

QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IN GHANA

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Introduction

Since the Accelerated Development Plan of Education was introduced in Ghana in 1951 in the First Republic, the country's educational system has been "tampered with" many times beginning with the Education Act of 1961. This tampering with, in a way, has been a positive mark in the sense that Ghana, like many other modern states, has regarded education as an indispensable tool in its socio-economic development. It has desired to tailor for itself a high quality education that suits its developmental needs. The current government's priority attention to human resource development, attests to this view. It is unfortunate, however, that the relevant type of education required continues to elude Ghanaians. The Education Act of 1961 which was a major first step taken in furtherance of quality and relevant education, for example, embodied many educational provisions to solidify the educational gains that had been made and make further developments (Mankoe, 2002:213). Among its several provisions, the Act defined more clearly the educational rules that guided education in the country.

Although the Act made proposals for educational refinement, quality of education attained thereafter was far from satisfactory in terms of the socio-economic needs of the country. Consequently, the first military government of Ghana, the National Liberation Council (NLC), appointed a review committee in 1967 under the chairmanship of Professor Alex Kwabong, then the Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana. The 32- member Committee was charged among other things:

- i. To conduct a comprehensive review of the educational system in Ghana, the elementary, secondary, teacher training and higher education;
- ii. To examine problems arising from the work of national research; and

- iii. To make recommendations and suggest reforms for improvement and eliminating inefficiency and waste.

Among its several recommendations and suggestions, the Committee stressed the need for an effective system to ensure constant feedback for evaluation both of the existing practices and innovations. The Committee proposed the formation of National Council for Pre-tertiary Education and a National Council for Tertiary Education. Each council was to be concerned with determining policies as well as coordinating activities of its own level of education and with balanced development that takes into account manpower and other requirements of the country. The NLC accepted the proposals for subsequent implementation. It could be argued that the 1967 Education Review Committee's proposals largely directed the administration and management of education in the country until there appeared to be general dissatisfaction with the system, particularly with its structure and content. For example, there had been discontentment with the rather long duration and somewhat bookish nature of pre-university education.

Consequently, another committee chaired by Prof N. K. Dzobo was appointed in 1972 to review the structure and content of education (Mankoe, 2002: 215). The Committee's report which was published in 1974 was implemented on pilot basis in some urban centres until 1987 when its proposals were spread nationwide with some modifications. For example, on the structure of secondary education, the Committee proposed a two-year senior secondary lower followed by a two-year senior secondary upper. These two levels were, however, combined into a three-year senior secondary education in Ghana. This new structure, of course, necessitated policy changes in human and material resources in education.

Another significant change in the provision of education was the introduction of the policy of decentralization in 1987. Decentralization, in this context, is explained as a process of relocating from the centre of an organization to its periphery a certain package of political, economic, legislative, fiscal and administrative powers. It means reshuffling of the bureaucratic and professional staff to provide for a more direct field contact, which usually involves the creation of field titles. The policy introduced a new structure for the administration and management of Ghana's educational system. The following administrative structure was introduced which is still in operation:

1. Minister of Education (Policy maker)
2. Director General of the Ghana Education Service (Policy implementer)
3. Deputy Director General
4. Director 1: (i) Divisional Director (Headquarters); (ii) Regional Director
5. Director 2: District Director
6. District Education Oversight Committee
7. Circuit Officer
8. Headteacher
9. Parent-Teacher Association
10. Teacher.

This policy made the District Director of Education the highest authority for decision making in the district while the Headteacher is the school-based decision-maker. He/she makes decisions for the school, decisions that are consistent with educational laws in the country. The District Assemblies are also expected to direct the efforts of the people. The Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) Law 207 of 1988 clarifies and legalizes community involvement by making the District Assemblies a pivot in the provision of education and other social services for the community. The Local Government (District Assembly Establishment Legislative Instrument, 1988, for example, enumerates 86 specific functions that District Assemblies are charged to perform. Sections 40-42 which pertains to educational provisions specify that it shall be the duty of the Assembly:

