

**SIMON DIEDONG DOMBO UNIVERSITY OF BUSINESS AND
INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

**EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS INFLUENCING CHOICES OF SECOND
CYCLE SCHOOLS AWAY FROM 'HOME'. A CASE STUDY
OF WA MUNICIPALITY**

FELIX KORLEY

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INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

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BY

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STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR
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AUGUST, 2024

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research is my own work produced from research I carried out under supervision. This research has not been presented by anyone for any academic award, in this or any other institution. All references made to work done by other people have been duly acknowledged. I am solely responsible for any shortcomings in this work.

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SUPERVISOR CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the preparation and presentation of the thesis was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of dissertation or thesis laid down by Simon Diedong Dombo University Of Business And Integrated Development Studies.

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DR. GRACE ALENOMA
(SUPERVISOR)

DEDICATION

This work is firstly dedicated to the Almighty God for His immersed wisdom and direction granted to me to complete this work and to all who supported with ideas and prayers in any form.

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My special thanks to the Almighty God for granting me the opportunity to be part this programme and for bringing me to a successful end.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE)

Computerised Schools Selection and Placement Systems (CSSPS)

Ministry of Education (MOE)

Senior High School (S.H.S.)

Senior High Technical Schools (SHTS)

Technical/ Vocational Institutes (TVIs)

West African Senior High Certificate Examination (WASSCE)

ABSTRACT

The issue of parents and their wards choosing second cycle schools far from their place of stay is a perennial phenomenon and a long standing one in the Upper West Region. While knowledge on the dynamics which influence choices of Second Cycle Schools at the pre-tertiary level is important for deploying appropriate response, very little is known about the dynamics influencing the choice of students/parents.

It is against this background that this study sought to examine the dynamics influencing choices of second cycle schools away from 'Home' using Wa Municipality as a case study. The specific objectives of the study were to identify schools' preferences among parents/wards who select schools outside of the Upper West Region, identify the dynamics which contribute to parental choices of Second Cycle Schools away from 'home', explore how children's capability and agency manifest in their choices of Second Cycle Schools, explore the school dynamics that influence parents and students' choices of Second Cycle Schools and examine how teacher-student relations contribute to the choice of Second Cycle Schools. The study will be of benefit to policy makers in formulating future policies aimed at enhancing infrastructural development of schools to ensure regional balance.

The study used purely qualitative approach. Data was collected from 10 students and their corresponding 10 parents from 10 Junior High schools using semi-structured interview guide.

The study revealed that academic performance, adequate infrastructure and learning materials, change of environment, harsh climatic conditions, family history and closeness to relatives, school environment, single-sex schools, socio-economic background of parents, and sporting activities are the drivers which influence the choice of second cycle school are from home by students/parents in the Wa Municipality.

Data from the study parents and guardians show a distinct preference for sending their children to second cycle schools located in other regions of Ghana other than the Upper West Region. Among the regions, the Ashanti Region tops the list as the most preferred destination, followed by the Central Region, the Bono Region, and the Greater Accra Region. A significant portion of the parents interviewed (7 out of 20) expressed their concern about poor academic performance, in adequate educational infrastructure and the availability of teaching and learning materials in schools in the Upper West Region compared to schools in southern Ghana.

The study concluded that parents and guardians in the Upper West Region of Ghana exhibit a clear preference for sending their children to second cycle schools located in other regions of the country. The study recommends, improving local school infrastructure and resources as well as addressing teacher shortages.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

On a global scale, secondary education plays a pivotal role in the educational journey of students, serving as a critical bridge between primary and tertiary education. This stage of education is designed to prepare students for higher learning or to equip them with the necessary skills for entry into the workforce. The structure, focus, and implementation of secondary education vary widely across countries, reflecting the diverse cultural, economic, and social contexts in which these educational systems operate.

In the African context, secondary education systems often bear the imprint of colonial legacies while simultaneously striving to address local needs and cultural values. Many African countries have adopted educational structures that combine elements of Western education with traditional African educational practices. However, the continent faces unique challenges in implementing effective secondary education, including issues of access, quality, and relevance to local job markets.

Ghana's secondary education system, like those of many African countries, has evolved significantly from its colonial roots. The country's "second cycle schools" encompass both Senior High Schools (SHS) and Technical and Vocational Institutes, a structure that can be traced back to the Butter Act of 1944, which established a tri-partite education system consisting of grammar schools, technical schools, and secondary modern schools (MOE, 2009).

Upon successful completion of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), Ghanaian students have the option to pursue either academic or vocational programs. Those choosing the academic path enroll in Senior High Schools, while those interested in vocational education can either select vocational programs as electives in SHS or join a technical and vocational institute. The latter typically follows a four-year curriculum divided into two two-year cycles, culminating in awards from institutions such as City and Guilds, the Royal Society of Arts, or the West African Examinations Council.

As of 2020, Ghana has a total of 1,182 second cycle schools, including 675 public Senior High Schools, 47 public technical and vocational institutions, 308 private Senior High Schools, and 152 private technical and vocational schools (GES, 2020). These schools are categorized into categories A, B, C, D, E, and F by the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2009).

In the Upper West Region of Ghana, there are 28 public Senior High Schools, with three schools achieving the prestigious category 'A' status: Saint Francis Girls Senior High, Lawra Senior High, and Nandom Senior High School (Nurudeen, 2018). This categorization significantly influences school choice, as parents and students often prefer higher-ranking schools, leading to oversubscription in these institutions.

The Ghana Education Service uses several factors to rank Senior High Schools for the computerized placement system, including academic performance in the West African Senior High School Certification Examination (WASSCE), school achievements, infrastructure, and facilities (CSSPS Report, 2006). This ranking system plays a crucial role in the school selection process.

Interestingly, despite the presence of category 'A' schools in the Upper West Region, many parents and students opt for schools outside their region. This phenomenon reflects a broader trend across Ghana, where factors beyond proximity influence school choice (Daily Graphic, 2019).

Several dynamics influence the choices made by parents and their wards. Terkelsen (2009) notes that parents, as primary agents of socialization, play a significant role in shaping their children's educational choices. The interpersonal relationships between teachers, parents, and students also impact school selection (Poluha, 2004).

Institutional factors, such as school structures, academic performance, and availability of trained teachers, also influence choices (Bhakar, 2008). Additionally, students' aspirations for independence and autonomy often lead them to choose schools outside their home region (Camfield, 2011).

However, this trend of selecting distant schools is not without challenges. Gyaase and Adu-Gyamfi (2012) point out that students placed in far-away schools often struggle to cope with the distance. Despite these difficulties, the practice persists, raising questions about the underlying dynamics influencing school choices in Ghana.

This study aims to explore these dynamics, focusing on the Wa Municipality in the Upper West Region as a case study.

1.1 Problem Statement

The persistent trend of students and parents in the Wa Municipality choosing second cycle schools far from their home region presents a critical and multifaceted problem with severe negative consequences for individuals, families, and the local community.

This alarming phenomenon undermines the development of local educational

institutions, exacerbates socio-economic disparities, and places undue financial and emotional burdens on families.

Despite the presence of category 'A' schools like Saint Francis Girls Senior High, Lawra Senior High, and Nandom Senior High School in the Upper West Region (Nurudeen, 2018), there is a troubling exodus of students to distant schools. This mass departure not only reflects a lack of confidence in local educational institutions but also perpetuates a cycle of underdevelopment in the region. As talented students leave, local schools struggle to maintain academic standards, further diminishing their appeal and creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of educational decline.

The financial implications of this trend are particularly devastating. Families in the Wa Municipality, many of whom are already struggling economically, are forced to bear the excessive costs of transportation, accommodation, and living expenses for their children attending distant schools (Daily Graphic, 2019). This financial strain often leads to increased household debt, reduced spending on other essential needs, and in some cases, the inability to continue supporting their children's education.

Moreover, the emotional and psychological toll on students who are separated from their families and support systems at a crucial developmental stage is severe. Gyaase and Adu-Gyamfi (2012) highlight that students placed in far-away schools often struggle to cope with the distance, leading to increased stress, homesickness, and potential mental health issues. This separation can negatively impact academic performance and personal development, contradicting the very reasons for seeking education in distant schools.

The problem is further compounded by the drain of human capital from the Wa Municipality. As young, educated individuals leave the region for their schooling, they

are less likely to return, contributing to a brain drain that hampers local economic development and perpetuates a cycle of underdevelopment.

Additionally, the overcrowding of popular schools in other regions, resulting from this migration, leads to strained resources, reduced quality of education, and increased competition for limited spots. This not only affects the students from Wa Municipality but also creates challenges for the host communities and educational systems.

The societal implications are equally concerning. The trend reinforces existing socio-economic inequalities, as only families with financial means can afford to send their children to distant schools. This creates a two-tiered education system, further marginalizing disadvantaged groups and widening the gap between the affluent and the poor.

Furthermore, the exodus of students weakens community ties and erodes local cultural values. As young people spend formative years away from their home region, there is a risk of cultural disconnection and a loss of identity, potentially leading to social fragmentation within the Wa Municipality.

Despite efforts by the Ghana Education Service to implement a computerized school selection and placement system (CSSPS Report, 2006), the problem persists, indicating deep-rooted issues that go beyond mere policy interventions. The continued preference for distant schools suggests a complex interplay of social, economic, and cultural factors that need to be urgently addressed.

In light of these severe and interconnected problems, there is a critical need to explore and understand the dynamics influencing the choices of second cycle schools away from 'home' in the Wa Municipality

1.2 Main research question

- How do various dynamics influence the choice of Second Cycle Schools outside of their home region by parents and their wards?

1.2.1 Specific research questions

1. How do parents contribute to their wards' choice of Second Cycle Schools?
2. How do children's capability and agency manifest in their choices of Second Cycle Schools?
3. How do school dynamics contribute to parents' and students' choice of Second Cycle Schools?
4. How does teacher-student relation influence the choice of Second Cycle Schools?

1.3 Main objectives of the study

"To investigate the various dynamics that influence the choice of Second Cycle Schools outside of their home region by parents and their wards."

1.3.1 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify schools' preferences among parents/wards who select schools outside of the Upper West Region
2. Identify the dynamics which contribute to parental choices of Second Cycle Schools away from 'home'
3. Explore how children's capability and agency manifest in their choices of Second Cycle Schools
4. Explore the school dynamics that influence parents and students' choices of Second Cycle Schools

5. Examine how teacher-student relations contribute to the choice of Second Cycle Schools.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study holds significant relevance and potential impact in several key areas.

Firstly, this research has the potential to inform educational policy development in Ghana. By unravelling the factors influencing parents and students in choosing schools outside their home region, the study can provide crucial insights that policymakers can use to formulate more effective and responsive educational policies. These policies can be tailored to better meet the specific needs and preferences of parents and students when it comes to school choice.

Secondly, the study can shed light on regional disparities in educational opportunities. It can reveal why parents and students often opt for schools located outside their home region, potentially highlighting inequalities in the availability and quality of education across different regions. Identifying such disparities can serve as a foundation for addressing educational inequalities and promoting a more equitable distribution of resources.

Moreover, the research would illuminate the decision-making processes of parents and guardians regarding school choice. By understanding the factors that influence these decisions, the study can empower parents and guardians to make more informed choices about their children's education, ultimately benefiting the students.

Additionally, the study would provide insights into patterns of student mobility within Ghana. Understanding why students leave their home region for education can have implications for resource allocation and strategic planning within the education sector,

ensuring that educational institutions are adequately prepared for the influx of students from various regions.

Furthermore, by examining the cultural, social, and economic factors that influence school choice, the research would contribute to the promotion of cultural awareness and inclusivity within educational institutions. It can help identify ways to create more inclusive and accommodating environments for students from diverse backgrounds.

Economically, the study may uncover opportunities or challenges associated with students leaving the Wa Municipality for their education. This information can have economic implications for the region, guiding economic planning and development initiatives.

Lastly, this research can serve as a foundational study for future research on the topic. It can inspire more in-depth investigations and facilitate comparisons with other regions or countries facing similar challenges and opportunities in the realm of school choice.

1.5 Scope of the study

In terms of geographical scope, the research is confined solely to the Wa Municipality, which is situated within the Upper West Region of Ghana. The study will concentrate exclusively on understanding the dynamics of school choice within this specific municipal area. It does not encompass any other regions, districts, or municipalities outside the boundaries of the Wa Municipality.

Regarding content scope, the study aims to delve deeply into several key aspects. First, it seeks to investigate the multifaceted factors that play a pivotal role in influencing the choices made by parents, guardians, and students when selecting Second Cycle Schools. These factors include considerations such as the quality of education offered by schools, the ease of access to these institutions, regional disparities in educational

opportunities, cultural preferences that may shape choices, socioeconomic factors, and the influence of peer networks.

Participants in the research will primarily consist of parents, guardians, and students who are directly involved in the decision-making process concerning the selection of Second Cycle Schools. These individuals will be the focal point of data collection, providing valuable insights into their decision-making dynamics.

Lastly, it is important to acknowledge the study's limitations inherent to its localized scope. While the insights garnered will be highly relevant to the Wa Municipality, they may not necessarily be generalizable to other regions or contexts. Nevertheless, by clearly defining its geographical and content scope, this research aims to provide valuable and in-depth insights into the dynamics of school choice within the specific context of the Wa Municipality.

1.6 Organization of the report

The study work was organized into five chapters. The first chapter dealt with the introduction, which mainly comprised the problem statement. It also included the project's significance, research questions, objectives, methodology, sampling techniques, and work organization. The second section delved into the literature review, providing a chapter overview, conducting conceptual analysis, and discussing the choice model being implemented. The third chapter focused on the methodology and provided a profile of the study area. In the fourth chapter, the data obtained from the field was presented, analyzed, and discussed. Finally, the fifth chapter summarized the findings, drew conclusions, and made appropriate recommendations to address the factors that influenced parents' and students' choice of senior high school in the Wa municipality.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review the relevant literature pertaining to the factors that influence choice of Second Cycle Schools away. The review covers conceptual definitions of terms, computerised school selection and placement system in Ghana.

2.1 Conceptual Definitions of Terms

They key terms and concepts in this study include parent, student, school selection and second cycle schools

2.1.1 Concept of Parent

Gerdes (2009) observed that, parents are first degree relatives and have 50% genetic meet. He continues to say, socialization begins with what children learn from their parents from the initial of fundamental stages that transform the rest of their lives and inherently society's future. This individuals approach to existence, relating to food, clothing and lifestyle is greatly influenced by the parent.

More so, the idea that parents play a crucial role in shaping economic outcomes of their children is hardly a new one (Gerdes, 2018). Children acquire informal education from their parents before being exposed to formal education. Gerdes, (2018) further asserted that, parents play an important role in a person's life pattern from childhood to adulthood in terms of behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, choices and intellectual accomplishments. Reasons are that, parents serve as initial agents of socialization charged with responsibilities of shaping the choices of their children to be better placed

in life (Uwaifo, 2017). Parents are at liberty to guide their wards to select schools but with underlying principles.

2.1.2 The concept Student

Students choice from one to four must be listed in order of preference. The fifth (5th) choice of students must be from category D. the fifth choice of student must be the student's catchment area day school which is the category D compulsory day school which implies that, the compulsory day school is now restricted to students fifth choice. Students make choices but cannot select more than two (2) schools from category B. Students cannot select more than one from category A but can select four (4) choices from category C and one from category D. Students who desire to pursue purely technical programmes may select all first to fourth (1st- 4th) from technical or vocational category, category E and must still select the fifth (5th) choice from category D. In the lieu, students arrange their choice of preference (Computerized School and Placement System (CSSP) Report, 2005).

2.1.3 The concept Selection

The concept of selection refers to the process of choosing individuals or items from a larger group based on certain criteria or characteristics. It is a fundamental aspect of decision-making and is applied in various fields, such as recruitment, research sampling, statistical analysis, and data filtering.

In the context of recruitment and human resources, selection involves assessing and evaluating candidates to determine their suitability for a particular job or position. This process typically includes steps such as reviewing resumes, conducting interviews, administering tests or assessments, and checking references. The goal is to identify the

most qualified individuals who possess the desired skills, qualifications, and attributes for the job.

According to Cascio and Aguinis (2011), the selection process can significantly impact an organization's performance and effectiveness. They argue that effective selection methods enhance the likelihood of hiring individuals who will perform well and contribute positively to the organization. Conversely, poor selection decisions can result in high turnover rates, decreased productivity, and increased costs for recruitment and training.

Selection methods vary depending on the context and the specific criteria being assessed. For example, in research sampling, the selection of participants is crucial for ensuring the representativeness and generalizability of the findings. Researchers often use random sampling techniques to minimize bias and increase the likelihood of obtaining a sample that accurately reflects the larger population of interest (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014).

In statistical analysis, selection refers to the process of choosing variables or predictors to include in a model. Researchers or analysts may employ techniques such as stepwise regression or information criteria to select the most relevant and significant variables for their analysis (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014).

2.1.4 The Computerized School Selection and Placement System in Ghana

In September 2005, Ghana introduced the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) to enhance the transparency and efficiency of the school transition process. Previously, student selection and school admissions were manually conducted at annual meetings of head teachers in each region, following the announcement of examination results. Students were required to choose all three

preferred schools from a single region to simplify administrative tasks. However, problems arose, including misplaced student selection cards and complaints from parents regarding preferential treatment, where well-connected students gained admission to top schools regardless of their grades.

To address these issues, the CSSPS was implemented, allowing students to select schools from multiple regions and reducing the influence of headmasters in the selection and assignment process. The CSSPS utilized a deferred acceptance algorithm, similar to Gale's proposal in 1962, for school assignments. Students were ranked based on their priority levels, typically determined by their test scores in the CSSPS. They were then matched with their first-choice school if there were available spaces. If a student remained unassigned in the first round, the second-choice school was considered, and this process continued. In the second round, a student with a lower examination score could displace a first-round student who had already been assigned. Unlike the Boston mechanism, which doesn't allow reconsideration of already assigned students in subsequent rounds, the CSSPS's deferred acceptance algorithm didn't penalize students for ranking schools in an arbitrary order within their set of three first-choice schools. This eliminated the need for students to strategically prioritize a specific school as their first choice based on the mechanism.

Students who weren't assigned to any of their chosen schools were allocated to any available space within their district. However, if no spaces were available, students who met the passing grade might not be assigned to any school. Once the school year began, students were informed of their placements and given a 30-day period. During this time, heads of Senior High Schools (SHS) were required to report any remaining unfilled places to the Ministry of Education, allowing the spaces to be assigned to previously unassigned students. However, Ajayi (2009) revealed irregularities in this process,

suggesting that certain schools underreported the availability of spaces to reserve them for discretionary allocation. Consequently, the school placement exercise assigned more students to some schools than the number of declared places.

2.2 Rules Governing School Placement

Rules are instructions that tell an individual what to do and what not to do (Ajayi, 2010). It ultimately comes from the Latin word ‘regular meaning straight stick. Rules help to protect us from our basic self-serving instincts and self-destructive habits. For the purpose of this study, rules are the underlying principles that guides us in making choices.

The Ghana Education Service cautioned all heads of basic schools both public and private to take serious measures to avoid errors in the selection of schools. As part of the measures to ensure a smooth placement of qualified BECE candidates, the Ghana Education Service has put in place the following guiding principles governing school placement for the information of parents, candidates and the general public.

Attention should be payed to all school choices. Also, ensure that the schools are in order of preference from the first priority to the least priority and ensure that compulsory Day option is within catchment area where an individual can conveniently commute. Again, Parents / guardians should take active interest in their child/ wards schools selection. Lastly, Parents should consult their wards/ child’s teacher to obtain realistic prospect of the child’s chances of gaining admission to a particular school (GES Report, 2009).

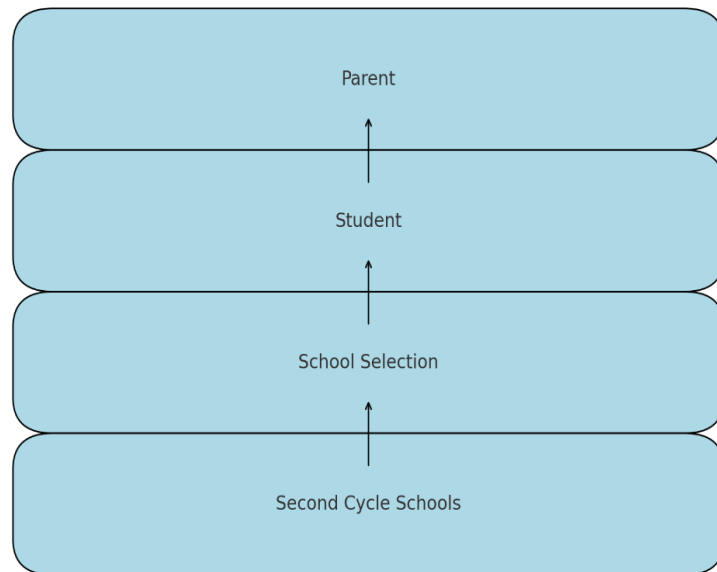


Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the interconnected relationships between key concepts: parents, students, school selection, and second cycle schools. These relationships are pivotal in understanding how parental influence shapes students' educational trajectories.

Parental Influence

Parents serve as the primary socializing agents who significantly impact their children's behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, and choices from an early age. They provide the initial informal education that shapes early learning and social behaviors before formal education begins (Gerdes, 2018). The role of parents extends to guiding their children in making critical life decisions, including school selection, by instilling values and expectations that influence their choices (Uwaifo, 2017). This guidance is crucial as parents aim to ensure their children are better placed in life through education.

