

**Education Matters:
Sharing our experiences**

*By Professor J. S. Djangmah
(Former Chairman of WAEC)*

Three or Four Years SHS: What does it mean to your Child?



Education matters.

Sometimes the cost of not knowing can be great. In 1974, I had to catch a train from Lodz (pronounced Wuj) in Poland. I was at the train station at 5.30 a.m. prompt to catch the train scheduled at 00.06 hours. I had missed the train by 6 hours! 00.06 hours means six minutes after midnight, and, not 06.00 hours or 6 a.m. I had to wait for another 18 hours, in freezing cold, to catch the next train to Frankfurt-on-Maine, Germany! By misreading the train time table, I suffered.

In the context of this column, education includes skills and training. I intend to share issues from my, and, other people's, experiences in education. Hopefully by so doing our collective options

for action will increase. Knowledge grows as it is shared, said an ancient philosopher! Knowledge is therefore not like a ball of kenkey which becomes smaller when shared!

MY BACKGROUND

Early in life, I had a bad experience with a bad colonial education policy. In 1950, my Middle School (a Methodist Senior School) Form 1 class was closed down after a visit by a government school inspector. We were simply thrown out by a colonial government policy intended to limit educational expansion. That was the end of middle school education for me. Thankfully, other doors immediately opened.

Later I went to the Presbyterian Secondary School, Odumase-Krobo. PRESEC was then one of just ten government-assisted secondary schools in colonial Gold Coast. After graduation from university in 1962, I was appointed a teacher of three subjects: Science, Ga and Mathematics, at Achimota School. An attempt by a Ministry of Education official to dump me where his child would not go was “thwarted” by his self interest. I was teaching his son who had become my friend. Secondly the Headmaster of Achimota, the illustrious Mr. Daniel Chapman Nyaho could not be browbeaten by a Ministry official. May his Soul REST IN PERFECT PEACE! So I have always feared the powers of officialdom! I was a director- general of the Ghana Education Service. It was for a brief period, 1986 to 1988. I have travelled up and down West Africa, marking examination papers and attending science conferences. In 2010, I retired from public positions in education.

For the past five years I have participated in a part-time international research project on education at the basic level. My three years’ chairmanship of the WAEC also gave me additional insight into the workings of the educational system in the sub-region. These are my credentials for writing this column.

THE EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) ACT

Today, I focus on the Education (Amendment) Act passed on August 2nd, 2010 by a majority vote in Parliament. This new Act has reversed the duration of the Senior Secondary School from four years back to three years. The Government has had its way, pushing through Parliament a pledge in its election manifesto. Whether this singular act amounts to a win for the governing party, or, a defeat for the minority party is not the issue.

I think Parliament got it wrong.

Parliament was not properly briefed. The amended act was largely based on the argument that an additional year would be costly for government and parents. Poor people are said to buy cheap things which do not last! Let Ghanaians of every ethnicity translate it into the local language. They will understand it much better. What about the far larger costs parents incur paying for extra classes and post-SHS remedial classes for their wards who write “second” and “third”

world wars? Also there are costs for the cream of our youth who appear not to have much time participating in many extra-curricular activities good for their age. I mean sports, music, excursions, debates, etc. Our parliamentarians missed the opportunity to assess more critically how we got ourselves into this mess. We have a few good academically-oriented secondary schools which deliver good results. We also have many senior high schools which produce poor results. We probably should learn from the Germans.

The Germans have had three types of secondary schools, the gymnasium or academic secondary school and two more technical and vocational secondary schools. All countries have a choice to make as to how to deal with different talents and aptitudes. We delude ourselves when we think that every child is an academic, at great cost to the well-being of our children. We must re-examine the dreams of our fathers to solve the challenges of today.

PREVIOUS EDUCATION ACTS

The “long title” of the Education ACT 778 of 2008 described it as: “An ACT to provide for the establishment of a well balanced educational system to produce individuals with the requisite knowledge, skills, values, aptitudes and attitudes to become functional and productive citizens for the social and economic development and the democratic advancement of the nation, and for related matters.”

Ghana has had only two education Acts. The very first Education Act of 1961 (Act 87) had as its “long title” “AN ACT for the development of education and to regulate the terms and conditions of service of teachers; and for purposes connected therewith.” Both Acts articulate a set of principles and practices to develop fully the talents of Ghana’s youth. They prescribe what should be done but it requires the ingenuity of governments, the education system and parents to make the dreams happen.

IMPACT ON THE CHILD

But, how is the Ghanaian child affected by the reversal of the four years back to three? Students who attend the well-performing schools will not be affected much. Our concern should be for the majority of students, who having obtained weak BECE grades, end up in schools which under-achieve. Some schools have the history, and, what it takes to perform well. They have well-prepared students and experienced teachers. Many other schools are handicapped in various ways.

In the memorandum that accompanied the Bill, the honourable Minister of Education rightly argued that: “*The results from some senior secondary schools have amply demonstrated that it is possible to achieve high standards within the three year period, if senior secondary schools are given adequate resources*”.

His challenge is to identify the schools which are handicapped. He must then fix them. They are too many!

THE SELECT COMMITTEES'S INPUT

The Parliamentary Select Committee on Education organized a forum to discuss the Education Bill. There was much support for my suggestion that the minority of schools which perform well should be allowed to do the SHS in three years. The majority of schools which under-perform enroll largely products of the poor public schools. They should be allowed to do the four years SHS. The thinking that the same size must fit all does not happen in the real world.

A NAGRAT official at the forum readily bought that argument. This should not pose problems of implementation to the Ministry having said in the memorandum to the Bill that “the change from three to four years was meant to provide for a remedial year to improve poor performance at the junior high school, and, to enable the SHS year one pupils select their elective subjects whilst in the secondary school rather than at the junior high school.”

AN APPARENT GENERATION GAP

For the public as a whole there is a generation gap between those born in the era of the preparatory schools, and, their parents who had experienced the common entrance examination taken in Middle Forms 2, 3 or 4. Many of the younger generation would not know that secondary education used to be four years *after* Middle School. Achimota School pioneered the five years' secondary school. Still at the time, Achimota School placed the older pupils who had completed standard seven in Secondary Form 2. Their younger classmates started from Form 1.

IMPACT OF LACK OF AWARENESS

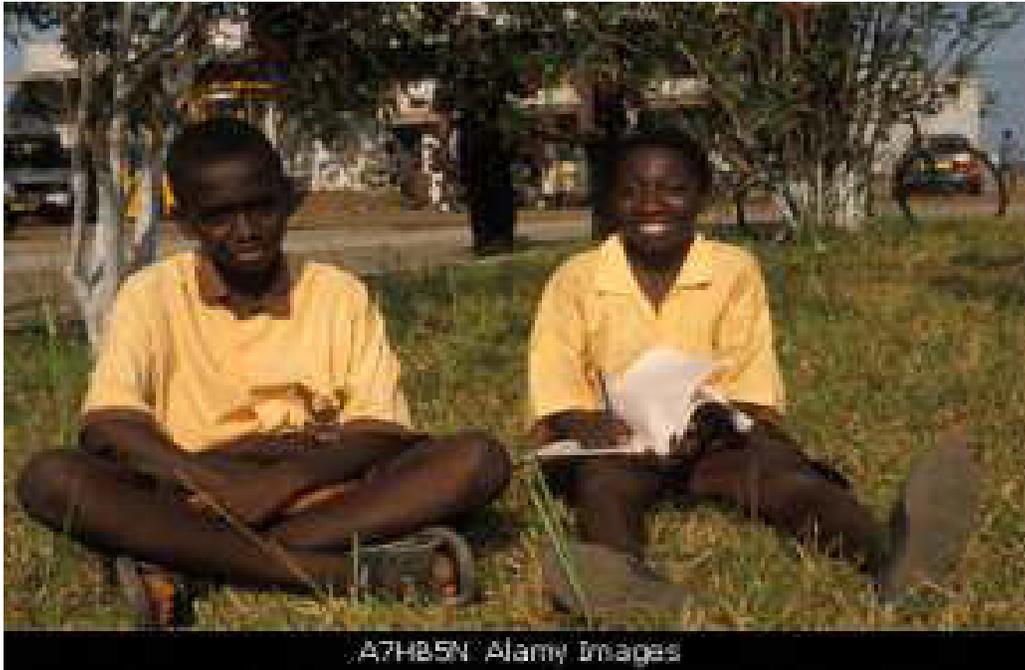
Another problem which clouds communication is the apparent lack of awareness about the state of our public schools. Teachers are generally singled out for blame. The difficulties they face in rural Ghana are not known by many. There are those who refuse postings to rural communities. There are those who commute from towns where they reside to the schools where they teach. The classroom with the missing teacher is a common phenomenon. The teacher who arrives late in class and leaves early is a daily frustrating experience for many children. We expect the teacher to be a missionary when many of us are not.

We must address the issue of the delinquent teacher, not the many who are conscientious, in the larger context of the responsibilities of at least four other stakeholders: government, district assemblies, communities and parents. Education in independent Ghana, since the state takeover of schools, sidelined the churches which pioneered public education in the Gold Coast. There is a case for re-opening the debate about the churches' role in public education.

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Some Senior High Schools perform well. Others don't.



Suppose we rank schools in order of their performance in the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE), we can distinguish the few which do well from the many which don't.

The Presbyterian University College announced in a recent ad that the basic requirement for its degree programmes (except in Nursing) is passes in three core subjects: English Language, Mathematics and Integrated Science, plus three relevant elective subjects, with a total aggregate of 24 or lower. This aggregate was fixed in 1992 by the public universities (at the time, *LEGON*, *KNUST* and *UCC*) after consulting the Ministry of Education. Other tertiary institutions have since adopted it. The proportion of exam candidates who meet this requirement is therefore a valid index of how well a school has done.

In this article, I comment on some analysis of school results.

The Ministry of Education, in defending the government's decision to revert to the three years, said: "*The results from some senior secondary schools have amply demonstrated that it is*

possible to achieve high standards within the three year period if senior secondary schools are given adequate resources”.

DO WE ACCEPT SO MANY FAILING SCHOOLS?

So, we can accept that the few schools which perform well have more resources than those which under-perform. But, it is still unacceptable that a small proportion of our senior high school graduates qualify for tertiary education. We are implying that such a large number of schools lack the resources required for them to perform.

It is on this small number of high performing schools that Ghana must depend for the highly critical numbers of more literate and numerate of the age group 15 to 18 we need for our middle and high level human resource. In 2006, of 109,285 candidates presented by 429 schools, only 15,375 (14.1%) qualified for tertiary education.

Is it acceptable that such a huge gap should exist between schools which are publicly funded? Imagine that 80% of those who qualified came from just 20%, or 86 of the 429 schools. In the years 2007, 2008 and 2009, exam candidates who qualified for tertiary education were about 13%, 18%, and 17% respectively. Of the senior high schools in Ghana, 20% produced 76%, 72% and 73% of qualified candidates respectively in those years.

SIERRA LEONE IS GOING FOUR YEARS SHS?

In the memorandum of the Education (Amendment) Bill to revert to the three years SHS, the Minister of Education said, among other things, that: *The West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) is taken in four countries in West Africa, namely, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Ghana. All these countries run three years SHS; why should Ghana be different?*

What would the Minister say now that Sierra Leone has decided on the *modification of the 6-3-3-4 System of Education to include a compulsory early child component, and extension by one year of the duration of senior secondary school?. The system now becomes 6-3-4-4. Government accepts the recommendation of the Commission for the review of the 6-3-3-4 System to 6-3-4-4, and to accommodate the implementation of Early Childhood Education.*

The poor performance of pupils in the 2008 Basic Education certificate Examination (BECE) and WASSCE in Sierra Leone, prompted their President to set up a Commission of Inquiry which recommended the above.

OUR TOP SCHOOLS

We know the schools which do well. Listed according to their location regionally for ease of recognition, secondary schools and colleges which had 60% or more of their candidates qualifying for tertiary education in 2009 were:

- **Greater Accra:** PRESEC, Accra Academy, Achimota, Ghana Christian International High, St. Mary's, Seven Great Princess Academy, Galaxy International
- **Eastern Region:** St. Peters, Aburi Girls, Okuapeman, St. Roses', Akosombo International,

Koforidua Sec/Tech., Pope John.

