Francis K. Amedahe and Balasubramanyam Chandramohan

Ghana – Towards FCUBE

(Free and Compulsory Universal Basic Education)

Summary

This first case-study takes the recent educational history of Ghana, the earliest African country to regain independence from British rule and the one with, at the time, the strongest economy. It focuses on the experience of Ghana in developing and implementing strategies to achieve Universal Primary Education – UP(B)E. It maps the period from the 1950s to the present in terms of progress, achievements, external and internal drivers and factors that contributed to success and later regression in different aspects of UP(B)E. Based on this discussion, the study identifies particular areas, old and new, where ongoing efforts need to be made to achieve UPE goals, in terms of both enrolment and progression and with increased emphasis on quality.

Educational developments 1950s to 2006

General comments

In Ghana, since the colonial and later the transitional nationalist period as well as in the post independence era, education has been identified as the key to development. Generally, within the constraints of the economy at any particular point in time, successive governments made the effort to improve education at all levels.

Education in Ghana can be categorised into three main levels. Until the 1987 educational reforms, the first level of education included the primary (elementary), middle and/or continuation schools. In 1987, middle schools and continuation schools were jettisoned and junior secondary schools were introduced as a three-year stage following primary. The primary and junior secondary schools now constitute the basic education level in Ghana. At the basic level, the educational system of Ghana contains mission schools, public (mainly local authority) schools and private schools. The mission schools are managed by designated Educational Units on behalf of the government. The government funds both the mission and the public schools in terms of paying the salaries of teachers and supply of schools materials including textbooks. The local government authorities support public schools in terms of infrastructure.

The second level of education comprises secondary schools and technical institutes or their equivalent institutions. Universities and polytechnics are classified as tertiary institutions; in between them and the secondary institutions are various post-secondary institutions, some of which are now being upgraded to diploma-awarding colleges. This category of institutions includes teachers' and nurses' training colleges.

Ghana's educational history has been heavily influenced by political events – including

changes of government involving coups and counter-coups – and by the instability and decline of the economy in the 1970s and 1980s, as shown in the brief commissions to review the educational sector and make recommendations for change. Some of the military governments had a short stay in power and consequently left hardly any meaningful footprint on the educational landscape.

Following the adoption of constitutional rule in 1993 coupled with a relative improvement in the economy in the 1990s, education received some attention, as shown in the implementation of the 1987 educational reforms. By 1996, the free universal compulsory basic education (FCUBE) programme was implemented. The gross enrolment rate at the basic level hovered around 80 per cent. Government continued its efforts to improve access to and quality of education in the 1990s and the early 2000s with the introduction of a capitation grant which sought to remove the school levies that partly accounted for the failure of some parents/guardians to send their wards to school, and also with the institution of a school feeding programme in selected schools in 2006. The country's education strategic plan targets universal primary completion in 2015.

Education in the Colonial and Nationalist Period (1950–57)

Formal education, otherwise known as the Western form of education was introduced into Ghana (then called the Gold Coast) in the early 17th century as a handmaid of Christianity to serve the primary needs of evangelism. The provision of formal education, initially, was a subsidiary function of European merchant companies. The first schools in Ghana were attached to the castles and forts which served as trading posts for the European merchants including the Portuguese, Dutch and later the English (Antwi, 1992).

Antwi (1992) notes that by 1950, on the eve of self-government, there were 2,904 primary schools in the Gold Coast Of these, 41 were directly run by the Government, while 1,551 were run by the missionaries and received government grants. The rest of the schools in the country were established and managed by private individuals, institutions and organisations. The total enrolment in all these schools was put at 271,954 (Nimako, 1976).

In 1951, the Gold Coast was granted internal self-government. The nationalist government of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah that assumed office in August 1951 introduced the Accelerated Development Plan (ADP) for Education, to provide for a significant expansion of education at all levels. In January 1952, tuition-free elementary education was introduced for children between the ages of 6 and 12. Essentially, this marked the modest beginning of what can be described as free primary education in Ghana.

The most outstanding result of the Accelerated Development Plan, according to McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1978), was the provision of half a million primary school places. Antwi (1992) notes that within the period 1952–57, primary and middle school places, taken together, tripled in number. On the eve of the independence of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah declared that Ghana had a population of 5 million of whom nearly half a million were children enjoying primary education. Unfortunately, the goal of primary

education for all was further away than had been thought because it turned out that the size of the population had been seriously underestimated. The 1960 census of Ghana, subsequently, showed that instead of 5 million, the population was actually nearer 7 million.

Independence and after (1957–66)

Ghana achieved full independence on March 1957 with Kwame Nkrumah as Prime Minister, leading the Convention People's Party (CPP). Later, in 1960, Ghana became a republic with Nkrumah as the first President. In education, the quantitative progress of the earlier years continued in the first years of independence. The number of approved primary schools rose from 3,571 in 1957 to 3,713 in 1959 and of middle schools from 1,311 to 1,394. Overall, the number of pupils enrolled in primary and middle schools combined doubled between 1961 and 1966 (Antwi, 1992); and according to UNESCO statistics, the gross enrolment ratio for the first level of education in Ghana (primary and middle schools, embracing the ages 6 to 15) rose from 38 per cent in 1960 to 69 per cent in 1965.

In November 1960, the President announced that fee-free compulsory primary and middle school education would be introduced in September 1961. Local Authorities were to continue to be responsible for providing buildings and it was reckoned that over 1,000 more schools would be required in September 1961. As a stopgap until new buildings were ready, a shift system was introduced with two daily shifts of four-and-a half hours each.

