



SPOTLIGHT ON BASIC EDUCATION COMPLETION AND FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING

Ghana



In partnership with



Ushirika wa Maendeleo ya Elimu Barani Afrika
الرابطة لأجل تطوير التربية في إفريقيا
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Foreword

Ghana extends its gratitude to the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report team and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) for participating in the initial set of country Spotlight Report.

Foundational learning is the bedrock of our educational transformation agenda, and this spotlight report focusing on basic education is appropriate and welcoming. Since 2017, the Ministry of Education has made frantic efforts to embark on an ambitious set of educational reforms to reposition the entire education system to produce a critical mass of assertive Ghanaian students with the essential skills for socio-economic transformation.

Among these reforms are the introduction of a new curriculum, development of national teachers' standards, introduction of Free Senior High Education, Teacher licensure examination, and improving accountability and learning outcomes across basic schools. The National Pre-Tertiary Curriculum Framework, approved by Cabinet in 2018, is assessed as being effective and appropriate.

I am pleased that these efforts are acknowledged in the Spotlight Report, and Ghana is generally considered to be doing well with the clarity of our vision, leadership, and roles. However, the Ministry of Education is not relenting in its efforts to strengthen its accountability systems for effective and efficient delivery of its services to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

My Ministry introduced the National Standardised Test (NST) last year to address education inequalities so that children would have the opportunity to learn and thrive. Further to this has been the introduction of the Communities of Excellence programme to strengthen community participation and parent engagement. The National Education Leadership Institute will also equip school leaders and administrators with relevant knowledge, skills, and competencies to ensure efficiency in their professional roles.

I hope that with these interventions, we will build on the gains of the past years to ensure the achievement of the objectives of our Education Strategic Plan 2018-2030 to make Ghana a learning nation.

Hon. Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum
Minister for Education



Table of Contents

Foreword	2
1. Executive summary	6
2. Introduction	7
2.1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	7
2.2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	7
2.3. MAIN ACTIVITIES	7
3. Situation analysis	8
3.1. GOVERNANCE OF PRIMARY, SECONDARY & TECHNICAL EDUCATION.....	8
3.2. ENROLMENT AND COMPLETION	12
3.3. LEARNING	13
3.4. EDUCATION FINANCING	15
3.5. DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS	17
3.6. GOVERNMENT EDUCATION PRIORITIES	19
3.7. LESSONS LEARNT TO DATE FROM IMPLEMENTING GHANA'S EDUCATION REFORM AGENDA.....	21
3.8. POLITICAL ECONOMY	22
3.9. SUMMARY	23
4. Analytical framework and fieldwork findings	24
4.1. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK OF CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS	24
4.2. RESULTS OF DISCUSSIONS WITH NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS	25
4.3. FIELDWORK APPROACH AND AREAS VISITED.....	26
4.4. OVERALL AND SPECIFIC FINDINGS	27
4.5. ADDITIONAL FINDINGS OF INTEREST	30
4.6. FINDINGS FROM LESSON OBSERVATIONS	32
4.7. FACTORS EXPLAINING DIFFERENCES IN SCHOOL PERFORMANCE	32
4.8. RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS	34
4.9. POLITICAL ECONOMY, RELATIONSHIPS AND INCENTIVES.....	34
4.10. CONSISTENCY AND COHERENCE OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION.....	35
5. Three positive case studies	37
5.1. TEACHING AT THE RIGHT LEVEL.....	37
5.2. PROMOTING THE USE OF MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION.....	37



5.3. PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION REFORMS37

6. Recommendations.....39

Abbreviations.....40

References.....41



1. Executive summary

Access has been a historic strength of Ghana's education system, although issues remain with over-age enrolment. While there is some recent encouraging progress in reading, basic education learning outcomes remain low. Since 2017, Ghana has embarked on an ambitious set of reforms, including development of teacher standards, introduction of a new curriculum, establishment of fee-free senior secondary education, an overhaul of pre-service teacher education and reforms to improve accountability and learning outcomes across basic schools.

Fieldwork findings show that Ghana is generally considered to be doing well on 'clarity of national vision, leadership and roles' and 'effective and appropriate curriculum' but that 'adequate resources focused on foundational literacy and numeracy' and 'community and parental engagement' are areas of concern. While there are good examples of effective supportive supervision and teacher delivery of the new curriculum, these are also areas where consistency and improvement are needed if Ghana is to achieve the Education Strategic Plan 2018–2030 objectives.

Recommendations for improving learning outcomes include:

- Introduce structured materials and support for professional learning sessions focusing on phonics and teaching at the right level.
- Invest in ensuring that textbooks and other teaching and learning materials reach classrooms.
- Provide structured, on-the-job education leadership training for all basic education schools.
- Explore new resourcing mechanisms for basic education, including results-based financing.
- Assist Regional, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Education Offices to prioritize objectives and oversee their achievement, providing supportive supervision to this end.
- Consider ways of decentralizing decision making and enhancing local accountability.



2. Introduction

2.1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The Spotlight series has two goals:

- Synthesize, analyse and clearly present comparative knowledge on challenges and solutions to achieving universal basic education (UBE) completion and foundational learning as a basis for support to regional peer learning mechanisms and national, regional and global accountability mechanisms.
- Support national and regional coalitions in the use of this comparative knowledge to move national education systems, plans, policies and budgets – but also international support mechanisms – in the direction of achieving UBE completion and foundational learning.

2.2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to stimulate an informed and strategic country-led policy dialogue with stakeholders and development partners which would, in turn, lead to tangible actions to address identified issues. It also assessed progress towards reaching targets. This Spotlight report will be a key input into an annual continental Spotlight report that will serve as a basis for continental peer dialogue on issues related to UBE completion and foundational learning. Four research questions guided the Spotlight study:

- What is the current state of Ghana's education system in terms of the six factors identified for the report's analytical framework?
- What progress has the country made in achieving UBE completion and foundational learning skills?
- What challenges does the country face in achieving UBE completion? What solutions is the country pursuing to overcome them?
- What are potential ways forward to foster foundational learning outcomes given the structural characteristics of the country's system and the country's current commitments to other goals?

2.3. MAIN ACTIVITIES

This Spotlight study in Ghana comprised a set of activities, each generating evidence and findings related to the study's four research questions:

- Literature review and stakeholder mapping (August to September 2021).
- Initial stakeholder workshop (October 2021).
- Fieldwork (November 2021).
- Validation workshop (January 2022).



3. Situation analysis

3.1. GOVERNANCE OF PRIMARY, SECONDARY & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

At the national level, the following actors and agencies play important roles in the governance of the education system in Ghana:

The **Ministry of Education** is responsible for education. It is headed by the minister for education and two deputy ministers, one responsible for general education and the other for technical and vocational education and training (TVET). The ministry's administrative head is the chief director. Ministry agencies are responsible for developing and implementing various aspects of education policy.

Ghana Education Service (GES): Established in 1974, the GES is by far the largest agency and one of the largest employers in Africa, with over 200,000 employees. It is responsible for implementing government policy on basic education and special education. It is the employer of all public sector teachers in Ghana. The GES works through a subnational structure of 16 Regional Education Offices (REOs) and 212 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Education Offices (MMDEOs), overseeing some 17,000 public and 9,000 private schools through a network of school improvement support officers (SISOs). While the management of basic schools is nominally decentralized to the district level, many GES functions, such as teacher postings, remain highly centralized, and MMDEOs rely heavily on guidance and directives issued by the GES's head office in Accra.

National Teaching Council (NTC): Established by law in 2008, inaugurated in 2011 and with its purpose and mandate clarified through the 2020 Education Regulatory Bodies Act, the NTC is mandated to license and register teachers, regulate institutions offering teacher education, oversee continuing professional development for teachers and ensure that all aspects of teaching comply with the National Teachers' Standards. Teacher licensing was introduced in 2018 for all new entrants to the profession. The NTC has an office in Accra and fewer than 50 staff.

National Schools Inspectorate Authority (NaSIA): Established by law in 2008, inaugurated in 2011 as the National Inspectorate Board and with its purpose and mandate strengthened through the 2020 Education Regulatory Bodies Act, which renamed it, NaSIA is responsible for providing independent periodic external evaluation of quality and standards in both public and private schools. It recently developed and implemented a new School Inspections Framework. Headquartered in Accra, it has fewer than 50 permanent staff but recently recruited and trained a network of 300 part-time 'team inspectors' to carry out school inspections nationwide.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA): Established by law in 2008, inaugurated in 2011 and with its purpose and mandate clarified through the 2020 Education Regulatory Bodies Act, NaCCA has overall responsibility for all matters relating to curriculum development and assessment. NaCCA was responsible for writing the new Standards-Based Pre-Tertiary Curriculum, which was rolled out in all basic schools in September 2019, and is currently leading the development of new curricula for junior high school (JHS) and senior high school (SHS), being rolled out incrementally from 2021. It is also responsible for introducing a new nationally comparable pupil progress assessment regime at selected points in the basic education cycle.

Before the NTC, NaCCA and NaSIA were established, the GES carried out their functions. The process of separating these functions from the GES and establishing autonomous agencies was fairly protracted, but the separation of responsibilities is now clear.

Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC): Established in 2020 through the merger of the National Council for Tertiary Education and the National Accreditation Board as mandated in the Education Regulatory Bodies Act, GTEC oversees all aspects of tertiary education, including quality assurance, accreditation and access. This includes oversight of all universities, technical universities and colleges of education.

Teacher unions play a prominent role in education discourse. Prominent unions include the Ghana National Association of Teachers, National Association of Graduate Teachers, Coalition of Concerned Teachers, Teachers and Educational Workers Union of Ghana, College of Education Teachers Association of Ghana and University Teachers Association of Ghana.



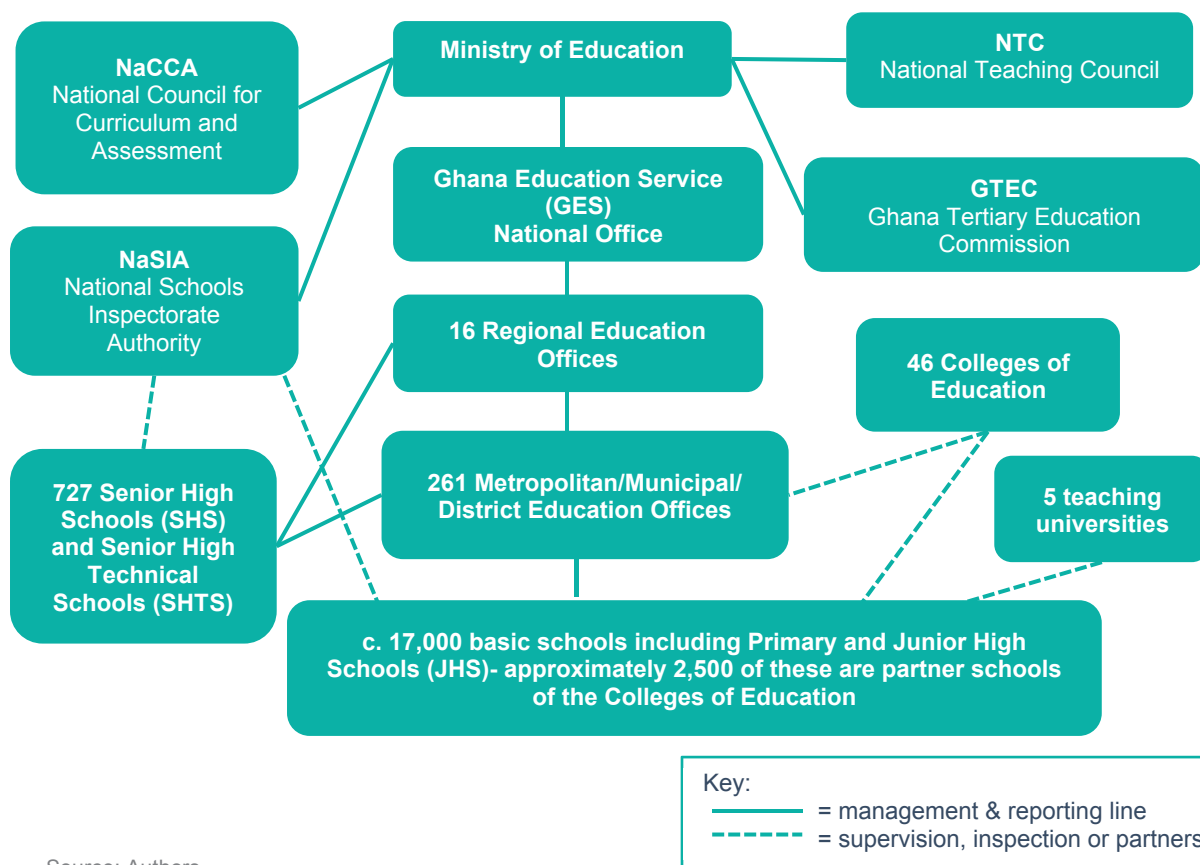
Private schools: While the number of private pre-primary and primary schools has increased significantly, there are comparatively few private secondary schools. Attending a public 'Category A' SHS is seen as more prestigious than attending a private SHS. The introduction of fee-free SHS education in 2017 further reduced demand for private SHSes, and COVID-19 shutdowns significantly affected private schools' finances. These two factors have resulted in some private schools closing. Despite private schools' role in Ghana education provision, private school owners and associations do not tend to feature prominently in discussions about education policy development and implementation. The main umbrella body for private schools is the Ghana National Association of Private Schools.

