

The Impact of International Aid on Educational Reform:

A Review of Educational Reform in Ghana in 1987

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the development of an educational program funded by the World Bank through a case study of the Education Sector Adjustment Lending (SECAL) project in Ghana, focusing on policy-making, implementation, and evaluation. The World Bank plays a very important role in both educational development policy in developing countries and the education aid policies of other aid agencies.

Ghana introduced an Economic Recovery Program (ERP) in 1983, and Education Sector Adjustment Credit (EdSAC) programs were introduced in 1987 and 1990. The conditionalities of the EdSAC in 1987 were the re-shaping the composition of education personnel, the removal of resources from non-educational to educational purposes, and the improvement of the efficiency of organization in teaching. The World Bank monitored the implementation process, and made decisions on disbursement. There were dissenting views as to the reform among GNAT, NUGS, religious bodies, etc. The views can be summarized as follows: the curriculum in junior secondary school is too difficult for the average primary-grade-six child, the training of teachers requires more time, the pace of reform is too fast, the logistics are not well-planned, and the pre-university education cycle is too short.

However, the reform program was, in fact, implemented. Three factors can be considered to have contributed to this implementation. Firstly, counterinfluence was excluded from the PNDC. Secondly, the implementation process of educational reform was characterized by exclusivity in decision-making. The National Planning Committee, which was created in 1987, was composed of those who shared views consistent with the reform policy. Thirdly, the reform was consistent with the educational demands of the Ghanaian people, especially parents in rural areas.

The World Bank contends that the educational reform program which was supported by the EdSACs was successful. However, the views of the Ghanaian people were different from that of the World Bank. The Ghanaians focused attention on academic achievement. The abysmal results of the Criterion Reference Tests and Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (SSSCE) in 1993 led to public criticism. The Education Reform Review Committee contended that if some of the dissenting views, which GNAT and NUGS had insisted on, had been considered and incorporated into the reform, the poor performance in the SSSCE could have been averted.

This study implies that it is important to prepare well before implementing large-scale educational reform. Without agreement among stakeholders, a reform will not be successful. Thus, donors have to pay as much attention as possible to the opinion of various stakeholders.

Key words: Ghana, educational reform, international aid, World Bank, structural adjustment

1. Introduction

In recent years, African issues, and the development of education in Africa have been at the forefront of international concern. For example, at the Kananaskis Summit in June 2002, African problems were one of the priority subjects, and a new basic policy was formulated, which would see over half of new ODA directed towards Africa through the 'Africa Action Plan'. In 2005 at the G 8 Summit in Gleneagles in the UK, issues such as waiving African debt and increasing the amount

of monetary support available were debated, and in 2008 Japan is scheduled to host an International Conference on African Development. With regard to education in Africa also, President George Bush made certain comments in June 2002 ("In Africa, burdened with civil war and famine, several countries are becoming hotbeds for terrorism" "The AIDS problem is casting a shadow over Africa's future"), announcing a new policy to support education in Africa.

Influenced by this international trend, basic educational support and African development has become an

important issue for concern within Japan also. Firstly, with regard to support for fundamental education, Prime Minister Koizumi announced the Basic Education for Growth Initiative (BEGIN) at the Kananaskis Summit, emphasizing that Japan would continue to focus on providing support to basic education in Africa. Moreover, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology released its final report of the 'International Educational Cooperation Round-table Conference,' which detailed its commitment to focus on cooperation to facilitate primary and secondary education, and to formulate a cooperation base in order to strengthen cooperative relationships. At the Environmental Development Summit in September 2002, the then Prime Minister Koizumi announced the implementation of an aid plan for education worth 250 billion yen over 5 years. Koizumi also commented that "if Africa's problems cannot be solved, there will be no stability or prosperity in the world of the 21st century," making clear his determination to implement a steady policy of aid for Africa. Looking at these trends, then, we can surmise that the question of support for basic education in Africa is an issue of growing concern for both Japan and the international community.

As is well known, Africa fell into an economic crisis after the 1970s, and many countries were forced to start to rely on outside aid for their educational financial policy also. After the 1980s, most African countries were subject to structural adjustment, and were strongly influenced by the education policies of international aid organizations. At present also, the amount received in education aid by many African countries exceeds that allowed for in their domestic budgets, and the influence of international aid on domestic educational policy is significant. The World Bank has had a particularly strong influence on African educational policy, but not enough examination has been carried out into the ways in which the World Bank's educational aid policies have developed in the African context, or the significance which these policies have come to have.

For example, the influence of structural adjustment on education is generally explained in terms of "structural adjustment having reduced education budgets and stagnated the school enrolment ratio." It is not the case, however, that every country follows this same pattern. For some countries, it would seem expedient to argue that factors such as civil war and tribal conflict, as well as the political instability behind such unrest, are likely to have had more influence than merely structural adjustment alone. For example, the primary school enrolment ratio is supposed to have dropped overall in the decade between 1980 and 1990, but percentile points

in fact increased in every country apart from those that were or had been experiencing civil war.