40. To build, equip and maintain all public primary, middle (now junior secondary) and special schools as are in the opinion of the Secretary [Minister] for Education, after consultation with the Secretary [Minister] of Education after consultation with the Secretary [Minister] for Local Government, required in its area.
41. To advise the Secretary [Minister] for Education on all matters as may be referred to it by the Secretary [Minister] for Education.
42. To be responsible for:
 - (i) postings and transfers within its area of authority of teachers including pupil (untrained) teachers;
 - (ii) keeping records of teachers;
 - (iii) discipline of teachers in accordance with the disciplinary code laid down by the Ghana Education Service;
 - (iv) appointment of welfare officers;
 - (v) recommending teachers for study leave;
 - (vi) appointment of headteachers in accordance with rules laid down by the Ghana Education Service;
 - (vii) supervision of primary and junior secondary schools;
 - (viii) formation of education committees;
 - (ix) collection of statistical data and other information;
 - (x) in-service training for pupil teachers;
 - (xi) nursery school education;
 - (xii) approval of opening of private primary and junior secondary schools;
 - (xiii) payment of teachers' salaries from funds made available by government;
 - (xiv) supply and distribution of textbooks;
 - (xv) disbursement of education grants.

The District Director of Education, who is the head of education in the district, looks up to the Assembly for approval of any local educational policy that may be formulated for schools in

the public system. Therefore, since the introduction of these major reforms, pre-tertiary education in Ghana has been provided under the policy of decentralization within which the Central Government shares the costs of education with the local communities. It is now fairly clear to all stakeholders that the government cannot provide single-handedly all the human and material resources required for education. Therefore, three bodies have been recognized in the local communities to provide resources for education. These are District Education Oversight Committees, School Management Committees and Parent-Teacher Association.

These reforms are all geared towards the attainment of high quality education in Ghana. How qualitative have these reforms been over the years? How effective have they been in the provision of adequate education at the pre-tertiary level?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the major educational structures designed to provide basic and secondary education and more importantly, their outcomes. Quality of the reforms could be determined largely from the impact which the reforms have had on the socio-economic lives of the people who pass through the system. It is essential therefore to assess what impact the reforms have had on graduates from the system more than two decades after its operation.

Research Questions

The study sought to address the following three research questions:

1. What structures were put in place in the 1987 education reform programme to provide relevant education at the basic and secondary levels?
2. How relevant has this type of education been to Ghana?
3. What has been the impact of this type of education particularly as it relates to employment of graduates from the system?

Significance of the Study

The reform designed to overhaul pre-tertiary education in Ghana in 1987 is nearly twenty years old. An eighteen-year old educational program has seen a lengthy implementation and its impact, whether positive, negative or otherwise should be clear to educational planners, implementers and beneficiaries. In Ghana, in spite of the structure put in place to provide relevant education in Ghana since 1987, there seems to be some dissatisfaction among a large section of the population. This study was therefore undertaken to provide some insight into its achievements as well as provide fresh thinking about educational practices that have gone on for nearly two decades and, depending on its outcome, call for another review or otherwise.

Research Design and Methodology

The goal of the study was to examine and provide a detailed description of the present trends in the provision of funds and materials for education and what achievements have been derived in Ghana. To this end, the study which was qualitative, involved field interviews. Population of the study embraced all identifiable groups that are currently active in the provision of education.

The Sample

The informants included (1) key policy makers, and (2) key stakeholders at the sub-national levels such as headmaster, teachers, parents, and citizens including chiefs and other community leaders. The sample for the field component of the study was as follows:

Ministry of Education and Culture (Headquarters)	2
Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning	2
Ghana Education Service (Headquarters)	5
District Administration	2

Regional/District Budget Office	2
Regional Directorate of Education	2
District Directorate of Education	6
District Assembly	2
Headmasters/mistresses	8
Parent-Teacher Association	6
Teachers	6
Parents/Community Leaders	3
Univ. Administration (Legon, Cape Coast & Winneba)	3
TOTAL	52