In addition to the institutions in **Figure 1**, the following two public institutions oversee the TVET system. The government has made TVET a priority in recent years and these institutions are tasked with promoting TVET and ensuring that training provision meets employers' needs:

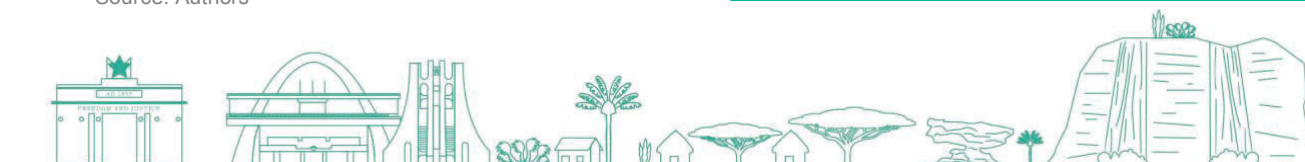
Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CTVET): Established by law in 2020, replacing the former Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training and the National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations, CTVET has a mandate focusing on policy formulation for skills development across pre-tertiary and tertiary education (including informal and alternative education); coordination of TVET provision to align with industry needs; curriculum development, assessment and certification (promoting competency-based training); and quality assurance of TVET provision.

Ghana TVET Service: Established in December 2021 to provide cohesion and focus to Ghana's pre-tertiary TVET reforms and delivery, the Ghana TVET Service works closely with the Ministry of Education and CTVET. It plays the same role for pre-tertiary TVET institutions as the GES does for basic schools, JHSes, SHSes and senior high technical schools (SHTSes). The Ghana TVET Service oversees 187 institutions previously managed by 19 separate ministries and agencies. It is also responsible for implementing the Free TVET for All initiative, which involves all 187 pre-tertiary TVET institutions being included in the computerized school selection and placement system for selection by JHS graduates from 2022 onwards. This means all JHS leavers can choose between attending a free SHS or SHTS or a free TVET institution.

FIGURE 1
Key actors in Ghana's public education system



Source: Authors



Ghana's pre-tertiary education system (**Table 1**), as set out in the 2020 Pre-Tertiary Education Act, consists of:

- Basic education, comprising two years of kindergarten, six years of primary school and three years of JHS.
- Secondary education, comprising three years of SHS or three years of TVET in SHTS.

TABLE 1
Structure of primary and secondary education in Ghana

Age of child at entry to class	Old classification	New classification (standards-based curriculum)	External examinations and national standardized assessments
4	KG1	KG1	
5	KG2	KG2	
6	P1	B1	
7	P2	B2	National standardized test from 2022
8	P3	B3	
9	P4	B4	National standardized test from 2021
10	P5	B5	
11	P6	B6	Proposed national standardized test
12	JH 1	B7	
13	JH 2	B8	Proposed national standardized test
14	JH 3	B9	BECE – Basic Education Certificate Examination
15	SHS 1	B10	
16	SHS 2	B11	Proposed national standardized test
17	SHS 3	B12	WASSCE – West Africa Secondary School Certification Examination

Source: Authors

In addition to the national actors and agencies listed above, the following subnational actors and agencies are involved in education (see also **Figure 2**):

Regional Education Offices (REOs): Ghana has 16 REOs. From 1987 to 2018, there were 10 regions, but 6 more were created following referenda in 2018. REOs, run by the GES, act as the layer of administration and governance between the GES's national office in Accra and the 261 MMDEOs. Basic schools report directly to MMDEOs but REOs tend to have a direct reporting relationship with SHSes.

Metropolitan, Municipal and District Education Offices: Ghana's 261 MMDEOs are responsible for implementing GES directives locally and ensuring that all basic schools follow them. MMDEOs have oversight of the capitation grant used by schools to implement school improvement plans and are responsible for developing an Annual District Education Operational Plan (ADEOP) and reporting progress against it every quarter to the GES head office. Posting of newly qualified teachers, previously an MMDEO responsibility, is now carried out by the GES.

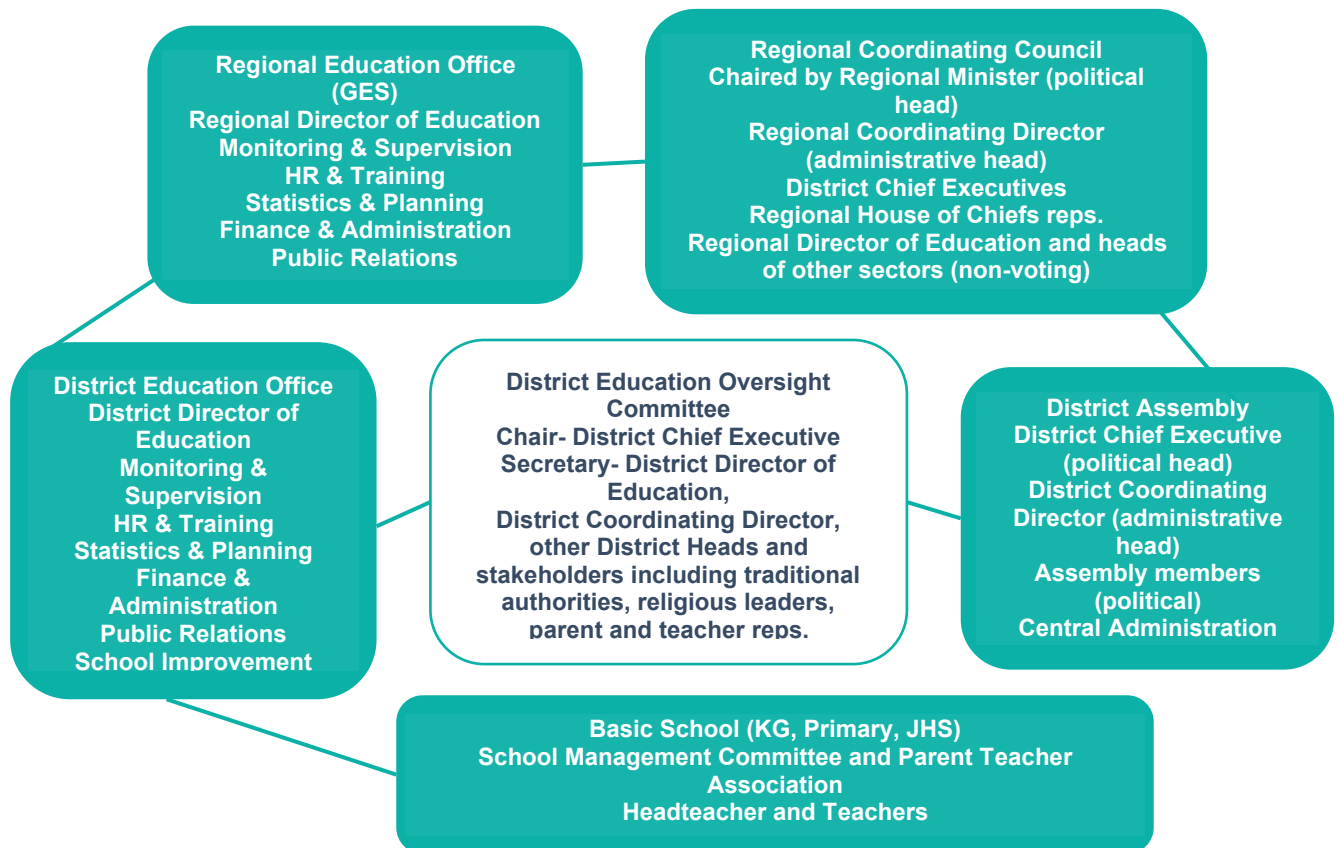
Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assembly: The assembly is the main local political institution across Ghana's 261 metropolitan areas, municipalities and districts. Each is overseen by a chief executive and makes



local resource allocation decisions concerning 11 subsectors, including education. Assemblies often provide furniture and school infrastructure.

Metropolitan, Municipal and District Education Oversight Committee: This is the main local education coordinating body and provides a forum in which assembly and education office representatives and other key stakeholders (including teachers, parents and religious and traditional leaders) meet quarterly and take decisions to improve education provision in their area.

FIGURE 2
Key actors in Ghana's public education system



Source: Authors

REOs are responsible for representing the GES at the regional level and for coordinating activities of the District Education Offices (DEOs) within their region. DEOs represent the GES at the district level and submit reports on progress against plans to their REOs. DEOs are expected to collaborate with district assemblies to ensure that basic education meets district residents' needs. District assemblies have the lead responsibility for building, equipping and maintaining the physical infrastructure and facilities within basic schools.

The District Education Oversight Committee (DEOC) is responsible for overseeing education delivery within the district and achieving the ADEOP objectives. The district chief executive chairs the DEOC and the district education director serves as secretary. Other members include local representatives of the health and social welfare ministries, religious bodies, parent-teacher associations, school management committees and private schools, along with teachers and traditional leaders.



3.2. ENROLMENT AND COMPLETION

While there were year-on-year increases in primary enrolment over the past five years, they did not keep pace with the projected annual population increase derived from the 2011 census. This led to a falling primary net enrolment rate (NER) (**Table 2**). However, preliminary results of the 2021 Population and Housing Census show that Ghana's population has been increasing at a lower rate than had been projected in 2011, with a 2.1% annual growth rate compared with 2.5% in the previous census. Hence the NER figures presented below underestimate the true level.

There are issues with over-age enrolment, as the 2019/20 figures show that 82% of the total number of enrolled primary pupils were aged between 6 and 11, the same level as in 2015/16.

TABLE 2
Trends in primary enrolment, completion and gender parity index

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Primary net enrolment	91.5%	91.1%	89.3%	87.3%	80.3%
Primary completion rate	101.6%	100.8%	99.6%	102.4%	108.5%
Primary gender parity index	1.01	1.01	1.00	1.00	1.02

Source: Ministry of Education, 2021a.

As with primary enrolment, while there were year-on-year increases in lower secondary enrolment over the past five years, there was a fall in the NER from 50% in 2015/16 to 46% in 2019/20 (**Table 3**). There are also issues with over-age enrolment, as the 2019/20 figures show that only 56% of all enrolled JHS pupils were of the right age for the level.

