



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

**Access to Basic Education in Ghana:  
politics, policies and progress**

**Angela W Little**

**CREATE PATHWAYS TO ACCESS  
Research Monograph No. 42**

**August 2010**



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## Contents

Preface .....	vi
Summary .....	vii
1. Introduction .....	1
2. Progress in Access to Basic Education .....	3
3. The Pre-Independence Period .....	5
4. Transition to Independence .....	7
5. Educational Policy and Military Governments .....	8
6. The 1987 Education Reforms.....	12
6.1 Policy Context .....	12
6.2 Policy Implementation and Resistance .....	14
6.3 Technical Challenges .....	16
6.4 Tensions between Technical and Political Imperatives .....	18
6.5 Formal Evaluations .....	19
6.6 Political Will .....	21
7. Sustaining Implementation of the 1987 Reforms in a New Democracy.....	22
8. Parallel Policies and Plans, 2000-2008 .....	27
9. The International Dimension of Educational Policy .....	31
9.1 The Donor Assistance Community .....	31
9.1.1 Finance .....	31
9.1.2 Discourse .....	32
9.1.3 The Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) .....	33
9.2 World Conferences.....	35
10. The Present and the Future.....	38
11. Conclusions .....	42
11.1 Progress in Basic Education .....	42
11.2 Policies for Basic Education .....	42
11.3 Political Regimes and Education Policies.....	44
11.4 Political Will .....	44
11.5 Drivers and Inhibitors of Reform Implementation.....	44
Appendices .....	48

## List of Tables

Table 1: Proportions of children aged 7, 14 and 5-17 years who were currently attending school by region and survey round, 1991, 1998 and 2006.....	4
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## List of Figures

Figure 1: Enrolment projections c. 1934.....	6
Figure 2: Costs per student by education level .....	6

## List of Acronyms

ADP	Accelerated Development Plan
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
BESIP	Basic Education Sector Improvement Project
CEE	Common Entrance Examination
COTVET	Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
CPP	Convention People's Party
CWIQ	Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
EFA	Education for All
EFA-FTI	Education for All Fast Track Initiative
ERP	Economic Recovery Programme
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
fCUBE	free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GES	Ghana Education Service
GLSS	Ghana Living Standards Survey
GNAT	Ghana National Association of Teachers
GoG	Government of Ghana
HERP	Health and Education Rehabilitation Project
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INSET	In-service Education and Training
JHS	Junior High School
JICA	Japan International Co-operation Agency
JSS	Junior Secondary School
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MOESS	Ministry of Education Science and Sports
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NEC	National Education Commission
NEF	National Education Forum
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NLC	National Liberation Council
NPP	New Patriotic Party
NRC	National Redemption Council
NCSE	New Structure and Content of Education
ODA	Overseas Development Administration (UK)
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
PNP	People's National Party
PP	Progress Party
PSD	Primary School Development
SHS	Senior High School
SSS	Senior Secondary School
SSSCE	Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination
STME	Science Technology Mathematics Education
SWAP	Sector-Wide Approach
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education

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I am grateful to colleagues in Ghana who gave of their time so generously to share with me their reflections on the politics, policies and progress of basic education in Ghana. Unless quoted from their published writings I refer to their views by 'interview with author', and not by interviewee name.

I am very grateful to Professor Jerome Djangmah and Dr Kwame Akyeampong who assisted me in setting up the interviews, to Dilrukshi Weeraratne for her patient transcription of many hours of interview material, to Stephen Adu for his comments on progress towards manifesto pledges since the 2008 election and to Caine Rolleston for his editing of the text and his general assistance on the paper. I am also grateful to Professor Djangmah, Dr Akyeampong and Dr Ato Essuman for comments on earlier drafts of this work.

## **Preface**

Ghana was well known for its high levels of access to education relative to other West African States in the 1960s. By the mid 1970s growth in participation had stalled and a series of political events including military government and global recession had derailed attempts to ensure that every Ghanaian child received a full cycle of primary schooling. Moreover long standing differences in access to education between the North and the South remained entrenched and may even have grown despite various initiatives to reduce the gaps in participation.

This Research Monograph tells the story of how over 30 years patterns of access have changed. The various policy events that have shaped progress are identified and analysed, with a special focus on the post 1987 reforms for Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) and the political economy of their implementation. Part of this story is one of fluctuating political will accompanied first by rapid gains in access through the 1990s which reached a plateau in the first years of the new millennium. Another part relates to the consistent engagement of development partners in supporting the ambitions of FCUBE, alongside the tensions that inevitably exist in relationships between donors and recipients.

Importantly the analysis highlights several developments that have more general relevance to the experience of other Sub Saharan African countries in various ways. There are concerns that growth in participation may have stalled in the 2000s for several reasons that include the difficulties of reaching the last 20% of primary age children especially in the North, increased numbers of overage children especially from poorer households, and softening demand at junior secondary level amongst those unlikely to progress to senior secondary school. Nevertheless there have been gains, not least in the reduction in differences between girls and boys. Capitation grants have been used to provide fee free schooling but this has not prevented schools from beginning to collect other monies in various ways. The initial gain in enrolments may not be sustained. Though the focus of concern for selection has now shifted from entry to junior secondary to entry to senior secondary, it is clear that pressures related to high stakes examinations remain important in constraining the curriculum and providing fuel for the growth of private tuition and demand for private schools, both of which disadvantage the poorest.

This analysis gives real insight into the swings of policy and political will which have accompanied efforts to meet government obligations to educate every child. At the centre of the story lie the actors that influenced events at key points in the evolution of participation, complemented by the underlying drivers of growth which illustrate how political will is often necessary but not sufficient to ensure sustained achievement of universal access to education. There are many lessons in this for other countries sharing the same goals.

Keith Lewin  
Director of CREATE  
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## Summary

This monograph examines the history and politics of educational reform in Ghana, focusing on the issue of access to basic education in the post-colonial period. The monograph employs data from a series of interviews conducted with senior policy-makers, implementers and researchers, as well as drawing on documentary sources, to explore the drivers and inhibitors of change at the political, bureaucratic and grass-roots levels. It describes the patterns of change in relation to enrolment and outlines the key policies adopted through from the British colonial administration to the various independent regimes, authoritarian and democratic. Progress in universalising access has been substantial and basic education indicators in Ghana, both in early post-colonial times and today, stand out positively when compared to most countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The study explores the nature of the domestic political and administrative machinery which has enabled comparative success in enrolment growth in Ghana, attending also to the importance of political will as well as to shifting patterns of international and donor influence.

The study draws out key tensions in education policy making, including tensions between the goals of access, equity, quality and relevance; those between academic and vocational orientations; those between elite and popular interests and those between political and technical imperatives. The processes of reform begun by the Kwapong and Dzobo committees and continued through to the fCUBE policy are examined in detail and the underlying aims and objectives of these processes are shown to share a number of common although sometimes mutually conflicting features. Interview data allow a nuanced interpretation of both impetus and resistance to policy formulation and implementation. The reforms of 1987 are shown to be critical in the development of the universal basic education policies that emerged subsequently and those later policies are considered partly as responses to unrealised objectives from 1987.

Following the restoration of democratic government in Ghana, the establishment of a constitutional commitment to universal basic education in 1992 provided a lasting and binding responsibility for the state, which was followed by a comprehensive policy in fCUBE. Subsequently education policy has played an important role in political manifesto pledges. The monograph concludes by considering the election pledges of the 2008 Ghana Government, their provenance and initial indications of their implementation and finally summarises its findings on progress and on the importance of policy, regime, political will, and the drivers and inhibitors of reform implementation in relation to the pursuit of basic education for all in historical perspective.



# **Access to Basic Education in Ghana: politics, policies and progress**

## **1. Introduction**

Ghana, formerly the Gold Coast, gained full independence in 1957. During the 1950s and 1960s her education system was the envy of much of the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. Access to basic education, indicated by enrolment rates, increased over the decades, especially between 1991 and 1998. It levelled off between 1998 and 2006, increasing again thereafter following the introduction of the 'capitation grant' designed to relieve parents of the burden of paying tuition fees in public schools. Since the early 1950s a number of policies to increase access to all levels of education have been implemented, several of which are described in CREATE's Country Analytic Review on Ghana (Akyeampong et al, 2007).

Major policy initiatives in basic education in Ghana are numerous. Most commentators on the history of educational policy in Ghana agree that each successive policy text owes much to the policy themes set out in earlier texts. Recurring policy themes include the provision of free education and the need for a practical, vocationally oriented education. The call for free primary education goes back to at least 1951, and that for practical, vocationally-oriented education to as early as 1847, during the British colonial period. Recurring policy concerns include access, quality and costs, with varying emphases at different points in time. A recurring policy tension has been that between expansion of access and the quality of education, reflecting the tension between CREATE's Zones of Exclusion in which, in Zone 1 children are excluded from enrolling in school and in Zone 3 are excluded from meaningful learning in school, once enrolled (Lewin, 2007)

The most radical reforms of basic education in the second half of the twentieth century are generally agreed to have been those set out in the report of the Commission chaired by Professor Dzobo in 1973/4. The Dzobo report recommended a restructuring of the secondary school system and a reorientation of the curriculum towards vocational skills. The reforms were implemented selectively and on an experimental basis. It was left to the new military government of 1981 to renew the push for their comprehensive implementation through the 1987 reforms. By 1992, the right to free and compulsory education was enshrined in the new constitution, heralding another implementation push from 1995 through the 'Free, Compulsory and Universal Education by 2005 Programme', known, more commonly, as fCUBE. fCUBE was linked closely with the Dzobo Commission proposals of 1974 and the 1987 reforms. As one of the case study interviewees explained

1974 was ... the blueprint ... 86 was when the government came in and said 'we would do it, implement it'. fCUBE 1996 was when it said 'let's correct some of the things, amend some of the issues that some of the problems that were raised by the people who were against it ... about (let's correct) how it affects quality. And let us also deepen some of the structures'. fCUBE deepened the structure of decentralization. Decentralization was key. So ... 74 set the blue print, 86/87 came in to implement it; and 95/96 fCUBE came to consolidate, to strengthen it (interview with author).

This monograph explores the politics, policies and progress in access to basic education in Ghana since independence through primary and secondary evidence. The primary source of evidence is a set of interviews with fifteen Ghanaian policy-makers, policy implementers and researchers who have played various roles in Ghana's education history over the past 35 years. They include senior government political appointees, senior civil servants, vice chancellors and university staff, trade union officials and district directors of education. Most interviewees have played various roles in policy formulation and policy implementation over many years. A particular effort was made to interview and meet those involved in the formulation of the 1986 and 1996 education reforms policies and implementation. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Evidence from interviews is supplemented by a range of documentary sources. These include published histories of education in Ghana, research reports, policy documents, commission and committee reports, evaluation studies and conference papers.

The monograph addresses 5 main questions:

What progress has there been in access to basic education over the past 30 years?

What policies for access to basic education have been promoted?

What role have political regimes played in the formulation of policies on access to basic education?

What role has political will played in the process of policy formulation?

What have been the drivers and inhibitors of the implementation of reforms in basic education since 1987?

The monograph offers a brief review of education policy during the political regimes of the British period, the transition to independence (1951-1957), democratic independence (1957-1969) and the first three military regimes (1972-1981). It explores in greater detail the process of policy formulation of the 1987 Education Reforms and the 1996 Free, Compulsory, Universal and Basic Education Programme FCUBE and the drivers and inhibitors of the implementation of these policies. The international dimension of policy, in particular the role of the international donor community and world conferences and declarations, is explored for their role in policy formulation and implementation.

## **2. Progress in Access to Basic Education**

Progress in access to basic education is conventionally assessed through gross, net and age-specific enrolment ratios. Time periods and the data sources used in various evaluations vary, rendering complex what should be a simple story. In a favourable assessment of educational progress between the 1950s and the 1980s the World Bank (1989) commented:

Despite a more than doubling of the population, enrollment rates at all levels have increased significantly, the number of schools and colleges has increased several fold, the number of teachers has grown considerably faster than that of students, and real unit cost allocations at all levels have fallen dramatically (World Bank, 1989:vi).

The pattern of enrolment growth over time was not consistent, however, and economic decline which began in the 1970s impacted negatively on basic education provision, especially in the latter part of the 1970s and into the early 1980s. Gross enrolment ratios (GER) in primary education continued to rise throughout most of the 1970s, but began to fall steadily at the turn of the decade and into the early 1980s (Colclough, Lewin and Chiswick 1993). Between 1987 and 1991 the GER in primary education increased from 76% to 79%, fell back to 73% in 1997 before increasing to 80% by 2001 and decreasing again to 78% in 2003 (Thompson and Casely-Hayford, 2008:1). An evaluation of educational progress undertaken by the World Bank suggested that between 1988 and 2003 there was a ten% increase in enrolment in basic education, a reduction in dropouts and an increase in girls' enrolment. Primary school graduate rates of illiteracy in English declined from 66% to less than 20%, while school infrastructure and the availability of textbooks and other learning materials increased markedly over the same period (World Bank, 2004:36).

GERs disguise the numbers of over-age and under-age children in an education system. The Ghana Living Standards Surveys (GLSS) offer an age specific snapshot of school attendance. Among seven year olds the proportion attending school increased from 71% to 84% between 1991 and 1998 and remained constant at 84% between 1998 and 2006. Among fourteen year olds the proportion increased from 77% to 86% between 1991 and 1998 and dropped back to 81% by 2006. Among those aged between five and 17 the proportion increased from 71% to 81% between 1991 and 1998 and remained constant between 1998 and 2006 (Rolleston, 2009).

National GERs also belie differences between social groups. The GLSS4 survey found that 83% of girls and 86% of boys aged 6-11 were enrolled in school in 1998. By the time of the GLSS5 survey in 2006 these figures had increased to 85% for both boys and girls. But it is the interaction of enrolment with poverty that is more illuminating. In 2006, the greatest discrepancies between girls and boys lay among the poorest urban quintile where girls out-enrolled boys by 83% to 69% and among the middle quintile where boys out-enrolled girls by 98% to 93% (Rolleston, personal communication). Of even greater concern is the decline in educational participation among the poorest between 1998 and 2006. Among all boys and girls, rural boys and girls and urban boys and girls participation rates among the poorest quintile have declined, while in every other income quartile participation rates have increased (Akyeampong, 2009:185). Since fCUBE was designed to introduce free basic education and expansion of access to the poorest these findings are of particular concern.

