



Presentation on the Youth Gender and Citizenship (YGC) Research in Ghana

Preliminary findings



ASSOCIATES FOR CHANGE

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Research Aims and Objectives

To understand the role of education in the lives of young people from a gendered perspective and identify the personal, social and economic outcomes for youth within different poverty contexts and socio-cultural worlds.

Research Questions

Does education help young adults in impoverished communities achieve participatory citizenship?

How can educational outcomes improve the capabilities young people to become participatory citizens and help improve the quality of life in their communities?

YGC Research Design

- Youth Study (15 –25 yrs) within the context of the household and community.
- 6 month in-depth qualitative study
- two community sites in northern (rural) and southern (urban)
- Intergenerational study between youth and their parents--
- Over 80 youth (M/F) and their parents were interviewed;
- semi structured---in depth interview (approx 2 hours per person on two occasions).

Methodology

- Community and Household level participant observations;
- Community interviews and focal group discussions with selected youth groupings (e.g. teenage mothers, SSS girls and SSS boys).
- Gate keepers and key informants were interviewed at school level and community level

Sampling

Sample based on Youth across three trajectories within the community and at exit points in the education system:

- non schooled: dropped out of primary (4M/4F);
- basic schooled: having completed JSS and not continued(3M/3F)
- post basic schooled: those who completed SSS/technical, vocational and beyond (3M/3F).

Sample selection drew on:

Community household census data and then selection for intergenerational aspect (father- son, mother daughter, siblings at different exit points).

The community

Poverty studies need to take into account the history of the community and the communities experience with schooling

Social context of education is extremely important to understanding poverty and youth transitions.

The Southern La Community (urban)

- Predominantly and traditional Ga community which in the early 1960's was a fishing and farming community;
- Fathers were fishermen and mothers sold fish and vegetables.
- With urbanisation during the 70 and 80's fishing and farming was converted to developed to other urban projects;
- Chief's began selling lands and family houses also began to rent out to others who were moving in... petty trading began.
- Men looked for jobs as commercial drivers and masons "by day"

La community experience with schooling

The people did realise that due to the transition to modern life around them “they did not see the importance of schooling in the early days... so when the farm lands were taken away they were left behind” and could not transition into the formal employment sector.

“by the time we realised it was too late...”

“Youth who were able to leave or move to other areas did not come back”.

Poverty issues in the community:

- Drugs, transactional sex, lack of water, unemployment and lack of opportunities for self development.
- congested due to population growth and large family sizes.

The Savelugu Rural community

- Traditional Dagomba community which has continued patterns of life including farming (groundnuts, yam, maize, rice, sheanut picking).
- Bartering and exchange of services is still used.
- Fathers continue to be subsistence farmers, access to large tracts of land and the main breadwinners
- Women engage in farming vegetables, shea butter production and supplement the family income.
- Over 15 years migration by young women to the urban centres as Kayayee (porters); young male non educated and school leavers also migrate to the cities to engage in scrap dealing...

Schooling in Northern Rural community

UBE is a relatively new phenomena in these communities. The first village schools were built on a large scale in the 1980's and with the first "pioneer children" graduating from JSS in the mid 90's.

Perceptions and Socio-cultural barriers for girls in attaining higher levels of education, (i.e. early marriage, fosterage and family betrothal);

Poverty issues include:

Inability to eat three times per day, hunger season for six months when food become extremely difficult to find, land erosion and diminishing fertility, lack of potable water, guinea worm...access to educational and health facilities requires travelling long distances.

Structure of Key Findings

- Desired and Actual Outcomes of Education
- Social Mobility and transition to working life
- Belonging and becoming a Ghanaian Citizen

Other Findings:

Transitions to adulthood

Gendered effects of education

1. Desired Effects of Schooling

- Parents and youth had high expectations involving social and economic outcomes;
- outcomes on a individual, family and community level.
- higher social status in society at large and in the community;
- “get a well paid job”... (white collar, civil service)
- the child would be better off than the parents were...
- higher levels of education (higher than JSS).

Youth Voice

“When I went to school and it gave me a kind of wisdom in life...
someone who has not been to school would not be able to get it.
(Northern Basic Schooled Youth)

“There is nothing wrong about schooling because it teaches nothing
bad....” (Female JSS Northern youth)

1. Desired and Actual Effects of Schooling

- North: expected that the girls in school would attract material support from the NGO and Government.
- long term investment which would lead to children's ability to cater for them during old age...
- They expected that girls that dropped out of school to get married...
- South: the child would be taken care of by the school.

