



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

A Comparative Study of Students' Performance for the Three Year and the Four Year Programmes in Mfantsipim and University of Cape Coast, Practice Senior High Schools in Cape Coast, Ghana

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Abstract:

The study set to find out whether student performance in the Senior High was influenced by the length of years spent in the Senior High School. It compared the three year senior high school to that of the four year. The study was done in two school senior high schools in the Cape Coast metropolis. The study covered West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) results from 2006 to 2013 but 2008 and 2009 were excluded because the policy initiative that brought the senior high system took effect from 2007/2008 academic year. 2006, 2007 and 2013 covered the period of the three programme while 2011 to 2013 for the four year programme. The main study area was Mfantsipim and University Practice Senior High Schools. A total of 4743 results consisting of six different years of WASSCE examination were analyzed and interpreted. Interviews were conducted with the teachers of the schools and later transcribed and typed. The four main core subjects namely Mathematics, English Language, Integrated Science and Social Studies were the main focus of the study. Some of the findings of this study were that, comparing the percentage passes in both programmes there was no significant change in the results obtained by students, extra-curriculum activities and late admission took much of the contact hours. It was recommended that arrangement can be made so that first year students will come to school on time and also to write their final exams in the long vacation period instead of using third term of the third or fourth year.

Keywords: *Students' performance, three year and the four year programmes, extra-curriculum activities, late admission.*

1. Introduction

Students' performance in the Senior High Schools is a matter of great concern to all. International development institutions such as the World Bank argue for greater investment into the secondary education to accelerate Africa's economic growth. This calls for policy measures to be put in place to ensure high and sustained performance in secondary schools. A policy measure for changes in education affects both the systems of education and the institution of education as a whole.

Ghana has experienced several educational reforms. The three-year Senior Secondary School (SSS) system was part of the 1987, Evans-Anfom Education Reforms which took effect for the 1995/96 academic year when the last group of students under the old system graduated (World Bank, 1996). The three year SSS therefore lasted for thirteen years (1996 to 2009).

On January 17, 2002, the New Patriotic Party government (ruled from 2000 - 2009) inaugurated a presidential committee on review of Education Reforms in Ghana under the chairmanship of Professor Jophus Anamuah-Mensah, former Vice-Chancellor of University of Education, Winneba. The committee maintained the three year SSS. But the government in power decided to increase it to four years and also change the name to Senior High School (SHS) to address concern about quality. The increase in years was also to ensure that students have adequate time to prepare for the West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). This was as a result of the large percentage of students who failed at the final examination (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, 2007).

The National Democratic Congress Party government (ruled from 2009–to date) on the other hand, maintained that the three years Senior High School (SHS) was ideal and all that they needed to do is to ensure improved infrastructure and better conditions of service for teachers and strengthen the weaknesses in the SHS rather than extending for another year. This they hope would help improve performance, hence the question "performance in senior high school; does the duration matter?"

1.1. Statement of Problem

There have been several committees on education reforms in Ghana. These committees have noted that factors that contribute to the low performance at SHS are multi-faceted. These include: lack of adequate teaching and learning facilities, poor infrastructural facilities, absence of proper guidance and counseling services, lack of well-motivated committed teachers, poor management and supervision, inadequate prepared Junior High School (JHS) leavers and absence of performance standards for each subject (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2004).

In spite of the problems identified by the various committees, time, which is a major ingredient in education, could not be identified. One complaint that all educators seem to have in common is 'We do not have time'. There is not enough time to teach all the material of potential value to students. In this research, attempt was made to find out whether duration matters when it comes to performance in SHS.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to know whether student performance is influenced by the length of years spent in the SHS. Specifically, this research seeks to find out:

- a. The nature of students' performance when SHS was three years.
- b. The nature of students' performance when SHS was changed to four years.
- c. The variations in performance for the three year and four year periods.

1.3. Research Questions

In this research the following questions are addressed.

- a. What is the nature of students' performance for the three-year period?
- b. What is nature of students' performance for the four-year period?
- c. What are the variations in comparing the two periods?

2. Literature Review

In this section of the paper, the structure and curricula of three and four year programmes and opinions on time and student performance are considered. The review also considers both the theoretical and empirical evidence to the study.

2.1. The Structure and Curriculum of the Three Year SSS (now SHS) Programme

The 1987 Ghana education reform brought about the three-year Senior High School. The structure of the education system before this reform was such that to complete pre-university education could take between thirteen (13) and fifteen (15) years. This disparity in the number of minimum years was because there was essentially a three track system in place. Students who managed to complete primary school could take the middle school track and end their education after completing four years of middle school. It was possible to skip middle school and enter secondary school after sitting the Common Entrance Examination in primary six (6) while the alternative was to do one or two years at middle school before sitting for the entrance examination to secondary school. The reforms replaced the three-track system with a one-track system.

In the one track system, primary and junior secondary school combined became basic education. All children were expected to go through a minimum of twelve years' pre-university education, thus, six years primary and three years' junior secondary school and three years' senior secondary school. With this one track system, students could either enter the world of work or continue to the tertiary level of education. The diversified SSS curriculum was intended to prepare majority of children whose formal education was terminated at the SSS education (Agyeman, 2008).

The three year SHS programme consisted of six compulsory core subjects; English Language, Social Studies, Integrated Science and Mathematics, Physical Education and Religious and Moral Education. However, Physical Education and Religious and Moral Education were only done in the first year. In addition to these core subjects, students were expected to choose three or four elective subjects from General Arts, General Science, Home Economics, Visual Arts and Business Programmes making seven subjects, thus if the student chose three elective subjects and eight subjects if the student chose four electives.

At the end of the three-year education each student is expected to write the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education (SSCE) or the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) which began in 2006 for each of the seven or eight subjects.

2.2. The Structure and Curriculum of the four Year SSS (now SHS) Programme

Ghana's educational system had under gone yet another reform. In 2002, government inaugurated a presidential committee on review of Education system in Ghana (Ministry of Education Youth and Sports, 2004). There was a new determination to restructure the pre-tertiary education provision so that it focused on preparing all secondary school students either into tertiary institution or for the job market through apprentice training in the private sector (MOESS, 2007).

The education reforms of 2002 became operational in September, 2007 (thus the 2007-2008 academic years (Acheampong, 2008). The new reforms laid emphasis on the post basic education as crucial to poverty reduction. The secondary education was extended from three years to four years to address concerns about quality and the need to ensure that students have adequate time to prepare for their final examination. This was as a result of the large percentage of students who failed at the final examination.

The four year SHS programme also consisted of eight compulsory core subjects; English Language, Mathematics, Integrated Science, Social Studies, French Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Physical Education and Library Periods. For the four year SHS students were only reading the core subjects thus French, Library Periods and Physical Education in the first year. Information and Communication Technology was added to Integrated Science.

In year two students were expected to choose three or four elective subjects from General Arts, General Science, Home Economics, Visual Arts and Business Programmes and added them to the remaining four compulsory core subjects, making seven subjects, thus if the student chose three electives subjects and eight subjects if the student chose four electives.

At the end of the four-year education each student is expected to write the West African Senior School Certificate Examination, (WASSCE), for each of the seven or eight subjects.

2.3. Opinions on Time and Students' Performance

Amanyi 2013, considering first how much time is allocated to the various subjects, teachers are bound to have preferences for certain areas of the curriculum. When these preferences result in the neglect of other content areas, the instructional programme and ultimately, students are bound to be affected.

Moyles (1997), argues that time as the modern world perceives is a finite, particularly the school days. The concept of time is incompatible for it's rarely balances adequately what we want to achieve. He stressed time as being limited and because of that it's not able to co-exist or rarely co-exist with what we want to achieve.

Balogun et al. (1984), explained management of time as an art or process of tactfully controlling or bringing various elements to work together for some particular purpose with a given period. They asserted that to manage time means to handle or arrange a number of people (students), things or situations within a stipulated time to bring about what one deserves.

Myers, (cited in Moyles, 1997), reported that in relation to learning time, it must be acknowledged that there is a difference between allocated and engaged time. Planning teaching time will not necessarily be equivalent to learning time. It is necessary to be realistic about this.