This is not to argue, however, that the influence of structural adjustment was barely felt. Structural adjustment had a significant effect on education in Africa, but the mechanism of this has not yet been fully documented. There is a lot of research on World Bank education aid policies, which focus on the structure of the World Bank's education aid, on historical trends in aid policies, and on analyses of the current situation, and are extremely useful in examinations of the World Bank. However, little research has touched upon the question of how the education aid provided by the World Bank developed in the receiving country, and this paper represents one attempt to redress this imbalance.

In this paper, I will consider the case of Ghana, which receives a comparatively large amount of aid from Japan compared with other African countries. Educational reform was implemented in Ghana in 1987 as part of a World Bank Structural Adjustment Program, and I will examine this from two perspectives, namely the 'process of implementation' and the 'results of the educational reform.' The 1987 educational reform was carried out as part of a structural adjustment program by the World Bank, and we can see the intention of the World Bank reflected very strongly in the processes involved. In that sense, this paper could be positioned as an examination of the educational reform that is undertaken through political aid.

2. Structural Adjustment and the 1987 Educational Reform

(1) Education Sector Adjustment

Ghana was the first African country south of the Sahara to achieve independence, and had often been labeled as the 'rising star' of the continent. At the beginning of the 1980s, however, Ghana was struck by a decrease in export income due to a sudden decline in the international value of primary commodities, and this caused inflation due to fiscal deficits. Soon, the country found itself facing ever accumulating debts. For these reasons, the Provisional National Defense Council (hereinafter, PNDC), led by J.J.Rawlings, received assistance from the World Bank and the IMF, and in 1983 implemented an Economic Recovery Program, focused on a policy of structural adjustment. In the first Economic Recovery Program (1984-1986), the main focus was on the improvement of macroeconomic indicators, but in the second phase of the Program (1987-1989) the focus of economic reform moved towards departmental reforms, and particular emphasis was placed on social

reform, such as education (Cobbe, 1991).

The education sector adjustment was mainly focused on quantitative expansion in primary education, as well as improvements in the quality and efficiency of education. The Education Sector Adjustment Credit (EdSAC I) was carried out in 1987, with EdSAC II carried out in 1990. EdSAC I had as its conditions 1) a reduction in grants for middle and secondary education and 2) the reform of the education system, and EdSAC II represented a strengthening of both these policies (Noss, 1991). This paper will focus primarily on 2) the reform of the education system.

The reason that this education reform can be considered so significant lies in the fact that, in Ghana, the education system was creating - and continues to create today - a number of problems, such as the fact that there is no system of employment for JSS graduates (JSS being the new lower secondary education system). The education reform had a long-term influence in Ghana, and many students - and their parents - were caught up in the resulting confusion. Moreover, it is not a problem that can be resolved either easily or quickly. In other words, this education reform represented a critical problem.

The education reform was both one element of the structural adjustment program overseen by the World Bank, and was supported by other donors. For example, the Primary Education Project (PREP) started in 1991 by USAID, and the Primary School Development Project, implemented in 1993, both supported education reform in Ghana.

(2) Reforms in the School System

Until 1987, Ghana's education system had been structured on a 6-5-2 year basis. However, very few students were passing the nationally standardized Common Entrance Examination which was required to continue to the next stage after finishing primary education, and most students were instead continuing their education at 4 year 'middle schools.' These 'middle schools' were intended as 'prep schools' to be attended before going onto junior high schools, and students at these schools were able to take the Common Entrance Examination every year. Of course, not all students were attending these 4 year middle schools, but due to the difficulty of the Common Entrance Examination many students would study at these middle schools for a number of years before successfully passing. Such a strict examination system was designed to secure the academic performance of students in higher school education, but because the vast majority of middle schools were publicly funded, the system was very cost intensive, and

the education budget was under increasing pressure. The conditions of the structural adjustment facility provided by the World Bank demanded the abolishment of these middle schools, which were to be replaced by 3 year Junior Secondary Schools (hereinafter, JSS) and 3 year Senior Secondary Schools (hereinafter, SSS), thereby establishing a 6-3-3 education system. This reform resulted in 9 years of compulsory education, and had as its intention an expansion of lower secondary education.

According to the explanation provided by Ghana's Ministry of Education, the reform had four major objectives:

- 1) Increase access to basic education
- 2) Change the education system from a 6-(4)-5-2 to a 6-3-3 year basis. In other words, reduce the number of years spent in education before entering university from 17 to 12 (However, efforts were to be made to avoid any decrease in the number of classroom hours, such as increasing term times from 32-35 weeks a year to 40 weeks a year)
- 3) Make education more financially efficient, and achieve cost recovery. By doing this, reforms could be maintained even after the completion of the adjustment period
- 4) Improve the quality of education by adjusting the curriculum to greater reflect social and economic conditions

In Ghana, the introduction of the 6-3-3 system had been debated since the 1970 s. At that time, the Dzobo Committee had been charged with examining how best to improve the education system, and in 1973 it had produced a report entitled "The New Structure and Content of Education," which had argued for the implementation of JSS. These JSS had been introduced slowly, on an experimental basis. At first, 9 schools were opened, and by 1987, just before the educational reform, the number of JSS had increased to 115. In other words, the introduction of the 6-3-3 system did not represent a sudden shift in policy brought about by the World Bank's structural adjustment policy, but was rather an issue that Ghana had been considering domestically since the 1970 s.