Data Analysis

A number of procedures were adopted to organize the information obtained from the field interviews. The first step in the data analysis was open coding. In this approach, four basic guidelines suggested by Strauss, cited in Berg (1989), were followed. The issues addressed by these guidelines are: (a) asking a specific and consistent set of questions such as what problems are the data pertinent to; (b) analyzing the data minutely in the initial coding procedure; (c) writing theoretical notes frequently while coding because such a process leads to grounded theory; and (d) accepting the analytical relevance of traditional variable only when indicated by the data. The open coding was followed by axial coding which involved coding categories around major themes of the study. This stage was followed an analytical induction process which leads researchers to go out of their way to look for negative evidence. Hence, the main steps for identifying major issues of educational reforms were open coding of data; categorization of data; emergence of major themes on the basis of axial coding; development of trial themes; search for negative themes, if any; and examining all relevant cases from the data to determine findings, relationships and patterns.

These categories provided the theme: quality assessment of the educational reforms. The theme is presented under three sub-sections: (i) assessment of basic and secondary education curricula, (ii) implementation of the secondary school program, and (iii) employment of secondary school graduates.

Assessment of Basic and Secondary Education Curricula

Respondents were asked to express their opinions on the relevance, adequacy and quality of the curriculum designed on the educational reforms and evaluation measures designed to assess the quality of primary, junior and senior secondary schools in Ghana. Six directors from the national headquarters and education districts, five headmasters, two community leaders, five teachers and four parents expressed common views on the curriculum and a general consensus was that the subjects introduced, especially at junior secondary school level, were too many for the very young students to cope with. One headquarters director, for example, commented:

At the basic level, especially in the primary school, we think the subjects are too many. The government has appointed an education review committee to review not only the curriculum but all aspects of the system, and I'm very certain that the issue of curriculum will be dealt with. At the moment the students are studying nine subjects, and we think if they offer between four and six at the maximum, it will be fine.

A senior secondary school administrator felt that with regard to the curriculum, the very first issue is the staff situation of any institution. This official observed that of all the problems confronting the schools, the most pressing one was the need for well-trained and qualified staff, and more importantly, people who are prepared to work. According to the administrator, it was very rare to find people who had come to the school because they want to work. He said that people were sometimes posted to a school against their will, or they simply wanted to be in a situation where they

would earn something at least, but not because they were prepared to work. To address this problem, he suggested the need for heads to focus on these issues and try to call everybody to order.

One district director suggested that subjects should be spread in every school from which the children could select. Money and personnel should also be provided to cater for the interests of a large variety of children. According to another district director, students study so many subjects that they are unable to go into any depths for each subject and this has resulted in so many poor results in the final examinations. When the director was asked to explain what he thought was the rationale behind the introduction of many subjects he replied:

I think the Ministry wants to expose students to many subject areas so that by the time they enter senior secondary school they would have some idea about everything – a broad knowledge. But we are saying that the subjects are too many. Let's take those who did GCE 'A' levels, for example. They offered only four subjects including general paper. But for the senior secondary school examination students offer six core subjects and three electives, making a total of nine subjects. I don't think pupils can study each of these subjects into any great detail so as to pass well. The solution is that the number should be reduced.

However, according to one headmaster of a senior secondary school, the curriculum for both junior and senior secondary schools is right because the child must have a broad foundation and the curriculum as planned can provide that broad foundation of knowledge. He, however, reiterated that the senior secondary program was not properly planned. As a consequence of poor planning, everything is out of touch with the reality, and the students feel hard pressed with their studies.

One junior secondary school headmaster noted:

The curriculum is OK; the only problem is that we think the subjects are too many for the children if we take their age and experience into consideration. As heads we feel that after studying all these subjects from junior

secondary school Form 1, they should be permitted to select some subjects as it is done in the second cycle. Also a student's chosen career should determine the number and types of subjects he or she has to take.

Teachers also agreed that the subjects studied at the junior secondary school were too many. One teacher recalled the subjects as mathematics, English language, French, Ghanaian language, science, technical skills, vocational skills, life skills, literature in English, religion and environmental studies. Another teacher commented on these subjects as follows:

The educational reform introduced a number of subjects that are geared towards helping the pupils in their lives, such as technical skills, vocational skills and the languages among others, but I think an important subject like religion is being relegated to the background. If the growing child is given moral education through religion, I feel that education will help not only the child but the entire society in the long run. Because of the strong influence of the TV and news papers on the community, if religion is not given strong emphasis, a time will come when our children will not learn anything moral. And this will cause social problems.