Matthew, (1989), shares the view that a student's level of attainment was directly related to the length of time actually spent in learning. Therefore, controlling the time devoted to different areas of the curriculum, teachers can exert major influences on student learning by determining how much attention and assistance each student will receive.

Carroll (cited in Duke, 1982), maintained that students will master instructional objectives to the extent that they are both permitted and willing to invest the time necessary to learn the content. Therefore, the time it takes each student to learn will vary depending on such factors as prior student achievement and attitudes. The important implication of this model, of course is that given enough time, most students can learn most content.

Richardson (as cited in Moyles, 1997) suggested two golden rules regarding time that are worth remembering. One can always make more effective use of time and the only person to make better use of your time is you. Richardson suggested that as people mostly underestimate the time needed for tasks, it is necessary to add around 20% to any estimate. Time can be created by recognizing the core component to oneself and the children.

2.4. Theoretical Review

The functionalist focus of analysis looks at the relationship among the different parts of the society (social institutions); parts are functional thus beneficial consequence or dysfunctional thus negative consequences. The central idea of the functionalism is that society is a whole unit, made up of interrelated parts that must work together (Henslin, 2007). They argue that society is kept in constant equilibrium by consensus because the parts share the same rules; they are interdependent and work together to contribute to the functioning of the society as a totality.

They believe that education contributes to the removal of social conflict from society. They also assert that education internalizes in people both commitments and capacities for successful performance of future adult roles. They are also of the view that the aim of education is to socialize children and teenagers thus learning the knowledge, attributes and values needed to be productive citizens.

Functionalists are of the view that society is a system, a set of elements or components that are related to one another in a more or less stable fashion through a period of time (Huges & Kroehler, 2009). To them for a student to perform very well in exams, all sections in the educational system must play their respective roles. Teachers must teach their full periods, the school must provide the necessary books, learning materials, favourable and conducive environment for learning and the student themselves learn and discipline themselves. These roles are related and interdependent on each other. The functionalist is of the view that if any of the above roles are not played as expected there is going to be a break in the process and hence will cause performance to be low.

According to the functional model of education, education becomes so important in diversified society because the skills requirements of jobs are constantly rising due to technological change (Himelfard & Richardson, 1979). Formal education is necessary so that the more highly skilled occupations can be filled adequately. Hence, education requirements for employment must also constantly rise causing larger numbers of people to stay in school for even longer periods of time. This explains why education becomes the key to mobility and maintenance of a high family status.

In other words, expansion of education has typically been seen as serving a dual role. On one hand, key occupational roles could be filled more adequately and perform more efficiently. On the other hand, extending the educational system would increase mobility by making access more available to all members of society.

The functionalist perspective has been criticized on a number of grounds. Firstly, they are accused of overlooking that education is equally capable of generating conflict in society. Secondly, they tend to ignore the dynamics of social change adequately. Thirdly, they fail to question the discriminatory role education to sex and gender. Lastly, it has been observed that students have increasingly become aware that education does not automatically guarantee high status job, (Himelfard & Richardson, 1979).

2.5. Empirical Review

The empirical review looks at an article published in Centre for Market and Public Organization (CMPO) by Christopher Ksoll, and Kim Lehrer. Estimating impacts of country-wide education reforms on achievement is often complicated by a lack of comparable control-groups or tests. In their study published in CMPO's journals research in public policy, issue 15, (Winter, 2012/2013), "can an extra year at high school improve achievement?" Christopher Ksoll, Assistant Professor in Economics, School for International Development and Global Studies, University of Ottawa; and an associate member, Nuffield College and the Centre for the Study of African Economies (CSAE), University of Oxford and Kim Lehrer a Research Officer at CSAE, compared the impact of an additional year of high school in Ghana on high school leaving test scores where they observe a credible control group, Nigeria.

To them, Educational reforms typically affect the whole population so that observed changes in test scores might reflect changes in grading or test difficulty rather than learning. In their study, they analyzed the high school leaving exams in both Ghana and Nigeria, thus, the West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination. Ksoll and Lehrer noted that the target knowledge assessed by the exams remained the same.

Ksoll and Lehrer again noted that as compared with previous years, the cohort receiving an additional year of education performed much better on the tests, with approximately 70 percent passing the test in 2011 compared with just below 50 percent in 2008 and 2009 receiving a credit passing six (specific) subjects. This doubles the requirement for admittance to university from 15 percent to 30 percent. These are very large gains (Ksoll & Lehrer, 2012).

According to Ksoll and Lehrer (2012), test scores in Nigeria also rose during this period, though by much less. They said this taking into account that these changes might have been due to changes in the test difficulty reduces their estimate of the impact of the extra year somewhat and that even with this reduction, on average, the additional year that Ghana implemented for the 2011 graduating cohort lead to approximately 15 percent increase in passing rates in Ghana (when they use Nigeria's definition of passing) relative to previous graduation cohorts, and relative to Nigeria over this period. These achievement gains are significant and large.

This research is very significant to the study because it compares two countries where one implemented an extra year to the Senior High School and the other didn't. It shows how student performed when an extra year was added as against a country which did not implement any additional year. This will help the researcher to acknowledge the strengths in terms of performance when there was an additional year to the Senior High School. This study will build on their findings and try and find some of the short fall inherent in the four year programme. It also identifies the gaps in educational systems of Ghana and Nigeria who are both WAEC members.

However, their findings only compared results of only 2011 results as against 2008 and 2009 results representing the four year programme and three year programme respectively. This does not give the entire picture of the effect of the extra year added to the Senior High School because the addition of the extra year lasted for three years. Having identified this gap, this study will factor the entire duration of the extra year added to the Senior high school. The researcher believes this would give the total effect of the extra year added to the Senior High School.

2.6. Candidates' Achievement in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination.

The second case study looks at the trends of candidates' performance in May/June WASSCE from 2006 to 2010 that is mainly the period of the three years SHS programme. Mulikat A. Bello registrar/CEO WAEC headquarters, Accra and Dr.M. G. Oke deputy registrar WAEC headquarters Lagos compares trend of candidates' performance in WAEC member countries in their paper an appraisal of candidates' achievement in West African Senior School Certificate Examination among WAEC member countries: Ghana, Nigeria, The Gambia, and Sierra Leone.

In their paper, Bello and Oke illustrated the trend of candidates' performance in May/June WASSCE in WAEC member countries using the percentage of candidates that had credit and above in some selected subjects. However, Ghana did not present candidates for the examination in 2010. They asserted that less than 50% (thus percentage of candidates who had credit in the subject ranged from 3.07 to 49.3) of the candidates who sat the examination in each year in all the countries had credit and above (A1 – C6) in English Language. Their data showed a downward trend in performance in all the countries.

Judging from data and the trend in performance, Bello and Oke showed that it could generally be observed that performance of candidates in WASSCE in the sub region in some subjects and for the period reviewed was not quite impressive except in Government where most of the candidates in Nigeria had credits and above. Performance of candidates in English Language and Mathematics in WSSCE in the sub-region was low.

Bello and Oke have showed the general performance in some core subjects and some elective subjects over a period covering the three years Senior High School. Their submission is very relevant to this study in that it shows some of the short falls in the three-year program in terms of performance of the core subjects. They identified the general performance level of the elective subjects under the three-year period and also showed some of the short falls.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Area

This study was conducted in the Central Region of Ghana. The Central Region houses most of the best secondary schools in Ghana including; Wesley Girls' High School, St. Augustine College, Mfantshipim, Adisadel College, Aggrey Memorial, Ghana National College, Holy Child, Cape Coast Technical Institute, Asuansi Technical Institute, Academy of Christ the King, University Practice, St. Nicholas Seminary Senior High School, just to mention a few. The study covers two schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. One school in the Cape Coast North District and the other in the Cape Coast South District, University Practice and Mfantshipim Senior High schools respectively.

