

## **Revised Proposal**

### **Special Issue of Comparative Education**

#### **Provisional Title: Access to Education in Sub Saharan Africa**

#### **Editors: Keith M Lewin and Kwame Akyeampong**

This proposal is for a special issue of Comparative Education based on the work of the DFID supported Research Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity ([www.create-rpc.org](http://www.create-rpc.org)). The special issue would be co-edited by Professor Keith Lewin and Dr Kwame Akyeampong both of the Centre for International Education, University of Sussex. It would include an introductory editorial, 8 papers of 6-7000 words, and a synthetic postscript to be published in early 2009.

Access to basic education is a central plank of the global Education for All initiative and is central to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals to which almost all countries subscribe. Sub Saharan Africa has the lowest indicators of access in the world. Over 25 million children are not enrolled and attending regularly at primary level and as many as 75 million at secondary. Most Sub-Saharan Africa countries have programmes to universalise access to free primary schooling but progress has been uneven, rapid expansion has degraded quality, and it is becoming clear that the restricted definitions of access used to monitor progress mask much silent exclusion (children enrolled but learning little) and conceal very unequal patterns of participation below the national level.

Access to education lies at the heart of development. Lack of education is both a part of the definition of poverty, and a means for its diminution. Sustained access is critical to long term improvements in productivity, the reduction of inter-generational cycles of poverty, demographic transition, preventive health care, the empowerment of women, and reductions in inequality. The issues have been widely discussed in Comparative Education conferences in the North and in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, educational development strategies related to Education for All remain under theorised, evidence on the effectiveness of different policies designed to improve access to near universal levels is patchy, and analytic collections of experience and insight are scarce. Much is to be gained from comparative analyses, and from single system analyses located within a comparative framework.

This special issue of Comparative Education is intended to fill some research gaps and provide:

- An overview of progress towards universalising access to basic education across Sub-Saharan Africa as a region
- Insights into changing patterns of access, with an emphasis on three countries – Ghana, South Africa and Kenya
- Explorations at the school and community level through case studies of specific problems and issues related to meaningful access
- A comparative perspective and a contribution to policy dialogue for strategies to improve access in the context of the Millennium Development Goals.

The special issue will draw on research undertaken for the DFID supported CREATE project which is working in Ghana, Kenya and South Africa. CREATE has developed schema to explore access issues in new ways and is undertaking community and school based fieldwork, research reviews, and secondary data analysis.

It will be organised as shown below.

**Editorial Introduction: Keith Lewin and Kwame Akyeampong**

This introduction to the special issue will outline issues related to access in Sub-Saharan Africa, locate the papers within an overall framework and draw attention to key theoretical and policy debates.

**Paper 1. Keith Lewin. Changing Patterns of Access in Sub-Saharan Africa.**

Patterns of access to basic education in Sub-Saharan Africa have been transformed over the last two decades but in different ways in different places. Some countries have succeeded in reaching near universal levels of nominal access, others have lagged far behind; where growth in entry to school into grade 1 has been rapid, it has often been accompanied by greatly increased drop out; large number of children are overage for their grade and many are in multi-grade classes by default rather than design, the poor, girls and other marginalised groups are disproportionately excluded.

This paper uses cross national and national data to portray and analyse how access to basic education has been changing. At least five different patterns of participation can be identified into which groups of countries fall across the Sub-Saharan Africa region. These patterns shape the challenges of universalising access. They are linked to variations related to household income, location and gender as well as systemic features of the different systems. Time series data within countries over time draws attention to unanticipated outcomes of some Education for All policy. The problems of access need new and more nuanced approaches which recognise diversity of context and the dynamics of growth.

**Paper 2. Kwame Akyeampong. Revisiting Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) in Ghana.**

Ghana became independent in 1957 with one of the most developed education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa. Over the next forty years its education system developed to provide school places to most but not all of its children with periods of progress interspersed with periods of stagnation. Since the education reforms of the late 1980s enrolments have grown consistently though in the North in particular many children remain out of school. Unlike other countries with universal free primary education policies the 1988 reforms did not result in a short period of rapid growth but a longer sequence of cumulative gains. However these have fallen below expectations. Most recently with the introduction of capitation grants and a reassertion of fee free policy there has been a 20% increase in enrolments in grade 1 (2006). Key questions are whether these recent gains will be sustained through into higher grades, whether they will result in sustained improvements in access amongst the poorest communities, and how changes will affect participation at Junior Secondary level. This paper will examine the evidence.

**Paper 3. Abena Oduro. Who has Access to Basic Education in Ghana?**

There are many important questions which relate to changing patterns of access in Ghana that have only been partially researched. This paper provides new national level analysis of which children are excluded, what the characteristics of their households are, and how they participate at different levels of the school system. The questions include how many out of school children are in households where no child ever went to school and how many in households where some attend and others do not? How do patterns of promotion and persistence vary between districts and different sub-populations and what are the implications for distributional equity? To what extent are those enrolled over age and are the reasons more to do with late entry or repetition and sporadic attendance; How do the gendered aspects of exclusion vary between districts? How has access to Junior Secondary schooling changed as primary enrolments have increased and how equitable is such access? These and other questions provide a framework for a national overview of access to schooling using the new Ghana Living Standard Survey and the GES Information System. This complements insights from school and community case study work undertaken in parallel.