The immediate effects of the introduction of compulsory primary education were dramatic. Instead of the expected 1,000 new schools, 2,493 new primary schools were in fact opened in September 1961 and 219,480 children were enrolled in the first year classes. Just before this, in 1960–61, there had been 441,117 children in 3,514 public primary schools but within 2 years both these figures had doubled. By the fall of the CPP Government in 1966, the total had surged on to 1,137,494 children attending 8,144 schools (McWilliam & Kwamina-Poh, 1978). This development has been described by McWilliam & Kwamina-Poh as the high tide in the history of education in Ghana.

The post-independence CPP regime made considerable efforts to expand educational facilities at all levels, since education was identified as the key to Ghana's development. The expansion of educational facilities at the primary and middle schools called for the establishment of new teacher training colleges, most of which were phased out and changed into secondary schools after the overthrow of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. During Nkrumah's regime, apart from paying the recurrent cost of teacher trainees, Government provided teacher trainees with allowances.

In furtherance of efforts to ensure attendance at primary and middle schools, the Education Act of October 1961 was passed. This Act established the post-independence legal basis for compulsory primary and middle school education for all children of school-going age. The Act replaced Governor Guggisberg's ordinances of 1925 and 1927, which had guided education in the colony and marked the beginning of universal free primary education in Ghana. The Education Act of 1961 empowered the Minister of Education

after consultation with the Minister of Local Government to constitute local authorities into local education authorities (LEAs). The local education authorities were to establish, build, equip, and maintain all public primary and middle schools in their localities.

The Act declared education to be compulsory. According to Section 2: 'Every child who has attained the school-going age as determined by the Minister shall attend a course of instruction as laid down by the Minister in a school recognised for the purpose by the Minister'. A parent defying the law could expect to be fined up to £10 and in the case of a continuing offence to a fine not exceeding £2 in respect of each and every day during which the offence continued. The Act also made provision for education to be fee-free at the primary and middle school levels. Section 21 (1) of the Act states that: 'No fee, other than the payment for the provision of essential books or stationery or of materials required by pupils for use in practical work, shall be charged in respect of tuition at a public primary, middle or special school'.

Even though the Act made primary and middle school education tuition free and compulsory, the government was unable to enforce it because of lack of adequate resources and infrastructure to enrol all children of school-going age.

The legal basis of Ghana's education system was enshrined in later constitutions. The 1969, 1979 and 1992 constitutions of the Republic of Ghana clearly emphasise the role of the government in educating her citizens. For instance, Article 10 of the 1979 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana lays down, *inter alia,* that: 'The Government shall within two years after the coming into force of this constitution draw up a programme for implementation within the following ten years of free, compulsory and universal primary education (Clause 2). This Clause was repeated in the 1992 constitution in Article 38(2), providing the basis for the introduction of the free, compulsory and universal basic education (FCUBE) programme that was implemented in 1996.

The National Liberation Council (NLC) Regime (1966–69) and the Busia Administration (1969–70)

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's regime was overthrown in February 1966. The new military administration of the National Liberation Council (NLC) under General Ankrah appointed two bodies, namely the Mills-Odoi Commission, to enquire into aspects of the educational system and the Education Review Committee. Among other things, the Mills-Odoi Commission proposed the establishment of a Teaching Service Division of the Public Service Commission and improvement of teacher remuneration and other conditions of service. These recommendations were later implemented. The Education Review Committee, on the other hand, 'streamlined education along the lines of the British system and upheld denominational supremacy and character building as the central theme of education' (Antwi, 1992).

The NLC regime in its three years of existence continued with the provision of educational facilities. However, a notable change brought about by the regime was the abolition of allowances to teacher trainees. The government still paid all the recurrent costs of the trainees. Other efforts were also made to improve education. As part of the effort, a two-

year Development Plan was adopted in 1968, which stressed the need to improve the quality of education at all levels.

All the same, in 1966–67, after the overthrow of the CPP government, the enrolment fell back to 1,116,843 and was below the one million mark (at 975,629) by 1969–70. There was a corresponding decrease in the number of public primary schools from 7,913 in 1966–67 to 7,239 in 1969–70. Conversely, the figures for middle school education, which also showed rapid growth following the 1961 Act, did not full back in this period. In 1960–61, there were 1,234 public middle schools with a total enrolment of 145,377, while in 1965–66, there were 2,277 middle schools with 267,434 pupils. In 1966–67, the number of schools had grown to 2, 346, with 280,866 pupils. In 1969–70, the corresponding figures stood at 3,422 and 424,430.

In 1969, a new constitution was promulgated and the civilian Busia Administration assumed power in August 1969. The Busia regime was short lived. It was overthrown in January 1972. In its One-Year Development Plan, the Government did not place emphasis on primary education, but rather on the need to expand secondary schools to absorb the increasing number of middle school leavers and to strengthen the secondary level education to facilitate university education (Antwi, 1992).

Regime changes 1972–81

The decade of the 70s was marked by the rise and fall of several short-lived administrations, some of which paid attention to education, but whose influences on the system were rather sporadic. Only the National Redemption Council remained in power long enough to have an impact, both in following up earlier reforms and in developing new structures.

The National Redemption Council, headed by Colonel I.K. Acheampong, replaced the Busia administration in a military takeover in 1972. The Acheampong regime contributed to the development of education in a number of ways. Notable among them were: (a) the approval of proposals for a new structure and content of education which placed emphasis on vocational, practical and technical subjects throughout the entire pre-university education; and (b) a shortened duration of pre-university education from 17 years to 12 years, to enable the government to realise savings in educational expenditure. The Ghana Teaching Service that had been proposed by the Mills-Odoi Commission was first established in 1973 and was later changed to the Ghana Education Service, to embrace all teachers in pre-university educational institutions, as well as general managers of schools, supporting staff in educational institutions and all professional civil service staff in the Ministry of Education.

