



# Education Watch

April 2009

## Training, Retraining And Retaining Teachers In Ghana(1)

### Introduction

Crucial to education is the interactive processes between a pupil and a teacher. It is in that context that quality is achieved. This puts the teacher at the core of the process of achieving quality basic education for all children in Ghana. Half way through the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) and Education For All (EFA) time line, the lack of teachers in classrooms, especially rural classrooms continues to be a common spectacle in the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education policy of Government. *The equitable deployment of teachers, in terms of numbers, qualification, experience and gender continues to be a mirage.* Even more challenging is the concomitant teacher leverage required to ensure that the over 800, 000<sup>1</sup> out of school Ghanaian children, most of whom are in rural areas access quality basic education. In the context of the Education Strategic Plan 2003-2015(ESP), the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education, and guided by the principle of equity and optimum utilization of available scarce resources, this paper examines with recommendations, the gains and challenges made in implementing the Untrained Teacher Training Diploma in Basic Education policy, the Paid Study Leave Policy and the District Teacher Training Sponsorship Scheme.

### Contextual Analysis.

The Ministry of Education developed the Education Strategic Plan (2003-2015) to serve as a long term plan that will provide

a strategic framework to guide the development of the education sector in Ghana, and shepherd our journey to attaining EFA/MDG Goals by 2015. The preparation was mainly informed by the Education For All convention, the Millennium Development Goals and the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy. Among the key targets on access set out in the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) are the attainment of 100% Kindergarten(KG) Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) by 2015, 107% Primary GER by 2012, a Primary Gross Completion Rate of 100% by 2012, and a JHS Completion Rate of 100% by 2015. In addition, the quality target of 95% trained teachers at the basic school (including KG's) is notable and decisive<sup>2</sup>. *It is an undisputed fact that reaching the aforementioned depends to a large extent, upon the availability and effective utilization of adequate quality and quantity of teachers.* Teachers are an indispensable education resource. Six years into the implementation of policies within the strategic framework provided by the ESP and half way through the MDG timelines, the current quality of teachers in KG's (42% trained), primary schools (59% trained) and JHS (76% trained) is certainly not enough to stimulate and sustain the gains needed to keep Ghana on track to attaining national ESP targets and EFA/MDG targets by 2015. Rural averages of 37 % ( Primary trained teachers) and 62% (JHS trained teachers) are catastrophic to realizing an equitable EFA/MDG in Ghana. Quality and quantity deficits in teacher deployment is a major facilitating factor in current access trends in basic education (GER of 89.9% in KGs, 95.2% in primary and 78.8% in JHS, and

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF advocates for 800,000 Ghanaian children to be in school. [www.myjoyonline.com](http://www.myjoyonline.com) – Thursday 17 January 2008

<sup>2</sup> Preliminary Education Sector Annual Review report, 2008.

national ESP targets and EFA/MDG targets by 2015. Rural averages of 37 % ( Primary trained teachers) and 62% (JHS trained teachers) are catastrophic to realizing an equitable EFA/MDG in Ghana. Quality and quantity deficits in teacher deployment is a major facilitating factor in current access trends in basic education (GER of 89.9% in KGs, 95.2% in primary and 78.8% in JHS, and completion rate of 88% for Primary and 67%, for JHS. The outcome is an average 60% pass rate in Basic Education Certificate Examination and a Net Admissions Rate (NAR) of 38% into SHS (Preliminary Education Sector Annual Report, 2008). Is the current teacher deployment policy under the ESP incapable of providing remedies to the problems in teacher deployment? Is there or has there been

### District Teacher Training Sponsorship Scheme

Decentralizing teacher recruitment has been one of the strategies adopted by Government to solve the problem of rural teacher deployment. Under the policy, district assemblies are required to sponsor Senior High School graduates to undergo teacher training education. Under the district sponsorship scheme, District Assemblies take up the full cost of assessing teacher training whereas in return the beneficiary also commits to lay his/her skills acquired at the disposal of the district for a minimum number of years, averaging five. Decentralized systems of teacher deployment, like the district sponsorship scheme, allows for more flexibility to respond to local needs, but at the same time are open to the influence of local elites and abused by beneficiaries especially where administrative capacity of the is weak (Mulkeen,2006).

District teacher sponsorships schemes have succeeded in training needy teachers but are not making the expected impact in solving the problems of teacher retention in rural areas. The lack of adequate financial resources to sustain the program and make it responsive to the real teacher needs of districts has hampered its success, especially in deprived districts. On the grounds of equity, the program was a failure at birth. Urban districts with higher local revenue generating capacity, higher shares of the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) but less teacher deficits (*due to the urbanization of teacher deployment*) have relatively more resources available to sponsor teachers compared to smaller rural districts with lower revenue generating capacities, low amounts of the

DACF, but with a higher teacher deficit. *The Ellebelle District is a small rural district with high poverty rates and low income generating capacity but higher teacher deficits compared to districts like Agona Nkwanta all in the Western Region. In 2009 for instance, the Ellebelle District Assembly plans to sponsor only 10 trainees whereas the relatively well resourced Agona Nkwanta District Assembly averagely sponsors over 50 teachers per annum.* Perhaps the most ubiquitous negative feature of the district teacher sponsorship scheme is the efficiency of bonds signed by beneficiary teachers.

