# Chapter 3

# Education and Skills Training

Ghana is known for its central government subsidisation of primary and senior high school education. However, to understand the foundations of this system, it is necessary to go back to look at the country's history under colonial rule.

## 3.1 A vision for Ghana's education growth

In 1995, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) partnered with GoG to establish Ghana Vision 2020. According to the IMF, 'the new development framework would foster stronger economic growth and better living standards for the people of Ghana' (Abukari et al., 2015, p. 3), with investment and reform in the education sector as key pillars. The first notable output of the partnership was the Free and Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) Policy in 1995, promising universal education by 2005. This 'guaranteed 9 years of free basic education for all children of school-going age with emphasis on quality teaching and learning, efficient management and sustainability, increased access, and decentralization of education management' (ibid., p. 4).

## 3.2 Centralising and democratising education policy in the early 2000s

### 3.2.1 The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

With an agenda to move towards a more state-centric solution, GoG renewed FCUBE as part of other policy initiatives and labelled it the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS). GPRS I, in 2003, marked a more inclusive age in education policy. This increased the duration of basic education from nine to eleven years, comprising two years of kindergarten, six years of primary school and three years of junior high school (JHS). Within this education expansion, there was a focus on literacy, creative arts, numeracy and problem-solving skills. GoG also recognised the excessive prioritisation of traditional education, and increased investment in technical and vocational training. One key issue that the FCUBE Policy had failed to address was teacher absenteeism, so GPRS sought to upgrade teacher training colleges and offer incentives to teachers in rural areas, particularly in northern Ghana. Finally, GPRS I laid out the preliminary stages of a strategy to introduce ICT into the curriculum and provide special education needs at all levels.

GPRS II, covering 2006–2009, focused on reducing poverty through the use of debt relief funds from the HIPC Initiative 'to increase access to and participation in all level of education and training and to bridge the equity gap in access to quality health care and nutrition services' (Republic of Ghana, 2005, p. 27). However, GPRS II failed to sufficiently address challenges associated with gender equality, children from low-income families, children with disabilities and rural youth. This led to the emergence

of new programmes to fill the gap for rural, marginalised and impoverished populations. Two notable gap-addressing policies were the Capitation Grant and the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP).

### 3.2.2 The Capitation Grant

Although the FCUBE Policy was supposed to provide free basic education to all, students still had to pay multiple fees as well as for their own supplies. This often acted as a barrier to impoverished families. In fact, '25% of children between ages 6 and 17 dropped out of school in 2003 because of these ancillary costs' (Abukari et al., 2015, p. 5). As a response to this, the Capitation Grant was introduced in 2005, under GPRS I and GPRS II, to subsidise fees and ultimately reduce inequality of access. After implementation, net primary school enrolment increased from 59 per cent to 69 per cent in school districts where the programme was first piloted, with the largest increase among girls, and the country achieved the gross enrolment target at primary level in 2013 (MOE, 2013).

However, it is felt that this spurred increase in enrolment has not been met by an increase in school resources: 'due to inadequate teachers and insufficient school supplies, a fee-free education would be meaningless to a rural child who only sees a teacher once a week or in some instances once a month or not at all' (Abukari et al., 2015, p. 5). In 2014, the Ministry of Education (MOE) reported pupil–teacher ratios of 42:1 and 18:1 for primary and secondary schools, respectively, in rural areas of the country, against targets of 35:1 and 25:1. This shows a clear imbalance in teacher allocation by education level and region. Because of these resource shortages, many students in impoverished areas have failed to obtain basic competency in reading and mathematics, even after several school years. In terms of providing students with employable skills, the aid from the Capitation Grant has little to show.

One potential strategy to assist with student absenteeism is to provide subsidies to impoverished families for the cost of their child attending school instead of working at home – a payment that could be delivered in the form of an education grant – as it is highly likely that the cost of providing temporary funding to target families will be exceeded by the economic benefit of their children attending school. Furthermore, incentivising quality teachers to move to areas where they are most required would go far to reduce teacher shortages. Allocating additional funds for teacher salaries with the provision of classroom materials in certain regions will be necessary to further address inequalities in educational opportunities.

