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Factors affecting Pupils' Participation in Basic Education: Evidence from Ghana

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Abstract:

Studies have identified a number of factors that constrain children's school and completion. In particular, direct and indirect costs of education, represented in out-of-pocket expenses and the opportunity cost of children time, respectively, are among some of the most important constraints (Assaad, Deborah & Nadia, 2001). This study therefore looked at factors affecting pupils' participation in basic education in Apewosika and Amamoma communities in the Cape Coast Metropolis in the Central Region of Ghana. Three research questions were used for the study. The descriptive research design was employed for the study. The target population for the study included all parents whose wards have dropped out of school. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 50 parents for the study. The research instrument that was used to collect the data was the questionnaire. The data gathered were analyzed and presented in frequencies and percentages. The theoretical framework used in this study draws on Becker's (1965) allocation of time theory, and Becker's (1991) theory of comparative advantage. In the allocation of time theory, he assumes that households combine goods and time to produce commodities. The study revealed that most of the parents agreed that poverty accounts for low participation of children in the basic schools. Also, it was realized that late and over age enrollment contributed to drop out. The study further revealed that household wealth determines the rate of enrollment and participation, cost of education and cultural values and practices all affect pupils' participation in basic education. Based on the research findings, it was recommended that parents should be encouraged and sensitized to send their children to school. Government should increase capitation grants and school feeding programmes should be extended to cover more schools and managed very well. Non-Governmental Organisations and stakeholders interested in education should establish and expand their scholarships schemes to support poor but needy students to enable them get enrolled.

Keywords: Participation, Education, Household, Ghana

1. Introduction

Education plays an important role in the life of a man and in the socio-economic development of a nation (Aggarwal, 1997). It is therefore essential to embrace education, for it is still regarded as an important bridge of social, economic and political mobility (Amutabi & Oketch, 2003). Throughout the world, people look up to education as a conduit to achieve social change and sustainable development. In response to this need, several educational programmes and reforms have been made both locally and internationally. The United Nations (UN) developed eight development goals known as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were adopted in September, 2000. Goal 2 of the MDGs talks about the universal access to primary education by the year 2015 and goal 3 talks about promoting gender equality and empowering women. The goal three is also targeted in eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015 (MDG Report, 2009). Ghana as a nation has adopted various educational programmes during the pre-colonial era and post-independence towards development. Prominent among these programmes is the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Programme (fCUBE), which was aimed at providing every child of school age with good basic education [Ministry of Education] (MOE, 2006). Also, Ghana aims to reach the middle income country status by the year 2020. This made government to develop a road map known as Vision 2020. The document contains an education policy with the objectives to ensure all citizens regardless of gender, age or social status, are functionally literate to the fullest and productive at the minimum [Ghana Statistical Services] (GSS, 2007). Added to this, is also a fact that the constitution of Ghana has stipulated in Article 25 clause 1, that all persons shall have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities and with a view to achieving the full realization of that right, basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all. Article 38 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana requires Government to provide access to Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education, and depending on resource availability, to Senior Secondary, Technical and Tertiary education and life-long learning. Following the implementation of capitation grants, and school feeding programme in Ghana, there has been a tremendous increase in basic education enrollment in general (MOE, 2008). Despite the spectacular rise in school rates at the basic education stage over the past two decades, the strong government commitment to enforce its declaration of free and quality basic education in Ghana, and the high value parents put on education of their children, basic school participation and rates are

still far from universal especially in the Apewosika and Amamoma communities in the Cape Coast Metropolis in the Central Region of Ghana.