How enforceable are such bonds that are supposed to bind teachers to teach in their mother districts after completing teacher training. District Assemblies complain the lack of cooperation by other para statal institutions in enforcing the bond. So weak is the bond that bonded student to manage to escape from the districts and succeed in securing employment opportunities with Government Agencies, including the Ghana Education Service in the urban areas. It no surprise that most District Assemblies are withdrawing support for the district teacher training sponsorship scheme.

### The Untrained Teacher Training Diploma in Basic Education

Enhancing the capacity of human capital is intricately linked with providing quality social service education, health etc. Attaining Education For All and Millennium Development Goals of Universal Primary Enrolment and Completion cannot materialize without an optimum quantum of trained and qualified teachers. A teacher by definition is one who is trained to teach, and is equipped with instructional skills. This makes the provision of opportunities necessary for the development of the capacity of teachers a vital cog in the wheel of providing quality basic education in Ghana. Two of such policies that exist to address capacity enhancement needs of teachers are the Untrained Teacher Training Diploma in Basic Education and the popular or somewhat traditional paid study leave policy.

At the mid- point of the millennium agenda (2000-2015), 40% of Primary school teachers and 24% of Junior High School teachers remain untrained in Ghana . Notable among the Ministry of Education's (MOE) effort at confronting the challenge is the Untrained Teacher Training Diploma in Basic Education (UTTDBE) which was introduced in 2005 to train up to 25,000 teachers by 2009. Currently,

the highly patronized program has 27,183 teachers subscribing to it. Quite similar if the Teacher Upgrading Distance Education initiatives being coordinated by the Institute of Education, University of Cape Coast and the Teacher Education Division (TED). These two programs have not only afforded opportunities for about 37,000 teachers to upgrade their skills but also given a true meaning to Ministry's commitment to meeting the target of 95% trained teachers by 2012 as enshrined in the Education Strategic Plan (ESP 2003-2015).

These highly patronized diploma awarding programs are on course, but not without problems. Evidence from the Upper West and Upper East Regions indicate that most teachers forfeit Friday lessons in favour of travelling to attend classes on Saturdays, and only to return on Monday afternoon. The Upper East and Upper West regions share one centre in Wa, inspite of the extreme difficulty in travelling within and across the Upper East and Upper West Regions as a result of bad access roads and inadequate transport facilities. This has reduced instructional or contact hours from five days to four days. Whiles the concomitant effect on quality is obvious, persistent complaints by teachers and other education stakeholders have since fallen on deaf ears.

This will continue in so far as there remains only one training centre in the two upper regions. The situation is not different from teachers accessing the program from most rural communities in the Central and Western regions. The recent (2007/8) inclusion of Kindergartens in the basic school set up and the expansion of the scope of the Capitation Grant to cover Kindergartens provides enough reason to expand access centres to train more teachers. This is a sure recipe to confront the challenge of training the current 60% of Kindergarten teachers who are untrained.

### Quota system on Paid Study Leave

That the paid study leave policy is a luxury is certainly no understatement. Prominent among the reasons adduced for the luxurious place given to paid study leave is the age old problem of scarcity of resources. Rationing and sometimes discrimination has been an immediate outcome of the paid study leave policy, which prescribes a basic qualification to be at least three years post qualification experience in teaching and in some cases one's area of subject specialization. This has favoured a few (*mostly science, mathematics*)

teachers to the detriment of the majority. Whereas It is factually accurate to say that the preference for science and math teachers over other teachers in enjoying paid study leave is justified by the needs factor (*Ghana lacks more science and mathematics teachers compared to the other subjects*), same cannot be said for the policy justification for sustainability, in so far as teacher remuneration remains hugely unattractive and insufficient to retain beneficiaries of paid study leave. Approximately 3,000 teachers receive paid study leave each year.

Anecdotal evidence available suggests that the paid study leave program is the major exit route for many teachers with transit intentions. Most of these teachers after benefitting from this facility at the expense of the state end up in the private sector. It is further suggested that the insurance companies and banks are the final destination of most of these teachers. Another notable outcome of the policy has been corruption. Grapevine from the Ghana Education Service confirms that decentralizing the selection processes of the policy, by giving the mandate to select beneficiaries to the regions has been a source of decentralizing and deepening corruption in the selection of beneficiaries from thousands of applicants per region.

It is obvious that our desire to make judicious use of available but extremely scarce resources has also landed us in a situation of financial waste. What can we do different from the statusquo? Are there any viable and sustainable alternatives?

Recognizing the skimpy nature of salaries in the education sector, will it be an economic logic to suggest that teachers bear the full cost of higher education, without recourse to paid study leave? The open but hard to talk secret is that teachers, especially basic school teachers are among the least paid in the Civil Service. The obvious difficulty in reconciling the cost of assessing higher education visa- vis the benefits by way of conditions of service of teachers is admitted.....but certainly not the only challenge.