- **Central Region:** Wesley Girls, Mfantshipim, St. Augustine's, Adisadel, Holy Child, Ghana National.
- **Ashanti:** Prempeh, Opoku Ware, Yaa Asantewaa, T.I. Ahmadiyya, Armed Forces, St Margaret, Anglican, St. Louis, St. Huberts Seminary, SDA, Cambridge Senior.
- **Brong Ahafo:** St. James Sem.,
- **Volta:** Abutia Sec/Tech
- **Northern:** NONE???????
- **Upper East:** Notre Dam Seminary
- **Upper West:** St. Francis Xavier Jnr. Seminary, Nandom.
- **Western:** Ghana Secondary/Technical, Archbishop Porter Girls', Fijai, St. John's

FIXING THE FAILING SCHOOLS

The results of the top four schools in 2009 are summarized for clearer understanding of how schools are assessed: St. James's Seminary presented 215 candidates for WASSCE, 213 qualified, 99%; St. Francis Xavier Jnr. Seminary, 44 presented, 43 qualified, 98%; St. Peters, 300 presented, 288 qualified, 96%; Wesley Girls, 406 presented, 386 qualified, 95%.

Where is Tamale Secondary? 520 candidates, 173 qualified, 33%; St. Charles Secondary: 134 candidates, 57 qualified, 43%. Where is Mawuli? 431 candidates, 192 qualified, 45%. Bishop Herman: 314 candidates, 154 qualified, 49%. What are the problems of these once great schools? They must be fixed.

Compare them to some schools which presented as many as 400 or 600 candidates and only 1, 2 or 3 qualified for tertiary education. An under-achieving school is like a human being who has been denied the opportunity to develop his or her potential. Muhammad Yunus, the founder of the GRAMEEN BANK of Bangladesh, the prototype of our rural banks, said this more clearly in his 2006 Nobel Prize Lecture:

“A human being is born into this world fully equipped not only to take care of him or herself, but also to contribute to enlarging the well being of the world as a whole. Some get the chance to explore their potential to some degree, but many others never get any opportunity, during their lifetime, to unwrap the wonderful gift they were born with. They die unexplored and the world remains deprived of their creativity, and their contribution. “

There are schools which have no candidate at all qualifying for tertiary education. In popular jargon used elsewhere, these schools are *failing schools*. They require some interventionist measures to fix them. Examples are: merger with other schools, conversion to other types of schools, changes in headship, etc. There must be some retired academics who can be persuaded to help them out.

A 30% QUOTA IN TOP SCHOOLS FOR PUBLIC BASIC SCHOOLS: WHAT HAPPENED?

At the beginning of the senior secondary school reforms, government was aware that many pupils

from public schools need a leg up to place them in quality secondary schools. Government decided that a 30% quota of enrolment in the top schools should be reserved for products of public junior secondary schools. Heads of some elite secondary schools killed that idea.

But our universities now reserve places for students from deprived schools. These students do just as well as their colleagues who entered with higher WASSCE grades. So, affirmative action is not unknown in Ghana.

By 1973, Ms. Garnett, headmistress of Wesley Girls, realized that unless she facilitated the entry of girls from rural communities, the social composition of the school would change drastically in favour of urbane girls. She admitted a girl from Senya with grades which placed her almost last at the time of admission. By the end of Form 2, she was almost first in her year. One girl who was fished out from a village by a sister school became a professor of science!

If our universities admit students from deprived schools, why not our top secondary schools? What about a policy which would allow the top two pupils from each public school automatic access to top senior high schools guaranteed by scholarship from government or district assembly?

PARLIAMENT NEEDS RESEARCH SUPPORT

In 2006, the bottom 100 schools presented 22,037 candidates for WASSCE. Only 208 or just about 1% qualified for tertiary education. Schools presenting as many as 459 or 498 or 600 exam candidates, had just one or two qualifying for tertiary education.

This statistic shows that the failure rate at the WASSCE does not support the three years SHS for the majority of Ghana's schools. In response to this same revelation, the Sierra Leone Government is implementing the four years SHS.

Parliamentarians need help.

They must be assisted with the most up-to-date research data to serve the nation better. It is not for nothing that the largest library in the world is the United States Library of Congress. It was built to provide legislators with the most accurate information they require for their work. On one of its walls is a statement attributed to the fourth President of the United States, James Madison, which reads:

KNOWLEDGE WILL FOREVER GOVERN IGNORANCE: AND A PEOPLE WHO MEAN TO BE THEIR OWN GOVERNORS, MUST ARM THEMSELVES WITH THE POWER WHICH KNOWLEDGE GIVES.

The next article will address the issue of the JHS/SHS; how we got here, and, what the way forward can be.

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***From Middle School to Junior High School
How we got here and What the way forward can be?***

TIME TO DEBATE BIG ISSUES IS NOW.

The recent education amendment Act has not closed the doors for debate. Quality education has eluded many young people. Capitation grants, school feeding grants, and free school uniforms are filling the classrooms. They may be necessary to push the poor and deprived to enter. How to deliver more and better education are issues that will require more debate.

LOOKING BACK TO 1951

This article looks back to 1951 when the first nationalist government of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah launched the Accelerated Development Plan for Education which made primary education tuition-free. The demand for education was great. The colonial government's declared interest at the time was to preserve quality by closing down schools which failed to meet quality criteria. An Education Act of 1961 made middle school education tuition-free. At the time elementary education, now basic education, consisted of six years primary and four years middle school.

EDUCATIONAL REFORMS AFTER 1966

Those who rejected Nkrumah's policies had the chance to review them after his fall. Two matters troubled them most. One was erosion of educational standards resulting from the rapid expansion of enrollment without adequate numbers of trained teachers. For the many who demanded education which the colonial government failed to provide, loss of quality was not a big deal. Quality of education at the government and mission schools was high but it did not spread to the new schools.

The second concern of Ghana's new rulers, the National Liberation Council (NLC), was unemployment. The new school leavers sought employment in the formal sector like earlier generations. They failed to get the jobs they desired. Those who explained the unemployment crisis as a case of school leavers hating manual labour could not have been right. The school leavers did not see any prospects in the subsistence economy in rural Gold Coast. They wanted jobs that would guarantee them monthly salaries.

The NLC appointed an education review committee to examine the perceived problems of education. It was chaired by Professor Alex Kwapong, soon to become Legon's first African Vice-Chancellor. His committee prescribed *Continuation Schools* for pupils in Middle Forms 3 and 4 who had not succeeded to enter secondary schools. These schools were conceived as a pilot programme "*patterned on the farming and industrial needs of the country*". They were not to be a route to secondary education.

CONTINUATION SCHOOLS AND THE JSS

Professor Kofi Busia became Prime Minister in 1969. He also constituted an education review committee chaired by Mr. Allotei Konuah, a former headmaster of Accra Academy. They prescribed a number of short-term measures to fix problems in education. One long term measure in their report of 1971 was to replace the “O” level and “A” levels inherited from Britain with the JSS/SSS. The four year middle school was to be replaced by the three years JSS.

Colonel Acheampong came into power in 1972. He also appointed an education review committee chaired by the late Professor Dzobo at the time dean of the faculty of education, UCC. This committee adopted the JSS/SSS for implementation. It became government policy as prescribed by the *New Structure and Content of Education* of 1974, a government white paper on the new educational reforms. The pilot phase of implementation of the JSS/SSS lasted from 1974 to 1983.

Not giving the products of continuation schools the option to enter secondary schools was considered unjust by the Professor Dzobo committee which argued strongly that the *continuation school system* had *divided the school system into the academically able pupils who attended secondary schools and the less gifted academically who were trained in vocational skills and were perceived as drop-outs and uneducables.*

Pursuing the dream of a more equitable access to secondary education led directly to the JSS for all primary school leavers. But the JSS required skilled teachers as well as facilities for technical and vocational education. We lacked both.

THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL AND THE BECE

Prior to the 1987 educational reforms of the PNDC, an education commission chaired by Dr. Evans-Anfom recommended an SSS programme of three years duration. This was in preference to the two years SSS lower (equivalent to “O” level) followed by two years SSS Upper (equivalent to “A” level) prescribed by Allotei Konuah’s committee and adopted by the Dzobo Committee. The Evans-Anfom committee fixed the standard of the three years’ SSS at the “O” level. I was a member of that education commission. The BECE became the terminal basic education certificate examination and also the selection mechanism for the SSS.

The proponents of the four years SSS have stressed the huge differences in the performance of our senior high schools. They are rooted in the disparity in the quality of teaching between our public basic schools and the fee-paying private schools. Pupils from the private schools obtain better BECE results which enable more of them to enter the top senior high schools. Inequity in educational performance based on socio-economic background is not unique to Ghana. It is a problem which we must address in ways borne out of our history, values and resources.

TIME TO REVIEW THE JHS/SHS IS NOW

After 20 years of implementation there is sufficient information to review the JHS/SHS. It is a more fundamental undertaking than a pact between political parties. Progress should have meant that most pupils coming out of primary schools being able to read and write. This has not happened. The dream that the JSS was to be the lower segment of the old secondary school has not been fulfilled.

Post-primary education, beginning with the JHS, must provide for the education and training for all the professions: high level, middle level and artisanal. The revelation that only about 16% of the products of the SHS qualify for tertiary education is evidence that most senior secondary school students are not having the opportunity to develop their talents to the full. We expect that every generation will have all the talents, aptitudes and attitudes waiting for avenues for education and training. This is a challenge and also an opportunity. The range of talents which an expanded school system releases is much wider than the highly selective secondary schools had to cope with in the past. The fierce competition for admission to the better known senior high schools is evidence that parents are choosing from a small circle of quality senior high schools.

Computerised selection of candidates is only the first step. Good vocational and technical schools will provide the diversity to change the senior high school landscape. There are many lessons the informal sector of technical and vocational training can teach.

100 YEARS OF ADISADEL COLLEGE: THE LESSONS?

Meanwhile, one great Gold Coast school, ADISADEL COLLEGE is 100 years old. Adisadel represents the best of the schools that prepare for higher education. We require more Adisadels and equally good schools for technical and vocational education and training. I wish to join the debate Sir Sam Jonah and Mr. Ebow Daniel have started on the future of Adisadel and schools of that vintage in the next article.

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100 YEARS OF ADISADEL COLLEGE: The way forward (1)



The centenary of Adisadel College was recently celebrated by the school and its major stakeholders, old boys, the Anglican Church of Ghana and the Government. The presence of President Atta Mills at one of the events marking the centenary was proof Government's interest. Hundred years of Adisadel College have lessons for education in Ghana. Perhaps it is not late to publish a feature article on Adisadel College in Ghana's major newspapers.

The Christian Churches pioneered western education in the Gold Coast. We are told that Adisadel began when the Anglicans decided not to allow their children to attend Mfantipim School to be forced to worship compulsorily in the Methodist Church. They decided to establish their own school. By 1930 Presbyterian Church leaders were much distressed that they had no school of their own to educate their children. They tried hard to establish a PRESEC. They were opposed by the missionaries who believed that educating teachers and pastors was their primary responsibility. The missionaries' view was that government has the responsibility to educate for the larger mission of national development besides teaching and religion. The colonial government woke up to this responsibility in 1927 when Achimota College was founded. In spite of this the Basel Mission established two short-lived secondary schools in 1863.

THE GREAT CAPE COAST SCHOOLS

When I first arrived in Cape Coast in 1956, the first thing I did the following morning was to climb the hill from Adisadel Village, where I had lodged, to see Adisadel College grounds. I was in Cape Coast to attend an interview for admission to St. Augustine's College sixth-form. Compared to PRESEC which occupied temporary buildings at Odumase-Krobo after 18 years, Adisadel and St Augustine's were housed in imposing buildings and surroundings! That afternoon four ambitious young men from PRESEC made their way to Cape Coast town to see Mfantshipim, the greatest of them all! Without counseling, our sixth-form applications stayed clear of Achimota and Mfantshipim. In my case one Jerome Pobee, an old boy of St. Augustine's had so influenced me that my Matthew became his Jerome.

