



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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ACRONYMS

BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
CDD-Ghana	Ghana Center for Democratic Development
CAPCOE	Campaign Against Privatization and Commercialisation of Education
COVID	Corona Virus Disease
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSSPS	Computerized School Selection and Placement System
Eduspike	Education Spike
Eduwatch	Africa Education Watch
FOSDA	Foundation for Security and Development in Africa
GBDC	Ghana Book Development Council
GES	Ghana Education Service
GETFund	Ghana Education Trust Fund
GHS	Ghana Health Service
GTEC	Ghana Tertiary Education Commission
JHS	Junior High School
LCPS	Low-Cost Private Schools
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
NaCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NaSIA	National Schools Inspectorate Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NNED	Northern Network for Education Development
OGI	Open Governance Index
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment

PUB	Public Universities Bill
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SERVE	Securing Educational Rights of Vulnerable Students in the COVID-19 & Post COVID-19 Era
SHS	Senior High School
SLTF	Student Loan Trust Fund
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TVIs	Technical and Vocational Institutes
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VFM	Value For Money
WAEC	West Africa Examination Council
WASSCE	West African Senior School Certificate Examinations
WHO	World Health Organization

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents an account of activities undertaken by Eduwatch in furtherance of our mandate to influence education policy to promote an equitable, accountable and responsive education system that assures of quality and equal opportunities for all, while establishing our position as a leading Education Policy Research and Advocacy Organization in Africa, drawing on Cross-Cultural, Transnational and International Comparative Perspectives across the continent. The report presents an overview of activities undertaken from September 2020 to December 2021.

OUR ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

1. TOWARDS SAFE SCHOOL REOPENING AMIDST COVID-19



Credit: UNICEF

Globally, education systems were closed in March 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 1.3 billion learners were sent home, including about 9 million from Ghana. After ten months of closure, Ghana was one of the first in West Africa to attempt re-opening its education system in full, after a partial re-opening for finalists in Junior High School (JHS) in August, five months after the pandemic.

Ahead of the re-opening of schools, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and World Health Organization (WHO) issued protocols to guide countries in planning their re-opening. Locally, the Ghana Health Service (GHS) and the Ghana Education Service (GES) also issued guidelines in line with UNESCO and WHO protocols to guide the re-opening of schools for final year JHS and Senior High School (SHS) students to write their final exams. Prior to this, drawing on lessons from post-Ebola Liberia and Sierra Leone in 2014, Eduwatch held engagements with key trans-national partners in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Kenya to strategize and discuss options and pre-requisites for school re-opening which featured in our 10-point proposal to Government on Re-opening.

OUR ACTIONS

Eduwatch on 29th December 2020, proposed 5 key points to Ghana's Cabinet, for consideration in taking school re-opening decisions, as Ghana prepared to re-open schools for the fourth time since school closures in March 2020. Alongside rehashing the need to decentralize the procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and ensure every school received PPE and sanitation logistics before re-opening, we highlighted the effects of prolonged school closures on students re-enrolment as well as new enrolments, while calling for community sensitization programmes and nationwide re-entry campaigns funded by Government to identify and support students, especially pregnant girls to re-enrol after delivery, and mobilize 1,000,000 children for enrolment in kindergarten one. We also charged the Ministry of Education (MoE) to harmonize the free SHS admission system and re-entry policy to allow school heads to re-admit students especially pregnant girls after delivery, while advocating for in-person extra tuition intervention to bridge the learning gap in rural schools.

Ahead of the scheduled school reopening in January 2021, our January edition of the Education Alert Policy Brief discussed how schools could reposition themselves to meet the varied student-oriented challenges that usually greeted the re-opening of schools in post pandemic societies.

Further, Eduwatch and partners monitored over 400 schools in Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Liberia with the aim of ensuring a safe school environment within the COVID-19 pandemic. In Ghana, our monitoring team identified delayed delivery of PPEs as a major challenge, depicting general unpreparedness for re-opening across various public schools nationwide. With the evidence gathered from our monitoring, we called on government to facilitate the swift delivery of PPEs to all schools who had not received theirs, and fast track plans to decentralise the procurement and distribution of same to avoid incidences of increased infections resulting from school re-opening. Together with ActionAid Ghana and partners of our COVID-19 Back to School Campaign, we submitted a Joint Memorandum to the MoE on the re-opening of schools to support the work of the team that was constituted to advice government on school re-opening.

Monitoring Compliance to COVID-19 Protocols in Schools

To support government's efforts at ensuring increased compliance to COVID-19 protocols in schools, our team monitored over seventy schools in the Greater Accra region for compliance. There were instances of some private schools recording COVID-19 cases but refused to disclose to authorities for fear of being closed down. Our intervention on such situations led to the health authorities enforcing the protocols. This was done in close collaboration with the GHS. By the end of the first month of re-opening, the GHS confirmed 556 positive COVID-19 cases from 139 schools, but compliance with the protocols on prevention, isolation and treatment ensured schools were not closed down to further disrupt the academic calendar.

