

The Political Economy of Cost-Free Education in Ghanaian Public Schools: A Critical Analysis of National Resources (Finance, Materials and Manpower)

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Abstract

This paper explores the subject matter of cost-free education that has been hotly and contentiously debated by political parties and incumbent governments before and during general elections in Ghana. These debates are usually centered on the feasibility or otherwise of a cost-free first and second cycle's education to the multitude of Ghanaian children. The portent of these arguments or debates of the possibility of a cost-free education stems from the realization that the majority of Ghanaian parents are unable to educate their children of school-going age as a result of abject poverty. This paper argues that the flux of ideas on cost-free education in Ghanaian public schools is unsustainable, and that it is a populist and a political gimmick.

Keywords: Abject poverty, Basic School, Education, Political Economy, Public School, skewed.

1. Introduction

The British colonial education in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) failed, to some extent, in committing enough financial resources to ensure expansion and accessibility of education to the indigenes. Progressing from the Second Cycle institutions to the tertiary levels was problematic as a result of infrastructure deficit. This explained the friction that existed between the few privileged educated elite and the colonialists. The colonial imperialists also offered a skewed education in the colony as educational infrastructure was only provided or encouraged in areas where resource exploitations were in earnest. In areas where resources were less endowed or absent, education to the people was not a priority. This skewed education or schooling in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) is a subject of contemporary debates on the possibility of a cost-free education to ensure social justice, equity and accessibility.

In the post-colonial epoch, the first elected government, headed by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, took some remedial and radical policies to ensure access to education equity and social justice throughout the country. Two key policies were formulated for this purpose. The first was the 1951 Accelerated Development Plan (ADP). The core proposal of the ADP was to commit financial resources to expand access to education throughout the colony at the primary level to serve as the lynchpin to a universal access and free education (Okyere, 2000:176). Second, the 1961 Education Act outlined several provisions (terms and conditions of service for teachers; establishment of board of governors in schools; freedom of the private sector involvement in education provision; basic education structured into two stages – six year primary education and four year middle school education among others). But the key among the component of the 1961 Act was the provision of compulsory and cost-free education for all school going age. These two policies initiated by the Convention People's Party (C.P.P.) did not only expand access of educational infrastructure, but also increased enrolment of pupils at all levels of the educational ladder. As aptly captured by Okyere (2010),

The result of this development was that 2,494 new primary schools were opened in September 1961 and 219,480 children were admitted into the first year classes ... enrolment in middle schools also witnessed tremendous increases: 1,234 public middle schools with a total enrolment of 145,377 in 1960/61; and in 1965/66, there were 2,277 schools with 267,434 pupils (cited in Okyere, 2010:176).

The compulsory and the 'free' component of education made it possible for the greater majority of Ghanaians to access education without which it would have been practically impossible to be educated. Beneficiaries of this policy (cost-free education) are currently occupying high public offices in the Ghanaian economy. Education was given the needed boost by the government of the C.P.P., because, education was (still remain though) seen as the keystone to accelerated national development.

In spite of the successes of the two policies (Accelerated Development Plan of 1951 and the Education of Act of 1961), the Nkrumah-led Government was faced with financial resource constraint. The economic and/or financial resources of the state could no longer match the ever-growing populations/demand for education as a result of fall in cocoa prices. In this perspective, the political will of the government to continue to offer free education was curtailed by economic reasons. The mind boggling question is, why will current and any future government in Ghana wants to implement a cost-free education when the economic situation remain precarious and largely agrarian?

This paper has seven sections: introduction; methodology; theoretical framework; politics of cost-free education in Ghana since the fourth republic; cost-free education and the political economy of finance, materials and manpower; implications and conclusion.

2. Methodology

Data and information for this study are largely qualitative derived from systematic enquiry, analyzed and interpreted to make sense on the political economy of cost-free education in Ghana. The study made use of primary sources obtained from reports and policy documents on the development of cost-free education in the immediate post-colonial era. Data were also gleaned from monographs and the standpoints of various political parties' manifestos on the proposed contemporary cost-free education in Ghana. As a first-hand study, the paper relied largely on first-hand information derived from personal observations, eye-witness accounts and interactions with teachers, politicians, parents and the public at large. All in all, this paper is a product of processed and analyzed data from a variety of sources. Data collected were carefully scrutinized, evaluated and synthesized.

