



**Consortium for Research on
Educational Access,
Transitions and Equity**

Educational Access in Ghana

Country Research Summary

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November 2010



**University of Sussex
Centre for International Education**



**UCC, Ghana
The University of Cape Coast, Ghana**



Consortium for Research on
Educational Access, Transitions & Equity

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The Consortium for Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) is a Research Programme Consortium supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). Its purpose is to undertake research designed to improve access to basic education in developing countries. It seeks to achieve this through generating new knowledge and encouraging its application through effective communication and dissemination to national and international development agencies, national governments, education and development professionals, non-government organisations and other interested stakeholders.

Access to basic education lies at the heart of development. Lack of educational access, and securely acquired knowledge and skill, is both a part of the definition of poverty, and a means for its diminution. Sustained access to meaningful learning that has value is critical to long term improvements in productivity, the reduction of inter-generational cycles of poverty, demographic transition, preventive health care, the empowerment of women, and reductions in inequality.

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CREATE is developing its research collaboratively with partners in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The lead partner of CREATE is the Centre for International Education at the University of Sussex. The partners are:

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Foreword

This Country Research Summary (CRS) provides an overview of recent research findings from CREATE research in Ghana. Its scope is selective and needs to be considered alongside the portfolio of research outputs CREATE has published which cover other aspects of the programme of research. This CRS brings up to date a process that we began in 2007 in the inception phase of CREATE with the publication of a series of Country Analytic Reviews and the initiation of the Pathways to Access Research Monographs (PTA) that now include over 60 contributions. The Ghana Country Analytic Review (Akyeampong et al., 2007) collated recent research, developed a baseline analysis of access to education, located pressing policy issues, generated conceptual tools, and identified key research gaps. The PTAs embrace review studies, analysis of large scale secondary data sets, empirical findings from household and school level data, and evidenced based thematic and conceptual discourses. Interim publications including earlier country level policy briefs have maintained the momentum of the impact of the CREATE research on policy and practice and made research results available in a timely way.

The CREATE team in Ghana, along with CREATE research students and associates have published a collection of monographs and policy briefs along with a portfolio of journal articles and other research outputs with particular relevance to Ghana. These are catalogued on the CREATE website (www.create-rpc.org). These extended the knowledge base we constructed in 2006/7 and contributed to building more understanding of the causes, consequences and capacity to reduce educational exclusion. They complement the generic outputs from CREATE which extend the range of insights into the opportunities that exist to enhance access to basic education consistent with the aspirations of national governments and internationally agreed goals.

CREATE seeks to inform policy dialogue at national level and international level. It depends on its networks of researchers and research associates, and its close relationships with national and local governments and with development agencies, to project its insights and ideas into evidenced based discussions. This CRS, and the associated portfolio of research products, provide a toolkit of ideas and insights to this end.

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Consortium for Research on
Education, Access, Transitions & Equity

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EDUCATIONAL ACCESS IN GHANA

COUNTRY RESEARCH SUMMARY

NOVEMBER 2010

This research summary describes and explains patterns of access to schooling in Ghana. It draws on empirical data from the Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) as well as existing literature and statistical analyses. It provides indicators of key dimensions of access and exclusion as well as insights into the characteristics of those denied access. The research summary introduces key findings from CREATE which will be elaborated further in the forthcoming Ghana Synthetic Report. It is hoped the findings and recommendations will be useful to policy makers and academics working in this field. More detail and full reference lists are available in the CREATE Ghana products cited.

Caine Rolleston, Kwame Akyeampong, Joseph Gartey Ampiah, and Keith Lewin

1. Access to Basic Education: Achievements and Prospects

Basic education lays the foundation for further human development and is associated with well-established social and economic benefits, including reduced family size and improved health and welfare. Ghana is one of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa where universal access to primary education may be achieved by 2015. Growth in enrolments since the early 1990s has been strong, enabled by robust economic growth, increased government revenues, budgetary reallocation in favour of basic schooling, donor support and a raft of policies aimed at increasing both supply and demand. In particular, the FCUBE (Free Compulsory Basic Education) programme and Capitation Grant Scheme (CGS) have been instrumental in achieving higher enrolment rates (Akyeampong, 2009).

Nonetheless, considerable challenges lie ahead. Ghana's spending on education as a proportion of GDP is already comparatively high. Quality is an increasing concern and evidence suggests that even middle poor households are opting for private sector schooling when it is affordable (see Box 3), despite relatively high costs. Serious issues of inequity surround progression at and beyond basic education and the evidence suggest that there has been little improvement in the relative position of poor and marginalised groups in terms of educational access.

2. CREATE Research in Ghana

In order to examine issues of access and exclusion, CREATE conducted a longitudinal survey of 36 schools and 1,049 households in two deprived districts in Ghana – the Community and Schools Survey (ComSS), alongside qualitative studies of the experiences of drop-outs and never-enrollers. A number of studies were conducted using secondary data, addressing issues of schooling, health and nutrition, costs and finance, national trends in exclusion and equity; and the character and development of private schooling. Data from national-level surveys (GLSS, CWIQ), administrative sources (EMIS), the ComSS study and CREATE qualitative studies are the principal sources of evidence employed in this research summary.

3. Policy and educational contexts in Ghana

Ghana has in the past introduced several education policies to improve access and quality in the provision of basic education, the notable post-independence ones being the 1987 education reforms; the free compulsory universal basic education initiative (FCUBE); and lately capitation grants and the school feeding programme. Each of these policies improved the supply of schooling and made it more accessible to the poor. In general the policies to improve access evolved from a focus on increasing

Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE)

supply of educational inputs to expansion within the limits of affordable costs. Each policy had implications for the rate of education expansion – for example, the quality-imperative framed expansion strategies with the supply of trained teachers as the defining yardstick. Meeting the cost of expansion was a central issue in the second wave of policies and led to the setting of a much longer timeframe for achieving UPE. The introduction of capitation grants in 2005 linked to fee-free provision re-emphasised the opportunity to participate for all households, irrespective of socio-economic background. All the indications are that the introduction of capitation increased demand, although it also may have produced negative consequences on quality and further fuelled interest in private schooling. One characteristic of education policies to improve access is that they did not specifically target poor households. So, for example, capitation grants are enjoyed by all irrespective of location and wealth. What is widely acknowledged in the Ghanaian literature is that the lack of access is largely concentrated among poor rural communities, as well as in densely populated urban areas. There are also population groups for whom sending a child to school is a difficult choice because of the consequences for economic survival. Previous education policies to improve access did not do enough to provide the kind of non-pecuniary incentives that would make public basic education increasingly attractive to poor and disadvantaged groups; nor did they resolve the issues that still surround the indirect costs to households.

CREATE studies have produced insights into the structure and composition of new policies that target poor and marginalised groups. As the evidence in this research summary indicates, quality of provision (school management, improvements in teaching and learning), and the extent of meaningful access (regular attendance, improved learning achievement etc) are key areas requiring urgent policy attention if Ghana is to achieve EFA by 2015, and sustain it beyond this date.

