

**A MISGUIDED CURRICULUM:  
DECENTRALIZED EDUCATION POLICY  
IN GHANA'S PRIMARY SCHOOL SYSTEM**

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*A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of a Master of Arts degree  
in International Development Studies*

Saint Mary's University  
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To my friends and family – no thesis is void of tears, headaches, long nights, early mornings and useless poetry. Thank you for the continual support and encouragement throughout these times, and always. Mom, Dad, Jared & Rachel – thanks for always following me wherever this spinning door of mine might revolve. To my extended family & friends – you know who you are and you know what you mean to me. Thank you.

Finally, as I prepare to submit this final draft, I am humbled by the fact that this entire educational journey of mine began with the opportunity to attend primary school. I urge anyone reading this thesis to look beyond the statistics to the faces, the people, the stories that are behind the numbers. Thank you to the people of Ghana for providing a case study that will hopefully effect change in international policy-making so that one day universal primary education might move from being merely an objective to a reality.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Tony Althorp whose devotion to the people of Ghana and his pursuit for a more equitable world was a major influencing factor in my decision to attend graduate school. Though Tony's life was taken during the completion of this thesis, his legacy is a constant reminder that change can and will be made so long as we remain committed.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

DA	District Assembly
EFA	Education For All
ERP	Economic Recovery Programme
GES	Ghana Education Service
GOG	Government of Ghana
GPRSP	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MOE	Ministry of Education
PNDC	Provisional National Defense Council
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Social and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

## **ABSTRACT**

**Leah K. McMillan**

### ***A MISGUIDED CURRICULUM: DECENTRALIZED EDUCATION POLICY IN GHANA'S PRIMARY EDUCATION SYSTEM***

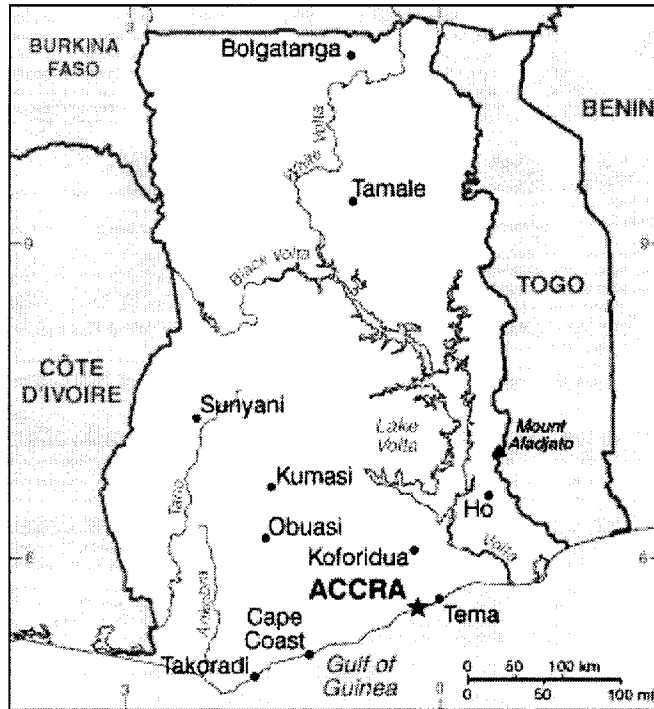
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Since the Millennium Development Goals addressed universal primary education as an objective to be met by 2015, the international development community has been looking for ways to overcome access issues in education. The World Bank situates decentralization strategies within its good governance agenda, compelling developing countries to adopt policies that will decentralize their education system, thereby improving access to education. The Government of Ghana's decentralized education policy, which began in 1987, is conceptualized within this good governance framework.

This research investigates the extent to which the Government of Ghana's education policy has been decentralized to determine the effectiveness of this strategy in improving enrolment rates. The government policies stipulate three areas in which access to education will improve as part of a decentralization strategy. These are: power relations between the centre and local governments, resources allocated to the District Assemblies, and development of curriculum. The data reveals that there has been little to no change in these three areas since the introduction of the decentralized education policy twenty years ago.

The analysis reveals that decentralization conceptualized within the World Bank's good governance strategy is deconcentrated in form; consequently, sufficient resource and decision-making power has not been allocated to the local governments. In effect, these governments have not been able to bring improvements to reflect the accessibility needs of their community and enrolment rates have not increased. This indicates that the decentralization strategy conceptualized by the World Bank's good governance initiative must be altered if universal primary education is to be achieved by 2015.

## MAP OF GHANA



(CIA World Factbook, 2007)

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION: DECENTRALIZING EDUCATION TO REDUCE POVERTY

This year marks the twentieth year of the implementation of Ghana's decentralized education policies. With such high expectations evident at the on-set of the reforms twenty years ago, one would anticipate a marked improvement to primary school enrolment. Sadly, this has not been the case. In 1987, 58% of Ghanaian primary school-aged children were enrolled; to date, this number has merely risen to 65% (UNICEF, *n.d.*). What has happened? Why has decentralized education policy not met the expectations intended? Why have primary school enrolment rates scarcely increased while the government has had twenty years to integrate the decentralization reforms? This thesis intends to provide some clarity to these questions.

The first of the Millennium Development Goals seeks to achieve universal primary education by 2015. Development theorists, practitioners, and policy-makers highlight primary education as a critical component to a state's development plan. The multi-lateral development institutions, namely the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and branches of the United Nations, have posited primary education as a key strategy for poverty alleviation. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers of the World Bank's Highly Indebted Poor Country initiative, for example, place basic education enrolment as a priority to the poverty reduction strategies in the developing world, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Ghana is no exception to this mainstream development thinking, and has placed universal primary education among the top of its development objectives. The government is hopeful that, by achieving universal primary education, development in turn will occur.

Ghana commenced its journey into primary education policy improvement at the end of the 1980s. In 1987, the government, with impetus from the World Bank, designed a decentralization policy to improve political, administrative, and fiscal effectiveness. With these new reforms in place, the government was hopeful that the delivery of social services would be improved. Thus, under the general decentralization scheme, Ghana's education system began a reformation strategy under which it, too, would decentralize. These reforms were met with great expectation. Since independence, Ghana had experienced considerable challenges in its education sector. Enrolment rates had been dismal, particularly in the rural, most impoverished regions of the country, with schools often too far or too over-crowded for attendance. Indirect fees, including textbooks and uniforms, have long made primary school enrolment difficult for the most marginalized in Ghanaian society. By decentralizing the education system, the government hoped to encourage local governments to more readily meet the needs of its citizenry, thereby increasing primary school enrolment.

This research analyzes the extent to which the government's decentralized education policy has impacted enrolment rates. In particular, the Government of Ghana posited three areas that were necessary to decentralize in order to affect enrolment rates, namely giving more decision-making abilities to the local government, allocating greater resources to the District Assemblies, and adapting the curriculum to meet more local needs. The government argued that by increasing the influence held by the local government in these three areas primary education would become more accessible. Decisions, resource management, and curriculum could be adapted in such a manner so as to reflect the needs of the local citizenry. This could allow the local government to

address accessibility concerns specific to their community, thereby increasing enrolment rates. The research question therefore becomes one of investigating the way in which decentralizing the policy has impacted these three areas and, as a result, how this has impacted enrolment rates.

In order for the link between enrolment rates and decentralized education policy to be made, the research question itself must be situated within a theoretical context. The review of the appropriate literature begins with first analyzing the role of primary education in development, followed by the role of decentralization in development. Ghana's decentralization strategy has been both heavily influenced and conceptualized by the decentralization posited under the World Bank's good governance agenda. Thus, it is imperative that the Bank's idea of decentralization within this good governance strategy be analyzed for its efficacy.

## **DEVELOPING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### ***Education and Development***

"Education is not a way to escape poverty – it is a way of fighting it," were the words of Tanzania's first President Julius Nyerere (UNESCO, 2001). Education has long been regarded as imperative to a country's development – a way of combating poverty. The United Nations Education, Social and Cultural Organization highlights the strong correlation between 'inadequate education' and 'income inequality' (UNDP, 2001). The major multilateral development institutions, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations, have cited education as a key component to development strategies, evidenced by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), where

the second goal aims to achieve universal free and compulsory primary education by 2015.

The MDGs were not the first international statement that cited primary education as crucial to poverty reduction strategies. In 1921, the International Labour Organization became the first international organization to correlate education and poverty reduction by declaring free and compulsory education as a means for eradicating child labour (Tomasevski 2003). Education was not only seen as an alternative to having children in the workplace, but was a way of “institutionalizing [the] socialization of children” (Tomasevski, 2003: 74). Children are formally socialized to become active, participating citizens in their respective country. It is argued that education achieves economic development by creating a more skilled, employable populace. At the most basic level, if children are attending school during the day, they are avoiding other destructive activities, including prostitution, child labour, and warfare (Tamasevski, 2003). Thus, education is regarded as a means for securing social and economic development.

Since the 1921 declaration by the ILO, the international community has continually noted education as necessary. When the United Nations drafted its Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, primary education was quick to make the list of universal basic rights: “Everyone has the right to education...Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory.” (UNGA, 1948 Article 26).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified in 1989, noted the international community recognizing the need for universal primary education, which noted that the international body must “make primary education compulsory and

available free to all”, and “take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates” (UNGA, 1989, Article 28-a&e).

To be sure, this focus on primary education has been so evident that one may argue its excessiveness, leaving secondary and tertiary education with inadequate funding for development and sustainability. The vast majority of educational policies proposed by development institutions posit primary education as the key for ensuring poverty reduction. Debates surrounding this presumption have escalated in the last decade, particularly since the establishment of the MDGs. Specifically, the goal’s target is to ensure that both boys and girls universally “complete a full course of primary schooling” by 2015 (World Bank Group, 2004). While primary education may be necessary for socio-economic development of the state, it is important to regard basic education within the context of an over-all educational initiative. Basic education is just that – basic. By focusing too heavily on primary education, policy-makers have lessened the opportunity for real employment rate growth – which is more able to rise if higher levels of education are achieved.

The attainment of primary education can be tied to poverty reduction as poorer households tend to have the least access to education. These disadvantaged households are often discouraged by lack of transportation to school, high fees and operational costs, and the need for children to attend to chores at home, particularly in agricultural settings. Human capital theory positively correlates educational level and levels of productivity. “At the macro-level, it is generally the case that levels of enrolment correlate with GNP” (Oxaal, 1997, p.4). Further, the level of education attained correlates to the employment rate within states. As Oxaal states:

On one hand poverty acts as a factor preventing people from getting access to education. On the other hand those with education are considered to be at least risk of poverty.

(Oxaal, 1997:6).

In 1974, 90% of the World Bank's school-related loans went into the secondary and tertiary levels of education (Lauglo, 1983: 265). The following decade this changed, however, and basic education became the focus of the World Bank and the majority of other international institutions. The Bank argues that primary education is a 'minimum learning need'. In viewing education as a human right rather than an actual exercise in attempt for socio-economic progression, minimal standards for educational achievement are made, limiting its ability to promote growth within states (Lauglo, 1983).

While primary education is important, it is at the level of secondary education that children become more focused and trained for the workforce, with classes focusing on vocational and technical skills, with more career-oriented subject matter. The completion of secondary school also provides the option of high education or employment, whilst basic education provides limited opportunities. In Ghana, a key problem with focusing on primary education too heavily has further hindered impoverished families from sending their children to primary school. These families are discouraged, cognizant of their inability to send their children to secondary school owing to their financial constraints. In the most disadvantaged communities, this focus on primary education has been a hindrance to accessibility. While education has been cited as necessary for a state's economic growth and therefore overall development, the focus on primary education could arguably be an obstacle to this being realized. Thus, although the attainment of universal primary education has been posited as a key means for achieving

international development, it is important to recognize that this assertion is not universally shared.

Irrespective of one's interpretation of education and which\_level is most important, it is almost universally accepted that education itself is a necessary component to poverty reduction strategies. Not only does schooling improve future employment and social opportunities for children, but it may also lessen the divide between the impoverished and wealthy in society. If education is available to all children, the playing field becomes more level. The second MDG was indicative of the international community's recognition of the vital role education plays in international development.

Cognizant of the amount of effort required to achieve universal primary education by 2015, as stipulated in the second MDG, the international community banded together in 2000 to create a global strategy to achieve universal primary education. In April 2000, in Dakar, Senegal, 184 nation-states band together at the World Education Forum which resulted in the Education For All – a declaration that these 184 states would work together to achieve universal primary education by the target MDG year. UNESCO, indicative of the general consensus in the global development committee, asserts that the MDGs and the EFA compliment each other, with the latter providing both an accelerated means and incentive for promoting the Goals, particularly the second. The MDGs therefore become a crucial element to the agenda of the EFA strategy; the strategy's mandate provides policy into some of the Millennium Development Goals, namely those pertaining to universal primary education and the elimination of gender disparity. The EFA strategy is therefore intended to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, namely Goals 2 and 3 (World Bank Group, 2001).

The EFA strategy is therefore seen as a means for accelerating the success of the Millennium Development Goals. Not only is this evident in the nature of these two documents, but also in the fact that they represent the opinions of the mainstream international development community. Considering that the five major contributors to the EFA strategy (UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, and the World Bank) are also major developers and sponsors of the MDGs, both policies are indicative of the agendas of these two documents. Indeed, the EFA and MDGs are working towards the goal of poverty reduction through similar approaches\_(UNESCO, 2001).

### ***Decentralization Conceptualized***

The previous section highlighted the perceived importance of primary education within the international development context. This section will now discuss the prominent literature pertaining to decentralization in order to reveal why the strategy has been deemed\_ important for\_state development efforts. Throughout the last two decades, decentralization has become a component to a myriad of international development initiatives. Its popularity is evident in the fact that 80% of developing states worldwide are either decentralized or currently embarking on a decentralization strategy (Work, 2002: 9). Decentralization is the process of reorganizing a state's political structure so as to legally delegate some responsibility, previously held by the central government, to local government bodies. Decentralization assumes a change of roles between the central and local government (De Grauwe et al., 2005:2). The strategy works to transfer some political, economic, and social policies and activities to more local levels of government (Ndegwa & Levy, 2004). By changing the power relations, this may also result in a

change in the way in which the government operates. Dependent upon the amount and type of autonomy given to local governments, they may devise strategies more conducive to their local needs. This research focuses on power relations within the definition of decentralization: to what extent has power been delegated to local levels of government? How much power is retained by the central government? For the purposes of this research, decentralization is the transferring of power, including resource management, policy development, and policy implementation, to local levels of government.

Decentralization is a process rather than an event (Olowu, 2001). The concepts of centralization and decentralization rest at either end of a continuum, with various states resting on various points along the line. Along this continuum rest various types and forms of decentralization. Though the type and amount of power transfer differs, the underlying concepts involve transferring power in some capacity to more local levels of government (Ayee, 1996). Regardless, the three types of decentralization are political, administrative, and fiscal, and three forms of decentralization are devolution, delegation, and deconcentration.

Political decentralization is concerned with the legal and political structures of the state. Political decentralization usually involves identifying roles through the constitution, perhaps involving sub-national elections that embrace the participation of all members of society. It seeks to incorporate all institutions, including civil society and the private sector, into decision-making processes, thereby adopting policies that are transparent and accountable to the public (Work, 2002). Thus, participation is a key component within this type of decentralization, with public participation regarded as a predominant reason for decentralizing in this manner. This form of decentralization is

linked to democratization in that the participation of the public is regarded as an objective and predominant reason for decentralizing. Participation involves the use of elections, ensuring that citizens have an opportunity to determine political leadership (Abrahamsen, 2000). Since government is brought to a more local level, it is argued that the local politicians can be more accountable to the people; their political actions could thus be more representative of the needs of their constituents. Political decentralization allots local governments more autonomy, especially decision-making. Political decentralization seeks to incorporate civil society into its apparatus; this is regarded as a means of increasing participation by establishing linkages with local societal organizations. Particularly in the developing context, communities may be very isolated from the central government; leadership at a more local level is important to ensure that there is still a government level able to influence these remote communities (Ebel, 1998).

