



# Education Watch

October 2012

## **THE CIVIL SOCIETY EDUCATION MANIFESTO BASIC EDUCATION POLICY PROGNOSIS FOR 2013-2016**

The approach to primary and Junior High School (JHS) education in the coming four years should emphasize on quality, specifically, improving the quality of teaching and learning, rather than access. That is not to say that issues of access are no more relevant in advancing primary and JHS education, but to the extent that between 2005 and 2012, there has been an appreciable increase in Net Enrolment from about 60% to about 80% without a corresponding improvement in learning and learning outcomes.

**Access-**Currently, about 80% children of primary school going age are enrolled in school, with the number dwindling as they transit along the educational ladder from lower primary (1-3) to upper primary (3-6), and further, to JHS. The current primary completion rate of about 90% suggests that, 10% of children who enrol in primary 1, drop out by primary 6. At the JHS level, the completion rate of 66% also means that 34% of pupils who enter JHS 1 do not complete JHS 3. Of greater consequence in Ghana's attainment of Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in education by 2015, is the issue of quality.

**Quality-**The decline in quality of basic education is manifested on two fronts-declining literacy levels (averaging 40%) and an average 60% Basic Education Certificate Exams (BECE) pass rate in the past decade. This, among others, has culminated in an average 47% transition rate into secondary education. The decline in the quality of basic education is occasioned by the following factors; poor early childhood education, inadequate trained teachers, teacher

absenteeism, poor time on task, lack of accountability and transparency in the distribution of textbooks, exercise books and laptops for schools, inadequate Capitation Grant and misallocation of education funds.

At the heart of the quality issue however, is the teacher. There still exist high numbers of untrained teachers teaching in pre-schools (74%), primary schools (38%) and junior high schools (22%) nationwide. The presence of untrained teachers in classrooms affects the quality of teaching, learning and learning outcomes. It has a direct bearing on the application of the right teaching and learning methods, curriculum and school management strategies for effective results. In as much as the Ghana trains about 8,600 teachers each year from the 38 colleges of education, some 10,000 teachers leave the profession annually. This means that, we are only managing teacher deficits and not necessarily adding to the numbers of trained teachers. The teacher deficit which stood at 21,000 in 2009 keeps increasing due to attrition.

The high teacher attrition is against the backdrop of a GHC 50 Million per annum Paid Study leave policy (where teachers assess tertiary education on full time basis while enjoying their full salaries for the entire period of academic study) which is only able to retain half of the 4,000 teachers who benefit from it annually. It has been described by analysts as a spring board to exiting the Ghana Education Service (GES).

Moving forward, we need to be unequivocal about strategy. It is no more a matter of choice

but that of necessity for Ghana to without any further delay implement the following decisive and somewhat unpopular strategies if we are to increase the quality of literacy, numeracy and performance levels in basic schools and ensure universal access to basic education.

1. Implement a teacher transfer and placement module that emphasises equity in the distribution of teachers among rural and urban centre. District Assemblies should fully sponsor teacher trainees in their districts to access teacher education.
2. Roll-out the second phase of the Untrained Teacher Training Diploma in Basic Education (UTTDBE) programme by July 2013 to afford the huge numbers of untrained teachers, especially at the Kindergarten level an opportunity to upgrade their skills.
3. Place 30% of teacher trainees under the UTTDBE to Kindergartens nationwide to improve the quality of Early Childhood Education and Care.
4. Abolish the current Study Leave with Pay policy and replace it with a study leave policy that rather reimburses the cost of tertiary education when teachers on study leave return to post, after completing their pre financed tertiary education. This move may free over GHC 50 million for investment in other critical areas in teacher development.
5. Strengthen school based supervision by setting performance benchmarks for teachers, head teachers and circuit supervisors and enforcing them.
6. Review the formula for spending the District Assembly Common Fund by compelling District Assemblies to spend a minimum of 30% of the DACF in building schools.
7. Explore and adopt a cost-effective alternative and appropriate technology

to build schools to address the increasing cost of school infrastructure in Ghana.

8. Continue the training of head teachers and circuit supervisors on school management and effective supervision.
9. Implement the 20% non-taxable top-up for teachers in remote and rural areas
10. Develop and implement a transparent monitoring system for supplying and distributing textbooks, exercise books and school uniforms. This should include the annual publishing of the names of beneficiary schools and the actual numbers of textbooks, exercise books and uniforms received.
11. Increase the Capitation Grant in line with inflation. In addition to the current per-student allocation formula, determine a minimum threshold for the Capitation Grant to deprived schools and pupils with special needs.