**Paper 4. Joseph Ghartey and Luke Akagura. Insights into Access at the School and Community Level.**

Improving access is a local issue which depends on actions at the local level that are supported by policy and resource allocation. This study explores the patterns of access in two case studies areas and seeks to identify the main factors that shape decisions to enter school, progress through grades to the end of primary, and to seek entry to junior secondary. This will allow some insights into the inter relationships between national policy and local circumstance. Important considerations are to probe beneath the patterns already evident from national data and understand more about the processes through which children gain and lose access. The issues that will emerge may have both supply and demand aspects and are likely to be linked to household decision making strategies that differ between communities and to characteristics of schools and those who work in them. Comparison will be possible across the case study sites using both quantitative and qualitative data.

**Paper 5. Shireen Motala and Veerle Dieltiens. Equitable Access in South Africa: Insights from Two School and Community Case Studies.**

Since 1994 most evidence suggests that though over 90% of South African children are enrolled in school somewhere between 300,000 and 750,000 children in the 6-15 year old age group remain out of school. Pockets of deprivation concentrate exclusion amongst certain communities, boys disproportionately drop out, regular attendance is recognised as a widespread problem, and levels of achievement are poor despite high levels of investment. A central question is how far after 13 years have South Africa's policies on access and exclusion resulted in more equitable access for those previously excluded. This paper draws on fieldwork sites in a township around Johannesburg and in rural Eastern Cape to generate analytic insight into equitable access and how it is changing in the new South Africa.

**Paper 6. Brahm Fleisch. Educational Participation of Children in Urban and Rural Areas.**

Some questions related to educational access require insights from longitudinal studies. Aggregate enrolment, repetition and drop out rates cannot say much about

what happens to individual children and how antecedents turn into consequences. A cohort of children born in Johannesburg in 1990 have been tracked within the Birth to Twenty longitudinal cohort study. The Agincourt study tracks households in Limpopo Province over time. These two sources of information provide unique sets of data which capture health and educational characteristics of the same children as they grow older. Analysis can lead to insights into patterns of age of entry, promotion, and repetition mediated by race, gender, location and household characteristics. This paper identifies differences between members of the cohort and generates a picture of how they have flowed through the school system. It highlights correlations that suggest the extent to which access to schooling has been changing.

**Paper 7. Crain Soudien and Dave Gilmour. Learning and Equitable Access in Western Cape, South Africa.**

Silent exclusion when children register and attend school but learn little is a critical feature of educational access in South Africa. Several international studies (e.g. TIMMS, SACMEQ) have shown that despite high levels of investment South African schools perform poorly in relation to other countries at similar levels of income. Equitable access is yet to be achieved with wide variations in the quality of access between sub-populations. This paper focuses on levels of learning achievement and comparisons between grades, schools, districts and populations of children in the Western Cape. Since outcome data is available over time changes can be followed and equitable access explored.

**Paper 8. Tony Somerset. Free Primary Education in Kenya and its Consequences.**

Since independence Kenya has experienced three post independence attempts to universalise primary schooling. The first two resulted in enrolment gains that were not sustained. Kenya has embarked on a third initiative to universalise free primary schooling. This paper asks what has happened to the cohorts of children who enrolled after the last announcement of fee free schooling and how has access been changing as a result. Enrolments rose rapidly in grade 1 in the year that FPE was introduced. However the growth was uneven and concentrated in some schools and not others, and there is evidence that early gains are not being sustained in enrolment increases at higher levels. National data on flows is compared with case study information from a cluster of schools first researched in the 1970s. There is therefore the possibility of learning from both the short term and longer term picture of access to basic education and drawing conclusions relevant to policy in the future.

**Paper 9. Postscript and Synthesis. Kwame Akyeampong and Keith M Lewin.**

This paper synthesises new insights into access from the papers in this special issue and from work on access undertaken by CREATE. It will consolidate expanded visions of access that can inform the policy debate that surrounds the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All targets for 2015. Comparisons will be made across the three countries and more generally across Sub Saharan Africa about the nature of the challenges, the progress towards meaningful access for all children to a full cycle of basic education, and the strengths and weakness of different policy initiatives.

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The audience for this special issue includes academics in international and comparative education, graduate students working on education and development, government and NGO development professionals, and others interested in educational development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The proposed Special Issue will therefore address recognised themes in Comparative Education that include conceptual analysis of meaningful access to education, educational reforms related to Education for All, system level comparisons of patterns of access, grounded case studies at school and community level, and policy relevant research.