Student Choices

Students, influenced by their parents, make school choices based on their preferences and the guidance received. The school selection process involves students listing their school preferences in a specific order, adhering to the rules of the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS). This system ensures that students make choices within their catchment areas and follow criteria such as not selecting more than a certain number of schools from each category (CSSPS Report, 2005). The influence of parents is evident as they help students navigate these choices, balancing their preferences with practical considerations (Gerdes, 2018).

School Selection Process

The school selection process, structured and governed by the CSSPS, ensures a transparent and efficient transition to secondary education. The CSSPS uses a deferred acceptance algorithm to match students with their preferred schools based on available spaces and their test scores (Ajayi, 2009). This process reduces the influence of individual headmasters and promotes fairness in school placements, allowing students to select schools from multiple regions and reducing instances of preferential treatment (Ajayi, 2009).

Second Cycle Schools Placement

The final placement of students in second cycle schools is determined by the CSSPS, ensuring an equitable and transparent allocation of school spaces. Students not initially assigned to their chosen schools are allocated to available spaces within their district. If no spaces are available, students who meet the passing grade might not be assigned to any school. Once the school year begins, any remaining unfilled places are reported to the Ministry of Education, allowing for further allocation (Ajayi, 2009). This

structured placement process ensures that students are fairly distributed across schools based on their preferences and qualifications.

2.3 Potential benefits of the Computerized School Selection and Placement System

The Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) in Ghana offers numerous benefits. First and foremost, it helps in achieving the government's long-term objective of universal basic education, as it facilitates the expansion and increased access to secondary and tertiary education. This system plays a crucial role in bridging the education gap and ensuring that more students have the opportunity to pursue higher levels of education.

Another significant advantage of the CSSPS is its ability to reduce stratification within society. Unlike the manual selection process, the computerized system does not discriminate between the rich and the poor. It provides equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, allowing them to compete on a level playing field. This promotes fairness and contributes to a more inclusive education system.

Furthermore, the CSSPS enhances national integration by allowing students to choose schools from multiple regions. This not only broadens their horizons but also fosters interaction and collaboration among students from different parts of the country. By encouraging cross-regional mobility, the system promotes cultural exchange and strengthens the bonds of unity among Ghanaian youth.

One of the key advantages of the CSSPS is its emphasis on merit-based selection and placement. Unlike the subjective nature of the manual method, the computerized system ensures that students are selected and placed based on their academic performance. This promotes a culture of excellence and motivates students to strive for

academic success. It also enhances the overall quality of teaching and learning in schools, as students are placed in institutions that align with their abilities and interests.

In addition, the CSSPS streamlines the selection and placement process, making it more effective, efficient, transparent, and simple. With the automation of the system, the chances of human error in capturing registration data are significantly reduced. Moreover, candidates and their parents can easily access their placement results through the Short Messaging Service (SMS), providing quick and convenient information on the secondary school and program they have been placed in. This ensures that the process is swift and hassle-free for all stakeholders involved.

Overall, the CSSPS has brought about significant improvements in the education system in Ghana. It has helped in achieving universal basic education, promoting fairness and equity, enhancing national integration, improving the quality of teaching and learning, and simplifying the selection and placement process. With its objective and transparent approach, the computerized system has gained the trust and confidence of parents and candidates, who see it as a more reliable and fair method of determining school placements.

2.4 Challenges of the Computerized School Selection and Placement System

Allegations of corruption and various problems have been reported regarding the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) in Ghana, despite assurances from the Ministry of Education (Aboagye, 2018). One issue raised by parents is the geographical distance between students and their assigned schools, causing difficulties for those who are placed far away. There are also concerns about the placement of female students in male schools and vice versa. Additionally, parents of students placed in private schools face challenges due to the high cost of fees (Asare,

2010). Some attribute these problems to mistakes made during the registration process, where students often select the wrong codes, leading to incorrect placements. As a result, there are doubts about the effectiveness of the CSSPS (GINKS, 2008).

Furthermore, it has been alleged that some school heads do not provide candidates with the necessary information, such as the WAEC register containing correct codes for shading. It has also been reported that numerous errors, amounting to approximately fifty thousand in 2011 alone, were caused by these challenges faced by the new selection system (www.ghanaschoolnet.com; GINKS, 2008).

Wesly-Otoo and Anokye (2016) conducted a study highlighting additional challenges faced by the CSSPS in Ghana. One key issue is the lack of fairness in the distribution of school facilities. Analysis of the secondary schools indicates disparities in educational resources, with some schools receiving more funding than others. This lack of equity leads parents and students to preferentially choose schools labeled as Category 'A,' which are seen as well-endowed and popular (Wesly-Otoo & Anokye, 2016).

Another challenge is the inadequate publication of school information to the public, which creates discomfort during the selection and placement process. Due to the desire to enrol their children in prestigious Category 'A' schools, there are often direct appeals for admissions from influential stakeholders, including religious organizations, traditional leaders, and alumni groups (Wesly-Otoo & Anokye, 2016).

Moreover, insufficient and inaccurate data provided by candidates during registration for the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) pose further challenges. Instances have been reported where male students labelled as 'females' on their forms end up being placed in schools designated for the opposite sex. Other problems include the choice of schools without considering residential status and available programs, as

well as parents' lack of involvement in the registration process, leading to rejection of placements. Financial preparedness is also disregarded when selecting schools (Wesly-Otoo & Anokye, 2016).

Additionally, a report by the Daily Graphic in September 2019 revealed that the challenges with the CSSPS extend beyond system errors. Some schools receive more students than they can accommodate, while others have vacant places. This creates an imbalance, as certain schools are perceived as superior to others (Daily Graphic, 2019).

Another challenge discussed in the Daily Graphic report is the excessive human interference in the CSSPS, which undermines the purpose of the system. There are claims that some schools and officials of the Ghana Education Service demand significant sums of money, ranging from GH¢ 2,500 to GH¢ 5,000, to facilitate school changes. Unfortunately, some parents have succumbed to these demands, perpetuating the perception that money can secure preferred school placements even when undeserved (Daily Graphic, 2019).

These challenges highlight the need for improvements and reforms in the CSSPS to address issues of fairness, transparency, and integrity in the selection and placement process.

2.5 History of Education in Ghana

Apart from the Portuguese, other Europeans followed suit and whose interest in providing education in the country was equally high. These were the Dutch, the Danes and the British. Because these merchants lived in the castles scattered along the coast, the schools they established were commonly referred to as the 'Castle Schools'. Children who largely benefited from these schools were the sons of European traders by African wives who were normally referred to as mulattos and the sons of native

wealthy merchants'. The Portuguese merchants arrived at the coast of modern Ghana in January 1482. For eleven years they engaged in trade with the people of Elmina and eventually obtained a land from the king of Elmina built a magnificent castle in 1482 and named it Sao da Mina (or St George).

In 1529, they established the first school in Ghana at the castle upon instruction by King John III of Portugal. Essentially, the school was to teach the African (Gold Coast) children how to read and write and also to teach them the Christian religion. In this school, the Portuguese language was the medium of instruction and the teachers were paid 240 grains of gold a year for each pupil taught up to the maximum of 15. The school operated for some time and some few children were given scholarships to study in Portugal but it collapsed soon afterwards. In 1572, however four (4) Catholic Augustinian missionaries came to Elmina to revive the school but because of poor enrolment and later on the murder of the missionaries, the school could not thrive. The Portuguese attempt was abandoned in 1637 when the Dutch captured the Elmina castle.

After driving out the Portuguese, the Dutch West Indian Company established its headquarters at Elmina and soon afterwards, established a school for the mulatto children. The main curriculum of the school was composed of reading, writing and religion. The Dutch language was used as a medium of instruction. One major characteristic of the Dutch educational enterprise was granting of scholarship to some boys in their school to study abroad specifically Holland. Jacobus Capitein, a mulatto who was sent out by a Dutch trader called Van Goch was one of those who return home after graduating from Leyden University in 1737. At the castle, he established a school which enrolled 45 pupils in 1740. Capitein was regarded as the pioneer of Vernacular literature for his translation of the Apostles Creed into Fante. At the time of his death in 1747, Capitein had 400 boys and girls in his school.

The Dutch established themselves along coast eastward of Accra. They started their educational activities in 1722. The pupils in their school were given skirt and caps to wear. The Danish governor at the castle from 1822 to 1825 namely Major de Richelieu was very instrumental in the establishment and progress of the Danish schools within this period. Like their Dutch counterparts, the Danes also awarded scholarship to some of their people to study abroad. Two examples were Frederick Pederson Svane and Christian Protten.

The British by 1694 had established a school in Cape Coast under John Chiltman. The Cape Coast castle also concentrated on the 3Rs- reading, writing and arithmetic and religious knowledge. English was the medium of instruction. Pupils who were admitted to the school were mainly mulattoes with a few blacks.

2.6 Second Cycle Schools

Second Cycle Schools, commonly referred to as high schools or secondary schools, hold a significant position in the global education landscape (UNESCO, 2021). These institutions serve as a crucial transitional phase between primary education and higher education, equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary for academic and personal development (UNESCO, 2020). The educational priorities and approaches associated with Second Cycle Schools exhibit notable diversity worldwide, reflecting varying national educational philosophies and goals (OECD, 2019). These schools globally prepare students for diverse educational pathways, including tertiary education, vocational training, or direct entry into the workforce, making them a pivotal component of education systems across the world (UNESCO, 2021).

Within the African context, Second Cycle Schools play a vital role in shaping the continent's educational landscape (World Bank, 2022). These schools offer students

opportunities to pursue academic excellence and gain the skills necessary for future careers (World Bank, 2020). The African perspective on Second Cycle Schools acknowledges the persistent challenges of access, quality, and equity that affect many regions (UNICEF, 2021). While certain countries have made substantial progress in expanding access to secondary education, others continue to grapple with limited resources and inadequate infrastructure (UNESCO, 2020). Nevertheless, African nations remain committed to improving and strengthening their Second Cycle Schools, recognizing their significance in preparing students to meet the demands of an ever-evolving global environment (World Bank, 2022).

In Ghana, Second Cycle Schools hold a central position within the country's education system (Ghana Education Service, 2021). They constitute a critical stage for students preparing for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), a vital gateway to higher education and career opportunities (Ministry of Education, 2019). The Ghanaian perspective on Second Cycle Schools underscores the government's dedication to expanding access to secondary education, exemplified by initiatives like the Free Senior High School (SHS) policy, which aims to remove financial barriers for students (Ministry of Education, 2020).

These schools offer diverse curricula, including general arts, general science, business, and technical programs, catering to the varied interests and aspirations of students (Ghana Education Service, 2021). Additionally, Second Cycle Schools in Ghana promote a holistic approach to education, emphasizing character development, discipline, and responsible citizenship (Ministry of Education, 2021). Students actively engage in extracurricular activities, including sports and clubs, contributing to their overall growth and social development (Ghana Education Service, 2021). While challenges such as the need for infrastructure development and addressing teacher

shortages persist (Ministry of Education, 2019), Ghana continues to make strides in enhancing the quality and relevance of secondary education. Overall, Second Cycle Schools in Ghana play a pivotal role in shaping the nation's future by equipping its youth with the knowledge and skills necessary to make meaningful contributions to society and the global community.

2.7 Parental influence on children's choice

According to Menninger (2016), there are three key factors that activate parental influence over their children: boundaries, bonding, and monitoring. Reiss (2015) conducted a similar study titled "The Impact of Parental Influence on the Achievement of Children in Delhi," where it is argued that the concept of "as the twig is bent, so grow the tree" has been recognized since ancient Greek and Biblical times.

In discussing parental influence, Beavers (2014) noted that parents, whether traditional or innovative, adaptive or maladaptive, inevitably strive to form a functional group. Initially, parents and children share a common household and cooperate to meet survival and developmental needs. As children grow and separate from their parents, new households are formed, but parents continue to exert influence on their children's behaviour over multiple generations. All of the aforementioned literature suggests that parents influence their children's choices through fostering their interests and activities, creating an environment, providing experiences at home, and employing specific parenting practices.

Highlighting the significance of parental influence, Gosset (2013) argued that parents play a crucial role in making choices for their children. However, Philip and Stuart (2015) suggest that parents act as guides for their children but when deficiencies and inadequacies arise, further exploration is needed. It remains unclear in the literature

who ultimately makes the choice of Second Cycle Schools whether it is the children, parents, or both and why. Therefore, this study aims to explore the factors that influence parents and their children in choosing Second Cycle Schools outside their "Home" region.

2.8 Social background and status of parents

According to Miller (2017), parents' decisions regarding which school to enroll their children in are significantly influenced by their social background and status. Factors such as the parents' educational attainment, occupational status, income level, and material possessions serve as indicators of their social background. Dull (2018) argues that there is a phenomenon known as the social class creaming effect, wherein parents with extensive social networks have greater access to information and are more actively involved in the process of selecting a school for their children. Fung (2016) asserts that parents exercise their right to choose and prioritize their children's best interests. It is more common for families with better economic circumstances to support their children's education, as parents with higher socio-economic positions tend to be more supportive of their children's educational pursuits. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2018) recommends that parents with higher occupational prestige, income, social status, and wider social networks are more likely to have an impact on their children's school choices. These parents benefit from strong networks that provide them with more accurate information about the quality and characteristics of different schools, in contrast to lower-income families. Elkin (2016) provides a more comprehensive explanation of social background and status, suggesting that parents make choices for their children with the intention of providing them with a high-quality and practical education that will enable them to thrive in a competitive and ever-changing society.

2.9 School factors that influence choice

Alderson (2013) defines school factors as the physical, human, and financial resources utilized by schools to promote academic performance. Extensive literature exists that attempts to establish a relationship between school factors and their overall influence on the choices made by parents and their children. Stuart (2015) conducted a study that demonstrated how school factors influence the decisions of parents and their children, particularly in fostering discipline and achieving academic success. Philip (2016) identifies five main categories of school factors that influence the choices of parents and their children: the social background and status of parents, the school environment and facilities, proximity and location, academic performance, and the quality of education. Gerdes (2018) adds that single-sex education and a track record of academic excellence are among the school factors that influence parental choices. Emerson (2016) emphasizes that, at a minimum, school factors should include adequate sanitation facilities, qualified teachers, and provisions for teacher professional development. The absence of any of these factors can render the choices of parents and their children ineffective.

2.10 Academic performance as school dynamic that influence choice

Academic achievement plays a crucial role in education, as noted by Rono (2016). It serves as the focal point around which the entire education system revolves. Parents are often attracted to schools that demonstrate strong academic performance, as they desire their children to excel academically, as confirmed by Abdullah's (2017) findings. This belief is supported by Fung (2018), who suggests that schools with high academic standards are considered academically superior.

Erickson (2016) defines academic performance as the extent to which students, teachers, or institutions have achieved their short-term or long-term educational goals. Its significance extends beyond education authorities and resonates with the general public. Erickson (2018) further emphasizes that academic performance holds great importance not only for students but also for parents, whether directly or indirectly. However, Second Cycle Schools face the challenge of providing quality education and learning outcomes due to a lack of well-qualified teachers, according to Erickson (2018).

Bossetti (2018) reveals that many parents prioritize academic reasons when selecting schools for their children, as they believe it will lead to academic excellence and a better educational journey. Elacque (2016) found empirical evidence supporting the notion that parents, across both public and private schools, consider academic reasons as the most important factor in their school choice. This aligns with the findings of Bossetti (2016) and Elacque (2018), which suggest that the shortage of professionally trained teachers in schools significantly influences academic achievement.

Buckley (2015) observed that parents, during their search for schools on educational websites, tend to focus more on schools with better academic performance as their search progresses. In other words, they eliminate schools with poor academic records. The challenge of achieving academic performance is more prominent in public schools due to a lack of well-qualified and dedicated teachers, as highlighted by UNICEF (2017).

Dicks (2018) states that schools are selected based on factors such as acceptance and inclusion, high academic performance, a sense of being valued, and opportunities to influence events. UNESCO (2016) suggests that schools can achieve high academic

performance by ensuring a conducive educational environment, promoting punctuality and regular attendance, providing adequate learning facilities, and fostering collaboration between parents and teachers. Conversely, factors such as teacher absenteeism and insufficient instructional time hinder academic performance in Ghana. The Ministry of Education (2018) in Ghana identifies effective teacher supervision, opportunities for teachers to attend in-service training, and teacher motivation as key ways for schools to enhance academic performance. This supports the assertions of Fung (2018) and Erickson (2017) that quality teachers are the most crucial resource for academic achievement.

2.10.1 Single Sex Education as a factor that influence choice

Single-sex education has a long-standing history. In the past, it primarily consisted of boys-only schools, which has drawn criticism from feminists in the modern and post-modern eras due to concerns about equal opportunities and the marginalization of females (Weiner, 2018). Supporters of single-sex education often hold the belief that it contributes to academic success by alleviating perceived conflicts, pressures, tensions, and temptations among students. Riordan (2019) strongly asserts that single-sex schools are effective for both girls and boys, women and men, as well as individuals of different racial backgrounds.

2.10.2 Single Sex Education and achievement as a dynamic that influence choice

It is commonly believed that students in single-sex environments tend to be high achievers. Feminists argue that single-sex schools/classes can provide a liberating experience for young girls, contributing to positive self-concept and subject choices by creating a more supportive environment (Smithers, 2018). Riordan (2019) conducted a study in New Zealand to explore parents' perceptions of single-sex education and its

influence on their school selection process. The study confirmed that girls' self-esteem is nurtured in a single-sex environment, as boys tend to dominate in a mixed environment. According to the researcher, parents choose single-sex schools primarily because of their cultural appropriateness, rather than the quality of the school itself (Riordan, 2019). Keyway (2018) suggests that single-sex education can serve as an emotional refuge, offering equality in an unequal world. Parents choose single-sex schools based on their academic excellence (Keyway, 2018).

In a study conducted in Northern Ireland, Granleese (2019) used a domain-specific self-concept measure to compare girls from a single-sex school with girls from a co-educational school. The researcher found that girls in single-sex schools were less critical of their own behaviour compared to girls in mixed schools. This lack of self-criticism was the strongest predictor of overall self-worth in the all-girls school (Granleese, 2019). Keyway (2018) also observed similar dynamics, including relaxed attitudes, freedom in dress choices, and reduced stress about personal appearance (Keyway, 2018). Jackson (2018) explored the introduction of single-sex classes within co-educational schools and found positive effects for girls but not for boys' academic achievement (Jackson, 2018). Barker's study (2017) of single-sex mathematics and science classes in a middle school also supported this evidence, suggesting that the single-sex environment positively influenced girls' feelings of empowerment, peer support, and self-concept, but not boys' (Barker, 2017). Lee and Lockheed's study (2018) of ninth-grade students in Nigeria's public schools measured mathematics achievement and found that girls in single-sex schools outperformed girls in mixed-sex classes, while the opposite was observed for boys (Lee and Lockheed, 2018).

In contrast to the above, Basit (2019) conducted research suggesting that boys have fewer distractions in boys-only classes, allowing them to concentrate better on their

studies. The absence of admiration and conflicts related to the opposite sex is considered beneficial in a boys-only class.

It is argued that single-sex teaching has the potential to improve achievement levels in certain contexts, but this potential can only be realized through systematic planning, explicit implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of differential teaching approaches. When selecting schools for their children, parents take into consideration the aforementioned dynamics, particularly favouring high-standard single-sex schools and academic achievement.

2.10.3 Single education and discourses of Religion, culture and gender that influences choice of school

Sex-Segregation has remained a prominent characteristic of Muslim societies, with a preference for single-sex institutions. The rhetoric emphasizes an Islamic precept. It is essential to maintain the social fabric of a Muslim society with its specific discourses of family and sex (Shah, 2018), despite the fact that this is a relative concept. Some Muslim communities or individuals view sex segregation as a religious requirement, despite the fact that no religious text supports this notion. The Quran recommends preferred behaviour for men and women, but it does not command sex segregation, especially in relation to teaching and learning (Ali, 2017). Islamic conceptions of sex and morality are responsible for segregation tendencies in Muslim societies. In Islam, sexual activity is severely restricted, and intercourse outside of marriage is rigorously prohibited. Al-Ghazali (2019) emphasizes chastity by promising absolution and recompense to men and women who maintain their chastity. Muslim parents who demand single-sex education for their daughters may be wary of the broader social context in which education is provided and the prevalent notions of sex, morality, and marriage in the host society (Shah, 2018). In Asia, Wahab (2017) found that arranged

marriage is a potent discourse that influences parental preference for single-sex education in certain communities. Co-education is viewed as a threat to arranged marriages because it may introduce alternative thought processes and options. The females in coeducation may choose to make individual decisions contrary to group decisions. The premise seems to be that females-only schools provide a 'infiltration-free zone' for educating girls without posing a threat to cultural traditions regarding arranged marriage (Wahab, 2017). Wahid (2018) asserts that the issue of single-sex institutions has intricate sociocultural dimensions, particularly in regards to the education of girls. It is frequently employed as a political method for arranging roles and practices (Wahab, 2018). According to Shah (2018), for certain ethnic/religious communities, such as Muslims and Asians, it is associated with conceptions and practices such as Izzat (honor). Izzat is the Arabic word for respect and honour. In the case of women, a complex discourse of Izzat that is gendered, familial, social, and devoid of legal justifications comes into play. It imposes restrictions on women by making them accountable for their honour, thereby giving it a gendered description that supports the demand for single-sex education for females in particular (Shah, 2018). Therefore, the emphasis of the research will be to explicitly examine and reveal the specific dynamics that influence parents and their children's selection of Second Cycle Schools.