4. Overview of patterns and trends in educational access in Ghana

Notable improvements in initial access to basic education took place in Ghana during the 1990s, and by the end of the millennium, only around one in ten children had never been to school. The large gap between the three northern regions and the rest of the country in terms of initial access narrowed substantially over the same period, as did the gender gap, in line with a key policy objective. The proportion of children who had ever been to school improved, even after controlling for important changes in socio-economic and demographic indicators, suggesting an effect of successful expansion in supply of schooling. Equally, household economic welfare levels improved over the period, although less so for the very poor. Increased educational access and declining absolute poverty in Ghana do not necessarily suggest an improving position in terms of equity and equality of opportunity, however. For the higher and more costly stages of education, there remained very large advantages afforded to males, urban residents, those in favourable socio-economic groups and in favourable regions, and most particularly those in higher welfare households. Moreover, despite policies to eliminate fees, the costs of education remained a serious barrier to access in Ghana even at the most basic level for disadvantaged groups.

Unlike initial enrolment rates, rates of drop-out and completion do not appear to have improved. Over-age enrolment may even have worsened in recent years. The factors contributing to educational exclusion are complex and overlapping so that children suffering multiple disadvantages may be considered most at risk. To illustrate, CREATE studies have identified strong linkages between low parental literacy, poor health and nutrition, over-age enrolment, poverty, rural habitation and poor attendance and poor achievement. While 'catch-all' policy initiatives such as FCUBE and CGS have achieved notable success, it may be argued that future interventions will need to attend more to the complexity of exclusion, through more effective targeting and interventions linked to multiple causes, if they are to improve the access chances of the most marginalised.

5. The CREATE zones of exclusion

A more in depth consideration of the application of the CREATE model in Ghana is available in the Ghana Country Analytic Report (CAR) (Akyeampong et al., 2007) and full results of modelling of the zones of exclusion using Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) data are available in Rolleston (2009).

5.1 Zone 1: Initial enrolment and children out of school

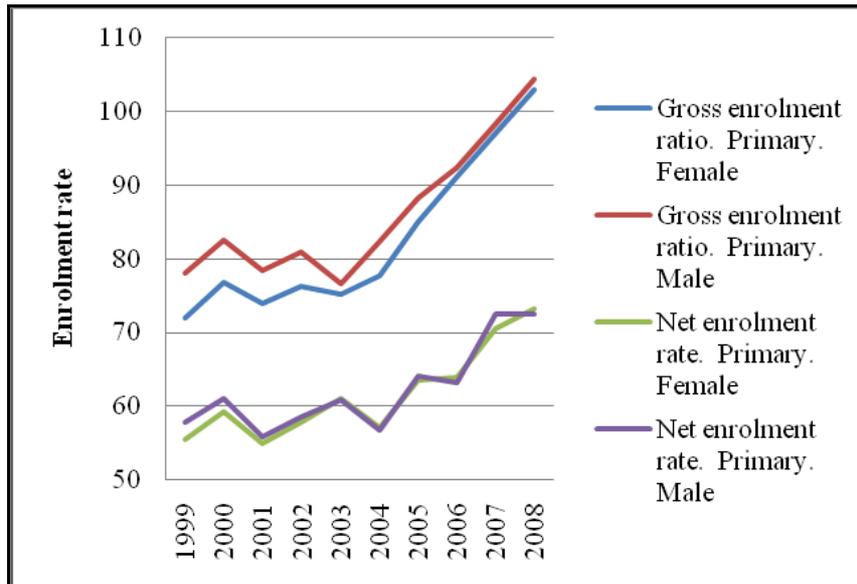
CREATE exclusion zone 1 refers to those children who never enrol in basic school. According to GLSS data, children's ever-attendance at school across Ghana increased by 10% from 77% to 87% between 1991 and 1999 in the 5 to 17 age group, remaining at a similar level in 2006. Administrative data from the Ghana Education Management Information System (EMIS) show a net enrolment rate (NER) at primary level of 88.5% and at junior high school of 47.8% in 2008/9. Substantial regional disparities are apparent, with much lower rates of ever-attendance being observed in the three northern regions (Northern, Upper East and Upper West). Exclusion from ever attending school over the period since 1991 in GLSS data ranged from as high as two thirds of children in the Upper East region in 1991/2 to only 3% of children in the Central region by 2005/6, but fell in the northern regions to between 33% and 42% by 2005/6, which nevertheless remains high. In the other regions the figure ranged from 3 to 15%.

It is important to view these estimates of proportions of children attending school in the light of estimates of population size and of population growth. Population growth in the 5-17 age-group has been comparatively rapid, with the absolute size of the group having grown by more than 50% since 1991. Consequently, static proportions of children gaining access to schooling represent large increases in absolute numbers. Figure 1 illustrates recent trends in primary enrolment ratios using EMIS which show static enrolment ratios between 1999 and 2005 (consistent with GLSS) followed by sizeable growth thereafter, coincident with the introduction in 2005 of the CGS.

School ever-attendance in 2005/6 (GLSS 5) was found to be highest in the 7-14 age range, with lower rates at younger ages due to late enrolment and at higher ages due to lack of progression beyond JHS and to drop-out, as shown in Figure 2. The patterns are shown by poverty status and indicate that the 'extremely poor' have lower attendance at school than other groups, especially at younger ages (see also Akyeampong, 2009).

Results of modelling the determinants of ever attending school show a declining relationship with sex, with boys being more likely to have ever attended school in the 1990s but an almost negligible difference at the national level by 2006. The historic differences in Gross Enrolment Rates are not reflected in Net Enrolment Rates (Figure 1) indicating that they are most likely to have arisen from greater persistence in school of over age boys. However, sex differences remained important in the north. In relation to the deprived district of Savelugu-Nanton, the district assembly explains some of the reasons for a continuing gender gap, especially at secondary level:

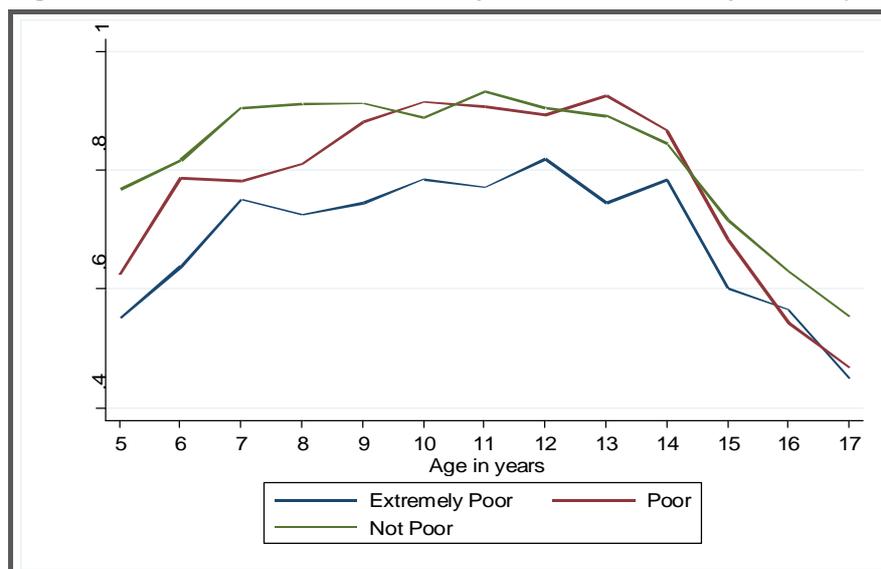
"There exists a gender parity gap. The situation emanates from poor retention of the girl child in school especially at the JHS level. The possible reason for this situation could be that at the JHS level, the girl child begins performing multiple domestic roles such as fetching water, cooking, washing sweeping and cleaning just to mention a few in the family and thus has little time for academic work. It appears impossible to prevent the girl child from performing the roles. Thus, the action being pursued is to support the girl child perform domestic roles without compromising with her education" (Savelugu-Nanton District Assembly, 2010).