TABLE 3
Trends in lower secondary enrolment, completion and gender parity index

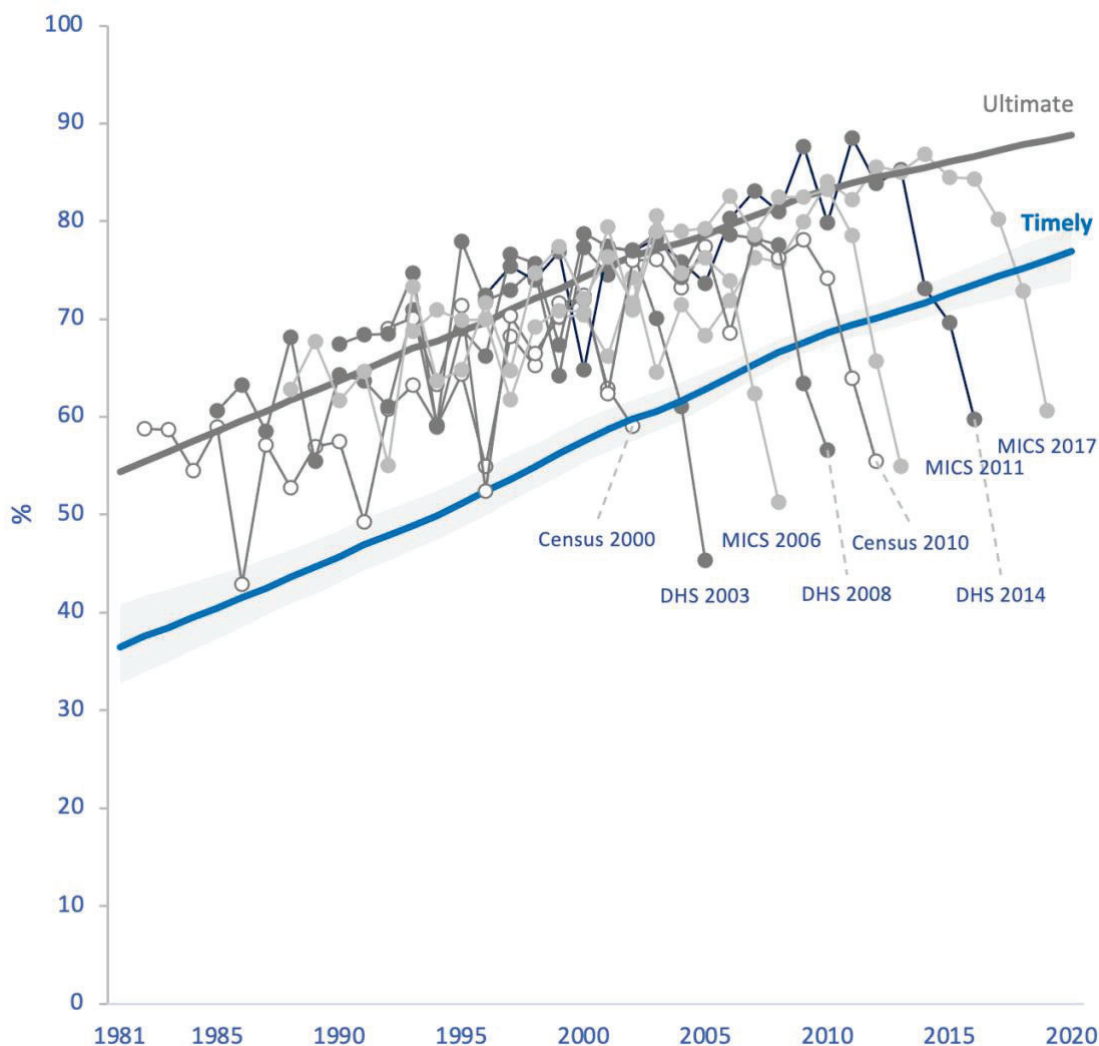
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Lower secondary net enrolment	50.3%	49.7%	48.5%	48.4%	45.8%
Lower secondary completion rate	76.1%	75.2%	78.8%	79.1%	77.5%
Lower secondary gender parity index	0.97	0.98	1.00	1.02	1.02

Source: Ministry of Education (2021a).

Analysis of multiple survey sources by the Global Education Monitoring Report team provides estimates that the primary education completion rate in Ghana increased from 57% in 2000 to 69% in 2010 and 77% in 2020 (**Figure 3**). However, when late completers are taken into account, the primary completion rate is higher, having increased from 74% in 2000 to 82% in 2010 and 89% in 2020.



FIGURE 3
Ultimate and timely primary completion rate in Ghana



Note: DHS = Demographic and Health Survey; MICS = Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey.
Source: UNESCO country completion estimates, <https://education-estimates.org/completion/country>.

3.3. LEARNING

An Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) in Ghana, carried out in 2017 across 168 districts, found that, by the end of second grade (P2), pupils could read an average of just 2.5 words per minute, with 77% being unable to read even a single word (USAID, 2018). Results of the 2015 EGRA were similar, showing that, by the end of P2, most public school pupils struggled with even foundational reading skills: In both Ghanaian languages of instruction and in English, at least half and often more of the pupils assessed could not read a single word correctly. Less than 2% were able to read with fluency and comprehension (Republic of Ghana, 2016).



The 2015 Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) found that in mathematics at the end of P2, pupils did reasonably well on most procedural items – number identification and level 1 addition and subtraction (i.e. addition and subtraction of two single-digit numbers) – scoring between 46% and 72% correct. Performance was worse on conceptual tasks. For example, 73% of pupils could not correctly answer a single level 2 subtraction question (involving subtraction of at least one two-digit number). Pupils tended to memorize facts, rules and procedures rather than learning basic concepts (Republic of Ghana, 2016).

Language match between pupils, teachers and the Ghanaian languages of instruction is a persistent challenge. The 2017 survey found that although 55% of pupils were in classrooms with a high language match, about 23% did not speak the official language of instruction and/or their teachers reported not being confident speaking the language of instruction (USAID, 2018).

Common characteristics of high-performing pupils identified through the 2015 EGRA and EGMA were being the right age for the grade, having attended kindergarten, regularly attending school, having books and reading materials at home, spending time at school reading on their own, practising reading out loud at home, and having someone at home who read to them.

The 2018 National Education Assessment (NEA) showed that between 19% and 25% of pupils met the NEA proficiency criterion (scoring 55% or above) across grades and subject areas. Between 35% and 48% of pupils scored below minimum competency (scoring 35% or below) (Ministry of Education, 2019). Comparison of the 2016 and 2018 results shows a general downward trend. While the difference in standard deviations is not significant, the difference is significant in terms of the percentage of pupils reaching various competency levels. The share of students below minimum competency in English in P4 increased from 29% in 2016 to 44% in 2018 (Table 4).

TABLE 4
National Education Assessment results, grades P4 and P6

	P4 English		P4 Mathematics		P6 English		P6 Mathematics	
	2016	2018	2016	2018	2016	2018	2016	2018
Below minimum competency	29.3	44.0	45.2	48.0	28.4	47.0	29.2	35.0
Minimum competency	33.5	32.0	32.8	33.0	33.7	28.0	45.9	44.0
Proficiency	37.2	25.0	22.0	19.0	37.9	25.0	24.9	22.0

Source: Ministry of Education Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation Department analysis of NaCCA data (2021).

The 2018 NEA data were disaggregated by subgroups (Table 5). On average, girls tended to outperform boys in English in both P4 and P6, and boys tended to outperform girls in mathematics in P6. Although the differences were, for the most part, statistically significant, they were not practically different, ranging from less than one to two percentage points. Disparities in pupil performance based on school location (urban vs rural), school type (public vs private) and district type (non-deprived vs deprived) were substantial. Average performance was lower in public schools, rural areas and deprived districts. School type (public vs private) was the factor linked with the largest differences in performance.

The Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) is norm-referenced in that it uses a stanine grading system. This means results between years cannot be compared (as evidenced by the constant percentage figures in Table 5) and thus evaluating educational standards over time is impossible. Differences in performance within each year's cohort, i.e. between schools, regions and by gender, can be evaluated, however. Slightly more female than male students pass English each year, while the reverse is seen for the other three core subjects.



TABLE 5**Basic Education Certificate Examination national results, 2015/16 to 2019/20**

BECE pass rate	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Maths	75.9% Male - 77.7% Female - 73.8%	76.4% Male - 78.3% Female - 74.3%	76.8% Male - 78.7% Female - 74.9%	76.4% Male - 78.0% Female - 74.7%	76.1% Male - 77.2% Female - 74.9%
English	75.6% Male - 74.9% Female - 76.4%	75.6% Male - 75.2% Female - 76.0%	76.8% Male - 76.2% Female - 77.4%	75.8% Male - 75.2% Female - 76.4%	76.2% Male - 75% Female - 77.5%
Science	76.1% Male - 77.7% Female - 74.3%	76.1% Male - 77.6% Female - 74.4%	76.4% Male - 77.5% Female - 74.1%	75.7% Male - 77.2% Female - 74.1%	75.6% Male - 76.6% Female - 74.6%
Social Science	76.4% Male - 78.1% Female - 74.6%	76.0% Male - 77.4% Female - 74.6%	76.4% Male - 77.4% Female - 75.3%	75.8% Male - 77.0% Female - 74.4%	76.5% Male - 77.3% Female - 75.8%

Source: Ministry of Education Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation Department analysis of NaCCA data, 2021.

3.4. EDUCATION FINANCING

The share of education expenditure provided by the central government, through the Ministry of Finance, increased from 75% in 2018 to 88% in 2020 (**Table 6**), while internally generated funds (i.e. from other government and institutional sources) fell from 22% to 9%. The remainder (between 1% and 3%) came from donors.

TABLE 6**Trends in sources of funds for education, 2018–20**

Source of funds	2018		2019		2020	
	Actual expenditure (GHS million)	% of annual total	Actual expenditure (GHS million)	% of annual total	Actual expenditure (GHS million)	% of annual total
Government of Ghana (GoG)	8,923.6	75.3%	10,453.4	84.6%	11,104.8	88.0%
Internally Generated Funds	2,647.4	22.3%	1,783.2	14.4%	1,144.7	9.1%
Annual Budget Funding Amount	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	16.4	0.0%
Donors	278.0	2.3%	126.2	1.0%	353.1	2.8%
Total	11,849.0		12,362.8		12,619.0	

Source: Ministry of Education, 2021b.



The 2021 education chart of accounts provides the following information (**Table 7**):

- Looking at the total budget in 2021 across all funding sources by item, 56% is allocated to employee compensation – down considerably from 82% in 2019. This decrease is due to a significant amount of funding to the Ministry of Education from the World Bank/Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project (GALOP) being classified under ‘general administration and finance’.
- Looking at expenditure by subsector, basic education (including JHS) accounted for 30.1%, followed by tertiary education with 25.2% and secondary education with 12.9%. Nearly 100% of these funds for basic education are allocated to employee compensation, as were 51.1% of tertiary funds and 100% of secondary funds.
- The ministry classifies all donor support under ‘management and administration’ regardless of the subsector these funds will support.
- This analysis shows that, for basic and secondary education, aside from project and donor funds (including GALOP, which is a loan, not a grant), almost 100% of allocated resources are spent on employee compensation.

TABLE 7
Breakdown of funds by category of expenditure and by level, 2021

	General Administration and Finance (US\$ million)	Compensation of employees (US\$ million)	Goods and services (US\$ million)	Other expense (US\$ million)	Non-financial assets (US\$ million)	Social benefits (US\$ million)	Total (US\$ million)
Management and Administration	401.7	0.9	1.5	323.1	76.3	0	803.4
Basic Education (kindergarten, primary and JHS)	0	769.8	2.5	0	0	0	772.3
Second Cycle Education (SHS and TVET)	0	331.6	0	0	0		331.6
Non-Formal Education	0	8.0	0.2	0.004		0.002	8.2
Inclusive and Special Education	0	0.9	0	0	0	0	0.9
Tertiary Education	0	330.6	217.8	0.8	97.0	1.0	646.3
Total	401.7	1,441.7	222.0	323.8	173.3	1.0	2,562.6

Source: Ministry of Education, 2021b.

According to UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) data, Ghana ranked 14th out of 36 sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries in 2018 for government expenditure allocated to education, at 18.6%. This is higher than the sub-Saharan African mean of 16.8% but represents a decline from 22% in 2016 and 21% in 2017. For West Africa, Ghana ranks fifth among the top six countries (**Table 8**).



TABLE 8
Share of government expenditure allocated to education, selected West African countries

SSA Ranking	Country	% of government expenditure allocated to education	Year of latest data
1 st	Sierra Leone	34.3%	2020
4 th	Burkina Faso	22.7%	2018
5 th	Senegal	22.1%	2020
6 th	Togo	21.8%	2018
14th	Ghana	18.6%	2018
15 th	Benin	17.7%	2018

Source: World Bank analysis of UIS data (2021).

The amount allocated to education each year has increased in real terms but remained stable as a proportion of GDP. A decline from 3.9% of GDP in 2016 to 3.1% in 2018 was later partly reversed: The figure remained constant at 3.5% in 2019 and 2020 (**Table 9**).

