Background Paper

Transitions from Primary to Lower Secondary School: A Focus on Equity

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Secondary Education in Africa:

PREPARING YOUTH FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

This paper was prepared for the Mastercard Foundation report, *Secondary Education in Africa: Preparing Youth for the Future of Work.* The opinions, findings, and conclusions stated herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Mastercard Foundation.

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Transitions from Primary to Lower Secondary School: A Focus on Equity

As Part of the Secondary Education in Africa: Preparing Youth for the Future of Work series (SEA) of MasterCard Foundation

SUBMITTED TO MASTERCARD FOUNDATION

9TH October 2018

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Equal access to quality education is crucial for addressing socioeconomic problems of poverty, unemployment and inequality (Reynolds et al., 2014; Browne & Barrett, 1991; UNESCO, 2017) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aptly captures this. SDG goal 4 proposes that by 2030, each country should "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". In developing countries, the gap between the rich and the poor, rural and urban populations in terms of access to quality education is enormous due to existing gaps in infrastructure and wealth distribution between geographies and social classes (Human Rights Watch, 2017; UNESCO, 2017). The Human Rights Watch (2017) further reports that about 49 million girls are out of primary and secondary school in Sub-Saharan Africa. Equal access to education and retention in schools are key issues requiring attention in educational policies or reforms. In recognising the dividends in quality education for economic development and social transformation, including bridging the widening income inequality gap, many countries in sub-Saharan Africa have adopted pro-poor educational policies to promote universal access to education at basic and secondary levels (UNESCO, 2017; Global Education Report, 2016; Chisamya, DeJaeghere, Kendall, & Khan, 2012). Although these reforms in Africa are not designed to purposefully discriminate against any social class of children; existing socio-cultural dynamics and institutional structures have meant that children from rural communities, poor or disadvantaged backgrounds, disabled, as well as the girls, are more likely to be discriminated against (Humble & Dixon, 2017; Kamper & Mampuru, 2007; Kamper, 2008). Access to quality education and retention in schools, especially at the post-primary levels, are influenced greatly by the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of children. This affects educational outcomes and individual aspirations, personal and career development of disadvantaged children, and national development (Lewis, 2009; Humble & Dixon, 2017; Filmer & Pritchett, 1999).

This background paper explores the dynamics that affect transitions from primary to lower secondary school, with a focus on equity. It forms part of series of papers contributing to a broader initiative of tracking the demand and supply sides factors that influence access to secondary education and prepare African youth for the future of work. Whilst case studies have been drawn from Ghana and Rwanda to assess their strengths and weaknesses to educational reforms,[1] emphasis is on transitions from primary to lower secondary schools in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. The background paper is in two main sections: review of factors affecting transitions in sub-Saharan Africa, and case study analyses for Ghana and Rwanda with the following themes guiding the discussions.

Theme 1: Access to education, progression and completion rates in primary and secondary schools

Theme 2: Trends and realities in secondary education: Equity in progression and transitions – from primary to lower secondary and upper secondary schools and equal opportunities for children with disabilities, members of religious and ethnic minorities and other forms or multiple cases of vulnerabilities

Theme 3: Learning outcomes, employability and wellbeing of youth with and without secondary education

Theme 4: Actionable recommendations to policymakers, implementers, donors and other stakeholders on how to improve transitions from primary to lower secondary for the marginalized populations.

[1] Both countries have rigorous educational reforms in the last two decades aimed at improving access to basic and secondary education for young people. These include free compulsory primary and lower secondary education, investments in educational infrastructure and human resource to improve learning outcomes. Yet, whilst Ghana has narrowed inequality gaps but have limited gains in increasing rates of transition from primary to lower secondary; Rwanda has increased lower secondary enrolment with a corresponding decrease in inequality gaps.

1.1 Overview of Primary and Secondary Education Transitions in sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of educational exclusion among all other regions of the world, with about 21% of primary school age children being denied access to education (UNESCO, 2018). UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) estimates that of the 63 million out of school children of the primary school age globally, 34 million (54%) live in sub-Saharan Africa. The region also leads in the percent of out of school children at lower and upper secondary school, 37% and 58% respectively (UNESCO UIS, 2018). Some of the countries with the highest rates of out of school children are also in Africa, including South Sudan (68%), Liberia (62%), Eritrea (57%), Equatorial Guinea (56%), Sudan (44%), and Djibouti (41%) (UNESCO UIS, 2018).

Socio-economic inequality between girls and boys declines as the average level of educational attainment increases, with secondary education producing the greatest payoff in bridging the gap, especially for women (Humble & Dixon, 2017; UNICEF, 2018). There is considerable evidence that even in settings where people are deprived of other essential services like sanitation or clean water, children of educated mothers have much better prospects of progression and completion than do the children of uneducated mothers (UNESCO, 2018). Quality education that equips students with knowledge and skills appropriate for each level is therefore typically viewed as a powerful factor in levelling the field of opportunity as it provides individuals with the capacity to obtain a higher income and standard of living.

An important turning point in educational delivery in Africa that seeks to bridge the access and inequality gap was the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE). With the removal of fee structures, education has become more accessible to the very poor now than before. Government expenditure on primary school education has also increased dramatically as a result. Governments and local communities have invested in upgrading school facilities, recruiting teachers and upgrading the skills of staff (Alubisia, 2005). Mass education enrolment drives have however also exerted unprecedented pressure on the education system (Zuze, 2008) requiring comprehensive retooling to achieve the corresponding learning goals. Aside from enrolment, quality of education being delivered is also paramount in the new education agenda. Primary school students in sub-Saharan Africa have, on average, learned less than half of what is expected of them (Majgaard & Mingat, 2012). The gap between the learning achievements in developed economies and the learning achievements in sub-Saharan Africa is estimated to be at least four grades (GPE, 2012; Winthrop & McGivney, 2015).

Access to education has generally improved in sub-Saharan Africa with both boys and girls reporting better completion rates in the last two decades (Lewis, 2009; UNESCO UIS, 2018). While the inequity gap has also improved, especially for girls, full parity has not been achieved generally and learning gaps remain high (UNESCO, 2017). Equity in education can be analyzed from two stand points: inclusion and fairness. When considering inclusion, equity means ensuring that all students reach at least a basic minimum level of skills. When one considers fairness, equity implies that personal or socio-economic circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin or family background should not be obstacles to educational success (OECD, 2012, p. 15).

There are varying definitions of quality education, depending on how one chooses to define the outcomes of schooling. For many, educational quality is measured through national examinations. If high scores are attained, then high quality education has been achieved. The OECD (2012, p. 14) has very high standards for measuring quality education to include provision of “children with knowledge, skills and interpersonal competences required for their development, adult life and contributions to economy and society” this ties in with the World Bank’s indicators for determining appropriate school quality ‘inputs’ required to boost student achievement. They include libraries, instructional time, homework, textbooks, teachers’ subject knowledge, teacher experience, laboratories, teacher salaries and class size (Sifuna & Sawamura, 2014, p. 3).

Transition is defined as 'the flow of students between different stages in the school system: from one level to the next, between grades within a given level, and out of and back into schools (World Bank, 2008, p. 7; Obrien et al, 2011, p. 20). This paper and the others in this SEA series focus on alternative pathways for out of school youths who do not complete the full cycle of education.

This background paper focuses on the thematic areas outlined above and provides examples of best practice from countries across the continent, and the growth that has been achieved in the past two decades. Achieving education of the desired quality is a key aspect and is highlighted through the lens of the themes. Following the reviews and case study analyses, actionable recommendations on how to improve the education systems in Africa to deliver better outcomes are made for uptake by state and nonstate actors working in the education space of Africa.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted mainly at the secondary levels reviewing literature and drawing on national and regional level educational policy documents. The literature was further corroborated with purposive key informant and institutional level interviews in Ghana and Rwanda. In reviewing the literature, we have considered several reports by organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, The World Bank, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, The African Union and The World Economic Forum. These institutions are the key actors in education at global and regional levels and have done extensive research in the sub-Saharan region covering the thematic areas in this background paper. Additionally, we considered academic works on primary and secondary education in Africa.

The scope of the paper covers the entire sub-Saharan Africa region. To have better insights of the existing dynamics, the review was zeroed on Eastern and Southern Africa on the one hand, and Western and Central Africa on the other. In Western and Central Africa, Ghana was used as specific case study as means of synthesising the sub regional findings. Similarly, Rwanda was used as a case study for Eastern and Southern Africa.

It must be highlighted that there is a dearth of information on the themes we covered in this paper for SSA. Further, the information is not the same for all countries – some countries have more published information, others have less. For example, in Eastern and Southern Africa, most of the research have covered South Africa and to some extent Kenya and Tanzania in the early 1990s. Most Eastern and Southern African countries however did not have enough research by international organizations and scholars and there are even fewer African scholars commenting on education.

2.0 THE STATE OF ACCESS AND TRANSITIONS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

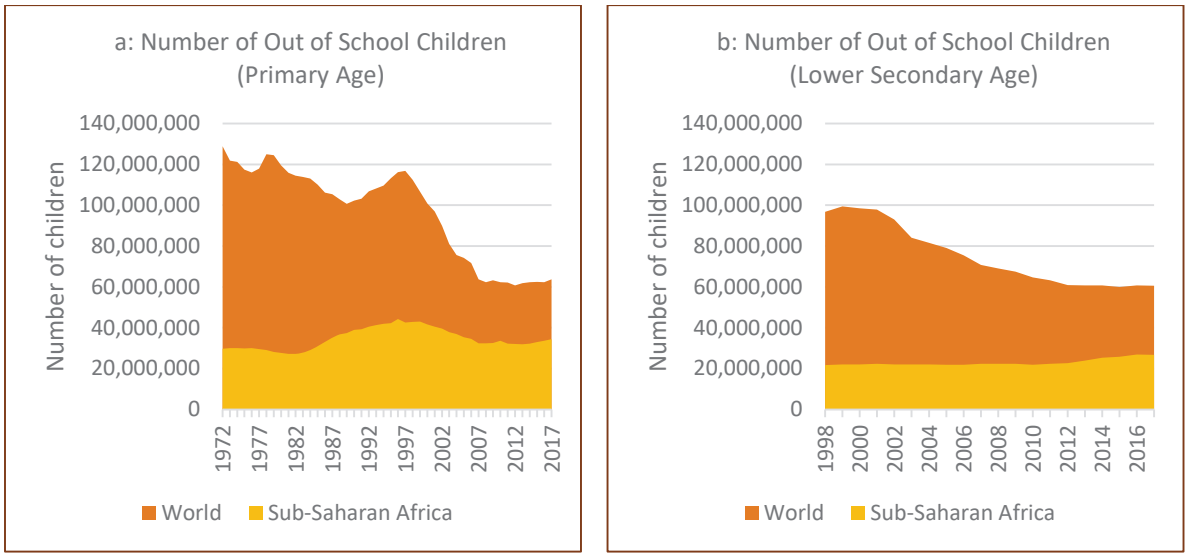
The Dakar Framework for Action Education for All (EFA) Meeting, held in 2000, collectively agreed on six goals related to: (1) early childhood care and education, (2) universal primary education (UPE), (3) promotion of learning and practical skills for young people, (4) reduction in adult literacy, (5) achieving gender parity and equality, and (6) improving the quality of education (UNESCO, 2015; UNESCO, 2012; Sperling, 2001). Despite these commitments, up to 64 million children of primary school age were out of school after a decade and half of EFA (UNESCO, 2018), down from 106 million in 1999.[2] More than half of this number live in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2015, p. 6).[3] Globally, there has been a decline in the number of primary school-age children out of school but the decline has been slower in sub-Saharan Africa (see figure 1a). As such, the sub-Saharan African share of out of school children of primary age has more than doubled over the past four decades. The sub-Saharan African share for lower secondary age also doubled over a two-decade span (figure 1b). Whilst education has always

[2] Out of school children include those who will eventually enrol, will never enrol, or enrolled but dropped out (UNESCO 2012)

[3] Africa's share was a considerable increase, compared to its 40% share in 1999

been a priority of post-independence African governments as a vehicle for economic growth (Orodho, 2014; Njeru & Orodho, 2003), political struggles and competitive ideologies (Sefa-Nyarko, 2016) have delayed implementation of policies or thwarted implementation; often due to misappropriation of scarce resources (Prew et al 2011).

Figure 1: Trends in number of children who are out of school for a: primary age and b: lower secondary age



Data Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

For example, the idea of Universal Primary Education (UPE) can be traced to a Conference of African States on Education in Africa held in Addis Ababa in 1961 (UNESCO, 1961; Oketch & Ngware, 2012). The aim was to establish priority educational needs to promote economic and social development in Africa, along with road maps for implementation (World Bank, 2008, 2010; Orodho, 2014, p. 12). Kenya and Tanzania's education reforms often refer to this conference as a milestone (Bogonko, 1992 as cited in Orodho, 2014). In Southern Africa, van der Walt et al. (2014) found evidence of improvement in availability of schools and access since the 1960s, but not much improvement in the quality of education. Despite these, 18.2 million girls and 14.5 million boys of school going age were out of school in sub-Saharan Africa in 2012, and many more that enrolled in Primary School were not able to progress to Lower Secondary Schools (UNESCO-UIS, 2012). Eger (2016) concluded that four fundamental challenges account for much of the failures in the education system in sub-Saharan Africa. These are ethnic and racial tensions, acute shortage of learning materials and trained teachers, inappropriate curricula, and high cost of education. Whilst suffering many bouts of ineffective and inefficient implementation, many governments have attempted to tackle most of these challenges. The post-independence political unrests that unravelled countries in sub-Saharan Africa account for much of the failures – DRC, Rwanda, Chad, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire. The following sections discuss such factors that influence access, transitions, retention and employability of young people in sub-Saharan Africa, using the themes outlined earlier.

2.1 Theme 1: Access to education, progression and completion rates in primary and secondary

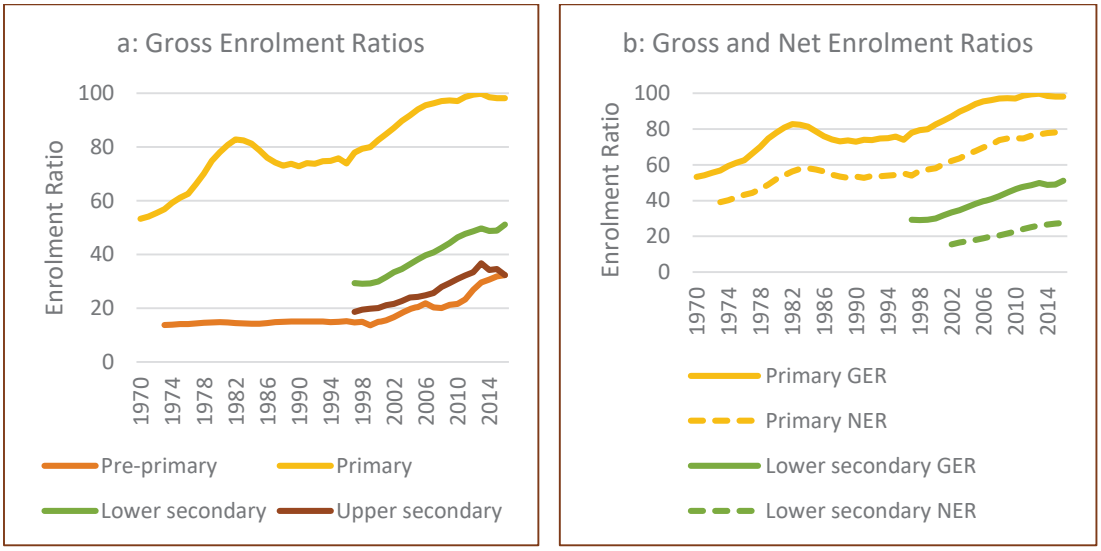
2.1a Access to education

Sub-Saharan African countries have strived to increase access to education by abolishing school fees, increasing the supply of schools and classrooms, and increasing the demand for education by introducing initiatives such as cash transfers, school feeding programs and take-home rations

(UNESCO, 2015). These efforts increased the number of children enrolled in primary school in sub-Saharan Africa by 46 million between 1999 and 2008. Countries that recorded impressive progress towards UPE include Ghana, Burundi, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mali and Tanzania (Dufera, 2006; UNESCO, 2011). Ethiopia for example, has increased the number of children enrolled in primary education five-fold between 1994 and 2012 and introduced a special policy focus on girls' education (Nega, 2012). Access to pre-primary education, which is one of the targets of SDG Goal 4 has been relatively slow with gains only being made in the past decade. Up to the mid-2000s,[4] the pre-primary enrolment rates were below 20% and have since risen to 32%.

Figure 2a presents time trends in access to education, represented by Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) for Sub-Saharan Africa from 1970 - 2016. UNESCO defines Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) as the number of students enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education. The trends show that the region has made great strides in expanding access to education over the past four decades and the proportion of school age children attending school has increased over time for all levels. The greatest strides have been made in access to primary education – the GER for primary school has risen from just above 50% in 1970 to almost 100% in 2016. Whilst this is an indicator of success in enrolment, such extremely high GER (above 100% in most cases) implies that over aged children are enrolled in classrooms below their age group – due to delayed entry, repetition or dropout and re-entry. As explained ahead in this paper, there is increasing opportunity cost of education for older children, which affects secondary students more than primary students.[5] Gross enrolment rates for the secondary levels also fall well below the figures for primary education with the 2016 GER being 51% for lower secondary and 32% for upper secondary. Secondary GER trends show a sustained increase over time as well.

Figure 2: Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios



Data Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

[4] SDG 4.2: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

[5] The higher level of students being older than the recommended grade for age in sub-Saharan Africa is evidenced by higher GER of over 100% in some educational systems, which exacerbates the problem of dropout.

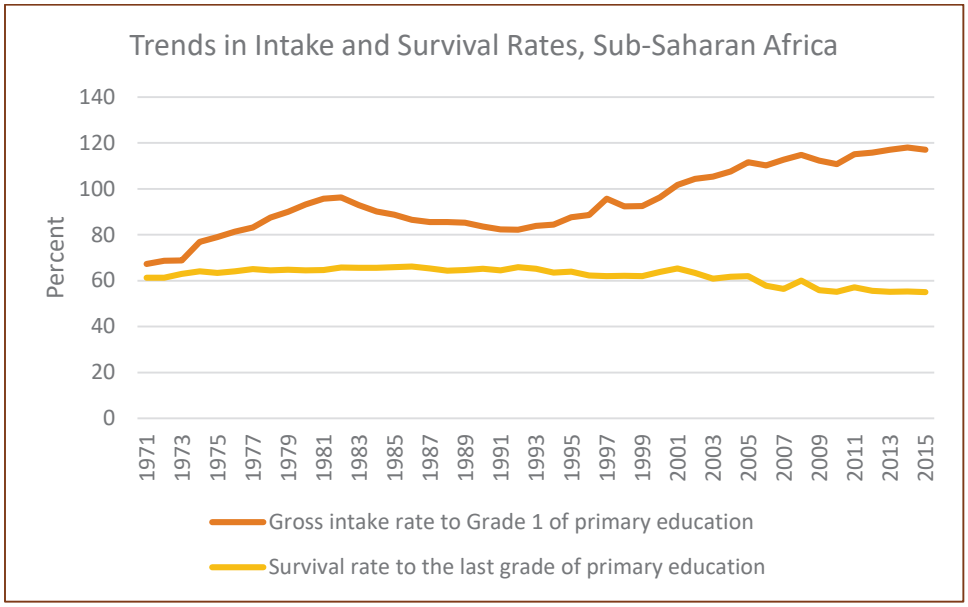
High GER can conceal the fact that children who should be in school are not. Net Enrolment Rates (NER),[6] which measure age-appropriate enrolment, are relatively lower (Figure 2b), indicating that the proportion of school age children who have access to education is still comparatively lower and there are children enrolled in school who are older than the recommended age for grade. This disparity between gross and net enrolment ratios has implications for progression and completion as older children are at higher risk of dropping out (Akyeampong, 2009; Ampiah & Abu-Yeboah, 2009; Fentiman, Hall, & Bundy, 1999; Weybright et al., 2017). A pupil who finishes primary school at age 18 instead of age 12 has lesser chance of transitioning to secondary partly due to the greater likelihood of dropping out to engage in economic activities for subsistence.

2.1b Survival and Completion Rates

A major concern with increasing access to education as discussed by Lewin (2009) is that it does not necessarily translate to comparable increases in completion rates. High enrolment rates in the lower grades often masks lower completion rates.

Figure 3 presents gross intake ratio[7] and survival rate[8] for primary education. The trend shows that the expanding access to education has not been accompanied by comparable increases in survival rates. Survival rates in the region have been stable over time. Post-2000s, there is a divergent trend with survival rates decreasing as intake rates increase and rise above 100%. Gross intake rates above 100 is indicative of delayed entry where children are starting at older ages than recommended. Given the increased risk of dropout as children age, the declining survival rates to the last grade of primary is consistent with having an increasing number of older children in primary education.

