



DEPRIVED CHILDREN AND EDUCATION

GHANA



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December 2007

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Web-ISBN: 978-90-79078-06-6

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This project was supported by Plan Netherlands



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Executive Summary

Ghana was selected in the light of low enrolment figures in some areas and recent efforts undertaken by the government to ensure free basic education for all. These efforts have already led to growing percentages of children in school, as well as growing concerns about the quality offered, especially in rural areas.

Three months of research commenced in January 2006, in Upper East and Upper West Ghana. It was decided to focus on the northern regions of Ghana, where poverty levels are highest and enrolment figures are generally lower than in the south. The first six weeks were spent in the Upper East Region, in the district of Garu-Tempene (within the villages of one chieftaincy: Pialogo, Kugri and Vambara). The second research area was the village of Dupare, situated in the Upper West Region, in the Wa-East district, approximately 150 km south-west of the first research area.

In Garu-Tempene, all but one of the households with children of school-going age had at least one child in school. Most typical were households that had some children in school (especially the younger ones) and one or two “in the house” or working/living elsewhere in Ghana. Despite regional figures showing virtually no gender-gap [Ghana Statistical Service 2005], a strong over-representation of boys in the higher classes could be observed. However, not many girls could be identified among the non-school going children in the village; girls were often living with relatives or working outside the region, usually in the south of the country.

In Dupare, it was estimated that primary school enrolment was below 50%. No Fulani children were enrolled; the few Dagarti families, the other ethnic minority group in the village, however, appeared to show patterns similar to those of the Wale majority (one or a few children per household were enrolled). Children from Muslim and “animist” backgrounds, as well as some of the Christian Dagarti children were among the Dupare schoolchildren. Strong differences in terms of educational behaviour could be observed between families within the same compound. Even in the few households with literate heads or members, not all children were enrolled.

Preconceptions

General poverty as well as cultural (animist) and religious (Muslim) practices have been mentioned as impediments to educational growth in the area [Ghana Statistical Service 2000]. But in the Ghanaian government’s statistical study on child labour, in cooperation with ILO-IPEC [Ghana Statistical Service 2003], it was found that most parents (65%), if they had the choice, would prefer their children to be either in school or in training. Most of their children (88%) would also prefer to go to school and complete their education. The child labour survey furthermore indicates that costs of education are indeed a major reason for non-enrolment and/or non-attendance. Unaffordability was, with 44.2%, the most cited reason for children to have never attended school. In the Upper East Region, the most economically deprived region of the country, the percentage was 63.7%.

However, researchers on education in Africa have also argued that it is too simple to take direct and indirect costs as the sole reasons for non-enrolment. The importance given to education by very poor parents is likely to depend on the way they perceive the impact on their daily or long-term subsistence. Peter Matz [2003] argues that the decision to enrol a child in school is the result of the household's evaluation of costs and benefits associated with schooling. Kielland and Tovo regard decisions on education in a similar way and speak of a "difficult balancing act" [2006:16].

The present study does therefore not focus on the economic or other returns of education as such, but rather on the perceived returns, because these ideas play an important role in the "balancing act" that finally determines the education of the children.

Parental beliefs

An increasing number of children in the research areas are going to school, but some groups of children remain difficult to reach, such as girls and the pastoralist Fulani. Cultural, financial or social factors can partly explain why children go to school or not. However, it has also become clear that some barriers are more likely to be overcome if parents and children clearly see the benefits in the completion of a formal education. If compulsory education is not being actively enforced, as is the case in the research areas, parents and children need to believe in the benefits of education before they will invest money and energy in it.

Economic and intrinsic gains

Education is primarily perceived as a way to achieve economic advancement. Many parents commented: "I don't want the children to be suffering like me." Children and parents dream of white-collar (*Nasala*) jobs that can be obtained after completing a formal education. The aspired positions include teacher, nurse and doctor.

Only a few respondents mentioned so-called "small jobs", such as carpentry, voluntary teaching and vocational work, as a desirable outcome of formal education. Improving production as a (commercial) farmer was never brought up as a perceived benefit. A Dagarti woman commented: "Farming is good, but involves a lot of energy; you grow old quickly. Someone with a *Nasala* job will be healthy and live long." Parents had little confidence in farming as a satisfactory way of earning an income and favoured the idea of their children leaving the traditional way of life to make a living (and support them), than of them becoming better and more productive farmers.

The lack of confidence in farming was less pronounced in the more fertile area of Dupare. Here it was commented, during a focus group discussion: "When you get to a certain level, that you are able to read and write and learn about farming skills, you can have better yields. You can read the instructions on pesticides and fertiliser."

In the literature on education in Ghana, mention has been made of a fear for alienation of the traditional ways of living among parents as an obstacle for universal access to formal education [Care International 2003]. The comments presented above, and many more heard during the fieldwork, challenge this idea or at least imply that such ideas may be changing. Also, when we asked parents if they were afraid that their children would not learn how to farm if they went to school, it was strongly denied. Parents stressed that children could learn their more traditional skills after school hours and in weekends.

Thus, education is primarily seen as a means to an end, whereby the end is a Nasala job and the ability to support one's family. The fact that a Nasala job takes a child away from his or her traditional way of life, does not appear to be experienced as a negative factor. In addition, parents with other traditional (non-agricultural) livelihoods, such as medicinal herbalists, saw education (more specifically, literacy) as a way their children could improve their trade.

People also mentioned other, more instrumental or intrinsic expected gains of education. They referred to the practical benefits of knowing how to read and write, especially for activities outside the village or contacts with the outside world (reading signboards, reading letters, speaking English with Ghanaians from other ethnic groups). This is influenced by a growing exposure to the literate world and it highlights the fact that in Ghana many languages exist and that the own linguistic area is rather small. In this way, literacy is associated by many with freedom and independence.

Virtually all parents confirmed that they had noticed changes in their school-going children compared to their out-of-school siblings. A mother commented that her non-school going children wanted to do little more than play and sleep, whilst those in school showed discipline and initiative. On the other hand, mothers were also adamant that their stay-at-home children were no less appreciated; in fact, one mother said: "Those going to school are wiser than those who farm. But it's because of those farming that I am not starving!"

The quality and value of primary education

Not much is known about the perceived quality of the available schools; i.e. the degree to which, in the eyes of the community, objectives will be reached through school attendance. Do they believe that the children, by attending school, will eventually get the desired Nasala job? This is important, as it is mainly the *perceived* quality that influences decisions of parents and children about enrolment and attendance.

Parents didn't exhibit any high demands; they are satisfied as long as teachers show up and do their jobs, and as long as the children are fed at school. Complaints were nevertheless abundant because even these simple requests are often not met in the village schools. Parents complained about the lack of a kindergarten, the inferior school buildings, the irregularity of school lunches, but most significantly they complained of teacher shortages (only in Pialogo, the least remote village, were the numbers deemed satisfactory). Although teachers had been sent to these remote schools, they mostly left again, according to parents, shortly after realising they had been assigned to a small and remote village without basic facilities.

Some parents, however, mostly the educated ones, were more critical than others. These parents were the only ones to directly voice their concerns about the quality of primary education, and complained that the level was too low to guarantee entry into secondary school. Some families in Dupare, many of them Muslims, sent their children to the Parish school, at quite some distance from the village. They considered the quality of this school noticeably higher than their own village school; they mentioned a greater number of teachers, but also higher costs (these families were generally better-off than most other families). The parents particularly appreciated the factor of "discipline" at the Parish school - not only discipline for their children, but also for the parents. "At the Parish school, there is discipline. Parents are forced to help building latrines, and if you refuse you have to pay money. It is a better school."

