Government adoption of the Compulsory Basic Education (CBE) programme in Ghana: Empirical findings to inform implementation.

Abstract

The Compulsory Basic Education (CBE) programme has been a key initiative within Ghana for providing ‘second chance’ access to the most marginalised, out of school children. Since 2012, CBE has accessed over 200,000 children between the ages of 8 and 14 with the support of the UK and US governments. The widespread success of CBE has resulted in the Government of Ghana’s commitment to undertake full implementation of the programme following the 2017/2018 academic year. As CBE shifts into its next stage of development and is reinforced as a core component of Ghana’s education system, it is crucial that issues identified from previous implementation cycles are made salient and applied. During this presentation, I will share findings that have emerged from data collected for an evaluation of the CBE programme. In particular, I will share how findings may mask important challenges faced by the most marginalised. I will demonstrate some of these challenges, particularly the lack of opportunity to engage with literacy tasks during the transition phase and the impact of changing language of instruction, particularly for low performing girls. Whilst CBE is shown to be effective for developing the skills needed for reintegration into formal school, the education system needs to recognise the complexity of the transition and the challenges faced by these students in order to ensure the sustainability of the programme. Finally, I will also focus more reflectively about the use of quantitative methods for research on the Global South.

Ricardo Sabates has been recently appointed Professor of Education and International Development at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge. He is also a member of the Research on Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre and the Cambridge Network for Disability and Education Research (CaNDER). Ricardo’s areas of research focus on inequalities in access and learning as well as the role of education in reducing wider social inequalities over the life-course. Ricardo has extensive experience collaborating with researchers in the Global South, particularly in Ghana, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda, India and Pakistan. Current work in Ghana focuses on understanding foundational learning over time particularly for the most marginalised, and particularly intersectionalities of gender and linguistic background. This project, as many others, has been affected by the current pandemic, but it is hoped that results from the CBE project can help us to illuminate a different future of learning.

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