Figure 1: Enrolment ratios in primary education: Ghana 1999-2008

Source: EMIS data

The relationship of a child to the household head was found to exert an important negative effect on ever-enrolment. These effects were particularly large for servants and fostered children (see Box 1), who were considerably less likely to have ever enrolled. The education and/or occupational class of a child's parents were found to exert significant effects. Household welfare (consumption) levels were also positively associated with a child ever having attended school, with children in higher welfare households being more likely to have attended. Regional effects were found to be significant and sizeable. The most positive regional effect overall was for the Brong Ahafo region whose children were up to 17% more likely, other things being equal, to have ever enrolled than in the region with the lowest ever-attendance (Upper East). There appears to have been a general and substantial decrease in the size of regional effects over time, however, probably owing to increased provision in the north, and to migration.

There is a significant effect on ever-attendance of urban as opposed to rural location at the national level. There is also a positive effect associated with later time periods since 1991, reflecting policy interventions to increase supply and increased demand for education. Table 1 shows enrolment indicators in detail for the two CREATE case-study districts taken from EMIS and from which inferences about ever-enrolment may be made. Patterns between the two deprived districts are somewhat different. The NARs (net admission ratios) indicate the proportion of children of the appropriate age who were enrolled in Primary 1 or JHS 1. In Savelugu-Nanton (northern Ghana) around three quarters of children of age were admitted to Primary 1 compared to just over two-thirds in Mfantseman (southern Ghana). A gender gap of 8% is observed in the north while there is parity in the south. The GAR (gross admission ratio) at primary denotes the quotient of all children enrolled in the first grade and the of-age (6-11) population. This is notably higher in the south indicating that in the first grade, a greater proportion of children were enrolled over-age. The primary NER indicates the proportion of children of primary age who were enrolled at primary level. This shows more than 90% timely enrolment in the south and less than 80% in the north; again with a sizeable sex difference in the north only. The difference between NER and NAR patterns between north and south is largely due to the very dramatic recent increases in enrolment in the north, since the NER takes account of pupils who had enrolled up to six or so years before 2009. Indeed, EMIS data show that the primary NAR has increased threefold since 2004 from 25% to 75% in Savelugu-Nanton. Figure 2 shows that the poorest remain disadvantaged and enrol at higher ages further compounding their disadvantages.

Figure 2: School Attendance Rates by Household Poverty Status (GLSS 5)


Source: Computed from GLSS 5

At JHS level, around two-thirds of pupils of-age were admitted into JHS 1 in the south compared to less than one fifth in the north. Across the JHS phase, around two-thirds of pupils of appropriate age were enrolled in the south and around a quarter in the north. In the south, it appears that a significant number of pupils at JHS level were admitted and enrolled overage, as the NER/GER and NAR/GAR differentials amount to more than 25%. In the case of the NER/GER difference, this shows that 29% of pupils were overage at JHS level. In the north, however, the NER/GER and NAR/GAR differentials are even larger, at around 50%. While indicators for the north at JHS have also been improving since 2004, the trend for increased participation is much less dramatic than at primary level and current figures reflect historically low enrolment and high proportions of over-age enrolment in the district. Table 1 shows enrolment rates in the two CREATE case study areas by level and illustrates north south differences. One important reason for lower rates in the north is related to fostering (Box 1)

Table 1: Basic Education Enrolment Indicators for Savelugu-Nanton District 2008/9

Level	Indicator	Total	Boys	Girls
Savelugu Nanton District (north)				
Primary	GER	83.2%	92.1%	73.8%
	NER	78.1%	85.7%	69.9%
	GAR	88.5%	96.5%	80.5%
	NAR	74.3%	81.8%	66.8%
Lower Secondary	GER	72.6%	80.7%	61.4%
	NER	27.8%	29.2%	25.8%
	GAR	77.2%	85.7%	66.1%
	NAR	18.8%	20.4%	16.7%
Mfanteman District (south)				
Primary	GER	96.8%	98.4%	95.2%
	NER	92.5%	92.9%	92.1%
	GAR	99.5%	100.1%	98.9%
	NAR	69.0%	69.0%	69.0%
Lower Secondary	GER	98.4%	97.7%	91.8%
	NER	69.8%	70.0%	69.6%
	GAR	95.7%	97.6%	93.7%
	NAR	67.6%	66.9%	68.4%

Source: EMIS data 2008/9

Box 1: Educational Access among Fostered Children in Savelugu-Nanton

In interviews conducted by CREATE, caregivers of fostered children made it clear that meeting educational costs was frequently a struggle. Many explained that they faced difficult choices: *"We face a lot of problems. Sometimes we sell the little food we have to buy the children's school needs and when we are faced with starvation we sell the few sheep and goats that we rear and that's how we continue to exist"* (Interview with caregiver). Moreover, where a family is unable to send all children to school, it may be foster children who are excluded. Education professionals tended to see the implications of fosterage for education in a negative light: *"Sometimes a child comes to school but they are slipping and the school asks why are you coming in late and the child says 'oh I am not staying with my parents I am staying with my auntie or this and that and early in the morning before I come to school I have to do this, do this, do this or have to work late at night that's why I am always sleeping in school. So the school will know that the child is not actually with the parents but they don't have records for that'"* (Interview with education professional). Caregivers, however, more often emphasised the benefits of fostering, including in terms of education: *"there are advantages for fostering these children for us and for the children. We get the opportunity to send them to school so they can learn. Sometimes with their biological parents they are not able to go to school"* (Interview with caregiver). Both sets of interviewees, nonetheless, agreed that some foster parents treat foster children unequally when compared to biological children. However, some foster parents cited a lack of support from biological parents as a major barrier in respect of providing for a foster child's education. One education professional explained the approach taken in his own case: *"When...she [his sister] came to take the child I told her, 'no, I want the girl to go to school. You don't live here, you live somewhere and if I give the girl to you she will become a liability'. But we are looking at the children as assets so that she will come and work for you, so if you want financial help, come to me and I will help you but this girl I want her to go to school and I want to keep her there."* The example illustrates the point that to some extent at least, the disadvantage suffered by fostered children may be alleviated through co-operation between foster and biological parents. Interview findings suggest that while some cases of fosterage are educationally beneficial to the fostered child, in many, kinship obligations are the main reason for the foster arrangement and these may result in a considerable burden on already poor families in respect of additional educational expenses.

Source: Rolleston (2010)

5.2: Zones 2 and 5: Dropping out of primary and junior high school (JHS)

CREATE exclusion zone 2 comprises primary school drop-outs and zone 5 JHS drop-outs. Between 1991 and 2006 the proportion of children aged 5-17 who were currently attending school at the time of the GLSS visits rose from 71 to 81% with rates being substantially lower in the northern regions. As a percentage of all children in the age range, drop-out affected between 1 and 10% of the age group according to region with no clear trend over the time period. The national figure remained constant over the period at around 6%. Although current attendance figures are lower for the northern regions, because ever-attendance is lower in these regions they represent similar proportions of those who had ever been to school so that in the north retention is not dissimilar from the national picture.