The reason for the choice of the schools is that Mfantshipim is considered a grade A school which is equal to a non-deprived secondary school according to a categorization developed by Amedahe's Committee on Deprived Senior Secondary in 2001. In their categorization, non-deprived schools are schools well established with very good infrastructural facilities, such as the electricity and water accessible, roads to the schools and they are mainly boarding schools and well-stocked libraries. Gender wise, Mfantshipim is a single sex school. University Practice Senior High school on the other hand is a grade B school. According to the Amedahe's Committee, grade B school is not well established. They have poor infrastructural facilities such as water, accessible roads to the school. They are mainly day schools. Their libraries are not so well stocked. Gender wise University Practice is a mixed school. The researcher believes it is ideal and the study will give a fair idea of the academic performance for the two Senior High School programmes in both a single sex school and the mixed school. Mfantshipim is located within the heart of Cape Coast at about 360 meters from the main Kotokuraba market in northward. University Practice is located in University of Cape Coast North campus. It about three minutes' drive from University's East gate.

3.2. Research Design

This study employed both the quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques to draw valid conclusions and inferences. Quantitative techniques include trend analysis used to consider the trend of performance of students over the years during the period under study. Other quantitative techniques used were T - test, percentages and tables.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) described qualitative research as a study that deals with one or more of these: description, interpretation, verification and evaluation to serve a particular purpose. Since the study seeks to compare the results of the two periods. Using qualitative method will help to describe the two Senior High programmes and evaluate their outcome. This aided in quick understanding and appreciation of the study.

3.3. Population

The population of this study consisted of the results that cover the three-year Senior High School starting from 2006, 2007, 2013 and the results covering the four-year Senior High School programmes covering 2011, 2012, 2013 in the schools under study, 4743 results in all. In 2013, students of both three and four programme wrote WASSCE together.

In the case of the teachers at schools under study, the purposive sample was employed to select those who could provide the needed information, thus the teachers who had taught both the three year and four-year Senior High School programmes. Eight teachers were interviewed in both schools.

3.4. Some Ethical Issues Involved

Data for this study were obtained from both the primary and secondary data collection methods. The secondary data used in the study covered the period of 2006 to 2013. They were obtained from the record department of the two schools. In collecting the secondary data, an introductory letter was taken from the Sociology and Anthropology Department of University of Cape Coast and presented to the authorities of Ghana Education Service, Cape Coast Office. They then gave the researcher an introductory letter to be sent to the schools being studied. For the primary data, face - to - face interview was conducted. Face- to- face interview allowed the researcher to interact with the teachers who taught under both programmes.

3.5. Sample and Sampling Method

The purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample of this study. The purposive sampling technique is one which the researcher intentionally selects respondents who exhibit characteristics very crucial to the study. The characteristics for this study include; first, for the primary data, teachers who had taught students of both programmes and had experience with both programmes were interviewed.

Secondly, for the secondary data of the two selected Senior High Schools, WASSCE results that covered the three year programme from 2006, 2007, and 2013 and that of the four year programme, results for 2011, 2012 and 2013 for the first school were obtained.

4. Results and Discussions

The presentation of the results and discussions done here begins with the interview conducted and followed by the analysis of the secondary data received from the record sections of the study area. Data gathered were grouped, analyzed and interpreted using Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS).

This study set out to find out whether student performance is influenced by the length of years spent in the SHS. So the results and discussions from the data gathered have been categorized under the following headings: The nature of students' performance for the three-year period, the nature of students' performance for the four-year period and the variations in comparing the two periods.

4.1. The Nature of Students' Performance for the Three-Year Period

From the face to face interviews with sixteen Senior High School teachers the teachers were asked whether they thought the duration mattered in student performance in Senior High School. Most of them answered yes and went on to explain that looking at the syllabus they needed more time to cover the whole content of the syllabus. Teachers get more contact hours to interact and help the students, the teachers would get ample time so would the student and this would help reduce the pressure on both teachers and students. Also they stated that first term of the first year's students was cut short because:

1. They come to school late due to late release of Basic Education Certificate Examination (B.E.C.E) and also late placement by the computer selection and placement system.
2. Other extra curriculum activities such as inter- school's colleges sports and super zonal in athletics, founder's day and the school's anniversary celebrations.
3. Also, two teachers one from each school lamented that there were a lot of the problems at the basic school level. They said that most of the teachers were not so qualified to teach and as a result basic school pupil come with misconceptions and therefore Senior High School teachers need more time to let them understand and appreciate the senior high school courses.

The researcher gathered from the interview that indeed duration is very important to both teachers and students at the senior high school. However, one of the teachers said that duration was not so serious an issue and continued that the most important element was the teacher. He said once they knew there is enough time they didn't pay particular attention to student unless they realized time was fast approaching examination.

The respondents were asked if they were to assess the three-year Senior High School what would be some of your observations.

Here, the teachers told the researcher it is not three years as the name suggests. It only the name but in actual sense it's two and half years. The reason they gave was that practically the first years come to school in the first term less than two months to vacation and to them in these few weeks not even one third of the first term syllabus would be covered. In the final year too, they only have two terms for teaching and learning and the last term was used for the final exams. So in all they had seven terms instead of nine terms. This notwithstanding, one teacher said that academic performance was not that bad but added that if certain structures were put in place like class room, dormitories and teaching materials are provided on time student performance would improve. The following were their observations:

1. Most of the slow learners were handicapped.
2. Student got to appreciate the senior high school course very late thus the third year when they were about writing the final examination
3. The first term of the three year senior high is virtually wasted coupled with strikes and other extra curriculum activities.
4. Most of the misconceptions learnt at the basic school were difficult to unlearn hence very difficult to teach the students given the short period of time.
5. Only students with high IQ (intelligent quotient) were able to catch up.
6. They were not able to complete or finish the syllabus on time which went a long way to affect student academic performance.
7. Pressure was high on both students and teachers to complete the course.
8. One teacher however stated that one thing he observed was that both teachers and students become more serious because they knew the time is short so they wouldn't waste much time.

The researcher realized that there were mixed reaction among the respondents but majority of them were of the view that performance was not so encouraging. The minority however said that performance was not so bad but could improve if certain issues are addressed. The next question the researcher asked the respondents was on the means by which they were assessing student performance under the three-year Senior High School programme?

All the teachers interviewed said they used class assessment which was GES approved. The class assessment included class exercise, class test, assignments, group work, project work, quizzes and end of term examination. Addition to these was the results from their final examination. Some of the teachers admitted that they went extra by assessing their personal and emotion life through classroom interaction and Question & Answers in class. Others also said they did oral examination and standardized test conducted by the school. When the respondents were asked whether the three years should be maintained having had a close look at the WASSCE results, almost all the respondents said no it shouldn't be maintained except for one who said yes it should be maintained. Two of the respondents said that so long as the problems at the basic school level are not rectified, it should not be maintained. One teacher said it depends on the government being the policy maker. So the three-year Senior High School should be managed.

4.2. The Nature of Students' Performance for the Four-Year Period

The next question was if you were to assess the four-year senior high school, what were some of your observations?

1. We had more time to cover and complete the syllabus, lost period and untreated topics were treated. Pressure on teachers and student was reduced. Students also learned at their own pace. Slow learners also benefited a lot since there was enough time to help them. There were more contact hours between the teacher and the student.

2. Students were made to understand that won't stay home for one year before entering the tertiary institution that is, if they learned hard and passed the exams. They left school more matured, conducted themselves well both in classroom and outside classroom. They were punctual and modest in class.
3. Students were able to understand and appreciate the Senior High School course better. They did better in terms of quality passes. The percentage passes of D7, E8 and F9 were less.
4. However, the other side to the 4 years was that most students were too tired; some felt they were grown so they started misbehaving. Also one teacher said seriousness on the part of teachers was very low. They thought they had enough time.

The next question the researcher asked was how was the means by which you were assessing student performance under the four-year senior high school programme?

All the teachers interviewed said it was basically the same way as they did in the three year programme. Just that this time they were able to mark and discuss the questions with the students in time before their final exams.

The next question was if they checked WASSCE results from WAEC do they think the four years senior high should be brought back? All the respondents except for one said yes it should be brought back. Some said comparatively, it's better than the three years in terms of results and student maturity was very high. Others said that if we want quality education then the four year should be brought back. The one who said it should not be brought back said because in some instances the three year products did better than the four-year product.