Many initiatives, such as the UN MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), are aimed at getting all children to complete at least Primary V. During this study, however, it became clear that the respondents (children as well as parents) regarded five or six years of schooling rather useless. Children who end their schooling before the end of the secondary school are referred to as “dropouts”, and are usually categorised as “illiterates”. According to many parents, “they are still blind, only less blind than we are”. The education they did receive is often considered to have been a waste of time and money. By completing primary education alone, or even junior secondary schooling there is little chance of finding a Nasala job; but more significantly, there is little faith that children can read and write sufficiently after primary or even junior secondary school alone.

Nevertheless, even low levels of literacy are deemed, by some, better than nothing. Although it won’t get you a Nasala job, it will still help you in other endeavours, such as going to market to sell your goods, or learning a craft. A mother said: “In the past you could be a seamstress or hairdresser without any schooling. Today they only take you as an apprentice if you can read and write.”

Motivation and barriers to education

The data suggests, in contrast to what is often claimed, that the non-enrolment of the child cannot be attributed to ignorance, failure to see benefits of education or a fear of alienation from traditional culture. People certainly recognise the benefits, but most do not consider it a priority to send *all* of their children to school (or to enforce their attendance).

Both Christian and Muslim parents said that their religious leaders encouraged them to send their children to school. In addition, the officials from the Ghana Education Service visit communities to “sensitise” villagers on the importance of education. Many of the “benefits” specified by the officials to encourage enrolment were accurately reiterated by parents during interviews. Notwithstanding the low enrolment rate in the village, it was commonly stated by the parents that: “They don’t need to come again to convince us, we know about the importance of education”. The benefits mentioned by officials and parents were, however, primarily focussed on the economic benefits of formal employment, rather than possible benefits for the personal rural context.

Child agency

Enrolment for Primary I is not subject to an age limit, which can have both negative and positive consequences. One positive result is that this system allows children to decide on education at a later age. Many older children were seen to have enrolled on their own initiative, without parental support, which was only possible once they had reached a certain age and level of independence. Some parents do not make the decision for schooling at the appropriate time (when the child is about five or six); they feel that there is no rush anyway, since the child can always be enrolled into Primary I the following year.

Despite the possible advantages for older children, the negative outcome of this system is classes of varying ages and a weakening of social norms concerning compulsory education for children above the age of six. A solution here can be found in non-formal education that acts as a bridging school, allowing older children to catch up before enrolling in an age-appropriate class.

Costs of education

The Ghanaian government subsidises primary education through the Capitation Grant, which should cut fees for primary education. Nevertheless, “lack of money” was still the main reason given by parents for the fact that (some of) their children of primary school-going-age were not enrolled. Teachers and governmental officials seemed to show little understanding for the poverty argument and insisted that this could only be a question of “wrong priorities”.

However, several household heads (mainly the poorest) insisted that the financial costs were still the main barrier to educating all their children. Costs mentioned included uniforms, exercise books and pens/pencils and sometimes, a table and chair to be able to work at home. Although uniforms are not compulsory, parents and children indicated that it is shameful not to wear one. For those children who wish to enrol on their own initiative, without their parents consent or support, the simplest costs can be an obstacle to their plans. Those who are determined choose to work first so as to earn enough to pay for uniforms and other fees.

A significant cost for parents is the PTA (parent teacher association) fee, which is levied to pay for volunteer teachers. Whilst the Capitation Grant cut all direct costs, PTA fees increased. The governmental subsidy and its education campaign have increased enrolment figures, but they have not been met with a parallel increase in numbers of trained teachers, and thus PTA fees cover the costs needed to provide for additional teaching staff, in the form of volunteer teachers.

The most significant cost-related reason for non-enrolment concerns the costs related to senior secondary school. Senior secondary school does indeed bring with it much higher fees, and so, with that prospect, in combination with (as discussed above) the fact that primary education alone is not given much credit as a stand-alone achievement, parents sometimes choose to discard the primary school in the first place (or they enrol only the number of children whom they believe they will be able to financially support all the way through to the completion of secondary education).

Child labour

According to a national census [Ghana Statistical Service 2003], the number of working children in the Upper East Region (UER) represents a little over one in three (34%) of the total population aged 7-14 years. The proportion of males of school-going-age who are working is 35.3% and that of females is 32.7%. From the statistics it is clear that in the studied areas, many children are engaged in economic activities, mainly agriculture. Domestic work in the own home, albeit not a significant part of these statistics, is also known to be a major activity for rural girls [Kielland & Tovo 2006].

The amount of work in a household is largely determined by the number of cattle and size of cultivatable land a family owns; those with little assets have little work to perform; the households that are slightly better-off, and that own a small number of cattle and some land, often need their children to help them; and finally, those who are well-off (with most cattle and land) have adequate resources to hire others to perform work for them (including other children), freeing their own children to attend school.

Many activities that children do perform were not considered work by the families; for example, many girls are obliged to work in the household, but this was rarely mentioned as a form of work. Cattle herding is carried out by children, as it seems to be somewhat of a laughing matter for adults to perform this work. Parents stressed that girls' work and labour can be performed after school

and should not be a reason for non-attendance - although they did admit that sometimes, during particular seasons, children are taken out of school to help on the land. Cattle herding was, however, observed to be a reason for not enrolling boys, or taking them out of school when new cows were acquired.

The nature and level (or lack) of urgency of the tasks that children are involved with in the household or on the land, has led many authors to comment on how a child's enrolment relies on a household's organisation and investment choices, rather than outright poverty and the need for children to work [see for example Hashim 2005:8].

An infringing labour issue for education is child labour migration, a common phenomenon in the area. In 2001, it was found that 15% of the child population had migrated out of the village without their parents and that 50% of the households had reported having a child living elsewhere. The migration of a child does not in all cases form an obstacle to its education and in some cases it can even be beneficial in terms of formal or non-formal education [Hashim 2005].

However, we met several girls who had never been to school, who had missed several years of schooling or who had started at a very late age, because of their many years in the south working as domestic servants, on cocoa farms, or as child carers (frequently with relatives). Many children said that they had wanted to start schooling in the south, but that their relatives (or parents) had refused to let them. It appeared that many migrant girls were denied an education, despite higher enrolment figures in the south; their status as a migrant (child) had made the difference. We also encountered many children who had left school and migrated to the south for work or an apprenticeship. It was not always clear whether the dropout was the result of a desire to migrate or that it had been the other way around.

The UWR painted a different picture. This is a more fertile area, and thus working on the land was more frequently given as a reason for non-enrolment. In addition, the layout of the village and fields in Dupare make it more difficult to combine work and school, as fields can lie up to 10 km away, and thus much time goes into travel to and fro.

Again in this region, little mention was made of the obstacles presented by girls' contributions to the household, despite the evidence that girls had not been enrolled, or had dropped out, due to the work responsibilities at home..

Gender and ethnicity

In Sub-Saharan Africa, for every 100 boys there are only 77 girls in primary school and girls are less likely to complete school [UNICEF 2006a]. In the research areas as well, the problem of non-enrolment and dropout appeared more prevalent among girls than boys. Whilst gender ratios are relatively equal in the lower classes, there is an underrepresentation of girls in higher primary classes and beyond.