In 1978, the Supreme Military Council I was replaced by the Supreme Military Council II of Major-General F.W.K. Akuffo, which was in power for barely three months. The regime had little time to settle, let alone tackle educational problems before Flight-Lieutenant J.J. Rawlings and his Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) swept it away in another military takeover on June 4, 1979. The AFRC regime existed for only three months and so hardly had time for educational development.

In September 1979, a new civilian administration came to power led by Dr. Hilla Limann. This regime was also short lived. The Limann administration, during its two years of administering the country, directed its attention to cutting down the costs of secondary education by taking a critical look at areas where some savings could be made.

The PNDC era and educational reforms of 1987

Flight-Lieutenant J.J. Rawlings returned to power in 1981, with the establishment of the Provisional Defence Council (PNDC). During the PNDC era, 1981 to 1991, measures were taken designed to improve the quality of and access to education generally in the country. These included (a) the restoration of state financial support for trainee teachers, (b) improvement in the supply of primary school textbooks and (c) the reform of the educational system.

As part of the process to improve education, the Evans-Anfom Commission on Basic Education was set up in 1986 to examine certain aspects of basic education in Ghana. The report of the commission noted, among other things:

- Approximately 27 per cent of the population of 6-year-old children in Ghana were not in school. The chief causal factor identified was inadequacy of facilities.
- The Education Act of 1961 that made provision in sections 1 and 2 for compulsory primary and middle school education had not been enforceable for mainly economic reasons, including the poverty of some parents resulting in their inability to provide the basic school needs of their wards as well as pay the fees and levies charged by the schools. A major factor, though, was that there was lack of adequate resources to ensure the attendance at school by every school-going aged child.
- The suggested timetable for the implementation of the compulsory primary and middle school education took the year 2000 as the target date by which Basic Education should be compulsory.
- Basic Education in Ghana could be defined as 'the minimum formal education to which every Ghanaian child is entitled as of right, to equip him/her to function effectively in the society'.
- Both Central Government and local communities should contribute funds to support Basic Education.
- About 97 per cent of the money voted for first-cycle education went to salaries of personnel. Only 3 per cent of the allocation remained to cater for the other requirements of schooling.
- District Councils were by law required to erect school buildings and maintain them and to provide equipment. Over the years, however, owing to the inability of many District Councils to perform these functions, they had had, in most cases, to be undertaken by the Central Government.

The commission recommended that the Central Government make allocations in the payment of salaries of personnel engaged in education and also make foreign exchange available for the importation of textbooks and other software for purchase by parents and guardians to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The major elements of the reforms introduced the following year in 1987 included: the restructuring of the educational system to provide nine years of 'basic' education (6 years of primary followed by 3 years of junior secondary schooling) for all children, followed by three years of senior secondary and then four years of tertiary education. This structure reduced the duration of pre-university education from a maximum of 17 years (for the small minority of university entrants who had successively undergone six years primary, four years middle, five years secondary and two years sixth form although most transferred to secondary after one, two or three years of middle school) to a standardised 12 years. The reforms were intended, among other things, to provide increased access to education especially in the northern half of the country and in other areas where the intake was persistently low by making basic education available to every Ghanaian child. Once again, the intention was to provide universal free education. The reforms had been prepared as far back as 1974 during the Acheampong regime. The implementation of the reforms led to the construction of additional classrooms, renovation of existing structures, training of teachers and in-service training of teachers. The World Bank supported the reform programme with an amount of US$45 million.

The implementation of these educational reforms continued throughout the 1990s after the PNDC regime metamorphosed itself into an elected democratic government in 1992 and ruled the country until 2000 when it lost power to the New Patriotic Party (NPP).

An important development in the 1990s was the introduction of the free compulsory universal basic education (FCUBE) programme in 1995, which is a constitutional requirement. The FCUBE is a comprehensive programme designed to provide quality basic education to all school-aged children in Ghana by the year 2005. Specifically, the FCUBE programme addressed (a) quality of teaching and learning, (b) management for efficiency and (c) access and participation at the basic level. The access and participation aspect of the FCUBE programme focused on expansion of infrastructural facilities and services to enhance access for all children of school-going age, as well as emphasising girls' education.

A mid-term review study report of the FCUBE published by the Ghana Education Service implementation coordinating unit in 2002, for the period 1996–2000, indicated that there were increases in the number of schools and enrolments, both in public and private schools. The report showed that public primary schools increased by 9.5 per cent, while enrolment grew by 7.9 per cent. However, the GER for public primary schools showed a decrease slightly from 76.6 per cent in 1996–97 to 75 per cent in 2000–01 (GES, 2002). This was indeed an apparent slight regress, but it was attributed to the inability of the study to cover all the existing 110 districts. From the study report, one can conclude that modest gains were achieved in the implementation of the programme, on the whole.

New Patriotic Party – NPP (2000–2008)

The New Patriotic Party government, on the assumption of office in 2000, set up a committee under the chairmanship of Prof. Jophus Anamuah-Mensah to review Ghana's educational reforms. His committee submitted its report in October 2002. It recommended, among other things, a new basic education structure of 2 years kindergarten, 6 years primary and 3 years junior secondary school – a total of 11 years for the new basic edu-

cation (Anamuah-Mensah et al., 2002). The government White Paper on the report accepted the proposed new structure but recommended that the junior secondary school should be named junior high school (MOEYS, 2004).