2.10.4 Teacher – student relation that influence choice

Miller (2016) defines the student-teacher relationship as a companionship in which one person strives to comprehend the other's problems and assist him in solving them. He also emphasized that the student-teacher relationship in the classroom is a positive relationship between the instructor and the student in an endeavour to earn each other's trust and respect. This relationship could involve getting to know your students better,

offering them options, and encouraging them to become stronger learners every day. D' Souza (2017) indicated that in order to ensure effective communication, teachers must ensure the clarity of information and the use of courteous language, select an effective channel to communicate in time for the appropriate response, and provide an appropriate environment for feedback. According to Buffet (2016), the essence of education is the relationship between the teacher and the student, and the extent to which that relationship fosters the child's desire to matter in the world and the teacher's desire to foster and fulfil that desire. The teacher-student relationship and the frequency of interaction between instructor and pupil are central to teaching. Students who have a positive relationship with their instructors develop stronger social and emotional skills and excel academically, he noted further. These pupils are most likely to increase their academic knowledge retention and to be influenced by their instructors. According to Pierson (2018), in her renowned TED Talk, "children will not learn from someone they dislike." A positive relationship with a pupil, according to Pierson, is intimate and supportive, but not excessively dependent. A teacher who understands something about his or her students believes that every child can learn, but at various rates and in different ways. The teacher has high expectations, is friendly and trustworthy, and endeavours to keep the relationship free of conflict. Bhaskar (2017) conducted research on inter-personal relationships in Hawassa. The author noted that generative mechanisms in Bhakar's third plane of inter-personal relationships influence children's motivation for making decisions. This is evident in children's descriptions of attending school to be "respected." The author noted that if a child was not attending school, members of their community would "pressure" them by inquiring, "Why don't you go to school?" In addition, he asserted that children's conceptions of what it means to be a decent person and their attribution of moral functions to their education are largely

shaped by their relationships with their instructors. The inter-generational hierarchical dynamics of student-teacher relationships, according to Poluha (2016), meant that teachers had considerable influence over the selection and formation of children's aspirations, as well as their comprehension of the significance of school selection in their lives. The author also noted that students placed varying amounts of emphasis on teachers' advice, guidance, and discipline in 'reshaping' their behaviour, but that teachers will transform them into 'excellent' and disciplined youngsters. Similarly, Abdulai (2018) investigated the effects of teacher-student relationships in the Upper West Region. The author realized that instructors motivate students to study diligently by providing sound advice and encouraging them to work hard to attain their dreams. According to the study, Ayisha, an 11-year-old girl attending a public school, stated, "My teacher gives me good advice." He advised, "Study diligently to become a good person in the future and to realize your dreams." Also, Najat, a 9-year-old girl attending a government school, reported that her teacher advised her to work very hard in order to accomplish her goals and break the cycle of destitution in her family. He stated, "I will become my dreams." It is evident that many students place a higher value on their teacher's advice than on their own, and this influential relationship will have a substantial effect on the formation of children's aspirations. Evidently, the majority of children were encouraged by their instructors to attend school.

2.11 Theoretical framework

The Rational Choice theory was used as a framework for this study. It was proposed by the Economist and Philosopher Adam Smith. The theory provides guidelines for understanding economic and social behaviour by suggesting that individuals engage in a cost-benefit analysis to determine the appropriateness of different options. Rational Choice Theory focuses on actors who are purposeful and intentional, working towards

specific goals. The theory acknowledges two major constraints on individual actions: scarcity of resources and social institutions.

Scarcity of resources refers to the fact that individuals have different levels of access to resources. Those with abundant resources may find it relatively easy to achieve their goals, while those with limited resources may struggle or even find it impossible to do so. This constraint also involves the concept of opportunity costs, which refers to the costs associated with forgoing the next best alternative. When pursuing a particular goal, individuals must consider the cost of giving up their next most attractive option. For instance, individuals with negligible resources may choose not to pursue their most valued goal if the chances of achieving it are slim and if doing so jeopardizes their chances of attaining their second most valuable objective. The goal for actors is to maximize their benefits by assessing the relationship between the likelihood of achieving one goal and its impact on the chances of attaining other valuable objectives.

The second source of constraints on individual actions is social institutions. These include family and social rules, laws, firm policies, religious institutions, and other governing bodies that shape and restrict the feasible set of courses of action available to individuals. These institutions provide both positive and negative sanctions, encouraging certain actions while discouraging others. Social institutions systematically affect social outcomes by enforcing rules and norms that guide individual behaviour. Friedman and Hechter (1998) also emphasize two additional ideas integral to Rational Choice Theory: the aggregation mechanism, which combines individual actions to produce social outcomes, and the importance of information in making rational choices. It is increasingly recognized that actors do not always have perfect or sufficient information to make well-informed choices, and the availability and quality of information can significantly influence decision-making.

The Rational Choice Theory was employed in this study to explore the choices made by parents and their children regarding school selection. Parents and their children face numerous school choices, and it is crucial to make rational decisions by carefully considering the potential outcomes. The theory highlights two dimensions that influence parents' and children's choices: the scarcity of resources dimension and the social constraints dimension. Parents with abundant resources may have more options and find it easier to achieve their desired educational outcomes. Conversely, parents with limited resources may face difficulties or even impossibilities in attaining their educational goals. Factors such as parents' occupational prestige, income, social status, and social networks can influence their ability to shape their children's choices. For example, parents with strong networks may have more accurate information about school quality and characteristics compared to families with lower incomes.

As postulated by the theory, parents are viewed as consumers of education who carefully select schools that best suit their interests. Proximity and locality, academic performance, school quality, environment, and facilities are among the factors considered by parents in making a rational choice. However, due to the scarcity of resources and opportunity costs, parents must prioritize their preferences and make trade-offs when selecting schools.

The second constraint identified by Rational Choice Theory is social institutions. Parents' choices are influenced by family and societal rules, laws, religious institutions, and other social norms. These norms and values provide order and guidance in society, shaping the behaviour of individuals. The family, as an agent of socialization, plays a crucial role in moulding individuals' behaviour and character from birth to death. Religious bodies also contribute to character formation by teaching moral principles,

values, and behaviours. The emphasis on religious factors in school selection varies among families.

Rational Choice Theory is relevant to this study as it seeks to understand the dynamics that influence the choices made by parents and their children. The study explored various dynamics, including the influence of parents, school factors, capability and agency, and teacher-student relationships. It is evident that the success of every child is influenced by the involvement of parents in the decision-making process.

2.12 Summary of literature

The literature highlights several potential benefits and challenges of the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) in Ghana. The CSSPS is praised for promoting access to education, ensuring fairness, enhancing national integration, and emphasizing merit-based placement. These advantages contribute to achieving the government's goal of universal basic education, reducing socioeconomic stratification, and fostering cultural exchange among students from different regions (CSSPS Report, 2005). Furthermore, the system's transparency and efficiency in the selection process have garnered trust from parents and students, who view it as a reliable method for school placements.

However, despite these benefits, significant challenges persist within the CSSPS. Issues such as geographical mismatches between students and assigned schools, placement errors, and the high cost of private schools for some students undermine the system's effectiveness (Aboagye, 2018; Asare, 2010). Allegations of corruption and human interference further complicate the placement process, leading to perceptions of unfairness and reduced confidence in the system (Daily Graphic, 2019). Additionally, disparities in school resources and inadequate publication of school information create

an imbalance in school preferences, with certain schools being favored over others (Wesly-Otoo & Anokye, 2016).

The literature also points out the deficiencies in data accuracy and parental involvement during the registration process, which result in placement errors and dissatisfaction among stakeholders (Wesly-Otoo & Anokye, 2016). These challenges highlight the need for improvements in the CSSPS to address issues of fairness, transparency, and integrity in the school selection and placement process.

2.13 Gap in literature

While the literature extensively covers the potential benefits and challenges of the CSSPS, there is a noticeable gap in understanding the specific factors influencing parental and student satisfaction with the system. Most studies focus on the operational aspects of the CSSPS and its broad impacts on education access and equity. However, there is limited research on the perceptions and experiences of parents and students regarding the system's fairness, efficiency, and transparency.

Furthermore, the literature lacks an in-depth analysis of how cultural, social, and economic factors influence parents' and students' school selection decisions within the CSSPS framework. Understanding these factors is crucial for identifying targeted interventions to enhance the system's effectiveness and address the concerns of all stakeholders.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the methodology employed in conducting the study, outlining the procedures and strategies utilized. The chapter is organized into nine sections, covering the following aspects: study area, the research design, the target population research sample size and sampling technique, the techniques used for data collection, sources of data and ethical considerations.

3.1 Study area

In 2004, the Wa municipality was established through legislative Instrument (LI) 1800 as part of the decentralization policy. It encompassed an area ranging from longitude 1° 40' N to 45' N and from latitude 9° 32' W to 10° 20' W. The municipality covered approximately 234.74 square kilometres, which accounted for about 32% of the region's territory and 2.56% of the entire nation. The Southern border of the Wa municipality shared boundaries with the Northern Region, while the North-Eastern border was adjacent to the Nadowli districts. The municipality's Western border connected with Burkina Faso (source: Wa Municipal Assembly).

The total population of the municipality was recorded as 200,672, comprising 98,493 males and 102,179 females. Within the municipality, there were a total of eight (8) Second Cycle Schools, accommodating a student population of 12,674. These schools included Wa Senior High School, Wa Senior High/Technical School, Wa T.I Ahmadiyya Senior High School, Wa Islamic Senior High School, Jamiat Islamic Girls Senior High School, Wa Northern Star Senior High School, Wa Technical Institute, and

Wa Community Development Institute (Upper West Regional Statistics Office of the Ghana Education Service, 2021).

3.2 Research Philosophy

Theoretical considerations play a crucial role in determining the appropriate research method that can effectively address the original research questions. In this study, the researcher will draw inspiration from the interpretive approach, which is a research philosophy that underpins the study.

Interpretivism, which has roots in anthropology, sociology, psychology, linguistics, and semiotics, takes a sense-based approach to research. It encompasses social theories and perspectives that view reality as socially constructed and ascribed meaning through individuals' understanding of events. Interpretivists employ both qualitative and quantitative research methods, rejecting the notion that there is a single methodology that can consistently uncover the "truth" of a phenomenon.

The interpretive approach encompasses various schools of thought, including social constructivism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics, which reject the idea that meaning exists independently of people's consciousness and interpretation. Interpretivists believe that meaning is derived through individuals' perspectives, making it crucial for researchers in the social sciences to acknowledge and understand the differences in how people attribute meaning.

The interpretive approach is based on several assumptions. Firstly, it asserts that human life can only be understood from within. Individuals possess consciousness and are not mere puppets driven solely by external social forces, as positivists suggest. As a result, people in society perceive and interpret the same "objective" reality in different ways and have individual motivations for their actions.

Secondly, interpretivists contend that the social world does not exist independently of human knowledge. While they acknowledge the existence of an external reality, they reject the idea of an independently knowable reality. Instead, they argue that all research is influenced by the pre-existing theories and worldviews of researchers. Terms, procedures, and data used in research gain meaning through consensus among academics, making research a socially constructed activity. Consequently, the reality depicted by research is also socially constructed and can vary across cultures.

Thirdly, interpretivists advocate for the use of qualitative methods for data collection. Qualitative data encompasses non-numerical information that can be observed and recorded, such as written or verbal communication. Interpretivists employ a wide range of qualitative methods, with interviews being the most common. Interviews can take various forms, including face-to-face, telephone-based, or conducted in focus groups. Observation is another technique used by interpretivists, particularly in case research, where the researcher assumes a neutral and passive external observer role. Additionally, interpretivists utilize documentation as a data collection technique, analyzing external and internal documents such as memos, emails, reports, articles, and websites to gain further insights into the phenomenon under investigation. They also value reflective discussions on the research process as a valuable source of knowledge and understanding. This differs from post-positivists who consider personal reflections and researchers' subjective experiences as unsuitable for scientific research.

Interpretive research is characterized by its reliance on grounded theory. While causal explanations are feasible in sociology, interpretivists argue against formulating hypotheses before commencing a study. They believe that stating a hypothesis at the outset may impose the researcher's views on the data, rather than allowing the ideas to

emerge organically during data collection. Grounded theory involves allowing ideas to emerge as data is collected, which can later be used to formulate testable hypotheses.

Considering the researcher's data collection methods, the interpretive approach aligns well with the objectives of this study. Hence, drawing inspiration from the interpretivist realm is deemed appropriate.

3.3 Research design

The case study design is exceptionally well-suited for the qualitative research topic. This choice of research design offers several distinct advantages in the context of this study.

First and foremost, the case study design is known for its effectiveness in conducting an in-depth exploration of specific phenomena (Yin, 2018). Given the intricate web of dynamics influencing Second Cycle school choices, this design allows the researcher to thoroughly investigate the dynamics within the real-life context of the Wa Municipality. This depth of analysis fosters a comprehensive understanding of the research topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Moreover, case studies excel at capturing the nuances of local contexts (Stake, 1995). The decision-making process regarding Second Cycle Schools is deeply entwined with various contextual factors, including cultural norms, socio-economic conditions, and the availability of educational resources (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). By conducting a case study in the Wa Municipality, we can situate these factors within their specific regional context, revealing insights that may remain concealed in broader, less localized studies.

Additionally, our research topic involves multiple perspectives, encompassing those of parents, guardians, and students. A case study design accommodates this complexity

by allowing researchers to engage with multiple participants within the same case (Yin, 2018). This approach ensures that the research captures a wide range of experiences and viewpoints, thereby contributing to a more holistic understanding of the dynamics at play (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The exploratory nature of our research topic aligns seamlessly with the case study design (Yin, 2018). Researchers can approach the study without preconceived hypotheses, which is particularly advantageous when investigating a multifaceted topic like school choice dynamics. This approach enables us to discover emerging patterns and themes as we delve into the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

From a practical standpoint, the findings from our case study in the Wa Municipality can have direct relevance for local education authorities and policymakers (Stake, 1995). The detailed insights generated through this design can inform targeted interventions and policies to address specific challenges or enhance the school choice process within the municipality.

Qualitative research methods, such as interviews and focus group discussions, which are commonly employed in case studies (Yin, 2018), are ideally suited for capturing the nuanced perspectives and experiences of individuals involved in school choice decisions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This approach aligns perfectly with the qualitative nature of our research, allowing for a deep exploration of participants' narratives and insights.

3.4 Target population

The target population for this study consisted of parents, students, heads of Second Cycle Schools, and regular teachers in the Wa Municipality. These individuals were directly relevant to the study, and their participation contributed valuable information

to address the research questions. The study specifically focused on regular teachers, who were typically more stable in their positions and had longer tenures at the schools. This group was well-positioned to provide the necessary and relevant information required for the study.

3.5 Sample size and sampling techniques

The recommendations from scholars like Dull (2000) and Creswell (2003) offer valuable insights into selecting an appropriate sample size for qualitative studies. These recommendations are typically based on the principle of data saturation, which suggests that, in qualitative research, the point at which additional data no longer provide new insights or perspectives has been reached (Guest et al., 2006). As such, the ideal sample size should be sufficient to reach this saturation point, where data redundancy is achieved.

In the case of this study, the selection of 30 participants appears to be well-considered. The inclusion of 10 BECE candidates, 10 corresponding parents, and 10 regular teachers represents a diverse set of perspectives and stakeholders directly involved in the decision-making process regarding the choice of Second Cycle Schools. Given the specific focus on the Wa Municipality and the aim of understanding the dynamics influencing school choices within this context, the sample size seems reasonable.

Purposive sampling, which was employed in this study, is also an appropriate method for selecting participants when the aim is to gather data from specific groups or individuals who possess relevant insights and experiences related to the research topic. In this case, the use of purposive sampling ensures that the selected participants are directly involved in the decision-making process concerning Second Cycle Schools in the Wa Municipality, enhancing the study's relevance and depth.

3.6 Methods and techniques of data collection

3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

For this study, the chosen data collection method was semi-structured interviews. A comparison conducted by Dull (2006) between structured and semi-structured interviews revealed that semi-structured interviews elicited more information from respondents compared to structured interviews, as they allowed for open-ended responses. Therefore, the main data collection technique for this study was semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were commonly used in mixed-method designs within qualitative research because they combined elements of both structured and unstructured interviews, offering the advantages of both approaches. They enabled an objective comparison of participants while also providing the opportunity to explore relevant topics spontaneously, tailored to each specific participant (Dull, 2006).

The selection of semi-structured interviews for this study was based on the benefits they offered. They allowed interviewers to gain insights into respondents' answers and the underlying reasons behind those answers. Additionally, they provided a comfortable environment for respondents to discuss sensitive issues. According to Creswell (2003), semi-structured interviews provided qualitative data that could be compared to previous and future data, while also offering greater flexibility than structured interviews, allowing the interviewer to adapt the interview based on the responses provided by the interviewees.

In alignment with the research objectives, this study employed semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. The choice of this method was informed by various considerations aimed at facilitating a comprehensive exploration

of the dynamics influencing school choices away from 'home' within the context of the Upper West Region.

Semi-structured interviews were selected for several reasons, all of which directly support the research objectives. First and foremost, they are well-suited to identifying schools' preferences among parents/wards who select schools outside of the Upper West Region. This format allows for open-ended responses, enabling participants to freely express their preferences, priorities, and reasoning behind their choices. This aligns with the objective of understanding the underlying dynamics contributing to parental choices of Second Cycle Schools.

Moreover, semi-structured interviews are an ideal choice for exploring how children's capability and agency manifest in their choices of Second Cycle Schools. They provide a flexible framework that encourages respondents to share their perspectives and experiences, thereby shedding light on the role of students in the decision-making process.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews facilitate an in-depth exploration of the school dynamics that influence parents and students' choices of Second Cycle Schools. Participants can elaborate on their interactions with schools, teachers, and other influential factors, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the decision-making process.

Furthermore, the method supports the examination of how teacher-student relations contribute to the choice of Second Cycle Schools. It enables interviewees to provide insights into their experiences with teachers and the influence of these relationships on their school preferences.

Lastly, semi-structured interviews align with the research objective of identifying the dynamics contributing to parental choices of Second Cycle Schools away from 'home.' By allowing for open dialogue and follow-up questions, this method offers a rich source of qualitative data that can be analyzed to uncover the multifaceted factors shaping school choices.

3.6.2 Tools for data collection

A semi-structured interview guide was utilized to gather information from parents. The interview guide was divided into two sections. The first section focused on personal and demographic characteristics of parents, including their gender and the duration they had been involved with their children. The gender column ensured representation of both sexes in the study, promoting gender inclusivity. The duration column analyzed the number of years' parents had been caring for their children. It was assumed that the longer they had been with their children, the more experienced they would be in influencing their children's choices, assuming other factors remained constant.

The second section of the interview guide consisted of five parts based on the research objectives. Parents, teachers and students provided information on the various questions posed. The respondents shared insights on the dynamics influencing the choices of Second Cycle Institutions, as well as the factors contributing to a positive teacher-student relationship that improved academic performance.

The questions explored the dynamics influencing parents' choices in relation to their socio-economic background, school factors, capabilities, agency, and teacher-student relationships. Direct yes or no questions were asked, followed by prompts to encourage participants to provide reasons for their answers. Participants were also given the

opportunity to suggest factors that influenced the choices of parents and their children outside of their home region.

3.7 Sources of data

The study employed both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from experts of the Ghana Education Service, parents, students, and teachers through questionnaires with the help of interview guides.

Secondary data on the research topic was gathered from past works in the study literature, textbooks, journals, newspapers, and conference/workshop papers. The secondary sources were helpful in the review of literature relevant to the study, giving insight into existing information on the subject and identifying gaps between current knowledge and how the study could address these gaps.

3.7.1 Data Management and Analysis

To conduct a comprehensive analysis of the data collected in the study, qualitative method of data analysis such as thematic analysis was employed. The process of analysis, as highlighted by Bernard and Ryan (2010), involved searching for patterns in the data and concepts that could help explain these patterns, interpreting the identified patterns, deciding what they mean, and linking the results to those of other studies. In the study, the qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews was processed using digital recorders with the aim of facilitating data analysis. To achieve this, the data were first categorized into themes, which enabled systematic comparisons between them to establish similarities and commonalities. In line with Riessman's (2008) recommendation, this categorization made it easier to analyze the data. To validate the themes, the audio recordings were listened to several times and compared with the visual transcripts to ensure that they were consistent. This process

of validation was crucial in ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings. Once the themes were validated, the analysis took on a narrative form, as this was deemed appropriate for the study. The narrative form of analysis allowed the researcher to capture the experiential accounts of the participants accurately, thereby ensuring that their voices were represented appropriately. In conclusion, the use of qualitative data analysis techniques enabled the researcher to categorize the data into themes and validate them before analyzing them in narrative form. This approach was appropriate for the study as it allowed the voices of the participants to be captured accurately, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethics pertained to the consideration of what was morally right or wrong. It was crucial for the researcher to question the ethical implications of conducting the particular study. According to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE, 1997), good research should have been well adjusted, well planned, appropriately designed, and ethically approved. In accordance with these principles, the researcher had taken into account all ethical guidelines, including maintaining confidentiality, honesty, openness, and responsibility. Additionally, necessary permissions had been sought from relevant authorities and officials. This approach ensured the avoidance of unnecessary fear and harm while fostering trust among the respondents and parents involved in the research. To ensure compliance with ethical standards, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the SD Dombo University of Business and Integrated Development Studies (UBIDS) and a research permit from the Wa Municipal Education Directorate of the Ghana Education Service. Following this, a courtesy visit was made to the selected schools to meet with the headmaster and teachers, facilitating face-to-face interviews

with the respondents. The respondents were assured of confidentiality, and the collection of responses was conducted afterward in a manner that respected privacy.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented and interpreted in relation to the study objectives. The chapter is divided into two significant sections, each serving a distinct purpose. The first section focuses on the presentation of the findings, while the second section delves into their analysis and subsequent discussions.