2. Statement of the Problem

Various studies have identified a number of factors that constrain children's school and completion. In particular, direct and indirect costs of education, represented in out-of-pocket expenses and the opportunity cost of child time, are some of the most significant constraints (Assaad, Deborah & Nadia, 2001). By 2002 the world average net primary education reached 81% [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation] (UNESCO, 2006). The increased demand for education contributed to a decline in the number of children who are out of school. Notwithstanding improved access to education, female participation in basic school level education in most developing countries including Ghana is still characterized by disparities. The case of Apewosika and Amamoma communities in Cape Coast Metropolis in the Central Region of Ghana is not an exception. Girls continue to constitute the majority of children out-of-school. Girls represent 55 per cent of all children who are out of school worldwide. Available data have indicated that worldwide, for every 100 boys out of school 122 girls are also out of school. This varies from country to country (UNESCO, 2006). According to Sperling (2005), in Sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of girls do not complete primary school and only 17 per cent of girls are enrolled in secondary school. Sutherland-Addy (2002) noted that in Ghana school enrollment have increased over the past decades, but fewer girls than boys are enrolled at all levels of education in Ghana, and the gap widens at higher levels and in rural areas. The rate of participation in basic schools in Apewosika and Amamoma especially among the girls is discouraging making it an issue of concern to both teachers and educationist in the Cape Coast Metropolis. It is against this background that the study deems it necessary to examine the factors which affect pupils' participation in basic education in the Apewosika and Amamoma communities in the Cape Coast Metropolis in the Central Region of Ghana.

3. Purpose of the Study

This study sought to examine the factors which affect basic school participation in the Apewosika and Amamoma communities in the Cape Coast Metropolis in the Central Region of Ghana. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Examine factors that affect basic school participation in Apewosika and Amamoma communities;
- Examine the varying performance of governments in raising enrolment, especially among girls; and
- Assess the impact of individual, household and community level variables on basic school participations in Apewosika and Amamoma communities.

4. Research Questions

The following research questions were used for the study.

- What are the factors that affect basic school participation in Apewosika and Amamoma communities?
- What efforts have been made by governments in raising enrollment especially among girls?
- How does an individual, household and community level variables affect basic school participations in Apewosika and Amamoma communities?

5. Review of Related Literature

Ravallion and Quentin (1999) used data on targeted stipend programme to identify how much child labour substitutes for schooling. They found that a stipend with a value considerably less than the mean child wage was enough to assure full school attendance among programme participants. Their results also suggested that subsidy reduces the incidence of child labour and increases school attendance rate. Dre'ze and Kingdon (2001) found that provision of mid-day meal in school roughly halves the proportion of girls excluded from the schooling system in rural India. When a choice has to be made among children in the family to decide who goes to school, it is girls that end up staying at home. Some studies reveal that school enrolment significantly decreases as per capita or household income decreases, with girls' rates decreasing profoundly as compared to boys (Filmer (1999; Fergany, 2000; Fentiman et al., 2001; Nagi, 2001). Similarly, using a proxy for households' level of wealth constructed from household possessions of consumer durable, Assaad et al. (2001) found that the household wealth index has a significant positive impact on children's schooling. In rural Ghana, for example, grade repetition and teacher unavailability as well as the attractive pull of seasonal economic activities have been identified as key factors contributing to drop out (Ananga, 2011). A synthesis of 54 research studies on girls' education in Ghana by Boakye (1997) concludes that barriers to girls' education are multifaceted and interrelated. Drop out according to Hunt (2008), is often a process rather than the result of one single event. Not much research has examined the impact that food aid and school feeding programmes have on educational access (Pridmore, 2007), but in Ghana one study investigated the impact of food aid intervention on girls' , attendance and retention in schools in the East Gonja District of Northern Ghana by Seidu (2003). Generally, it found that although food aid is an incentive for girls to enroll, attend and remain in school till completion, it was equally important in improving girls' participation in basic education (Seidu, 2003). Hashim (2005) conducted a similar research in Northern Ghana and suggested that the likelihood of children to drop out of school is based on a complex mix of factors which included the educational level of parents and the ability to pay indirect/direct costs of schooling. In addition, research conducted in a rural area of Ghana revealed that most children do not follow schoolwork because they do not possess the understanding from previous work that is a prerequisite for the syllabus of the higher grades of primary school and junior high school (Pryor & Ampiah, 2003). On the whole these reasons tend to be multifaceted and interrelated but with poverty as a common denominator (AED, 2002). Factors influencing female enrollments have been identified as: beliefs and practices and the perception of the role of girls by families and communities; costs; the

opportunity cost of sending girls to school and girls having to travel long distances to go to school (Avotri, 2000; AED, 2002; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004). Using qualitative interviews as well as observations, with fifteen families in Accra and Koforidua, Yeboah (1997) found that there was some favouring of boys over girls. She noted that culture, quality of school, performance of a child, were critical variables in family decision-making around girls' education.

6. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study draws on Becker's (1965) allocation of time theory, in which he assumes that households combine goods and time to produce commodities. Households try to maximize their utility in which consumption of goods and services, and the time they use in market, non-market, and leisure activities are arguments. Households maximize their utility subject to income and time constraints. The time allocated for school attendance is input in the education process, which could be used to participate more fully in the labour market or home production, and therefore school time represents forgone earnings or gains to households, which is an indirect cost of education to the family. Moreover, households incur additional direct costs on school tuition, books and supplies, school uniforms, and private lessons make school costs unaffordable for poor households. Such resource constraints may bear significant gender implications on parents' decision to send girls to school. Becker (1991) in his theory of comparative advantages in multi-person households states that members who are relatively more efficient at market activities would use less of their time at consumption activities than would other members. Empirical research entails that application of Becker's theories (1965 and 1991) as determinants of child schooling should allow for inclusion of measures of school quality which might explain significant unobserved heterogeneity exogenous to the theory of time allocation and comparative advantage. In this regards, Becker's (1965) theory of time allocation has been found lacking the ability to incorporate the effects of power and control over resources on the intra-household allocation of time and resources, however alternative frameworks are even more limited (Assaad, Deborah & Nadia, 2001). Though, this observation had been made, the theory is still relevant in this study. Because it helps to find out factors which affect participation in the basic education. In decision making an individual looks at the benefits he/she would gain after taking that decision. Parents as rational beings decide as to whether to educate their children or not looking at the opportunity cost. Also, the decision of which child to send to school, that is boy or girl is based on the cost involved and the expected benefits.

7. Methodology

7.1. Research Design

This study employed the descriptive research design. It is non-experimental, conducted without interfering with the natural setting or manipulation of study variables. Also, it involves collection of accurate data for the purpose of determining the current nature of the subject of study and it uses logical methods for inductive/deductive reasoning to arrive at generalizations (Best & Kahn, 1995; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). The data gathered are directed toward the determination of the nature of a situation as it existed at the time of study. This design was appropriate because the study attempted to describe some aspects of a population by selecting samples of individuals who were asked to complete a questionnaire.

7.2. Population Of The Study

The target population for the study included all parents in the community whose wards drop out from school. This was done in order to gather extensive and in-depth information on the issue under study.

7.3. Sample And Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents for the study. The rationale for the choice of the sample technique according to the study was to select respondents who are abreast with relevant information and knowledge in the issue under study. The sampling was done based on certain strategies. These were theory-based and critical case sampling techniques. The theory based was used to select respondents on the basis of their manifestation in the factors which affect basic school participation in the Apewosika and Amamoma communities in the Cape Coast Metropolis in the Central Region of Ghana. Critical case sampling was used to select most important schools and communities that could yield the most information which would have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge (Patton, 1990). The total sample used for the study was 50.

7.4. Research Instrument

The research instruments that were used to collect the data were the questionnaire. A questionnaire comprises a number of questions or statements that relate to the purpose of a study. It is a data-gathering instrument through which respondents are made to answer questions or respond to a given statement in writing (Best & Kahn, 1995). This method gave the necessary information the study wants from the respondents. With regards to the questionnaire, 25 items in all were designed for each respondent. The questionnaires were divided into four sections A, B, C, and D. Section A covers the background information of respondents including gender. Section B deals with factors affecting basic school participation, C deals with efforts made by government to increase enrollment at the basic school, and D deals with impact of individual, household and community level variables on basic school participation.

7.4. Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

Validity of the instruments was ensured by using appropriate sampling techniques and data instrumentation in measuring the concepts of the research instrument. Experts in research made useful suggestions to help in fine tuning the instruments. The

reliability of the instruments was obtained through pre-testing of the instruments on a cross section of the target population. Respondents used in pre-testing the instrument were asked to make comments on the clarity of the questions. These comments were taken into consideration to make the questions as clear as possible.