The Ghana Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) (2003) included questions on attendance at school and on reasons for non-attendance. Among drop-outs nationally, the most common reasons for not attending were that school was considered “useless” (27%) or “too costly” (25%). Modelling exercises using GLSS data show that current attendance (retention) was affected by similar factors to ever-attendance, including age and gender for the most part; but that children’s work was found to be more strongly linked to retention as was household size and composition – particularly the number of young children in the household. However, household welfare and occupational status were found to be more important in determining ever-attendance than retention and regional, urban/rural and time effects were much smaller for retention. This suggests that the most obvious drivers of exclusion – poverty and the availability of schooling affect initial enrolment most strongly, while retention depends more on child characteristics and the household’s needs for child labour including in relation to care for younger children. Qualitative work in Mfantseman district identified a number of forms of temporary and permanent drop-out, shedding light on the complexity of push and pull factors that lie behind the quantitative indicators. These are summarised in Box 2.

CREATE interviews with teachers in the two case-study districts included a question on reasons for dropping out. The most common reasons cited for drop-out among boys in Mfantseman district are summarised in Table 2, as an example of the findings. When asked about girls’ drop-out, pregnancy was also cited as a key reason. Teachers perceived poverty and child labour to be key along with lack of parental care and poor academic performance. Teachers did not perceive however, that school based factors such as poor teacher attendance and excessive corporal punishment also played a role in drop out (Alhasan and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2010).

Table 2: Reasons given by teachers for boys dropping out of school (Mfantseman district)

	Reason 1	Reason 2	Reason 3
Abonko	Truancy due to lack of parental control	Poverty/child labour	Poor academic performance
Akobima	Migration	Poverty	Poor academic performance
Holiness	Poverty/child labour	Truancy	Poor academic performance
Kormantse	Poverty/child labour	Lack of parental care	Teacher too hard on them
BMK Nurudeen	Lack of parental control	Lack of interest in school – work for money	Distance covered to school
Narkwa	Poverty/child labour	Lack of parental care	Transfer
Saltpond	Poverty/child labour	Transfer	Poor academic performance
Smerbu	Lack of school fees	Lack of table and chair	Lack of books/others

Source: Ampiah and Kwaah (2010a)

Table 3 shows the mean values of relevant education and background indicators from the ComSS study for drop-outs and non drop-outs alongside the results of a t-test for the difference between mean values. The results show that, on average, pupils who later dropped-out had performed less well in English and maths, had attended less frequently and lived in poorer households and in households with lower levels of caregiver literacy. These findings appear to be largely consistent with teachers’ perceptions. Drop-outs were also more overage for their grade. Differences were not significant in relation to hours spent working or distance travelled to school.

Box 2: Typology of temporary and permanent forms of drop-out in southern Ghana

Temporary: Sporadic Dropout

For children who have stopped attending school owing to temporary economic needs, dropout is a temporary withdrawal from school in the short term. This can be called 'sporadic dropout'. In reality, this type of dropout is marked by intermittent nonattendance. Such temporary dropout cases can include those *at risk* of dropping out permanently and those *silently excluded* and learning little. Low levels of attendance, where 25% or more of learning time is lost is a kind of drop out even if the child remains registered and nominally enrolled. If linked to temporary economic needs children will return to school when these ease.

Permanent: 'Unsettled Dropout'

'Unsettled dropouts' are generally older children who do not attend school and are unlikely to return to complete the cycle. The doubts these children have about going back to school are sufficient to discourage them. Often they have feelings of embarrassment at being too old for a given grade and of having to attend class with younger children. They may also have doubts about what benefits they would gain from going back to school especially if they think their chances of graduating are very low

Temporary: Event Dropout

'Event dropout' is a response to one or more critical events in children's lives either at school, at home or both. This type of dropout lasts for about a year. Events outside school that can lead to dropout include migration of a child's family or the death of one or both parents, or other household shocks including sickness and unemployment. Events in school can include conflict between a child and teachers which can result in temporary dropout. For example children who refused to conform to corporal punishment in some case study schools were given a stern warning not to return to class until the terms of the punishment had been met. Often dropout is the result of a combination of two or more factors which trigger decisions to stop attending for a period.

Temporary: Long-term Dropout

Some temporary dropout involves prolonged periods out of school for some children. As a result they acquire 'overage' status if they do return to school. Some children who have been out of school for periods lasting between 2 and 4 academic years, are as a result older than 12, the nominal maximum for primary schooling. These "overage cohorts" have difficulties in completing primary schooling and may be excluded by school registration policies. This kind of falling out of a cohort group can be called 'long-term dropout'. Despite being over age many of those interviewed hoped to return to school and in that sense were not permanent drop outs.

Permanent: Settled Dropout

A fifth group of dropouts exist where children are settled in an occupation or livelihood. These children are working directly or learning a trade. Their decision not to go back to school is a reflection of their perception of the value of more education. Children for whom 'dropout' is permanent are frequently overage when they drop out of primary school.

Source: Ananga (2010)

Table 3: Comparison of education and background indicators by drop-out status (ComSS)

	Non Drop-Outs	Drop-Outs	T-test sig at 5%
English Test Score 2007/8 (%)	45.5	35.1	Yes
Maths Test Score 2007/8 (%)	47.0	41.0	Yes
Attendance 2007/8 (%)	83.0	73.4	Yes
Household Portable Asset Score ¹	-0.26	0.09	Yes
Distance to School (km)	1.55	1.57	No
Hours Spent Working	1.89	2.25	No
Caregiver Literacy Score	8.82	6.67	Yes
Years Overage for Grade	4.03	5.14	Yes

Source: Computed from ComSS data

5.3 Zone 4: Progression and Transition

CREATE exclusion zone 4 comprises pupils who complete primary education but do not progress to JHS. This section considers the issues of completion, progression and transition to include zone 4 exclusion and exclusion from post-basic education. Overall, using GLSS data at the national level, completion rates for both the primary and secondary phases of education did not improve between 1991 and 2006. In 2006, 73% of 17 year olds had completed primary school, compared with 74% in 1991. With regard to lower secondary school completion, rates remained static over the period, with around half having completed by age 20 in both 1991 and 2006. Table 4 shows the percentages of children aged 13 and 17 who had attended school that had completed primary school in 2006. If it is assumed that the vast majority of children who will complete primary school will do so by age 17, then the data suggest that between one tenth and two fifths of children who had ever attended school in Ghana never completed their primary education, varying notably by region. At age 13, figures are markedly lower, indicating a high prevalence of over-age enrolment. Table 4 also shows JHS completion rates at ages 15 and 20. By age 20, between a quarter (in the north) and seven tenths (in Accra) had completed, while at age 15 the figure was 15% or less, except in Accra. In sum, increased enrolment rates have been achieved without concomitant increases in completion rates suggesting that repetition, overage enrolment rates drop out rates have not diminished.