Another area of current concern is the apparent decrease in participation experienced in the Northern regions between 1998 and 2006. Table 1 shows the proportions of children aged

seven years, 14 years and 5-17 years who were enrolled in school at the time of three nationwide Ghana Living Standards Surveys (GLSS) undertaken in 1991, 1998 and 2006.

**Table 1: Proportions of children aged 7, 14 and 5-17 years who were currently attending school by region and survey round, 1991, 1998 and 2006**

	Age 7			Age 14			Total age 5-17		
	GLSS	GLSS	GLSS						
	3	4	5	3	4	5	3	4	5
	1991	1998	2006	1991	1998	2006	1991	1998	2006
Western	0.76	0.91	0.94	0.77	0.91	0.83	0.75	0.89	0.89
Central	0.74	0.86	0.92	0.78	0.93	0.88	0.71	0.85	0.90
Greater Accra	0.81	0.92	0.91	0.88	0.95	0.87	0.82	0.87	0.89
Eastern	0.83	0.75	0.83	0.90	0.79	0.87	0.80	0.80	0.79
Volta	0.73	0.90	0.88	0.79	0.89	0.94	0.77	0.87	0.86
Ashanti	0.83	0.93	0.97	0.81	0.88	0.84	0.79	0.86	0.89
Brong Ahafo	0.82	0.85	0.91	0.88	0.93	0.82	0.79	0.88	0.86
Northern	0.46	0.70	0.52	0.44	0.68	0.58	0.44	0.60	0.55
Upper West	0.35	0.69	0.63	0.31	0.68	0.58	0.34	0.64	0.60
Upper East	0.22	0.69	0.69	0.48	0.57	0.64	0.32	0.57	0.64
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<b>0.84</b>	<b>0.84</b>	<b>0.77</b>	<b>0.86</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>0.81</b>

Source: Rolleston (2009) computed from GLSS 3, 4 and 5

Table 1 suggests that in the three northern regions of Upper East, Upper West and Northern, educational participation among 5-17 years olds increased between 1991 and 2006. The greatest advance was made between 1991 and 1998, with a subsequent decrease in two of the three regions between 1998 and 2006, during the early period of fCUBE implementation. Why this is happening is not entirely clear and will be discussed subsequently.

### **3. The Pre-Independence Period**

Education traditions in Ghana go back centuries. But the origins of the the current basic education structure in Ghana owes much to its colonial past. Between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries French, Portuguese, Dutch and English traders and settlers provided limited education access, especially in the coastal areas, a legacy which has lived on into the present. Christian missions were also active in the education field. Between 1821 and 1840 the British Crown authorities financed a number of government schools, including one for girls. Both government and church-funded schools were based on the public 'monitorial' schools then current in England (Foster, 1963:49). Educated unemployment emerged as early as 1850 when the supply of educated school leavers seeking 'modern' colonial sector jobs exceeded available opportunities. Between 1881 and 1901 the number of schools grew. In 1901 61 schools were associated with the Basel and 49 with the Wesleyan Christian missions, compared with seven government run schools. Education was the privilege of a small minority, largely elite, male and urban and residing in the South of the country. In general, the social demand for education remained low (Foster 1963:79).

All in all, education at this period did not become essentially part of a coherent Government policy. The pattern that emerged was a group of Government aided schools as well as a large number of unaided ones, some of which from time to time asked the Government for money. There was no definite pattern of school distribution, either. Schools sprang up wherever the need was expressed for them, and wherever the townsfolk showed a genuine desire to help in their running (Graham 1971:103).

Schooling for girls remained limited and provided mainly by the missions. Curricula for girls focused on social accomplishments such as needlework and dress making, were oriented towards marriage and reflected curricula in middle class schools for girls in England at the time. But, as Graham (1971:133) also pointed out, the role of women in Ghana was quite unlike that of women in England at that time. Ghanaian women were and are more independent of their husbands.

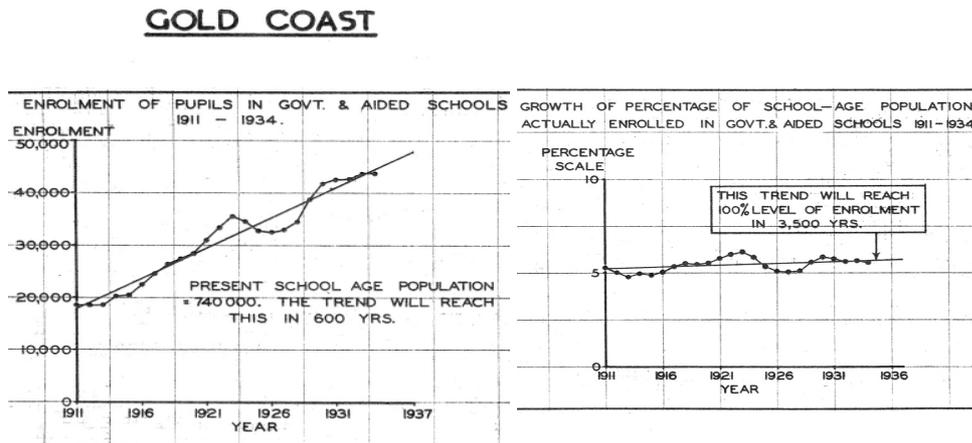
From 1919 there was a marked change in government policy. Governor Guggisberg established 16 guiding principles for the development of education. These stressed equal opportunities for boys and girls, co-education in certain stages, the importance of a vernacular education as the base for English education, the provision of trade schools to equip young men with craft skills and high quality teachers. The principles did not include free and compulsory basic education. Educational expansion was cautious and limited by the supply of trained teachers (Akyeampomg et al, 2007:4). In 1925 the Committee of the Privy Council recommended that school curricula should have a stronger technical/agricultural orientation in order to develop a thriving agricultural economy (Foster, 1963:54-58).

By the 1930s, education planners were projecting student enrolments based on past trends and costs. Figure 1 indicates that between 1911 and 1937 the enrolment of pupils in government and aided schools increased from around 18,000 to 44,000. With an estimated school age population of 740,000 it was calculated that it would take 600 years before all were in school (Figure 1). Based instead on the growth in the percentage of the school-age population enrolled in school it was calculated (Figure 1) that it would take 3,500 years to achieve a GER of 100%! Figure 2 indicates that the costs to the government per student by level of education ranged from £3.9 at the primary level, to £24.6 at secondary to £66.7 at

college level. The pupil projections were based on very slow and unplanned growth of enrolment in government and in aided schools in the past and in a context where government policy to speed up enrolment and raise revenue for education was weak.

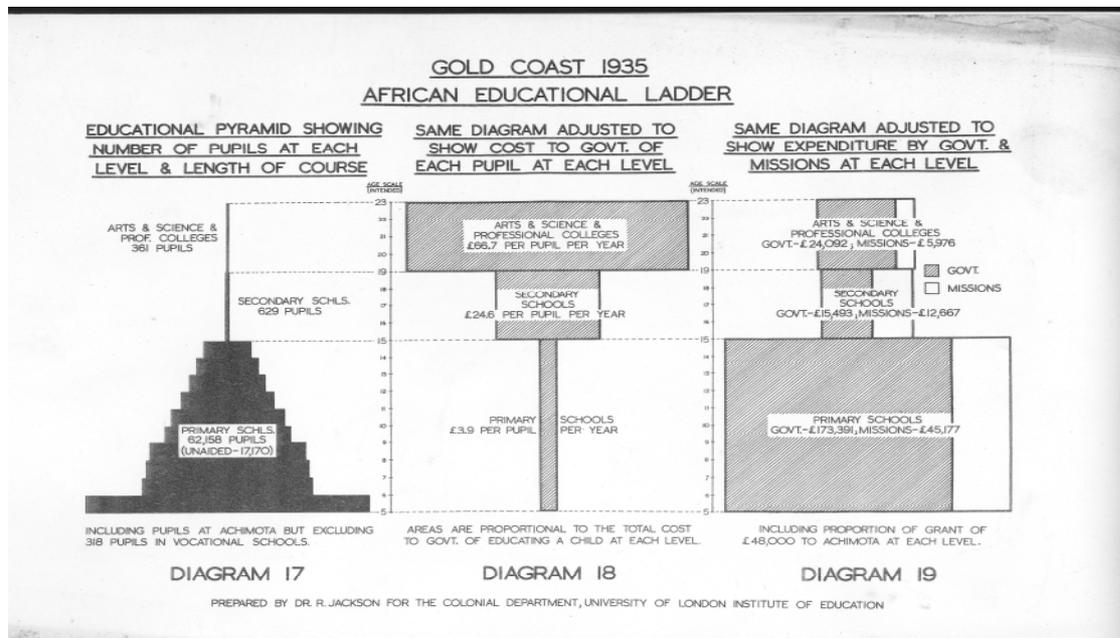
By 1945/6 the colonial government had set out a ten year education plan designed to enrol all children in primary education by 1970.

Figure 1: Enrolment projections c. 1934



Source: University of London Archive, Senate House Library

Figure 2: Costs per student by education level



Source: University of London Archive, Senate House Library

#### **4. Transition to Independence**

In 1951 a legislative assembly was elected, marking the transition from colonial rule to independence for what was still known at that time as the Gold Coast. The transitional government was led by Dr Kwame Nkrumah and his Convention People's Party (CPP). Educational access was more extensive than in any other African territory apart from the Union of South Africa. However, literacy levels were very low, estimated at below 20% of the population. Geographical inequalities in educational provision between the north and the south of the country were marked. The educational system showed:

marked structural similarities to that of the metropolitan power. Superimposed upon an expanding primary network were a few highly selective academic secondary schools together with a very limited provision of alternative types of schools offering technical instruction. As in the earlier stages of English educational development, direct government provision of schools was negligible, and government action was primarily concerned with offering grants-in-aid to institutions developed by voluntary agencies (Foster, 1963:170).

The authors of the Accelerated Development Plan (ADP) for Education of 1951 proposed a massive expansion of provision for primary and middle school education. The plan laid down a revised structure for general education comprising six years of primary, four years of middle schools, five years of secondary and two years of sixth-form education. This structure was introduced gradually and became the blueprint for the system until the 1970s when the structure of the middle and secondary schools was experimented with and until the late 1980s when the structure was changed more fundamentally.

Under the ADP, Teacher Training Colleges were opened and 'pupil teachers' were trained while in service. The ADP introduced tuition fee-free primary education and undertook 'emergency' training of large groups of teachers. The emphasis was on an expansion of access to education for all groups in society. The authors of the ADP introduced the term 'Universal Primary Education' (UPE) into the policy discourse. Enrolment growth was rapid.

In 1957, the Gold Coast and British Togoland were unified. In 1960 Nkrumah became President of the First Republic of Ghana led by the socialist Convention People's Party (CPP). As a result of the growing regional gap in educational access scholarships for primary, secondary and tertiary education were introduced for children from the regions of the north and from parts of Brong-Ahafo. The Education Act of 1961 made primary and middle school education, referred to as elementary education, fee-free. Parents were required to contribute a modest sum for textbooks (Addae-Mensah et al 1973:5). In the six years between 1960/1 and 1966/7 enrolment in public elementary schools more than doubled. By the early 1960s social stratification in access to education in Ghana was already clear. By the early 1970s only about five percent of those who entered primary made the transition to secondary education for which tuition fees continued to be charged (Addae-Mensah et al, 1973:16). The son of a secondary school educated man and a university educated man had 17 and 32 times respectively the chance of entering secondary education as the son of an illiterate. Moreover the general quality of education available to the masses was low, due mainly to the large numbers of untrained and poorly trained teachers (Foster, 1965).

## **5. Educational Policy and Military Governments**

In 1966, Nkrumah was deposed in a *coup d'état* led by the military. The new military government of the National Liberation Council (NLC) and its Chairman, Major General Ankrah, appointed an Educational Review Committee under the chairmanship of Professor A.A. Kwapong. The rapid expansion of access to education in the 1960s was raising concerns in some quarters about the low quality of educational provision. This led to calls to decelerate plans to expand enrolments and to focus on quality. Unemployment among educated school leavers was surfacing as a problem and 'alleged interference by politicians in educational matters were blamed for a relaxation in discipline in schools' (National Education Forum, 1999:6). Indeed one of those who overthrew Nkrumah, A.A. Afrifa, is quoted as justifying the coup in part because of the havoc wrought by rapid education expansion and the lowering of educational standards during Nkrumah's period (Afrifa, 1966 cited in Pedley and Taylor, 2009).

The Kwapong committee recommended that after two years of middle school, a portion of students should be selected for the academic stream in the secondary school. Those not selected would follow a pre-vocational course of two further years in 'continuation' classes. The committee's report also recommended that a long-term objective for the system should be a course of six years at primary school, four years of secondary education, and two years of sixth-form leading to three or more years at university. Although the introduction of 'continuation school' was intended to meet the demand for education relevant to the world of work, its implementation reinforced social divisions between rich and poor as it channelled poorer children into an inferior education oriented to lower status jobs. Under this reform it was still possible to enter the academic secondary stream directly with a strong performance in the Common Entrance Examination (CEE). One unintended result of the policy was an expansion in the number of private primary schools oriented to academic selection via the CEE.

In 1969, parliamentary elections brought the right-leaning Progress Party (PP) to power with Dr Kofi Busia as Prime Minister. This government promoted an anti NLC and anti-Nkrumaist stance. It adopted a liberalised economic system, devalued the Ghana *cedi* by almost half and deported large numbers of Nigerians and others under the 'Aliens Compliance Order' (1969) which provided for the removal of immigrants without proper documentation within two weeks. Public resistance to Busia's government grew rapidly. In 1971, a series of proposals for education reform were made. Another military coup intervened before they could be implemented.