In an effort to improve on the efforts of their predecessors in terms of access, participation and quality of education at the basic level, the NPP government has, with effect from September 2005, instituted a capitation grant to basic schools. This is an amount of ¢30,000 per pupil enrolled in a school per year paid by the government to the schools in place of the school levies paid by parents and/or guardians (sports, cultural activities, development activities). With the coming into effect of the capitation grant, the government has abolished all school levies, the payment of which prevented some poor parents from sending their children to school. It has been estimated that enrolment at the primary level has increased by 14.22 per cent following the implementation of the capitation grant (*Daily Graphic*, June 9, 2006).

The enrolment rates calculated by the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) in *The State of the Ghana Economy* indicate that the Gross Enrolment Ratio at the primary level was 87.5 per cent with the Net Enrolment Ratio of 59.1 per cent. At the junior secondary level the GER was estimated to be 70.2 with a NER of 31.6 (ISSER, 2006).

Other areas where efforts were made by the NPP government to ensure attendance at school by every child of school-going age include, among others, a school feeding programme and free transport to pupils to attend schools. The school feeding programme commenced in the 2005/2006 academic year in selected schools across the country. It ensures that pupils are fed with one nutritious meal during the school session, generally at lunchtime. It started on a pilot basis with 100 schools, 10 each from the 10 regions of the country. The programme, however, is not the first of its kind in the country. The Catholic Relief Services (CRS), supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), had been operating school feeding programme in selected schools in the Northern Region of the country for some time before the Government stepped in, to promote improved enrolment. It has been reported that the government has spent ¢7 billion on the feeding of children, the setting up of kitchens and the provision of other inputs in 138 schools in the country (*Daily Graphic*, June 2, 2006). In the 2006–07 academic year, the programme benefited 975 public primary schools and over 440,000 pupils in all the 138 districts in the country. (*Daily Graphic*, September 5, 2006)

In 2008, in a straightforward democratic election, Dr Atta Mills was elected President; at the time of writing, he was continuing the efforts of his predecessor government.

Features and facets of primary/basic education

Teacher training

The teacher is the hub of any effective educational system. Thus the quality of an educational system is dependent on, and reflected partly by, the quality of teachers. Ghana's system of training teachers for basic schools expanded in the years since 1953. Under the

Accelerated Development Plan of 1951, emphasis was laid on the training of primary and middle school teachers. In February 1953, an Emergency Training College was opened at Saltpond and by the end of that year it had conducted five courses of six weeks and 298 pupil teachers (untrained teachers) had passed through its cocoa-sheds (McWilliam and Kwamina-Poh, 1978). Subsequently, Pupil Teachers' Centres were started in rented buildings in various parts of the country. In this way, about 3,000 pupil teachers attended the six-week course each year. By 1957, the number of pupil teachers in approved primary and middle schools had fallen to 9,688 from its peak of 11,055, as the output of the two-year training college (Teacher's Certificate B programme) began to overtake new primary and middle school openings. The Pupil Teachers' Centres were strongly criticised for attempting to train teachers in six weeks.

While in 1951 virtually all students in teacher training colleges were middle school leavers pursuing the Certificate B or A programmes, by 1961, the spread of secondary education provided a growing number of entrants to two-year post- secondary Certificate A programmes. By the beginning of 1960, out of 4,427 teachers in training 340 were products of secondary schools. As already noted, the Accelerated Development Plan gave encouragement to those entering the profession by allowing for the payment of salaries (allowances) to teachers in training. This system continued until the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah in 1966 and was only restored in the early 1980s, to encourage more candidates and to support those in training. In order to provide guidance and control in teacher education for the primary and middle schools, the National Teacher Training Council of Ghana was set up in 1958.

As part of the implementation of the President's proclamation of fee-free compulsory primary and middle school education in 1961, local authorities were to continue to be responsible for providing buildings and over 1,000 more schools were required in September 1961. Again, as already noted, as a stopgap until new buildings were ready, a shift system was introduced, with two daily shifts of 4½ hours. The shift system prevails in some urban settlements. Its major disadvantage is the short instructional time as compared to the normal whole-day system. It also places strains on the teachers. By September 1960, there were about 12,000 trained and 8,000 untrained teachers (pupil teachers) in the education system. Following the announcement by the President of fee-free and compulsory primary and middle school education, it was planned to increase training college enrolment by 1,200 over the next 2 years to take care of the increases in the number of schools and classrooms.

In order to attract and retain teachers in the classroom, the government announced what had been described as the 'New Deal' for teachers in 1960. By this deal, the salary of Pupil Teachers was increased from £G102 to a scale of £G144 to £G180. Certificate A and B teacher received increases varying between £G35 and £G85 a year. In addition, 12 per cent of Certificate A teachers would be made Senior Teachers on £G500–700 a year and a new grade of Principal Teacher was to carry a salary of up to £G900. The President's intention was to create a teaching service that was second to none.

With the proclamation of fee-free primary education in 1960 and its implementation in September 1961, efforts were made to increase the number of trained teachers and also

to make up for the decline in output caused by the ending of the Certificate B courses in 1962 following the decision that for middle school leavers, a 4-year Certificate A course should be the rule. The number of training colleges grew from 12 Certificate A and 19 Certificate B in 1961 to 82 Certificate A colleges in 1966. In this period, nearly 9,000 trained teachers qualified and the total numbers in the field rose by 28 per cent. But in the same five years (1961–1966), the number of pupil teachers went up by no less than 165 per cent and the proportion of trained teachers fell from 53 per cent to 35 per cent.