Participation is political in nature as it is used as a means for recreating power relations by determining whose voices are heard and at what levels (White, 1996). Indeed, participation has been highlighted as a condition for democratization (White, 1996). And while participation is a component of political decentralization, who participates and how varies across communities. Participation has come to be regarded as essential for sustainability of any development project and/or governmental project (Mikkelsen, 2005).

The type of decentralization refers to the type of power that has been delegated to local bodies. As decentralization involves the establishment of different levels of government, fiscal decentralization determines the monetary responsibilities of each. Local governments generally have three funding sources: revenues collected, transfers

from the central government, and development assistance (Fjeldstad, 2001: 2). Fiscal decentralization is intended to give local governments more budgetary decision-making abilities, including the opportunity to collect and manage their own taxes (Fjeldstad, 2001). Spending and revenue collection responsibilities and entitlements of each level of government are outlined, transferring some monetary and budgetary responsibility to local levels of government (Grindle, 2007). As local governments are within closer reach to the community than central government, they are argued to be in a better position to collect revenue. Citizens may feel more confident paying taxes to a local government body which is seemingly more accountable to them; transparency and accountability are increased with government institutions that are closer to the people. It is argued that taxes can “be increased without excessive public dissatisfaction” owing to this level of trust (Fjeldstad, 2001: 1). Citizens are arguably more connected to the government as they contribute monetarily to the social services rendered. On the other hand, this also encourages more accountability as citizens want to ensure that their money is being used in a proper and beneficial manner (Juul, 2006).

Fiscal decentralization is argued to economic efficiency and fiscal equity – ensuring not only that local governments have sufficient revenue to carry out their newly-established responsibilities, but also that the amount of resources available is equitable across all locales. Central governments may need to step in to ensure fiscal equalization if some local governments do not have a resource base comparable to other institutions throughout the country. For example, the Government of Canada makes\_transfer payments to provincial governments with less\_revenue than other provinces to better

ensure that services delivered are comparable across the country (Malcolmson & Myers, 2005).

Public services, such as education and health, are components to administrative decentralization. With administrative decentralization, policies are still conceptualized at the national level, whilst being executed at a more local level. These policies are attributed to the responsibilities of local governments (Siugzdiniene, n.d.) The local governments become responsible for executing policies, whilst the central government retains responsibility for policy development. In this form, central government simply establishes localized offices that are still completely controlled by central government. This could be conceptualized as central government representation at the local levels. Whilst this form provides the central government with a window into the necessities at the local level, the major criticism of this type of decentralization is the lack of autonomy given to local governments. They become as pawns to the central government rather than separate entities capable of best meeting the needs of community members.

When analyzing the extent to which a state has decentralized administratively, it is imperative to regard the form of decentralization being undertaken. Devolution involves a full transfer of power from the central to the local government bodies. As local government becomes autonomous in scope, this is the form that is thought to be 'true decentralization.' When one engages in an exercise of decentralizing a government system, it is devolution that becomes the goal. Nevertheless, decentralization is rarely achieved in its purest form, rather one of the other three forms of decentralization are in existence.

While the above articulates the type of decentralization in question, what is perhaps most important is distinguishing between the three forms of decentralization, namely devolution, delegation, and deconcentration. Deconcentration could be regarded as 'decentralization in theory.' While the local government institutions are in place, the central government is still heavily involved in all decision-making processes. Autonomy of local governments is almost completely non-existent, with high levels of accountability to the centre.

Nyendu attributes delegation to fiscal decentralization, devolution to political decentralization, and deconcentration to administrative decentralization (Nyendu, 2000). While the type of decentralization determines where the power lies, these three forms define the extent of power that has been designated to the local government bodies. Delegation involves transferring select power to local government bodies. While the central government still exercises some level of accountability from the local government, the local governments are given some autonomy of power. Tasks are delegated between the central government and the local government bodies, touching upon all three types of decentralization. Decision-making capabilities in fiscal, political, and administrative areas are therefore delegated between central and local bodies. Devolution is an articulation of decision-making at the political and administrative level, though central government retains control over the finances and resources. While local governments are more autonomous than in a centralized system, they are still somewhat dependent upon the central government as a result of the fiscal dependence perpetuating. There is, however, a strong focus on popular participation, with political participation, including elections, being a major focus of this form of decentralization.

Lastly, deconcentration is attributed to administrative decentralization only. With merely administration decentralized, no real power is given to the local level; the central government retains much control in terms of policy-development, implementation, and resource management. While this may increase efficiency of service delivery since the central government is now working from the local level, decentralization is little more than the movement of the central government from the capital to more localized communities. Little to no new roles have been established.

For the purpose of this research, deconcentration is merely administrative decentralization. Although local governments do exist, central government retains policy-making control in all aspects of government, including social services. Thus, while local levels of government are responsible for implementing these policies, resource allocation and policy development is all decided at the central level of government.

The recent popularity of decentralization strategies is in part owing to its conceptualization within the World Bank's good governance agenda. This agenda posits decentralization as a necessary precursor to ensuring that good governance practices can flourish within a country. It is therefore imperative within this literature review to conceptualize good governance itself, followed by the agenda's push for decentralization. Governance itself has been regarded as the way in which government bodies interact with one another and with the public. As 'government' is the actual political structures of a state, governance can be regarded as the way in which those structures operate. The UNDP defines governance "as the system of values, policies, and institutions by which a society organizes collective decision-making and action related to political, economic and

socio-cultural and environmental affairs through the interaction of the state, civil society and the private sector” (Work, 2002: 3). Good governance links these relationships in a manner that is regarded as ideal by the international community – transparent, accountable, and participatory. The good governance strategy identifies the various responsibilities to be played out by the legislative, judiciary, and executive components of government, as well as the national, regional, and local levels (Mansaray, 2004). Decision-making processes are to utilize partnerships, with all members and facets of society, including the most disadvantaged, included in decision-making (Work, 2002). Since the 1990s, good governance has been posited by the World Bank and many other mainstream development organizations as an essential component for development. The 2007 World Bank defines governance as:

...the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. This includes the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them.

(World Bank Group, 2007).

In order to achieve these attributes through partnership mechanisms, a state must create an ‘enabling environment’, capable of making decisions in these manners (Work, 2002: 3). Decentralization is regarded as a necessary condition for fostering this enabling environment. Herein lies the link between decentralization and good governance – decentralization is necessary for developing a state where good governance can be realized. Decentralization has thus been pushed throughout the developing world by the World Bank as critical to bringing about good governance. Since good governance is regarded as necessary for development, decentralization has become a concept at the

forefront of mainstream poverty eradication programmes, including Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers.

Towards the end of the 1980s, the term 'good governance' began creeping into the development framework, though very slightly. Although the actual term was not entrenched until the 1990s, the underlying concepts of democratization and decentralization were beginning to be evident in development theory and policy-making of the World Bank. The concept of good governance was introduced into neo-liberal dialogue at the end of the 1980s, it now underlies all reforms, particularly those in Africa. The concept is multi-dimensional in nature, permeating in various sectors, including social, political, and economic (Husswin, 2003). The three levels of decentralization, fiscal, political, and administrative, must work together in order for decentralization to be realized. This, of course, falls directly in line with neo-liberalism which seeks to intertwine these three key areas. Good governance policies focus on eliminating corruption within the realm of politics in countries, focusing instead on ensuring that citizens are able to participate in a political process which they understand (Ndegwa & Levy, 2004).

As quoted in the Progress Report 2005 from the G8 meeting in Gleneagles, Scotland,

Improving the effectiveness of aid is a vital complement to increasing the volume of resources...The evidence shows that aid is particularly effective when provided to governments with sound policies, strong leadership and capacity to absorb resources.

(quoted in Nanda, 2006:270).

Good governance is an attempt to ensure that governments use the aid in the correct manner in order to ensure that the economy grows, but not at the expense of the poor;

thus, social conditions, via participatory methods, should be taken into account (Doornbos, 1995).

The good governance strategy was in part a reaction to the criticism the Bank and Fund had been receiving for imposing policies that were lacking a human element. In response, these institutions re-conceptualized their strategy; ‘adjustment with a human face’, as it was called, was highlighted as a new means for achieving development. Though the end goals of the previous programming were still in place, the means for achieving these were improved to focus more on social consequences, thereby stressing the need for participation of community members themselves. It was during this shift that the concept of decentralization began to be highlighted by the neo-liberal multilateral institutions. As discussed in Chapter One, decentralization was posited as a means for ensuring democracy, thereby creating a semblance of good governance within a country. It is also of importance to note that decentralization was a convenient method for inducing privatization, a very popular policy promoted by the IMF.

An underlying assumption within good governance is that, in order for development to occur, a culture of true democracy at the state level should be realized. Poverty-Reduction Strategy Papers, to be drafted by all countries identified as HIPC, must show that their government’s activities are situated within a good governance approach. Indeed, western neo-liberal institutions (and therefore the dominating international development community) posit that good governance is a prerequisite for development to be realized (UNDP, 2002)

The Governance and Anti-Corruption bureau of the World Bank states that “A well functioning public sector that delivers quality public services consistent with citizen

preferences and fosters private market-led growth while managing fiscal resources prudently, is considered critical to the World Bank's mission of poverty alleviation and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; decentralizing the state has been highlighted as a means for achieving this objective. A state which practices good governance is regarded, by the World Bank, as one which is better able to achieve poverty reduction. Decentralization is a major component to the World Bank's good governance strategy. In the case of Ghana, the decentralization strategy is situated within the good governance agenda pushed by the World Bank and adopted by the Government of Ghana for the purpose of development. It is therefore imperative to situate the discussion of decentralization within the context of the World Bank's good governance agenda in order to understand how Ghana's decentralization strategy has been conceptualized. What will be found is that the decentralization strategy pushed by the World Bank is deconcentrated in nature; consequently, decentralization is merely an exercise of central government administratively decentralizing whilst retaining decision-making control.

Decentralization strategies pushed by the neo-liberal multilateral institutions are criticized for being very top-down systems, structuring the decentralization strategy in a very deconcentrated form. Decentralization has held a position in development strategies since the World Bank and International Monetary Fund began their structuring adjustment strategies in the 1980s. At this time, it was argued that deregulating the central state system was a necessary component for achieving development, and decentralization was posited as a necessary component to deregulatory policies (Astiz et al., 2002). Decentralization thus began holding a prominent place in the poverty

reduction strategies of mainstream development theorists. The following decade, the trend toward decentralizing government flourished, which Boone attributes to the fiscal crisis during the 1990s which created the need for more localized development initiatives (Boone, 2002).

Decentralization ideally contributes to good governance by establishing decision-making mechanisms in a country that are transparent, representative, and participatory. Decentralization should bring good governance into the fiscal, political, and administrative facets of the state. These attributes can be put in place with decentralization as communities are better able to view and respond to local government actions. Good governance agendas strive for participatory and peaceful societies. With mechanisms through which to address their concerns at the local level, citizens are perceived to play a more active, peaceful role in their community by being able to effect change within their community (Siugzdiniene, n.d.).

The World Bank articulates that the way in which these powers are constructed determines the sustainability of development maintainable (Hearn, 2002). Decentralization is deemed an effective ingredient for creating a positive link between local and central governments, ensuring that accountability and transparency between the two institutions can best take place. As well, with the focus on local government, participatory measures an emerge; decentralization is seen as a mechanism that encourages more participatory practices (Azfar et al., 2004).

Interestingly, the major indicators used for measuring liberal democracy within a state - liberty, equality, and accountability - are reflected in the very definition of decentralization (Smith, 1985). The decentralization strategy pushed by the neo-liberal

institutions, and seen at the heart of poverty reduction strategy papers, is one that aims to create neo-liberal democracy worldwide. Thus, decentralization is not merely a poverty reduction policy, but one that follows a very obvious ideological trend. The most popular model of decentralization, currently being instituted by developing states worldwide, is one which follows the convictions of neo-liberal thinking. As Teune notes, “Local government is at a turning point insofar as there is local democratization politically and globalization economically” (Teune, 1995:17). He observed in the mid-1990s the World Bank’s trend towards decentralization as a means for implementing its neo-liberal objectives of privatization, liberalization, industrialization, and democratization in the developing world. Since decentralization is regarded as an essential component to the good governance strategy posited by the World Bank, it is highlighted as a key for development, recognizing the World Bank correlation between good governance and poverty reduction (Ayee, 1996).

The decentralization conceptualized within the good governance strategy has not been met without criticism. Both the concept itself and the validity of the assumptions made therein have been brought into question: mainstream decentralization policies wreak of a very deconcentrated form of decentralization. Resulting, decentralization imposed as part of good governance strategies has been merely executed at the administrative level. While lower levels of government do exist, the influence of the central government is still very much in place. The mainstream conception of decentralization has been implemented in a very top-down fashion, despite the fact that this completely contradicts the idea of decentralizing government. As a component to the good governance strategies, national governments follow a model of decentralization

preconceived and pre-constructed by the World Bank. Interestingly then, these states are asked to impose decentralization strategies in a manner contradictory to the desired outcome – in a very centralized manner. With the central government working with the multilateral institutions, the local governments have no role in the policy implementation process. Local governments do not become part of the decentralization process until after the policies are apparently implemented (Oxhorn, 2004). The decentralization process designed by these mainstream institutions leave little room for true decentralization to take place.

In light of the heavy role of these arguments, critics assert that the decentralization posited by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund is deconcentrated in form. Neo-liberal decentralization is often merely deconcentration – rather than decision-making abilities being transferred to local levels of government, the central government merely uses local government institutions as local offices for making their own duties more efficient (Siugzdineine, n.d.:1). Especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, decentralization is often seen as “cosmetic rather than substantial” – a result of the quick-fix solution without any real power being given to the local levels (Haynes, 1991:295). The neo-liberal decentralization policy is inherently ideologically-driven, resulting in policies that are often designed haphazardly, without the implementation process being fully observed. Remaining is a deconcentration, whereby the centre still retains considerable amounts of control.

The issue of power is perhaps most critical to a discussion of decentralization since, at the very core of decentralization studies, is the idea that power needs to be distributed from the centre. Decentralization is intended to take power from the centre

and give to the periphery; the underlying problem with this is that the centre must want to transfer some of its existing powers to the periphery. In the decentralization model posited within the good governance strategy, the idea of the 'centre' not only includes that national government, but also the multilateral institutions, particularly the World Bank. As the centre expands to include these external actors, so too does its power. In reality, this decentralization is actually deconcentrated in form. Although various responsibilities are given to the local governments, the actions are still very much manipulated centrally.

Although the overall outcome of poverty reduction is a predominant reason for states implementing policies prescribed by the World Bank, the quest to please this institution to secure more funding is an inescapable reality. Developing governments recognize that attempting to implement the good governance strategy is a way of ensuring future funding and support from the World Bank. Consequently, decentralization strategies are often implemented much too rapidly to achieve positive results. This has resulted in highly ineffective local governments that must perpetuate reliance on the central government for advice and support. Resulting is a very deconcentrated form of decentralization.