The main reasons given for this are marriage, unintended pregnancies and labour migration to the south. First of all, girls are married off at a relatively young age and then move into their husband's household; with this prospect in mind, it is not considered necessary for a girl to be educated and educational investments are considered a waste of money and energy. During the fieldwork, many mothers complained that men are disadvantaging their daughters. They are willing to sell a cow for

their sons' education, but not their daughters'; in addition, they feel that they are rewarded for their daughter's marriage (in the form of a bride's price) but not for their education.

As mentioned above, many girls are sent to work for relatives in the south, where they are mostly excluded from school. Many villagers commented that they had (recently) been made aware of their "ignorance". They explained how they had previously believed that the only option for a girl is to work in her own, or her husband's, household. Now they had been told that girls too can get a Nasala job if they are educated. These statements clearly echo the campaign statements on girl education.

The dominant ethnic group in Dupare, the Wale, associates the Dagarti with educational success, whilst they find the Fulani clearly uninterested in schooling. The Fulani are pastoralist, which means that formal schooling has never been a part of their ways. Although they are becoming increasingly sedentary, they are believed to have little interest in changing their traditional lifestyle. The data collected during this study does support the local ideas about the Fulani having practically no children in school, especially in Dupare. The Fulani, however, showed an interest in education during interviews and expressed a desire to get good jobs, as to not have to work under the burning sun all day. They were less informed about school and their educational options because of their poor integration in the village and a lack of educated role models amongst them. A young Fulani woman said: "It's because we never see any Fulani teachers or nurses. If someone will start sending, others will follow".

School-community integration and Parent Committees

Besides a favourable learning environment and the quality of teaching, the integration of the school in the community is considered a key characteristic of a quality school. PTA, school boards and the SMC (school management committee) are considered central instruments for communities to monitor and influence the access and quality of education. All the research villages had established PTAs and/or SMCs, but generally only the chairman was active. Villagers were often unaware of the identities of the other members.

PTA assemblies are sometimes considered instruments for sensitisation on education and recruitment of pupils, but their reach was seen to be limited. More active ways may be required (such as going to people's houses) to reach everyone, including ethnic minorities and women. The main role of the PTA is of course to diminish the social distance between parents and teachers, but most parents considered the PTAs to be mainly concerned with collecting money to pay for volunteer teachers or demand for communal labour.

Conclusion

All people could mention benefits to formal education; they talked of the practical benefits literacy can provide during travel in different ethnic areas, and they used metaphors such as "eye opening". Nevertheless, the possible economic advantages of having a child with a Nasala (white-collar) job were considered most valuable. Especially in the Upper East, it was stated that farming ("the traditional occupation") was no longer favourable. People stated that "life had changed" and that in "today's world" more money and different knowledge was needed. This was supported by the fact that virtually all families had at least one child in school, albeit since only recently.

Educational statistics as well as interviews with parents and children indicate that primary education is on the rise in rural Upper East and Upper West Ghana. During the last few years, it has become common practice to enrol children approaching the age of six; overcrowded lower primary (or kindergarten) classes in 2005 and 2006 were the result. According to local views, there have been improvements in terms of access (reduction of costs) and quality (more teachers, albeit community paid volunteers). Nevertheless, large numbers of children are still not enrolled, or are not completing even primary, let alone junior secondary school.

Summed up, the reasons given by parents, teachers and children, for non-enrolment were:

- Indirect costs for uniforms and PTA fees and exams. Even small fees are a challenge for children wishing to enrol at a later age without parental support or consent.
- The prospects of higher costs for secondary school, combined with a lack of faith in basic schooling alone.
- A demand for children's contributions to household- and farm work, especially in slightly better-off families that have more cultivatable land and animals. The wealthiest families have additional resources to hire other people. The poorest families have little assets that require work, yet some households without able-bodied men may need the economic activities of one of their children to ensure food security and money for school fees for the other children.
- People in less fertile areas have somewhat lost faith in farming as a source of income, and look towards education and Nasala jobs as a solution. The prospect of losing traditional ways of life does not appear to be a worry. This may be related to the expectation that only few will "succeed" and leave the village.
- People in more fertile areas still feel rewarded by farming and expect their children to assist in farming activities to a greater degree than elsewhere.
- Some ethnic minorities like the Fulani have as yet had little contact with the educational system. However, interviews with Fulani people (including children) showed that they are becoming increasingly sedentary and do see benefits in education. A lack of role models in their own ethnic group and their (physical and social) position in the villages, are more significant reasons for their lack of participation in schooling.
- Household chores are performed by girls. Although this work can be done after school and in the weekends it nevertheless places extra pressure on girls trying to combine school with work.
- Many girls are sent to work in households of relatives, where they are generally excluded from attending school. This practice is a major infringement on the education of girls.
- Many parents see unintended pregnancies, marriage or labour migration of their daughters as good reasons to not enrol them in the first place, since these factors will likely prevent them from completing secondary school.
- Parents feel that their input is limited; PTA and other forms of community involvement can only do so much. Although some interesting initiatives have come forth from such associations they are mainly restricted to collecting fees to pay for volunteer (untrained) teachers and demands for communal labour. Parent committees could increase access by organising sensitisation and information meetings, yet it should be noted that households who do not yet send any children to school, are often not reached in this way.

Introduction

International treaties have recognised free and compulsory elementary education as a human right for more than half a century now, and especially during the last decade the drive for universal (primary) education has gained momentum. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), agreed upon in 2000, set 2015 as the year in which universal primary education (MDG-2) and gender equality (MDG-3) are to be achieved. Despite such efforts and their echoes in national policies, many children are still out of school. The mid-term results for MDG-2 suggest that big strides have been made in terms of universal enrolment, but also give reasons for concern.

The overall statistics are merely averages and tend to hide what happens to the most vulnerable and most excluded children. Various forms of deprivation continue to put tens of millions of children in a difficult situation without access to education. The estimates of these children not attending school vary from 100 to 200 million. Successes in extending primary education have been unmistakable, but actual school attendance in most regions is still dramatically low, despite high gross enrolment figures (and fairly lower net enrolment figures).

Table 1: Out-of-School Children (millions)

	1998	2002	% Girls
Sub-Sahara Africa	45	40	55
Arab States	8	7	58
Eastern Asia	8	15	58
South & West Asia	36	30	59
Latin America	4	2	45
North America & Europe	2	2	53
Central & Eastern Europe	3	3	55

Source: UNESCO [UNESCO 2005:48]

Table 1 shows that the number of out-of-school children has generally decreased since 1998; unfortunately, the progress is slow and too many children have not yet found their way into the education system.

The current policy focus on education is not only based on the adherence to the “child’s right to develop its personality, talents, physical and mental abilities to its fullest potential” (CRC article 29). Education is also generally considered a key factor in reducing poverty and child labour and in promoting democracy, peace, tolerance and development [UNICEF 2006b]. Both approaches largely draw their attention away from the perspectives of parents and children themselves. Efforts have been directed instead towards sensitising uneducated masses of their “right to education” and the “importance of education”. Yet not much is known about how exactly uneducated people perceive education as a tool (or impediment) for their own family’s subsistence or advancement. What future

expectations and aspirations do parents have for their children, or children for themselves? How does (basic) education feature in these ideas? And does the quality of the education on offer influence such ideas? What are the perceived obstacles preventing access to education, and which changes should be made to remove these obstacles?