3. Theoretical Debates

Developing Countries are "notorious" in subsidizing education and other utilities such as electricity and water to citizens. Abject poverty of the majority of the citizenry is usually cited; even though the economic fundamentals of the economies does not support such interventionist approach. Bilateral loans and grants contracted for specific projects are usually diverted and used as subsidy for the populace in lieu of electoral support from beneficiary communities. There is a plethora of theories that underpin the study of welfare states. According to Baker, 'a theory is a proposed explanation for a set of coordinated occurrences or relationships (Baker, 1999:50). Bohm and Haley also defined a theory as 'an assumption (or set of assumptions) that attempts to explain why or how things are related to each other' (Bohm and Haley, 2002:70). This paper is studied within the framework of Social Justice. In developing a framework for a social justice audit, Gewirtz (2002) states:

the centrality of issue of social justice to ... much policy sociology research in education, surprisingly little attention has been devoted to exploring precisely what we mean, or ought to mean, when we talk about social justice. Yet, if we want to understand the extent and ways in which policies contribute to, or detract from, the promotion of social justice we are using ... (Gewirtz, 2002:139).

Social justice is a contested phrase that has to do with distributive justice (distributive justice describes what is due to individuals, or groups in society). Such descriptions are usually determined on issues of rights, privileges deprivations and entitlements). In this perspective, social justice defines the framework within which particular applications of distributive justice arise (McClean and Mcmillan, 2009:494). The standpoint of most welfare states is its philosophy of social justice and equity in all facets of human development. Modern governments that are designated or ideologically-inspired as 'Social Democrats' tout themselves as enacting policies that are pro-poor from subsidy on utilities to education delivery. As aptly captured by Clark:

The concept of social justice is central to theorizing about education and schooling, for it points to something important in society which ought to be taken into account by politicians, policy-makers and practitioners in their thinking about the nature of education and what schools are for. In one sense we are all for social justice – it is hard to imagine that anyone would be seriously in favor of social injustice (Clark, 2006:272).

Social justice is narrowly construed in this paper to mean or explain a restructuring of the society that ensures some degree of equality, rights and privileges to the disadvantaged in society by enacting such laws or policies to empower the vulnerable through education. In the words of Gewirtz:

The subject matter of justice is the basic structure of society, or more exactly, the way in which the major social institutions ... distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the distribution of advantages for social cooperation (Gewirtz: 2002:140).

Post-colonial states in attempt to ensure social justice promulgated laws and/or policies that give legal recognition to the marginalized or deprived members of particular societies and usually through education. For, education is seen as the right instrument to reconstruct society for participation of all members for development. In Ghana, the first president of the republic, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah extended a skewed cost-free education to the people of northern Ghana to counteract the 'injustice' suffered under the colonial policy of deliberately not extending education to the Northern territories and using its people as farm laborers in cocoa farms and felling of timber in Southern Ghana for the benefit of the colonialists. The idea was to bridge the educational gap between the people of Northern Ghana and their counterparts in the South. This 'free education' is still in force in modern Ghana. Most developing countries still roll out policies that are geared to bridging the gap between the haves and the disadvantaged in societies. However, there has been wholesale extension of welfare to cover all populations (for parochial political reasons) thus, putting severe financial constraints on the economies of already precarious states in developing economies.

This wholesale subsidies is a source of conflict in most developing economies in the world. In

contemporary times, political authorities have seen the need to roll back the state intervention on subsidies. This attempt to roll back the states' interventionist approach is the scene of violence we are witnessing in most developing world today. According to Al-Rodhan and Kuepfer (2007), 'it is difficult for a state whose population had become accustomed in receiving subsidized goods from the government, to cut these subsidies without risking strong popular opposition or worse' (Al-Rodhan & Kuepfer, 2007:54). The gradual removal of petroleum subsidy in Ghana led to a 23% hikes on petroleum products that affected transport fares, foodstuffs and general cost of living. In response, organized labor declared a nation-wide strike and demonstration on July 24, 2014. The simultaneous nation-wide strikes and demonstrations across all administrative regions did not only paralyzed government business, but also, threatened the stability of the state (Daily Graphic, 2014:2). In the midst of these economic challenges, government is still working out modalities to implement wholesale cost-free education in the 2015/2016. This position by government can only be explained for political reasons other than for societal consideration(s).

