Their accounts provide an additional perspective on the forms and extent of involvement reported by parents and community members

*Parental and Community Role in Curriculum Development*

The study revealed that parents and community members are not actively involved in determining what should be included in the curriculum or in selecting learning materials. For example, the headteacher at School B stated:

"Some parents and community members do not actively involve themselves in developing curriculum and learning materials for pupils, even though PTO/SMC executives sometimes help." (Head teacher 2, School B)

Similarly, the headteacher at School D confirmed:

"No, parents and community members are not involved in curriculum development."(Headteacher 4, School D)

These responses highlight the limited role of parents and community members in formal curriculum decisions, with curriculum content largely determined by education authorities rather than at the community level.

The headteachers' accounts are broadly consistent with the earlier views of parents and community members, who also reported having little influence over what children were formally taught. This strengthens the finding that curriculum development was not a major area of local participation in the study communities.

However, while parents were generally not involved in formal curriculum development, headteachers described other ways in which they supported teaching and learning. At School A, the headteacher shared that:

“During SMC/PTA meetings, parents and caregivers are sensitised on the need to support learners at home with workbooks. A few other parents voluntarily teach some curriculum content, especially the Ghanaian language, in classes of non-native teachers." (Headteacher 1, School A)

At School C, parental support is mainly financial:

"Yes, and that is only on the part of learning materials, where parents sometimes contribute funds to purchase some materials for that purpose."(Head Teacher 3, School C)

These accounts add an important qualification to the general finding of limited curriculum involvement. Although parents did not participate in designing the formal curriculum, some supported its delivery through workbooks, learning materials and, in one account, by helping to teach the Ghanaian language.

The Ghanaian-language example is particularly important because it shows that local knowledge could enter classroom teaching even when parents had no authority over curriculum development. In the rural Ghanaian context, parents who had knowledge of the local language could therefore become useful educational resources, especially where a teacher was not a native speaker.

The Ghanaian-language contribution is also relevant to educational quality because it may help connect classroom instruction with pupils’ linguistic and community context, particularly where the classroom teacher is not a native speaker. However, this form of participation appeared occasional rather than an established part of curriculum planning.

The teachers’ and headteachers’ accounts broadly reinforce both the earlier stakeholder findings and the scoping review, which showed that rural parents are often minimally involved

in formal curriculum development (Chikoko, 2008; Jamhar & Hastuti, 2019; Pansiri & Bulawa, 2013). However, the present study adds an important qualification: limited involvement in curriculum design did not mean complete absence from curriculum delivery, as illustrated by parents' occasional contribution to Ghanaian-language teaching.

This also qualifies the earlier parent and community accounts, in which direct classroom participation was rarely reported. From the headteacher's perspective, at least some parents contributed directly to teaching in particular circumstances.

Viewed through decentralisation, the findings distinguish clearly between supporting curriculum delivery and having authority over curriculum content. Parents and community members could provide materials, support learning at home and occasionally contribute local-language knowledge, but formal decisions about what was taught remained largely outside their control.

Overall, teachers' and headteachers' accounts confirm that parental and community influence over formal curriculum development was limited, while revealing some locally meaningful participation in curriculum implementation. The Ghanaian-language example is particularly important because it shows that local knowledge could enter classroom practice even where communities had little authority over formal curriculum decisions.

### *Learning environment*

**Building and support of Infrastructure projects**

The findings reveal that parents and community members play a crucial role in supporting infrastructural projects within the schools. Their support comes through contributions made through the payment of PTA development levies, which fund essential improvements such as classroom plastering and floor screeding. According to the heads, these efforts aim to promote

child safeguarding and enhance the effectiveness of the teaching and learning environment. One headteacher opined that:

> The plastering of screed floors in classrooms B1, B2, and B3 has been completed to address child safeguarding issues and enhance effective teaching and learning at the school. This improvement was made possible through the payment of the PTA development levy. (Headteacher 1, School A)

At School B, the headteacher similarly reported that parents contributed through PTA and SMC levies towards classroom construction where there were not enough classrooms.

"Through parent-teacher associations and school management committees, parents are levied towards the construction of classrooms in an attempt to make up for the lack of classrooms in the school." (Headteacher 2, School B)

These accounts show that parents' contributions were used to address basic school needs rather than only general school development. Improving classroom floors and providing additional classroom space were directly connected to pupils' safety and the conditions in which teaching and learning took place.

In some cases, parents assist with other essential repairs, such as reroofing classrooms. In the other two schools (C and D), when headteachers were asked about the support from parents and community members, they shared the unfortunate situation that often arises in the schools during heavy downpours. They noted that parents do their utmost to contribute towards the roofing materials. They ensure that classrooms are roofed using their own labour. Additionally, the two schools were situated within the same community. The headteachers echoed these sentiments, with one noting:

"Roofing part of ripped off the structure. It is done through the parent association levy" (Headteacher 4, school D).

“Parents sometimes contribute funds to reroof classrooms that are or were ripped off by rainstorms. They monitor and stay around till the classrooms are covered before they leave.” (Headteacher 3, School C)

This shows that parental involvement was not limited to financial contribution. Parents also gave their time and remained involved until the repair work was completed. In this rural context, such involvement was important because damaged roofs could directly interrupt children’s use of classrooms.

All the teachers in School B, during their focus group discussion, reported that parents and community members assisted in the provision of pavilions for kindergarten classes, maintenance, and protection of school properties, completion/covering of a pavilion for upper primary students, and reroofing of the school building. The teachers further added that all these contributions toward the school's infrastructure projects were from the PTA levy. Voices below are from some teachers:

“The school previously had no kindergarten block, so parents provided a pavilion for the KG children before the government came out with a new block for the KG.” (Teacher 4, School B)

“Parents and community members play an important role in the maintenance of the doors and windows of furniture and the entire protection of the school property, especially during holidays.” (Teacher 5, School B)

Their contributions towards maintenance activities, such as repairing doors, windows, and furniture, contribute to the overall preservation of the school environment. However, most teachers in schools A, D and C noted that parents have not made any contribution regarding infrastructural projects. But a few among them cited roofing of sheets as the main support that parents and community members rendered for the schools. They attributed this to the financial

challenges that have plagued the people living in the community, making it cumbersome to make contributions. One teacher noted that.:

“Parents have not done anything due to lack of income”. (Teacher 2, School A)

This difference is important. The findings do not show the same level of infrastructural involvement across all four schools. They suggest that participation depended partly on the resources available to families and on the particular needs of each school. The financial barriers affecting these contributions are discussed further in Chapter 6.

In the document analysis, there are many occasions on which parents and community members made financial contributions towards infrastructural improvements, such as the maintenance of school windows and the construction of urinal pits. In one of the meetings at school A, where erosion has deteriorated the school compound, the community members and parents said they would be available any day, at any time, to dig gravel and fill the eroded areas. These examples directly support the heads and teachers' findings that parents play a critical role in infrastructural projects, enhancing the learning environment.

Another example documented in one of the schools is the community’s response to the theft of locks and TV sets. They contributed by financing windows and repairing all the broken ones. This not only reflects their commitment but also illustrates their practical impact on creating a secure and conducive learning space.

The findings are consistent with the scoping review and earlier studies showing that rural parents and community members support school infrastructure through levies, labour, materials and volunteering despite limited household resources (Donkor & Waek, 2018; Preston, 2013; Stevenson, 2014; Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016).

The present study adds examples of temporary classrooms, reroofing after rainstorms, erosion control, protection against theft and ongoing maintenance of facilities

These contributions supported important conditions for educational quality because safe classrooms, functioning roofs, sanitation facilities, secure school property and usable learning spaces affect whether teaching and learning can take place effectively.

The rural northern Ghanaian context gives this finding particular meaning. Parents and community members were often responding to immediate problems such as inadequate classrooms, damaged roofs, erosion, and poor school facilities. Their involvement was therefore practical and closely connected to keeping schools functioning.

Viewed through decentralisation, PTA and SMC structures enabled parents and community members to contribute money, labour and ideas towards local school development. However, larger infrastructural needs remained dependent on government support, showing that community participation complemented rather than replaced public responsibility.

Overall, teachers' and headteachers' accounts corroborated the parent and community reports that infrastructural involvement extended beyond financial contributions to include labour, maintenance, protection and practical problem-solving. However, the level of participation varied across schools, indicating that willingness to contribute operated within unequal local resource conditions.

**Upkeep and care of the environment.**

The findings reveal that parents and community members were concerned about the children's health and safety. Parents and community members ensure that their children are punctual and assist in cleaning their classrooms and schools. One headteacher noted:

"Parents and community members prepare their wards well and early enough to be in the school to sweep and tidy up their sessions." (Headteacher 1, School A)

A teacher similarly explained:

Parents and community members support teachers in ensuring that the school environment is safe for all learners by checking for broken furniture and erosion and weeding around the school to stay away from harmful animals like snakes. (Teacher 5, School B)

Community support also included protecting and improving the school environment. One teacher stated:

"Community members do provide a security person to look after the school at night. They once planted trees and flowers around to beautify the school." (Teacher 4, School B)

These accounts show that involvement in the learning environment went beyond providing buildings and infrastructure. Parents and community members also helped to maintain, protect, and keep the school environment safe for children. Activities such as sweeping, weeding, checking damaged furniture, providing security, and planting trees were practical forms of involvement.

They also counselled themselves on the need to make the school environment conducive and free of smells and rubbish, which could affect both their studies and the development of their children. A head teacher asserted that:

"They do sometimes during PTA or General Assembly meetings advise each other not to dump refuse on the school compound and not to defecate around the school". (Head Teacher 3, School C)

However, there were other negative actions in the community, including polluting the school environment. A teacher indicated that.

"Parents and community members do not help make the environment conducive for learning, they rather defecate around and even in the classroom, highlighting severe challenges in maintaining a clean environment in some schools". (Teacher 7, School C)

These contrasting accounts show that community behaviour was not consistent. While some parents and community members promoted cleanliness and organised measures to protect the school environment, others were reported to contribute to sanitation problems. Community involvement in environmental care was therefore both supportive and, in some instances, contradictory.

From the minutes of the PTA and SMC meetings, there was discussion of community efforts to secure school premises at night and of the proposal to plant trees. For example, in school B, at the end of the SMC and PTA meeting, the PTA chairman and members finally agreed that all parents would pay 2 Ghana cedis to hire security personnel to watch the school. These actions are concrete examples of how parents and community members contribute to the care and upkeep of the environment, supporting the responses from heads and teachers about the community's role in environmental care.

The findings agree with the scoping review, which identified sanitation, school cleanliness, safety, and pupils' well-being as areas in which rural parents and community members participated. Sharma et al. (2016) similarly reported community concern for children's health and welfare.

The present study extends this evidence by showing the specific ways environmental care was carried out in the study communities, including weeding to reduce the risk of snakes, addressing erosion and damaged furniture, employing a night security person, planting trees, and discouraging refuse dumping and open defecation.

These activities supported the conditions needed for safe and effective schooling. In the rural study context, concerns about snakes, erosion, damaged facilities, sanitation and school security meant that environmental care involved practical responses to everyday risks affecting pupils and school property.

PTA and SMC structures gave community members opportunities to identify environmental problems and organise local responses, such as contributing towards security and discussing sanitation. This shows local participation in the day-to-day care of the school, even though larger environmental and infrastructural problems may still require support from government authorities.

The main contribution of this finding is that parental and community involvement in the learning environment included not only building facilities but also maintaining, protecting, and keeping the school safe. At the same time, the contrasting sanitation accounts show that community involvement was uneven and sometimes contradictory.

**Provision of educational materials.**

The provision of educational materials by parents and community members varies. While some headteachers report that parents support their children individually with basic learning resources, others note that parents collectively provide exercise books, markers, and other necessary materials. A headteacher opines that:

"Parent and community members do not directly buy or supply the school with any educational materials but individually support their own children with basic learning". (Headteacher 1, School A)

In the Focus discussions, a few teachers mentioned that parents and community members provided pens, exercise books, pencils, plastic chairs, furniture, and uniforms.

"Parents and community members provide educational materials such as textbooks, exercise books, school uniforms, and furniture." (Teacher 5, School B)

These accounts show two different forms of material support. Some parents provided resources directly for their own children, while others contributed materials that could be used more broadly within the school.

However, several teachers reported that parents and community members did not provide educational materials directly to their schools. One teacher stated:

"No educational materials are provided at all." (Teacher 5, School C)

This variation is important because material support was not the same across the schools. In some cases, parents helped to fill shortages in school resources, while in others their support remained mainly at the household level or was not reported by teachers at all.

The finding agrees with the scoping review, which showed that parents and community members sometimes provided books, stationery, furniture, and other learning materials, although the level of support differed across rural settings (Asare, 2011; Bekoe, 2013; Kong, 2008; Erlendsdóttir et al., 2022).

The present study therefore confirms that the provision of educational materials is an uneven form of parental involvement. It also adds an important distinction between providing materials for one's own child and contributing resources for the wider school.

Access to books, writing materials, uniforms and suitable furniture supported pupils' participation in teaching and learning, although the ability of communities to provide these resources differed substantially across schools**.**

The main contribution of this finding is therefore the distinction between material support provided to individual children and contributions made to the school collectively. Teachers' and headteachers' accounts also show that neither form was consistent across schools, reinforcing the uneven nature of parental and community material involvement.

*School governance/management*

Regular attendance at school meetings was identified as an important form of parental and community involvement in school governance. Headteachers explained that PTA and SMC meetings provided formal spaces where parents and community members could receive

information, discuss school concerns, and contribute to school management. A headteacher stated.

“Parent and community members meetings are held at least twice in the term that is beginning and towards the end of the term, emergency meetings are also held in some cases” (Headteacher 2, School B).

This account shows that PTA and SMC meetings provided regular opportunities for parents and community members to participate in school affairs. The meetings also allowed schools to seek community support when urgent issues arose.

However, the findings also show that attendance at meetings did not always translate into active or sustained participation. Some parents will only attend but will not have time to stay till the meetings end. A head teacher note:

> “Some parents do not keep long at PTA meetings; one to 3 minutes they start to leave. This is because some parents do not regard the meetings, others feel they have nothing to contribute and so many parents do not participate’’. (Headteacher 3, School C)

This suggests that the existence of formal meetings did not ensure sustained participation. Some parents attended only briefly, while others were perceived by the headteacher as feeling that they had little to contribute. Chapter 6 examines the reasons for uneven attendance and participation in more detail.

This is consistent with studies showing that formal attendance does not necessarily amount to meaningful participation in decision-making (Sharma et al., 2016; Swift-Morgan, n.d.). The important issue is therefore not only whether meetings occur or parents attend, but whether they remain, contribute and influence decisions**.**

The findings also evinced that through PTA and SMC meetings, some parents contributed to key decision-making processes, reflecting their active role in school governance. These

meetings provided a platform for parents and community members to participate in setting goals and developing school plans. Discussions often revolve around issues such as learner performance, truancy, inadequate textbooks, and furniture. When head teachers were asked about the specific matters and decision-making that parents and community members contribute to. One headteacher stated:

> Yes, parents and community members take part in setting goals and development plans for the school. The main channels for discussing these matters are staff meetings, SMC or PTA executive meetings and community General Assembly meetings. Some specific matters are the inability of learners to read and poverty. (Headteacher 1, School A)

Another headteacher explained:

"Yes, that is done through a School Performance Appraisal Meeting (SPAM). First, we discuss learners' performance, including truancy and those not studying at home. Sometimes, we make observations about inadequate textbooks, furniture, and other issues." (Headteacher 3, School C)

Headteachers in Schools B and D similarly reported that parents and community members participated through SMC, PTA and School Performance Appraisal meetings, where they discussed pupil performance, infrastructure, learning outcomes, behaviour, and the general management of the schools.

These accounts show that parents and community members were not completely excluded from school governance. Through PTA, SMC, SPAM, and general school meetings, they participated in discussions about school improvement, infrastructure, discipline, learner performance, attendance, and learning materials. Their involvement was therefore most visible in practical areas of school management where schools required parental cooperation, financial contributions, monitoring, and community support.