The second military *coup d'état*, in 1972, brought the National Redemption Council (NRC) to power. While the education policy discourse had shifted between 1966 and 1970 to a concern with education quality, it was clear that attention to quality rather than general levels of access was favouring the educational chances of the elite and ruling classes. By the early 1970s educational access had resurfaced as a prime concern. By now, it was the issue of access to secondary rather than primary school that had moved centre-stage.

Educational research was being used in the policy discourse to promote a renewed emphasis on access. Addae-Mensah et al. (1973) explored the relationship between family background, educational opportunity and performance in CEE. They demonstrated that children who had attended what were termed 'special primary schools' (i.e. private schools) typically made the transition to secondary after only six or seven years of primary education, whereas most of

those attending the government-funded schools who passed the exam did so only after eight, nine or ten years of primary and middle school. In 1972, 21% of students from special primary schools appeared among the first 1,000 best performing candidates, compared with less than one percent of students from government schools. Successful candidates from special schools entered the high reputation secondary schools disproportionately. Many of the middle classes used the private primary schools to give their children a head start in the race to gain access the best government secondary schools via the CEE without recourse to the middle school. Access to secondary education was not only unequal across the social classes but it was also inequitable.

In 1974 the Dzobo Committee on education recommended a 'New Structure and Content of Education' (NSCE). It drew on several of the proposals made first by the 1971 committee that had worked during the time of Busia's progress party. The NSCE proposed a common, diversified and extended basic education cycle in which all children would follow a common curriculum for nine years, six in primary schools and three in the newly established junior secondary schools (JSS), followed by four years of senior secondary school (SSS) split into two stages of two years each. The recommendation was partly motivated by concerns in relation to equity which had surfaced following the appearance of favourable routes through the basic-school system for those able to access better quality education (often through private schooling) at the earlier stages, which afforded a considerable selection advantage at secondary-level.

The former 'middle schools' were to be removed from the structure, reducing the notional maximum length of the school system from 17 years to 13 years. It was intended that the 'middle schools' be 'converted' into junior secondary schools, which would provide a curriculum akin to the first three forms of the traditional secondary schools. At the same time, the committee also recommended that the curriculum be made more practical and skills-oriented, through pre-technical and pre-vocational subjects in both the primary and junior secondary stage. In order to implement the new reforms the Ghana Education Service (GES) was established, bringing together teachers, administrators and other education personnel into a unified service under the Ministry of Education.

The proposals encountered many implementation challenges. Although 118 experimental JSS were established between 1974 and 1986, this plan was not extended to the whole country. There was considerable resistance to the JSS concept, not least from among the middle-class bureaucrats of the newly established GES. A member of the subsequent 1987 reforms central committee explained that the main resistance flowed from the middle class bureaucrats rather than the middle classes as a whole. The bureaucrats were:

afraid of losing their power and their authority. That's why – human nature. They were very conservative, they were resisting change (interview with author).

The implementation of the Dzobo committee proposals was also undermined by a lack of financial resources. Oil price hikes, low levels of domestic and foreign investment and general economic decline saw the percentage of government revenues spent on education fall from 6.4% to 1.5% between 1976 and 1983 (World Bank, 2004:7). Shortages of teaching and learning materials in schools impoverished the quality of the education system. Many trained teachers migrated to Nigeria for work in its fast-growing oil-based economy. Growth in enrolment in all stages of education was slower than the growth in the relevant population age groups and:

the decay of those parts of the system patronised by the mass of the population was so marked that it was doubtful whether children were learning anything. More than half the teachers were untrained, there were virtually no textbooks in the schools, there was no inspection or supervision, and the few resources available were used to employ superfluous staff rather than purchase essential educational materials. In addition pilferage and theft has reached endemic proportions (World Bank, 1989:vi).

As well as a lack of financial resources, one official at the time reflected on the lack of political will to implement the proposals (interview with author).

The introduction of junior secondary schools with a three-year cycle, in the presence of resourcing difficulties including in terms of facilities and adequately trained teaching-staff, has led to believe that they have served to replicate or even to worsen the inequality inherent in the former middle-school system (interview with author). The new junior secondary schools (which had been former middle schools) could not prepare pupils to the standard achieved in the former academic secondary schools. Equivalence at the end of Form Three between new JSS and old secondary schools was defined by the reforms, but not realised in practice. Previously, the academic secondary schools comprised pupils who had passed the Common Entrance Examination, and these schools were considerably better resourced, especially in terms of teachers who were typically university graduates, compared to the former middle-school teachers who were typically post-secondary trained. Comparing the old and new 'elite' and 'mainstream' routes through the system, commentators note that under the new system it was the mainstream pupil whose *de facto* pre-tertiary preparation was significantly reduced. The potential to access 'academic' secondary schooling after two, three or four years of middle school (eight, nine or ten years of basic education) was removed and a common cycle of 9 years of basic education imposed. The elite continued to avail themselves of access to private preparatory schools and either high quality former secondary (now JSS) or private JSS schools (interview with author).

For some, it was the failure to ensure the quality of state primary schooling in terms of pre-secondary preparation and the failure to ensure quality improvements in the ex-middle schools that served to perpetuate and reinforce inequality in the post-Dzobo system. This was caused, the argument goes, by those among the elite bent on reforming a system they did not intend to use for their own children and the doubts expressed, particularly among bureaucrats in the GES, stemmed rather more from concerns about widening inequality under the proposed reforms than from vested interests. Moreover, some argue that the reforms were not supported by a majority of the elite, whose interests were well served by the old system, but that certain powerful elites allied themselves with reforms supported by the World Bank for reasons associated with their own political interests, recommending a system of improved equity *de jure* but which, in line with the concerns of the rest of the elite and among the bureaucrats, was to result in potentially greater inequity *de facto* (interview with author).

In 1979 the third military coup brought Flight Lieutenant Rawlings to power as Chairman of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) for a brief period. The AFRC aimed to purge corruption and graft from the armed forces and wider society. After elections in September 1979, power was handed over to Dr Hilla Limann of the social democratic People's National Party (PNP). The PNP government lasted for just over two years before Rawlings led Ghana's fourth, and his second, *coup d'état*, assuming power with his left-wing Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC). The economy remained in a dire state and by 1982 per capita incomes were 30% below their 1970s level, import volumes were one third

less and export earnings just half (World Bank, 1989). The economy was very weak, and the prospects of reform in education poor.

## **6. The 1987 Education Reforms**

### **6.1 Policy Context**

The character of political will and the availability of financial resources were to change in the mid 1980s. After leading his second military coup Rawlings had expected financial support to flow in from socialist countries and the Eastern Bloc in his efforts to counter economic decline. When this support did not materialise, he turned to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, launching the Economy Recovery Programme (ERP) in 1983 (Pedley and Taylor, 2009). The ERP included currency devaluation, reductions in tariff levels and import restrictions, increased prices for export crops, retrenchment of public sector employment and increased levels of government expenditure. With GDP growth of 6.3% per annum, the early economic gains were substantial (World Bank, 1989).

Alongside the ERP came a political agenda that was anti-elitist, pro-poor, pro-rural: in short populist. Radical reforms in education were aimed at improving the quality of educational provision and at more equitable access to primary and secondary education. Much of the ERP focussed on the rural economy.

The PNDC government realised that if the ERP was to succeed, the skill and attitudes of Ghanaian youth would have to be changed so that they would be prepared to become productive farmers or skilled artisans and craftsmen ready to work for their own, their community's and their country's development (World Bank, 1989:2).

The low quality of education in the early 1980s has been described by many, including the National Education Forum (NEF), which, in 1999 offered a retrospective.

By 1983, Ghana's educational system, which until the mid-1970s was known to be one of the most highly developed and effective in West Africa, had deteriorated in quality. Enrolment rates, once among the highest in the sub-Saharan region, stagnated and fell. The percentage of GDP allocated to education dropped from 6.4 percent in 1976 to 1.7 percent. The real levels of financing fell by about two-thirds. Government resources were no longer available to construct, complete or maintain educational facilities. Scarcity of foreign exchange affected the country's ability to purchase textbooks and other teaching and learning materials. The economic downturn also resulted in the mass exodus of qualified teachers. At the basic education level, the ratio of trained to untrained teachers fell significantly. Low motivation and morale led to ineffective supervision. Finally, the lack of data and statistics needed for vital planning led to decisions being taken on an *ad hoc* basis (National Education Forum, 1999:9).

In its retrospective assessment of the same period, but published some ten years earlier, the World Bank provided a withering and harsh description of the state of teaching and learning in the early 1980s, not inconsistent with that offered by the National Education Forum. The authors of the report commented on the limited number of school hours and days available for student learning, the absence of learning materials and the low level of literacy among grade six completers. They went on to comment very unfavourably on the quality and motivation of teachers and school administrators.

... the school has been seen by unscrupulous administrators as a way of placing relatives or friends in salaried employment, even when the prospective teacher is semi-literate himself and his post not justified according to student numbers ... The job of circuit officer (inspector) has generally been considered a sinecure, offered as a reward to long serving teachers with no precise job description or clear duties. Teachers would only turn up to school when it suited them and consequently student attendance was generally low and dropout rates high. Teachers would often demand that students work on their farms which led parents to withdraw their children from school (World Bank, 1989:18).

An early policy reform by the PNDC in 1983 was the promulgation of the PNDC Law 42. The Ghana Education Service Council and the National Council for Higher Education were dissolved and their statutory powers transferred to the PNDC Secretary (equivalent to the term Minister in an elected parliamentary government). In 1983 a conference of Directors of Education reviewed the Dzobo report and made recommendations. In 1985 a National Education Commission (NEC) on education was established to advise the Secretary. The commission held extensive consultations across the country that involved trade unions, the heads of secondary schools, civil servants and university students. Technical advice from foreign consultants and the World Bank was employed alongside technical advice from a wide range of Ghanaian professionals. In essence, the NEC's recommendations echoed those made nine years earlier by the Dzobo committee under the military regime of the National Redemption Council. The challenge now was their implementation.

The NEC's work was soon taken over by the Ministry of Education. Indeed some would describe the take-over as an aggressive political move by the Ministry of Education and in particular by one of the deputy secretaries of education.

... as the commission was working, all of a sudden the then deputy secretary for education took charge of the reform in a very aggressive way and therefore this commission was sidelined ... So it was I would say so aggressive that there was some kind of resistance. People felt that there was indeed a need for reform, there was no question about it but the pace at which the reform was going I think looked too fast for people ... But it was a military government so there wasn't anything like say democracy or anything. And so she set up some committees operating within the ministry and in fact the secretary herself was not actively involved (interview with author).

The revolutionary, military political regime under which the 1986/7 reforms were formulated and driven, was markedly different from that of earlier periods. The process of policy formulation brought professional experts, several from the university sector, into the decision-making arena and conferred political powers on them as ministers or deputy ministers. Some of those who were centrally involved in the policy dialogue recalled:

this was a government that saw itself as a revolutionary government ... and in it were people who had a lot of ideas about how to get us ... out of the economic crunch and the social consequences of the economic crunch. So that was from the very top ... and ... the people who were ministers were often technocrats with a passion for change and ... who wanted to reformulate things and see how to make them more with a few resources. We were the sort of people who thought that the universities should have farms, that sort of thing (interview with author).

When the PNDC government came into power and ... it was all political ... this mass movement. Everybody then was interested in seeing issues in their right perspective ... And all of us agreed that something drastic had to happen for education ... the drive in policy was increase access (interview with author).

The 1987 reforms were designed to overcome many maladies in education - both in improving access to education, especially to the junior secondary stage, and improving the quality of education and learning. Wide ranging in scope and covering the entire education sector from primary to tertiary level, the key basic education elements with implications for education access reflected the much earlier 1974 proposals of the Dzobo committee. Indeed, most commentators agree that the 1987 reforms were an attempt to put into practice the recommendations of the 1974 proposals which, in turn, owed their roots to a 1971 committee appointed by Dr Busia. The 1987 reforms were of four main types.

*Structure of Education:* Reduce the pre-university span from 17 years to 12 years. Replace the primary (6), middle (4) and secondary school (5) structure with primary (6), junior secondary (3) and secondary (3). Introduce non-selective basic education across the primary and junior secondary stages (6+3).

*Curriculum:* Provide children with literacy skills in their own language, a second Ghanaian language and English, modern farming skills, familiarity in using tools, manual dexterity, practical mathematics. Create positive attitudes to hard work and national development. Restructure teacher education.

*Expected destinations of graduates from basic education:* The majority of graduates from basic education were expected to become productive modern farmers (with support from agricultural extension services); a substantial number to become productive skilled workers (with short term training or informal apprenticeships); 30% to proceed to secondary education.

*Finance of Education:* Concentration of resources on basic education. Savings to be made by reducing length of pre-university course from 17 to 12 years; redeployment of unnecessary non teaching and unqualified teaching staff; charging of book user fees from Grade 3; the removal of boarding and feeding subsidies for secondary and tertiary institutions and removal of student subsidies in tertiary education. (World Bank, 1989).

## **6.2 Policy Implementation and Resistance**

The reforms were announced by the secretary for education and culture in October 1986 for implementation from September 1987. Their initial implementation was handled firmly and decisively. Leadership from the top, comprising the secretary for education, the deputy secretary for basic and secondary education and the deputy secretary for higher education was strong.

The detailed planning of the reforms and their implementation occurred in parallel for most of the 1987-1992 period. The PNDC government wasted no time in moving to country-wide implementation, just eleven months after the reforms had been announced. The reforms were not piloted and were introduced nationwide 'with less than a year's lead time in order to prevent vested interests from mobilising against the reforms' (World Bank, 1989:2). Vested

interests in maintaining the structure and content of education were anticipated to lie among the elite who had for some time gained considerable advantage for their own children in a socially stratified, urban-oriented, academic and selective education system. Despite the political determination to embark on implementation 'money or no money', external financial support was necessary. The World Bank stepped in early to support the reform process. In 1984-5 initial education sector analytical and planning work as well as essential school materials were provided, followed by substantial education sector credits between 1986-91 and 1990-94 to support the reforms (World Bank, 2004:20).

