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CITIZENS' EXPERIENCES WITH SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE AND LEARNING INPUTS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN GHANA

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■ Introduction

Education has been acknowledged as one of the ways through which poverty and other forms of deprivation can be eliminated. As a result, governments and policy makers all over the world have been exploring ways through which the promised benefits of education can be harnessed. The Government of Ghana, in attaining its Education for All (EFA) targets of ensuring improved primary school access and equity, as well as educational quality and learning outcomes for all children by 2015, has since 2004 implemented various policy initiatives and interventions. Among these are the 2003-2015 Education Strategy Plan (ESP), the School Fee Abolition Program (or Capitation Grant), Nutrition and School Feeding programs, training and upgrading of teachers, especially in the area of Science, Mathematics, and Information Communication and Technology (ICT) education, provision of free textbooks, furniture and infrastructure.

One major tool that has been used for public service delivery assessment is the Citizens' Report Card (CRC). Developed in Bangalore, India, in 1993 by civil society in response to concerns about the quality of public services, The CRC is a simple tool that provides a public service delivery agency with systematic feedback from a random sample survey of service

users regarding their experiences with the quantity and quality of service. Such feedback enables the service provider to identify strengths and weaknesses in their work. Over the years, countries such as Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa and Uganda have used CRCs purposely to ensure accountability and transparency in the delivery of public services.¹ In Ghana, the CRC has been used to gauge city dwellers within the Accra Metropolitan Area opinions on the delivery of public services such as water, refuse collection and management, education, sanitation among others.²

The Citizen Report Card (CRC) methodology to assess citizens' knowledge and experiences with public primary education service delivery using a household survey approach is a follow-up to the Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) by CDD-Ghana [which was funded by Results for Development (R4D) under the Transparency and Accountability Project (TAP) in Ghana]. The PETS project examined possible leakages in the distribution of core textbooks in thirty (30) public primary schools located in six (6) districts - Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese, Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam, Awutu-Efutu-Senya, Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa, Cape Coast and Twifo-Hemang-Lower Denkyira in the

¹ See World Bank, 2004.

² See World Bank, 2010.

Central region of Ghana as part of the multi-year CDD-Ghana implemented and Results for Development (R4D) funded Transparency and Accountability Project (TAP) in Ghana.

Given the critical role of inputs such as teachers, textbooks and furniture among others to learning outcomes and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2 and 3 in Ghana, a Citizen Report Card detailing the experiences, expectations and satisfaction of beneficiaries of educational services provides valuable feedback to national actors (Ministry of Education, and the Ghana Education Service) and sub-national [District Education Directorates (DEDs) and District Education Implementation Committees (DEICs)] and other supply-side actors at the school level (i.e. School authorities and teachers) on the experiences of parents, and community members with these educational services.

Study methodology: The CRC survey used both secondary and primary data collection methods to gather data. The secondary method involved a review of publications on global and local education policies from sources such as the World Bank, UNESCO, IIEP DFID, USAID, Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ghana Education Service (GES) etc. Also, reports on citizen report card surveys carried out in other countries were reviewed. The primary data collection method involved the designing of data collection tools and the use of same gather information from key stakeholders in education in the survey districts. The study gathered data on the experiences and opinions of citizens on the delivery of education services in public primary schools. Respondents were drawn largely from households with children in public basic schools in various communities within the six project districts - Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese, Awutu-Efutu-Senya, Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam, Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa, Twifo-Hemang-Lower Denkyira and Cape Coast.³

This briefing paper presents education service users' scorecard regarding their experiences and knowledge of the provision of educational infrastructure and inputs as well as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities in public primary schools in the survey districts.

■ Knowledge and Experiences with the Provision of School Infrastructure

The provision of adequate school infrastructure is critical to education service delivery in Ghana, especially in deprived communities. Cuyvers *et al.* (2011) in a study concluded that school infrastructure definitely contributes to the well-being of students and that poor infrastructure affects students be it in the urban or rural areas. Similarly, other international and national based studies have established that inadequate school infrastructure restricts access to education and negatively impacts on child retention, particularly among the most deprived regions and districts in Ghana (UNICEF, 2012; Casely-Hayford, 2011; IBIS, 2010; Hunt, 2008; World Bank, 2004).