As part of our monitoring, we engaged the GHS, MoE and GES to enforce the COVID-19 isolation protocols in basic schools that recorded COVID-19 cases, while advocating for offending schools to be sanctioned by the MoE.

International Day of Education



Credit: Global Campaign for Peace Education

On the 24th of January 2021, the day set aside by the United Nation as International Day of Education, Eduwatch's message to African leaders recognized the logistical and infrastructural challenges African countries faced in education delivery, and called for

strengthened commitment of governments to education as a right. Acknowledging that about 5.3 million learners in Africa risked dropping out of school due to COVID-19, we urged African governments to prioritize interventions geared towards protecting the right to education by ensuring all children who left school in March 2020 returned in 2021 while encouraging the involvement of local communities in planning and implementing back to school campaigns to identify and support children at risk of dropping out, and putting in place measures to strictly observe physical distancing protocols in classrooms in accordance with UNESCO and WHO protocols.

THE OUTCOMES

Flowing from our 5-point proposal to Cabinet, there was a nationwide Back To School/Re-entry Campaign by Government through the GES, and implemented by all District Education Offices across the country to encourage parents and community members to re-enrol their wards as schools re-opened after the 10-month closure.

2. IMPROVING GHANA'S PRE-TERTIARY ASSESSMENT SYSTEM



The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) is mandated to administer pre-tertiary examinations in Ghana and four other West African countries-Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Gambia. It conducts the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE) and the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) for final year basic and secondary school students respectively. The organization has operated a virtual monopoly in Ghana since the early 1950s.

Over the past decade, WASSCE had been greeted with regular question leakages and institutionalized malpractices with no frantic effort to strengthen security systems, undertake institutional governance reforms, and demand accountability from the monopolistic examination body that has the backing of the establishment due to an incongruous governance arrangement with conflicting interests, as the GES, whose work is assessed by the examining body, also co-chairs the board of the examination body. This, coupled with a history of politicized examination results made it difficult for government to admit there was a problem, thus, the need to take action. There also

existed a multi-million questions leakage and marketing industry with interests both within and without the examining body. These myriads of interests meant continuous denial of obvious question leakages by the examining body, security agencies and schools.

OUR ACTION

Under the Education for Active Citizenship (EFAC) Project with support from OXFAM, Eduwatch undertook an undercover monitoring of the conduct of the 2021 WASSCE in fifty (50) Selected SHSs and an online monitoring of the sales of questions on telegram platforms.

THE OUTCOME

Our monitoring revealed the existence of a questions trading cartel with links to some officers of the examining body, students and school authorities. About 55% of papers sampled for the undercover monitoring were leaked within hours to days prior to their scheduled writing time. A report was then compiled for stakeholder engagement.

Eduwatch engaged the Minister of Education and Parliament, (the two agencies with oversight on the assessment body) the Ghana Police Service as well as Civil Society with the evidence, and called for action, in the face of persistent denial by the examining body.

Through our advocacy engagements, we secured the following:

1. An admission by WAEC of the leakages
2. A commitment by the MoE to initiate reforms in the pre-tertiary assessment system with specific commitments to strengthen questions security and reform the assessment sector.
3. Two Members of Parliament also filed a motion calling for a bi-partisan Committee to investigate examination leakages in the WASSCE 2021 as reported by Eduwatch.

4. A commitment by WAEC/MoE to initiate a review of the WAEC law to strengthen its governance and accountability, and criminalize examination fraud, and a commitment by Parliament to support the effort.

As a result of our monitoring and report on the widespread leakages in the 2021 WASSCE, the Bureau of National Investigation was tasked to take over the security of printing of the 2021 BECE questions, which ended up recording no leakage.

Our WASSCE 2021 Monitoring Report also generated discourse in Liberia and Sierra Leone on questions leakages, because, platforms that sold questions in Ghana advertised for other West African Countries, especially for common papers written by all countries. On 7-8th October 2021, at the 90th Meeting of the International Final Awards and Examinations Appointments Committee attended by all five WAEC member countries [Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gambia], Eduwatch's 2021 WASSCE Ghana Monitoring Report was discussed as a point of reference in advising countries to strengthen the security of questions and address examination irregularities.

3. FRONTING REFORMS IN TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN GHANA



Ghana is reforming its Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system with the aim to produce a highly skilled local workforce, capable of supporting the development of local industry sectors and contribute to a sustainable growth of the country. With a population of about 30 million people and a GDP of 1,550 USD per capita, Ghana has a 56.6% unemployment rate among the youthful population (UNESCO, 2016). This situation is partially due to difficulty in transition for young people from school to the job market, as a result of the lack of labour market skills. Based on historical average, of the about 360,000 secondary school students who graduated in 2020, only 35% were projected to transition into the tertiary level; leaving close to 240,000 in search of skills and jobs.