The findings agree with the scoping review, which identified meetings, development planning and decision-making as important forms of involvement in school management.

However, the present study adds detail by showing that planning in the study communities focused strongly on immediate concerns such as reading difficulties, truancy, lack of furniture and textbooks, poverty, and pupils who were not studying at home.

By raising concerns about attendance, reading difficulties, learning materials, safety and performance, parents and community members contributed local information that could assist school planning and problem-solving.

However, the documentary records also show that the nature of participation was largely concentrated around resource mobilisation, discipline, monitoring, and implementation. Parents and community members were often involved in discussing how to pay dues, repair furniture, provide learning materials, support school security, monitor children's attendance, and respond to poor performance. This suggests that while parents participated in school governance, their role was often more supportive and practical than authoritative. They contributed to the functioning of the school, but their influence appeared more limited in areas involving curriculum, pedagogy, and broader educational policy.

Viewed through decentralisation, PTA, SMC and SPAM structures created opportunities for local participation, but parents and community members were more often involved in consultation, resource mobilisation and implementation than in exercising authority over broader instructional or policy decisions.

The documentary records also raise an important gender issue in school decision-making. In several meeting records, formal leadership and agenda-setting roles were held by PTA chairmen, SMC chairmen, headteachers, imams, and male parent speakers. Women were not entirely absent, as some female teachers and mothers contributed to discussions on children's

welfare, feeding, illness, academic performance, and home monitoring. However, women appeared less visible in executive leadership and agenda-setting roles. This suggests that formal school governance spaces were largely male-led, even though women also participated in some ways.

This gendered pattern matters because school-level decisions are not neutral. Issues discussed in PTA and SMC meetings, such as attendance, discipline, learning materials, pupils' performance, children's behaviour, school safety, and home support, affect boys and girls differently. If men dominate formal leadership spaces, the specific educational concerns of mothers and daughters may not always receive full attention. This gendered pattern is analytically important because participation cannot be assessed only by counting attendance. Formal school-governance spaces may provide opportunities for parents to be present while still differing in who speaks, who leads and whose concerns enter the agenda. The documentary evidence therefore raises a question about the inclusiveness of participation as well as its frequency.

Taken together, teachers' and headteachers' accounts show that PTA, SMC, SPAM and other school meetings created regular opportunities for parents and community members to receive information, discuss school concerns and contribute to development planning. Their participation was most visible around practical issues such as attendance, pupil performance, discipline, learning materials, furniture, infrastructure and resource mobilisation.

However, the existence of these structures did not guarantee sustained or equal participation. Some parents attended meetings only briefly, while documentary records showed that formal leadership and agenda-setting roles were more visibly occupied by men. School governance therefore involved variation not only in whether parents participated, but also in the depth and inclusiveness of that participation.

Viewed through decentralisation, the findings distinguish between formal opportunity and meaningful influence. Local structures created avenues for consultation and participation, but parents and community members were often more involved in identifying problems, mobilising resources and supporting implementation than in exercising authority over broader educational decisions. Attendance at meetings should therefore not be treated automatically as evidence of equal voice or shared decision-making power.

*Financial support.*

The study examined whether parents and community members mobilised financial resources for school activities, including infrastructure, learning materials, field trips, teacher support and pupil-related activities. Teachers and headteachers reported that financial contributions occurred mainly through PTA levies and were usually directed towards specific and immediate school needs. One headteacher remarked that:

> There are no fundraising activities; funds are raised solely through the PTA development levy. Furthermore, there are no community initiatives to sponsor school-organised field trips, as the majority of parents find it challenging to provide three square meals a day and many feel they are incapable of doing so. There is no supplement to the teacher's salary. (Headteacher 1, School A)

This account shows that financial participation was constrained by household economic circumstances. Contributions were therefore more likely to be directed towards immediate school needs than towards activities such as salary supplements or field trips. The wider effects of household poverty on participation are examined in Chapter 6.

Supplementing teachers' salaries and organising fundraising activities are areas where parental and community involvement is generally limited. Headteachers indicate that there are no formal

efforts to supplement teachers' salaries, although gifts such as foodstuffs are occasionally given as tokens of appreciation. One Headteacher stated:

“Teachers in the rural communities do not enjoy much support financially. However, gifts such as foodstuffs are sometimes extended to the teachers as appreciation for the services the teachers are rendering to the school.” (Headteacher 2, School B)

This suggests that appreciation for teachers was not always expressed through money. In a rural setting where cash income may be limited, foodstuffs provided an alternative way for community members to recognise teachers’ work. However, these gifts were not the same as regular salary supplements.

These accounts suggest that parental and community financial involvement is more project-oriented than salary-oriented. Parents may not be able to provide direct financial incentives to teachers, but they contribute to school improvement through levies for furniture, repairs, and maintenance. This distinction is important because it shows that parental financial support exists, but it is concentrated in areas considered immediate and practical for the functioning of the school

This differs from Chikoko (2008) and Nishimura, (2019), where parents contribute mobilised funds to supplement schoolteachers’ salaries and motivate them to teach their children effectively.

The present study therefore differs from settings where financial support was directed towards teacher remuneration. In the study schools, limited funds were more often used for immediate practical needs affecting the operation of the school.

However, teachers from School B indicated that the money raised from the PTA levy was used to support structures, sponsor school trips, and hire security guards to protect the school.

The community raises funds through PTA levies. They also contribute to pay for the night watchmen they have hired, and they sponsor field trips. (Teacher 2, School B).

This account shows that some communities were able to mobilise funds for a wider range of activities than others. Financial participation therefore varied across the schools, both in the amount raised and in the purposes for which it was used.

Financial participation therefore varied across the four schools in both scale and purpose. Documentary evidence from PTA, SMC, and SPAM meeting records supports these interview findings. The records show specific instances where parents contributed financially toward classroom repairs, furniture, urinals, school security, electricity bills, examination fees, and extra classes. In some cases, parents agreed to pay small levies, such as one cedi per month for extra classes, two cedis for maintenance, five cedis per child for classroom flooring, and monthly contributions toward electricity. The records also show that PTA dues were used for items such as a DVD deck, urinal maintenance, watchman support, and other school-related expenses. These examples demonstrate that parents and community members made concrete financial contributions to support school operations and infrastructure.

At the same time, the documentary evidence also reveals the limits of these contributions. Several meeting records referred to unpaid dues, incomplete contributions, delayed maintenance work, electricity debt, lack of furniture, shortage of textbooks, and difficulties in raising money for school projects. This shows that while parents and community members were willing to contribute, their ability to sustain financial support was constrained by poverty and inconsistent payment. Therefore, financial involvement was both present and limited: parents contributed where they could, but the scale and regularity of support were often insufficient to meet the schools' needs.

The document analysis also revealed that parents sometimes contributed to extra classes when pupils' academic performance was low. For example, in one meeting, parents agreed to make monthly contributions toward the organisation of extra classes, especially for upper primary pupils. This indicates that financial support was not limited to infrastructure. It was also linked to improving pupils' academic outcomes. However, such initiatives depended heavily on parents' ability to pay, making them vulnerable to financial constraints and uneven participation.

These findings are consistent with the scoping review, which identified PTA levies, direct payments, school activities, learning materials and infrastructure as common forms of financial participation, while also showing that poverty often constrained their scale and regularity.

The present study adds contextual detail by showing that contributions were predominantly small, project-specific and directed towards immediate needs such as repairs, furniture, security, electricity, examinations and extra classes.

These contributions supported the resources and conditions needed for teaching and learning. Furniture, secure facilities, electricity, examination support, and extra classes could all contribute to pupils' participation and progress.

In the rural northern Ghanaian context, however, many parents were contributing from households that were themselves experiencing financial hardship. Their small levies may therefore represent meaningful commitment even when the total amount raised was not enough to meet all school needs.

Viewed through decentralisation, PTA and SMC structures enabled parents and community members to identify needs, agree on local levies and contribute towards school priorities. However, the inability of local contributions to meet some essential needs also shows the limits of community financing and the continuing importance of government provision.

Overall, financial participation was present but uneven across the study schools. Parents and community members contributed mainly through small PTA levies and project-specific payments for infrastructure, security, electricity, examination costs, learning activities and extra classes, while regular salary supplements and broader fundraising were uncommon.

The important distinction is between willingness to contribute and financial capacity. Some families contributed despite limited household resources, but unpaid levies and incomplete projects show that local willingness could not always generate sufficient resources. Financial involvement should therefore be understood as meaningful but constrained, rather than either wholly absent or sufficient to meet schools' needs.

### *School personnel (teachers)*

The study also examined how parents and community members monitored, supported and raised concerns about teachers, and the extent to which they participated in school personnel matters**.**

This aspect was important for understanding headteachers' and teachers' views of the role parents and community members play in promoting teacher accountability.

**Monitoring and Motivation of Teachers**

Parents and community members employ various methods to monitor and motivate teachers. Surprise visits and indirect monitoring through observations while passing by the school are common practices. Headteachers and teachers note that regular visits by PTA and SMC chairpersons help ensure that teachers remain punctual and committed. A voice from a headteacher:

> Parents and community members monitor the activities of the school directly through visits and indirectly that is secretly when passing by early mornings to their workplaces. In a recent SMC/PTA meeting held in the school, three parents acknowledged that the

> teachers have been punctual and very regular in school and even went ahead to mention names in the midst of all and sundry. (Headteacher 1, School A)

Another headteacher stated:

"The PTA chairman and the SMC Chairman respectively always visit the school to check on their work. There was one teacher about whom they expressed concern regarding his bad behaviour towards students during the 2022 academic year." (Headteacher 2, School B)

These accounts suggest that parents and community members play an informal accountability role in relation to teachers. Their monitoring is not usually conducted through formal inspection or professional appraisal, but through observation, school visits, reporting concerns, and participation in PTA/SMC meetings. This indicates that community accountability operates through everyday visibility and relational monitoring. Teachers are aware that parents, SMC members, PTA executives, and community members may observe whether they are present and active in the school.

The documentary evidence from PTA, SMC, and SPAM meeting records supports this finding. In the SPAM meeting records, teacher attendance was discussed in relation to pupil performance, and the Circuit Supervisor clarified that teacher attendance was not the main issue, but that pupils' performance required attention. Other records also show that teachers' punctuality, pupil performance, discipline, and parental monitoring were discussed in formal school meetings. This confirms that PTA/SMC and SPAM meetings created spaces where teacher-related issues could be raised, even if parents did not have direct authority over teacher employment or professional training.

This pattern is consistent with studies showing that PTA and SMC representatives may monitor attendance, punctuality and teacher conduct through school visits and reporting concerns (Essuman & Akyeampong, 2019; Sharma et al., 2016).

However, the present findings also show that this accountability is limited. Parents and community members can observe, report, encourage, or complain, but they do not appear to have substantial authority over teacher deployment, professional development, or disciplinary procedures.

In addition to monitoring, parents and community members also motivate teachers through verbal encouragement, prayers, public commendation, and occasional practical support. One headteacher explained:

> Parents and community members pray for teachers and speak words of blessing for the effort that they're putting in., even though there is more room for improvement. They also sometimes repair and fix gadgets for teachers and schools at low or no cost. (Headteacher 1, school A)

Teacher motivation was therefore not exclusively financial. Parents and community members could express appreciation through prayers, public recognition and occasional practical assistance. These activities may strengthen school–community relationships, but they are distinct from formal incentives or professional support.

The findings also show that parents and community members did not organise teacher training or structured professional development activities. Teachers indicated that during PTA meetings, parents and community members mainly raised concerns about what teachers should or should not do, but they did not provide formal training opportunities. One teacher explained:

“Communities and parents raised their concerns on what teachers should do and not do in the school during PTA general meetings but never organised the training for teachers.” (Teacher 4, School B)

This finding reveals the boundary of parental and community involvement in relation to school personnel. Parents and community members contribute to teacher accountability through monitoring and feedback, but they do not have the capacity, resources, or institutional mandate to provide professional development. Their role is therefore stronger in supervision and moral encouragement than in technical support for teaching quality.

Overall, the findings show that parents and community members participate in school personnel management mainly through informal monitoring, PTA/SMC visits, public acknowledgement, reporting concerns, and verbal motivation. These practices help promote teacher punctuality and accountability. However, their role remains limited because they do not participate meaningfully in teacher training, professional development, or formal teacher recruitment.

The findings agree with the scoping review that community involvement in school personnel management is stronger in informal monitoring than in technical or formal personnel functions. In the rural northern Ghanaian context, this monitoring operated through close everyday contact between the school and community. Teachers could be seen while community members were going about their normal activities, while PTA and SMC leaders also visited schools and raised concerns through meetings. This made teacher accountability partly a community-based process.

From a quality education perspective, such involvement can support teacher attendance, punctuality, appropriate conduct, and positive school-community relationships. However, informal community monitoring is different from professional teacher evaluation and cannot replace formal supervision and professional development.

From a decentralisation perspective, parents and community members had a voice in holding teachers accountable, but their authority had clear limits. They could observe and report concerns, while formal teacher management remained largely with headteachers and education authorities.

The main contribution of this finding is therefore the distinction between community accountability and professional personnel management. Parents and community members played a meaningful role in monitoring and motivating teachers, but they remained outside the technical and administrative aspects of teacher management.

**Recruitment and termination of teachers**

The study also examined the extent to which parents and community members participated in teacher recruitment and dismissal. In contrast to school maintenance, resource mobilisation and monitoring, their formal role in these personnel decisions was very limited, with recruitment and termination remaining largely under the authority of the Ghana Education Service and district education authorities. At School B, the headteachers stated:

"No, teachers are selected and dismissed by the district director of education." (Headteacher 2, School B)

This response indicates that parents and community members do not have formal decision-making power in the appointment or dismissal of teachers. Their involvement is limited because recruitment and dismissal are treated as administrative matters handled by district-level education authorities rather than by the local school community.

At School A, community members are only informed about such decisions, as noted in the response:

"Community members are informed when teachers are dismissed or selected, but there has not been any instance, yet where they were involved in the selection."(Headteacher 1, School A)

This suggests that community participation in teacher recruitment is more informational than participatory. Parents and community members may be notified about decisions after they have been made, but they do not appear to influence who is posted to the school or who is removed. This distinction is important because being informed is not the same as having decision-making authority. The headteacher at School C, mentioned a slightly different approach, saying:

"We do suggest to the parents to inform the Ghana Education Service (GES) as well to post teachers in our school."(Headteacher 3, School C)

This reflects an advocacy role rather than a recruitment role. Parents and community members can communicate teacher shortages and school needs to GES, but they cannot directly appoint teachers. Their involvement therefore lies in drawing attention to staffing needs, not in controlling teacher deployment.

Overall, the findings distinguish between formal personnel authority and community advocacy. Parents and community members could be informed about staffing changes, report teacher-related concerns and request additional postings where shortages existed, but they did not select, appoint or dismiss teachers. Their involvement in recruitment and termination was therefore informational and advisory rather than authoritative.

This is consistent with Chikoko (2008), who found that parents may raise concerns about teachers while remaining outside formal hiring and dismissal decisions. Viewed through decentralisation, the finding demonstrates a clear boundary to school-level participation: local structures provide channels for community voice, but formal employment authority remains with higher education authorities.

This distinction is particularly relevant in the rural study context because communities may experience teacher shortages directly while lacking the authority to address them through

recruitment. Their role is consequently to identify staffing needs, advocate for postings and communicate concerns to the authorities responsible for personnel decisions.

Taken together, Chapter 5 shows that parents and community members participated in multiple areas of children's education, including learner support at home, school finance, the learning environment, school management and aspects of school personnel support. Their participation included homework assistance, encouragement, resource provision, school meetings, infrastructure maintenance, monitoring and practical problem-solving.

However, participation was not equally distributed across these areas. Parents and community members had stronger roles in practical and supportive activities that could be organised locally, but considerably less influence over curriculum decisions, classroom instruction, professional teacher development, recruitment and dismissal.