Citizens' knowledge on the availability of educational infrastructure is mixed. As presented in Table 1, while the majority (88%) of users indicated that the public primary schools in their districts within their communities or in nearby communities had safe and adequate infrastructure or buildings, about tenth (9%) expressed contrasting views. Also, absolute majority (95%) claimed primary schools in the districts had classrooms for all levels (i.e. primary 1 to 6) aside the marginal 1 % who thought otherwise and felt this hampers effective teaching and learning. With respect to the provision of library facilities, 55% of service users indicated that schools in their communities or in nearby communities had no library facilities to enable out of school reading and learning by pupils and teachers. Nearly a third (29 %) however said primary schools had this facility. Similarly, a majority of users also attested that schools had no access ramps (81%) and

³ A total of 1258 completed field returns was submitted by the field teams, 40 more field returns above the target of 1,218.

hand rails (82%) to facilitate access for children with disabilities in schools.

The district level figures showed that for school infrastructure and classrooms for all levels, in all the project districts, those who responded in the affirmative were in the majority. Also, in all the districts, those who claimed primary schools lacked ramps and hand rails constituted the majority. With respect to the availability of library facilities, a majority from Awutu-Efutu-Senya District said these facilities were available.

In fact, the provision of school infrastructure has become a major governmental objective since 2004. As one of the most visible developmental assets, past and present governments have invested heavily in its provision to enhance teaching and learning. At the end of 2011 alone for instance, 1,226 school projects were under construction in line with the Government's effort towards eliminating schools under trees over the medium-term. In addition, 350 boreholes, 99 gender-friendly lavatories and 250 urinals were constructed in basic schools in deprived districts (GES, 2011). Indeed, studies by SEND-Ghana in 2008; Korbie et al in 2011; Associates for Change in 2011 and; UNICEF in 2012 showed that

infrastructure shortage (use of temporary facilities) and limited classroom spaces continues to lead to high levels of congestion in classrooms and restricting participatory teaching and learning in Ghana.

The absence of library facilities in schools in the survey districts consistent with previous studies by GNECC study on infrastructural challenges and financing of public basic education in Accra metro which found that 79% of schools had no library facilities (2010). Alemna's (2002) earlier study also alluded to the lack of recognition of the important role library plays in the school as there is no law or policy on school libraries; and no specific standards for school library development.

VOLPHIG's (2011) study in the Volta Region which revealed that 94% of the schools in the region had no provision of access for persons with disabilities, and thus, exposing the persistent gross disregard for Sections 6 and 60 of the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act, 715), which mandates owners and occupiers of public buildings including schools to provide easy access for persons with disabilities clearly corroborates the findings of this current study.

Table 1: Knowledge on availability of school infrastructure

	Safe building or infrastructure		Classrooms at all levels		Library facilities		Ramps		Hand rails	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese	4%	94%	2%	96%	47%	25%	77%	7%	82%	2%
Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam	14%	86%	2%	98%	71%	27%	94%	1%	93%	1%
Awutu-Efutu-Senya	7%	91%	1%	99%	29%	54%	75%	12%	78%	9%
Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa	10%	88%	--	94%	70%	14%	80%	2%	81%	1%
Cape Coast	12%	88%	0%	99%	60%	30%	84%	1%	82%	1%
Twifo-Hemang-Lower Denkyira	8%	79%	1%	85%	51%	25%	76%	4%	77%	4%
Overall Average	9%	88%	1%	95%	55%	29%	81%	5%	82%	3%

■ Knowledge and Experiences with the Provision of Learning Inputs

The importance of the provision of educational inputs (e.g. textbooks, supplementary materials, blackboards, school furniture, uniforms etc) to support quality education cannot be overemphasized. For instance, textbook continues to be a major influence on classroom teaching and has a high cost effectiveness ratio for improving learning (Mingat, 2005, p 126). Crossley and Murby (1994) notes that, “in times of severe budgetary restraints (as is the case in the developing world) ... the most cost effective way of improving educational quality is the increased provision of high quality textbooks... as they hold considerable potential for high school achievements” and counter-balancing the problems of poorly trained teachers and the lack of basic facilities in schools. Consequently, it has been the aim of most governments, and most educators, alike to provide every pupil with a complete set of school books in every subject, free of charge.