OUR ACTIONS

Eduwatch believes improving the TVET to secondary ratio from the current 5% is one strategy that could enhance the employability of secondary school graduates. Consequently, ahead of the secondary school selection process for final year JHS students, we launched our ***iChooseTVET*** Campaign to reach out to parents and guardians to encourage their wards to choose TVET related courses and schools to provide them with employable skills after school. Through the campaign, we sensitized the public on the benefits of TVET to the youth, and its prospects for national development drawing on European best practices.

With support from OXFAM, we launched the “Ghana FreeTVET Report” on 19th November 2021, together with representatives of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Trade Associations and Training Institutions, after which the report was used to engage policy makers on the need to make TVET free in all schools, while developing innovative curriculum on traditional TVET areas to enhance the marketability of skills.

The report identified key challenges in the delivery of free TVET in Ghana, including the lack of smooth career progression in some trades along the National TVET Qualification Framework, inadequate and delayed disbursement of funding for practical work in Technical and Vocational Institutes (TVIs), lack of start-up incentives including working spaces for graduating learners or apprentices, lack of adequately resourced TVIs in rural and peri-urban areas, as well as poor regulation of the informal sector by the Commission for TVET.

Engaging Parliament on TVET Reforms

On May 31st, 2021, we joined the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) to engage the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education, on pre-tertiary education issues that required the appreciation of Parliament and urgent action by Government. We had the opportunity to present the Ghana Free TVET Report to the Committee to guide Government’s implementation of the free TVET campaign promise in a manner that assures participation, policy effectiveness and efficiency.

Eduwatch in partnership with the Ghana National Union of Technical Students reviewed the Technical Universities Act 2016 (Act 922), five years after its passage by Parliament in 2016, with the view to ascertain its effectiveness, five years after the commencement of the conversion of Polytechnics into Technical Universities. Our findings, which were used to engage stakeholders, including the Deputy Minister of Education (TVET) and the Western Regional Minister, included the dominance of humanities over TVET programmes in Technical Universities, contrary to their objectives.

THE OUTCOME

Our ***iChooseTVET*** Campaign garnered public attention, with scores of parents, guardians and the general stakeholder public supporting the call to choose TVET related courses and schools to provide the budding youth with employable skills after school. The TVET to secondary ratio has since increased marginally to 6%, and with the recent addition of about 90 public TVIs unto the free TVET programme, increasing the number of TVIs to about 140, it is expected that there will be increased participation in TVET.

4. A STANDARD CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL PUBLIC SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

In 2021, separate incidents occurred in SHSs across the country which called to question the extent of authority the MoE and GES wielded over public SHSs in the country. During the obligatory Ramadan fasting period, it was reported that Muslim students in Wesley Girls SHS in Cape Coast (in the Central Region of Ghana), were being prevented from engaging in any Islamic activity, including the fast. There was also an incident in Achimota School (in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana) where two Rastafarian students were refused admission due to their hairstyles, after being duly placed by the Computerised School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS). Parents of the affected students dragged the school to court after a directive from GES was totally disregarded by the school's management.

Our attention was further drawn by our Partner, Crime Check Ghana, to the refusal of Awe, Fumbisi and Sandema SHSs (in the Upper East Region of Ghana) to admit a Ghanaian ex-convict who wrote the BECE while in prison and obtained aggregate 16. The aforementioned incidents though separate, signalled the need for a standardized, inclusive and non-discriminatory governance code in SHSs that mirrors Ghana's culture and standards while activating provisions for re-entry of students in SHS.

OUR ACTIONS

In partnership with our media networks, we mounted pressure on the GES and MoE to guarantee the religious and cultural rights of all SHS students by developing a standard inclusive code of conduct.

As part of our advocacy, we participated in a documentary by DWTV and several media platforms to demand the admission of the two Rastafari Achimota students.

On the refusal of Awe, Fumbisi and Sandema SHS to admit an ex-convict, Abu Yahaya, we engaged the Director General of GES to facilitate his admission.

THE OUTCOMES

1. The National Peace Council was tasked to draft a Memorandum of Understanding with Religious Bodies on a Code of Conduct for SHSs in Ghana.
2. The Director General of GES facilitated the admission of Abu Yahaya.

