



Highlights on inclusive education policy in Ghana

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Abstract

Education across the globe has gone through a lot of structural and policy adjustment aim at the development of human capital. The significance of education policy and programme are not farfetched. Since the independence of Ghana in 1957, the educational policy direction has been geared towards the three Northern Regions in Ghana with the focus being eradication of educational gap or disparity among the ten Regions of Ghana and alleviating the poverty in those regions. Policymakers kept improving education by way of introducing free school uniforms, free school feeding, capitation grant and finally the nationwide introduction of free senior high school in Ghana which took effect from August 2017. The objective of this paper is to examine the inclusive education policy in Ghana, the major stakeholders and identifies the strategies for inclusive educational policies in Ghana. The highlights of this current paper will make decision makers of education policy well informed on the objectives and strategies of inclusive education. The paper brings to bear universally accepted standards and guidelines that advocate convenient teaching infrastructure and highly skilled trained human capital accessible to all learners taking into account the needs of students with special needs. This current write collected information and details from various sources including Ministry of Education of Ghana, UNESCO, The Dakar framework for Action and many other articles and publications.

Keywords: policymakers, inclusive education policy, free education, strategies

Introduction

The equal rights to education was enshrine in article 25 of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana. Since 1957, the first Prime Minister and subsequently the first president of the republic of Ghana Dr. Kwame Nkrumah extended the Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) to Senior High School in the three Northern Regions of Ghana with the aim of bridging the poverty gap between Southern Ghana and Northern Ghana. This policy was successfully implemented, however, the poverty gap continue to exist till date, despite improvement in the standard of living in the Northern Regions.

There have been many calls from the section of the economy including the political parties over the last decade to provide “Free senior High School” education across the existing ten regions of Ghana. The article 25(b) the 1992 Constitution stipulates that senior high school which includes technical and vocational education shall be made available and accessible by every appropriate means, and progressively free education. The question arises when it comes to inclusive education, the question of how to make education accessible and available to all. The challenge of how to financing education comes into mind of policy makers. However, the tertiary education in Ghana such as the College of Education and Nursing training colleges received stipends until 2013/2014 academic year when the this stipends was abrogated. The government claimed that his decision was to allow many students passing out of senior high school access to tertiary education. The government then argues that the cancellation of the stipends will make funds available to increase the infrastructure of the tertiary schools in order for them to admit several students.

However, section of the populace rallied against this government decision for the fact that most students enrolled in the tertiary schools survival partially depends on the allowances provided by government.

The impact of inclusive educational policy was identified by Esther Duflo *et al.* (2017)^[3]. The researcher’s paper provides experimental evidence on the impacts of free secondary school on the lives of young adults, and disaggregates these effects by gender and between academic and vocational tracks in Ghana.

Although overall school participation over the past three decades has surge, many children are still left out of the education ladder due to lack of educational infrastructure, teaching and learning materials and parent’s inability to fully finance their wards education up to a successful completion. The Dakar Framework for Action in 2000 also prescribes education for all which included six regional frameworks for action. Major education conferences took place in the 1990s, such as the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education (1994 Salamanca, Spain), which encourages the international community to show continue commitment towards working attainment of the goals set (Dakar Framework for Action, Para 4.). The “Expanded Commentary on the Dakar Framework for Action’ describes the broad vision of “Education for All” which needs to be adopted so as to achieve the Dakar Framework for Action goals. The standards and guidelines, in addition to the inclusive education policy in Ghana as enshrine in the 1992 constitution preceded the 1994 World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality and 2000 Darkar Framework for Action respectively. The various educational policies were design to

eradicate the issues of marginalization and exclusion and recognize inclusive education as a tool to address the issues regarding marginalization and exclusion.

Literature Review

Sayed (1997), was of the view that the concept, quality in education is elusive and frequently used but never defined" and goes on to discuss how its several meanings reflect divergent ideological, social and political values." By critiquing key approaches to education quality, Sayed laid emphasis on what ascribe as the value bases of any framework for education quality.