Adisadel was famous for Inter-College Sports having won the Aggrey Shield more than most schools. The school had also established a great reputation for the study of classics. Perhaps it shared this reputation with St. Augustine's. Some of the good students in the sixth-form have had excellent grades in Latin, French and Greek at the School Certificate Examination in addition to good grades in Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics. In my years at Legon, 1958 to 1962, Adisadel, the other Cape Coast Schools, Achimota and Prempeh College dominated Legon admissions. I thought I also saw more lecturers who had schooled in Cape Coast.

THE ADISADEL BRAND ACCORDING TO SAM JONAH AND EBOW DANIEL.

I was motivated to write this piece to support what I thought were important statements made by Sir Dr. Sam Jonah and Mr. Ebow Daniel, distinguished old boys of Adisadel College, in speeches they delivered to mark the centenary. Both of them stressed the Adisadel brand of secondary education which they described as self-reliance, adventure and self-confidence. A school whose students could put up a school building under the supervision of the headmaster had every right to claim self-reliance as a defining characteristic. With the shared confidence that success in sports brings to a school Adisadel alumni can also claim self-confidence as a defining characteristic. Mingling of the "tribes" impressed young Sam Jonah. In the words of the sociologist, Professor G. K. Nukunya (Page 38 of his autobiography, *Stages of Life*) Adisadel was "a melting pot of cultures". He noted that being Anglican, Accra and Cape Coast families were very much represented; "Ewe presence was negligible, and only a few Northerners". Sam Jonah further noted the small town and rural origins of many of his mates. His actual statements paint a better picture and are worth quoting:

'I must prolong my reminiscences to report that when my year group arrived for the first time at this great institution, we were a ragbag of young (and not so young) boys. Many came from rural areas and small towns. Almost all of us came from the public school system, and our fathers were not called "Daddy", only "Egya" or "Paapa". Back then, the simplicity of assessment for secondary school, the Common Entrance exam, covered only the elements of

education (the so-called Three Rs: Reading 'riting and 'rithmetic). This allowed the village boy from a government elementary school and the son of a wealthy town dweller equal chance of entry to the best secondary schools.

"Many of my classmates were the first in their families to attend school; some had never worn shoes before, and indeed some reported to school barefooted with the prescribed shoes securely embedded in their trunks (after all the prospectus said 'bring shoes', it didn't say 'wear shoes'). For most of us, this was our first encounter with the cutlery and the experience wasn't always pleasant". "Clearly under the conducive circumstances of my time, the metamorphosis of a village boy, born of illiterate parents, into a lawyer, doctor, judge or other professions was not uncommon. Adisadel embodied Thomas Jefferson's view that "talent and virtue needed in a free society, should be educated regardless of wealth, birth and other accidental condition".

The picture Jonah painted about the humble social origins of his classmates was applicable to the top schools at the time. It showed the rapid social change that the Gold Coast was undergoing just before and after independence in 1957. The boarding schools had made maximum interaction possible between young people who had gathered from "small small" places, in a country of six million people scattered over a large land area of about 239,000 square kilometers. GTV had not arrived. Radio Ghana did not cover much of Ghana. There was no Accra-Winneba road. There was an Accra-Nsawam road which led to Cape Coast. My first time by train to Nsawam, I remember my sixteen year old sister, just completed standard seven, sent me to the ticket seller to repeat the Ga words "Wor Gbekebii etc" meaning we are three children.

The other side of the Adisadel story as told by Professor Nukunya reads:

"Compared with Accra High School, there was much evidence of affluence at Adisadel. The richness of the kente cloths on show at Sunday mass, and the weekend assemblies, the amount of money students spent at the school's provision store at week-ends on food, appeared lavish to me, and the students' general comportment all pointed to this conclusion. It is possible that essentially day school, Accra High School did not have the opportunities for any exhibition of affluence, based on my assessment of the two situations, I would say that things were different at Adisadel." (*G. K. Nukunya, Stages of Life, page 38*)

Little Sam Jonah knew both worlds. He remembered the big boy who "believed in the "argument of force" whose protection he enjoyed by sensibly agreeing to supply him readily from the provisions in his "chop box".

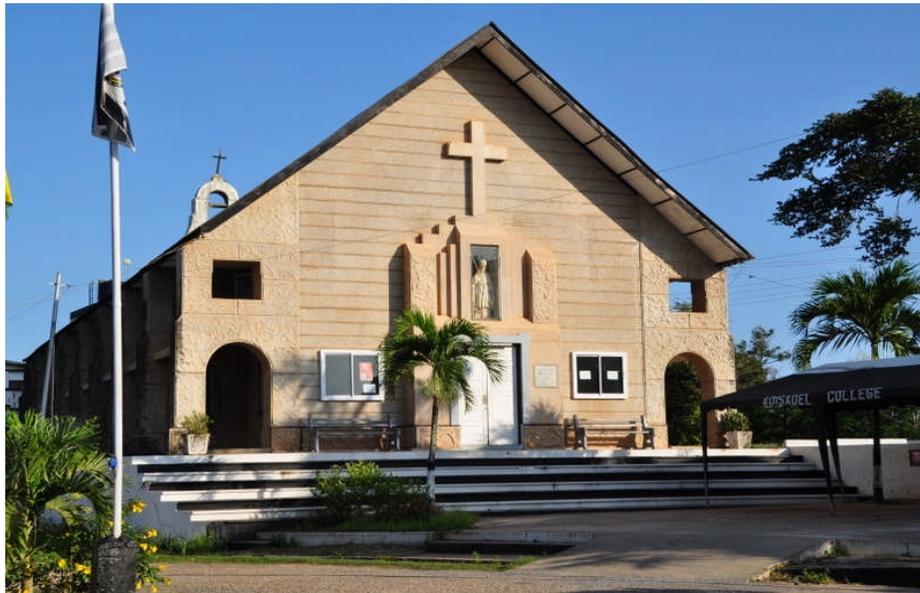
OTHER ISSUES FROM THE JONAH AND DANIEL SPEECHES

Next week this column will discuss some of the other issues which Sir Jonah and Mr. Ebow Daniel raised. These include the private-public partnership proposed by Sam Jonah, to raise a lot of money to keep Adisadel "visible in the clouds" according to Ebow Daniel. The other issue Sam Jonah raised is what to teach in our schools in the age of science, technology and innovation which the Chinese and Indians have so mastered that their countries have become major players in the world economy. He proposed a study of Mandarin Chinese also. Mr. Ebow raised the issue of autonomy. Everybody thinks it is good. I will address it.

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100 YEARS OF ADISADEL COLLEGE: The way forward (2)



ST. NICHOLAS CHAPEL ADISADEL COLLEGE

In the last article I referred to a picture of fresh Adisadel students in the early 1960s that Sir Sam Jonah painted in his Adisadel Centenary Address. He described them as “*a ragbag of young (and not so young) boys. Many came from rural areas and small towns. Almost all of us came from the public school system, and our fathers were not called “Daddy”, only “Egya” or “Paapa”. Back then, the simplicity of assessment for secondary school, the Common Entrance exam, covered only the elements of education (the so-called Three Rs: Reading ‘riting and ‘rithmetic). This allowed the village boy from a government elementary school and the son of a wealthy town dweller equal chance of entry to the best secondary schools.*”

The picture is at once a commentary on the slow pace of educational development under the colonial government and the rapid social change that Ghana was undergoing just before and after independence. Thanks to President Nkrumah and the Ghana Educational Trust. The number of secondary schools increased from 13 in 1951 to 105 in 1966.

The “Ninos” of Achimota in 1956

Achimota was our best endowed school in colonial Gold Coast. It had the most expansive infrastructure of any other school. But its students were not different from those of Adisadel and other schools as recalled by 1956 Nino Boy (Professor Ivan Addae-Mensah. Achimota School 83rd Founders’ Day Speech, 2010):

“Fifty four years ago on 17th February 1956, I was one of about 120 “Chaw Chaw Ninos” who set foot on the soil of Achimota. Like over 90 percent of my colleagues, I came to the school BAREFOOTED. I had come all the way from Tarkwa. Prior to that day, we had attended a selection interview at Cape Coast. In those days you did not only have to pass the common entrance examination. After passing, you also had to attend a selection interview so that two white men and one African would assess whether you could speak English and had the ability to cope with the rigours of Achimota education. Those of us from schools in the Western and Central Region attended our interview at Cape Coast. Except for one girl who wore canvas shoes and white socks, the rest of us were all barefooted. Interestingly, the girl, seeing how odd she looked being the only one in some sort of footwear, decided to look like the rest of us and also took off her shoes.”

The schools that educated and trained that generation and earlier generations were mission schools and a few government schools. These schools were spread all over southern Gold Coast, and Ashanti, though not evenly spread. Very few schools existed in Northern Gold Coast (all the three Northern Regions). The state takeover of the management of these schools and their being handed over to the unprepared local authorities did affect the quality of education in the public schools.

With hindsight we can say that the policy did harm to Ghana’s education. The public schools that produced students for our top schools then are not the schools associated with quality education now. In their place are fee-paying schools of all kinds, some church affiliated, others for profit, and still others owned by organizations. We the beneficiaries of the education these schools provided in the past have the responsibility to rethink the demise of the public school system and rebuild a fairer system to spread quality education nation-wide. Capitation grants, free school lunches, and free school uniforms are good to attract children who would otherwise stay out of school. We need to do much more with respect to management and resources to deliver the quality education that all children have a right to expect.

There is a strong case for a rethinking of government’s control of schools. In an age of a Methodist University College, a Presbyterian University College, a Catholic University College, a Central University College, etc., past partnership arrangements with churches and other recognized bodies must be reviewed in the light of the poor state of schools which are associated with government. The abusive term that describes these schools should be an affront to government and all patriots. I cannot therefore use it. The concern of this column is how to retrieve the quality that existed in the past to chart the way forward for much better education to reach the brains scattered all over Ghana. I hope many share this concern.

Learning More Science and Chinese

Sam Jonah described very well the challenges for Ghanaian education in the 21st century. India and China have mastered the science, the mathematics and the ICT related skills that are required

to drive the knowledge economy. India and China have moved to the centre stage of the global economy. China has upstaged Japan to become the second largest economy in the world. How did the Indians and Chinese achieve this? **A Miracle? No!** They have responded to the challenges and opportunities that ICT have brought to the world of learning, business, social interactions and the world economy. According to Sam Jonah:

“Each year, these countries are churning out over a million graduates in the field of engineering alone, and most of these are specializing in Information Technology and the technologies of the new sunrise industries. Revolutions in technology and communication have created an entire economy of high-tech, high-wage jobs that can be located anywhere there is an internet connection. Is the Ghanaian graduate of today globally competitive in the job market where thousands of other contemporaries in India and China are being educated longer and better than before?” Compared to Singapore which has all (100%) second cycle schools connected to the Internet, Malaysia has 14.7%, and Ghana has 1.4%.

Many countries are aware of what they should do to be part of this knowledge world.

The Canadian Government (Canadian Government Paper 2003) set the following milestones for children and the youth: (i) Canada must become one of the top three countries in mathematics, science, and reading achievement. (ii) All young Canadians must be computer and Internet literate by grade school graduation. (iii) All students who graduate from high school must achieve a level of literacy sufficient to participate in the knowledge-based economy. (iii) The proportion of high school graduates who have a working knowledge of both official languages (English and French) must double.

The UK described her vision for further education colleges in 2004 as: *The UK has a prosperous history but our future depends on our skills. The world is a competitive market and the marketplace is crowded with nations seeking to succeed. Newer entrants to the market – China for example – can call on fantastic numbers of increasingly skilful people. The world being as it is, the UK cannot assume that its future will be like its past: it truly may not be. We need to maximise and fulfill the potential of all our people – young people and adults – to contribute knowledge and skills of world class quality in competitive proportion to the size of our population.*

Sam Jonah posed the following question for Ghana:

“And how are we going to engage with the new world power, China? Countries in the developed economies are adapting their school curriculum to allow for the study of Mandarin, the main Chinese language. They are also actively encouraging their nationals to study in China.” We must do the same. This is the future that Sir Dr. Sam Jonah desires for Adisadel College and senior high school education nationally.