1. Desired Effects of Schooling

Post basic youth category

they see the importance of education and schooling from a social and economic perspective :

- Literacy in English
- computer literacy skills,
- Decision-making
- family hygiene/health,
- social relations,
- status and networking
- social skills in interacting with other peers

- the desire and expectation to move to higher levels of education...

1. Actual Effects of Schooling

- When asked if they benefited from education they are not able to answer
- their expectations were not fulfilled...
- youth not able to get employment and also not able to get to higher levels of education.
- a range of learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy....
- Social acceptance from the community as an “educated youth.”

The vast majority of youth in the basic schooled category did not realise their expectations by obtaining a job and were surprised that schooling did not help them make it out of poverty.

1. Actual Effects of Basic Schooled

Basic Level Youth:

South: Majority of basic schooled youth (m/f) were placed in apprenticeship in south as a transition to working life; many did not complete the apprenticeship training due to lack of funds for food and transportation, and lack of parental support;

North: the youth who completed basic education ended up back on the farm or migrated to urban sites in search of work (scrap metal, track pushers or shoe shine) with the hope of saving funds to go back to school and move to higher education levels (JSS or SSS).

In both poverty sites very few youth reached post basic levels of education (North: only one female could be found)

Actual Effects of Schooling for 'post basic' youth

BIG IDEA: They knew that education would give them a better life with a "good job" in Ghana or abroad.

Wider sphere of opportunity knowing that they could leave community and their nation to find employment... mobile with status.

As they moved higher in the education levels they were challenged by their peers and had more role models around them, they become more determined once they saw the future outcomes/ possibilities.

Parental monitoring and supervision were a key factor especially for female in assisting them move to higher levels of education (poor or non poor households).

Females in south: security and safety non risky behaviour
North: financial emotional support by parents

The Outcomes GAP between expectation and actual outcomes

RURAL NORTH:

Karachi factor: "elite educated youth" attitudes...

Non satisfaction with education outcomes and the inability to fit back into the community

Most youth who complete JSS and SSS and fail to attain higher levels of education; no longer "fit back into the traditional farming life of the community."

found it hard to appreciate their community life pattern;

did not see agricultural as a successful and viable option...migration;

Outcomes GAP in the Urban Setting

Basic and/or non schooled

Boys began to become members of a sub culture gangs: loitering, impregnating girls (to become men), drinking and smoking 'wee', selling drugs, internet fraud, stealing and robbery.

Girls began to "go for men" because needed assistance and food

"they were expected to take care of themselves"

Ame nyie shika see ("they are following money")...transactional sex

The Unfulfilled Promise of Education

Children who have attended school to JSS level do not meet the communities notion of a successful person (unable to read and get a job);

Options for youth when unsuccessful in completing primary, basic and post basic

South:

“ they only turn to apprenticeship when formal education fails them.”

Their parents use informal apprenticeship options to assist them enter skills training with hopes of acquiring a job (easy access, flexible payment and influence);

North:

farming as an option for youth who did not continue in education (men) and women were expected to marry...

There are very few opportunities for formalised skills training in northern and southern Ghana; types of skills are defined by gender...feminine and masculine hand skills, entry level requirements, fees.

2. SOCIAL MOBILITY AND TRANSITION TO WORK

Outline of section

- Perceptions of Social mobility
- Routes and Strategies,
- Education schooling in relation to social capital and social Networking were key.

North and south

The majority of youth who complete the JSS cycle of education are unable to find work in the formal and informal sector– remain dependant on parents and jobless.

South: those with work were in the informal sector as: waiter/waitress; engaged in petty trades such as the sale of bread and fried eggs.

North: they engage in farming activities such as sheanut picking, harvesting groundnuts and rice and “by day.”

2. Young peoples strategies for social mobility

Youth with higher levels of schooling were able to use social networking as a key means to acquiring jobs and sometimes “good job” (eg Civil service);

social networking enabled youth to become more socially mobile.

Cultural and social capital have a significant effect on the transition to work and higher education (difference between poor and wealthy families /children’s education outcomes);

Parents in the non poor households (southern Ghana with white collar/government jobs were better able to steer the direction of their children’s future ... influence their choices and options to secure entry into post basic education and a decent job compared to youth from poor backgrounds.

Northern Ghana: siblings and family relations with educated backgrounds and in influential positions.

Escape Route in the south: Poverty and the transition to work

- Youth that escape poverty have been able to use education at the post basic levels and social capital.
- Southern Post basic: youth had a vision and strategic plan to escape the barriers of poverty due to locality and family background.
- Dependence on social networking and “knowing a somebody...”
- Exposure to peers from other backgrounds, become challenged, Most SSS youth from La interviewed have a vision of what they want to do and understand the pathway to attaining a job despite their socio-economic disadvantage;
- Strategic plan :TTC, health worker...) compared to youth with little education (Primary or to JSS)
- Most were determined to make it despite all social, family and economic barriers.
- Not true for all the girls in southern Ghana...