Another conventional explanation is the supposition that states in developing countries continue to enact interventionist policies on education and subsidies in utilities (such as petroleum, water, electricity, farm implements and inputs and their like) to citizens to score cheap political points in spite of the inadequate financial and human resources. This unsustainable cost-free education policy is rooted in populist political machinations to beguile the masses to hang onto political power. As a result of abject poverty and illiteracy largely created by politicians in developing countries through poor and ineffective governance, official corruption, incompetence and embroiled in politics of patronage and clientele relations, governments in Developing Economies continue to roll out pro-poor policies in order to win the minds and heart of the vulnerable in society. Studies on the activities of state accept the central role for the state, but argued that the state relation to society is principally a debatable one (Callaghy 1984a; Kohli 1986; Azarya & Chazan 1987; Migdal 1988). This is because, political leaders in developing economies view democracy as a strategy to acquire and maintain state power for their own agenda under the guise of acting in the interest of the society.

In the unique case of Ghana, there has been acute financial constraints in the provision of educational infrastructure, teaching, learning materials and shortage of teachers in rural Ghana. The educational sector alone takes 34% of national budget (Ministry of Finance). This quantum of money allocated to the Ministry of Education largely go into recurrent expenditure. Other commitments such as school infrastructure and materials, are donor-funded projects. Given the precarious picture of education funding in Ghana, it is therefore mind-boggling for a country like Ghana whose educational finance is donor-driven to implement a cost-free education throughout the country. Political reasons other than the welfare of the masses/poor underpin welfare policies in developing economies including Ghana.

4. Politics of Cost-free Education in Ghana since the Fourth Republic

Ghana embarked on its fourth democratic journey in 1993 having adopted neoliberal policies hook, line and sinker in the 1980s. Some of these policies included the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) and the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). These policies, as part of the political and economic conditionalities of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, 'compelled' the Ghana government (then headed by Jerry John Rawlings Provisional National Defense Council – a military regime) to abolish the existing and somewhat cost-free education to focus more on cost-sharing and/or cost recovery as a quid pro quo for financial assistance. The implementation of these policies led to the 1987 educational reforms in spite of the massive spontaneous resistance by both students and parents – the resistance was due to the financial burden imposed on both parents and students popularly tagged as "cost shifting" by the Ghanaian public.

The 1987 education reforms came under severe scrutiny and a barrage of criticisms by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), parents and politicians when the first batch of the reforms recorded mass failure in the West African Examination Council results in 1993 (Ministry of Education, 1994). In the 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012 general elections, issues of education reforms and cost-free education took the center stage in all political parties' campaign messages and debate. In the 2012 general election, education was used by the various political parties as the central political technique to capture the levers of government. The largest opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) which is ideologically inclined to liberal philosophy campaigned on cost-free education to Ghanaians from the Basic school levels (comprising primary and junior high) to the senior high school if voted into power. As aptly captured by the party's 2012 manifesto:

We are really committed to making secondary education free to every Ghanaian child. By free SHS we mean free tuition, admission, textbook, library, science center, computer, examination, utilities, boarding and meals...the alternative of a largely uneducated and unskilled workforce is a situation Ghana cannot afford (NPP Manifesto, 2012:23).