A major problem with decentralization is that the local environment is not considered prior to the outlining of responsibilities. While a decentralized policy may be written, local governments may not possess the appropriate resources necessary for effectively carrying out their new duties. Without appropriate financial training, the intricacies and complexities of governmental budgets may not be drawn correctly. As a result, good fiscal management may not take place. This may lead to confusion, corruption, and mismanagement (Wunsch, 2001). The World Bank itself has noted that

capacity building exercises must occur in order for decentralization policies to be as efficient as possible. Without proper capacity building being realized due to the speedy nature in which these strategies are implemented, the neo-liberal forms of decentralization have not been effective. At the same time, even if capacity building exercises did take place, it would involve the local governments being given training and guidance from the central government. This in itself perpetuates a very top-down model in which the local government bodies must rely on the national government as the 'expert' (Hadiz, 2004:706). This in turn calls the autonomy of the local government into jeopardy.

With local governments becoming better integrated into the political process, an environment for cultivating accountability and transparency is created and corruption is dissipated. The ideal situation posited by the institutions pushing this agenda conceptualize a situation whereby power is distributed amongst all levels of government; with a division of responsibility, each level is accountable to the other, and powers are divided in such a way so as to ensure that services and duties can be enacted as effectively as possible. In this situation, all levels of government are in dialogue, allowing for the opinions of the citizenry to be both understood and considered. Together, the levels of government conceptualize their respective duties, ensuring that resources are properly allocated to increase appropriate practice.

The aforementioned, of course, is the ideal effect of decentralization, conceptualized by the World Bank. In reality, however, this situation is rarely created. Instead, there has proven to be an inherent problem in the link between the written decentralization policy and its implementation. Whilst the intent may be to create the

ideal good governance, deconcentration is the result. While deconcentration does involve a division of responsibility between the centre and the local governments, the central government retains influence over the local level. Thus, while the local government is given some decision-making power, owing to the perpetual domination of the central government, the local government policies and implementation must be reflective of the desires of the central government. Resulting, deconcentration is very loosely termed 'decentralization' as it is very much a façade – a very surface-level form of decentralization.

The decentralization model used by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund has at its goal the attempt to create better governance within states. Decentralization, therefore, becomes a means of achieving a greater goal rather than simply being a goal in and of itself. Critics assess that the introduction of decentralization becomes a very ideologically-driven exercise, focusing on pushing neo-liberalism throughout the developing world. Alternative models of decentralization stress that decentralization needs to be regarded as its own goal, with the primary purpose being to improve the efficacy of the government.

A major challenge of the neo-liberal model of decentralization is its over-generalization of the 'local' existing in decentralized reform. Though power may lie at the local level, a centre still exists, creating local governments that are forced to navigate within the overarching control of the central government, rather than having their place defined by the central government. This is in contrast to the good governance model of decentralization, whereby the central government is responsible for delegating tasks to the local government. In this model, decentralization begins with a transitional phase,

which requires the central government to strengthen its own accountability to the local government bodies. Following people must become more aware of their own right and responsibilities as citizens, and how they can realize these rights at the local level. This, of course, requires the cooperation of the citizenry, assuming that all persons, civil society organizations and private institutions will be willing to participate (Box, 2004). Upon completion of this transitional phase, all levels of government are stronger, and the citizenry is capable of communicating their needs to the appropriate level of government. This model of decentralization is very dependent on the local citizenry for its implementation. Decentralization in this model is a bottom-up approach, requiring the citizenry to actively engage in the decentralization process in order for it to be fully realized.

Successful decentralization builds upon the weaknesses and strengths of all levels of government. Local governments may be lacking resources of technical expertise necessary for carrying out their new duties (Hollister, 2000). Ideally, decentralization is a process whereby all levels of government work together in order to improve the system. This is especially true in cases where decentralization is being implemented for an outcome such as poverty reduction. If efficiency is to be achieved, the strengths and weaknesses of the centre and the local must not only be recognized, but must be built into the implementation of the decentralization reform (Hollister, 2000).

In an analysis of Sub-Saharan African decentralization efforts, Jesse Ribot noted two missing links to successful decentralization policies: “locally accountable representation and discretionary powers” (Ribot, 2003:259). Indeed, these ideas can also be applied to decentralization in general. At the heart of decentralization efforts is the

increase in accountability of the government to the public. Accountability of the local is only as good as the organizations being given powers to operate. When implementing decentralization policies, powers are sometimes given to local bodies that are ill-equipped to carry out their duties. Consequently, they are incapable of implementing a decentralization system (Ribot, 2003). A major impediment is often that local governments themselves are not democratic. For decentralization to be successful, an appropriate environment for these policy reforms must be intact. A more bottom-up approach to decentralization than has been the good governance strategy has conceptualized may be a better means for ensuring the improvements to the government system hypothesized by the neo-liberal decentralization. Alternative approaches to decentralization have been created that seek to provide solutions to the negative outcomes attributed to the good governance decentralization model.

To overcome obstacles faced at local levels, decentralization can alternatively be viewed as a process rather than a single rewriting of legislation, as neo-liberal decentralization often demands. Transferring power to an incapacitated local body has been a major critique of decentralization reforms. Alternatively, decentralization should be implemented at a continual, steady pace, with powers being given to local bodies only as capacity is developed. Often power is given, and building capacity follows. If the opposite were to occur, decentralization may be more successful.

### ***The Decentralization of Education Policy***

As this study investigates the effects of decentralization on public service delivery, it is imperative to give an introduction to the literature surrounding the

decentralization of social policy. Decentralizing social sectors is intended to improve their efficacy. Analyzing the organizational structure of social services is reviewed in order to ensure that programming is actually improved under a decentralized system (Mliga, 2006). By allowing local governments to be responsible for service delivery, services can be tailored to match the needs of the community (Fjeldstad, 2001)

The reformation of basic social services, including education and health, has been a major focus of the decentralization strategies of the good governance agenda. Notwithstanding the assertion that development growth occurs when essential services are made more accessible, neo-liberals argue that decentralizing these social services will improve the governance structure of each service delivery sector. Localizing service delivery is not only more efficient, but is arguably the best way for ensuring that the needs of communities are met. Decentralizing social policy is intended to better meet the needs of the citizenry. It is assumed that a local government is better able to conceptualize and act upon local needs (Hadiz, 2004)

Particularly throughout the last two decades, social service delivery has been declining in the developing world. Decentralizing these services is highlighted as a means for improving their delivery by bringing decisions and resources closer to the public (Ahmad, Devarajan, et al, 2005). Particularly since the push for decentralization during the last decade, a centralized government system is seen as hindering social service delivery (Ahmad, Devarajan, et al, 2005). Decentralizing public services is hypothesized to increase the productive efficiency of a government by increasing expediency of resource delivery. By involving local governments in the delivery process, goods are distributed from a localized base thereby increasing expediency of the delivery

(Kimenyi & Meagher, 2004). Proponents for decentralization argue that a centralized system has the potential of creating corrupt social services, with the majority of resources remaining in the capital region (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2000).

The UNDP sites administrative forms of decentralization as particularly involved in the decentralization of social services. However, in order for accessibility to increase, the administrative reform must be complimented by an increase in popular participation (Work, 2002). In order for many of the proposed benefits of decentralizing service delivery to emerge, participation of the local community is crucial. The extent to which participatory mechanisms are in place in a community therefore determines that ability for service delivery to be improved.

The mainstream decentralization strategies posited by the multilateral institutions often begin with the reformation of the social service sector. However, in an attempt to begin a decentralization process in these states, the reforms are often pursued too quickly, resulting in inadequate time for proper policy implementation; local governments may be lacking sufficient resources and skills to adequately deliver the intended services (Ahmad, Devarajan, et al, 2005). Consequently, though the social services have been decentralized in writing, not much has changed in terms of actual service delivery. It is therefore not enough to simply regard the social service policies – the impacts of decentralization must be analyzed (Batterbury & Fernando, 2006).

One of the most dominant arguments for the decentralization of social services is increasing the ability for local governments to meet the needs of otherwise marginalized communities. A clear distinction between the impacts of decentralization in rural and urban areas can be identified (Batterbury & Fernando, 2006). As rural areas have

traditionally been the most segregated from the central government decentralization policies are intended to increase government support to these regions. It is therefore critical to analyze the effects of decentralization policies in rural areas. It is important to assess the consequences of decentralization within the rural context as this is of great concern to decentralization policies. This is particularly true in the discussion of social service delivery, where rural residents are often geographically dislocated from basic services. Decentralization policies are intended to improve the ability of remote communities to prioritize their needs and ensure greater access to social services (Hadiz, 2004). In a study on the effects of decentralization in rural villages in Malawi, Chinsinga observed that socio-economic participation increased as a result of decentralization. Indeed, rural areas benefit from improved social service delivery – a perceived benefit of decentralization (Chinsinga, 2005).

Decentralization may increase patronage politics at the local level. Local leaders may choose to be only accountable to the most influential in their community, increasing, rather than lessening, corruption. In Indonesia, corruption is said to have increased at the local level upon policy reform implementation. Instead of improving service delivery, decentralizing the system actually led to a heightened division between and within regions (Fritzen & Lim, 2006).

Mkandawire notes that the creation of social policy in Africa is met with four predominant challenges, namely poverty eradication, the push for development, the push for democratic and participatory social policy, and meeting globalization's concerns but not at the expense of "the intrinsic values of social objectives of equity and well-being" (Mkandawire, 2006:4). Mkandawire emphasizes that "social policy is a key instrument

for economic and social development” (Mkandawire, 2006:5). The decentralization of education policy has been one of the major impetuses for addressing the necessity of social policy improvement as a component to poverty eradication strategies.

Though decentralization is intended to improve social service delivery, critics assess that this has not always been the case. For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to analyze the social service delivery even more intimately, addressing the specific arguments centred around the decentralization of the education sector.

Education has historically been noted as a key social policy for development, particularly in Africa. Directly following independence, African states focused on their education policies in an effort to build national cohesion and, at the same time, increase the number of educated and employable individuals within their borders. In the 1970s, with the emergence of the basic needs theory led by dominant development thinkers and institutions, education continued to play an important role in social policy development (Mkwandawire, 2006). This decade also saw for a major financial collapse especially felt in the developing world, including Sub-Saharan Africa. This warranted a necessary change to the way in which education policy was conceptualized.

Education is perceived to be most effective when those making the decisions are also those most impacted by them; a decentralized education system has been posited as ideal for ensuring that decisions about a community’s education are made by the community (Mankoe & Maynes, 1994).

Proponents for decentralized education policy argue that:

those closest to the community and school have a better understanding of local conditions and are in the best position to make decisions about the educational processes that best serve local needs.

(Chapman, et al, 2001:181).

Indeed, decentralized education allows for the local government to make decisions pertaining to the education in their community. The local government is given responsibility for the schooling of primary school-aged children. This responsibility involves ensuring that these children are in attendance. Since the local government is closer to the individual community, it may be better able to understand and respond to community-specific issues relating to school inaccessibility. A decentralized education policy is argued to be a means for better addressing community school-related concerns. Indeed, decentralized education is “seen as a major policy to increase efficiency, flexibility, accountability, and responsiveness for economic development in both developed and developing countries” (Sui-chu Ho, 2006:590). By bringing decision-making to local bodies, government is perceivably better able to address the accessibility concerns of the local levels with a more effective policy system. Further, conflict can be better managed at the local level, thus an impetus for decentralizing education (Weiler, 1990).

UNESCO argues that decentralized education policies are central components of the international EFA (Education For All) initiatives. These policies attempt to both encourage and facilitate the achievement of universal primary education by the Millennium Development Goal successful target year, 2015 (UNESCO – *Decentralization*, 2005). Decentralization is a modern trend in the improvement of public services (UNESCO Bangkok). In fact, the international community has highlighted decentralization as necessary for any state focused on achieving the Education For All initiatives (UNESCO Bangkok). In this way, the provincial/regional

level can focus on achieving EFA within their own jurisdiction, thereby improving the chances of these objectives being realized.

Centralized education systems are said to have “weak incentives for efficiency and low accountability for student learning objectives” (draft 2001, p.6). As a result, the community makes no effort to ensure basic education of all students. Decentralizing education policy is said to alleviate these problems.

### ***Prominent Issues in the Education Sector***

In analyzing the effects of decentralization on education policy, there are a myriad of issues that could be investigated, from community participation to textbook availability to the gender disparities evident in the school system. While the researcher recognizes that every issue is important in its own right, the scope of this thesis is much too small to undertake careful investigation of each individual issue. Alternatively, three predominant issues will be analyzed in order to assess the effects of Ghana’s decentralized education policy on accessibility. These issues are: centre-local power relations, resource allocation, and curriculum control.

### ***Power Relations Between the Centre and the Local***

A major question arising when investigating the decentralization of education policy is how much power has actually been allocated from the centre to the local levels of government? The response is often not as great as the government may have written in the original policy. Rather, the central government may perpetuate its decision-making

role. It is imperative to investigate the way in which the policy was implemented; poor implementation may result in decentralization not having actually been carried out.

Perhaps then a major problem with the dominant decentralized education policies has been that local governments do not become fully autonomous entities. In Merera Gudina's study on the decentralization processes of Ethiopia, he concluded that the self-sufficiency of the local government is crucial to the success of the decentralization policy: "...true decentralization involves local autonomy in the decision-making processes in a manner that citizens can influence public policies that affect their daily life" (Gudina, 2007:96). Not only must local governments be autonomous in their decision-making powers, but they must also be trusted with adequate resources from the central government to carry out their duties. As Gudina notes, it is imperative that all local governments are given equal opportunities through equal resources (Gudina, 2007).

Deconcentration is regarded as little more than a reformulation of control already possessed by the centre. Although in theory power has been given to the periphery, the centre still holds enough power to maintain dominance (Sayed, 1999). Further, when national education policies are decentralized, they are done so in such a way that manages to retain power at the central level of government.

In a 2004 UNESCO policy statement, the organization observed that decentralizing an education system "requires that central authorities...and provincial education authorities apply a common approach to education planning and implementation monitoring" (UNESCO Bangkok:6). According to UNESCO, the central government needs to attain some control of the education system in order for proper planning to be successful. The idea that the central government is still crucial in policy

actualization is vital to the deconcentrated form of decentralization. With this in mind, critics assess that the mainstream form of decentralized education policy is deconcentrated.

### ***Resource Allocation***

Centralized government policies tend to be more equal across regions as resource distribution is maintained from the centre. A major impediment to decentralization policies is their ability to increase fiscal imbalances, placing greater financial burden on regions already suffering economically in a country. Education has been highlighted as a social service often impacted by regional disparities heightened through decentralization policies. Regional educational inequalities increase because poorer regions become less able to compete with neighbouring regions collecting greater amounts of revenue (Canaleta, Arzoz, et al, 2004).

Efficiency can be improved in service delivery through local revenue collection. Further, decisions can then reflect the needs and wants of the community, lessening the chances of ethnic conflict in communities by being more in tune with the cultural needs of each area (Garman, Haggard, et al., 2001:205). This is especially true in African countries, where a myriad of ethnicities exist within state borders. By allowing localities to collect and manage their own revenues, decisions may be more reflective of the needs and desires of the community (Garman, Haggard, et al., 2001).

The problem arises, however, when a local community is unable to collect sufficient revenue as they are in an impoverished area. If decentralization is dependent on local revenue, poorer regions will be less able to collect adequate revenue, furthering

regional inequalities (Garman, Haggard, et al., 2001). Decentralizing an education system fiscally may necessitate the collection of revenue at the local level. This has the potential of creating educational divides, particularly in countries where unequal access was a problem from the onset. Regional disparities increased in China following the implementation of a decentralization system as a result of the unequal tax base available throughout the country (Fritzen & Lim, 2006). Colombia also experienced heightened disparities as a result of its decentralization system (Fritzen & Lim, 2006). This anecdotal evidence puts into question the assumption that decentralization improves access for all.