## 3.3 Current policies addressing educational access and quality in Ghana: The Education Strategic Plan

### 3.3.1 Education strategy: a review of the 2003–2008 period

In 2003, MOE released a number of initiatives under the first Education Strategic Plan (ESP), focusing on education access, quality of education, education management, science, technology, and technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Following the conclusion and revision of this programme, in 2010 MOE, in partnership with the Ghana Education Service (GES), released an updated

**Table 3.1 SWOT analysis takeaways**

| STRENGTHS | OPPORTUNITIES |
|---|---|
| • Increased access to basic education through improved public awareness and the use of capitation grants<br>• Complementary education and other non-formal opportunities for out-of-school children and adults<br>• Community–school partnerships | • Improved use of public resources in education through efficiency savings and value for money<br>• Improved effectiveness through accountable decentralisation<br>• The report card system |
| **WEAKNESSES** | **THREATS** |
| • Poor retention<br>Of pupils in the basic cycle<br>Of committed teachers, especially in deprived areas<br>• Increasingly inequitable distribution of education benefits<br>• Management capacity, particularly at district levels | • A lack of effective means of ensuring decent returns against rising costs, especially on salaries<br>• Expansion of the tertiary sector with little regard for the national economy<br>• Official and unofficial absences<br>• Diminishing public perceptions of the value of education |

**Source:** MOE (2012).

ESP, which is on-going to the end of 2020. To understand the goals and functionality of this plan, it is important to look first at the outcomes of the previous ESP – its accomplishments and failures. In 2008, the state conducted a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) analysis of the initial ESP, to guide the 2010–2020 ESP. The analysis indicated a need for improvements in overall quality of education, increased investment in teacher training for kindergarten and primary schools, strategies for retaining JHS students and the reorientation of tertiary spending towards science, technology and vocational training (see Table 3.1).

### 3.3.2 The 2007 Education Reform and 2008 Education Act

In response to the government analysis of the first ESP, both the 2007 Education Reform and the 2008 Education Act were passed. Many specialised policies used today were implemented under these Acts, including the TVET Policy, designed to improve student employability and trainability; the ICT Policy, designed to provide equitable access to science and tech training to meet labour market demands; and the Inclusive Education and Special Educational Needs Policies (Boateng, 2018), which increase equitable access for, and sustain public awareness of, students with special needs.

### 3.3.3 The Inclusive Education Policy

Although Ghana has made numerous advances in the past few decades in its education system, little has been done to improve access to quality education for students with disabilities. Approximately 194,026 Ghanaian youth have a disability. Generally, 40 per cent of persons with disabilities in Ghana aged three years and older have no formal education (GSS, 2014). In 2013, the Inclusive Education Policy was created to redefine and recast the delivery and management of educational

**Box 3.1 A rights-based approach to education**

In 2001, the UN established a framework to use in viewing education policy goals. This sees access to quality education as a right, not a privilege. This rights-based approach can be broken into four interconnected categories: Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Adaptability. Each category is governed by the universal right to a high-quality education: the Right to Education, Rights in Education and Rights Through Education.

| TOMAŠEVSKI'S CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO EDUCATION | | |
|---|---|---|
| RIGHT TO EDUCATION | AVAILABILITY | • Fiscal allocations matching human rights obligations<br>• Schools matching school-aged children (number, diversity)<br>• Teachers (education and training, recruitment, labour rights, trade union freedoms) |
| | ACCESSIBILITY | • Elimination of legal and administrative barriers<br>• Elimination of financial obstacles<br>• Identification and elimination of discriminatory denials of access<br>• Elimination of obstacles to compulsory schooling (frees, distance, schedule) |
| RIGHTS IN EDUCATION | ACCEPTABILITY | • Parental choice of education for their children (with human rights correctives)<br>• Enforcement of minimal standards (quality, safety, environmental health)<br>• Language of instruction<br>• Freedom from censorship<br>• Recognition of children as subjects of rights |
| | ADAPTABILITY | • Minority children<br>• Indigenous children<br>• Working children<br>• Children with disabilities<br>• Child migrants, travelers |
| RIGHT THROUGH EDUCATION | ADAPTABILITY | • Concordance of age-determined rights<br>• Elimination of child marriage<br>• Elimination of child labour<br>• Prevention of child soldiering |

**Source:** Tomaševski (2001). p. 12, box 1.

services to respond to the diverse needs of all learners through the establishment of an environment that enables students with diverse and special needs to realise their academic potential (MOE, 2013). Based on every child's right to quality education without discrimination, the Policy aims to create schools based on universal access to education with the goal of building a society that is inclusive of everyone.

The Inclusive Education Policy outlines four main policy objectives: improving and adapting the curriculum to accommodate those with special needs; promoting an inclusive school environment to enhance the quality of education for all learners; developing a human resource framework for the successful delivery of the Policy; and ensuring the long-term sustainability of implementation through collaboration with government institutions, including MOE officials.