A teacher who was very vehement in her stand against the number of subjects, argued:

How do you expect a 10- or 13-year old child to study 13 subjects – to pass well in examinations? And how do you expect the society or the community to provide teachers to teach all these 13 subjects in one school? Or do you expect a teacher to teach three or four subjects at a go? If one teacher is asked to teach three or four subjects, assuming we want to economize so that, as the government has directed, the number of teachers in a junior secondary school is not more than five, that means on the average, teachers are going to teach three different subjects each. Do we expect the teacher to do a thorough preparation for the teaching? I don't think we can expect that, given the fact that in our society today, people have other things to do when they return home from work.

A community leader, however, praised the junior secondary school program and said, "It wasn't there at our time when after completing the elementary school, one had to go in for a white collar job. Today pupils learn practical skills while they are in school. So after completing school, they can establish their own business shops." Giving a specific example with his own child, the community leader said:

I have one child in junior secondary school form 3. When I asked him the type of job he would like to do after completing school, he replied, "I will do electronics." When I asked him why, he explained that today everything seems to be computerized, and government jobs are no longer available. So if I learn some trade, at least I will be able to do something on my own to earn a living.

The common views expressed by different types of respondents, then is the curriculum is too broad and must be narrowed down. What about the implementation of the JSS/SSS programs?

Implementation of the Secondary School Program

The junior/senior secondary school program that was introduced in 1987 was the centre of the educational reform. It was the transitional stage between basic school and the senior secondary school programs. One basic assumption was that such success would be largely determined by students' level of performance in their final examinations, their preparedness to undertake further apprenticeship training and/or their prospects on the job market. Respondents were asked to describe the program in terms of examination performances, adequacy of the foundations laid for them to learn or even take on news jobs based on the foundations laid at the JSS and its transition to the senior secondary school (SSS).

One headquarters director speaking on the JSS program noted:

Students' performance at the JSS final examinations initially was bad because the children involved were those who passed through primary schools when the state of affairs there was really poor. They didn't have

textbooks. They didn't have anything. Most of them could hardly read anything by the end of primary six. Of late, the resources we have put in the schools, and the training being given to teachers, have brought some improvement even though it is not as good as we thought it would be. The performance is improving gradually.

An assistant director representing his regional director commented on the JSS program as follows:

Well, I went for students' examination report cards from Accra, and I sat on the Board for the selection of JSS graduates for admission to the senior secondary school. What I realized was that there were so many passes. Wesley Girls, for instance, had good passes in six subjects. Some students even had up to ten, eleven and twelve passes. When we started the selection for admission, we started from those who had twelve passes. By the time we reached those who had seven passes, we had got the number required for the senior secondary school admission. There were more passes than could be absorbed by the senior secondary school.

It was noted in the interview that the school cited as an example by the assistant director was among those categorized as grade one schools in the country. The director was therefore asked to explain the situation pertaining to schools which had less endowed students. He explained that in every system, the beginning is always hard, but as the system moves along and the people become more experienced, and teachers are able to teach the children better, better results would be achieved.

Another director dwelt at some length on the poor results in rural schools which formed the majority, and when asked to explain the factors that accounted for poor performance in the rural schools, he recounted:

There are a lot of factors. Students in the cities and big towns have access to various facilities such as good teachers, well-to-do parents, extra classes, international schools where students are well prepared, libraries and so on. But go to the rural areas – even if a child has a good teacher, after learning in the school, he

goes home and doesn't see the books again. They only think about going to catch crabs, grasscutter or something like that. During market or fishing day, they will leave the classroom for the market, no matter what you tell them. In fact, the situation there does not induce them to learn. There are no lights, etc to entice them to learn in the evening. Sometimes even the teachers are not serious because they themselves are not happy where they are.