Decentralization has the potential of “increasing inequality, the empowering of local elites, political instability, and general ineffectiveness” (Fritzen & Lim, 2006:1). The potential of these dangers existing increases in the developing world where resources are lacking. Local governments may become incapacitated, furthering regional inequalities and ineffectiveness. In the education system, decentralizing may strengthen the educational abilities of some regions at the expense of others. Poorer communities are noted as having fewer children in school. Lacking or inadequate electricity often hinders the ability for children to attend school (UNDP 2001:6). Poorer communities have more challenges to enrolment than those which are more affluent.

Since decentralization strategies have a tendency to create a larger division between the poor and the affluent, may power given may actually translate into more power being given to the already empowered members of a society. As a result, the elites possess more control over the less influential in society (Sayed, 1999). The issue of inequality has been studied in education decentralization. Geo-Jaja provides an analysis

of the decentralized education system in Nigeria. According to Geo-Jaja's study, accessibility to education in Nigeria was interrupted when decentralization was introduced. Although communities were given the opportunity to manage their own schools, this included fiscal management. In poorer regions, they were unable to collect adequate revenue. With public schools deteriorating due to lack of funds, wealthier families began enrolling their children in the private system. The private school system thus enjoyed a steady increase in enrolment at the public school system's expense. Private schools deteriorated in quality and number, making access much more difficult, particularly in the poorest areas. As a result, decentralization imposed severe inequalities in the Nigerian context (Geo-Jaja, 2004).

### ***Curriculum Control***

The issue of curriculum reform is prominent in discussion pertaining to the decentralization of the education system. While most discussions surrounding educational curriculum seek to determine the best curriculum for improving the quality of education provided, within the decentralization context is deciding upon who is responsible for creating the curriculum. Is curriculum development a national responsibility or a local government responsibility or both? What curriculum exists is a determining factor in a family's decision to send their child to school. The responsibility of curriculum development is therefore a crucial issue in the discussion of the decentralization of education policy.

Curriculum is an essential component to the educational debate as it identifies what is being learned in each subject area and how this is taught. The body that is responsible for

making these decisions therefore tailors the curriculum to meet their objectives (Obanya, 1995). If the objectives are developed at the local level, they in turn are suited to the needs and capabilities of this local level.

The lingering question debated is whether the curriculum should be locally or nationally developed. When a government begins the process of decentralizing its education system, it has the opportunity to extend curricular reform responsibilities to the local government. The main argument for localized curriculum is the recognition that varying localities within a nation have different cultures, languages, and traditions. Curriculum should be tailored to the specifics of individual communities in order to ensure that children have the best education possible that focuses on the specifics of the area in which they reside. Curriculum guides what students are learning. It therefore has the ability to guide a child's cultural, social, and political comprehension of their surrounds (Astiz, et al., 2002). On the other hand, if curriculum is nationally-developed it could reflect the position of the central government rather than the local community. Curriculum plays an important role in the issue of access because parents are more likely to send their children to school if they view the curriculum as beneficial to their child's future.

The most economically disadvantaged families are at the greatest risk for not attaining a primary education. With many obstacles needed overcoming, a family is forced to determine the best possible option amidst their circumstances. Is it most advantageous to send their child(ren) to school to attain an education, or to keep the child(ren) at home to attend to family duties? For these families, the curriculum must appear beneficial for their present and future livelihood. Tailoring the curriculum to the

needs of the individual community can do this. The attainment of education is very much linked to a family's income status. Can they afford to send their child to school? With exception, large family size is indicative of lower family income. Not being able to afford to send all of their children to school, these families are forced to choose which of their family will attend school. More often than not, this is the elder male child. In poorer families, parents have been discouraged by the realization that they cannot send their children to secondary school.

International development institutions have been criticized for outlining an educational agenda which promotes western culture. National curricula indicate that elites within this central government system have the power to dictate what is being learned throughout the country. The centre could use this to its advantage to push a particular ideology or political agenda forward. Moreover, whether or not done intentionally, national curriculum has a tendency to reflect the culture and language of the capital region, ignoring those of the smaller localities (Gibbs & Howley, 2000). In Togo, where approximately forty languages exist, a nationalized curriculum meant the nationalized of language – requiring many children to master a language different than their own. Many saw this national language policy as a political manoeuvre, by allowing one central language to dominate (Obanya, 1995).

A recent study at the University of Calgary concluded that student learning was best improved when school leadership reflected the values and culture intrinsic within a given community. Parents need to be able to view the positive outcomes of sending their children to school. A community-tailored curriculum, developed by the local

government body, is therefore arguably able to improve access to education by ensuring that children attain an education reflective of their community's priorities.

On the other hand, many argue that curriculum needs to be devised at the national level, ensuring that the entire country is working together to improve the educational system. This is said to be particularly true in the developing context, where an entire country must be working towards improving the education system for the purpose of development. Within this is the idea of setting educational standards nationally. These standards not only outline what the curriculum should entail, but also grading practices and educational objectives. Designing a conclusive curriculum to meet national standards can enable all children to receive a similar education, resulting in similar post-graduation opportunities. A nationalized curriculum can in this way create a level playing field from which all adults begin their quest for employment (Gibbs & Howley, 2000).

The idea of the national curriculum is situated within mainstream neo-liberal thought, which asserts that many developed countries with impressive education programmes have a national curriculum, which has ensured this success. Education perceived in this way is critiqued for promoting the agendas of international institutions without consideration of local contexts. Schools are a major component to the socialization and politicization of children. Schools can be used as a mechanism for promoting a national and/or international agenda (Gibbs & Howley, 2000).

In almost a compromising fashion, others argue that curriculum should generally be centralized, with stated goals made at the national level, yet with local governments having the ability to tailor specifics to the community context. While many subjects are

generally nationally-oriented, for example science and mathematics, others could be tailored to fit a more localized context. For example, geography could include more topographical information pertaining to the situation within each community context. With the learning outcomes of the students as the first priority, curriculum developed in this way would both set a national standard for education whilst allowing students to attain skills and knowledge necessary for active membership in their own community (Caldwell, 1997).

### ***Hypothesis***

The Government of Ghana has been decentralizing its education policy in an attempt to improve access to primary school. Although the government has been implementing the decentralization strategy for twenty years, the results have not been as expected, and rates have not subsequently improved. The problem is rooted in the policy itself. Ghana's decentralization policy follows that posited by the World Bank as a component of its good governance agenda. Their form of decentralization is in reality deconcentration – a form criticized for being mainly rhetoric rather than a real change of the governmental structure and responsibilities. Ghana's educational access has therefore not benefited because true decentralization has yet to be realized. Although the policies are in place, the implementation has not resulted in true decentralization of the education system. The problem is therefore inherent within the policy itself.

The Government of Ghana highlighted three areas to be improved by the decentralized education system, namely decision-making power between the centre and local governments, the allocation of resources to the local levels, and control of

curriculum. By allowing the local government better control over these three areas, whilst improving the amount of resources for carrying out these new responsibilities, these locales are thought to be better able to address the needs of their citizenry. Thus, problems accessing education could be addressed by a local government better able to reflect the needs of its citizenry. It is hypothesized that, as Ghana's decentralized education policy has not been properly implemented, these three areas have not adequately been improved. Resulting, access rates have remained stagnant.

### ***Methodology***

This research will use the case study of Ghana to highlight the relationship between decentralized education policy and primary school enrolment rates. Ghana was chosen as a case study for a variety of reasons. Firstly, Ghana has been heralded by the international community for properly implementing development policies. Since the country is noted for accurately undertaking proposed development initiatives, it follows that the country can be used to assess whether or not the appropriate implementation will reap the appropriate results. Secondly, Ghana's decentralized education reforms began in 1987. The twenty year lapse until the present provides sufficient time to assess whether or not this policy is meeting the desired results. On a more technical level, there has been substantial research conducted in the area of Ghana's decentralization strategy – a reality necessary for undertaking secondary research.

This research analyzes the relationship between primary school enrolment rates and decentralized education policy implementation. Firstly, the decentralization of

Ghana's education system will be investigated to measure the extent to which decentralization has occurred. The form of decentralization utilized under the educational reforms will be sought to analyze the extent to which reforms have been decentralized. This will be done using evidence from a variety of secondary sources. Archival evidence using government documents will assess the government's aims of implementing the decentralization strategy. Secondary data collection will further include results who have assessed the nature and extent of Ghana's decentralization programming. will also be used to highlight the Government of Ghana's aims for the decentralization strategy.

Using secondary data, we will assess the government education reform and collect data on changing enrolment rates between 1987 and the present. This will be done to determine the extent to which primary enrolment has or has not improved since the onset of the decentralized education reforms. These rates will further be disaggregated based on region and gender to analyze any trends in these particular variables.

Again relying on secondary data, we will examine the government's decentralization strategy, especially as it pertains to education. In particular we will examine three issues most crucial in education, namely changes in power relations between the centre and the local, the shift in resource allocation , and decentralization in curriculum development. This will allow us to determine the nature and extent of transfer in education matters between the central and local governments. Each of these will also examine the way in which they contribute to enhancing enrolment once they

have been decentralized, and the way in which a lack of decentralization, or when it is limited to deconcentration, does not enhance primary school enrolment.

Primary enrolment rate statistics will be collected from the UNESCO and World Bank Development statistical reports. Data pertaining to the Ghanaian education policy will be gathered from the policies themselves, including the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and the Ghana Vision 2020 report. Data to analyze the realities of the three access issues investigated will be collected from secondary sources. These will include Canadian theses undertaken in the same subject area, as well as journal articles and research papers which, again, have analyzed a similar topic within Ghana.

The researcher recognizes the limitations of relying on secondary data. Inasmuch as primary data collection could have allowed for data collection tailored to the needs of this research, the issue of education and decentralization is well-documented in Ghana. Further, by including a variety of secondary sources, this research was able to draw conclusions concerning the entire country rather than simply one community in which primary research was undertaken.

Lastly, the three issues chosen in this study are indicative of ways in which the government views decentralization as being able to improve accessibility in education. Because they themselves are to improve enrolment rates, the issue of control variables is not applicable. While other factors may have affected the lack of growth in enrolment rates over the twenty years, the reforms are intended to ensure that growth occurs, regardless of other challenges occurring within the country. Thus, irrespective of control variables, the conclusions drawn from this data remain the same.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**SEQUENCE AND SUCCESSION:**  
**DECENTRALIZED EDUCATION IN CONTEXT**

*From Colonization to Nkrumah: the Modernizing South*

European settlement of Ghana began in 1471 when the Portuguese began to use the Ghanaian coast as an exceptional trading route, with commodities such as gold, ivory, cocoa, and persons for the slave trade (Huo, 1989). The British colonized the Gold Coast in 1901, taking advantage of the immense resource base and strategic western port; this facilitated trading in cocoa, gold, timber, slaves, and other commodities. The British thus regarded the colony as an important economic piece, perfect for their puzzle of expansion. It was the southern coastal region of the country that was given the most attention, with geography comprising an important component to the British trading route. Thus, when Governor Gordon Guggisberg designed the 10-Year Development Plan in 1919, he concentrated on Ghana's southern development. This included the building of the Tema port, roads, water systems, schools, and a railroad (Huo, 1989). It is important to note that this colonial focus on growth in the south is largely linked to the north-south economic divide that persists in the country today.

Ghana's colonial legacy is a vital component to the entire history of the African continent, as it was the first state to gain independence. On March 6, 1957, led by Kwame Nkrumah and his Convention People's Party, the Gold Coast became the Republic of Ghana. The country's big industrial push symbolized not only the heightened

economic expansion deemed essential under the modernization theory's approach to development, but the optimism for a developed and prosperous African continent.

Nkrumah held the dream of a prosperous, secure country; at the top of his governing priorities were Ghanaian nationalism and development. To maintain these goals, Nkrumah's government was very centralized, a strategy thought to increase cohesiveness of the Ghanaian community, thereby securing a sense of nationalism. Following thoughts from modernization ideology, the Nkrumah government undertook a number of infrastructure development initiatives, including the building of the Volta River dam– the largest man-made river in the world. The river included the Akosombo Hydroelectric Project which constructed the Akosombo Dam – which was both a supplier of water and electricity, and a trade route for Ghana's landlocked neighbours, including Burkina Faso and Niger. During the 1950s and 1960s, Ghana was described as a newly independent country that was well on the road to economic stability. The GDP was regarded as one of the highest amongst the African countries (Huo, 1989:2). Ghana continued to export its cocoa and gold, continuing the trading patterns developed during its period of colonization.

### ***Ideological Change: the Shift to Neo-liberalism***

While Ghana was building its infrastructure, throughout the world the Cold War heightened, with liberal capitalist and communist ideologies at odds worldwide. Characteristic of the Cold War was the Soviet Union and United States competing against one another, avidly trying to surpass each other, they tried to convince while convincing other countries to join them in support of their ideologies. In 1965, the IMF, towing the

line of the western liberal ideology, began its involvement in Ghanaian politics. Nkrumah had been criticized by the west as being too left-leaning, integrating socialist policies that threatened communist expansion throughout Africa. When Major General Joseph Arthur Ankrah of the National Liberation Council gained Presidency by way of a military coup, the west, including the IMF, was very supportive (Hutchful, 1987).

1966, the year of Ankrah's coup, also saw the introduction of the first of Ghana's IMF-directed policies. The Fund began a stabilization programme, crafted to reduce Ghana's deficit and budgetary expenditures. This included liberalizing the country's trading policies and deregulating the cedi by 30% against the dollar (Hutchful, 1987:25). Hutchful argues that the IMF was skilfully entering Ghana under the heading of 'economic recovery, but in reality was starting to "deepen foreign control of the Ghanaian economy and intensify its structural and social contradictions" (Hutchful, 1987:20). Indeed, this year marked a considerable change in the Ghanaian political, economic, and social system; the country was now said to be highly influenced by western political ideals, beginning its road to infiltration by the IMF and World Bank (Hutchful, 1987).

It is indisputable that the World Bank and IMF adhere to neo-liberal ideology. The very nature of their programming is to improve the political and economic structures of developing states in a manner that is saturated in neo-liberal thought. When prescribing policies to a country, the Bank and Fund stipulate what the policy should entail and how it should be carried out. Collier calls this a "transfer of sovereignty", noting the amount of power the multi-lateral institutions are exercising by imposing the approach under which a government must operate (Collier, 1999). Although there is

much debate as to the success and/or failures of the policies imposed by the Bretton Woods Institutions, consensus has been made that the multilateral institutions design their policies in such a way that encourages neo-liberal policy prescriptions. All policies placate neo-liberal goals as necessary for development. The case of Ghana is no different, with the Fund and Bank utilizing their infiltration into the Ghanaian political system as a means for ensuring the country continues on the path to adopting policies following neo-liberal ideologies.

### ***Beyond Rhetoric: The Implementation of Structural Adjustment***

Much like its neighbours throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana felt the effects of the 1980s debt crisis. There was no one reason for Ghana's economic collapse in the 1980s. Instead, it is owing to a myriad of factors, such as "international constraints, drought, policy failures, and bureaucratic mismanagement" (Rothchild, 1991:6). When Jerry Rawlings secured presidential leadership in 1981 following a coup d'état which ousted Dr. Hilla Limann, the country was in the worst economic situation the country had experience in its limited time as an independent nation. Although Rawlings was sceptical of engaging in policies imposed by external forces, with a debt steadily increasing and a country becoming even further impoverished, the government had little choice but to accept aid from the International Monetary Fund. Thus, in 1983, falling in line with many developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and throughout the globe, Ghana began to implement the structural adjustment packaging prescribed by the IMF in exchange for monetary assistance.