5. PRESERVING THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE ACADEMIA; PROTECTING THE CIVIC SPACE

The impact of executive dominance on public boards in Ghana is well documented, as we risk over-politicizing the governance of public agencies. In the education sector, the ravages of politically motivated initiatives and decisions cannot be overemphasized, as most deficits in the sector can be attributed to same. In 2021, the Minister of Education laid before Parliament a supposed Public Universities Bill (PUB) which was fraught with the sole intent of intensifying Executive dominance, by increasing government representation from 30% to 60% on University Councils. Prior to election 2020, the first bill was temporarily suspended due to issues raised by Eduwatch and stakeholders including the University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG) and the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences. Eight (8) days after the elections, the Minister for Education on the hindsight of stakeholders and the public re-laid a supposed new Bill to Parliament which unfortunately went through a second reading.

Simultaneously, GES and MoE also initiated the process of pushing through a policy to regulate Non-Governmental Agencies (NGOs) and CSOs working in the sector. This was the second time such an attempt was being made; the first failed attempt was in 2018.

OUR ACTIONS

Together with stakeholders including UTAG, we demanded and lobbied for the withdrawal of the Bill. This included petitioning the President of the Republic to cause the immediate withdrawal of the Bill from Parliament, as it undermined academic freedom and independence of Public Universities through executive dominance of the Governing Council of Public Universities.

On the draft NGO/CSO Regulatory Framework/Policy, together with 165 CSOs, we petitioned GES/MoE and submitted our observations, objections and recommendations on the supposed regulatory framework. We clearly outlined why we thought the attempt to regulate CSOs amounted to constricting the civic space, stifle Civil Society voice, and influence same.

THE OUTCOMES

1. Two days after our petition to the President on the PUB, the Bill was suspended and withdrawn from Parliament indefinitely on the orders of the Vice President.
2. The processes for the draft NGO/CSO Regulatory Framework was equally stalled as a result of our petition and collective advocacy with the over 165 CSOs and NGOs.

6. PRIORITIZING EFFICIENCY AND VALUE FOR MONEY IN EDUCATION SPENDING

The African Development Bank in its Africa Economic Outlook 2020 Report indicated that, even though Africa ranked second globally in terms of its 5% GDP allocation to education, the continent ranked last in spending efficiency. It went ahead to predict that if Africa's spending efficiency increased from an average 50% to the level of Latin America (Average 75%), primary school completion rate would increase from 79% to 98%.

Indeed, there are mainly two challenges in Ghana's education sector – Inefficient Spending and Poor Management. In 2021, we had cause to raise concerns over spending efficiency and Value For Money (VFM) in the wake of some procurements made by Government. These included the procurement of Past Questions worth GHC 34.8 million for final year SHS students through single sourcing, and the GHC 80 million KAPEK Mathematical Instruments 'Calculator' deal.

Governance and accountability deficits had been raised as Ghana implemented its COVID-19 Coordinated Education Response Plan since April 2020 with a \$15 million support from the Education Development Partners aimed among others at deploying virtual learning programmes, and building Virtual learning technologies to mainstream e-learning into our education system, including teacher education. This was meant to build a pandemic resilient public education system.

OUR ACTIONS

On the procurement of the GHC 34.8 million worth of past questions for SHS students, we questioned the spending efficiency and sustainability of procuring over GHC 30 million worth of past questions on a disposable basis annually, when these past questions are scarcely used beyond the six weeks of examinations in the year. We further called out the absence of due diligence in the Ministry's deal with Kingdom Books and Stationery Ltd - a book and stationery distribution company with no track record in Ghana's publishing industry, tasked to publish and supply about 450,000

copies of past questions through a single source window. While commending government for providing the past questions, we recommended in our statement on the matter that past questions should be reusable, just as textbooks, instead of the current 'disposable' approach of buying new ones every year. We also called on the MoE and agencies to demonstrate beyond the rhetoric that, making competitive procurement a culture is a genuine government policy without which the education Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cannot be attained by 2030.

On the procurement of the GHC 80 million KAPEK Mathematical instruments, our preliminary objection to the deal was that it did not assure VFM due to the emergency sole sourcing nature. We wrote to the Chief Director of the MoE for a copy of the contract for our information, analysis and report, but our request was not honored. We proceeded to check the price of similar WAEC approved calculators sold in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Liberia - our fellow WAEC member countries. Our preliminary observation was a \$12 average transnational per unit price at retail, with prices in Liberia (\$10) being the lowest. However, Ghana's procurement, which was a bulk order of over 800,000 pieces, together with a tax waiver, was rather \$18. We also observed that in these countries, parents were buying their wards' calculators on the open market. Since we were denied access to the contract, and by extension, official information on the exact specifications, we could not complete our report on the matter, but the controversies surrounding the contract lingered on.

The 2021 Global Education Summit was attended by President of the Republic and Minister of Education upon the invitation of Prime Minister Boris Johnson and President Kenyatta. Ahead of the Summit, 30 leading CSOs and networks in the Education Sector led by Eduwatch, petitioned President Akufo Addo through the Minister of Education, to commit to global financing benchmarks of 20% national budget allocation and 6% GDP by increasing domestic financing for education, prioritizing spending efficiency, while ensuring opportunities for all out-of-school children to enrol and complete basic education by 2030.