The JSS were implemented throughout Ghana in September 1987. The children who would have been first year middle school students were now designated as first year JSS students. The first year middle schools students from the previous financial year (FY 1986) became second year middle school students, and the second year middle school students from FY 1986 also became third year middle school students. This meant that both the old and new systems were functioning in

parallel. As a result, the middle schools remained in existence until 1990, and because the fourth year students who graduated from the old middle school system went on to the 5 year junior secondary schools to take their O levels, and then subsequently onto the 2 year higher secondary schools to take their A levels, it was not until 1997 that the old system could be entirely disbanded. Of course, the students who joined the newly implemented JSS in 1987 graduated to SSS in 1990, and from those SSS in 1993.

Under normal circumstances, it is necessary to garner opinion and support from related parties, and to undertake sufficient preparation, before attempting any large-scale reforms of the education system. This is because diverse preparations need to be made in a number of areas, such as extending existing schools and classrooms, expanding school facilities, reviewing the curriculum, improvements in teacher training (teacher training, on-the-job training etc.), and so on. In order to respond to these needs, Ghana created the National Planning Committee, which consisted of persons from the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service (GES), the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), university representatives, and persons from the National Service Scheme, amongst others. In addition, District Implementation Committees were also formed, to support implementation of the reforms on a regional level.

There was also considerable support from international bodies. The World Bank approved a total of 6 finance loans, totaling 170 million US dollars. IDA and USAID also provided large amounts of funding. The total amount of international aid provided to support Ghana's 1987 education reform has been said to top 270 million US dollars. The main projects providing impetus to the education reform were the World Bank's PSDP, USAID's PREP and the UK ODA's Junior Secondary School Teacher Education Project.

However, within Ghana itself, there was considerable criticism of the education reform. Strong arguments against the reforms came, in particular, from the teachers' union (GNAT), religious bodies, and the National Union of Ghana Students. The main points of these arguments can be summarized as follows: 1) the JSS curriculum was too hard for the average student, 2) more time was needed for adequate teacher training, 3) the pace of reform was too fast, 4) there was insufficient planning in place for the distribution of educational resources (as a result, the teaching materials needed for the new curriculum would not reach the schools, and would be lacking even after the reforms were implemented), and 5) 12 years was too short a

period for pre-university education.

Moreover, a number of problems were highlighted from the experimental implementation of JSS, which had begun in 1974 (and lasted until 1987). The biggest grievance was that the experimental implementation had not been in any way comprehensive, and not a single SSS had been established during this period, even experimentally. As such, the graduates of these experimental JSS were required to continue their studies within the old school system. However, these JSS graduates had studied a curriculum that was different to non-JSS students, and were not able to follow the content of the classes, finding it difficult to study for O levels.

Two years before the implementation of the new curriculum, in 1985, the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service had summarized the following problematic areas:

- 1) Most middle school buildings were old, and had only 4 classrooms. JSS, however, were to be for only 3 years, and each year would need 2 classrooms, meaning a total of 6 classrooms would be required. As such, in order to turn middle schools into JSS, 2 more classrooms would need to be constructed
- 2) The teaching facilities available were not suitable. Middle schools had no science laboratories, for example, so science classes were held in the normal classrooms.
- 3) Teaching materials were lacking, and it would be difficult to undertake any technical or vocational training.
- 4) It was difficult for schools to get hold of textbooks.
- 5) Most schools had no library, and no staff room.
- 6) There was a lack of teaching staff able to supervise technical and vocational subjects. As well as being lacking in absolute numbers, the staff that there were also lacked experience in teaching. As such, the technical and vocational capabilities of teaching staff were extremely low.
- 7) The lack of financial resources was a crucial issue.

Whilst there was recognition of these problems, then, the education reform itself had become a prescribed course of action, and the Ghana government undertook a number of campaigns in support of the education reform, through various activities (Yeboah, 1992). Firstly, in January 1987, a government initiated forum was held. At the beginning of the education reform (until around 1987), the government had not sought any advice from universities, researchers, or the teachers' union (GNAT). Rather, it had seemed keen to eliminate the influence of such external organizations. This may well have had an influence on the lack of quality teachers and of teacher training. At the forum in January

1987 also, the government failed to listen seriously to any criticism, and instead emphasized the positive aspects of the reform program.

Moreover, the government implemented a campaign to highlight the positive implications of the reform, through mass media such as newspapers. However, it was not just educational organizations that were criticizing the reforms. Many concerned parents amongst urban dwellers and the social elite were calling for a reinforcement of the intellectual subjects taught at prep schools. These people did not believe that the vocational training to be made available at JSS were answering the needs of their children, and were critical of the proposed reforms to the education system (Cobbe, 1991).

The fact that there had been insufficient evaluation of the results of the experimental period (1974-1987) was another significant problem. There were rumors of an evaluative report having been drawn up, but even if it were true, this report was not made use of by the Ministry of Education, by the Ghana Education Service, by the World Bank's office in Accra, or by GNAT. What is of particular interest is the fact that the World Bank, which provided 85 million US dollars in structural adjustment funds to the education sector between 1987 and 1990 has no evaluative evidence to show for itself. The fact that no evaluative report has been made public by the World Bank must mean that either the results of the evaluation are restricted and confidential, or possibly that no such evaluative report ever existed. What was being undertaken during this period as investigative research by the World Bank was an examination of what kinds of environment can exert influence on academic performance, and there was no research undertaken to consider whether or not the JSS system would be effective for Ghana (Streicher, 1988).

