

Problems of Teaching and Learning in Basic Schools-The Case of Ewusa Demonstration Basic School, Ghana

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Abstract

Education is considered the main vehicle through which nations are developed. This implies that effective teaching and learning in schools should be enforced to ensure that educational and school goals are achieved for national development. The study was therefore conducted at the Ewusa Demonstration Basic School in the Central Region of Ghana with the aim of describing how teaching and learning is done in the school. The method used was qualitative for both the data collection and analysis. Participants for the study were teachers and pupils of the school. The findings from the study were that teaching and learning generally goes on in the school as expected. However, lack of teaching and learning materials, large class size, and poor socio-economic background of the pupils and some aspects of the teacher factor pose threat to effective curriculum implementation in the school. It is, therefore, recommended that teachers of the school should adhere to the Ministry of Education's (2012) directives on teaching at the basic level. The stakeholders of the school should also provide the basic needs of the school, and the government's school feeding programme should be extended to the school to enhance enrolment and interest of the children in the town to go to school.

Key words: Basic, Ewusa, learning, problems, school, teaching

INTRODUCTION

Teaching, generally, is helping others learn to do particular things, but the process of professional teaching comprises the intentionally designed activity of increasing the probability that students will attain specific intended goals (Ball & Fozain, 2009). Teaching and learning are casually tightly bound activities, and so to consider what learning entails, there is the need for a perusal of what precisely are the components of teaching and their underlying principles that can cause effective learning (Mandin, Dessus, & Zampa, 2009). Therefore, effective teaching, among other things, involves acquiring knowledge about students and using that knowledge to inform the designing of the course and classroom teaching, aligning the three major components of instruction (learning objectives, instructional activities, and assessments) and prioritizing the knowledge and skills the teacher chooses to focus on (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt and Associates, 2005).

De Houwer, Barnes-Holmes and Moors (2013) see learning as the changes in the behaviour of an organism that are the result of regularities in the environment of that organism. Thus, for learning to take place, the organism should encounter certain situation for a period of time.

This could be the reason for Abbot's (1994) explanation of learning as that reflective activity which enables the learner to draw upon previous experience to understand and evaluate the present so as to shape future action and formulate new knowledge. Effective learning, among other things involves organizing knowledge appropriately, developing mastery of what is learnt by acquiring component skills, practise integrating the skills learnt and knowing when to apply what is learnt (Kuh et al, 2005). Sharma and Chandra (2003) opine that for students to comprehend the concepts taught, certain guidelines or rules, which they term maxims of teaching, should be followed. Thus, teaching must be from particular to general, known to unknown, whole to parts, analysis to synthesis, and simple to complex. For teachers to go about their teaching systematically, they need to consider the teaching method (the manner in which teachers impart knowledge to learners) to use (Owing, cited in Dorleku, 2013). These teaching methods include group method, discussion, question and answer, drill, projects, demonstration, whole class method, and individual instruction.

With the group method, students are put in small groups supervised by their teacher for better communication skills to promote participation by students, and motivation to learn independently. Mixed-ability groups are formed to enable students learn from one another by sharing views and discussing topics of common interest. Discussion method of teaching gives students an opportunity to express their views or opinions orally on certain issues. They share ideas and experiences, solve problems and promote tolerance with understanding. With the question and answer method, the teacher poses questions that require convergent as well as divergent thinking on the part of the students to stimulate them to higher levels of thinking. Questions asked can be rhetorical, direct, and overhead, relay or reverse to maintain students' interests (Child, cited in Dorleku, 2013). The drill method involves listening to a model provided by the teacher or on a tape recorder or another student, and repeating what is heard. The focus is on accuracy and provision of intensive practice to students in hearing and saying particular words.

Individualised instruction is where the teacher takes each student's skills, abilities, interests, learning styles among other attributes into consideration in order to assist them learn what is taught. Demonstration method of teaching involves direct communication of information and ideas from teacher to students, using a visual approach to disseminate information, ideas and processes. In class method of teaching, the teacher addresses the whole class without consideration of individual differences among students (Child, cited in Dorleku, 2013). Project-based learning begins with an assignment to carry out one or more tasks that lead to the production of a final product. The culmination of the project is usually a written and/or oral report summarizing the procedure used to produce the product and presenting the outcome. The sequencing or ordering of techniques selected by teachers to teach a particular lesson to enable students to learn is referred to as the teaching strategy (Ampeh, cited in Dorleku, 2013).