The cost-free education as espoused by the NPP became the lynchpin and/or direction for political party campaigns. According to the NPP, many Ghanaian children are unable to continue their education throughout the various levels of the educational ladder mainly as a result of poverty and cultural factors. And

since education is the keystone to accelerated national development, the only alternative was to offer a cost-free education to the Ghanaian child regardless of the socio-economic, political, religious and geographical background. The campaign promise of the NPP, to implement a cost-free education from the Basic to Senior High Schools stemmed from a critical assessment of the Ghanaian school system. The NPP states, inter alia, in its 2012 manifesto:

Our education system is in serious crisis. Out of a 100 of our children that starts kindergarten only 71 ends up in primary school, only 65 will go up to junior high school, out of that only 35 progress to senior high school and only 3 will end up in university...many of our children fall out because they cannot afford to go on...Consequently many of our children and youth are not well prepared for the job market because they lack the requisite quality of education and skills. The current state of our education is simply not acceptable ... (NPP Manifesto, 2012:20).

Encapsulating the analysis of the verdict (the statistical analysis) professed by the NPP on the Ghanaian school system gave compelling reasons for the implementation of cost-free education to the majority of the have-nots in the Ghanaian economy. The missing link in the NPP campaign message was the absence of a formula for the implementation of the policy of cost-free education targeting and focusing precisely on those who actually need it (the poor in the Ghanaian economy). Superficially, the policy was to be a holistic implementation for all citizens including the rich in society. An analysis of the Ghanaian economy in 2012 (even now) reveals a striking parallel between national resources (Finance for instance) and the ever-growing population in schools to sustain such a policy. This campaign promise by the largest opposition political party (the NPP) caught up well with majority of Ghanaian voters who had to go through several family denials such as clothes, sandals and food, among others, just to pay school fees for their wards. Other opposition political parties such as the Convention People's Party (CPP), the People's National Convention (PNC) and the Progressive People's Party (PPP) also joined the fray and hyped their campaign messages to implement a cost-free education if voted into power.

The response of the ruling government (the National Democratic Congress) who initially "rubbished" the NPP message on cost-free education as utopian and a desperate attempt by a desperate politician (referring to the main opposition leader of the NPP) hungry for political power, had to soften its position on the cost-free education apparently because of the euphoria associated with it on the campaign trail of the opposition political parties. The NDC also contended that the cost-free education is not a promise and also not the brainchild of any political party but a constitutional provision enshrined under Article 25 (i) (a) and Article 38 (2) – the fulfillment of constitutional obligation to provide Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE). The NDC in its manifesto outlined the following measures to the progressive implementation of a future cost-free secondary education under Article 25 (i) (b). The process of the implementation of a cost-free education is captured and outlined in the 2012 Election Manifesto of the NDC as:

Expansion of infrastructure and other logistics to enable access to all;

Expanding and improving the human resource base by increasing the number of Teacher Training Institutions to improve quality of teaching and learning (NDC Manifesto, 2012:14).

A critical analysis of the policy direction for the two main political parties suggest that both political parties, in principle, vouched for the implementation of cost-free education. While the NPP proposed 2014/2015 Academic Year as the ideal timeline for the implementation of the cost-free senior high education; the NDC, on the other hand, proposed a gradualist approach to get the fundamentals or the basics right (construction of additional school blocks to accommodate the ever-growing population of pupils) in the educational front. The NDC, therefore, proposed to expand access by constructing 200 new community day senior high schools in four years (50 community senior high schools to be built each year for the next four years) and 10 teacher training colleges to train more teachers to man schools without the required number of qualified teachers throughout the country. The incumbent government (the NDC party) won the 2012 Ghanaian election and is therefore expected to implement its manifesto promise especially the cost-free senior high education. Two years into its administration, not a single Community-Day Senior High School or Teacher Training College has been constructed. It is unclear if the NDC government would ever construct the promised school blocks before the next election in 2016. On the contrary, the NDC government hurriedly announced to Ghanaians its resolve to implement the cost-free senior high school education in the 2015/2016 Academic Year. This was contained in President John Dramani Mahama's sessional address to the Ghanaian legislature this year. This declaration by the government led to heated debates on the airwaves. The debates hinged on the following thematic questions. First, the source of revenue to implement the cost-free senior high education in the face of Ghana's economic hardship; second, the issue of the construction of new community day schools and teacher training institutions promised; and three; Ghanaians wanted to know why the sudden change of the implementation timeline and in an election year (2016).