(3) Basic Data Collection and Infrastructure Improvement

The education reform was begun firstly with the collection of basic data, for example school mapping. In reality, Ghana had almost no data on school mapping or population at the start of the education reform. Firstly, then, the distances between middle schools were measured, and locations were identified for the construction of JSS. Moreover, statistics were collected on student numbers and on the qualifications held by teachers, and the number of JSS needed in each area was determined.

In terms of the JSS school buildings, there were enough in terms of number, but the quality of these buildings was terribly poor, mostly because the buildings that were to be turned into JSS - having previously

been middle schools - had not been renovated for years, and were in extremely bad condition. In 1986 there were 5462 middle schools and JSS. After the school mapping, and a number of amalgamations, by September 1987 there were 5260 JSS in Ghana.

If we look at this perspective of the organization of the JSS educational environment, we can see that what was more important than just the school building was the existence of workshops, materials and tools that would be needed for the vocational and professional education to be provided. From this perspective, there is no other option than to say that the teaching facilities available in these JSS were sadly lacking. The government had hoped that the construction of special workshops would be made possible through local contributions, but the persons of influence in local areas were not able to make this happen. This was mostly because there were no areas in Ghana at that time that were able to find the resources necessary to build such an extension in the short time period of just a few months (Association for the Development of African Education 1995).

It is said that a fairly high number of JSS were able to get their hands on a reasonable amounts of the tools and materials needed for vocational education, and the laboratory equipment needed for science education. Through support from the World Bank, tools and science kits were distributed to the JSS. The numbers of such kits, however, cannot be said to have been universally sufficient, and rather more of an issue was the fact that there was a lack of teachers who were able to use these tools and kits in lessons to develop skills.

(4) Curriculum

In parallel with the introduction of the new education system, there was a need for a reform both of the curriculum and of teacher training. At JSS, vocational and practical subjects such as 'life skills,' 'vocational skills' and 'agriculture' were all to be newly taught as mandatory subjects in addition to the conventional cognitive subjects, in an attempt to integrate the learning undertaken at schools and the knowledge needed in the actual workplace.

The primary school curriculum did not change fundamentally between 1974 and 1987. Recently, efforts are being made to reduce the number of subjects taught. At the early stages of the reform, the primary school curriculum consisted of nine subjects (English, Mathematics, Ghanaian languages, Science, Social Studies, Cultural Studies, Agriculture, Life Skills, P. E.). The government, however, gradually reduced this to 4 subjects (English, Mathematics, Ghanaian languages,

Children and the Environment), with higher education having 5 subjects (English, Mathematics, Ghanaian languages, Science, Agriculture). These reasons for this are two-fold. Firstly, there was a lack of infrastructure, and secondly, the primary school children, in their sixth year, were showing poor academic performance (I will elaborate on this later).

The JSS curriculum consisted, at the start of the JSS system, of 9 ordinary subjects and 4 vocational subjects. The ordinary subjects were: 1) English, 2) Ghanaian languages, 3) Mathematics, 4) Integrated Sciences, 5) Social Studies, 6) Cultural Studies, 7) Life Skills, 8) P. E., and 9) French (optional). The vocational subjects were: 1) Agriculture, 2) Technical Drawing, 3) Industrial Skills, and 4) Vocational Skills. However, from the middle of the 1990s the number of subjects began to be reduced, as had also been seen in primary education. In the ordinary subjects, social and cultural studies were integrated into a single subject, and life skills was incorporated into the latter of two new preparatory vocational subjects, namely the 'Preparatory Vocational & Technical Program' and the 'Integrated Vocational Techniques and Life Skills Program'.

(5) Teacher training

The preparatory vocational training that was to be provided at JSS was a measure intended as a response to a new demographic of student that would be entering the facilities as a result of the expansion of junior secondary education. However, the lack of qualified teaching staff was a glaring obstacle in the realization of such curriculum reform. The economic troubles that Ghana had experienced from the latter half of the 1970s to the early 1980s had prompted a brain drain the science and technology, with qualified teaching staff moving abroad to find work.

As a result, there was a severe lack of qualified teaching staff able to oversee these classes in the new JSS. Moreover, 44.2% of all teaching staff in primary schools were unqualified as of 1986 (Ministry of Education, 1994), and this question of how to improve levels of quality in teaching staff was an urgent issue to be tackled. Despite this, it was the teaching staff that would be playing the most crucial role in the realization of the proposed education reforms.

Teacher training was built around two axes, reform of the teacher training system, and in-service teacher training. Of these, the former clarified the diverse teaching qualifications that had previously existed into one: 'having graduated from a higher educational facility than upper high school'. Prior to the reforms, it had been possible for middle schools graduates to work as

teachers, but this system was abolished. Moreover, the 'in-service teacher training' was designed both as a response to the new curriculum, and to see unqualified teachers earn teaching qualifications whilst on-the-job. Training focused on the teachers' ability to handle the contents of the new curriculum was carried out during the school holidays. Until 1995, unqualified teachers also took part in the training, and were removed from their positions unless they achieved relevant teaching qualifications.

