



**Consortium for Research on
Educational Access,
Transitions and Equity**

**Inequitable Access to Basic Education in Ghana:
The Way Forward for Free Compulsory Universal
Basic Education (FCUBE)**

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INEQUITABLE ACCESS TO BASIC EDUCATION IN GHANA: THE WAY FORWARD FOR FREE COMPULSORY UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (FCUBE).

J. S. Djangmah

Abstract

This paper¹ highlights educational disparity in Ghana and the consequences of the two-tier basic for the delivery of quality education to the poor. The majority of Ghanaian children who attend public basic schools are not receiving the quality of education they require to progress beyond post-basic levels of education i.e. Grade 9. This paper analyses the results of the Basic Education Certificate of Education (BECE) and the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) to determine differences in performance and the extent of polarisation. The analyses confirmed the high differentiation in performance between schools, especially at the Senior High School level in Ghana. This explains why parents do whatever it takes to have their wards attend particular schools. The most striking revelation was that only a small proportion of senior high schools provide most of the candidates who qualify for admission for tertiary institutions, broadly defined to include all types of post-secondary institutions. The implications of the huge disparity in educational opportunity are discussed in the light of the high hopes that the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education programme and the commitments to the Education for All targets and Millennium Development Goals promise to advance the poor through education.

¹ This paper was first presented at the UKFIET Conference at New College, Oxford in September 2009 as *Measuring Performance in Schools: Disparity in Ghanaian Basic and Senior High Schools: Consequences!* UKFIET- September 2009

1. Introduction

Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) in Ghana is critical to fulfilling the high hopes raised by the EFA and the MDGs for expanded access to basic education. Expected positive gains would include among other outcomes enhanced access to post-basic education for the poor. Children from rural and deprived communities who have had access to basic education, have completed it and have transited successfully to senior high school are well on their way to grasping the opportunities to take themselves and their families out of poverty. Meaningful access to basic education as defined by CREATE would allow the acquisition of minimum competences in literacy and numeracy skills. Its achievement is by far the greatest challenge for gains in universal basic education in Ghana as in much of Sub-Saharan Africa (Lewin, 2009). In the context of the CREATE studies this paper's concern is the lack of equity in educational quality which denies large numbers of Ghanaian children from completing junior high school with grades which are good enough to access post-basic education for the substantial gains it brings. The additional concern is the concentration of the majority of those who succeed in "failing" schools. In a country research summary of educational access in Ghana in the 1990s it was noted that though access increased and absolute poverty had declined, equity and equality of opportunity had not necessarily improved (Rolleston, Akyeampong et al, 2010).

In an overview of access to education in Sub-Saharan Africa Lewin and Akyeampong (2009) stress that wealth as indicated by household income data "continues to be a very powerful predictor of participation with children from the top 20% of households having at least six times the chances of being in Grade 9 as those from the poorest 40%". Without much of a chance for the majority of poor children to reach Grade 9 and complete Junior High School their chances to transit into senior high schools are minimal. The real test of the FCUBE as an enabler of social mobility is the extent to which the children of the poor also move into higher levels of education and derive the benefits that come with it. More affluent parents invest in quality education to achieve such results. In community and school studies of access and exclusion of rural Ghana Ghartey-Ampiah (2007) reported that parents of children of non-performing parents still nurse dreams of these children enrolling in universities.

Early differentiation in quality and meaningful learning (Lewin and Akyeampong, Ibid) are evident very early in the Ghanaian education system. This disparity has magnified over the past few decades when a two-tier basic educational system evolved and developed with fee-paying schools achieving learning objectives not available to the majority of children in public schools. This paper explores educational disparity in Ghana and the consequences of the two-tier basic for the delivery of quality education to the poor. *Criterion Reference Testing* in the 1990s in primary schools, more recent *National Educational Assessment* and the *Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE)* have both confirmed that the majority of Ghanaian children who attend public basic schools are not receiving the quality of education they require to progress beyond post-basic levels of education. This paper analyses the results of the *West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE)* over the four year period, 2006 to 2009, to determine differences in performance between senior high schools. The analyses confirmed the high differentiation in performance between senior high schools in Ghana and why parents would do whatever it takes to have their wards attend particular schools rather than others. The most

striking revelation was that only a small fraction of senior high schools graduate most of the candidates who qualify for admission into tertiary institutions broadly defined to include all types of post-secondary institutions. These analyses go beyond an earlier analyses of admissions into Ghana's two oldest and prestigious universities (Addae-Mensah, 2000) which showed that about 50 schools produced 70% or more of the candidates offered admissions by the two universities. The implications of the huge disparity in education opportunity are discussed in the light of the high hopes that the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) programme, and the commitments to the Education for All (EFA) targets and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) promise to advance the poor through education

1.1 Drivers of Educational Reforms

Disparity in educational quality and access in Ghana dates back from the colonial era. Western education started in those areas especially along the coastal areas which had earlier contact with European traders creating a demand and access which spread along with the exchange economy to rural Gold Coast (Foster, P. 1965: 126-130,). The quality of education is likely to have declined with distance from areas of high demand and supply to the areas of less demand and supply in the interior².