Delors *et al.* (1996) [2], in their article learning: the treasure within, pointed out the learning outcome. They emphasized that the aim of learning is about knowing, doing, living and learning to be. The purpose of every good education policy should aim at these basic points.

Bunting (1993) [1], projected that quality in education does have a bottom line and that it is defined by the goals and values which is essentially human activity of education. The implication is that this bottom line must be the initial point for our understanding of the notion of quality in education. Inclusive education is inconclusive until the quality of education is put in place by policy makers.

Penrose (1993) [9], in his review observed school effectiveness literature on developing countries which was concerned with inputs-outputs and could more accurately be called "school efficiency" literature. The efficient is measured by the school completion with respect to the pass rate and social return to the public.

Jones (1992) [6], pointed out that a bank justifies its loans for education development in terms of public financial returns. This indicates that the purpose of education is social returns in terms of skilled labour who will intern drive the economy towards development.

Hirst & Peters (1970) [5], examined described education as "the development of desirable qualities in people" Of course; there is no agreement about the end of "desirable qualities". They identified that the purpose of education is prerequisite of quality education. Quality of education should be captured by every educational programme introduced in a country.

Methodology

This current write collected information and retrieved policy document from various secondary sources including Ministry of Education of Ghana, UNESCO, The Dakar framework for Action and many other articles and publications. The secondary data collected were further converted into figures to evaluate accessibility of both public and private schools nationwide. The paper focused on inclusive education policy in Ghana but at the primary, Junior High School and the Senior High School level.

Objectives of education policy

The Salamanca Statement (1994) also stressed the importance of inclusive education, calling on governments to "give the highest policy and budgetary priority to enable them to include all children regardless of individual differences or difficulties" and "to adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education".

Ghana Government recently endorsed an Inclusive Education Policy which was drafted jointly by several stakeholders involved in the provision of Education in Ghana. The purpose of Ghana's Inclusive Education (IE) policy is to redefine and re-examine the delivery and management of educational services to resolve different needs of all learners within the framework of Universal Design for Learning and Child Friendly School Concept.

Ghana's actions in promoting inclusive approaches in education will aim at:

- i) Forging a holistic approach to education which ensures that the concerns of marginalized and excluded groups are incorporated in all education activities, and cooperating to reduce wasteful repetition and fragmentation.
- ii) Making education accessible to and functional for all learners with special educational needs. A securer, easier and friendly environment for the benefits of all learners.

Inclusive education provides flexibility and guarantees a learning set-up which is barrier free and enables all learners including those with disabilities to move about safely and freely, use facilities and participate in learning and all aspects of school life.

The procedure for policy development

The process of developing the policy recognized the multi-sectoral nature of education and so undertook to engage all stakeholder groups in public institutions, civil society, the private sector, and the community. National, regional and district level consultative workshops were organized to allow stakeholders to participate extensively discussing and agreeing the strategic direction of Inclusive Education in Ghana. The process benefited immensely from international best practices including interactions with practitioners from other countries. The process also gained the support and committed involvement of the political, administrative and traditional leaders. A multi-disciplinary technical working group provided both on site thus during consultative workshops and off site technical support in the final editing, layout, and validation of the Policy text.

Objectives and strategies

Policy Objectives

- Improve and adaption of educational schemes and structures that ensures that learners with special educational assistance are not left out.
- Ensure that UDL and learner friendly school environment to improve the quality of education for all learners is given much attention.
- Ensure the development and training of human resource for the quality and delivery of inclusive education in Ghana.
- Ensuring that inclusive education implementation in the country is sustained.

Strategies

Includes but not limited to the following:

- Transform special education institutions to serve as resource centers to help the mainstream system and special unit's schools for those with disabilities.