Repeatedly, there has been a summing up of relevant factors that form major barriers for achieving basic education for all. Sarkar [2004:12] has classified these factors into four groups:

- *Accessibility* - the physical and social distance to school, discrimination, the burden of household chores, and the burden faced by children combining work and schooling
- *Affordability* - direct, indirect, and opportunity costs
- *Quality* - the lack of infrastructure, facilities, materials, and support systems for children, inadequate conditions of work for teachers, low status of teachers, lack of adequate training, aids and materials for teachers, and the lack of sensitivity of education authorities and teachers to the needs of children at risk
- *Relevance* - curriculum detached from local needs, values and the aspirations of children at risk, curriculum inadequate to prepare students for gainful skilled employment

Quality issues have become a central theme in the education debate over the last few years. Increasingly, it is being acknowledged that quality must be seen in the light of how societies define the purpose of education [UNESCO 2004] and that quality can influence parents' choices to invest in education [Plan Netherlands 2006]. However, not much is known about the (lack of) intrinsic, social, cultural or economic benefits different parents and children may see in the education that is on offer to them, or in which way they feel school-attendance may influence their children's prospects. By collecting village case studies from seven developing countries, this study aimed to provide insights into local ideas about future expectations and aspirations of parents and children, and how (basic) education features in these ideas.

In periods of three to four months during 2006 and 2007, research was conducted in different areas of three South-Asian countries (Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan) and four Sub-Saharan-African countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Burkina Faso and Ghana). These countries were selected on the basis of their enrolment and attendance data.

Figures for the selected regions for 2000-2005 show that in Sub-Saharan Africa only 61%, and in South Asia 74% [UNICEF 2007:105] of children of primary school age are enrolled. In certain countries within those regions figures are significantly lower. The selected countries, with the exception of Kenya, used to have adult literacy rates that were substantially below the average of developing countries, but have made substantial progress over the last decades. The exception is Kenya, where the youth literacy rates in 2004 were actually lower than in 1990. Table 2 shows that where the countries in Asia have done reasonably well (in Nepal, for example, female literacy increased from 27% in 1990 to 60% in 2004), the African countries have had mixed results. Burkina Faso still had, in the early years of this century, male and female youth literacy rates of only 25.5% and 14.0% respectively.

Table 2: Literacy in Selected Countries

	Adult & Youth Literacy				Share of Females in Illiteracy		Youth (15-24) Literacy Rate				Not enrolled (millions)
	1990		2002-4		1990	2002-4	1990		2002-4		2002-4
	M	F	M	F			M	F	M	F	
Bangladesh	44.3	23.7	50.3	31.4	56	57	50.7	33.2	84.2	67.7	2.9
Nepal	47.4	14.0	62.7	34.9	63	65	67.0	27.3	80.6	60.1	0.9
Pakistan	49.3	20.1	61.7	35.2	62	63	62.5	30.6	74.8	53.9	8.1
Burkina			18.5	8.1					25.5	14.0	1.4
Ethiopia	37.6	19.8	49.2	33.8	57	57	51.5	34.1	63.0	51.8	5.7
Ghana	70.1	47.2	62.9	45.7	65	60	88.2	75.4			1.3
Kenya	80.9	60.8	77.7	70.2	68	58	92.9	86.7	79.8	80.0	2.0
Developing countries	75.9	57.9	83.2	69.5	63	64	85.8	75.8	85.0	88.7	

Aggregated from UNESCO [UNESCO 2005]

Access to the research areas was facilitated by local staff of Plan International and other NGOs, but they were not necessarily regions in which these NGOs worked. The long stay in each area, a minimum of three weeks, allowed the researcher to build up a relationship of trust and to distinguish official statements from reality.

This study was initiated to deepen the understanding of household and village level perception of education in rural areas, and to get an insight into the factors determining the continuation of non-enrolment and non-attendance despite the efforts made by governments and NGOs to facilitate education for everyone, including the poorest segments of society. A central, underlying theme is the perception of education in terms of relevance and quality by parents and children, and the way these perceptions influence decision-making with regard to school enrolment and attendance. The main question addressed is:

How does the perception, on household and village level, of relevance and quality of education, in interaction with other economic and cultural factors, lead to non-enrolment, non-attendance and/or drop-out?

The research was qualitative in nature and the results cannot haphazardly be applied to any country at large. However, the research areas were selected in such a way that they covered the poorest families in the poorest areas where school-enrolment is low.

The research involved close contact with the various stakeholders, particularly with the parents and the children. Much attention was given to their perceptions, and thus to how their circumstances, ideas and experiences may explain non-enrolment, non-attendance and drop-out, or enrolment and attendance in the face of adversity. Such insights are needed in order to design education policies that respond well to the ideas and circumstances on a grass-roots level.

Country selection

Ghana was one of the seven countries selected for this worldwide study on “Deprived Children and Education.” It was selected in the light of low enrolment figures in some areas, combined with the recent efforts undertaken by the government to ensure free basic education for all. These efforts have already led to growing percentages of children in school, as well as growing concerns about the quality offered, especially in rural areas.

It was decided to focus on the northern regions of Ghana, where poverty levels are highest (see below) and enrolment figures are generally lower than in the south. Another reason for our choice is the fact that Plan Netherlands, our main partner in the study, works with Plan Ghana in this area. Thirdly, the researcher’s network and knowledge of the region made it a logical choice.

This report is based on three months of research conducted by Albertine de Lange in Upper East and Upper West Ghana, which commenced in January 2006. The first six weeks were spent in the Upper East Region, in the district of Garu-Tempane. All interviews, observations and school visits were conducted within one traditional chieftaincy (Pialogo-Kugri-Vambara). The second research area was situated in the Upper West Region, in Wa-East district, approximately 150 km south-west of the first research area. This district was chosen because Plan Ghana was setting up several community development programmes, which were scheduled to start a few months after the field study. By selecting a village in this area, this study could aim to provide information that could directly serve Plan in their interventions. The village of Dupare was selected from this district due to its remote location and low enrolment figures.

The research was qualitative in nature and there was close interaction with the children and the members of their families. Explanations given in this report are mainly “emic”: accounts given from an internal view, in terms that are culture-specific, by someone who lives and functions within a specific cultural and socio-economic structure. The views sought after by this study were those that could explain why children do, or do not go to school. The more “official” discourse amongst official education administrators and teachers was taken into account to provide us with a comparison of different perspectives.

Outline of the report

Chapter 1 presents a general picture of the research country and specific areas. It provides an overview of past and current states of education, and the social habitat of the research population in terms of livelihood, culture, religion and educational opportunities. A description is given of the research activities. Finally, the chapter will indicate which members of the communities go to school and how this may relate to existing ethnic, gender and socio-economic structures. Overall, the chapter aims to provide the descriptive framework in which data in the subsequent chapters should be understood.

The subsequent chapters present the insights gained in the different research villages from interviews and observations. The following main questions are addressed:

- Which benefits do parents and children recognise in primary education and how is this translated into strategies?
- Which problems exist in terms of access to and quality of primary education and what are the local views about it?
- To what extent can parents exert control over the quality offered?

The concluding chapter will provide a number of policy options that could help make quality education a reality, without excluding the most difficult to reach populations.