In order to ensure schools are well-funded and inclusive institutions with the training and resources necessary to work with marginalised students, a number of strategies are currently being pursued. These include setting up existing special needs institutions as resource centres for other schools to ensure the latter are sufficiently equipped and their physical infrastructure has been modified to accommodate students with special needs; providing additional teacher training opportunities; ensuring access to relevant equipment and assistive devices; reviewing the school curriculum and assessment to ensure these align with the needs of marginalised students; promoting school health programmes; establishing consistent sources of funding to improve access for marginalised groups; and advocating for national standards on inclusive education in schools (MOE, 2013).

### 3.3.4 Education Strategic Plan framework 2010–2020

The current ESP framework builds on the guiding principles of education policies implemented in the early 2000s (see Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2 Focal areas of the ESP 2010–2020**

| | |
|---|---|
| **1 Basic Education** | First cycle: kindergarten, primary, junior high |
| **2 Second Cycle Education** | Senior high (general and technical); technical and vocational institutes, apprenticeship, agriculture |
| **3 Non-Formal Education** | Complementary education, training, skills, literacy, adult education, informal apprenticeship |
| **4 Inclusive and Special Education** | Inclusion of excluded children within mainstream schools, special needs, special school and units |
| **5 Tertiary Education** | Third cycle: colleges of education, professional institutes, polytechnics, universities, open learning |
| **6 Education Management** | Planning, decision-making, accountability, finance, decentralisation, capacity-building |

**Source:** MOE (2012).

### The Ghana Secondary Education Improvement Project

In 2014, GoG began collaborating with the World Bank to initiate the Ghana Secondary Education Improvement Project, designed to increase access to senior secondary education in underserved districts as well as improve the quality of education in areas with low-performing senior high school (SHS).[1] The project components, based on outcomes of the education reforms of the early 2000s (most notably the ESP), included increasing access to SHS through the construction of new secondary schools in target areas; rehabilitation and expansion of low-performing schools; and provision of academic scholarships and grants for needy students.

There has been considerable progress since project implementation in 2014. In 2018, an independent report was released, marking the project's third full year (World Bank, 2018). This found substantial progress, with the creation of approximately 5,000 new spots in underserved districts; an increase in enrolment by about 3,000; and over 6,000 SHS students receiving scholarships in participating schools, with ICT-based instruction introduced in 95 per cent of these. Furthermore, the JHS to SHS transition rate has risen steadily, from 39 per cent in 2014 to 64 per cent in 2018 (ibid.), suggesting improvement in JHS completion rates.

West African Secondary School Certificate Exam results indicate an increased share of students meeting the requirements for tertiary education, from 10.7 per cent in 2014 to 15.2 per cent in 2018 (World Bank, 2018). There also appears to have been progress in addressing socio-economic gaps in educational attainment: in the Ghana Living Standard Survey, 'the two poorest quintiles of targeted districts have increased from a baseline of 14.3% in 2014 to 22.4% in 2016/17' (ibid., p. 2). Over 10,000 scholarships have been given to students from low-income families (60.5 per cent of them female) and 50 existing SHSs have been rehabilitated. Additionally, a school mapping portal has been created and developed for 231 schools, and an ICT-based mechanism (I-box and I-campus) has been introduced to deliver supplementary classroom materials in target areas (World Bank, 2018). That being said, there is still room for vocational infrastructure development, as only five vocational and technical facilities have been initiated across the country (ibid.).

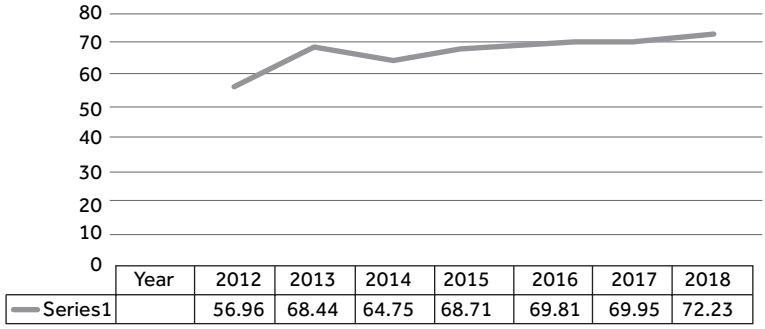
### Increasing access: the Free Senior High School Programme

> '*I feel there is much more to quality education. We have to educate the people so they really understand… help us understand our nation better… [so] that in the near future we are able to still stand… based on the knowledge we acquired.*' Female, 15–20 years old

In 2017, with the goal of increasing enrolment through the elimination of SHS tuition fees for young Ghanaians, MOE presented the Free Senior High School Programme as a catalyst for the 2018–2030 ESP extension. It linked this directly with SDG 4 and GoG's Education 2030 Agenda, with the rationale that the long-term benefits would outweigh the short-term costs.

