

Government touts achievements in education but the attributions are misleading

Prince Hamid Armah, PhD | 17th December, 2015

The Deputy Minister for Communication, Mr. Felix Kwakye Ofusu, has shared two pictures on his Facebook wall with the following text in accompaniment:

“The two pictures below on pages 6,7and 8 sum up the progress made so far. The first picture shows a table which compares figures in the sector between the 2008/2009 Academic year and the 2014/2015 Academic year. It shows that the number of educational institutions for all levels has increased from 45,447 in 2008/2009 to 57,270 in 2014/2015 representing an increase of 11,823 or 26.01%. Total enrolment from the Basic to Tertiary level has increased from 7,038,738 to 8,891,892 representing an increase of 1,853,154 or 26.33%. This means that roughly 36% of our population is in school. It also means that access has been created for an additional 1,853,154 students. The second picture shows the Community day senior high school at Ekumfi Otuaam”

For someone who often uses figures from the Ministry of Education’s EMIS data, it would be pretty difficult for me to dispute these figures, especially when I have no other means to verify them. In general, I absolutely agree with the Deputy Minister for Communication on this monumental achievement in expanding access to education, particularly at the basic education level. However, it has to be said forcefully that there has been colossal donor funding and other credit facilities towards access, equity and quality of education compared to the New Patriotic Party tenure in respect of meeting the targets for universal basic education (Millennium Development Goal 2) by the end of 2015. And now that we are in the period of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), more funding is expected to be made available to the education sector soon to facilitate the SDG 4 imperatives (i.e. improving learning outcomes). In other words, the quantum of funding in the education sector from 2008 remains unprecedented, especially post 2010. At all material times in Ghana’s development agenda, a large chunk of funding for education projects has come from the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID), the United States’ Agency for International Development (USAID), The World Bank and other international development partners but it appears that this government has benefited the most.

As we speak, there is the Secondary Education Improvement Project (SEIP) to increase access to senior secondary education in underserved districts, being funded by The World Bank at the cost of US\$ 156.00 million (read more <http://tinyurl.com/h4plbg7>); there is the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) project to improve equity, access, and quality in 57 deprived districts being funded by the GPE at the cost of US\$ 75.5 million, the highest ever awarded to Ghana since it joined the partnership in 2004 (read more <http://tinyurl.com/hwzpdfd>); there is the Complementary Basic Education (CBE) Programme being funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) in collaboration with US Agency for International Development (USAID) with the view to addressing access to education in some of the deprived communities. The DFID and USAID have made available € 18 million and \$16million respectively towards this project (read more <http://tinyurl.com/gbtpgb>). There is also the Partnership for Education: Learning Project being funded by USAID as its flagship programme to improve and sustain learning outcomes, costing \$71 million (read more >><http://tinyurl.com/z7pvm6o>). There are several other projects ongoing such as the T-TEL to improve preservice teacher education being funded by the DFID at the cost of more than £17 million (read more <http://tinyurl.com/j5vhrgz>). These projects, among other similar ones such as the Ghana Education for All Fast Track Initiative, have helped increased access, effectively contributing to the figures the Minister is happily quoting. In fact, 23 of the government's Community Day Senior High School (GCDSHS) project are being funded under the World Bank's SEIP mentioned earlier.

So in touting the government's achievement and juxtaposing it with what the erstwhile NPP government did, it would have been helpful if the Honourable Minister had included the cost and funding sources. In this way, one could be able to evaluate how well these two governments have done in this critical sector of the economy. In particular, we could judge which of them has efficiently used the resources at their disposal, thereby enriching the debate and shaping public opinion in sincerity and honesty.

It is however critical to point out that, the ultimate impact of these initiatives on improving learning outcomes, particularly at the basic schools, in both international and national examinations, still remains unsatisfactory. For instance, the National Education Assessment (NEA) which is used as a measure of quality at the basic level has always indicated a poor performance at both P3 and P6. More importantly, a large proportion of students drop out before

reaching the Basic Education Certificate Exam (BECE) and about half of those taking BECE do not successfully pass the exam.

I am sure the Government will appreciate a frank discussion on the state of our education system.

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