Figure 3: Intake rates and survival rates for primary education



Data source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

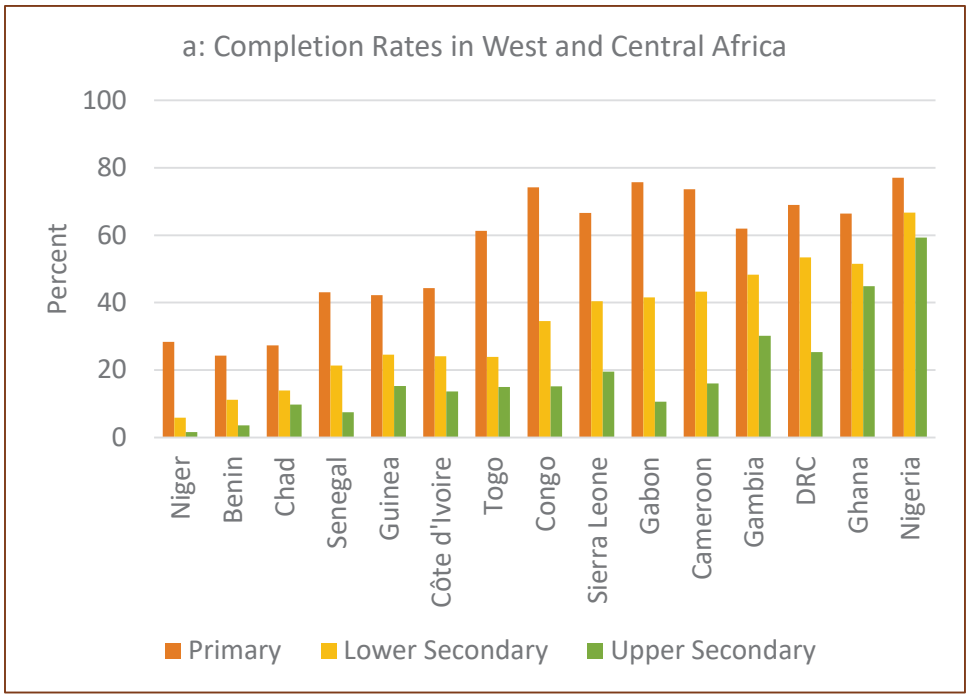
[6] Net Enrolment Rate definition is total number of students in the theoretical age group for a given level of education enrolled in that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group

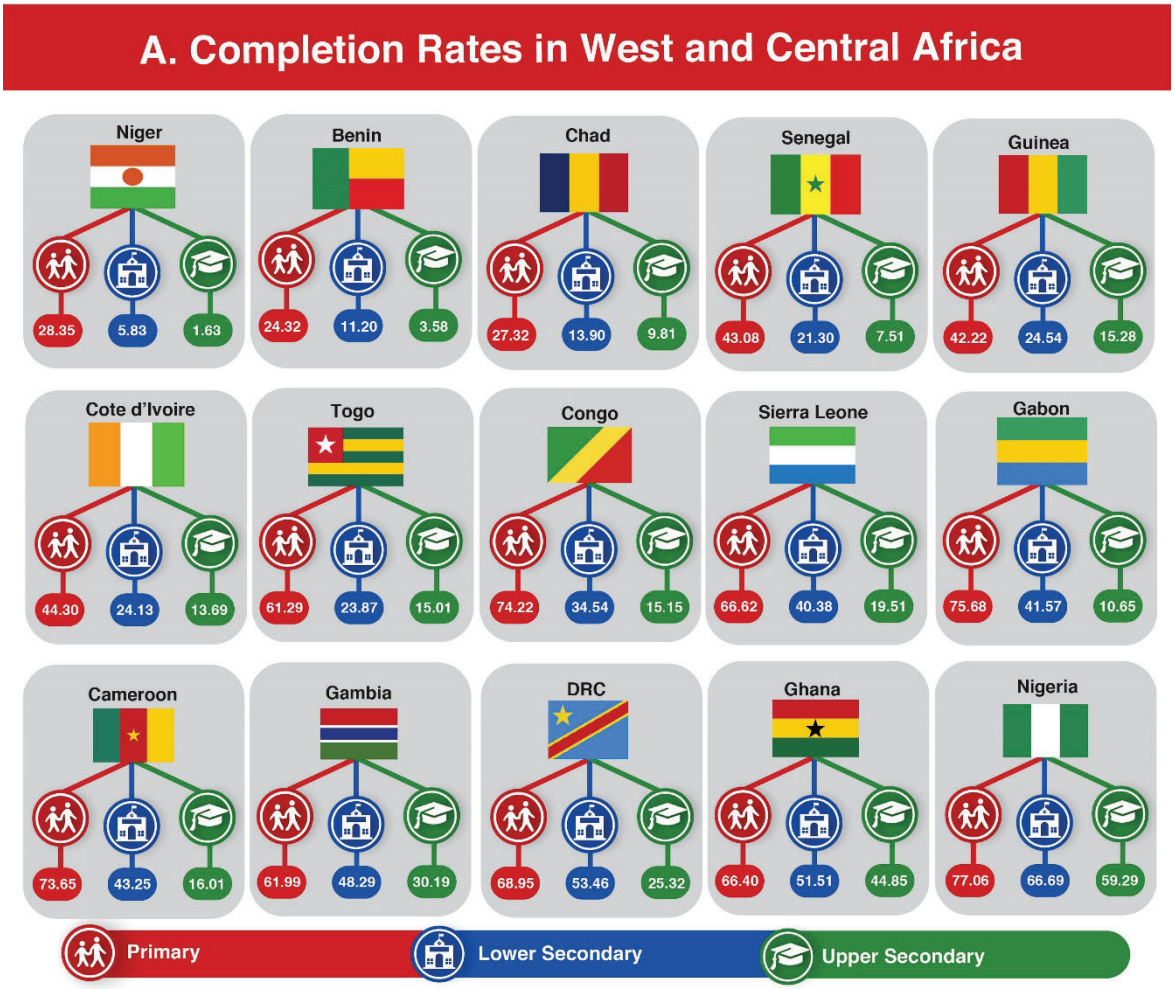
[7] Gross Intake Ratio is the total number of new entrants in first grade of primary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population at the official primary school-entrance age.

[8] The survival rate is the percentage of a cohort of students enrolled in the first grade of a given level or cycle of education in a given school year who are expected to the last grade, regardless of repetition.

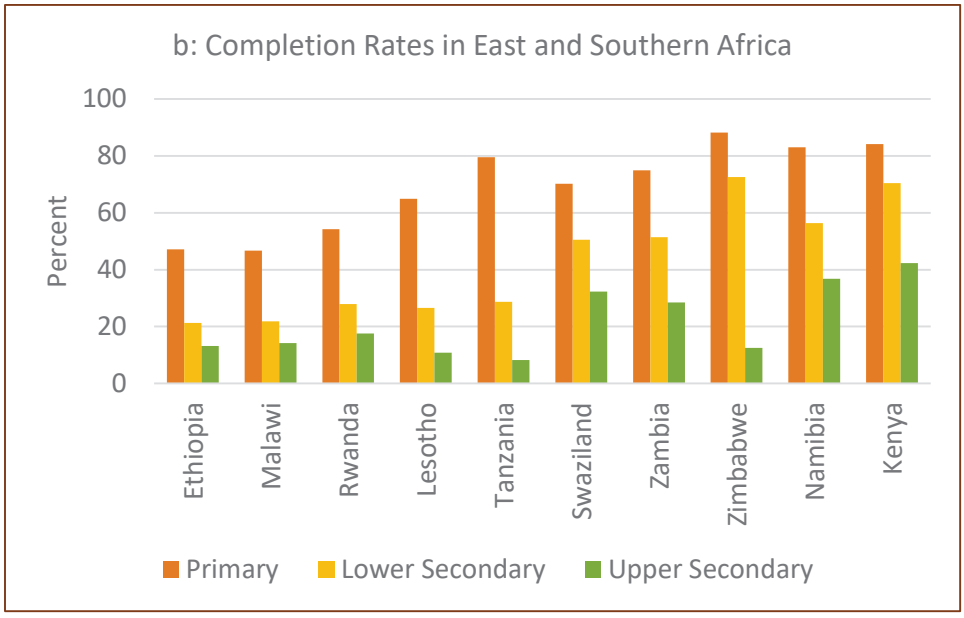
Figures 4a and 4b present data on completion rates, which are similar to survival rates. Completion rate for primary school are well below the near universal rates observed for enrolment. The completion rate also declines as the level of education increases likely because the costs of children's time increases as they age making them more vulnerable to dropping out. For older girls, pregnancy and marriage are threats to completion; whilst for older boys, repetition and economic activities exacerbate this trend.

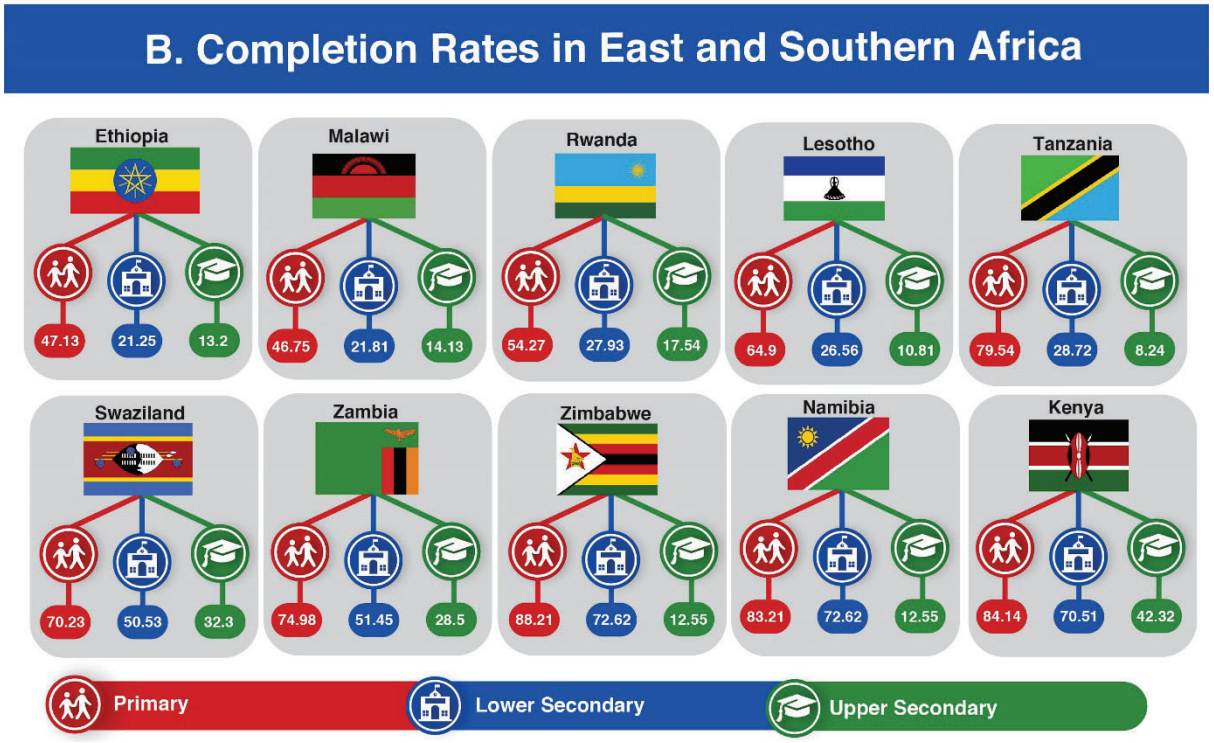
Figure 4: Completion Rates by Level of Education in a: West/Central Africa and b: East/Southern Africa





Infographic 1: *Completion Rates in West and Central Africa*





Data Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2015/2016)

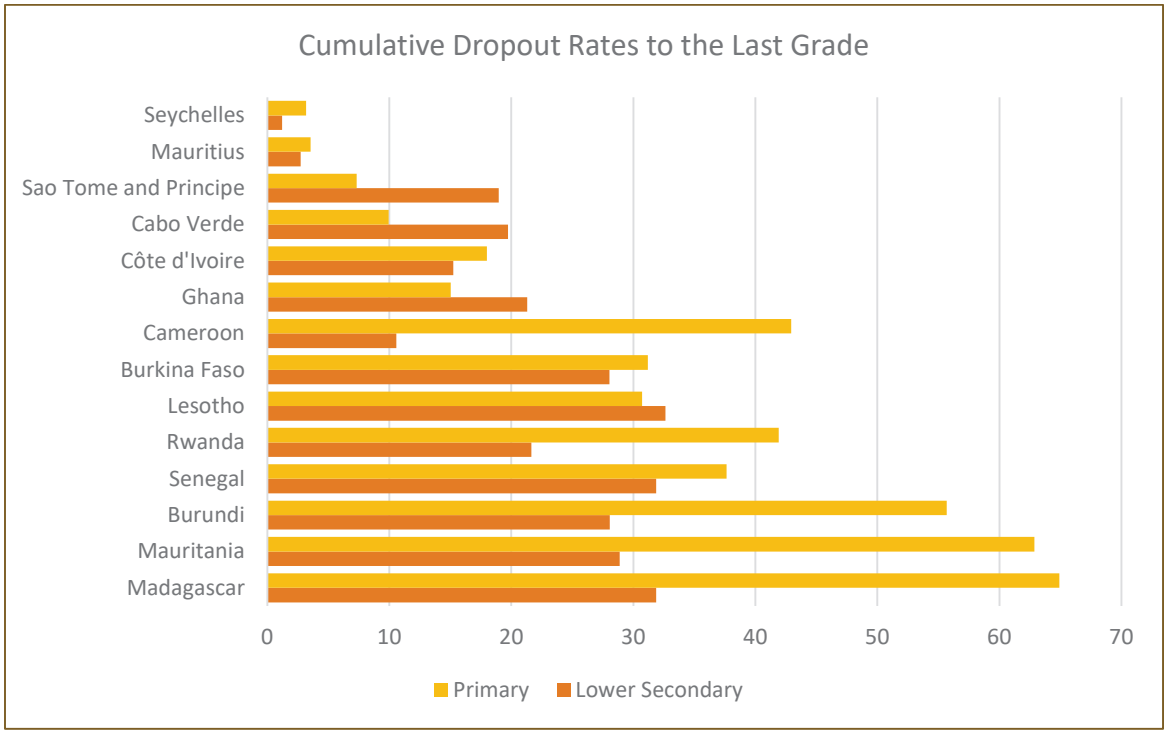
Infographic 2: *Completion Rates in East and Southern Africa*

2.1c Progression

Figure 5 presents cumulative dropout[9] rate to the last year of primary school. The cumulative dropout rate represents the proportion of pupils who drop out over the course of primary school. The rate ranges from 3% in Seychelles to as high as 65% in Madagascar where two-thirds of pupils who start first grade drop out by the end of primary education. Higher rates have been recorded by UNESCO (2012) in other countries - Chad (72%), Uganda (68%) and Angola (68%). Cumulative dropout rates to the last grade of lower secondary are similarly varied – ranging from below 5% in Seychelles and Mauritius to 87% in Togo where less than one-fifth of pupils who start lower secondary are expected to stay in school to the end. Generally, dropout rates are higher in primary school than in lower secondary. Sao Tome and Principe, Cabo Verde and Ghana are the exceptions.

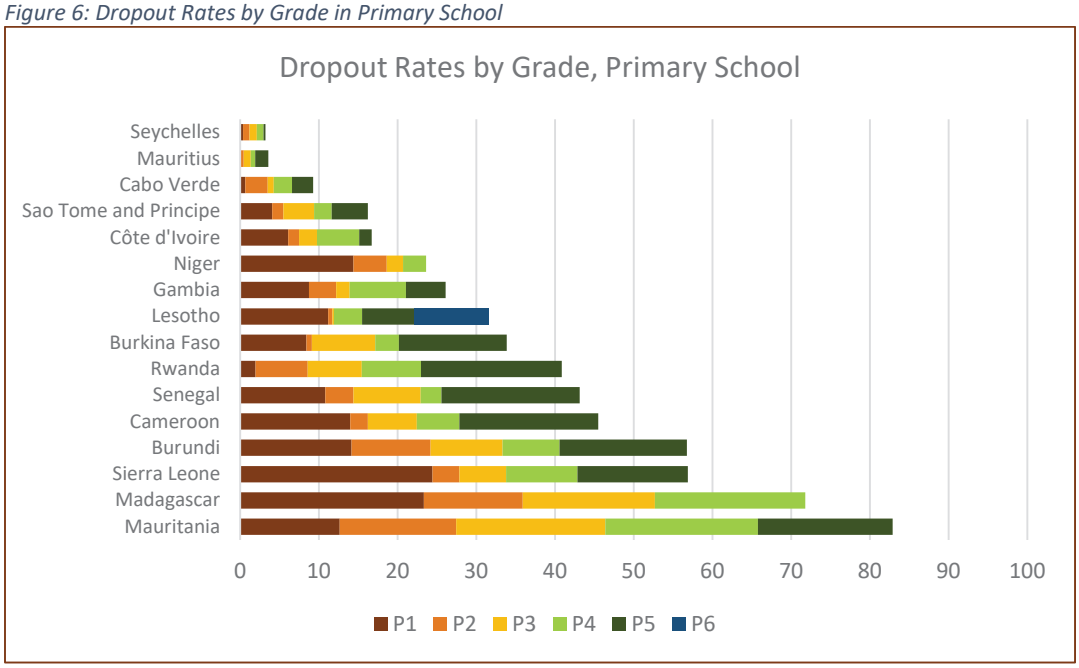
[9] For cumulative dropout rate in primary education, it is calculated by subtracting the survival rate from 100 at a given grade

Figure 5: Cumulative Dropout Rates



Data source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2015/16)

Figure 6: Dropout Rates by Grade in Primary School

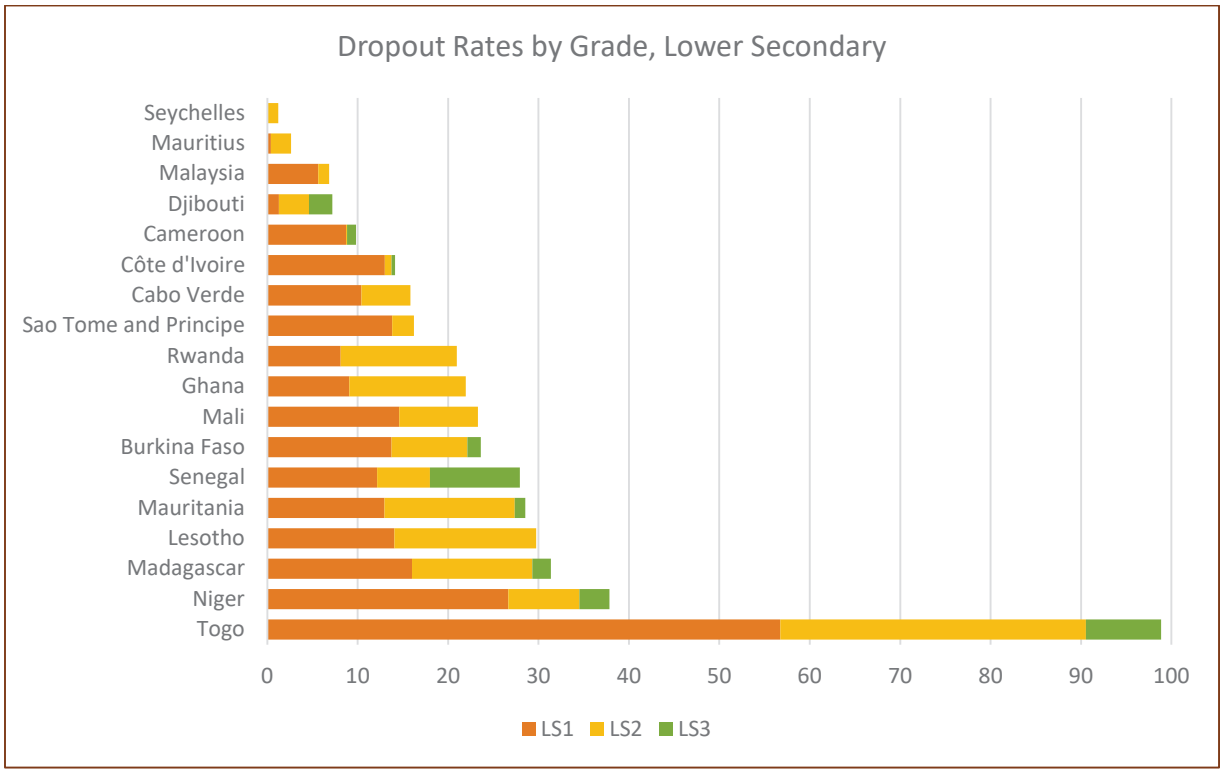


Data source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2015)

Figure 6 presents data on dropout rates by grade for primary education defined as the proportion of pupils from a cohort enrolled in a given grade at a given school year who are no longer enrolled in the following school year (UNESCO). The data on grade-specific dropout is available from the first to the penultimate grade of primary (P5 for all countries except Lesotho). The risk of dropping out after the first grade is high in most country and is consistent with UNESCO (2012) report that one in six African

pupils leave school after the first grade. After first grade, the highest dropout rates are in P4, P5 and P6 which is consistent with the explanation that the risk of dropping out increases as children age.

Figure 7: Dropout Rates by Grade in Lower Secondary



Data Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

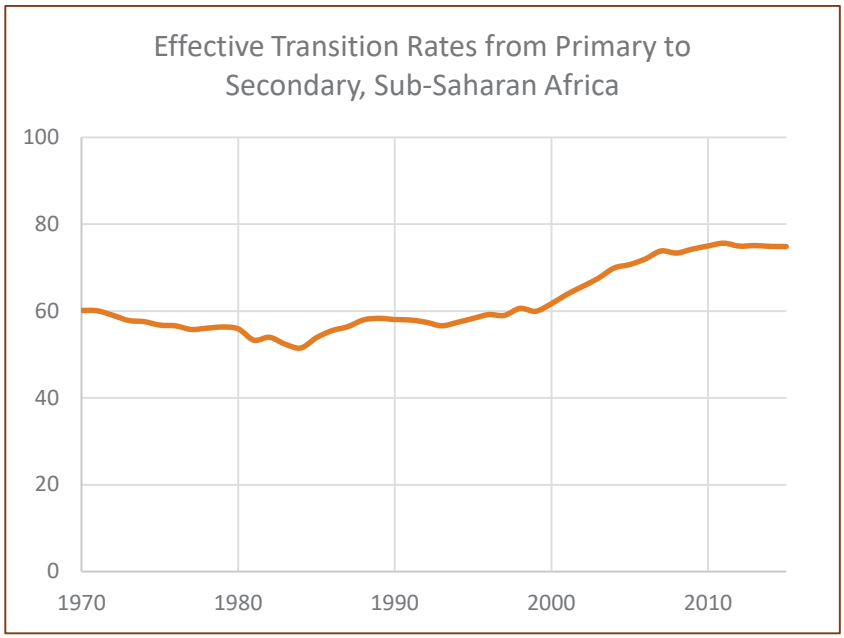
Figure 7 presents data on dropout rates by grade for lower secondary education. At this level also, the risk of dropout in the first grade is high – with students having the greatest risk of dropping out in the first grade of lower secondary for most countries. The most extreme case is Togo where majority of pupils are expected to drop out by the end of lower secondary. A possible explanation may be due to Togo having one of the highest primary education repetition rates in the sub-region (23%) with those pupils expected to spend two to three years repeating grades (UNICEF, 2012). In contrast, Mauritius with 4% repetition rates (UNICEF, 2012) has less than 5% of pupils dropping out by end of lower secondary.