The findings broadly confirm the areas identified through the scoping review while adding contextual detail about how involvement operated in rural northern Ghana. In particular, the study highlights indirect and communal forms of learner support, non-academic learning, the contribution of siblings and wider family networks, traditional leadership, and locally organised responses to immediate school needs.

Viewed in relation to Epstein's framework, the findings show that parental involvement extended across learning at home, communication with schools, school participation and wider community support. The rural Ghanaian evidence further shows that some forms of involvement were distributed across siblings, relatives, traditional leaders and other educated community members rather than being undertaken by parents alone.

Parents and community members also contributed to conditions supporting educational quality through learning materials, safer school environments, attendance support, infrastructure, security and monitoring, even where they were not directly involved in classroom instruction.

Viewed through decentralisation, the findings reveal different levels of participation and authority. Parents and community members were relatively active in identifying problems, raising concerns, mobilising resources, monitoring and supporting implementation, but their influence weakened in areas where formal authority remained with teachers, headteachers, the Ghana Education Service and other education authorities. Formal opportunities for participation therefore did not necessarily amount to shared decision-making power.

The central contribution of Chapter 5 is therefore not simply whether parents and community members were involved, but how the form, depth and authority associated with their participation varied across educational domains. Participation was strongest in support, monitoring, mobilisation and practical problem-solving, while influence was weaker in curriculum, classroom instruction and formal personnel decisions. The findings therefore distinguish clearly between being involved in schooling and having authority over schooling, providing a more nuanced account of parental and community participation in rural northern Ghana.

# Chapter 6: Facilitators and Barriers of community and parent involvement in quality education

This chapter examines the facilitators and barriers that shape parent and community involvement in quality education. It draws on the perspectives of teachers, headteachers, parents, and community members to show the conditions that encourage or limit participation. The chapter is organised into two parts. The first part discusses facilitators of involvement, including communication, school-community engagement, and positive relationships between schools and families. The second part examines barriers, including time constraints, livelihood demands, financial difficulties, distance, and limited resources. Together, these findings address Research Question Four and explain why parental and community participation varied across households, schools and forms of involvement, providing the basis for the strategies discussed in Chapter 7.

## 6.1 Teachers and headteachers' views on facilitators

### Effective Communication and Information Sharing

The study examined how communication between schools, parents and community members facilitated participation. Teachers and headteachers described multiple channels for sharing information, including PTA and SMC meetings, telephone calls, home visits, messages sent through pupils and traditional community announcements.

One Headteacher explained:

> The school and teachers share information with the parents and community through SMC or PTA executives and direct phone calls to parents as well as messages through their wards in the school to them, since there are different communities feeding the

> school in terms of enrolment, thus different means to reach up to them is required if it's a critical home visit. (Headteacher 1, School A)

The study also found that in one of the two towns, information was shared in the community through announcements by the gong beaters on behalf of the chief. A head teacher asserted that:

The schools and teachers share information through PTO/ General Assembly meetings, also through the learners to their parents and also through the chief by way of announcing to the community through the gong-gong beaters and also through spam meetings. (Headteacher 3. School C)

These accounts show that schools combined formal school communication with locally established community practices. The use of several channels increased the likelihood of reaching parents living in different communities and with different levels of access to written or electronic communication.

The study further shows that parents and community members are motivated by various forms of information sharing to engage in children's education and school activities. One teacher explained:

> Information is shared through announcement in the community. Yes, you will find a lot of parents and community members coming to the meeting and participating in most activities in the schools when announcements are made. This is because everyone listens when the community sends information to the people. This is a usual practice, and they are used to it. Parents are reminded even if their children informed them. (Teacher 2, School B)

Another teacher described how parents with limited literacy responded to written information:

> Information is shared through PTA meetings. Information is also sent to parents through the children orally or in written notes. Yes, most parents are also happy to see their children come with letters. They open and allow literate people to read for them. They will just write the date of the meeting on the wall with charcoal so as not to forget the date. This gets them motivated, and they always want to take part. (Teacher 7, School C*)*

The second account is particularly important because it shows that limited literacy did not automatically prevent parents from responding to school information. Some parents sought help from literate people and used simple ways, such as writing the meeting date on the wall, to remember school activities

The findings show that communication facilitated participation when information was delivered through channels that parents and community members could access and recognise. Schools did not rely on written notices alone; they combined meetings, telephone calls, home visits, pupils as messengers and traditional announcement systems. This is consistent with the scoping review, which identified regular school–family communication as an important facilitator, while the present study adds contextual detail about the use of chiefs and gong-gong beaters as locally established communication channels.

The rural northern Ghanaian context is important because parents differ in literacy levels, access to phones, place of residence, and daily livelihood activities. The account of parents asking literate people to read school letters for them and writing meeting dates on the wall with charcoal shows how families adapted to communication difficulties rather than simply ignoring school information.

Viewed through Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model, school communication functioned as an invitation to involvement. Information about meetings, children's progress and school concerns signalled to parents that their participation was expected and provided specific opportunities for them to respond.

From a decentralisation perspective, communication through PTA, SMC, SPAM, and community meetings gives parents and community members opportunities to receive information and participate in school matters. The use of chiefs and traditional announcement systems also shows how formal school structures can work together with existing community practices.

The main contribution of this finding is that effective communication in the study communities depended not only on providing information but also on using communication methods that suited local conditions and practices.

## Training programs

The study also examined whether training helped parents and community representatives understand and perform their roles in school participation. Headteachers reported that the Ghana Education Service and NGOs such as Right to Play had organised training for selected PTA and SMC representatives, including community leaders such as the Magazia.One headteacher explained:

> Yes, but it was specifically for the SMC chairman, vice SMC and Magazia of the community and PTA chairman, vice PTA Magazia. Specific training included the roles of SMC members and the roles of the PTA. This programme encourages them to get involved because most of them do not know about their various roles. (Headteacher 1, School A)

Another headteacher stated:

> Yes, GES sometimes organised workshops for SMC and PTAs to sensitise them about their roles and the need for them to take or play active roles in school management. NGOs like the Right to Play sometimes also organise it for them. (Headteacher 3, School C)

These accounts show that training helped participants understand what was expected of them in PTA and SMC structures. Knowing their roles made it easier for them to participate in school management.

At one of the schools, the training programs for teachers and parents focused on helping parents support their wards with homework and other academic activities. A headteacher claimed that:

"Training is organised in collaboration with NGOs in education to train parents how to help their wards with homework and other activities related to their children's educational development." (Headteacher 2, School B)

This shows that training supported involvement not only in school management but also in children's learning at home.

The findings also showed that in School D, it had never occurred.

"In School D, the headteacher indicated that no such programs have been conducted in the school." (Headteacher 4, School D)

This variation shows that access to training was uneven across the study schools. The findings align with Cheairs (2016), who found that training parents to support children's learning at home can strengthen parental involvement. Peterson (2008) also found that empowering parents increased their participation in school activities. The finding also agrees with the scoping review, which identified training as an important facilitator of parental and community involvement.

Viewed through decentralisation, the finding shows that creating PTA and SMC structures is not enough if members do not understand the responsibilities given to them. Training therefore helped build the knowledge needed for more meaningful local participation. The absence of similar training in School D also suggests that the capacity to participate may differ even when the same formal structures exist.

In the rural northern Ghanaian context, this is important because some community representatives may have limited previous experience with formal school-governance roles. Training therefore helped connect existing local leadership, including the Magazia, with the formal responsibilities of PTA and SMC structures.

The main contribution of this finding is that providing opportunities for participation was not always enough. Parents and community representatives also needed a clear understanding of their roles to participate effectively

## Motivation and engagement

The study also examined how schools motivated and engaged parents and community members and whether these efforts encouraged sustained participation.

The findings from the study reveal that achievement and developmental plans are shared with parents, which excites them and makes them to place great trust in teachers to nurture and educate their children. It also finds that headteachers who acknowledged parents' attendance in meetings with refreshments increased their involvement. One headteacher explained:

> When achievements and developmental plans are shared with parents, they feel excited and hopeful about the future of their children in the teachers' care. Certainly, parents respond positively when they are motivated. Additionally, appreciating their attendance with small refreshments during meetings encourages them, although this can be difficult to sustain due to a lack of funding. (Headteacher 1, School A)

This shows that recognition and keeping parents informed about school progress could encourage their continued participation. However, financial limitations made some forms of motivation, such as refreshments, difficult to sustain.

On top of that, the data reveal that parents and community members were invited to participate in extracurricular activities like sports and cultural activities. This increased their involvement because they felt like they were part of the school community. One headteacher opined:

"Parents respond positively because they are always involved in school activities. During extracurricular activities such as sports and cultural activities, parents are engaged, which makes them part of the school community." (Headteacher 2, School B)

The findings further reveal that headteachers inform parents of their children's progress and the interventions available to their wards when parents take an interest in their children's education. Notifying parents of all school information and making them aware of their ownership of the school increased their involvement.

> By letting them to know that they now own the schools, another way is telling them the progress of the learners. Also, by way of telling them the interventions available for their wards if they take a keen interest in their wards' education. (Headteacher 3, School, C)

These findings suggest that parents were encouraged when schools recognised them as important partners and kept them informed about both school development and their children's progress.

Teachers similarly described PTA meetings and direct invitations as opportunities for parents to voice concerns, advise pupils and contribute to school activities. One teacher mentioned:

“Through PTA, members get the opportunity to voice their ideas and concerns. Parents respond positively when they are motivated.” (Teacher 1, School A)

This is consistent with Vigo Arrazola & Soriano Bozalongo (2015), and the scoping review, which identified recognition, invitations and positive school–family relationships as important facilitators of participation.

Viewed through Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model, these practices functioned as school-based invitations to involvement. Parents were more likely to perceive participation as expected and valued when they were personally invited, recognised, informed and given identifiable roles in school activities.

However, the findings further reveal that while parents respond positively during PTA meetings, their engagement does not extend beyond these gatherings. One teacher stated:

“Through PTA meetings teachers give talks about the need of parents to support school activities and they respond positively during the meetings but that ends it.” (Teacher 11, School D)

It also evinces that providing uniforms to needy but brilliant students as a form of motivation did not consistently lead to encouraging responses from parents:

> We invite parents to meetings. The school also share uniforms with needy but brilliant students just to motivate and encourage parents to let their children be in school. That does not motivate them cos their response is not encouraging in most cases (Teacher 9, School C)

These contrasting accounts show that motivation did not have the same effect on all parents. Positive responses during meetings or the provision of material support did not necessarily result in sustained involvement.

Headteachers and teachers indicated that when parents could see the results of their contributions, this encouraged continued support.

Documentary records also showed that parents and community members were publicly acknowledged for attending meetings and contributing to school-development activities. Such recognition provided another way of reinforcing participation and signalling that community contributions were valued.

The results of these findings provide additional evidence supporting the (Swift-Morgan, n.d.) findings, as appreciative attitudes from school staff were a significant motivator for community members to get involved in meetings. The findings also support the scoping review by showing that recognition, opportunities to participate, and visible school activities can encourage involvement.

In the rural northern Ghanaian context, motivation was closely connected to practices that parents could see and participate in directly, such as PTA meetings, sports, cultural activities, school projects, and public recognition. At the same time, the socioeconomic conditions of many households meant that motivation requiring additional financial resources could be difficult to sustain.

The main contribution of this finding is that motivation was more effective when parents were recognised, informed, invited to participate, and could see the results of their involvement. However, motivation alone did not always produce sustained participation, showing that other barriers also shaped parents' ability to remain involved.

Taken together, teachers' and headteachers' accounts show that parental and community involvement was facilitated when schools communicated through accessible and locally appropriate channels, clarified participants' roles through training, and created opportunities for parents and community members to feel recognised and involved. Communication helped

parents know when and how their participation was needed, training strengthened their understanding of the roles available to them, and recognition and visible school activities could encourage continued engagement. However, these facilitators did not operate uniformly, as positive responses to invitations or school activities did not always lead to sustained participation.

## 6.2 Parents and Community members' views on Facilitators

### Information sharing and communication

Parents and community members described receiving school information through several channels, including PTA meetings, PTA executives, children, direct contact with teachers and school visits.

"The school sometimes organises PTA meetings on behalf of the school's development, and the children pre-inform us towards the date scheduled for the meeting." (Parent 3, School A)

Similarly, a community representative explained:

"The teachers share information with me because I am the PTA chairman. I also do my best to make sure the information gets to every parent in the community". (SMC 1, School A)

Children also acted as messengers by bringing information from school to their parents, including reports, notices, and information about meetings. Parents also received information through direct interaction with teachers and visits to the school.

"The teachers inform me regarding my children's performance in class, and it motivates me a lot." (Parent 10, School D)

These accounts show that communication occurred through both formal school structures and personal contact between schools and families. The involvement of PTA leaders and children also helped information to move between the school and the wider community.

During PTA meetings or school interactions, teachers provide advice and collect feedback from parents on issues related to their children's education. One parent explained:

"The teachers engage us by sharing a lot of challenges regarding the welfare of our children, and the information is shared during PTA meetings." (Parent 12, School D)

The communication shared by schools and teachers significantly motivates parents to actively support their children's education and participate in school activities.

Parents feel motivated when they receive updates about their children's academic performance and suggestions for improvement.

"The teachers share information regarding our children's performances in the school which motivates us to attend PTA meetings organised by the school." (SMC 7, School D)

Teachers also sought parents' views on school development, which encouraged some parents to remain involved.

"Yes, they share any information regarding the school's development with us just to listen to our feedback. And it motivates me a lot." (Parent 1, School A)

This shows that communication was not only about giving information to parents. In some cases, parents were also invited to provide feedback, which made them feel that their contribution to the school was valued.

Parents' and community members' accounts were broadly consistent with the teachers' and headteachers' reports that effective communication encouraged participation. The findings also agree with those of Kgosidialwa (2010) and Nishimura (2019) and the scoping review, which identified regular information sharing as an important facilitator of involvement.

Viewed through Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model, communication functioned as an invitation to involvement. Information about children's performance, PTA meetings and school development signalled that parents' participation was expected and that their views could contribute to school activities.

The rural northern Ghanaian context adds important detail because communication was not limited to formal written channels. PTA leaders, children, direct teacher–parent contact and school visits helped information circulate where literacy levels and access to formal communication differed.

The finding therefore shows that communication facilitated involvement most effectively when information was accessible, relevant and allowed some opportunity for parental response.

## Respect and Trust

The responses indicate that respect and trust between schools, teachers, parents, and community members are key factors motivating parental involvement in school activities. The majority of the parents and community members indicated that the teachers and the school respected them and guided them in areas where their knowledge was limited and did not see them as inferior Parents report feeling respected and valued during visits to the school.

"We are being respected and valued whenever we visit the school to check on our children." (Parent 4, School B)

A community member also linked teachers' respect to confidence and trust:

"Teachers have respect for their parents, which gives us confidence and trust in what they teach our children." (SMC 3, School B)

These responses show that respectful relationships increased parents' confidence in teachers and made them feel comfortable engaging with the school.

Parents also described respect through the way teachers treated them during meetings and involved them in discussions about their children. One parent explained:

"During PTA meetings, the teachers offer us good sitting places and make us understand that we (parents) and the teachers are all equal in terms of the well-being and future of our children." (Parent 5, School B)

Another parent stated:

"They show us the maximum respect by engaging us in decision-making as well." (Parent 7, School C)

This finding underscores the respect teachers and headteachers demonstrated during meetings, which made parents and community members feel valued and included in key decision-making processes. This aligns with (Swift-Morgan, n.d.) findings, which indicate that the respect and positive attitudes exhibited by school staff can significantly influence parents' perceptions of their engagement. It also agrees with the scoping review, which identified respect, trust, and positive school-family relationships as important facilitators of involvement.

Viewed through decentralisation, these findings show that formal participation structures are not sufficient on their own. Parents also need to feel that their presence and views are recognised if participation is to become meaningful rather than merely procedural.

In the rural northern Ghanaian context, this is particularly relevant for some parents with limited formal education who may have less confidence when dealing with teachers and school authorities. Being guided rather than treated as inferior can therefore make participation easier. The finding suggests that trust and respect facilitated involvement by making parents and community members feel more comfortable, recognised and able to contribute.