Data indicates that, since initiation in 2017, the programme has been having a positive effect on student enrolment. Registration for the SHS entrance exam (the Basic

**Figure 3.1 Gross enrolment ratio, secondary, both sexes, 2012–2018 (%)**




**Source:** UNESCO (n.d.).

Education Certificate Examination) increased by 11.5 per cent from 2017 to 2018 and enrolment for SHS increased by 30.7 per cent (Prempeh, 2018). Nevertheless, despite the apparent successes of the programme, GoG still faces wide criticism, including that poor regions still have access only to less established institutions that offer a lower-quality education and charge higher material costs as a result of lack of funding. Meanwhile, students in wealthier regions with more established institutions enjoy better-quality education at lower material costs.

> *'I think we are also learning too much theory. Because after the four years you can go to a company and they will say you are not fit for the job because you do not have the skills.'* Male, 15–20 years

Figure 3.1 shows enrolment in secondary school education since 2012 as a percentage of the 15–24 years age group. Two significant increases in enrolment were recorded in 2015 and 2018, suggesting that the Ghana Secondary Education Improvement partnership and the FSHS programme are both working to successfully increase student enrolment.

## 3.4 Looking forward to the Sustainable Development Goals (2020–2030)

Areas of focus in working towards the SDGs include inequalities in spending across the socio-economic hierarchy and a need to better understand why these inequalities exist. Across primary, secondary and tertiary levels, Ghana has one of the highest rates of inequality in education spending between the poorest and richest 20 per cent (Table 3.3). Government programmes should seek to address these external variables to ensure equity across both access and quality.

The measurement of academic success through enrolment rates and not learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2016) remains an inherent flaw. For example, even though enrolment rates are relatively constant across genders, youth aged 15–24 see a female–male literacy ratio of only 0.85 (ibid.). Enrolment rates are simply not the only indicator of academic success and therefore should not be used in isolation.

**Table 3.3 Household spending on public education by income quintile, selected countries and years (%)**

| Country | Year(s) | Primary | | Secondary | | Tertiary | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Poorest | Richest | Poorest | Richest | Poorest | Richest | Poorest | Richest |
| Bangladesh | 2010 | 27 | 13 | 13 | 23 | 2 | 55 | 20 | 20 |
| Burundi | 2006 | 23 | 13 | 12 | 27 | 4 | 59 | 15 | 29 |
| Congo, Rep. | 2011 | 21 | 16 | 18 | 18 | 1 | 62 | – | – |
| Ghana | 2007 | 19 | 13 | 13 | 20 | 4 | 65 | 12 | 34 |
| Honduras | 2004 | 31 | 6 | 5 | 20 | 1 | 67 | – | – |
| Indonesia | 2007 | 26 | 11 | 15 | 19 | 4 | 57 | 20 | 23 |
| Pakistan | 2007–08 | 25 | 11 | 16 | 23 | 9 | 55 | 17 | 28 |
| Thailand | 2011 | 25 | 14 | – | – | 1 | 73 | 20 | 26 |
| Uaganda | 2009–10 | 19 | 15 | 6 | 38 | 1 | 68 | – | – |
| Zambia | 2010 | 22 | 14 | 8 | 39 | 0 | 86 | 15 | 31 |

**Source:** World Bank (2017).

A number of obstacles for disadvantaged youth continue to exist. For young women, considerable social stigma remains around education attendance, along with the patriarchal values that lead to education exclusion. One common output of patriarchal societies is early marriage and pregnancy, which further diminish the ability of women to attend school. Similarly, drop-out and illiteracy rates are disproportionately high among students with disabilities (GSS, 2014), largely because of a lack of the physical, medical and academic infrastructure necessary to accommodate them.

During group discussions and interviews with young people, concerns were raised that the teaching methods in SHS are geared towards preparing students to pass specific exams and do not challenge students to think critically and develop entrepreneurial skills. With respect to the programme itself, there is apprehension that the funding, which is largely dependent on revenue from oil reserves, is volatile at best; it has been recommended that GoG provide more secure financing (Ibrahim, 2018).

Addressing the skills gap between what secondary students are trained in and what is demanded in labour markets is also critically important. Introducing industry case studies similar to those handled by entry-level employees into the curriculum would be beneficial in preparing students for employment. Finally, GoG must work to actively obtain secure funding sources for this programme. Expanding on Act 754 (Ghana Parliament, 2008), which takes revenue from Ghana's extractive sector (oil and gas, gold, etc.) and reallocates it to education and skills training programmes, is a start, but revenue-stable sources should be considered, such as investment by international development organisations or multinational corporations (Ibrahim, 2018). Enforcement mechanisms should exist all the way down to the local level, with appropriate measures in place to oversee implementation of the FSHS Programme and its provision of funds.