The decision to introduce the reforms with less than year's lead time points to a well-known tension between the technical and political imperatives of education reform. Most education policy implementers stress the need to trial and pilot reforms in order to test their technical characteristics and take corrective action before going to scale. Politically, reforms are often pushed through hard and fast to circumvent resistance and/or to secure electoral support. Pushed too fast the political imperative can backfire and create tensions in the early stages of implementation.

The reforms met with resistance from several quarters. Those in the driving seat were aware that the middle classes and associated political groups from earlier regimes would resist components of the reforms. Already, the middle classes' resistance to a common system of secondary education that would place their children in a common race for educational and occupational opportunities had thwarted reform efforts in the 1960s and the 1970s. But the political scene had changed. Since the PNDC's political base was the rural poor, it did not fear the middle classes.

Students resisted proposed reforms in higher education. These were dealt with firmly and universities were closed for periods of time. The PNDC government had relied on students for their support initially. But since universities and the students within them were widely regarded as elitist, the government did not feel threatened by the anticipated loss of their support (World Bank, 2004:29-30).

Resistance to the general education reforms also came from the middle class bureaucrats in the (GES). Once again the government acted firmly.

... the Secretary for Education told the GES that if they are not prepared for the implementation of the reform they will all be removed from office by revolutionary order (interview with author).

This demonstrated the government's determination to overcome resistance by all means possible, it transferred three important units from the GES - Supplies, Curriculum Research and Development and Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation - to the ministry. The army was mobilised to distribute textbooks to the new JSS. Some GES officials were charged with corruption. A former director general of the GES at that time recalled the way in which the GES was sidelined by both government and the World Bank.

I was hardly consulted. The World Bank people were part of the problem. They preferred really the political heads ... they made a b-line to the political heads. They ignored the director general and I should have resigned ... But ... that would have been (seen a) a case of sabotage. That's how they would have looked at it. There was no way I could explain myself (interview with author).

Anticipated resistance from the regional administrations was bypassed largely by the establishment of the newly established district Assemblies. The district assemblies were expected to raise public awareness of the reforms, mobilise funds and oversee the massive school building programme.

Overt resistance to the reforms was muted. Military regimes typically wield power in an authoritarian way. Orders are orders, directives are directives. Debate is stifled. People do not speak out and are intimidated. As a university academic who was played a key role in the educational reform commented:

This was a directive. So it was easier. And you know the direction ... whether people like it or not they don't mind the other opposing views. It can come but it doesn't matter (interview with author).

Resistance to the reform from the middle classes was certainly present, but it was passive. Those who resisted did not speak out at public discussions about the reforms. Instead, they found ways of by-passing the new system. Many middle class children attended private primary schools and sat the CEE a year early. In this way they entered the traditional secondary school directly rather than wait a year and proceed to secondary via the new JSS. This practice was also followed by the children of some, but not all, members of PNDC. The practice of using the private primary schools to gain subsequent advantage within the public secondary and tertiary systems continues to the present day (Djangmah, 2009:1).

### **6.3 Technical Challenges**

As implementation moved forward, a number of challenges were faced, some technical and some political. Technically, some felt that change was being pushed too fast, with insufficient attention being paid to detail. While controversial reforms for the financing of universities were leading to student protests, university staff expressed their concerns about the likely impact of the reforms on basic and secondary education and the quality of university student intake.

Suddenly we decided that after six years everybody must transit into something that ought to be equivalent to a secondary school ... Ideally this was perfect, excellent if every child in the country could have education to the level of what we would consider to be secondary education. It would boost the intellectual level of all children. Unfortunately over 80% of the schools in the country in the public system were the so-called middle schools ... transformed overnight to junior secondary schools but they were nothing more than glorified middle schools. Suddenly schools where one person was teaching every subject in a class in the middle school became a junior secondary school. And the same teacher was supposed to teach various subjects - mathematics, English, geography, history - to a level that ought to be equivalent to what used to be secondary school Form 1 in the old system. Naturally that affected standards (interview with author).

An evaluation by a British volunteer teacher-educator working in the north during the earliest years of the reform confirmed the burdens on teachers (Scadding, 1989). Because the JSS curriculum had been extended to thirteen subjects, teachers were now obliged to teach four subjects where previously they had taught two and felt under increased pressure to cover the official syllabi. A compulsory two week training course conducted country-wide in the

summer of 1987 was judged by teachers to be inadequate, especially in relation to the teaching of the specifics of particular subjects. The sense of isolation was acute among teachers in the rural and sparsely populated north. The innovative pedagogic methods of continuous assessment, group-work and inquiry-based learning posed particular challenges for teachers. There were worries too about the overwhelming emphasis on the JSS stage to the detriment of the first six years of primary where the foundations of formal learning and the foundations for the JSS stage are built. Early concerns were also expressed about the inequalities beginning to arise between communities as they 'shared' responsibility with government for the building of the new schools. Recognising that the reforms themselves were 'fundamentally imaginative, forward-thinking' and were inspiring and enthusing many teachers and educationalists, Scadding (1989:48) also wondered 'if the government has not bitten off more than it can chew'.

Scepticism about the quality of the graduates from the restructured secondary school system was considerable. In 1993, the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) results among the first nationwide JSS cohort were lower than expected, triggering national debate about the effectiveness and appropriateness of the new structure of education. There was considerable confusion about the intended level of the SSSCE.

The Education Commission was clear that it should be pegged at O level since the old A level was for the cream of the O level who enrolled in sixth forms. The ministry said that the SSSCE should be a shade above O level, so syllabuses were prepared based on standard of examinations above O level (interview with author).

They were also unhappy about the school-based continuous assessment which contributed 40% of the total marks per subject. The universities expected about 20,000 students to qualify with a minimum aggregate of 24. In the event, only 1,300 reached this level. As a former chairman of the Universities Entrance Examination Committee was to ponder, years later:

In which country does mass education reach such levels with all the inadequacy of books, science and mathematics teaching and a basic school system which is taught by trained teachers who are university rejects ambition-wise and examination results wise (interview with author).

The universities responded by insisting on setting their own entrance examinations.

Notwithstanding the quality of education and levels of achievement reached, the restructuring of the pre-university system nationwide to a 6+3+3 model went ahead and has endured. It was probably the most radical reform component to have been implemented.

The second most radical component was the vocationalisation of the curriculum, especially at the JSS level. It posed technical challenges. It was capital intensive, requiring equipment and workshops unavailable everywhere. Since 12-15 subjects were to be studied in all it placed a heavy burden on the curriculum and on students. The requirement that practical skills in technical and vocational subjects be developed across the country in an objective and comparable manner proved impossible to meet and the Examinations Council resorted to using written items to assess practical work. A former chairman of a JSS management committee recalled:

In the whole of the Central Region (our children) were the best in terms of the exams introduced under the reforms but they didn't have a workshop. They could do well in all these technical subjects and so on but they really didn't have any workshop. They were just memorising the things and passing (interview with author).

The proposal to provide one workshop per JSS contrasted markedly with the technical training centres that had previously served a number of middle schools. The financial requirements were considerable and did not attract support from the World Bank (see World Bank, 2004:28).

#### **6.4 Tensions between Technical and Political Imperatives**

At a local level politicians were involved in implementation decisions through their role in district assemblies and in particular the education social services committee. Politicians were also involved at the village level in decisions about school restructuring and in ways that were sometimes in conflict with the technical plans of education managers. A former district director recalled some of the conflicts with politicians and religious leaders, and the compromises that had to be reached at village level:

The total enrolment of the primary school was 96 but for political reasons the assembly man wanted popularity and attempted to put in a six-classroom block ... I went there to inspect with my team to see the facility before we gave a ruling and there were a lot of local chiefs ... they wanted schools ... even if the proximity of the other school is less than five kilometres still they wanted it. And it had implications for resources. But of course when we saw that it was going to bring a lot of conflict and issues, we sometimes acceded to some of these. You look at the situation on the ground; because in some cases they won't let the children go school ... you really have to do a lot of consultation even at a friendly level (with the churches). You could see a church here is very close and it has a Roman Catholic primary school, then there is a Methodist primary school. But the (total) enrolment of these two together does not even meet the criteria for one school. You need to talk to them, consult, and say 'OK we'll give you the primary school but they will pick the JSS' ... So there were political (aspects) under of all those things about access (interview with author).

Resistance of other kinds also arose at local level. Community labour was key to the success of the JSS school building programme. The government provided pavilion structures with foundations, walls and a roof, while community members were trained to complete the cladding of walls. In some cases those opposed to the military government persuaded communities that the government was wrong to expect them to provide their labour and that school buildings were entirely a government responsibility. Such influence discouraged some communities from sharing the responsibility for the provision of school infrastructure.

Notwithstanding the difficulties faced in some communities, all those interviewed judged that it was easier to implement the hardware programmes of buildings than the software programmes of the curriculum and teacher education. A particular issue arose in relation to the rewriting of textbooks. Traditionally most text book writers had been contracted from among university teachers. When the new texts needed to be written, the ministry fell back, not unexpectedly on traditional expertise - the same university teachers who had offered the greatest source of resistance to the reforms.

## **6.5 Formal Evaluations**

Large-scale formal evaluations reinforce many of the points made above. Within two years of the 1987 reforms being launched, the World Bank (1989) undertook an early formal assessment, with a particular focus on the junior secondary stage and its likely effectiveness on employment opportunities for young people. In part this early assessment was motivated by a desire to make constructive input to the implementation stage which had been launched quickly and with no pilot. Implicitly it provided encouragement to the government for the reforms and endorsed their general ideology.

The evaluation reported varying levels of support among parents for the reforms. Strong support was voiced by rural and small town craftsmen, though this was lower in the Central and Western regions compared with the Eastern, Volta and Ashanti regions. Parents in the Central and Western regions expressed concerns over the hurried implementation of the reforms and shortages of teachers to teach the practical and technical subjects. Least support for the reforms was reported from the north where, historically, educational provision and participation had been lower, where parents feared that teachers used education to proselytise, and where, historically education had been completely free. These problems were compounded by the fact that household incomes were heavily dependent on subsistence agriculture, that academic timetables were insensitive to the seasons in the north and the opportunity costs of education were therefore likely to be relatively high. The evaluators noted that while the long school vacation had been changed to coincide with the peak planting season in the south, the same period coincided with a very low demand for farm labour in the north. The possibility of aligning the dates of school vacations in the north and the south with their respective peaks of seasonal labour demand did not appear to have been considered and to this day remains an issue (see Hadley, 2009 for a fuller discussion of seasonality). Community involvement in the construction of school buildings and JSS workshops was reported to be high in many areas, though the evaluators noted that the wide range of roles and responsibilities expected of communities extend beyond building.

The evaluation of the reforms to improve the quality of curriculum and assessment yielded mixed results. While the JSS level textbooks were judged to be well-prepared and conveyed messages consistent with the objectives of the reform.

The timetable still carries an anti-practical bias, with the practical work often being concentrated at the end of the day or even outside the normal timetable. The lack of a textbook for Ghanaian languages carries the hidden message that these are less important than English and other subjects. At the primary level less attention has been paid to avoiding an urban, middle-class, modern-sector bias in the textbooks ... Pedagogically there are too many subjects taught in any one year at the JSS level. There is no way a student can absorb 12 or 13 subjects at a time (World Bank, 1989:20).

The system was judged to be both under-financed and over-financed. Teachers qualified to teach the new JSS subjects were in short supply. This was confirmed some years later by Akyeampong et al (2007:9) who concluded that the implementation of the technical and vocational aspects of the reform was compromised by the inadequate supply of well-trained technical and vocational instructors. While this indicated under-financing, the World Bank study drew attention to the 'overfinancing' of the system caused by overstaffing and the inefficient use of resources and time. In many, JSS staff had been appointed in excess of

quotas. Duplication of facilities was noted in the south where schools belonging to different church denominations, but funded almost entirely by government, were located very close together. Schooling hours were judged to be very low - 23 official school hours per week in JSS and 17.5 hours in primary. When teacher absenteeism, late starts to the day and unofficial school closures are taken into account actual school hours were far fewer.

A subsequent World Bank evaluation (2004) reported that the textbook charges in primary education were removed in 1995. Subsidies for boarding and feeding in secondary and tertiary institutions were removed through an increase in parental contributions and the subsequent removal of the parental contribution. The proposal to remove subsidies for university students ran into political difficulties owing to student protests and was delayed for some time before a loan scheme was introduced.

Teachers' views on the reform were mixed. In 1991 an evaluation of teachers' perceptions of the reform was conducted by John Nyoagbe on behalf of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT). This evaluation of 333 teachers assessed teacher preparation for the reforms and examined how the reforms affected teacher workload in terms of pre-lesson preparation, lesson delivery, evaluation of learning outcomes and class-size. It also explored teacher involvement in community participation and teacher views on the policy of cost sharing.

In general, teachers felt they had been consulted insufficiently prior to the implementation of the reforms. When contrary views were expressed during the consultations that did take place these were felt to have been suppressed.

... the public fora organised in the wake of the reforms in 1987 did not offer them enough opportunity to articulate their candid views as professionals and the live-wire in the implementation of the school reforms. Where views contrary to the official stance were expressed ... these were not tolerated and in certain instances they were considered subversive. A case in point was the timing and phasing of the reforms and their position that necessary logistics be mobilised up front before implementation took off (Nyoagbe, 1993:9).

Most teachers felt that their professional training had equipped them well to implement the reforms in most curriculum areas. The exception was technical and vocational education, introduced in the JSS. A dearth of teachers was qualified to teach technical drawing and other technical and vocational skills. Many teachers called for the need for more orientation courses to specific aspects of the reforms. In an interview in 2009 Nyoagbe recalled the teachers' union's suggestion for a phased implementation of the reforms and the PNDC's resistance to this proposal

We even made some proposals to them that the reforms should have started from Primary 1. The thinking was that with each passing year, you phase in another grade after you develop the curriculum and all that. But the government was suspicious of that arrangement ... So when the Ghana National Association of Teachers advised that we should prepare, we should take things slowly and phase things gradually, the PNDC government was not too accommodating of that request. And in order to ensure that the reforms went through they rather started from the junior high school level. They went to the top before they came back to look at the primary school curriculum. And that is what happened. And then hurriedly teachers ... were

orientated for a couple of weeks. It was a very rough take off and many teachers were not happy. They didn't have the confidence and the mastery to handle many of the new subjects introduced in the curriculum (interview with author).