- Provision of assessment centers at the regional and district levels throughout Ghana.
- Ensure that architectures of schools are modified to enhance opportunities for learners with special educational needs.
- Ensure that school infrastructures are accessible to learners with special needs and are constructed on the bases of principles of universal design.
- Reviewing the education management information system to reflect inclusive education issues and provide data on students from marginalized groups to inform the planning and provision of better services for marginalized groups.
- Mobilize adequate funding (national budgets and requests for development assistance) for targeted excluded groups.
- Initiate and facilitate national consultative processes to develop national standards for inclusive education and for enhancing the quality of learning outcomes.
- Develop monitoring and evaluation system to track progress of Inclusive Education (IE) within the context of wider data collection on communities and citizens.

Institutional Work

The Ministry of Education and its Agencies are responsible for the implementation of IE Policy. In this endeavor, the Ministry will collaborate with relevant sector Ministries, Agencies and Departments, Non Governmental Organizations, Private Sector Organizations, Associations implementing education, human rights and child protection programmes and the umbrella coalitions of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). The implementation of the IE Policy requires well-defined structures at all levels, and defined specific roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders. The functional structures must ensure effective supervision, timely delivery of inputs as well as monitoring and evaluation of policy performance. Both private and public institutions shall be enjoined to implement inclusive education. Under no circumstance should a person with special educational needs be denied admission

into a public and private institution. Learners with special needs should receive equitable treatment. The classroom environments should be well organized, equipped with age-appropriate furniture, well illuminated and ventilated. School authorities should follow the Universal Design Principle.

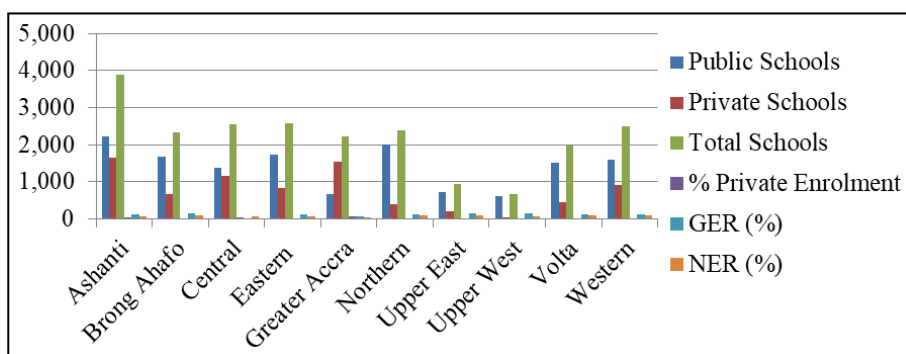
Financing Education Policy

The Annual Budget Funding Amount (ABFA) is the amount of petroleum revenues allocated to support Ghana’s annual budget. Over the last five years, the ABFA has totaled roughly GHS 3.4 billion, representing 39 percent of total petroleum receipts up to 2015. In the 2017 budget, the government has proposed GHS 211 million from the ABFA be spent to finance “Free SHS” beginning in September 2017. This represents 27.3 percent of the ABFA for the year. ABFA funds would be supplemented by additional budgetary support of GHS 188 million to finance the balance of costs associated with the “Free SHS” commitment.

Successes of inclusive education Policy

- High school enrollment across the country.
- Reduction of illiteracy rate
- Increase in labour supply, efficiency and increased national output.
- Increased earnings and poverty alleviation.
- Reduction in teenage pregnancy and early marriage etc.

Figure1 depicts access indicators by region at the KG level in 2015/16. The total number of schools in the ten regions varies significantly. The number of schools in the Ashanti Region is the highest which is 3,883, while Upper West has the lowest number of schools at 671. The number of private schools in Greater Accra region at 1,554 outnumbers that of public schools at 663 unlike other regions, which is depicted by the percent of private school enrolment in Greater Accra, which stood at 62.4%. Upper West Region has the lowest proportion of private school enrolment is in Upper West, at 7.8%.