Table 4: Primary completion rates by age and region (2006)

	Age 13	Age 17	Age 15	Age 20
	<i>Primary Completion</i>		<i>JHS Completion</i>	
Western	0.26	0.80	0.08	0.57
Central	0.30	0.75	0.09	0.58
Greater Accra	0.46	0.84	0.29	0.70
Eastern	0.28	0.79	0.04	0.50
Volta	0.33	0.87	0.15	0.56
Ashanti	0.35	0.87	0.12	0.66
Brong Ahafo	0.26	0.66	0.06	0.53
Northern	0.10	0.31	0.02	0.27
Upper West	0.10	0.43	0.04	0.23
Upper East	0.15	0.46	0.01	0.24
Total	0.28	0.73	0.11	0.53

Source: Computed from GLSS 5

Table 5 reports the transition to secondary school rates for primary completers from 1999 to 2008 using UIS data taken from EMIS. Figures show no particular trend of change but transition to JHS is found to be high - at 92.7% in 2007, indicating that zone 4 exclusion is relatively uncommon at the national level i.e. most who reach Grade 6 manage to transit to JHS Grade 1.

¹ Calculated using principal components analysis using indicators for portable assets e.g. television, refrigerator.

Table 5: Primary-secondary transition rates 1999-2008

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Transition from primary to lower secondary (%)	92.6	82.1	90.0	86.8	92.7	...

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)

In a modelling exercise to examine the determinants of levels of educational progression using the sample of young adults aged 19-35 from GLSS 5 data males were found to be more likely to have reached all levels of educational attainment than females, other things being equal. This difference increases at higher levels so that historically, males were considerably more likely to have progressed beyond lower secondary school. Relationship to the household head was found to affect educational attainment significantly. Children of the household head were most likely to have made educational progress and servants least likely. Greater proportions of children under the age of 7 in a household were found to reduce the probability of a household member reaching post-primary education. The same was true in relation to the number of household members aged over 59 years of age. Much more important was the occupational or socio-economic status of the household head. Household members in a household with a head in formal public or private sector employment were much more likely to have progressed beyond junior secondary than in households headed by a food farmer and were more likely to have completed JHS and to have completed primary, other things being equal.

Smaller but notable advantages were also found among households headed by informal private sector employees, export farmers, those in non-farm self-employment and those who were not working. These effects may be considered in part separable from the effects of income and consumption. An improvement in household welfare is found to increase the likelihood that a household member had progressed educationally, particularly to the end of lower secondary school or beyond, being associated with a greater probability of accessing post-lower secondary education. Urban residence was found to positively affect the probability of progression to the end of lower secondary school and beyond. Regional effects were found in some cases to be extremely large. Those in the Ashanti region, for example were found to be considerably more likely than those in the north to have accessed or completed primary or lower secondary schooling. Other regions with strong positive effects included the Western, Central, Brong Ahafo and Greater Accra regions. It is notable that with regard to educational access beyond junior high schooling, regional effects are smaller. This may suggest that at these levels of schooling the effect of regional level supply is balanced by very large effects of affordability and socio-economic factors. When the exercise was repeated for individual survey rounds, results showed decreasing regional effects over time, perhaps due to improvements in schooling provision in the less advantaged regions.

5.4: Zones 3 and 6: Silent exclusion in primary and junior high school

Children who meet the challenge of initial enrolment and who continue in school without dropping out may nonetheless suffer 'silent exclusion' resulting in poor achievement and progress. CREATE zone 3 comprises pupils suffering silent exclusion in primary education and zone 6 at JHS level.

Low cost private schools have been growing in number in Ghana. The reasons are linked to dissatisfaction with standards and practices in public schools which are fee free and to the wishes of motivated parents to avoid "silent exclusion" where there is poor teaching and low levels of achievement (Box 3). Though low cost, these private schools remain expensive for households below the median level of income and unavailable to the poorest.

Box 3: Why Do Low Income Households Use Private Schools?

CREATE research in Mfanteman District (Southern Ghana) found that households with children in low-fee private schools incurred significantly higher costs per child than those who had children in a fee free public school. These costs were also a significantly higher proportion of household income for poorer families. So why are some of the poorer households opting for the low-fee private schools?

Although the costs were much higher, low fee private schools were adopting strategies that induced demand from households. In one low-fee private school fees were reduced for every additional child enrolled. A fourth child enrolled paid no fees. Two low-fee private schools were willing to enrol children between the ages of three and five for free in their pre-schools. What this did was to ensure that they had a stock of children ready to enter the fee-paying stream. Households who made prompt payments sometimes received a fee discount of 10 to 15%. Such practices ensured that the low-fee private schools were able to recruit from poor households. On the other hand, the fee-free public schools made no such effort to induce demand. The general view among households was that public schools were insensitive to their concerns about poor performance, and that generally supervision of children's work was poor.

Households with children in the low-fee private schools felt the schools operated with a clearer vision of improving pupil learning and achievement. In particular, they referred to the speaking and writing proficiency of children in private schools in the English language, as an indication of their quality and success. For them, the low-fee private schools stood for something they were prepared to buy into – the evidence of success was tangible, whereas for the fee-free public schools they felt there was less commitment to this goal.

Source: Akaguri (2010)

Silent exclusion is signified by poor attendance, poor performance and overage enrolment each of which is found to be prevalent in ComSS data.

6. Attendance and absence from school

Absence from school across both ComSS study sites averages one day per pupil per week or about 20% of teaching time. Children absent more than 20% of the teaching time available will almost certainly have difficulty keeping up with the curriculum and will clearly be disadvantaged in relation to those who attend more regularly, assuming teaching is taking place every school day. In models which take account of a range of determinants of absence, absence from school is associated with being male, starting school above six years old, being overage, having stunted growth and especially with being overage at higher ages partly as a result of repetition. At the household level, greater distances travelled to school and to water are associated with more absence from school, while the availability of a light/electricity source in the home is associated with lower absence. Sizeable effects on absence also appear to be associated with location of education circuits, communities and schools. These are typically associated with livelihood activities which are clustered by village or other geographic unit. For example, there is an association between farming and casual labour and higher absence and between collection/foraging activities and lower absence at community level. There is also an association between receiving private tuition and lower absence, clustered by school.

Unobserved circuit and school effects on absence typically remain large and significant in modelling exercises when a full range of variables is included to explain absence from school. These effects capture unobserved factors common to households and pupils at these levels, but since controls are included for important indicators of household education and economy, it may be argued that there are important differences, particularly between schools, in terms of school and school community characteristics and practices, which explain differences in absence rates. For example, pupils at a Methodist Primary School in Mfanteman district are on average more overage than average and live

in households with fewer assets, while the school has one of the highest attendance rates. Nonetheless, issues of pupil sorting by school (e.g. on ability) can also not be ruled out, especially in more urban areas where there is a choice of school. Indeed, in the presence of the full set of controls, the schools with the largest positive effects on absence were in the urban areas of Saltpond and Savelugu and were Methodist, Roman Catholic and English-Arabic schools, which may attract particular pupils as well as following distinctive education practices.

7. Achievement

As part of the ComSS study, achievement tests in English and maths were administered to all sampled pupils at two time points – in 2007/8 and 2008/9. Good attendance is clearly an important determinant of achievement in school and modelling exercises using the ComSS data found attendance to be a significant factor in determining test scores, especially in English. Other factors found to be correlated with attainment, when a full set of pupil and household controls were included and school/community effects were accounted for, included age at entry and overage status, which were found to impact negatively; caregiver literacy and the receipt of private tuition, which were found to impact positively. In some models, stunting was found to reduce attainment (especially in maths) even when overage status was accounted for separately, indicating the persistence of this health/nutrition effect. Also in relation to maths, female sex was associated with lower levels of progress and living in a household engaged in petty trading was found to be associated with higher attainment.