Teachers commented on the increased workload required for lesson preparation and assessment of pupil work. Although the continuous assessment scheme had introduced new forms of assessment it consumed large amounts of teacher time and effort. In many cases class sizes had increased. At the time of the survey, 43% of teachers were managing class sizes of between 41 and 60 pupils with five percent of teachers managing more than 60. The charging of fees for the use of books was felt by many teachers to be deterring some pupils from attending school. The non availability of pupil learning materials was a source of frustration for most teachers. Teacher views were divided on whether the increased level of examination fees could be afforded by many parents. There was general agreement that school involvement in co-curricular activities such as sports and games had been enhanced. Teacher perceptions of community support for the reforms were also divided, reflecting in all probability the variations in community involvement in education reforms. Teachers were also divided on whether the reforms had improved the quality of teaching and learning and on whether they had experienced greater fulfilment in teaching or not (Nyoagbe, 1993:13).

Financial resources ploughed into the 1986 reforms were considerable. The principal external donor during the period 1986 to 1994 was the World Bank, initially through the Health and Education Rehabilitation Project (HERP) and two education sector adjustment credits, EdSACI and II. These were followed in subsequent years by the Primary School Development (PSD) project and the Basic Education Sector Improvement Project (BESIP), two investment projects for Community Secondary School Construction and Tertiary Education and two projects for adult literacy (World Bank, 2004).

## **6.6 Political Will**

Political scientists underline the strength of political will associated with the 1987 reforms. Elsewhere, I have offered a definition of political will as a sustained commitment of politicians and administrators to invest the necessary resources to achieve specific objectives and a willingness to make and implement policy despite opposition (Little, 2008). Addressing the question of political will and reforms in primary education Kosak (2009:496) suggests that 'no government will provide primary education unless doing so helps the government to stay in power' and suggests two conditions under which support for primary education helps the government to stay in power. The first is where the political base of the government is the rural poor, and the second is where employers need large numbers of workers qualified to the primary school level. But the poor need a 'political entrepreneur' to help their claims. In the Ghana case, especially between 1986 and 1992, the interests of the poor were served by General Rawlings' PNDC revolutionary government, challenging the assertions of those that suggest that investments in primary education are best served by democratic governments (Kosak, 2009). Most evaluators of the 1987 reforms would agree that they were driven by considerable high level political will. Inevitably, resistance arose from various quarters but it was dealt with firmly and was muted. While implementation of the reforms made good headway in the early years, overall progress was much slower than expected. Implementation would gain new momentum in the 1990s.

## **7. Sustaining Implementation of the 1987 Reforms in a New Democracy**

1992 was a watershed in Ghana's political history and marked the beginning of a period of sustained political stability and strengthening democracy. Military governments had dominated for more than half the period since 1957. By the early 1990s pressures from within the country and from external development partners led to the establishment of the National Commission for Democracy. The commission consulted widely and recommended the election of an executive president, the formation of a national assembly, the creation of the post of prime minister and the adoption of a new constitution. Among the many issues raised were falling standards in education and the continued exclusion of many from education.

In power since 1981, Rawlings retired from the Army in 1992 and stood for election under the newly named National Democratic Congress (NDC). The NDC won most of the seats in the new assembly. The 1992 Constitution of the Fourth Republic of Ghana came into effect on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 1993. It marked a highly significant shift in the political environment in which education policy would be formulated and implemented. More than that, it marked a distinct shift in political legitimacy and the beginnings of a new democratic era.

The 1992 parliamentary and presidential elections were the first of five so far in the new democratic era, including a peaceful handover of government from one political party (the NDC) to another, the New Patriotic Party, (NPP) in 2008, and back again in 2008 ... this marks a shift in terms of political legitimacy. In the past, democratically elected governments were at risk of being overthrown by the military ... governments have skilfully managed the leadership and incentives of the military so that it poses no real threat to continued civilian rule (Pedley and Taylor, 2009:15).

Article 25 of the new constitution made basic education 'free, compulsory and available to all'. Article 38 (2) of the constitution required that the government:

shall within two years after Parliament first meets after the coming into force of this Constitution, draw up a programme for implementation within the following ten years, for the provision of free, compulsory and universal basic education (Article 38 (2), the Constitution of the Fourth Republic of Ghana, 1992).

This constitutional duty added new impetus to the implementation of the 1987 reforms through the Free, Compulsory, Universal Basic Education programme (fCUBE). The enshrinement of free and compulsory basic education in the constitution reinforced more strongly than before the principles of free primary education set out in 1951 and the free and compulsory education clauses in the 1961 act. The constitutional mandate gave citizens of Ghana the legal right to free and compulsory education. It also offered legitimacy to the civilian government. As a recently retired chief director of the ministry explained:

fCUBE was started in 1996 and ended in 2005. It was driven by a constitutional mandate ... successive governments cannot run away from this. It is something that has to be run to make sure there is access for all school children ... When these people who came from a military government became a civilian government, there was an issue of legitimacy and acceptability. Education has been the key agenda of many governments ... and was coming from a political angle (interview with author).

The development of the fCUBE programme was spearheaded by the minister of education. Ad hoc committees and sub committees were formed. Membership drew from experienced members of the education service, the universities and others. The main objectives of the programme were increasing access and participation, increasing the quality of education and improving management efficiency. Recalling the discourse of the time, a former director general of the ministry said:

they always added participation to access (to refer to the fact that) not only should the people be in school but also the community's involvement in this whole process. In between this everyone was talking about gender and girls' education. So in the access and participation making sure that equal opportunities were given to girls and making sure there was gender parity and so on (interview with author).

The fCUBE programme was published in 1995 and reflected several years of work by ministry personnel, education officers, citizen groups, donors and consultants. Described as a strategic plan rather than a policy it sought to add momentum to the implementation of the 1986 reforms through five 'strategic elements' which in turn were intended to 'redress four major deficiencies in the present education system' (GoG, 1995:4). These four (GoG, 1995:4-5) were:

*Access* - must be expanded but especially for girls and citizens living in disadvantaged areas and who, for social and economic reasons have not yet sufficiently partaken in the educational process.

*Efficiency* - repetition and dropout rates must be reduced.

*Quality* - increase the pass rate for admission into secondary cycle institutions to 80% by 2005. By the same year 75% of Basic stage pupils to meet minimum standards of performance on national criterion referenced tests.

*Relevancy* of basic education will be increased through quality improvement in the curriculum and by strengthening community participation in oversight of local schools.

The five strategic and integrated elements designed to remedy these four deficiencies were infrastructure development, management reform, curriculum change, community participation and improvement of quality of personnel who support basic education at all levels. Technical sub-committees were established for each of these areas.

The designers of fCUBE undertook to make education decentralisation a reality in the districts through the Local Government Acts of 1988 and 1993 (Act 462) and through the 1995 Ghana Education Service Act. They reviewed and revised teaching material and syllabi, introduced additional incentives for teachers (through housing and prizes), and proposed a shift to distance-based in-service teacher training. Access and participation were promoted through school infrastructure schemes and pilot scholarship schemes to increase access among girls in primary schools. fCUBE also provided a framework for coordinated donor support to education.

Consultation was conducted extensively with representatives of teachers and parent-teacher associations, with churches, district directors of education, district assemblies and the West African Examinations Council. The minister was centrally involved, not least because:

he realised that this was a constitutional issue and in parliament questions were always being asked as to how far this was going (interview with author).

While high level political will continued to have a positive impact on policy implementation it continued to undermine the formal and mandated role of the bureaucrats in the GES.

In our structure like in many other countries there is a separation of policy from implementation. The ministry focuses on policy ... and the Ghana Education Service is for implementation. The criticism I had (was that) it did not allow the Ghana Education Service who are really in touch with the schools and teachers to own the programme. They were just driven to do this and that ... education that was being talked about and being pushed but the motivations were mixed (interview with author).

In recognition of the rushed preparation of teachers for the 1987 reforms, fCUBE proposed more thorough schemes for teacher preparation and upgrading.

There was the need for a more thorough teacher preparation and that thorough preparation includes not only feeding them with the necessary content and the pedagogical skills but also preparing them psychologically to own the fCUBE process. So that was one aspect. Then the question of teacher motivation itself and a whole lot of things go into motivation. (There are) issues about continuous professional education, about recognition for excellent performance, and about better pay which will retain them in the existing profession (interview with author).

A major programme of teacher education and the upgrading of teachers' qualifications through distance education was spearheaded by the University College of Winneba. As if this challenge was not enough in itself Winneba became a university in its own right in 1994. Winneba would face technical and institutional implementation challenges simultaneously. The technical challenge was the development of a large-scale teacher education system through a new technology - distance learning. The institutional challenge was the creation of a new university from six teacher training colleges. A former vice chancellor recalled four of the institutional challenges that arose. The first was the rivalry among the staff of the six colleges. A second was the creation of new syllabi tailored to the work of training teachers. A third was a shortage of accommodation to meet the various needs of technical, agriculture, music and physical education. Finally there was the need to establish a university and a university culture.

We even had a re-designation of staff. We were moving people from the Ghana Education Service culture into a university culture. Therefore they are coming with different designations and we had to make sure that these designations became university designations (interview with author).

Under the Access and Participation Programme of fCUBE the government committed itself to achieve gender parity in admissions to the first grade of primary school by 2000 and to equalise completion at sixth and seventh grade by 2005. In view of the historically lower

levels of access, it committed to universalise access to Grade 1 in the North by 2000 and to achieve a 93% completion rate at Grade 6 by 2005 (GoG, 1995:4).

We realised that in the northern parts of our country their participation in education was very low. So apart from targeting girls, we also put special emphasis in the three northern regions for people to go to school so that we can reach the level there. And of course because of that, politicians from the north ... were really keen on having their children going to school, yes, we were very, very keen on that and they assisted a lot of schools and of course the president, the head of state himself and his ministers have realised that look if we are to move our country forward then education requires our party's attention. And ... if we are to fight ethnic problems in the country, it is necessary to ensure that those who are low down in participation in education are brought up, for national stability, national progress and so forth (interview with author).

A more specific action plan for girls' education aimed to increase girls' enrolment in basic education, reduce their dropout, increase transition from basic education to the senior secondary school, and expose 'ten thousand girls in pre-tertiary education to science, technology, mathematics education (STME)' (Sutherland-Addy, 2001:75-76).

A Girls' Education Unit was set up in 1997 and considerable financial investment made, largely by external agencies. The programme involved a range of activities from advocacy and community sensitisation to scholarship schemes, formation of girls' clubs, micro-credit schemes and community mobilisation. In 2002 a sobering assessment of progress in girl's access and participation, commissioned by UNICEF-Ghana, concluded that the rate of improvement was slower than expected.

The enrolment rate of girls at primary level has decreased by 0.5% over the 4 year period since 1998. The dropout rate at this level is stagnant while at the JSS level it is 1.1%. Transition from JSS 3 to SSS is also stagnant (33% to 32.8%). At the secondary and tertiary level it seems that policies and programmes specifically addressing questions of gender equity have stimulated a response in the target population. There is evidence of improved performance. ... Despite these indicative improvements, low enrolment and transitions at basic level give a general view of stagnation (Sutherland-Addy, 2002:67-68).

The strong political will for education reform that was evident in the 1980s continued through the 1990s with the push from policy formulation into policy implementation. The donor community was very active in its support both for fCUBE and for policy-relevant research. Indeed some have gone so far to suggest that the funding of policy research in Africa through the 1980s and 1990s became so donor-dominated and led by researchers external to the country that local needs and views were suppressed (e.g. Samoff et al, 1996). An evaluation of 34 policy studies and views of policymakers, policy implementers, researchers and initiator organisations by a team of Ghanaian researchers confirmed that the research was funded disproportionately by development partners. However, a majority of studies were conducted by Ghanaian researchers and the development partners were judged not to have 'interfered' with the process and outcomes of the studies (Agyeman, Baku and Gbadamosi, 2000).

The implementation challenges posed by fCUBE for the supply and training of teachers were similar to those faced in the wake of the 1987 reforms. The supply of untrained teachers and of trained teachers struggled to keep pace with increases in enrolment. The student-teacher ratio in primary declined from 32:1 in 1996/7 to 35:1 in 2005/6, while it was more or less constant at 18:1 at the junior secondary level. The student to trained-teacher ratio in primary declined from 43:1 to 63:1, and in junior secondary they rose from 23:1 to 26:1 (figures rounded). Pass rates in the BECE examination sat at the end of the junior secondary stage increased only very slightly from 60.4% in 1998 to 62.2% in 2008 (Akyeampong, 2009).

## **8. Parallel Policies and Plans, 2000-2008**

The target date for the provision of free and compulsory basic education for all children was 2005. Elections in 2000 heralded a regime change. While the left-of-centre National Democratic Congress was replaced by the right-of-centre National Patriotic Party, the commitment to fCUBE was maintained. The Ministry of Education led an Education Sector Review which fed into a long term plan for education, the Education Strategic Plan (ESP), 2003-2015. Developed largely by professional educational planners, well aware of the discourse on basic education circulating among members of the international community, the ESP was framed in the language of Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals.

It provided the fully-costed basis for annual operational plans, for Ghana's bid for additional resources under the EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI), and for sector budget support from donors particularly DFID and the World Bank (Pedley and Taylor, 2009:19).

In parallel with this Ministry-led policy and planning process, the president established a separate 30-member committee, working under the chairmanship of Professor Anamuah-Mensah. The committee undertook widespread consultations through visits to institutions, districts and regions, phone-in radio programmes, press briefings and submissions of memoranda. In 2002, *Meeting the Challenges of the Twenty First Century* was presented to the Office of the President and the cabinet. It reported GERs of 38.7% at pre-school, 82.3% at primary, 63.3% at the junior secondary stage and 17% at senior secondary stage. The committee identified the 'major defects' in the current structure of education as exclusion from pre-school education, and over-emphasis of a 'grammar/general type of education', inadequate attention to technical and vocational education and the limited opportunities for transfer between streams. It recommended a new structure of basic education: two years of kindergarten, six years of primary and three years of JSS. Beyond JSS there would be three parallel streams, each of three years duration, namely senior secondary schools, technical institutes and vocational institutes along with a programme of apprenticeships.