In 2007, the Ministry spent 40,200,000 GHC on paid study leave alone, an amount spent for a purpose whose gains are purely either uncertain or unsustainable (ESAR,2008). Bearing in mind the existence of Seven hundred and fifty four million, three thousand and eighty five thousand six hundred and forty seven Ghana Cedis (754,385,647) GHC financial gap in the education budget, how justifiable is it to spend so much of the already distressed Ministry's budget on a few teachers who have avowed

travelling to attend classes on Saturdays, and only to return on Monday afternoon. The Upper East and Upper West regions share one centre in Wa, inspite of the extreme difficulty in travelling within and across the Upper East and Upper West Regions as a result of bad access roads and inadequate transport facilities. This has reduced instructional or contact hours from five days to four days. Whiles the concomitant effect on quality is obvious, persistent complaints by teachers and other education stakeholders have since fallen on deaf ears. This will continue in so far as there remains only one training centre in the two regions. The situation is not different from teachers accessing the program from most rural communities in the Central and Western regions. The recent (2007/8) inclusion of Kindergartens in the basic school set up and the expansion of the scope of the Capitation Grant to cover Kindergartens provides enough reason to expand access centres to train more teachers. This is a sure recipe to confront the challenge of training the current 60% of Kindergarten teachers who are untrained.

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detriment of the majority. Whereas it is factually accurate to say that the preference for science and math teachers over other teachers in enjoying paid study leave is justified by the needs factor (*Ghana lacks more science and mathematics teachers compared to the other subjects*), same cannot be said for the policy justification for sustainability, in so far as teacher remuneration remains hugely unattractive and insufficient to retain beneficiaries of paid study leave. Approximately 3,000 teachers receive paid study leave each year. *Anecdotal evidence available suggests that the paid study leave program is the major exit route for many teachers with transit intentions*<sup>1</sup>. Most of these teachers after benefitting from this facility at the expense of the state end up in the private sector. It is further suggested that the insurance companies and banks are the final destination of most of these teachers. Another notable outcome of the policy has been corruption. Most teachers are of the view that decentralizing the selection processes of the policy, by giving the mandate to select beneficiaries to the regions has been a source of decentralizing and deepening corruption in the selection of beneficiaries from thousands of applicants per region.

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Ministry of Education put in place in this direction? The political will is paramount here: What is the NDC Governments position on this?

### **The way forward.**

District Assemblies are supposed to be responsive to the needs of the local people. The current formula for disbursing the Common Fund places some emphasis (5%) on capacity to generate local revenue as a factor in determining how much each district is allocated. By implication, districts with small economies as a result of poverty, but huge teacher deficits can only attract low amounts of the DACF. *This is not to suggest a review of the formulae for disbursing the DACF but to echo the need for a threshold for deprived districts especially in education and health. This will provide deprived districts the needed resources to sponsor more teachers.*

*As earlier mentioned, the success of any decentralized teacher deployment policy depends on the administrative efficiency of the district. Administrative inefficiencies have weakened the veracity of bonds signed by teacher trainees to return to teach in their parent districts. There is the need for a coordinated institutional and inter agency collaboration between District Assemblies and all Ministries Department and Agencies. The proposed computerized human resource network/database should make it easy for tracking labour within the education sector and between the education sector and other state and para-statal institutions within the civil and public service. This should be backed by a cross cutting civil and public service policy that*

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<sup>1</sup> Preliminary Education Sector Annual Review report, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education on the 2009 Annual Estimates of the Ministry of Education

prohibits the unconditional employment of bonded teachers. This will make it easy for districts to either blacklist or prevent abusive tendencies.

Financing should not be a reason for the absence of separate learning centres for the Upper East and Upper West Regions. In the same way, only two centres for large regions like the Ashanti and Northern region seem inadequate. Less than 5% of the annual 40,200,000 GHC spent on the paid study leave policy can create and sustain three new centres in the Upper East, Ashanti and Northern Region annually. This will expand access for the 60% untrained KG teachers, the 43% untrained primary and 23% untrained JHS teachers access training.

Teacher attrition, especially after study leave is a global phenomenon and not peculiar to Ghana. Even in America, between 40-50% of teachers leave the profession before their fifth year<sup>1</sup>. This however doesn't make the issue invincible to solutions. *The MoE should give a practical meaning to the advice by the National Education Reform Implementation Committee (NERIC) in 2007, to the effect that the paid study leave system is not sustainable and should be phased out immediately.* The MoE in collaboration with the key partners should set up a teachers training support fund from which teachers will access loans (1% to 3% per annum) to support their further studies. With an effective guarantee system in place, repayment should not be an issue, whether teachers return to teach or not. By so doing, we would have saved

some 40,200,000 GHC and invested it into the slim infrastructure budget of the MoE.

Resource deficits in education will remain, but the decisive factor will always be the efficiency in management of available resources. Resource deficits if managed well, with the correct priorities would offset the prevailing quality deficit that has characterized basic education in Ghana. Teachers are educational resources and require quality and sustainable management.

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<sup>1</sup> EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.