Towards the end of the colonial era and a few decades before, the high demand for education was being met by the opening of privately owned schools particularly in rural communities. The colonial authorities resorted to the unpopular policy of closing down many of these so called "bush schools"³ (Kimble, D. 1965: 119-120). These schools received no assistance from government and lacked trained teachers.

The Accelerated Development Plan for Education was launched by the first nationalist government in 1951 to universalize primary education to meet the high demand for education. Without much preparation and adequate numbers of trained teachers, hurriedly trained teachers and untrained school leavers taught in the newly established schools. Educational standards appear to have declined as expansion over stretched capacity and resources (Ghana CAR 2007:5, Foster, 1965: 190). Since then untrained teachers, referred to as pupil teachers have been a continuing feature of basic education in Ghana with negative consequences for quality⁴. Teacher education and training in Ghana had subsequently gone through many changes in policy to address the challenges of teacher quality and quantity.

Simultaneously with the implementation of the Accelerated Development Plan of Education was a policy to cede control and management of schools from the more experienced churches and

² The writer of this paper attended in the mid-1940s a village primary school built by the community. Two teachers who were untrained senior primary school leavers taught the small number of children in six classes housed in two rooms.

³ A report from the education department complained about the many schools which were poorly staffed and equipped and "were doing more harm than good to the people who attend them".

⁴ An Emergency Training College was opened in 1953 to provide short courses of training for pupil teachers. In 1964/65, there were 9,826 trained teachers in primary and middle schools in contrast to 22,749 pupil teachers. The number of teacher training colleges was 46. The following year, 1965/66, more teacher training colleges were opened to increase the number to 83 (Dzobo, N. K. 1971)

missions⁵ to ill equipped local authorities. This policy is also likely to have affected quality of education delivery.

After the fall of the Nkrumah regime in 1966 educational reforms were driven by the twin concerns of how to fix the perceived poor academic standards of school leavers and how to make the curriculum more practically – oriented. There had been a strongly held belief since early colonial times that technical, vocational and agricultural education were better for economic development of the Gold Coast than the more “bookish” academic education which had prevailed in spite of spirited attempts to change it (Foster, P. 1965; Dzobo, N. K. 1969).

The major reforms in Ghana’s educational history began in 1974. The reforms introduced the Junior Secondary School and Senior Secondary School structure of education to replace the “O” and “A” levels which Ghana inherited from colonial rule (Ministry of Education, 1974). Before then a two-tier educational system had emerged which by the early 70s was allocating places in Ghana’s top secondary schools largely to products of fee-paying private schools (Addae-Mensah et al.1973; Addae-Mensah, 2000). With this development, wealth became a major factor in access to quality education in Ghana.

1.2 The Origins of the Fee-paying Basic Education

A little background information on the origins of Ghana’s fee paying private schools is provided here to clarify the context of the two-tier educational system. In the 1950’s an experiment was conducted at the University College of the Gold Coast⁶ to assess the relative merits and demerits of the use of English rather than the local or mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the early years of primary school. The experiment proved that after six years of primary school, children who had been taught in English were ready to be admitted into secondary schools. However the high cost of English medium primary schools did not allow its introduction into public basic schools. Soon fee-paying English medium primary schools, which came to be described as preparatory schools because they prepared their pupils for secondary schools, became “...a new breed of private schools which were largely patronized by the more affluent sections of society to the virtual exclusion of all the rest” (Boateng, E. A., 1995). The Education Review Committee (Ministry of Education, 1967) set up after the fall of the first nationalist government⁷ in 1966, recommended that when primary education improved nationally, secondary education should follow six years of primary education. By the mid-60s and 70s the two-tier primary education system had become a fact of life for the Ghanaian child. *Box 1*

⁵ At a public lecture the late Professor E. A. Boateng (1995) described the policy as follows:

The policy to make primary education compulsory and free “was accompanied by an extensive increase in state control of education at the expense of missionary participation and direction, which greatly added to the government’s burdens and undermined the moral role formerly played by the churches and religious bodies. Paradoxically it was the next civilian government under Dr Busia which dealt the final blow to the formal participation and control of these bodies in the basic education process”.