The next question the researcher asked was should WASSCE alone should be used as a measure to assess student performance at the Senior High School?

More than half of the respondents said yes it should be the only body to assess students. Because of the following:

1. "Some teachers don't even understand assessment. They give students test and when they fail they are happy." One respondent said.
2. Its standard, because it not only done in Ghana. Nigeria, Gambia and Sierra Leon also takes the same examination. It is used for selection into the tertiary institution and for certification.
3. Some said yes and added that internship and practical's during vacation can be included but should only be done in the four year programme because there would be enough time in the four year programme.
4. Others also believed that internal exams should be included.
5. One respondent was of the view that they have been efficient and challenging enough.

About five of the respondents said no because they were of the view that:

1. There could be other examination bodies that can compete with WAEC so the competition can bring about the best in students.
2. It is only an entrance exam to the tertiary institutions.
3. One respondent said no because he believes the student must learn something for life as well.
4. "I don't think so but our system makes it so. If you go outside the country, there are other means of assessing student performance. Because if a student is sick during examination and cannot write the paper does that mean that student cannot be assessed?" one respondent lamented.
5. One respondent said to him he thinks Ghana Education Service needs to restructure the entire curriculum of the Senior High School and when that is done examination will not be the only means of assessing student performance.

4.3. Comparing Performance for the Three Year and Four Year Periods.

The last question was that in their own view of the three year and four year programmes which one do they think the students performed better?

All the respondents but one said students performed better in the four year programme than in the three year programme. However, the one who said the three year performed better than the four year said the four year was ideal but in some of the subjects the three year products did better than the four year products. From the responses and reactions from the respondents it's indicated that academic performance in the four year programme was very impressive as compared to the three year programme.

4.4. Analysis of the Secondary Data Gathered

Table 1 to Table 12 show how students performed in the four core subjects: Mathematics, English Language, Integrated Science and Social Studies for SHS3 and SHS4 in 2013 across single sex (boys) and mixed schools in the Cape Coast.

4.5. Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Mathematics for 2013

As can be seen from Table 1, some (33.9%) of the students obtained grades B2 or B3 while some (28.9%) of the students obtained credit or Grades C4, C5 or C6. About 15.8 percent of the students attained excellent results or had Grade A1 and 14.3 percent made Grades D7 or E8. Only 7.1 percent of the students had Grade F9 or failed. This means that about 92.9 percent of the students passed in mathematics when the SHS was three years.

School Grade	Single Mixed				Total		Single Mixed				Total	
	SHS3-2013		SHS3-2013				SHS4-20113		SHS4-2013			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
A1	128	20.6	4	1.9	132	15.8	179	28.1	6	2.2	185	20.3
B2	67	10.8	3	1.4	70	8.4	79	12.4	13	4.7	92	10.1
B3	189	30.4	24	11.3	213	25.5	202	31.7	37	13.4	239	26.2
C4	41	6.6	17	8.0	58	7.0	37	5.8	15	5.4	52	5.7
C5	52	8.4	14	6.6	66	7.9	39	6.1	22	8.0	61	6.7
C6	85	13.7	32	15.1	117	14.0	65	10.2	56	20.3	121	13.3
D7	34	5.5	36	17.0	70	8.4	18	2.8	53	19.2	71	7.8
E8	18	2.9	31	14.6	49	5.9	13	2.0	37	13.4	50	5.5
F9	8	1.3	51	24.1	59	7.1	5	0.8	37	13.4	42	4.6
Total	622	100.0	212	100.0	834	100.0	637	100.0	276	100.0	913	100.0

Table 1: Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Mathematics for 2013

Source: Field Data, 2014

With respect to the four year programme, it can be seen that most (36.3%) of the students obtained either very good or good grades (B2 or B3) while some (25.7%) of them got credits or C4, C5, C6. This is followed by students who obtained Grade A1 or excellent results (20.3%). About 13.3 percent of the students had Grade D7 and E8. About 4.6 percent however failed in Mathematics when the SHS was four years. This implies that 95.4 percent of the students passed in Mathematics that year. The percentage difference between SHS3 (92.9%) and SHS4 (95.4%) who passed in mathematics was 2.5 percent. This difference is greater than 1 percent and less than 8 percent and so may be said to be a small difference.

4.6. Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Mathematics for 2007 and 2012

Table 2 is a comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Mathematics for 2007 and 2012 respectively. With respect to the 2007 performance, the data in Table 2 indicates that overall, most (31.8%) of the students obtained Grade B2 or B3 (i.e. Very good or good results). This is followed by 18.7 percent of the students who attained Grade A1 or had excellent results. However, a total of 25.3 percent of the students had credits or Grades C4, C5 or C6). About 14.7 percent of the students obtained passes or Grades D7 or E8 while about 9 percent (9.4%) of the students obtained Grade F9 or failed.

School Grade	Single Mixed				Total		Single Mixed				Total	
	SHS3-2007		SHS3-2007				SHS4-2012		SHS4-2012			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
A1	159	32.1	7	3.2	166	18.7	210	41.0	21	6.8	231	28.2
B2	42	8.5	10	4.5	52	9.4	76	14.8	14	4.6	90	11.0
B3	105	21.2	16	7.3	121	22.4	122	23.8	45	14.7	167	20.4
C4	35	7.1	3	1.4	38	7.2	28	5.5	8	2.6	36	4.4
C5	31	6.3	21	9.5	52	6.9	36	7.0	31	10.1	67	8.2
C6	45	9.1	39	17.7	84	11.2	23	4.5	55	17.9	78	9.5
D7	31	6.3	25	11.4	56	7.9	8	1.6	49	16.0	57	7.0
E8	27	5.5	32	14.5	59	6.8	6	1.2	48	15.6	54	6.6
F9	20	4.0	67	30.5	87	9.4	3	0.6	36	11.7	39	4.8
Total	495	32.1	220	100.0	715	100.0	512	100.0	307	100.0	819	100.0

Table 2: Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Mathematics for 2007 and 2012

Source: Field Data, 2014

With regard to SHS4 in 2012, the results show that the general pattern in students' performance in mathematics for the 2012 academic year changed in favour of the proportion of students who obtained Grade A1. As can be seen in Table 2, overall, most (28.2%) of the students obtained Grade A1. This is followed by 20.4 percent (Grade B3) and 11 percent (Grade B2). A total of 22.1 percent attained credits or Grades C4, C5 and C6) while about 14 percent of the students obtained pass or Grades D7 and E8 whereas about 5 percent of the students obtained Grade F9 or failed. In general, it is clear from Table 2 that in terms of proportions, more students in SHS4 (2012) attained Grades A1 compared to SHS3 students (2007). The proportion of students who failed in mathematics when SHS was 4 years was less (5%) when compared with the proportion that failed when SHS was 3 years (9.4%). In other words, about 95 percent of the students passed in Mathematics when SHS was four years as against 90.6 percent when SHS was three years. This difference is greater than 1 percent and less than 8 percent and so may be said to be a small difference.

4.7. Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Mathematics for 2006 and 2011

Table 3 is a comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Mathematics for 2006 and 2011 respectively. With regard to the 2006 performance, when SHS was 3 years, Table 3 suggests that for both single and mixed sex schools, most (25.3%) of the students obtained very good and good or B2 and B3; followed by 24.8 percent of the students whose performance was excellent (Grade A1). At the same time, a 21.4 percent of the students got credits or Grades (C4, C5 and C6). About 18 percent of the students obtained pass or Grades D7 and E8 while about 11percent of the students obtained Grade F9 or failed. Therefore 89 percent of the student of SHS3 in 2006 passed in mathematics.