To increase access and participation in basic education, the authors of the report recommended that district assemblies and traditional authorities should embark on enrolment drives. They recommended a relaxation of the insistence by some principals of the wearing of school uniforms in kindergarten and lower primary, especially in deprived areas where school uniforms represent a significant cost to the household. They also recommended that district assemblies should supply more facilities and equipment, and that MoESS and district assemblies should persuade Koranic schools to adopt the national curriculum.

The government's assessment of this report led to the publication of a white paper in 2004 and the commitment on paper at least to additional reforms not included in the ministry's long term Education Strategic Plan. A capitation grant scheme was also introduced in 2005 as part of the larger process educational decentralisation. Its purpose was to support primary schools and reduce their need to charge any type of fee. Its initial impact on increasing enrolments was marked but has not been sustained (Akyeampong, 2009:182, Thompson and Casely-Hayford, 2008:1).

During the period from 2000 to 2008, parallel machineries for policy formulation were in place. On the one hand the ministry had created the Education Strategic Plan for the period

2003-2015. On the other the President's Review Committee had made a series of recommendations, many of which had been translated into a white paper. The donor community appears to have perceived the production of the white paper as indicating a weakening of the commitment to the Education Strategic Plan with its overriding goals of universal primary education (Pedley and Taylor, 2009) and a commitment to reforms that were unsustainable financially (MoESS, 2008).

Five years elapsed before some of the recommendations in the 2002 President's Review Committee had been implemented.

there was a lot of disagreement at cabinet and it took some time before the government issued the white paper on it. It was unfortunate that the white paper was issued sometime in 2004 which was just at the end of the first term of the government then it (finally) took off just one year before the end of the second term of the (same) government (interview with author).

One reason for the delay was the frequent change of minister. A senior official in the ministry recalled how in seven years he had worked with five ministers. This stands in direct contrast with the 1986 reforms when the senior ministerial team endured for many years. Effective political leadership does not emerge when ministers can expect to be changing their job after 15 months. When the white paper was issued the ministry established the National Education Reform Implementation Committee. Although the minister was formally the chair, in the minister's absence the meetings were generally chaired by the ministry's chief director or a representative of the tertiary sector. The committee comprised professionals from the private sector, industry employers, from tertiary education and from basic education. In contrast with the 1986 reforms when the GES was substantially by-passed, this time a deliberate attempt was made to involve the GES.

... learning from the 86/87 reforms, where the ministry was accused of high-jacking the whole reform, I made sure that the director general of the GES who is head of the implementing wing, was part of it. I sat in the chair with him in front there every time. Sometime last year we handed over the implementation reports to them for them at the implementation level to look at it and study and have their own way of working out what has been recommended (interview with author).

By the time the new reforms were introduced in 2007 some of the original recommendations made in the 2002 report had been changed. Most controversially, secondary education was extended from three to four years. Less controversially JSS and SSS schools were to be renamed as Junior High Schools (JHS) and Senior High Schools (SHS) respectively.

Reflecting on the NPPs proposed change of senior secondary schooling from three to four years one policy-maker who had been very involved in the 1986 and 1992 reforms said:

We actually never finished (the 87 reforms) and one would have expected that it will be fine tuned to do the evaluations and then step back and correct and move forward, not change just because you didn't like the thing. Like what the last government (NPP) did, they changed it to four years ... for absolutely no reason, no scientific logic. Because the very committee they put together to look and make recommendations did not recommend that. They said 'look the three years is good,

there is a lesson' ... What is the cost of that to the nation, to students, to parents? It doesn't make sense (interview with author).

By 2008, the NPP had been in power for eight years, compared with the nineteen preceding years of the military PNDC and the civilian NDC. While the NPP is generally perceived as the pro-private sector party of the middle classes, with a stronger emphasis on the quality of education, the PNDC period is seen as the one in which the greatest improvements in the expansion of enrolment were achieved. The rate of change in education enrolment in secondary education, compared with the growth in population, would, arguably, not have been so great had it not been for the determination of Rawlings' military government. If change had depended on a voting electorate, no government would have been courageous enough to take some of the steps on access that Rawlings did. Indeed some have viewed the NPP's emphasis on quality:

as a way for the elite to come to have their agenda. You find more private institutions set up during the NPP government. Right from primary to university we have more private universities than public universities. There is always this tension (interview with author).

Another observer claimed that although educational access was on the NPP's agenda, they did not address seriously the question of equitable access. The introduction of a school feeding programme offers a case in point.

They deprived communities that really needed this support. For example, the school feeding programme was supposed to increase access in the deprived communities. So why do you have the school feeding programme in Kumasi and Accra and the deprived communities are not having the service. This is the political leadership. They brought in that in. If you want to get the support of the voting community – the communities that vote for you, they were predominantly in Kumasi and Accra. If the feeding programmes are done there, next time they will vote for you (interview with author).

Another spoke of the enduring tensions between the political and the technical imperatives of reform.

Politicians set the broad political parameters or the guidelines ... Then some of the bad things – it looks like sometimes when issues of curriculum come up, they are not referred to curriculum specialists. The politicians make the decisions. For example the issue about religious and moral education, I thought it was terrible for people to walk to the president and ask the president to make a curriculum decision. Because yes he is the most powerful but I don't think he is a curriculum specialist. Of course he didn't make the decision directly but by merely referring the thing and telling 'take another look at it' the message was clear. He said you cannot go against the president (interview with author).

At the same time, politicians' sensitivity to the voting public can be beneficial for implementation, especially in relation to the provision of infrastructure.

The general public judge politicians. So the politicians are more sensitive about those things that the voting public judge them on like 'do we have schools that have roofs, children have furniture to sit on and are the teachers there?' (Interview with author).

The power of the political over the technical dimensions in policy formulation and planning, as distinct from implementation, appears to have strengthened during the period 2000-2008. The gatekeepers who controlled access to policy formulation were the President himself and those approved by him.

All key appointments are personally approved by the president. This included membership of the 2002 President's Committee on Review of Educational Reforms. The result seems to be that, to a great extent, this committee acted as a filter of policy ideas on education (Pedley and Taylor, 2009:25).

Although the ministry carried the formal mandate for education policy formulation, the agenda of the president's committee appeared to enjoy greater influence than the agenda embedded within the ESP. In turn this suggests that presidential associates and advisers 'had more influence than officials, consultants, and donor agency staff working in or with the Ministry of Education' (Pedley and Taylor, 2009:25). This position may reflect the views of donors largely. Ghanaian commentators suggested that with the exception of the donors there was a high degree of overlap in the membership of president's committee and the group that produced the ESP (interview with the author). What all are agreed on is that the President's Committee had a broader remit for all sectors of education - primary, secondary and tertiary - while the ESP focussed more on basic education.

## **9. The International Dimension of Educational Policy**

International ideas and practices in education influence domestic policy formulation in many ways. *Inter alia* these include the influence of the donor assistance community, of ideas and practices borrowed and lent through conferences, professional associations, networks and journals, of foreign consultants, advisers and delegates and of accountability systems associated with so-called global standards (Little, 2008). Here we focus on two main types of influence – the donor assistance community and Ghana's engagement with World Conferences on Education.

### **9.1 The Donor Assistance Community**

The donor assistance community offers both finance for policy reform, a discourse about the content of policy reform and a discourse about ways of organising the finance for reform. All three are considered here.

#### **9.1.1 Finance**

Following full independence in 1957 Ghana's education system was financed largely by domestic resources. During the 1980s the World Bank became a major provider of additional resources for education. These resources were part and parcel of the World Bank's broader support for the Economic Recovery Programme. As noted earlier, analytical and planning work and essential school materials were provided from 1984. These were followed by substantial education sector credits between 1986-91 and 1990-94. Subsequent projects included a Community Secondary School Construction Project (1991-1995), the Literacy and Functional Skills Project (1991-1995), Tertiary Education Initiative (1992-1998), Primary School Development Project (PSD, 1993-1998), the Basic Education Sector Improvement Project (BESIP, 1996-2002), Vocational Skills and Informal Sector Project (1995-2001) and a National Functional Literacy Programme (1999-2004). Between 1986 and 2002 the Bank disbursed \$269 million. This money has been spent on many inputs, including 35 million textbooks and 8,000 school pavilions (World Bank, 2004).

The World Bank's own assessment of its impact on education policies and outputs over the period 1989-2004 is positive. In contrast to Heyneman's (2003:315) claim that 'local policy makers have become passive recipient's of the World Bank's agendas', the Operations Evaluation Department of the World Bank presents a different view of its operations in Ghana in the 1980s. It argued that the World Bank did not push a particular education agenda. Rather it supported a reform process that was owned by the PNDC Military Government and rooted in a domestic reform agenda stretching back to the early 1970s. From this perspective the World Bank saw itself as a catalyst and funder of the 1987 reforms, rather than driver (World Bank, 2004). While this is the World Bank's own assessment, some have suggested that donors expressed their demands by linking the provision of finance to reform implementation. Donors bought reforms as part of a structural adjustment package (Pedley and Taylor, 2009:13). Still others, on the Ghanaian side, have suggested that the World Bank was co-opted by Rawlings, and did not seek out or listen to the views of other stakeholder groups, including the Ghana Education Service (Interview with author).

### **9.1.2 Discourse**

A key member of Rawlings' government recalled the relationship with the World Bank in the lead up to the 1987 reforms and the negotiations between the Ghanaian government, the World Bank education sector staff and the World Bank's macro finance staff. It illustrates well the discussion and the language that surrounded the negotiation of a financial loan and is worth quoting at length.

it was at a time when they (the World Bank) believed in conditionalities ... So what they would do would be to say 'ok, what do you want to achieve and let's cost it, let's look at how long it will take, what it would take to do it, do the whole staffing ... all of that thing'. And then they would say 'well, we can't do it because we can't afford it. And besides you should concentrate on one area'. So they tried very hard to use the funds to get us to fit into their conception of what an educational reform should look like for a country at the stage that we were at. So we spent a lot of time debating and arguing our way through these things and then you had the macro people dealing with the Ministry of Finance and so on and they would say you can't spend more than an X amount. And so there was that debate as well. The sector people and the macro people in the Bank I don't think they have coffee together or anything. This was completely mind-boggling ... different worlds. But they did try to look at issues of efficiency and so on. But we think by and large we did make some progress in saying - 'look we can't see a situation where you are dealing with primary education where are the teachers going to come from and so on'. So we got to work on upper levels of education as well and it was hard. Especially in the area of higher education they felt that we couldn't afford to do certain things like set up a teachers' university and we thought that if you have 120,000 people in an industry, they've got to have an outlet. They've got to have a place where they can improve themselves and we thought the overall effect on the sector would be many, many times what was invested in it and so on. So we tried to rationalize our diploma colleges and get them together, to put together a university college for teachers (interview with author).

The pro-active role of government and the critical stance towards aid and conditions was echoed by several who played key roles in Rawlings' government.

And the economic recovery programme affected education ... we needed money to promote education. So that initiative came from the government, not from the World Bank ... and they gave the advice that you have to plan and get money for the education sector at that time (interview with author).

It was not easy ... we accepted conditions in so far as it did not move us too far away from our objective. To start with the US government... refused to do anything. They refused absolutely refused ... We really got pissed off by the United States Government attitude. But eventually they turned around towards the end. They were very, very critical because it looked so good and they couldn't be left out (interview with author).

Speaking particularly about the higher education reforms, a former deputy secretary recollected the tensions between the PNDC rhetoric, the World Bank's rhetoric and the demands of various constituencies.

Part of the difficulty was that *we* had gone to the World Bank to go and get funding. And so there was a stigma around the efforts that were being made ... This (reform) was driven from within (but) there was this feeling that it was the Bank that was making us do these things and asking for efficiency and asking for this and that and the other ... we had to work on the rhetoric, so it did not sound so much as if it was the Bank ... That made it quite difficult sometimes to work with certain constituencies like the teachers' unions, the university unions, the vice chancellors and so on (interview with author).

The World Bank played three main roles in support of the reforms. The first was financial support, especially for teacher training, textbooks, learning materials and school building and rehabilitation. The second was the provision of technical assistance for studies that contributed to planning, policy and implementation. Thirdly, it was instrumental in mobilising support for the programme from other donors.

But negotiation and policy dialogue is, in principle at least, a two-way process. The World Bank did not support every aspect of the 1987 reform and had to concede some ground. As described earlier, it resisted strongly the vocationalisation of the junior secondary curriculum but accepted it in return for agreement that it should support the education sector more generally. Secondly it did not wish to support the government's proposed rate of expansion of secondary education and tried without success to find another donor to support the Community Secondary Schools Project. Having failed to do so, it supported the project itself. Thirdly, it 'quickly accepted the government's view that it was politic to bring in a subsidised loan scheme at tertiary level once feeding subsidies were eliminated' (World Bank, 2004:28).

### **9.1.3 The Sector Wide Approach (SWAp)**

In 1987 the World Bank led an important meeting of donors to education in Ghana in Vienna. Recognising the suspicion with which it was perceived by some in the international donor community at that time, the World Bank's assessment of its role included the comment that 'it probably helped that the meeting was jointly sponsored by UNICEF, since donors may have resisted being directed solely by the Bank' (World Bank, 2004:31). The donors agreed to contribute to a common programme of support to education. Donor support for the 1987 reforms had the character of a sector-wide approach (SWAp):

a decade before the term came into usage and the Bank can claim some credit for achieving this degree of donor coordination (World Bank, 2004:31).