⁶ The university college of the Gold Coast was established in 1948.

⁷ The first nationalist government of the Gold Coast was set up in 1951 as the transition to Ghana’s independence in 1957. It launched fee free primary education in 1951 and so expanded primary education which also resulted in consequences in erosion of academic standards in the many schools which were poorly housed and staffed. The Education Review Committee to review education was set up when the Nkrumah government fell in 1966.

describes the socio-cultural dimensions of the two-tier basic education system as seen in the eyes of a seasoned Ghanaian professor⁸.

Box 1: Preparatory Schools and Public Schools

.....But taking the country as a whole it became increasingly clear as time went by and the number of preparatory schools increased that they offered a better preparation for admission to secondary schools than the state-supported schools which were in the majority. This was a dangerous sign from a social point of view, but since the government was not in a position to provide the necessary support for enabling the public schools to offer the requisite quality of education, these invidious disparities continued and grew in scale. Even more serious, they began to engender a feeling of inferiority in the pupils in the public schools who were mostly from the less affluent homes as well as those from the rural area, where privately run schools are practically non-existent. The derogatory name, 'Cyto', which came to be applied as a sub-cultural term for the elementary schools, quickly acquired a permanence in popular usage; and I was once greatly shocked and saddened when, upon innocently asking a young school girl in Accra what school she was attending, I received the bland and apologetic reply 'Cyto'. Some what like Pavlov's dog, she had meekly become conditioned into accepting her inferior status in the educational hierarchy.

Source: Professor E. A. Boateng. *Crisis, Change and Revolution in Ghanaian Education*, page 30, *The Armstrong Amissah Memorial Lectures*, 1995

⁸ Professor E. A. Boateng attended Achimota College, the premier secondary school as a student and teacher, and after graduating from Oxford University became a foundation lecturer, later first professor of geography at the University College of the Gold Coast, and the founding Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Coast.

2. Measuring Achievement in Basic Education

2.1 Criterion Reference Testing (CRT)

Criterion Referenced Testing (CRT) was conducted in the 1990's to assess the quality of primary education in Ghana. It was used to monitor primary school achievement by testing performance of a 5% sample of public and private school pupils in English and Mathematics. The test were in the medium of instruction i.e. English. Mastery Levels were fixed at 60% for English and 55% level in Mathematics. In both English and Mathematics pupils in public schools under-achieved compared to private schools. As compared to fee-paying private schools which in 1994, 1996 and 2000 had well over 50% of pupils achieving mastery levels in English, in public schools the highest mastery level was 9.6% in 2000 compared to 77.9% in pupils in private schools (see Table 1)

Table 1: Percentage of Pupils Reaching Mastery Levels in English

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1999	2000
Public	2	3	3.3	3.6	5.5	6.2	8.7	9.6
Private			51.4		56.5	68.7		77.9

Source: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2002)

In Mathematics private school pupils also obtained much higher mastery levels as in Table 2. Table 3 compares the mean scores of the two groups of pupils which showed the huge gap in achievement.

Table 2: Percentage of Pupils reaching Mastery Levels in Mathematics

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1999	2000
Public	1.1	1.5	1.5	1.8	1.8	2.7	4	4.4
Private			31.7		31	40.4		53.7

Table 3: Mean Scores in English and Mathematics 1992 – 2000

Year	Public		Private	
	English	Mathematics	English	Mathematics
1992	29.9	27.3		
1993	30.9	27.4		
1994	31.0	27.7	58.8	47.3
1995	31.6	28.1		
1996	33.0	28.8	61.0	47.0
1997	33.9	29.9	67.4	51.7
1999	36.9	32.2	59.2	46.6
2000	36.9	32.3	70.4	56.9

Source: 2000 Report on the Administration of CRT, Ministry of Education March 2002

2.2 National Education Assessment

National Education Assessment tests were introduced in 2005 to monitor the performance of the system. These tests also showed the higher performance of private school pupils compared with public school pupils in Primary 3 and Primary 6 in English and Mathematics as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Percentage of Pupils Attaining Minimal Level (35%) and Proficiency Level (55%)

	Public Schools			Private Schools		
	Mean	35%	55%	Mean	35%	55%
P3						
English	38.1	48.6	16.3	69.7	89	72.6
Mathematics	36.3	47.2	18.6	60.34	80.6	65.8
P6						
English	43.1	64.1	23.6	65.7	91.0	73.5
Mathematics	34.4	42.7	9.8	59.2	87.3	58.5

Source: Extracted from Report on 2005 Administration of National Education Assessment Primary 3 and Primary 6: English and Mathematics. Ministry of Education and Sports.