(6) Automatic Promotion

Of particular interest within these 1987 education reforms was the introduction of automatic promotion. As is well known, at the World Education Forum held in Dakar in 2000, one of the objectives set for improving the quality of education was 'completion of primary school,' which was second only to 'quality primary education'. In other words, students should not drop out from primary schools mid-way through, but should be able to build up the academic ability required to be able to graduate from primary school.

However, cases of students dropping out mid-way through school courses, or remaining in the same grade for several years, are extremely common, and this is one of the factors contributing to the poor levels of efficiency in African education. One of the reasons that many aid organizations have neglected primary education is this very problem: the lack of efficiency in primary education. Some African countries have extremely strict examinations in place that students are required to pass in order to continue onto secondary schools. Several countries list one of the main reasons for children dropping out of schools as the fact that they were "did not pass the examination". For example, according to a DHS survey, between 20% - 30% of school drop-outs in Comoros, Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Togo gave "not being able to pass the examination" as the reason for their departure from school.

The most direct way to solve the problem of children repeating the same year in school is to introduce a system of automatic promotion. Reports by the World Bank do not mention automatic promotion in so many words, but often show regular occurrence of arguments regarding the introduction of automatic promotion in schools. However, many African countries are extremely reluctant to introduce automatic promotion. The reasons given are that such a system would cause teachers to lose interest in teaching, cause children to lose interest in learning, and lead to a situation in which even the most basic levels of academic performance could not be guaranteed.

In the 1987 education reform, Ghana introduced this system of automatic promotion. After 1987, children were able to move directly from their first year of primary school to their third year in JSS without being held back at all. However, in order to move up from JSS to SSS, students were required to take the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), and achieve acceptable results. The ratio of students continuing from JSS to SSS lies at around 35% (from results between 1991-1993).

Recent research comparing Ghana and Togo (which has extremely strict examinations in place) (N'tchougan-Sonou 2001) developed the question of which system was better: the automatic promotion system implemented in Ghana, or the strict system of examination in place in Togo, which results in many children having to repeat school years. According to this result, Ghana, having selected the automatic promotion system, enjoyed the following advantages: "young students which until now have been in a comparatively disadvantaged position (such as the very poor, and female students) are now able to remain in school, even without having reached a certain academic level. The result of this is an increase in human resources"; "children no longer have to be frightened of exams, and they are not scorned at for failing to pass exams"; "students no longer remain in the lower levels of school, which has meant an increase in the quality of education received by lower school years." Equally, he indicates the damage that automatic promotion can produce: "the teachers' lose a sense of pride in their work, and they no longer attempt to get through the entire curriculum"; "there is no exam pressure until the BECE at the end of the ninth year of education, so parents and children are shocked when they take the BECE and get poor scores"; "the lack of examinations means that parents are unable to determine the academic abilities of their child"; "children are able to complete basic education without even being able to read, write or do basic arithmetic (or, put the other way, basic education is churning out large numbers of graduates unable to read and write)". In Togo, by contrast, where strict examinations have been and remain in place, whilst there is the advantage that levels of minimal academic performance are being maintained throughout all of the school grades, a great deal of students find themselves lingering in the lower grades for several years, which causes an increase in the average number of years spent at school, and creates financial burden (N'tchougan-Sonou 2001).

In recent years, criticism of the disadvantages of the automatic promotion system has been emerging in Ghana itself, with the 2002 Education Sector Review

calling for a review of the system (Ministry of Education 2002).

3. The political context of education reform

Based on the conditions set by the World Bank, the proposal for education reform was passed in October 1986. The government then set about implementing the necessary preparations. The funding from the World Bank was to be provided in order to support the various expenses that implementation would entail, and the disbursement would be carried out based on confirmation of the progress of reforms. The first structural adjustment facility would be provided in two disbursement installments, and support would be given to the collation and analysis of data on school mapping, the development of curriculum, the preparation and distribution of teaching materials, new facilities and equipment for the new curriculum, training for current teaching staff, the establishment of a new system of school inspectors, and the creation of a new organization to operate the various projects. The education reform, then, moved towards practical implementation, under the guidance and support of the World Bank.

What were the reasons for such a large scale reform being implemented in Ghana? I believe that it can be understood in terms of the following three points: 1) decision-making entities for the apportioning of structural adjustment funding, 2) organizations responsible for educational policy and 3) the Ghanaian people who were to be the recipients of education.