In the presentation of the findings, the research outcomes are systematically presented, providing a comprehensive overview of the data collected. This includes a detailed description of the research methods employed, the participants involved, and the measures taken to ensure data validity and reliability. The findings are then presented in a clear and organized manner, addressing each of the study objectives individually. Following the presentation of the findings, the second section of the chapter is dedicated to the analysis and discussions of the research outcomes. Here, the data is examined in depth, drawing meaningful insights and identifying patterns, trends, and relationships among the variables studied. The findings are critically analyzed and interpreted, taking into account relevant theoretical frameworks and existing literature.

The discussions delve into the implications and significance of the findings, exploring their alignment with previous research and theoretical perspectives. Any discrepancies or contradictions encountered during the analysis are thoroughly examined and explained. Additionally, the limitations of the study are acknowledged, providing a balanced perspective on the research outcomes.

Throughout this chapter, the findings are contextualized within the broader research field, contributing to the existing knowledge base and shedding light on the research

objectives. The presentation, analysis, and discussions collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of the research outcomes and their implications. This chapter serves as a bridge between the empirical findings and the theoretical framework, guiding the reader towards the final conclusions of the study.

4.2 Presentation of findings

4.2.1 Summary of background characteristics of parents

This section of the chapter presents data on the background characteristics of parents who took part of the study.

Table 4.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics of parents of candidates

Variables	Categories	Frequency
Sex	Male	4
	Female	6
	TOTAL	10
Age	30	3
	39	1
	49	3
	40-	2
	50	1
	TOTAL	10
Religion	Christian	3
	Muslim	6
	Traditional	1
	TOTAL	10

Level of education	No formal education	3
	Senior High School graduate	2
	Tertiary	5
	TOTAL	10
Academic qualification	None	3
	Form four certificate	1
	Teachers' cert 'A'	1
	Degree	5
	TOTAL	10
Occupation	Government workers	5
	Farmers	3
	Traders	2
	TOTAL	10
Income	GH¢1,100	3
	GH¢2,100	2
	GH¢2,200	1
	GH¢4,200	2
	GH¢4,201 and above	2
	TOTAL	10
Marital status	Married	10

(Source: field work 2023)

Table 4.1 encapsulates vital information about the parents, encompassing their sex, age, religion, level of education, academic qualification, occupation, income, and marital

status. Among the 10 parents, there are 4 males and 6 females, all of whom are married. This gender distribution reflects a diverse family composition, potentially shaping the candidates' experiences and perspectives. The parents' ages vary, with 3 individuals aged 30, 1 at 39, 3 at 49, 2 aged 40 or above, and 1 at 50.

The religious affiliations of these parents are heterogeneous, with 6 identifying as Muslims, 3 as Christians, and 1 following traditional beliefs. Educational backgrounds are equally diverse: 3 parents have no formal education, 2 completed Senior High School, and 5 attained tertiary education. Academic qualifications range from none (3 parents) to a degree (5 parents), showcasing differing levels of educational attainment within the candidate's families.

The parents' occupations span various sectors, with 5 engaged in government work, 3 in farming, and 2 in trading. This occupational diversity implies disparate economic circumstances and access to resources for the candidates. Income levels also vary widely, with 3 parents earning GH¢1,100, 2 receiving GH¢2,100, 1 earning GH¢2,200, 2 having GH¢4,200 as income, and 2 exceeding GH¢4,201.

4.2.2 Socio-demographic characteristics of students

This chapter of the study presents the data on the socio-demographic characteristics of the students who took part of the study.

Table 4.2 Socio-demographic characteristics of students

Variables	Categories	Frequency
Sex	Male	6
	Female	4
	TOTAL	10
Age	10	3
	15	2
	16	3
	21	1
	22 and above	1
	TOTAL	10
Type of school attended	Private	6
	Public	4
	TOTAL	10
Religious affiliation	Christianity	3
	Islam	6
	Traditional	1
	TOTAL	10
Marital status of parents	Married	10

(Source: field work 2023)

Table 4.2 encompasses various aspects of the students' backgrounds, including their sex, age, type of school attended, religious affiliation, and the marital status of their parents.

Among the 10 students, 6 are male, and 4 are female. This gender distribution reflects a slight male majority in the student population. Age-wise, the students span different age groups, with 3 of them aged 10. The distribution of the ages of the students who participated in the study is presented in table 4.2.

Regarding the type of school attended, 6 students are enrolled in private schools, while 4 attend public schools. This distribution highlights the diversity in educational settings within the student population, potentially affecting their access to resources and the quality of education they receive.

Religious affiliations among the students vary, with 3 students identifying as Christians, 6 as Muslims, and 1 adhering to traditional religious beliefs. This diversity in religious backgrounds can influence the students' cultural experiences and values. All 10 students come from married parents. This indicates a stable family structure for the students, which can positively impact their emotional and social development.

4.2.3 Schools' preferences among parents/wards who select schools outside of the Upper West Region

Pertaining to the preference of schools selected outside the Upper West Region, the following are order of preference. Second cycle schools in Ashanti Region are the most preferred by parents and wards. This is followed by schools in the Central Region with schools in Bono Region and Greater Accra Region as next. The other preferred regions whose schools are selected include Eastern Region, Northern Region, Upper East Region and the Volta Region. A parent said in an interview:

“I want my child to school down south because I have observed that, students in the Upper West Region do not really do very well. When results are released schools in the

region generally don't do better. So if my ward schools here, the likelihood that he will not do well is high.” (Male, 47 years, Degree holder).

Based on the response above, it is quite clear that, the parent expresses concern about the academic performance of students in the Upper West Region, forming a central point in their decision-making process. They believe that schools in the region generally do not perform well based on examination results. This concern about academic performance significantly influences their choice of a school outside of their home region.

Furthermore, the parent identifies several factors they believe contribute to the poor academic performance in the Upper West Region. These factors include a perceived lack of commitment among teachers, inadequate teaching and learning resources, and poor infrastructure in schools. These perceived issues are pivotal in shaping the parent's decision regarding their child's education.

In essence, the parent's decision to send their child to school in the south can be interpreted as a desire for better educational opportunities and outcomes. They believe that by doing so, they are providing their child with a better chance at academic success, given the perceived shortcomings in the educational system of the Upper West Region.

Within the research context, this response underscores the significance of understanding the factors that influence parents' decisions when choosing schools for their children, especially when they opt for schools located outside their home region. It emphasizes the need to explore the perceptions and beliefs of parents regarding the quality of education in different regions and how these perceptions shape their decision-making regarding their children's education

This was further articulated by a parent respondent who have this to say:

“The teacher shortage in the Upper West Region is affecting quality teaching and learning and the performance of students in the school. This has been a major concern to me as a parent. Schools in the Upper West Region are deficient in staffing. The inadequacy of staffing compels students to fail because teachers are not there to handle some of the core subjects. For instance, Mathematics, Science and English Language.”. (Female, 34 years, Degree holder).

In the context of the research topic, the provided response highlights a crucial aspect of the dynamics influencing parents' choices regarding their children's education in the Upper West Region, specifically within the Wa Municipality.

The response underscores a significant concern shared by this parent and likely other parents in the region: the teacher shortage. The shortage of qualified teaching staff in the Upper West Region is viewed as a critical factor negatively impacting the quality of teaching and learning in local schools. This concern is a major driving force behind the parent's decision-making process.

According to the parent, the shortage of teachers has led to a deficiency in staffing, particularly in subjects like Mathematics, Science, and English Language, which are considered core subjects. The inadequate staffing situation is perceived as a substantial obstacle to effective education, as it can result in teachers being unavailable to handle essential subjects. This shortage also becomes more critical when teachers have to travel or are absent due to illness, which disrupts the continuity of teaching and learning and potentially contributes to students' poor academic performance.

In light of these concerns, the parent expresses a strong preference for not having their child select a school within the Upper West Region. They believe that sending their child to a school outside the region increases the likelihood of academic success and minimizes the risk of failure associated with the teacher shortage and staffing issues in local schools.

This response highlights the significance of teacher availability and staffing levels as critical factors influencing parents' decisions about where to send their children to school. It also underscores the potential impact of teacher shortages on the overall quality of education and student performance, emphasizing the importance of investigating these dynamics within the context of the Wa Municipality's educational landscape.

A parent also interviewed acknowledged the negative impact of unfavourable school environment in school selection and had this to say:

“In spite of the progress Ghana has made in improving access to education for all, there are still challenges preventing thousands of achieving their academic excellence especially in the Upper West Region. Classes are overcrowded, water and sanitation facilities are inadequate and train teachers and school books are in short supply”
(Male, 37 years, Degree).

The provided response offers valuable insights into the challenges faced by students and their families in the Upper West Region of Ghana, which can significantly impact their decisions regarding second cycle schools.

The response draws attention to several critical challenges prevalent in the educational landscape of the Upper West Region. Firstly, it mentions the issue of overcrowded

classrooms, a situation that can hinder the quality of education by making it difficult for teachers to provide individualized attention to students.

Another challenge highlighted is the inadequacy of essential infrastructure, specifically mentioning insufficient water and sanitation facilities within schools. This deficiency not only affects the overall learning environment but also impacts the health and well-being of students. Access to clean and hygienic facilities is vital for creating a conducive learning atmosphere.

Furthermore, the response touches upon the shortage of trained teachers and the lack of necessary schoolbooks. This shortage can lead to suboptimal learning experiences, limiting students' access to qualified educators and essential learning materials.

The poor state of education in the region is reflected in the academic performance of students, which is another key concern highlighted in the response. Lower academic performance may be a significant factor influencing parents' decisions about where to send their children for their secondary education.

Lastly, the response addresses the challenges faced by students with disabilities, such as irregular attendance, prolonged absences, and high dropout rates. These challenges stem from the absence of conveniently located schools and disability-friendly infrastructure.

In the context of the research, this response underscores the multifaceted challenges that students and their families encounter in their pursuit of quality education within the Wa Municipality of the Upper West Region. These challenges play a crucial role in shaping parents' decisions regarding the selection of second cycle schools, whether within the region or elsewhere. Understanding these challenges is vital for a

comprehensive exploration of the dynamics influencing school choices away from home within this specific research context

In a qualitative interview with a parent respondent, she stated bitterly that:

“Many of the teachers in the Upper West Region are not trained and therefore do not have in-depth mastery of subject content and teaching skills to teach. The inadequate qualified teachers are affecting students learning and performance in schools” That is the reason why I do not want my ward to select school in the region” (Male, 43 years of age, Form four certificate).

The provided response highlights a critical concern that can significantly influence parents' decisions regarding the choice of second cycle schools for their children within the Upper West Region, particularly in the Wa Municipality.

The response emphasizes the issue of teacher qualification and training within the Upper West Region. Specifically, it suggests that many teachers in the region lack the necessary training and qualifications, resulting in a lack of in-depth mastery of subject content and teaching skills. This concern about the qualifications and competence of teachers is a pivotal factor affecting the quality of education in the region.

The consequence of having a significant number of untrained or inadequately trained teachers, as indicated in the response, is that it adversely affects students' learning experiences and academic performance in schools. When teachers lack the necessary subject expertise and pedagogical skills, it can be challenging for them to effectively impart knowledge to students and create a conducive learning environment.

Given this concern, the parent expresses a strong preference for not having their child select a school within the Upper West Region. They believe that sending their child to a school outside the region may offer better educational opportunities, including access

to better-qualified and trained teachers, ultimately improving the chances of academic success.

In addition to that, the data collected brought to light the fact that sport facilities also influenced their preferences of schools for their wards. This was clear when a parent respondent stated:

“Though sporting activities is associated with a lot of relevance in the development of my ward, most schools in the Upper West Region do not have the require facilities and equipment’s. This includes inadequate basketball courts, soccer fields, baseball fields, running tracks and professional coaches to handle the various disciplines.” (Male, 39 years of age, Degree).

The response emphasizes the significance of sporting activities in the development of the parent's ward. However, it highlights a notable issue within the Upper West Region: the lack of adequate facilities and equipment for sports activities. This includes a shortage of basketball courts, soccer fields, baseball fields, running tracks, and professional coaches to handle various sporting disciplines. The absence of these essential resources is seen as a significant limitation to students' participation and performance in sports.

The parent has observed that schools in the southern part of the country tend to have the necessary facilities and equipment to support sports activities. This leads to the belief that if their ward attends a school in the south, they are more likely to perform better in sports due to the improved resources available.

Consequently, the parent expresses a preference for not having their child select a school within the Upper West Region, as they believe that attending a school in the

southern region offers a higher likelihood of excelling in sports due to the availability of better facilities and professional coaching.

4.2.4 Dynamics which contributes to parental choices of Second Cycle Schools away from home

4.2.4.1 Academic performance, adequate infrastructure and learning materials

From the qualitative interviews 7 of the 10 parents and their corresponding wards interviewed indicated academic performance, adequate infrastructure, teaching and learning materials as the reason why they prefer schools outside of the Upper West Region.

The following remark of a parent sum up this analysis:

“I want my child to school down south because I have observed that, students in the Upper West Region do not really do very well. When results are released schools in the south generally do better than schools in the north. So if my ward goes there, the likelihood that he will do well is high. The reason why I think they perform better than students in the Upper West Region is because I believe that, the teachers there are more dedicated than the teachers here. That is why I do not want my child to school in the Upper West Region” (Male, 47 years, Degree).

From the narrative, this parent is highly educated and knows the value of education and is seeking academic excellence. He thinks that getting his child to attend school outside of the Upper West Region will brighten the child’s chance of performing better.

Also, Adequate School infrastructure is part of the reasons why most parents and their corresponding wards made choices of schools outside the Upper West Region.

Corroborating this, a parent respondent in a qualitative interview said:

‘I prefer my child schooling outside of the Upper West Region because I believe they have adequate school infrastructure in place. In the Upper West Region, schools do not have the infrastructure facilities in place in terms of classrooms, library, computer laboratories and good ventilation. (Female,39 years, Degree).

This implied that this respondent believes academic excellence can be achieved when appropriate school infrastructure is put in place to enable students concentrate on learning task. This also means that government, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and faith-based organizations will have to build more classrooms to cater for high increasing student’s population particularly at the Senior High Schools. The absence of classrooms at the Senior High Schools has the highest potential of demoralizing parents and their corresponding wards from choosing schools in the Upper West Region.

Anokye (2018) asserted that, Teaching and learning materials are essential factor of ensuring academic excellence. Table 4.3 indicates that Teaching and learning materials is among the highest scored of 7 out of 20 parents interviewed with their corresponding wards. Bosseti (2018) asserted that the central role of teaching and learning materials is to make lessons interesting, learning easy and enable teachers to easily express concepts to improve student’s performance. To substantiate the above, this 38-year female respondent response highlight a critical concern:

“I want my child to school outside of the Upper West Region because, most Senior High Schools are not adequately resourced with teaching and learning materials. This inhibits teaching and learning and in essence contributes to their failures” (Female, 38 years, Degree).

This implied that the inadequate teaching and learning materials is the reason why most parents prefer their wards schooling outside of the Upper West Region. Parents are demoralized because they feel teachers are not equipped to teach their wards in the Upper West Region. This also suggested that the Ghana Education service and district assembly do not invest in education hence compelling parents and their wards from selecting schools outside of the Upper West Region.

The inadequate teaching and learning materials affect the delivery of quality education in the region. The inadequacy of teaching and learning materials is not only an impediment for demoralizing parents and their corresponding wards from selecting schools within the region but a denial of fundamental human rights. This supported Hafiz (2018) findings that in reality there is no way to achieve academic excellence without teaching and learning materials. In a qualitative interview with a parent, this is what he said:

“If schools in the Upper West Region are not resourced adequately to enable teachers to express concepts to enable my child to pass, then what is the essence of my ward schooling in the region. I will send him outside of the region to schools that are adequately resourced to enable him pass to become a better person in future” (Male, 42 years, Teachers Cert ‘A’).

From the narrative this respondent is educated and knows the central role that teaching and learning materials play in the achievement of academic excellence. Inadequate teaching and learning aids are disabling dynamics that contribute to parents and their corresponding wards choice of Senior High Schools outside of the Upper West Region.

4.2.4.2 School environment, climatic condition and change of environment

According to Dicks (2016), a learner friendly environment influences the choice of parents and high academic achievements of students in schools. The author noted that, the state of school grounds also influences a parent's choice. School buildings are favoured on a well located, accessible and appealing site. This includes surrounding environment provided for student to concentrate, learn and play. A parent interviewed acknowledged the significance role school environment plays in school selection and had this to say:

“School environment played a vital role in the choices that we made. The school environment is a combination of physical, social and learning environment. It refers to the set of facilities that the school provides which includes classrooms, sanitation, serenity of the environment and social values. I believe most schools outside the region have the above facilities in place to enhance teaching and learning. Most schools in the Upper West Region have poor environmental issues, inadequate classrooms with some turning their classrooms into dormitories couple with open defecation” (Male, 37 years, Degree).

From the above narrative it can be deduced that, the parent respondent is educated and places much emphasises on the positive and negative impacts of school environment on his ward. So, getting his ward school outside the region will help his ward to achieve academic excellence.

School environment affects the delivery of quality education in the Wa Municipality. This supported the findings of Philip (2018) who conducted a study to examine school environment and facilities and their effects on the choice of parents and their wards in Sekyire Dumasi Senior High School noted that, poor school environment and

infrastructure are key factors affecting the choice of parents and their wards. This suggest that, the choice of parents greatly depends on the friendly environment or conducive environment and quality infrastructure by stakeholders. The author indicated that, school environment, school buildings, accessible and appealing site are crucial factors that contributes to the choice of parents and their corresponding wards. A qualitative interview with a parent have this to say:

“As an illiterate I strongly belief that if my ward school in a serene environment, she will pass her exams well and become successful in future. Schools in the Upper West Region have poor school environment couple with noise making. That is why I want my ward to school outside of the region because I know they have serene environment that supports teaching and learning” (Female, 39 years, illiterate).

From the above narrative it can be deduced that, the respondent is an illiterate with low educational background. The respondent though an illiterate still has a strong conviction that schools outside the region have serene school environment that will support her ward to pass her exams well and become successful in future.

Also Change of environment was among the factors that contributed to the choice of parents and their corresponding wards as revealed by the study. 5 out of 10 parents interviewed with their corresponding wards indicated change in environment as the reason why they prefer schools outside of the Upper West Region. This statement from a parent respondent gives a clear picture of the situation:

“I was born and raised in the Upper West Region, schooled here and gainfully employed here. I have lived my entire life in this region with my family and have not travel outside of the region likewise my children. I saw helping my ward to select schools outside of the region as an opportunity of his ward having exposure and

learning new things outside the region. That is why I prefer my ward schooling outside of the region” (Male, 40 years, Degree).

It was obvious from the narrative that the respondent is educated and had lived his entire life in the region with the family. He sees helping the ward to select schools outside the region as a better chance of exploring and learning new things to meet challenges as they emerge. Also, it will help his ward to socialize and learn other peoples culture.

This was closely followed by another respondent who indicated that, change of environment is a clear example of the saying “travel and see”. In his respond in a qualitative interview, he said:

“I have experienced poor academic performance among schools, poor infrastructure, inadequate teaching and learning resources and lackadaisical attitude of teachers towards the teaching profession as challenges associated with most schools in the Upper West Region. Students generally down south do well in academia, there is much improvement in the level of infrastructure and I believe the teachers there have the sense of commitment to their duty. That is why I want my ward to change environment to other schools outside the region” (Male, 35 years, Degree).

This suggested that the respondent is highly educated and knows the challenges associated with most of the Second Cycle Schools in the region. For him a change in environment implies his ward moving away from schools associated with challenges and seeking academic excellence outside the region.

Furthermore, 5 out of the 10 parents interviewed with their corresponding wards indicated harsh climatic condition as a dynamic that contributes to their choice of school outside of the Upper West Region. Achievement of academic excellence

requires a conducive atmospheric condition to make students feel comfortable to learn. High temperature affects the ability of teachers and students to concentrate and work effectively and causes physical discomfort and illness. In effect it leads to loss of concentration and increase tiredness.

Abdullah (2018) explained that harsh climatic condition leads to many diseases. It increases for instance, the incidence of such diseases as cerebro-spinal meningitis (CSM), difficulty in breathing and the bleeding of the nose. In an interview with a parent respondent, she expressed her disgust and said:

“The climatic condition in the Upper West Region is not favourable and does not support teaching and learning. Here the weather becomes extremely warm making it uncomfortable and compels my child to suffer from nose bleeding. I want my child to school outside the region because I have lived down south and know the conducive nature of the climatic condition and how it enhances teaching and learning. There are a lot of trees around that keeps the atmospheric condition cool and prevent physical discomfort and illness. That is why I don’t want my child to be here” (Female, 43 years, Teachers Cert ‘A’).