School Grade	Single Mixed				Total		Single Mixed				Total	
	SHS3-2006		SHS3-2006				SHS4-20111		SHS4-20111			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
A1	170	34.3	8	3.6	178	24.8	150	31.4	11	4.2	161	21.7
B2	57	11.5	7	3.1	64	8.9	66	13.8	14	5.3	80	10.8
B3	103	20.8	15	6.7	118	16.4	125	26.2	53	20.0	178	24.0
C4	33	6.7	11	4.9	44	6.1	24	5.0	8	3.0	32	4.3
C5	31	6.3	7	3.1	38	5.3	29	6.1	25	9.4	54	7.3
C6	45	9.1	27	12.1	72	10.0	46	9.6	52	19.6	98	13.2
D7	42	8.5	36	16.1	78	10.8	23	4.8	37	14.0	60	8.1
E8	10	2.0	40	17.9	50	7.0	11	2.3	24	9.1	35	4.7
F9	4	0.8	73	32.6	77	10.7	4	0.8	41	15.5	45	6.1
Total	495	100.0	224	100.0	719	100.0	478	100.0	265	100.0	743	100.0

Table 3: Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Mathematics for 2006 and 2011

Source: Field Data, 2014

In consideration of the 2011 academic year when SHS was 4 years, the data in Table 3 show that a total of 34.8 percent of the students had very good and good or obtained Grades B2 or B3. Furthermore, a total of 24.8 percent of the students were awarded credits or Graded (C4, C5 and C6). About 21.7 percent of the students obtained grade A1 while 12.8 percent of them had pass or had Grades D7 or D8. About 6 percent of the student could not make it (failed) in Mathematics when SHS was 4 years. It can be deduced from Table 3 that performance of most students in SHS4 (2011) was generally good or when compared with SHS3 students (2006). However, the proportion of students who failed in mathematics when SHS was 4 years was a little more (12.8%) or when compared with the proportion that failed when SHS was 3 years (11.0%). In other words, about 89 percent of the students passed in mathematics when SHS was three years as against 96.0 percent when SHS was four years. Thus, more students of SHS4 passed in mathematics than students of SHS3 in 2011 and 2006 respectively. The percentage difference of 1.8 percent between the two groups is greater than 1% and less than 8% and therefore may be described as a small difference.

4.8. Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in English for 2013

Table 4 is a comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in English for 2013 and 2013 respectively. Table 4 indicates that when SHS was 3 years, majority (66.9%) of the students obtained grades B2 or B3; followed by 28.9 percent of the students who got credits or Grades (C4, C5 and C6). About 2.5 percent of the students obtained pass or Grades D7 and E8 while only 1.4 percent of the students' performance was excellent (Grade A1). However, only 0.2 percent of the students obtained Grade F9 or failed. Therefore, about 98.8 percent of the student of SHS3 in 2013 passed in English.

School Grade	Single Mixed				Total		Single Mixed				Total	
	SHS3-2013		SHS3-2013				SHS4-2013		SHS4-2013			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
A1	12	1.9	0	0.0	12	1.4	25	3.9	0	0.0	25	2.7
B2	83	13.3	5	2.4	88	10.6	107	16.8	3	1.1	110	12.0
B3	418	67.2	50	23.9	468	56.3	376	59.0	68	24.6	444	48.6
C4	73	11.7	46	22.0	119	14.3	83	13.0	76	27.5	159	17.4
C5	26	4.2	33	15.8	59	7.1	29	4.6	46	16.7	75	8.2
C6	10	1.6	52	24.9	62	7.5	15	2.4	52	18.8	67	7.3
D7	0	0.0	16	7.7	16	1.9	0	0.0	22	8.0	22	2.4
E8	0	0.0	5	2.4	5	0.6	1	0.2	4	1.4	5	0.5
F9	0	0.0	2	1.0	2	0.2	1	0.2	5	1.8	6	0.7
Total	622	1.00	209	100.0	831	100.0	637	100.0	276	100.0	913	100.0

Table 4: Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in English for 2013

Source: Field Data, 2014

Turning to students' performance in English when SHS was 4 years, Table 4 indicates that majority (66.6%) of the students' performance may be described as good or B2 or B3; 32.9 percent of the students who got credits or Grades (C4, C5 and C6). About 9.7 percent of the students obtained pass or Grades D7 and E8 while 0.7 percent of the students obtained Grade F9 or failed. About 2.7 percent of the students' performance was excellent (Grade A1). Therefore, about 99.3 percent of the student of SHS4 in 2013 made it in English. Even though in proportion terms more students of SHS4 passed in English Language than students of SHS3 in 2013, the percentage difference of 0.5% between the two groups is less than 1% and may be described as no difference for the periods under study.

4.9. Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in English for 2007 and 2012

Table 5 is a comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in English for 2007 and 2012 respectively. Table 5 shows that when SHS was 3 years, majority (56.0%) of the students obtained credit got credits or Grades (C4, C5 and C6). About 30 percent of the students obtained good Grades (B2 and B3) while about 13.0 percent of the students' attained pass or Grades D7 and E8; only 1.1 percent of the students obtained Grade F9 or failed while only 0.4 percent of the students' performance was described as excellent (Grade A1). This means that about 98.9 percent of the students of SHS3 in 2007 passed in English Language.

School Grade	Single Mixed				Total		Single Mixed				Total	
	SHS3-2007		SHS3-2007				SHS4-2012		SHS4-2012			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
A1	3	0.6	0	0.0	3	0.4	98	19.1	0	0.0	98	12.0
B2	17	3.4	0	0.0	17	2.4	137	26.8	13	4.2	150	18.3
B3	184	37.2	14	6.4	198	27.7	231	45.1	114	37.1	345	42.1
C4	101	20.4	17	7.7	118	16.5	29	5.7	62	20.2	91	11.1
C5	88	17.8	32	14.5	120	16.8	8	1.6	44	14.3	52	6.3
C6	84	17.0	78	35.5	162	22.7	5	1.0	59	19.2	64	7.8
D7	16	3.2	51	23.2	67	9.4	0	0.0	7	2.3	7	0.9
E8	2	0.4	20	9.1	22	3.1	3	0.6	8	2.6	11	1.3
F9	0	0.0	8	3.6	8	1.1	1	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.1
Total	495	100.0	220	100.0	715	100.0	512	100.0	307	100.0	819	100.0

Table 5: Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in English for 2007 and 2012

Source: Field Data, 2014

Furthermore, Table 5 is shows that when SHS was 4 years, majority (60.4%) of the students results were very good or good (Grades B2 or B3) while 25.2 percent of the students earned credits or Grades (C4, C5 or C6). About 12 percent of the students' performance was described as excellent (Grade A1) while about 2.3 percent of the students' attained pass or Grades D7 and E8; and 0.1 percent of the students obtained Grade F9 or failed. This means that about 98.9 percent of the students of SHS3 in passed in English and 99.9 percent passed when SHS four years in 2007 and 2012 respectively. This is an indication of some difference. The difference of 1.0 percent may be described as no difference for the periods under study.

4.10. Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in English for 2006 and 2011

Table 6 is a comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in English for 2006 and 2011 respectively. Table 6 shows that when SHS was 3 years, majority (60.0%) of the students obtained credit got credits or Grades (C4, C5 and C6). About 25 percent of the students obtained very good or good Grades (B2 and B3) while about 17.0 percent of the students' attained pass or Grades D7 and E8; only 1.3 percent of the students obtained Grade F9 or failed while only 0.3 percent of the students' performance was described as excellent (Grade A1). This means that about 98.7 percent of the students of SHS3 in 2006 passed in English for the period under study.

School Grade	Single Mixed				Total		Single Mixed				Total	
	SHS3-2006		SHS3-2006				SHS4-2011		SHS4-2011			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
A1	2	0.4	0	0.0	2	0.3	27	5.6	0	0.0	27	3.6
B2	13	2.6	1	0.4	14	1.9	101	21.1	2	0.7	103	13.8
B3	149	30.1	18	8.0	167	23.2	231	48.3	44	16.5	275	36.9
C4	96	19.4	20	8.9	116	16.1	68	14.2	41	15.4	109	14.6
C5	67	13.5	17	7.6	84	11.7	39	8.2	89	33.3	128	17.2
C6	124	25.1	79	35.3	203	28.2	8	1.7	71	26.6	79	10.6
D7	34	6.9	51	22.8	85	11.8	4	0.8	10	3.7	14	1.9
E8	8	1.6	31	13.8	39	5.4	0	0.0	7	2.6	7	0.9
F9	2	0.4	7	3.1	9	1.3	0	0.0	3	1.1	3	0.4
Total	495	100.0	224	100.0	719	100.0	478	100.0	267	100.0	745	100.0

Table 6: Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in English for 2006 and 2011

Source: Field Data, 2014

As regard students' performance when SHS was 4 years, Table 6 demonstrates that majority (50.7%) of the student's results were very good or good (Grades B2 or B3); 42.4 percent of the students earned credits or Grades C4, C5 or C6) while 3.6 percent of the students' performance was excellent (Grade A1). About 2.8 percent of the students' attained pass or Grades D7 and E8; and only 0.4 percent of the students obtained Grade F9 or failed. This means that about 99.6 percent of the students of SHS4 in 2011 passed in English. Comparing the proportion of SHS3 (98.7%) and SHS4 (99.6%) who passed in English suggests that the percentage difference in performance between the two groups is less than 1percent (0.9%). This means that there is no difference in performance between the two groups as far as English language was concerned for the periods under study.