Young girl helping at home with the cooking



Young boys herding the cattle

Chapter 1

Background Information: context, methodology and location

1.1 Context

1.1.1 Northern Ghana: socio-economic situation

Ghana lies on West-Africa's coast and borders with Cote d'Ivoire, Togo and Burkina Faso. Its population is approximately 22 million, and it has a human development index (HDI) of 0,520 (2003), which places Ghana in a 128th position out of 177 countries worldwide. Life expectancy is 56.3 years for men and 57.3 years for women. Between the years 2000 and 2004, 46% of women and 63% of men were able to read and write [UNICEF 2005]. The net primary school enrolment rate, during the same period, was 65 for boys and 53 for girls. Primary school attendance was about 61% between 1996 and 2004.

Historically, as well as geographically, there are important distinctions between Ghana's North and South. The South consists of the coastal and Ashanti areas that have been in contact with European traders for centuries; it is generally more fertile and humid. Ghana's North (the three provinces: Northern Region, Upper East Region and Upper West Region) is drier, with a savannah-like landscape. The area has experienced more Muslim influences than the South. Ghana's South is generally more developed than its North.

According to the report "Poverty Trends in Ghana in the 1990s" [Ghana Statistical Service 2000], the share of the population with a standard of living below the extreme poverty line (a total expenditure that falls below the money needed for minimum nutrition) decreased during the 1990s from 36.5% to 26.8%. In the rural North (classified as rural savannah), however, in which both research areas lie, the incidence of extreme poverty had increased from 57.5% to 59.3% in the same period. Even though this data should be interpreted with caution (for example, it has been suggested that in reality people find ways to find cheaper sources of food than as calculated in the survey [Van der Geest 2004], the percentages do give an impression of the difficulties people face in the region.

The above mentioned report also shows that the savannah clearly had the highest incidence of extreme poverty in the early nineties, but that conditions have since improved. The Upper East Region, however, experienced a dramatic decrease in standards of living and is now considered the most deprived region in terms of consumption poverty [Whitehead 2004].

1.1.2 History of formal education in Ghana

Until the end of the 19th century, preparation for civic life in Ghana consisted mainly of informal education within the home, by elders and parents. On a very small scale, however, formal education systems were initiated in the 1600s by the colonial powers, in the form of castle schools in the foreign forts on the coast. A native of Ghana (then Gold Coast), Philip Quaque, was trained in England at the age of thirteen and after graduation became the first African headmaster of the Colonial School at Cape Coast in 1766. The Colonial School at Cape Coast produced the first generation of English-educated Africans.

In the northern parts of what is now Ghana, formal education was first introduced by “mallams” who instructed children in reading and writing in Arabic and repetition of passages from the Koran, mainly in the larger commercial towns. The British, who arrived in the North around 1900, did not encourage nor repress this existing type of schooling [Bening 1990].

Christian missionaries started to establish schools along the coast between 1830 and 1850. Missionary societies saw the establishment of schools as instrumental to their main task of evangelisation. Opening schools was a way to attract young people, and education would enable converts to read the bible and learn about the new faith. Through education they also hoped to bring about social change and exercise some moral influence on the new converts [Der 2001:107]. Ashanti princes from the Ashanti region were also sent to these schools around 1830 and some even completed their education in England.

The first missionary school in the North was opened in 1907; this was the North’s introduction to Western education [Der 1998:109]. The number of pupils, however, was low; in 1909, only 29 boys were attending the school in Navrongo. Until independence in 1957, the colonial government only provided limited investments for education in the North. Der commented: “nearly after twenty years of effective colonial rule in the North, the British administration had only four schools in the area. By 1922, the total enrolment in these schools was just 243 in a population estimated at 631.139 persons of whom at least a third or more would have been children of school-going age” [Der 1998:23].

This poor investment in education in the North was part of the deliberate policy of the British to establish a Northern labour reserve for the South. This also meant that they did not see a reason to educate the Northerners at a more than basic level. Restricting the opening of mission schools was also part of this policy. In the 1920s, new British policies severely disturbed the expansion of education. Practical skills and craftwork, not academic education, were to form the basis of the Northern education. It was laid down as a policy that the highest level of education was to be primary 6, except at one special school that would be set up in Tamale. Furthermore, no new schools were to be opened without permission and classes were not allowed to be larger than twenty-five pupils.

After “indirect rule” was introduced as the official colonial policy in the 1930s, the British tried to make education a privilege for the children of the chiefs or other likely successors to chieftaincy. The colonial administration felt that the members of the ruling classes who formed the Native Administration should be educated well ahead of the masses; the children of the common people were not to be educated at all. As a result, only an elitist minority was admitted to the government

schools and the expansion of missionary schools, which accepted people from all classes, was further restricted [Der 2001].

In the 1950s, there was some improvement of the educational offerings in the North. The loosening grip of the British made it possible for the missionaries to expand on their educational efforts. After independence in 1957, education became a priority for the new government and policies were set up for free compulsory basic education, free textbooks for all students, and the creation of local education authorities with responsibilities for buildings, equipment and maintenance grants for primary schools [Asiedu-Akrofi 1982:100]. On a national level, school enrolment more than doubled between 1960 and 1965.

Northern leaders had exerted pressure on both colonial government and the immediate post-independence government, and finally in the 1960s and 1970s, this resulted in a special scholarship scheme that tried to stimulate Northerners to go to school by reducing education costs [Songsore 2001].

In the early 1980s, the country experienced a general economic slump, and the education sector clearly suffered. No textbooks or stationary, particularly in the rural areas, were available in the mid 1980s and “the success story of the educational system had begun to appear as a mirage by the mid 1980s” [Eyiah 2007]. In an effort to reverse this decline and to make schools more cost-effective, relevant and practical, massive reforms were introduced in 1987. The main objectives were: a restructuring of pre-university education from 17 years down to 12 years (6 years of primary, 3 years of junior secondary and 3 years of senior secondary), a more relevant curriculum, reduction of overstaffing, enhancing sector management and decentralisation to district and circuit level (to ensure an increased level of school visitation and supervision).

The country’s commitment to “free education for all”, which has existed since 1961, and was echoed in the 1992 constitution, resulted in the introduction of the FCUBE (Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education) programme in 1996. The programme’s objectives were to raise the quality of teaching and learning results, improve access and participation, improve community participation and decentralise the education management system, which mirrored the declarations made during the World Conference on Education for All (held in Jomtien, 1990). As the above statistics indicate, the success of these efforts has been limited: in 2004, 40% of Ghanaian children were still not in school. Differences in educational level between North and South are now particularly visible at secondary level. Participation in Junior Secondary school (which is also Basic education) is much lower in Northern regions than in the South; 43% (UER) and 47% (UWR), versus 63.4% nationally. Gross primary enrolment rates, however, are in line with national averages over the last few years. Statistics show that already in 2002/2003, in the two “upper regions”, more children were enrolled in class one than there were children in the 6-year-old population [Ghana Statistical Service 2005]. This suggests that older children were also enrolled, but does not automatically mean that all children reaching primary school age were enrolled.

In 2004-2005, the amount of primary school children constituted 74% (UER) and 68% (UWR) of all children between ages 6 and 11. It should be noted that this concerns Gross enrolment ratios, which means that all children in primary school are measured against the group of official school going age. Almost half of them are girls (49.7% UWR and 48.6% UER), which means that gender gaps at the primary level have almost disappeared.

1.1.3 Education policies today

The current education policies (2003-2015) are laid down in the fourth Education Strategic Plan (ESP) [Government of Ghana 2003]. The ESP mission statement is as follows: “The mission of the Ministry of Education is to provide relevant education to all Ghanaians at all levels to enable them to acquire skills that will assist them to develop their potential, to be productive, to facilitate poverty reduction and to promote socio-economic growth and national development” [idem:7]. One of the goals formulated is, again, “basic education for all”. Basic education in Ghana refers to primary education as well as junior secondary education.