2.1d Effective Transition Rates

The sub-region made strides in improving effective transitions from primary to lower secondary over the past few decades but at a slower pace compared to gross enrolment. UNESCO defines effective transition as "number of new entrants to the first grade of the higher level of education in the following year expressed as a percentage of the students enrolled in the last grade of the given level of education in the given year who do not repeat that grade the following year." Transition rates increased from 60% in 1970 to 75% in 2015 (Figure 8). The improvement in transition rates has taken place mainly over the past twenty years with the sustained increase starting from late 1990s, a period coinciding with the introduction of Free Basic Education (FBE) policies in several countries. FBE have led to increasing transition rates in the region since 1999 (UNESCO, 2016). Making education free beyond primary encourages transition to lower secondary for pupils whose main constraint to transitioning is the cost of fees. Some Anglophone countries such as members of the West African Education Council (Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone) have promoted Lower

Secondary School enrolment by linking primary and secondary school through the creation of a universal basic education cycle (UNESCO, 2012).

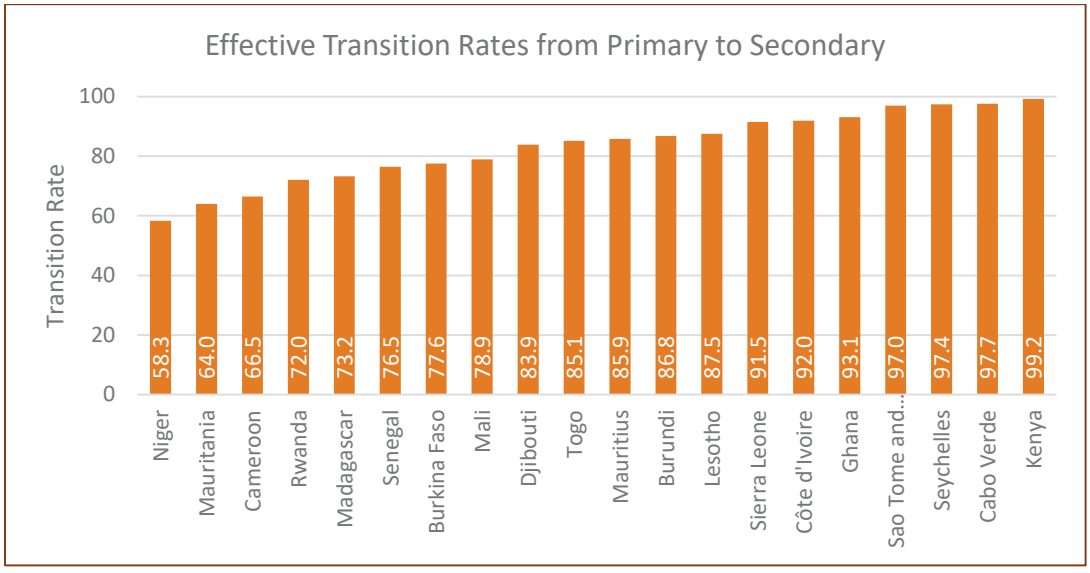
Figure 8: Trends in Effective Transition Rates from Primary to Secondary Schools for Sub-Saharan Africa



Data Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Figure 9 presents a cross-national comparison of countries in sub-Saharan Africa showing that there is some variation within the region with transition rates ranging from above 90% in Kenya, Botswana, Sao Tome and Principe, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire to below 70% for Cameroon, Mauritania, and Niger.

Figure 9: Effective Transition Rates from Primary to Secondary School



Data source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2015/16)

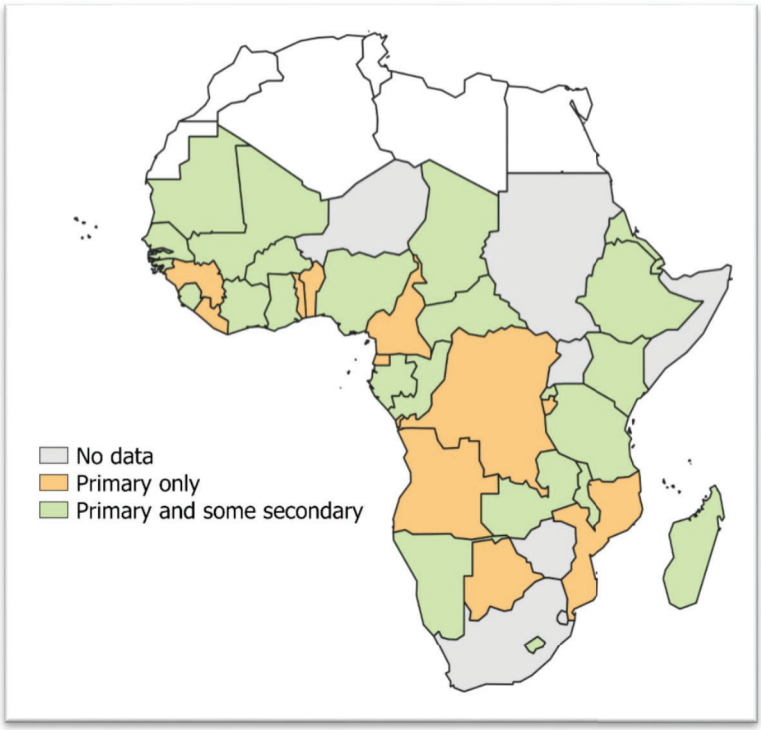
One explanation for the variation in transition rates by countries is the educational policies in place. Transition rates to lower secondary are correlated with years of free and compulsory education at the primary and secondary level with the top performing countries. Kenya and Cape Verde for instance with free lower secondary education have almost universal transition rates. Some countries, despite

free education policies have relatively low transition rates due to other contextual factors. For instance, in Niger, and Mauritania where child marriage is common (UNICEF, 2014) transition rates are below 70%.

2.1e Conceptualising Basic Education in Practice and Impact on Enrolment

The duration of basic education and how it is defined varies from country to country; and such definition is influenced by educational finance policies. Whilst some countries provide free education for the entire basic education period, others fund only portions of it. This has impact on access, progression and completion, since it is easier for poorer households to send children to school when tuition fees for education have been eliminated. There has been a push for free universal primary education in the region as part of global efforts to achieve the universal primary education (UPE) target set by MDG2. This push partly explains the high gross enrolment ratios observed in the region.

Figure 10: Free Education Policies in sub-Saharan Africa



Data Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2016)

The map in Figure 10 shows how extensive free primary coverage is in the region. In addition to universal primary education, many countries have aimed to make lower secondary education more affordable to increase access for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to secondary education (UNESCO, 2012). As such several countries have implemented free secondary education policies as well. However, as with free primary education policies, the same issues of indirect costs and competition for children's time and labour will pose challenges for children from poorer households.

Free education policies lead to reduction in inequality but not necessarily increase in equity. The key lessons to be learned from the introduction of free education policies is the risk of the poorest students benefitting the least. Akyeampong's (2009) review of Ghana's Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy investigated why the target of universal basic education was not achieved and why the most vulnerable households benefitted the least. The paper's findings were that despite free tuition, the indirect costs and fees associated with schooling as well as competition for

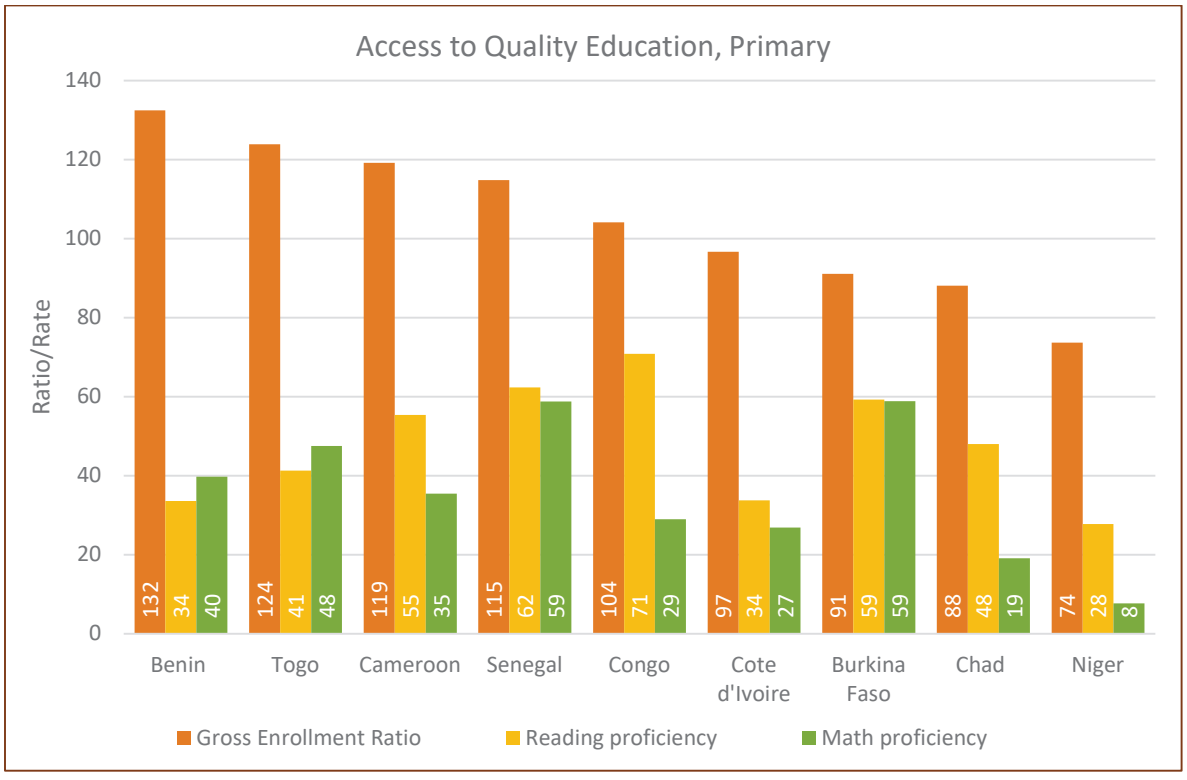
children's time and labour continued to pose significant barriers to schooling for the most vulnerable households as children aged. Abuya, Oketch, and Musyoka (2013) draw similar conclusions for urban poor children in Nairobi.

2.1f A Consideration for Quality Education

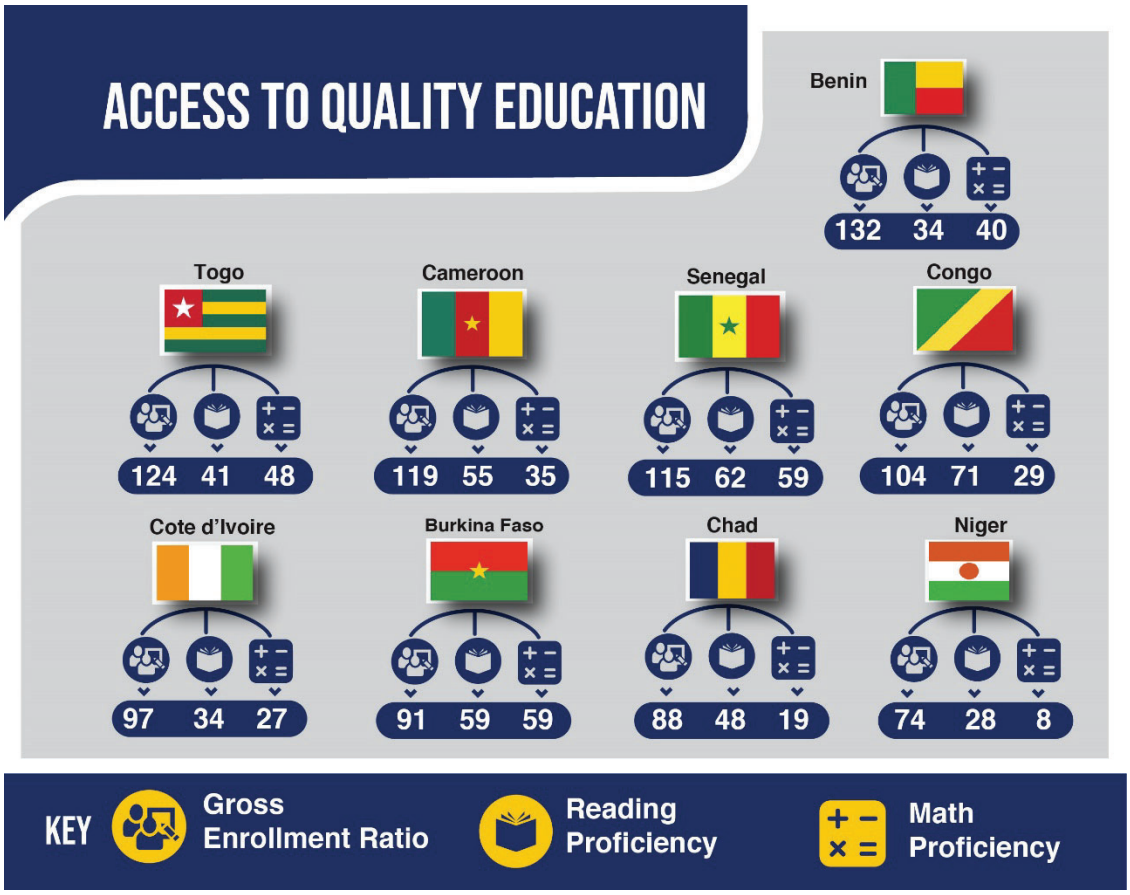
Gross enrolment ratios (GER) provide a measure of access of education but do not provide a measure of quality education, which is one of the main targets of SDG4. One of the ways that SDG4 measures quality of education is using percent of students who have at least the minimum proficiency level in reading and math by Grade 2/3 and at the end of primary education.

Figure 11 presents data from Francophone countries participating in the Programme for the Analysis of Education Systems (PASEC) on proficiency at the end of primary education and data show that access to quality education is lagging well behind access to education in general. For instance, Benin which has one of the highest primary GER at almost 140% has just over 30% of children reaching minimum proficiency levels for reading by the end of primary education. The proportions for math are even lower. The quality indicator suggests that less than half of children in the sub-region have access to quality education despite the expanding access to education with percent reaching minimum proficiency after primary ranging from 9% in Niger to 62% in Senegal. Additionally, there appears to be no correlation between gross enrolment rates and proficiency rates.

Figure 11: A Comparison of Gross Enrolment Primary Education Ratios and Proficiency Rates at the of Primary Education for Francophone Africa



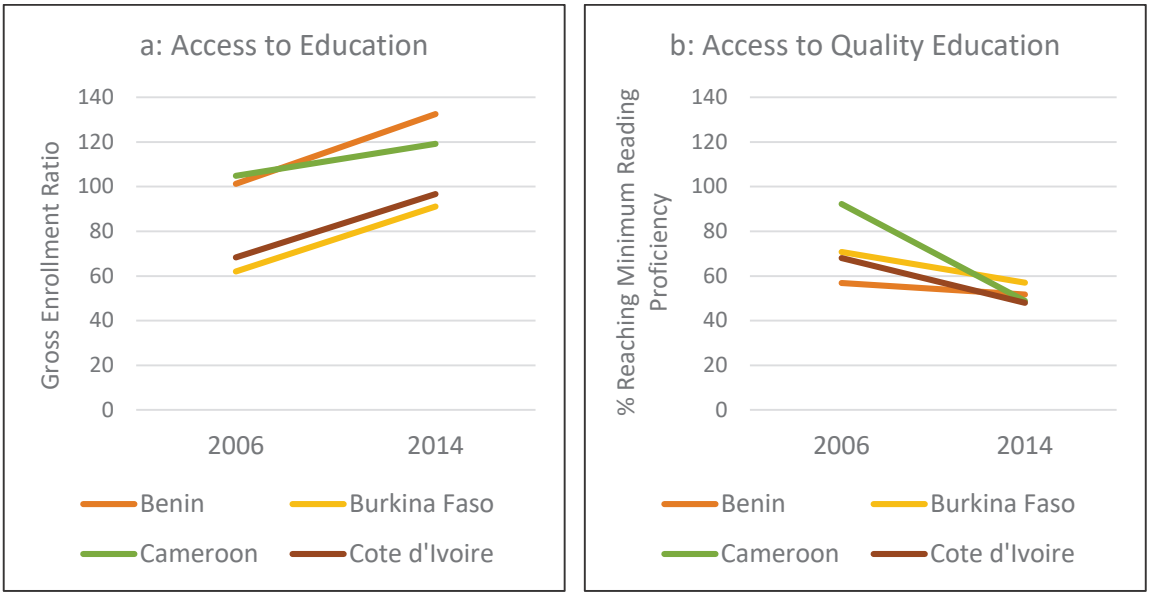
Data Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2014)



Infographic 3: *Access to Quality Education in Francophone countries*

Figures 12a and 12b present information on access to education and quality of education for four countries that have data for 2006 and 2014. A comparison of the two time periods indicates that the percent of children achieving minimum proficiency in reading by the end of primary school has declined while primary school GER went up in the same timeframe. The contrasting time trends are indicative of a focus on increasing education enrolment without an equivalent focus on learning outcomes once children are enrolled. The decline in quality is important as lower quality of schooling is linked to increased dropout risk (Inoue, 2014; Sabates, Westbrook, Akyeampong, & Hunt, 2010).

Figure 12: A Comparison of Trends in a) Access to Education and b) Access to Quality Education



Data Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

2.2 Theme 2: Trends and Realities Affecting Progression and Transitions to Secondary Education: Equity and Inclusion in focus[10]

2.2a Funding as a Factor

Poverty, location, and gender are some of the factors that affect secondary school dropout risk (UNICEF, 2018). Young people in school may leave sooner than they otherwise would to take responsibility for their day-to-day survival (Ansell, 2004). Children from poor, rural and ethnic or linguistic minorities face a higher risk of dropping out (UNESCO, 2011). Social protection programs like food for education initiatives are useful to ensure that children who attend school remain healthy (UNESCO, 2015). In Ghana and Kenya, although the existing evidence is limited, food for education initiatives suggest that school feeding programmes have consistently improved enrolment and attendance (UNESCO, 2015). Bruns, Alain and Rakotomalala (2003) have argued that the countries that achieved relative success towards universal primary education with corresponding increase in quality devoted higher share of their GDP to public primary education, paid teachers an average annual wage of about 3.3 times per capita GDP, spent slightly higher on complementary non-teacher salary inputs, have an average pupil-teacher ratio of 39:1, and have repetition rates of below 10%. Evidence elsewhere suggests that when teachers are properly incentivised and teaching and learning materials are adequate, teacher quality improves (increased teacher competencies, time use and motivation or effort), which translates to better learning outcomes (Rogers, 2008; World Bank, 2018).

[10] Transitions from Primary to Lower Secondary, and completion of Lower Secondary Schools, paying attention too, to equal opportunities for children with disabilities, members of religious and ethnic minorities and other forms or multiple cases of vulnerabilities

Despite the successes in enrolment, over half of the grade six students in Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia attended classrooms that did not have a single book (UNESCO, 2009). Public spending on education in these countries have dwindled.[11] Low income countries tend to invest the least in the education sector, and when funds are allocated, it is largely spent on the compensation of teachers. For example, in Zambia, 93% of the education budget was allocated to primary school teachers' compensation with only 4% allocated to textbooks and other teaching and learning materials (UNESCO, 2009).

It was estimated that the external finance gap cost of achieving the EFA goals would be about 25 billion dollars between 2008 and 2015: 16 billion for pre-school, primary and adult literacy training, and 9 billion for lower secondary. In this light, the governments of Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Uganda and Tanzania have, with donor support, increased spending on education through grants and abolition of basic school fees (Wils, 2015; UNESCO, 2009).

Box 3: Mitigating the Financing Gap in Zimbabwe

In 1980, less than 4 percent of children of secondary school age in Zimbabwe were enrolled in secondary education. Within three years, secondary school coverage rose to more than 65%. The surge in secondary education was attributed to partnerships formed between the government and communities to build and equip secondary schools as follows:

First, parents and communities built the school infrastructure with technical and material (like prefabricated roofing and pillars) assistance from the government to ensure that safety standards were met.

Second, the government provided trained teachers at the fixed ratio of 1 teacher for every 30 students, a per capita grant for teaching and learning materials, and free in-service training and pedagogical materials for the teachers.

Third, among other responsibilities, parents and communities paid and controlled fees for additional teachers, furniture, and construction; managed the schools; and ensured attendance.

Strengthening public-private partnerships assist in complementing public sector funds to finance the public education system in Africa.

(Majgaard & Mingat 2012; World Bank 2009)

In 2012, there were 552 million youth enrolled in secondary schools globally and only 49 million of those resided in African countries. African governments are exploring a wide variety of financing options to boost the quality and capacity of secondary schools. For instance, in Uganda—where 72%of secondary school-aged children are not in school — a public-private partnership is enabling more adolescents to gain an affordable, quality secondary education. For this partnership, non-profit social enterprise Promoting Equality in African Schools (PEAS) and Absolute Return for Kids (ARK) operate a network of secondary schools, which are financially supported by the Ugandan government (AAI, 2015).

Tackling drop-out rates requires a broad set of policies that deal with reducing underlying vulnerabilities, including poverty related factors linked to education. An example of such policy is found in Malawi, where cash transfers (between US$5 and US$15) were given to unmarried young women attending school. Within a year, their drop-out rate was 6 percent compared with 11%for girl's not receiving cash transfers (UNESCO, 2014). Another example is the girls' scholarship programme in Gambia where waiving school fees for girls increased both enrolment and educational attainment for females (Gajigo, 2012).