Several district directors and assistant directors expressed similar views about the rather poor performance of JSS leavers, particularly in the rural areas. One assistant director stated:

The JSS is now quite an old system and generally there has been some improvement, but I will say that in the rural areas, because of lack of qualified teachers, some of them have done very poorly. It is a matter of getting teachers and other facilities to those areas. Good teachers tend to be mostly in urban areas.

One headmaster was of the view that the examination results were not being assessed fairly. His explanation was that many students passed well in the arts, humanities and social science subjects supposed to be elective, non-compulsory subjects, but failed in the three compulsory subjects: English, Mathematics and Science. However, no matter how well a student passed in the electives, failure in any of or all of the three compulsory subjects closed the door to the university to any aspiring student, as indeed was the ultimate objective of a vast majority of secondary school students.

A senior administrator in a senior secondary school believed that given the initial problems that confronted the reforms from the very onset, the achievement of the students so far was something to be commended. He observed:

I think the performance of senior secondary school students is an issue which has been overblown. As far as I am concerned, the candidates performed very well in view of the initial problems – time factor, their own academic standards at the time of admission to the various programs – these had to be

overcome. It is stated by Professor Moses Antwi in his book, Society, education and development, that in Ghana those who enter the university directly from school at any time are very few, including even those who passed through the five-year and two-year secondary school programs. Other people have to attend other institutions and may be after many years enter the university. In view of this fact, if we have over a thousand students who qualify to enter university, then that is a very good achievement. It looks like those who are looking at the issue are basing students' performance upon those who qualify to enter the university. But I don't think that is the most important issue.

According to this official, after making an assessment in his own school, they found that many students qualified to enter other tertiary institutions. Out of 140 students, 86 passed with some of them making five passes with good grades. The limiting factor was that out of nine subjects, a student must pass well in six – all core subjects with a minimum of grade D, and three electives. Some students passed in all core subjects, passed in two electives and failed in only one. Therefore, if the university entrance was not used as the basis for good performance, then there was a large number of other students who could enter the polytechnics and other advanced institutions. “Consequently, the overall achievement was not that woeful,” said the administrator.

Another SSS headmaster explained the situation at length and declared:

Taking our school, for example, we started on a very uncertain footing because we had no workshops or classrooms, and for a whole year, we could not even teach the students. And when we started we were not familiar about the syllabus and a whole lot of things. . . . and I cannot tell of any teacher who completed his syllabus or covered even two-thirds of it. We also realized even the students admitted were not very good to start with.

One assistant director in another district felt that the examination results of the SSS candidates were commendable to some extent. According to him, however, supervision at the junior secondary school examinations were not

effective, because a lot of the pupils obtained good grades when they had no strong foundation to make those grades. The assistant director pointed out that the problem of weak foundation surfaced when students went over to the senior secondary school. He said, "A student boldly said that the results of the JSS examinations made them believe that they were good, but when they went to the SSS, they realized that they did not know much. This is why many candidates did not do well at the initial stages of the program.

Teachers expressed views that were similar to those of headmasters. One teacher explained the situation as follows:

I have always maintained that the planners of the JSS/SSS concept were handicapped from the beginning. For this reason, the first few batches were handicapped. The JSS students, for example, did not complete their syllabuses by the end of their final year. Therefore when these students entered SSS form 1, it was there that they had to study the JSS form 3 syllabus. So instead of using an SSS material at SSS form 1, they had to study a JSS material. The required textbooks also arrived very late. Moreover, new subjects were introduced at the SSS level in which the students did not have any foundation at the junior secondary level. The students were really handicapped in learning these new subjects.

The situation being explained meant that senior secondary school students sat for their final examinations when they had not been adequately prepared for it. When the teacher was asked what, in his opinion, could be done to help correct the negative situation, he said:

I believe that the problem should be tackled right from the primary school. The number of subjects studied at the primary level should be reduced. The primary school teacher is currently overburdened with too many subjects he has to handle there. He is being asked to teach about eight or ten subjects. Definitely one teacher cannot prepare adequately to teach these many subjects. Another problem is caused by the continuous assessment and cumulative records. If a teacher handles a class of about fifty pupils and has to prepare continuous assessment and cumulative records

continually for each of them, you can understand the problem. There should therefore be specialization and the subjects handled by a single teacher should definitely be reduced.