Differences in attainment and progress in both maths and English between education circuits and schools were found to be large and significant in many cases. Since these differences remained after controlling for important background factors, there is some indication of strong contextual effects on performance. These effects include community level preferences for education but also school and circuit level practices and policies. Again pupil sorting may be an issue. Positive effects on achievement and progress were found to be consistently strong in one low-cost private school in Mfantseman District but there were also strong positive effects in the public schools in the peri-urban Saltpond and Mankessim circuits in Mfantseman. School effects were typically weaker in Savelugu-Nanton District and in the rural circuits within Mfantseman. This pattern of effects requires further investigation. It is notable, however, that large disparities were found in levels of teacher training and experience, with these being much lower in the northern case-study site, where class-sizes are also larger.

Pass rates in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) at JHS level in Savelugu-Nanton are considerably lower than national averages and sex differences at this level are large. In 2008/9 for example, of the 1,104 pupils in JHS 3, 921 sat the four core subject examinations with around one third achieving a pass mark in maths and English. The number of boys who sat the examinations was more than double that of girls, and boys' pass rates were 5 to 13% higher.

The District Administration (DA) reports that performance in WASSCE (senior secondary) examinations is also poor:

In 2005, whilst four students qualified to enter the University from Savelugu SSS, five representing 3.5% of students sitting for the examination qualified from Pong-Tamale SSS. The reasons for the abysmal performance at the SSS though could result from poor teaching, are also partly due to the quality of students admitted. (Savelugu-Nanton District Assembly, 2010)

This is some indication that quality is a problem at all levels, and that at higher levels performance remains low despite selection effects arising from selective drop out of lower achieving students.

8. Over-Age Enrolment

The overall prevalence of overage enrolment nationally varies according to the data source and definition, but in UIS data gathered from EMIS and shown in Table 6, there is a clear indication of an increasing proportion in recent years as enrolment rates have increased.

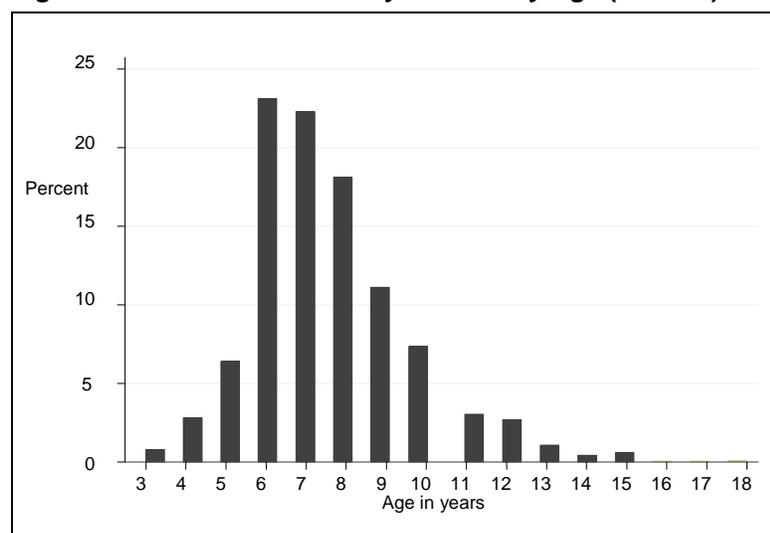
Table 6: Overage enrolment 1999-2008

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Over-age enrolment ratio.	16.0	17.0	17.8	19.0	13.1	20.9	20.8	26.9	24.6	29.4

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)

Figure 3 shows the distribution of pupils' ages in Primary 1 using GLSS 5 data (2006). While 6 years is the nominal starting age, it is clear that a sizeable proportion of pupils begin at ages 7-10. A very similar pattern is observed in the ComSS case-study sites. Over-age enrolment begins with late initial enrolment but is frequently exacerbated by grade repetition, and periods of dropping out and returning to school often into the same grade a year or two later.

Figure 3: Enrolment in Primary Grade 1 by Age (GLSS 5)



Source: Computed from GLSS 5

CREATE asked teachers in schools included in the ComSS study to explain what they considered to be the main reasons for over-age enrolment. Teachers' perceptions in relation to girls' over-age enrolment in Savelugu-Nanton district are summarised in Table 7. Teachers cited transfer from alternative education programmes, repetition, late entry, the advent of fee-free education prompting parents to enrol children who had previously been out of school due to lack of money for fees, child labour and poverty among the reasons for pupils being over-age. The ComSS study also asked parents to explain reasons for late enrolment of their children. They typically cited lack of money, distance to school, work in the household and illness as important explanations.

Table 7: Teachers' perceptions of reasons for over-age enrolment (Savelugu-Nanton)

	Reason 1	Reason 2	Reason 3
Rawdaltul-Atfal	Free education -capitation grant	Admission of School for Life graduates ²	Poverty
Wataniya	Admission of School for Life graduates	Late enrolment into school	Child labour
Moglaa DA	Repetition and poor performance	-	-
Tampion DA	Repetition	Late enrolment into school	Inadequate knowledge of their ages
Tarikpaa DA	Late enrolment into school	Drop out and re-enrolment	Poor performance
Yoo RC	Single parenthood	Admission of School for Life graduates	Child labour
Future Scholars Academy	Disregard for the importance of girl child education initially	Repetition for poor performance	Lack of parental care

Source: Ampiah and Kwaah, (2010b)

Analysis of ComSS data showed that being overage is associated with notable educational disadvantage, as has been considered in relation to attendance and achievement. Modelling exercises were undertaken to examine the factors that may drive overage enrolment. Late initial enrolment was found to be associated with male gender³, low body mass index (BMI), with growth stunting and with lower levels of literacy of the household caregiver. Specifically, an increase in stunting of one standard deviation was associated with an additional half a year of late enrolment and a decrease of one standard deviation in the BMI by four fifths of one year. Late enrolment is also associated with a pupil's household running a business and with its receipt of charity assistance. But pupils living in farming households appear to be associated with lower levels of late initial enrolment, other things being equal.