Private-Public-Participation and Autonomy

This will be discussed next week in the last installment of 100 Years of Adisadel. Readers who wish to read the entire speech Dr. Jonah delivered may please get hold of *Daily Graphic*, July 26, page 21, and also July 28, pages 19 and 21, 2010 (*Adisadel: Adding to the gains of our forebears*)

**Education Matters:
Sharing our experiences**

By Professor J. S. Djangmah
(Former Chairman of WAEC)

100 YEARS OF ADISADEL COLLEGE: The way forward (3)



A dormitory block at Adisadel College

The last two articles discussed some issues that were raised by Sir Sam Jonah and Mr. Ebow Daniel in their addresses to mark 100 Years of Adisadel College. Reference was also made to the address by Professor Addae-Mensah at the 83rd Founders' Day Celebration of Achimota School in February 2010. We concluded that the nations' top schools in the 1950s and 1960s admitted students from all over the country and molded them socially to transcend ethnic barriers. We know whom to contact at Nsaba, Bompata, Agogo, Peki, Tamale (Issaka is there), Swedru, La, Teshie, Nungua, Kumasi, Sunyani (Bamfo-Kwakye's people are there), Anum, Gallo Sota, etc.

Autonomy. What does it mean for Schools?

Many alumni of the leading schools in Ghana are of the view that these schools must have more autonomy to operate better than they are doing now. The universities are autonomous alright but the university staff negotiate their salaries with government because their remunerations come from public funds. The universities appoint their own vice-chancellors. But government is well represented on the councils which do the appointing. The universities determine their academic terms. The Ministry of Education should try and stay out of decisions as to when senior high schools should open for the term. Boarding fees for example can vary from region to region and can be negotiated. Autonomy therefore does not debar consultations with government and other stakeholders. Some Akoras remember when their headmaster was a member of the colonial

cabinet! The Adisadel old boys are not that ambitious. All they want is Private-Public Partnership to bring in the much needed financial resources for Adisadel to remain “visible in the clouds.”

Current Funding of Senior High Schools

Government funding of schools is insufficient to provide most of what is required to maintain school buildings, classrooms, school grounds, etc. The deterioration in the schools is the result of schools requiring more money than government provides. At Achimota we are told that government provides about 45% of the school’s annual budget to cover salaries and wages, with a small subvention for maintenance. The school then generates its remaining income from boarding fees and other income such as donations and rental of its chapel. The GET fund also provides a small stipend for academic purposes. Old boys and girls and also PTAs’ have supported many schools for a long time.

Private-Public Partnership

There is the view that many parents may be prepared to pay fees charged at economic rates for the quality education that they desire for their wards. Who will mobilize the funds that would be required to deliver that quality? Adisadel old boys have suggested a *Private-Public Partnership* arrangement to mobilize funds for this purpose.

What does this concept mean? According to Dr. Sam Mensah (Santaclausian) a “PPP is an arrangement under which services that are normally provided by the state are provided by the private sector under a long-term contract. The model has been applied by governments all over the world for infrastructure such as roads, railways and in the provision of services such as education and health care.”

The Ministry of Education /GES represent the state which currently owns schools in the public sector. What if the management of Adisadel, for example, is contracted out for a trial period, say ten years, to Adisadel Management Limited (AML), a private sector entity formed by Santaclausians (old boys of Adisadel), the PTA, the Anglican Church of Ghana, and others.

Is this arrangement worth considering? What is the justification for this? The alumni of many schools would say that it is justified on the grounds that the Government of Ghana/Ministry of Education does not have the capacity to maintain the physical and academic standards of the schools leading to a progressive deterioration in quality. “The limited resources of the state suggest that this situation is not about to change either for Adisadel or any of the other second cycle schools. Santaclausians recall with nostalgia the quality of Adisadel’s physical facilities and academic standards when it was a mission school owned and operated by the Anglican Church and “assisted” by the government.”

Many argue that those who can afford the fees paid in private kindergartens, private schools, and in private senior high schools such as Tema SOS International School, can afford the fees charged at the economic rate of providing high quality education.

What about those who cannot pay? The proponents of the PPP say that “through a Scholarship Endowment Fund, Santaclausians mobilize resources to provide scholarships to all needy students, thereby ensuring that qualified students are not denied admission to Adisadel College for financial reasons. In addition, a stated percentage of the profits of AML will be paid into the Scholarship Endowment Fund.”

Will such an arrangement benefit the government and people of Ghana. Some Santaclausians say that “MoE will be saving money under this arrangement because it will be relieved of the operating costs of the school (including teachers salaries and other operations and maintenance expenses) which it currently bears.”

Sam Jonah added that another educational service that their proposed Adisadel Management Limited can provide is to establish outreach programmes with rural junior and senior high schools with a view to imparting best practices, sharing materials, mentoring and interacting on a cultural and educational level in areas such as sport, music, arts, drama and debating. At the moment the JHS meant to be lower secondary schools in practice function like upper primary schools.

Who can dismiss these suggestions coming from serious minds who have been reviewing the lessons of 100 years of the school which has contributed much to their careers and the entire nation? There are the many Ghanaians who are so cynical that to them things that work well elsewhere do not appear to work here. Cocoa Board Scholarships, for example, many believe regularly went to children of public servants whose children do not deserve them. In most countries school lunches will never be provided free to the children of parents who can afford to pay. I still remember some well-fed women who sat before a committee to benefit from microfinance! Many were wives of bank officials. Our national propensity to abuse privileges is so huge that we make it difficult to implement policies which work well elsewhere. For example, the number of parents of children in private schools who will register their children in public schools to benefit from a special facility designed for deprived children will not be small.

So what? Adisadel Centenary provided the opportunity for old boys to raise major issues about the way forward for Ghana’s education and made specific policy proposals which deserve serious consideration. We must discuss them again and again at the appropriate fora. Meanwhile this column thanks Sir Sam Jonah, Mr. Ebow Daniel, Professor G. K. Nukunya, Professor Addae-Mensah, and Dr. Sam Mensah whose ideas provided the substance for the three articles on 100 years of Adisadel.

Next week we will begin a series on some issues that were raised at a conference at the University of Cape Coast to wind up a five year project funded by the UK’s DFID on aspects of Basic Education which include Access and Equity, Educational Quality, and Social and Economic Outcomes of Education.

**Education Matters:
Sharing our experiences**

By Professor J. S. Djangmah
(Former Chairman of WAEC)

Basic education and its Challenges in Ghana (1)



New School building: Bimbila children rejoice (columnist, 2002)

The column so far has focused on senior high school education matters. This is the first in a series on basic education. They are based on insights from findings of researches which the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID) had funded for the past five years. A conference was held at the University of Cape Coast on the 27th and 28th of September, 2010 to present these findings. There was representation from the Ministry of Education and the GES. Regional and District Directors of Education, principals of colleges of education and head teachers of basic schools were there. Officials of the DFID were also there. The first lady Vice Chancellor of UCC, the premier university of education opened the conference.

Why Basic Education?

The framers of the 1992 Constitution recognized the value of education to the nation's development. Considering the cost of providing it free they settled for basic rather than secondary education, meaning nine years of schooling free. The constitution also prescribed that the government that came into office after 1992 should plan the implementation of free compulsory universal basic education (FCUBE) within ten years. In 2010, eighteen years after Ghana's latest constitution became law, a sizable number of Ghanaian **children** are out of school, many who never enrolled and many who have dropped out of school (*more concrete figures will be given in the next article*).

What are some of the challenges?

Soon after the Nkrumah government expanded elementary education in 1951 unemployment of school leavers became a huge challenge. There was not enough of the salaried employment in the formal sector that school leavers preferred. Return to the subsistence economy was not the reason that they went to school. Education that would also provide skills for work became a major issue in Ghana's educational policy. We therefore took the provision of technical and vocational skills training seriously. Thoughts about reforms beginning in 1971 were focused on a JSS whose academic content would be that of the first three years of the old secondary school, but technical and vocational skills must also be an important component of the curriculum. These were the dreams of the Dzobo committee which became law in 1974. Implementing these reforms faced many challenges. Workshops to teach skills did not materialize and the trained teachers could not be found in adequate numbers. The period of implementation also coincided with the decline of Ghana's economy, which started in the mid 1970s. Teachers vacated the classrooms to seek greener pastures, many of them heading to Nigeria, just as many other skilled workers had done, School enrolments plummeted and quality of teaching and learning declined. The 1987 educational reforms were launched to implement fully the Dzobo reforms. Much foreign assistance has since gone into education.

The perceived challenges of education were many. They included the breakdown of educational infrastructure, insufficient numbers of trained teachers, lack of textbooks and teaching materials generally, rampant absenteeism among teachers, inadequate teaching and learning, inadequate school supervision and inspection due to lack of transportation, etc. Since then many policies have been implemented to tackle some of the challenges. The gap between attendance of boys and of girls was large. Many of our school children continue to be overage with consequences for completion of basic education. Many children also drop out of school at various stages in primary school, particularly in the first three years of primary schooling. The scale of this challenge is such that the majority of children not in school are those who have dropped out. By JHS three only about 50% of Ghanaian children are still in school. The real challenge therefore is how to enroll children in schools and to ensure that they stay to learn and reach a satisfactory level of education in nine years of basic education. This is not being achieved in the majority of our public schools. We should drum home the importance of participation and progression right through basic cycle of education.

Another challenge is the large number of children who cannot read and write and perform basic mathematical skills by the end of primary school. This problem persists through junior high school. Poor supervision of schools and teachers, empty classrooms without teachers, limited parental support for schooling, have been blamed for the poor learning in many schools. Much debate was focused on access and quality of senior high school education lately, but the genesis of the problem is inadequate basic education, which has eluded many Ghanaian children. The research group, CREATE, to which this columnist belongs, has stressed the concept of '*meaningful*' access. If children enroll in basic school and complete junior high school but demonstrate a level of competence of say primary four level, then we have failed them what was promised. Children who have failed this test have been denied one of the most important outcomes of education, the opportunity to improve social and economic

circumstances, referred to as social mobility. It is said of America that public education was the means by which a land of opportunity fulfilled its promise, ensuring that each generation was better off than the one before.

Capitation grants, free school lunches, and free school uniforms are currently filling the schools with children who would otherwise not be in school. This is evidence of how poverty and deprivation and to some extent the values of people hinder access and participation. But these interventions have to be targeted to meet the needs of the poorest in society – it is delusional and dangerous to our economic development and competitiveness if we ignore the poor quality of education delivery in rural communities. If we target the poor with massive investment to improve the quality of public schools that they go to, the whole nation stands to benefit. Having many semi-illiterate dropouts or completers of basic education is not a sign of a developing economy. If we ignore this issue, it will come to visit us with consequences that the nation will regret in the future. Unfortunately many of our opinion leaders think little about education beyond what their children and grandchildren have access to.

Many challenges hinder progress. They have to be understood before appropriate policies based on the evidence can be devised to address them. How many children are not in school in a particular community? How many drop out of school? Who acts when a child is not in school? What can communities do to attract teachers? Parents who demand education are prepared to pay for it? Some poor parents sacrifice their comforts to send children to school but others do not. Demand for education is therefore the key to greater participation! How can demand for education be aroused in deprived communities? Poverty and deprivation are the social and economic context in which lack of access and poor learning outcomes thrive. With less poverty, the demand for education would increase. Capitation grants, free school lunches, and free school uniforms may need to be targeted more on the poorest. It is better to target them and provide the support that good parents give. Research may be able to test this and other propositions.

Access and Exclusion from School

The above and other related issues which impinge on access and exclusion from school were the research focus of the *Consortium for Research in Educational Access, Transitions and Equity, CREATE* (www.create-rpc.org). Two deprived districts in Ghana, Mfantseman in the Central Region and Savelugu-Nanton in the North school, were selected for school and community studies to seek insights into why children do not enroll, why many are seriously overage and why large numbers drop out before completing basic education. A number of children were tracked over three years to identify patterns of admission, attendance, progression and achievement. The results paint a disturbing picture that illustrates how many fail to complete the cycle, how many are silently excluded (attending but not learning) and how many are more than two years behind the achievement levels expected for each grade. Most importantly poverty remains at the heart of educational exclusion and this suggest the need for more

interventions targeted specifically at children from poor households to improve their participation and learning.