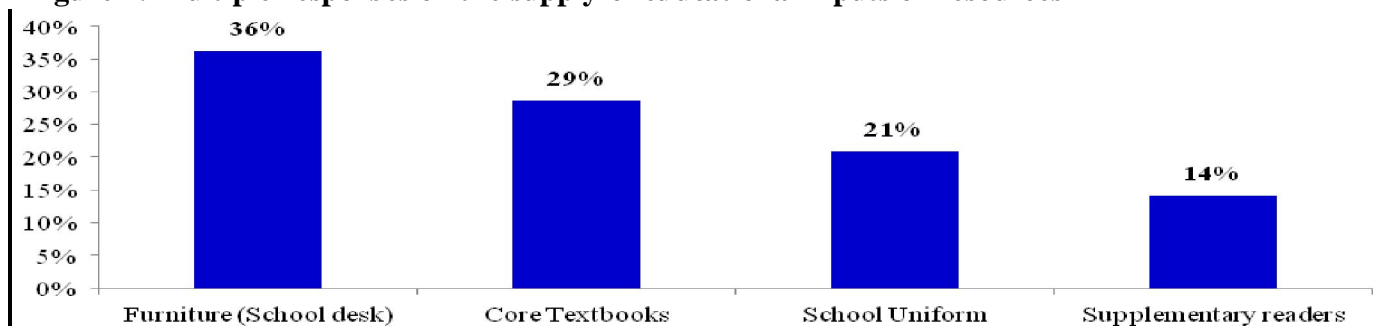
In general, education service users are largely informed about the provisioning of blackboards and school furniture or desks. Overwhelming majorities of education service users reported that almost all schools had blackboards (95%) and school furniture or desks (87%) to facilitate teaching and learning. In terms of the use of school desks, nearly 8 in every 10 users (i.e. 79%) reported that two or three pupils shared a desk. Again, across the six districts, we found majority of users agreeing that these educational inputs are provided to schools within or near their communities (Table 2).

Analysis of the GES Education Management Information System (EMIS) data for the six survey districts showed that the seating places of pupils in most of the survey districts were worse than the regional average and the MoE standards as a result of the increased enrollment occasioned by the introduction of the capitation grant without a commensurate improvement in the provision of writing places in the last four years (CDD/HP, 2013).

Table 2: Knowledge on the provision of educational inputs

	Blackboards		School furniture or desks	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese	--	99%	3%	91%
Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam	0%	99%	1%	99%
Awutu-Efutu-Senya	1%	97%	12%	86%
Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa	1%	92%	5%	82%
Cape Coast	1%	98%	8%	88%
Twifo-Hemanng-Lower Denkyira	1%	84%	7%	75%
Overall Average	1%	95%	6%	87%

Figure 1: Multiple responses on the supply of educational inputs or resources



Indeed, a strong majority of education users (78%) admitted that children in the public primary schools received free school materials from the educational authorities. When asked to indicate the types of free school materials that pupils who attend the public primary schools in their households or communities receive, of the 2,069 multiple responses gathered, as depicted in Figure 1, school furniture came up top with 36% followed by core-textbooks (29%), school uniforms (21%) and supplementary readers (14%).

Again, of a total of 1,036 responses on the time when these materials are received, the “*beginning or a month after the commencement of the first term*” led the pack with 59%. Another 18% went for “*end of the academic year*”; 16 %, “*somewhere in the second term*”; and 8%, “*end of first term*”.

Having recognized the enormous role the provision of text books play in achieving quality education, governments all over the world have been exploring ways of making textbooks and other supplementary materials available. However this decision has mostly been a highly political issue since it’s one of the most visible components of government educational provision whose absence is noted by parents.⁴ Governments in Ghana are no exception to the politicization of this laudable education policy. In the past two decades, irrespective of the political party in power, education has maintained a top priority status with various governments recognizing the need to maintain effective programs of previous administration, particularly those with high visibility, and with direct incentives of scoring strong political marks among the population (e.g. infrastructure, school feeding, free school uniforms, capitation grant etc. (Casely-Hayford, 2011). Indeed, the provision of some of these educational inputs has often been made a political campaign issue meant to secure votes from the ordinary people.