Arguments against the proposal of the 'U-turn' of the NDC-led government to implement a cost-free education in Ghana consider the proposal to be driven by political, rather than a germane educational

considerations. The analyses of the proposal reveal that political considerations to hang onto power other than the implementation of policies for the mutual benefit of the poor in society influenced these “welfare” or “social justice” policies. The incumbent government’s attempt to implement cost-free Senior High Education in the 2015/2016 is meant to cajole voters in poor communities who, by all indications, are the majority on the electoral register to vote to keep them in power. It is also meant to shut the main opposition candidate of the NPP in the 2012 (who is contesting the presidential primaries of his party to stage a comeback in the 2016 election) Ghanaian election of ever reinventing the wheel on the issue of cost-free education in the 2016 and any future electoral competitions. This is because, the NDC government could not discuss issues of the economy, health, agriculture, employment and other basics of the economy except to use every platform to counter the ‘infectious’ cost-free education espoused by the largest opposition political party (the NPP) that even got the support of other opposition parties. In effect, it would appear that the NDC government will do whatever under the sun to implement this policy (cost-free education) to guarantee its electoral fortunes in the coming 2016 general election. The problem usually is not the initial legislations or Acts guiding the implementation but the sustainability

4.1 Cost-free Education and the Political economy of Money, Materials and Manpower

Effective and efficient quality education worldwide is contingent on three key factors: money, materials and manpower of the state. The resource of states are the sinews of political and economic wealth. The optimum blending or bonding of these factors, to a larger extent, will reflect in the ephemeral responsiveness of the education and its products on the economy. This section explores the political economy of these three key factors (Money, Materials and Manpower) in relation to Ghana’s quest to implement a cost-free school system from primary through to the junior and senior high schools in the 2015/2016 academic year.

Ghana Educational Sector gets the largest share of the national budget. Since Ghana’s fourth republic, the education sector has always taken the chunk of the national budget; and this has consistently seen upward reviews by successive governments. Currently, the budgetary allocation to the educational sector is 34% of the national purse (Ministry of Education, 2011, 2012, and 2013 annual Budget estimates). While it is altruistic that the education gets the highest quantum of money as compared to health and agriculture for example, almost the entire budget is spent on recurrent expenditure and/or emoluments. Recent agitations by teachers and Government’s failure to pay subventions on time cast the shadow of the monumental financial problems associated with the cost-free educational policy. Currently, the Ghanaian media are inundated with news items concerning agitations by newly engaged Teachers about unpaid salaries over the past two years. Similarly, teacher associations (Ghana National Association of Teachers; National Association of Graduate Teachers; and Coalition of Concerned Teachers Association) are up in arms against government for unpaid annual incremental and transfer allowances. Equally, subventions for the 2013/2014 Academic Year are yet to be paid to over 500 public Senior High Schools to cover administrative and feeding expenditure. This situation has compelled headmasters to threaten the closing down of Boarding Schools as a result the schools’ indebtedness to food suppliers. Besides, while Capitation Grants to run Junior High Schools are in arrears, the School Feeding Programme secretariat is said to be indebted to caterers for the past one year (since 2013). Appallingly, students on government scholarship in Cuba and Russia have not been paid their monthly stipend since 2012. A catalogue of the challenges facing the Ghanaian public education sector cannot be complete without mention of statutory payments. These are a component and compulsory percentage deducted from the Value Added Tax (VAT) - to Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund). Just like the Capitation Grant, the statutory payments have also been in arrears since 2013 (rendering the activities of the Fund administrators to zero) to a halt. A youth activists of the largest opposition political party (the NPP) Richard Nyamah sued the government at the High Court in Ghana to compel the Finance Ministry to pay the arrears owed the GETfund. The court in its ruling on Thursday July 10, 2014 granted the application brought to it by Richard Nyamah. The Accra Fast Track High Court ordered the Ministry of Finance to pay all arrears (over GHS 500 million equivalent of US\$350 million) owed the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETfund) by government (The Ghanaian Times, 2014:3). Polytechnic Teachers Association of Ghana (POTAG) are on strike for the past three months for unpaid book and research allowances, while University Teachers’ Association of Ghana (UTAG) are bracing to declare a strike for the same reason as POTAG. The usual “no money syndrome” that afflicts Ghana has witnessed unbridled borrowing from the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to finance education. It is therefore mind-boggling that in the midst of these problems of money, the government and the Ministry of Education are interested in implementing a cost-free education in the 2015/2016 academic year.