With the overthrow of the CPP government in 1966, the NLC government phased out some of the newly established teacher training colleges and turned them into secondary schools, because it was thought that there were going to be more trained teachers than would be required. But this proved not to be the case. There has been a perpetual deficit in teacher training in the Ghana for the basic level. Currently, there are 38 public teacher training colleges in the country. These are all post-secondary institutions that are being upgraded to Diploma awarding institutions. The process of upgrading the colleges is scheduled to be completed by 2010. The requirements for entry into the teacher training colleges are aggregate 24 or better in six subjects; three core and three electives at the senior secondary school level. The core subjects are English language, mathematics and science.

It is important to note that, despite the modest efforts to increase the number of trained teachers in the system, there has been a perennial shortage of trained teachers at the basic level since the 1960s. Even with the use of untrained teachers (pupil teachers), there has been always a shortfall. The problem partly stems from teacher distribution. Many trained teachers do not want to serve in remote and deprived areas. Serving in these areas often means living under harsh conditions, such as lack of potable water, absence of adequate medical facilities, no electricity, limited access to markets, poor dwelling facilities for the teacher and their families. Another dimension of the problem is the low level of remuneration of teachers. This accounts for the high attrition rate in the Ghana Education Service; teachers leave the service for greener pastures in other better-paying jobs. Coupled with the poor remuneration is the low social recognition given to teachers in the country.

A new development in tackling the perennial shortage of trained teachers is the institution of a new kind of untrained teachers training programme. This targets those untrained teachers already in the system by training them through a distance learning mode for four years.

The state and church schools – educational units

The Education Act of 1961 recognised the principle of freedom of religious belief and extended it. Section 22 of the Act reads:

- No person shall be refused admission as a pupil on account of the religious persuasion, nationality, race or language of himself or of either of his parents.
- No test or enquiries shall be made of or concerning the religious beliefs of pupils or students prior to their admittance to any school or college and
- No person attending a school as a pupil shall, if his parents object be required to

attend or to abstain from attending, whether in the institution or elsewhere any Sunday school, or any form of religious worship or observance, or any instruction in religious subjects.

By the Act, regardless of the management of a school, all schools are regarded as state-owned because the Government pays the teachers. The managers are, in fact, acting as agents of the government.

The Education Act of 1961 has been seen as having had the effect of stifling local initiative and the active interest of the denominational bodies in their schools (Antwi, 1992). By the middle of the 1960s, the growing protests of many parents, other interested citizens and members of various denominational bodies expressed through the mass media caused the NLC Administration to request the Ministry of Education to invite views from the public on the effects of the Act on the discipline of teachers, pupils, students and parents, and on the attitude of parents to education and religion.

The intention of the government to hand back to the denominational educational units their former schools absorbed into the public system was hotly debated by the mass media. This issue has still not been resolved. The Churches continue to ask the government to hand back the schools to them.

The Education Review Committee of 1966, established by the NLC, believed that the denominational bodies have a continuing and desirable role to play and proposed that they should be permitted to develop their philosophy of school management and concept of education of the young and that all institutions managed by them should be under their effective and immediate control within the general service conditions of the Ministry of Education.

The White Paper on the Report of the Education Review Committee rejected the dual pattern of school management and advocated its replacement by a unitary one. It pointed out that a unitary pattern would make for economy, simpler administration and efficiency and it recommended that the management of schools built, maintained and wholly financed from public funds should be vested in Management Boards/Committees on which Educational Units would be represented where necessary. The Mills-Odoi Committee of 1967, which was to review the structure and remuneration of the public services in Ghana, affirmed the government's position in the White Paper. Subsequently, efforts have been made over the past 35 years by Ghanaian governments either to absorb the denominations – educational units – into the public system or to relieve them of the responsibility of managing schools. In all cases, the denominational bodies have fiercely resisted these efforts.

From all indications, successive governments have been committed to ensuring equality of educational opportunity for all Ghanaians and also to efficiency and economy in educational provision, in order to maximise returns on educational expenditure. In pursuit of these aims, a report of the National Consultative Committee on Educational Finance appointed in 1975 recommended that district councils should take over the functions of the educational units and absorb their personnel where necessary. At present, the state is responsible for the payment of teachers' salaries as well as provision of infrastructure in

terms of buildings and supply of textbooks in denominational (church) primary and junior secondary schools (except for those that are privately-owned and run).

Access, retention and drop-out

Studies conducted in the 1990s (Asare-Bediako et al., 1995, & BESIP, 1997) indicated that access and retention at the basic education level have been on the increase since the reform programme of 1987. Gross enrolment ratio at the primary level was 78 per cent in 1991/92. The ratio rose to 87.5 per cent in the 2004–05 academic year, as indicated earlier in this chapter. It is worthy of note that Gross Enrolment Ratios are not uniform across the country. Generally, they have been significantly lower in the three northern regions of the country even though in those regions, in an attempt to even out disparities and to promote the development, education up to the secondary level is free. There is also a continuing gender imbalance in both enrolment and retention rates.

Girls' education

Boys continue to outnumber girls in the education system generally, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels. A number of factors militate against girls' enrolment in schools. The factors include:

a The high opportunity costs to families of sending girls to school and losing their contribution to domestic work and child-minding services;
b The additional opportunity costs when families are poor and require these children to engage in farming, herding or petty trading;
c Parental and community attitudes towards girls' education. This partly stems from cultural practices. These include early betrothal of girls, which means that those who start in school are withdrawn from it;
d Teenage pregnancy, which is another cause of girls dropping out, particularly in rural areas;
e Lack of comfortable access for girls (and women teachers), e.g. gender-sensitive facilities and security;
f Lack of community action for girls' enrolment.