Escape Route in the south:

- Southern basic or non schooled: youth from poor households did not have the exposure or life skills to find work on their own particularly in the formal sector.
- Some of the girls who were monitored, and protected did not understand the routes out of poverty.

Escape Route in the North:

- Key virtues were self help and determination to make it to higher levels of education;
- Communal motivation: youth were afraid to fail their communities once they attained SSS.
-
- Northern site revealed that socialization patterns and upbringing restricted the northern youth from gaining life skills, confidence and being assertive due to authoritative and limited involvement in decision making and being told what to do: automatic obedience by youth.
- Northern Post basic youth: Their were only 2 in the study sample who had achieved SSS level and beyond and both understood how to escape the poverty trap (higher education and employment; combining the schooling skills with farming, apply agricultural knowledge to assist the farming). Educating family members to improve their farming practices.

Gender dimension of social mobility

Gender disadvantage

Mainly male strategies

Identity as men related to impregnation

Young girls can't think of social mobility strategies

Not a relevant discourse of girls (exception gets to higher education)

Socialisation of girls with mothers with an "eagle eye" limits their exposure to basic life skills.

North and South: Girls in the community do not have a strong sense of personal potential nor direction in their lives;

they fall even further into the cycle of poverty when impregnated particularly below the post basic level.

Low expectation among their family and peers.

General negative attitude towards the girls in northern Ghana if they become educated: they will be spoiled, they will fail them.LL

The Mirage of Social Mobility

A boy becomes' a man when he gets married and has a child nad the same applies to a woman because they do not see you as a man or woman until you start having children...(JSS Male youth north)

After meals the girls will wash the dishes... if she is going to be free it is after 9 pm while the boys are resting the girls are suffering in the house... we have seen that the girls suffer too much. (Male Northern Youth)

Social context limiting education outcomes: The Cycle of Poverty

- La Girls fall into a cycle of early pregnancy once they complete or are still attending JSS
- they may have another pregnancy while learning a trade or skill at the same time as taking care of one or two children;
- The image of girls and lack of parental willingness and ability to take care of young girls in the La community is limiting girls ability to protect themselves from transactional sex, early pregnancy...prey to boys who entice them with transactional sex.
- Girls who did attain SSS or beyond (very few found in the site) they exhibited strong moral and personal rectitude to attaining higher levels of education and social attainment, employments (traders and paying for their own school fees).

Social context limiting education outcomes: The Cycle of Poverty

Northern Ghana

Girls in northern Ghana have a triple burden of working at the home and being expected to assist their mothers in household and income generating activities while attending school.

This is having negative impact on their achievement and attention at school...

Seasonal periods of ground nut and shea nut picking, girls are unable to participate in school (Primary and JSS).

Parental factors which inhibit education as a means to escaping poverty/ social mobility

Southern Site:

Poor parents do not know the child's options when they drop out or only reach JSS.

Single mothers were found to have difficulty controlling their male children

Large family sizes, absence of male heads and unregistered marriage/ non-legalised relationships and cohabitation

Children at a very early age were expected to work and fend for themselves.

Parental factors which inhibit and support education as a means to assisting youth escape poverty

Northern Site:

Polygamous family systems were having an impact on child welfare and schooling due to limited financial support.

Limited exposure, ignorance of the value of schooling and low levels of literacy

Strong cultural and family norms were still in place in the north which provided values and morals which assisted the children and youth gain confidence and direction for their future. Hard work and respect...

This had a very positive impact on poverty and education

3. Citizenship and Education

- Engagement of youth in community and social activities
- Belonging
- Participation
- Identity

3. Citizenship and Education

Identity and belonging

Findings from the southern site revealed that youth are more attached to their nation than the community

northern site revealed a closer affiliation to the community.

Southern Youth: Their sense of belonging to the community and their ability to give back to the community varies according to the social strata (e.g. La higher social strata).

Participatory Citizenship

Schooling and/or education played a limited role in helping the youth in the study sites become good citizens;

- The post basic category had a much stronger knowledge of what good citizenship was about based on their schooling experience to expand on ways a good citizen should conduct themselves.
- Schooling helped the post basic category participate in community development and political participation...(clubs in the schools, more confidence and had a desire to enter politics).
- Southern Youth had limited engagement with civil society and in politics. The youth in northern Ghana were partially involved in politics such as attending rallies.