In a recent report of results of the NAE this writer noticed that private and public school results were not disaggregated. This is not good enough to monitor how public schools are doing in comparison with the private schools which undoubtedly have more working for them.

3. Performance of JHS students at the BECE

The Basic Education Certificate of Education tests students in 4 Core Subjects (English, Mathematics, Integrated Science and Social Studies) and 5 other subjects (Religious and Mural Education, Agriculture, Pre-technical Skills, French (optional), Ghanaian Language and Vocational Skills). Performance in a subject is graded from Grade 1 (highest) to Grade 9 (lowest). The overall best performance for a student is aggregate 6, that is a grade 1 in each of the 4 core subjects in addition to a grade 1 in two other subjects. To be selected and placed in a senior secondary school, a candidate in the BECE must have a minimum aggregate of 30 in six subjects. A grade which is lower than 6 in any one of the core subjects will not be selected for placement. The best performers in the BECE would have aggregates 6 to 10. The poorest performers would have aggregates 26 to 30.

Children who complete basic education successfully and have achieved high levels of competence in literacy and numeracy have the opportunity for post-basic education especially in senior high schools. Currently about 50% of the products of the JHS proceed to SHS. A computerized selection process grades candidates according to their raw scores in six subjects. 516 senior high schools were numbered on the computerized list in 2010. Public schools numbered 500 and private schools numbered 16. Candidates were allowed a choice of five schools which admitted them according to their aggregate scores in the six subjects. Candidates not admitted in their first choice school are automatically transferred to the other schools until they are fixed. Just about 50% or 173,889 out of the 352,521 candidates who wrote the BECE were deemed to have qualified for admission (Ministry of Education, 2010). The competition for places is most keen for the schools which are known to be better endowed and graduate the most students for tertiary education.

As expected at both the CRT and the NAE, pupils from fee-paying schools perform better in the BECE and therefore have the better chance of admission into the top senior high schools in the country. A comparison of performance of pupils from basic schools, are shown in the tables and charts below.

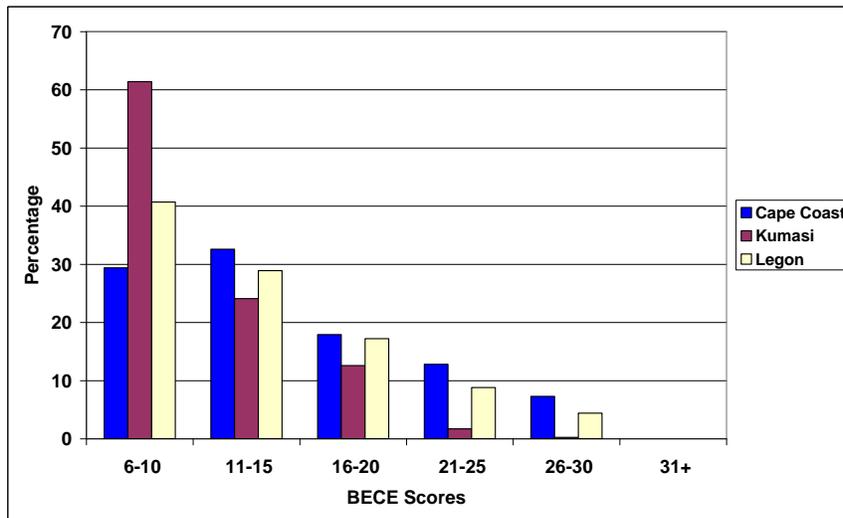
Table 5 and Figure 1 show a summary of the BECE results of schools owned by Ghana's three oldest universities (Legon, Kumasi and Cape Coast). The patterns of distribution of aggregate grades shows that candidates are concentrated in the highest scoring bands, especially in Kumasi.

Table 5: Universities of Ghana Basic Schools BECE 2007

	Aggregates					Candidates
	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	
Legon	83	59	35	18	9	204
Kumasi	288	113	59	8	1	469
Cape Coast	64	71	39	28	16	218

The distribution of grades and therefore of performance of basic schools of the three universities shows the same pattern of a skew towards low aggregates (i.e. high performance). In spite of differences in the proportions passing in each grade it is clear that these are high performing schools. It is the case that children in them are mostly from higher social and economic backgrounds of pupils, and that the quality of teaching and learning is recognized to be good. In all the schools over 60% will gain access to the senior secondary schools with the best reputations.

Figure 1: Distribution of Grades in BECE of Candidates from Universities' Basic Schools



The charts below (Figure 2, 3 and 4) show the disparity in the performance of junior high schools in the BECE in selected schools. These results from individual schools represent different categories of schools. In each case a typical profile of school performance has been identified from performance data. The schools have not been identified by name since this could be invidious.