The collaborating team of researchers of *CREATE* were from the universities of Sussex, London, Cape Coast, Legon, Winneba, South Africa, India and Bangladesh.

The columnist acknowledges the assistance of Professor Keith Lewin and Dr. Kwame Akyeampong, both of Sussex University for valuable comments. The next article will focus on aspects of basic education with respect to educational quality in deprived communities and the social and economic outcomes of basic education.

**Education Matters:
Sharing our experiences**

*By Professor J. S. Djangmah
(Former Chairman of WAEC)*

Basic education and its Challenges in Ghana (2)



Thanks

Researcher with children who should be at school (Ananga, 2010)

The first article in this series on basic education focused on issues relating to access and exclusion which the DFID funded research consortium, **CREATE** (see website: www.create-rpc.org) , investigated for five years. The current article discusses the work of the two other research consortia which investigated respectively, issues concerning how school and community leadership can interact to deliver quality education in deprived communities, and the social and economic outcomes of education.

What do the numbers say?

Ghana has made considerable progress in access to education over the years. For example surveys which the Ghana Statistical Service carried out showed that between 1991 to 2006, the proportion of Ghanaian adults per household with no formal education has declined significantly. For the years 1991 to 2006, for example the proportion of Ghanaian children who have ever attended school rose to 87% for the age group 5-17. This proportion dropped with age such that for men and women, aged 55 to 64, the proportion was 40%, compared to only 12% for the age group 74 or above in a 2003 survey. But for that same year about 15% of Ghanaian children nation-wide, have never attended school. This proportion was 5% for Greater Accra, but as many as 43% for the North, 35% for Upper East, and 40% for Upper West. Rural children are thus most affected. The male – female gap in school attendance in 2003 was about equal for boys and girls, aged 6 to 14, but high for men and women, aged 55 to 64, men 48% and women 26%.

So while a large number of school children may be out of school in Ghana the gender disparity has closed over the years but rural and urban disparity still persists. The gap between rich and poor in school attendance is wide and very high by end of basic education. Transition to senior high school especially enrollment in quality high schools remains the preserve of children in areas and households of relative economic privilege. As mentioned in earlier articles in this column, the consequence of the huge gap in achievement levels between public basic schools and fee paying private schools, is responsible for the 20% of senior high schools nationally producing about 75% of senior high school graduates who qualify for tertiary level education. Ghana's basic education therefore excludes many poor children with respect to access and meaningful learning. This lack of access to quality considerably hinders social mobility.

Education Quality and Deprivation

Poor communities lack the modern conveniences to attract workers of all kinds. Teachers would more likely wish to live and teach in communities which have potable water, electricity, health facilities, accessibility to paved roads, coverage by radio and television, etc. Heads of schools and community leaders in deprived communities are more challenged to provide the leadership to deliver quality education in such circumstances.

Many schools in rural communities were established by Christian missionaries and the enterprise of community members. They appointed untrained teachers and paid them before the Accelerated Development Plan was launched in 1951. This is evident that under the right leadership quality schools can run in rural and deprived communities. How can this be done in the era of the FCUBE? The Educational Quality Implementation Consortium (**EdQual**: website: www.edqual.org) focused their research on identifying what school heads, teachers and community leaders must do with respect to their individual and collective roles to effect positive changes in the lives of the children to enable them learn well. Research collaborators from UCC's Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA); Universities of Dar es Salaam, Bath and Bristol formed this consortium.

Social and Economic Outcomes of Education

Education considered as an investment must yield benefits which governments, parents and learners consider positive. If access and completion of basic education would, for example, reduce the incidence of the *kayayo* phenomenon in the North of Ghana, the nation would reap the benefits of improved well-being for a significant proportion of Ghana's womanhood.

The very high expectations Ghana places on education is well articulated in the "long title" of the Education Act 778 of 2009 which reads as follows:

"An ACT to provide for the establishment of a well balanced educational system to produce individuals with the requisite knowledge, skills, values, aptitudes and attitudes to become functional and productive citizens for the social and economic development and the democratic advancement of the nation, and for related matters."

Whatever the social constraints, educated mothers should be expected to negotiate themselves more successfully out of traditional and cultural practices incompatible with good reproductive health, sound nutrition and good sanitation. We should expect that school leavers who can read well, write well and have basic numeracy skills to have better chances to acquire technical and vocational skills to reduce

family poverty. The skills of counting, weighing, and measuring form the core in all such vocations. Otherwise the entire world community would not have adopted the Millennium Development Goals which link poverty reduction with universal completion of primary school by 2015. In Ghana we have nine years of basic education which includes the lower half of secondary school. That is what the JHS is! These issues were the focus of the research consortium called **RECOUP** (website: www.educ.cam.ac.uk/RECOUP) which stands for *Research Consortium for Educational Outcomes and poverty*. The group is made up of the Associates for Change in Ghana, and teams at the universities of Cambridge, Edinburgh, Oxford, Kenyatta University, and other centres in Pakistan, and India.

Evidence-based Policy

Achieving the national objective of basic education for all requires that we have concrete knowledge and understanding about the major challenges constraining access, exclusion from schools, and meaningful learning, how poverty magnifies them, how quality school and community leadership can deliver quality education, and how to determine and measure the impact of social and economic outcomes. It is essential that stakeholders demonstrate concern about what happens to the child in the classroom.

My participation in the research projects has made me more sensitive to the notion of pro-poor policy or policies. This is a reaction to the known tendencies of governments to implement blanket interventions which squander scarce public resources on the non-poor. The best policies with respect to value for money are those which more closely target the poor. Universities through their funded researches must analyze government policies to ensure that they meet poor and non-poor criteria. But researchers also include teachers and policy implementers. The areas of cooperation need to be enlarged to bring in a wider array of actors to bring about change. I believe that this is one of the main messages from the Cape Coast conference on Educational Access, quality and outcomes to education.

The columnist acknowledges the assistance of Dr. George K. T. Oduro, Institute for Educational Planning & Administration, UCC; and Dr. Leslie Casely-Hayford, Associates for Change, Accra. The next article will focus on identifying the different groups of children who are excluded from basic education and the particular policies that would be required to address the challenges they pose.

Education Matters:

By Professor J. S. Djangmah

Sharing our experiences

(Former Chairman of WAEC)

Transparency in School Feeding. The Challenges are Everywhere!



A crowded classroom: Upper West

School feeding programme is good but!

On Saturday November 6, 2010 this paper, the Ghanaian Times, devoted its editorial column to the school feeding programme. The concern is good. The caption was: ***Showing Transparency in School Feeding***. The overriding challenge of extending quality basic education to children in deprived communities is household poverty. Many children in such communities are too hungry to pay much attention to whatever is being taught at school. Some of our readers may have come across school children who during break time crowd around one child or two to grab a morsel here or there. Some children because of poor nutrition are stunted for their age and therefore fail to enroll at the correct age. It is therefore not surprising that the age of Ghanaian children in primary one range from four to eleven years. The school feeding programme has much to recommend it. In poor and hungry communities it pulls children to school.

Some of the issues the editorial raised are recalled here:

- School feeding increases and sustains enrolment by providing children with one hot nutritious meal a day. Some children who would otherwise be hungry at school have at least one reason to be at school. School feeding therefore advances the realization of one of the Millennium Development Goals;
- Using locally produced foodstuffs provides a market to local farmers;
- Using imported food negates this important aspect of the programme. It may be good for children but adds nothing to the local economy;
- The paper lauded government's decision to set up a Social Accountability Project to ensure successful implementation.



The struggles of a rural child: Upper Manya (Djangmah 2006)

An official of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which supports school feeding programmes says the following about them:

- School feeding is one of the most successful social policies in the history of the world.
- Many countries provide school meals for at least some of its students. This is a measure of its success,
- Its appeal is that for the cost of one meal, you get a double payoff: more kids get fed *and* more kids go to school.
- School feeding boosts school enrollment and also school achievement.
- If girls enroll and complete school it lowers child mortality, lowers fertility rates, and protects women from abuse and exploitation.
- If school meals supply the required micronutrients children are protected from diarrhoea and anaemia which are the outcomes of poor and inadequate nutrition.

What are the challenges of school feeding?

They are not different from the many government programmes face. In the hands of private individuals these programmes seem to work well. In the hands of government many are bugged down by large bureaucracies which fail to meet set objectives. The layers of officialdom which manage government programmes made up of directors, deputy directors, regional directors, district directors, supported by a fleet of vehicles many times leave little for the actual implementation. Some of these programmes are attractive to local staff because of the dollar emoluments they provide. When donor support ends many such programmes die because national governments lack the resources to sustain them. It is no wonder that the huge donor support running in millions which had supported education in Ghana since the 1987 reforms have little to show in terms of quality of public education. Private schools are thriving even more than they were before 1987.

Ghanaians in their 60s and 70s would remember the days before the free textbook scheme. As school children we made our way with parents and senior siblings to bookshops in the larger towns. The Methodist, Presbyterian book shops in Accra, Kumasi, Cape Coast etc, had all the books that were prescribed. Different schools used different books. In families with many children books are passed on from one sibling to another. With time fewer books were bought each passing year. After independence our governments starting from the CPP launched the free textbook

scheme. Textbooks were standardized; one standard textbook for Mathematics, History or English became the order of the day. A few textbook writers and publishers monopolized the writing and distribution of these books. The Ghana Publishing Corporation established to publish and distribute these books proved unequal to the task. The book industry was killed in no time. The well-known bookshops which should by now be having their branches all over Ghana lost their market. Should we be surprised that the reading culture diminished in our schools as well?

Our governments have been good at creating bureaucracies which provide “jobs for the boys” and spread corruption. The quasi governmental organizations, called quangos in the UK, become the conduits to feed the “foot soldiers” of the party apparatus. I remember the large textbook depots in the mid-1980s that were managed by teachers. With well run bookshops a government needn’t set up book depots, and also procure trucks to distribute books nationwide. We killed the local bookshop business, failed to supply books to our children in schools and finally killed quality education in public schools.

Some suggested solutions?

- School feeding programmes should not displace the local women, however illiterate, who fed children before the onset of the school feeding programme. The trained caterers must supervise them, supply them with the cheaper foodstuffs which large scale purchasing makes possible, but should not displace them. These local women are the mothers and sisters of the school children.
- A school feeding programme decentralized to the local level should not lay off local food suppliers and cooks.
- Schools farms wherever this is possible should be an integral part of the school feeding programme. In the great food producing areas, Bimbila for example, a good and honest programme can substantially empower the local farmers.

Lessons from Elsewhere

The same official from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation summarized the benefits of school feeding programmes to the local food market as follows:

- It took a while—too long, I think—for those of us in the development business to consider a very important question: What if the students were fed food grown by local farmers, food that is processed, fortified, and stored by local business, and prepared by local kitchen staff? All of a sudden, school meals become an economic development program. Local farmers and businesses don’t just have a new customer. They have a new customer that’s going to be buying their product 180 days a year on average, a customer that will come back next year, and the year after.
- That gives them the confidence and the resources to start making investments in things like better seeds and better machinery. This new capacity gives them access to new markets. And the multiplier effects kick in. That’s how it’s supposed to work; and that’s how it has worked in most of the world’s rich countries and some countries that have made the transition to Middle Income Country status over the last 20 years or so. Countries like Brazil, Chile and Mexico, for example, have required that a certain percentage of the food that goes into their school meals come from local farmers.

The Social Accountability Project

Government has set up this project to create a platform for stakeholder groups to monitor implementation of the school feeding programme. We can only wish the project well. Perhaps reducing the size of the school feeding programme into manageable decentralized units which operate at the local level may also help.

What we need more is a determined effort to meet the objectives of the programme as practiced elsewhere so that it would not collapse when the donors withdraw their support. Poverty is a huge obstacle to meeting the objectives of basic education for all. An honest and an innovative school feeding programme which benefits local farmers, local traders and local food producers is good. The good people to make it work well will always be in short supply. Still we must persevere!