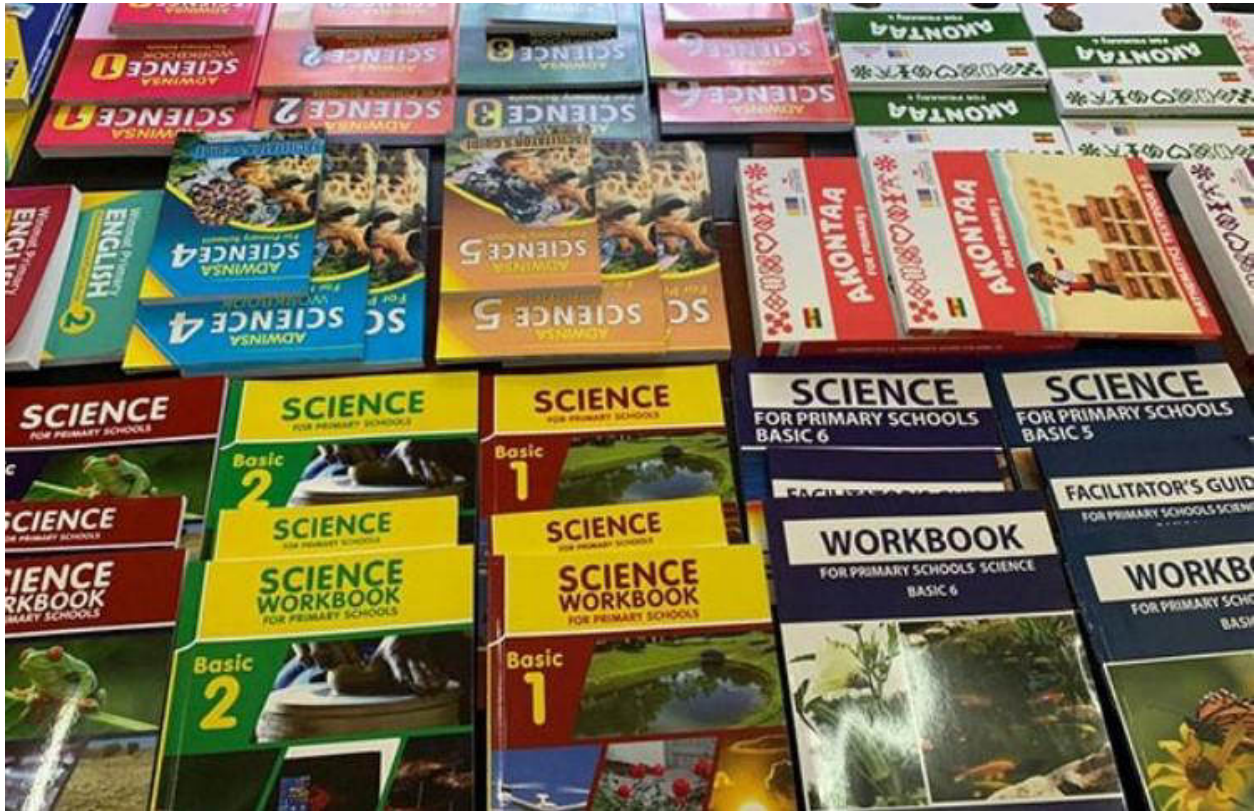
With support from OXFAM, Eduwatch undertook a participatory monitoring of the implementation of virtual learning interventions under the COVID-19 resilience programme with the aim of gathering evidence for policy level engagement on issues relating to accountability and participation, relevance among others. Our study report identified that, an interactive virtual learning platform [Edmodo Ghana] developed for use by basic schools was less than 1% utilized, as teachers and students were unaware of its existence, including the absence of a monitoring mechanism for ensuring virtual learning facilities reached rural schools contributed to inequitable participation in the virtual learning space, especially for pre-recorded learning content. Accountability and VFM issues relating to the spending of about \$1 million on an obsolete Learning Management Platform were identified.

The report was published in December 2021 and disseminated with the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education and stakeholders including the MoE, to enhance their appreciation of the status of virtual learning interventions in basic schools and Colleges of Education while strengthening the quality of oversight. It recommended the mobilization of teachers, parents and students to participate in the virtual learning space while ensuring transparency and accountability in the management of the \$15 million project.

THE OUTCOMES

1. Within days after our statement condemning the lack of spending efficiency in the procurement of past questions, the MoE pronounced publicly that there would not be any procurement in 2022.
2. After raising VFM concerns regarding the procurement of GHC 80 million worth of KAPEK Mathematical instruments, the contract was terminated halfway into execution by Government.