Ryder (2009) identifies some challenges that teachers need to contend with in the teaching and learning situation. These include the challenge of students' behaviour management, planning and programming, assessment, communication with parents, differentiation (meeting the differing interests, abilities, skills and knowledge of students), technology, and the challenge of teaming with other teachers. Other challenges outlined by Meador (2015) are increased curriculum responsibility-teaching many subjects, lack of parental support, lack of proper funding and overemphasis on standardized tests. These and other challenges confronting the teaching and learning situation have resulted in low academic performance in many schools in Ghana (Agyeman, 2012), and the performance of the Ewusa Demonstration Basic School is no

exception. Hence, this study was conducted to ascertain how teaching and learning is being done in the school, and also to investigate the problems the school face. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for the town, school and participants in the study. The following questions were therefore formulated to guide the study:

1. How is teaching and learning done in Ewusa Demonstration basic school?
2. Why is teaching and learning done that way in Ewusa Demonstration basic school?

CONTEXT

Context is the set of facts or circumstances that surround a particular situation or event. It is the conditions in which something exists or occurs (Webster, n.d.). Vinlove (2012) posits that the context of students' lives and their family situations and background in connection with the communities and larger places where they live and go to school form the foundation on which education will occur; and contextual information worth responding to in the classroom are in two categories. These are information about each individual pupil and his/her family and information about the larger community and environment in which the pupils live. Instruction always takes place within a context. Thus, there are contextual differences in relation to class and subject, each of which requires special understanding and specific skill to handle (Multi-professional Faculty Development, 2012). Subjects investigated were English Language and Religious and Moral Education (RME). English Language lessons were observed because pupils gaining proficiency in it impacts positively on their overall academic performance in school as it is the medium of instruction for all subjects except the vernacular. RME was also included to ascertain how the spiritual and moral developments of the pupils are being catered for in that mission school (CRDD, 2012: iv).

English Language, according to Ampiah (2010), is the official language in Ghana used in government, administration, for commerce, in the learned profession and the media. In the school system in Ghana, English Language is the medium of instruction from Primary 4 to the tertiary level. This means that, for any learner in Ghana to be successful in education, proficiency in the language is inevitable. For this reason, English Language is seen as a major subject of study in Ghanaian schools. The learning of English Language in the basic school is aimed at developing the basic language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in pupils. It is also to help pupils attain high proficiency in English to assist them in their study of other subjects and also in their study of English at higher levels. Another aim is to cultivate in pupils the habit of and interest in reading, and communicating effectively in English. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Ghana has laid down some regulations as regards the teaching and learning of the subject in our basic schools.

Some of the regulations are that teachers should address the learning problems of each individual pupil for the majority of the pupils to master the objectives of each unit of the syllabus, and could add more information to the content presented. Teachers are to have more content knowledge to be able to teach the syllabus effectively. As regards teaching and learning activities, there should be lots of practices on the part of pupils for mastery since instructional model is understanding followed by practice. Teachers are therefore encouraged to re-order the teaching and learning activities, and add to them where necessary. Learning the English Language should lead to the acquisition of knowledge and understanding. Thus, the ability to identify and recall for example, the principles of grammar acquired through instruction. Pupils should also acquire the skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing (Ministry of Education, 2012).

Again, teachers are to use the integrated approach to teach skills. Thus, a reading lesson must provide plenty opportunity for the practices of related listening, speaking and writing skills. Teachers are to develop scheme of work and lesson plans for teaching the subject and lesson objectives should be stated in action verbs that describe the behaviour the pupil will be able to demonstrate by the end of the lesson. Evaluation is to comprise oral questioning, quizzes, class assignments, essays structured questions, and projects. With this, teachers are to ask questions that will challenge their pupils to develop excellent skills in English Language as a result of having undergone instruction in that subject (Ministry of Education, 2012).

Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) are to include dusters, wall pictures, conversation charts, cardboards, manila cards, markers, water ink, tape recorders, computers, printers cassettes, Compact Discs (CDs), photocopiers, exercise books, A4 papers, drawing books, writing books, jotters, clay, coloured chalk, brushes, sand trays, pencils, workbooks, textbooks, library books, teachers resource packs-dictionary, material for costumes, screens, projectors, relia (such as toys, vegetables, animals, birds, human beings, fish, etc), desk computers for teachers, laptops computers for pupils, television, chalkboards, and formica boards (Ministry of Education, 2012).

Religious and Moral Education is a vital and an indispensable aspect of human growth and development in the Ghanaian society. The subject reinforces the informal religious and moral training given to young people from the homes. Since some of the homes are unable to provide this type of training adequately, it becomes the school's responsibility to fill that need to enable the young person grow up into a religious, moral and responsible adult. It is a subject that "is aimed at providing appropriate attitudes and values that will help pupils to make the correct choices and decisions in their growth toward adulthood" (Ministry of Education, 2012: ii). The course covers cherished Ghanaian values such as love, truthfulness, self-control, honesty, respect, hardwork, hospitality, kindness, cleanliness, justice and humility. Time allocation for the subject is 30 minutes per period, four times a week. Pupils are to be taught factual knowledge as well as practical knowledge including attitudes, and values which they are expected to exhibit. Teachers are to add to the content provided in the syllabus as well as develop their own content in some cases (Ministry of Education, 2012).

Regulations on teaching and learning indicate that activities should ensure maximum pupil participation in the lessons. Emphasis should be on participatory teaching and learning on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of knowledge wherever appropriate. Each lesson is to begin with a practical problem to help pupils acquire the habit of analytical thinking. A relevant practical problem should be selected for each lesson to enable pupils use knowledge gained afterwards. At the end of a lesson, the teacher should state or write the problem on the board for pupils to analyse, suggest solutions, criticize solutions offered, justify solutions and evaluate the worth of possible solution. Topics such as environmental degradation, relationship in the family and community are dealt with in RME and also in Social Studies so as to emphasise such critical issues in more than one subject. Evaluation of pupils' understanding of lessons taught should be in the form of oral questions, quizzes, class assignments, essays, structured questions, project work, among others. Questions, tasks, and assignments should challenge pupils to apply their knowledge to issues and problems (Schwartz, 2012).

STUDY SETTING

The setting for the research was Ewusa Demonstration Basic School in the Central Region of Ghana. Ewusa is a coastal town about six kilometres off the Amandze-Bonsuadze highway. The Ewusa Demonstration Basic School is located at the north-western part of the town. It is about 150 metres west of the commercial street that divides the town into two non-proportional parts. Opposite the school junction is a filling station and an abandoned structure for one of the telecommunication companies. The school compound is not cemented. It is walled on all four sides but part of the southern wall which blocks the view of users of the untarred street leading to the school junction is broken down. Beyond the eastern wall is the Ewusa Girls Senior High School. There stands an abandoned toilet facility at the north eastern side of the compound. The northern side of the school compound is covered by bushy wild grass boarded by trees and a small plantain and okra farms to the east and west respectively. The Ewusa Junior High School, a ground floor of an uncompleted storey building, is to the west of the Demonstration school block. Two-seater toilet and two urinals, built together, stand to the south western side of the school observed. There are no trees on the compound for pupils to play under. A shed standing beyond the Junior High School block houses the food vendors.

The Ewusa Demonstration Basic School block is a six-unit classroom block built in semi-circular form, painted green down and yellow up with a metal gate and roofed with aluminium sheets. Just to the eastern side of the gate inside the enclosure is a tap from which the pupils fetch water. The classrooms are to the east and west of the block with a library, store room, the headteacher's office and a room for the kindergarten to the south. A spacious veranda boarded the enclosed part of the school block (See fig.1b). Part of the enclosed area of the school block is not cemented. Four wooden structures for washing bowls were placed at vantage points on the veranda. There were two long teachers' tables on the north-eastern side of the veranda. Each classroom has a big door positioned very close to the chalkboard (which is a cement work attached to the wall), four fluorescent lights, an old drawer that faced the door with books and other items on and inside it, three pairs of windows, dual desks for pupils, a table and chair for the teacher, cardboard and charts with pictures and statements used in previous lessons and class rules on the upper parts of the walls. Some of the classrooms have wall clocks placed either on top of the chalkboard or between the chalkboard and the door. Each class faced the chalkboard to the south. The classrooms were not ceiled. The school environment was calm with no noise from any commercial activity, or air pollution that disturbed academic work apart from the usual noise-making associated with primary schools.