TABLE 9
Five-year budget allocation trend in Ghana

Year	Total amount allocated to education (\$) billion	Total budget amount (\$) billion	% of GDP
2016	1,666	11,849	3.9%
2017	1,693	12,958	3.6%
2018	2,017	13,322	3.1%
2019	2,287	14,969	3.5%
2020	2,463	15,917	3.5%

Source: Ministry of Education Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation Department analysis of Ministry of Finance data (2021).

3.5. DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

In 2019, President Akufo-Addo launched the Ghana Beyond Aid Charter, which sets out the country's aspiration to become 'a transformed Ghana that is prosperous enough to be beyond needing aid, and that engages competitively with the rest of the world through trade and investment' (Republic of Ghana, 2019, p. 8).

While Ghana Beyond Aid may be seen as aspirational rather than as a detailed roadmap, development partners are being encouraged to look at how they can respond by providing targeted technical assistance rather than establishing stand-alone projects and programmes. The Education Beyond Aid programming of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) is an example.

The World Bank/GPE, USAID and FCDO have been the three largest basic education donors to Ghana over the past five years, while UNICEF and UNESCO have also provided technical and financial support. FCDO tends to fund UK-based or UK-registered technical assistance providers, such as Cambridge Education, Crown Agents,



the Education Development Trust and Cambridge Assessment International Education. USAID generally funds US-based technical assistance providers, such as FHI 360 and the Education Development Center. World Bank funds are handled by the government of Ghana and any technical assistance procured has tended to be either provided by the World Bank or contracted locally through Ghanaian organizations and consultants.

The Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa and the government of Kuwait have also provided significant funding for infrastructure. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has provided targeted technical assistance in local accountability and school management.

One notable trend in recent years has been an increase in private philanthropic donors and foundations seeking to work in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Ghanaian government agencies and other stakeholders on basic education. Such organizations include Big Win Philanthropy, Dubai Cares, the Mastercard Foundation and the Jacobs Foundation. Other organizations delivering technical assistance services include Sabre Education and Right to Play, two non-governmental organizations (NGOs) specializing in early grade education; Plan International Ghana, which inherited two successful technology-focused basic education programmes from the Varkey Foundation; Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), which has a strong research focus; and the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, which is now a UNESCO Category 2 Centre of Excellence in Education. Transforming Teaching, Education & Learning (T-TEL), a new Ghanaian not-for-profit technical assistance provider established in 2020, is working in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Mastercard Foundation on a large-scale secondary education reform programme.

The largest current development partner programme in Ghana is GALOP, funded by World Bank/GPE, with a total commitment of US\$213 million from 2019 to 2024. This project provides a focal point for other partners interested in addressing foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) within the Ghanaian education system. For example, USAID's new Education Accountability programme will be aligned with GALOP when it commences in 2022.

Several development partner projects have been completed in Ghana over the past few years, helping to build an evidence base of 'what works' (**Table 10**). The projects include:

- The FCDO- and USAID-financed Complementary Basic Education programme. The final evaluation found that it had been very effective and provided good value for money in enabling out-of-school children to re-enter formal education at P3 or P4.
- The FCDO-funded predecessor to T-TEL, called Transforming Teacher Education and Learning, which supported introduction of pre-service teacher education reforms. Evaluations have shown significant changes in teachers' practice, knowledge and behaviour but it is too early to see whether this has affected learning outcomes (Cambridge Education, 2020).
- The major USAID-funded Partnership for Education: Learning activity is also coming to an end, although some activity is ongoing through the Transition to English extension. Evaluations have shown that this project made a measurable impact in improving literacy through supporting the use of Ghanaian languages as a medium of instruction in lower primary school. There is more limited evidence of success, however, for community-engagement programmes such as the USAID Partnership for Education: Innovating (USAID, 2019).
- The IPA and UNICEF Strengthening Teacher Accountability to Reach all Students (STARS) programme aimed to improve student achievement by enhancing head teachers' and circuit supervisors' roles in monitoring, providing feedback, motivating and supporting teachers to teach at the right level by grouping pupils by learning level, not by grade, in 140 schools across 20 districts. Both targeted instruction and targeted instruction plus management training increased students' combined mathematics and English test scores; these approaches are now being scaled up nationally through GALOP.



TABLE 10**Overview of major development partners supporting education in Ghana**

Agency	Major Supporting Partner	Technical assistance providers	Projects	Summary of support
Ministry of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCDO • World Bank • GPE • USAID • Big Win Philanthropy • Mastercard Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPA • Various short-term technical providers through PCDO's Education Beyond Aid • T-TEL • Education Partnership Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Bank/GPE GALOP • GPE COVID-19 response • FCDO Education Beyond Aid • Transforming Senior High School Education, Teaching & Learning (T-SHEL) • Norwegian Teacher Initiative 	DFID technical assistance support to the Ministry of Education Reform Secretariat; funding for monitoring and evaluation from Big Win Philanthropy; oversight of development of the National Teacher Policy; lead oversight agency for GALOP; research support from IPA; Education Partnership Group development of an Accountability for Learning Framework.
GES (national office)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Bank • GPE • USAID • Education Commission • UNICEF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FHI 360 • IPA • PwC Ghana • T-TEL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Bank/GPE GALOP • USAID Learning • Education Workforce Initiative • T-SHEL 	Lead implementing agency for major system support programmes including USAID Learning and World Bank/GPE GALOP; also working with PwC on the Education Workforce initiative to rationalize and restructure the GES at the national and subnational levels.
NTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JICA • FCDO • Dubai Cares • Mastercard Foundation • UNICEF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cambridge Education • T-TEL • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DFID T-TEL • Norwegian Teacher Initiative 	Support to development of National Teachers' Standards and portfolio assessment; Ghana Teacher's Prize; national teacher policy; review of teacher licensing.
NaCCA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCDO • World Bank • GPE • UNICEF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cambridge Assessment International Education • Sabre Education • T-TEL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Bank/GPE GALOP • T-SHE • 	Technical assistance to complete the pre-tertiary education curriculum and accompany assessment framework; support from Sabre Education on Kindergarten curriculum; support from T-TEL on secondary education curriculum; funding to conduct P2 and P4 national standardized assessment tests.
NaSIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCDO • World Bank • GPE • Big Win Philanthropy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Development Trust • Education Partnership Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Bank/GPE GALOP 	Technical assistance to develop a new school inspection framework and development of a school certification and licensing policy.

Source: Ministry of Education, 2018a.

3.6. GOVERNMENT EDUCATION PRIORITIES

The 2018–30 Education Strategic Plan (ESP) is the key document guiding Ghana's education system, plans and priorities. The Ministry of Education developed the plan in 2017 and 2018 through a participatory and consultative process involving a wide range of stakeholders. The ESP is focused on three main themes:



- **Improved learning outcomes:** ‘Unpacking an improvement in learning outcomes reveals a number of interwoven reforms, strategies, and interventions which come together to create learning systems; from the broad high-level reforms, such as the curriculum reviews (for schools and Colleges of Education) to the practical school-level interventions, such as reducing teacher absenteeism, and ensuring more productive engagement with communities.’ (Ministry of Education, 2018a, p. xiii)
- **Prioritization of policies and activities:** ‘[T]he MoE has developed a “lens for prioritisation” through which all proposed policies and interventions must be viewed, comprising three questions, which ask whether the proposal positively impacts a) learning outcomes, b) accountability for learning outcomes, and c) equity.’ (Ministry of Education, 2018a, p. xiv)
- **Efficiency:** ‘[A] willingness to introduce or reform policies to ensure high-quality results with the resources available’ along with ‘renewed emphasis on the need for strong accountability mechanisms and a sector-wide framework to hold actors to account appropriately.’ (Ministry of Education, 2018a, p. xiv)

The ESP’s overall goal is ‘to deliver quality education service at all levels that will equip learners in educational institutions with the skills, competencies and awareness that would make them functional citizens who can contribute to the attainment of the national goal’ (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 14). The plan contains seven subsectoral goals, activities and targets, encompassing basic education, secondary education, TVET, non-formal education, inclusive and special education, tertiary education, and education management and finance. It has three policy objectives for basic education (**Table 11**).

TABLE 11
Education Strategic Plan policy objectives and subobjectives

Policy objective	Subobjectives
Improved equitable access to and participation in inclusive quality education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased enrolment in basic schools, particularly in disadvantaged communities. ● Achieved and sustained gender parity in access to quality basic education, with a focus on reducing regional disparities.
Improved quality of teaching and learning and Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased use of quality Teaching & Learning Materials (TLMs). ● Improved learning assessment to support learning achievement ● Improved learning environments, including health and sanitation, child protection, and guidance and counselling; ● Improved quality and relevance of basic education curriculum; ● Enhanced instructional practices of basic education teachers and head teachers; ● Improved STEM education, quality, & relevance of teaching/learning.
Sustainable and efficient management, financing and accountability of education service delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improved effectiveness of community-based structures to strengthen their supervisory functions. ● Strengthened financial management, coordination, and accountability in basic education. ● Improved planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems.

Source: Ministry of Education (2018a).

Specific activities and targets for each subobjective are set out in the 2018–21 Education Sector Medium Term Development Plan (Ministry of Education, 2018b). The Ministry of Education is to review progress against this plan in 2022 to develop the 2022–25 plan.

The Ministry of Education has introduced an ambitious and comprehensive set of reforms since the start of 2017. They cover almost all aspects of the education system from early childhood through to tertiary and TVET. The main reforms affecting basic education are:



- **Free SHS:** This reform ensures that senior high school is available free of charge to all students regardless of their BECE performance. It has led to a significant expansion in enrolment, with a 16% increase between 2017/18 and 2019/20, necessitating the introduction of a double track system. The government has embarked on a large-scale building programme to increase the number of places and reduce the need for the double-track system, but is constrained by a lack of resources.
- **New standards-based pre-tertiary curriculum:** New curriculum was rolled out nationwide for Kindergarten to B6 students in September 2019. Plans call for rolling out a new JHS curriculum in 2022 and a new SHS curriculum from 2023/24. The new curriculum represents a significant departure from the previous one: It prioritizes time spent on literacy, numeracy and science; shifts away from a focus on teacher talk-time and rote learning for exams to encourage critical thinking, group work, phonics and experiential learning; introduces nationally comparable assessments of progress at B2, B4, B6, B8 and B10; and is designed to inculcate an understanding and appreciation of Ghanaian culture and values (Ministry of Education, 2019b).
- **National Teachers' Standards (NTS) and teacher licensing:** The NTS set out for the first time what defines a good teacher in Ghana and provides a basis for setting standards for teacher performance and teacher education. The NTS is thus the foundation for teacher licensing, which was introduced for new entrants to the profession in 2018 and is being extended to all teachers since 2020. Licensing is intended to increase teaching's standing as a profession in a way similar to nursing and other professions (Ministry of Education, n.d.a)
- **Teacher education reforms and introduction of the B.Ed. in initial teacher education:** Entry standards for the teaching profession will be raised to a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree, which has replaced the Diploma in Basic Education since 2018. The B.Ed., which is written to adhere to the NTS, is also much more practically focused than the previous diploma, with greater links between the country's 46 Colleges of Education and their more than 2,000 partner schools and with less focus on written exams (Ministry of Education, n.d.b.).
- **Gifted and talented education (GATE):** This is a major area of focus for the current minister for education. Ghana plans to make provision for GATE a part of its strategy to ensure inclusive education. This will involve making sure Ghana's most gifted and talented young people have access to enrichment and accelerated programmes to enable them to fully develop their capabilities, both in dedicated institutions and in mainstream education.
- **Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education:** This area features prominently in the ESP and is also a priority of the current minister, who plans to establish at least 20 model STEM centres.
- **Professionalizing education leadership:** This will be done through the establishment of a dedicated National Education Institute to train head teachers and school leaders and the provision of professional leadership training by universities aligned with Ghana's new National Professional Education Leadership Qualification Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, n.d.c).

To oversee progress across these and other reform areas, the Ministry of Education established the Reform Secretariat in 2018. Located in the ministry, it has a small staff, recruited externally, who have established a system of performance contracts, roadmaps and targets for all the agencies listed in Section 3.1 of this report. The intent is to enhance accountability and focus on delivery of key reform priorities. The Reform Secretariat is financed by the FCDO from 2018 to 2022. There are plans to diversify funding so it can continue beyond 2022.