## 3.5 Summary points

1. A number of strategies and policies, including GPRS and the Capitation Grant, marked a more inclusive age in education policy, focusing on upgrading teacher training and providing free education.
2. Reviews indicate the need for improvements in the overall quality of education, increased investment in teacher training, strategies for retaining students and the reorientation of tertiary spending towards science, technology and vocational training.
3. The Inclusive Education Policy of 2013 was created to redefine and recast the delivery and management of education services to respond to the diverse needs of all learners through the creation of environments that enable students with diverse and special needs to realise their academic potential.
4. The Secondary Education Improvement Project 2014 was a government collaboration with the World Bank to increase access to senior secondary education in underserved districts as well as to improve the quality of education in areas with low-performing high schools.

5. The FSHS Programme 2017 had the goal of increasing enrolment through elimination of SHS tuition fees. Despite its successes, questions remain regarding the quality of education for students in impoverished areas and the high material costs they have to pay for supplies, as well as inequalities of access facing females and students with disabilities. Concerns have also been raised regarding the SHS curriculum, which is geared towards preparing students to pass specific exams without giving them skills to secure employment after graduation.
6. Looking forward, the primary objectives of SDG 4 include improving secondary education quality, bridging the gender gap, improving teacher resources, expanding infrastructure in rural communities and promoting lifelong learning.

## 3.6 Recommendations

1. *Marginalisation by gender and disability*: Inequalities in access to education exist for girls and youth with disabilities, particularly in impoverished and rural areas. Solutions include providing disability training to select teachers, funding programmes that get girls involved in traditionally male-dominated science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields and expanding education on social stigmas.
2. *Skills gap with the labour market*: There is a notable divide between what is taught in secondary schools and what skills are demanded in the labour market. Secondary schools should include industry case studies and activities, as well as inviting employers to come and talk with students about opportunities.
3. *Maintaining education quality*: Increased funding should be focused on SHS in impoverished communities, targeted at minimising external fees, including for books, uniforms, computers and transportation, for impoverished students.
4. To address these shortcomings of the FSHS Programme, MOE should consider increasing funding for areas with high populations of marginalised children and families to ensure equity in access to quality education. This funding could go towards additional teacher training in special education for students with disabilities, as well as interventions to increase female involvement in STEM fields and minimising the material costs for students in these areas. It is also recommended that the programme's scope include completion rates, and not simply enrolment.

## References

Abukari, Z., A. Kuyini and A. Mohammed (2015) 'Education and Health Care Policies in Ghana: Examining the Prospects and Challenges of Recent Provisions'. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2158244015611454

Boateng, A. (2018) *Ghana: Making Inclusive Education A Reality*. Paris: IIEP-UNESCO.

Ghana Parliament (2008) *Communication Service Tax Act 754*. Accra: GoG.

GSS (Ghana Statistical Service) (2014) *2010 Population and Housing Census. Disability in Ghana.* Accra: GSS.

Ibrahim, M. (2018) 'An Appraisal of the Free Senior High School Policy in Ghana'. Policy Brief. Northern Network for Education Development. http://www.nnedghana.org/2018/04/19/policy-brief-an-appraisal-of-the-free-senior-high-school-policy-in-ghana/

MOE (Ministry of Education) (2012) *Education Strategic Plan 2010 to 2020. Volume 1: Policies, Strategies, Delivery, Finance. Volume 2: Strategies and Work Programme.* Accra: GoG.

MOE (2013) *Inclusive Education Policy*. Accra: GoG.

Prempeh, M. (2018) 'Implementation of Free SHS Programme and the Double Track System'. Presentation. http://moe.gov.gh/edge/content/uploads/2018/10/GES-COUNCIL-PRESENTATION-Copy.pdf

Republic of Ghana (2005) *Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II) (2006–2009)*. Accra: Republic of Ghana.

Tomaševski, K. (2001) 'Human Rights Obligations: Making Education Available, Accessible, Acceptable, and Adaptable'. Right to Education Primer 3. Stockholm: Sida.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) (2016) *Education for People and Planet: Creating Sustainable Futures For All. Global Education Monitoring Report 2016*. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO (n.d.). UIS.Stat. http://data.uis.unesco.org/# Retrieved on 20th February 2019.

World Bank (2017) *Learning to Realize Education's Promise: World Development Report.* Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank (2018) 'Ghana Secondary Education Improvement Project'. Implementation Status & Results Report. Accra: World Bank.

## Note

1 http://projects.worldbank.org/P145741/?lang=en&tab=overview