Comparing the stakeholder perspectives shows that several interconnected conditions facilitated involvement. Teachers and headteachers emphasised communication, training, invitations, recognition and opportunities to participate, while parents and community members particularly emphasised communication, respect, trust and being given opportunities to contribute. The two perspectives therefore broadly converged on the importance of schools making participation accessible, understandable and valued.

The findings are consistent with the scoping review, which identified communication, training, motivation and positive school–family relationships as important facilitators. In the study

communities, however, these conditions operated through locally specific practices such as PTA and SMC structures, recognised community representatives, direct teacher–parent contact and respectful engagement with parents who differed in literacy, resources and familiarity with formal school systems.

Viewed in relation to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model, the findings show the importance of school-based invitations, role understanding and parents' perceptions that their participation was welcomed and worthwhile. At the same time, the findings indicate that invitations alone were not sufficient; trust, recognition and the practical ability to respond also shaped whether participation was sustained.

Overall, involvement was facilitated when parents and community members were informed, understood the roles available to them, felt respected and valued, and were given realistic opportunities to contribute. These facilitators should therefore be considered alongside the barriers discussed in the next section, because opportunities to participate did not always mean that parents had the time, resources or capacity to respond.

## 6.3 Teachers and Headteachers' Views on Barriers

### Economic Constraints

Economic constraints emerged as an important barrier to parent and community involvement in children's education. Teachers and headteachers identified poverty and poor socioeconomic conditions as limiting parents' ability to provide educational materials such as books, uniforms, pencils, pens, sandals, and shoes. Fear of being asked to pay school levies was also identified as discouraging participation. One headteacher explained:

"Poverty is one of the key issues; even sometimes buying a pencil, exercise book, school uniforms, sandals or shoes for their wards sometimes leads to withdrawal of a child from schools" (Headteacher 3, School C).

Another referred to:

"……. fear of being asked to pay money or levy to support the school. …..., poor socioeconomic status." (Headteacher 1, School A)

These accounts show that financial difficulty affected both parents' ability to provide directly for their children and their capacity to contribute to wider school activities.

The finding is consistent with Haines (2012), Donkor (2010) and the scoping review, which identified household poverty and school-related financial demands as constraints on parental participation. Documentary records from the study schools also showed incomplete payments and difficulties meeting levies for maintenance and other school needs, corroborating the teachers' and headteachers' accounts.

In the rural northern Ghanaian context, financial capacity was also tied to livelihoods that could provide limited or irregular income. Economic constraints therefore affected both what families could provide for individual children and their ability to respond to wider school demands.

## Limited Formal Education and Awareness

Lack of education and awareness among parents and community members significantly inhibits their involvement in children's education. Teachers and headteachers reported that some parents, due to their limited educational backgrounds, did not see the importance of getting themselves involved in school matters or how to support their children effectively. Therefore, they preferred the government to fully control the affairs of the schools.

One headteacher commented,

> Illiteracy and ignorance are some of the impediments to parents and communities' involvement in their children's education; for instance, some parents do not see the need to get involved in the affairs of the schools, and so the government should take full responsibility of their schools (Headteacher 3, School C)

The headteacher's use of the terms "illiteracy" and "ignorance" reflects a school-based interpretation of limited participation and should not be adopted uncritically as a description of parents themselves. The wider findings show that limited formal education could affect parents' confidence, familiarity with school processes and ability to assist directly with academic work, but these limitations were not equivalent to a lack of educational interest.

Teachers also noted that some parents were unsure about the importance of their involvement or how they could contribute effectively to their children's education. One teacher stated:

"Lack of awareness: Some parents and community members may not be aware of the importance of their involvement in education or may not understand how they can contribute effectively." (Teacher 4, School B)

Another teacher explained:

"…….. lack of knowledge and skills to assist their children." (Teacher 10, School D)

These responses suggest that some parents may lack the literacy, confidence, or knowledge required to participate in formal school activities or provide direct academic assistance. This should be distinguished from whether they value their children's education.

Importantly, these accounts represent teachers' and headteachers' explanations of why some parents participated less. They should therefore be considered alongside the parent and community accounts presented later in this chapter. Chapter 5 already showed that limited formal education did not produce one uniform pattern of involvement: some parents provided direct assistance, others relied on siblings or more educated people, while some experienced greater difficulty supporting schoolwork.

The finding is consistent with Chikoko (2008) Renth et al. (2015), and studies in the scoping review showing that limited formal education, unfamiliarity with school content and low

confidence can restrict some forms of parental participation (Erlendsdóttir et al., 2022; Ngozwana et al., 2024; Seleka & Masoabi, 2024).

In the rural northern Ghanaian context, differences in parents' formal educational experiences may affect their confidence in dealing with teachers, written information, school meetings, and children's academic work.

Viewed through Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model, this finding relates particularly to parents' perceived efficacy for helping their children. Parents may value education while feeling less able to undertake particular forms of involvement when they lack the knowledge, literacy or confidence they believe those activities require.

The finding also has implications for decentralised participation: formal PTA and SMC structures may provide opportunities for involvement, but some community members may be less able to use those opportunities when they are unclear about their roles or lack confidence in formal school settings.

## Limited or uneven Monitoring

Teachers and headteachers also perceived limited parental monitoring as a barrier to children's education. Their concerns focused on some parents' monitoring of attendance, study routines, school performance and contact with the school. Teachers noted that parents often do not ensure their children have proper routines for sleep and school attendance, nor do they engage with their academic progress. One teacher stated:

"Parents and community members do not monitor their children at night to sleep and wake up early" and "Parents do not check their wards' performances and do not pay a visit to their schools" (Teacher 2, School A).

Another teacher explained:

"The majority of parents and community members do not pay visits to the school to check on their children's attendance and academic performance in the school." (Teacher 5, School B)

These accounts represent teachers' perceptions that parental monitoring was limited in some households. However, they should be read alongside Chapter 5, where parents and children described checking exercise books, asking about schoolwork, visiting schools and monitoring attendance. The evidence therefore points to variation in parental monitoring rather than its general absence across the study communities

Documentary records also noted low meeting attendance and instances where some agreed parental actions were not followed through, such as not checking exam papers or not attending school regularly, providing additional evidence that monitoring and engagement varied across families and school activities.

Where monitoring was limited, children had less consistent home–school follow-up around attendance, study routines and school progress.

## Time, livelihood and Transport constraints

Time constraints and lack of transportation are significant impediments to parental involvement. Parents often have to balance farm work and childcare, leaving little time to participate in school activities. Additionally, some parents face transportation difficulties to school, further limiting their involvement. A headteacher explained,

"Lack of time to adequately visit their wards and participate because of their farm work and taking care of their kids, lack of means of transport to frequently participate" (Headteacher 1, School A).

This account shows how livelihood and household responsibilities could compete with the time required for school participation. Transportation difficulties could further restrict participation for families who did not live close to the school.

Time is a significant inhibitor of parent and community involvement as parents have busy schedules and other responsibilities that hinder their involvement in children's school activities. This aligns with the findings of those who indicated that during the harvest and planting seasons, most parents spend all day on the farm and return home late at night. The finding is consistent with Chikoko (2008), who noted that seasonal agricultural work could restrict parents' availability, and Chowdhury & Afrin (2019), who identified childcare and household responsibilities as additional time constraints.

Documentary records also noted difficulties with meeting attendance and participation in school activities, providing further evidence that work and other commitments could restrict parents' availability.

These findings are consistent with the scoping review's identification of livelihood demands, limited time and distance or transport difficulties as barriers to participation. The present study adds contextual detail by showing how farm work, childcare and transport constraints could reduce parents' opportunities to attend meetings, visit schools and participate regularly.

Overall, teachers' and headteachers' accounts identified economic hardship, limited formal education and school-system familiarity, uneven parental monitoring, livelihood and household demands, and transport difficulties as barriers to involvement. Their accounts suggest that limited participation could arise from constraints on parents' resources, knowledge, confidence and availability rather than from a single cause. At the same time, these are school-based interpretations of parental participation and should be considered alongside the parents' and community members' own explanations in the following section.

## 6.4 Parents and community members' reflections on barriers

### Language and lack of confidence

Parents identified language and lack of confidence as barriers to their participation in school activities. Some parents explained that English was commonly used in formal school communication, while they were more comfortable speaking Dagbani. This sometimes made it difficult for them to express their views confidently during meetings.

One parent explained:

> "Because of my education level, I find it very difficult to speak English fluently, and some of the teachers are from the south, which also makes it difficult for them to speak and understand our local dialect (Dagbani Language) fluently." (Parent 4, School B)

Another parent stated:

"My problem is just my inability and confidence to speak English fluently." (Parent 1, School A)

These accounts show that language difficulties could affect some parents' confidence in communicating with teachers and expressing their views during school activities.

Parents rely on translation between English and the local language (Dagbani) during meetings, which can lead to communication delays or misunderstandings.

"We speak in our local dialect, which is translated to the teachers, and they also do the same for us." (Parent 5, School B)

However, language was not a barrier for all parents. One parent explained:

"I don't face any problems because the teachers communicate with us using the local dialect, so communication is quite easy for me." (Parent 12, School D*)*

This variation shows that the barrier was reduced where teachers were able to communicate with parents in a familiar language.

The finding aligns with Chowdhury & Afrin (2019), who identified limited literacy and confidence as barriers to parental participation, while Matshe (2014) further emphasises that many parents refuse to take on roles in the PTA and SMC, hindered by these deep-seated insecurities. In the rural northern Ghanaian context, this finding reflects the difference between the language commonly used within communities and the language of formal schooling. Difficulty communicating in English should therefore not be interpreted as a lack of interest in education.

Parents' confidence to participate was partly shaped by their experiences of school communication and whether they felt able to express themselves. Language barriers could therefore reduce some parents' ability to understand school information, communicate concerns and contribute confidently during meetings.

## Time and Livelihood Constraints

Farming is the primary occupation for most parents, consuming significant time and energy. The distance to farmlands often requires extended stays away from home, reducing their ability to participate in their children's education. The demanding nature of their occupations, whether farming or other forms of labour, makes it challenging for parents to dedicate time to their children's education.

"I only deal in farming activities, which is my mainstay, and that is what consumes my time. The distance of our farms is very far; due to that, we spend weeks at the farm before coming back home." (Parent 4, School B)

A community member similarly stated:

"Farming activities and animal husbandry consume a lot of my time so that is the only factor that can prevent me from taking part in school activities." (SMC 6, School C)

Parents also mentioned work, travelling, family responsibilities, and unexpected emergencies as factors that could limit their involvement. A parent stated:

"Unless family issues or unprecedented emergencies, these are the only things that can prevent me from involving myself in my children's education." (Parent 1, School A)

These findings show that participation in education competed with responsibilities required to maintain the household. In the rural northern Ghanaian context, farming and animal husbandry were important livelihood activities, and parents could not always leave these responsibilities to attend meetings, visit schools, or support learning at home.

The finding agrees with Chikoko (2008), who reported that planting and harvesting activities reduced the time some parents could devote to school participation. It also confirms the scoping review's identification of employment, household responsibilities, and lack of time as barriers to parental involvement.

These time pressures can reduce opportunities for school visits, communication with teachers, monitoring of children's schooling, and direct support for learning at home, even when parents value education. These findings show that limited participation could reflect competing livelihood and household responsibilities rather than limited educational interest.

## Financial and material Constraints

The responses reveal the significant impact of financial challenges on parental involvement in their children's education. Below is an analysis of the findings:

Parents mentioned that financial constraints are a major impediment to supporting their children's education. These hardships prevent them from meeting the basic needs required for schooling, such as paying fees or purchasing learning materials. One parent stated:

"Financial situations and hardship of life prevent us from catering for our children, and financial situations have led to so many school dropouts and teenage pregnancies in the community." (Parent 4, School B)

Another explained:

"Due to financial instability, it's very difficult for me to help assist them whenever they need assistance, and it worries me a lot." (Parent 11, School D)

Some parents highlighted that their financial stability depends on farming and livestock, which are not always reliable sources of income. Without sufficient resources, they struggle to support their children's education.

"Without money, I can't farm or rear livestock to raise money in order to support their education." (Parent 5, School B)

These accounts show that parents' ability to support education was closely connected to the economic resources available within the household.

Other parents described the same constraint through unemployment and limited access to basic learning materials. One parent explained:

"The difficulties I have are that when I am unemployed, I find it very difficult to support my children." (Parent 9, School C)

Another stated:

"Books and pencils are essential for her homework activities because here in the rural areas, we don't really have access to books and pencils." (Parent 3, School A)

These accounts show that financial hardship affected not only school fees or larger educational expenses but also access to basic materials required for everyday learning.

This finding also connects with Chapter 5, where some parents described using farm produce or livestock to support their children's education. However, the same resources were also needed to sustain the household. One parent explained:

"Farming activities can prevent me from sacrificing my assets, especially when they are only farm produce to rely on. This is because that is the only means to take care of the family." (Parent 4, School B)

This shows an important tension between willingness and capacity. Parents could value education and be willing to sacrifice resources, but they also had to protect the resources needed for food, farming, and other household needs.

In some cases, financial challenges force parents to involve their children in activities like street hawking to generate funds, which can interfere with their schooling and overall education.

> The financial situation affects me in so many ways that I have no other option than to engage my children in the street hawking for a few days just to raise money for their needs, especially for items they are instructed to buy from school. (Parent 3, School A)

This account shows how poverty could create competing demands on children's time as families tried to obtain resources needed for schooling.

The findings agree with the scoping review, which identified poverty and limited household resources as important barriers to involvement and showed that financial constraints could restrict access to books, learning materials, transport and other educational needs (Abraha, 2022; Ahmed et al., 2024; Erlendsdóttir et al., 2022; Ngozwana et al., 2024).

Financial hardship can restrict children's access to learning materials and other conditions that support regular participation in education.

## Difficulties in Supporting Children's Homework

Parents also described difficulties providing direct academic support to their children at home. Their accounts show that homework support was affected by their educational background, financial resources, and access to people who could provide additional academic assistance.

One parent explained:

> Well, I need a lot of support as a parent, most especially teachers who can teach my children when they come back from school. Nowadays, my farm produce cannot help me financially, and I also need financial stability to be able to buy textbooks, pencils, and erasers and other things just to keep them motivated towards education. (Parent 5, School B)

Another parent stated:

"As a parent, I need financial aid to engage my children more in extra classes when they come back from school so that I can help them boost their knowledge and understanding when it comes to schooling." (Parent 8, School C)

These accounts show that the difficulty of supporting homework was not only about parents' academic knowledge. It was also connected to whether households could afford learning materials and additional academic support.

Parents also identified basic materials as important for children's participation in learning. One parent stated:

"Bags, sandals for school, food items, and financial support are essential for their academic activities." (Parent 3, School A)

Parents' accounts show that homework support depended on more than willingness to help. Some parents lacked the academic knowledge required for particular tasks, while others lacked the resources needed to purchase learning materials or obtain additional teaching support.

The findings agree with the scoping review, which showed that limited education, literacy, financial resources, and familiarity with school content can restrict parents' ability to provide direct academic assistance. The present study adds the rural northern Ghanaian context by showing how these difficulties were connected to farming income and households' ability to obtain learning materials or additional teaching support.

Viewed through Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model, these findings relate to parental efficacy. Parents could value education and want to assist while feeling less capable of doing so when they lacked the academic knowledge, resources or access to knowledgeable support required for particular learning tasks.

Parents were also asked about the support they believed would help them address the difficulties they experienced in assisting their children academically. Their responses centred mainly on financial resources, educational materials, and access to additional teaching support.

One parent explained:

"Well, the support I need is teachers who can teach my children after school hours just to keep their focus on achieving good grades in their education." (Parent 10, School D)

This response shows that some parents recognised the limits of the academic assistance they could personally provide and identified additional teaching as a way of supporting their children**.**

Together with the earlier accounts about financial assistance and learning materials, the findings show that parents identified three closely connected needs: resources to obtain educational

materials, financial capacity to support additional learning, and access to knowledgeable people who could assist children academically.