3.7. LESSONS LEARNT TO DATE FROM IMPLEMENTING GHANA'S EDUCATION REFORM AGENDA

Lessons learnt from implementing education reforms since 2017 include:

- **Ensuring adequate time for teacher preparation when phasing in reforms:** Several of the new reforms require a significant shift in teachers' mindset and understanding if they are to succeed. Evidence from the national roll-out of the new standards-based curriculum in basic schools showed that the time allocated to preparing teachers prior to roll-out was not adequate. By contrast, regular professional development sessions over a number of years in Colleges of Education prior to the B.Ed. roll-out in 2018 helped ensure that tutors implemented the curriculum as intended.
- **Engaging in stakeholder consultation and communications:** The reforms which have been most successful to date were underpinned by a comprehensive stakeholder engagement and communication



strategy to ensure that potential risks and issues were identified before roll-out. Progress faltered in some reform areas (such as Ghana Partnership Schools) due to miscommunication and public opposition.

- **Allocating sufficient resources to make reforms a reality:** Successful reforms have had sufficient resources allocated to enable their effective implementation. Examples include introduction of the free SHS policy, where resources were prioritized through the Ghana Education Trust Fund, and the Secondary Education Improvement Project and teacher education reforms, which were resourced and supported through the T-TEL project.
- **Setting standards and systemic incentives:** Sustained behaviour change is essential if the intended impact of curriculum reforms is to be achieved. It is important to develop clear, binding standards (such as the NTS) and then align systemic incentives and assessment methods to reinforce the desired changes. This has happened with the introduction of teacher licensing and the teacher education reforms.
- **Developing institutional capacity development and support:** Reforms are most effective when they are genuinely led and owned by the relevant agencies. Providing support to enable agencies to identify and address areas where their capacity needs to be strengthened may prove more effective in the long term than contracting external technical assistance to implement reforms.

3.8. POLITICAL ECONOMY

The current minister for education, Dr Yaw Osei Aduetwum, was appointed in the first quarter of 2021, having served as deputy minister from 2017 to 2020. Dr Aduetwum has considerable experience of teaching and education management from his time in the United States, where he founded a chain of charter schools.

His educational priorities include:

- Addressing the significant disparity in basic education performance between the five northern regions, plus the Volta and Oti regions, and the rest of Ghana.
- Introducing flexible learning pathways and opportunities for all, including specific pathways for learners identified as gifted and talented and sufficient time for remedial instruction for those who are learning at below the expected grade level.
- Promoting STEM at all levels of education, including establishment of dedicated STEM centres, and encouraging more learners to study STEM courses at the tertiary level.
- Increasing the proportion of Ghanaians entering tertiary education from 18% to 40%.

The ‘high stakes’ nature of the Ghanaian political system, whereby the ruling party has significant influence over appointments to public institutions, coupled with competitive electoral dynamics, means the electorate is probably the most influential stakeholder group in the country.



Ghana’s highly competitive electoral dynamics have resulted in an entrenchment of universal policies that are extremely ambitious (Blampied et al., 2018, p. 11)

Governments need to demonstrate tangible, ambitious progress over a four-year cycle in order to have a chance of being re-elected. This explains why there has historically been a focus on large, universal and highly visible policy commitments (e.g. the free SHS policy), which are often resource intensive.

Teacher unions are another influential group and can block reforms they oppose, such as the 2020 proposal to decentralize teacher management and employment to district assemblies. Regular and open consultation between government and unions is critical.



Ghana has an active and free media, which plays an important role in amplifying stakeholder views and opinions rather than necessarily having a strong agenda of its own on education. Media outlets' focus is often on isolated management and resourcing issues in Category A SHSes rather than on broader basic education issues.

Religious organizations still have significant authority, particularly over issues perceived as threatening traditional cultural values and social conservatism.

Many civil society organizations have declined in influence in recent years and are now less influential than the major donor agencies which control significant amounts of funds; however, Africa Education Watch has been effective in attracting media attention to resourcing and other basic education issues.

3.9. SUMMARY

This overview of Ghana's education system has identified several key issues:

- An absence of nationally comparable data on learning outcomes prior to BECE.
- A perceived decline in primary and lower secondary NERs.
- Low learning levels identified through EGRA results.
- Inconsistent implementation of the new basic education curriculum.
- A significant proportion of the annual education budget spent on employee compensation.
- Increased pressure on education budgets, including for basic education, to cover the costs of the free SHS policy.
- Disparity in learning outcomes, with weaker performance in public schools, rural areas and deprived districts.

Several strengths can be built on:

- An ambitious national education reform agenda.
- A new basic school curriculum reflecting best practice and backed up with plans for national learning assessments.
- Successful reforms in initial teacher education, which should produce a supply of teachers who understand the curriculum.
- The 2018–30 ESP, which provides clarity and strategic direction for reforms and reporting.
- Significant funds for basic education through the World Bank/GPE GALOP project.
- Evidence of improved learning outcomes through projects such as Learning and STARS.



4. Analytical framework and fieldwork findings

4.1. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK OF CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

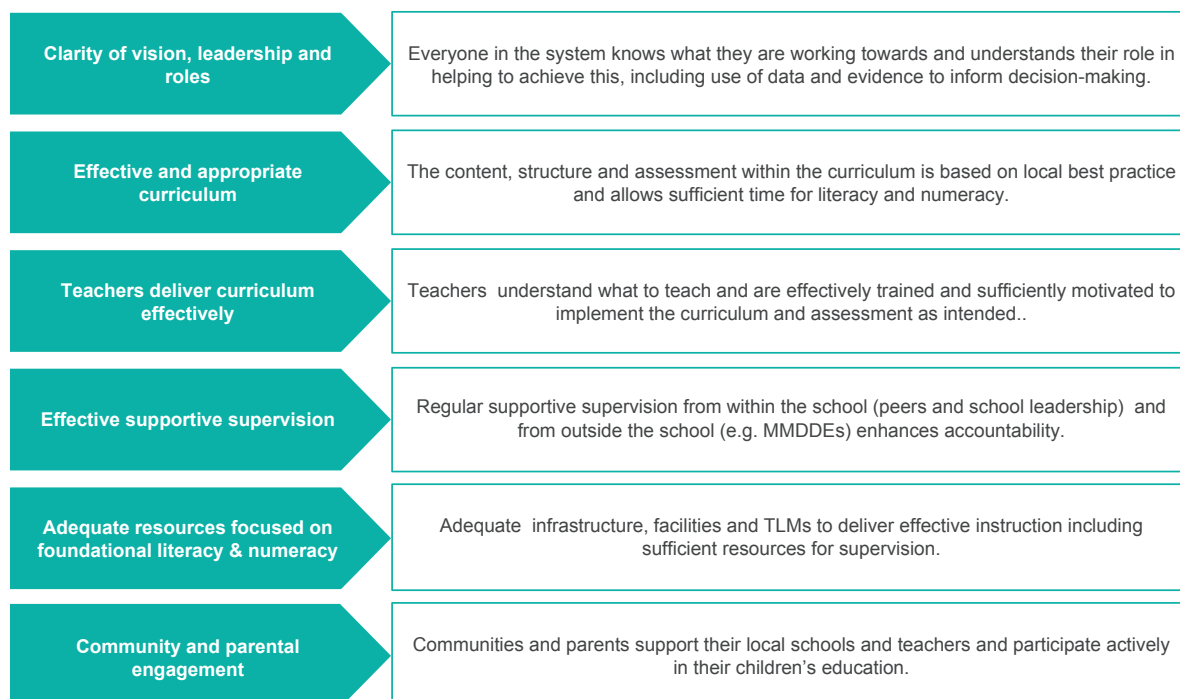
A review of international and Ghanaian literature (see Bashir et al., 2018; Ministry of Education, 2019a; USAID Ghana, 2018; Republic of Ghana, 2016; Evans and Popova, 2016; Pritchett, 2013; and Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel, 2020) and interviews held with key national stakeholders suggest that teaching and classroom practices are critical to improving outcomes, particularly when complemented with systemic support and parental and community engagement. Below are some of the critical success factors relating to teaching and classroom practices.

- Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa suggests that improving instruction in classrooms has the greatest impact on learning. The World Bank summarizes this as 'structured pedagogy', a term encompassing teacher training and ongoing teacher support, resources or materials.
- Learning outcomes are most likely to be enhanced when teachers teach to the students' level. The most effective pedagogic interventions provide detailed and continued support tailored to the teacher's skill level and involve follow-up training and mentorship.
- Other practices proven to significantly improve learning include additional learning time (extending the school day or altering the timetable to enhance contact hours) and remediation (additional instruction, either in school hours or before or after school).
- Effective teachers are more likely to achieve better learning outcomes. This is why teacher training is a key element of most education programming. Effective teachers collaborate with others to improve their teaching, plan their lessons, identify misconceptions in student understanding of content, have strong content knowledge and use questioning techniques.
- Follow-up visits and continuous monitoring of teachers have shown significant impact, particularly where individualized feedback provided to teachers through observation sessions helps them incorporate good pedagogical practices into their teaching. Evidence on the effectiveness of community-based monitoring, while relatively limited, has been found to have some impact on learning outcomes.
- High-performing education systems use diagnostic feedback and regular learning assessments to inform instruction. Teachers are trained to administer and use these assessments to inform their teaching. Often, the assessment results are communicated to parents and the community to ensure accountability.
- Learning does not just take place in the classroom; children's home and community environments are also critical to learning outcomes. Evidence suggests that interventions targeting family and community support can be effective in influencing a child's readiness to learn.
- Successful education support systems tend to be locally responsive to the judgement and concerns of local parents and teachers. Countries need to develop their own evidence base of what works and foster systems which encourage innovation and incorporate pressure to perform (including standards and measurement from 'above' and communities and parents from 'below').

Following the literature review, a framework was developed of potential factors likely to have an impact on basic education learning outcomes in Ghana (**Figure 4**). This framework was used to structure the national interviews and fieldwork questions. Consisting of six interrelated areas, it formed the model of the analytical framework that was then adapted and developed for other Spotlight country reports.



FIGURE 4
Analytical framework of factors likely to influence basic education learning outcomes in Ghana



Source: Authors.

4.2. RESULTS OF DISCUSSIONS WITH NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

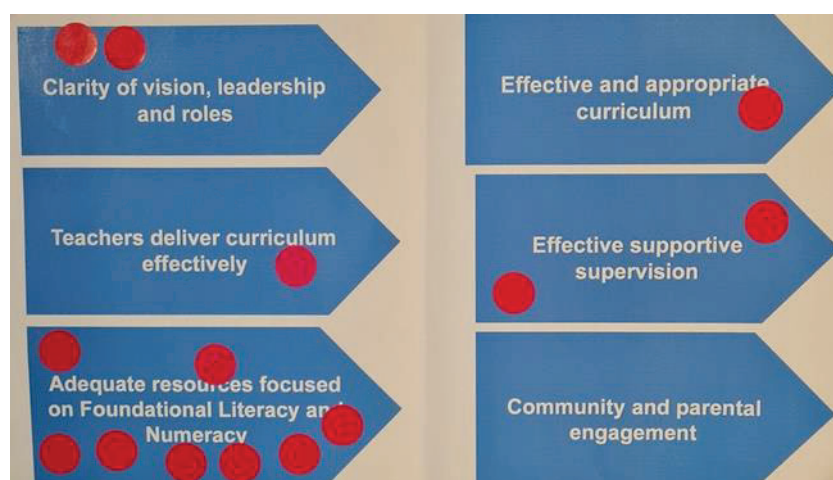
On 1 October 2021, during National Education Week, the research team held a national stakeholder workshop for 17 participants from national education agencies (NaCCA, GTEC, NaSIA, GES and the Ministry of Education), teacher unions (Ghana National Association of Teachers and Coalition of Concerned Teachers), civil society (Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition), universities (University of Cape Coast) and development partners (UNESCO). The workshop's purpose was to validate the analytical framework and seek participants' views on six critical success factors. The final stage of the workshop involved brainstorming solutions to problems related to these factors.

After a brief discussion, participants agreed to endorse the analytical framework without amendments. They then identified the most significant issues (**Figure 5**). Resourcing topped the list (57% of respondents), followed by 'clarity of vision, leadership and roles' (14%) and 'effective supportive supervision' (14%). No participants selected 'community and parental engagement'. Participants explained reasons for their responses, with those selecting 'clarity of roles' noting that there was potential overlap between the mandates of national agencies (such as the GES, NaCCA, NaSIA and NTC). Those who selected 'effective supportive supervision' felt that accountability systems could be strengthened and that not all SISOs observed lessons or focused on teaching and learning when they visited schools.