A parent noted that education differs from generation to generation. If the new secondary school is what we have in this generation, then it should be embraced by all. The parent, however, complained that the implementation had been delayed and the delay had adversely affected everything. She was happy about the fact the program had at least led to the acquisition of some skills such as carpentry, masonry, and fitting even though the implementation was not well effected by the implementers. She observed that only some few schools in Ghana, particularly the private ones, provided children with effective learning.

On the acquisition of textbooks, another parent felt that asking parents to buy textbooks for their children was an ideal thing to do because the government had failed to honour its free textbook policy in full. She lamented, however, that the textbooks were not on the market and the government had monopoly over the books. She said:

Personally, if I had been asked to buy books for my children, I would have done so willingly because I'm sure if the children had books which they take home from school and from home to school, it would give them better learning experience than what we are doing now. So the books should be on the open market so that we could buy them.

Employment Prospects for Secondary School Graduates

The quality of the educational reform program could also be assessed in terms of the extent to which the products could fit into the open market. To this end, respondents were asked to express their views on the relevance of the graduates' qualifications and employment prospects. Five district directors, four assistant directors, five headmasters, four teachers, two parents, one community leader and two other officials expressed diverse views on job prospects for the junior and senior secondary school graduates.

Two district directors commented on the job prospects as follows:

I don't see the way clear as far as job placement of graduates are concerned. The whole idea of reforms has been good, but the implementation has been faced with many difficulties. Financial constraint is one issue. The launching of the program many years ago was not put on sound footing in that before you start something, all the human and material resources must be ready. Teachers who will implement the program must be available, but there is a lot of teachers who have not moved abreast with the program. Technical and vocational teachers are not enough.

I know that we should train children to face the real situations in society to enable them play their roles. A few students have been turned out who can do some business. Some have managed to set up their own private businesses but the number is small and this is a challenge to educational planners, administrators and policy makers.

Giving suggestions on how and where to start traditional education, one district director was of the view that those who have already passed through the education system should set examples. The director recounted:

When I started building a house in my village, people asked me why I didn't build in Accra [the national capital]. None of my colleagues was willing to build a house in the village. But when they finally saw my building and that I always went there, others started building there. Now we have three others who are building there. I also started farming there and people are admiring the progress I am making. So it's up to us the educated section of society to lead by setting good examples for others to copy. We have become so urbanized that we don't even want to visit our villages.

Another assistant director argued that the government alone cannot absorb all students who pass through the system. Therefore emphasis should be placed on high quality education as well as on the improvement of the private sector so that private businesses could absorb some school graduates. The director

suggested that if the central government made it a responsibility to encourage private businesses to improve upon their performances, they would be in a position to employ school graduates. The main point made above suggests that the achievement of the job objective of JSS graduates depends on several factors and not only on what happens in the classroom. Yet, given the current structure, it is unlikely to provide adequate education and skills with which graduates could become self-employed. The program may only provide its graduates with some foundation for subsequent apprenticeship before products could become employable. As one headmaster pointed out, "the students are only exposed to a number of vocations so that when a student gets a chance to enter SSS, he could acquire more skills, and from there could even go to the polytechnic to specialize in those skills. The suggestion then is that if a student terminates his education at the end of the JSS, the parents must provide him with some further training through apprenticeship. Parents themselves must be aware of the need for such further training since many of them may regard the JSS education as the end of it all or that a child is a failure if he does not gain admission to the SSS.

A senior administrator in a senior secondary school noted that there were not sufficient jobs for secondary school graduates. On top of that people were being laid off from their jobs. SSS graduates were supposed to do a year's national service as a form of initial employment. However, according to this officer, no employment provisions through the national service scheme had been made for graduates who were coming out from the senior secondary schools.

