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Case Studies in U. S. Distance Education: Implications for Ghana's Under-Served High Schools

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ABSTRACT

Ghana, like many other nations in recent years, has made education a top priority for national development. Despite newly developed policies, however, there remains a significant quality gap among high schools; due largely to an inequitable ratio of government's educational spending by geographic area. While most urban schools flourish with better funding and more resources, many rural schools are substandard due to funding inequity, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of logistical support, material input, and qualified teachers. These problems call for attention and resolution and distance education is considered a panacea to these problems. To achieve this objective, three distance education sites/cases—two parochial schools and one large state-supported public school were studied. Using a variety of data collection interview methods—video conferencing, Skype, face-to-face conversations, and e-mail—interviews were conducted with individuals representing various roles at the three case study sites in the United States: teachers, principals, local and district administrators, and technical and program directors. Effective and ineffective practices at these focus sites provided contextual referencing for future program development/replication in Ghana. Interviews revealed many common issues and themes for success in facilities/program development, program management, and instructional delivery. Recommendations and a model for online distributed education emerged to aid in addressing Ghana's educational needs. The study findings can inform other systems, nationally and internationally, though the study specifically emphasized concerns in Ghana—where quality education is needed to better prepare under-served school populations for higher education and for further contribution to the development and prosperity of that nation.

KEYWORDS

Distance Education, Technology, Privileged, Under-Served, Interactive

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