FIGURE 5

The most significant issues national stakeholders identified in the analytical framework



Source: Responses given at workshop of national stakeholders.

Most participants felt the biggest current issue in Ghana was the lack of resources to implement plans and reforms successfully. They noted difficulties in resourcing schools and Regional, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Education Offices (RMMDEOs) as well as insufficient infrastructure and facilities in many schools. After discussion, they proposed two potential solutions to resourcing issues: (i) prioritizing results-based financing mechanisms and (ii) developing new basic education financing mechanisms, including consideration of partnerships with the private sector.

4.3. FIELDWORK APPROACH AND AREAS VISITED

The fieldwork team visited two regions, four MMDEOs and eight basic schools between 25 and 29 October 2021. The Upper West and Central regions were selected because available EGRA and EGMA data show that they are outliers: Central performs better and Upper West worse. They also represent two geographic extremes of Ghana.

Within each region, the team visited one urban and one rural education office. Within each metropolitan area, municipality or district, the team visited one GALOP and one non-GALOP school. The GALOP school was used as a proxy for a low-performing school, as the 10,000 GALOP schools nationwide show low levels of learning outcomes. It was not possible to use other data as an indicator of primary school performance because the first nationally comparable data on education performance are not collected until the end of JHS. The 'higher performing' (non-GALOP) school selected in each district was recommended by the local education office in the absence of learning outcome data. All schools visited were public basic schools. As the focus for the visit was specifically on FLN, classroom observations and interviews were held with teachers and head teachers responsible for primary classes (Kindergarten to P6). Five of the schools had a stand-alone primary school while three were combined with a JHS.

All regions, MMDEOs and schools had previously been visited in January 2020. This allowed comparison and observation of any changes over the 18 months since the onset of COVID-19.



4.4. OVERALL AND SPECIFIC FINDINGS

In each RMMDEO, the fieldwork team facilitated discussions with staff structured round the six critical success factors identified in the analytical framework. All groups felt the six factors were appropriate and suggested no modifications. At the start of each discussion, session staff were asked to identify the one factor that, in their opinion, was the biggest issue in Ghana today. Responses were received from 67 staff across the 2 REOs and 4 MMDEOs (**Figure 6** and **Table 12**).

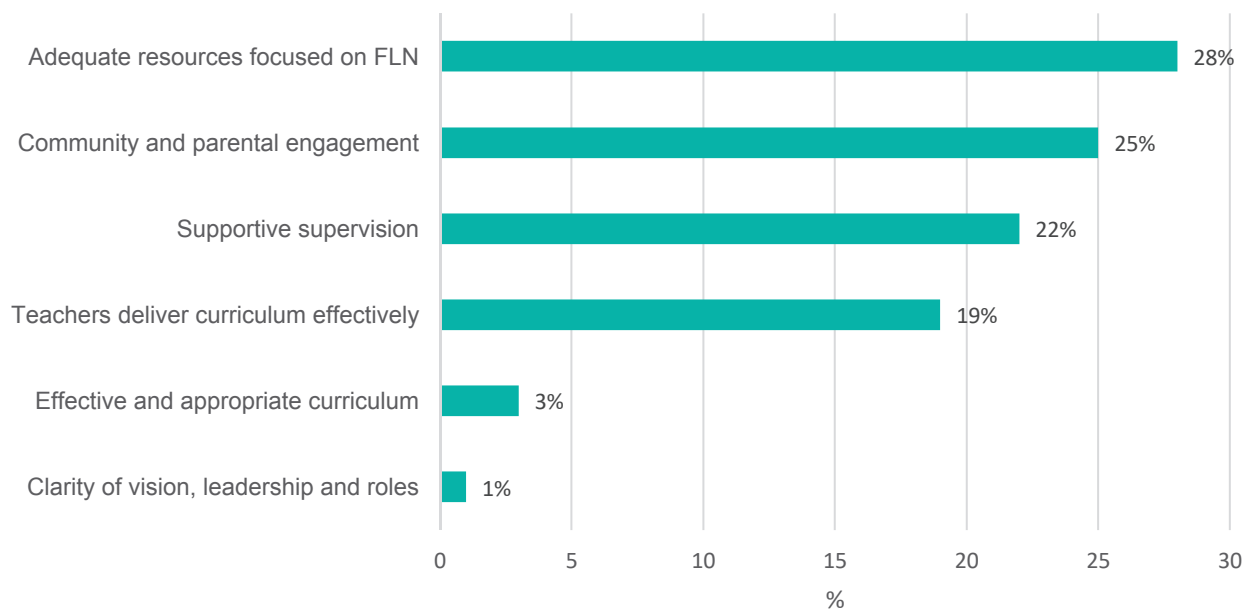
The overall scores hide variations in responses between offices (**Table 12**). One REO and one Municipal Education Office ranked 'community and parental engagement' as the biggest issue, but it was not mentioned by any participants in another REO and Municipal Education Office. The latter two were in large towns, suggesting that views on this issue vary considerably by location.

One REO, one Municipal Education Office and one DEO saw 'adequate resources' as the biggest issue, but it received no votes in another Municipal Education Office, where staff stated that GALOP funds had helped address the resourcing issue.

'Teachers deliver curriculum effectively' and 'supportive supervision' were mentioned as an issue by respondents across all six offices. **Table 12** shows the two main issues selected by each office.

FIGURE 6

Proportion of staff selecting each critical success factor as the biggest issue in Ghana today



Source: Responses given at workshop of regional stakeholders.



TABLE 12
Priority issues identified by RMMDEOs

Education Office	1 st priority issue	2 nd priority issue
REO 1	Community engagement	Adequate resources
REO 2	Adequate resources	Supervision and teaching
Metropolitan Education Office	Adequate resources	Community and parental engagement
Municipal Education Office 1	Teachers deliver curriculum effectively	Supportive supervision
Municipal Education Office 2	Community engagement	Supportive supervision
DEO	Adequate resources	Teachers deliver curriculum effectively

Source: Ministry of Education, 2018a.

There are specific findings related to each critical success factor:

Clarity of vision, leadership and roles: There was general agreement among subnational stakeholders, including head teachers and teachers, that their roles and responsibilities were clear. Some stakeholders mentioned the ESP and ADEOP, as well as the associated school performance improvement plans.

The priority performance measures are pupil enrolment and BECE results. The ADEOP covers both, among its 260 key performance indicators (**Table 13**) broken down into 'public', 'private' and 'total', across all areas of education. However, this quantitative focus is more suited for measuring attendance than quality (e.g. where 'number of teachers' features as a quality indicator). A typical indicator in a district plan will be 'number of teachers trained' without focusing on measuring skills and competencies gained or applied.

TABLE 13
Key performance indicators for pre-tertiary education levels

Education level	Access indicators	Quality indicators	Physical infrastructure indicators	Total indicators
Kindergarten	23	20	7	50
Primary	32	23	6	61
JHS	29	30	6	65
Basic schools (general)	11 (not disaggregated by category in the ADEOP)			11
SHS	50 (not disaggregated by category in the ADEOP)			50
TVET	11 (not disaggregated by category in the ADEOP)			11
Special schools	12 (not disaggregated by category in the ADEOP)			12
Total indicators				260

Source: Ministry of Education, 2018a.

One notable change since 2020 has been the GES's introduction of signed performance contracts for regions, districts and schools. School key performance indicators include BECE results, P4 National Standardized Assessment Test scores, lesson observation, the conducting of weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) sessions and annual School Performance Appraisal Meetings (SPAMs), and teacher attendance.



Effective and appropriate curriculum: National and subnational stakeholders were universally positive about the content and structure of the new basic school curriculum. Most teachers were also positive but a few raised concerns about the structure of the Kindergarten and early-grade curriculum, stating that they were not sure how to teach them using the new standards-based approach.

Every school and subnational office complained about the lack of textbooks. Some teachers said they bought their own copies on the open market but did not have any for pupils. Teachers also said they had not been adequately trained prior to curriculum roll-out.

Teachers deliver curriculum effectively: Curriculum delivery was raised as an issue by several participants in the subnational workshops who believed there had been inadequate training and preparation for teachers on the new curriculum.

Generally, stakeholders said the quality of newly trained teachers from Colleges of Education was good, and the team observed some good lessons delivered by 2019 graduates, but had concerns about graduates from some private universities and those who did distance learning.

One rural district in the Upper West region had significant problems with teacher posting and retention. Teachers did not want to go to the district and those from other parts of Ghana quickly found excuses to be transferred. Posting was also raised as an issue in the Central region, where centralized recruitment meant some schools lacked appropriately trained teachers.

There was inconsistent occurrence of weekly PLC sessions, which seemed to happen regularly in the high-performing schools in the Central region but were totally absent in the Upper West region.

Supportive supervision: Several participants in the subnational workshops raised this issue. SISOs recognized that they had a crucial role to play in supporting teacher and head teacher improvement, but acknowledged that resource constraints meant they could not visit schools, particularly more remote schools, as often as desired. Teachers in basic schools likewise appreciated the support their SISOs provided, with some teachers noting that there had been a change in recent years from a focus on 'inspection' to 'support and guidance', particularly with the introduction of the new pre-tertiary curriculum.

The ADEOP measures supportive supervision but the metric used – number of schools visited – does not relate to tasks or achievements such as lesson observation. Some SISOs visit many schools in a day to save resources and achieve the target.

Staff in one DEO said they had received useful training on supportive supervision some years ago from an NGO. A Municipal Education Office that had participated in USAID Learning stressed the importance of technology but noted that the tablets used had been taken away.

Supervision from the head teacher was a common theme in high-performing schools. In these schools, the head teachers could readily provide evidence that they carried out lesson observation, kept attendance records, read lesson notes, kept submission records and held weekly PLC sessions. In one school, which had achieved 100% BECE pass rates for over a decade, teachers had to submit 'situational reports' to their head teacher on a regular basis. The reports detailed successes, challenges and supporting data to document progress in each class. They formed the basis for the weekly PLC discussions, where issues of common concern could be discussed and resolved.

Adequate resources focused on foundational literacy and numeracy: Resourcing was the most significant issue identified during the national stakeholder workshop and the biggest issue raised by RDMDEOs: Three of the six offices identified it as their current main concern.

The lack of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials for the new curriculum was the most commonly cited area where resources were lacking. No pupils had textbooks in any of the observed lessons.

Delays in release of capitation grants were another frequently mentioned issue, although GALOP schools said they had recently received funds which they had used for teaching and learning materials.

RMMDEOs cited inadequate funds to conduct effective supervision. One DEO stated that supervision had been inadequate since UNICEF support ended a while ago. The same DEO, in a remote rural area, also cited inadequate infrastructure and a lack of trained teachers as resourcing issues.



Community and parental engagement: A lack of community and parental engagement was the second most frequently identified issue in subnational workshops, and was the biggest issue in two of the six offices (in the two most rural areas, one dominated by fishing and the other by farming), although it was not mentioned at the national workshop.

Respondents in rural areas noted that there was some fatigue among parents who had invested in educating their children and then saw that it had not helped them get a job. They therefore thought that engaging their children in farming or fishing was a better option.

The messaging about education being 'free' had also been misrepresented or misunderstood by parents, who in some areas showed limited willingness to buy exercise books and pens or contribute to the parent-teacher association.

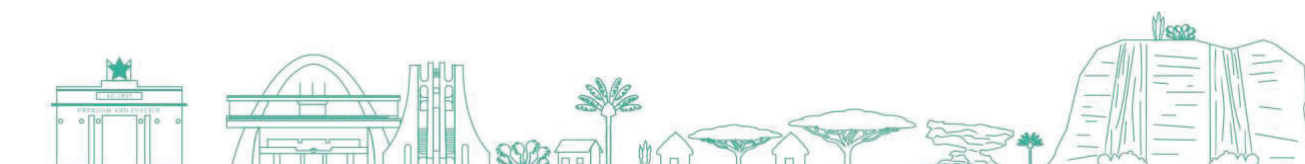
One Municipal Education Office in the Central region had achieved some success in parental engagement through outreach activities, awards and campaigns. The activities included an annual metropolitan-level SPAM where awards were presented to the best-performing school and students based on BECE performance. Parents of these students and representatives of the school management committees and parent-teacher associations of recipient schools attended and were enthusiastic about the public recognition their schools received. All RMMDEOs said more could be done to strengthen school management committees.