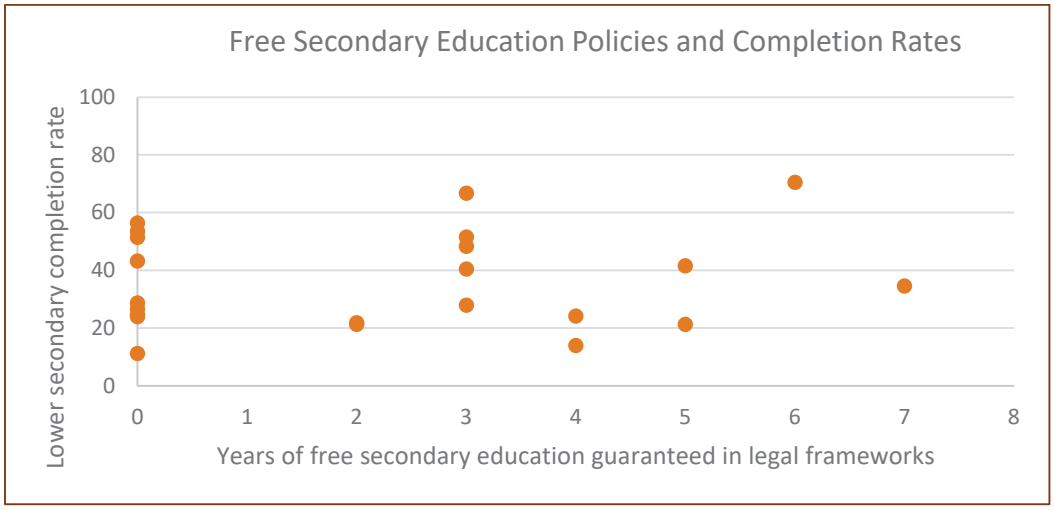
[11] Over half of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa planned to reduce public spending as a share of GDP in 2012 due to fiscal pressure. Such cutbacks threaten to reverse countries' considerable achievement in education.

2.2b Factors of Equity

Equity and education are highly associated with the rationale for inclusive education in support of inclusive economic and social growth. High quality pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education –is the level that most influences equity and economic and human development in low-income countries. There will be a trade-off in standards of excellence and by extension economic production if equity is not pursued (Zuze, 2008). In the long run society will gain from accessing the skills of all its members (Meuret, 2006).

With the increase in enrolment across sub-Saharan Africa, governments must ensure that high transition rates are achieved. For example, when the rate of enrolment rate in secondary increased to 75% in Botswana, students were retained in school through the introduction of a department on secondary education which was charged with assisting, advising and guiding teachers in preparing students for examinations (UNESCO, 2005, p. 2). Similarly, Kenya introduced a school-based deworming program to reduce absenteeism and improve transition rates after the introduction of free primary education. In 2010, the program helped to reduce absenteeism by 25% (Mbiti, 2011, p. 30). Challenges that serve as barriers for achieving higher transition rate include high pupil-teacher-ratio (PTR), which is very high in countries like Mozambique and Rwanda, where the PTR was 60:1 in 2006; much above recommended international standard PTR of 40:1. These ratios and other issues like poor infrastructure and teacher absenteeism also affect quality of teaching and learning (UNESCO, 2009).

Figure 13: Free Education Policies and Lower Secondary Completion



Data source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012-2016)

Figure 13 presents a scatterplot of free years of secondary education and completion rates for lower secondary. From the graphs, there is no evidence of a correlation between free secondary policies and completion rates. Countries offering some years of education are not clearly better off in terms of completion rates than the countries that are not. This is in line with the explanation that the costs of children's time increase as they grow older making them more vulnerable to dropping out to pursue economic activity for example. Also, free education policies that eliminate tuition fees, and do not subsidize complementary cost such as textbooks and uniforms would have substantial proportion of students from lower income households still at a disadvantage (Akyeampong, 2009; Sabates et al., 2010). Osei et al. (2009) further find that in the short-term, introduction of Capitation Grants in Ghana had no significant impacts on schooling outcomes in lower secondary (enrolment, pass rates in the

Basic Education Certificate Examination and gender inequality).[12] One of the explanations they theorized for this finding was that delays and shortfalls in disbursement of funds to schools left them under-resourced and challenged to deliver services.

Educational system features such as a post-primary examination also affect retention and transitioning to secondary school because students who fail such examinations do not transition. Some countries have eliminated the examination at the end of the primary school to increase access for children of all socio-economic backgrounds. For example, the Gambia increased the enrolment of students in lower secondary school from 44% to 63% after eliminating post-primary examinations in 2004 (UNESCO, 2012). As seen in Box 1, progression to upper primary and all other levels of education in Ethiopia is hinged to children's ability to pass series of examinations, which is often administrative strategy to reduce the number of students getting admission to higher levels. Countries in sub-Saharan Africa generally have disproportionately more primary schools than the secondary and tertiary infrastructure can accommodate.

Box 1: Examinations and Educational Progression in Ethiopia

Fewer people in Ethiopia transition from primary to lower secondary school, and examinations are among the greatest obstacles to progression. Primary education is divided into 4-year cycles: Grades 1 to 4 and Grades 5 to 8. Between the two cycles is a national examination that must be written and passed with a minimum of 50% to progress to the next cycle. Another round of national examination is written by Grade 8 students to obtain the National Primary School Certificate (NPSC) for entry into secondary school. Those who pass the NPSC exams are admitted into two years of general secondary education, who sit again for the Ethiopian General Certificate exam. Based on outcomes, students either proceed to the second phase of preparatory secondary education (Grades 11 and 12) or opt for TVET. The examinations filter out academically weak students and ensure that the country has the capacity to absorb students that progress into the higher levels. This is because less than 3% of schools in the country offer secondary education; the bulk offer primary education.

Ethiopia currently has one of the lowest primary school enrolment rates and the highest illiteracy rates in the world. Regardless of the government's efforts to expand access to primary education, insufficient resources are allocated towards improving the quality of education. The primary school completion rates are also significantly low. These affect transition to lower secondary and completion.

(NUFFIC, 2012; World Bank, 2005; Pereznieto & Jones, 2006)

Gender poses a significant barrier to transition as sociocultural and economic factors prevent girls from continuing their education once they reach adolescence (UNESCO, 2012; Levin, 2006). In Benin and Mali for instance, the rate of transitioning to secondary school remains low for girls as low-income families, particularly in rural areas often require girls to do domestic work. Early marriage particularly affects girls' transition to lower secondary. Unmarried girls have the same opportunities to attend and complete primary school as boys however once primary schooling is completed, the likelihood of transitioning for those who are married declines (UNESCO, 2012). Early marriage, pregnancy and HIV/AIDS, and lack of sanitary materials, remain the dominant challenges for adolescent girls, especially in East and Southern Africa (Kattan, 2006).

[12] Capitation Grant scheme was set up by the Ghana Ministry of Education in 2005/2006 academic year, in which every public basic school in Ghana received about two Dollars equivalent per pupil per term to replace tuition fees paid by parents.

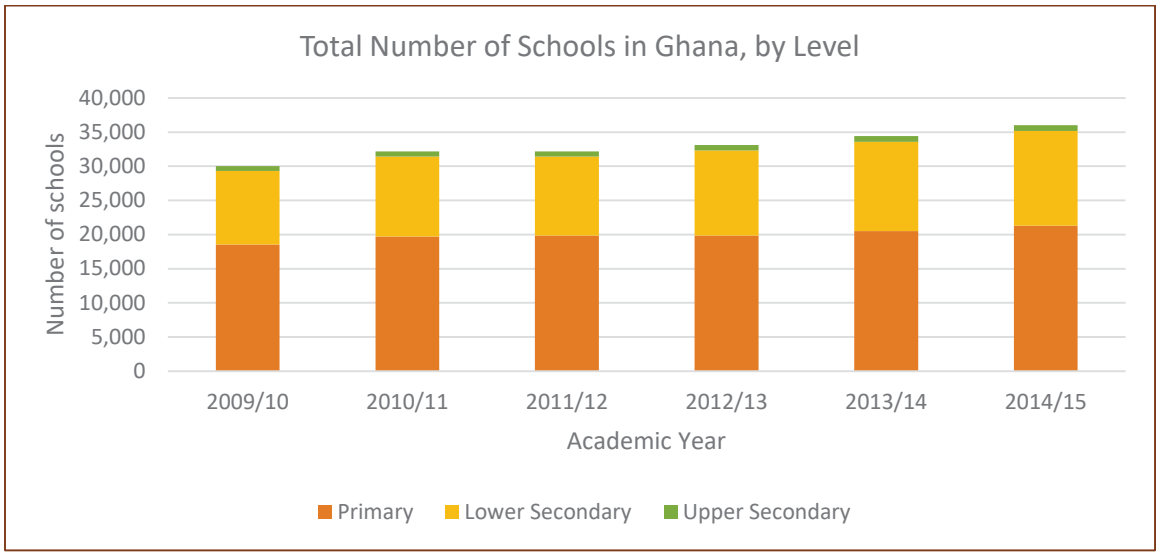
Gender socialisation – social construction of roles and relationships for boys and girls – that undermine the capacities, rights and status of girls and women also affect completion of girls in secondary schools (Kashu, 2014). Gender disparities tend to be wider among poor people than the affluent, in rural areas than in urban areas and within the latter, in slums than in non-slum areas (UNICEF, 2015). In Angola for instance, the secondary enrolment rate in urban areas is six times higher than in rural areas for both boys and girls (UNICEF, 2014). Some girls face the effects of cultural norms, beliefs and practices such as early marriage and teenage pregnancy, which affect their transitioning to secondary school (Sayed, 2009). Studies of rural pupils in Kenya, Malawi and Rwanda, for instance, showed that teachers have lower expectations of female students (Mensch & Lloyd, 1998; Brandon, 2013).

Ethiopia has attempted to address the issue by raising the number of female teachers through admission quotas at teacher training colleges (UNESCO, 2009). In addition, the Ethiopian government has targeted quality through initiatives such as installing water supply and toilets in schools, and conducted sensitization campaigns (UNESCO, 2009). This is similar to efforts in Swaziland, through the World's Education Bantwana Initiative, which focuses on girl's education. The return on each year of secondary education for girls correlates to a 25 percent increase in wages later in life however, only 13 percent of young people complete secondary school, and while 90 percent of youth transition to secondary school, only 47 percent of girls make it to upper primary (BWEI, n.d.).

Access to schools is one of the main factors influencing trends in secondary education because financial and time costs of travel to school present a barrier to transition. Distance to lower secondary schools have a negative correlation with access and transitions (Mingat & Ndem, 2010). A comparison of Congo, where almost 38% of students live at less than 30 minutes away from a secondary school, with Mauritania and Senegal where less than 10% live at less than 30 minutes away from a secondary school do show that the former face higher dropout rates after primary school (Mingat & Ndem, 2010).

Access to primary education has been expanded significantly with almost all communities having a primary school in many sub-Saharan African countries. However, the same is not true for lower secondary education. In Ghana, for instance, the lack of 1 on 1 mapping of primary schools to lower secondary schools is one of the main factors influencing transition rates. In many rural areas, lower secondary schools are situated to serve multiple communities (satellite schools) and some children do not make the transition to lower secondary where the travel time is greater than that for primary school. There are even fewer upper secondary schools across the country. Among other policy options, one way to improve access to lower secondary education is to narrow the gap between the number of primary and secondary schools. Figure 14 presents data on the number of pre-tertiary schools at all levels in Ghana over a five-year span. The trend shows that despite the increasing number of lower secondary schools being built over the past few years, there continues to be more than twice the number of primary schools as secondary, leaving many children, particularly in the rural areas, at risk of not transitioning.

Figure 14: Total Number of Schools in Ghana by Level



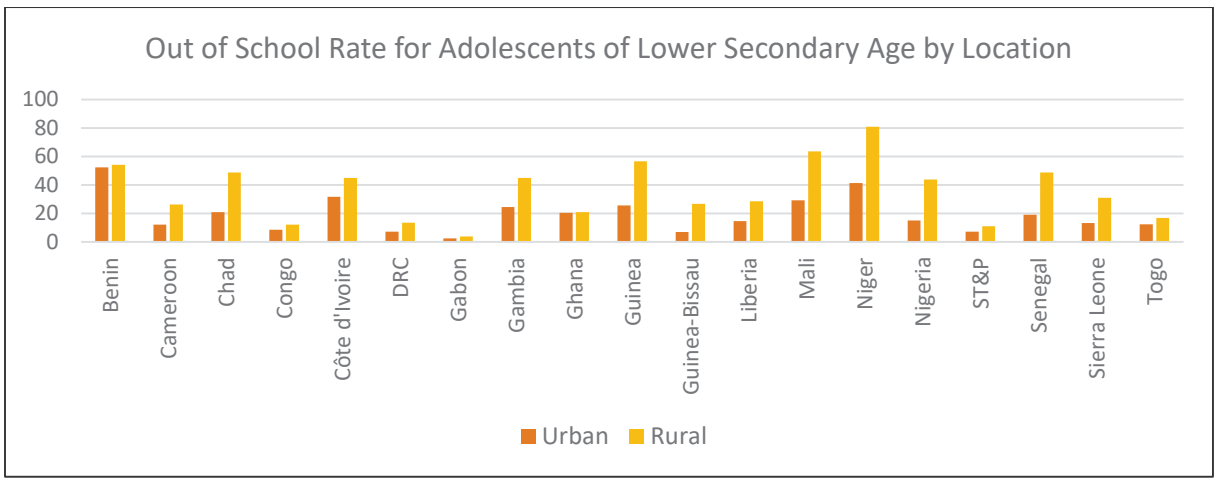
Data Source: Education Management Information System EMIS)

Considering the number of Primary, Lower Secondary and Upper Secondary schools in sub-Saharan Africa, many students who are filtered out by the exit examinations for basic education (the Basic Education Certificate Examination, BECE, in Ghana) drop out of school without any effort by the state to keep them or transition them to other sectors. These examinations and assessment systems affect retention and transitioning to secondary school (UNESCO, 2015). The majority of school systems in sub-Saharan Africa do not have the capacity to accommodate all children born into their respective countries. This has impact on out of school rates in sub-Saharan Africa.

2.2c. Predictors of School Dropout

Figure 15 presents data on the out of school rate for adolescents of the official lower secondary school age for urban and rural residents in West and Central Africa. UNESCO defines out of school rate as the number of children of official primary school age who are not enrolled in primary or secondary school, expressed as a percentage of the population of official school age. For countries in the region, adolescents in rural areas are more likely to be out of school than their counterparts in urban areas, indicating that transition and completion rates are lower in rural areas.

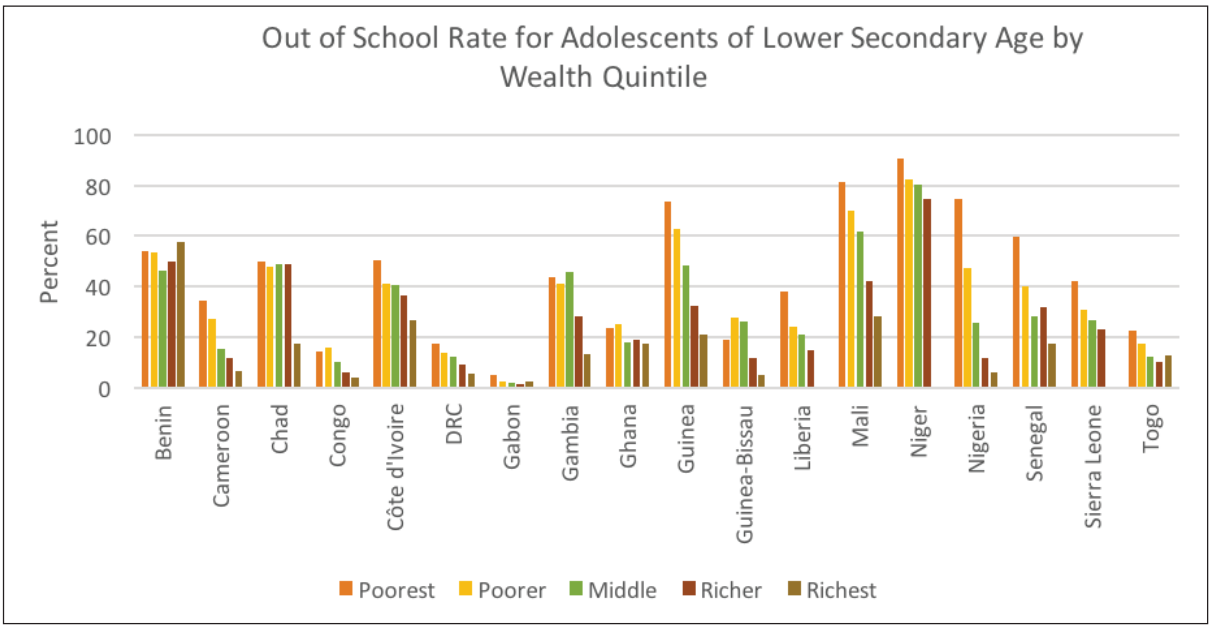
Figure 15: Out of School Rate for Adolescents of Lower Secondary Age (West and Central Africa)



Data Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Another predictor of transition to lower secondary and completion is a family's socioeconomic status. The ability of households to absorb the cost of schooling depends on their available resources, and this ability declines with increasing level of education. This significantly affects transition to lower secondary, since lower secondary school tends to be more expensive than the primary school. Even where government subsidizes or eliminates tuition, there are still indirect costs such as uniforms, textbooks and transportation. Opportunity costs of students' time can also present barriers to transition because the costs increase as children grow older (Akyeampong, 2009; Lewin, 2009; Lewin & Sabates, 2011; Sabates et al., 2010). Such indirect costs result in inequitable access to lower secondary even in countries where there is a push for free education because poorer households are disproportionately affected – resources are limited, and children's time can be utilized in ways that are more productive to the household in the short-term. Figure 16 presents data on the out of school rate data for adolescents of the official lower secondary school rate separately by wealth quintiles.

Figure 16: Out of School Rate for Adolescents of Lower Secondary Age by Wealth Quintile



Data Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Generally, the likelihood of being out of school decreases as wealth quintile increases. Some countries have greater disparities than others. For instance, Chad which has free and compulsory lower secondary education shows the lowest disparity across wealth quintiles; but that is because there are high levels of out of school youth across the board. Guinea and Nigeria have the greatest disparities – adolescents in the poorest wealth quintile are so many times as likely to be out of school as those in the richest quintile. Yet, whilst Guinea has neither free nor compulsory basic education, Nigeria has both institutionalised. This suggests that free education alone may not be enough to eliminate socioeconomic disparities. The inverse relation between household wealth quintile and proportion of out of school children of secondary age even in countries where free secondary education policies are in place provides support for the explanation that inability to pay the indirect costs is a challenge for poorer households.

Other factors are equally paramount. With the lack of nurturing at school, and the inability of parents to support their child, underachievement (failure to develop or utilize latent potential) may leading to poor student attendance and increased dropout rates (UNESCO, 2011).

Delayed entry and repetition are other risk factors for dropout as students that are older than their grade for age are less likely to complete. Repetition is particularly an important predictor (Branson,

Hofmeyr & Lam. 2014; Glick & Sahn, 2010; Weybright et al., 2017). The higher the percentage of primary school repeaters in a country, the lower the number who transition to lower secondary (Bernard, Simon & Vianou, 2005). Repetition is more likely to lead to dropout for students from poorer backgrounds because the additional year in school has cost implications for the family as it signals to poor families their child does not have the aptitude and is motivated to withdraw them from school (Bernard et al., 2005). The negative relationship between age and dropout is a concern due to the high proportion of children who are behind the recommended grade for their age in the region.

2.2d. Factors of Inclusion and Exclusion

Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of a Child states that all children have a right to a primary education, and further reiterates in Article 29 that the development of a child's personality and ability should be the target of children's education (United Nations, 1989). Several factors contribute to non-enrolment and further exclusion of children in education. These include disability, gender, residential arrangements and socio-economic background of children. Disability is particularly a barrier to enrolment. Children with language, speech, physical, sensory disabilities or cognitive disabilities are more likely to drop out of school. This is because they are often excluded from learning, especially if the curriculum has not been adapted to their needs (UNICEF, 2015).

Another factor that leads to non-enrolment and non-completion in many countries is conflict and humanitarian crises (UNICEF, 2018), especially in Sudan, South Sudan, Chad, DR Congo and Somalia. During conflict, children are often rendered mentally and physically disabled, orphaned, and made refugees or internally displaced people. For example, 613,000 children became orphans in Uganda during the early 1990's conflict (Sayed, 2009). In 2011, children in conflict-prone societies were three times more likely to miss out on a proper education (UNESCO,

Kenyan Educational Assessment and Resource Centre for Children with Special Needs

In 1984, the Kenyan government set up 17 Educational Assessment and Resources Centres (EARC) to provide support to children with special needs and disabilities. 200 EARC are operational across the country. The roles and functions of these centres include; early identification, assessment, intervention, and placement of children and young people with special needs and disabilities in appropriate educational training programs, referring children with disabilities for medical check-ups and examinations, integrating the children into regular mainstream schools, and regularly visiting the children in the schools they are posted to give support where necessary.

It is estimated that only one in six children with disabilities attend school in Kenya, and those who are able to attend face problems of stigmatization, inappropriate curricula, poorly equipped schools and insufficiently trained teachers (Global Education for All 2016). Three different models of inclusive education are employed in Kenya to improve the participation of children with disabilities . The first is the Inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education through Leonard Chesire Disability (LCD), which adopts an integrated form of inclusive education, it focuses on children with and without disabilities and designs the teaching methods, textbooks and materials. The second model is the Integrated Family Supported education used by the Deaf Child Worldwide program. Certain units are taught by a qualified deaf teacher alongside the government teacher already present, ensuring that the deaf children acquire quality education. This model has been successful in improving family communications and relationships. Third, there is the community-based education utilized by Sense International (SI). Trained teachers from mainstream schools are deployed to homes twice a week to work with a child who is deafblind or suffers from complex disabilities, and the parents, to impact life skills.