Education Matters:

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***THE CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC BASIC EDUCATION:
WHAT CAN OUR CHURCHES OFFER?***

Two previous issues in this column (October 15 and November 5, 2010) headed *Basic Education and its Challenges in Ghana : (1) and (2)*, respectively highlighted some challenges of basic education which researchers have identified. A follow-up article: *Transparency in School Feeding: Challenges are everywhere*, appeared on November 12, 2010. The article was a commentary on an earlier Ghanaian Times editorial on the school feeding programme. That article supported the school feeding programme because it fills schools with children who would otherwise not be at school. It however argued that like many government measures it is the bureaucracy, often large which bogs them down.

The challenges of basic education include the large numbers of children who do not enroll, the many who drop out soon after admission into primary one and the many who do not complete primary six and the junior high school. Other challenges are the large numbers of children who are in school but are learning very little. There are many who complete junior high school but have competency levels equivalent to normal pupils in primary four or less. Ten, twelve or even thirteen year olds, the overage children in primary one and other classes have difficulty completing school. These challenges of basic education are not unique to Ghana. They occur in many developing countries. At a recent conference in London a speaker pointed out the situation in poor neighborhoods in South Africa where the problem is not attendance or dropping out but the many children who stay on to complete basic school but with low levels in literacy and numeracy skills.

In most of the world wealth and poverty divide schools into those that achieve results and those that do not. The Ghanaian situation is the divide between overcrowded public schools which we unashamedly call CYTO associated with poor achievement levels and the fee paying schools. In a do-nothing scenario the situation in schools would continue to resemble the different fates of seeds described in the *Parable of the Sower*. The seeds are the same. Whether they bear fruit thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold depends on where they land, on good soil, along a footpath, among thorns, or on rocks. The home, the school, the teacher, individual ambition, etc, matter very much in educational progression.

Inequality in educational opportunity is worldwide. Imagine that the words below apply to the United Kingdom, poles apart from Ghana developmentally. Many counties have libraries bigger than most libraries in Ghana put together. The words were taken from a UK Government White Paper on Education published November 10, 2010. I quote it extensively to show that without serious interventions the status quo will always be a gap between what a minority gets and what a majority, laboring under less conducive circumstances, have to make do even in a developed country like Britain.

“.. lesson of the best education systems is that no country that wishes to be considered world class can afford to allow children from poorer families to fail as a matter of course. For far too long we have tolerated the moral outrage of an accepted correlation between wealth and achievement at school; the soft bigotry of low expectations. Children on free school meals do significantly worse than their peers at every stage of their education. They are just half as likely to get good GCSEs as the average. More children from some private schools go to Oxbridge than from the entire cohort of children on free school meals. This vast gap between rich and poor is not pre-ordained. In Finland and Canada the gap is much smaller. Even in this country there are some groups – Chinese girls on free school meals for example – who significantly outperform the national average.

Education reform is the great progressive cause of our times. It is only through reforming education that we can allow every child the chance to take their full and equal share in citizenship, shaping their own destiny, and becoming masters of their own fate.

Throughout history, most individuals have been the victims of forces beyond their control. Where you were born, both geographically and in class terms, was overwhelmingly likely to dictate your future. Jobs were rarely a matter of choice and normally decreed by who your father was. Opportunities for women outside the home were restricted. Wealth governed access to cultural riches. Horizons were narrow, hopes limited, happiness a matter of time and chance.

But education provides a route to liberation from these imposed constraints. Education allows individuals to choose a fulfilling job, to shape the society around them, to enrich their inner life. It allows us all to become authors of our own life stories. That is why it matters so much that access to educational opportunities is spread so inequitably in England. The gulf between the opportunities available to the wealthy and the chances given to the poor, is one of the widest.”

These words were from a Conservative-led Government in the United Kingdom. They did not come from a left of centre Labour Government.

The challenges of implementing a policy of education for all, rich, poor, bright, not so bright, desired, not desired, etc., are huge. If education is only for children from homes where the demand for it is great, where home work would be supervised, teachers would rarely be absent, books are available at home, and children are taken to libraries regularly, etc., many of the challenges of the FCUBE will not be known. In the real world many children would not be born into an educationally advantaged background, and many are born into poverty. The situation in the UK as painted above is worse in Ghana where there is more poverty and government has less money to spend. But is government using well the resources of the many social partners, the parents and the communities?

Churches must show what they can offer to Public Education.

This article argues the case for revisiting the policy of partnership between state as government and the churches which were largely responsible for spreading education in colonial Gold Coast. The churches rather than government extended education to communities which as now never felt much the hand of government.

Thinking along these lines, my attention was drawn to a publication in the Ghanaian Times of Friday November 26, 2010 with the heading “*Churches get back schools*” which said all the right things about how such a process can take place:

- Government to hand all mission schools back to their units to enhance effective and efficient management and supervision;
- Government would still be responsible for the payment of teachers’ salaries;
- Local managers of church education units would manage schools to ensure discipline and academic excellence after the handing over.

I am aware that staff of church education units are paid by government but operate under the supervision of their respective churches. Would they be better supervisors than the bureaucrats who run the district education offices? I do not have the answer. Why then have the churches been so insistent in their call for a return of their schools?

The statement about the return of schools to churches and religious bodies was attributed to the Upper West Regional Director of Education. He even commended catholic schools in the Upper West Region for being among the best in the region. When I called persons at the Ministry of Education and the GES who should know, they denied that any such review of partnership between government and churches has begun.

The late Professor E. A. Boateng, was old enough in 1951 to see how the Nkrumah government’s policy with respect to church participation in education unfolded and the consequences it had on education. He said the following at a lecture to Wesley College Past Students Association in 1995:

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”.

My position is that there is a strong case to rethink the current policy on the participation between government and religious bodies on the administration of education. They are collectively the single largest non-governmental organizations in the country. In many communities church leaders are also the most prominent community leaders.

The religious bodies, parents, and NGOs collectively constitute the major element in community and local participation in education. It was a major plank in the educational policy reforms which heralded the FCUBE. Without more commitment and resources from community leaders and parents, government and the education bureaucracy alone will not be able to deliver the quality education private proprietors sometimes, with limited expertise, are able to deliver. All concerned with making public schools better than they are now may wish to note this.

Education Matters:

By Professor J. S. Djangmah

Sharing our experiences

(Former Chairman of WAEC)

Education in 2010: Matters arising *District Assemblies and Education in Ghana*

Did much happen in the education sector in 2010? Much happened that go to show that governments must at all times be circumspect about the decisions that they take in the sector. Matters arising from the decision to revert to the three years' senior high school came to haunt the Ministry of Education and the Government at the beginning of the 2010 academic year. Finding classroom space and boarding accommodation for Form 1 students, additional to the spaces occupied by Forms 2, 3 and 4 students was a major challenge to the Ministry and the GES. We can only hope that the incumbent government and the former government have learnt the appropriate lessons.

The Chief Inspector of Schools

As required by the 2008 Education Act the government has appointed a chief Inspector of Schools to set and enforce pre-tertiary educational standards. He would also double as the Executive Secretary of the National Inspectorate Board. The Chief Inspector of Schools, Dr. George Afeti is superbly qualified for the position, bringing to the office considerable teaching and administrative experience in technical education at the university and the polytechnic levels. Technical education has been an area of great weakness in the educational reforms so far. The National Inspectorate Board has the responsibility to “*set and enforce standards to be observed at the basic and second cycle schools in both public and private educational institutions*”. Other functions of the board include assessment of quality of teaching and learning, as well as facilities available in educational institutions. If the office of the Chief Inspector of Schools works well schools we would no longer have heads of schools reporting unchallenged at speech days that all their students who took the WASSCE passed when in fact very few candidates qualified for tertiary education, a much better index of quality performance.

How well are district assemblies funding education?

As far back as 1961 independent Ghana's first education Act (Act 87) gave local education authorities the responsibility to:

- Build, equip and maintain all public primary and middle schools, in their areas;
- Establish all such public primary, middle and special schools as are, in the opinion of the Minister, after consultation with the Minister responsible for local government, required in the area; etc.

Unfortunately the local authorities then lacked the intellectual capacity as well as the material resources to discharge their assigned responsibility. The 2008 Education Act (Act 778) has prescribed the same functions to the District Assemblies. The current metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies are much better resourced.

How Accra Metro finances education?

Other bodies with special interest in education can research and monitor the provision of education at the level of the district assembly. The Greater Accra Branch of the Ghana National Education Coalition Campaign (GNECC) recently undertook a study of infrastructure provision in the Accra Metropolitan area. Their report entitled *Infrastructural Challenges and Financing of Public Basic Education in Accra Metro*, was discussed at a stakeholders forum held at the offices of the Greater Accra Regional Coordinating Council on 26 November 2010. This columnist had the privilege of reading the report and also participating in the forum. Also present was Professor Akilagpa Sawyerr, former Vice-Chancellor of Legon and a member of the Council of State.

The major challenges of infrastructure of public basic education in Accra Metro as revealed by the GNECC report include:

- Water and its supply to schools; about 63% of schools have no supply, while supply was poor in an additional 12% of schools; schools had to buy from vendors at a high cost or do without water altogether;
- Urinals were poor in about 39% of schools, or completely unavailable as in about 27% of schools, this is most inconvenient particularly to our teenage girls,
- Hand washing provision is adequate in most schools, posing serious health risks to pupils;
- Disposal of rubbish, cleaning of gutters, provision of disinfectants pose serious challenges to schools which inadequate capitation grants cannot meet;
- About 45% of schools had classrooms which are in poor condition; buildings in poor condition, many had leaking roofs or collapsing roofs, cracks in walls, poor drainage, broken windows and doors;
- Honeycombed walls instead of windows leave many classrooms hot and dark. Electricity supply was lacking in about 27% of schools while poor in 18% of schools supplied;
- School furniture was inadequate in about 36% of schools where more than two pupils sat in dual desks meant for two.
- Most of these schools lack facilities for ICT and Science which are compulsory subjects.
- “Lack of library facilities is one of the factors contributing to poor command of and performance in English language. Very few pupils have the opportunity to read good material in English outside their prescribed textbooks”.

The District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) is a major fund at the disposal of each assembly. The Assemblies also generate considerable revenue which they can also spend on education. According to the GNECC report, in 2009 the AMA had a budget of GH¢42.4 million, having received only GH¢3.2 million from the District Assemblies Common Fund. Personal emoluments took 20% of the budget; capital expenditure took 36% of the budget. Expenditure on schools, took only 1% of the capital expenditure. Miscellaneous expenses took as much as 37% of the budget. The DACF allocation to AMA rose steadily from 2004 to 2009. However the

amounts allocated by AMA to schools were small, ranging from less than 1% to 20% of the allocation.

The Communiqué on Basic Education (GNECC)

The communiqué which the GNECC issued after the stakeholders forum tells a story which all concerned with the provision of basic education may wish to read as follows:

1. That, on grounds both of equity and of national development, the provision of quality basic education for all is inescapably a state obligation. While this is generally acknowledged, it needs to be carefully specified and backed by the allocation of adequate public resources.
2. That, greater priority needs to be given to meeting basic school needs in the budgeting process at all levels, to ensure more realistic funding whether through an enhanced Capitation Grant or some other scheme.
3. In particular, District and Metropolitan Assemblies, which are charged with the provision and maintenance of basic school infrastructure, must give it due priority by dedicating adequate funding to it.

Three further issues that the communiqué raised need serious consideration by the Government and the Ministry of Education:

- That, to ensure that budgetary allocations reach the target schools and are properly applied; mechanisms for tracking such allocations and expenditures must be developed and regularly implemented with direct civil society and community involvement.
- That, in recognition of the limitations on the capacity of the state fully to discharge its obligation to provide quality basic education for all, policy on support by parent-teacher associations (PTAs), local communities, and school alumni and alumnae must be carefully considered and spelt out, and such support promoted and facilitated.
- *That as a matter of policy, 10% of national oil revenues expected from 2011 should go towards the development and support of public basic education, with special emphasis on decent school infrastructure and facilities.*

The AMA and Kumasi are the major recipients of the District Assemblies Common Fund. The AMA in spite of the poor state of the educational structure would allocate such paltry amounts to basic schools. Education therefore cannot be said to be a priority to the AMA. With 40% of schools in Accra being private schools which serve the more articulate segment of society who know what quality is and would pay for it, it is a great surprise that public education which serves the majority of Ghanaian children would be so poorly provided for. It does mean that the value of quality basic education for as the major instrument to promote national development is not being appreciated. The current AMA Mayor Dr. Alfred Vanderpuye deserves praise for his crusade on abolishing the shift system. Ataa Oko has to persevere to eliminate the overcrowding the change has caused.