This is important because it shows that parents were not simply describing what they could not do. They also identified the forms of support that could strengthen their ability to remain involved in their children's learning.

## Infrastructure and Conditions for Home Learning

Parents' accounts also showed that the physical conditions in which children studied could constrain learning at home. One parent identified unreliable electricity as a particular difficulty for evening study:

> "Electricity, especially when there is a blackout, makes it extremely difficult for children to study at night because we don't use lanterns any longer in this era of electricity. Therefore, electricity outage plays a pivotal role in their studies at night." (Parent 5, School B)

This account adds an important contextual dimension to the barriers identified in the study. Difficulty supporting children's learning was not located only in parents' motivation, formal education or financial capacity. The physical conditions available within the household also affected whether children could study effectively. In this case, parental willingness could not compensate for the absence of reliable lighting.

The finding therefore shows that home-based learning depended partly on the infrastructure available within households. Where evening study relied on electricity, interruptions to power reduced the time and conditions available for homework regardless of whether parents valued education or encouraged their children to study.

This finding is particularly relevant to the rural northern Ghanaian context because it demonstrates how the conditions under which families live can shape the practical possibilities

for parental involvement. Parents may encourage children to study, organise study time and provide supervision, but these forms of involvement remain dependent on the availability of basic conditions that enable learning to take place.

The finding also extends the scoping review by drawing attention to an infrastructural constraint that was less prominent in the reviewed studies. While the scoping review identified poverty, limited educational resources and household circumstances as barriers to home learning, the present study shows that unreliable household infrastructure can also restrict the conditions under which children complete academic activities outside school.

## Other Motivational Constraints

Although most barriers described by parents and community members related to livelihood, financial, educational and practical circumstances, one parent indicated that perceptions of a child's seriousness and academic performance could also influence willingness to continue making educational sacrifices: A parent noted:

"Lack of seriousness and poor performances from my children in terms of education can demoralise me and therefore can prevent me from making sacrifices for them." (Parent 5, School B)

Because this view was expressed by one parent, it should not be treated as a common pattern across participants. However, it suggests that continued parental investment could sometimes be influenced by how parents perceived children's commitment to schooling and whether their educational efforts appeared to be producing progress.

This finding adds a small but relevant motivational dimension to the predominantly economic, educational and livelihood-related barriers identified in the study. It also connects with the earlier finding that visible educational progress could motivate parental support. In this

particular account, the reverse possibility was expressed: perceived lack of seriousness or poor performance could weaken a parent's willingness to continue committing limited household resources.

Comparison across stakeholder groups shows both convergence and difference in how barriers to involvement were understood. Teachers and headteachers commonly described limited meeting attendance, weak monitoring, limited awareness and irregular participation, while parents and community members explained these patterns through farming and livelihood demands, financial hardship, language difficulties, limited formal education, household responsibilities and constraints on their time. The same visible pattern of limited participation could therefore be understood differently depending on stakeholder position.

An important finding is the distinction between educational interest and the capacity to act on that interest. Parents could value education and want to support their children while lacking the time, financial resources, language confidence or academic knowledge required for particular forms of involvement. Viewed through Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model, these findings highlight the importance of perceived capacity alongside motivation and school invitations.

Overall, the barriers were interconnected rather than operating independently. Rural livelihoods could provide resources for education while also limiting parents' time; limited formal education could reduce confidence in formal school settings without necessarily reducing educational aspirations; and financial hardship could constrain both school-based participation and support for learning at home.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the facilitators and barriers shaping parental and community involvement from the perspectives of teachers, headteachers, parents and community members. Involvement was facilitated by accessible communication, training, recognition, respectful

school–family relationships and opportunities to participate. These conditions helped parents understand when their involvement was needed, what roles were available to them and whether their contributions were valued.

At the same time, participation was constrained by financial hardship, limited formal education, language and confidence, farming and other livelihood demands, household responsibilities, transport difficulties, limited capacity to support homework and, in some cases, the physical conditions available for home learning. The findings therefore show that participation depended on the interaction between opportunity, motivation and capacity rather than on parental interest alone. These findings provide the basis for Chapter 7, which considers strategies and expressed support needs for strengthening parental and community involvement.

# Chapter 7: Suggested strategies to involve parents and community members in quality education.

## 7.1 Teachers' and Headteachers' Suggested Strategies

This chapter presents suggested strategies for strengthening parental and community involvement in quality education. These strategies are derived from the perspectives of teachers and headteachers, who are treated as school-based actors due to their direct roles in teaching, school leadership, communication with parents, and the implementation and coordination of school-level activities. Their institutional positions provide them with a comprehensive understanding of both the practical and structural challenges influencing parental and community involvement.

Although parents and community members were not directly asked to propose formal strategies, the study was designed to explore their experiences, perceptions, and forms of involvement. The insights generated from these groups, as presented in earlier chapters, provide an important foundation for interpreting and contextualising the strategies identified by teachers and headteachers. The strategies presented in this chapter should therefore be understood as school-based actors' proposed responses to issues identified across the wider study, rather than as strategies proposed by all participant groups.

The responses from teachers and headteachers were analysed thematically and organised into four key areas: economic support and government intervention, sensitisation and awareness creation, parental commitment and school–community engagement, and collaborative decision-making

### Economic Support and Government Intervention

Teachers and headteachers suggested that improving the economic conditions of rural families is important for strengthening parental and community involvement in education. They viewed

poverty and limited household income as major constraints that affect parents' ability to support children's schooling consistently.

Teachers emphasised that economic stability would make it easier for parents to prioritise children's education and provide basic learning support. They suggested measures such as subsidising agricultural products and providing financial support to families, particularly those engaged in farming, to improve school attendance and learning outcomes.

Headteachers, however, placed greater emphasis on broader government interventions. They suggested policies such as regular salary increments, comprehensive subsidies, and the provision of start-up capital for young entrepreneurs, especially women. In their view, these measures would reduce poverty and unemployment and create a more stable environment for educational participation.

> The government should resurrect the yearly salary incremental jump of workers on the government payroll since prices of goods and services are increasing every now and then, and this will help cushion workers' conditions of service for the better. The government should subsidise agricultural produce goods and services, making them readily accessible to the average low-income farmer since over 70% of Ghanaians depend on peasant farming. The government should support young village and entrepreneurs with substantial start-up capital or funding to support their businesses to reduce poverty and unemployment (non-partisanship) especially young women. (Headteacher 1, School A)

This quotation represents one headteacher's broader economic proposals rather than a strategy expressed in the same form by all participants. However, the underlying concern about household economic hardship was shared more widely.

This proposed strategy connects directly with the barriers identified in Chapter 6, where teachers, headteachers, parents, and community members described poverty, unstable income, farming livelihoods, and difficulty providing learning materials as constraints on involvement. In the rural northern Ghanaian context, economic support is particularly relevant because some families depend heavily on farming and livestock, while the same limited household resources are required for both schooling and everyday family needs.

This is also consistent with the scoping review, which identified poverty and limited household resources as major barriers to parental and community involvement. From a quality education perspective, reducing these constraints may strengthen families' capacity to provide learning materials and support children's continued participation in schooling.

The significance of this strategy lies in addressing the gap between willingness to support education and the economic capacity to do so. Improving the economic conditions of families could enable parents and community members to translate their educational commitment into more sustained forms of involvement.

### Sensitisation and Awareness Creation

Teachers and headteachers strongly emphasised the need for sensitisation to improve parental and community involvement. They noted that some parents do not fully understand the importance of education or the long-term benefits it provides.

Teachers focused on raising awareness about the value of education and encouraging parents to ensure regular school attendance. They believed that sensitisation would motivate parents to take greater responsibility for their children's learning. A teacher noted:

"Sensitisation about the positive impact of quality education to both the individual and the community, and the country as a whole." (Teacher 6, School B)

Headteachers extended this idea by emphasising the need to educate parents not only about the value of education but also about government policies. They observed that some parents withdraw support because they assume that the government is solely responsible for providing educational resources. A head teacher stated:

"…Parents and community members need to be educated or sensitised on certain government policies, otherwise, some parents will still fold their arms and say the government says it will provide." (Headteacher 3, School C)

These accounts reflect the school-based participants' interpretation that greater awareness could strengthen participation. However, this should be considered alongside the findings from parents in earlier chapters, where many expressed strong commitments to their children's education but described poverty, farming, language, time, and limited formal education as constraints on how they could participate.

Sensitisation should therefore be understood not only as convincing parents that education is important, but also as clarifying school expectations, government responsibilities, parental roles, and the different ways families can support children's learning.

Viewed in relation to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model, sensitisation may strengthen parents' understanding of their role by clarifying where and how their involvement is expected. However, clearer role understanding alone may not overcome financial, livelihood or other capacity-related constraints.

The significance of this strategy is therefore the distinction between awareness and capacity. Sensitisation may help parents understand how they can participate, but sustained involvement also depends on whether they have the practical means to respond.

## Commitment, Active Participation, and School–Community Communication.

Teachers and headteachers identified parental commitment, active participation, and school–community communication as closely connected strategies for strengthening parental and community involvement in quality education. In the data, these ideas appeared together through suggestions about attending meetings, visiting schools, monitoring children's learning, providing educational materials, and maintaining regular interaction between families and schools

Teachers emphasised the need for parents to demonstrate commitment through active participation in school-related activities.

One teacher explained:

Parents should respond positively to meetings. Parents should also buy the required learning resources for their children. Parents need to visit teachers and students regularly to know how teaching and learning are going and to support learners and teachers. (Teacher 9, School C)

This response shows that teachers understood parental involvement as an ongoing relationship between home and school involving continuous engagement with the school, regular communication with teachers, provision of learning materials, and monitoring of children's progress. In this sense, active participation also functions as a form of communication. When parents attend meetings and visit schools, they gain information about their children's learning, understand school expectations, and become better positioned to support both learners and teachers.

Headteachers also value active participation but highlight the need for government support in providing necessary school logistics and organising regular PTA or General Assembly meetings to keep parents engaged and involved in school matters. They see these measures as

essential for building trust and maintaining consistent parental involvement. A headteacher noted that:

> "…. Regular PTA or General Assembly meetings to constantly engage parents. The government should play its part well by supplying the necessary logistics and materials, which will help parents understand that the government genuinely cares and is actively involved in managing their schools." (Headteacher 3, school C)

This suggests that communication is not only about sharing information but also about building trust between schools, parents, communities, and government. When schools regularly engage parents through meetings and visits, parents are more likely to understand their responsibilities and participate in school activities. At the same time, headteachers believed that government responsiveness is important because parents may become more willing to participate when they see that the government is also fulfilling its responsibilities through the provision of school materials and logistics.

The strategy responds directly to the findings in Chapter 6, where irregular school contact, livelihood demands, financial constraints, language difficulties and distance affected some parents' ability to participate consistently. Encouraging active participation therefore needs to be accompanied by communication practices that are accessible and responsive to parents' circumstances.

The strategy is consistent with the scoping review, which identified regular communication and positive school–family engagement as facilitators of parental involvement. The present study adds contextual detail by showing that communication in the study communities could operate through PTA and SMC meetings, home visits, local-language interaction, children as messengers and established community channels.

Viewed in relation to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model, regular communication and direct invitations from schools can signal that parents' involvement is expected and valued. However, the findings from Chapter 6 also show that invitations alone may not result in sustained participation where parents face constraints on their time, resources or confidence.

The significance of this strategy is therefore not simply encouraging parents to attend more activities but maintaining accessible and regular connections between schools and families that enable parents to understand when their involvement is needed and how they can contribute.

## Collaborative Decision Making

Teachers also suggested that parental and community involvement could be strengthened by giving parents and community members greater opportunities to participate in decisions concerning education, school planning, and school improvement. One teacher stated:

"Collaborative decision-making involves parents and community members in the decision-making process related to education." (Teacher 1, School A).

This strategy responds directly to the Chapter 5 finding that PTA, SMC, SPAM, and General Assembly structures provided opportunities for participation, but that attendance or consultation did not always mean that parents had substantial influence over final decisions.

The strategy can be understood through the existing PTA, SMC, SPAM, and General Assembly structures already identified in the study. Strengthening collaborative decision-making would therefore involve making these existing structures more meaningful rather than necessarily creating new ones.

The strategy is consistent with the scoping review, which showed that formal membership or attendance within school-governance structures does not always translate into meaningful influence. The present study similarly distinguished between being present in participatory structures and having an effective voice within them.

Viewed through decentralisation, collaborative decision-making involves more than informing parents or inviting them to meetings. It concerns the extent to which parents and community members can express their views and influence decisions within the areas where local participation is permitted.

The significance of this strategy is therefore not simply to increase attendance at meetings, but to strengthen the quality of participation by ensuring that parents and community members have genuine opportunities to contribute to school decisions.

Taken together, the strategies suggested by teachers and headteachers addressed both household and school-level conditions affecting involvement. Economic support was proposed in response to financial constraints; sensitisation sought to clarify roles and expectations; regular communication and active engagement aimed to strengthen school–family interaction; and collaborative decision-making sought to increase parents' and community members' influence within existing participatory structures.

These strategies also reflect the wider findings of the study, which show that increasing involvement requires more than encouraging parents to participate. Opportunities for involvement need to be accompanied by economic, institutional and relational conditions that enable parents and community members to make practical use of those opportunities.

This study examined parental and community involvement in quality primary education in two rural communities in the Tolon District of northern Ghana. Specifically, it explored how parents and community members perceive and value education, how these perceptions influence the priority given to schooling, the forms of involvement that occur across home, school and community settings, the conditions that facilitate or constrain involvement, and possible strategies for strengthening participation. The study drew on the perspectives of parents, community members, teachers, headteachers and children across four public basic schools.

Considered together, the findings show that parental and community involvement cannot be understood through a simple distinction between parents who are involved and those who are not. Across the five research questions, involvement was shaped by the relationship between the value and motivation attached to education, parents' and communities' practical capacity to act, the opportunities available for participation, and the degree of influence or authority attached to those opportunities. These relationships help explain why strong educational aspirations could exist alongside uneven participation, why limited formal education could change the form of parental involvement without necessarily ending it, and why formal opportunities to participate in school activities did not always result in shared decision-making power.

# Chapter 8: Conclusion

The findings of this study respond directly to the objectives and research questions by showing that rural parents and community members in northern Ghana generally value education highly and participate in supporting quality primary education, although the nature, form and extent of their involvement are shaped by socio-economic, cultural, linguistic and institutional realities. Anchored in a human-rights-informed conception of quality education and a decentralisation perspective, the study has illuminated the voices, practices and constraints of rural stakeholders whose contributions may not always be visible through conventional measures of school participation.

Taken together, the findings show more than whether parents and community members value education or whether they participate in schooling. Across the five research questions, a broader pattern emerges. Parental and community involvement is shaped by the relationship between the value and motivation attached to education, the practical capacity to act on that motivation, the opportunities available for participation, and the authority attached to those opportunities. These relationships help explain why strong educational aspirations can coexist with uneven participation, why limited formal education can change the form of parental support without necessarily reducing educational commitment, and why formal participation in school structures does not always result in equivalent decision-making power. These dimensions are not proposed as a new theoretical model. Rather, they provide an integrated synthesis of what the findings collectively reveal about parental and community involvement in the study communities.

## 8.1 Synthesis of the Main Findings

### Perceptions and Value of Education

The study shows that parents and community members generally attached substantial value to education, but the meanings they gave to it were multidimensional. Education was associated with knowledge and problem-solving, employment and improved livelihoods, independence, moral and social development, family wellbeing and community progress. It was therefore understood not only as a route to formal employment or certification, but also as a means of developing responsible individuals who could contribute to their families and communities. Chapter 4 similarly showed that participants connected education with practical knowledge, future opportunities, and the individual's broader development.

These positive views were not entirely uniform or unconditional. Participants also evaluated education through the outcomes they observed around them. Visible educational success, children's progression and the contributions of educated people to their communities could strengthen confidence in schooling. In contrast, unemployment among educated young people, high educational costs and uncertainty about future opportunities could create doubts about the returns to continued educational investment. Educational value was therefore not fixed. It was influenced by experience, observation and changing expectations about what education could realistically achieve.