Fig 1a:. The Ewusa school compound



Fig.1b: The Ewusa school block

PARTICIPANTS

The participants of the study were teachers and pupils of the Ewusa Demonstration Basic School. The school is a mission school established in 1934 to educate children of the church members and the general public to become useful citizens of the society both socially and spiritually. The school has over the years turned out many prominent people for its catchment

area and raised many members for the church that established it. Majority of the pupils in the school come from poor socio-economic background. Their parents are fishermen and fishmongers residing in Ewusa or working along the Volta Lake. Fishing work in Ghana is generally seasonal and so most of the time the inhabitants of the town are jobless. Some of the pupils in the school have been taken to work on the Volta Lake before. The pupils dress in green uniform with yellow bands across the hedges. In addition the girls have yellow belts made of the yellow bands across the hedges of their uniforms which they wear across their stomach. Some of the pupils were in their Friday wear as the day of the observation was a Friday, 29th May, 2015. They were all neatly dressed, and were in assorted footwear. The teachers in the school are all graduates and are class teachers. Two of them were national service personnel. The teachers were punctual and neatly dressed. Most of them have done long years of teaching. To ascertain how teaching and learning go on in the entire school, two classes from the Upper Primary (classes 5 and 6) and two from the Lower Primary (classes 2 and 3) were judgements used for the study.

METHODS

Yin (1994) states that methods used for case studies can be qualitative or quantitative or both. For this study, we used the qualitative method for both the data collection and data analysis. Participant observation and interview were employed to collect data to increase the construct validity of the study. We moved from one class to the other and observed teachers and pupils in teaching and learning situation. The headmistress was out of the school on official duty and so we interviewed her assistant and the basic 6 teacher on some of the issues confronting teaching and learning in the school. Pattern marching-descriptive/explanatory (Yin, 1994) was used to analyse the data collected. Document analysis was done on the lesson notebooks of the teachers observed.

FINDINGS

We gained access to the school by submitting an introductory letter from my Head of Department on the 22nd May, 2015 to seek official permission for the observation. Permission was granted and the actual observation took place on the 29th May, 2015. We arrived at the school at 7:25am when pupils were sweeping in and around the classrooms. Drum was beaten at 7:42am for the morning assembly. Singing of the national anthem was done with drums accompaniment. However, the instruments overshadowed the singing. After the proceedings the assembly was dissolved at 7:50am. There was mass singing in the primary 6 classroom for 15 minutes. The singing was done in monophonic texture (all of them sung in one part).

Teaching and Learning followed and I was introduced to the Primary 6 class. We sat at the back of the class after greeting them and telling them I was there to learn with them. There was much ventilation and light from the sun. The subject taught was English Language and the topic was English Grammar (Subject Verb Agreement). The teacher had a scheme of work for the term and the lesson was to last for 60 minutes. The lesson note was well prepared with clearly stated, specific, measureable and achievable objectives. Teacher and learner activities were clearly spelt out in the lesson note. The evaluation column had examples of questions for evaluation of the lesson. Also, the lesson note had been vetted by the headteacher.

The lesson started at 8:16 a.m. with the teacher calling the pupils to attention by greeting them. They stood up, responded and were commanded to sit down. The class was almost half empty (See Fig. 2a). The teacher wrote the subject and the topic on the blackboard and called a girl to give a sentence. Other pupils were invited to give sentences, a few of which were written on

the blackboard. The teacher sequentially guided the pupils to identify the subject and predicate in the sentences on the board. They then identified the verb in the sentences. Next, they were guided to identify singular subjects and the type of verbs that go with them. They were then taken through plural subjects and their corresponding verbs. For instance, “Kwame (singular subject) goes with (singular verb) to school”. Another example was “Kwame and Aba (plural subject) go with (plural verb) to school”. Throughout the lesson, the teacher used whole class method of teaching as he never did any group work or gave attention to individual pupils. However, pupil participation in the lesson was encouraging as they repeated statements and words given either by the teacher or their mates in chorus. A few of them were called to underline either a subject or a verb in the sentences written on the chalkboard.

