



EDUWATCH NEW YEAR STATEMENT ON THE EDUCATION SECTOR

Eduwatch wishes the Ministry of Education (MoE) and all education stakeholders a Happy New Year, and the successful commencement of the 2022 academic year. Our review of the performance of the Education Sector in 2021 indicates that, the MoE made significant gains towards achieving the SDG 4 targets that require consolidation, while addressing critical areas of policy deficits. Pursuant, the following policy reinforcements are recommended to the MoE for 2022:

- 1. Challenges with Teacher Rationalization:** In 2021, about 44,000 (over 15%) teachers left the basic school system with no replacements. While the ongoing efforts to recruit some 16,000 teachers is commendable, it does not even address the deficit half-way. The MoE must ensure the posting of all teachers being recruited to deprived districts where they are needed, devoid of any protocol considerations. In addition, the many districts with surplus teachers should be decongested, and teachers re-posted to empty classrooms in deprived districts where they are most needed. Eduwatch's foremost priority for 2022 is to support the MoE by monitoring teacher postings and teacher deployment in general, in line with the Minister's vision of One Teacher Per Classroom. Our 'Every Child Deserves a Teacher' Campaign will be launched later this month.
- 2. Challenges with Standard Based Curriculum (SBC) Implementation:** The first two years of implementing the SBC has been poor, due to the lack of textbooks and the myriad of planning deficits surrounding the rollout of the Junior High School (JHS) curriculum i.e., Common Core Programme (CCP). To rewrite this script, the MoE must streamline communication on timelines for rolling out the SBC in JHS and SHS to enable proper planning; Make textbooks available to all kindergartens and primary schools this term; Train teachers in the CCP before roll-out this term; Provide textbooks for the CCP in the 2022 academic year to prevent a repetition of the two-year absence of textbooks that occasioned the primary school curriculum.
- 3. Proposals for Secondary Education Reforms:** There is information that the MoE intends to reform secondary education by increasing the duration to 6 years. The news further suggests that the MoE has scheduled 2023 to be the piloting year for this proposal. Eduwatch supports cogent initiatives to improve the quality of our lower secondary school system, provided it addresses the existing quality and access inequities between rural and urban schools. The MoE must communicate clearly to prevent any misunderstanding among the general public, consult widely and open up to alternatives, before taking a firm decision and drawing up a realistic timeline for the roll-out of any such reforms. Eduwatch will submit proposals on this subject matter for consideration.
- 4. Unstable Academic Calendar and GES Governance issues:** A stable academic calendar continues to elude the pre-tertiary education sector over the past three years, making it difficult for parents, students and teachers to plan the discharge of



their responsibilities effectively. The MoE has an opportunity to reverse this trend in 2022 by working closely with schools to produce a workable calendar and ensuring the timely availability of resources to prevent any obstruction. Relatedly, the GES still does not have a Governing Council, a situation that continues to affect its smooth operations. The MoE must expedite action on the GES Council and other agencies without Boards/Councils as a matter of urgency.

5. **Spending Inefficiency (Procurement):** The education sector received only 12.9% of the national budget for 2022, compared to 14% and 16% in 2020 and 2021 respectively. The reduction in the percentage of national budget allocation, is not only below the 20% UNESCO benchmark, but makes a strong case for increased spending efficiency by the MoE and its agencies. The MoE must take a second look at the disturbing culture of single source procurement that has engulfed major procurement activities at the MoE. We have an opportunity in 2022 to make competitive procurement a culture, in line with His Excellency, the President's own vision for a Ghana Beyond Aid.
6. **WAEC Reforms and accountability:** We commend the GES for dismissing staff who participated in examination malpractices in the 2020 WASSCE and BECE. The move is a bold statement of zero tolerance for teachers' participation in examination malpractices. In 2021, significant strides were made in securing commitments from the MoE and Parliament to reform WAEC and strengthen accountability and credibility in their examinations. While some of the issues are long term, many others are achievable within 2022. These include the need to commission an independent inquiry into the 2021 WASSCE leakages and prosecute staff and assigns of WAEC whose actions or inactions may have led to the 2021 leakages in WASSCE papers; introduction of serialized questions; amendment of the WAEC Act to criminalize examination malpractices and related activities; digitizing questions transmission and the establishment of a regulator of the external examinations sector to among others regulate WAEC and other examining bodies in Ghana, in line with international standards. The MoE must prioritize these key actions in 2022.
7. **GETFund issues:** We are concerned about the dwindling resourcefulness of GETFund to the education sector due to its capping by the Minister of Finance. The capping has diverted majority of the Fund to other sectors. As a result of the 25% capping, in 2021, only GHC 1.4 billion was allocated, out of which 60% went into debt servicing. The remaining 40% allocations has since remained a subject of delayed disbursement, retarding projects and interventions. In fact, by the end of November 2021 when the 2022 budget was read, less than 50% of the capital expenditure allocation (funded from GETFund) had been released. The MoE must have an honest conversation with the Ministry of Finance and Parliament on how the capping and securitization of the GETFund is negatively affecting the sector, especially basic education infrastructure financing.