4.11. Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Integrated Science for 2013

Table 7 is a comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Integrated Science for 2013. Table 7 shows that when SHS was 3 years, most (44.3%) of the student's results were either very good or good (Grades B2 or B3). This was followed by students who obtained credit got credits or Grades C4, C5 and C6 (23.8%) and students whose performance was excellent or Grade A1 (22.9%). About 8.5 percent of the students obtained pass or Grades D7 and E8 while only 1.6 percent of the students earned Grade F9 or failed. In other words, about 98.4 percent of the students of SHS3 in 2013 passed in Integrated Science for the period under study.

School Grade	Single Mixed				Total		Single Mixed				Total	
	SHS3-2013		SHS3-2013				SHS4-2013		SHS4-2013			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
A1	183	29.4	8	3.8	191	22.9	296	46.5	26	9.4	322	35.3
B2	111	17.8	12	5.6	123	14.7	105	16.5	26	9.4	131	14.4
B3	206	33.1	41	19.2	247	29.6	148	23.3	67	24.3	215	23.6
C4	32	5.1	22	10.3	54	6.5	34	5.3	22	8.0	56	6.1
C5	23	3.7	16	7.5	39	4.7	15	2.4	22	8.0	37	4.1
C6	51	8.2	46	21.6	97	11.6	24	3.8	58	21.0	82	9.0
D7	11	1.8	33	15.5	44	5.3	12	1.9	36	13.0	48	5.3
E8	5	0.8	22	10.3	27	3.2	2	0.3	15	5.4	17	1.9
F9	0	0.0	13	6.1	13	1.6	0	0.0	4	1.4	4	0.4
Total	622	100.0	213	100.0	835	100.0	636	100.0	276	100.0	912	100.0

Table 7: Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Integrated Science for 2013

Source: Field Data, 2014

On how students performed when SHS was 4 years, Table 7 reveals that most (38%) of the student's results were very good or good (Grades B2 or B3) while 35.3 percent of the students' performance was excellent (Grade A1), 19.2 percent of the students have credits or Grades C4, C5 or C6). About 7 percent of the students' attained pass or Grades D7 and E8; and only 0.4 percent of them obtained Grade F9 or failed. This means that about 99.6 percent of the students of SHS3 in 2013 passed in Integrated Science. Comparing the proportion of SHS3 (98.4%) and SHS4 (99.6%) who passed in Integrated Science implies that the percentage difference in performance between the two groups is about 1percent (1.2%). This means that there is no difference in performance between the two groups in Integrated Science for the periods under study.

4.12. Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 Integrated Science- 2007 and 2012

Table 8 is a comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Integrated Science for 2013. Table 8 reveals that when SHS was 3 years, most (40.7%) of the students got credits or Grades C4, C5 and C6, followed by 25.3 percent of the students who made Grades D7 or E8 (pass) while the results of 24.8 percent of the students' performance were either very good or good (Grades B2 or B3). This is followed by students whose performance was excellent or Grade A1 (12.9%). About 5.3 percent of the students performed poorly resulting in Grade F9 or fail. In other words, about 94.7 percent of the students of SHS3 in 2007 passed in Integrated Science for the period under study.

School Grade	Single Mixed				Total		Single Mixed				Total	
	SHS3-2007		SHS3-2007				SHS4-2012		SHS4-2012			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
A1	89	18.0	3	1.4	92	12.9	273	53.3	26	8.4	299	36.5
B2	53	10.7	4	1.8	57	8.0	83	16.2	27	8.8	110	13.4
B3	100	20.2	20	9.1	120	16.8	97	18.9	75	24.4	172	21.0
C4	47	9.5	11	5.0	58	8.1	23	4.5	37	12.0	60	7.3
C5	26	5.3	15	6.8	41	5.7	10	2.0	33	10.7	43	5.2
C6	82	16.6	46	20.9	128	17.9	20	3.9	53	17.2	73	8.9
D7	59	11.9	45	20.5	104	14.5	4	0.8	40	13.0	44	5.4
E8	28	5.7	49	22.3	77	10.8	1	0.2	10	3.2	11	1.3
F9	11	2.2	27	12.3	38	5.3	1	0.2	7	2.3	8	1.0
Total	495	100.0	220	100.0	715	100.0	512	100.0	308	100.0	820	100.0

Table 8: Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 (Integrated Science-2007 and 2012)

Source: Field Data, 2014

With respect to how students performed when SHS was 4 years, it can be seen in Table 8 that most (36.5%) of the students had excellent results (Grade A1) while 24.4 percent of them had their results described as either very good or good (Grades B2 or B3). Also, 16.4 percent of the students were able to get credits or Grades C4, C5 or C6). About 6.7 percent of the students' attained pass or Grades D7 and E8; and only 1.0 percent of them had Grade F9 or failed. This implies that about 99.0 percent of the students of SHS4 in 2012 passed in Integrated Science. By way of comparison, the proportion of SHS3 (94.7%) and SHS4 (99.0%) who passed in Integrated Science means that even though the percentage difference in performance between the two groups is about 1 percent (4.3%). This may be termed as a small difference in performance between the two groups in Integrated Science for the periods under study.

4.13. Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Integrated Science-2006 and 2011

Table 9 indicates that when SHS was 3 years, most (34.5%) of the students attained credits or Grades C4, C5 and C6, followed by 28.6 percent of the students who made Grades D7 or E8 (pass) while the results of 27.3 percent of the students results were either very good or good (Grades B2 or B3). This is followed by students whose performance was excellent or Grade A1 (5.1%). About 4.5 percent of the students' performance can best be described as poor (Grade F9 or fail). Put differently, about 95.5 percent of the students of SHS3 in 2006 passed in Integrated Science for the period under study.

School Grade	Single Mixed				Total		Single Mixed				Total	
	SHS3-2006		SHS3-2006				SHS4-2011		SHS4-2011			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
A1	36	7.3	1	0.4	37	5.1	110	23.0	6	2.4	116	16.0
B2	63	12.7	1	0.4	64	8.9	82	17.2	13	5.2	95	13.1
B3	118	23.8	14	6.3	132	18.4	126	26.4	45	18.1	171	23.6
C4	39	7.9	3	1.3	42	5.8	39	8.2	15	6.0	54	7.4
C5	57	11.5	14	6.3	71	9.9	42	8.8	19	7.7	61	8.4
C6	100	20.2	35	15.6	135	18.8		9.6	64	25.8	64	8.8
D7	58	11.7	68	30.4	126	17.5	23	4.8	44	17.7	67	9.2
E8	21	4.2	59	26.3	80	11.1	7	1.5	42	16.9	49	6.7
F9	3	0.6	29	12.9	32	4.5	3	0.6	0	0.0	3	0.4
Total	495	100.0	224	100.0	719	100.0	478	100.0	248	100.0	726	100.0

Table 9: Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Integrated Science- 2006 and 2011

Source: Field Data, 2014

An examination of Table 9 shows that when SHS was 4 years most (36.7%) of the students had their results described as either very good or good (Grades B2 or B3) while 26.6 percent of the students were able to get credits or Grades C4, C5 or C6). About 16.0 had excellent results (Grade A1) while 15.9 percent of them attained pass or Grades D7 and E8; and only 0.4 percent of them had Grade F9 or failed. This implies that about 99.6 percent of the students of SHS4 in 2011 passed in Integrated Science. When the proportion of SHS3 (95.5%) and SHS4 (99.6%) who passed in Integrated Science are compared, it can be seen that the percentage difference in performance between the two groups is about 4 percent (4.1%). This can best be described as a small difference in performance between the two groups in Integrated Science for the periods under study.