The policy goals can be grouped into four focus areas: equitable access and quality of education; educational management and science; technology; and technical and vocational education. The plan specifies that in allocating resources, particular emphasis will be given to poorer areas, including the three northern areas. Furthermore, although the report identifies an increase in physical access, it also recognises weaknesses, such as low enrolment in and low retention rates in the Northern regions.

The ESP classifies several challenges for the education sector, including the issue of teacher training and development; it is acknowledged that a serious lack of teachers in rural regions is accompanied by an over-concentration of teachers in urban areas. It is argued that the policy to encourage and mobilise non-state resources from the private sector to support education sector development has to be given more attention. It is also emphasised that further consideration will have to be given to empowerment of communities in school management and control [Government of Ghana 2003].

An important recent development in Ghana’s education policy was the introduction of the so-called “capitation grant” for basic education in 2005. School fees had already been annulled (or at least kept very low) for government schools in the northern regions, but in reality a set of activity- and maintenance fees were still being levied. It was considered a major obstacle to “free basic education for all” that parents were still charged these small fees. A study conducted by Hashim [2004:122] in Garu-Tempene, for example, gives an idea of the fees that were levied before the grant was introduced (10.000 cedi = approx. 0.90 eurocents):

Table 3: Average school fees, before the introduction of the capitation grant

Sports	C6,000 per annum
Culture	C6,000 per annum
PTA dues	C3,000 per student
Water pump	C7,000 per student
‘Volunteer’ Teacher	C200 per student
Cook	C400 per month
Junior secondary school	
Sports	C6,000 per annum
PTA	C5,000 per student
Well	C7,000 per student
Examination	C5,500 per term

The 2005 capitation grant involved the payment to the school of 30,000 cedi (around 2.70 euros) per enrolled pupil per year. The grant is only disbursed after the school's parent-teacher association (PTA) has made a plan ("School Performance Improvement Plan"), including a budget, describing how the grant will be used. For their budget, the associations can select expenditures such as the construction or renovation of classrooms or latrines, furniture, sports or cultural activities, the purchase of markers or other school utensils, or "sensitisation tours" in the community about the importance of education. Since the implementation of the grant, it has become strictly forbidden for teachers to levy fees, besides PTA fees, which are set by the parents themselves. Several cases were reported in the media of (head) teachers sent home for demanding money from pupils. Compensation for volunteer teachers and cooks, however, is still condoned and such fees usually vary between 1500 and 3000 cedi (14-25 eurocents) per trimester per pupil.

The capitation grant, as well as the public campaign on real free and compulsory education, has substantially increased enrolment figures on a national level as well as in the Northern region specifically. In one of the two districts where the study took place, for example, enrolment figures in 2005-2006 were 26% higher than in the preceding year (an increase from 22.553 to 28.381 pupils in one year). Since the introduction of the capitation grant, resulting teacher-shortages have been partly met by retired teachers returning to the classrooms and by volunteer teachers who were previously, with the reforms in the 1980s, not allowed to be teaching.

1.1.4 The school system

Since the 1987 reforms, basic education in Ghana has consisted of six years of primary and three years of Junior Secondary Education. Currently, the government aims at setting up pre-schools (nurseries) in all schools. The subjects taught in primary school are: mathematics, English, integrated science, religious and moral studies, environmental studies, Ghanaian languages and music/dance. It is policy to focus on maths and English. In the three lowest classes the language of instruction is the language belonging to the dominant ethnic group in the area. In the three upper classes of primary schools, teachers are expected to increasingly turn to English, since (officially) English is the only language of instruction for Junior Secondary Education (as well as in senior secondary schools).

According to teachers and the GES officials (Ghana Education Service) in the research area, teachers are advised not to make poor performing pupils repeat classes as this would prolong the duration and costs of education. There is no exam or test after class six of primary school and all children should be allowed passage into Junior Secondary Education. Officially, junior secondary schools are no longer allowed to use entrance tests to select pupils for their school. School children take their first formal exam after 9 years of schooling: the BECE exam, which determines if a pupil can continue into Senior Secondary Education (3 years) where pupils are prepared for tertiary education such as training colleges, polytechnic schools or universities.

The PTA (and the school management committee) that is formally installed in every school is a result of decentralisation policies undertaken in Ghana in the past. Such committees consist of elected community members as well as the head teacher and other teacher(s). PTA meetings are arranged to discuss school matters, such as repairs to the school building, compensation for volunteer teachers, expenditure of the capitation grant, etc. The disbursement of the grant has to

fit a framework of 5 targets, namely: improving access, provision of teaching and learning materials, school management, community-school relationship and school facilities.

1.1.5 Common explanations for low enrolment ratios in the area

As above has been suggested, the low level of education in the Northern Regions is likely to be related to the late introduction of Western education. Moreover, general poverty as well as cultural (animist) and religious (Muslim) practices have been mentioned as impediments to educational growth in the area [Ghana Statistical Service 2000]. It has been suggested that a “strict adherence to beliefs that formal education alienates children from their original culture” creates an obstacle to education for all in Ghana [Care International 2003]. This argument, however, which implicates an unwillingness of parents to send their children to school, does not seem to hold in statistical surveys, which indicate that parents in fact do prefer their children to go to school. In the Ghanaian government’s statistical study on child labour, in cooperation with ILO-IPEC [Ghana Statistical Service 2003], evidence was found of the parents’ preference for “Children’s Future Activity”. If they had the choice, most parents (65%) would prefer their children to be either in school or in training, and to complete their education. Most (88%) of their children themselves also preferred to go to school and complete their education before starting work. The report concludes that parents’ and children’s preferences thus differ from what the children are actually doing. In the present study we examine whether results collected in the research areas confirm this.

The child labour survey furthermore indicates that costs of education are indeed a major reason for non-enrolment and/or non-attendance. On a national level, unaffordability was, with 44.2%, the most cited reason for children who had never attended school. In the Upper East Region, the most economically deprived region of the country, the percentage was 63.7%.

On the other hand, researchers on education in Africa have also argued that, taking direct and indirect costs as the sole reasons for non-enrolment is too simple. The importance given to education by very poor parents is likely to depend on the way they perceive the impact on their daily or long-term subsistence. Peter Matz [2003] argues that the decision to enrol a child in school is the result of the household’s evaluation of costs and benefits associated with schooling. Kielland and Tovo regard decisions on education in a similar way and speak of a “difficult balancing act”:

The linear relationship between schooling and income may hold for better-off African families, but research so far has suggested a different pattern among the great majority of the poor. For poor families, decisions on children’s schooling are more likely to be the result of a difficult balancing act that takes into account several factors. The three most immediate questions that parents will have to face are: what would the child do if they did not go to school? Who will do the children’s work if the children go to school? What will schooling do for the children and their families? [2006:16]

Through collecting qualitative data from children and parents in deprived areas, this present study provides insights into this “balancing act”. Two central aims are to find out why the balance still results in non-enrolment for certain children and what policy measures should be undertaken to help all children into school.