■ Knowledge and Experiences with the Capitation Grant Schemes and School Feeding Programs

The cost of education takes a hefty chunk of the income of most families in Ghana. Consequently, the burden of paying school fees could further drive most Ghanaian families into abject poverty. In order to lessen this burden, the Government of Ghana introduced the pro-poor Capitation Grant and School Feeding programs. The Capitation Grant was introduced on pilot basis in 40 districts during the 2004/2005 academic year with support from the World Bank and expanded across the country in 2005/2006 academic year with high increases in enrollment. Through the Capitation Grant scheme, each pupil in public kindergarten, primary and junior secondary school receives an annual grant, currently GH¢ 4.50.⁵

While most education service users claimed pupils in public primary schools benefit from capitation grant, the same could not be said about the school feeding program. At least 6 in every 10 service users (62%) indicated that pupils in public primary schools in their or nearby communities “*always*” or “*sometimes*” received the capitation grant. While 11 % said pupils never received the capitation grant, a quarter (25%) surprisingly did not know whether pupils receive the capitation grant or not. With respect to the provision of school nutritional program, only 18% of education service users admitted that pupils “*always*” or “*sometimes*” benefit from the school feeding program. More than 7 in 10 of users (76%) reported that pupils in schools in their or nearby communities never benefited from the school feeding program (Table 3).

The district disaggregated data, especially the one on capitation grant brought out some important findings. A little over half of services users in Awutu-Efutu-Senya (51%) surprisingly are ignorant of whether pupils receive the capitation grant or not. In

⁴ DFID Guidance Note; *Learning and Teaching materials: Policy and practice for provision.*

⁵ See Hammond, 2010; Obeng, 2012; and Amoah, 2012.

three other districts - Twifo-Hemang-Lower Denkyira, Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa and Cape Coast – the percentages that similarly lacked knowledge about receipt of capitation grant were relatively higher (29%; 28%; and 26 %) than the overall average. With respect to the school feeding program, at least a fifth or more in Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese and Awutu-Efutu-Senya (20 % each) as well as Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa (31%) said pupils “always” or “sometimes” benefit from the school feeding program. These figures are comparatively higher than the overall average.

respectively of PTA and SMC executives did not know whether their schools received the CG for the first term of the 2008/09 academic year. For the second and third terms, again, 45% and 48% of PTA and SMC executives in Bosomtwe and Jomoro respectively did not know if the CG had been received (CDD, 2010).

Table 3: Knowledge on availability of school infrastructure

	Capitation Grant			School Feeding Program		
	No, never before	Yes, (Always & Sometimes)	Don't know	No, never before	Yes, (Always & Sometimes)	Don't know
Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese	--	90%	9%	78%	20%	2%
Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam	--	94%	6%	92%	6%	2%
Awutu-Efutu-Senya	15%	33%	51%	73%	20%	7%
Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa	3%	69%	28%	68%	31%	1%
Cape Coast	45%	29%	26%	84%	14%	1%
Twifo-Hemang-Lower Denkyira	2%	54%	29%	63%	14%	3%
Overall Average	11%	62%	25%	76%	18%	3%

Users’ limited knowledge of the receipt of capitation grant by schools is very consistent with findings of earlier studies by CDD-Ghana in 2010 where teachers, PTA and SMC executives, parents and pupils mostly displayed ignorance or little knowledge of when the grant was released and factors underlying delays in release of funds. Though absolute majorities (87%) knew of CG, more than half (54%, 58% and 60%) did not know whether their wards schools had received the CG for the first, second and third term respectively. Indeed, four in every ten PTA and SMC executives (i.e. 40%) did not know whether the 2008/09 CG had been received or not. For districts like Tamale, Bosomtwe and Jomoro 75%, 42% and 43%

The lower percentage that claimed that pupils benefit from the school feeding program as compared to the capitation grant could be due to the pilot nature of the former compared to the latter which is more generalized. However, it is worth noting that across the country, an estimated 148,144 pupils in 490 schools benefited from the feeding program during the 2010/2011 academic year (GES, 2011). Impact and evaluation reports by Send Ghana (2008) and SNV Netherlands Development Organisation in 2008 on the Ghana School Feeding Program points to the limited coverage and scope of implementation of the program as well as the inability of district authorities to scale the program to cover all schools in their districts.