(1) Decision-making entities for the apportioning of structural adjustment funding

Firstly, with regard to the decision-making entities for the apportioning of structural adjustment funding, it is important to note that opposition from the PNDC, a decision making body, was eliminated. Within the early internal power structure of the PNDC there was an ultra left wing faction which strongly opposed receiving any aid from western nations, including that from the World Bank. However, after an attempt at a bloodless coup d'etat failed in 1982, this faction was expelled from the PNDC, and the government was rid of any opposition to approaching the World Bank for support. Moreover, decisions on the introduction of structural policies were made within an extremely small scope of bodies, with a strong emphasis on the PNDC itself, and it is also likely significant there was no procedure put in place to question the opinion of Ghana citizens on the subject (Takane, 1993). In this way, then, the process of decision-making with regard to structural adjustment policy was characterized by its exclusiveness. Such exclusivity is likely the most

important factor in explaining why the adjustment policy was received so smoothly. Furthermore, it is also significant that, internal governmental opposition having been eliminated, this likely meant the student opposition movement was unable to link itself to any internal government power sources.

In addition, it is critical that the PNDC did not position the urban elite as their main basis of support. The vocational education provided in JSS was not particularly amenable to the urban elite, whose children would be focusing on the academic route through education, through SSS onto universities. As such, whilst the urban elite were somewhat discontented with the nature of the educational reform, the PNDC had a strong basis of support amongst rural areas and villages, rather than amongst the urban elite, and it is perhaps this that helped to push forward the reforms.

(2) Organizations responsible for educational policy

The same exclusivity can be seen amongst the organizations responsible for the implementation of educational policy. In preparation for the implementation of the new education system in September 1987, a National Planning and Implementation Committee was established in February of the same year, as the implementing body of the education reform program. This Committee was made up of members of the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service, teachers' unions and university, all of whom had been selected. What is important here is that the leaders of the education reform were able to select the members of the committee. The leaders of the reform need to ensure that the reform was carried out in September of that same year, and as such needed a speedy and efficient preparatory system. As such, they did not allow any persons with conflicting opinions to their own to become members of this new National Planning and Implementation Committee. In other words, the National Planning and Implementation Committee was nothing more than a collection of "yes-men" (Association for the Development of African Education 1995).

In the same way, no perceivable efforts were made by the government to ascertain the levels of support amongst Ghana citizens during the implementation process of the reforms. The government believed that consulting its citizens would have been a weakness, and that any such action would be considered a minus point in terms of maintaining its own political strength. As such, despite the fact that criticism of the reforms emerged from teachers' unions and student organizations, and that these bodies submitted a number of alternative proposals, the government made no efforts to accommodate these suggestions. This exclusivity in the organizations responsible for implementing the reforms can be considered as being deeply interrelated to the practical outcomes of the reforms themselves.

(3) Educational needs

It is significant that, in terms of the education demands at the time, there was an increase in demand for lower secondary education amongst the general population, in particular in villages. By 1980, it had become extremely difficult to gain employment in Ghana without having graduated from at least junior high school. Looking at the relationship between employment and academic background, we can see that the vast majority of people who had only graduated from primary school were self-employed, and were not in employment (See Table 1).

As a result of such circumstances as these, the majority of the Ghanaian population, and in particular that sector of the population that had not been able to continue education after primary school, had begun to demand, by the 1980s, greater opportunities to continue education beyond primary school. The 6-3-3 system introduced as a result of the adjustments to the educational field met the demands of this majority, in that it allowed children to continue into secondary education without taking any examinations. The reforms were also aided by the populist approach of Rawlings' government, and it can be argued that the reforms were implemented with little fuss.

Table 1 Relationships between Academic Background and Employment as seen in the Ghana Household Income Survey (GLSS, 1989)

	Unemployed	Employed Private	Employed Public	Self-employed
None	0.6	4.3	2.6	92.4
Primary	0.8	8.8	3.4	87.0
Secondary	3.0	13.6	18.7	64.7
University	0.0	17.9	60.7	21.4
All	1.5	8.2	8.8	81.5

Source: From Cobbe (1991)

4. An examination of the education reform: A rapid expansion of education, and the decline of quality

Currently, many African countries appear to be experiencing both a rapid expansion of basic education, and a concurrent decline in the education quality. This, of course, reflects the EFA (education for all) movement of the international community. For example, in Malawi, Uganda and Kenya, primary education has been made free, and the enrolment ratio for primary schools has shot up as a consequence. However, the response in implementing the structural reforms required by such a sudden increase of enrolment, such as improved teacher training or better teaching conditions has been slow, and the subsequent drop in the education quality is now a significant problem. The 1987 education reform in Ghana can be said to have resulted in similar problems in secondary education. I will now examine the results of the education reform in Ghana from both its quantitative and qualitative aspects.

(1) Quantitative aspects

The international aid organizations, beginning with the World Bank, that supported the 1987 Ghanaian educational reform, are inclined to see the reform as having been a success, in that it expanded the scope of education within the country. For example, the World Bank has evaluated the results positively, taking as justification the increase in the number of students

enrolled in schools.

However, whilst primary school enrolment ratios may be rising, they still have not reached the levels they were at in 1980 (80%). In addition, what is worrying is that policies designed to prevent school enrollment by the poorest sections of society appear to be in development. For example, since 1990 a textbook fee has been collected at primary schools, and it can be argued that such financial burden could lead to an increase in the number of children unable to continue their schooling. Moreover, an overall policy of decentralization has led to some local governments collecting class fees at primary schools, further increasing the financial burden placed on parents. In actuality, since 1991, school enrollment numbers have been unmovng.