Whereas in the high fee-paying private school most candidates have aggregates within the range of 6 to 15 which guarantee admission into top secondary schools, in the public school the majority of candidates who qualify for admission to senior high schools have grades which range from 21 – 30. Lower grades take successful candidates to senior high schools which do not have much of a reputation for high performance (Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2: BECE Scores of Pupils in Fee-paying School in Accra⁹

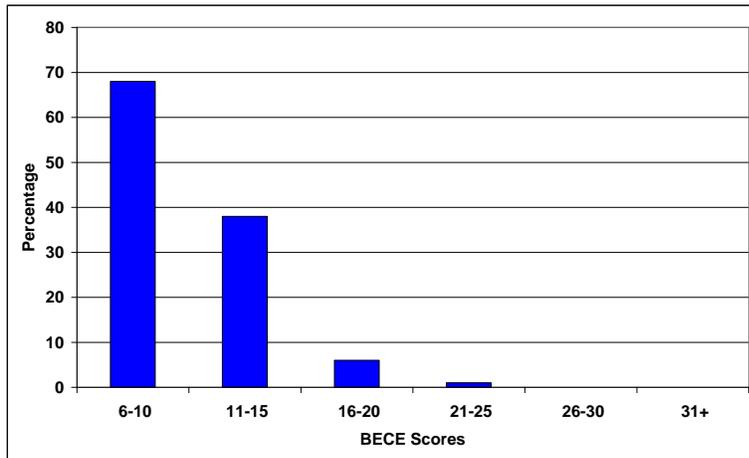
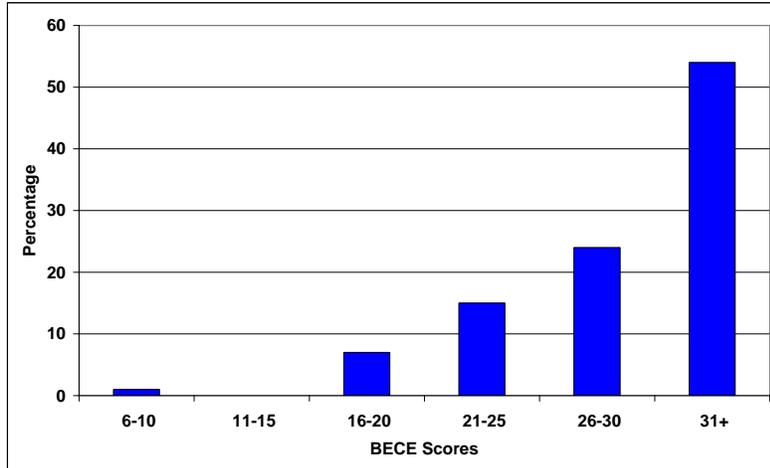


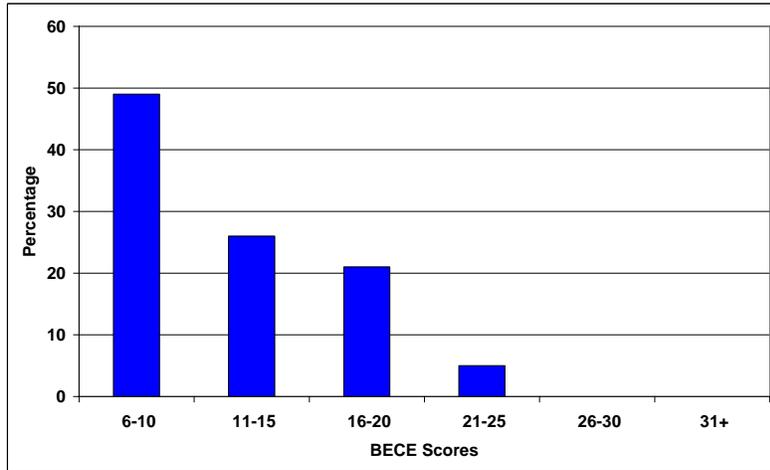
Figure 3: BECE Scores of Pupils in Public Basic School in a Poor Area of Accra¹⁰



⁹ This school is owned by group of teachers from on the most well known senior secondary schools.

¹⁰ This school has a pattern found in many other schools in the surrounding area in Accra

Figure 4: BECE Scores of Pupils in Private School in the same Poor Area of Accra



Comparison of scores in a lower cost private school in the same depressed urban setting in a poor part of Accra area (Figures 3 and 4) shows that this private school out-performs the public school. Whereas the private school had 74% of their BECE candidates obtaining 6 to 15 aggregate scores only 1.2% of the public school candidates obtained these excellent aggregate grades. In the public school as many as 53% of BECE candidates had aggregates lower than aggregate 30 and so failed to qualify for admission to senior high school. Figure 5 combines the scores of pupils in public and private schools for the entire district from which it is clear that the public school pattern of low performance is dominant because it includes many more schools than the private sector.