7. REFORMING THE BOOK SECTOR



Credit: DailyGuide Network

One function of the Ghana Book Development Council (GBDC), an agency under the MoE, is to establish standards for publishers and printers in the book industry. Part of executing this mandate includes ensuring that the industry churns out educational books strictly produced and sanctioned for distribution upon the approval of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA). There were books that distorted the book space over the years under the pretext of being produced “based on the NaCCA syllabus”. Some of these books had misleading and controversial content, yet found their way onto the book market, questioning the responsibility of NaCCA over publishers in the book sector. Some Basic School textbooks published by some publishers - Badu Nkansah and Golden Publishers supposedly based on the new NaCCA syllabus had some inappropriate content, and courted public displeasure.

OUR ACTIONS

After our attention was drawn to the alleged inappropriate content from the publishers, we constituted a team to review only NaCCA approved text books with any such deficits, and visited some private schools and bookshops in the process. We shared the link to NaCCA's list of approved textbooks, and entreated the public to forward any contentious content with specific issues and evidence to our team for verification, review and engagement with NaCCA. After the observation, the team concluded that, none of the offensive and ridiculous content making rounds on social media were NaCCA approved. We thus educated the public on the difference between "NaCCA approved textbooks" and those developed "based on NaCCA's syllabus", while concluding that the said textbooks under contention were not NaCCA approved. The team gathered that some private school heads rejected the textbooks from the Publishers following their failure to provide NaCCA approval letters, but others who acted on familiarity with these publishers took stock and sold to parents.

We therefore called on NaCCA to develop a seal and ensure that all approved textbooks bear the seal on cover pages, and criminalize any unauthorized use of the seal. We further cautioned against NaCCA's romance with offending publishers, for stiffer punishments to be meted out to them beyond mere withdrawals of the book from the market and issuance of apology letters.

It was revealed that NaCCA had previously queried the content of samples of these books with inappropriate content in September 2020, yet the books were published and disseminated. We called for further investigations by National Security to ascertain how samples of books submitted to NaCCA by the publishers and queried by same in September 2020 found their way in commercial quantities unto the Ghanaian book market in 2021, causing public disaffection. We also called for the MoE to expedited action on the Ghana Book Development Bill. The said Bill when passed into Law would provide a legal and institutional framework to guide the MoE and GBDC to develop and implement a comprehensive National Book Development Policy with ethical and professional standards in book development.

THE OUTCOME

Following our team's observations and recommendations, the offensive publications were recalled from the book market. The publishers also rendered unqualified apologies to the public for the distasteful content of their publications.

8. REMOVING ACCESS BARRIERS TO EDUCATION IN GHANA



Eduwatch played a key role in the first phase of the Securing Educational Rights of Vulnerable Students in the COVID-19 & Post COVID-19 Era [SERVE I] Project in partnership with the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Northern Network for Education Development (NNED), and funded by STAR Ghana Foundation to enhance Civil Society advocacy on the educational rights of vulnerable students in COVID-19 and beyond.

Eduwatch led phase two of the SERVE Project [SERVE II] with the objective to review GES' Back To School (BTS) Campaign and Re-entry Policy to mobilize policy level and budgetary support for a social protection policy that targets providing economic support to vulnerable teenage mothers who seek to re-enter and complete basic education. Both projects aimed to facilitate the re-enrolment of students after COVID-19, especially girls, and engage duty bearers accordingly.

OUR ACTIONS

Eduwatch provided technical support as a strategic partner to STAR Ghana Foundation to engage stakeholders in selected districts and at the national level on operationalizing the GES' Re-entry Policy for Pregnant Girls and Teenage Mothers through institutional collaboration at the decentralized level.

Additionally, in partnership with CDD-Ghana and NNED, we undertook a study in eight selected districts to ascertain the issues affecting the re-enrolment of students after COVID-19, especially girls, and engage duty bearers accordingly.

The study documented evidence of risk of exclusion of vulnerable students from education during COVID-19, gaps in policy and institutional framework for delivering virtual learning to vulnerable students, ineffectiveness in accessing virtual learning programs to meet learning needs of vulnerable children and evidence of COVID-19 health and safety in schools. The study recommended a decentralized PPE procurement regime, and a scale-up of the scope and implementation of the Re-entry Policy and BTS Campaign.

The review of the BTS Campaign and Re-entry Policy was the principal focus under SERVE II for 2021. Eduwatch and girls' re-entry stakeholders, including the lead implementor, the Girls Education Unit of the GES undertook a participatory review of the BTS Campaign and Re-entry Policy, appreciating the gains, challenges and opportunities. Key issues arising out of the review included the lack of a harmonized communication strategy on the prevention of pregnancy between the GES and the GHS, limited scope for capturing teenage pregnancy data (only public schools), amorphous data regime on teenage pregnancy - as GES and GHS used different data, and economic barriers to re-entry for teenage mothers.