■ Knowledge and Experiences with the Provision of Water and Sanitation Facilities

The relationship between education, water, sanitation, and health is cardinal in the education service delivery and under the GES' School Health Education Program; the provision of water, sanitation and health is considered a crucial aspect of education delivery (WaterAid, 2007; Pillitteri, 2011; Smith-Asante, 2011).

Education service users agreed that most public primary schools have access to safe drinking water. As presented in Table 4, majority of education users (69%) reported that the public primary schools in their or nearby communities had safe drinking water for the pupils. In the experience of more than 6 in 10 of these users (i.e. 61%), the drinking water facility provided water all year round. Most of these water facilities were standpipes in the school and communities where the schools are located (37%) and public boreholes in the community and schools (20 percent). It is worth noting that some 25% of users indicated that the schools in their or nearby communities had no safe drinking water.

The district level analysis showed that in five out of the six project districts (i.e. Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam, Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa, Cape Coast, Twifo-Hemang-Lower Denkyira and Awutu-Efutu-Senya), a fifth or more of service users claimed schools lacked safe drinking water.

Also, less than half of users interviewed in Twifo-Hemang-Lower Denkyira agreed that the water facility is operational all year round.

The EMIS data on the six districts showed that access to drinking water in public primary schools in the six districts seemed to have declined by about 14% in the past five years (EMIS, 2013).

A large majority of education service users (77%) also reported that schools had hand washing facilities. Some 20% of respondents however indicated that the schools in their communities had no hand washing facilities. These findings were consistent with the findings of the GNECC study of Accra Metropolitan Area public schools where 27% of schools surveyed had no hand washing basins.

The importance of separate toilet facilities with respect to the attendance of pre-teen girls cannot be over-emphasized as it has been linked to absenteeism and school dropout among girls at upper primary and in Junior High School (UNICEF, 2012; FAWE, 2011; Pridmore, 2007; GNECC, 2009; Hunt, 2008; Alhassan et al, 2010).

A large majority (81%) of education users averred that toilet facilities were available and functional. Another 7% said the facilities are available but dysfunctional while similar numbers (i.e. 7%) said the facilities were not available and pupils and teachers use open spaces.

Table 4: Knowledge on schools' access to safe drinking water

	Schools have access to safe drinking water		Facility provides water all year round	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese	18%	79%	2%	77%
Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam	22%	78%	2%	76%
Awutu-Efutu-Senya	39%	56%	10%	51%
Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa	22%	70%	6%	60%
Cape Coast	24%	71%	10%	54%
Twifo-Hemang-Lower Denkyira	27%	58%	12%	48%
Overall Average	25%	69%	7%	61%

Seven in every ten service users interviewed (71%) indicated that the toilets in the schools were mainly Kumasi Ventilation Improvement Project (KVIP) facilities. Only 4% mentioned the presence of water closets while 3% each mentioned pit latrines and traditional pit with planks across for squatting. According to 77% of survey respondents, these facilities had been provided separately for male and female pupils.

■ Conclusion

Citizens held positive views and knowledge of the availability of school infrastructure such as classrooms and blackboards. They were aware however of the inadequacy and sometimes total absence of furniture, library and disability-sensitive facilities in schools in and near their communities.

Citizens were mostly aware of the disbursement of the capitation grant to schools in and near their communities. Only a small proportion of citizens had knowledge of the presence of school feeding programs in the public primary schools within and near their communities.

Citizens largely reported that the public primary schools in or near their communities had safe drinking water for the pupils. A quarter of citizens in this communities however indicated that the schools in or near their communities had no safe drinking water.

■ Recommendations

- √ Improve access to educational inputs and resources such as textbooks, laptop computers, uniforms and the school feeding programs;
- √ Provide library facilities stocked with relevant books; and
- √ Encourage active interaction between school authorities and parents within and outside the PTA fora.

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