A study on *Gender and Primary Schooling in Ghana* under the auspices of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) highlighted the problem: girls' enrolment has consistently lagged behind that of boys and the imbalance remained constant throughout the period 1991–92 to 1996–97.

Financing education

Since 1961, many African states including Ghana have been making efforts to expand their educational systems as part of their overall national development plans (Antwi, 1992) because of their conviction that education holds the key to development. By the Education Act of 1961, the government of Ghana declared a fee-free education at the primary and middle schools. In line with this policy, tuition at all levels of the public educational system was declared free, that is, it was borne by the government. At the basic and secondary levels, students paid minimal book-user fees every year.

These arrangements are still in place. In addition, the Ministry of Education subsidises the Basic Education Certificate Examination fee (formerly the Middle School Leaving Certificate) for junior secondary students. This is to make sure that no child drops out from the exam due to inability of the parents/guardians to pay the registration fee for the examination. The Ministry of Education also currently pays all recurrent costs of teacher training and provides allowances for teacher trainees. (As already noted, the provision of allowances for teacher trainees was discontinued during the period of the National Liberation Council Administration but later restored by the National Democratic Congress government led by Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings).

As a result of governments' commitment to continued educational expansion, educational expenditures claimed, and continue to claim, a large, though fluctuating, share of government current expenditure. For instance, the government of Ghana in 1990, 1991, and 1992 allocated 22 per cent, 21 per cent, and 22 per cent of the national budget to education. Out of total education expenditure 43 per cent, 44 per cent, and 45 per cent respectively were allocated to primary education over those years (DeStefano, Hartwell & Tietjen, 1995).

An examination of educational expenditure in relation to the economy shows that for the years 1970, 1976 and 1978, the Ghana government's expenditure on education averaged 3.3 per cent of the gross national product (GNP). This expenditure was equivalent to an average of 24 per cent of the government's current expenditure (Antwi, 1992). Antwi further points out that, according to an official report issued by the government of Ghana in the 80s, the per capita expenditure on education had declined from $20 in 1972 to $10 in 1979 and to $1 in 1983 (using constant 1975 US dollars). Those were the years of economic decline that invariably affected expenditure on education. A World Bank Report (1996), Staff Appraisal Report on Basic Education Sector Improvement Programme noted that during the 1970s and early 1980s, the economy of Ghana had contracted by 2–3 per cent per annum. The decline had an impact on development and on the budget and thus inevitably on provision of educational facilities.

Government expenditure on education, however, varied with the educational levels. Antwi (1992) notes that a wide disparity was evident in the cost per student per year at different levels of education over the years. According to the Report of the Committee Appointed by the Executive Council of the National Liberation Council to advise Government on the future policy for financial support for University students in Ghana (1970), in the 1968/69 academic year the average recurrent costs per head for primary schools (6 years) was N¢120, that is ¢20 per annum, while that for middle schools was N¢80 – also ¢20 per annum. In the same year, public expenditure per head at the secondary level was N¢875, that is N¢175 per annum. At the University level for the same academic year, the expenditure per student on a course was N¢10,325, or N¢2,950 per annum. The annual unit costs at the university level were therefore 148 times the level of primary schools. This disparity is a dilemma for all governments providing for all levels of the educational system, but is particularly worrying in societies where only a very small proportion of the population have the opportunity of higher education.

More recently, according to the Ghana Education Service, in 2001, the recurring unit cost

per pupil was ¢203 in the primary, ¢43,595 at the junior secondary, and ¢2,398,579 at the teacher training level. All these expenditures show a shortfall of between 56.2 per cent and 78.8 per cent from the planned expenditure (Education Review Report, 2002).

In 1984, the government launched the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) with support from the IMF, the World Bank and other donors. Since launching the Economic Recovery Programme, the economy grew by an average of about 5 per cent annually or at around 2 per cent per capita. The macroeconomic situation was less favourable in the early 1990s. Despite a successful turnaround in fiscal balance, annual inflation exceeded 60 per cent in 1995 (World Bank Report, 1996).

Despite the financial difficulties which confronted the governments of Ghana over the years, each one continued to put emphasis on the importance of education in the development process, as reflected in the budgetary allocation for education. The World Bank Report in 1996 notes that Ghana showed, relatively, strong fiscal commitment to the education sector during the period of structural adjustment (1985–1995). Between 1990–1995, the proportion of the government's annual discretionary budget allocated to education averaged nearly 39 per cent on annual actual spending basis. The report (World Bank, 1996) further notes that intra-sectoral allocation since the educational reforms began in 1987 had been in favour of basic education that consistently received 60 per cent or more of the Ministry of Education's budget.

Since the late 1980's and 1990s, the government of Ghana has been provided with financial support for the educational sector following the implementation of the educational reforms in 1987. In the early 1990s (1990–1995), of the total amount of basic education recurrent expenditure, the government contributed about two-thirds, households about a quarter, and donors about 10 per cent (World Bank Report, 1996). The World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) are among significant donors. USAID began providing support to the educational sector in Ghana in 1990. Most often the support of the Agency is limited to the primary level. For capital costs, districts were the major source of in-country domestic spending and, on average, they share the load equally with external aid partners. In terms of funding the education sector in Ghana, the donors provided 12 per cent in 1999, 6 per cent in 2000 and 9 per cent in 2001 (Education Review Report, 2002).