Source: Ministry of Education Ghana (MOE)

Fig 1: KG Access Indicators by Region, 2015/16

Gender

According to UNESCO, gender parity is achieved when the Gender Parity Index (GPI) is between 0.97 and 1.03, which measures equitable access (UNESCO eAtlas of Gender Inequality in Education). Table 1 depicts GPI statistics for the three sub-levels of Basic education for deprived districts and nationally. The three sub-levels have achieved nationwide

parity. Parity was achieved in 2012/13 at the primary level, which was maintained in 2015/16 with a corresponding GPI of 1.01. The GPI has fluctuated in and out of parity, but in 2015/16 the GPI decreased from 1.04 to 1.01 at the KG level, falling within the range. For JHS, the GPI increased over the years and in 2015/16, the GPI reached gender parity at 0.97. In deprived districts, the trend is similar with the GPI achieved

in KG since 2012/13 and in Primary in 2015/16. At the JHS level, a similar increasing trend in the GPI in deprived districts

was noted with GPI reaching 0.93 in 2015/16. Figure 1 shows this graphically.

Table 1: Gender Parity Index, Basic Schools

	National						Deprived Districts			
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
KG	0.98	0.98	1.03	1.01	1.04	1.01	1.02	0.99	1.0	0.99
Primary	0.97	0.97	0.99	0.99	1.0	1.01	0.97	0.94	0.96	0.97
JHS	0.92	0.94	0.93	0.95	0.96	0.97	0.91	0.88	0.9	0.93

Source: Ministry of Education Ghana (MOE)

Completion rates

Completion rates measure the percentage of the population of appropriate age enrolled in the final year of a grade level. The Junior High School (JHS) completion rate is calculated as the enrolment of JHS3 students divided by the total number of students who have attained 14 years. It is emphatic that at both the Primary and JHS levels, Ghana has made effort over the years to improve the completion rate. In 2015/16, completion rates at the Primary level increased by two percentages as compared to 2014/15 from 99.6% to 101.6%, and at the JHS

level an improvement was also noted from 73.5% to 76.1%. The completion rate in deprived districts at the Primary school level improved significantly from 94.9% to 101.5% between 2014/15 and 2015/16. Hence, deprived districts at the Primary level completion rate are almost on par with the national completion rate. Meanwhile the completion rate for deprived districts at the JHS level are still lower than the national average, whereas an improvement was also noted in this area whereby the completion rate improved to 65.1% in 2015/16 from 63.7% in 2014/15.

Table 2: Completion rates in basic education

% completion rate	National						Deprived districts			
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Primary	91.6	93.7	112.4	97.5	99.6	101.6	114.2	86.9	94.9	101.5
JHS	66.9	66.8	70.1	69	73.5	76.1	59.9	57.1	63.7	65.1

Source: Ministry of Education Ghana (MOE)

Conclusion

Educational policy has been the focal point of Ghana's development agenda in recent years. Various Governments implemented different programmes such as free school feeding programme, free school uniforms and the most recent implementation of free senior high school to absorb all these programmes. The inclusive, quality and free education system introduced at all levels of education in Ghana, most especially from the basic education to the senior high school level is aimed at developing the human capital and decreasing the school dropout rate in Ghana. Therefore, Government has collaborated with MDA, MMDAs, NGOs, and Civil Society Organizations among others to map out relevant stakeholders at all levels. Also, the establishment of a steering committee to mobilize resources at all levels to support inclusive education policy is a significant move to ensure policy success.

Nevertheless, the platform for advocating IE Policy issues have been established in diverse ways and mapping of documentation of relevant stakeholders is completed. Government should provide continuous budget allocation and support for the implementation of the policy and lobby Parliamentarians to support Inclusive Education Policy.

Finally, Government should strengthen monitoring and evaluation system to track and or document progress of Inclusive Education delivery within the context of wider data collection on communities and citizens. Additionally, surveys should be conducted to study, evaluate and share findings with stakeholders for policy review and improvement.

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