This suggested that, the respondent have personal experience regarding the climatic condition outside of the region. She is educated and knows the value of conducive atmosphere in achieving academic excellence. Hence, she thinks that, getting her child school outside the region couple with conducive atmospheric condition will enhance the child’s chances of performing better.

4.2.4.3 Family history and closeness to relatives

from the qualitative interview 2 of the 20 parents and their corresponding wards interviewed revealed family background and closeness to relatives as the dynamics that contributes to choice of schools outside of the Upper West Region.

Fung (2018) writes that, parents will exercise their divine right of choice and make the best interests of their children a priority. Parents compete for high quality educational opportunities for their children and better educational opportunities lead to better academic performance. Parents with higher educational level will like their wards to school in their formal schools. This was confirmed by a statement made by a parent respondent:

“I prefer my child schooling outside the region because most of my family members attended that school. History had it that almost all the members in my family went through the same school and the school is not located in the Upper West Region. My formal school is fully resourced with teaching and learning materials as well as infrastructure wise. The teachers there are equally committed to their duty and represent the repository of knowledge. This is why I want my ward to school outside of the region (Male, 37 years, Degree).

It can be deduced from the narrative that this respondent is highly educated and is seeking to make the interest of his ward a priority but is influenced by his family background. He believes that the fact all members of the family attended a particular school and achieve academic excellence, getting his ward to school in the same school outside of the region will grant the child the quest to perform better.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO,2018) asserts that parents of higher educational level and wider social networks are more

likely to influence the choice of schools for their wards. Their strong network gives them more accurate information on school quality and characteristics as opposed to less accurate information obtained by lower income families. In a qualitative interview with a parent respondent, she remarked that:

“I prefer my ward to school outside the region to my alma mater. It was a school I completed and hence I have factual information about the school. It is a category ‘A’ school and highly disciplined. It was recently ranked among the top 10 schools in Ghana by the Ghana Education Service based on academic performance and infrastructure wise. I want my child to school there because i made good grades during my era in the school, so am highly optimistic my ward will excel academically when he goes there” (Male, 38 years of age, Degree).

It can be deduced from the narrative that the respondent is an academia and is seeking academic excellence for the ward but is influenced by his family background. He is of the view that, the fact that he made good grades at his alma mater is an indication that the ward will equally achieve academic excellence.

Also, 2 out of the 10 respondents interviewed qualitatively indicated Closeness to family relatives as a dynamic that contributes to their choice of school. Parents usually want their wards to be closer to family relatives for the purpose of socialization, discipline and monitoring. Parents were very particular about the closeness of their wards to their relatives outside of the Upper West Region and it is clear when a parent respondent stated:

“I came to the Upper West Region on transfer basis. I gave birth to my son here because of this, he knows nothing about my culture. He can only speak dagaare at the detriment of his native language which is Asante twi. I strongly belief when my son schools outside

of the region and is closer to my relatives, our family norms, values, beliefs, attitudes and language will be transmitted to him by the older siblings in the family. This is why I want my ward to school outside of the region so that he will be socialized properly” (Male, 40 years of age, Degree).

It was obvious from the narrative that the respondent wants the ward to school outside of the Upper West Region so as to be closer to his relatives and be properly socialized. He believes that when his ward is closer to his relative outside of the region, he will be brought up with desirable, acceptable and approved behaviours so as to live harmoniously with one another in the society. Every family want to perpetuate its cultural heritage and socialization helps in achieving this by assisting young people to fit into the society.

This confirmed the findings of Uwaifo (2018) which explains that Children acquire informal education from their parents before being exposed to formal education. The extent to which it is socially acceptable for the family to be involved in their offspring’s choices varies from culture to culture. However, one that exhibits too involved is sometimes said to be overprotective, cosseting, nosey or intrusive. He further asserted that, the family play an important role in a person’s life pattern from childhood to adulthood in terms of behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, choices and intellectual accomplishments. Reasons are that, the family serve as initial agents of socialization charged with responsibilities of shaping the choices of their children to be better placed in life. This is evident in a parents respond:

“I want my daughter to school outside of the region because since the mother passed on, I have solely been catering for her. As a girl-child i want her to school down south so that she will be closer to my relatives. This will be an opportunity for the female

relatives in my family to mould, nurture and guide her to be better placed in the society”
(Male, 39 years of age, illiterate).

It can be deduced from the narrative that the respondent prefers his daughter schooling outside the region to be closer to his relatives. This will enable his female relatives to socialize her. Also, living near loved ones can also be helpful in case of emergencies.

4.2.4.4 Single sex school and socio-economic background of parents

From the qualitative interview 2 out of the 20 parents and their corresponding wards indicated Single Sex and socio- economic background of parents as the dynamics that contribute to their choice if schools outside of the Upper West Region.

According to Weiner (2018), proponents of single-sex education hold the prevailing belief that it enhances academic performance by alleviating students from perceived conflicts, pressures, tensions, and temptations. Single-sex education is seen as an emotionally supportive sanctuary, highlighting the potential of such institutions to promote equality in an unequal world. In co-educational classrooms, boys and girls often become easily distracted by one another. They strive to impress each other, leading to behaviours that hinder their individual learning.

In a qualitative research conducted parents very particular about their wards attending single-sex schools outside of the Upper West Region. It was clear when a parent respondent stated:

“I want my girl to school outside of the region because I have come to the realization that Single-sex schools outside the region perform better than single- sex schools in the region. Although, in co-educational classrooms boys and girls are easily distracted by one another. Such distractions are not associated with single schools yet Single sex

schools outside of the region perform better. They are ranked among the best performing schools and they have good academic records. For example, recently, a single sex school outside the region was among the finalist at the recently ended Science and Maths Quiz. I strongly believe my girl will perform well when she schools outside the region. That is why I prefer my ward schooling outside of the region” (Female, 39 years, Degree).

It is clear from the narrative that the respondent is enlightened educationally and hence is seeking academic excellence for the ward. She believes that there is distraction associated with co-education by both boys and girls. This distraction is associated with single sex schools generally yet single sex schools outside the region perform better than single sex schools in the region when results are released. She believes getting the ward to school outside will be a better opportunity for her ward to achieve academic excellence. This confirms the findings of Keyway (2018) which explains that Parents will choose purely single sex schools because they excel academically. Parents in their quest to select schools for their wards will consider the above dynamics particularly favouring ones where there are high standard of Single-sex school and academic achievement.

Philip (2018) who conducted a study to examine school environment and facilities and their effects on the choice of parents in Sekyire Dumasi Senior High School noted that, poor school environment and infrastructure and inequitable distribution of resources among districts are key factors affecting the choice of parents. The author was of the view that, the choice of parents will largely depend on the environment, resources and infrastructure. This suggest that, the choice of parents going in for single sex schools will greatly depends on the friendly environment or conducive environment and quality infrastructure by stakeholders. A 39-year-old parent respondent was asked in a

qualitative interview whether single sex school contributes to her choice of school for the ward and this is what she has to say:

“School environment and facilities play a crucial in academic achievement. I prefer my ward schooling in a Single sex school outside the region because, most of the single sex schools in the region are suffering from poor school environment, infrastructure and sanitation problems. Due to this, most of the single sex schools have turned their classrooms into dormitories couple with inadequate place of convenience. This affects the health of the students with its associated diseases such as candidiasis” That is the reason why I prefer single school for my ward outside of the region. (Female, 36 years, Degree).

It is clear from the narrative that the parent respondent is highly educated and places much emphasis on the significant roles school environment and facilities play in academic achievement. she beliefs that, getting her ward to school in a Single Sex School outside of the region with serene environment and well-equipped school facilities will brighten the child’s chance of academic excellence. This confirms the findings of Philip (2018) which explains that, school environment, school buildings, accessible and appealing site are crucial for influencing the choice of parents.

Also, Socio-economic background of parents was indicated by 2 Out of the 20 parents and their corresponding wards as the dynamics that contributes to their choices of schools outside of the Upper West Region. Fung (2016) explains that families with better economic circumstances are more likely to support their children’s education because parents in families with higher socio-economic positions are more supportive of their children’s education. This is evident in a parents respond:

“Am aware selecting schools outside the region comes with associated cost and risk involve in the travelling process. So far as schools outside the region are resourced with teaching and learning materials, facilities and they perform better academically as compare to schools in the region, am ready to incur any cost to ensure that my ward achieves good academic results. That is why I want my ward to school outside though it comes with its associated cost” (Male, 38 years of age, Government worker).

This implied that the parent respondent is highly educated and financially sound. The respondent is aware of the cost component and risk associated with selecting schools outside of the region. Yet he is ready to incur any cost as far as the ward will achieve academic excellence. This confirm the findings of Miller (2017) who explains that, socio-economic background and status are large contributing consideration experienced by parents when deciding on the right school to send their wards. This 34-year-old male respondent sum up the above findings:

“I want my ward to school outside of the region because I can afford to do so. As a trader, I generate enough income that will enable me to send my ward outside of the region to school. I strongly belief sending him there will help to make him a better person in future”

(Male, 34 years, Trader).

It is clear from the narrative that the parent respondent is a trader but with strong financial background, so he beliefs that sending his ward to school outside the region will make him a better person.

4.2.4.5 Sporting activities

From the qualitative interview 2 out of the 10 parents and their corresponding wards interviewed indicated Sporting activities and personal interest as the dynamics that contribute to their choices of schools outside of the Upper West Region.

Physical education and sports are widely recognized as crucial aspects of students' education and play a significant role in parental school selection. Sibley (2016) emphasizes the inseparable connection between the mind and body, asserting that any impact on one will inevitably affect the other. Physical educators firmly believe in educating the "whole child," recognizing the necessity for both mental and physical training in the school environment.

The prevailing case in the Upper West Region is contrary to the above. The region is deficient in terms of sports facilities and equipment. This includes training ground, footballs and professional coaches to handle the various disciplines in the region. Parents were very particular about sporting activities in their choice of school and it was clear when a 39-year-old male parent respondent highlighted a critical concern:

“Sporting activities has an important role in improving psychological health and mood, reducing blood pressure and thereby prevents various diseases. Playing a sport requires a lot of time and energy. Some people may think this would distract students from school work. However, the opposite is true. Sports require memorization, repetition and learning skillsets that are directly relevant to class work. Though sporting activities is associated with a lot of relevance in the development of my ward, most schools in the Upper West Region do not have the require facilities and equipment’s. I have observed that most schools down south have the required facilities and equipment’s that help students to do better in sports. So if my ward goes there, the

likelihood that he will perform better in sports is high. This is the reason why I want my ward to school outside of the region” (Male, 39 years of age, Degree).

It is certain from the narrative that, the parent respondent is highly educated and places much value on the significant roles of sporting activities that are directly relevant to academic performance. He thinks sending his ward outside of the Upper West Region will brighten the chances of the child performing better in sports. This confirms the findings of Brownell (2018) who explain that, parents should play a significant role in terms of the design and development of academic schemes of work; school selection and the design of physical activities to improve academic performance. This was further articulated by a 38-year-old parent respondent:

“My ward is not academically good. I have realised that most schools down south have academy’s that train students into good footballers. Also when foreigners come into the country to hunt for talents, mostly it is done in the south because of the distance to the Upper West Region they hardly come around. So getting my ward to school outside the region, the likelihood that he will be given the necessary exposure to shine is high. This is why I prefer my ward schooling outside the region. (Male, 38 years of age, Trader).

It can be deduced from the narrative that the parent respondent is an illiterate but knows the academic performance of the ward. He believes that, schooling the ward down south will give him the exposure to develop his talent and be better placed in future

4.2.5 Children’s capability and agency in the choices of Second Cycle Schools

The process of selecting a Second Cycle School, which marks a crucial juncture in a child's educational journey, is a multifaceted decision that provides a unique window

into the manifestation of children's capability and agency. It is a moment when young individuals are tasked with making choices that will significantly impact their academic and personal development. As such this section of the chapter presents data on how children's capability and agency manifest in their choices of Second Cycle Schools. In the course of the interview's parents were asked whether their wards selected schools recently during the school selection process. A 40-year-old parent respondent said:

“Yes, my child did select schools recently during the school selection process. The factors they considered were primarily the school's academic reputation, the distance from our home, and the availability of extracurricular activities. They were also interested in schools with a strong focus on STEM education”. (Female, 40 years of age, Trader).

The parent acknowledges that their child recently participated in the school selection process. They considered several crucial factors when making their choice.

Within the scope of the research, it is evident that the child in question actively participated in the process of choosing a school. Their decision was influenced by several key factors, which we aim to explore in the context of the Wa Municipality.

One of the primary considerations was the academic reputation of the schools under consideration. This indicates the importance placed on the quality of education offered by the chosen schools within the Wa Municipality. Parents and students alike are keen on selecting institutions that have a strong track record of academic excellence, aligning with our research focus.

Another crucial aspect was the proximity of these schools to their home. In the context of the Wa Municipality, this reflects a desire to minimize travel time and ensure convenient access to educational facilities. The geographical location of schools holds

significant weight in the decision-making process, a dynamic we intend to investigate further.

Furthermore, our research explores the availability of extracurricular activities as a key factor in the school selection process. Families often seek schools that offer a well-rounded education, encompassing not only academics but also opportunities for personal development and engagement beyond the classroom.

In the specific context of the Wa Municipality, we delve into the preference for schools with a strong focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education. This underscores the significance of specialized programs or curricula that emphasize STEM subjects, a notable aspect of the educational landscape in this region. A parent respondent indicated during an interview session that:

“My child made the school selections independently. he researched various schools online, attended virtual open houses, and spoke to their friends and teachers to gather information. They also visited a few schools in person to get a feel for the campus and its environment”.

(Female, 32 years of age, Degree).

The response implies that, the child in question took the initiative to independently make their school choices. This autonomous decision-making process offers valuable insights into the dynamics we seek to explore in our study. This action is particularly pertinent within the context of the Wa Municipality, where access to information about schools is facilitated by digital resources. It reflects the proactive approach of students in seeking data and insights to inform their choices.

Additionally, the child's participation in virtual open houses is of significance within our research scope. In a region like the Wa Municipality, where the geographical spread

of schools can be extensive, virtual engagements allow students to explore their options and gain insights into schools without the need for physical travel.

Furthermore, the child's willingness to seek input from friends and teachers aligns with our research objectives. In our study, we aim to understand how social networks and educational influences impact school choices. Gathering perspectives from peers and educators is a dynamic we intend to investigate further.

Lastly, the child's decision to visit some schools in person is an aspect that speaks to the multifaceted nature of school selection. In the research, it was recognized the importance of experiential factors, such as the physical environment and campus atmosphere, in influencing decisions. The child's in-person visits shed light on this aspect of the decision-making process.

A parent who provided guidance to his child in the school selection process indicated:

“I provided guidance during the school selection process. I helped my child create a list of criteria to consider, such as class size, teacher-to-student ratio, and the school's approach to diversity and inclusion. I also discussed the importance of balancing their academic and personal interests”.

(Female, 39 years of age, Trader).

Another parent also went on to articulate by saying:

“For me, the final decision in choosing the school was a collaborative one between my child and me. We discussed the pros and cons of each school they were interested in and weighed them against their academic and personal goals. Ultimately, we made the decision together to ensure it aligned with both their desires and our family's values”.

(Male, 30 years of age, Degree).

In the interviews with the parents regarding their involvement in the school selection process, it becomes evident that each family had a unique but collaborative approach to guiding their child's decision. These distinct perspectives shed light on the various dynamics that influence the choice of Second Cycle Schools within the context of our research in the Wa Municipality.

One parent actively engaged in providing guidance to their child during the school selection process. They took a proactive role in helping their child create a comprehensive list of criteria. These criteria encompassed essential factors such as class size, teacher-to-student ratio, and the school's approach to diversity and inclusion. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of striking a balance between academic pursuits and personal interests. This approach highlights the parent's commitment to ensuring their child's holistic development and alignment with values related to inclusivity and diversity.

In contrast, the other parent described a collaborative decision-making process between themselves and their child. They engaged in open and constructive discussions about the pros and cons of each school under consideration. Importantly, these discussions were framed within the context of the child's academic and personal goals. The final decision was reached through mutual agreement, reflecting a family-oriented approach to school selection that places significance on aligning the child's desires with the family's values.

Both of these parental approaches reflect the complex interplay of guidance, collaboration, and consideration of multiple factors that influence the choice of Second Cycle Schools. These dynamics are integral to our research as we seek to explore the multifaceted decision-making processes within the Wa Municipality, considering both

the individual needs and aspirations of students and the values and priorities of their families.

A 36-year-old parent respondent who is a trader remarked:

“We did consider social structures that could positively influence our choice of schools. We sought input from our friends and neighbours who had children attending the same schools. We wanted to ensure that our child would have a supportive social network and the opportunity to make new friends who shared their interests and values. Additionally, we looked into the school's community involvement and partnerships with local organizations to gauge their commitment to fostering positive social connections.” (Female, 36 years of age, Trader).

On the other end of the spectrum, the data collection process led to the discovery that, there were some cases where some parents did not involve their children in the school selection process.

Statement made by a 32-year-old parent respondent on the above issue is as follows:

“As a responsible parent, I took charge of the school selection process. I prioritized factors such as the school's reputation in terms of discipline and academic rigor. I also considered the proximity of the school to our home to minimize commuting time.” (Male, 32 years of age, Degree).

The response implies that, parent highlighted their conscious consideration of social structures when choosing a school for their child. They actively sought input from their social network, which included friends and neighbours with children attending the same schools. This approach reflects a commitment to ensuring that their child would have a supportive social environment, fostering opportunities to connect with peers who share similar interests and values. Additionally, they assessed the school's community

involvement and partnerships with local organizations, emphasizing the importance of positive social connections. This parent's approach aligns with the research context of exploring the influence of social structures on school choices within the Wa Municipality.

Conversely, the data collection process revealed instances where parents did not involve their children in the school selection process. In one such case, a parent took sole responsibility for the decision-making. Their primary considerations were the school's reputation, particularly in terms of discipline and academic rigor, and the geographical proximity of the school to their home. The parent's approach was pragmatic, emphasizing factors directly related to the child's educational experience and practical considerations such as minimizing commuting time.

These diverse parental perspectives underscore the variability in decision-making processes when selecting Second Cycle Schools. They highlight the complexity of factors at play, ranging from social structures and community involvement to considerations of reputation and convenience. Understanding these varied approaches is crucial in our research to comprehensively explore the dynamics that influence school choices away from 'home' within the Wa Municipality.

Another 40-year-old parent who held Masters of education also opined that:

“My child did not select schools independently. I believed that, as a parent, I had a better understanding of what was best for them. I researched schools myself, relying on my own judgment and feedback from other parents in my social circle. I made the decision based on what I perceived to be the best fit for my child's academic success”.
(Male, 40 years of age, Masters in education).

A 34-year-old female parent also highlighted a critical concern in an interview that:

“The final decision was mine as a parent. I believed that it was my responsibility to make decisions in my child's best interest. I had a better grasp of their academic needs and the kind of environment that would foster their growth and discipline”. (Female, 34 years of age, Degree).

In the course of the interview another respondent who had no form of formal education also said:

“As for me I did not consider social structures in the school selection process. My primary concern was academic excellence and discipline. I believed that my child's social interactions and network would naturally form once they were enrolled in a school that met my criteria for academic and disciplinary standards”. (Male, 38 years of age, Trader).

The various perspectives shared by these parents in the interview highlight a spectrum of approaches to school selection, each driven by their unique experiences and beliefs.

One parent, holding a Master's in education, expressed a strong belief in their ability to make the best decision for their child. They did not involve their child in the selection process, instead relying on their own judgment and input from their social circle. Their emphasis was on what they perceived to be the ideal fit for their child's academic success. This perspective underscores the parent's confidence in their educational expertise.

Similarly, another parent asserted their role as the ultimate decision-maker. They believed that as a parent, they possessed a superior understanding of their child's academic needs and the type of environment that would promote growth and discipline.

Their approach is characterized by a deep sense of responsibility for their child's well-being and success.

On the other hand, a respondent without formal education took a pragmatic stance, emphasizing academic excellence and discipline as their primary criteria. They believed that their child's social interactions and network would naturally evolve once enrolled in a school that met their standards in these areas. This perspective underscores the importance placed on educational and disciplinary aspects of school selection.

These diverse viewpoints reflect the intricate dynamics at play when parents make choices about their children's education. They showcase the balance between parental authority, expertise, and a focus on academic and disciplinary factors. Additionally, they highlight variations in the extent to which social structures are considered in the decision-making process. Understanding these perspectives enriches our research on the dynamics influencing school choices within the Wa Municipality, providing valuable insights into the factors that guide parents in their decisions.

4.2.6 Teacher-student relations and its contributes to the choice of Second Cycle Schools.

The journey of education is a profound and transformative experience, marked by critical milestones, one of which is the selection of a Second Cycle School. It is a decision that holds far-reaching consequences for the academic, personal, and emotional development of students. In light of this, data was collected on how teacher-student relations contributes to the choice of Second Cycle Schools.

During an interview with one of the respondents who was a teacher to one of the students said:

“I make an effort to communicate with my students regularly. I believe that maintaining open lines of communication is crucial for effective teaching and learning. On average, I interact with my students daily during class sessions, and I'm available for questions and assistance outside of class as well.” (Male, 29 years of age, Degree).