Certain barriers continue to limit access to education for children with disabilities. These include a lack of understanding about forms of disability and children with disabilities' needs, insufficient resources to accommodate diverse needs, discriminatory attitude towards disability and difference, and poor data on which to build policy.

(UNESCO, 2015; Handicap International, 2013)

2011). Similarly, children from nomadic and herder communities such as the Karamajong, Peulh and the Touareg, are also more likely to be excluded from education (UNICEF, 2015). Nomadic-specific education plans emerged in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan and Tanzania. However, the vulnerability among nomadic groups continue to grow due to factors such as natural drought which are beyond their control (UNESCO, 2015).

Majority of out of school children come from marginalized and disadvantaged circumstances (Sayed, 2009). The three main challenges are on physical access to educational institutions, access to quality education and outcomes in the job market for marginalized minorities once they leave the education system (Eshiwani, 1990). Supply-sided interventions that can address these include the creation of forms of schooling that are more relevant to needs of the specific group (Sayed, 2009).

These include special admission policies such as lower entry requirements for those special communities, reservation schemes which provide quotas for socially discriminated populations, introduction of scholarships, bursaries and stipends such as those implemented in Djibouti, Kenya and Sierra Leone. In Djibouti and Sierra Leone, these interventions led to improved attendance and retention among girls that received them (Sayed, 2009). Other potent supply side interventions include provision of appropriate education for disabled people, private schooling, creation of mobile schools, the introduction of second chance programs that provide bridging education for youth and young adults, and the introduction of Healing Classroom Initiatives in camps in post-conflict societies, as was implemented in Northern Ethiopia.[13] In Kenya the Ministry of Education introduced mobile schools near watering points in Northern Kenya in 2003 (Sayed, 2009).[14]

Children from poorer backgrounds have delayed development, learning and attainment of potential (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Kamper & Mampuru, 2007; Kamper, 2008; Powers, 1996; Zorn & Noga, 2004). Many children drop out of school to work – to earn a living, even though child labour is illegal in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa. This can translate into poor student attendance and increased dropout rates (UNESCO, 2011).

The UNESCO (2018) report on children with disabilities in 42 countries, including 19 sub-Saharan African countries revealed that lower secondary school age children with functional disabilities in Gambia and Uganda are more likely to be out of school. The report also finds completion rates are also lower for children with disabilities and as with the overall population, the risk of being out of school is higher for girls.

World Vision (2007) in their review of inclusion reported that for several countries in the sub-region, policies to aid disabled learners with existing policies are poorly implemented or not in effect. Policies are also unclear on whether they are aiming for inclusion i.e. changing education systems, so the needs of all learners can be catered for versus or integration i.e. placing marginalized learners into the existing mainstream schools (the SDG4 focus is on inclusive education). The report notes that Francophone West African countries - Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal – lagged in their policies.

2.3 Theme 3: Learning, Employability and Wellbeing of the Youth with and without secondary education

There is limited information on learning outcomes and skills level of students in lower secondary schools. Ensuring quality education at the secondary level will prepare students for institutions of higher learning and training and produce graduates with the needed skills for the local labour market (AAI, 2015). There are three types of skills (functional) needed by young people. These are

1. Literacy and numeracy skills necessary for getting work;
2. Transferable skills which include ability to solve problems, communicate ideas and information, showcase leadership and conscientiousness and demonstrate entrepreneurial skills;
3. Technical and vocational skills which equip students with technical knowledge.

In Malawi, students get selected into schools based on their performance in the primary school leaving certificate examination. Top performers are selected into conventional schools, second tier performers to community day schools, and third tier performers are not selected, they either drop out or join private schools. However, Community Day Secondary Schools compared to the better resourced Conventional Secondary schools are inadequately resourced and fail to ensure the minimum quality of education. The Conventional Secondary schools raise the school outcomes of pupils through greater retention and learning outcomes compared to pupils who obtained similar end of primary examination results and attended Community Day Secondary schools.

(Chimombo, 2010; De Hoop, 2010).

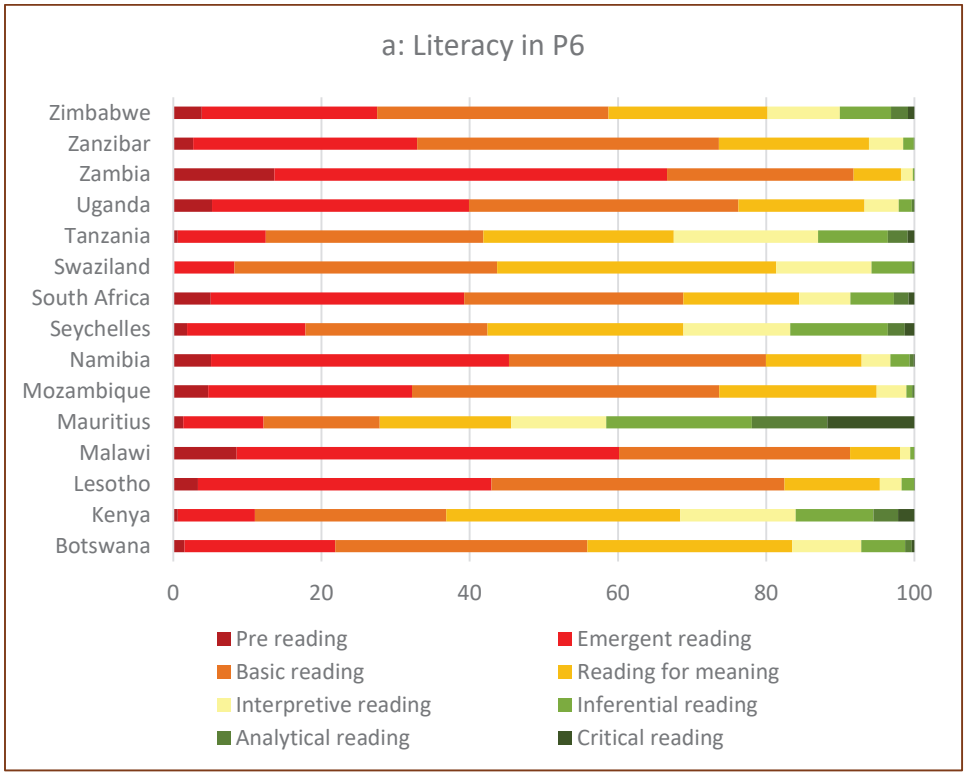
Foundation skills, which are attained at secondary school, are also essential for career advancement, active citizenship and safe choices about personal health (UNESCO, 2012).

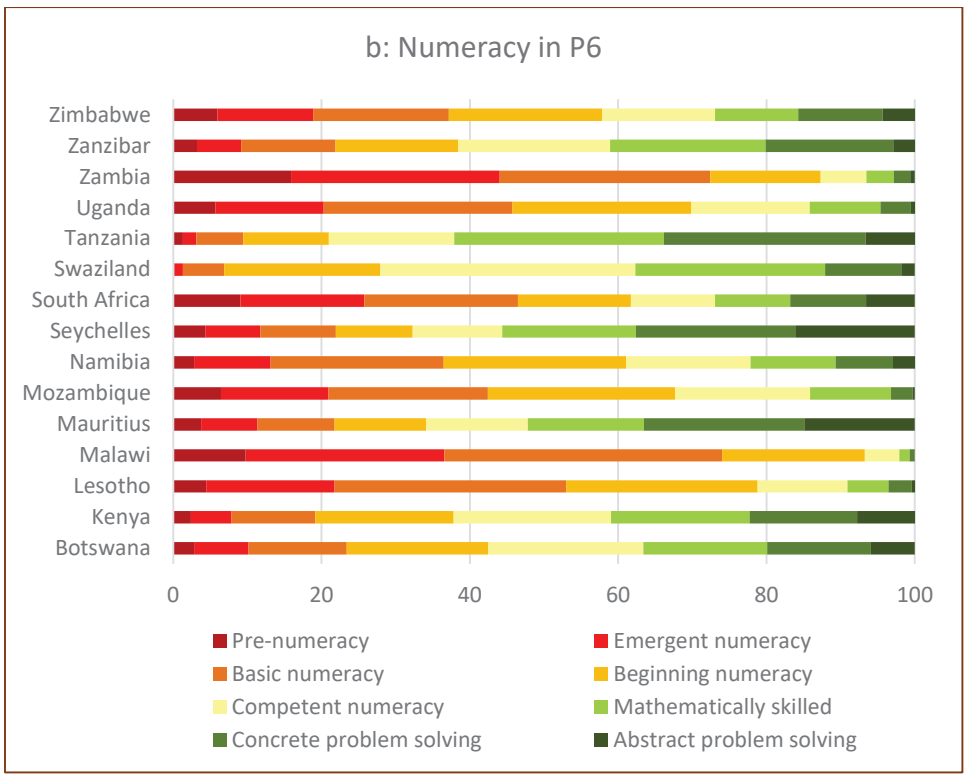
2.3a Literacy and Numeracy as Proxies for Employability

In assessments for the East and Southern Africa region, average test scores for literacy and numeracy are generally low, with a considerable percentage of students failing to have acquired basic skills in reading and mathematics. In Lesotho, for example, by Grade 6 only 48 per cent of students achieved basic reading skills. In Zambia and Malawi, only 27 per cent of students achieved this level. In mathematics, the proportion of primary students with basic skills is considerably lower, with fewer than 50 per cent of students in Grade 6 achieving the minimum level in two-thirds of the countries (UNESCO, 2014). Results from *the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality* (SACMEQ) III (2007) also show wide disparities in basic reading and mathematics skills by the end of primary education (Grade 6).

The graphs presented in Figures 17a and 17b show Primary 6 learning outcomes for reading and mathematics; majority of P6 pupils are simply reading and writing at the basic level or below. The level of literacy skills at the end of primary school suggests young people that dropout after P6 may not be adequately equipped for the labour force. The graph in Figure 17a show that in 3 of the 15 participating countries in Eastern and Southern Africa (Kenya, Tanzania and Swaziland), between 80 per cent and 93 per cent of students achieved the minimum reading level in SACMEQ. Mauritius recorded the most students (over 40%) exhibiting very high reading skills – inferential, analytical and critical reading skills. Tanzania recorded the highest level of numeracy skills, followed by Seychelles, Mauritius, Zanzibar and Kenya (See Figure 17b).

Figure 17: Level of Skills in P6 for a: Reading and b: Mathematics

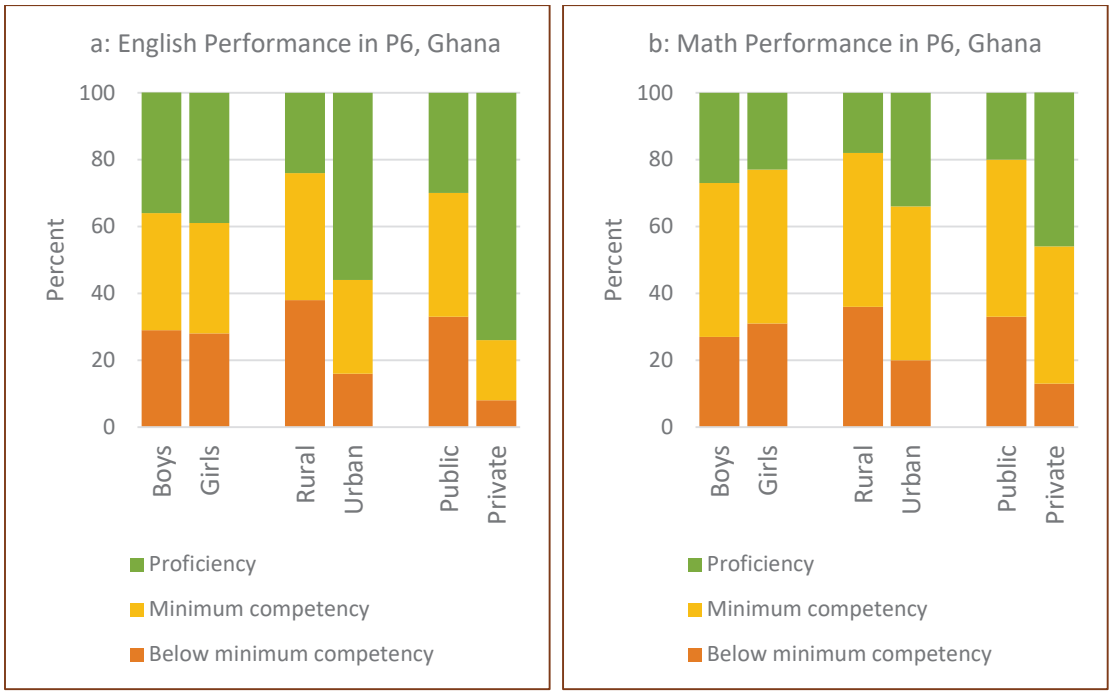




Data Source: Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality III (2006 – 2011)

Findings on Primary 6 English and mathematics proficiency for Ghana indicate that approximately a third of students score below the minimum competency in both subjects (Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service & National Education Assessment Unit, 2016). That means that children who do not transition to lower secondary are at risk of leaving school without the requisite skills needed to enter the labour force. Further, there are substantial differences by groups indicating that some children – girls, rural residents and school pupils – are at greater risk of leaving school unprepared than others (see Figures 18a and 18b). The differences are particularly pronounced between public and private schools.

Figure 18: Group Differences in a: English and b: Mathematics Proficiency (Primary 6)



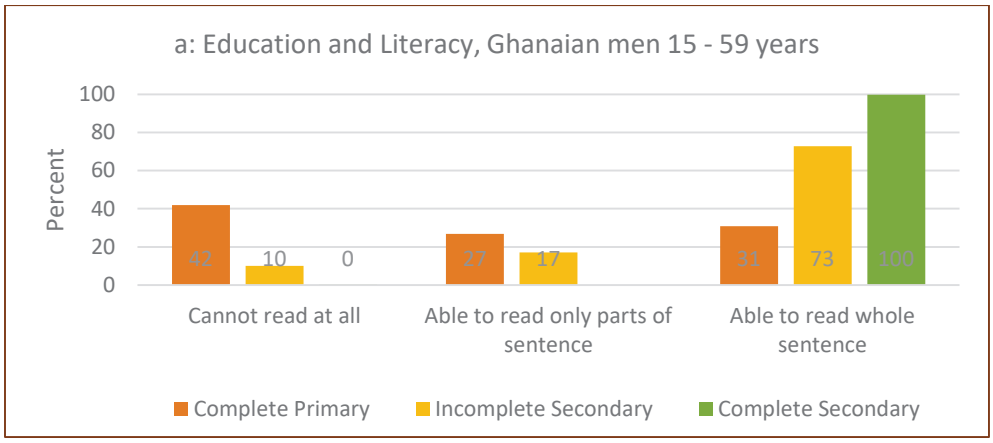
Data Source: Ministry of Education et al. 2016

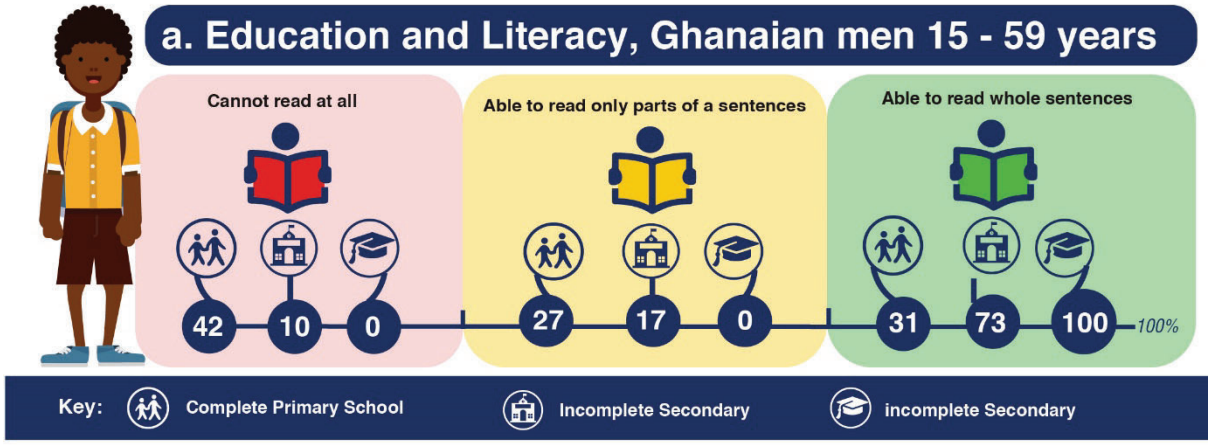
Leaving school early increases the likelihood that youth enter into low paying jobs (UNESCO, 2010) because they transition to the labour force without the requisite skills to position them for a life that they would have acquired if they stayed in school (UNESCO, 2012). As indicated ahead in this section, the probability of being employed without a minimum of lower secondary certificate is very low in many African countries. Unfortunately, few countries offer programmes to train out-of-school youth and existing programmes are on small scales, with limited funding that is not sustainable. This subject matter is explored further in another background paper on Alternative Pathways for out-of-school Youths.

In West Africa, Ghana's performance in the 2011 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) for students in eight grade (second grade of lower secondary in Ghana) indicated low skills level, ranking last in both math and science (Martin, Mullis, Foy, & Stanco, 2012; Mullis, Martin, Foy, & Arora, 2012). Further, Ghanaian students performed satisfactorily at the facts and procedures level but failed in the more advanced areas of problem solving, reasoning and using concepts. This indicates that the higher order skills needed to survive in the competitive global economy are not being developed by lower secondary schools in this context.

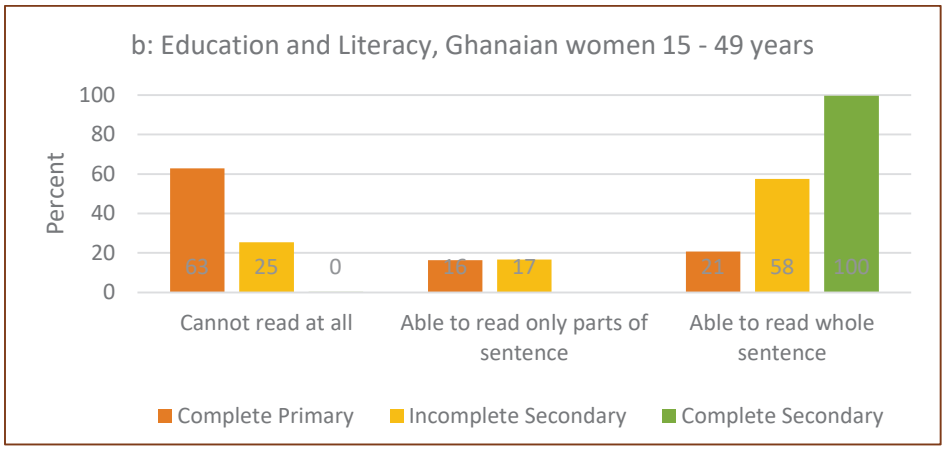
Figures 19a and 19b present differences in literacy and numeracy from the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (DHS). The DHS categorizes secondary education as complete and incomplete and so people that have completed lower secondary but not upper will be in the incomplete secondary category. The literacy is classified as respondent can read a sentence fully, partially or not at all. For both men and women, the most pronounced differences by education is whether the respondent can read a whole sentence. The graph demonstrates the long-term importance of completing secondary education in the development of basic skills for life. Almost 100% of secondary school graduates can read the whole sentence compared to 73% and 58% for men and women respectively who did not complete secondary education. There are also gender differences in the literacy skill levels as a higher proportion of men with primary and incomplete secondary can read a sentence fully or partially. 60% of women with primary education cannot read a sentence at all compared to 42% of men.