4.5. ADDITIONAL FINDINGS OF INTEREST

Motivation can go a long way towards improving performance regardless of infrastructure constraints. A school the team visited in the Upper West region was only a few years old and had limited infrastructure, with Kindergarten 2 lessons taking place outside. Despite the lack of facilities and infrastructure and the low enrolment (there were only seven students in the Kindergarten 2 lesson), the head teacher and teachers believed strongly in the school and its potential for growth and improvement. The staff were all proud of a framed citation they had received from the GES Islamic Education Unit after reaching the quarter-finals in a regional quiz competition and outscoring several more established schools. The school attributed its success to the general commitment of teachers, several of whom had volunteered at the school as 'community teachers' before its absorption by the government; to small classes where individual students received ample attention from each teacher; and to the leadership of the head teacher, who is dedicated to securing resources and support for the school.



Teaching was more aligned with the new curriculum in the Central region than the Upper West but there had been big improvements in some Upper West schools since January 2020. All eight schools were first visited in January 2020. No schools demonstrated a visible decline or poorer lesson delivery than during the previous visits. Central region schools still demonstrated greater adherence to the new curriculum than those in the Upper West but there were some notable improvements in Upper West schools. One had raised funds from the parent-teacher association to paint the classrooms and repair some floors, and piles of furniture had been removed. More importantly, teaching had improved significantly. The two lessons observed made good use of group work and improvised teaching and learning materials, and were well planned, learner-centred and



interactive. Both lessons were delivered by new teachers, who had graduated from Colleges of Education in the Ashanti and Eastern regions in 2019 and who had made a visible difference in the quality of teaching and learning at the school.



There were some concerns about COVID-related learning losses. Basic schools in Ghana were closed for almost 10 months in 2020 and some stakeholders noted that this had led to learning losses, which they had attempted to address through ‘catch-up’ lessons. Still, there were greater concerns about availability of teaching and learning materials for the new curriculum and its roll-out to JHS than about COVID-19.

Some stakeholders in the Central region were concerned about new curriculum adherence declining in their schools. The staff of one Municipal Education Office reported that they had seen a drop-off in adherence to the new curriculum in several schools under their supervision. When the new curriculum was introduced, teachers made much greater use of group work and interactive approaches. Now, however, some were seen as reverting to the methods they had used before 2019. Staff also noted that most schools had stopped holding regular PLC sessions. They attributed the drop-off in adherence to a general lack of supportive supervision; they took responsibility for this, stating that they lacked resources to visit as regularly as they would like. Structured materials and learning packs would help improve PLC sessions’ effectiveness; schools are asked to meet and discuss identified issues, which is difficult for many to do each week without structure and guidance.

Phonics were perceived to be essential in improving literacy. MEOs and DEOs that had participated in USAID Learning and been supported by UNICEF and Sabre Education stressed this point. Stakeholders felt that more should be done to formalize phonics in both the new curriculum and the way teachers are trained in Colleges of Education.

The P4 National Standardized Assessment Test was seen by some as a high-stakes examination. There was generally good awareness that a P4 National Standardized Assessment Test (NSAT) would be carried out in 2021, but some perceived it as a ‘BECE for P4’ and one teacher was encouraging students to ‘learn hard’ so that they passed. Such attitudes seem to stem from a misunderstanding of the NSAT’s purpose, possibly due to involvement by the West African Examinations Council in administering the test and the use of centralized testing



locations. The inclusion of NSAT targets in schools' performance contracts with MMDEOs may be another contributing factor.

4.6. FINDINGS FROM LESSON OBSERVATIONS

The fieldwork team observed 11 lessons at the 8 schools visited, in classes ranging from Kindergarten 2 to P4: 6 language lessons, 4 mathematics lessons and 1 lesson in information and communication technology. The main findings are summarized below.

- The largest class size was 57, the smallest was 7 and the mean was 30.
- 82% of classrooms had adequate space, one classroom was overcrowded and another was held outdoors, under trees, as there was no classroom.
- Few classrooms were decorated with pupils' work.
- 36% of classes had pupils seated in groups of four, an arrangement more common in the Upper West (50%) than Central region (20%). This represented a significant shift since January 2020, when the Upper West figure was 0%.
- 55% of teachers had a copy of a textbook while the remaining 45% used lesson notes. 90% of teachers were able to produce their lesson notes and plan for the lesson.
- In only one class did pupils have textbooks. The class was in the Upper West region and pupils shared textbooks in pairs.
- 36% of lessons involved the whole class, while 45% had small groups (normally of four) working on the same task; 18% of lessons had individuals working on the same task and 18% of lessons had individuals working on different tasks.
- 73% of teachers guided their pupils, with 64% moving around the class to see what individual learners and groups were doing; 45% actively encouraged pupils; 18% provided guidance on the use of pedagogic resources, such as textbooks and materials for drawing circles in mathematics.
- 18% of lessons had no discernible structure; 82% had a clear introduction and presentation; 55% had an effective conclusion and evaluation.
- Most pupils showed interest in 82% of lessons; 90% of lessons were orderly, with no interruptions.

4.7. FACTORS EXPLAINING DIFFERENCES IN SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

School leadership: In the schools displaying the best classroom practice, the head teacher set the overall tone and acted as a role model for teachers by conducting supportive supervision and lesson observation and setting standards for attendance, punctuality and lesson preparation. These head teachers could see evidence that they were overseeing effective weekly PLCs, and their teachers mentioned that the head teachers supported them with resources where possible and encouraged them to develop teaching and learning materials.

Teacher motivation and dedication: The teachers demonstrating the best classroom practices clearly wanted to teach and put in extra effort to prepare and deliver good-quality lessons. They conducted research outside the classroom and had all downloaded or bought supplementary materials to assist them in delivering the new curriculum. They were doing what they were trained to do and being resourceful to overcome constraints and put the needs of the children first. In a few schools, it was clear that newly trained teachers had improved the standards of teaching and learning by introducing pedagogic approaches aligned with the new curriculum.

Community and parental engagement: Sociocultural differences in the communities with the best schools – generally Central region schools were better than those in the Upper West – cannot be overlooked. Such differences may be related to local willingness to embrace new ideas and concepts regarding education, local expectations of education (they are higher in the Central region, which has some of Ghana's oldest schools and universities), parental and community 'peer pressure' and expectations of how a school should operate, access to information (which is more readily available in both print and broadcast media in the Central region) and a common native language (Fante is widely spoken by teachers in the Central region, whereas many Upper West teachers cannot speak Sisaala or Dagaare).



Supervision: In addition to supervision and support from head teachers, the schools displaying the best classroom practices could see evidence of regular supervisory visits from SISOs and other RMMDEO staff.

Case study of a high-performing school: Efutu M/A Basic School, under the Cape Coast Metropolitan Education Office, is a high-performing school, having achieved a 100% BECE pass rate for the past decade. The school has had the same head teacher for 12 years. Average class sizes are 68 in primary and 38 in JHS. The school is located in a relatively small community about 15 kilometres north of Cape Coast. The primary occupation in the area is farming. There is no substantive difference in the resources received by Efutu M/A Basic School and other schools in the MEO's jurisdiction. Interviewees stated the following about the school (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7
Efutu M/A Basic School interviewee comments

'As a leader, you must have a vision and bring all your team members on board that vision because you work through them. If you don't do this, you can't succeed. If they understand your vision then everything goes well. ... Our vision is to be a model school, achieve 100% BECE results and inculcate moral training into the children.'

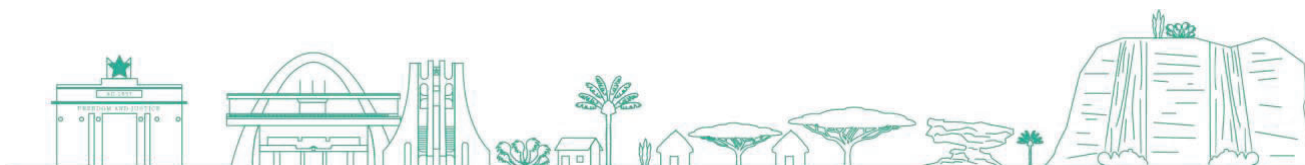
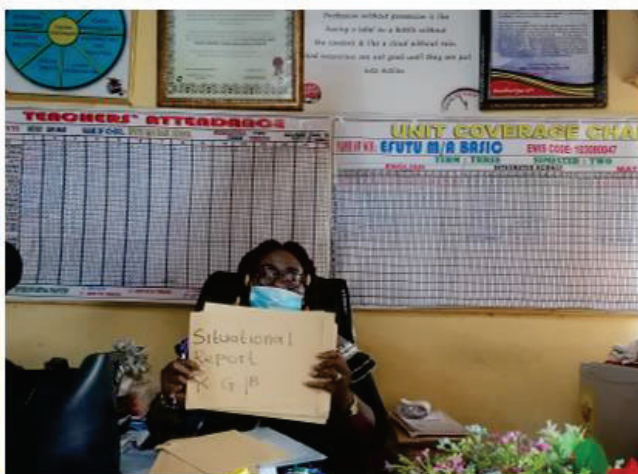
'We have one vision. Our madam says we are a chain. If one chain breaks, it affects all of us. So we help each other.'

'As a head, you can't fold your arms and just wait if there are no resources. I plan ahead and provide what I can to ensure teaching goes on.'

'Our head teacher is God sent. She won't allow you to misuse the instructional time. Even if you have finished teaching, engage the students. She comes around all the time. You can't relax.'

'The parents understand that the school is their asset. We invite them to speech day, open day and PTA. ... [T]he last PTA was in the first week of October and the parents attended in their

'Teachers submit situational reports where they highlight their challenges and then we set targets to achieve them. ... [T]he curriculum leads also consult them and get their difficult topics so that they are discussed at PLC meetings.'



4.8. RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Stakeholders at the national, subnational and school levels were asked to rank the relative importance of the six critical success factors in improving learning outcomes (Table 14). As there are significant links between the factors, the exercise was imperfect, but still useful in identifying stakeholder priorities.

TABLE 14
Ranking of the six critical success factors in improving learning outcomes

Rank	Critical success factor
1 st	Effective teaching
2 nd	Appropriate curriculum
3 rd	Adequate resourcing
4 th	Supportive supervision
5 th	Community and parental engagement
6 th	National vision and leadership

Source: Responses given at workshops of regional stakeholders.

Effective teaching was ranked as the most important factor in improving learning outcomes. This is unsurprising, as the interaction between pupil and teacher as facilitator of learning is at the heart of skills acquisition. The factor ranked second highest was the curriculum – what children are supposed to learn, how they are supposed to learn it and how this learning is assessed. The next highest ranked factor was adequate resourcing to ensure that the curriculum can be taught effectively.

There was a large split in responses for ‘parental engagement’, with some stakeholders saying it was not important while others, particularly at the subnational level, saying it was the most important. Interestingly, ‘vision and leadership’ was considered least important. This may be due to two factors: the artificial need to rank something as ‘least important’ when all factors are actually important; and the fact that, as Ghana benefits from clear national vision and leadership (in the national and subnational workshops only 1% of respondents said lack of vision was the biggest issue in Ghana today), there is a tendency to take it for granted – arguably its lack would be noticed but not its presence.

4.9. POLITICAL ECONOMY, RELATIONSHIPS AND INCENTIVES

Everyone in the education system, from the national level down to individual schools, seems to know what they are working towards and understand their role in helping to achieve it. Ghana’s education reforms are well understood by stakeholders and the focus on quality, a new standards-based pre-tertiary curriculum and teacher licensing are generally known at all levels of the system. However, some of the finer details of these reforms, such as institutional awareness of the NTS, are less understood. The respective roles of NTC, NaCCA, GES and NaSIA are generally well understood and the Reform Secretariat has introduced strong performance management functions for national-level agencies. There is a good level of consistency and coherence between national priorities (as set out in the 2018–30 ESP), district plans (ADEOPs) and school-level plans (School Performance Improvement Plans). In large part, this is due to the GES’s provision of standard planning templates pre-populated with baseline data for specific indicators related to ‘access’ and ‘quality’ (there is an absence of indicators on ‘management efficiency’, which is one of the three ESP priority areas). There is a significant number of indicators, however, with the ADEOP containing 101 ‘key indicator targets’ across all education levels that are further disaggregated by public vs private and gender, making it difficult to identify priority indicators and targets. While the link between activities in annual action plans and ‘access’ indicators is clear, the link between ‘quality’ activities and indicators in action plans is much weaker. In many plans, these activities are reduced to quantitative indicators, such as number of workshops held or notebooks supplied.