Three key stakeholders were engaged: Parliament, the British Special Envoy on Girls Education, Civil Society and duty bearers.

THE OUTCOME

Duty bearers and CSO partners agreed on the need to strengthen institutional collaboration at the district level and harmonize campaigns to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in re-entry advocacy campaigns.

9. IMPROVING ACCOUNTABILITY IN GHANA'S EDUCATION SECTOR

The 2019 Auditor General's Report on the education sector revealed various financial, tax and procurement irregularities involving over GHC 23 million of the tax payers' funds. Although each year, institutions and individuals cited for various financial irregularities in the Auditor-General's Report appear before the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in a Public Hearing, very little is retrieved as there is no effective system for monitoring compliance with the directives of the Auditor-General and other consequential orders of the PAC. This, coupled with the lack of spending efficiency in the sector, and opacity of procurement continues to account for deficits in the use of the scarce resources in the education sector.

OUR ACTIONS

Our strategy included providing information on financial waste and corruption to the media and CSOs, to enable them demand accountability from the relevant agencies. This was done through the development of an abridged version of the 273 paged 2019 Auditor-General's Report on Pre-University Institutions which was launched by a deputy Auditor-General. The simplified version of the report, dubbed 'Education Accountability Report', captured all key malfeasance, cash management, procurement and stores, contract management, payroll, asset management, rent payments, advances and tax irregularities for necessary referencing and follow-up action.

Eduwatch further engaged the PAC to develop a monitoring mechanism that tracks compliance with previous orders of the PAC ahead of its subsequent meetings.

10. ADVOCATING INCREASED INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC BASIC EDUCATION



Our research into government investments in public basic education indicates that, over the past decade, while private schools grew by about 150 percent, public schools grew by less than 30%, signifying the lack of adequate investment by government in public schools, especially in rural areas. Eduwatch's preliminary monitoring of school re-opening revealed that some 200 Low-Cost Private Schools (LCPS) attended by 60,000 students had collapsed as a result of the pandemic, leading to the displacement and drop-out of students across the country, with many failing to find public schools to attend even as 2021 ended. Overcrowding of urban and peri-urban classrooms led to denial of admissions, with many children from poor families dropping out due to the lack of public basic schools. This was endemic in municipalities like Adenta, Ga Central etc. where up to 95% of basic schools are privately owned.

OUR ACTIONS

With support from OXFAM, Eduwatch partnered the Campaign Against Privatization and Commercialisation of Education (CAPCOE) made up of Teacher Unions, All African Students Union and the National Union of Ghana Students to implement the Education Spike Campaign to advocate increased investments in public basic education to discourage its commercialization.

Eduwatch developed policy briefs, documentaries and undertook two researches; one into the deprivation and learning outcomes in public basic schools, and the collapse of low-cost private schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a situation which denied some students the opportunity to continue their basic education. Our documentary on the lack of JHS and its impact on basic school completion, and the collapse of low-cost private schools and its impact on post pandemic (COVID-19) re-enrolment was widely disseminated using social media influencers and celebrities, including Ameyaw Debrah and the winner of the 2020 Ghana's Most Beautiful Beauty pageant, Naa Dedei Botchwey.

Duty bearers, policy makers and the legislature were engaged on the outcomes of the research, based on which various calls were made for government to increase its investments in basic education, especially infrastructure in urban and rural communities. A Position paper was submitted to the Minister of Education, the Speaker of Parliament, prior to meetings with the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education and the Deputy Minister of Education in charge of General Education.

THE OUTCOME

As a result of the Eduspike campaign, commitments have been made by the Minister of Education and the Parliamentary Select Committee of Education to increase investments in basic education to improve equitable access, improve quality and mobilize demand. Political awareness on the need to construct more public basic schools in underserved communities has been created and sustained.

11. WORKING WITH PARLIAMENT



Parliament remains a key partner in our advocacy, as we continue to provide technical support to their oversight work. Apart from the three meetings held with the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education over the reporting period, Eduwatch and CDD-Ghana paid a courtesy call on the new Chairman of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education, as part of the transition process of the 7th Parliament of the fourth republic.

We expressed our commitment to continue working with the Committee to influence education policy and strengthen accountability. The team also took the opportunity to share a Joint Briefing Paper developed by Eduwatch and CDD-Ghana on issues that require attention at the basic education level in the next four years. They included the lack of JHS, the need for increased public investment in rural basic school infrastructure, teacher rationalization, high dropout rates and the inequitable distribution of learning outcomes against deprived districts.

12. STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE MEDIA

Local and international media partnerships for policy influencing remain one of our strategic goals. This is in acknowledgement of the role of the media in policy influencing and advocacy. Our strategic focus includes building and sustaining partnerships with the media at all levels, to pursue education policy influencing, education and accountability.