Ghana’s education is donor-driven in all departments. Parliament on July 9, 2014 approved a US\$ 156 million World Bank loan facility to finance the Ghana senior high school education improvement project – construction of community senior high schools (SHS). Part of the credit is meant to offer scholarships to an estimated number of 10,400 SHS students (targets’ girls) and also provide free sanitary towels to girls of both senior and junior high schools. It is unclear how the government would finance the entire education budget

if the proposed cost-free education is implemented in the 2015/2016 academic year. It is also mind-boggling for a government interested in implementing free education policy in the 2015/2016 to again source a World Bank facility or loan to partly finance the education of 10,400 senior high school students (it intends to offer scholarships).

The tables below give a panoramic overview of Ghana's dependence on donor and other financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in financing the educational sector.

Table 1: Major bilateral contribution to educational sector/reforms

Donor	Project/Programme	Period	Budget	Activities
DFID	Whole School Development	1988-2005	UK £50 million	Support for 2 pilot schools in each district. Construction of 125 classroom blocks.
EC	Micro-projects	1990-1996 1996-2000	ECU 14.1 million ECU 9million	Community activities with guidelines for 20.0per cent education; in practice for education (e.g., classrooms)
USAID	Primary Education Project (PREP)	1990-1995	US\$35million	US\$32 million budget support plus US\$3 million technical assistance.
	Quality Improvements	1997-2004	US\$53million	US\$39 million for school improvements

Table 2: Sources of education financing since 1999

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
In millions of US dollars (at 2006 prices)								
GoG	350.5	342.0	385.2	472.3	525.6	541.6	586.7	706.3
Donor	34.0	18.7	27.3	39.4	28.6	58.1	74.8	24.5
IGF	-	-	-	-	-	73.0	83.4	111.4
GET Fund	-	-	-	-	62.3	75.8	86.5	125.5
HIPC	-	-	-	-	17.6	37.9	37.8	48.5
DACF	-	-	-	-	7.0	14.5	10.4	15.1
EFA Catalytic	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.2	3.0
SIF	-	-	-	-	-	-	5.7	3.7
Total	384.6	360.7	412.5	511.7	641.2	800.9	889.5	1,038.1
GoG-Donor Total	384.6	360.7	412.5	511.7	554.3	599.7	661.5	730.8

Source: GES Annual Educational Sector Review Report, various issues. Dollar conversion by AFC

Besides money, Ghana's educational sector is also donor-driven in the provision of materials. School materials in this paper refer to school infrastructure, teaching learning materials, textbooks, uniforms, furniture and feeding. The various sums of money and materials sourced from the international financial institutions is an indication that Ghana lacks the capacity to single-handedly implement cost-free educational system. In the context of this paper, a state is said to have resources if it has adequate wealth, materials and highly skilled manpower. State capacity is defined here as the state's ability to implement strategies to achieve its economic, political or social goals in society (Evans, 1989). In the case of Ghana, the dichotomy between economic wealth and the population demanding access and expansion of school infrastructure is strikingly parallel. In other words, there is a wide gap between the demand for education and financial resources of the country. Accordingly, it is therefore safe to state that Ghana lacks the capacity to independently implement a cost-free education without external support. Currently, donor funds to the education sector is highly erratic as a result of Ghana's new status as a low middle income country. The withdrawal of the donor community have unleashed harsh economic conditions as a result of the shortfall of revenue and the competing demands on the national purse from sectors such as health, agriculture, energy, water and petroleum among others. The government have therefore resorted to austerity economic measures such as increases in taxes, cancellation of teacher-trainee allowances, the inability of government to purchase crude oil regularly to power generators for electrical power and their like. The table below summarizes donor support in the provision of materials from 1994 to 2002.