Two major sources of funding for districts in recent years are:

a The District Assembly Common Fund (DACF), a centrally-distributed intergovernmental transfer of 5 per cent of the national tax revenue which was introduced in 1992; and
b Funds generated by the districts themselves, with education levies accounting for most.

The government has been responsible mainly for recurrent expenditure, predominantly salary and administrative costs. For example in 1998, the Ministry of Education's share of the Ghana Government discretionary recurrent estimate was 33 per cent while the share for development was 3.9 per cent, a total of 36.9 per cent. In the same year, the allocation of the Ministry's recurrent budget by sectors and items show that the headquar-

ters together with the subvented organizations received 4.6 per cent of the allocation, the Ghana Education Service (GES) received 83.3 per cent and tertiary education took 12.1per cent. Of the total recurrent budget for the Ministry, 86.3 per cent was earmarked for personal emoluments, leaving 13.7 per cent of the budget for non-salary items. Of the GES allocation, 88.1 per cent was also set aside for personal emoluments while 11.9 per cent was set aside for non-salary items (Ministry of Education, April 1998). At the basic level, the Governments spending on infrastructure and instructional materials has been minimal.

In 1995, there was a general shortage of instructional materials, especially in primary schools, and of trained teachers, particularly in rural areas. There was also weakness in the resource distribution system and the teacher posting system, resulting in considerable inequities between schools, regions and districts. (World Bank Report, 1996). These problems were partly due to absolute resource limitations.

From the foregoing sections, it is clear that Ghana's educational progress was hampered by severe economic difficulties in the 1970s and early 1980s. Following the acceptance of the structural adjustment programme by the World Bank in the 1980s, economic support was provided by the international bodies to help ensure Ghana's economic recovery, which reflected on the support for her educational programmes by late 1980s and early 1990s. Support for educational activities at the primary level is championed by United States Agency for Development (USAID), the Department for International Development of United Kingdom (DFID), German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to mention a few in recent years.

Private sector participation

Private sector participation in primary and junior secondary schooling has been rather limited till recently, as educational provision was seen as the preserve of the state. The figures for enrolment and number of schools for 2001–2002 provide a snapshot of the situation. During this period, 19.3 per cent of schools were in the Private category, and they accounted for 22.4 per cent of the total enrolment. 15.4 per cent of the junior secondary schools were private and they had a 14.3 per cent share of total enrolment. (Ministry of Education, 2002; cited in *Meeting the Challenges of Education in the Twenty First Century*, p. 255)

Commenting on the role of the private sector, a World Bank study pointed out that the private sector has 'limited government involvement and none from the Bank'. This statement should be treated with caution, since although there may be no direct public subvention, private schools benefit from such publicly-funded activities as teacher training and curriculum development. The sector had shown phenomenal growth to 20 per cent of primary enrolment compared to 5 per cent 15 years earlier. (*Impact Evaluation*, p. 27)

Voluntary Sector

Voluntary Sector organisations (VSOs) have emerged as key stakeholders in the educational development of Ghana. Some of them have strong links with overseas sponsoring organisations. They undertake small projects in specific parts of the country or focus on

particular areas where the efforts of the state have not been fully successful. Also, they provide support that can reinforce the efforts of the government to make quantitative or qualitative improvements.

VSOs act as pressure groups highlighting areas of concern. For example, Action Aid International Ghana and Oxfam GB participated in the 2004 Global Action Week events in Ghana on the theme of 'Children Missing Out in School'. During the week a national lobby was held in Accra to bring together parliamentarians, policy makers, those missing school and students. 'Community Missing Out Maps' were produced to make the government 'indisputably aware of the exact areas in the north where help is needed to encourage children back into school.' (Abu-Gyamfi and Foster, p. 21)

The role of the diaspora in education

There are private initiatives from both within the country and from the Ghanaian diaspora that support schools with money or efforts to meet infrastructure needs or help individuals or groups of pupils. The role of the diaspora in educational development is on the rise especially as the remittances, globally, have increased faster than official aid from donor countries. Global migration trends have diversified diasporic destinations and new information technologies allow maintenance of links with the home country more than in the past. This interest might result in support for education at an individual level – through sponsorship to pay for educational expenses – or at an institutional level – to support educational institutions in their home towns/villages, for example. How far the current global recession will affect the scale of remittances from abroad, and as a result diminish this educational assistance, is not yet clear.

UP(B)E in Ghana: Why will it (not) succeed?

Commitment/political will

Both the government and the public are strongly committed to the notion/cause of UPE/UBE. Constitutional provisions provide the legal framework that underpins that commitment.

The commitment to universal basic education is an extension of the commitment to develop human resources. While notions of nation-building underpinned past initiatives, the current emphasis is on creating a well-educated population fit to compete in a globalised and globalising world. Comparisons with the rise of East Asian economies and the role of education in the process are cited in official documents:

> 'The rationale for an accelerated human resource development strategy for Ghana is based on the persuasive experience of countries that have made the transition to successful economic development. The evidence is strong that the basic level of education must be improved as the platform to sustainable growth and development. Asian countries with rapid economic growth had all achieved universal primary by the time they began their growth period. Today, Ghana has lower primary enrolment and literacy rates than the Asian countries had when

> their economic growth began to accelerate … . At the secondary level, however, Ghana's enrolment ratio of 39 per cent is quite high and compares favourably with Asian countries at the time of their take off. This is the basis of the argument for a high level of public resources to provide basic schooling and literacy.' (*Towards Learning for All*, p. 2)

The government in 2006 restated this rationale of education for economic prosperity in the context of globalisation: 'Ghana, in spite of severe economic constraints will continue to remain committed to efforts aimed at putting in place an efficient, credible and sustainable education system that will make the nation competitive in today's globalised economy which is increasingly becoming knowledge-driven' (Ghana Education System, last para).