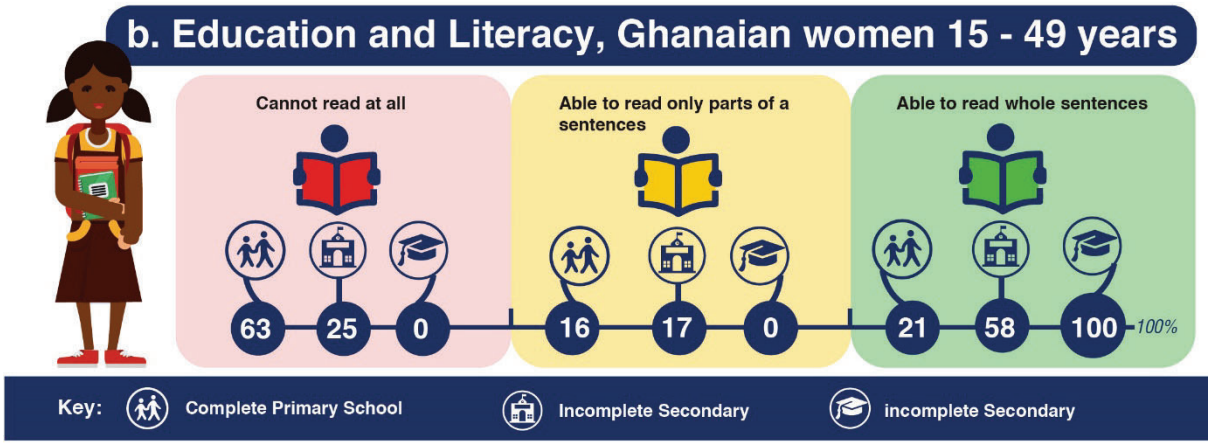
Figure 19: Educational Attainment and Literacy in Ghana for a: Men and b: Women





Infographic 4: *Education and Literacy for Ghanaian Male 15 – 59 Years*





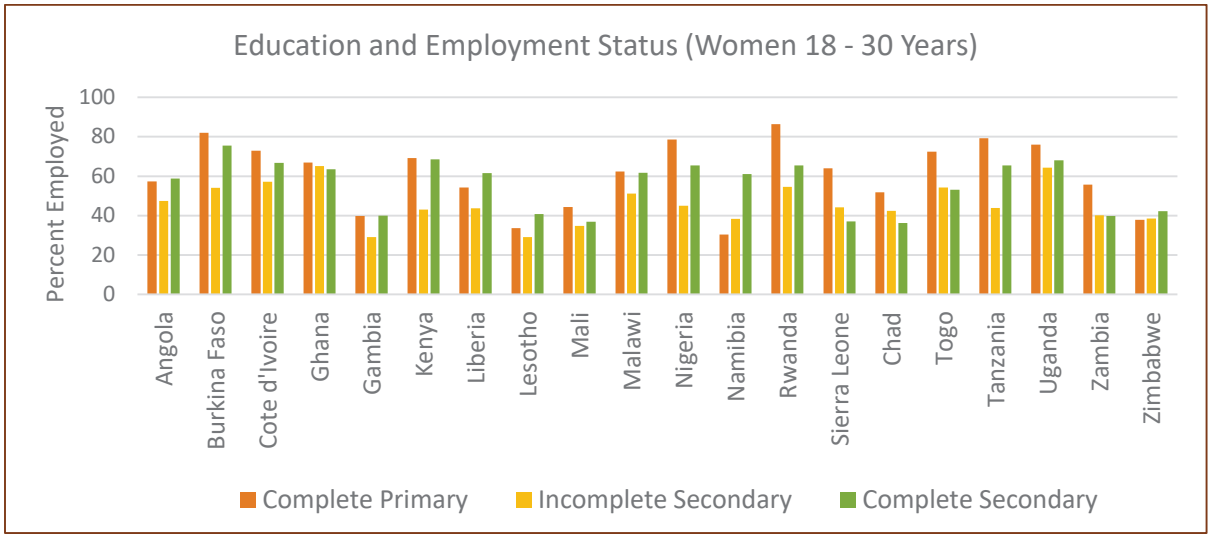
Infographic 5: *Education and Literacy for Ghanaian Females 15 – 59 Years*

Data Source: Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (2014)

2.3b Educational Attainment, Likelihood of Employment and Wellbeing

Figure 20 shows the probability of being currently employed for young women 18 – 30 years surveyed in the DHS conducted in the past five years. The graph compares women whose highest educational level is completed primary with women who have some secondary education and those whose highest level is completed secondary education (and so excludes women with some post-secondary education). The pattern observed is that in most countries, those who have completed primary have the highest likelihood of reporting current employment compared to those who continued to secondary. For women who went to secondary school, those who have completed secondary education are more likely to be working than those with incomplete secondary education. The next graph presents further information on the women who are employed.

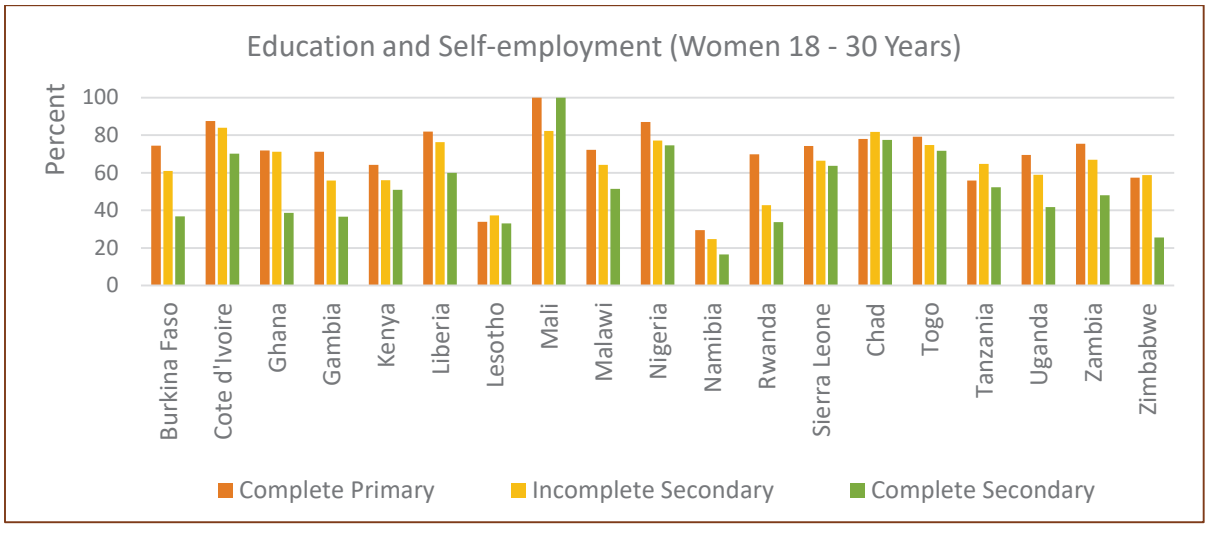
Figure 20: Women Education and Employment



Data Source: Demographic and Health Surveys (2013 – 2017)

Figure 21 shows the probability of being self-employed for young women who reported that they are currently employed. Overall, the women who have completed secondary education are the least likely to be self-employed. For most countries, having had incomplete secondary education also reduces the likelihood of being self-employed compared to women who have completed primary education. Self-employment is being used as a proxy for informal work as most self-employed workers in this context are working in the informal sector. Based on this assumption, we can conclude that completion of secondary education reduces the likelihood of being self-employed and increases the chance of being employed in the formal sector.

Figure 21: Education and Self-employment

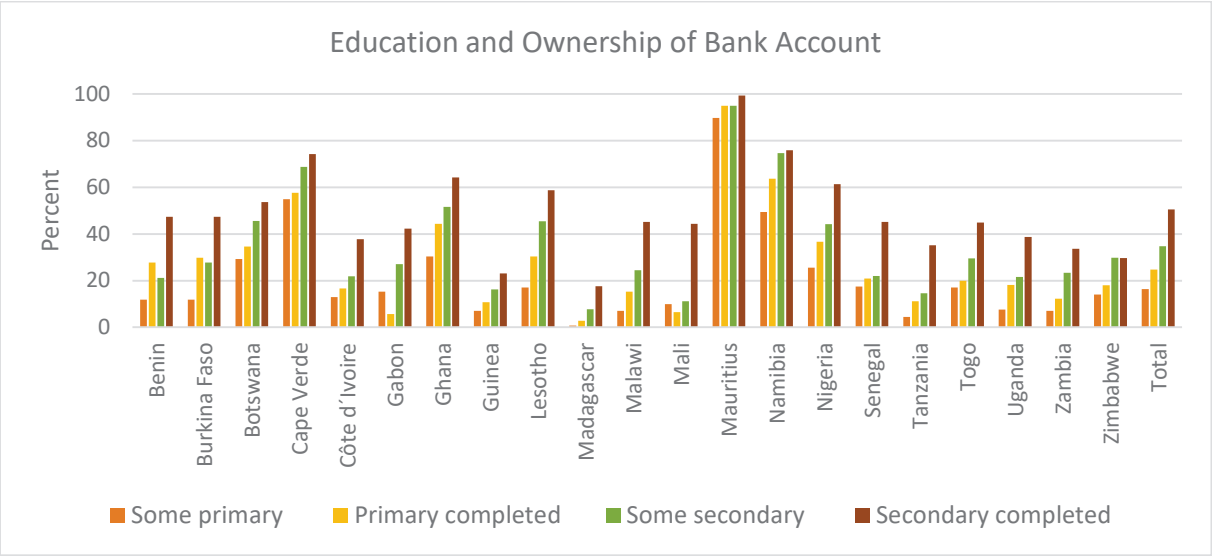


Data Source: Demographic and Health Surveys (2013 – 2017)

Figure 22 presents data on bank account ownership, which is one measure of financial inclusion. The trend reveals a general positive correlation between educational level and having a bank account.

Those that have completed secondary education have the highest probability of owning a bank account.

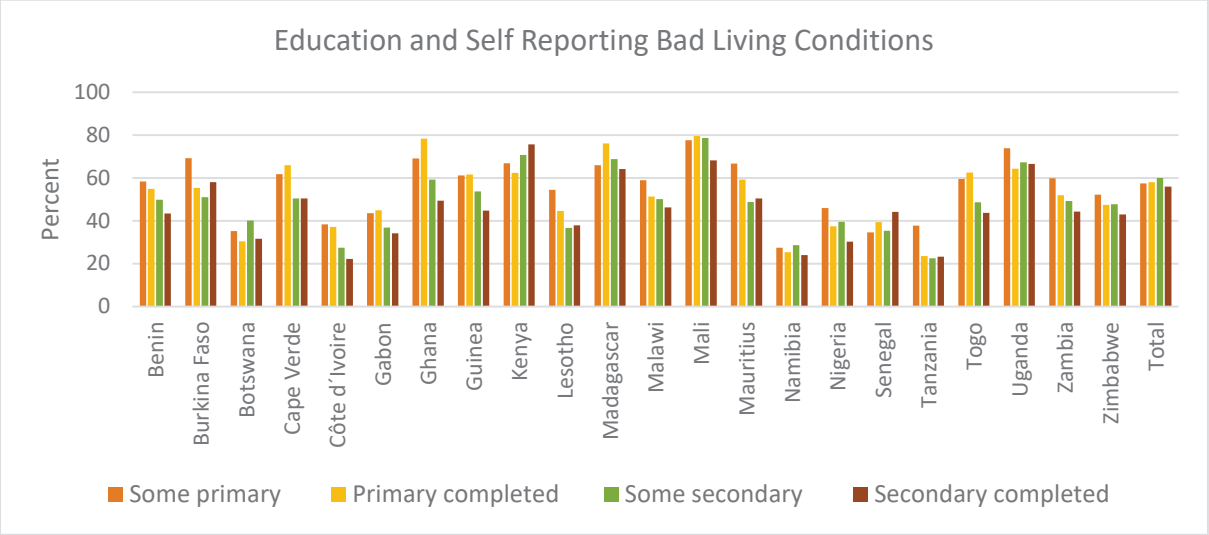
Figure 22: Education and Bank Account Ownership



Data source: Afro barometer R7 (2016-2018)

Figure 23 presents the distribution of self-reported standard of living – the proportion of respondents who say their current living conditions are bad or very bad. There is a positive relationship between education and living standard with those having completed secondary education having less than secondary being less likely to say their current conditions are bad.

Figure 23: Education and Standard of Living



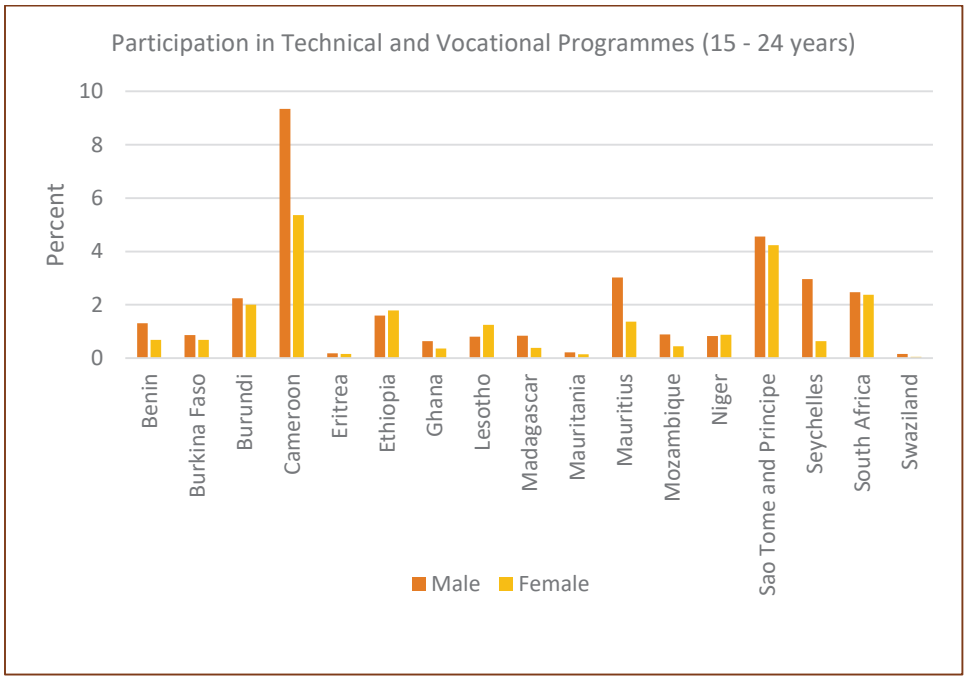
Data source: Afro barometer R7 (2016-2018)

Employment rates in the formal sector are low in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2009) and yet, countries have not fully taken advantage of the opportunities offered by Technical and Vocational training (TVET), which itself requires strategic planning for countries to take advantage of. Enrolment to TVET is only at 6% of the total secondary and post-secondary enrolment (World Economic Forum, 2017). The three strategic issues that face TVET include (i) poor perception – Teachers' perceptions

and parent mindsets that are transferred to students; (ii) gender stereotyping – who can participate in mechanics, engineering, etc; (iii) lack of trained infrastructure (African Union, 2007). Employers in countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and Nigeria identify lack of adequately skilled workforces as a major constraint to their business. A strengthening of vocational secondary education could contribute to economic development, serve to prevent large youth groups from falling outside the society and the world of work, and increase the general interest of being enrolled into secondary school (World Bank, 2008).

Figure 24 presents available data on participation in technical and vocational programmes. Technical and vocational programmes can be an avenue to train out-of-school youth, even though the design, focus and targeted beneficiaries matter. When TVET programme is designed for those who drop out of primary or lower secondary schools, its curriculum is designed to meet the skills of those who have basic literacy and numeracy. Further discussions on the prospects of TVET is discussed in another background paper. Less than 10% of youth are enrolled in TVET programmes. The participation of women is even lower meaning progress towards gender equality is also needed as that is one of the targets of SDG4.[15]

Figure 24: Participation Rate in Technical and Vocational training Programmes



Data Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

3.0 CASE STUDIES

The Ghana and Rwanda education systems have further been interrogated, where secondary data were complemented by primary data. Primary data collection involved loosely structured in-depth interviews with key informants to complement the literature review and secondary data analysis. The selection of informants for the interview was informed by a systems approach to gain perspectives from key informants on how factors at the various levels of the educational system on both the demand and supply side effect progression and completion. The systems approach allows the actionable recommendations collated from the research to reflect a diverse group of stakeholders.

[15] SDG4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

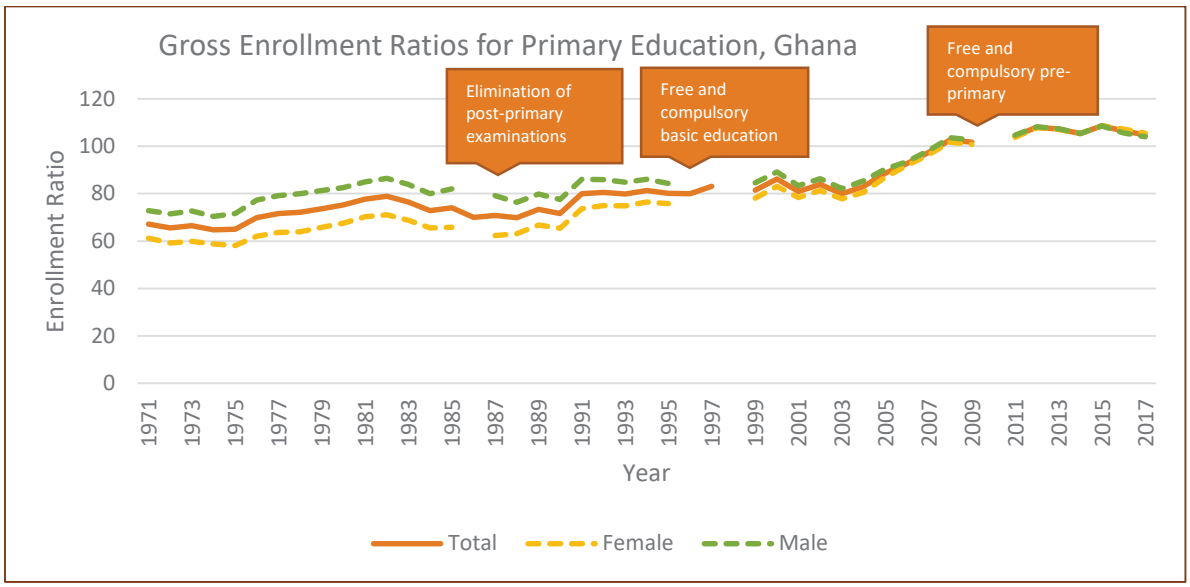
The systems approach enables understanding of how different levels in the educational system interact to shape educational outcomes. The conceptual framework was drawn from ecological principles that theorize that the factors that influence educational outcomes are interrelated (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Focusing solely on one aspect and ignoring the existence of confounding context-specific variables will paint an incomplete picture of how to improve schooling outcomes. This ecological perspective is very relevant in developing contexts where children face barriers to progression on multiple fronts. For the Ghana study, in addition to the key informants from the national level, stakeholders from two districts – one in a high performing and one in a low-performing region were selected (See Appendix I). Getting perspectives from both ends of the spectrum allowed for comparative analysis to better craft the policy recommendations. In Rwanda, challenges in getting ethical clearance meant that interviews focused only national level policy makers.

3.1 Ghana Case Study

3.1a Theme 1: Access to education, progression and completion in primary and secondary

Ghana's current educational system is 2 years pre-primary, 6 years primary, 3 years lower secondary and 3 years upper secondary. In 1987, Ghana introduced the current Junior Secondary School (JHS) system which eliminated the end of primary school Common Entrance Examination. The first national examination is conducted at the end of lower secondary. In 1997, Ghana introduced Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) to increase access to both primary and lower secondary. Figure 25 shows that access to education in Ghana has been increasing steadily over time with primary education GER rising from 67% to 104% over the past four decades. The gender differences in enrolment ratios have also been eliminated in recent times, with the narrowing of the gender gap being observed in the years following the introduction of the free and compulsory basic education. The higher than 100% GER shows though, that over-age pupils are a challenge, due to the factors that have been discussed earlier.

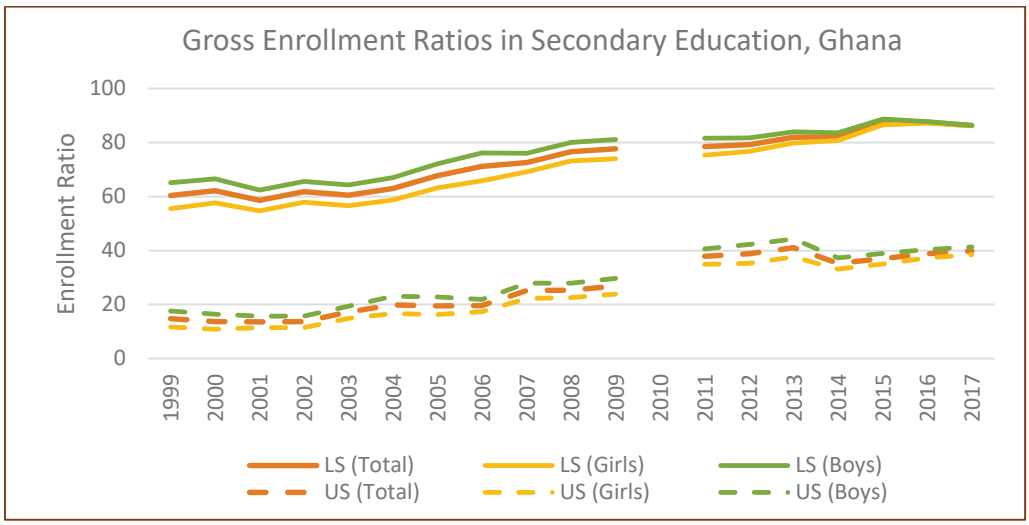
Figure 25: Access to Education in Ghana - Trends in Gross Enrolment Ratios



Data source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Figure 26 presents gross enrolment ratios for lower and upper secondary which have also increased steadily over time but are lower than that for primary education. Gender gaps have also narrowed for both lower and upper secondary. However, quality education is in question, as many students have less than the requisite literacy and numeracy skills.