The political situation at this time was unstable, owing to Rawlings recent military take-over of the government (Mensah, Oppong-Koranteng-Frempong, and Yeboah, 2003). Ho-Won Jeong notes that "...Ghana was able to launch structural adjustment programs under an authoritarian regime that does not require efforts to reach social consensus" (Jeong, 1996:67). Certainly, owing to the illegitimate takeover of government, Rawlings was desperate to attract global legitimacy of his regime. At the same time, Rawlings was not particularly dependent on national consensus for his actions. These two realities, coupled with the disintegrating national economy, attracted the government to IMF programming (Swift, *The Race*, 1998).

The Economic Recovery Programme, which the Rawlings government instituted in 1983, was the first phase of the Ghanaian Structural Adjustment Programme. Rothchild observes that Rawlings himself had coined the structural adjustment impositions 'neo-colonialism' – a popular criticism owing to the conditionalities imposed by the IMF in exchange for the development assistance. National policies thus began to be taken shape by these policy implications.

Interestingly, throughout the life of Ghana's structural adjustment programming, the country was applauded by the IMF as the 'prized pupil' of the structural adjustment programme, having accurately implemented the prescribed policies, which the international community perceived as resulting in success. Ghana's situation was even regarded as an 'economic miracle', with the country acting almost as a 'poster child' for structural adjustment (Hutchful, 2000). Ghana was among the primary pupils of SAPs (Mensah, Oppong-Koranteng, and Frempong-Yeboah, n.d.). The programme was implemented in three phases: Economic Rehabilitation Programmes I,

II, and III, each focusing on a different aspect of economic improvement. The main aspects of Ghana's programmes, as conditioned by the IMF, were devaluation of currency, diversification of export base, trade liberalization, removal of price controls and subsidies, and the privatization of state companies (International Labour Review, 1993, p.525).

Indeed, the intensity of the relationship between the Bretton Woods Institutions and the Ghanaian government cannot be overlooked. The IMF and World Bank have played a prominent role in the state almost since its independence. As a result, it is of little surprise that the decentralization form and strategy posited by the neo-liberal multilateral institutions have been adopted by the Ghanaian government. With such an established history with these institutions, and a great amount of outstanding loans, the Ghanaian government has little option but to implement these policies. The case of Ghana has been no different, having designed national policies that fall directly in line with the rhetoric of the Bank and the Fund.

It is therefore understandable that Ghana's education policies themselves have been heavily influenced by the Bretton Woods institutions, particularly the World Bank. As the Bank posits decentralization as necessary for improving social services within a state, Ghana's decentralized education system follows the decentralization conceptualized within this World Bank agenda.

### ***Ghana's Decentralization Strategy***

Ghana is an important case study for analyzing decentralization policy in Sub-Saharan Africa. The country has been a quintessential example of development initiatives since the imposition of its Structural Adjustment Programming in 1982 and, as such, can be used as a prototype for many other countries in the region. Ghana continues to require external assistance, ranking 136 of 177 countries on the Human Development Index. With a mere 57.9% of the adult population literate, it is clear that the education system is lacking. The life expectancy of the country is 57 and \$2240 is the Gross National Product in terms of Purchasing Power Parity. Indeed, the country is one defined as 'developing', and has been integrating development measures into its policies in an attempt to improve the socio-economic environment (UNDP, 2006).

Though the state began with high hopes for development, by the 1980s the effects of the 1970s oil problems and debt crisis began to take shape. In 1982, the government sought help from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund for debt relief. Following the trend of the day, decentralization was posited as a key for Ghana to further democratize, practice better governance, and develop. In 1988, with the introduction of District Assemblies, the Ghanaian local government system was born and the process to decentralize had begun (Hutchful, 1987).

Before 1988, decentralization efforts had been made, though their significance small. 1974 is seen as the first attempt at some decentralization by Lt. Col. Acheampong's regime, but most critics argue that this was very much a deconcentrated central system, where local bodies were still very much controlled by the centre (Crawford, 2004). Thus, the imposition of decentralization is normally credited Jerry

Rawlings' time in office. Beginning in 1983, the Rawlings' PNDC party "announced a policy of administrative decentralization of central government ministries, alongside the creation of People's Defense Committees (PDCs) in each town and village" (Crawford, 2004:7). By 1988, decentralization efforts were brought to the country's legal framework, and the Local Government Law, or PNDC Law 207, were created. The Local Government Law divided the state into 110 districts within the 10 existing regions. DAs (District Assemblies) were created which managed the districts, with elections held every 4 years. 1/3 of DA members were nominated by the central government, leaving the remaining members up to the electoral decision of each individual district (Crawford, 2004:7-8).

Though presenting a brief landscape of the history which led up to decentralization in the country, it would be an oversight to place Rawlings' PNDC government as the heart and soul behind democratization and decentralization in the country. Still today, this government is criticized by many for engaging in the worst human rights abuses the country has seen. Though in 1988 the District Assemblies were elected, these were 'no-party' elections, leading to a boycotting of these elections by bodies such as churches, select civil society groups, and the Trade Union Commission (Hutchful, 2002:197). In 1991, the Rawlings' government recognized the decline of support for its leadership. In an attempt to regain political credibility, they instituted a transition to Constitutional rule in January of that year. The first multi-party elections in Ghana were held in 1992, signifying the transition to democratizing the state (Hutchful, 2002:198).

This new Constitution reinforced the decentralization reforms of 1988. In fact, as Osei analyzes, the Constitution underlines decentralization as a necessary component to Ghana's democratization efforts, stating in Article 35(6)(d) that:

State shall take appropriate measures to make democracy a reality by decentralizing the administrative and financial machinery of government to the regions and districts and by affording all possible opportunities to the people to participate in decision-making at every level of national life and in government.

(Crawford, 2004:9).

Thus, decentralization was very much a part of Rawlings' attempt to reclaim his legitimacy as country ruler. Scholars argue that it was a political tool used for attempting to regain support countrywide.

Ayee sites Ghana's decentralization system as having five main objectives: to devolve political and state power in order to promote participatory democracy through local-level institutions; to deconcentrate and devolve administration, development planning, and implementation to the district assemblies; to introduce an effective system of fiscal decentralization that gives the district assemblies control over a substantial portion of their revenues; to establish a national development planning system to integrate and coordinate development planning at all levels and in all sectors; and to incorporate economic, social, spatial, and environmental issues into the development planning process on an integrated and comprehensive basis.

(Asante & Ayee, n.d.:7)

Asante and Ayee note that the goal of poverty reduction has been a key component to the decentralization reforms, following the logic between these concepts brought about by donor agencies. It is inevitable therefore that poverty reduction strategies were drafted in the country at the same time as the decentralization system was

in place. Within these include the Programme of Actions to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment of 1987, the District Assembly Poverty Alleviation Fund of 1996, and Ghana's entry into the Highly Indebted Poor Country initiative in 2002 (Asante & Ayee, n.d.:9).

Ghana's decentralization story carefully follows the model put forward by the neo-liberal institutions aiding it. The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) was drafted as a necessary component to Ghana's receiving aid as part of the Highly-Indebted Poor Country initiative. There have been two stages to the GPRS, aptly named GPRS I and II. While the first was fully focused on the Millennium Development Goals, the second was a more forward-looking attempt at turning Ghana into a middle-income economy (the site). Though they are different in scope, both papers highlight the attainment of universal primary education as necessary not only for attaining the first MDG, but also for realizing poverty reduction thereby improving the country's overall economic status. Both papers recognize the importance of Ghana's educational reforms, noting the inaccessibility of primary education as a major impediment to achieving the objectives laid out in these policies. Indeed, Ghana's decentralized education policies are a component to the entire good governance strategy pushed forward by the World Bank to achieve development within this state.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **DECONCENTRATION NOT DECENTRALIZATION: AN IMPETUS FOR CHANGE GONE WRONG**

#### ***Ghana's Education System***

Following independence, Ghana's education system was heralded as one of the best in Sub-Saharan Africa. By the mid-1970s, however, along with economic difficulties, the Ghana's education programming began to take a downfall, as determined by the government's Dzobo Education Review. Although 3.4% of the GDP was spent on education during the 1970s, this had declined to less than 2% by 1980 – well below the average noted by the World Bank for successive education programming (Cobbe, 1991: 104). Based on these facts, in 1987 the government began an entire reformation of the educational system, recognizing the importance of education for poverty reduction. This reformation was package to the structural adjustment economic recovery programme stipulated by the IMF and World Bank. In 1990, when the Jomtien Conference called for a global revolution for achieving universal primary education, the Ghanaian government was adamant that it would improve its educational system. The first priority was to make education more accessible, thereby achieving universal primary education rates within its borders (Akyeampong, 2004).

Ghana has undergone four major education reforms over the last four decades, namely the Accelerated Development Plan for Education in 1951; the Education Act of 1961; the Education Reforms of 1987; and the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education of 1992.

Although these acts have all attempted to improve the educational system, none have secured universal primary education within the country's borders. Though the country can be applauded for its attempts, basic education still remains widely inaccessible to almost over 1/3 of the country's population (UNESCO, 2005).

The 1961 reform moved much responsibility of the education system to the local levels of government in place at this time. The policy included the push for universal primary education, stating in Section 2(1) that:

Every child who has attained the school-going age as determined by the minister shall attend a course of instruction as laid down by the Minister in a school recognized for the purpose by the Minister.”

(MOE, 2007)

Six years was the age established as the 'school-going age'. The Minister at this time placed restrictions regarding what indirect fees could be made mandatory for school attendance; although fees were lifted, families were still responsible for school supplies, textbooks, and uniforms (MOE, 2007). The 1961 continued the highly formalized, academic-focused education system characteristic of that instituted by the British during the colonial era.

In 1974, what was known as the Dzobo Committee established the “The New Structure and Content for Education in Ghana” paper which highlighted numerous reparations to be made to the education system in an attempt to continue increasing both enrolment and quality. The major impetus for this paper was to restructure the education system to make students seen as more valuable for post-schooling employment. Indeed, the government was widely recognizing the correlation between educational attainment and development, and hoped that improving the education system would in turn improve the economy (MOE, 2007).

Much to the dismay of the Government of Ghana, the high hopes for the Ghanaian government were relinquished by the end of the 1970s. By the beginning of the 1980s, at the imposition of the structural adjustment programming, the government recognized that Ghana's education system was decreasing both in quality and in enrolment rates. The Ministry of Education sums up Ghana's educational problems at the beginning of the decade:

By 1983 the education system was in such a crisis that it became necessary for a serious attempt to be made to salvage it. Among the many problems of the system were lack of educational materials, deterioration of school structures, low enrolment rates, high drop-out rates, poor educational administration and management, drastic reduction in Government's educational financing and the lack of data and statistics on which to base any planning.

(MOE, 2007)

Thus, at the onset of the structural adjustment programming, Ghana was ready and willing to accept any changes proposed by the IMF and World Bank in order to improve their educational system.

The 1986 educational reforms were therefore in large part owing to the demands of the World Bank under their own Educational Sector Adjustment Credit. Though the 1970s had educational reform proposals at the heart of Ghana, by 1980 with both Ghana's citizens calling for an improved education system, and donor organizations demanding it, the Ghanaian government had no choice other than to adopt a reform package that would improve the educational system (Cobbe, 1991). The reforms of 1986 re-evaluated the Dzobo reforms of the 1970s, in an attempt to determine why education had been digressing rather than improving in spite of these efforts. The objectives included increasing accessibility to primary education, "making education cost-effective

and [achieving] cost recovery”, and making educational attainment and quality more in line with the socio-economic conditions of varying regions throughout the country (MOE, 2007). Under the Local Government Law, or the PNDC Law 207 of 1988, Section 29 decentralization 22 Departments and Organizations. Among these were the Ghana Education Service, and thus the education sector (Mankoe, 1992).

It was a result of these reforms that the wearing of the brown and orange uniform, quintessential to the image of the Ghanaian school-aged child, was instated. Basic education was to constitute nine years of schooling, including six years at the primary school level, and three at the junior secondary school level, respectively. This was to be compulsory for all Ghanaian school-aged children, with school fees to be waived. The Ministry of Education sites external assistance following the institution of the 1986 reforms. For example, USAID and the International Development Assistance Programme both gave financial assistance to select programmes aimed at helping the primary school education system in Ghana improve. Nonetheless, by the early 1990s, the government was citing little to no improvement in basic enrolment rates, despite considerable attention and reformations. Determined to reverse the precedence of a declining education sector, the Ghanaian government, with the advisement of the external development community, instituted the Free Compulsory Basic Education Plan in 1992 (MOE, 2007).

The Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education plan (FCUBE) was a reaction to these reforms. In 1992 FCUBE came out with the goal of reaching universal primary education in Ghana by 2005. FCUBE highlighted three keys to the success of its programming: improving teacher capabilities, improving management at central and

district levels, and ‘improving access and participation’ (Akyeampong, 2004:2). As part of the FCUBE plan, the Whole School Development programme was introduced, calling for more localized educational initiatives to ensure that all students would have access to education. It was thought that a more localized, decentralized form education system would allow local problems with access to surface and local responses to these problems to emerge. Resulting would be the improvement of the education system and the attainment of universal primary education. Both FCUBE and WSD programmes fall under the jurisdiction of the Ghana Education Service. The WSD is particularly concerned with schools in rural areas – one of the least accessible areas in the country.

### ***Ghana’s Access Issues***

Access to primary education has historically been a major problem for Ghana. Cobbe notes that the formal school system began as “basically elitist, tapering rapidly toward the top of the pyramid, and excessively lengthy” (Cobbe, 1991:101). At the heart of Ghana’s decentralized education system is the realization that, in order for universal primary education to be achieved, school must become more accessible. This study does not deal with the *quality* of education, rather the *accessibility* of it.

Ghana is starkly divided geographically, with the three northern regions, namely Upper West, Upper East, and Northern, being the most impoverished regions in the country. The north faces acute water and food shortages owing to the semi-desert topography. The under-population makes employment opportunities quite low (Akyeampong, 2004). Besides enormous economic disadvantages faced by northern families, access issues also prevail owing to the scattered structure of these communities.

The Upper West and Upper East regions have the greatest number of children walking more than 30 minutes to reach their school building (Akyeampong, 2004). Distance to school is a major impediment to attendance in the north. As well, the northern regions have the most sparsely populated of the country, with rural agricultural life being the predominant form of survival. Consequently, access is impacted.

The divide between the north and the south has severely economically divided the country in both pre- and post-colonial periods, with the north suffering economically (Gyimah-Boadi & Asante, 2004). The issue of hidden costs are also problematic in Ghana, particularly in the north. Hidden school fees, including uniforms and textbooks, make primary schooling inaccessible for the poorest citizens. Under advisement from the structural adjustment prescriptions, the Government of Ghana has termed this ‘cost-sharing’, forcing families to pay for school fees, uniforms, and their own textbooks (Narman, 1995). The already impoverished families in the north have reported education as inaccessible because of these indirect fees associated with it (Gimah-Boadi & Asante, 2004).

Familial income is used as a good indicator of education accessibility, with the upper classes of society having the greatest opportunity to send their children to elementary school (Daddieh, 1995). It is therefore vital when analyzing families who cannot access education to identify the groups of families who are most impoverished. In the Ghanaian context, families in rural regions are more likely to be poor. Following, agricultural regions, particularly in the north, are susceptible to low education enrolment. Families may need their children to stay at home and tend to farming duties. Agricultural families often tend to be the poorest. The combined cost of transportation to school,

indirect costs, and loss of manual labour time, make inaccessibility high in these agricultural regions of the country. As well, Daddieh notes that families who cannot afford to send their children to secondary school may regard schooling as useless and therefore will not be in attendance. She explains:

Unlike in Ghana's impoverished north, where parents are questioning the value of an education because of the generally poor exam results and low remuneration for skilled jobs, those in Accra area have continued to send their children to school.