The teacher evenly distributed his questions. He would ask the question, pause and invite a pupil to answer. However, some of the questions resulted in chorus answers from the pupils. Most of the questions were oral questions. Conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning prevailed throughout the lesson. The teacher kept a blind eye on certain pupil behaviours which needed to be queried. For example, he did not question pupils who entered the class as teaching and learning was going on with the exception of one pupil. We observed that pupils continued to enter the classroom after 8:30 a.m. The teacher’s voice was clear and well projected throughout the lesson. He had mastery of the subject matter and invited questions from the pupils in the course of his teaching. His chalkboard summary work was good with legible handwriting and well laid out organisation of the lesson summary.

The teacher asked questions and called pupils by their names to answer the questions. He encouraged the class to applaud for any correct answer given in answer to his questions. However, in the course of teaching, the teacher, many a time, talked to the chalkboard and pointed at words and statements on the chalkboard with his fingers to assist pupils in reading them. Apart from chalkboard illustrations, no other teaching and learning material was used. Oral evaluation of the lesson was intermittently done by the teacher. No formal closure of the lesson was done. At 8:43 a.m., pupils were given four problems on the topic treated (written on the board) to solve. Pupils did their class exercise with no supervision. A late comer entered the class at 9:00am in the absence of the teacher. We left the class at 9:04 a.m. after advising the pupils on the need to learn hard so as to become successful in future.



Fig. 2a: Half-empty Primary Six classroom



Fig.2b: Pupils working on some exercises

The second observation took place in the Primary 5 classroom. After greeting the class, we were introduced to them as having come to learn with them. We sat at the back of the class. The subject taught was RME and the topic was “The environment”, with the sub topic, “The Soil”. The teacher had prepared a scheme of work for the term. The vetted lesson note was not detailed because it had very few teacher and learner activities. However, it had clearly stated and achievable objectives. The stated duration was 60 minutes. The teacher for this class was

one of the national service persons in the school. The lesson started at 9:16am. This class was almost full. The teacher reviewed the pupils' relevant previous knowledge (RPK) with a few oral questions. He then introduced the class to general issues about "the soil" and uses of soil. He used a sketch on the chalkboard to explain how soil is used for construction work.

The teacher taught with confidence and projected his voice throughout the classroom. His chalkboard work was well laid out and legible. His questions were evenly distributed but were mostly recall questions. The teacher mostly asked the class to clap for anyone who gave a correct answer in response to his question. He on one occasion verbally rewarded a pupil with the word "good". During the evaluation time, the teacher gave clear verbal instructions to pupils on how they should solve the problem posed; and supervised them while they worked. He kept a smiling face throughout the lesson. Whole class teaching and the lecture method were the teaching techniques used by the teacher. He did almost all the talking. Pupils' participation was when a few of them gave oral answers to the teacher's questions. Throughout the lesson, the teacher hardly remained in front of the class. He walked among the desks to the eastern side of the classroom. He wrote long statements on the chalkboard while the class looked on. Apart from the chalkboard no other teaching and learning material was used by the teacher to enhance pupils' understanding of the lesson. At 9:29 a.m., he wrote two questions on the topic on the chalkboard for pupils to answer. This was after he had summarised the core points. He instructed the class to copy the statements he had written on the chalkboard on completion of the exercise. We thanked the class, gave them the advice given to the previous class, and left the class at 9:35 a.m. Thus, the lesson lasted for 19 minutes instead of 60 minutes.

The third observation took place in the Primary 2 classroom. After the usual pleasantries, we told them we were going to sit and learn with them. This information made the pupils excited, probably they were wondering why elderly people like us were going to learn with them. This classroom had two teacher's tables; one just by the entrance of the classroom and the other at the back. We sat at the back table. The subject taught was English Language and the topic was "Days of the week, Questions and Answers". The lesson note book had a scheme of work for the term. The lesson note was well prepared with clearly stated, specific and achievable objectives but with no duration stated. Teacher/Learner activities were clearly spelt out and examples of evaluation questions written at the evaluation column. The lesson note had been vetted.