As more donors became involved in education in Ghana, so the competition between them grew, especially between the World Bank, USAID and ODA/DFID. By the early 1990s, the new NDC government was developing fCUBE. A sizeable budget was prepared, from which the World Bank was planning to commit about one fifth of the required finance. Although the ministry was formally in charge of the planning, the World Bank saw fit to remind the minister of education of the importance of the 'government being seen to be firmly in charge' and to suggest that the minister invite other donors to a meeting to mobilise their support for the new fCUBE programme. While other donors had little or no experience in education in the mid 1980s and were willing to follow the World Bank's lead, this would not be the case nine years later (World Bank, 2004:32). DFID and USAID were beginning to act independently of the World Bank. For example the Overseas Development Administration (subsequently DFID) invited a high level team from the Ghanaian Ministry of Education to

London. The purpose of the meeting was the development of an education sector strategy, despite the fact that a strategy had been developed already. No other donors were invited to the London meeting. From this time onward first DFID and then USAID went their own way with programmes to finance basic education (interview with author).

A former senior civil servant in the GES recalled that during this period there was considerable disagreement and some argument with donors, particularly with USAID.

SWApS were not accepted by USAID as a funding mechanism initially although they are now changing somewhat. The World Bank is also slightly more sympathetic to country driven priorities (interview with author).

But by the late 1990s the donor community as a whole was not working through the modality of a SWAp. The fragmentation of funds led to similar projects being managed through separate silos and separate relations with government. As the number of donors increased so did the fragmentation of their efforts.

The increased *number of donors* and the corresponding increase in the number of their activities, outside the central government's framework for the reforms, raised fears of duplication of efforts and the likelihood of these donors operating at variance with government's priorities in the sector. For example, while the Saudi Fund focused on secondary education, the Norwegian government preferred non-formal education, the OPEC Fund concentrated on basic schools in the three Northern Regions, with the African Development Bank concentrating on the tertiary sector. Each donor adopted its own method of operations (Thompson and Casely-Hayford, 2008:16).

Tensions between the bilateral donors and the World Bank grew. The insistence of most of the bi-lateral donors on an exclusive focus on basic education was at odds with the World Bank who wished to support tertiary education as an extension of basic education, a tension which led some to claim that the World Bank was a 'traitor to the Education for All agenda' (Thompson and Caseley-Hayford, 2008:16)

While potential for a SWAp with strong donor coordination was weakened from this point on, the flow of funds increased, with major contributions from USAID and DFID in particular. A former acting-director of fCUBE recalled the considerable volume of resources from external sources:

ODA (DFID) assisted in providing materials and so on, especially for the new curriculum in JSS around vocational and technical subjects. Resource allocation was intended to be sufficient to provide text books for every pupil. A lot of donor resources were available and were largely sufficient for the 1996 action programme (interview with author).

Throughout the 1990s the power of the donor community to influence educational policies and action plans remained strong. But this did not mean that government officials were steam-rolled into spending money on what the donors wanted. As two government officials reflected together:

It has always been a struggle balancing with what the donors want and what we want. And we have always argued with them and we used to have ... a consultative panel

meeting once every month. We met with all the donor agencies briefed them on what was going on and they would give their thoughts on the way – because they do their monitoring as well. And sometimes they disagree with some of the things we want to do. We try to convince them. When they are able to persuade us of some of the things and the merit in them and we see merit in them, we take them. But sometimes we have to argue with them strongly (interview with author)

The inevitable strain placed on the ability of the ministry to deal with the separate project management structures resulted some years later in a merged Project Management Unit within the ministry.

By the 2000s the power of the donors had weakened considerably. With only ten% of total public expenditure coming from external sources, the donor community was of the view that it enjoyed less policy influence and leverage compared with the 1980s and 1990s. The strategy of ‘strong conditionality’ could no longer be employed (Pedley and Taylor, 2009:24-25). From the perspective of the Ghanaian government the donor community had lost some influence because it has not wished to support some of the non basic education programmes that the government has wished to promote. Reflecting on a conversation with the outgoing minister of education in 2008, a Ghanaian consultant commented:

one thing the minister said was you know we never realised just how much expensive this (recent) reform was going to be and realised that we didn’t have the money to do it. But when we looked at the fCUBE we saw that it was only possible because it had a lot of financial backing from the donors ... The NPP government started talking about reforms, by talking about higher education, talking about secondary. But then the money wasn’t there. So they were stuck with the reforms. They couldn’t implement because there was no financial support from the donors (interview with author).

At the same time the general policy environment within which policies in all sectors, including education, are formulated, had changed. With a change in the political legitimacy of government after 1992, but especially after 2000, the rules of the political game had also changed. Influence had become more indirect and informal and many more groups had a political voice, including those of the media, trade unions, those in parliament and civil society groups. This changed policy environment changed the way that donors have needed to work in-country. No longer could donors cannot rely on government alone to drive through reforms (Pedley and Taylor, 2009). Ghanaian commentators agree that the influence of donors on national policy agenda is waning and changing its nature. While in earlier regimes the views of the political leadership on the agenda in which donors could participate were reasonably clear and donor representatives knew with whom they could and should negotiate in the ministry, the space in which donors can act and negotiate appears to have become ambiguous (interview with author).

## **9.2 World Conferences**

Even if financial aid from the donor community and direct influence through the discourse of negotiation have diminished, the education policy-making community in Ghana is now more engaged with the international community through international conferences and meetings than it was three decades ago. Post-colonial policy discourses in education have continued to be influenced by discourses from beyond Ghana’s shores. As importantly, Ghana’s practices

and discourses in education have influenced discourses beyond Ghana's shores, and not only in the West Africa region.

Ghana's 1987 reforms were influential in the discussions and texts at the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien in 1990. A former deputy secretary of education had played a key role in Jomtien as one of two chief rapporteurs. In the interview transcript below she describes her role, her perception of some of the tensions in that work and the contribution she was able to make, representing both Ghana and developing countries more generally. She recalls how delegates from developing countries with poorly developed education systems wanted more clarification about the meaning, ambitions and targets for basic education while delegates from European countries wanted to define basic education rather broadly.

A lot of the developing nations wanted more clarification especially on the whole idea of achieving this within a decade and so on. That was difficult. And I think the Europeans had difficulty with how relevant this is to them and could they define basic education more broadly and so on. So that kind of wording – form of words to convey how you can make basic education, you can customise the concept whichever angle you were coming from, that's really something and I think the final declaration did manage to satisfy people to some extent as far as that was concerned. I think that was the most major thing (interview with author)

Ghana had much to offer the discourse at Jomtien. Ghana's 1987 reforms in basic education were 'ahead of the curve. We had not even gone to Jomtien when we were talking about basic education' (interview with author).

In turn, the emerging international EFA discourse was employed in the Ghanaian debate and is apparent in the policy texts produced between 1992 and 1996 when fCUBE emerged. Asked whether the Jomtien discourse had entered the policy discourse in Ghana and to what extent there were two parallel discourses, a former Acting Director General of fCUBE and a former Deputy Secretary of Education commented:

Jomtien was influential in that there was a dovetailing of policy documents (interview with author).

Ghana in particular was very good at adapting the sort of multi-national or global ... conceptions of where to go, the direction. They would sort of incorporate it into the policy direction. For example the idea of basic education – we used to have primary school and so on. But we adopted basic education. In fact in a way Ghana was ahead of the curve because by the time we talked about basic education we hadn't even gone to Jomtien yet (interview with author).

The report of the President's Review Committee published in 2002 referred to Ghana's commitment to Education for All (EFA) and recognised the use of innovative approaches to improve the GER. These included the mainstreaming of shepherd and Koranic schools and the use of distance education and ICT, including radio and television (GoG, 2004). The language of the Millennium Development Goals declared at the Millennium Summit in 2000 is also apparent in several subsequent policy texts. The Education Sector Performance Report of 2008 produced by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (MoESS) reports that the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) for the period 2003-2015 was informed by 'key documents,

such as GPRS1 and 2, Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals' (MoESS, 2008:10). It goes on to indicate the influence of a range of other international frameworks for development cooperation on decisions about targets and policies, including the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI).

## **10. The Present and the Future**

Elections in December 2008 placed educational policy under the spotlight once more. All parties contesting the elections produced manifestos on education. The incumbent party - the National Patriotic Party (NPP) - asserted that 'education is the key to the development of our nation and a healthy democracy (and) a public good' (NPP, 2008:46). They claimed that they would:

work hard towards a new Ghana where all children have an equal and unfettered chance at gaining access to quality education regardless of their economic circumstances or what part of the country they live or come from. (NPP, 2008:46).

*Inter alia* the NPP committed to a programme designed to promote both access and quality including commitments to:

- Guarantee access for all children of school-going age to free quality education currently available at the basic school level. This will be extended to cover Senior High School level as well
- Improve school supervision
- Make available adequate teaching and learning materials
- Establish 'league tables' for schools in each district/region to spur competition and raise academic standards and performance, with rewards going to dedicated teachers and head teachers
- Refocus teaching from remembering facts and figures to stimulating thinking, creativity, analysis and problem-solving (NPP, 2008).

In its manifesto, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) acknowledged the work of the Anamuah-Mensah Committee during the time of the NPP government (2001-2009) and deplored 'the cycle of reforms the (education) sector undergoes each time there is a change of government, making the sector unpredictable and dysfunctional' (NDC, 2008:67). The NDC promised to convene an all-party conference on Education Reform, to review the technical options available and to strive to reach a consensus. All parties would be invited to sign an 'Education Pact', committing the country to an educational reform package for the next 25 years. Major reforms within this period could only be made by a similarly reconvened all-party education conference (NDC, 2008:67)

The NDC's manifesto committed itself to a longer list of promises than that of the NPP. These are detailed below along with comments on the progress made in relation to each in the period between the 2008 election and the time of writing (July 2010).

- Providing a coordinating mechanism to enable pre-school education to become a component of the fCUBE program as a cure for the present chaotic situation whereby the Ministry of Education, the Department of Social Welfare, District Assemblies, NGOs and individuals are all involved in pre-school education.

This commitment follows developments in pre-school education begun by the previous government. While co-ordinating mechanisms have not been fully established, pre-schooling has become compulsory and is being integrated into basic school provision so that pre-schools are being attached to existing basic schools.

Some 11,000 basic schools have pre-school facilities attached at the time of writing. In 2010, 200 new pre-schools were scheduled to be built.

- Establishing a pre-school training college in each of the ten regions.

Currently seven colleges are implementing early-childhood training and the University of Education, Winneba is organising both pre-service and in-service training for early-childhood education with support from UNICEF. There is not yet a pre-school training college in every region in Ghana, however.

- Within basic education abolish fees for sports and cultural activities. Provide school uniforms for children in public schools in deprived communities and reduce walking distances of children by establishing basic schools in all under-served communities.

These fees have been abolished and the provision of free uniforms has begun. Political issues surrounding the selection of 'deprived communities' based on rather dated definitions has meant that a longer list of deprived communities has been used for this purpose and also that free uniforms have been provided to some 'non-deprived' communities in addition. The establishment of basic-schools in all under-served communities has yet to be completed.

- Ensure that each constituency has a minimum of one senior high school.

This has not been achieved and has been complicated by changes to the number and size of constituencies and districts.

- Revamp the science resource centres and restore vacation science and technology workshops for girls.

This process has begun including by means of the renovation of resource centres and the training and mobilisation of technicians. The task has been decentralised to the regions (via the regional co-ordinating directors) and is no longer a national focus. Moreover, the focus is no longer on girls only and will include provision for boys.

- Modernise and expand technical schools and provide for alternative well-developed streams of technical education.

Provision in relation to this commitment remains largely in the planning stage. COTVET (Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training) has been established and is mandated to establish apprenticeship programmes. It is also mandated to develop technical school provision. The pursuit of this commitment may depend on the availability of funds although development is being supported by JICA among other donors.

- Improve the general conditions of teachers through the payment of competitive salaries, provision of decent accommodation and enhanced retirement benefits.

Negotiations continue in relation to this area. A 15% increase in salaries across the board has been approved and programmes supported by donors to improve conditions (especially teachers' accommodation) in deprived areas are in operation. Support is

also being received in deprived areas from the World Bank. Allowances for teachers and other state employees in deprived areas are being reviewed and pensions are also under review in consultation with unions. At the present moment, however, these changes are unrealised.

- Pay certificated teachers a professional allowance.

This ‘professional allowance’ is said to be reflected in the agreed 15% salary increase. This is an across the board increase, however, so is not specifically a ‘professional allowance’.

- Pay hardship allowance to teachers in identified deprived areas.

These allowances have not yet been agreed or paid but are under review along with allowances for other government workers.

- Provide access and support to teachers for training and professional development.

Following a process begun by the previous government, a national INSET policy is now in place. This is a school-based programme and structures for operation are already in place. The ministry is supporting INSET distance programmes as part of the national policy provided by the University of Education, Winneba and the University of Cape Coast. School-based INSET programmes are decentralised to the district level.

- Streamline and strengthen the operational and delivery capacity of the school feeding programme and expand the programme to cover all primary schools.

This is being developed and new schools are being added to the school-feeding programme, although it is far from covering all basic schools. Expansion is very gradual and is sensitive to political issues at the local level around the definition of deprivation and need.

- Review the capitation grant policy and expand infrastructure to cope with expected surges in enrolments resulting from the policy review.

The level of the capitation grant has been increased from 3 to 4.5 Ghana *Cedis* (US\$ 2.44 to 2.79). The policy itself has not yet been reviewed. Provision for infrastructure development has been made in the budget, including for the construction of new pre-schools and other basic schools, with support from donors including DFID and JICA.

- Computer literacy and basic typing skills will become part of the basic education system (NDC, 2008).

While computer literacy and typing skills are already part of the ICT curriculum in basic schools, implementation of this provision is hindered by major problems of ICT infrastructure including the provision of computers and the connection of schools to the electricity grid. Progress on this commitment is likely to take considerable time and investment. Planned examinations in ICT could not be implemented owing to inadequate infrastructure. Progress will depend heavily on the availability of funding.

The introduction of a 'School Report Card' system will aid the identification of infrastructural deficiencies and is being supported by USAID. Nonetheless, movement in concrete terms on this pledge has been very limited.

- Revert the duration of the four year senior high school to three.