(Daddieh, 1995:37)

The north is geographically disconnected from the south. Still today, roads in the north are scarce. The road connected Bolgatanga, the capital of the Upper East Region, to the Upper West's capital, Wa, is unpaved and often impassible during the rainy season. These areas thus feel disconnected on a mere geographic level. Ghana's decentralized education system is designed to counter these inaccessibility issues. It is thought that if education is viewed from the local level, local government can address the specific needs of their own communities. Regional disparities are thought to decrease as each region can be accountable for their own educational system, placing greater emphasis on the special needs of these areas. Further, the number of teachers available in the north has had a history of scarcity. The problem is cyclical: since the number of students has traditionally been lower in the north, it follows that the teachers produced is also a small amount than in the south. Further, there is little incentive for teachers to either stay in the north. Ghana faces large migration to the south as professionals seek better paying jobs. Teachers from the north may move to the south in search of better pay. Those in the south have little to no incentive to move northward (Narman, 1995).

### ***The Ghanaian Education System***

Primary education in Ghana consists of nine years of schooling, commencing when a child reaches age six. This includes six years in primary school and three in junior secondary school. By law, all school-aged children must complete these nine years of basic education. At the end of Junior Secondary School, two exams must be taken to determine the student's ability to enrol in Senior Secondary School. These two exams include a national exam and one written by the West African Examinations Council. These exams must be paid for personally by students and their families. The school year is forty weeks, commencing in September.

This system of examinations determined a student's entry into Senior Secondary School is reflective of the formal, exam-based education system typical throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. This can be traced to the structures left in place by the colonial administrators. This system itself has been criticized for perpetuating socio-economic disparities. Daddieh has cited that owing to the low teacher salaries, many of these professionals offer a tutorial service outside of classes in preparation for these exams. Consequently, those able to afford the extra fees are at an advantage for writing the exams (Daddieh, 1995).

The Ministry of Education is the body of the central government responsible for the education sector. It dictates responsibilities to each District Assembly. The Ministry of Education has set forward an Action Plan that is indicative of the main objectives of the Ghanaian schooling system:

- 1) expanding access to education at all levels of education
- 2) providing and improving infrastructural facilities

- 3) raising the quality of teaching and learning for effective outcomes
- 4) making education more relevant to national goals and aspiration by focusing on vocational and technical education
- 5) making tertiary education more cost effective
- 6) providing free education at the basic level
- 7) promoting sport at all levels

(MOE, 2007)

One notes that objectives 1 and 6 are working towards meeting the objectives put forward by FCUBE. Resulting, the Ministry of Education is responsible for the overall improvement in the education system. The District Assemblies, while holding some levels of responsibility for the schooling in their jurisdiction, are held accountable to the MOE.

The FCUBE reform is still working towards meeting the objectives of universal primary education today. A decentralized education system still persists in the country – a system intended to improve the education sector by making primary education more accessible, particularly in remote areas. However, the extent to which decentralization is meeting these objectives is questionable.

### ***The Introduction of the Reforms***

Ghana's decentralization reforms were welcomed with great optimism and expectation. Local government bodies were, for the most part, quite willing to adapt to the new system of government, recognizing the benefits it would have at this level. However, the mood quickly changed as it became clear that the promises of

decentralization were not being realized. Twenty years following the establishment of the decentralization reforms, the policies are still not fulfilling the expectations of the majority of Ghanaians. This not only refers to the decentralization reforms in general, but also specifically to the decentralized education reforms. Referring to the FCUBE, Osei and Brock noted in 2006 that the “general conclusion has been that there has been little improvement” (Osei & Brock, 2006, p.438).

The Government of Ghana’s plan for decentralizing education falls in line with the World Bank’s good governance strategy and the Education For All initiatives of the international community. Ghana’s education sector has adopted the importance of primary enrolment, establishing a policy which matches the second Millennium Development Goal, achieving universal primary education. The GPRS highlights the reforms as identifying targets that fall in line with the Millennium Development Goals (B)

The fact that Ghana has been integrating the international objective of good governance and universal primary education is not surprising, considering that, from the very beginning stages of education reform in 1987, the World Bank was helping to monetarily support Ghana’s initiatives. In 1987, the World Bank began the Education Sector Adjustment Credits, which signifies the important role the Bank played in the educational reforms. The World Bank has continued its support of the Ghanaian education system; when the FCUBE programme began in 1996, the World Bank helped by way of the Basic Education Sector Improvement Credit. Without doubt, Ghana’s educational system has been widely influenced by external forces. Between 1987 and 1997, \$240USD million was given to the Ghanaian education sector from external

funding (B, 14). Clearly, Ghana's education system is heavily influenced by external forces. Further, within the GPRS, the government states that decentralizing is imperative to the achievement of its good governance strategy. Decentralizing the education system has been regarded as a means for securing good governance country-wide.

Ayee coined Ghana's decentralization system as 'decentralized centralization', noting that, although local governments have been given some responsibilities, they are still widely accountable to the central government (Ayee, 1997). In fact, the perpetual interconnectedness of the central and local governments produces the popular criticism that Ghana is not decentralized, rather exemplifying a deconcentrated form of government.

In 1988, the PNDC Law 207, Section 29, identified twenty-two departments that would be decentralized; the Ghana Education Service was included in this strategy, thus beginning Ghana's path of decentralized education policy. The government was determined to improve primary enrolment rates, recognizing that "in the national interest, efforts of the Government to strive for universal, quality basic education is not only a constitutional responsibility, it is a prerequisite for the economy to grow and for poverty to be reduced" (B, 3). Thus, the government began the process of decentralization which divided responsibilities between the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service, and the District Assemblies. The Ghana Education Service is run through the MOE and is to act as a liaison between the Ministry of Education and the District Assemblies. The Ghana Education Service has existed within the districts since before the on-set of the decentralization strategy. Its role in each community was to allow the Ministry to better manage education at the local level. A major focus of the Ghana decentralization

strategy was therefore to transfer responsibility from the Ghana Education Service to the District Assemblies (PRSP 2003: 102).

The Ghana Vision 2020 became as the National Development Policy Framework, outlining ways in which Ghana could become more developed by 2020.

Within the GRPS, the Human Resource Development and Basic Services area is the component in which the education sector is analyzed. The progress report notes that the over-all goals of educational sector help include “enhancing access to basic education, with special emphasis on gender and geographical equity” and “improving the quality of education’ (IMF 2004: 89). The report itself notes that there has been “insufficient progress in primary school enrolments; persistent geographical and gender disparities in access to education; and less than satisfactory quality education” (IMF 2004: 90). In 2004, the goals were re-set in an attempt to once again achieve these results.

Adequate resources are to be given to each community through the District Assemblies Common Fund. This Fund, as articulated in the 1992 GOG Constitution, stipulates that 5% of the national budget is to be divided between all District Assemblies in order for them to more effectively carry out their responsibilities as local government bodies. Within this amount, each District Assembly must budget for the educational sector (Ghana Common Fund, 2006). In fact, the Fund has identified the improvement to the education sector as a major impetus for its creation, recognizing the need for more resources in order to have educational access to increase. The Ministry of Education also continues to receive funding from the national government. Recently, this has risen, with 3.1% of GNP (World Development Report 1999:74) spent on education in 1980, to 5.4% in 2006 (World Development Report 2007:74).

Under the education policies, the Government targets which groups are most vulnerable to primary education inaccessibility and seeks to provide strategies to ensure that enrolment rates increase. According to the Government, the most vulnerable are the impoverished, the geographically disadvantaged, and girls. Bringing control to the local level, providing better resources, and ensuring a more locally-based curriculum were identified as ways for improving accessibility to these vulnerable groups. Children could, of course, be part of more than one of the groups, which is quite often the case. The impoverished, for example, are quite likely to be part of the geographically disadvantaged. The Government defines the geographically disadvantaged as persons living in the three northern regions of the country, namely Upper West, Upper East, and the Northern Region. These three regions host the most isolated, the most rural, and thus the most poor persons from the country. Indirect costs such as textbooks, uniforms, and transportation, have traditionally kept rural northern children from attending school. Parents must also decide between keeping a child home to help with household chores or to send this child to school. This latter point often overlaps with the last group of vulnerable persons – girls. Especially in northern Ghanaian culture, the education of a girl is not regarded as important as a boy's. If a family is forced to choose which child to send to school due to economic restrictions, it will more than likely be the boy who gains.

The Government identified a decentralized education system as a means of overcoming the problems associated with these three vulnerable groups. Atop giving better resources and more decision-making power to the District Assemblies, the Government also sought to create a new curriculum that could allow for more adaptation by communities themselves to account for the diverse languages and cultures country-

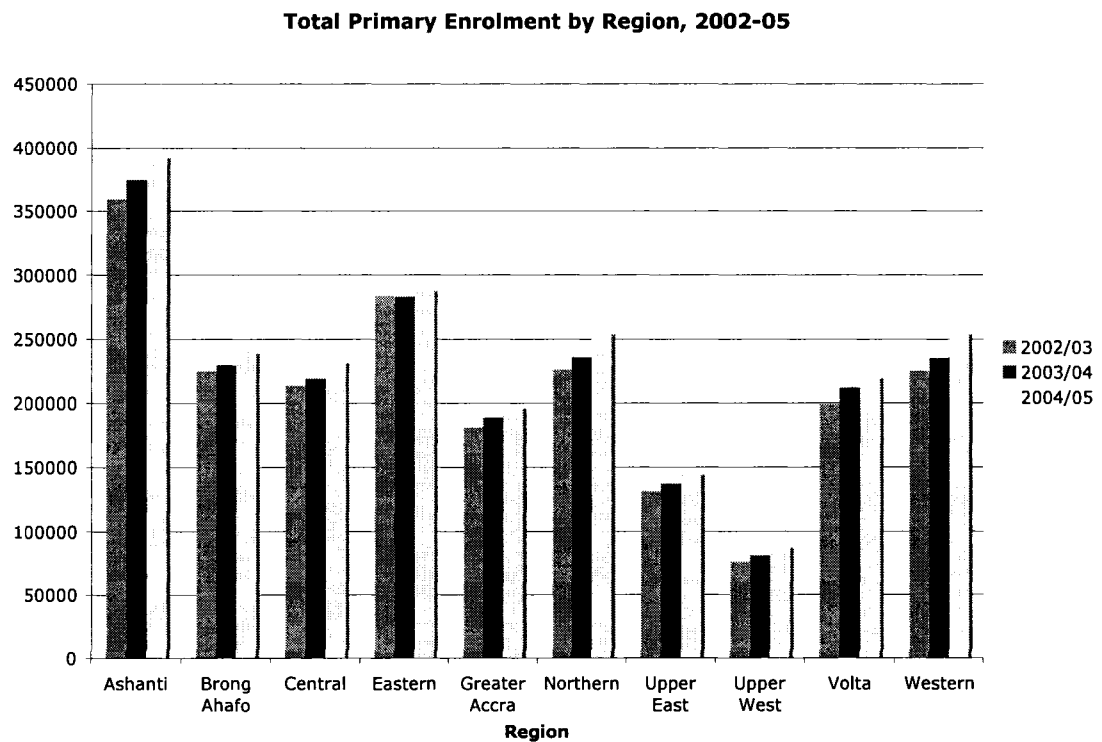
wide. Ghana boasts fifty-seven local languages, each associated with a different culture. Curriculum has been a deterrent to enrolment growth as parents, particularly in rural areas, who do not view schooling as beneficial to their child, will not enrol their children into the educational system. The Government perceived that if communities could incorporate local cultural realities into the curriculum it would make parents more likely to send their children to school as primary education would be regarded as valuable in and of itself. It was within the Blueprint for Implementation, which was first established in 1985, that the necessity of building localized curriculum was established (Osei, 2004).

### ***Primary Enrolment Rates***

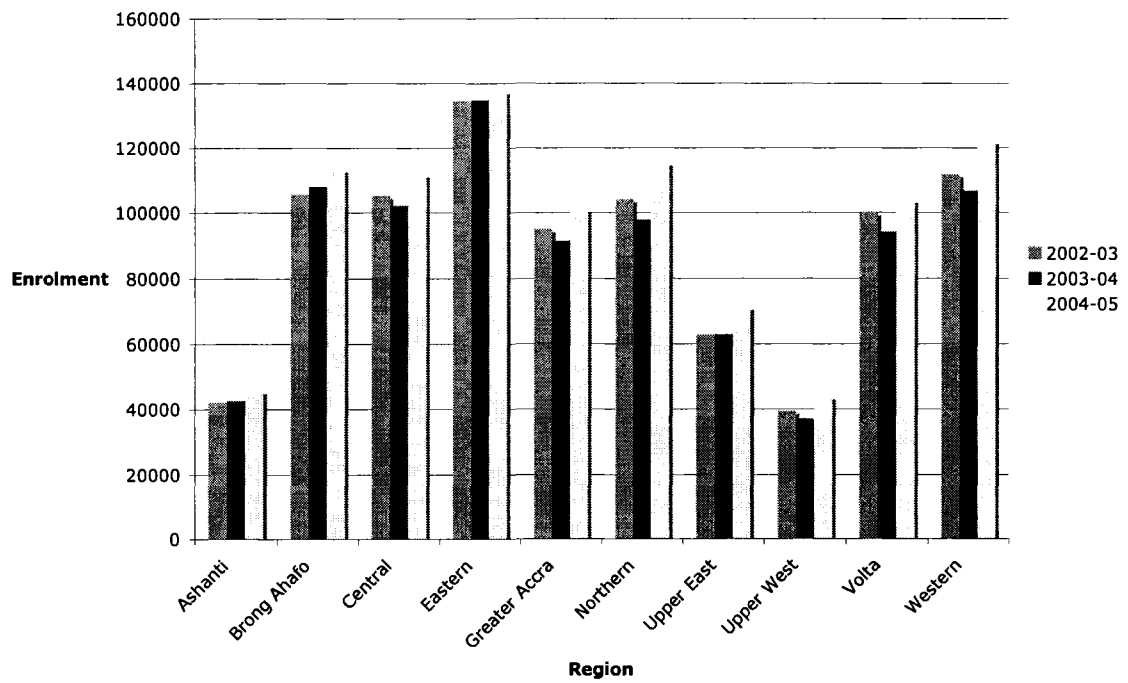
Despite the efforts of the decentralized education policy, primary enrolment rates have only slightly improved in Ghana – a very dismal reality when one considers that the decentralization strategy has been implemented for twenty years. Though the idea of an enrolment rate improving well can be highly subjective, the fact that the Government of Ghana is attempting to increase enrolment in line with the second MDG, any figure indicative of the government's inability to reach universal primary enrolment by 2015 can be viewed as 'dismal' (MDG, 2007). Further, although the international community has no defined figure as to what constitutes a 'good improvement in enrolment', documents which allude and/or show good improvement boast an increase of at least 1% per annum (UNDP, 2005).