The lesson started at 9:50am with the teacher calling pupils to attention. They were commanded to stand and sit two times. In this class there were a few empty desks. The teacher reviewed pupils' RPK on what they do on certain days of the week. He then introduced the lesson with a question on what they ate the previous evening and developed the lesson by engaging pupils in telling about the days of the week and the activities associated with some of these days. He read out a short passage from the pupils' textbook and asked a few questions on it.

This teacher also used the whole class method of teaching throughout the lesson. He used English and interspersed it with the vernacular (Fante). His questions, which were mostly recall questions, were evenly distributed. He had mastery of the subject matter and so taught with confidence. He related his questions to the pupils' everyday experiences; and this created a lively atmosphere in the classroom for pupils to contribute to the lesson. The teacher was audible, wrote legibly on the blackboard and called pupils by name. His forms of reward were both verbal and non-verbal as he either commanded the class to clap for those who gave

correct answers or used the word “Good” to motivate them. To help control his class, he banged the cane on a table and shouted “Quiet”. And there was calm. He was very mobile as he taught and many a time moved a little into the columns between the desks. Apart from a calendar which he used to illustrate a point he was making and the chalkboard, there was no use of teaching/learning material in the lesson. At 10:06am, pupils were given exercises in their English work book to do. Each pupil had a work book to use. The teacher explained well how to go about the exercise. No supervision of pupils’ work was done, neither was any formal closure of the lesson made. It was break time so pupils were asked to go out for break and come and continue. And so we all left the classroom. The break time lasted till 10:46 a.m.

The fourth and final observation was done in Primary 3. After the usual pleasantries I sat at the back of the class. This class was full of pupils with some of them visibly over aged. The class teacher was a lady. The subject taught was English Language and the topic was Reading and Comprehension: Reading aloud (Awa goes to the market). The lesson notebook had scheme of work for the term. The objective was not specific but the lesson note was detailed with well stated core points. It had been vetted by the headteacher. The evaluation column had questions for the evaluation of the lesson. Teacher/Learner activities were clearly spelt out. The lesson was to last for 60 minutes.

The lesson started at 10:59 a.m. The teacher called pupils to attention by asking them to stand and recite the poem titled “Twinkle, Twinkle, little star”. She introduced the lesson by posing questions on what happens in the town on Fridays. Based on the answers given, the teacher built her lesson by relating it to the passage to be read. She wrote the keywords on the blackboard and took the pupils through phonetic pronunciation of each word. Individual pupils and group of pupils were called to read the key words. The teacher explained each of the keywords with examples. She then read out the passage aloud. The teacher used the whole class and individual methods as well as demonstration. She talked to the whole class, attended to individual pupils and then demonstrated the meaning of some of the keywords. Her questions were straight forward and evenly distributed with some of them encouraging chorus answering. She interspersed the English with the mother tongue (Fante). Pupil participation in the lesson was much encouraging as they answered questions, took part in the treatment of the keywords, read the passage in chorus and individually and identified some of the keywords on the chalkboard. No flashcards were used.

The large class size posed problem of class management to the teacher as some of the overgrown boys sitting at the back were many a time heard talking. She had to shout “Quiet, quiet” occasionally to silence them. She walked to a desk and woke up a boy who was sleeping in class. At 11:24 a.m. it started raining. This lasted for five minutes; and that forced the teacher to strain her voice. There were a few disruptions here and there as those sitting by the eastern side struggled to close the windows. Throughout the lesson the teacher was audible and displayed knowledge of the subject matter. She wrote legibly on the chalkboard, was cheerful, called pupils by name, used clapping for reward and gave specific instructions to pupils. Apart from the chalkboard and pupils’ textbooks which was shared one to a desk, no teaching and learning material was used. At 11:44 a.m., pupils were given four questions on the passage to answer. The questions were written on the board and explained. The teacher went round and supervised pupils’ work. There was no formal closure or summary of the lesson made. The lesson ended at 11:59 a.m.



Fig. 3. The Primary 3 class

DISCUSSION

Chamunorwa (2010) posits that no effective teaching and learning can go on without scheme of work, syllabus, and lesson plan. The Ewusa Demonstration Basic School teachers prepare scheme of work and lesson notes with specific and achievable objectives for lessons they teach. The lesson notes are vetted by the headteacher. Thus, supervision is done to ensure the right thing is done in the area of teaching and learning (Adepeju, 1998; Rantn, Okello & Kimathi, 2012).