Do parents and children believe that education - more specifically, the education that is offered in their community - can improve their lives and how do such ideas influence enrolment patterns? Whilst most economic models claim that sending a child to school is an investment for future family income, this does not seem to be applicable to the poorest families, who need to rely on all possible reserves. According to Kielland and Tovo, "a formally educated population is often more beneficial to society as a whole than it is to many of the individual households within it" [2006:17]. The present study does not focus on the economic or other returns of education as such, but rather on the perceived returns, because these ideas play an important role in the "balancing act" that finally determines the education of the children. It takes into account not only the expected economic profits, but also other (possible) socialising or intrinsic benefits of education mentioned by parents and children. The perceived benefits of education are considered in the context of alternatives, such as child work and idleness.

1.2 Research activities

This research is built around three case studies and mainly based on qualitative fieldwork carried out in early 2006. The first fieldwork period took place in three villages in Garu-Tempene District in the Upper East Region (UER), for 7 weeks during January and February 2006. Additional quantitative data concerning the district and region was obtained from the Ghana Educational Service (GES) in Garu Town, Bawku and Bolgatanga.

The second fieldwork period took place in March 2006, in Wa-East District, Upper West Region. Two weeks were spent in the village of Dupare and some additional days were spent in the Regional capital of Wa, where statistical data was collected.

1.2.1 Research activities in Garu-Tempene

The field study in Pialogo started with a meeting with the village chief and his elders, as well as a meeting in which the majority of compounds in the village were represented. This meeting aimed to capture the general and shared ideas about education and child work, to ask permission for interviews with the children in and out of school, and to prepare households for possible visits by the researcher and the interpreter during the following weeks.

Within the dispersed village of Pialogo, 14 households were visited and interviewed. In each compound, general information about the number of adults and children was gathered from a household member that was available. Subsequently, interviews were arranged with the children (school-going and not) and their caregivers. First visits were mainly done during school hours so as to ascertain effectively which of the household's children were not attending school. The intention was to reach both the male and female caretakers, to determine their different roles in the decision-making process regarding the children's education. Most families were visited several times in order to build up trust and gain confidence, to interview different family members or to come back to issues that had not become totally clear in earlier interviews. Observations focused on the factual activities of both the children out of school and of those in school (after school time).

It should be noted that children from certain neighbourhoods in Pialogo go to a Primary school other than Pialogo primary, because this school is closer in distance and can more easily be reached. There is also another primary school in the area that was officially part of Pialogo: Natin Primary.

Yet due to the location of the selected compounds, none of the children we interviewed attended this school.

Seven Pialogo school children were interviewed individually, during breaks or after school hours. Some of them were members of the same families who functioned as case studies in the “compound visits”, yet others were only interviewed independently of their families. In addition, the PTA chairman was interviewed as well as one of the village’s night school teachers. Additional insights were obtained from Ghana Education Service officers in Garu and Bawku, and an officer of the Bawku-based NGO BEWDA. Furthermore, class observations were carried out several times in order to get an idea of the daily routine in the classroom, the manner of teaching and interaction between pupils and teachers. The school registers since 1996 were studied in order to capture the recent trends and developments in school enrolment, attendance and drop-out. One “girl-child sensitisation” meeting initiated by the Ghana Education Service (District level) was attended. Through several (informal) meetings and interviews with the teaching staff, further insights were obtained about their backgrounds and views.

In Kugri, the school was visited several times and pupils and teachers were interviewed both in groups and individually. Frequent conversations were held with the two (educated) villagers; the PTA chairmanship alternates between these two. The chief, living a few kilometres from the school was interviewed. A community some distance away from the school was visited several times; interviews were held with the children as well as their parents. In both communities, around ten households were visited, once or several times. In addition, random people were (informally) interviewed. In Vambara, the teachers and the PTA chairman were interviewed. The Senebaga primary school was visited and one focus group discussion was held in this village. Finally, Dusbuliga JSS was visited; and information was gathered from interviews with the head teacher and the PTA chairman.

1.2.2 Research activities in Dupare

The research in Dupare consisted of interviews with community members (children and adults), informal conversations, observations, focus group discussions, school visits to Dupare Primary School as well as a visit to the nearby parish school St. Augustine’s. Because the researcher and the interpreter stayed in one of the family compounds, day and night, observation and informal conversations formed a valuable part of the research. Due to the daily interaction, it was easier to build up trust with some villagers. Several times, people started talking spontaneously about their ideas about education, for example at night, after dinner when all were sitting outside in the light of a lantern. Also, the nucleated structure of the village made the structure and activities in the village more oversee-able (than in the Upper East Region); it was easier to get an overview of which children were in school, which were not, and what activities children and people engaged in during the day.

Twenty households were studied. In most cases this investigation included an interview with the household head and his wife and one or more of their children, as well as several more or less random conversations and observations. In addition, children who were out of school were observed and interviewed during or after their work, usually in groups. Apart from the children who were interviewed in their families, discussions were held with school children when their teachers were absent. Several group discussions were held with parents. Besides the conversations with Dupare’s

teachers, the former (retired) head teacher was interviewed as well as the head teacher of Bulenga JSS and the head teacher of the Parish school.

1.3 Research areas: communities and schools

1.3.1 Garu-Tempene district, Upper East Region (UER)

Garu-Tempene is situated in the Upper East Region in North-eastern Ghana. Garu-Tempene district was newly created in 2004; the area was formally part of Bawku-East district. Bawku-east district was estimated to have the lowest educational attainment of the Upper East Region. In the 2000 census, it was estimated that 77.3% of the population in the district, aged six and older, had never attended school. Of those who had ever attended school, 75% had attended Primary or JSS, 10% JSS/SS [Ghana Statistical Service 2005]. About 80% of the economically active population engaged in agriculture (including hunting and forestry). The share of economically active people who were formally employed is relatively low in the research area (4.5% versus 15% on a national level).

The UER is markedly more densely populated than the two other northern regions. Its climate is characterised by pronounced dry and wet seasons. The rainy agricultural season lasts from May to October, but rains are unpredictable and often poor [Ghana Statistical Service 2005]. The closest city to Garu-Tempene district is Bawku, which lies approximately 35-60 kilometres from the research villages. The district capital Garu has recently been connected to the electricity grid, as have some nearby villages, yet few private houses have been connected. Infrastructure is poor; all roads are unpaved.

The villages in this district are dispersed settlements; people live in compounds surrounded by their farmland rather than in nuclear settlements. Average household size is 7 persons and different households sometimes live in one compound. The largest ethnic groups are the Kusasi. Minorities include the (semi) nomadic Fulani, Yaars (who are closely related to the Kusasi) and the Bissa (who live mainly in Garu town). Traditional religions, as well as Christianity and Islam, are practised; the latter two on an increasing scale.

The main products grown are millet, guinea-corn, maize, groundnut, beans, sorghum, and dry-season tomatoes and onions. Livestock and poultry production are also important [Ghana Statistical Service 2005]. It has recently become common practice to grow onions on irrigated garden plots in the dry season. Other off-farm activities include Shea butter processing, selling food on the market, pottery and charcoal production.

In 2005, Garu-Tempene district hosted 22 kindergartens/preschools, 67 primary schools, 16 JSS (Junior Secondary Schools) and 1 Secondary School (in the village of Tempene). The recent introduction of the capitation grant has strongly increased primary enrolment numbers in the district. According to official data, enrolment figures in 2005-2006 were 26% higher than in the preceding year (an increase from 22,553 to 28,381 pupils in one year). As the supply of teachers has not grown to the same degree, pupil-teacher ratios have grown from around 62 in 2004 to 82 in 2005. 46% of enrolled students are girls and 54% are boys, which is a wider gender gap than the regional average. Statistics confirm that teachers are unevenly distributed among urban and rural areas. All primary schools with five or more government-appointed teachers are situated in semi-

urban areas such as Temppane/Garu. Statistics show that many rural schools have only one or two government-appointed teachers.