Figure 5: BECE Scores of Pupils in Private and Public Schools for a Deprived District in Accra

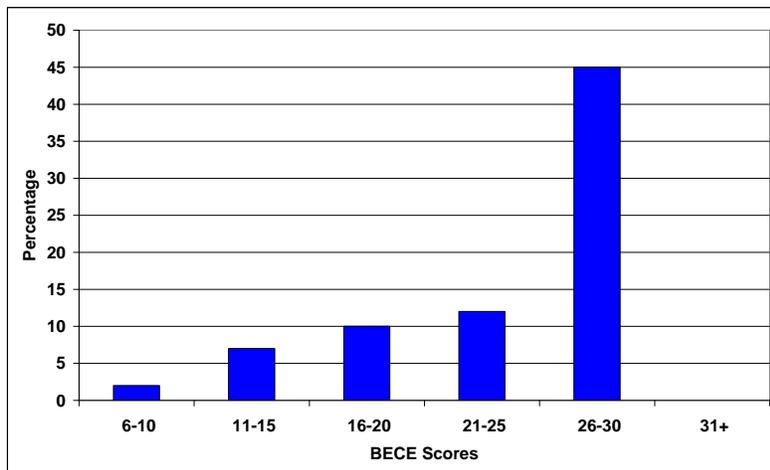


Table 6 is a summary of 2007 BECE results from 248 private and 257 schools in the Accra Metropolitan Assembly area. The disparity in performance between the two types of schools is confirmed by this data on about 500 schools.

Table 6: 2007 BECE Results from Schools in the Accra Metropolitan Assembly Area

Mean Aggregate Grade	Private School		Public Schools	
	No of Schools	% of Schools	No of Schools	% of Schools
Grade 6 - 10	57	23	3	1
Grade 11- 15	82	33	14	5
Grade 16 - 20	59	24	32	12
Grade 21 - 25	43	17	57	22
Grade 26 - 30	7	3	151	59

These differences are well known by the public and to government officials as indicated in a recent statement by an education official of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (See Box 2).

Box 2: Private Schools praised for high performance

Attending a fee-paying school is an investment parents make to have their children admitted in the better endowed senior high schools. The much read Ghanaian tabloid, the Daily Guide, of April 6, 2011, page 15, quoted the following statement made by the Accra Metro Director of Education: “A notable number of you provide quality infrastructure, amenities and other logistics that promote and enhance quality education delivery, particularly at the basic level, which results in credible learning outcomes especially in terms of Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results.” The director added that in the 2010 BECE, private schools captured 90% of the best performing 100 schools, and that the private schools were working hard to complement efforts to provide quality education. His address was made at a week of celebrations of the Greater Accra Regional Branch of the Ghana National Association of Private Schools (GNAPS).

4. Performance of Students in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE)

Admission to tertiary education in Ghana is defined widely to cover admissions to all kinds of post-senior high school education which include universities, polytechnics, teacher training colleges, and nurses’ training colleges. Admission requires that a candidate must obtain a total aggregate of 24 or lower in three core subjects and three elective subjects in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE)

For most academic disciplines at the universities this requirement translates to aggregate scores in English, Mathematics, and Integrated Science, in addition to passes in three relevant elective subjects. Addae-Mensah (2000) reported studies on admissions which he conducted for 1998/1999 and 1999/2000 academic years for the University of Ghana and for the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. For the University of Ghana he reported that in the humanities including law, in 1998/1999, seventy-five per cent (75%) of candidates admitted were from 50 top schools out of 504, whereas in 1999/2000, 69.6% of candidates were from those same schools. Candidates in the sciences including agriculture who came from those schools were 91% and 85% respectively in 1998/1999 and 1999/2000. In administration the admitted candidates numbered 78% and 61.2% respectively for the two consecutive academic years.

For the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) the pattern of admissions was the same as observed for Legon with 50 senior high schools producing most of the candidates admitted into the university. For the 1998/1999 academic year the university admitted 1210 candidates, 910 or 75.2% of them came from just 50 top schools which constitute less than 10% of the 504 senior secondary schools in the country. Also for 1999/2000 academic year, 75.2% came from those same schools. Admission into the most coveted disciplines such as medicine, architecture and the engineering sciences, were overwhelmingly in favour of the top schools.