The findings also reveal both change and continuity in attitudes towards girls' education. Most participants described greater support for girls' schooling than in the past, when girls were more strongly associated with domestic responsibilities and marriage preparation. However, increased support for girls' education did not mean that all gendered expectations had disappeared. Some participants continued to discuss girls' education in relation to protection from teenage pregnancy, sexuality and appropriate behaviour. The significance of this finding

is therefore not simply that attitudes had improved, but that changing educational aspirations could coexist with continuing gendered expectations.

Religion and culture were also not generally presented as alternatives to formal education. Although some participants gave greater weight to religious or cultural obligations, many viewed formal education as compatible with moral, religious and cultural development. Religion and culture were valued for their contribution to morality, discipline, identity and responsible behaviour, while formal education was associated with knowledge, future opportunities and wider social and economic advancement.

Taken together, these findings move beyond the simple conclusion that rural parents and community members value education. They show that educational value was strong but multidimensional and socially shaped. Participants judged education through its practical, moral, social and economic consequences, while their views could change in response to the outcomes they observed. Strong educational aspirations could therefore coexist with uncertainty about costs, future returns and continuing social expectations.

## Educational Value and Prioritisation

These perceptions influenced how education was prioritised, but the relationship was not straightforward. Parents and community members expressed strong aspirations for children's schooling and reported supporting education through enrolment, encouragement, material provision, monitoring, school-meeting attendance and continued concern for children's progress.

Some parents also described substantial material sacrifices. Farm produce, livestock and other household resources could be directed towards educational expenses. In the rural context, these were not necessarily surplus resources; they were part of household livelihoods. Educational

commitment could therefore involve difficult decisions about how limited household resources should be used.

Educational priorities were also strengthened when participants could connect schooling with outcomes they considered meaningful. Visible success among educated people, positive reports about children's performance and the contribution of educated community members to local development provided reasons for continuing to invest in schooling.

However, the findings qualify any assumption that valuing education automatically produces the same form or level of educational participation. Parents could place substantial value on education while lacking the time, financial resources or educational experience required for particular forms of involvement. This is broadly consistent with Ghanaian research showing that educational participation is shaped by wider social, economic and household conditions (Amagnya, 2020; Martey et al., 2022).

The important distinction is therefore between educational commitment and the capacity to act on that commitment**.** Positive perceptions provided reasons for prioritising schooling, but the practical expression of those priorities remained shaped by household resources, livelihood demands and other contextual conditions.

## Forms and Boundaries of Parental and Community Involvement

The study found that parental and community involvement occurred across home, school and community settings and took considerably more forms than formal meeting attendance or direct homework assistance alone.

At school and community levels, involvement included infrastructure development and maintenance, environmental care, school security, communal labour, advocacy, resource mobilisation, financial and material contributions, attendance at PTA and SMC meetings, monitoring, and practical responses to immediate school needs.

At home, parents supported children through direct academic assistance where they possessed the required knowledge, but also through encouragement, supervision, provision of books and other educational materials, reminders about schoolwork, moral guidance and practical learning.

An important contribution of the study is therefore that parental involvement in the study communities cannot be reduced to whether parents personally assist with homework or frequently visit schools. Rather, involvement emerged as relational, adaptive, distributed and, in some circumstances, compensatory**.**

It was relational because educational support was embedded in relationships among parents, children, siblings, relatives, neighbours, teachers and other community members. It was adaptive because families adjusted the type of support they provided according to their educational backgrounds, resources, confidence and everyday responsibilities. It was distributed because educational support could be shared across wider family and community networks rather than being provided by one parent acting alone. It could also be compensatory in particular circumstances. When some parents could not provide direct academic assistance, they remained involved through supervision, encouragement, material support or by seeking help from people with greater academic knowledge.

These terms are used here to synthesise the empirical patterns rather than to propose a new formal model of parental involvement. This pattern was particularly clear in home-based learning. Some parents could assist directly with schoolwork, while others, because of limited formal education or confidence, could not. Yet difficulty with direct homework assistance did not necessarily mean withdrawal from children's education. Some parents continued to monitor schoolwork, encourage study or arrange assistance through older siblings, relatives, neighbours or other educated community members.

Previous rural research has similarly shown that relatives and neighbours may support children where parents have limited capacity to provide direct academic assistance (Erlendsdóttir et al., 2022; Rodriguez-Kufner, 2016). The present study extends this understanding by showing how arranging such help can itself form part of parental involvement. The focus therefore shifts from only asking who personally performs the academic task to considering how support is organised around the child.

Children's accounts also reinforced this broader understanding. Their experiences indicated that parental support could involve academic help, encouragement, provision of materials, moral guidance and forms of practical and cultural learning. This does not mean that every household activity should be classified as formal parental involvement in schooling. Rather, it demonstrates that children's learning and development extended beyond formal homework into family, cultural, religious and livelihood contexts.

The study therefore broadens the understanding of home learning without collapsing the distinction between formal academic education and other forms of learning. This is consistent with earlier rural studies that identified cultural and practical learning within family life (Abraha, 2022; Ram, 2018), while the present study provides further contextual detail from rural northern Ghana.

However, the findings also reveal clear boundaries to involvement. Parents and community members had stronger roles in practical, supportive and locally manageable activities but considerably less influence over formal curriculum development, classroom instruction, professional teacher development, recruitment and dismissal.

The curriculum findings illustrate this distinction. Parents generally did not determine formal curriculum content, although some could provide materials, support curriculum learning at home and occasionally contribute local-language knowledge to classroom teaching. Limited

curriculum authority therefore did not mean complete absence from curriculum-related support. Similarly, parents and community members could monitor teachers, identify staffing problems and advocate for additional personnel, while formal recruitment and dismissal remained with higher education authorities.

Taken together, involvement was therefore broad in form but unequal in depth and authority. Parents and communities could identify problems, mobilise resources, monitor activities, advocate and support implementation, while significant formal authority remained elsewhere. This finding complicates any assumption that participation itself represents shared power. Being involved in schooling was not always the same as having authority over schooling. The important issue is therefore not only whether participation occurred, but the form, depth and authority associated with that participation.

## Conditions Shaping Involvement

Parental and community involvement was shaped by interacting facilitators and barriers. Accessible communication, school invitations, trust, respectful relationships, recognition, local leadership, training and formal structures such as PTAs and SMCs created opportunities for participation. Schools communicated through meetings, telephone contact, home visits, messages through children and traditional community channels. These different forms of communication could make expectations clearer and help families understand how they were expected to participate.

However, opportunities for participation existed alongside substantial constraints. Economic hardship, farming and other livelihood demands, household responsibilities, transportation difficulties, limited formal education, language barriers, lack of confidence in formal school processes and limited capacity to assist all affected involvement academically.

Some constraints were also located in the physical conditions surrounding learning. Unreliable electricity, for example, could affect children's ability to study in the evening even where parents were willing to encourage and supervise learning. This extends the barriers identified through the scoping review by showing that parental motivation alone cannot overcome all infrastructural constraints on home learning.

These barriers were interconnected rather than operating separately. Farming illustrates this complexity particularly clearly. Rural livelihoods could generate resources that parents used to pay educational expenses, while at the same time reducing the time available for school meetings or home supervision. Limited formal education could restrict direct academic assistance or confidence in school-based interactions without reducing the value parents attached to education.

One of the strongest findings came from comparing stakeholder perspectives. Teachers and headteachers sometimes described limited meeting attendance, weak monitoring or irregular participation. Parents and community members explained some of these same visible patterns through farming demands, financial hardship, household responsibilities, language and limited academic capacity.

The same pattern of apparently limited participation could therefore be interpreted differently depending on the stakeholder's position. These findings challenge deficit interpretations that treat limited visible participation as sufficient evidence of parental disinterest. It shows instead that parents may value education and want to participate while lacking the time, money, confidence, educational knowledge or practical opportunity required for a particular form of involvement.

The findings therefore distinguish willingness from capacity**.** Educational participation depended on the interaction between motivation, capacity and opportunity rather than on parental interest alone.

## Strategies for Strengthening Involvement

The final research question considered possible strategies for strengthening parental and community involvement.

Teachers and headteachers identified strategies relating to economic and government support, sensitisation and clarification of roles, stronger parental commitment and school–community engagement, and collaborative decision-making. Parents' accounts further identified financial and material needs and access to additional academic assistance where parents could not provide direct instructional support.

These findings suggest that strengthening involvement requires more than encouraging parents to participate more frequently. Sensitisation may clarify roles and expectations, but it cannot by itself remove poverty, livelihood pressures or limited academic knowledge. Similarly, inviting parents to meetings creates an opportunity to participate, but the value of that opportunity depends partly on whether communication is accessible, whether parents feel respected and whether their contributions have some possibility of influencing school processes.

Strategies therefore need to address both family capacity and institutional opportunity. Families and communities require conditions that make participation practically possible. At the same time, schools and education authorities need to create accessible, respectful and meaningful avenues through which participation can occur.

Collaborative decision-making is especially important in this respect. The findings do not necessarily point to the need to create additional committees. PTAs, SMCs and other

established structures already provide channels for participation. The more important issue is the quality of participation within these structures—whether parents can express their views, understand decisions, receive feedback and exercise influence in areas where local participation is permitted. Chapter 7 similarly concluded that increasing involvement requires opportunities to be accompanied by economic, institutional and relational conditions that allow families to use those opportunities in practice.

Considered together, the five research questions therefore reveal that parental and community involvement is not adequately explained by participation alone. Across the study, four interconnected dimensions repeatedly shaped involvement: the value and motivation attached to education, the practical capacity to act on that motivation, the opportunities available for participation, and the authority attached to those opportunities.

These dimensions help explain why strong educational aspirations could coexist with uneven participation, why limited formal education could alter the form of involvement without necessarily reducing educational commitment, and why formal participation in school structures could exist without equivalent decision-making power. They are not proposed as a new theoretical model; rather, they provide an integrated synthesis of what the findings collectively reveal about parental and community involvement in the study communities.

## 8.2 Theoretical and Conceptual Contributions

The theoretical contribution of the study lies not in developing a new theory, but in using evidence from rural northern Ghana to extend, refine and complicate the application of existing perspectives on parental involvement, participation and educational governance.

Epstein's framework provides a broad understanding of parental involvement through areas such as parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and

collaboration with the community. The present findings support the usefulness of this broad perspective but extend the application of learning at home in the study context.

The findings show that parental involvement in children's academic learning did not always require parents to perform the educational task themselves. Some parents were able to assist directly with homework, while others with limited formal education or academic knowledge remained involved by monitoring children's work, encouraging study, providing learning materials, organising study time or mobilising support from older siblings, relatives, neighbours or other knowledgeable people.

These practices show that home-based academic support could be relational, adaptive and distributed**.** Support was often organised through wider family and community relationships, while parents adjusted the form of their involvement according to their own educational knowledge, resources and circumstances. Responsibility for supporting a child's learning could therefore extend beyond one parent and be shared across a wider network of people.

The theoretical significance is that home-based involvement should not be understood only by asking whether a parent personally helped with homework. Attention should also be given to how parents organised, enabled or mobilised the support needed by the child**.** Limited capacity for direct academic assistance did not necessarily mean withdrawal from involvement; in some cases, it changed the form that involvement took.

The findings also broaden the empirical expression of learning at home in this context. Participants described moral, cultural, religious, livelihood and practical forms of learning alongside formal academic support. The contribution is not to redefine every aspect of family life as parental involvement in schooling. Rather, it is to show that a narrow assessment based only on direct homework assistance or visible school-facing activities may fail to capture important ways in which parents contribute to children's learning and development.

In this way, the study extends the application of Epstein's learning-at-home perspective by showing that parental involvement may include both direct academic assistance and the organisation of support through the relationships and resources available to families.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's framework help explain involvement through parental role beliefs, motivation, perceived capacity and invitations from schools. The present findings support the relevance of these ideas, particularly the importance of communication and invitations from schools. However, the study refines the meaning of capacity in this context. Capacity was not simply an individual belief that a parent was competent to help. It was connected to material and social circumstances, including educational background, finances, livelihood demands, available time, language, transport and access to people who could provide additional academic support.

A parent could therefore believe strongly that supporting education was part of their responsibility while being unable to participate in a particular form. The findings consequently qualify interpretations that equate limited participation with limited motivation**.** Motivation remains important, but it needs to be understood together with the conditions that determine whether motivation can be translated into action.

The study also reinforces the relevance of decentralisation as a governance perspective while showing the limits of formal decentralised participation. Ghanaian structures such as PTA and SMC provide recognised channels for local participation and accountability (Ghanney, 2016; Nudzor, 2014). The findings demonstrate that these structures created genuine opportunities for parents and community members to obtain information, raise concerns, contribute resources, monitor activities and support school development. However, they also complicate any assumption that decentralised participation automatically redistributes decision-making authority**.** Parents and communities were generally more active in consultation, monitoring,

mobilisation and implementation than in areas such as curriculum, classroom practice and formal teacher employment decisions.

This sharpens the distinction between participation, influence and authority**.** Attendance at a meeting does not necessarily mean equal voice. Being consulted does not necessarily mean determining the final decision. Providing resources does not necessarily mean exercising authority over the educational domain in which those resources are used. Decentralisation should therefore be examined not simply through whether participatory structures exist, but through the depth and influence of participation within them**.** Chapter 2 established this distinction conceptually, and the empirical findings show how it operated across different areas of schooling.

The study also contributes to a context-sensitive understanding of quality education. Parents and communities were generally not responsible for formal classroom instruction, but they contributed to conditions surrounding children's education through learning materials, infrastructure, environmental care, security, monitoring, resource mobilisation, communication and home-based support. Quality education in the study communities was therefore connected not only to classroom processes but also to the wider conditions that allowed children to participate in schooling. This should not be interpreted as suggesting that families and communities should replace professional or governmental responsibilities.

Rather, the findings show that educational quality is supported through relationships among school provision, family support, community resources and institutional arrangements.

Rurality is important here as a contextual lens, rather than as a separate theory. Farming, livelihood demands, local-language communication, household resources, infrastructure and community networks shaped how involvement was practised and what participation was practically possible.

## 8.3 Contribution to Existing Literature

The study contributes to existing research in several connected ways. Previous Ghanaian studies have provided important evidence on parental investment, school readiness and educational outcomes (Chowa et al., 2013; Wolf & McCoy, 2019), while rural research such as Ghanney (2020) has examined formal forms of school participation, including PTAs and SMCs. The present study extends this literature by examining involvement across home, school and community settings and by bringing together the perspectives of parents, wider community members, teachers, headteachers and children. This addresses an important gap identified in Chapter 2, where children's and wider community perspectives were considerably less visible than those of parents and school personnel.

The multi-stakeholder approach also adds analytical value because it demonstrates that the same form of participation may be understood differently depending on stakeholder position. Teachers and headteachers may observe limited attendance or monitoring, while parents explain the same pattern through livelihood demands, financial difficulties or limited capacity. The study therefore shows why explanations of parental involvement should not rely exclusively on school-based perspectives.

The findings also qualify interpretations that associate limited formal education with lack of parental involvement. Existing rural research has shown that parents may rely on relatives or neighbours where direct academic assistance is difficult (Erlendsdóttir et al., 2022; Rodriguez-Kufner, 2016). The present study shows more clearly how this support can operate through wider family and community networks and how organising such support can itself constitute involvement.

The study further extends understanding of non-academic involvement. Previous research identified cultural, religious and practical learning in rural family life (Abraha, 2022; Ram,

2018). The present study provides additional contextual detail about how such forms of learning coexist with formal school support in rural northern Ghana.

Children's accounts also strengthen the contribution. Research has often concentrated on adults, while studies such as Ahmed et al. (2022) demonstrate the value of examining children's perceptions. By placing children's accounts alongside adult perspectives, this study offers a broader view of how parental support is reported by adults and experienced by children.

Finally, the study contributes to literature on decentralised school governance by showing that participation differs according to educational domain. Parents and community members could participate strongly in practical and supportive activities while having considerably less influence over professional or formally regulated areas.