Several stakeholders are concerned that the system is too centralized and structures for ensuring local ownership, engagement and problem solving do not always work effectively. REO and DEO staff noted the increased centralization of systems and processes in recent years, particularly in relation to teacher deployment. It was also notable that most subnational staff felt that their role was to collect and verify data, while analysis and use of evidence to inform policymaking was something done at higher levels of the system. This means issues are often not resolved locally but are pushed to higher levels, which can be time consuming and inefficient. Structures do exist to ensure local ownership, engagement and problem solving through school, circuit and district SPAMs and DEOCs, but resourcing and other constraints mean they are not used as regularly or effectively as they could be. The strength of the relationship between district assemblies and DEOs varies considerably. A common belief is that the education system is nepotistic and ‘who you know’ protects teachers and staff against consequences of non-performance.

Subnational perceptions of the minister’s priorities. RMMDEO staff, head teachers and teachers were asked to name the priorities of Minister of Education Dr Yaw Osei Aduwum (**Table 15**). The purpose was to ascertain how well his priorities are understood throughout the education system. The responses show that subnational education staff, head teachers and teachers have a strong understanding of his priorities, three of the four of which appear on the list. GATE was the only priority missing.

TABLE 15
Subnational stakeholders’ perceptions of the minister’s priorities

Rank	Perceived priorities of the current minister
1 st	Expanding STEM education
2 nd	Improving quality and access
3 rd	Bridging the gap between the north and south of Ghana in education outcomes
4 th	Expanding access to tertiary education, particularly in science
5 th	Running institutions like corporate entities
6 th	Robotics

Source: Responses given at workshops of regional stakeholders.

4.10. CONSISTENCY AND COHERENCE OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Areas of policy coherence and reinforcement

- The vision and leadership provided by the Ministry of Education and GES are set out in the ESP. The Reform Secretariat plays an important role in ensuring consistency across reform priorities through roadmaps.
- The development of the NTS provides coherence across a range of related policy areas, including teacher licensing, continuing professional development, promotion and progression, recruitment and teacher education.
- The standards-based pre-tertiary curriculum was developed in close consultation with the stakeholders who wrote the National Teacher Education Curriculum Framework, thus ensuring strong links across in-service and pre-service teacher training.
- NaSIA has developed a new supportive supervision and inspection system aligned with the NTS.
- The new teacher education B.Ed. has developed age-specific specialisms (early grade, upper primary and JHS), which will increase the supply of specialist early grade teachers, although uptake of this specialism remains relatively low. The teaching of synthetic phonics should, however, be more formalized within both College of Education curricula and the new pre-tertiary curriculum.



Areas that need attention to ensure coherence and avoid conflicting policies

- The performance contract system appears to be having an impact in driving behaviour. Care should be taken, however, that it does not inadvertently compromise the reforms' intent. For example, including National Standardized Assessment Test targets in school performance contracts is likely to encourage schools and teachers to view P4 and other such tests as high-stakes examinations.
- The introduction of the free education policy (made possible through more resources) appears to have had a detrimental impact on parental and community participation in basic education. Some schools report that parents are now less willing to engage with their children's education or support the school. This could be addressed through a communication strategy.
- There are issues over the language of instruction for early years. While the policy is for instruction to take place in one of Ghana's 11 official languages until the end of P3, efforts have also been made to introduce the use of phonics and English in the early grades; this has had some positive impact. The use of 11 official languages also remains problematic as it excludes the significant number of Ghanaians who are not native speakers of these languages. It also creates confusion in urban areas, where there can be a wide mix of home languages in any single class.
- Adequate resourcing, textbooks and structured support to school PLCs will help ensure that the curriculum is implemented as planned.



5. Three positive case studies

5.1. TEACHING AT THE RIGHT LEVEL

Strengthening Accountability to Reach all Students was a programme implemented by Innovations for Poverty Action, UNICEF and the GES to gather data and evidence on improvements in student achievement through enhancing head teachers' and circuit supervisors' roles in monitoring, providing feedback, motivating and supporting teachers. STARS took place in 20 districts, with 70 schools receiving training in targeted instruction (students were assessed and then taught in class groups according to learning level rather than age), 70 schools receiving training in targeted instruction and management training, and 70 schools acting as a control group.

According to preliminary results, both targeted instruction and targeted instruction plus management training increased students' combined mathematics and English test scores by 0.11 standard deviations from the mean. The programme was effective in increasing mathematics and English test scores, leading to 0.7 additional years of learning per US\$100 spent for the targeted instruction group and 0.4 additional years of learning per US\$100 spent for the targeted instruction plus management training group.

Following this evidence of impact, targeted instruction was incorporated within GALOP and is now being implemented in 10,000 basic schools nationwide. Staff at one district visited during fieldwork spoke positively about STARS but expressed some concern that GALOP had started disbursing funds but had not yet shared the student assessment instrument to allow students to be placed in class groups according to their learning level.

5.2. PROMOTING THE USE OF MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION

The USAID-funded Learning early grade reading programme worked in 100 districts across more than 7,200 schools and promoted the use of mother tongue in the 11 official Ghanaian languages. The programme also improved overall accountability by using a 'fidelity of implementation' system that monitored lessons using tablets and real-time data to improve teaching and learning in schools. Fieldwork feedback from MMDEOs and schools that participated in Learning was positive; they saw real value in the materials and approach Learning promoted. However, despite this strong institutional-level impact, Learning was weaker when it came to effective national policy engagement.

The 2019 endline survey found that, at the end of P2, Learning programme pupils read 8.6 words per minute more and scored 10 percentage points higher in reading comprehension in the Ghanaian language of instruction than their peers in the control group. The programme's impact on reading skills, regardless of language, is larger than in 12 comparable international programmes included in the World Bank systematic review measuring two-year impact with year P1 and P2 pupils.

Teacher time spent on reading instruction increased significantly, with P2 pupils receiving a full hour more reading instruction than control pupils. While phonics methods were widely used in both programme and control groups, the programme led to increased frequency in use of phonics methods, as almost 100 percent of programme teachers used phonics methods daily while the control group was more likely to use them weekly or less frequently.

Programme pupils were substantially more likely to read and to enjoy reading as a result of the programme, increasing the chances that a P1 or P2 pupil read in the previous day by 50% or 90%, respectively, and increasing the likelihood that they would enjoy reading by 100% or 50%.

5.3. PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION REFORMS

There is emerging evidence that Ghana's ambitious and comprehensive pre-service teacher education reforms are having a significant positive impact on the quality of beginning teachers. Transforming Teacher Education and Learning was a six-year (2015–20) FCDO-funded programme supporting the Ministry of Education, NTC and



GTEC in developing the National Teacher Education Curriculum Framework and the NTS, and later supporting 46 Colleges of Education and 5 universities in introducing the B.Ed. for initial teacher education. The B.Ed. replaced the Diploma in Basic Education for all 16,000 annual entrants to Colleges of Education from 2018 on, raising the minimum qualification required to become a teacher and introducing learner-centred pedagogy.

There is clear evidence that these teacher education reforms have improved the quality of newly qualified teachers entering basic school classrooms, as shown by comparing 2019 national survey data with the 2015 baseline (**Figure 8**). The figures are likely to improve even further from 2022/23 when the first batch of B.Ed. graduate teachers enter basic school classrooms.

FIGURE 8
Ranking of the six critical success factors in improving learning outcomes



Note: PTPDM = Pre-Tertiary Teacher Professional Development and Management policy.
 Source: Cambridge Education, 2020, p.20



6. Recommendations

Introduce structured materials and support for Professional Learning Community sessions focusing on phonics and teaching at the right level.

The GES introduced weekly PLC sessions in all basic schools in September 2019. They have great potential to improve teaching and learning and enhance teachers' understanding of the new curriculum. Fieldwork showed that regular PLC sessions were a key differentiating factor in the best-performing schools. Many schools, however, do not hold weekly PLC sessions. One reason is the absence of structured materials and session guides. Instead, schools are asked to arrange their own sessions based on identified issues. The GES should work with NTC and NaCCA to produce a set of weekly PLC session support materials, along with a handbook for each semester covering key areas of concern, and ensure that SISOs support these sessions.

Invest in ensuring that textbooks and other teaching and learning materials reach basic school classrooms.

Resourcing was the most significant issue identified during the national stakeholder workshop and the absence of textbooks for the new curriculum was mentioned as a significant constraint in all schools visited. Only in one lesson observed by the fieldwork team did pupils have textbooks. Printing and distributing of NaCCA-approved textbooks for all subjects and classes covered by the 2019 curriculum is an urgent priority. Efforts should also be made to provide teachers with guidance on creating low-cost and no-cost teaching and learning materials. This could be a possible focus of some PLC sessions.

Provide structured, on-the-job education leadership training for all basic schools.

Leadership is a key differentiating factor between the most and least successful schools. The Ministry of Education and GES should work with the new National Education Institute, once established, to provide structured, on-the-job leadership training for all basic schools, based on Ghana's education leadership framework. This training should be qualification bearing and mandatory for all leaders. Efforts should also be made to reform the way school leaders are recruited, selected and remunerated. The best-performing head teachers should mentor others in their area.

Explore new resourcing mechanisms for basic education, including results-based financing.

Resourcing was the most significant issue identified during the national stakeholder workshop and was one of the top two identified at the subnational level. While there is no simple solution to a lack of basic education resourcing, a combination of approaches can be taken to address the current situation. These should include (i) considering establishing a dedicated basic education funding mechanism similar to the Ghana Education Trust, (ii) exploring mechanisms that incorporate a results-based payment element (not examination results but process indicators) to encourage focus on efficiency and outputs rather than inputs, and (iii) encouraging greater collaboration with district assemblies and enhanced community contributions.

Assist RMMDEOs to prioritize objectives and oversee their achievement, providing supportive supervision to this end.

As Annual District Education Operational Plans contain a significant number of indicators and targets, it is often difficult to prioritize actions. As a result, much attention is paid to BECE results and B9 (formerly JHS 3), with other levels of the system often overlooked. RMMDEOs should be trained how to run participatory prioritization sessions and encouraged to develop local plans containing a small number of key indicators linked to their priorities. They should be supported in actively supervising and solving problems, with school-level and RMMDEO-level data collected and analysed so as to track progress monthly. Performance contracts could help ensure the data is collected and then used.

Consider ways of decentralizing decision making and enhancing local accountability.

The GES should conduct a review to identify areas where decision-making could effectively be decentralized to the regional, district or school level. At the school level, consideration should be given to ways of enhancing the engagement of community leaders, parents and local civil society in basic schools' operation. The review should look at how to use existing structures, such as ADEOCs, school management committees and parent-teacher associations, to achieve these aims. The minister's Communities of Excellence programme, encouraging grade-level reading standards in local communities, could be an effective means of promoting local collaboration.



Abbreviations

ADEOP	Annual District Education Operational Plan
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
CTVET	Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
DEO	District Education Office
DEOC	District Education Oversight Committee
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (United Kingdom)
FLN	Foundational literacy and numeracy
GALOP	Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project
GATE	Gifted and talented education
GES	Ghana Education Service
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GTEC	Ghana Tertiary Education Commission
IPA	Innovations for Poverty Action
JHS	Junior high school
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MMDEO	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Education Offices
NaCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NaSIA	National Schools Inspectorate Authority
NEA	National Education Assessment
NER	Net enrolment rate
NSAT	National Standardized Assessment Test
NTC	National Teaching Council
NTS	National Teachers' Standards
PLC	Professional Learning Community
REO	Regional Education Office
RMMDEO	Regional, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Education Offices
SHS	Senior High School
SHTS	Senior High Technical School
SISO	School Improvement Support Officer
SPAM	School Performance Appraisal Meeting
STARS	Strengthening Teacher Accountability to Reach all Students
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
T-SHEL	Transforming Senior High School Education, Teaching and Learning
T-TEL	Transforming Teaching, Education and Learning
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UBE	Universal basic education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
USAID	United States Agency for International Development



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ED/GEMR/MRT/2022/SL/CR/1