Once again, for the next political administration, the aforementioned issues and policy recommendations are non-negotiable, if Ghana should see improvements in the quality of literacy and performances in the BECE. It requires the political will to take ground breaking unpalatable policy decisions which may be unpopular with certain power blocs within the education sector (especially teacher unions). However, the expected benefits of such far reaching recommendations provide enough justification for their implementation. The impacts may not materialise immediately, but may have significant and sustained positive impact on teaching and learning, equitable access and the quality of learning outcomes by 2016.

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## **Expanding Equitable Access to Quality Secondary Education: Civil Society Policy Proposals for 2013-2016.**

After diagnosing the key causal and symptomatic issues in secondary education, civil society is of full conviction that the direction of secondary education policy in the next four years, should focus on expanding equitable access (less than 50% of junior high school graduates enter secondary schools), reducing the cost and improving the quality of science and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) education. The key issues in secondary education requiring urgent attention from the incoming administration are among others, the duration of secondary education, low admission rates into Senior High Schools (SHS), provision of science and ICT resource centres, reduction in the cost of secondary education and improving the operation of the Computerised School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS).

Civil society believes that the long standing debate surrounding the duration of secondary education has been politicised and should end. Indications are that, should there be a change of government, there could be a reversal of the current 3-year duration of secondary education to 4-years. Civil society is extremely concerned about the erratic changes in secondary education duration on the performance, outcomes and future of secondary education in Ghana.

Of immense relevance is the declining numbers of JHS graduates entering SHS in the past decade. Out of 375,000 BECE candidates in 2011, only 202,339 were able to transit into SHS. The huge dropout rate of about 47% is due to

economic and academic reasons and portends negative prospects for the economic and social development of Ghana. Among the causal factors to low enrolments into SHS is the issue of cost. The cost of secondary education still remains unaffordable to many Ghanaian families. The current GES approved termly school fee of GHS 328 (for boarding schools) is beyond the reach of many poor families, taking into cognisance the per capita household expenditure (\$175) incurred on secondary school students. This situation is worsened by the absence of statutory scholarships for needy students who qualify but are unable to afford SHS fees, thereby dropping out, and the teeming masses of students who pass the BECE but fail to secure school placements through the CSSPS.

The CSSPS continues to pose severe challenges to accessing secondary education in Ghana. The following key issues associated with the CSSPS require urgent attention by the incoming administration:

- a. Most parents lack the financial capacity to finance the schooling of their wards when placed in distant or boarding schools by the computer. This leads to drop-outs.
- b. The CSSPS breeds corruption among school heads and education officials, as they superintend protocol admissions to politicians, cronies and elites.
- c. The computer is unable to place students who attain between aggregate 24 and 36, yet

they are deemed to have passed.

- d. There is a gap between school vacancies and computer placements. This denies students who have been duly placed by the computer in a particular school, an admission.

In spite of the huge government investment into ICT education, there still remain huge inadequacies in the provision of ICT and science resource centres in secondary schools. This compels most SHS to travel to access science laboratories during science practical lessons, while most ICT teachers teach without adequate number and quality of computers. In fact, the absence of electricity in most day senior high schools makes the teaching of ICT a luxury beyond access in rural areas without electricity.

**Among the numerous policy demands, civil society advises the next government to;**

1. Maintain the current 3-year duration of secondary education but also up-grade and expand secondary school infrastructure, provide the requisite teaching and learning equipment and increase teacher motivation to enhance the delivery of teaching and learning in secondary schools.
2. Set up and re-equip all science resource centres in secondary schools nationwide.
3. Build 212 more day senior high schools to absorb the envisioned increase in SHS enrolment. With an initial capacity of 300 students per year group, some 84,000 more students can access secondary education. This will increase the current enrolment in secondary schools by 42% from the current 202,339 to 286,339.
4. Recruit and train more qualified teachers in SHS to address the worsening pupil-teacher ratio that will result from the building of an additional 212 schools.
5. Develop and implement a national policy on secondary education scholarships, targeting female students choosing science and mathematics courses and needy students in general.
6. Abolish all unapproved admission fees charged by secondary schools and provide a 50% subsidy on feeding fees in secondary schools.
7. Improve the operations of the CSSPS by:
  - a. Ridding it off all forms of interferences
  - b. Aligning school placements with school vacancies.
  - c. Declaring as illegal any other means of admission into secondary schools.
  - d. Adopting a computerised mop-up system for the re-placing of non-assigned and ill-assigned pupils with the right passes and aggregates.

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