The contribution therefore lies not simply in demonstrating that parents and communities participate, but in showing how the form, depth and authority of that participation vary**.**

Overall, the thesis does not claim that poverty, limited formal education, indirect support or restricted local authority are entirely new findings.

Its contribution lies in showing how these issues interact within a rural northern Ghanaian context**.** In particular, the study demonstrates that: strong educational commitment can coexist with limited practical capacity; limited formal education can change the form of involvement rather than eliminate it; educational support can be distributed across family and community relationships; the same visible participation pattern may be interpreted differently by different stakeholder groups; and formal participation can coexist with limited authority.

Together, these findings provide a more contextually grounded understanding of parental and community involvement than a simple distinction between families who are involved and those who are not.

## 8.4 Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings have implications for schools, educational authorities, policymakers and community leaders.

First, limited visible participation should not automatically be interpreted as parental disinterest. Before describing parents as uninvolved, schools should consider whether financial hardship, livelihood demands, language, limited formal education or other practical conditions affect the forms of participation available to them.

Second, communication should be accessible to parents with different educational and linguistic backgrounds. The study identified several existing communication channels, including meetings, telephone contact, home visits, messages through children and traditional community communication systems. Using multiple channels may make it easier for different groups of parents to receive information and respond.

Third, parents and community representatives need clear information about their roles and opportunities for participation. Orientation and capacity-building within existing PTA and SMC structures may strengthen participants' understanding of their responsibilities and the areas in which they can contribute.

Fourth, schools should recognise different forms of parental support. Parents who cannot directly assist with homework may still monitor learning, provide encouragement, organise support through others, provide educational materials or contribute to children's moral and practical development. Recognition of these different forms of involvement may support more respectful school–family relationships.

Fifth, participation should not be assessed mainly through meeting attendance. Existing structures should provide meaningful opportunities for parents and community representatives

to express concerns, understand decisions and receive feedback about how their contributions have been considered.

The findings also suggest a need to consider who has influence within participatory spaces. Documentary evidence showed that formal leadership and agenda-setting roles were often more visibly held by men, although women also contributed to discussions relating to children's welfare, learning and home support. Participation should therefore be considered in terms of inclusion, voice and influence as well as attendance.

Finally, parental and community contributions should complement rather than replace government responsibility.

The study communities contributed labour, materials, money, monitoring and other forms of support despite significant household constraints. Essential educational provision should therefore not become overly dependent on the capacity of disadvantaged rural communities to finance or provide services that properly belong within public educational responsibility.

## 8.5 Scope and Transferability of the Findings

The conclusions of this study are grounded in four public basic schools located within two rural communities in the Tolon District of northern Ghana.

The findings are therefore not intended to represent all rural parents, communities or schools in Ghana and should not be statistically generalised beyond the selected cases.

The experiences reported in the study were shaped by particular contextual conditions, including farming and livestock livelihoods, household economic constraints, local-language communication, traditional leadership and Ghanaian PTA, SMC and district educational structures.

These conditions may operate differently in other rural locations. Nevertheless, the study may have analytical relevance for other settings with comparable social, livelihood and institutional

conditions. The potential transferability lies primarily in the relationships identified, rather than in assuming that identical practices will occur elsewhere.

In particular, the distinctions between:

Educational interest and capacity; direct and distributed support; and participation and authority may provide useful analytical points for examining parental and community involvement in other rural educational contexts.

The study therefore offers a contextually grounded explanation rather than a universal model. Transferability should be judged by readers according to similarities between the Tolon context and the contexts in which they seek to apply or compare the findings. This is consistent with the methodological approach already established in the thesis, which explicitly avoids statistical generalisation and provides contextual detail to support judgements about transferability.

## 8.6 Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings. First, language barriers affected data collection. Interviews with parents and community members were conducted in local languages that the researcher did not fully understand. This sometimes limited direct engagement with participants' responses and reduced the researcher's ability to follow conversations in real time. Although trained research assistants supported the interviews and interpretation, direct fluency in the language would have enabled closer engagement with participants' meanings and more immediate probing of emerging issues. A related challenge arose during the transcription and translation of the audio recordings. The initial translator produced low-quality transcripts, prompting the researcher to seek additional translators with greater proficiency in the language. Although this issue was addressed by engaging university students with stronger language competence, minor loss of meaning or nuance in translation cannot be entirely ruled out. A further methodological limitation concerns

the role of research assistants in the translation process. Although they were engaged to support communication in local languages, translation in qualitative research is not purely mechanical and may involve elements of interpretation in how participants' meanings are conveyed. Word choices, explanations, and cultural context may influence how responses are expressed in English. To minimise this, the researcher worked closely with the assistants, clarified the intent of questions, reviewed transcripts, and engaged additional translators where necessary. However, some variation in meaning cannot be entirely ruled out.

Second, the study relied on purposive selection of both the study sites and participants. The rural towns, schools, and parents included in the study were selected because they were suitable for addressing the research questions and feasible for in-depth qualitative fieldwork. While this was appropriate for the study's aims, it may have limited the range of perspectives captured. In particular, the parents who participated were identified partly through school-related structures and selected on the basis of relevance, availability, and accessibility, which may have favoured those who were easier to reach or more visible within the school community. As a result, some parents with different, less visible, or less school-connected experiences may not have been included. Similarly, the study was conducted in selected rural communities within one district, and these contexts may not reflect the diversity of rural realities across Northern Ghana or Ghana more broadly. The findings should therefore be understood as context-specific, while still offering insights that may be transferable to similar rural educational settings.

Third, the research process was shaped by gatekeepers. Access to schools and participants was facilitated through the District Director of Education, headteachers, and PTA chairpersons. While this was necessary for legitimate and respectful entry into the field, it may have influenced which schools and participants were more likely to be included, especially those who were more accessible, more visible, or already connected to school structures. In addition,

because some participants were approached through school authorities, there is a possibility that some responses were shaped by social desirability or by a desire to present themselves, their schools, or their communities positively. However, participants also described difficulties, dissatisfaction and limitations, indicating that the data were not uniformly favourable. This is particularly relevant in rural contexts where school and district authorities often command respect and influence.

Fourth, the limited number of participating schools, parents, and community members may have restricted the breadth of perspectives captured in the study. Although the sample was appropriate for qualitative inquiry, which prioritises depth of understanding rather than statistical generalisation, broader participation across more schools, parents, and rural districts could have produced a wider range of experiences and strengthened the transferability of the findings. In particular, uneven participation among some stakeholder groups, especially community members, may have reduced the breadth of perspectives available on school governance and community decision-making processes.

Fifth, the study relied primarily on interviews and document reviews, with limited direct observation of participants' practices. Direct observation of parents' involvement in home learning environments could have provided richer evidence of how families support children's education beyond self-reported accounts. Similarly, attendance at PTA or SMC meetings would have allowed direct observation of community participation, interactional dynamics, and decision-making processes. Although school minutes provided useful supplementary information, observational data could have strengthened triangulation and enhanced methodological robustness. More broadly, the reliance on self-reported accounts means that the study captures participants' descriptions of their practices, which may not always fully correspond to what occurs in practice.

Sixth, the study was cross-sectional in nature and captured participants' views at one point in time. Yet parental and community involvement may vary across school terms, agricultural seasons, examination periods, changes in school leadership, or shifts in household economic conditions. A longitudinal design could have provided deeper insight into how patterns of involvement evolve over time and in response to changing local circumstances.

Finally, although children's perspectives were included in the study, they were not explored to the same depth and breadth as those of parents, community members, teachers, and headteachers. Greater inclusion of children's voices in future research could provide deeper insight into how learners themselves experience parental and community involvement and how that influences motivation, behaviour, and learning outcomes.

These limitations do not undermine the value of the findings. Rather, they highlight important opportunities for future research to expand methodological approaches, increase participant diversity, deepen observational and longitudinal inquiry, and further strengthen understanding of parental and community involvement in rural education.

## 8.7 Directions for Future Research

Future research could examine parental and community involvement across additional rural districts in Ghana. Comparative studies would help determine which patterns are closely connected to the Tolon context and which may also be found in communities with different livelihood systems, languages, educational resources and governance arrangements.

Longitudinal research would also be useful. Following families and schools across different periods could show how parental and community involvement changes according to agricultural seasons, household economic conditions, school terms or changes in school leadership.

Further research should give greater attention to children's perspectives. The present study demonstrates that children can provide important insights into how parental and household support is actually experienced. Future work could investigate more deeply how children understand direct academic support, indirect assistance, moral and cultural learning and support from wider family and community members.

The distributed nature of educational support also deserves further investigation. Research could examine how responsibilities for children's learning are shared among parents, siblings, extended family members, neighbours and other community actors and whether similar arrangements operate in other rural settings.

Further studies could also examine PTA, SMC and other school-governance structures through direct observation. Such research could explore who speaks, who influences decisions, how final decisions are reached, whose concerns enter meeting agendas and whether particular groups experience less influence despite formal representation.

Gender differences in participation and leadership also merit further attention, particularly given the differences observed between formal representation and visibility in leadership and agenda-setting roles.

Finally, intervention research could examine whether approaches such as accessible local-language communication, strengthened parent orientation, additional academic support and changes in participatory practices improve involvement over time. Such research would move beyond identifying possible strategies towards establishing which approaches work, for whom and under what conditions.

## Conclusion

In sum, this research demonstrates that parents and communities in the selected rural communities of northern Ghana generally possess strong educational aspirations and contribute to quality primary education despite substantial social, economic and institutional constraints. Their involvement should not be considered absent simply because it is less visible through formal school-facing activities. Rather, support may be direct or indirect, individual or distributed, school-based or embedded within wider family and community relationships.

The broader contribution of the thesis is therefore to move beyond a simple distinction between involved and uninvolved parents and communities**.**

A fuller understanding requires attention to how involvement is organised, what enables or constrains it, who participates in providing educational support, and how much influence different forms of participation actually carry.

Strong educational motivation can coexist with limited practical capacity. Limited formal education can change the form of support without eliminating educational commitment. Wider family and community networks can extend the support available to children. Formal participation can also coexist with limited authority.

Strengthening parental and community involvement therefore requires more than encouraging rural families to participate more often. It requires recognition of the educational support that already exists within families and communities, attention to the material and livelihood conditions that shape capacity, accessible opportunities for participation, and closer consideration of the influence parents and community members can exercise within existing school structures.

Parental and community involvement should consequently be understood as an important complement to, rather than a replacement for, the responsibility of schools, educational

authorities and government to provide quality basic education. The central question is therefore no longer simply whether rural parents and communities participate**,** but how their participation is organised, constrained and empowered within the social and institutional realities in which education takes place**.**

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Interview Schedule For Parents And Community Members

**Dear Participant,**

I am a Ghanaian doctoral student at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain. I am conducting a study on the topic: **"Community and Parent Involvement in Basic Education in Rural Ghana."** This study is being undertaken as part of the requirements for my doctoral degree. You have been purposefully selected to participate in this research because of your experience as a parent or community member. You are kindly requested to respond to the

following questions based on your views and experiences. Your responses will be treated confidentially and used only for academic purposes. Thank you for your participation.

Question 1: Perceptions And Values Of Parents And Community Members And How These Shape Educational Prioritisation

**1.1** What is your understanding of education and schooling?

**1.2** What beliefs and attitudes do parents and community members have about education?

**1.3** What are your own attitudes and beliefs about the education children receive?

**1.4** What are your views on the current education system and how it supports children's learning?

**1.5** What do you think about the statement that "education is the key to success"?

**1.6** Do you think religious education and cultural obligations are more important than formal education? Please explain.

**1.7** How do your beliefs, values, and cultural experiences influence how you prioritise education?

**1.8** What are the benefits of education to you as a parent or community member?

**1.9** Can you explain how education has improved your life or the lives of others in the community?

Question 2: Areas Of Education In Which Parents And Community Members Participate

**2.1** What academic activities do children bring home from school?

**2.2** In what ways do parents assist children with academic activities at home?

**2.3** How do parents in this community help children with homework?

**2.4** What difficulties do parents face when supporting children's homework?

**2.5** What support do parents need in order to help children with their academic work more effectively?

**2.6** What opportunities can the community gain if more people become educated?

**2.7** Apart from academic activities, what non-academic activities do parents or community members engage children in at home or in the community?

**2.8** Do parents or community members teach children activities such as storytelling, cooking, drawing, traditional crafts, cultural practices, hygiene, nutrition, or participation in community

events? If yes, please explain the activities and why they are important. If no, please explain why not.

**2.9** How motivated are parents or community members to help children achieve higher levels of academic progress? How do they show this interest?

**2.10** In what ways do parents make sacrifices to ensure that children receive education?

**2.11** What factors or circumstances prevent parents from sacrificing what they have to support children's education?

**2.12** In what ways does the school or community promote children's education and learning at home?

**2.13** Does the community have a local library or any learning resources for children and parents?

**2.14** Does the community organise study groups, peer tutoring, or other forms of academic support for children?

**2.15** Do community members serve as mentors or role models for children? If yes, how do they support or inspire children's education?

**2.16** In what ways do parents or community members assist teachers or support classroom learning?

**2.17** Are parents and community members involved in decisions about what children learn in school? If yes, how do they give their suggestions?

**2.18** Are parents and community members involved in developing learning materials for students? If yes, how?

**2.19** What infrastructural projects have parents and community members supported in the school?

**2.20** How did parents and community members support these infrastructural projects?

**2.21** How do parents and community members help maintain the school environment and make it conducive for learning?

**2.22** What educational materials do parents and community members provide to the school?

**2.23** Do parents and community members take part in setting school goals or development plans? If yes, what issues do they contribute to?

**2.24** What channels do parents and community members use to discuss school development issues?

**2.25** Are parents and community members involved in school decision-making? If yes, what kinds of decisions do they contribute to?

**2.26** Has the community made any effort to support teachers financially or materially? If yes, how?

**2.27** In what ways do parents and community members raise funds for the school?

**2.28** Do parents and community members support school activities such as field trips, school projects, or school maintenance? If yes, how?

**2.29** How do parents and community members monitor teachers' work or teacher attendance?

**2.30** How do parents and community members motivate teachers in the school?

**2.31** Are parents and community members involved when teachers are posted, selected, or dismissed? If yes, how?

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Question 3: Facilitators Of Parent And Community Involvement

**3.1** How do the school and teachers share information with parents and community members?

**3.2** Does the way information is shared motivate parents and community members to support children's education or participate in school activities?

**3.3** How often does the school invite parents and community members to meetings or school activities?

**3.4** Do these invitations motivate parents and community members to participate? Please explain.

**3.5** How do schools and teachers encourage parents and community members to participate in school activities?

**3.6** Do parents and community members respond positively when they are encouraged to participate?

**3.7** How do teachers or school leaders show respect to parents and community members?

**3.8** What makes parents and community members trust the school and teachers?

**3.9** Do respect and trust encourage parents and community members to participate in school activities? Please explain.

**3.10** What training, guidance, or support do teachers or schools provide to help parents support children's education?

**3.11** Does this training or guidance increase parents' and community members' involvement in children's education?

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Question 4: Barriers To Parent And Community Involvement

**4.1** What challenges do parents and community members face when participating in school meetings or activities?

**4.2** How does parents' level of formal education affect their participation in school activities?

**4.3** How does parents' level of formal education affect their ability to support children's learning at home?

**4.4** What responsibilities or circumstances limit parents' time for involvement in children's education?

**4.5** How do teachers and school leaders respond to parents' and community members' contributions in decision-making?

**4.6** Are parents or community members treated differently in school decision-making because of gender, social status, occupation, or level of education? If yes, how?

**4.7** Are there any school rules, procedures, or practices that make it difficult for parents and community members to enter the school or access information?