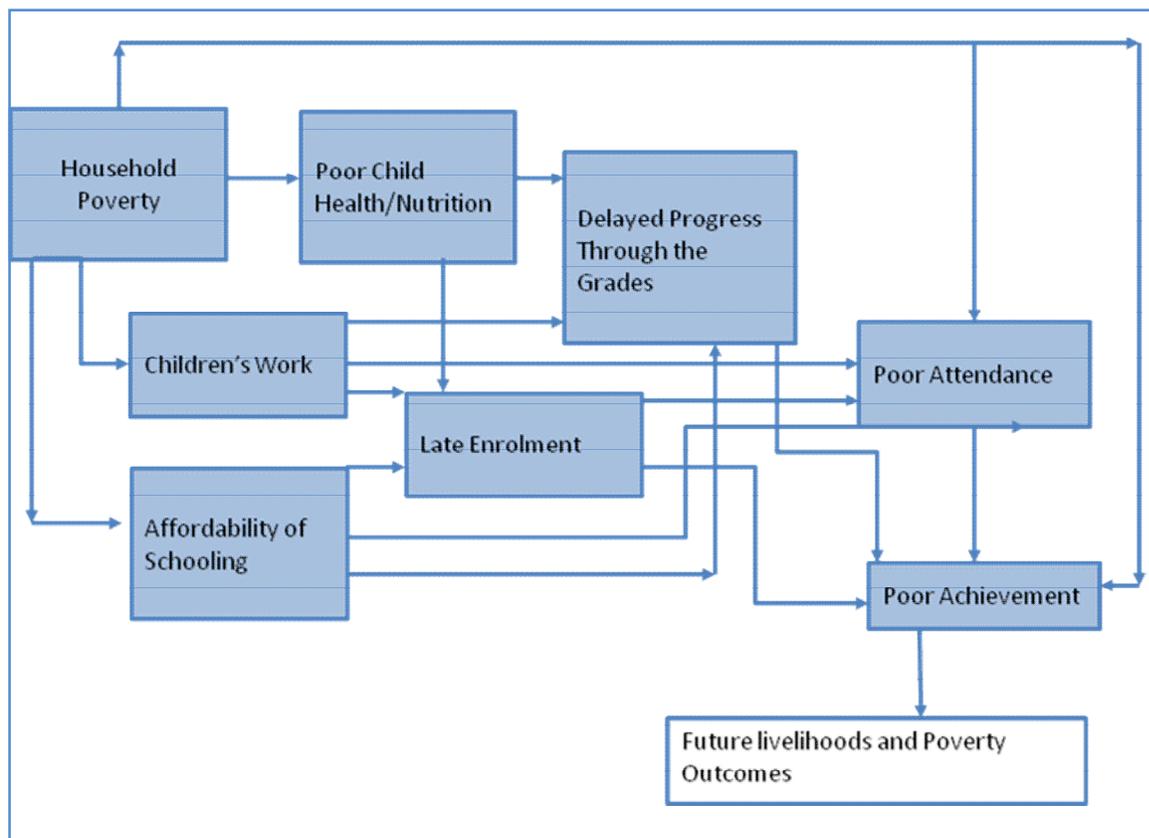
Late-enrolment was found to account on average for less than half of the period by which a child was over-age. Once enrolled, as pupils progress the extent to which they are overage typically increases through repetition and age-grade slippage. Taking into account age and age at initial enrolment, female sex is associated with being more overage, so that while boys in the sample are disadvantaged by their overage status initially, girls are more disadvantaged later on. Increasing overage status is associated largely with the same factors as initial late enrolment, especially growth stunting so that the health/nutrition effect appears to continue to exert an influence beyond initial enrolment. Also, attending pre-school for longer was associated with being less overage.

Further, differences between education circuits in late enrolment and overage patterns are found to be relatively large, although patterns also differ by initial and subsequent age-grade delay. Thus there appear to be important community or contextual effects associated with livelihood and school/community factors. Net of other explanatory factors for example, attending school in Primary 1 in Ekumfi-Narkwa (a circuit comprising a rural fishing community) is associated with 1.8 years later initial enrolment than Savelugu East (a rural farming and peri-urban circuit). Taking into account the age at entry, over-age enrolment (subsequent delay) is particularly high in Moglaa (a rural farming community). Savelugu West (a peri-urban circuit) is associated with both late initial enrolment and a high number of additional overage years. These patterns illustrate the complexity of the factors contributing to over-age enrolment but it appears that health/nutrition at the individual level and work/livelihood factors at the community-level are especially important. Dramatic improvements in overage enrolment rates in the north as a whole as considered earlier, however, are potentially an indication of the success of recent policy interventions, especially those to reduce schooling costs. Box 4 shows the linkages identified between poverty, late-entry, overage-enrolment and 'silent exclusion' through poor attendance and achievement.

² School for Life is an NGO supported basic education programme

³ The ComSS sample contains more boys than girls due to gender bias in school enrolment so that gender effects are conditional on initial enrolment

Box 4: Linkages between poverty, overage status and exclusion



9. Costs, Access and Equity⁴

Using data from the 1991/92, 1998/99, and 2005/06 Ghana Living Standards Surveys (GLSS) and a combination of descriptive statistics and econometric techniques, Boakye-Yiadom (forthcoming) highlighted the links between household expenditure (on basic education) and schooling participation rates. Also explored were the links between fee-free educational policies and household expenditure on basic education. Overall, the findings suggest that while the capitation grant scheme and the school feeding programme may be having considerable favourable effects, the direct costs of basic education still remain substantial. The analysis also shows that many households in Ghana are characterised by the presence of schooling-deprived children and that the poor are more likely to suffer this predicament.

When the effect of inflation is neutralised, the average expenses on basic education per household are found to have increased – between 1991/92 and 1998/99 – by 77.3%, while average expenses per pupil for primary and JHS pupils each increased by 74.2. Similarly, between 1998/99 and 2005/06, the average expenditure by basic school pupils increased by 42.7%, with the corresponding increases at the primary and JHS levels being 35.2% and 67.5%, respectively. Thus, over the periods 1991/92 – 1998/99 and 1998/99 – 2005/06, there were increases in the monetary cost of schooling with the greatest increases for JHS in the more recent time period which were likely to make it more difficult for the poorest to participate above primary school level.

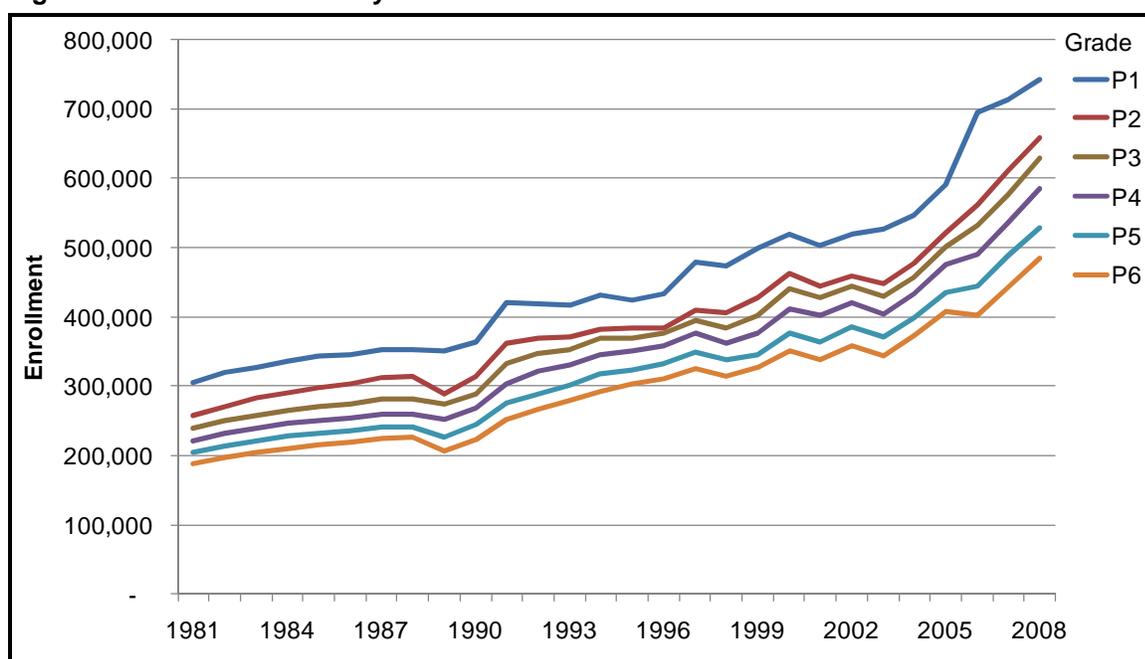
⁴ Source: Boakye-Yiadom (forthcoming)

The average education expense incurred by urban school pupils is much higher than that of rural pupils. The fact that urban basic school pupils incur a higher level of real expenditure on basic education than their rural counterparts has implications for the quality of schooling enjoyed by the two groups of pupils. The urban basic school pupil spends much more – in real terms – on ‘books and schools supplies’ than the rural pupil. Thus, all things being equal, the urban basic school pupil would have access to more and/or better books and school supplies than the rural pupil, resulting in disparities in schooling outcomes.