Legon please set up a centre for urban studies

The GNECC deserves commendation for conducting the research and disseminating its findings which unfortunately did not receive much media coverage and participation from \the Ministry of Education and the GES. We don't hear much from our faculties of education in such matters. Why? When I wrote to the former AMA boss, Mr. Adjiri Blankson, and also Dr Vanderpuye, to set up in conjunction with the University of Ghana, a *Centre for Urban Studies* for research and advocacy on the problems of the city none of the honourable gentlemen responded. It is my Christmas message to Dr. Vanderpuye, Professor Ernest Aryeetey and Mr. P. V. Obeng. Set up this centre to research the most complex human habitat in Ghana, the city. *Good Education is the Best Gift any Child can have, please bear that in mind!*

The columnist thanks Mrs. Judith Sawyerr and the executive of the Greater Accra Ghana National Education Coalition Campaign for the report and the invitation to the forum.

Comments may be addressed to edumatters2011@yahoo.com

Education Matters:

By Professor J. S. Djangmah

Sharing our experiences

(Former Chairman of WAEC)

Education agenda for 2011 and beyond. And welcome to the new Minister of Education!

The Education Matters column returns in 2011 to bid farewell to the outgoing Minister of Education, Honourable Mr. Alex Tettey-Enyo, and to welcome the new Minister, Honourable Mrs. Betty Mould Iddrisu. While anyone is free to speculate on reasons for the change, the President discouraged such speculation when he said that apart from himself and the Vice-President, no minister or appointee has a fixed term of four years. This columnist wishes Mr. Tettey-Enyo well for the future and hopes that Mrs. Betty Mould Iddrisu would bring to the education ministry new and unique commitments.

Today's column highlights some issues on education at various levels which may be considered ingredients of Ghana's ongoing education agenda, 2011 and beyond. It is the wish of this columnist that issues raised in the column may be of use to the big people at the education ministry, the GES and all who can influence change.

Education Agenda Issue Number 1: Expand pre-school education for all sooner rather than later.

This column has focused much on basic education because it is the foundation on which the overall national education edifice is built. The Education Act of 2008 made preschool education part of basic education. Before then preschool was not prescribed for all. It is at the level of pre-school education that the socialization and the correct attitudes to learning by children are formed. Children who have attended crèches and kindergartens are more likely to enroll at the correct age in primary school and would not be among the many overage children in public basic schools. Enforcement and provision of facilities for preschool education should therefore be firmly on the education agenda. The new Minister may wish to ask the GES for a good briefing on pre-school education in Ghana.

Education Agenda Issue Number 2: Remove the Poverty Gap in Quality Education between Fee paying schools and Public Basic Schools.

Pre-school, primary and junior high schools together constitute basic education in Ghana. The new minister cannot make parents richer during her tenure but she can make public schools better than she met them. As stated in this column of December 23, 2010, district assemblies were assigned the responsibility by the 2008 Education Act (Act 778) and also the 1961 Act (Act 87) to "provide *the necessary infrastructural needs and any other facilities for the education of the population in the area of its authority*". Act 778 (Subsection 3) requires the Minister of Education to "*take measures for the effective decentralization of executive responsibility for the*

provision and management of basic and second cycle schools to the District Assemblies". The research report on schools' physical infrastructure in the Accra Metropolitan Assembly discussed in the last column, painted a very dismal picture about the state of school buildings, and the provision of water and sanitation, etc., to schools, which is largely the result of inadequate funding of public schools. So shocked were panelists and listeners who heard these revelations on radio that Mrs. Betty Mould Iddrisu may wish to place the provision and management of schools by district assemblies on her high priority list of concerns for immediate action. By working with the district assemblies she can make an impact on how they fund and manage schools. As in the 1961 Education Act the 2008 Education Act also made provision for enforcing compulsory basic education. So far it has not happened. As a lawyer, the minister may wish to consider enforcing the law on compulsory school enrollment. It will have a positive impact on enrolment and it will change the attitudes of irresponsible parents.

Education Agenda Issue Number 3: Not entering Senior High Schools does not make one a failure: True or False?

352,521 candidates in 2010 wrote the BECE. Out of this number 173,889 were considered qualified for admission into senior high schools. With an increasing population of pupils coming out of the JHS, the number of places in senior high schools must necessarily increase to provide for the natural increase in the number of basic school graduates who would seek admission into senior high schools. While this should be the case it is important that the one year apprenticeship training option which was promised by the former regime to absorb basic school leavers who are not enrolled in senior high schools should be implemented. These pupils must not be called failures. The Ministry of Education and the new Minister may be reminded of Section (1) subsections 6, 7 and 8 of the Education Act quoted below:

(6) In addition to subsections (1) to (5), there shall be a system of non-formal functional and life long educational programmes.

(7) The Ministry of Education and the District Assemblies may establish open colleges at the district level.

(8) The open colleges and life long educational colleges shall also provide avenues for skills training and formal education as determined by the Minister by legislative instrument.

My vision for further education and training outside the senior high school is the *community college* concept appropriately adapted from America to suit post-basic education in Ghana. Some of the many organizations including churches which are craving to establish private universities may be counseled to rather establish community colleges. I consider such a development the logical step in the development of post-basic education under our circumstances in Ghana as stipulated in the subsections (6) to (8) of the Education Act.

Education Agenda Issue Number 4: Improving Senior High School Education

This column flogged in three articles the challenges of the senior high school in Ghana. Currently about 20% of our senior high schools, produce 75% of the candidates in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) who qualify for tertiary education. In 2006, out of 429 schools which presented 109,285 candidates for the WASSCE, 15,375 qualified for tertiary education, 12, 389 of these candidates or 75% of them came from 86 or 20% of the schools. In 2009, out of 516 schools which presented 149,346 candidates for the WASSCE, 26,534 candidates qualified for tertiary education; out of this number 19,394 or 73% of the qualified candidates came from 103 or just 20% of the schools. In spite of this dismal performance heads of many schools yearly report at schools' speech days that all their students passed.

Unless public basic school education improves, the three years SHS will continue to condemn the majority of Ghanaian senior high school students to substandard education in schools which are not equipped to improve their chances for tertiary education. The new minister may wish to place quality senior high school education high on her agenda for change.

A statement which Professor Arthur Lewis made on secondary education as far back as 1968 is still relevant today. He said: "...*the capacity of African economies to benefit from producing more secondary school graduates is virtually unlimited (somewhere between 10 and 20% of the age group).....And if one is to use the secondary school boys and girls, one must give them the specialized post-secondary training..*"

Education Agenda Issue Number 5: Recruiting more of our best graduates into teaching!

It is said that the highest performing school systems are those which place high premium on teachers and recruit some of the best graduates into teaching. With more than 100,000 students in our tertiary educational institutions it should be possible to devise a special scheme to recruit more of the best graduates into teaching at both the basic education and senior high school levels. Nothing prevents Legon, KNUST and UCC from run special education courses in the final year for students who would wish to enter the teaching profession. This is especially so when the policy to restrict certain courses to each of the three oldest universities when their total enrolments were under 10,000 has been abandoned. In other words with a student population of 33,000 students, Legon, for example, can also establish a faculty of education to provide teaching qualifications for some of them and to improve their job opportunities. Teaching, if quality education is what we desire, should be recruiting more and more university graduates. That has been the history of teaching in many countries! A new agenda for teacher education is therefore recommended for consideration by the new minister.

I wish all my readers a Happy New Year. Those who have comments for me may wish to contact me at [*edumatters2011@yahoo.com*](mailto:edumatters2011@yahoo.com)

Education Matters:

By Professor J. S. Djangmah

Sharing our experiences

(Former Chairman of WAEC)

Abolish the BECE: Senior High School for All: The CPP proclaims!

Speaking for himself and the CPP, the 2008 Presidential candidate, Dr. Paa Kwesi Nduom called for the abolition of the BECE. This columnist took part in a CITI FM discussion programme on the issue. Today's column discusses the implications of senior high school admissions without the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE).

What is wrong with the BECE??

What is wrong with the BECE is likely to be wrong with competitive examinations generally. They are a ritual which all school systems go through. What is the alternative to examinations for selection when 350,000 students seek admission into senior high schools which can take about 175,000 students? Pupils who are better taught generally earn the best grades, aggregates 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 which take them to the top senior high schools. Their counterparts largely from public basic schools, many of them not so well taught, earn lower grades. Their aggregates range from 24 to 30 and so enroll in poorly performing senior high schools. Candidates whose grades are lower than 30 are not considered for admission. The BECE is good when it is testing children from the same social and economic backgrounds and who attend the same quality of schools. Children who have attended crèches, kindergartens and the best primary and junior high schools, have no problem with literacy and numeracy. Such children will have no difficulty competing in similar tests in the UK, the USA, Canada, indeed anywhere in the English speaking world.

Placing such children in competition with their poor relations in the depressed parts of the city and rural Ghana exposes the deficiencies of examinations for selection purposes. Selection systems which in addition to examinations recognize and also use quotas, interviews, etc., to compensate for socio-economic differences are more likely to be fairer to the disadvantaged. This is what the BECE is unable to do. Children from disadvantaged schools and communities therefore have little chance to attend higher quality senior high schools where their opportunities to excel are higher. The solution is not to scrap the BECE but to think more deeply about what it measures and how it can be improved. Psychologists and experts in educational measurement are the people with the appropriate skills to confront this problem. Building more quality senior high schools to minimize differences between schools would of course be the ideal solution.

What about a selection process which depends on assessment by teachers alone? The continuous assessment grades which are submitted by schools enable class teachers to make inputs into the BECE and therefore the selection process. Many people would argue that external assessments of performance such as the BECE have higher objectivity than school assessment. Whatever the merits and demerits of these positions performance in the BECE has over the years concentrated pupils from the fee-paying schools into the best endowed and best performing schools while the majority of pupils who attend the public basic schools largely end up in the poorer endowed and lower performing senior high schools. This is serious lack of equity which must be addressed. The attempt to address it by reserving at least 30% of places in top schools to pupils from local schools could not be implemented. It must be reconsidered with respect to public basic schools as a whole.

A better educated workforce is required!

The CPP flagbearer linked his call for the abolition of the BECE with making the senior high school the terminal point in compulsory basic education rather than the junior high school. This would create a better educated Ghanaian workforce. The average educated Ghanaian now is more likely to be a JHS graduate than a senior high school graduate. Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, countries which were not different from the Gold Coast at independence have secondary school enrolments which are closer to 90% of the age group. Between 60 to 70% of the age group also graduate from universities and polytechnics. The gap between them and us, socially and economically is therefore as much an educational gap, as a science and technology gap.

We need a new Model of Senior High School!

Dr. Ndoum's desire to take basic education beyond junior high school to senior high school is well founded and laudable. The position of this columnist is that the challenges to overcome to make his vision a reality must however be better understood and debated. We need a model of a senior high school that can deliver quality and a diversified curriculum to cater for the different talents and skills that any cohort of young people possess. Secondly until Ghanaians are weaned away from the attraction of the large boarding school we would not be able to focus on the essential features that make a good school. The failure of the NPP Model Secondary School concept to be multiplied, one for each district, was due more to cost constraints and therefore feasibility. It is an inappropriate model at this time when we must think about the large numbers to cater for. The CPP may wish to develop a model which is appropriate and feasible for rapid replication nation-wide? It is amazing that in the mid-1990s some of us had to drive from Legon to Dzorwulu about midnight to make telephone calls and to fax messages to the USA. In this era of the cell phone, this has become most unnecessary. Some homes have as many phones as there are people. It is therefore the appropriateness of the cell phone technology that has brought telephone communication into the hands of very many even in Ghana. The landline could not spread in the numbers desired. That is the lesson that we must learn. What is feasible is what is doable!

May be with oil and gas revenue soon to “arrive” we may have the capacity in the very near future to fund our educational system better and also establish more technical and vocational schools at the senior high school level.