**4.8** How does financial hardship affect parents' and community members' involvement in children's education?

## Appendix B: Interview Schedule for Headteachers and Teachers

**Dear Participant,**

I am a Ghanaian doctoral student at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain. I am conducting a study on the topic: **"Community and Parent Involvement in Basic Education in Rural Ghana."** This study is being undertaken as part of the requirements for my doctoral degree. You have been purposefully selected to participate in this research because of your experience as a headteacher or teacher. You are kindly requested to respond to the following questions based on your views and experiences. Your responses will be treated confidentially and used only for academic purposes. Thank you for your participation.

Quality Of Education That Community Members And Parents Participate In

**1.1** Do parents and community members get involved in developing curriculum and learning materials for students? If yes, how do they participate and how do they respond? **Headteachers only**

**1.2** What infrastructural projects have parents and community members carried out in the school? How did they carry them out?

**2.3** How do parents and community members ensure the upkeep and care of the school environment to make it conducive for learning?

**2.4** What educational materials do parents and community members buy or supply to the school to assist students' learning?

**2.5** How often do parents and community members attend meetings in the school?

**2.6** Do parents and community members take part in setting goals and development plans for the school? What is the main channel for discussing these matters? What specific issues do parents and community members contribute during goal setting and development planning? Are parents and community members part of key decision-making? Do they want to be part of decision-making? If not, why? **Headteachers only**

**2.7** Has there been any effort by the community to supplement teachers' salaries? In what ways does the community organise fundraising activities for the school? Are there initiatives from the community to sponsor field trips organised by schools? In what ways have parents and community members contributed financially to support the school?

**2.8** How do communities and parents organise and direct teacher activities in the school? What specific training activities have parents and community members organised for teachers in the past?

**2.9** Are parents and community members involved when teachers are selected or dismissed? Are there any examples? **Headteachers only**

**2.10** How do parents and community members monitor or check on teachers? Are there any experiences you can share? **Headteachers only**

**2.11** How do parents and community members motivate teachers in this school?

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Facilitators Of Community And Parent Involvement In Basic Schools In Rural Areas

**3.1** How do the school and teachers share information with parents and community members? Does this motivate them to participate in school activities and children's education?

**3.2** How do you motivate or engage parents and community members in school activities? Do parents and community members respond positively when they are motivated?

**3.3** Are there any training sessions organised for parents and/or community members? What are they? Do these training programmes encourage parents and community members to become more involved?

Barriers To Community and Parent Participation

**4.1** What are the impediments to parents' and community members' involvement in children's education?

**4.2** What do you think can help parents and community members involve themselves in quality education in this community

## Appendix C: Interview Schedule For Children/Pupils

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Participant Code: _____
School Code: _____
Class: _____
Age: _____

QUESTIONS

**1.1** How does your parent support the homework that you bring home?

**1.2** Do your parents have any struggles in assisting you with homework? What are the struggles?

**1.3** In what other ways do your parents support your studies at home apart from homework?

**1.4** How do your parents check the progress of your academic achievement?

**1.5** What do you want your parents to do to support your education?

**1.6** Are your parents interested in you going to school? If yes, how do they show their interest in your education?

**1.7** Aside from schoolwork or studies at home, what other things do your parents teach you to help you learn and become knowledgeable? For example, storytelling, cooking, dressing properly, eating well, keeping clean, or doing things on your own.

**1.8** How often do your parents take you to town libraries or community events, such as festivals or fairs, to learn about local culture and traditions?

**1.9** Does the community have a local library that offers resources such as books for children and parents to use?

**1.10** Does the community organise study groups or peer-tutoring programmes to provide additional academic support from peers or community members? How are students informed?

**1.11** Do community members serve as mentors or role models to children in this community, inspiring and guiding them in their education? Which of these activities have you taken part in?

**1.12** What do you think prevents your parents from showing interest in your education or participating in school activities?

**1.13** Do you think the community is doing enough to support children's learning at home? What should the community do more if it is not doing enough?

# Appendix D: Summary of PTA, SMC, and SPAM Meeting Records Reviewed

| Anonymised site | Date/time | Meeting type | Participants/leadership visible | Key issues discussed | Parent/community contributions | Challenges/limitations | Analytical use in thesis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Documentary Site 1 | 24/01/2011 | PTA Executive Meeting | SMC chairperson, Headteacher/Headmaster, PTA executives | Nursery pupils moving around during class hours; need for support for nursery teacher; parents not visiting the school; proposed extra classes; delayed JHS construction; teacher lateness and absenteeism. | PTA leadership accepted the need for cooperation; extra classes and cooperation for school development were proposed. | Weak parental visits; limited executive follow-up; JHS construction delayed/unsuccessful; teacher lateness and absenteeism. | Shows that school governance discussions connected parental visits, school development, teacher attendance and learning support. |
| Documentary Site 1 | 01/02/2011 | PTA Meeting | SMC and PTA executives, Headteacher, Parents | Improvement of teaching and learning; need to support children to become professionals and future leaders; organisation of extra classes. | House agreed to pay 1 cedi per month toward extra classes. | Sustaining monthly contributions may be difficult for some parents. | Shows parental financial contribution toward academic support beyond normal school hours. |
| Documentary Site 1 | 24/03/2011 | PTA Executive Meeting | PTA/SMC executives | Planning for a general PTA meeting; proposed agenda included funeral attendance, school/community collaboration, community relationship, and other business. | Agreed to hold a general PTA meeting the following day. | Mainly an agenda-setting record; material contributions not specified. | Shows that executive-level meetings helped set the agenda before wider parent participation. |
| Documentary Site 1 | 25/11/2011 | General PTA Meeting | PTA leadership, Headteacher, Parents | Challenges of early childhood education; reasons for dropout including high school fees, inability to understand lessons, poverty, adopted children, BECE failure, parental neglect, and lack of textbooks. | Parents contributed explanations of dropout and school participation challenges. | High fees, poverty, lack of textbooks, learning difficulty and parental neglect. | Shows parents were involved in diagnosing barriers to children's schooling, not only in paying dues. |
| Documentary Site 1 | 28/10/2015 | PTA Meeting | PTA chairperson, Headmaster, Parents | Security of District Assembly learning materials; checking pupils' exam papers; district organised examination; proposed increase in lower primary exam fees from 2.50 to 3 cedis; resource centre needs ceiling fan, multi-socket, plastic chairs, louvres and roofing. | Parents were advised to monitor pupils' exam papers and school attendance; final agreement for parents to pay 2 cedis. | Resource centre needs; exam fee burden; dependence on parental payments. | Shows parent involvement in monitoring performance and supporting school resources. |
| Documentary Site 1 | 24/01/2018 | PTA Meeting | Headteacher/school leaders, New teachers, Parents, PTA executives | Introduction of new teachers following mass transfer; PTA executive election planned; low parent turnout. | Parents who attended raised concern about low turnout. | Meeting postponed because of low parental attendance. | Shows that formal governance structures existed but participation was uneven. |
| Documentary Site 1 | 31/01/2018 | PTA Meeting | Headteacher, Parents, PTA executives, New teachers | Election of PTA executives; official introduction of new teachers. | Parents participated in electing PTA executives. | No major challenge visible beyond the need for leadership renewal. | Useful evidence that parents participated in choosing PTA leadership. |

| Anonymised site | Date/time | Meeting type | Participants/leadership visible | Key issues discussed | Parent/community contributions | Challenges/limitations | Analytical use in thesis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Documentary Site 1 | 31/10/2018 | PTA Meeting | PTA leadership, Parents, School representatives | Poor school condition; theft of generator and flat screen; broken locks; case reported to police and chief's palace; repair of windows and washrooms; absence of watchman. | Parents agreed each parent should pay 2 cedis for maintenance of windows and washrooms. | Theft, poor security, lack of watchman and infrastructure damage. | Shows parents deliberated on security and maintenance rather than only accepting school demands. |
| Documentary Site 1 | 12/07/2019 | PTA Meeting | Headmaster, Parents, Teachers, PTA leadership | Use of PTA dues: DVD deck 150 cedis; urinal maintenance 256 cedis; total 406 cedis; exam fees; absence of electricity; electricity debt of about 1,946 cedis; lack of notebooks. | Parents suggested contributing exam fees; proposed a school account for periodic contributions; agreed 0.50p monthly for electricity; an eight-member finance committee was formed. | Electricity debt; lack of notebooks; difficulty paying exam fees; debate about whether non-paying pupils should write exams. | Shows financial governance, resource mobilisation and tensions around excluding children for non-payment. |
| Documentary Site 1 | 30/06/2021 | PTA Meeting | PTA chairperson, Headteacher, Parents, PTA executives | Construction of urinal pits; classroom maintenance and flooring of about four classrooms; need for cost estimate/amount. | A parent suggested 5 cedis per child; proposal was seconded and agreed; parents were urged to pay within one month. | Urinal pit construction was unsuccessful and suspended; need for clearer estimates. | Shows parental deliberation on infrastructure financing and school maintenance. |
| Documentary Site 1 | 02/12/2021 | SMC Meeting | PTA chairperson, SMC executives, Headteacher, Parents | Election of SMC executives; school maintenance work; report on contributions already received. | SMC executives elected; about 1,155 cedis contributed for maintenance work. | Some parents had not paid; maintenance depended on incomplete contributions. | Shows formal school governance and community contribution to school maintenance. |
| Documentary Site 1 | 25/10/2022 | PTA Meeting | Assistant Headteacher, PTA executives, Parents | Defecation in KG block; watchman duties; careless riding through school compound; proposed ramps; erosion after road construction; absenteeism. | Parents suggested PTA executives meet the watchman; proposed ramps; members offered to help dig gravel and fill eroded areas; parents were urged to visit school. | Open defecation, careless riding, erosion, inadequate supervision and absenteeism. | Shows parents proposed practical solutions and school-community labour support. |
| Documentary Site 1 | 30/05/2023 | PTA Meeting | New Headteacher, Parents, PTA/SMC representatives, Circuit Supervisor, Education Office representative, external education organisation officials | Low learner attendance; discipline/caning debate; need for parent-teacher collaboration; learning materials; communication channels; classroom maintenance. | Parents were encouraged to attend school events and meetings; contact numbers collected; parents agreed to pay 5 cedis for flooring two classrooms. | Low learner attendance, weak collaboration, need for learning materials and discipline tensions. | Shows broader stakeholder involvement and parent-teacher communication as governance tools. |
| Documentary Site 2 | 18/01/2018; 10:05 a.m.–11:20 a.m. visible | General PTA Meeting | PTA chairperson, SMC chairperson/executives, Imam, Teachers, Parents | Exam fees; chalkboard issues; improving educational standards; capitation/PTA dues; books, uniforms, food plates, drinking money; monitoring children's academic performance; informing teachers when pupils are sick. | Parents and teachers discussed pupils' welfare and learning materials; parents were urged to buy necessary books and uniforms. | Payment difficulties; limited materials; pupil welfare needs; non-payment of dues. | Shows PTA as a forum for pupil welfare, finance and academic monitoring; some female teacher contributions visible but leadership mainly male-led. |
| Documentary Site 2 | 05/10/2018; meeting began around 1:40 as recorded | General PTA Meeting | PTA chairperson, SMC chairperson/executives, Staff, Parents | External interventions/programmes; PTA dues; school development; number of pupils expected to pay dues; outstanding dues. | Some parents had paid PTA dues; school had benefited from external interventions. | Out of 701 pupils expected to pay dues, 325 had paid, leaving 376 unpaid. | Shows resource mobilisation but also serious non-payment and uneven participation. |
| Documentary Site 2 | 13/02/2020; 10:05 a.m.–11:40 | General PTA Meeting | Headteacher, PTA chairperson, SMC chairperson, Teachers, Parents | Attendance, punctuality, regularity, furniture, pupils' dressing code, exam fees, PTA dues, use of | Parents discussed PTA dues, furniture and school support; suggestions were | Furniture shortages, discipline, attendance, PTA dues and parent monitoring challenges. | Shows school governance focused on discipline, resource |

| Anonymised site | Date/time | Meeting type | Participants/leadership visible | Key issues discussed | Parent/community contributions | Challenges/limitations | Analytical use in thesis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | a.m. visible | | | PTA dues, watchman salary, parents visiting school. | made for addressing children's behaviour and school issues. | | mobilisation and parental responsibility. |
| Documentary Site 2 | 31/03/2022; time partly unclear | PTA/SMC Meeting | PTA/SMC leaders, Headteacher, Parents | PTA dues; payment of security man; receipt/ticket for payment; unpaid dues; whether pupils should be sent home for unpaid dues. | Leaders agreed to discuss the amount for security payment; ticket/receipt system suggested. | PTA dues not being paid consistently; security payment unresolved. | Shows PTA/SMC leadership in financial accountability and school security discussions. |
| Documentary Site 2 | Undated | General PTA Meeting | SMC chairperson, Parents, Teachers | Contributions for printing exam questions; repair of broken furniture; watchman salary; payment of dues. | Parents/committee discussed contributions for exam printing, furniture repair and watchman salary. | Financial hardship, furniture repair burden and watchman payment. | Shows SMC-led discussion around school resources and basic operations. |
| Documentary Site 2 | Undated; time visible around 10:00 a.m.–12:19 p.m. | SPAM/Cluster Meeting | Circuit Supervisor, Teachers, Parents, GES/school officials and stakeholders | Pupil performance in Mathematics and English; teacher attendance; poor pupil performance; homework; school visits; children going to disco dances; phone use; discipline; textbooks; uniforms and food; parental monitoring. | Parents urged to support teachers, monitor homework, visit teachers, provide supplementary materials, uniforms and food; GES urged to provide textbooks. | Poor pupil performance, lack of textbooks, phone distractions, weak homework monitoring, attendance and discipline challenges. | Useful for cautious gender reflection because the record mentions mothers/fathers' monitoring roles and women teachers' maternity leave. |
| Documentary Site 2 | Undated | Opinion leaders/community-school note | Opinion leaders, Chief, Teachers, Parents/community stakeholders | Opinion leaders to plead with chief to ban music during naming ceremonies; teachers to motivate non-performing pupils; parents to build lower-class performance; children to be motivated and disciplined. | Community leaders expected to intervene in cultural activities affecting schooling; teachers and parents urged to motivate and discipline pupils. | Cultural events and music seen as distracting children; weak foundational performance. | Shows school issues were connected to wider community norms and traditional authority. |

**Appendix E**

Fax: 03720-22080
Website: www.uds.edu.gh

P. O. Box TL 1350
Tamale, Ghana

Our Ref:.....
UDS/DIRA/2023/010

Your Ref:.....

UDS INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Date: May 11, 2023

To Whom It May Concern

Dear Sir/Madam,

**LETTER OF INTRODUCTION**

This confirms that Mr. Daniel Oduro is a PhD student from Autonoma University of Barcelona who has visited the University for Development Studies, Tamale, Ghana as part of the Erasmus plus mobility programme to conduct research on Community and Parent Involment in Primary Education in Rural Ghana.

The Directorate of International Relations and Advancement would like to request that your Faculty/Directorate/ School grants him the necessary support to enable him conduct his research.

We count on your understanding and consideration.

Yours faithfully,

**Prof. Courage Kosi Setsoafia Saba**
**Director, International Relations and Advancement**

DIRECTOR
UDS INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
AND ADVANCEMENT
BOX TL 1350, TAMALE - GHANA

# GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE

*In case of reply the number and date of this letter should be quoted*
Our Ref: PU.64/GES/NR/TDA
**Your Ref. No:**

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

District Education Office
P.O. Box 16
**Tolon N/R**
NL-0025-5085
25th May, 2023

**RE: INTRODUCTION LETTER TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL**

I wish to introduce Mr. Daniel Oduro a PhD student from Autonoma University, who wish to conduct a research on **Community and Parent involvement** in Primary Education in Rural Ghana.

I therefore selected your school and wish to introduce Mr. Daniel Oduro to you.

Kindly grant him all the necessary support he requires from your outfit.

Thank you.

**ALHASSAN SUMANI (ALHAJI)**
**DISTRICT DIRECTOR**

**THE HEADTEACHER**
1. NYANKPALA DA PRIMARY SCH, A
2. TOLON DA MODEL PRIMARY
3. TOLON DA PRIMARY B
4. NYANKPALA DA MODEL PRIMARY

CC:
*File