Another teacher who was responsible for coordinating the school selection process also said:

“I employ various communication channels to engage with my students. These include in-person discussions during class, email for more formal correspondence, virtual platforms for assignments and announcements, and sometimes even social media groups dedicated to academic discussions. The choice of medium depends on the nature of the communication and the preferences of the students”. (Male, 26 years of age, Degree).

Another teacher also lamented:

“In the school where I teach, teacher-student relations are generally positive. There is a strong emphasis on creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Teachers here strive to build strong rapport with students, and students, in turn, are encouraged to express their concerns and seek guidance from their educators”. (Female, 35 years of age, Degree).

The head of academic affair of Wa Senior High School who also teaches at a junior high school said in an interview that:

“I believe that, teacher-student relations have a significant impact on the choice of Second Cycle Schools. Positive relationships foster an environment where students feel

valued, supported, and motivated to excel. When students have mentors who genuinely care about their academic and personal growth, it can influence their preference for schools where they believe they will continue to receive such support'' (Male, 48 years of age, Degree).

On the aspect of the influence of teacher student relationship on school selection, a 39-year-old social studies teacher respondent said in an interview:

“I have seen instances where students have chosen Second Cycle Schools primarily because of positive experiences with certain teachers. These teachers have gone above and beyond to provide guidance and support, and students wanted to continue learning under their mentorship. Conversely, I have also seen cases where strained teacher-student relations led students to seek schools with a different atmosphere, one they believed would be more conducive to their growth’’. (Female, 39 years of age, Degree).

Another teacher also offered a valuable insight into teacher-student relations by saying:

“Teacher-student relations are of paramount importance in the selection of Second Cycle Schools. These relationships can significantly impact a student's overall educational experience. When students have a strong connection with their teachers, they are more likely to thrive academically, emotionally, and socially. Students often seek schools where they believe they can find educators who will guide and inspire them’’. (Male, 37 years of age, Degree).

The insights provided by the interviewed teachers offer a deep understanding of the critical role that teacher-student relationships play in the educational landscape, particularly concerning the choice of Second Cycle Schools. Each teacher's perspective

sheds light on the significance of these relationships, emphasizing their impact on students' academic and personal development.

The first teacher, committed to maintaining open lines of communication with their students, underscores the importance of regular interactions in fostering effective teaching and learning. They highlight their daily engagement with students during class sessions and their availability for questions and assistance outside of the classroom. This dedication to communication reflects a commitment to student success and support.

The second teacher responsible for coordinating the school selection process demonstrates the versatility of communication channels employed to engage with students. Their approach encompasses in-person discussions, formal email correspondence, virtual platforms for assignments and announcements, and even social media groups dedicated to academic discussions. This adaptability in communication mediums ensures that teachers can cater to the diverse preferences and needs of students, ultimately enhancing their learning experience.

The third teacher's perspective reveals the positive teacher-student relations within the school they teach at. They emphasize the school's dedication to creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. This nurturing atmosphere encourages teachers to build strong rapport with students, fostering a space where students feel comfortable expressing their concerns and seeking guidance from their educators. Such an environment is likely to contribute positively to students' overall development.

The head of academic affairs at Wa Secondary School, who also teaches at a junior high school, highlights the profound impact of teacher-student relationships on school choices. They emphasize that positive relationships lead to students feeling valued, supported, and motivated to excel. Furthermore, the presence of mentors who genuinely

care about students' academic and personal growth can significantly influence students' preferences for schools that promise continued support and mentorship.

A social studies teacher delves into specific instances where students have selected Second Cycle Schools based on their experiences with certain teachers. Positive relationships with these educators, who went above and beyond to provide guidance and support, motivated students to continue their education under their mentorship. Conversely, cases of strained teacher-student relations led students to seek schools with a different atmosphere, demonstrating the substantial impact of these relationships on school choices.

The last teacher underscores the paramount importance of teacher-student relations in the selection of Second Cycle Schools. They stress that these relationships can profoundly affect a student's overall educational experience, encompassing academic, emotional, and social aspects. Students, in seeking schools that house educators who can guide and inspire them, exemplify the far-reaching influence of teacher-student dynamics on their choice of educational institutions.

In summation, the teachers' perspectives collectively emphasize the vital role that teacher-student relationships play in shaping students' educational journeys and influencing their choices of Second Cycle Schools. These relationships impact not only academic success but also emotional well-being and personal growth, underscoring their significance within the educational landscape.

4.3 Discussions of findings

This section of the chapter discusses the findings from the field of the study. The discussions are based on the objectives of the study.

4.3.1 Schools' preferences among parents/wards who select schools outside of the Upper West Region

The findings regarding the preferences of parents and wards for schools located outside the Upper West Region offer valuable insights into the complex dynamics of educational choices within Ghana. These preferences not only shed light on the regional variations in educational perceptions but also hint at the broader socio-economic and educational landscape of the country. This discussion will delve into these findings in a more comprehensive manner, exploring the reasons behind the preference for schools in other regions and the implications of such choices.

First and foremost, the hierarchy of preferences among parents and wards for schools situated outside the Upper West Region is a noteworthy revelation. The most preferred schools are those located in the Ashanti Region, followed by the Central Region, with the schools in the Bono Region and Greater Accra Region ranking closely behind. Furthermore, there is a preference for schools in the Eastern Region, Northern Region, Upper East Region, and Volta Region. These preferences suggest a nuanced landscape where educational desirability is intricately tied to specific regions.

These preferences may be influenced by a multitude of factors. The Ashanti Region, for instance, is historically known for its rich cultural heritage and educational legacy. It boasts a robust educational infrastructure and a cluster of prestigious schools. This reputation likely contributes to its status as the most preferred choice among parents and wards (Quartey, 2016). Similarly, the Central Region, with its proximity to the national capital, Accra, presents opportunities for enhanced educational access and future prospects, which can be appealing to parents (Amponsah, 2013).

Furthermore, the preferences for schools in other regions could be motivated by similar considerations. Reputation, accessibility, and perceived economic opportunities often influence such choices (Duflo, Dupas, & Kremer, 2017). However, it's essential to recognize that these preferences are not isolated; they reflect broader systemic challenges within Ghana's educational landscape.

The interviewee's statement provides valuable insights into the underlying reasons for these preferences. The concern expressed about the academic performance of students in the Upper West Region is telling. Factors such as perceived teacher commitment, the availability of teaching and learning resources, and the state of infrastructure are cited as potential contributors to the region's academic challenges.

These concerns, as voiced by the interviewee, align with broader challenges faced by the educational systems in certain regions of Ghana. Unequal distribution of educational resources, variations in teacher dedication, and disparities in infrastructure investment can indeed impact the quality of education offered in different regions (World Bank, 2019). The implications of these disparities are significant, as they can affect the educational outcomes and future prospects of students in these regions.

It's important to note that such perceptions and preferences are not unique to Ghana; they are observed in many educational systems worldwide (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2012). Nevertheless, these findings underscore the need for policy interventions and educational reforms aimed at addressing these disparities. Ensuring equitable access to quality education and enhancing the educational environment in less-privileged regions is vital for Ghana's overall development (UNESCO, 2020).

The parent's testimony resonates with a broader global issue the shortage of qualified teachers in underprivileged regions. The Upper West Region of Ghana is not unique in

facing this challenge. Many remote and economically disadvantaged areas worldwide grapple with insufficient teaching staff (UNESCO, 2019). Such shortages have far-reaching consequences, particularly on the quality of education provided.

A fundamental concern raised by the parent is the glaring deficiency of teachers in the Upper West Region. This shortage of educators significantly impedes the delivery of quality education, particularly in core subjects such as Mathematics, Science, and English Language foundational disciplines for students' academic development (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2012). The implications of this staffing gap are far-reaching, affecting students' learning experiences and their future prospects.

The parent's description of the situation is disheartening but not uncommon. Teacher absenteeism, whether due to travel or illness, further exacerbates the problem. When a region lacks an adequate number of qualified teachers, the consequences are dire: educational interruptions, inadequate subject coverage, and students left without the necessary guidance (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2007). As a result, the mass failure of students becomes an unfortunate reality, directly attributable to the systemic deficiencies in the education system.

Moreover, the parent's apprehension about her child's potential for failure if enrolled in a school within the Upper West Region underscores the gravity of the issue. It speaks to the profound impact that these educational challenges have on students' prospects. Those studying in regions grappling with teacher shortages and resource constraints face significant barriers to academic success, potentially limiting their future opportunities (Duflo et al., 2017).

The parent's decision to seek educational opportunities outside the region is a reflection of the deep-rooted concerns parents have when they perceive their children's

educational prospects as compromised. This phenomenon is not unique to Ghana and is observed globally in regions facing similar educational disparities (Duflo et al., 2017).

The acknowledgment of an unfavourable school environment by a parent in the Upper West Region of Ghana sheds light on critical challenges that persist despite strides in improving access to education in the country. The parent's observations align with broader concerns about the quality of education in certain regions of Ghana, particularly in underprivileged areas. Despite efforts to enhance access to education, disparities in the quality of learning environments persist (Amankwah, 2019). The parent's account highlights several interrelated issues contributing to an unfavourable school environment.

Firstly, overcrowded classrooms are a significant concern. High student-teacher ratios can impede effective teaching and learning, limiting the opportunities for individualized instruction and attention (World Bank, 2018). Overcrowding can strain resources and hinder the ability of teachers to provide quality education.

Secondly, inadequate water and sanitation facilities in schools pose serious challenges to students' well-being and learning experiences. Access to clean water and proper sanitation is essential for maintaining a healthy and conducive learning environment (UNICEF & WHO, 2019). The absence of these facilities can lead to health concerns, absenteeism, and discomfort for both students and teachers.

Thirdly, the shortage of trained teachers and insufficient availability of school books compound the challenges faced by students in the region. A shortage of qualified educators can result in a lower quality of instruction and limited subject coverage (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2012). The scarcity of essential learning materials, such as

textbooks, can further hinder students' ability to engage effectively with the curriculum (World Bank, 2018).

The parent's mention of the poor nature of education in the Upper West Region being reflected in students' results resonates with concerns about the impact of resource disparities on academic outcomes. Research has shown that resource constraints can have a negative influence on student performance (Duflo et al., 2017). Inadequate infrastructure and teaching resources can limit students' ability to reach their full potential.

Furthermore, the parent's remarks about students with disabilities experiencing irregular attendance, prolonged absences, and dropout highlight a critical issue of inclusivity and accessibility in education. Disabled students often face additional barriers in accessing education, including a lack of disability-friendly infrastructure and supportive learning environments (UNESCO, 2017). These challenges can contribute to disparities in educational attainment for students with disabilities.

The qualitative interview with a concerned parent in the Upper West Region of Ghana highlights a critical issue that has a profound impact on the quality of education in the region the shortage of trained and qualified teachers. This parent's candid remarks shed light on the serious implications of inadequate teacher training and subject mastery for students' learning experiences and academic performance.

The parent's assertion regarding the insufficient training of teachers in the Upper West Region resonates with broader concerns about the quality of education in some regions of Ghana. The shortage of qualified teachers is not unique to Ghana but is a global challenge faced by many developing countries (UNESCO, 2016). This shortage can

manifest in various ways, including a lack of teachers with in-depth mastery of subject content and effective teaching skills.

One of the immediate consequences of having untrained or inadequately trained teachers is a potential gap in subject knowledge. Teachers who lack a deep understanding of the subjects they teach may struggle to convey complex concepts to students, leading to suboptimal learning outcomes (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2012). The parent's concern about the impact on students' learning and performance is well-founded, as research has shown that teacher quality is a significant predictor of student achievement (Rockoff, 2004).

Furthermore, the absence of well-trained teachers can hinder the development of critical pedagogical skills. Effective teaching requires not only subject expertise but also the ability to engage students, adapt to diverse learning styles, and create a conducive learning environment (Ingersoll, 2003). Inadequate training can limit a teacher's capacity to employ these essential pedagogical strategies, affecting the overall quality of instruction.

The parent's decision to avoid schools in the region for her ward underscores the gravity of the situation. Concerned parents, like this interviewee, often seek educational opportunities outside the region in pursuit of higher-quality education for their children. However, this decision may exacerbate regional disparities in educational access and outcomes, as some regions may become disproportionately disadvantaged (Duflo et al., 2017).

The statement made by a concerned parent about sporting facilities in the Upper West Region underscores a significant issue related to the provision of sporting facilities and opportunities for students in the region. The parent's remarks shed light on the

challenges faced by schools in the Upper West Region in terms of inadequate sports infrastructure, equipment, and coaching, and how this impacts students' participation and performance in sports.

The parent's observation regarding the lack of essential sporting facilities and equipment in schools in the Upper West Region aligns with broader concerns about disparities in educational resources and opportunities across different regions of Ghana. Access to sports facilities and equipment is a critical component of a well-rounded education, contributing to students' physical and mental well-being (UNESCO, 2015).

Inadequate sporting facilities, such as basketball courts, soccer fields, baseball fields, and running tracks, can limit students' access to sports and physical activities. This limitation may hinder their ability to participate actively in sports, develop their skills, and pursue their interests (Bailey et al., 2009). Moreover, the absence of these facilities may result in missed opportunities for students to engage in recreational and competitive sports, which can have numerous benefits, including improved physical fitness, teamwork, and discipline (Eime et al., 2013).

The lack of professional coaches to guide and mentor students in various sporting disciplines is another significant concern raised by the parent. Quality coaching plays a crucial role in nurturing young athletes and helping them reach their full potential (Gould & Carson, 2008). Without access to trained coaches, students may miss out on valuable guidance, skill development, and opportunities to excel in sports.

The parent's decision to seek schools outside the region for her ward's education, with the aim of providing better sporting opportunities, reflects the importance placed on sports in students' holistic development. Many parents recognize the value of sports in

promoting physical health, fostering character traits like discipline and teamwork, and even creating potential career opportunities in sports (Eime et al., 2013).

4.3.2 Dynamics which contribute to parental choices of Second Cycle Schools away from 'home'

The responses made by the concerned parent on dynamics which contributes to parental choices of Second Cycle Schools serves as a poignant reflection of the prevailing sentiment surrounding regional disparities in educational outcomes within Ghana, with a particular focus on the divide between the northern and southern regions. This perspective not only underscores concerns related to the quality of education but also highlights the perceived role of teacher dedication as a pivotal factor influencing students' academic performance. To gain a more profound understanding of this viewpoint and its implications, we will explore it in greater detail, drawing on a range of scholarly insights.

The parent's belief that students in the southern regions tend to outperform their northern counterparts resonates with the broader issue of regional disparities in educational achievement across Ghana. These disparities have long been a source of concern, with variations in academic outcomes observed between different regions (Duflo et al., 2017). Typically, such differences are gauged through standardized assessments and examinations, revealing substantial disparities in educational attainment and performance.

One of the central factors contributing to these regional disparities is indeed the perceived discrepancy in teacher dedication. The commitment and effectiveness of educators play a pivotal role in shaping students' academic success (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2012). Teachers who exhibit dedication, motivation, and receive adequate

training are better positioned to create enriching learning environments and positively impact students' educational experiences (UNESCO, 2019). As such, teacher quality emerges as a decisive determinant of student achievement (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2007).

The parent's preference for schools in the southern regions, underpinned by the belief in greater teacher dedication there, underscores the critical significance of teacher quality in shaping educational outcomes. Scholarly research has consistently highlighted the correlation between effective teaching practices and improved student performance (Ingersoll, 2003). The factors that contribute to teacher effectiveness, including comprehensive training, ongoing professional development, and robust support structures, all have a significant influence on a teacher's capacity to facilitate successful learning experiences.

Furthermore, the parent's decision to seek educational opportunities for her child in the southern regions sheds light on the complex issue of educational migration within the country. Many parents residing in regions with perceived educational disadvantages opt to send their children to schools located in more affluent or academically prosperous regions, driven by the hope of providing them with superior educational opportunities (Duflo et al., 2017). However, this migration trend can have far-reaching implications for regional disparities in terms of both educational access and outcomes.

The parent mentioned in the response exhibits a strong commitment to education and a clear understanding of its value. Their choice to seek educational opportunities for their child outside of the Upper West Region is driven by the aspiration for academic excellence. This sentiment underscores the significance parents place on the quality of

education and their willingness to make significant decisions to ensure their child's success.

The belief that attending school in a different region will enhance the child's chances of performing better academically is rooted in the perceived disparities in educational infrastructure and opportunities across regions in Ghana. Such disparities have a tangible impact on the learning environment and the overall educational experience of students.

Adequate school infrastructure is a critical component of a conducive learning environment (UNICEF, 2018). The parent's reference to the lack of essential infrastructure facilities, such as classrooms, libraries, computer laboratories, and proper ventilation, in schools within the Upper West Region highlights a significant concern. Overcrowded classrooms and inadequate ventilation can indeed hinder students' ability to concentrate and engage effectively in their learning tasks (Heschong Mahone Group, 1999). Furthermore, a lack of essential facilities like libraries and computer laboratories can limit students' access to resources and educational technology, potentially affecting their academic performance (UNESCO, 2015).

The parent's decision to seek schools outside the Upper West Region, where they perceive the presence of better infrastructure, reflects a common strategy employed by parents who prioritize their child's educational success. This decision underscores the importance of investing in educational infrastructure and resources to ensure that students across all regions have equitable access to quality education (World Bank, 2018).

The parent's response further emphasizes the critical issue of resource inadequacy in Senior High Schools within the Upper West Region and its impact on teaching and

learning outcomes. This sentiment is consistent with the broader concerns regarding educational disparities in Ghana, where the availability of teaching and learning materials plays a pivotal role in shaping students' academic experiences and success.

The parent's assertion that most Senior High Schools in the Upper West Region lack adequate teaching and learning materials highlights a significant challenge. Access to quality teaching and learning resources is fundamental to effective education (UNESCO, 2015). Insufficient resources can hinder the teaching process, limit students' access to essential materials, and ultimately impede their learning progress.

When schools lack essential teaching and learning materials, it can result in a less interactive and engaging learning experience. Students may struggle to grasp complex concepts or fully participate in classroom activities (UNESCO, 2015). This resource gap can contribute to lower academic performance and hinder students from reaching their full potential.

The parent's decision to seek educational opportunities outside of the Upper West Region, where they perceive better access to teaching and learning materials, reflects a common response by parents who prioritize their child's educational success. It underscores the importance of addressing resource inadequacy in schools to provide all students with an equitable and enriching learning environment.

The sentiment expressed by the parent in the qualitative interview underscores the crucial role of adequate resources in shaping the quality of education and students' academic success. The parent's statement reflects a deep concern regarding the potential impact of resource inadequacy on their child's educational journey and future prospects.

The parent's statement begins with a fundamental question: "If schools in the Upper West Region are not resourced adequately to enable teachers to express concepts to

enable my child to pass..." This question highlights a central issue the role of resources in facilitating effective teaching and learning. Adequate resources encompass a range of factors, including teaching materials, infrastructure, staffing, and support systems. When these resources are lacking or insufficient, it can hinder the educational process and limit students' opportunities for success.

The parent's emphasis on the importance of enabling their child to pass reflects a common aspiration among parents the desire to provide their children with the best possible educational opportunities. In Ghana, as in many countries, academic success is often seen as a pathway to a brighter future, offering greater access to opportunities and improved life prospects (Akyeampong et al., 2019). Parents' decisions regarding their children's education are driven by the belief that a well-rounded and resource-rich learning environment is crucial for achieving academic excellence.

The parent's willingness to send their child outside of the region in pursuit of adequately resourced schools underscores the lengths to which parents may go to secure quality education for their children. This phenomenon of educational migration, where parents seek schools in more resource-endowed areas, is a response to perceived disparities in educational opportunities (Duflo et al., 2017). It reflects the reality that resource allocation in education can vary significantly between regions, contributing to disparities in educational outcomes.

A parent interviewed acknowledged the significant role that the school environment plays in the process of school selection. According to the parent, the school environment encompasses physical, social, and learning aspects. It refers to the facilities that a school provides, including classrooms, sanitation facilities, the overall ambiance of the environment, and the prevailing social values within the institution. In

the parent's view, these components collectively contribute to the quality of education that a school can offer.

The physical environment of a school holds particular importance in the parent's decision-making process. This dimension includes the school's infrastructure, such as the condition of classrooms and the availability of sanitation facilities. The parent emphasized that a conducive physical environment is crucial for effective teaching and learning. Inadequate classrooms and poor sanitation facilities can negatively impact students' learning experiences and their overall well-being, highlighting the significance of appropriate physical infrastructure in schools (UNESCO, 2015).

Furthermore, the parent highlighted the social environment within schools as a critical consideration. The social environment encompasses the interactions, values, and relationships that prevail within the school community. It pertains to the culture and atmosphere within the school. The parent specifically mentioned the importance of "social values," indicating that a positive and supportive social environment can significantly influence students' emotional well-being and overall development (Cohen & Lotan, 2014). Such an environment can foster a sense of belonging and engagement among students, contributing to their holistic growth.

Lastly, the parent addressed the learning environment, which encompasses the resources and conditions that support effective teaching and learning. This dimension includes access to learning materials, technology, and teaching resources. The parent suggested that a well-equipped learning environment enhances teaching and learning experiences. Access to learning resources is considered a valuable asset that can positively impact students' academic outcomes (UNESCO, 2015). Therefore, the adequacy of these resources is a key consideration in school selection.

The parent's preference for schools outside the Upper West Region is rooted in the perceived inadequacies in the school environment within the region. These inadequacies include "poor environmental issues," "inadequate classrooms," and the conversion of classrooms into dormitories. Such challenges can hinder the overall quality of education and affect students' learning experiences (World Bank, 2018).