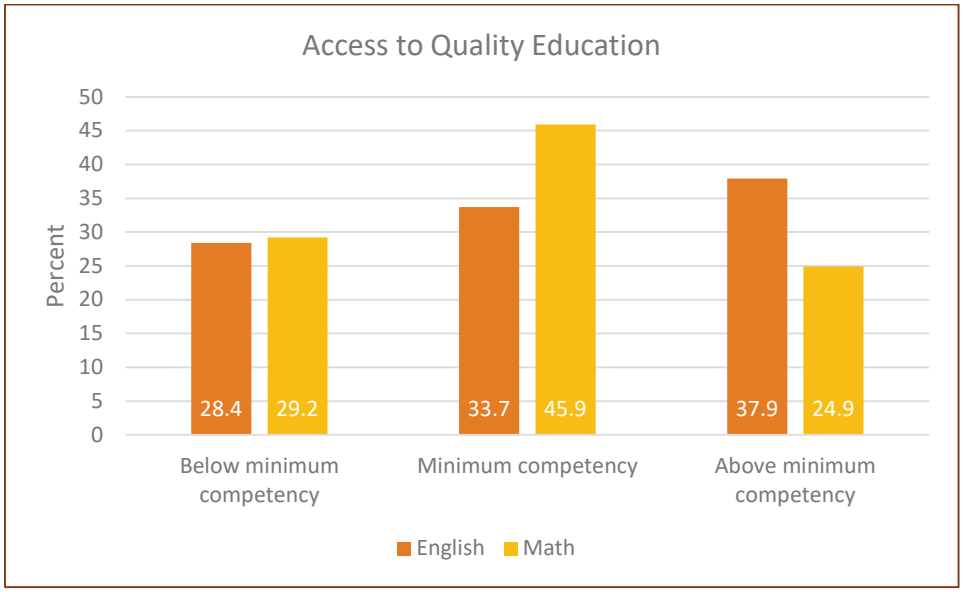
Figure 26: Access to Secondary Education in Ghana – Secondary Gross Enrolment Ratios



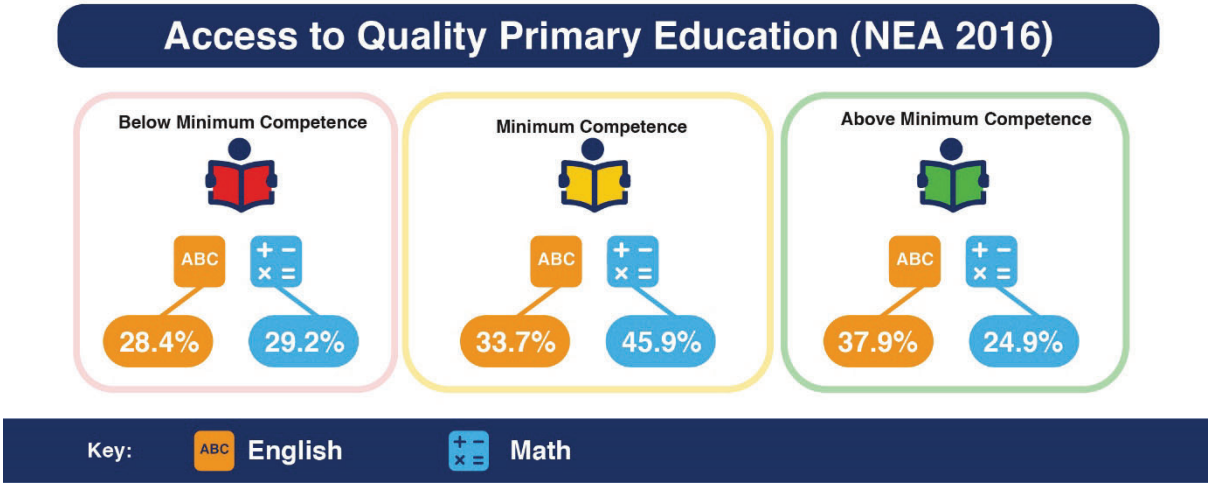
Data source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Figure 27 presents results from the Ghana National Education Assessments (NEA) showing that almost 30% of pupils in the final year of primary school were below minimum proficiency. This finding indicates that quality education delivery lags access to education in general. Although Ghana has historically not given prime attention to technical and vocational education and training (TVET), the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2003-2015 sought to improve TVET to offer skills development opportunities to Ghanaian youth, including out-of-school children and 'dropouts' (Ansah & Ernest, 2015). The present ESP from 2018-2030 has prioritised the mainstreaming of TVET education and making it attractive to young people (Ministry of Education, 2018).

Figure 27: Access to Quality Education – P6 Competency Rates in English and Math



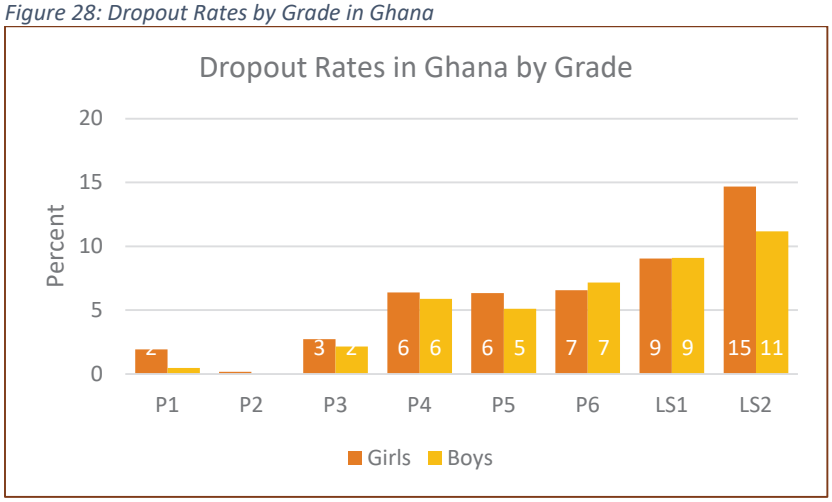
Data source: (Ministry of Education et al., 2016)



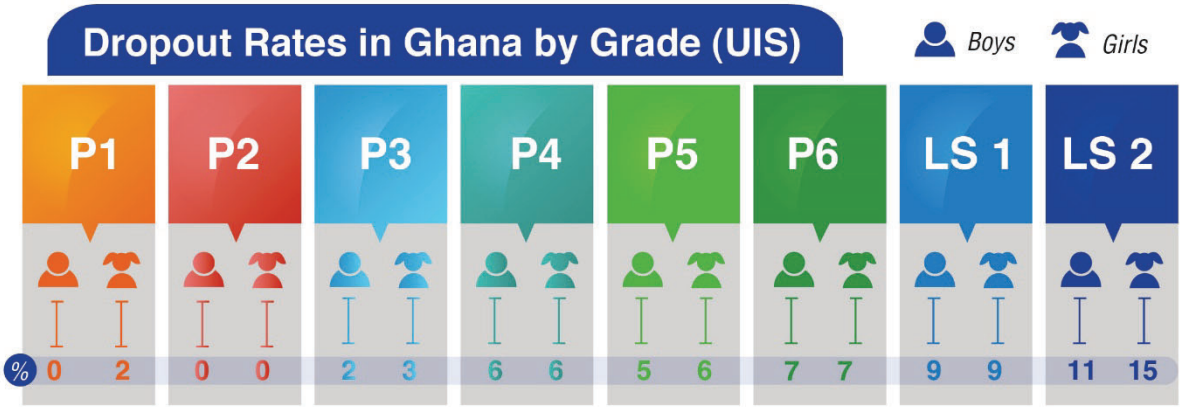
Infographic 6: *Access to Quality Primary Education in Ghana*

Figure 28 presents dropout rates by grade for primary school and lower secondary in Ghana (the P6 value estimated is using transition rate from P6 to JHS 1). The proportion of pupils that drop out increases by grade after lower primary. Girls drop out at a slightly higher rate than boys and the greatest gender difference is observed in the middle of lower secondary. The dropout rate increasing with grade is consistent with the explanation that the cost of children's time increases with age making them more vulnerable to dropping out.

Figure 28: Dropout Rates by Grade in Ghana



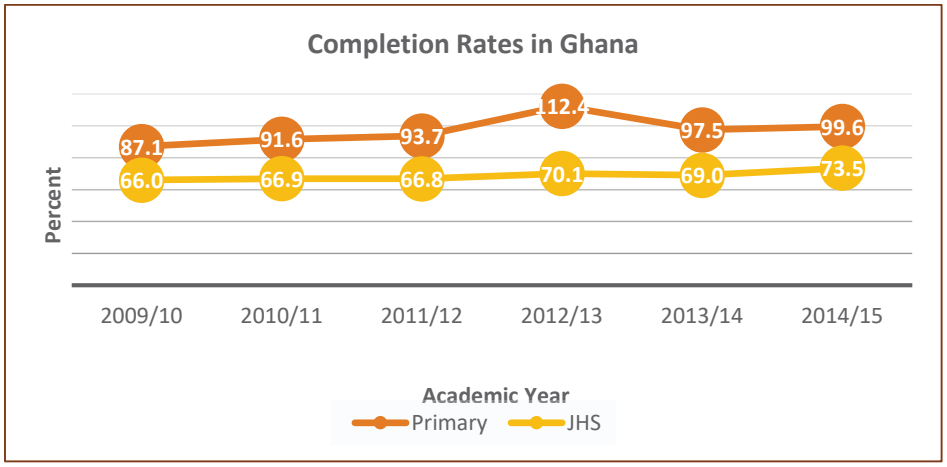
Data source: UNESCO UIS (2016)



Infographic 7: *Drop Out Rate in Ghana by Grade and Gender*

Despite the high rates of transition, completion rates for lower secondary lag substantially behind that for primary school – 73.5% compared to 99.6% in the 2014/2015 academic year (Ministry of Education, 2015). Figure 29 presents the completion rates by level. That means almost a quarter of students that make the transition to lower secondary in Ghana do not complete. This finding goes against the conventional notion that students are at greatest risk of dropout during transitions. In line with secondary data, the key informants cited that completion rates for lower secondary in Ghana is a concern that needed to be addressed because pupils transitioning to lower secondary and not completing means that they do not receive the basic education which is the right for all children.

Figure 29: Completion in Primary and Lower Secondary in Ghana



Data source: Ministry of Education (2015)

3.1b Theme 2: Trends and Realities Affecting Progression and Transitions to Secondary Education in Ghana: Equity and Inclusion in focus[16]

Household and Community Characteristics of Ghanaian Children of School Going Age

Findings from key informant interviews at the national and district levels in Ghana are consistent with research indicating that one of the main predictors of dropout is the inability of parents to cover the non-tuition costs of schooling such levies, uniforms and textbooks (Adam, Adom & Bediako 2016; Adamu-Issah et al., 2007; Akyeampong, 2009). Key informants noted that school feeding programmes and provision of free uniform and textbooks to reduce the indirect costs at the primary level are not available at the lower secondary level and as such students are more likely to complete primary then drop out after transitioning to lower secondary with age, gender, poverty, and geography being strong influences on who drops out because of financial constraints.

In communities where agriculture is the predominant economic activity, key informants noted that the likelihood of dropout increases as children age because of their ability to provide manual labour on farms. Informants cited higher rates of truancy and dropout during the farming season with boys being more likely to dropout during the farming season. Poverty is an exacerbating factor where agricultural work-related dropout is concerned. Boys are cited as more likely to dropout during the farming season. This is consistent with research on seasonal dropout in Ghana which is influenced by agricultural activities (Ampiah & Abu-Yeboah, 2009; Ananga, 2011)

A notable factor consistently cited by key informants in Ghana as influencing lower secondary completion rates was “poor parenting”. Informants at the district level saw parents as key to reducing school dropout in communities. “Poor parenting” is equated to minimal or non-existent parental involvement – support and supervision – in their children’s education. Poor parenting is also presented as the intermediary mechanism through which many of the household factors worked. There is lack of support– both financial i.e. feeding, textbooks, uniforms, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) fees etc., and non-financial i.e. encouraging students to stay in school or encouraging dropouts to return to school, participating in school activities such as PTA meetings. Informants also cited inadequate supervision – monitoring their children’s attendance to avoid truancy, checking whether homework had been completed, ensuring that children are home on school nights and not out socializing at bars,

[16] Transitions from Primary to Lower Secondary, and completion of Lower Secondary Schools, paying attention too, to equal opportunities for children with disabilities, members of religious and ethnic minorities and other forms or multiple cases of vulnerabilities

funerals etc. An exploratory qualitative case study in Ghana provides some explanation for this – teachers indicated that some parents did not know about the non-financial ways of providing educational support while some parents indicated they knew they had to provide support but were unable to because of long work hours, absences from home and financial constraints (Donkor, 2010). Another exploratory survey in Ghana had similar findings – most parents knew the importance of being involved and wanted to be involved in their child's education but did not have the requisite resources and tools to do so and were overly reliant on teachers to provide the needed support (Ampadu, Butakor, & Cole, 2017).

Informants cited poverty as the main reason for the lack of parental support. When parents are poor, they are preoccupied with economic activities, so their children's educational participation and progress become secondary. Parents who cannot provide the basic needs for their children such as feeding are unable/uninterested in preventing children from dropping out to pursue more profitable short-term activities such as jobs and transactional sex. Poor parents, who want their children to stay in school, particularly struggle to enforce discipline when their children are independent; many of such children engage in economic activities to fend for themselves. This is consistent with Chant and Jones (2005) qualitative findings that dropout often was a decision taken by youth and not their parents.

Further, informants at the district level mentioned that community members did not value the skills that are being taught in school because they did not see those skills as necessarily translating into money. As one informant said, the lower secondary education curriculum is not geared towards building skills for employment, entrepreneurship and independence. Rather it is focused on teaching literacy, numeracy and social skills. Poverty, both urban poverty and rural poverty, is consistently cited by key informants in Ghana as a factor in shaping community attitudes towards education. Youth in poor communities are more likely to focus on things that brought "quick money" than the long-term investments required for educational attainment. *Okada* (commercial motorcycle) business is particularly cited as an attractive option for boys and prostitution for girls.

One of the factors cited at the community level as increasing the risk of dropout, especially for girls, is the influence of students that are already out of school. One key informant described school dropout as part of a cycle where dropouts create more dropouts in cases with inadequate parental supervision. Out-of-school males that are working are negative peer influences to enrolled students who are poor and looking to improve their socioeconomic status – to boys they are "role models" and "benefactors" to girls. Programmes are needed to re-integrate dropouts into school, enrol them in non-formal training opportunities, or engage them in fulltime work so they are not distractions to enrolled students.

Informants cited a lack of intrinsic motivation to transition to and complete lower secondary education due to factors such as lack of role models, and low perceived value of education. The inability of schools to motivate students to stay in school through activities such as alumni networking, and career fairs, was another factor contributing to dropout.

Poor school quality was also cited as a deterrent for students to stay in school as students were not engaged or motivated to keep studying in such environments that are not conducive for learning. The government is working to eliminate schools under trees as one way to keep students in school.

Assessment of Policies and Interventions by Government of Ghana

Ghana has implemented some education policies and programmes aimed at promoting equity in secondary education for vulnerable groups such as poor students, disabled students and groups with double disadvantages such as poor girls (Ministry of Education, 2013).

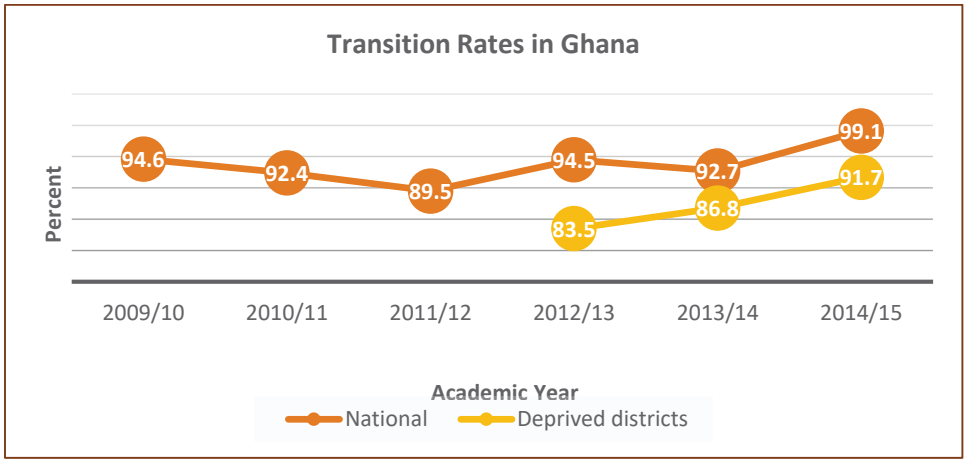
Government also introduced the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) in 2005 to provide free meals to pupils in deprived public primary schools. The GSFP is a socially inclusive policy intended to boost enrolment and at the same time curb malnutrition in children from poor and vulnerable households (Government of Ghana, 2015). This was further supplemented by other pro poor interventions like free uniforms, sandals and textbooks. These interventions have helped to remove structural and financial barriers to primary education in Ghana. Key informants attributed improvements in enrolment, attendance and retention to school feeding programmes. One district key informant reported observing correlation between enrolment and school feeding programmes based on comparing enrolments in schools with and without school feeding. This observation is consistent with case studies finding positive correlation between school feeding and attendance and retention in Ghana (Aliu & Fawzia, 2014; Oduro-Ofori & Yeboah-Gyapong, 2014; Osei-Fosu, 2011; Yendaw & Dayour, 2014; Salifu, Boateng, & Kunduzore, 2018). However, the school feeding programme is only provided for primary school pupils and so it is cited as one of the factors leading to dropout once students transition to lower secondary, particularly for youth from poorer households. When pupils must go through the school day hungry, they are likely to drop out to pursue economic activities that can provide them with some money to feed themselves.

The government of Ghana introduced an Inclusive Education Policy in 2013 to address the needs of disabled students. The country's Inclusive Education (IE) programme is being implemented in 46 districts across the country. Approximately 2% of school-age children have a disability however more than a quarter of out of school children (Ministry of Education, 2013) have at least one disability indicating that children with disabilities are at substantially greater risk of dropout. The IE programme provides training for district staff, head teachers and teachers working with children with special educational needs. The IE programme has improved school readiness and participation of children with physical disabilities. Despite some progress made there are still unresolved issues of inclusion for children with disability in Ghana, and the number of students with special needs receiving educational services in inclusive settings is low (Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015). There is more to be done to improve access for the disabled. Danso, Owusu-Ansah and Alorwu (2012) found in their study of 264 upper secondary schools that most facilities were not disability-friendly, limiting enrolment and retention of students with disabilities at that level. Again, the special and inclusive education system currently caters for only three types of students with disabilities – deafness, blindness, and intellectual disabilities (Ministry of Education, 2010). As of 2008, the special education coverage was only 0.098%. The implication is that it takes years of waiting to be admitted to a special school, and the average school entry age in a special school is around 10–12 years (Kniel & Kniel, 2008).

Key informants also noted that the disability fund provided by the government is one factor that increases access to lower secondary education for children with disabilities. Parents/guardians are provided support from the fund to enrol their children in mainstream basic schools where possible or in special schools. The fund also supports the procurement of aids such as wheelchairs to make schools accessible for the physically challenged. The fund is particularly important for parents from poorer households who are unable or reluctant to send their children with disabilities to school with their own resources.

The Ghana Partnership for Education Grant (GPEG) is, with donor support, providing district-level and school-level funding to the 75 deprived districts (Ministry of Education, 2015). The education sector currently has 75 deprived districts (out of 216). Deprived districts are in the bottom third ranking of districts based on education and poverty indicators. The trend in the three academic years since the deprived districts' ranking was introduced shows that the gap between the national average and deprived district average has narrowed indicating that progress is being made. Figure 30 presents recent transition rates from primary to lower secondary from the Ministry of Education for deprived districts showing steady increases in rates over a three-year period.

Figure 30: Transition Rates from Primary 6 to Junior High School 1 in Ghana



Data source: Ministry of Education (2015)

One of the initiatives in the Ghana education sector to address challenges of intersectionality is the launch of the three-year Girls Participatory Approaches to Student Success (G-PASS) programme with the assistance of the Department for International Development (Ministry of Education, 2015). G-PASS aims to increase retention and completion of lower secondary for girls in deprived districts through financial assistance to needy girls at risk of dropout, and capacity building of district education officers and teachers. G-PASS has provided scholarships to 55,000 girls leading to improved attendance and retention of girls and increases in gender parity (Ministry of Education, 2015).

The Complementary Basic Education (CBE) programme, an initiative targeting out-of-school learners offers a nine-month literacy and numeracy training (Ministry of Education, 2015). The CBE, which is expanding with the assistance of donor funding, provides one avenue to transition out-of-school youth into the mainstream educational system. Key informants cited that the CBE is most effective for children who have never been to school. Dropouts who go through the CBE and return to school are at risk of dropping out again if the challenges that caused them to drop out initially are not resolved.

3.1c Theme 3: Learning outcomes, employability and wellbeing of youth with and without secondary education in Ghana

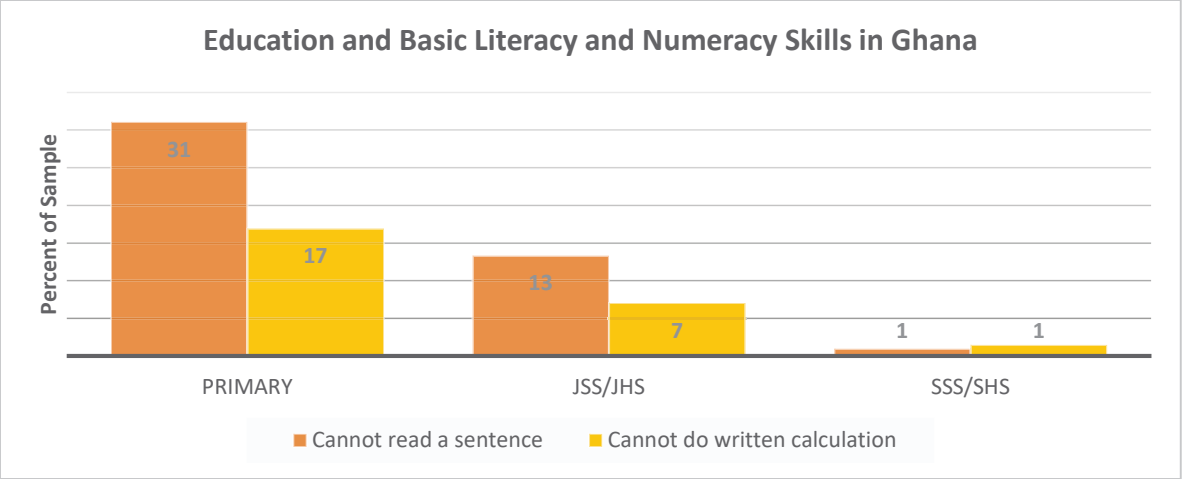
Data on skills from Ghana indicate that the skill level of primary school dropouts is likely to be low – the findings from the latest National Education Assessments (NEA) in 2016 reveal that only 38% and 25% of pupils in the final year of primary school, reached proficiency levels in English and math respectively (Ministry of Education et al., 2016). Further, the NEA findings revealed that pupils struggled more in the domains of the test that required higher order skills such as critical thinking and reasoning.

Key informants said that low achieving students are at risk of not transitioning to JHS. Sub-par academic performance, for poor households, is a signal to parents that the child does not have aptitude for schooling and so their time can be better utilized as productive labour once they complete primary school. TVET education, which has been highlighted as a central educational policy in the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2018-2030 and the Education Sector Medium-Term Development Planning (ESMTDP) 2018-2021, offers an alternative to improving employability of children in Ghana, even though the curriculum needs to be geared towards instructions for both brilliant and weak pupils. Government must also be seen to be investing in the needed teaching and learning materials (TLMs) that are required for TVET education. The upgrading of the 10 existing Polytechnics into Technical Universities is a good step to ensuring that TVET education is not meant for Basic school dropouts alone. Pupils who wish to develop a career up to post-graduate levels can do so using the TVET

pathways. The danger with this is that TVET may become another system for academic development, losing out on the practical aspects of TVET. Existing internship systems that complement TVET education could be reinforced to make up for the lack of TLMs in many technical and vocational institutions in Ghana.