Below are the tables from the last three years provided by the Government of Ghana, showing the enrolment rates disaggregated by gender and region. This will reveal that in the most recent period, there has been no real change to enrolment, including

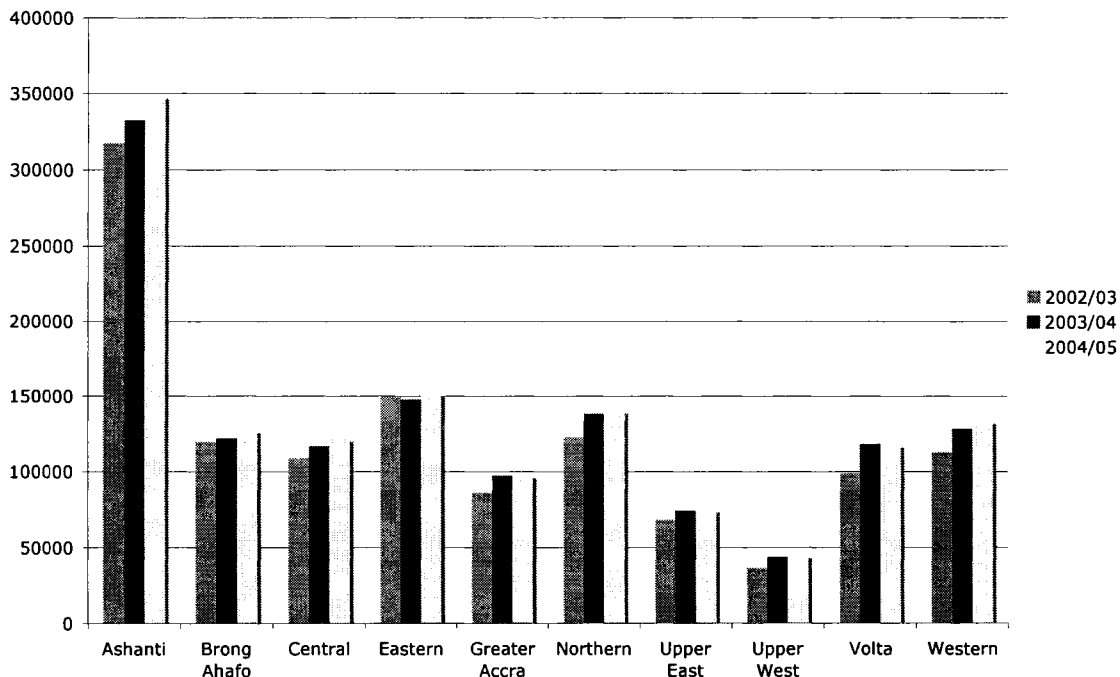
when disaggregated by gender and region. It is also important to note the change in enrolment rates since the time of policy implementation. In 1987, 58% of Ghanaian primary school-aged children were enrolled. Twenty years later, the percentage has merely rise to 65 (UNICEF, *n.d.*). Evidently, there has been no real improvement to primary education, despite the decentralized education policy.



**Girl Primary Enrolment by Region, 2002-05**



**Boy Primary Enrolment by Region, 2002-05**



The data reveals the contrary. In fact, there has been no notable improvement in enrolment rates. It is important to note that this is true even when disaggregating the data by gender and by region. Regionally, it is the Upper West, Upper East, and Northern Regions that are most impoverished. Consequently, they have also been confronted with the greatest challenges to primary school attendance, as evident in their lower rates in comparison to the remainder of the country. The fact that the decentralization reform period has not seen for an increase in the enrolments in these regions suggests that the decentralization reforms have not adequately been adapted and implemented to reflect the inaccessibility problems throughout the country.

The gender-disaggregated data is particularly interesting to analyze, especially since the Government of Ghana within its decentralized education strategy highlights girls as one of the vulnerable groups unable to access education. These statistics,

however, reveal that in the Ghanaian context, girls have been increasingly able to access education. In fact, girls in many regions have greater enrolment than boys. This is indicative of the very gender-focused policies that have been in existence in the country particularly since the end of the Structural Adjustment period. Although a division between men and women still exists in the Ghanaian context, these statistics reveal that gender sensitization pushed by the government has been having some positive benefits. Although enrolment rates have but slightly increased, indicative of a problem at the level of decentralized education policy, it is important to note that any attempts to improve the gender balance in schools has clearly been successful (Abane, 2004).

Indeed, the statistics presented above indisputably reveal that there has been no real improvement to primary school enrolment since the introduction of the decentralized education reform. The data now turns to anecdotal evidence of the inadequacies of the Ghanaian decentralized education system to attend to the inaccessibility issues apparent. A problem with accessibility in the country has clearly been established. The Government of Ghana highlighted within its policies that giving local governments more decision-making abilities, more resources, and allowing more locally-developed curriculum to emerge would improve access to education by allowing local governments to tailor education policies to reflect the needs of their community. Problems of inaccessibility could be improved through a local government better able to determine local needs, adapting their educational strategies accordingly.

### ***Power Relations Between the Centre and the Local***

In 1987, as a component to the decentralization strategy imposed being undertaken by the Government of Ghana, the Ministry of Education began implementing educational reforms. The government was cognizant of the deterioration of its education system and therefore developed policies with the intention of ameliorating these problems. For the primary school system, this included a revised education system, new teaching and learning materials, ensuring more qualified teachers, the introduction of 'cost-saving/sharing policies', and "began the process of administrative decentralization" (GPRSP, 1998:2).

The government has stated that "In the national interest, efforts of the Government to strive for universal, quality basic education is not only a constitutional responsibility, it is a prerequisite for the economy to grow and for poverty to be reduced" (GPRSP, 1998:, 3). These arguments for focusing on basic education fall in line with those articulated by the international community.

Under the Local Government Acts of 1988 and 1993, primary and junior secondary schools are legally under the jurisdiction of the District Assemblies. The government established "Common Funds" used as a surplus to help DAs meet their expenses (GPRSP, 1998:7). Though this is helpful for ensuring that all districts have adequate resources necessary for delivering public services, it perpetuates local reliance on the centre.

"The Government, through MOE, is responsible for basic education policy." (GPRSP, 1998:4). The Ghana Education Service is evident at all central, regional, and district levels, and is the body responsible for carrying out the educational policy

implementation. Although the Local Government Act of 1988 stipulated that the DAs are responsible for “Providing and maintaining basic school infrastructure”, all educational services continue to be supervised by the Ghana Education Service. The Ministry of Education also continues to play a dominant role, by providing all teachers and teaching and learning materials. Although the DAs are responsible for ensuring that these materials are used at the local level, the actual policy is dictated from the centre.

Since implementing the reforms, basic education has received at least 60% of Ministry of Education funds (GPRSP, 1998:5). This is indicative of the GOG’s commitment to stressing primary education above all other levels of education. The FCUBE document outlines the emphasis on basic education as bearing economic benefits of investment. While this may be true, there was no mention of the effects of secondary education involvement.

Scholars cite motivations for and the manner in which decentralization is implemented as key components to the successful outcome of any decentralization programme. A history tainted with unwritten political motivations and inadequate legislative procedures, the Ghanaian decentralization reform process was far from ideal, resulting in a system that has yet to be fully implemented, twenty years later. Indeed, a power struggle between the central bodies and the District Assemblies was evident from the beginning. Resulting, to date the District Assembly does not have autonomous decision-making power.

When Rawlings returned to power for the second time in 1981, his government realized that their reemergence into the central government by force made Ghanaians particularly suspicious of their work. Mindful of the distrust in their party by many

within the country, the PNDC devised a plan to gain the popularity of the majority. Decentralization is noted as one policy devised to push legitimacy of the PNDC amongst the Ghanaian citizenry. For this reason, the decentralization strategy was never actually intended to reduce the central government's role in districts; rather, it was a quickly implemented in an effort to secure popular support (Ayee, 1996). Decentralization reforms were being implemented alongside Ghana's structural adjustment programme. As the latter necessitated the state to economically push the state forward into the world market, Ghana's development strategy was being accelerated in a very state-driven manner. Since the political and economic climate at the time was one which was heavily influenced by the international community, the government was wary of bestowing too much power upon the local governments. Resulting, the decentralization system was implemented in a very deconcentrated manner, with local governments remaining highly accountable to the centre.

Decentralization reforms also lacked adequate legislation for determining the division of powers. Although the decentralized education policy stated that the local government would now be involved in the school system, the extent of this involvement was not determined. Without any legal documentation articulating the responsibilities of the local level of government, the central government maintained, and continues to maintain, much control of the levels of government. Without properly stipulating within the policy which responsibilities would be given to the local level, the central government continues to maintain much control of the District Assemblies (Ayee, 1996). Consequently, the central government continues to draft policies which the DAs are responsible for implementing. This is very characteristic of a deconcentrated form of

decentralization, whereby local government is involved in the process of policy implementation, but the level of decision-making rests at the centre (Apusigah, 1999). An example of this is the FCUBE strategy, whose reforms are very much controlled centrally. FCUBE is part of the Education Sector Plan, which is funded by the World Bank and highlighted within the GPRS. Thus, although the District Assemblies are responsible for ensuring that the FCUBE strategy is implemented and followed within their district, decisions pertaining to this policy were previously constructed at the national level (Osei & Brock, 2006:441).

Mankoe's study on *The Perceived Problems and Benefits of a Decentralized Elementary Educational System in Ghana* identified that stakeholders, including DA members and school employees were dissatisfied with the amount of decision-making power they had been granted following the decentralization reforms. Although the Government had ensured an increase of decision-making power, this had not been realized. Moreover, it remained unclear as to what responsibilities of the district in fact were. The new educational policies had stated that more responsibility would be given to the local governments without clarifying the type and scope of responsibility in question. Consequently, local persons were left confused and unaware of their duties rather than empowered to make more decisions to suit their needs, as the reforms intended.

A prime way in which the central government has retained control over the local government bodies has been its control of the civil service. All civil service employees are still employed through the regional ministry; therefore the districts themselves do not have the chance to make decisions regarding those working under their auspices (Crook, 1994). Since the District Assemblies are lacking adequate resources to undertake the task

of hiring their civil servants, teachers, the central government continues its responsibility of recruiting teachers, bringing into question the true autonomy of districts (Ayee, 1997). Teachers are an integral role to the school system. A centrally-guided hiring process is indicative of the decision-making tasks still held by the central government.

The Government Education Service exists in each locale to carry out responsibilities dictated by the Ministry of Education. Shifting power to the GES has experienced progress that is “patchy and slow on community involvement” (Osei & Brock, 2006, p.440). The GES has been criticized as being mere representatives of the central government rather than autonomous units. For example, under the FCUBE initiative, the District Director of Education is accountable to the GES Director-General – an example of the perpetuated power relations existing between the district and central levels of government. In this way, “the state has enjoyed a virtual monopoly over Ghanaian schools...” (Osei & Brock, 2006:450). Traditionally, the Ghana Education Service played an important role in each district, bringing the central Ministry of Education into each locality. However, now that the decentralization system has established District Assemblies to be responsible for the education system, the Ghana Education Service’s role could be called into question. By perpetuating its existence in each District Assembly, the GES almost violates the autonomy of the DAs by remaining central to the local decision-making process.

With the central government maintaining much control still over the so-called decentralized education system, the local government has not been able to meet the specific needs of their respective communities, as was a major argument for implementing the decentralization reforms in the first place. In a 2007 research project

conducted in Ghana, Robinson noted that in two districts, 70% of citizen respondents revealed that the District Assemblies had not been able to meet their particular needs. They were, instead, disappointed in the outcome of the decentralization policies (Robinson, 2007, p.11).

Much of the push to decentralize the local government education system has been rhetoric rather than reality. According to Osei and Brock:

although the central government has demonstrated a commitment to empowering local government organizations and actors, it has yet to create a socio-political context conducive to such a transfer of authority.

(Osei & Brock, 2006:454).

In 2006, Akukwe studied the range of participation in the education sector. Interestingly he concluded that, as much as there was little room for participation in a still very top-down approach to decentralization, whatever decision-making abilities the public did have, the women were largely excluded from these exercises (Akukwe, 2006).

### ***Resource Allocation***

In a 1992 study of the decentralized primary school system, Mankoe undertook a survey to gather opinions on perceptions of resource distribution following the educational reforms. The inadequacy of resources was viewed as a major problem in the school system, by stakeholders, teachers, community leaders, and DA staff. The data revealed that fiscal decentralization had not occurred, and districts did not have control over the school budget. On a Likert scale with 5 as a 'major problem', and '1' as 'not a problem', stakeholders viewed insufficient resources as a problem, with a mean of 4.24,

teachers' viewed it with a mean of 4.27, and community leaders' with 4.12, referring to insufficient local resources to tap. Resources were regarded as a problem.

Among the leading problems also surfacing from Mankoe's 1992 study, as perceived by teachers, were inadequate incentives for teachers (mean 4.27), teachers' lack of ability to exercise control (mean 3.52), and insufficient policy implementation procedures (3.33). Stakeholders viewed insufficient local resources as a major impediment to their work (mean 3.94), but also felt that 'policy-makers did not know what is expected of them' (mean 2.86). Among the problems articulated by community leaders, the community not receiving adequate information (mean 4.46), the centrally-determined rules (4.42), and top administrators unwilling to divest power (mean 4) were perceived as major problems. From this data, it is obvious not only that sufficient resources for carrying out duties have not been received, but the perception of community stakeholders is that the central government has not given sufficient powers to the local level, despite the intention to do so under the decentralization scheme. The Ministry of Education has continued to control the budget; without sufficient allocation in this manner, the local schools do not have the ability to carry out their tasks. Mankoe notes that one District Planning Officer "noted that decisions made at the local level worked better because the local people knew their own financial standing and educational level better" (Mankoe, 1992: 159). Indeed, the communities recognize the potential of a decentralization education system, but they have not been given the opportunity to reap these benefits. The DPO articulated that decentralization should mean local governments have the opportunity to make their own decisions. This has unfortunately not been the case.

Mankoe and Maynes note that resource management upon decentralizing a government can exacerbate already existing economic divides. Ghana has been no exception to this, with poorer districts now struggling even more to deliver appropriate services in light of being given more responsibility without adequate resources to meet these demands (Mankoe & Maynes). Although the government has allocated 5% of its GNP to the District Common Fund, districts must then use this money to budget for all of their services, not simply the education sector (Ghana Common Fund, 2006).

Employing qualified teachers remains a challenge in Ghana. Since teachers are trained at colleges in larger towns and cities, they tend to want to stay in these areas to work. This is an example of the urbanization that has been occurring in Ghana, making trained teachers want to stay in the cities to work, even if their home is rural. Those teaching in rural Ghana must face many challenges not associated with city teaching, including lack of available housing and poor teacher headquarters, the discouragement of lower enrolment rates, higher student to teacher ratios since there are not as many teachers, and a much longer waiting period for their pay owing to their geographical isolation. This is coupled with the fact that the number of qualified teachers has been decreasing. While in 2000, 68.6% of teachers were trained (World Bank, 2003: 76), this has been depleting per annum, with 64.9%, 62.9%, 60.7%, and a low 53.2% from 2001-2005, consecutively (World Bank, 2004-2007: 72, 84, 84, 74). This has meant that the student to teacher ratio has grown by 10 since the decentralized education policy, with 24 students per teacher in 1989, but presently 35 students per teacher (WDI 1995 - 72, 2005 – 74).

The number of qualified teachers is important in the discussion of resource allocation because, since teachers are a necessary component to the educational system, teacher pay raises have been used as an incentive for bringing and keeping teachers in the school system. Consequently, a vast majority of the educational budget is spent on teacher salaries. To illustrate, in 1994, 80% of the educational budget was spent on teacher salaries (Mankoe, 1996: i). This leaves a remaining 20% of the budget to cover all additional costs of the education system – not sufficient resources if the government intends to not only maintain, but improve, the educational system. For example, Ayee notes that schools are still lacking necessary resources, such as office supplies, calculators, desks, and photocopiers (Ayee, 1997:45). This has meant that decentralization has in fact made in some ways government less effective; responsibility has been given to the District Assemblies, yet these bodies do not have adequate resources to sufficiently carry out their tasks.

Atop the fiscal resources necessary for carrying out their duties, District Assemblies also do not have adequate human resources for these jobs. With the swift move towards decentralization, DAs were asked to undertake what they did not have the appropriate skill base to undertake; they were lacking managerial, administrative, and fiscal knowledge. Assibey-Mensah adequately questions this:

...how can decisions affecting budgeting and effective administration  
be successfully adopted and implemented when many representatives  
lack the necessary financial and administrative skills to facilitate their work?  
(Assibey-Mensah, 2000:20).