4.14. Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Social Studies for 2013

Table 10 illustrates that when SHS was 3 years, most (50.1%) of the students managed to get either very good or good (Grades B2 or B3). This is followed by students who excelled or had Grade A1 in the Social Studies (38.6%) About 9 percent (8.9%) had credits or Grades C4, C5 and C6, in Social Studies while 2.2 percent of the students scored Grades D7 or E8 (pass). Only 0.2 percent of the students failed or attained (Grade F9 in Social Studies. This implies that 99.8 percent of the students of SHS3 in 2013 passed in Social Studies.

School Grade	Single Mixed				Total		Single Mixed				Total	
	SHS3-2013		SHS3-2013				SHS4-2013		SHS4-2013			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
A1	287	46.1	35	16.5	322	38.6	430	67.6	44	15.9	474	52.0
B2	165	26.5	36	17.0	201	24.1	120	18.9	52	18.8	172	18.9
B3	142	22.8	75	35.4	217	26.0	68	10.7	107	38.8	175	19.2
C4	10	1.6	16	7.5	26	3.1	7	1.1	23	8.3	30	3.3
C5	9	1.4	14	6.6	23	2.8	6	0.9	12	4.3	18	2.0
C6	5	0.8	20	9.4	25	3.0	3	0.5	19	6.9	22	2.4
D7	4	0.6	9	4.2	13	1.6	1	0.2	8	2.9	9	1.0
E8	0	0.0	5	2.4	5	0.6	1	0.2	8	2.9	9	1.0
F9	0	0.0	2	0.9	2	0.2	0	0.0	3	1.1	3	0.3
Total	622	100.0	212	100.0	834	100.0	636	100.0	276	100.0	912	100.0

Table 10: Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Social Studies for 2013

Source: Field Data, 2014

On how students performed when SHS was 4 years, it is clear from Table 10 that majority (52.0%) of the students harvested Grade A1 or had excellent results while 38.1 percent of the students had either very good or good results (Grades B2 or B3). About 8 percent (7.5%) of the students obtained credits or Grades C4, C5 or C6) while 2.0 percent of them had their results described as pass (Grades D7 and E8) However, less than 1 percent (0.3%) of them failed or had Grade F9. This means that about 99.7 percent of the students of SHS4 in 2013 passed in Social Studies. Comparing the proportion of SHS3 (99.8%) and SHS4 (99.7%) who passed in Social Studies suggests the percentage difference in performance between the two groups is about 0.1percent. This is a small difference in performance between the two groups in Social Studies for the periods under study.

4.15. Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Social Studies for 2007 and 2012

Table 11 shows that when SHS was 3 years in 2007, majority (70.6%) of the students had either very good or good (Grades B2 or B3) while 21.4 percent of the students obtained credits or Grades C4, C5 or C6). About 6 (5.9%) percent of the students were awarded Grade A1 or had excellent results while 2.0 percent of them had pass or Grades D7 or E8. However, less than 1 percent (0.1%) of them failed or had Grade F9. This means that about 99.9 percent of the students of SHS3 in 2007 passed in Social Studies.

School Grade	Single Mixed				Total		Single Mixed				Total	
	SHS3-2007		SHS3-2007				SHS4-2012		SHS4-2012			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
A1	31	6.3	11	5.0	42	5.9	312	61.1	91	23.5	403	44.8
B2	122	24.6	27	12.3	149	20.8	108	21.1	68	17.5	176	19.6
B3	278	56.2	78	35.5	356	49.8	72	14.1	180	46.4	252	28.0
C4	31	6.3	36	16.4	67	9.4	3	0.6	18	4.6	21	2.3
C5	23	4.6	17	7.7	40	5.6	4	0.8	17	4.4	21	2.3
C6	9	1.8	37	16.8	46	6.4	10	2.0	9	2.3	19	2.1
D7	0	0.0	9	4.1	9	1.3	1	0.2	4	1.0	5	0.6
E8	1	0.2	4	1.8	5	0.7	1	0.2	1	0.3	2	0.2
F9	0	0.0	1	0.5	1	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	495	100.0	220	100.0	715	100.0	511	100.0	388	100.0	899	100.0

Table 11: Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Social Studies for 2007 and 2012

Source: Field Data, 2014

When SHS was 4 years, majority (47.6%) of the students attained either very good or good results (Grades B2 or B3). Nearly 45 percent (44.8%) of the students performed excellently or made Grade A1 while 6.7 percent of the students obtained credits or Grades C4, C5 or C6). Less than 1 percent grabbed passes (Grades D7 or E8). However, none of the students failed or had grade F9 (Table 11). This means that all the students passed in Social Studies when SHS was four years. Given that the proportion of SHS3 (99.9%) and SHS4 (100.0%) who passed in Social Studies gives 0.1 percentage difference in performance between the two groups. Thus, there is a small difference in performance between the two groups in Social Studies for the periods under study.

4.16. Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Social Studies for 2006 and 2011

Table 12 represents students' performance in Social Studies when SHS was 3 years and four years respectively. With regard to students' performance in Social Studies when SHS was 3 years nearly 49 percent (48.9%) of the students managed to get either very good or good (Grades B2 or B3). This is followed by students who had credits or Grades C4, C5 and C6, in Social Studies (41.2%). Nearly 7 percent (6.9%) of the students obtained Grades D7 or E8 (pass) while only 0.3 percent of the students failed or attained (Grade F9 in Social Studies and none scored Grade A1 or excellent results. The implication here is that about 99.7 percent of the students of SHS3 in 2006 passed in Social Studies.

School Grade	Single Mixed				Total		Single Mixed				Total	
	SHS3-2006		SHS3-2006				SHS4-2011		SHS4-2011			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
A1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	186	38.9	17	6.4	203	27.3
B2	44	8.9	0	0.0	44	6.1	126	26.4	40	15.1	166	22.3
B3	286	57.8	21	9.4	307	42.8	124	25.9	99	37.4	223	30.0
C4	89	18.0	38	17.0	127	17.7	20	4.2	33	12.5	53	7.1
C5	51	10.3	36	16.1	87	12.1	11	2.3	16	6.0	27	3.6
C6	24	4.8	77	34.5	101	14.1	8	1.7	26	9.8	34	4.6
D7	0	0.0	42	18.8	42	5.8	3	0.6	21	7.9	24	3.2
E8	1	0.2	7	3.1	8	1.1	0	0.0	8	3.0	8	1.1
F9	0	0.0	2	0.9	2	0.3	0	0.0	5	1.9	5	0.7
Total	495	100.0	223	100.0	718	100.0	478	100.0	265	100.0	743	100.0

Table 12: Comparison between SHS3 and SHS4 in Social Studies for 2006 and 2011

Source: Field Data, 2014

With respect to when SHS was 4 years, Table 12 reveals that majority (52.3%) of the students attained either very good or good results (Grades B2 or B3) while 27.3 percent of the students had excellent results or made Grade A1 in Social Studies. About 15 percent (15.3%) of the students obtained credits or Grades C4, C5 or C6 while 4.3 percent got passes (Grades D7 or E8). However, less than 1 percent (0.7%) of the students failed or had grade F9 as shown in Table 12. This means that 99.3 percent of the students passed in Social Studies when SHS was four years. Considering the proportion of SHS3 (99.7%) and SHS4 (99.3%) who passed in Social Studies, it is clear that the percentage difference in performance between the two groups is small (0.4).

In conclusion, this chapter analyzed both the primary and secondary data. The primary data comprised the interviews conducted. It was transcribed and analyzed. The secondary data comprised of the WASSCE results received from the record section was also analyzed and interpreted using tables and percentages. Inference were made from both data gathered. Comparing the results from the two periods, thus SHS3 and SHS4 in the core subjects, it could be seen that although the percentage differences are small, the SHS4 students performed better than the SHS3 students.