Figure 31 presents basic literacy and numeracy of adults in Ghana by the highest level of education attained – comparing primary, JSS/JHS (lower secondary) and SSS/SHS (upper primary) and shows clear difference by level in skills. The difference is especially pronounced for literacy. A third of primary graduates cannot read a sentence compared to less than 1% of upper secondary graduates.

Figure 31: Educational Attainment and Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills in Ghana

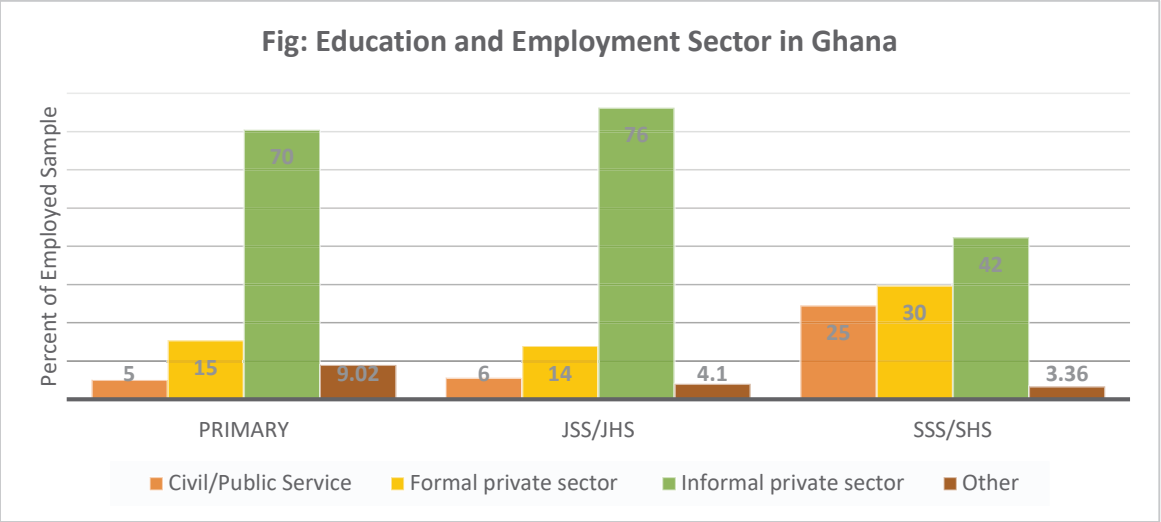


Data Source: Ghana Living Standards Survey 6 (2012/2013)

Key informants revealed that rarely do dropouts who leave in search of economic activity return to school with their earnings or significantly improve their standard of living over time. They tend to stay in low wage and low skilled jobs in the informal sector in the long-term.

Figure 32 shows differences in employment for adults of working age by level of education for primary, lower secondary (JSS/JHS) and upper secondary (SSS/SHS). Completing upper secondary is correlated with the lowest likelihood of being in the informal sector and the highest likelihood of being employed in the public sector or the private formal sector. Surprisingly, the graph also indicates that completing lower secondary does not equate to an advantage when it comes to employment sector as primary graduates are less likely to be in the informal sector and slightly more likely to be in the formal private sector compared to lower secondary graduates.

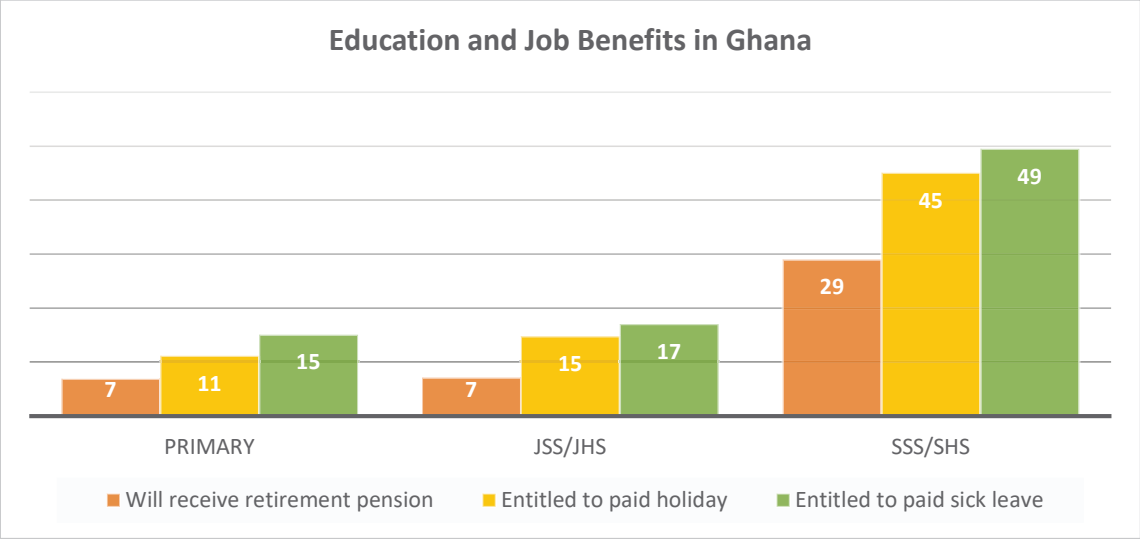
Figure 32: Education and Employment Sector in Ghana



Data Source: Ghana Living Standards Survey 6 (2012/2013)

Figure 33 shows differences in job benefits by educational level for working adults in Ghana. Workers with upper secondary are most likely to have jobs benefits. Again, we see a much larger difference between upper secondary and lower secondary than the difference observed between primary and lower secondary.

Figure 33: Education and Job Benefits in Ghana



Data Source: Ghana Living Standards Survey 6 (2012/2013)

Infographic 8: *Correlation between Education and Job Benefits in Ghana*

3.2 Rwanda Case Study

3.2a Theme 1: Access to education, progression and completion in primary and secondary

Rwanda introduced a free compulsory 9-Year Basic Education (9YBE) in 2009, which was later increased to 12 years (12YBE); with the aim of increasing access to basic education (MINEDUC & UNICEF, 2017). The government is currently focused on improving quality, after recording significant successes with enrolment and retention. Net-enrolment ratio in primary school has increased from 62.5% in 1990 to 91.7% in 2010 (Institute of Policy Analysis and Research-Rwanda, 2012, P. 10; Paxton, 2012). Today, compulsory education lasts 12 years (12YBE) from age 7 to age 18, covering lower and upper secondary. Primary gross enrolment has continued to increase from 134.3% in 2014 to 135.3% in 2015, while net enrolment has remained relatively the same; only slightly increasing from 96.8% in 2014 to 96.9% in 2015 (MINEDUC, 2015; Statistical Yearbook, 2016, p. 8). The introduction of English language for instruction from upper primary upwards, the implementation of a new curriculum that prioritises competence, and the prioritisation of Information Communication Technology in schools are all geared at improving quality (MINEDUC & UNICEF, 2017).

After the abolition of school fees, Rwanda resorted to using public funding (money raised through taxes or acquired through overseas domestic aid) to fund the education sector. The Capitation grant, which is paid on a per-pupil basis, aimed at decentralising education, is sent directly to the headmaster at the school who assumes control on how the money is spent. Data shows that in 2010 this amount rested at RF3500 per pupil at the primary school level, while it amounted to RF11000 for those in day lower secondary schools and RF21000 for those in boarding lower secondary schools (William, Abbott, & Mupenzi, 2014, p. 935). While Rwanda has recorded significant successes in eliminating structural and material barriers to education, data still suggests that costs associated to schooling remain a major barrier to education access and progression, particularly for those from low income households (Williams, Abbott, & Mupenzi, 2014). These are hidden costs for boarding students for example who must pay for items for hygiene, extra cloths, buying uniforms or participating in extra-curricular activities. Data collected in 2017 shows that the estimated median cost of educating a child in primary is RWF 6,900 per year, RWF 33,500 for a child attending lower secondary, and RWF 136,000 for a child enrolled in upper secondary school (MINEDUC & UNICEF, 2017, p. 9). The MINEDUC and UNICEF (2017) have proposed an adjustment to the capitation grant in order to effectively channel the resources to where they are most needed (MINEDUC & UNICEF, 2017, p. 171).

Another factor that affects access and progression in schools is proximity. Proximity to a primary school significantly affects the rate of dropout among children from age 7 to 12, especially those who live in the rural areas (MINEDUC & UNICEF, 2017). Children living in these areas are less likely to drop out if there is a school situated in their village, compared to those who have no school close by (MINEDUC & UNICEF 2017, p. 8).

Literature on Rwanda suggests that the rate of enrolment has increased over the years but has not led to similar rates in transitions to and completion of lower secondary education (MINEDUC, 2013). Primary completion rate reached 72.7% in 2012, a marked improvement from 52.5% in 2008. According to data present, the transition rate to lower secondary stood at 95.9% in 2012, while the transition rate from lower secondary to upper secondary reached 95.9% in 2012 from 86% in 2008. Both the repetition rate (12.7%) and drop-out rates (10.9%) in 2012 declined from 15.3% and 14.7% respectively in 2008 (MINEDUC, 2016, p. 19). Data acquired from the 2016 Statistical Yearbook showed that the completion rates in primary dropped to 60.4% in 2015 while the transition rate to lower secondary dropped to 71.1% (MINEDUC, 2016, p. 26). Existing data also suggests that 81.6% girls and 84.1% boys passed P6 national exam in 2011 (MINEDUC, 2016, p. 26). These numbers point to a positive dramatic improvement in providing access to students in a post-conflict environment.

3.2b Theme 2: Trends and Realities Affecting Progression and Transitions to Secondary Education in Rwanda: Equity and Inclusion in focus[17]

Despite the successes, large inequalities between different regions and income groups exist, which affect equity in transitions (Paxton & Mutesi, 2012). Available evidence shows that the likelihood of a 7 to 8-year-old child starting school at their right age is four times higher if they come from a wealthy household (William, Abbott, & Mupenzi, 2014, p. 945). The range of factors that hinder the progression in education include poverty, ill health and malnutrition, gender discrimination against girls, and geographical conditions (National Policy on Orphan Children and Other Vulnerable Children, 2003; Special Needs Education, 2007).

Disparities between children from rural and urban areas continue to persist and hinder progression in education, especially at the secondary school level. Data collected from the 'Education Sector Strategic Plan 2010-2015' shows that in 2010/11, cost accounted for 16% of students who dropped out before completing primary education, and 42% of the students dropped out before completing secondary school. Repetition and performance remain a big hindrance to the achievement of this goal. Historically, girls are less likely to make the transition to secondary school. It was estimated that 82% of boys between the ages of 16 and 18, who were enrolled into primary six in 2015, were still in school in 2017, compared to only 68% of the girls from the same age group (MINEDUC & UNICEF 2017, p. 146). The government is however trying to improve transition rates among girls by giving them preference in admission policies by lowering test admission scores (Girls Education Policy, 2008; National Gender Policy, 2010). Barriers that continue to prevail in the provision of girl's education include societal perceptions that girls do not need to complete school, gender-based violence at home and school, school drop outs due to pregnancies and missing of classes due to domestic work (Plan International UK, 2017, p. 3).

Initiatives such as 'Keeping Girls in School' tries to focus on the challenges girls face in staying in lower secondary school by introducing mentoring and peer support through girls' clubs as well as promoting saving activities which promote independence and self-esteem among the girls (Tikly & Milligan, 2017). In practice, children of the poor found it difficult to enter primary school after the genocide (Obura, 2003; Mathisen, 2012). Literature shows that a key goal of the Ministry is to ensure that the

[17] Transitions from Primary to Lower Secondary, and completion of Lower Secondary Schools, paying attention too, to equal opportunities for children with disabilities, members of religious and ethnic minorities and other forms or multiple cases of vulnerabilities

4% which represents out of school children, both boys and girls from mostly rural areas, are enrolled at the primary level. A similar aim is to increase the percentage of children enrolled in lower secondary from 21% to 40% and in upper secondary from 25% to 42%, with a primary focus on girls and children from the poorest households (Education Sector Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 36).

The Special Education Needs policy adopted by the Rwandan Ministry of Education attempts to take care of students who require additional support for their education. Children who fall into this category include; children with different disabilities such as hearing, visual, motor and speech impairments, children with HIV/AIDS, or come from abusive homes, and children with learning achievement disorders such as slow learners and underachievers (National Policy for Orphans and other Vulnerable children, 2003; Special Needs Education Policy, 2007). Presently, there are over 57 special centres for education and rehabilitation of children with disabilities. A few schools have developed child friendly and inclusive education (Karangwa, 2012, p.3).

The largest barriers to accessing quality education by children with special needs revolve around three factors: the deep impact of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, persistent high levels of poverty and the impact of HIV/AIDS and other health related factors (National Policy on Orphan Children and Other Vulnerable Children, 2003; Special Needs Education Policy, 2007; Karangwa, 2012). Evidence present also indicate that children with special needs in Rwanda face additional barriers to education in their neighbourhood schools because their needs are often overlooked thus hindering inclusion (Special Needs Education Policy, 2007, p. 10). Perception is also a key factor for children with disability as most parents think these children are not very useful to society and they will not get a job after schooling.[18]

3.2c Theme 3: Learning outcomes, employability and wellbeing of youth with and without secondary education in Rwanda

In Rwanda, several initiatives have been employed to improve learning outcomes. These improvements revolved around curriculum, improving literacy and numeracy as well as focusing on the development of a variety of skills including financial, social, environmental and technical skills (Tickly & Milligan, 2017). The introduction of ICT into the education sector has also been a key project for the MINEDUC. Currently, over 60% of schools have electricity, 536 out of 2,752 schools have smart classrooms and 19% of schools have access to the internet.[19] According to key informants at the MINEDUC, the introduction of ICT has increased students' curiosity in learning and in the process has helped to improve retention. Rwanda also has the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Policy, formulated in 2008 aimed at training qualified and competitive workers to be able to participate in sustainable growth and poverty reduction. For example, the Tumba College of Technology has made great strides in equipping many Rwandans with technical skills that they can use to meet the industrial and societal needs of the job market. Some of the courses they offer include computer literacy, software development, repair and assembly of electronics, and installation and maintenance of solar home systems (Ayuba & Gatabazi, 2009, p. 9) Similarly, the private sector has played a pivotal role in improving the TVET programs offered to students in Rwanda. The Private Sector Federation's TVET program comprises of an internship program, a business plan competition and an advocacy component (Malunda, 2011, p. 28). This platform gives graduates the opportunity to engage directly with the market they will eventually go in to, equipping them the necessary skills they require to advance and succeed in a competitive job market.

[18] Interview of MINEDUC Official, 2017
[19] Interview with a MINEDUC official

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The factors influencing transitions to lower secondary are multi-faceted and as such improving transition (and completion) rates for lower secondary education requires a multi sectoral approach that will target all levels affecting educational outcomes. Actionable recommendations include the following:

Theme 1: *Access to education, progression and completion rates in primary and secondary*

1. Scale up poverty reduction and rural development programmes because many of the negative influences of transition rates are exacerbated by poverty and rural residence.
2. Extend government assistance for indirect costs such as school feeding and uniforms to lower and upper secondary schools to reduce the costs for poorer households and reduce dropout risk.
3. Build more lower secondary schools to increase access, particularly for rural communities.
4. Improve the quality of existing secondary schools to increase retention.
5. Introduce financial reforms such as effective mobilization of budgetary resources, and the introduction of cash-in-kind transfers as incentives to keep children in school.

Theme 2: *Trends and Realities Affecting Progression and Transitions to Secondary Education: Equity and Inclusion in focus*

6. Employ cross-cultural reforms such as creating policies that increase household income designed to avoid pushing children into work and establish of new agricultural technologies to enable children to attend school.
7. Place further government emphasis on special needs education, by ensuring that the curriculum accommodates all vulnerable children, despite their economic background.
8. Employ further efforts to ensure stigma against special needs children is tackled within the education sector and in the community at large.
9. Governments should provide or reinforce sexual education to prevent teenage pregnancies and provide supportive policies to enable teenage mothers return to school.
10. Education sector should work with communities to introduce flexible schooling schedules for instance during farming seasons and on market days. Care should be taken, though, to avoid reinforcing child labour cultures.
11. Involve communities in the educational process so that members feel they are truly stakeholders. They should be involved in planning, fundraising and policymaking, especially through the School Management Committees (SMCs) that are already mandated by law to govern schools at the community level; and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs). The SMCs and PTAs have the capacity to insist on accountability of teaching and learning, if made to be effective.
12. Develop social behavioural change campaigns to change communities' attitude and educate them about the long-term returns to education investments.
13. Provide role models and other needed support to at-risk youth to encourage them to stay in school.
14. Make the school environment attractive, safe and friendly for young people in communities.
15. Make parents accountable for their children's welfare and education through sanctions for truancy and dropout.
16. Develop and enforce community-based school governance systems for community ownership, better school outcomes and gender-mainstreaming.

Theme 3: *Learning outcomes, employability and wellbeing of youth with and without secondary education*

17. Introduce policies that support and dignify TVET education at all levels of education.

18. Run skills development training for out of school youth to keep them engaged.
19. Develop lower cost private sector-led alternative education programs and promote educational aspirations among conservative community groups.

4.1 Need for Further Studies

1. There exists a huge gap in access to secondary education in Ethiopia; the country currently has over 12, 000 primary and secondary schools across the country. The bulk of the schools offer primary education while less than three percent offer secondary education, which translates to one of the lowest primary school enrolment rates and one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world. There is need to do a country specific study on Ethiopia especially focusing on issues of access and transitions. This is one of the fast-growing countries in Africa with a big uneducated population.

2. South Sudan is the youngest nation in the world and has no record of progress in the education sector, especially due to the nature of the evolving civil war.

3. Further studies on the use of technology in classrooms and how that impacts retention and learning should be conducted.

4. Disability is a big barrier to enrolment, retention, completion and educational outcomes. This is because people with disabilities are often excluded from learning, especially if the curriculum has not been adapted to their needs. We do not have enough information on what is happening to those who face barriers in learning due to how they were born or disability that comes in later life. Acquiring further insight into this is critical, especially in post-conflict countries where war leaves challenges for individuals physically and psychologically.

5. The best ways to make School Management Committees and Parent Teacher Associations effective in ensuring accountable teaching and learning should be explored.

6. Further studies on parental expectations and parental involvement and their influence on education outcomes are also needed.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Ghana Fieldwork

List of Persons interviewed

District 1

1. Municipal Chief Executive
2. Planning officer, Municipal Assembly
3. Planning officer, Municipal Assembly
4. Client Services Unit officer, Municipal Assembly
5. Parent Teacher Association chairman

District 2

6. Assistant Director, District Assembly
7. Social Welfare officer, District Assembly
8. Planning Officer, Ghana Education Service (GES)
9. School Health Education Programme (SHEP) Coordinator, GES
10. Acting Director for Human Resources, GES
11. Acting Director for Administration and Finance, GES
12. Circuit Supervisor, GES

Ministry of Education/Ghana Education Service

13. Planning Officer, Basic Education Division
14. Planning Officer, Basic Education Division
15. Former Director, Ghana Education Service

Challenges

The challenges faced primarily was the reluctance of targeted informants to be interviewed or recorded and concern about the length of time required for the interview.

In one district, due to concerns about being recorded, the Education Directorate did not consent to participate in the study. After two unsuccessful attempts, they were excluded from the study.

In the other District Education Directorate and the national level, some of the key informants requested that a focus group discussion be conducted with other colleagues instead of an in-depth interview to save time. So, focus group discussions were conducted there.

Other concerned participants agreed to be interviewed after going over the consent form and understanding the recordings would be kept confidential by the researcher.

One key informant interview was travelling and consented to be interviewed by telephone and have the conversation recorded.

APPENDIX II: Methodology and Respondents for Fieldwork in Rwanda

This paper relies on three kinds of sources. The first is key policy documents from the Rwandan government, The Ministry of Education and International Organizations that are interested in the

education sector or are key players in ensuring education reform in Rwanda. Second, it uses journal articles on these topics that have been published in Rwanda and internationally. Although some of the reports are in French, majority of the reports are in English. This is in part due to a policy change in 2000 that made English Rwanda's official language. Similarly, Rwanda's International partners are mostly Anglophone (Canada, United Kingdom, United States) compared to its pre-genocide francophone partners who were mainly Belgium and France. Although few in comparison, there is research produced by Rwandan experts who opted to write in French and English and rarely in Kinyarwanda. All these variables were taken into consideration when viewing the research available, ensuring there was a wide range of ideas are represented and an overview of the current state of affairs offered.

In addition, the report is informed by key interviews with directors at the Ministry of Education in Rwanda. From the March 1st to the 5th 2018, I carried out interviews with four senior directors at the Ministry of Education in Rwanda. The purpose of this research trip was to gain insights into realities on the ground in transitions from primary school to lower secondary schools in Rwanda, drop out, equity and other supporting programs that are improving youth's readiness for work after school. My three interlocutors were Ms. Uwimbabazi Sylvie, director of Cross Cutting Programs, Ms. Kabusingye Mary program director for Disabilities, and Mr. Kayumba Theogene director of ICT. This field work report is divided into themes that were addressed and name of each informant. I have paraphrased what their contribution is.

It is important to note that due to the current environment and changes in the Ministry only few people can speak on behalf of the Ministry. Therefore, these are the key informants that I could access within the framework of the letter given by Mastercard Foundation. For example, I wanted to speak with people at Rwanda Education Board (REB) but right then when I was visiting an entire team from the director at REB was suspended for lack of performance. Since they had already received suspension letters, I was told they could no longer speak for the Ministry and a new team was yet to be appointed. I followed the issues and just sometime in Mid-April is when the new team was named. It is equally crucial to note that the Ministry of Education got a new Minister who also changed some directors or sent some from MINEDUC to REB. For example, the director of ICT interviewed here was transferred to REB. It these changes that will continue to take effect this year that will address some of the challenges identified in this report chief among them being how to ensure quality education for all.