Research Question1: How is teaching and learning done in Ewusa Demonstration basic school?

The teachers start their lessons by calling pupils to attention. This prepares the pupils' mind for the commencement of the lesson. They also revise the pupils' relevant previous knowledge which serves as foundation upon which new knowledge to be imparted is built and to reflect the needs of the learner (Dochy, 1992). The teachers present their lessons step by step and distribute their questions evenly to ascertain whether all pupils are following their teaching (Xiaoyan, 2008). They write legibly on the blackboard and organise their blackboard summary to enhance the teaching and learning situation (Mankoe, 1997). They create conducive classroom environment to ensure effective teaching and learning (Dorman, 2002); and motivate the pupils through reward. The teachers also address pupils by name which among other things promotes regular attendance at school (Sternheimer, 2014). As teachers' subject knowledge is important in increasing pupils' knowledge (Sadler, Sonner, Cooley, Cook-Smith & Miller, 2013), the teachers studied, demonstrate mastery of the subject matter which makes them teach with remarkable degree of confidence.

They give exercise to pupils to do during lessons to ascertain whether the goals and standards of the lesson are being met (Edutopia, 2008). Those who teach the Lower Primary classes follow the Ministry of Education's (2012) policy of using the vernacular in teaching these classes. In teaching English Language, they occasionally use the vernacular to explain some points which pupils find difficult to understand. Cultural influence on pupils' education cannot be overemphasised (Vinlove, 2012). Singing and drumming which forms part of the Ewusa people's culture are practiced in the school. Manford (1996) notes that when pupils are involved in musical activities their general academic work improves. Thus, from the fore-going discussion, teaching and learning can be said to be effectively done in the Ewusa Demonstration Basic School. However, a closer perusal of the data reveals the following shortcomings:

The method of teaching the syllabi suggested by the Ministry of Education (2012) is not being followed to the letter. In the first place, the integrated approach to the teaching of the English

Language which requires that in each English lesson, plenty provision of opportunity for the practices of listening, speaking and writing skills be made, is not being adhered to. The lessons observed focused mainly on one of these three skills and a little of the remaining two. For instance, a lot of opportunity for listening on the part of the pupils run through all the lessons observed with very little speaking and writing. Secondly, whole class technique of teaching dominates the teachers' practices in the school. No group work is done and individualised teaching is almost non-existent as it was only one of the teachers observed who was found assisting a few individual pupils. Thus, the learning problems of individual pupils are not being addressed as suggested by the Ministry of Education (2012). Limbu (2012) advocates the use of individualised teaching as it allows each pupil to progress through the curriculum at his/her own pace.

Even though pupils are called to answer questions orally and are also given exercises to do during lessons, their participation in the teaching and learning process at the Ewusa Demonstration Basic School fall short of expectation as the teachers do almost all the talking and perform related activities while the pupils sit, listen and look on. Active pupil participation in lessons is paramount to effective curriculum implementation (Weimer, 2011). Questions asked are mostly recall questions which do not promote analytical thinking as demanded by the Ministry of Education (2012). Supervision of pupils' work is key to effective teaching and learning in school (Tracy, 1995). But the pupils studied are mostly not supervised when given exercises to do in class. The consequence is that, they earn up presenting copied work for marking. The individual pupils' actual academic output is compromised (DeNeen, 2013).

Teacher mobility while teaching is also a problem in the school observed as the teachers hardly stay in front of the class while teaching. They move into the columns and among the row of desks as they talk. This forces pupils sitting in front to turn their back to look at the teacher. Pupils who do not turn miss the teacher's gestures and facial expressions which also assist effective lesson delivery. As corollary to this point is a teacher talking to the chalkboard. Pupils either do not hear some of what the teacher says properly or do not see the proper shape of the mouth for the pronunciation of the words being spoken (Dugdale, 2015). The teachers also do not extend their lessons to cover the specified duration. All but one of the teachers observed ended their lessons far before time. This problem emanate from the fact that they do not state the time for teaching the elements of their lessons in the lesson notes to guide them. This leads to loss of contact time.