Readers may wish to contact me at *edumatters2011@yahoo.com*

Education matters:

Sharing our experiences:

Professor J. S. Djangmah (Former Chairman of WAEC)

Senior High School for All: Some Notes for Flagbearers!

Life is not always fair! Not all children have the opportunity to attend crèches, kindergartens, primary, junior high and senior high schools. The differences in life's chances and national development represented by attendance, non-attendance, and quality of the education that is dispensed at each level are not small. Our governments spend our monies fixing problems which strictly should by now be the responsibility of parents. My little knowledge of economics tells me that governments spend more doing things which individuals can do for themselves more cheaply. Free school uniforms, free school lunches and capitation grants are some of the public expenditures which fall in this category. Because we have failed to create sufficient demand for education among significant sections of our society our governments are constrained to spend public monies not always on bigger issues.

Senior High School for all is a very big issue. It has major consequences for sustaining our claimed middle income status. A well educated workforce is a guarantee against underdevelopment.

Good Students always exist!

One thought, a rather sad one, crossed and weighed on my mind as I wrote this column. My classmate, a former Ghanaian Ambassador to the European Union, has just died! Brought up in the traditional community of fishermen, fishmongers, saw millers and goldsmiths of Nungua, he attended Osu Salem and also Teshie Presbyterian Senior Boarding School. After completing standard seven (middle school form 4 or JHS 3), he was for a short period apprenticed to a lorry driver as his mate. He won a scholarship to attend PRESEC then at Odumase – Krobo. He obtained Grade 1 in the West African School Certificate Examination, taken in the Gold Coast for the first time in 1955. Again he won a government scholarship into the sixth-form at Prempeh College. The Gold Coast was about to be an independent country, expatriate civil servants would leave, and the new country had to rapidly produce her own professionals and degree holding civil servants. Prempeh College was the only secondary school in Ashanti (including Brong-Ahafo) and the Northern regions when it opened its doors in 1949. At Legon my friend graduated with honours in Philosophy. He worked for a short spell at the Government Information Services Department before entering the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He rose to become Ghana's Ambassador to the European Union, before promotion to the Chief Director of the Ministry, and later a Deputy Minister.

A little twist to my friend's story is worth recording for posterity. He was very good in Latin, History, English Literature and Economics in the sixth-form. His performance in the Higher School Certificate Examination earned him a place at Legon to read Philosophy, having being unsuccessful in his attempt to read Economics. Without an "O" level pass in Mathematics, Legon would not allow him to read Economics. Our Mathematics teacher at Odumase-Krobo killed his confidence in the subject so he had to replace mathematics with General Science for the West African School certificate Examination. Imagine that someone who could do well in Logic (in philosophy) would not be allowed to study

Economics because he lacked “O” level Mathematics. This was the time when Legon had a student population of 700 not the 33,000 as now. This is just one example of how opportunities are denied even by universities which have the capacity to make other arrangements to compensate for school-based deficiencies. Brains and talents are indeed to be found in every environment but many circumstances do determine in many cases whether or not they flourish!

From Poor to Middle Income and First World

I understand that the 2008 NPP flagbearer Nana Akufo Addo promised SHS for All during the last electioneering campaign. So like Dr. Paa Kwesi Nduom, the CPP flagbearer, the issue of the SHS for All is on the front burner of presidential aspiration. I invite other aspirants to give some thought to what Ghana would look like socially and economically if most of the products of the JHS have opportunities for further education, skills and apprenticeship training, in senior high schools, technical and vocational schools, open and community colleges, etc.

Singapore operated a shift system in the 1960s which it phased out in the 1990s. Singapore moved from a Chinese educational system of 6 years primary, 3 years of junior middle and 3 years of senior high school to an English School System school of 6 years primary, 4 years of secondary school, and 2 years of pre-university education. Singapore streamed its secondary schools into academic, technical and vocational schools. Placements into these schools are based on performance in a Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). The Singaporean education system allows movements between tracks based on performance and assessment by Principals and teachers. That country ensured that changes in its education mirrored closely its industrial development. Our challenge would also be how to create the jobs for the young people who are graduating from these post-basic and tertiary institutions.

Since I am not likely to prepare a better speech than President Obama and his speech writer, I thought my readers, including presidential aspirants of Ghana, I venture to think, would profit more from the following direct quotation from the *American President's recent State of the Union Address*:

“...But if we want to win the future - if we want innovation to produce jobs in America and not overseas - then we also have to win the race to educate our kids.

Think about it. Over the next ten years, nearly half of all new jobs will require education that goes beyond a high school degree. And yet, as many as a quarter of our students aren't even finishing high school. The quality of our math and science education lags behind many other nations. America has fallen to 9th in the proportion of young people with a college degree. And so the question is whether all of us - as citizens, and as parents - are willing to do what's necessary to give every child a chance to succeed.

That responsibility begins not in our classrooms, but in our homes and communities. It's family that first instills the love of learning in a child. Only parents can make sure the TV is turned off and homework gets done. We need to teach our kids that it's not just the winner of the Super Bowl who deserves to be celebrated, but the winner of the science fair; that success is not a function of fame or PR, but of hard work and discipline.

Our schools share this responsibility. When a child walks into a classroom, it should be a place of high expectations and high performance. But too many schools don't meet this test. That's why instead of just pouring money into a system that's not working, we launched a competition called Race to the Top. To

all fifty states, we said, "If you show us the most innovative plans to improve teacher quality and student achievement, we'll show you the money."

Meanwhile, nations like China and India realized that with some changes of their own, they could compete in this new world. And so they started educating their children earlier and longer, with greater emphasis on math and science. They're investing in research and new technologies. Just recently, China became home to the world's largest private solar research facility, and the world's fastest computer."

Obama is saying that Education matters and countries that take it seriously will out-compete by out-innovating and out-producing those that do not!

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Education matters:

Sharing our experiences:

Professor J. S. Djangmah (Former Chairman of WAEC)

**Teshie Technical Training Centre: A Model Community
Technical/Vocational Senior High School!**



“In Ghana, mostly among the [Ga people](#), elaborate figurative coffins in the shape of cars, boats or animals are made of wood. These were introduced in the 1950s by Seth [Kane Kwei](#)”

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kane_Kwei_Carpentry_Workshop.jpg

Just as a community or town must have a post office, a police station and a health clinic, we should expect day care centres, kindergartens, primary schools and ideally a senior high school to educate and train the young. Educating and training young people to prepare them for adult life is a requirement in traditional as well as modern societies. As we begin to think more seriously about mass education to secondary school level, locating such schools in our communities becomes the ideal choice. Never mind that in the days long past we had no choice but to travel long distances to the few available schools, the Cape Coast schools for example. When Prempeh College was founded in 1949 it was the only secondary school for the whole of Ashanti (then including Brong-Ahafo) and the entire North (now the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions). To the few lucky youngsters at the time, those days were good old

days. Of course we cannot plan the future of our beloved Ghana now on habits which were good for a people who lived in small and scattered towns and villages, but now live in huge population centres.

Last year, November 5, 2010 a refurbished cluster of schools was commissioned by Vice – President John Mahama at Teshie, a major township in the newly created Ledjokuku-Krowor Municipal Assembly (LEKMA) area. The cluster of schools has kindergartens, seven primary and junior high schools. With the refurbishment which has taken place the cluster of schools now has a computer resource centre, a library and a functioning water and toilet facilities for the 4000 and more pupils and their teachers. Much better than the facilities recently reported for public basic schools in Accra.

Teshie Technical Training Centre (TTTC)

The windfall which the children and people of Teshie should celebrate includes a new Technical/Vocational Senior High School. The technical/vocational senior high school, named the *Teshie Technical Training Centre* was designed to accommodate 450 students. When fully staffed and equipped this new senior technical high school should be able to provide needed technical and vocational education and training for young people in the community and beyond. Teshie, like most sizable towns in Ghana does not lack skilled artisans, the entrepreneurs, and the master craftsmen and women who operate the boisterous informal economy. Usually they receive little government support and yet provide gainful employment for many school leavers. The alternative to that life of toil is for example the more precarious lives of the street hawkers further up the Teshie-La highway!

The generosity of workers of the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) of Ireland contributed the 2.5-million-dollars that were required for the project. The ESB consulted for the Electricity Company of Ghana in the 1980/1990s. Led by its Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Pedraig McManus, the NGO wing of the ESB sponsored by its workers selected the Teshie School complex and one other school in Kaneshie as their “pay back” charity to the people of Ghana. This is their community outreach project which many corporate bodies feel called upon to render. I suppose corporate Ghana also sponsors important community development projects, some praiseworthy, others not so great! Perhaps they could do more if we recognize the good ones more.

The TTTC came into being after the completion of the first phase of the Teshie project when the coordinator of the project, Mr. Chris Adom, a retired senior engineer, persuaded the ESB to establish the Technical/Vocational School as the most desirable addition to the basic schools in the cluster. Initially 5 workshops were provided in the design of the technical/vocational school block to teach *Carpentry and Joinery, Block laying and concreting, electrical installations, catering and cookery, tailoring and dressmaking*. Anyone familiar with the Teshie township will not fail to notice the multiplicity of artisans of all types who morning, noon and night busily, quietly and also noisily apply their talents and skills, marketing their products in whatever ways are possible to make their living and feed their families. The range of artisans in the Teshie community as elsewhere is large. They include electrical tradesmen and equipment repairers; television, radio, stereo and sound systems repairers; automobile mechanics, welders; carpenters, cabinet and furniture makers; fishermen, fishmongers, outboard motor repairers;

photographers; computer repair services; food and catering services; building and construction tradesmen; etc.

It is in this huge beehive of human activity, ingenuity and enterprise that our school leavers have to locate their social and economic well-being after school. This is Ghana's informal economy which provides jobs for the vast majority of them outside the agricultural sector. Our educational system must recognize and deal with this fact of Ghana's economy. Unknown to many residents, the products of the Teshie fanciful coffin manufacturers displayed along the main road have their reputation secure among the hallowed exhibits of the British Museum in London (See the picture above)!

What lies beyond the Brick, the Mortar and the Speeches?

Having a vision of what is to be done for the three hundred thousand or more junior high school leavers is one thing. The greater challenge is how to organize the school curriculum to bring about the required flexibility to link classrooms more to the workshops and kiosks of the master craftsmen and women who have the skills to impart. We know what happens, for example, in the dual technical and vocational education and training tract in German schools. Students spend four days at school and a fifth day in industry to learn the skills and work culture which schools lack. This is one of the practices to adopt and adapt to suit our conditions in Ghana. German industry is said to be proud of how unlike other countries it has been more successful in linking education more closely with industry.

Collaboration with ATTC

The Ghana Education Service realizing that the Accra Technical Training Centre (ATTC) has the requisite experience to mentor the Teshie Technical Training Centre, decided to formally handover managerial responsibility of the Teshie school to the ATTC. The principal of the TTTC is an experienced tutor from the ATTC. This is good. The ATTC's counterpart institute, the Kumasi Technical Institute (KTI) can also provide similar services to the new senior technical high schools in the Ashanti region and elsewhere.

Meaningful learning in Primary Schools is the Foundation!

How to make post-primary education truly functional to cater for the diverse talents that any cohort of young people possess is the concern of this article. It is the conceptual underpinnings of the Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary School since first mooted in 1972 and adopted in 1973. In 1974 the JSS/SSS became the essential concept in the government white paper, the *New Structure and Content of Education* to replace the "O" level and "A" level system of Pre-tertiary Education. An effective JSS/SSS or now the JHS/SHS like any other system of education is only possible if the basic rudiments for all learning: reading, writing and performance of basic tasks in mathematics, are mastered in primary schools. This is what the *Consortium for Research Access Transitions and Equity (CREATE)* has described as *meaningful learning*. It is the consensus at all the talks I heard at gatherings of education practitioners and researchers in Cape Coast, Dodowa, Oxford, Sussex, London and lately New Delhi!

This article is in appreciation of Mr. Pedraig McManus and the workers of ESB, Mr. Chris Adom, the officials of the GES, LEKMA, the Teshie Traditional Leaders and all others who contributed to the success of the project.