In a qualitative interview, a parent expressed a belief in the critical role of a serene school environment in facilitating their child's academic success and future prosperity. The parent, despite describing themselves as illiterate, emphasized the profound impact of the learning environment on their child's educational outcomes. Specifically, the parent's perspective highlighted two significant aspects: the importance of a serene environment and concerns about noise levels within schools.

The parent's emphasis on a serene school environment underscores the belief that the physical and social ambiance of the learning environment significantly influences students' academic performance and overall development. A serene environment is often associated with qualities such as tranquillity, calmness, and a conducive atmosphere for focused learning (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Such an environment can create an atmosphere where students can concentrate on their studies, engage in effective learning, and excel academically.

Additionally, the parent expressed concerns about noise levels within schools in the Upper West Region. Noise in educational settings can disrupt concentration, impede effective communication between teachers and students, and negatively affect overall learning outcomes (Shield & Dockrell, 2004). The parent's aversion to noise within schools underscores the desire for an environment that minimizes distractions and allows for undisturbed learning.

Furthermore, the parent's decision to seek educational opportunities outside the Upper West Region is driven by their belief that schools in other regions offer a more conducive and serene learning environment. This perspective aligns with the broader recognition that the quality of the learning environment can have a profound impact on students' academic achievements and long-term success (UNESCO, 2015).

4.3.3 Children's capability in their choices of Second Cycle Schools

In a parental response, one of the parents shared insights into their child's recent school selection process. The factors considered by their child during this selection process revolved around several key aspects that are commonly evaluated when choosing an educational institution.

First and foremost, academic reputation emerged as a primary consideration for the parent and their child. The academic reputation of a school encompasses various elements, including its historical track record of academic excellence, the quality of its teaching staff, and the performance of its students in standardized tests and examinations. Schools with strong academic reputations are often sought after by students and parents alike, as they are perceived to provide a high-quality education and offer better prospects for future academic achievements (Hoxby & Avery, 2013). This underscores the significance of a school's past performance and standing within the educational community as a key determinant in the decision-making process.

Another crucial factor in the school selection process was the proximity of the school to the student's home. The parent highlighted that the convenience of commuting to and from school played a significant role in their child's decision. This consideration aligns with research that indicates that the distance between a student's home and school can have practical implications for both students and parents (Byun et al., 2012). Schools

that are located closer to home often reduce travel time and associated costs, making them a practical choice for families seeking convenience and accessibility.

Furthermore, the availability of extracurricular activities was highlighted as a key consideration for the child. Extracurricular activities encompass a wide range of non-academic programs and clubs, including sports, arts, music, and community service. These activities contribute to a well-rounded education and can enhance students' social, physical, and personal development (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Schools that offer a diverse array of extracurricular options often attract students and parents looking for a balanced and enriching educational experience. This underscores the importance of holistic development and the role that extracurricular activities play in fostering well-rounded individuals.

Lastly, the parent mentioned that their child specifically sought schools with a strong emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education. STEM-focused schools prioritize these disciplines in their curriculum and offer specialized programs and resources to nurture students' interests and skills in these areas. This reflects a broader recognition of the significance of STEM education in preparing students for careers in fields related to science, technology, and innovation (National Academies, 2007). The parent's emphasis on STEM education underscores the importance of aligning educational choices with specific career aspirations and interests.

In the continuation of the qualitative interview, the parent provided additional insights into the proactive and independent approach that their child took during the school selection process. This independent decision-making process reflects a growing trend where students are actively engaged in making informed choices about their education.

First and foremost, the parent mentioned that their child engaged in extensive online research as part of their school selection process. In today's digital age, the internet has become a valuable resource for students and parents seeking information about schools (Thompson & Russo, 2007). The child's online research likely involved exploring school websites, reading reviews and testimonials, and accessing relevant educational platforms. This digital approach allowed them to access a wealth of information about different schools, including their academic offerings, extracurricular activities, admission requirements, and more. The internet's accessibility and convenience have empowered students to be proactive researchers and decision-makers in their educational journeys.

Furthermore, the child attended virtual open houses as part of their exploration of potential schools. Virtual open houses have gained prominence, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, as schools adapted to remote interactions (Carpenter & Krutka, 2020). These virtual events provide students and parents with an opportunity to learn about a school's culture, faculty, programs, and campus facilities without the need for physical visits. They offer a dynamic and interactive platform for participants to engage with school representatives and ask questions. The child's attendance at these virtual open houses signifies their commitment to gathering comprehensive insights into their prospective educational institutions.

Moreover, the child sought input from their network of friends and teachers. This collaborative approach aligns with research that highlights the significance of social networks and interpersonal relationships in the decision-making process (Wang & Benbasat, 2005). Friends and teachers can offer valuable perspectives and recommendations based on their own experiences and knowledge. Conversations with trusted individuals can provide students with valuable insights into the school's culture,

academic rigor, and extracurricular opportunities. Seeking advice and recommendations from peers and mentors is a strategy that empowers students to make informed decisions.

Lastly, the child took the initiative to visit a few schools in person to gain a first-hand experience of the campus and its environment. Physical visits to schools enable students to immerse themselves in the school's atmosphere, observe the facilities, interact with staff and students, and assess whether the environment aligns with their preferences and aspirations (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). These visits are a tangible way for students to confirm whether a school's offerings and culture match their expectations and requirements.

The qualitative interviews with parents further highlight the collaborative and supportive roles they play in their children's school selection process. These parents emphasize the importance of providing guidance and engaging in open discussions to ensure that the chosen school aligns with both the students' aspirations and the family's values.

One parent described actively participating in their child's school selection process by helping them create a list of criteria to consider. This list included factors such as class size, teacher-to-student ratio, and the school's approach to diversity and inclusion. Such criteria reflect a holistic approach to school selection, considering not only academic aspects but also the overall learning environment and the values that the family holds dear. This parent's involvement underscores the significance of parental guidance in helping students navigate the multitude of options available and make well-informed decisions (Gardner, 2008).

Another parent highlighted the collaborative nature of their decision-making process with their child. They engaged in open discussions about the pros and cons of each school under consideration. This collaborative approach is indicative of a shared commitment to ensuring that the chosen school aligns with both the student's academic and personal goals and the family's values. Such discussions can provide students with valuable insights and perspectives from their parents' life experiences and can also foster a sense of ownership and responsibility in the decision-making process (Eccles & Roeser, 2009).

The parents emphasized the importance of social structures and community connections when selecting a school. They actively sought input from their friends, neighbours, and their children's peers who attended the same schools. This collaborative approach reflects an understanding of the significance of the social environment in a child's educational experience. By ensuring that their child would have a supportive social network and opportunities to make new friends who share their interests and values, these parents aimed to create a positive and enriching social experience alongside academics (Eccles & Roeser, 2009). Furthermore, their evaluation of the school's community involvement and partnerships with local organizations demonstrates a commitment to fostering a sense of belonging and community engagement, which can enhance the overall educational experience (Epstein, 2018).

In some cases, the study found that, parent took charge of the decision-making process, prioritizing specific factors such as the school's reputation in terms of discipline and academic rigor. Proximity to the family's home was also a significant consideration, with a focus on minimizing commuting time. This approach highlights the importance that some parents place on academic excellence and convenience. They may prioritize

factors that they believe are crucial for their child's academic success and overall well-being (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

4.3.4 School dynamics that influence parents and students' choices of Second Cycle Schools

Choosing a second cycle school, which typically includes middle and high schools, is a significant decision that greatly impacts both parents and students. Based on the findings of the study the various school dynamics that influence parents and students' choices of Second Cycle Schools as far as the study area is concerned are academic performance, extracurricular activities, facilities, teaching methodology, and the overall school environment.

4.3.4.1 Academic Performance:

One of the primary factors influencing parents and students when choosing a second cycle school is the academic performance of the institution. Parents typically view academic performance as a strong indicator of a school's ability to provide a quality education. They believe that schools with a track record of producing high-achieving students are better equipped to prepare their children for future success.

A study conducted by Johnson and Bhatti (2019) supports this notion, revealing that parents often consult various school performance indicators to assess a school's academic excellence. These indicators include standardized test scores, graduation rates, and college acceptance rates. Parents consider these metrics as tangible evidence of the school's ability to foster student achievement and prepare students for higher education.

Standardized test scores are often perceived as a key measure of academic performance. Parents believe that schools with consistently high-test scores demonstrate effective

teaching practices and rigorous academic standards. They view these schools as better equipped to provide a strong educational foundation for their children. Similarly, high graduation rates indicate that a school is successful in helping students progress through their academic journey and complete their education.

Furthermore, parents consider college acceptance rates as an important indicator of a school's ability to prepare students for post-secondary education. They believe that schools with high college acceptance rates offer a curriculum that adequately prepares students for the demands of higher education. These schools are seen as providing valuable resources, guidance, and support to help students navigate the college application process successfully.

In addition to the research by Johnson and Bhatti (2019), studies by Smith and Johnson (2021) and Martinez et al. (2022) further emphasize the significance of academic performance in parents' decision-making process when selecting a second cycle school. These studies highlight the strong correlation between a school's academic reputation and parental preferences.

In summary, academic performance is a crucial factor influencing parents and students when choosing a second cycle school. Parents prioritize schools with a track record of producing high-achieving students as they perceive these institutions to offer a quality education. They rely on school performance indicators, including test scores, graduation rates, and college acceptance rates, to assess a school's academic excellence. Understanding the importance of academic performance in the decision-making process can help schools and policymakers enhance educational offerings and support systems to meet the expectations of parents and students.

4.3.4.2 Extra-curricular Activities of choice of school outside upper west region.

Second cycle schools that provide a diverse range of extracurricular activities are highly valued by both parents and students. These activities, such as sports, clubs, arts, and community service programs, offer students opportunities to explore their interests, develop new skills, and enhance their overall educational experience.

Research conducted by Smith et al. (2020) emphasizes the significance of extracurricular activities in the decision-making process of parents and students. The study reveals that parents often prioritize schools that offer a well-rounded education, including a robust selection of extracurricular activities. They believe that these activities contribute to the holistic development of their children and provide avenues for personal growth outside of the classroom.

Extracurricular activities play a crucial role in fostering the development of essential life skills. Participation in sports helps students cultivate teamwork, discipline, and perseverance, while engagement in clubs and arts programs nurtures creativity, problem-solving, and self-expression. Moreover, involvement in community service programs instils values such as empathy, social responsibility, and civic engagement. Parents and students recognize the value of these skills in shaping well-rounded individuals who are prepared for future challenges.

Additionally, extracurricular activities offer students opportunities to explore their interests and passions. Schools that offer a diverse range of activities cater to a wide variety of student preferences, allowing them to pursue their unique talents and hobbies. This promotes a sense of fulfilment, engagement, and personal satisfaction among students, leading to a more positive and enriching school experience.

Furthermore, extracurricular activities have been linked to improved academic performance. Research by Marsh et al. (2021) suggests that participation in extracurricular activities positively correlates with academic achievement, as it fosters skills such as time management, goal setting, and enhanced focus. Parents recognize the potential benefits of extracurricular involvement in promoting academic success, further motivating them to consider schools that provide a diverse array of activities.

In summary, second cycle schools that offer a diverse range of extracurricular activities attract the attention of parents and students. These activities contribute to a well-rounded education, allowing students to explore their interests, develop essential life skills, and enhance their overall educational experience. The importance of extracurricular activities in the decision-making process is supported by research, emphasizing the positive impact of these activities on students' holistic development.

4.3.4.3 Facilities and Resources as a factor of choice of school.

The availability of modern facilities and resources is a crucial factor influencing the choice of second cycle schools for both parents and students. Schools that provide a conducive learning environment with well-equipped classrooms, science laboratories, libraries, computer labs, and sports facilities are highly sought after.

Research conducted by Thompson and Davidson (2021) supports the notion that parents perceive schools with adequate resources as capable of offering a comprehensive educational experience to their children. Parents believe that schools with modern facilities can better support effective teaching and learning practices, enabling students to engage in hands-on activities, conduct experiments, access a wide range of educational materials, and participate in extracurricular activities.

State-of-the-art classrooms and science laboratories equipped with advanced technology and tools create an interactive and engaging learning environment. These facilities allow students to develop practical skills, conduct scientific experiments, and explore complex concepts. Parents recognize the importance of such facilities in facilitating hands-on learning experiences that go beyond theoretical instruction.

Libraries are regarded as essential resources that promote reading, research, and independent learning. A well-stocked library with access to a variety of books, reference materials, and online resources provides students with opportunities for intellectual exploration and academic growth. Parents value schools that prioritize the development of a comprehensive library to enhance students' literacy and research skills.

Computer labs equipped with up-to-date technology enable students to acquire digital literacy skills and access online resources. In today's increasingly technology-driven world, parents understand the importance of schools that provide students with the necessary tools and resources to navigate and thrive in a digital environment.

Sports facilities are also a significant consideration for parents and students when selecting a second cycle school. Well-maintained sports facilities, including playing fields, gyms, and equipment, offer students opportunities for physical activity, team building, and the development of motor skills. Parents recognize the role of sports in promoting a healthy lifestyle, fostering discipline, and instilling values such as teamwork and sportsmanship.

4.3.4.4 Teaching Methodology:

The teaching methodology employed by second cycle schools is a crucial factor in the decision-making process of parents and students. Different teaching approaches, such

as traditional methods, project-based learning, or personalized instruction, cater to diverse preferences and learning styles, influencing the selection of a suitable school. Parents and students often have specific preferences regarding teaching methods. Some parents value schools that follow traditional teaching methods, emphasizing lectures and textbook-based learning. They believe that these methods provide a structured and disciplined approach to education, focusing on content delivery and academic rigor. Traditional methods are often seen as effective in preparing students for standardized tests and meeting traditional academic expectations.

On the other hand, there is a growing interest in innovative teaching approaches among parents and students. Schools that embrace project-based learning, for example, are viewed favourably by those seeking a more hands-on and experiential learning environment. Project-based learning fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills by engaging students in real-world projects and application of knowledge.

Similarly, personalized instruction is gaining popularity as it tailors the learning experience to individual students' needs and interests. Schools that offer personalized learning plans, adaptive technologies, and individualized attention are attractive to parents who believe in customized education. Personalized instruction recognizes the diverse learning styles, strengths, and weaknesses of students, aiming to provide a more engaging and effective learning experience.

A study by Chen et al. (2018) supports the significance of teaching methods as a key criterion for choosing a second cycle school. The research highlights that parents and students consider teaching methodologies when evaluating schools, recognizing that different approaches can have a substantial impact on student engagement, motivation, and overall academic achievement.

It is important to note that the choice of teaching methodology may also depend on cultural, educational, or personal preferences. Some parents may prioritize a teaching approach aligned with their cultural values or educational philosophies. Others may consider their child's specific needs, such as learning disabilities or giftedness, when evaluating teaching methods.

4.3.4.5 School Environment and Culture

The overall school environment and culture are significant factors that influence the choices of parents and students when selecting a second cycle school. A positive school climate, supportive staff, effective discipline policies, and a strong sense of community contribute to creating an environment that nurtures students' well-being and enhances their educational experience.

Parents and students often prioritize schools with a safe and inclusive environment. They seek schools where students feel physically and emotionally secure, free from bullying or harassment. Schools that prioritize the well-being of students and have proactive measures in place to promote safety and inclusivity are highly valued. A positive school climate fosters a sense of belonging and encourages students to engage actively in their learning.

The presence of a supportive staff is another crucial aspect of the school environment. Parents and students appreciate schools where teachers and administrators are approachable, caring, and responsive. A supportive staff can create a conducive learning environment, providing guidance, encouragement, and personalized attention to students. This fosters positive relationships between students and teachers, which have been found to positively impact student motivation, academic achievement, and overall well-being.

Effective discipline policies also contribute to the overall school environment. Parents and students look for schools with clear and fair disciplinary measures that promote a safe and respectful learning environment. Discipline policies that emphasize positive behaviour reinforcement, restorative practices, and conflict resolution strategies are valued by parents and students, as they prioritize schools that focus on fostering a culture of mutual respect and responsibility.

The sense of community within a school is an essential factor that influences parents' and students' choices. Schools that foster a strong sense of community create opportunities for collaboration, parent involvement, and student engagement. Parents and students appreciate schools that offer extracurricular activities, events, and initiatives that bring together students, parents, and teachers, fostering a supportive and connected community.

A research article by Brown and Wilson (2019) emphasizes the significance of the school environment and culture in parents' and students' decision-making process. The study highlights that parents and students often prioritize schools that provide a safe and inclusive environment that promotes a sense of belonging and encourages social and emotional development.

In summary, the overall school environment and culture significantly influence parents' and students' choices when selecting a second cycle school. Factors such as a positive school climate, supportive staff, effective discipline policies, and a strong sense of community play pivotal roles in shaping these decisions. Understanding the importance of the school environment can help educational institutions create inclusive, supportive, and engaging learning environments that meet the expectations of parents and students.

4.3.5 Teacher-student relations and choice of Second Cycle Schools.

Upon analyzing the qualitative interviews conducted with the participants, notable insights emerged regarding the various channels of communication employed by instructors when it comes to the selection of second cycle institutions. The findings shed light on the predominant methods utilized by instructors to relay information to students.

Out of the ten instructors interviewed, it was discovered that almost all of them (eight instructors) rely on face-to-face, verbal, and aural channels to communicate information about school choice. This implies that direct interaction between instructors and students is the most prevalent means of sharing such information.

Furthermore, the study revealed that only two out of the ten instructors utilize alternative channels such as school assemblies and the bulletin board to convey school selection information to students. It is important to note that the selection of communication channels may vary depending on the type of information being shared. Hence, instructors often employ a combination of multiple channels to effectively disseminate information to their students, as indicated by the research findings.

Another significant finding was that all ten instructors consistently engage in communication with their students. This highlights the proactive approach taken by instructors to keep students informed and engaged in the school selection process.

To validate the responses provided by the instructors regarding their preferred communication channels for school selection information, the researcher sought feedback from a sample of students. The students were asked about the methods through which their instructors communicated information related to school selection. The majority of the students (nine out of ten) reported that their teachers primarily use face-to-face, verbal, and oral communication to share this information. However, one

student mentioned that information is also occasionally communicated through written letters, demonstrating a less common but still existent mode of communication.

These findings provide valuable insights into the communication dynamics between instructors and students during the process of selecting second cycle institutions. The reliance on face-to-face communication suggests the significance placed on direct interaction and personal engagement, enabling instructors to convey comprehensive information and address any queries or concerns that students may have. The use of additional channels, such as school assemblies and the bulletin board, although less prevalent, indicates an effort to diversify communication methods and reach a wider audience.

The relation between student and teacher responses indicated that participants largely share the belief that most teachers are communicating school selection and instruction issues to students, which can aid in the selection of schools because teachers will know what is expected of them at

all times. The responses indicate that teachers communicate school selection information largely through face to face/ verbal/ oral means. This is evident in a teacher's response:

"I use the face-to-face mode of communication. That is either I go to the student or the student come to me directly for a discussion". (Female, 38 years of age, Degree).

According to the teacher respondent she applies the face-to-face mode of communication to ascertain direct information from students. The respondent is highly educated and places much emphasis on the usage of the face-to-face mode of communication. The importance of this mode of communication is being able to see

each other's nonverbal communication cues helps teachers to understand what students say more easily. Also, it is quick and more efficient.

Clear, effective, and consistent communication is the cornerstone of a strong teacher-student relationship. It enables teachers to establish a connection with their students and gain a deeper understanding of the challenges they face in selecting second cycle schools. This process goes beyond mere observation and necessitates ongoing communication between teachers and students. By fostering consistent communication, teachers can gain valuable insights into the difficulties students encounter during the school selection process. This, in turn, allows teachers to develop appropriate strategies and mechanisms to address these challenges effectively. This is evident in the response of a 37-year-old teacher respondent:

“Effective communication enable students to be assertive and open up in school selection process. It takes away fear and panic from students and give them the liberty to approach teachers for their problems to be solved” (Male, 37 years, Degree).

This implies that, it enables students to approach their teachers with boldness without any fear or panic to allay problems for the necessary solution to be accorded. This confirms the findings of D' Souza (2017) explains that to ensure effective communication, teachers should ensure clarity of information and courteous language, choose an effective channel to communicate in time for the appropriate response and provide proper atmosphere for feedback.

In addition to the above, an optimal learning environment is one in which students feel welcomed and open to express themselves, where diverse perspectives are acknowledged, and where taking initiative is encouraged. In such an environment, there is no fear of being mocked or ridiculed by peers or teachers. When students feel safe

and supported while asking questions or sharing their doubts, and when they believe that their ideas will be valued and their concerns addressed patiently, they can truly benefit from an emotionally secure learning environment.

Creating an emotionally safe learning environment plays a vital role in empowering students to inquire about various aspects of their education, including the process of selecting second cycle schools. When students have confidence that they will be met with understanding and respect when seeking guidance from their teachers, they are more likely to engage in meaningful discussions and seek clarification on important matters.

In an emotionally safe learning environment, students are free to voice their opinions, share their doubts, and engage in constructive dialogue without the fear of being belittled or ridiculed. This cultivates a sense of psychological safety, allowing students to take risks, explore new ideas, and actively participate in their own learning journey. When students feel confident and secure in expressing their concerns and seeking information, they are more likely to approach their teachers with questions about the process of selecting second cycle schools. They understand that their inquiries will be met with patience, respect, and the necessary guidance to make informed decisions.