In this paper senior high schools were ranked by the proportion of their WASSCE candidates who qualified for tertiary education generally, not just universities. Qualification for tertiary education is considered a valid enough assessment of quality performance even though not all who apply will be admitted. To be on the list of this ranking, a school must have at least one of its examination candidates qualifying. For example in the year 2006 the first two schools in the ranking together registered 436 students, 403 of them qualified, whereas the last two on the list, registered 970 students with only two qualifying.

The WASSCE results from 2006 to 2009 were analysed, ranked and summarised as in Tables 9, 10, 11 and 12. As shown in Table 9 shows for 2006, there were 429 schools appearing on the list of schools. Eighty-six (86) or 20% of the 429 schools graduated 75.7% of the candidates who qualified for tertiary education. Similarly for 2007, the top 20% or 88 schools out of the 440 graduated 76% of candidates qualifying for tertiary education. In 2008 the top 20% or 101 schools of the 505 schools graduated 71.8% of candidates who qualified for tertiary education. In 2009 the top 20% or 103 out of 516 schools graduated 73.1% of candidates who qualified for tertiary education. In 2006, only 3.0% of qualified candidates graduated from the bottom 40% of schools. Figures were 3.2, 3.4 and 3.6 per cent respectively for 2007, 2008 and 2009.

The results of these analyses show that like the Addae-Mensah report on the two universities secondary school education in Ghana is highly differentiated with regard to quality. The top schools which literally exclude public basic school pupils from admission on the basis of their weak BECE results grab the overwhelming proportion of tertiary education places. Considering that universities have more stringent requirements than non-university tertiary institutions university admissions must be almost the exclusive preserve of Ghanaian children who have attended fee-paying basic schools.

Table 7: Candidates Qualifying for Tertiary Education WASSCE 2006

School		No	No	% Total
Rank	Schools	Sat	Qualified	Qualified
1-86	Top 20%	29,589	12,389	75.7
87-172	2nd 20%	25,857	1,746	16.7
173-258	3rd 20%	18,339	751	4.6
259-344	4th 20%	16,190	322	2.0
345-429	5th 20%	19,310	167	1.0
		109,285	15,375	

Table 8: Candidates Qualified for Tertiary Education WASSCE 2007

Schools		No	No	% Total
Ranking	Schools	Sat	Qualified	Qualified
1-88	Top 20%	29,758	11,926	76.0
89-176	2nd 20%	26,864	2,494	15.8
177-264	3rd 20%	20,967	779	5.0
265-352	4th 20%	20,180	354	2.3
353-440	5th 20%	20,452	149	0.9
		118,221	15,702	

Table 9: Candidates Qualified for Tertiary Education WASSCE 2008

Schools		No	No	% Total
Ranking	Schools	No Sat	Qualified	Qualified
1-101	Top 20%	33,959	17,174	71.8
102-202	2 nd 20%	30,412	4,319	18.6
203 - 303	3 rd 20%	24,240	1,442	6.2
304 - 404	4 th 20%	20,685	594	2.4
405 - 505	5 th 20%	20,103	217	1
		129,399	23,746	

Table 10: Candidates Qualified for Tertiary Education 2009

Schools		Total	Total	% Total
Ranking	Schools	Sat	Qualified	Qualified
1-103	Top 20%	38,182	19,394	73.1
104-206	2 nd 20%	33,227	4,589	17.3
207-309	3 rd 20%	27,878	1,589	6.0
310-412	4 th 20%	25,260	729	2.7
413-516	5 th 20%	24,799	233	0.9
		149,346	26,534	

Concluding Remarks

The gap between fee paying schools and public basic schools is so wide that in the competitive Basic Education Certificate Examination most of the places in Ghana top senior high schools, which are mostly public, are taken up products of fee paying schools at Junior High School level which are private. And most of those in these high performing junior Secondary schools are likely to have attended high cost primary schools. The best Senior Secondary schools graduate most of those admitted into tertiary institutions especially universities.

In the short and medium term improvements in teaching and learning at the public primary and Junior High schools are unlikely to take place quickly enough to minimize the quality gap which exists in the two-tier educational system. Not minimizing the gap will continue to consign products of public basic schools who transit into senior high schools to the failing schools which cannot enhance their chances of progression into tertiary level institutions. If the FCUBE is unable to do this for significant numbers of poor children the social mobility which is a real test of its impact cannot be achieved. Conclusions and policy issues which derive from the overwhelming disparity of quality of performance and access are discussed below.