Regional disparities

Regional variations in educational provision have their roots in the extension and consolidation of control by the British government during the colonial period in the 19th century. Three areas that had distinct political histories – Gold Coast, a coastal 'colony' established initially through an agreement with Fanti states, Ashanti, a colony by conquest, and the protectorate of the Northern Territories (NTs). Western Togoland, earlier a German colony, was administered by the British after 1918, alongside the then Gold Coast, first as a League of Nations Mandate and then as a UN Trust Territory; it was integrated into Ghana in 1957.

The governmental and missionary activities during the 19th century established 'the base of the educational system' (George, p. 7). When the British Government annexed Ashanti in 1901 and established the Northern Territories Protectorate in 1902, 'the population for which the Governor of the Gold Coast was responsible increased roughly by three times, but there was no corresponding increase for some years in the money available for such activities as education … . As it was there was no educational legislation for the Northern Territories until 1927, a generation later' (McWilliam, 1962, p. 34).

Regional variations can also be attributed to the prevalence of Christian missionary activities in the three regions, with the coastal regions having the most and the northern regions the least. Apart from being considered the 'right bodies to manage education' missionaries had more money than the government … For example, … in 1844 Thomas Birch Freeman during a single visit to Britain was able to collect £5,500 for the work of Wesleyan Mission on the Gold Coast – more than the Gold Coast Government's total revenue for that year' (McWilliam, 1962, p. 7).

The pattern of regional variations continued in the post-independence period. Even the increases in school enrolment in the post-independence nation-building of the 1950s and 1960s did not change the pattern. In 1970–71, for example, 'While Ghana had about 11 per cent of the total population in primary schools, about 5 per cent in middle schools, and 0.6 per cent in secondary schools … [Northern and Upper regions] had less that 4 per cent of its population in primary schools, less that 2 per cent in middle schools, and less than 0.2 per cent in secondary schools' (George, p. 215).

Enrolment figures for 1994–97 in public primary schools by region and gender show the nexus between enrolment levels, poverty and gender disparities: 'Upper West, Upper East and Northern regions had the lowest number of enrolled pupils ... The three regions with the lowest enrolment also happen to be the three poorest in the country' (Avotri et al. p. 22).

The persistence of regional disparities continues into the 21st century, despite the successes of FCUBE and other measures. Table 2.1 shows the gross enrolment ratios of primary schools nationally and in the three Northern Regions of the country from 2001–02 to 2004–05.

Table 2.1. National and three regional gross enrolment ratios in primary schools

Indicator	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05
National	90.4	84.5	86.3	87.5
Northern Region	66.4	70.5	70.5	71.5
Upper East	71.2	76.5	77.1	80.4
Upper West	63.1	70.3	74.1	77.3

Source: The State of the Ghanaian Economy in 2005, Accra, ISSER Publication

The government agencies are aware of the situation and efforts are being put in place to improve it. The problem is two-fold: to continue with expansion of provision for basic education (a problem of quantity); and to ensure that appropriate learning outcomes are achieved (a problem of quality). Admittedly, the challenge of achieving Universal Primary/Basic Education in Ghana is a difficult and complex one – arising out of the pattern of general and educational development set in the colonial period, and the inadequacy of colonial and post-colonial efforts to harmonise levels of educational access/uptake across the whole country.

Conclusions

Cultivating institutional memories of the past educational 'high tides' and retreats in their contexts, both external and internal and at micro and macro levels will be of great value to current and succeeding Ghanaian governments if they wish to lead Africa in the quest to achieve and maintain UPE successfully. Cycles of rapid expansion and drastic cutbacks have to be avoided in favour of a steadiness of approach. While external events, such as the oil shock and the recent global recession, are beyond national governments' control, it would make good sense to plan national education budgets 'for a rainy day' and avoid being pressured by outside agencies into sudden splurges.

In planning for the achievement of UPE by 2015, Ghana has some significant advantages. The constitutional obligation to free universal primary education is a cornerstone. With that assurance, the UPE/UBE initiatives in the country, in spite of political fluctuations, have been almost continuously backed by a strong political will and now also by a sense of urgency to find a rightful place for the nation in a globalising world. A good deal of work in the past fifty years by planners and reviewers is there as foundation for future

progress. The Ghana Education Service has knowledgeable, experienced and committed staff, who usually remain throughout governmental changes. The basic structures are sound, in spite of the unsolved relationships with religious bodies, and the main stumbling blocks are well-known. There are problematic issues, such as how far it is safe to rely on external funding and when such funding is available, and how far can the country resist pressures from the donors.

Against this background, we would like to suggest the following guidelines for the future:

- The FCUBE programme, Ghana's flagship initiative, is well-structured to serve the children and parents of Ghana and to tap into internal and external funding. It is to be cherished;
- More work is needed to address social and historical/regional disparities. This should include a very serious effort to bring more girls into school and keep them there, with gender-sensitive facilities and positive incentives to guardians/parents. It should also include a new campaign to gain more uptake of schooling in the three Regions in the North which lag behind – e.g. extra payment to teachers who are ready to serve in remote areas and more involvement with local communities;
- New discussions might be valuable with representatives of the voluntary community and the diaspora organisations, to see if there are ways of rationalising their support, to channel it to the most needy sectors/areas;
- Finally, the whole system depends on the dedication and professionalism of teachers, without whom there will be no motivation for pupils to continue in school and no hope for improvement in the quality of education. It is critically important to increase the supply and standard of teachers, year on year.