Further, to date no sufficient capacity building has been undertaken with the objective of making local bodies more knowledgeable in these areas. Instead, the local bodies remain dependent upon the central government for help in these areas; the national government

has perpetuated this reliance, not having built appropriate capacity levels to allow the local units to become autonomous (Assibey-Menah, 2000). Lack of training has resulted in lack of capacity. Assibey-Mensah criticizes the central government, noting that this lack of built capacity "...clearly undermines the efficacy of its [the central government's] own policy of decentralization' (Assibey-Mensah, 2000:20). Without adequate capacity built, the decentralization reforms continue to be mere rhetoric rather than policies actually possible to be fully implemented.

In the Ghanaian context, the lack of human resources has also been owing to lack of persons actually wanting to enter the public service. Reflective of the structural adjustment programme which forced cutting back on social service spending, the government continues to reduce its budget in the social services first when there is a budgetary problem. This often has resulted to cutting civil servant wages. At the beginning of the 1990s, for example, Ghana experienced what Crook coined a 'manpower crisis', without sufficient Ghanaians desiring to enter the social service sector (Crook, 1994:349). It has been difficult to maintain persons working for the District Assemblies. Without adequate staff, DAs are capable of merely carrying out miniscule tasks, necessitating a turn to the central government, particularly the Ministry of Education for guidance and support (Crook, 1994:360).

In order to combat the resource inadequacy, many District Assemblies have taken to taxing their citizens in a quest for sufficient revenue to increase their resource base. The problem with this is that the less equipped DAs are mainly those that were already disadvantaged economically. The citizenry does not have the capacity to meet the demands of these new taxes and, consequently, the local government loses the support of

its public. This is the opposite effect of what decentralization intends – to have a legitimate government democratically able to better meet the needs of its citizenry.

As the local communities viewed decentralization as a means for encouraging development in their communities, the lack of resources meant that the high expectations, brought with decentralization reform, were quickly dissipated, by both the public and District Assembly employees. In March, 1994, a mere one-third of District Assembly employees in Keta and Ho districts were restood or were reelected into office (Ayee, 1996:44). This revealed a lack of trust in the capabilities of the DAs. The public and local government bodies alike have become frustrated with the lack of resources capable of carrying out their tasks, which Ayee attributes to this dissipating support. Ayee notes that Keta and Ho are representative of sentiments felt throughout the country.

Not only are resources lacking but, owing to the decentralization policies, more resources are needed than before. Conyers notes that the increase in political and administrative responsibilities, as well as the increase in staff at the local levels, has heightened the amount of resources necessary for District Assemblies to perform their delegated tasks. The central government has not reviewed its budget to account for these changes, resulting in incapacitated local bodies (Conyers, 2007). Moreover, Chapman concluded that regional inequalities have now been exacerbated in a country where the more affluent districts are able to better implement policies for improving enrolment rates (Chapman, 2001). This is notable when returning to the regional enrolment rates of the previous section which demonstrated that the three northern, poorest regions in the country are also the three experiencing an actual decrease in primary enrolment rates.

Lacking adequate resources, both fiscal and human, has been a major impediment to improvements in the education sector since decentralization. Although the policies intend to give local governments more autonomy, in reality, even if they had the power to carry out their own tasks, they do not have sufficient resources to initiate any programmes themselves. The decentralized education system intended to improve accessibility by giving local governments the opportunity to meet the needs of the citizens in their district. However, with insufficient resources, District Assemblies have been unable to adequately carry out their responsibilities, hindering their effectiveness as government bodies, with inefficient administration (Die, 1999). Without adequate efficacy to effect change, enrolment rates have not increased under the new decentralized education system.

### ***Curriculum Development***

Curriculum is the nexus of any education system. The curriculum determines what is learned, when it is learned, and how it is learned. Control of the curriculum is therefore one of the most important issues in education policy. The curriculum controls the most important component of any education – what body is responsible for what is going to be learned. Although curriculum development can be analyzed in terms of the quality of education gained, for the purposes of this research, the critical issue is that of power – is it the centre or local government who is responsible for curriculum development in Ghana?

Since the beginning of the decentralization strategy, the Ghanaian government has been reforming its education policy to reflect the decentralization strategy of its

government. Curriculum reform intended to improve accessibility of the primary education level by making the curriculum more adaptable to the needs of the community. Curriculum was to be more relevant to the everyday lives of Ghanaian citizens, ensuring that it would prepare them for the 'real world'. This was in an effort to make primary education seem as applicable as possible. This idea of applicable education targets the rural population which has historically not regarded education as beneficial to their agricultural livelihood. The new curriculum has focused on the inclusion of more practical skills to provide students with concrete knowledge and skills for active citizenship post-graduation. This keeps in mind the fact that many students will not have the opportunity to continue their education at the secondary level; basic education therefore must be essential in and of itself (Attar, 2000).

The new curriculum, however, is criticized for not being sufficiently reflective of local context (Kuyini, 2007). Despite the introduction of curriculum reforms which attempt to create more locally-derived educational content, it is evident that the basic education curriculum in Ghana is still very heavily influenced and controlled by the Ministry of Education (Osei, 2007). Curriculum in Ghana is criticized by some for still not adequately reflecting the values and the development of each local community (Kuyini, 2007). This suggests that the control of the curriculum has not been adequately decentralized to allow for integration of local context.

Although the Local Content Curriculum Reforms outlined the integration of local content into the primary education system, the Ministry of Education is still highly influential in curricular decision-making in the country. While the local government may introduce localized content and ideals into the curriculum, the MOE still has the

conclusive verdict on whether or not a proposed change will be implemented. As well, textbooks are created centrally to be distributed throughout districts. There is therefore limited room for adapting curriculum to match the local context, as the Ministry has designed the textbooks and therefore controls much of the knowledge to be learned. The very fact that textbooks are published and distributed by the Ministry of Education suggests a curriculum that is nationally-prepared. While individual schools may have the opportunity to adapt components of the curriculum to the experiences of their community these localized ideas will still be driven at the national level. Resulting, while curricula may have been somewhat adapted to various community's needs, they are still bound to particular expectations of the central government body (Osei, 2007). This limits the ability for communities to focus on ideas and values that may contradict those of the centre.

Osei's primary research on the effectiveness of the curriculum reforms supports the argument that curriculum reforms have not been implemented properly and are therefore ineffective. He argues that the linkages between the district and central levels of government are weak, thereby lessening dialogue between these two bodies. This lack of coordination has resulted in problems in even properly implementing the curriculum changes. As well, it has also resulted in a misunderstanding of the goals of the new policy (Osei, 2004).

With the Ministry of Education still very much involved in the curriculum development process, curriculum still runs the risk of presenting an urban bias by maintaining a curriculum that is tailored towards the experiences of the urban centres. Not only is this true on account of the MOE's location in the capital and therefore is

exposed to the urbanized realities but because Ghana continues to integrate national testing with the National Education Assessment. Inasmuch as the curriculum reforms have attempted to implement more localized content into the school system, communities are still cognizant of the national examinations which must be completed and passed in order for students to graduate and prove eligible for additional schooling at the secondary level. Though communities may in writing have the ability to adapt the curriculum, schools will stay within the framework of a national curriculum to ensure that students learn the information for the national exams. Atop the nationalized exams, the FCUBE strategy outlines evaluation mechanisms to ensure that students are tested on their ability to recall the information learned. Since these evaluations are conceptualized at the national level, curriculum must be indicative of what is being tested. Although the curriculum reforms stated that districts would have more control over what is learned in their communities, in reality the districts must follow very nationalized content. The curriculum reforms were intended to allow local governments to adapt the curriculum to their local context, increasing accessibility by making schooling seem more beneficial to families. As there has been no real change to the curriculum, improved accessibility has not occurred.

### ***A Final Word on the Data***

A major criticism of Ghana's decentralization system is that the government's underlying rationale for instituting the policy is rampant in political ideology. Many argue the PNDC began the decentralization reforms in an attempt to regain legitimacy throughout Ghana. Thus, decentralization began as a political tool rather than an actual

attempt to improve local government efficacy. Ghana's decentralization system is still arguably a political tool rather than an actual goal of improving the efficacy of government, including social service delivery. Although the system is seemingly decentralized, in reality the centre still retains much power (Mohan, 1996:450).

The amount of control still possessed by the central government is evident when analyzing the centre-power decision-making, resource allocation, and the control of curriculum development. While the Government of Ghana's education policies stipulates that these three areas are necessary components to improving access to education through decentralization, the data in this chapter has revealed that these changes have not taken place. Instead, the central government perpetuates control the control, revealing a decentralization system that is highly deconcentrated in nature. Consequently, the desired improvements to primary enrolments have not taken place as no real change to the education system has occurred. Decentralization has not been properly implemented.

Ghana's decentralization reforms were largely instituted upon suggestion from the World Bank and IMF. The adoption of decentralization has therefore been largely regarded as an exercise of meeting the demands of these institutions, rather than meeting the demands of the Ghanaian citizenry. Consequently, "control in the Ghanaian reforms comes in the form of the centralized administrative machinery and the machinations of the World Bank, as a sponsor of the reforms" (Apusigah, 1999:180). The reforms have not improved the service delivery in communities, as this was never their intention; rather, they have perpetuated the thrust for neo-liberal policies stipulated by the World Bank. Thus, to date the decentralization system in Ghana can be regarded as both "partial and hesitant" (Mohan, 1996:449).

Decentralization policies do have the potential of positively impacting communities, but countries must be studied in their own context in order for these benefits to be best realized (Mankoe & Maynes, 1994). The problem with the decentralization policies strategized by the World Bank is that they constitute an overarching policy intended to work in each country similarly. Because the context of each country has not been considered, the policies are not best meeting the needs of the communities, as decentralization intends.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINISHING THOUGHTS ON AN UNFINISHED STRATEGY**

35% of Ghanaian children to date do not attend primary school, even after twenty years of the decentralization strategy in effect. Undoubtedly, the policy is flawed. The data collected in this study suggests that Ghana's decentralized education system is still very deconcentrated in nature; therefore the perceived results of a decentralized social service cannot surface. In remaining very top-down, Ghana's basic education system cannot benefit from the apparent positive outcomes of policy decentralization. Issues to inaccessibility of the education system have therefore not been adequately addressed: the Ministry of Education is still very much in control of the education system, the local governments do not possess adequate resources to carry out their responsibilities without aid from the central government, and the curriculum is still heavily influenced by the national government. While the World Bank and the Government of Ghana together conceived that decentralizing the education system would address accessibility issues in the country, the form of decentralization implemented has not warranted these desired results.

Ghana's decentralization policies have been drafted, adopted, and implemented within the confines of the World Bank's development strategy for the country. Ghana's decentralized reforms are therefore reflective of the ideological mandates of this institution. The data presented in this section reveals that primary enrolment rates have not improved despite the Government of Ghana having implemented the decentralization strategy of the World Bank over the last two decades. The problem has been that the

decentralization strategies of the Ghanaian education system are not decentralization, rather deconcentration. The latter form is insufficient, not able to bring about the changes desirable and hypothesized. Conclusively, if the decentralization strategies are intended to improve the accessibility issues in the country, the strategies to effect this improvement must also change.

While the Government of Ghana intended to improve accessibility by increasing the decision-making capabilities of the local government, allocating more resources to these governments, and allowing the curriculum to be adapted to be more reflective of community needs, the data reveals that there has been little to no change in these three areas. Consequently, the improvements to the enrolment rates hypothesized by the Government to improve access to schooling have not taken place.

Decentralizing education policies has been posited by the international community as critical for improving accessibility to primary education. However, in order for decentralization to effect change in primary enrolment, changes must move from the level of policy development to actual implementation. In the case of Ghana, the decentralization policies have not transferred into real changes. Instead, the central government remains in control of the school system. This is indicative of a form of decentralization that is deconcentrated, where the central government retains much power. As explored in the literature review, deconcentrated forms of decentralization do not allow for the perceived value of decentralized policies to be realized. Evidently, without much power being given to the local levels of government, Ghana's decentralization strategy is not reaping its intended benefits and enrolment rates have not been improved.

This research began with an articulation of education's importance in international development. Regardless of one's beliefs with respect to what encompasses education and how it should be administered, it is almost inarguable that education, whether formal or informal, whether institutionalized or freelanced, is a necessary precursor for development. An educated society is an empowered society, capable of actively participating in political, social, and economic spheres of their community. The global community is so adamant about the importance of primary education that it is not only a development focus, but remains a universal human right. It is little wonder that when the international community, led by the United Nations, the IMF, and the World Bank, began conceptualizing eight core objectives to begin the new millennium, that universal primary education was given second place on the list, preceded only by the very generic goal of poverty reduction. Within this climate of heightened focus on universal primary education, the international development community has become particularly adamant about achieving this objective. It is little wonder that at the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, strategies for realizing universal primary education were considered. Consequently the Education For All initiative was born – a document aimed at providing the necessary incentive and steps for achieving universal primary education.

Of course, inasmuch as there is little debate regarding the necessity of achieving universal primary education, the way in which this should occur is highly contestable. Nonetheless, it is the perceived notions of the mainstream international development institutions, particularly the World Bank, which possess the most dominant voice in this discussion. Resulting, the recent international primary education initiatives wreak of the neo-liberal, mainstream political and socio-economic objectives asserted by the Bank.

And within this dialogue rests the pinnacle concept of both this research and the policy documents of the development world – decentralization: decentralization of government, decentralization of policies, decentralization of social services. Indeed, Ghana's decentralized education policy follows the decentralization strategy conceptualized by the World Bank within its good governance agenda. Although decentralization could possibly have the intended benefits as explored in Chapter One, so long as decentralization is following the deconcentrated World Bank model of the term, change will not be effective.

A major problem with situating the decentralization strategy within the good governance agenda is that the decentralization of the education system has not merely been developed for the purposes of improving primary education. Rather, it is evidence of the underlying neo-liberal political agenda of this institution. While the policies developed are good in theory, upon more careful examination, it becomes evident that they are intrinsically erroneous. What may be perceived as decentralization is in effect deconcentration – a strategy in which any decentralized responsibilities are still heavily influenced by the central government.

Ghana is an important case study because the country is continually praised for being stable and orderly, with a government that has a history of accurately following policies prescribed by international development institutions. When Ghana, the prized pupil of the Structural Adjustment Programme, began to face consequences owing to this policy implementation, the downfall of these programmes became more questionable. In the same vein, the obvious ineffectiveness of the World Bank's decentralization strategy in Ghana should make the entire Education for All good governance agenda also

questionable. When Ghana, a country praised for its effective policy implementation, is not experiencing sufficient benefit from a programme, it is the programme that must come into question and not the country.

Following this research, it is therefore recommended that the decentralization strategy posited by the World Bank be called into question. The problem with the push for universal primary education is not the end goal, rather than the proposed strategy for its achievement. Governments are not simply asked to decentralize their education system. Instead, they must implement an entire good governance strategy polluted with concepts and procedures that underpin the neo-liberal agenda that has been posited by the major international development institutions over the last few decades. Improving educational access becomes secondary to the overarching goal of maintaining neo-liberal political agenda this century.

The literature review identified three forms of decentralization, namely devolution, delegation, and deconcentrated. This research argues that deconcentrated forms of decentralization are highly ineffective as the central government perpetuates control of the local government systems. This, however, assumes that devolution and/or delegation could possibly overcome the problems associated with deconcentrated forms of decentralization. Still, the question exists – can any form of decentralization improve access rates? Is there any ‘true decentralization’ implementation that exists? There is an inherent assumption that a local government will ensure that the needs of their community are met. This assumption itself is questionable. While this research is confident that the decentralization strategies posited by the World Bank are not effective

forms for improving primary school enrolment rates, the question still remains – will any form of decentralization effect positive change?

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