More attention has to be paid to the issue of lack of meaningful access which characterize the delivery of basic education funded by the FCUBE and capitation grant. Government is aware of the quality gap which is a mirror of the socio-economic gap in society between an affluent minority and a poorer majority. Children in public schools see themselves as unlucky to be receiving lower quality education in schools owned by the state. The inferiority complex generated by calling themselves *CYTO* meaning not in the main stream is evidence of how deeply the divide has grown.

Attempts that have been made to minimize the quality gap include making kindergarten education part of basic education for all children. This policy was instituted only in 2007 with the launching of the new education reforms. For that policy to make a difference more time will be required for its impact to be felt. Children who have had access to preschool are likely to have an advantage over those who do not, and provision is unlikely to be evenly distributed across the population. Innovative implementation strategies are required to provide pre schooling equitably.

The FCUBE, capitation grant, free school uniforms and free school lunches have increased enrolment but they have not improved quality. The overcrowding of classrooms which the increased enrolment has resulted in is likely to worsen quality in the public education system. Akyeampong (2009) said that “the biggest challenge Ghana faces in its attempt to achieve education for all by 2015 is how to significantly increase and sustain attendance from the poorest households. Lessons from FCUBE suggest that as enrolment expands effort should be made to improve and maintain quality to ensure demand”. It is the view of this writer that unless the poorest are identified for enhanced special assistance to remove the direct and indirect costs of education (Boakye-Yiadom, 2011) the additional costs which must go into quality improvement will be wasted on many parents who hardly need assistance.

New policy is needed that covers tuition and other direct and indirect costs and which targets the poorest but enables the many who may choose to contribute to the cost of additional resources for the delivery of quality education may be the way forward. Combined with the granting of more autonomy to communities and districts, this may encourage parents and guardians to enhance quality in local schools. This would require that policy makers would have to change the rhetoric that public education need to be entirely free of costs. That is not how education began in the Gold Coast. EFA and the MDGs targeted free primary education not post-primary education. With the state also taking on the costs of pre-school education, lower secondary education, school uniforms and school feeding, the access achieved may have seriously compromised quality. Politicians see the electoral benefits of promising more “free” delivery of education to include senior high school, not just tuition but boarding and lodging as well. Ghana may have gone beyond what a country with limited resources can supply without creating a wider divide between the minority education and poor quality free education and sustain quality simultaneously.

The model school policy plans to upgrade one senior high school in each district to the level of a private endowed school. This has merit. It could not be implemented in the numbers desired because the model was perceived as a boarding school model which requires more resources to build and operate and is unaffordable for every district. At the start of the recent reforms it was recognized that public schools in some poor localities which had established private endowed schools might be disadvantaged because those with lower BECE scores locally could not compete with those from other more developed areas. For this reason an initial policy decision was made to reserve 30% of admissions to pupils in local schools. Faced with some objection from some heads of schools the government failed to implement this measure to compensate for the socio-economic divide. This policy may need to be revisited especially since government education policy recognizes deprived districts need special attention. Some educational systems allocate places to high achievers in schools using local quotas. What this means is that pupils who are ranked highly in their local schools are allocated places despite having lower aggregates than those from other more developed areas.

Teacher quality for an expanded educational system is also an issue which must be addressed. With a rapidly expanded tertiary education system, the quality of post-senior high school students who enroll in teacher education colleges requires a review. A study of how to restructure teacher education is required to attract better qualified students into colleges of education which are extensions of universities. Special programmes introduced into universities to target undergraduates into teaching in all universities are suggested.

The post-Nkrumah reforms which targeted technical and vocational education and concretized into the JSS and SSS addressed the real world of varied talents and aptitudes. Not finding the resources to implement a multitrack secondary education consisting of grammar schools, technical and vocational schools has left the country with grammar school oriented secondary schools which are cheaper to run but keep out education and training for the many who have other aptitudes. A junior high school for all which has little other than language, science and mathematics for all may be keeping at school the many whose time could be spent doing other things.

The failings of Ghana's post-primary education, which is built on a poor quality public primary education, require some hard thinking for a sustainable mass education system that meets a wider range of educational needs and children's capabilities.

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This paper highlights educational disparity in Ghana and the consequences of the two-tier basic for the delivery of quality education to the poor. This paper analyses the results of the Basic Education Certificate of Education (BECE) and the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) to determine differences in performance and the extent of polarisation. The analyses confirmed the high differentiation in performance between schools, especially at the Senior High School level in Ghana. The most striking revelation was that only a small proportion of senior high schools provide most of the candidates who qualify for admission for tertiary institutions, broadly defined to include all types of post-secondary institutions. The implications of the huge disparity in educational opportunity are discussed in the light of the high hopes that the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education programme and the commitments to the Education for All targets promise to advance the poor through education.

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