8. **Teacher Trainee Allowance:** The GHC 242 million spent annually on an ever-delaying teacher trainees' allowance which arrives at an immaterial time continues to be a drain on the taxpayer, at a time Teacher Training Colleges have all been converted to Colleges of Education, qualifying trainees to access government's guarantor-free student loan. This looks even more compelling in 2022, as in 2021, government could not find the resources to recruit even half of the 44,000 basic schoolteachers who left their classrooms. For the avoidance of doubt, the amount earmarked for spending on Teacher Trainee allowance in 2022 can recruit 6,000 more teachers that are urgently needed in rural schools. The MoE must scrap this wasteful policy and prioritize its spending amid dwindling budgetary resources due to the national revenue and debt situation.
9. **Narrowing the Civic Space:** The Civic Space is the cornerstone of a democratic society. It is the space where CSOs engage with government directly and indirectly, without hindrance. Within the education sector, CSOs participate by among others, undertaking evidence-based research on government policies to inform policy strengthening. However, a directive by the GES to District Education Offices (DEOs), requiring CSOs to produce letters of introduction from the GES Headquarters before permitting them to undertake any research in and around the school environment is being used as a basis for denying certain CSOs entry into schools for obvious reasons, thereby constricting the Civic Space.

In 2021, none of Eduwatch' requests for introductory letters to conduct research in schools were granted by the GES Director-General, in spite of numerous follow-ups. Many other CSOs were caught in this trap under the guise of coordinating the activities of CSOs. As indicated in our letter to the Minister of Education in 2019, the GES has for decades operated a decentralized structure where CSOs seek the written permission of DEOs to enter schools. In the absence of any evidence suggesting the lack of capacity of DEOs to coordinate the activities of CSOs in their districts, there is no conscionable basis to centralize permission for entry into schools, if not for the reason of restricting entry or access to information of some CSOs, thereby narrowing the Civic Space.

While this re-centralization of authority flies in the face of the MoE's own policy to decentralize education management, any experienced sector practitioner would appreciate that, the GES Headquarters has no capacity to administer the issuance of letters of introduction to every entity that seeks to enter all the 40,000 public pre-tertiary schools in Ghana. We are calling on the MoE to reverse this decision by allowing the DEOs to coordinate school entry and leave the GES Headquarters to focus on weightier matters related to its core mandate of teaching and learning.

The narrowing of the Civic Space is not only limited to the denial of entry into the school environment but also the denial of access to reports for scrutiny and accountability. There are hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of donor funded projects in the education sector, all contributing to the education reform. Most of these projects are implemented with loans at the expense of the taxpayer. These include the US\$ 218 million Ghana Accountability and Learning Outcomes Project



(GALOP) and the US\$ 1.5 billion GETFund Syndicated Loan, now converted into the Daakye Bond. These two alone constitute the largest loans and projects ever assembled/procured in the education sector. However, there is no structured accountability mechanisms to Civil Society, as there is no single technical, procurement or financial report published on the MoE's website or any other public repository after two years of implementation. When access to information for accountability is restricted or denied, CSOs are unable to play their checks and balances role in education sector governance. To promote a transparent and accountable governance of education, the Minister of Education and agency heads should open up to CSOs by publishing technical, financial and procurement reports of all its activities, especially projects.

10. **Strategic deficits in some GALOP activities:** If effectively implemented, GALOP should impact positively on teaching, learning and learning outcomes. To achieve the desired results, the strategic implementation of the various activities is crucial. Unfortunately, the manner in which some activities are being implemented raises serious rationale, strategy and value for money concerns which may have negative consequences on project outcomes. There seem to be a procurement objective underpinning activity implementation other than outcome or impact. For example, our published research conducted into the implementation of the \$15 million COVID-19 Education Response Plan as part of GALOP indicates that, a Learning Management System (LMS) for basic school students and teachers known as Edmodo was procured for about US\$ 1 million (GHC 7 million) to enable over 8 million teachers, students and parents engage in virtual classrooms. While there are many Free and Open-Source Learning Management Systems available, including Google classroom, the unique feature about Edmodo is that in addition to its off-line functionalities, it creates a platform for teachers, students and parents to interact in a virtual classroom, the reason we spent millions to procure.

Unfortunately, more than one year after its launch by the then Minister of Education, 99% of teachers, students and parents are not even aware of its existence. In fact, user data generated from the LMS indicates that less than 0.8% of teachers and students had registered on the platform which also had no uploaded learning content. The fact that about 99% of teachers are unaware of the existence of this platform suggests the Edmodo LMS was just another procurement activity, which even though is not new in the sector, has disturbing implications on Value For Money. GALOP is the single biggest project ever assembled in the education sector. Only a strategic focus on activity implementation will leave an outcome legacy after spending over GHC 1.2 billion on that intervention. It shall be appreciated if the MoE adopts a more strategic approach that prioritizes the sequencing of activities and their inter-relationships to achieve the relevant outcomes under GALOP.

Eduwatch reiterates its commitment to support the MoE and its agencies to work towards achieving the objectives of Ghana's Education Strategic Plan (2018-2030) in this new year.

Accra, 10th January 2022.