The main problem confronting teaching and learning in the school as observed is non-use of teaching and learning materials. Toscani Academy (2012) argues that teaching and learning materials are like the pictures of the lesson and help explain knowledge better and as well assist pupils to learn. But the teachers observed relied only on the chalkboard and the pupils' textbooks for teaching and learning aid. Thus, the pupils miss the pictorial aspects of the lessons taught them while the teachers' workload or explanations are not reduced. Lesson closure is the time when teachers wrap up a lesson taught and help pupils organise the information into meaningful context in their minds. Teachers look for areas of confusion that they can quickly clear up. This reinforces the most important points so that the learning is solidified for future lessons (Lewis, 2015). These important aspects of teaching and learning are missing from the academic work of the pupils of Ewusa Demonstration Basic School as the teachers do not engage them in formal closure of the lessons taught them.

Research Question 2: Why is teaching and learning done that way in Ewusa Demonstration basic school?

The state of teaching and learning in the school studied emanate directly or indirectly from the following factors:

1. From the interview data, the non-use of teaching and learning materials in the school is as a result of the uncooperative behaviour of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) who do not even turn up at meetings. "When we call PTA meetings, parents do not turn up," said the class 6 teacher. My question is, why not the government or the church come to the aid of the school, and cannot the teachers in anyway improvise?
2. There is also the problem of large class size with over aged pupils. The large class size overburdens the teachers (Pearson, 2015) and so they resort to some inappropriate means of going about their teaching. The overage pupils are those that have been brought from working along the Volta Lake to stay at Ewusa. They pose the problem of class control to the teachers. "Many of the pupils come to school on empty stomach and this affects their effective participation in the lesson" (said the Assistant Headteacher). From the interview data, this development is as a result of their socio-economic background. The main occupation of their parents/guardians is fishing which is seasonal; and so whenever the fishing season is over, then poverty sets in. Pupils' basic school needs including food are, therefore, not provided and it affects their academic work.
3. Another factor militating against teaching and learning in the school is that pupils fail to do their homework as their illiterate parents/guardians do not know its importance and so fail to encourage them to do it. The class six teacher lamented, 'their parents are illiterates and so don't see the importance of encouraging them to do their home work'. The inference from this statement is that, this consequently demoralizes the teachers in doing their best to teach the pupils. The teachers attribute pupil absenteeism to the flood-prone nature of the school compound when there is heavy down pour (See fig.1a).
4. Lateness also poses problem to effective teaching and learning in the school. When pupils are either late or absent, they miss all that the teacher factor brings to the teaching and learning situation (Jones, 2006).

CONCLUSION

The Ewusa Demonstration Basic School in the Central Region of Ghana, has a beautiful classroom block, furniture for teachers and desks for pupils. It has a full set of teaching staff, most of whom are professional and experienced teachers. The teachers put in the needed effort to enhance effective teaching and learning in the school. However, their non-use of teaching and learning materials as well as some classroom practices and the socio-economic background of the pupils affect teaching and learning negatively in the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Teachers of the Ewusa Basic School should as much as possible adhere to the methods of instruction suggested for basic school teaching in the various syllabi to enhance teaching and learning at that level of education.
- The teachers should ensure full pupil participation in their lessons to enable pupils gain firsthand experience in what they learn. To help pupils focus attention on the teacher, the latter should as much as possible stay in front of the class when addressing the whole class during teaching.

- Supervision of pupils during class exercises should be given the needed attention by the teachers to foster the act of individual work in pupils.
- The headteacher should ensure that contact hours for teaching and learning are fully utilised by teachers and pupils. That is, lessons should cover the stipulated duration on the time table, and all the elements of a lesson should be treated in every lesson taught.
- To solve the problem of large class size, the school should be split into A & B streams and if necessary run the shift system (even though it also has its shortcomings). Or the teachers should use the group method of teaching in the interim.
- Counselling should be given to pupils on the importance of being punctual and regular at school.
- The government's school feeding programme should be extended to the Ewusa Demonstration Basic School to help address the problem of pupils coming to school on empty stomach.
- School-based in-service training should be organized for the teachers on appropriate methods and techniques of teaching, classroom management skills, and effective supervision of classroom activities.
- The school authorities should plant trees on the compound to serve as shade, windbreaks and a means of beautifying the compound.
- Future research should focus on how to mitigate on the teaching and learning situation in the school.

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