5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This section provides a summary of the study. It highlights the major findings and conclusions of the study and provides recommendations.

5.1. Summary

This study set out to find out whether student performance is influenced by the length of years spent in the SHS. Specifically, it sought to ascertain the following:

1. How students performed when SHS was three years;
2. How students performed when SHS was change to four years; and
3. Compare performance for the three year and four year periods.

In the pursuit of these objectives the study made use of data collected from secondary sources. The secondary data was drawn from relevant documents from one single sex and one mixed school in Cape coast.

5.2. Findings

The major findings of the study among others include the following:

1. About 92.9 percent of the students passed in mathematics when the SHS was three years in 2013 while 95.4 percent of the students passed in mathematics that same year.
2. The proportion of students who failed in mathematics when SHS was 4 years in 2012 was less, 5 percent when compared with the proportion that failed when SHS was 3 years in 2007 was 9.4 percent
3. About 89 percent of the students passed in mathematics when SHS was three years as against 96.0 percent when SHS was four years. Thus, more students of SHS4 passed in mathematics than students of SHS3 in 2011 and 2006 respectively.
4. About 98.8 percent of the student of SHS3 in 2013 passed in English and 99.3 percent of the student of SHS4 in 2013 made it in English. In proportion terms more students of SHS4 passed in English Language than students of SHS3 in 2013.
5. About 98.9 percent of the students of SHS3 in passed in English and 99.9 percent passed when SHS four years in 2007 and 2012 respectively.
6. About 98.7 percent of SHS3 and 99.6 percent of SHS4 passed in English for the years 2006 and 2011.
7. Also about 98.4 percent passed integrated Science when SHS was three years in 2013 and when SHS was four years 99.6 percent passed in Integrated Science.
8. About of 94.7 percent of SHS3 students in 2007 and 99.0 percent of SHS4 students in 2012 passed in Integrated Science.
9. About 95.5 percent of the students SHS3 passed in 2006 and 99.6 SHS4 in 2011 passed in Integrated Science.
10. About 99.8 percent of the student of SHS3 and 99.7 percent of student in SHS4 passed in social studies in 2013.
11. Social Studies recorded 100 percent pass in 2012 when SHS was four years and 99.9 percent passed in 2007 when SHS was three years.
12. The proportion of students who failed in Social Studies when SHS was 3 years in 2006 was less, 0.3 percent when compared with the proportion that failed when SHS was 4 years in 2011 was 0.7 percent.

The study further revealed that the differences in performance of student in the three year programme can largely be attributed to the following:

- The duration was too short for the teachers to complete the syllabus. In addition to this, some of the terms were cut short as a result of extra curriculum activities including inter school's games competition, speech days, industrial actions (strikes) and late admission into the first year owing to late release of B.E.C.E. results by WAEC. As a result, there was intense pressure on both the teachers and the students. They had to improvise and conduct extra classes at odd hours. Slow learners were handicapped.
- Again, most Junior High School Pupil comes to the Senior High with misconceptions about most of the core subjects. They were introduced to new subjects in addition. Given the time duration as being only seven terms, they are not able to get the understanding of the core subjects and also to understand the new ones. It takes time to teacher student to unlearn these misconceptions.

- The study found out that the three years programme as that the name suggest is not up to three years (nine terms), it's only the name but in actual sense it's two and half years (seven terms). The reason being that practically the first years come to school in the first term less than two months to vacation and in these few weeks not even one third of the first term syllabus will be covered. And in the final year too, they only have two terms for teaching and learning and the last term is used for the final exams. So in all they have seven terms instead of nine terms which is inadequate for effective teaching and learning.

However, for the four year programme, the study found out that:

- More time to finish the syllabus and the course. Enough time to give more class exercises, assignments and group works. Teachers were able to mark these exercises and discussed the solutions and their observation with the students. Lost time due to extra curriculum activities was recouped.
- The pressure on students and was also reduced. Students learned at their own pace. Teachers were able to help the slow learners. There was enough time for students to understand and appreciate the senior high courses. Most of the misconceptions learnt from the Junior High were corrected.
- The challenge that school authorities faced was that most students taught they were grown and had stayed in school for a long period of time so they started misbehaving.

5.3. Conclusions

Based on the findings presented above, the following conclusions are identified:

The percentage difference between SHS3 and SHS4 who passed in Mathematics in 2013 was small or no difference. The percentage difference between SHS3 and SHS4 who failed in Mathematics in 2007 and 2012 was small. The percentage difference between the two groups, SHS3 and SHS4 in 2006 and 2012 may also be described as a small difference.

Even though in proportion terms more students of SHS4 passed in English Language than students of SHS3 in 2013, the percentage difference of between the two groups may be described as no difference. The percentage difference between 2007 when SHS was three and 2012 when SHS was four also may be described as small no difference. Comparing the percentage difference in performance between SHS3 and SHS4 in 2006 and 2011 respectively in English, there was no difference.

The percentage difference in performance between SHS3 in 2013 and SHS4 2013 for Integrated Science maybe described as no difference. Even though the percentage difference in performance between the 2007 when SHS3 is less than that of SHS4 in 2012, it may also be termed as a small difference in performance. it can be seen that the percentage difference in performance between the SHS3 in 2006 and SHS4 in 2011 can best be described as a small difference in performance of the two programmes.

The percentage difference in performance between SHS3 in 2013 and SHS4 2013 for Social Studies maybe described as no difference in performance of the two programmes. The percentage difference in performance between SHS3 in 2007 and SHS4 2012 for Social Studies maybe described as no difference in performance of the two programmes. The percentage difference between SHS3 and SHS4 who failed in Social Studies in 2006 and 2011 was small. Comparing the results from the two periods, thus SHS3 and SHS4 in the core subjects, it could be seen that although the percentage differences are small, the SHS4 students performed better than the SHS3 students.

5.4. Recommendations

Owing to the findings and conclusions drawn from the research, it is recommended that:

1. The Ghana Education Service must inform WAEC of the duration of the three year programme so that WAEC will put measures in place that will ensure that B.E.C.E. results will be released on time. In addition to this, the computer selection and placement office should be aware of the situation in the Senior High School so that placement will also be done on time. This will help reduce the time lost in the first year.
2. Parent should be made aware of the duration of the three year programme through P.T.A. meetings. They having knowledge of the duration they can help by hiring tutors to teach their wards during vacation. Students will be able to catch up and understand the course.
3. Ghana Education Service must also factor extra curriculum activities into consideration into the main syllabus of the SHS so that contact hours lost can be made up for.
4. Ghana Education Service and WAEC can come to agreement to push the final exams into the third term long vacation period so that the final term the SHS will not be used for the final exams. In both the three and four year programmes.
5. Again, more qualified teachers should be employed to teach the Junior High School. This will reduce the misconceptions that Junior High pupils learn and the time that teacher at the senior would have used to un-teach these misconceptions will be used to cover more areas of the syllabus.
6. Since the four year programme had enough time to finish the syllabus, introduction of industrial attachment and volunteer services can be added to the four year SHS course so that during vacation student can engage in. This will help expose students to other training. In addition, it will also reduce the feeling of boredom on the part of student. When this is done, WASSCE alone will not be the only medium through which student in Senior High School be assessed.
7. GES must intensify their supervision on teachers at the Senior High. This is to check the tendency of teachers relaxing or doing other side jobs during teaching hours thinking they have plenty of time. This will induce high performance on the part of teachers and directly have a positive effect on student performance.

8. Lastly, in order to check student misbehaving due to the fact that they have stayed too long in school, counseling units in the Senior High Schools must be equipped to offer counseling services to students to help in shaping their behavior to socially acceptable ways. Religious programmes can also be added to work on their moral life. This will reduce the rate of student misbehaving.
9. A careful and systematic study comparing the two programmes shows that comparing WASSCE results for the two programmes, the four year students did better than the three year programme. Some education experts are calling for total restructuring of the entire curriculum of GES for secondary, until that is done, the researcher can conclude based on the findings of this research that comparatively, the four year programme in terms of duration is better than the three years and it should be brought back.

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