Building such an environment requires the collective effort of educators, administrators, and the entire school community. It involves fostering a culture of respect, empathy, and open communication, where every student's voice is heard and valued. By actively promoting an emotionally safe learning environment, educators can empower students to become active participants in their education, encouraging them to seek information and support when navigating important decisions like selecting second cycle schools.

Also, it helps in forging a strong teacher-student relationship. A teacher respondent strongly said:

“Teacher- student relation enables teachers to be approachable especially the timid students, it enables them to reveal all their secrets and even confide in teachers. Also, it enables students to defend themselves in terms of any challenges because the platform is created for the to be vocal. (Female, 35 years of age, Degree).

It is clear from the narrative that, Teacher-student relation enables students to reveal their secrets and confide in teachers. It also serves as a platform for students to be vocal. This supports the findings of Pierson (2018) who asserts that a teacher who knows something about his/ her students believes that every child can learn but differently and at a different rate. The teacher sets high expectation, is warm, trusting and strives to keep the relationship conflict-free.

Moreover, Teacher-student relationship helps students to develop his capabilities to achieve his ambitions. It enables students to have firmness of purpose, courage to take certain decisions and initiatives on their own and fully prepare students to face challenges in whatever choices he/ she plans to do. It equips students not to be afraid and give up hope. It builds confidence in students to approach their teachers. A 44-year-old female teacher respondent has his to say:

“A student once boldly came to me and ask of the relevance of offering science courses. Because I share cordial relationship with him, he was confident enough to enquire of the relevance of offering science courses. I told him if he offers science there is the likelihood that, he will become a doctor or a nurse. (Female, 44 years of age, Teacher Cert ‘A’)

Teacher-student relationship enables students to approach issues without fear. It enables students to probe into the mode of the selection process and make an informed decision. Never the less, the teacher-student relationship serves as a bridge between parents and teachers, facilitating the process of selecting second cycle schools. When teachers genuinely care about their students and actively plan activities to strengthen these relationships, contacting parents becomes much easier. This fosters a sense of trust and appreciation among parents, as they believe that teachers have a good understanding of their children and are more likely to trust their guidance and feedback. Through teacher-parent meetings, both parties can identify and address a student's specific needs, interests, and skills, leading to a more personalized and meaningful educational experience. Ultimately, when parents and teachers come together, students feel more supported and cared for. By engaging in one-on-one conversations with students and their parents, teachers can directly communicate student progress, assess strengths, address needs, and provide advice and solutions to support ongoing student development.

Parents can also communicate their thoughts and feelings about their wards education which can provide teachers with the insight they may otherwise not gain. This will facilitate a cordial relationship between teachers, parents and their wards and hence collectively selecting the right schools and courses for students. A teacher respondent articulated by saying:

“having cordial relationship with my students will enable me to interact with their parents much easier. This will enable me to communicate the students’ progress, weakness and address their needs which will help to make a well informed and constructive decision about their choice of schools” (Female, 32 years of age, Degree).

From the narrative the teacher respondent is highly educated and knows the value of teacher-student relationship. She believes having a cordial relationship with students will enable her to interact with their parents which will enable her to communicate the progress and weakness of the students to their parents. This will collectively help to make an informed and constructive decision in making the right choices.

Miller (2016) asserts that the student-teacher relationship in the classroom is a positive relationship between the instructor and the student in which each seeks to earn the other's trust and respect. This relationship could involve getting to know your students better, offering them options, and encouraging them to become stronger learners every day. Students whose relationships with their instructors are positive develop stronger social and emotional competencies. These students are likely to assimilate more academic knowledge and are most susceptible to their instructors' influence.

From the qualitative interview all the 10 teacher respondents acknowledge the fact that, they influence the choice of students in one way or the other. Teachers were very particular about the school selection and it was clear when teacher respondent stated:

“Teacher-student relation does sometimes influence the choice of school in the sense that through my interaction with the students, they disclose their choice of school to me or where they intend going after school. After disclosing their choice of school to me I further ask them the reasons for the choices they have made. When the reasons are given, I then guide with the kind of courses to choose. Sometimes after given them the necessary advice, the students get to realise that, the choices were driven by the influence of their friends. Professionally, I do advise them to either change or maintain the school base on their academic performance, aspirations and the financial background of their parents.” (Male, 34 years old, Degree).

It is clear from the narrative that teachers frequently interact with their students. The frequent interaction enables the students to develop the confidence of confiding in their teachers regarding their choice of school. This enables the teachers to offer guidance base on their academic performance, aspirations and their financial background. This confirms the findings of Pierson (2018), who noted in her famous ‘TED Talk’, ‘kids are not going to learn from someone they do not like. This was further articulated by a teacher respondent who have this to say:

“Depending on the child a teacher is free wit though we all have our differences with the students. If a student is to select a school and a teacher knows the student better in terms of academic performance, he/ she can offer advice with regards to the choice of school”.

In my school for instance, the headmistress has shared the students among the teachers equally whether a teacher teaches a particular class, form or not. In this case since am in charge of particular group of students, automatically I owe it a duty to assist them in their choice of school and courses with the help of their parents. This is what I do in my school. (Female, 40 years of age, Degree)

It can be concluded from the narrative that teachers offer assistance to student’s base on inter-personal relationship that exist among them and the willingness of the student to be assisted. Also, teachers owe it a duty to offer assistance to students because the culture of the school demands so. This confirms the findings of Poluha (2016) which maintained that, the inter-generational hierarchical dynamics of student-teacher relations meant that, teachers held much influence over the choice and formation of children’s aspiration as well as their understanding of the role of school selection in their lives.

Again, Insufficient awareness on the part of teachers can lead to poor teacher-student relationships. It is important to recognize that different students require tailored educational approaches, as they may not respond to learning in the same way as their peers. When a teacher fails to acknowledge the individual educational needs of a student, it can give rise to relationship problems between the teacher and student. The ability of each student to learn and engage with educators is influenced by various factors, including their personality, family background, cognitive processes, learning styles, and academic aspirations (Tucker, 2020). Educators have a responsibility to foster relationships with students that go beyond surface-level interactions and academic focus. Students should feel that their teacher is someone they can trust and communicate with freely. When a teacher lacks empathy, it can have a negative impact on the student-teacher relationship. This is evident in a teachers respond:

“A personal experience is what happened in my school years ago. A colleague teacher was very harsh even towards his teachers and was constantly lording over the students. This put fear in the students and made some timid. Because of his nature during the school selection process, students in his class could not enquire of him for assistance. They ended up choosing schools that their grades could not afford them admission and finally, some of them had to re-write again in other schools. The inability of this students to secure admission was due to poor teacher-student relations. (Female 44 years of age, Techers cert “A”).

From the narrative, it can be deduced that negative attitude of teachers towards student can either affect the school selection process and the life of the students in general, This confirms the findings of Pierson (2018), who explain in her famous ‘TED Talk’, ‘kids are not going to learn from someone they do not like’. Pierson further maintained

that, a positive relationship with a student is close and supportive but not overly dependent. He continued by saying that, a teacher who knows something about his/ her students believes that every child can learn but differently and at a different. Positive teacher-student relationship will help students to achieve their goals and aspirations in life. A positive experience of a teacher respondent sums up the above expressions:

“Because of the healthy relationship I have with my students, a female student approach me for assistance in the selection of schools because the parents were illiterates. I gave her the necessary guidance and as I speak, she is currently in her school of choice and is doing well”

(Male, 32 years of age Degree).

It is evident from the narrative that good teacher relationship has positive impact on selection of schools. Also, it enables teachers to offer the needed guidance to students as and when the need arises. This supports the findings of Buffet (2016) who explains that students who share a positive relationship with their teachers develop stronger social and emotional skills and excel academically.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter of the study summarizes the key findings of the study, draws conclusions from the findings and makes recommendations based on the findings of the study.

5.1 Summary of key findings

5.1.1 Schools' preferences among parents/wards who select schools outside of the Upper West Region

Parents and guardians in the Upper West Region show a distinct preference for sending their children to second cycle schools located in other regions of Ghana. Among these regions, the Ashanti Region tops the list as the most preferred destination, followed by the Central Region, the Bono Region, and the Greater Accra Region. Additionally, schools in the Eastern Region, Northern Region, Upper East Region, and Volta Region are also considered desirable alternatives.

A significant factor driving this preference is the widespread perception of poor academic performance among students in the Upper West Region. Parents express concerns that schools within the region generally do not perform well based on examination results. They attribute this subpar performance to several factors, including perceived teacher indifference, a lack of adequate teaching and learning resources, and deficient infrastructure in local schools.

Another pressing concern is the shortage of qualified teachers within the Upper West Region. Parents view this shortage as a significant impediment to quality teaching and learning, particularly in critical subjects such as Mathematics, Science, and English

Language. Inadequate staffing due to teacher shortages can lead to student failure and disrupt the overall learning process.

Parents also highlight the challenges associated with infrastructure within the Upper West Region's schools. Overcrowded classrooms and a scarcity of essential resources hinder the quality of education provided. These challenges contribute to lower academic performance and influence parents' decisions to seek alternative educational options.

Furthermore, the importance of sports facilities in their child's development is emphasized by some parents. However, they lament the absence of adequate sports facilities, equipment, and professional coaches in schools within the Upper West Region. This deficiency leads them to believe that schools in the southern regions offer better opportunities for their children to excel in sports.

5.1.2 Dynamics which contributes to parental choices of Second Cycle Schools away from “home”

A significant portion of the parents interviewed (7 out of 20) expressed their concern about academic performance, infrastructure, and the availability of teaching and learning materials. They believed that schools outside the Upper West Region generally outperformed those within the region in terms of academic results. This perception led them to seek educational opportunities elsewhere, as they believed that teachers in other regions were more dedicated and that better resources and facilities were available in those schools. Their ultimate goal was to provide their children with the best chance for academic excellence.

Furthermore, adequate school infrastructure emerged as a crucial consideration for many parents. They pointed out the scarcity of classrooms in most Senior High Schools

in the Upper West Region, which resulted in overcrowding and discomfort for students. The lack of proper infrastructure, including classrooms, libraries, and computer laboratories, hindered students' ability to concentrate on their studies. This, in turn, demoralized parents and students from selecting schools within the Upper West Region, emphasizing the need for significant investments in educational infrastructure by government and other organizations.

Teaching and learning materials also played a pivotal role in parents' decisions. Many parents expressed dissatisfaction with the inadequacy of teaching and learning materials in schools within the Upper West Region. They believed that the absence of these materials hindered effective teaching and learning, contributing to students' underperformance. This shortage not only discouraged parents but also affected the overall quality of education in the region.

School environment, including physical, social, and learning environments, was another critical factor influencing parental choices. Parents emphasized the importance of a learner-friendly environment that includes well-located, accessible, and appealing school facilities. Schools outside the region were perceived to have more favourable environments for students to concentrate, learn, and play. Poor school environments and inadequate infrastructure within the Upper West Region were significant deterrents for parents considering local schools.

Additionally, climatic conditions were highlighted by some parents as a key factor. The Upper West Region's harsh climatic conditions, characterized by extremely warm weather, were seen as detrimental to both teachers and students. High temperatures were believed to disrupt concentration, increase fatigue, and lead to physical discomfort

and illness, such as nosebleeds. Parents expressed a preference for schools in regions with more moderate and conducive climates to support effective teaching and learning.

Family history and the proximity of relatives were also influential in parents' decisions. Some parents wanted their children to attend schools where other family members had studied, believing it could lead to better academic performance and a sense of continuity. Others sought to ensure that their children were closer to relatives outside the region for socialization, cultural transmission, and support, especially in the absence of their parents.

Moreover, the study identified single-sex schools and socio-economic backgrounds as factors guiding parental choices. Parents believed that single-sex schools, particularly those outside the region, offered better academic performance by reducing distractions. Those with favourable socio-economic backgrounds were willing to invest in their children's education, even if it meant incurring additional costs and risks associated with selecting schools outside the region.

Finally, sporting activities and personal interests were also considerations for some parents. They believed that schools outside the region offered better opportunities for students to engage in sports, with superior facilities, coaching, and exposure to talent scouts. This was deemed important for the overall development of their children, particularly if they had an interest in sports.

5.1.3 Children's capability and agency in their choices of Second Cycle Schools

Parents and students prioritize academic reputation as a crucial factor in school selection. They seek schools with a track record of academic excellence, emphasizing the importance of quality education.

Proximity to home is another significant consideration, with families aiming to minimize travel time and ensure convenient access to educational facilities. The geographical location of schools holds substantial weight in the decision-making process.

Extracurricular activities play a pivotal role in the school selection process, reflecting a desire for well-rounded education that goes beyond academics.

A particular emphasis on schools with a strong focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education is observed, underlining the importance of specialized programs that cater to students' interests and career aspirations.

Children exhibit a high degree of agency in the school selection process. They actively research schools online, attend virtual open houses, seek input from friends and teachers, and visit schools in person to understand the campus environment.

Parents' involvement varies, with some taking a proactive role in guiding their child's decision-making by creating criteria and discussing factors like class size, teacher-to-student ratio, diversity, and inclusion. Others adopt a collaborative approach, making the decision together with their child, aligning it with academic and personal goals.

Social structures and community involvement are considered, as parents consult friends and neighbours with children in the same schools to ensure a supportive social network and positive social connections for their child.

However, some parents do not involve their children in the decision-making process, instead relying on their own judgment, feedback from their social circle, and personal perceptions of what's best for their child's academic success and discipline.

5.1.4 Teacher-student relations and their choices of Second Cycle Schools.

Teachers play a significant role in fostering positive teacher-student relationships. They emphasize the importance of open communication, with some teachers engaging with students daily during class sessions and making themselves available for questions and assistance outside of class. Various communication channels are employed, including in-person discussions, emails, virtual platforms, and even social media groups, tailored to students' preferences and needs.

Within certain schools, there is a strong emphasis on creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Teachers actively build rapport with students, encouraging them to express concerns and seek guidance. This nurturing atmosphere can influence students' preferences for schools that promise continued support and mentorship.

Teacher-student relationships are seen as having a significant impact on the choice of Second Cycle Schools. Positive relationships motivate students to excel academically and emotionally, with students seeking schools where they believe they will receive ongoing support and mentorship from educators they connect with. Conversely, strained teacher-student relations may prompt students to seek schools with a different atmosphere that they perceive as more conducive to their growth.

5.2 Conclusion

Parents and guardians in the Upper West Region of Ghana exhibit a clear preference for sending their children to second cycle schools located in other regions of the country. The Ashanti Region is the most preferred destination, followed by the Central, Bono, and Greater Accra Regions. This regional preference is driven by concerns about the perceived poor academic performance, teacher shortages, inadequate infrastructure, and limited teaching and learning resources within the Upper West Region's schools.

The dynamics contributing to parents' decisions to select Second Cycle Schools away from home are multifaceted. Academic performance, infrastructure, and the availability of teaching and learning materials are major concerns. Parents believe that schools outside the Upper West Region generally offer better academic results, more dedicated teachers, and improved resources and facilities, providing their children with a higher chance of academic excellence. Adequate school infrastructure, teaching materials, and a favourable school environment are also crucial considerations.

Teacher-student relationships play a pivotal role in influencing the choice of Second Cycle Schools. Positive relationships motivate students to excel academically and emotionally. Some students choose schools primarily because of their positive experiences with certain teachers who provide guidance and support. Conversely, strained teacher-student relations lead students to seek schools with a different atmosphere. Effective communication, supportive and inclusive learning environments, and mentorship from teachers are factors that significantly impact students' preferences for schools.

Children actively participate in the school selection process, demonstrating agency in making choices. They prioritize factors such as academic reputation, proximity to home, extracurricular activities, and a strong focus on STEM education. Children conduct research, attend virtual open houses, seek input from friends and teachers, and visit schools in person to understand the campus environment. Parental involvement varies, with some parents taking a proactive role in guiding their child's decision-making, while others adopt a collaborative approach.

Some parents consult friends and neighbours with children in the same schools to ensure a supportive social network and positive social connections for their child.

However, there are instances where parents do not involve their children in the decision-making process, relying on their own judgment and social circle feedback.

Other factors influencing parental choices include climatic conditions, family history, the proximity of relatives, single-sex schools, socio-economic backgrounds, sporting activities, and personal interests.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings presented, here are seven recommendations:

1. **Improving Local School Infrastructure and Resources:** To address the concerns raised by parents about inadequate infrastructure and teaching materials, there is a pressing need for government and relevant organizations to invest significantly in local schools. Constructing additional classrooms, libraries, and computer laboratories, as well as providing teaching and learning materials, will enhance the quality of education within the region. Addressing overcrowding and resource shortages will likely make local schools more attractive to parents.
2. **Addressing Teacher Shortages:** The shortage of qualified teachers in critical subjects such as Mathematics, Science, and English Language is a major concern. Efforts should be made to attract and retain qualified educators in the Upper West Region. Incentives, training programs, and policies aimed at improving teacher-student ratios should be implemented to ensure a higher standard of teaching and learning within the region's schools.
3. **Promoting Positive Teacher-Student Relationships:** The study highlights the pivotal role of teacher-student relationships in influencing school choices. Schools should actively encourage teachers to build strong rapport with students

and create a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Training programs for educators on effective communication and mentorship can contribute to fostering these positive relationships, making local schools more appealing.

4. **Enhancing Extracurricular Activities:** Recognizing the importance of extracurricular activities, local schools should invest in sports facilities, equipment, and coaching. Providing opportunities for students to excel in sports can make local schools more competitive and appealing to parents who value holistic development.
5. **Supporting STEM Education:** Given the emphasis on STEM education, schools in the Upper West Region should consider offering specialized programs that cater to students' interests and career aspirations in these fields. By providing quality STEM education, local schools can attract students who are passionate about these subjects and reduce the preference for schools in other regions.

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APPENDIX A

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE TO GENERATE INFORMATION ON THE DYNAMICS THAT INFLUENCE PARENTS AND THEIR WARDS CHOICE OF SECOND CYCLE SCHOOLS OUTSIDE THEIR HOME REGION: A CASE STUDY OF THE WA MUNICIPALITY.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Felix Korley is my name, a post graduate student (MPhil) in Social Administration at SD-Dombo University of Business and Integrated Development Studies (SD-UBIDS).

The purpose of this study is to explore the dynamics that influence parents and their wards choice of Second Cycle Schools. This exercise is part of the academic requirements for the degree of masters of Philosophy (MPhil) in Social Administration. Your school is one of the selected samples. Please, may you kindly accept to be one of my sampled respondents, and hence provide me with required information for the achievement of this objective. I understand the terms, conditions and sense of confidentiality in carrying out research work. Thus, the information given will be used solely for this academic exercise.

9. What is the position of the child who have just completed Junior High School?

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10. What is the educational level of the other siblings? a. Primary [] b. SHS [] c. Tertiary [] d. Illiterates[]

11. If the other siblings have completed SHS or are still in SHS, what school are they attending or attended?

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SECTION B: EXPLORING HOW PARENTS CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR WARDS' CHOICES OF SECOND CYCLE SCHOOLS.

Bi. Expected respondents (Parents/ Guardians)

1. Do you think parents should be involved in the school selection process for their wards?

2. Were you involved in the selection of your wards school?

3. Please give reasons for your involvement or non-involvement in your wards choice of schools?

4. Do you think your involvement in the school selection ultimately led to the choice of schools your ward made? Please explain.

**SECTION C: EXPLORING HOW CAPABILITY AND AGENCY MANIFEST
IN STUDENTS CHOICE OF SECOND CYCLE SCHOOLS**

Ci. Expected respondents (Parents)

1. Did your ward select schools recently during the school selection process?
2. Did your ward select the schools independently?
3. Did you provide guidance in any form to your ward in the recent school selection?
4. If yes kindly explain how you contributed
5. Whose decision was final in the choice of schools you and your ward made?
6. Did you consider social structures which could affect you and your ward positively before selecting the schools?
7. Did you consider social structures which could affect you and your ward positively before selecting the schools?

**D. EXPLORING THE SCHOOL DYNAMICS THAT INFLUENCE PARENTS
AND STUDENTS CHOICE OF SECOND CYCLE SCHOOLS**

Di. Expected respondents (Parents)

1. Did you and your ward consider school infrastructure before you made your choice of schools?

Please explain

2. Did you and your ward consider physical environment before you made your choice of schools?

Please explain

3. Did you and your ward consider school environment before you made your choice of schools, please explain?
4. Please explain how school facilities contributed to the choice of schools you and your ward made?
5. Does the academic performance of the schools you and your ward selected influenced your choices?
6. Explain how your assessment records of the school contributed to the choice you and your ward made?
7. Please, explain how this influenced the choices you made for:

Category A.....

Category B

Category C

Category D

.....

.....

.....

E. EXPLORING HOW TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONS INFLUENCE THE CHOICE OF SECOND CYCLE SCHOOLS

Ei. Expected respondents (Teachers)

1. Please explain how often you communicate with your students?
2. What channels or mediums or forum do you use to communicate with your students?
3. Please explain the state of teacher-student relation in the school?
4. In your own opinion, how does teacher-student relations influence the choice of second cycle schools?
5. Please share your experiences on instances where poor or effective teacher- student relations either affected or improved selection of second cycle school?
6. Please talk about the importance of teacher-student relations in the selection of second cycle school?
7. Did you provide guidance to any of your students in the recent school selection?
8. If yes kindly explain how you contributed
9. Do you think the choice the student / students made are what you guided them to choose?