10. The Evolution of Primary Enrolment 1980-2008

Patterns of participation over time in primary enrolments in Ghana indicate that rates of drop out have not been decreasing. Figure 4 shows that attrition between Grades 1 and 6 has remained fairly constant over long periods, with the largest decline from Grade 1 to Grade 2. This may be because Grade 1 includes some under age children, and others who enter Grade 1 more than once in attempts to start their school career. Though overall enrolments and enrolment rates have improved it is clear that completion rates remain problematic. In effect, even after years of reforms and investments in basic education, the basic primary progression structure has not altered very much, indicating persistent and systemic problems in access and delivery of basic education in Ghana. The CREATE evidence has shed light on the varied and complex nature of problems of access which are at the root of this persistent failure.

Figure 4: Evolution of Primary Enrolments 1980-2008



Source: Based on Ghana EMIS data

conditional on school attendance. If this is to be introduced it would need to be carefully targeted for maximum effect. Increased capitation payments may also be desirable if they succeed in improving school quality and hence increasing demand for school places.

11. Summary of Key findings: access to education in Ghana

Initial access to basic education in Ghana has expanded considerably in recent years. However, up to 10% of children remain excluded nationally. For them, the costs associated with schooling, poverty, livelihoods in farming, location in the north and in rural areas and fosterage are among the factors that

inhibit access along with low perceived benefits and lack of relevance. Enrolment rates have expanded unevenly, and have been accompanied by increased numbers of over age students and little reduction in drop out since completion rates have remained largely unchanged. The introduction of the CGS did have an impact on enrolment growth but this effect was one-off. Higher enrolment amongst the most marginalised groups almost certainly requires more targeted interventions to address specific exclusion issues directly. Those who remain excluded include those for whom school remains difficult to access physically due to distance or disability, those for whom indirect costs such as food, materials and transportation are prohibitive especially at JHS and above, and those whose labour remains essential for family livelihoods.

Less progress has been made in relation to rates of drop-out and completion in the primary education phase, and progression to JHS remains much lower in the north. Drop-out is associated with poor attendance and performance, caregiver illiteracy, income and schooling costs, household composition and children's work. It is associated with complex patterns of temporary periodic absence as well as permanent cessation of schooling. Progression depends particularly strongly on household livelihoods and welfare beyond the basic phase, although the vast majority of those who reach primary completion do progress to JHS except in the north. In some parts of Ghana almost half of all children fail to make the transition and more than half fail to complete JHS, the end of the basic education cycle.

An important and often overlooked finding is the association of drop-out with a child being over-age. Indeed, late enrolment and overage progression are very prevalent in Ghana and are also associated with silent exclusion in the forms of poor attendance and achievement. One important explanation of over-age enrolment is growth stunting due to poor nutrition which can lead to late entry because children are judged to be "too small" especially if chronological age is underestimated. This emphasises the importance of early intervention where health and nutrition are concerned. Absence from school is high among disadvantaged groups and achievement relatively poor often leading to age in grade slippage. But large differences between schools and communities are also important and perhaps indicative that variation in preferences for education and in local level policies and practices are important vectors where meaningful access is concerned. Sensitivity to varying context is very important for future policy formulation.

Table 8: Achievements and Challenges

Achievements	Persistent and Emerging Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial increases in enrolments • Reduced north south gaps in enrolments and differences between boys and girls • Improved physical access to education especially in the north • Large increases in spending on basic education • Reduced costs to households as a result of capitation and fee free policy increase participation of the poorest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor nutrition and health remain prevalent • Overage enrolment and age-grade slippage very prevalent • Indirect costs remain a barrier • Growth of private schools serving the middle poor appears to be motivated by poor quality in the public system • Poor attendance is common in some areas, especially among marginalised groups • Poor achievement common among marginalised groups • Inequality is persistent in relation to progression and transition • Completion rates have remained static

12. Key Policy Recommendations

- The Capitation Grant (CG) needs to represent a more significant proportion of unit cost per pupil if it is to have sustained effect on persistence in schooling and the quality of provision.
- Future education policy needs to target marginalised groups more purposefully and further flat rate subsidies to all household should be avoided in favour of directing subsidy to the poorest. There is a great need to increase investments into public basic schools in rural areas to improve their quality so as to give children from poor households access to a basic education that has real potential to improve their chances of accessing post-basic education.
- It is important that the parameters and indicators for measuring progress in educational access include distributional measures of improved participation and progression across the basic school cycle to establish whether equity has been improving. This should be used as the real measure of progress. Key indicators include giving special attention to improving transition from Primary 1 to 2, and monitoring the transition from grades 6 to 7 and 9 to 10. Investments into improving quality education in early primary schooling (and Pre School) should be given priority. In public schools, the best teachers should teach in the early grades and should be incentivised to achieve improved learning with high progression rates through the primary school system.
- Develop a database which links registration of births with expected year of school enrolment. This will require collaboration between district health and education authorities. At the beginning of each academic year, this data can be used to help identify who has enrolled, not enrolled, or moved out of the catchment area of the school. This could be piloted in areas which have a history of poor enrolments.
- Promote sensitisation campaigns on the demerits of over-age enrolment especially in rural areas.
- Consider the introduction of conditional cash transfers linked to timely enrolment and progression in areas with high incidence of poverty, and where livelihoods are fragile.
- Focus enrolment drives on timely enrolment and progression, particularly in the first two years.
- Introduce a reward system for schools that meet efficiency and effectiveness criteria for progression, repetition, drop out and completion rates
- Increase and target Capitation Grants on classroom level inputs. Implement ring-fenced capitation that goes directly into improving classroom level inputs to improve quality. Thus capitation should be linked to deprivation indices for districts; fees could continue to be levied for those who can afford (mostly in relatively rich urban areas) to pay especially at JHS and SSS level and the income used to improve quality.
- Finally, introduce a monitoring system that can effectively monitor school attendance for both pupils and teachers. A first step is to ensure that schools have enrolment and attendance records that can be held electronically at district level. Circuit supervisors on regular visits to schools should monitor and update these records (this can be easily done using a digital camera). Regular inspection of school attendance records will help to identify children at risk of dropping out, or who have dropped out, so that the necessary action can be taken at school level to reduce this risk.

The CREATE studies have shown that there are also a number of factors outside the domain and influence of the education system that impact on access for the poor. These include livelihood patterns especially where these involve seasonal migration and internal displacement. Some of the effects of these factors can be ameliorated with more effective and responsive educational administration. In the long term, investing in the development of deprived districts both in general and specifically educationally, should lead to improvements in the welfare of inhabitants and have a positive knock-on positive effect on household attitudes and participation in basic education. Universal enrolment and completion of basic education depends on improvements at the margin and in the most disadvantaged areas without which it will not be achieved in 2015 or indeed any time in the future.

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All CREATE monographs and other publications are available on the CREATE website: www.create-rpc.org

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