(2) Qualitative aspects

1) Academic achievement

Turning our attention to the qualitative aspects, then, there are those of the opinion that the results of the education reform cannot be evaluated entirely positively (Peil 1995). This can be shown, for example, in the reaction by the Ghanaian population to the results of the Criterion Reference Test administered through the support of USAID in 1992, and the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) administered by the West African Examination Council in 1993. These examinations were one of the bottom lines for the series of educational policies that were begun in 1987, and the results caught the attention of

Table 2 Trends in School Enrolment Ratio

	Primary Education		JSS		SSS	JSS→SSS
	Gross enrolment ratio	Number of students	Gross enrolment ratio (boys)	Gross enrolment ratio (girls)	Number of students	Transition rate
1986	77.3					
1990	79.3	569,343			168,000	
1991	79.0	605,760			199,260	35.3
1992	77.6	644,976			225,277	33.8
1993	78.1	676,182	67.44	48.90	247,496	34.8
1994	75.9	690,558	68.17	50.23	236,527	
1995	74.6	713,878	66.74	50.65		
1996	76.5	738,057	66.49	51.33		
1997	77.5		65.56	51.60		
1998	78.4		57.66	51.36	188,908	
1999	79.4		63.80	52.30		
2000	78.6	804,419	64.20	53.30		

Source: Ministry of Education, Ghana (2002)

the whole country. The results of both examinations, however, were far from what the country had been expecting.

The first Criterion Reference Test was conducted with a sample of 6th year primary school children, with 11,488 taking a mathematics test, and 11,586 taking an English test. For mathematics, only 1.1% of children were able to answer more than 55% of the questions correctly. In the English test, only 2% of children achieved a score of 60% or more. At the second round of tests, these results had improved slightly to 2.1% and 5.3% respectively, but still could hardly be said to represent satisfactory performance. The lack of English ability was further proved by other surveys. The CRIQPEG survey implemented by the University of Cape Coast consisted of a detailed test given to primary school children at 14 different schools. The results showed that just 5% of children had been able to master

reading, writing and speaking in English. This lack of English skills is not a problem that could be ignored. English is the standard language used in education after primary and secondary school, and a lack of understanding in English leads inevitably to a lack of understanding in other subjects.

Next, let us take a look at the results of the SSSCE. The Criterion Reference Test is simply a survey of academic performance, and has no direct bearing on the future of the children who are taking it. By contrast, the SSSCE is akin to a university entrance examination, and is extremely significant for the students sitting it. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, this examination was the first SSSCE to be implemented since the 1987 education reforms, and the population was extremely keen to see the results. The examination was administered in December 1993, and the results were published in May of the following year. The results, however, were dis-

Table 3 Trends in the Criterion Reference Test

	English		Mathematics	
	Average score	% of pupils reaching mastery level	Average score	% of pupils reaching mastery level
1992	29.9	2.0	27.3	1.1
1993	30.9	3.0	27.4	1.5
1994	31.0	3.3	27.7	1.5
1995	31.6	3.6	28.1	1.8
1996	33.0	5.5	28.8	1.8
1997	33.9	6.2	29.9	2.7
1999	36.9	8.7	32.2	4.0
2000	36.9	9.6	32.3	4.4

Source : Ministry of Education, Ghana (2002)

Table 4 Results of the 1993 Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE)

	Number of students	%
Passed 9 subjects	1,656	3.9
Passed 8 subjects	1,719	4.1
Passed 7 subjects	2,036	4.8
Passed 6 subjects	2,435	5.8
Passed 5 subjects	3,120	7.4
Passed 4 subjects	3,948	9.4
Passed 3 subjects	4,667	11.1
Passed 2 subjects	5,427	12.9
Passed 1 subjects	8,222	19.5
Passed all subjects	9,746	21.1

Source : From Streicher (1988)

mal (See Table 4). Only 2.7% of the total examinees had passed into university, and criticism of the education reforms rose sharply after the publication of the results. Newspapers and magazines ran shocking headlines - "SSS Disaster," "Education Policy - A National Disaster," "The SSS Scandal" - and coverage of the abysmal results was widespread.

Some comments, however, did not see the SSSCE results as being the direct result of the education reforms. According to these, only one third of JSS graduates continued into SSS, so to judge the success or failure of the education reforms on just 33% of the country's overall academic performance was not appropriate. However, the results of interviews I carried out in 1997 showed that most SSS principals were aware of the low level of students' academic ability, and believed the situation to be a grave one.

The Ministry of Education also took the situation extremely seriously, and in July 1994 established the Education Reform Review Committee, to consider and reflect upon the education reforms for the past decade (Association for the Development of African Education 1995).

In March 1994, the Education Minister held a national forum on basic education. At that forum, the Minister made the following comments, and acknowledged that the reforms had yet to produce satisfactory results (Association for the Development of African Education 1995).

Since 1988 we have been able to reorganize the financing and rehabilitate the infrastructure of the education system. But today we see that this is not enough. In spite of the excellent work that has been started, pupils are not learning what is expected. The great majority of primary-6 pupils are functionally illiterate in English and Mathematics. Without functional literacy pupils won't gain comprehension and skills in other subjects, they won't be prepared for further education, nor will they be prepared for the world of work. How can we justify continuing expenditures on expanding a system that doesn't lead to learning?