7.5. Pre-Testing of the Instrument

Pre-testing of questionnaires on a sample of respondents drawn from the target population is useful in fine tuning aspects of the questions that could otherwise make it difficult for respondents to interpret questions as intended (Foddy, 1995). Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) have stressed the need for pre-testing of survey instruments before administering the instruments to the respondents. The questionnaires were pre-tested on 10 parents who were not used in the study. The reliability of the instruments was confirmed by examining the individual test items with the Cronbach's alpha (Gall et al. 1996). The Cronbach alpha value for the pre-test was 0.85 (85%). This value was considered appropriate for the study.

8. Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis

The questionnaires were self-administered and this increased the response rate. Fifty instruments were retrieved and used for data analysis. The raw data collected from the respondents were processed by coding the questionnaires. The questionnaires were analyzed using Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS version 16) and the results presented in frequency and percentages.

9. Results and Discussion

The results were presented and discussed in accordance with each research question. The selected respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with the statement using likert scale. SA= strongly agree A= agree D= disagree and SD= strongly disagree. Table 1 illustrates their responses.

Factors	SA		A		D		SD	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Poverty affects participation	30	60.0%	20	40.0%	-	-	-	-
Inadequate supply of teachers	5	10.0%	5	10.0%	15	30.0%	25	50.0%
Distance from schools	5	10.0%	15	30.0%	15	30.0%	15	30.0%
Poor school environment	20	40.0%	5	10.0%	10	20.0%	15	30.0%
Late and over age enrollment	20	40.0%	15	30.0%	10	20.0%	5	10.0%
Cultural values and practices influence basic school participation	10	20.0%	25	50.0%	10	20.0%	5	10.0%
The level of household wealth determines the rate of enrollment	20	40.0%	25	50.0%	10	20.0%	-	-
Parental level of education affects school participation	5	10.0%	20	40.0%	10	20.0%	15	30.0%
Cost of educating a child affects enrollment	30	60.0%	15	30.0%	-	-	5	10.0%

Table 1: Factors affecting Basic School Participation

The statistics from Table 1 revealed that all the respondents 50 (100.0%) agreed that poverty was a factor that accounts for low participation at the basic level in the Apewosika and Amamoma communities. This confirms the work of Hunt (2008) that Poverty affects participation. Similarly, the results is also in line with the study conducted by Assaad et al. (2001) using a proxy for households' level of wealth constructed from household possessions of consumer durable, when they found that the household wealth index has a significant positive impact on children's schooling. Filmer (1999), Fergany (2000), Nagi (2001), and Assaad et al. (2001) also, documented similar findings on the significant positive relationship between school attendance and household level of wealth for 41 developing countries using DHS data. Furthermore, 35 (70.0%) of the respondents agreed that late and over age enrollment of pupils was a factor leading to low participation and high dropout rate. More so, it was seen that the majority of the respondents 45 (90.0%), 45 (90.0%) and 35 (70.0%) agreed that the level of household wealth determines the rate of enrollment, cost of education affect enrollment, and cultural values and practices influence school participation respectively. The findings of Sperling (2005) supports this result when he reported that rightly or wrongly impoverished parents often feel they need their girl-child labour for additional income, just to help with the grueling requirements of life. He went further to state that 60% of girls in an estimated population of 110 million children in the developing world, where Ghana is one will not have the opportunity of entering school while the few girls enrolled will drop out.

10. Conclusions and Recommendations

From the findings of the study, it was concluded that poverty, late and over age enrolment, household wealth determines the rate of enrolment, costs of education, cultural values and practices all influence school participation. It was therefore recommended that, Parents whose wards have been dropout from school should be encouraged and motivated by the stakeholders and to send their children to school at the school going age. Government and Non-governmental organizations should give financial support to poor and needy children to enable them enrolled into schools. The capitation grant and the school feeding programmes should be increased and sustained to further help increase and maintain rate of enrollment and retention at the basic level. The government and other agencies interested in girl-child education should allocate funds to supplement parents and schools in educating the girl

child in order to bridge the disparities in terms of enrollment at the basic level. Although it was revealed that the introduction of capitation grant and school feeding programmes had helped to increase participation and enrollment, teachers and parents should endeavour to implement and manage the programme well to increase participation at the basic level. Much training on income generating ventures should be given by NGOs to parents to help supplement their little income in order to enable them cater for their children basic needs in education. Also, parents should be educated on the importance of girl child education.

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