Table 3

	US\$ millions		Percent		US\$ millions	
	IDA	Total	IDA	Total	IDA	Percent
School building and rehabilitation	11.3	17.5	29.4	38.4	15.2	28.5
Teacher Training	3.4	3.4	8.8	7.5	1.1	2.1
Teaching Materials	8.1	8.1	21.0	17.8	12	22.5
School furniture and equipment	9.4	10.3	24.4	22.6	18.2	34.1
Other Expenses	6.3	6.3	16.4	13.8	6.8	12.8
Total	38.5	45.6	100.0	100.0	53.3	100.0

Source: World Bank (2004)

Table 4: Allocation of resources under PSD and BESIP

	PSD (1993-98)		BESIP (1996-2002)	
	US\$ Mil.	Percent	US\$ Mil.	Percent
School building and rehabilitation	38.0	67.1	16.3	34.2
Head Teacher's Housing	10.5	18.6	0.0	0.0
Training materials	2.1	3.7	1.3	2.7
Training		0.0	1.3	2.7
Teaching materials	0.0	0.0	2.0	4.2
School furniture	0.0	0.0	4.2	8.8
Textbook supply	0.0	0.0	16.4	34.4
Other expenses	6.0	10.6	6.2	13.0
Total	56.6	100.0	47.7	100.0

Source: World Bank, 2004

Funding education is a necessity if a country desire to develop. Apart from money and materials, another principal component is the manpower of a state. Money and materials are coterminous to the manpower of the nation. Investments in the education sector without a corresponding skilled manpower can only at best decelerate national development if even money and materials are readily available. Ghana in an attempt to build a strong and effective manpower to man schools, currently have thirty eight (38) public College of Education upgraded to Diploma awarding status and two universities (University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba) specialized in teacher training at the undergraduate and graduate levels. In spite of the multitude of graduates that are churned out from these institutions annually, there still remain yawning gaps and the demand for teachers throughout the country. Some of these graduates never end up in the classrooms, but to other sectors of the Ghanaian economy where the conditions of service is/are greener. The few graduates who accept to teach end up in the cities and other semi-urban communities where social amenities are readily available. The Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ghana Education Service (G. E. S.) continue to recruit untrained teachers to fill vacancies in the classrooms across the country. There is also a policy where the untrained teachers are trained in the existing Colleges of Education to obtain the professional teacher status while in classrooms. The programme is organized during school recess.

The availability of the needed manpower in the educational sector is concentrated in the cities/urban and few semi-urban centers. Many schools in rural Ghana are without qualified trained teachers. The availability of trained teachers and untrained teachers is in the ratio of 1:10 in the peripheral societies in rural Ghana (Field Notes, 2013). Visits to outskirts environs of schools in Salaga, Kpandai, Zabzugu, Bimbilla, Bongo, Tongo West Gonja, Central Gonja, North Gonja (e.g. Mankargu) Savelugu/Nanton, Gambaga, Nalerigu, Bunkpurgu and Ada districts showed that most schools are without a single trained/qualified teacher; except few schools where the head teachers are trained personnel. The district capitals have a combination of trained and untrained, though a preponderate number of them belong to the trained-teachers category. It is significant to note that these districts are found in the peripheries of Ghana. Nevertheless, within the peripheries there are areas designated as "the periphery of the periphery", and an epithet such as "overseas" is used to describe them. These "overseas" communities are without motorable roads, electricity, portable water, clinics and entertainment avenues. The situation in the "overseas" gets worse during the rainy season when such communities are usually cut off from the rest of the country through flooding. Interacting with some of these 'Pupil teachers' or untrained teachers was startling. Some could not expressed themselves in the English language – which is the medium of instruction from primary four (4) to the highest level - and are just one-step above their own pupils. Many schools in these districts rely on the annual postings of National service personnel before the pupils get a somewhat meaningful tuition. When the service is over, these schools will have to wait until the arrival of new service personnel. Regrettably, some of these service personnel do not even report to their duty stations. It is the

conviction of this paper that resources - money, materials and manpower - do not bond well in the educational sector in Ghana to warrant the implementation of a cost-free schooling.