In consideration of the publication of the examination results in 1994, the Education Minister was severely criticized by the mass media and teachers, and he submitted his resignation. The Prime Minister, however, refused to accept the resignation, instead showing great confidence in the Education Minister. This support from the Prime Minister greatly shored up the Education Minister's leadership, and in 1996 a program

of free compulsory universal basic education (fCUBE) was started. However, in terms of achieving quality in education, the results of a Criterion Reference Test carried out in 2000 showed English pass levels at less than 10%, and less than 5% for mathematics. The pass rate for the BECE has also been in decline for the past few years, meaning that it is still not possible to claim that basic education in Ghana has sufficiently improved.

2) Quality of teachers

As I have already mentioned, it would be one-sided to only consider the results of academic tests in determining the success or failure of the academic reforms. Academic performance is not everything. Here, I would like to take a brief look at whether quality of teachers has been improved.

One of the most important successes of the education reforms has been an increase in the number of qualified teaching staff. According to documentation from the Ministry of Education, the number of qualified teaching staff in primary schools has increased from 58% (1987/88) to 68% (1992/93), and in JSS has increased from 67% (1987/88) to 75% (1992/93). Looking at the figures for basic education as a whole, 71% of teachers are now qualified. There remains, however, a severe lack of qualified teachers for the vocational subjects. As a result, JSS and SSS have not yet been able to produce satisfactory levels of success in practical vocational education.

3) Employment opportunities for JSS graduates

Another perspective to be employed in evaluating the educational reforms is the related to the very reasons for the establishment of JSS. One important objective of the JSS was to implement practical education, such as preparatory vocational education, that would allow students to find employment quickly after graduation. Since two thirds of students would not progress to SSS, the question of whether or not gainful employment could be found after graduation was a significant issue for both students and their parents. It is also another area in which the validity of the concepts behind the educational reforms can be questioned.

However, it cannot unfortunately be said that the figures on employment are good. For example, according to a report in the Daily Graphic (21st January 2001), "the education reforms have sent to 1.792 million Ghanaian children onto the streets." The article suggests that of the 200,000 students graduating from JSS every year, about 72,000 (36%) continue to SSS, and a further 10,000 (5%) go onto vocational schools. The 118,000 (59%) remaining are left jobless on the streets. Moreover, of the 72,000 students that continued to SSS,

25,000 (35%) of these will go onto universities, polytechnics and teacher training colleges, leaving the remaining 47,000 (65%) to linger on the streets. What this means, says the article, is that since 1990, a total of 1,792,000 students have been left unemployed after graduating from JSS and SSS. The article implies that there is little or no opportunity for employment other than continuing one's education, and that the expectations of both students and parents toward the educational reforms have been betrayed, with the actual situation being far from what the reforms had initially envisaged.

Of course, resolving this issue of educational infrastructure and employment opportunities has been shown previously to be extremely difficult, by Dore in the 1970s, and by Forster in the 1960s, in the specific context of Ghana (Dore, 1974, Foster, 1965). However, in Ghana, JSS were introduced extremely rapidly as part of structural adjustment, and whilst their introduction may have prompted a quantitative expansion in lower secondary education, problems - serious problems - remain.

The education reforms aimed toward establishing a fair and universal education system, in terms of guaranteeing secondary education to many children. However, it should be noted that differences in social class have been and remain a serious issue. The vast majority of students who go onto study at influential universities is made up by graduates from leading SSS, and in order to achieve the necessary BECE test marks to enter these leading SSS, families will pay expensive tuition fees to send their children to private middle schools which can guarantee this success. Of course, only a very limited number of families of certain social class can afford to give their children that option.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, I have examined the case of the education reforms in Ghana from two perspectives, namely from the process of the implementation of the reforms, and from the results of the reforms. It is necessary to be extremely cautious when evaluating education reforms, in deciding on their success or failure. As I have already mentioned, it is possible to herald the reforms a success by looking at those aspects where there have been proven results. However, if we look at a different aspect of the results, then it is not so easy to proclaim the reform a success. In particular, it is certain that there are many issues which still need to be tackled, such as the decline the educational standards that has accompanies the expansion of lower secondary education, and the lack of opportunities for graduates, as

discussed in the previous section. In terms of the actual education reforms themselves, both the decision-making process and the implementation process were carried out with high levels of exclusivity, and it may well have been that the reforms were simply pushed ahead despite the bodies concerned having failed to attain the understanding and support of persons more directly involved with educational bodies. As such, we can surely say that the reforms have not been able to successfully reach their objectives.

What all of this implies is that firstly, the 1987 reforms in Ghana were marred by a lack of preparation in terms of the education system reforms, that the policies in place to deal with the quantitative expansion in education were insufficient, and that as such it is necessary to be cautious of any such rapid implementation of wide-ranging reforms. Secondly, education is a 'system' made up of a number of different bodies, and that by reforming this system only partially - schools systems, curriculum, teacher training and so on - despite still facing opposition from various other stakeholders, the proposed reforms are unlikely to go well. Thirdly, it also implies that international aid organizations should pay close attention to the movements shown by these various stakeholders, during the process of providing aid for reform.

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