Knowledge of their rights and responsibilities:

- Findings from the northern and southern site youth from the non schooled and basic category have limited knowledge of their rights as citizens of Ghana;
- the post basic category of youth had a stronger knowledge of their rights and responsibilities as Ghanaian citizens (e.g. access universal education)

The making of a “good” citizen

- Schooling was less important than community and parenting in developing the concept of “good citizenship” among youth (role models).
- Community principles of helping one another has helped influenced the youth’s notion of who a good citizen is (north)

Desires of youth in Ghana

- To see positive changes in the community and in Ghana,
- To be supported to go back to school (JSS and SSS)--- second chance
- To have access to skills training (modern)
- To have basic social amenities provided for the community (water and health)
- majority of youth desired to see changes in education (quality, less corporal punishment).
- more employment opportunities and/or jobs particularly in the communities;

Policy Implications

Long term Policy Implications for Education

Complex story with different poverty contexts, social class and genders...

Government needs to orient youth and their parents of the potential avenues from JSS;

for youth who are unable to achieve higher levels of education should know their options.

Improving the quality of education will be key to empowering the youth and ensuring an entrepreneurial class evolves.

Policy Implications

Employment and Labour issues

Job creation is needed within the local and national economy in order for expectations of youth to be realised;

Government needs to be able to completing bridge the pathway from education to employment particularly at the lower levels of education/skills (e.g. JSS, vocational and below)—Malaysia model.

Youth in rural north should be oriented and supported to engage in modern methods of commercial farming.

Policy Implications

Education

Need for strong counselling structures in and outside the school system in order to assist youth and pre youth with their pathway to educational attainment, employment, life choices and options for future.

There should be funds for supporting apprenticeship and then helping youth to set up business after training.

Stronger drive towards moral education within the school system.

Listening to Youth

Need to Link Education Policy, youth policy and employment policy

Strategies to assist youth require understanding of the contextual realities and strategies should take into account different poverty worlds...

Gender issues: School should play a stronger role in helping young people recognise and relate to each other as equals... curriculum on gender equality.

The last word

For my children, they will have free basic education because the World Bank promised free education for all by 2015. Also I am expecting more foreign aid for education from the UN, USA, World Bank and Foreign NGOs. Massive investment in education. Some time to come too we will have so many people with first degrees- what I don't know is the availability of jobs. (YOUNG WOMAN POST BASIC, La).

The End

THANK YOU

3. Citizenship and Education

Southern Ghana

Loss of livelihood partly due to urbanization particularly among men has led to dissatisfaction with the state;

Youth experiencing the absence of father figure and loss of livelihoods among men in the community had a direct impact on youth's growing dissatisfaction...

Increasing social vices were a result of the lack of opportunity and unemployment.

Many youth expressed desire to leave the community in La but due to their lack of employment they are "stuck"

The few youth who were able to transition to higher levels of education and employment left the community.

Perceptions of “who makes it in life”

People in north and south Ghana see education as a means to escaping poverty only if it provides the youth with a job: a job is a white collar formal employment (in companies, Government or NGO's)

Self employment is not a good result of successfully educated person and youth who are self employed are not perceived to have “made it.”

Very few youth in northern and southern Ghana from poor households attain tertiary level education;

Very few are able to get the successful job they aspire for;

Parents and youth have been left disappointed and discouraged as a result of the outcomes to education.

Result of the GAP between expectation and actual outcomes

North (non schooled and basic schooled)

Parents feel obligated to send their child to school but are not satisfied with the results/outcomes of schooling (higher educ, good job, social status); youth are also not fulfilled with the outcomes of schooling.

Impact on the their siblings and the next generation of children...

Parents loose hope in the system...

Factors that contribute to poor outcomes to education

Factors that contribute to the poor outcomes of schooling include: poor understanding of the value of education, lack of parental support, and inability to financially support children (fathers loss of livelihood, death in family).

School based and home /community based factors.

Home based factors are very significant in poverty zones in Ghana.

Parental factors which inhibit education as a means to escaping poverty/ social mobility

Southern Site:

Children at a very early age were expected to work and fend for themselves. This had a particularly negative impact girls due to the outcomes of transactional sex and early cohabitation with males in the community to survive.

Youth from wealthy households depend on their parents and submit to their direction/vision of their future since they are being financed by the household head compared to youth from poor households... who strategize carefully about the pathway to higher education.

Most SSS graduate youth opt for higher education as a means to escaping poverty once they complete SSS but find it difficult to finance (poor and wealthy backgrounds).

Short Term Policy Implications

Employment, Social Welfare Policies

Need for small scale industries in the communities which have lost their traditional livelihoods;

Need for traditional rulers to unite for community development;

Government should ensure that basic social amenities such as the provision of water are available.

More education on family planning methods to encourage smaller families.