4.2 Implications

The national resources of Ghana (Finance, materials and manpower) from the analyses of the educational sector suggest a mirage of problems that need to be sorted out before any effective implementation of the proposed cost-free education in the 2015/2016 academic year. Implementation of the cost-free education without the resolution of these problems of money, material and manpower will lead to unexpected implications on the Ghanaian economy.

First, implementation of cost-free education without addressing the teething problems of national resources (Finance, materials and manpower) will lead to unintended consequences on the Ghanaian economy. Cost-free education is not an event but a process. There is therefore the need to employ a gradualist approach in the implementation of the policy until the nation gets the basics or fundamentals right especially the training of the requisite manpower and materials such as school infrastructure, textbooks and teaching aid(s). It has always been difficult for Ghanaian governments to release subsidies to Government-assisted senior high schools to run smooth administration. For instance, the Ghana government has not been able to release subsidies for 2013/2014 academic year. The heads/principals of these SHS are threatening to close down schools earlier than schedule for lack of finance to purchase food items, stationery for examination, and fuel among others. Ghana government pays GHS 23.00 (Twenty three Ghana Cedis on each student as subsidy and rest of fees are paid by parents/guardians) per term for each student. The first, second and third term subsidies are currently in arrears (as at July 10, 2014; though the academic year ends on July 31, 2014). In the face of these challenging demands on the national purse, any attempt to 'rush' the implementation of such a policy presupposes that Ghana may have to continue the unbridled path of borrowing from the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to finance education which may not be sustainable in the long run.

Secondly, Ghana, just as many other developing economies are faced with several challenges. Education competes with other sectors of the economy such as energy, provision of water, health, agriculture, industry and their like on the national purse. The scarce resources of the state (money and materials for example) must be fairly distributed to ensure sustainable development. Investment in education does not necessarily lead to economic development as returns. But it is contingent on the nature and type of education being offered to the citizens – quality education. Quality education is a well-balanced development of the cognitive and the psychomotor skills of the individual to fit and solve basic societal problems (Braithwaite, Mbowura & Seidu 2014: 145). Implementation of the proposed cost-free education in Ghana implies that other equally important sectors of the economy – health, agriculture, industry, transport, energy and their like - may suffer neglect to the detriment of the governed.

Thirdly, policy-makers on the proposed cost-free education must take a cue from the hurriedly implementation of the 1987 educational reforms. For instance, the reforms were hurriedly implemented without professional audit of the manpower available and materials. Some materials such as textbooks, teaching learning materials got to senior high schools across the country when the first batch of students received first year textbooks when they were either in the second year or the third year depending on the location of school. Some of these students never saw third year textbooks before they completed the third year. Nonetheless, these students were expected to answer questions from such materials. The result was the massive failure of the candidates. In the same vein, if due diligence and professional audit of resources available (finance, materials and manpower) are not undertaken and analyzed before implementation, such a policy is bound to fail.

5. Conclusion

Subsidy on education in Developing Economies like Ghana is not a bad idea. However, the wholesale transplant from subsidy on education to cost-free education from the Junior High to Senior High Schools must be critically examined and measured according to the national resources – money, materials and power - available to the nation. The need for equity or social justice in the educational front in Ghana is plausible, but it is important that policymakers must avoid wholesale implementation of cost-free education. The authorities must adopt a concentric approach to identify the vulnerable in society who really deserve to benefit from such a policy/programme. One of the key conclusion that emerged from this study is that it is obvious that the Ghanaian economy is not yet ready for any wholesale "take-off" of a cost-free education until the nation gets the basics right – bonding of money, materials and manpower. The current donor-driven education is unsustainable moving forward as a nation. The concept of cost-free education for all intend and purposes, must be re-examined thoroughly devoid of any parochial political or ideologically-inspired lenses. The precarious state of the economy cannot support and sustain a cost-free education policy. The search for economic stability and "economic independence" must precede the implementation of a cost-free education policy. The unbridled desire to implement a cost-free education in Ghana is populist and a political gimmick that has the potential to

politicize the otherwise “laudable” future policy.

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