OUR ACTIONS

The networking strategy rolled out by our Media Team at the regional, national and international level in the course of the year, led to increased partnerships with media organisations online, on radio, television and print. The partnership was sustained by the regular development and sharing of education policy related content for news and advocacy.

During the period under review, there were four hundred and thirty (430) media features for Eduwatch, an average of 28 media mentions a month

Our website was regularly updated with information on education policy and data, to serve the needs of our network of stakeholders in Africa and beyond, especially researchers. Between September 2020 and December 2021, our website received an average of twenty-four thousand (24,000) visitors each month from fifteen countries in five continents.

13. EVIDENCE BASED POLICY REVIEWS FOR ADVOCACY: THE EDUCATION ALERT

Policy analysis, education and influencing remain at the core of our advocacy. We continued to engage Research Fellows and Associates, and Policy Associates to lead in conducting policy researches and reviews on critical issues affecting the achievement of SDG 4 and 8 targets in Ghana and beyond, while generating public and stakeholder discourse and influencing policy decisions of policy makers.

OUR ACTIONS

Eduwatch published a total of twenty (20) Policy Briefs and Research Papers during the sixteen (16) month period of reporting. The Policy Briefs and Research Papers which were disseminated through our online portals to over 5,000 readers worldwide were:

1. A Critical Review of Technical Universities, Five Years after Implementing the Technical Universities Law. (Policy Brief)
2. The Cost of Free SHS: Is Free SHS Increasing or Removing Financial Barriers to Secondary Education for the Poor? (Policy Brief)
3. The Education-Migration Nexus: Strategies for Education Policy Implementation in 2021 and beyond. (Policy Brief)
4. Back To School: How Schools can Address Challenges Students Come With. (Policy Brief)
5. Ghana's High School Dropout Rate: Policy and Practice Prognosis. (Policy Brief)
6. Curbing Examination Fraud through Innovative Technology in Questions Distribution Systems. (Policy Brief)
7. Urban Public Education Provision Study - Perspectives from Labone in Urban Ghana. (Policy Brief)
8. Ghana Free TVET Report.
9. "Where Is Our Money?"; Education Accountability Report.
10. The Open Governance Report on Education Sector Institutions in Ghana.

11. The 2020 WASSCE Report (An Independent Assessment of the Conduct of the 2020 WASSCE by WAEC).
12. Briefing Paper on Education Privatization in Ghana.
13. Eduwatch 2021 WASSCE Ghana Monitoring Report.
14. A Study into the Effects of Privatization of Education on Access and Exclusion in Rural Areas, Slums and Inner Cities and Resiliency of Private Schools in Emergencies. (Research Report)
15. A Study into the Extent of Deprivation in Basic Schools in Deprived Areas and its Impact on Learning Outcomes. (Research Report)
16. Ghana Education Sector COVID-19 Resilience Monitoring Report.
17. Eduwatch Presentation on Access Barriers to Education.
18. Eduwatch Presentation on WASSCE 2021 Monitoring.
19. Presentation on the Extent of Deprivation of Public Schools in Deprived Communities and Its Impacts on Quality Learning Outcomes of Learners.
20. Presentation on a Study into the Effects of Privatization of Education on Access and Exclusion in Rural Areas, Slums and Inner Cities.

CONCLUSION

Our second year in the education policy space has proven impactful. We have positioned ourselves as a key education policy influencing and advocacy organization in Ghana while leveraging our network of partners to deepen our influence in other countries. Our works were cited on/by major local and international education policy platforms, researchers, parliamentarians, government officials and media networks.

In pursuit of our vision of a continent with globally competitive human capital that drives economic and social development, we will continue to influence education policy at the national and transnational levels through research, networking, evidence-based campaigns and partnerships for policy influencing, leading to the attainment of SDG 4 and 8 targets in Ghana and beyond.

OUR PARTNERS

Institution
ActionAid Ghana
ADANU
Care Love Charity Foundation
Ghana Center for Democratic Development
Centre for Youth Development Analysis
Child Online Africa
Citi TV and Radio
Conference of Heads of Private Schools
Crime Check Ghana
EIB Network
Foundation for Security and Development in Africa
Ghana Integrity Initiative
Ghana National Association of Private Schools
Ghana National Association of Teachers
Ghana TVET Coalition
Graphic Communications
HAYTAFORD
Hope Alive 360
HURDS Foundation
IMANI Africa
Institute for Education Studies
International Child Development Programme
Light for Children
Media General
Mindnet LLC
Multimedia Ghana
National Association of Graduate Teachers
National Union of Ghana Students
Northern Network for Education Development

NOYED Ghana
OXFAM Ghana
Participatory Development Associates
Perform Investments
SDG 4 Platform
Star Ghana Foundation
World Vision Ghana
YEFL-Ghana