Explaining what could be done to ameliorate the situation, a headmaster was of the view that if practical learning materials were provided, students could learn well enough to be self employed. Learning materials were not in the schools for students to use. Moreover, teachers to teach technical drawing and technical skills were not available. Some students were taught by teachers who were not qualified. Other schools had only a skeleton staff to teach. The officer then asked, "If students lack technical ability, how do they work? It is therefore up to

the government to ensure that there are enough technical teachers to fill the vacuum.

Discussion

The issues addressed in the foregoing data analysis are (1) assessment of the basic and secondary education curricula, (2) effectiveness of the school program implementation and (3) employment prospects for secondary school graduates. In the data analysis, one major observation is that any adequate measure of productivity depends on satisfactory measures of inputs and outcomes. On the first issue of the assessment of basic and secondary education curriculum, respondents were unanimous that the subjects being studied were too many. They therefore called for a reduction of the subjects taken at final examinations. The pupils were too young and inexperienced to cope with too many subjects. Respondents referred to a number of problems that have confronted the system. These problems include lack of qualified staff for the science and technical subjects, lack of incentives to attract qualified staff, teachers being required to teach three or more subjects at the same time, too large classes and completion of continuous assessment forms, and weak handling of syllabuses. Heads of schools suggested an additional one year to the three-year SSS program, but this suggestion was initially rejected by the Ministry of Education. It is an interesting coincidence that at the time of writing this research report, the Presidential Committee on Education Reforms in Ghana (2002:61) also rejected the additional one year to the SSS program duration. The Government White Paper on the report, however, accepted the additional year to make the SSS program duration four years.

Respondents differed in their perceptions about the quality of the senior secondary school programs. Although some gains had been made, educational administrators, teachers, and parents were not satisfied with the general quality. Respondents differed in their views about the performance of students in the final examinations. A number of respondents attributed the poor quality of the program to the initial rush in planning.

On employment prospects, while respondents, including district directors, headmasters and teachers, agreed that employment was a major objective for the school reform program, they noted that this objective was far from being realized. The secondary school program had not adequately prepared students for self-employment in the public sector. It was not even clear whether the junior secondary school program was to prepare students for employment or just to be exposed to some initial skills and the handling of tools. Hence, it was some respondents' view that the entire program lacked effective initial planning. Respondents also pointed to the lack of adequate human and material resources such as qualified teachers to teach technical, vocational and life skills. Consequently even those schools which had been supplied with some tools did not use them. Also some teachers could not teach the practical skills.

It was the government's responsibility to supply the resources to the schools, but the government had not been able to live up to this responsibility. At the same time, however, schools did not have any authority to ask for monetary contributions from the community. Hence, schools have been emphasizing book knowledge instead of practical skills as envisaged by the new program. Teachers were also in short supply. Although teachers were being trained to some extent, many of them were inclined to quit teaching for better paying jobs. Those who remain in do not demonstrate adequate commitment owing to lack of incentives. There is therefore a lot of work to do ensure that junior and senior secondary education achieves its intended goals.

Recommendations

1. The Ministry of Education/Ghana Education Service must pay adequate attention to technical and vocational education by procuring the necessary tools and equipment for both junior and senior secondary schools for pupils to acquire practical skills. Until job learning materials are supplied to schools, our education will continue to be theory-based.
2. The current 12 subjects can be studied in JSS form 1, but reduced to nine in form 2 and then reduced to six in form 3 for the

- final basic education certificate examination. This will make for effective learning and subject choice by the pupils. This will also remove confusion in the minds of the pupils as regards what they are capable of learning well towards employment sooner than later.
3. Teaching universities and polytechnics must also design practical programs for teachers who will come out to teach technical and vocational skills that would lead to self-employment instead of graduates craving for white-collar jobs.
 4. In the junior secondary schools, the GES can employ local artisans such as carpenters, masons, plumbers, tailors/seamstresses, and electricians to teach these skills at least on part-time basis.
 5. In an era of cost sharing education, the MoE/GES must permit schools to mobilize funds through, for example, the PTA to provide some of the teaching-learning materials. The government must be honest with the people by accepting the fact that completely free and compulsory basic education cannot be attained within the present socio-economic situation in the country. The government cannot provide all the required resources in adequate quantities for all schools as at now.

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