This controversial plan resonates with that of the predecessor NDC, in power between 1992 and 2000. Some have argued that:

the objective for the extension of the duration of the four year SHS was to enable the majority of students who are products of the under-funded and poorly taught public basic education system to benefit more from second cycle education (Djangmah, 2009).

While students who have been taught well in private fee paying primary and junior secondary schools perform well in the four year SHS and are expected to continue to perform well in the three year SHS, it is suggested that the poorest who access low quality basic education would benefit greatly from a fourth year in SHS (Interview with author).

This pledge has not been achieved as yet, and a final decision requires a decision in parliament. Parliament approved the document submitted proposing the change in July 2010 and infrastructural provisions for the move back to three years of SHS are in preparation.

## **11. Conclusions**

This monograph has explored five questions in relation to the politics of, policies for and progress in basic education. These were:

What progress has there been in access to basic education over the past 30 years?

What policies for access to basic education have been promoted?

What role have political regimes played in the formulation of policies on access to basic education?

What role has political will played in the process of policy formulation?

What have been the drivers and inhibitors of the implementation of reforms in basic education since 1987?

### **11.1 Progress in Basic Education**

We saw in Table 1 that the greatest strides in enrolment in recent years in basic education occurred between 1991 and 1998. This progress has appeared to level off in recent years and appears to have reversed for the children in the poorest quintile. In partial explanation, Akyeampong (2009) suggests that children in the lowest poverty quintile are more likely to enrol children in primary Grade 1 late and that the mean age-grade 'delay' is greatest in the Northern, Upper West and Upper East regions. This, combined with greater levels of relative poverty, and perhaps, the increasing opportunity costs of child labour, may have conspired to demotivate households from investing in education.

While Sutherland-Addy (2002) focussed on the four year period 1998-2002, and Akyeampong (2009) and Rolleston (2009) focussed on the period 1991-2006, the World Bank's 2004 evaluation purports to assess the impact of efforts over the 15 years between 1989 and 2004. It points to increasing school attendance (enrolment) rates among children of primary and junior secondary school age and a levelling off of enrolment in secondary. It records the virtual elimination of the gap between male and female enrolment, except in the northern regions. In contrast to the analyses of Akyeampong (2009) and Rolleston (2009), the World Bank (2004) claim that primary enrolment has risen more sharply among the poor than the non-poor. In part this must reflect the boundaries drawn by each evaluator between poor and non-poor, the particular years selected for comparison as well as the data sources employed. There are significant discrepancies between administrative and survey data and between the GLSS, DHS, CWIQ and MICS surveys. These are partly due to definitions. The primary NER among the poor may have improved more dramatically as a result of more children enrolling in lower grades. What does seem clear however is that up to 2006 there was no significant improvement in completion, and that the higher up the system a child is the more poverty appears to disadvantage them, most likely because of the increasing costs to be met by households (Rolleston, personal communication).

### **11.2 Policies for Basic Education**

Policies for the expansion of access to basic education in Ghana have been advanced since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, starting with Governor Guggisberg's 16 guiding principles

for the development of education. These included equal opportunities for boys and girls and co-education at certain stages, the use of vernaculars as media of instruction in the earliest stages of education, curricula relevant to the economy and high quality teachers. These themes would recur several times and in the run up to independence the colonial government set out a ten year development plan for universal enrolment of children in primary education by 1970.

Nkrumah's Accelerated Development Plan (ADP) of 1951 was even more radical and promoted both supply and demand-led strategies. Fees for primary education were removed, large numbers of new teachers recruited and trained and schools expanded. A revised structure of education was proposed and introduced gradually. After full independence in 1957 and the introduction of the Education Act of 1961 tuition fees for middle school were also removed. Scholarships for primary, secondary and tertiary education were introduced to increase the demand for education from students in the northern regions and Brong-Ahafo. Up to this point the policy emphasis was on increasing access through enrolment.

After 1966, policies for basic education – and in education more generally – focussed on standards and the quality of education experienced by children once they had enrolled. This included a focus on the content of curriculum relevant to the world of work in the post primary grades and a proposal that children be selected for the academic stream of secondary after two years in middle school. Those not selected would follow a further two years in 'pre-vocational' classes prior to leaving school. This policy was perceived by many as elitist and pandering to the needs of the middle classes and by 1972 the pendulum had swung back from standards and quality to access. By this time large numbers of children from the poorer households had gained access to primary education and their aspirations now were for improved access to secondary, especially to the academic rather than the vocational stream of secondary. Policies to create a basic education stage, common to all children, and covering primary and the first three years of secondary (junior secondary) were promoted as part of the New Structure and Content of Education (NSCE) in 1974. The NSCE also recommended changes in the curriculum that would make the experience of primary and junior secondary education more practical and skills-oriented.

In essence the NSCE proposals became the blueprint for the 1987 and the 1996 reforms which emphasised increases in enrolments in basic education as well as changes in the content and relevance of the curriculum. To increase the demand for education among girls, scholarship schemes were piloted. Teachers were given incentives in addition to salary through housing, prizes for teaching and training schemes.

By the mid 1990s the focus of attention had reverted to the question of standards when the performance of the first junior secondary school cohort of students was lower than expected. *Inter alia*, this would lead to an extension of the senior secondary stage in 2007, from three years to four, to make up for the lower than expected performance of students in the junior secondary stage.

While much of the policy discourse in the 1970s about inequalities in education focussed around the transition from primary to junior secondary, the focus now is on the transition from junior secondary to senior secondary. In 2002 policies for the introduction of a fee-free two year pre-school and a diversified, three-stream, secondary school were recommended. To increase demand for schooling among the poorest recommendations were made to relax the insistence on the wearing of school uniforms among pre-school and lower primary children

and a school capitation grant introduced to reduce the need for primary schools to raise revenues from households.

During the run up to the parliamentary elections in December 2008 both the right of centre NPP and the left of centre NDC promised increases in access and quality at all levels. The NPP stressed quality and standards at all levels rather more than the NDC who emphasised expansion of pre-school education and teacher training, an expansion of technical schools, while at the same time proposing a reduction for the senior secondary stage from four years to three.

### **11.3 Political Regimes and Education Policies**

Political regimes both before and after the establishment of a stable democracy have played an important role in the direction of education policies as have external priorities and issues of resource availability. Populist regimes, both democratic and military, have both pushed education reform hard and mainly in the direction of increased opportunities for the rural poor. This has been so during the early post independence years of Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (1951-1966) years through the military regimes of the National Redemption Council (1972-1979) and the Provisional National Defence Council (1981-1992) and on through the democratic National Democratic Congress (1992-2000). While not backtracking on access, regimes owing their power base to the urban middle classes have tended to stress the importance of improving quality and maintaining and improving standards. Both the military regime of Ankrah (1966-1969) and the elected Progress Party (1969-1972) wished to see the rate of expansion contained with a greater focus on quality and standards.

It would be almost thirty years before a right of centre regime would reappear, after the democratic elections of 2000. The right of centre National Patriotic Party remained committed to fCUBE, created a long-term plan for education (2003-2015) and introduced a capitation grant scheme to remove the need for schools to charge any type of fee. It also promoted the private sector, promoted diversification of the senior secondary stage of education and education decentralisation and management, a move which some feared was contributing to increasing, rather than reducing, disparities between schools in the quality of public basic education on offer (Akyeampong et al, 2007). Annex 1 provides a summary of the links between political regimes and education policies over the period 1951-2008.

### **11.4 Political Will**

Political will can be defined as a sustained commitment of politicians and administrators to invest the necessary resources to achieve specific objectives and a willingness to make and implement policy despite opposition. The formulation and implementation of the 1987 reforms offer a clear illustration of an education reform driven from the highest political authority and a mobilisation of financial and human resources to support implementation. Some of the politicians were themselves drawn from among practising educationists and led not only the formulation of plans but also their implementation. The military regime brooked no opposition and reduced the powers of those who opposed aspects of the implementation, in particular that of the bureaucrats in the Ghana Education Service.

### **11.5 Drivers and Inhibitors of Reform Implementation**

In section one it was suggested that both the 1987 and 1996 education reforms were attempts to implement policies that had been formulated in 1974. The 1974 policies on restructuring

the education system and changing the content of education had run into myriad obstacles. These included a lack of finance in a declining economy, and considerable resistance from the middle classes as well as the middle class bureaucrats running the education system. There were shortages of trained teachers, educational equipment and other learning materials. Overall there was little political will to push the reforms forward in the face of opposition and extremely limited resources.

From 1987 the pattern of drivers for and inhibitors of reform would change. Through the 1980s there was a very strong political will and agenda for change. The institutional framework for change was strengthened through the creation of a National Education Commission and a Ministry of Education and committees peopled with experts in education. Planning and implementation were pushed simultaneously, awareness programmes mounted and district assemblies were involved in implementation of the large scale infrastructure programme. Significant financial resources for the reforms were made available by the World Bank. Resistance to the reforms was similar in some respects to that experienced post 1974. The education bureaucrats were not enthusiastic implementers and the middle classes resisted passively. The revolutionary government dealt with resistance, through, *inter alia*, restructuring the ministry and the GES and by directing the army to deliver textbooks and other logistics. The implementation process was stymied technically because the reforms were not piloted and teachers insufficiently oriented and trained in the more radical curriculum content and pedagogy, including assessment and some shortages of equipment. Parental support for the reforms was variable across the regions and some plans were insensitive to the different agricultural seasons in the north and the south of the country. In some areas local politicians worked alongside local communities to undermine some of components of the building programme.

The 1996 fCUBE programme benefited from constitutional change. Article 38 (2) of the constitution required that the government develop a plan for implementation within the following ten years, for the provision of free, compulsory and universal basic education. These gave legal force to the provision of basic education across the country. The political will that had driven the 1987 reforms remained and finance from the international donor community continued to flow. This time teachers were better prepared for the reforms through extensive upgrading programmes. Research began to be used more readily to inform the work of policy makers and implementers. Education decentralisation became a reality through legal fiat. The technical challenges faced in the development of large scale distance education programmes for teachers were great and the supply of untrained teachers and of trained teachers struggled to keep pace with increases in school enrolments.

The drive for universal access to basic education remains strong even today. The tensions between increases in enrolments and improvements in the quality of learning also remain. The supply of trained teachers struggles to keep a pace with the numbers of children enrolled, and, as more and more children complete primary and junior secondary education the goal posts of what constitutes education for all will shift. So too will the ideological preferences of political parties in a democratic system. In its 2008 election manifesto the victorious NDC promised to convene an all-party conference on education reform, to reach a consensus on education reform for the next 25 years (NDC, 2008:67). To date that conference has not been convened.

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## Annex 1 Political Regimes and Education Policy Texts, by year, 1951-2008

Year	Political Regime	Political Head	Regime orientation and power base	Significant Education Policy Texts	Policy themes
1951	Transition from colonial power elections (under universal suffrage) for Legislative Assembly won by the Convention People's Party (CPP)	Nkrumah	Nationalist, Populist	1951 Accelerated Development Plan for Education	Expansion of primary education
1957	Convention People's Party (CPP)	Nkrumah	Left, Populist, Rural base	1961 The Education Act (Act 87)	Expansion of primary education
1966 Military Coup	National Liberation Council (NLC)	Ankrah		The Kwapong Committee Report	Contain expansion of primary education; focus on quality. Selection to academic and vocational streams after two years of middle school
1969 Elections	Progress Party (PP)	Busia	Right	1971 committee on education reform	Common and extended basic education.
1972 Military Coup	National Redemption Council	<a href="#">Acheampong</a>		1974 The Dzobo Report: the New Structure and Content of Education  1974 The Ghana Education Service Decree	Common and extended basic education cycle of 6 years primary and 3 years junior secondary. Removal of middle schools from the structure of education
1979 Military Coup	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)	Rawlings	Left, Populist, Rural		
1981 Elections	Social Democratic People's National Party (PNP)	Limann	Social Democratic		
1981 Military Coup	Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC)	Rawlings	Left, Populist, Rural	1983 The PNDC Law 42  1987 The 1987 Education Reforms  1988 The PNDC Law 207  1988 University Rationalisation Committee (URC) Report  1991 Government	Increase access to common and extended basic education. Reduce pre-university span from 17 to 12 years in a 6+3+3 system. Literacy in the vernacular, a second Ghanaian language and English, technical and vocational education, restructured teacher

				White Paper on the URC report	education, introduction of continuous assessment
1992 Elections	National Democratic Congress (NDC)	Rawlings	Left, Populist, Rural	<p>The Constitution of 1992, the Fourth Republic</p> <p>The NCTE Act (Act 454)</p> <p>1994 Education Reforms Review Committee Report</p> <p>1994 Programme for the Provision of Free, Compulsory and Universal Education (fCUBE) by the Year 2005</p> <p>1995 the Ghana Education Service Act (Act 506)</p> <p>1995 Programme for the Development of Basic Education within the Framework of Free Compulsory Universal Basic education (fCUBE) by the year 2005</p>	Continued implementation of the 1987 reforms
2000 Elections	National People's Party (NPP)	Kufour	Right, Middle classes	<p>2002 President's Education Review Committee (the Anamuah-Mensah Committee)</p> <p>2003 Launch of the Education Strategic Plan 2003-2015</p> <p>2004 Report of the President's Review Committee</p> <p>2005 Review of fCUBE</p> <p>2006 White paper on the Report of the President's Education Review Committee</p> <p>2007 National Education Reform Implementation</p>	<p>Continued implementation of the 1987/1992 reforms</p> <p>Pre-schools</p> <p>Diversification of senior secondary</p> <p>Capitation grants to schools</p>

				Committee	
				2008 Education Act	
2008 Elections	National Democratic Congress (NDC)	Atta Mills	Left, Rural, Populist		



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**Report summary:**

This monograph examines the history and politics of educational reform in Ghana. Using data from interviews conducted with senior policy-makers, implementers and researchers, as well as documentary sources, to explore the drivers and inhibitors of change at the political, bureaucratic and grass-roots levels. The monograph explores the nature of the domestic political and administrative machinery which has enabled comparative success in enrolment growth in Ghana, attending also to the importance of political will as well as to shifting patterns of international and donor influence.

**Author notes:**

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