District level data shows that admission and enrolment rates are growing - at least since 2001 - yet that there are problems in the field of retention. Garu-Temppane/Bawku East statistics show that between 2000 and 2004, primary school completion rate was around 74%, which means that over a quarter of the children enrolled did not complete primary level.

Until recently, schools in the research area were supervised by the Ghana Education Service (GES) based in Bawku, but due to an administrative reorganisation an office was opened in Garu in 2004. Circuit-supervisors are charged with the direct control of attendance and teaching. Among others, there are special officer teams for girl- and technical education. The main financial assistance comes from DFID (the UK Department of International Development). UNICEF assists in awareness raising programmes on the importance of education; they provide packages (uniforms, pens etc.) for the most needy, and supply bicycles for girls. Food programmes are implemented by the CRS (Catholic Relief Services) in several schools, and the World Food Programme provides food to girls who attend school for a specified minimum number of days per month.

1.3.1.1 Research village in the Garu-Temppane district: Pialogo

The first fieldwork period was spent in the community of Pialogo, approximately 7 kilometres from the district capital Garu. The village is spread out and part of it is cut off during the rainy season due to flooding. There are some wells and motorised grinding mills, but no real shops, churches or mosques. According to the Ghana Statistical Service, 627 people live in Pialogo - no data was available on the number of children. Village borders are somewhat unclear for an outsider, and children often attend schools that officially lie outside their own village. Therefore, no reliable estimates can be made for percentages of children attending school in Pialogo simply on the basis of population numbers and the enrolment figures of the two primary schools present in the village.

The majority of people are Muslim, yet animist practices are also widely practiced. Only a few formally educated people could be found in the village; it was claimed that the village school had supplied pupils who were now teachers living in Garu or urban centres further away. A prominent figure in Pialogo is the “Blind mission director”, a pensioned native from the village, who had occupied important positions such as “director of the mission for the blind”. His financial support to poor families came up several times in interviews.

Pialogo Primary School is a few kilometres away from the main (dirt) road connecting Gambaga and Garu (and Bawku). It is situated next to the mud compound where the current traditional village head lives; the so-called Chief’s palace. Three classrooms are closed structures and three are open-sided, whilst another three are still under construction.

According to villagers’ accounts, a school was first built in the village about 27 years ago. A few years before this research took place, the government replaced the old mud structure with a new building. The new school building is now in a good state, but teachers complain that the open-sided classrooms are problematic in the rainy season. Black boards and chalk are available as well as sufficient tables and chairs. At one point the school allegedly had to close down for a few years after many children died from an infectious disease (or witchcraft as some villagers suggested), but was re-opened in 1988.

Registers show that in 1996-97 every class consisted of between 11 and 19 pupils, with at least twice as many boys than girls. In 1998-1999, the CRS food programme started to supply free midday meals for all pupils and an immediate increase in Primary 1 pupil registration took place (up to almost 100 pupils). 5 years later, only some of those registered students could be found back in the higher classes. There was a new surge of students with the introduction of the capitation grant in 2005.

130 pupils were enrolled in Primary 1 during the present study. The classroom was extremely overcrowded, despite most children not attending every day, but each pupil had his or her own seat. The total number of registered pupils in January 2006 was 339. 60% of the pupils were male. Not a single girl was enrolled in Primary 6.

At the time of the research, the school in Pialogo had a headmaster, one trained female teacher, two untrained teachers and two “volunteer teachers”. The headmaster, a man in his fifties, taught class 1, and had to perform duties outside the school at least twice a week (meetings with other headmasters, retrieval of funds or books, etc.). On these days, the 130 pupils of Primary 1 were usually assigned tasks by another teacher or were expected to revise their notes. The other government-appointed and paid teachers were a young, female (trained) teacher and two so-called pupil teachers who had received only limited training and who were paid a small sum by the government. In addition, there were two “volunteer teachers” working in the school. They had been appointed by the community (specifically by the PTA) rather than the government, and were paid small allowances, collected from the pupils through the PTA. They had not received any training, but had recently completed secondary school. They were natives to Pialogo, and had previously attended this primary school themselves.

The headmaster normally spent weeknights in the simple bungalow next to the school and weekends in his village, about twenty kilometres away, where he also worked as a pastor. He reached the school by motorbike. The three government employed teachers lived in Garu, from where they travelled every morning by bike. The two volunteer teachers, appointed and paid by the PTA, lived with their parents in Pialogo.

All (government) teachers were from the Kusasi ethnic group, and were all from neighbouring villages. They appeared to be well aware of life in the village, and the difficulties in the lives of their pupils, and often referred to their own comparable backgrounds. In some cases, teachers appeared to have specific relationships with certain pupils. Teacher Mary, for example, sometimes paid the fees for a boy whom she knew had difficulties paying them. Another boy, who was responsible for producing and supplying food to his entire family, told me that because a certain teacher was aware of his situation, he would not be punished when he was late in the mornings during agricultural season.

The government-paid teachers in Pialogo were Christians. The headmaster was even a pastor in his home community. The two volunteer teachers, however, were Muslims, like most people living in Pialogo. The headmaster appeared to respect the fact that most community members were Muslim. It was observed, for example, that before PTA gatherings he would ask a Muslim to lead them in prayer. .

There were no JSS or SSS schools in the village. Pupils from Pialogo had to travel to Garu to attend JSS. For SSS they have to travel to Tempane (approximately 15 kilometres away) or to other SS

schools in the country (usually Bawku)¹. Regarding non-formal education, there had been a night-school in Pialogo for several years. In addition, in one of the compounds further away from the school, a SSS graduate irregularly gathered some adults and adolescents around a lantern, to teach them how to read and write. During the fieldwork, no observations were made of the night-school lessons, yet the night-school teacher, a JSS graduate, was interviewed. His work was voluntary, yet he had received a short training in a larger town and had received some gifts like a raincoat and a lantern. The class consisted of about 25 people (15 women and 10 men); women were more regular attendees according to the teacher. The “students” are not requested to pay any fees. English is taught, rather than the local language (Kusaal), which is more common in similar non-formal education forms. According to the teacher, this choice was a response to the needs expressed by the community: “Some of the people already know some Kusaal. And also, they say Kusaal won’t help them a lot, only in your own community.”

According to the teacher, students were at least 15 years old. It became clear that in some cases the night-school functioned as a kind of bridging school for the youngest students. From the night-school, one girl had recently been transferred to Pialogo primary. The night school teacher said: “She was just sitting in the house. I told her: Now you are interested in school, you are still young so you can go to school. I saw she was smart. In the training, they told us we can teach children, but we have to push them into primary if they are doing well.” From life history interviews with adult men from the area, it again became clear how night-school (usually in the local language) can work as a very effective bridge into primary school, especially when children are older, as it can help them flow into the higher primary classes. One of the JSS teachers in Garu, for example, only started night-school when he was 14 and was able to enter P5 when he was 15.

Another very important form of non-formal education in the area is vocational training through apprenticeships, such as tailoring, weaving, hairdressing (girls), and bicycle fitting, carpentry, masonry (boys). All craftsmen and women in Garu, as well as in smaller villages, have at least some apprentices who, usually by paying a small fee, learn the trade within their business. Children roughly above the age of 14, who have dropped out of school or who have never attended school, take part in this form of training. Normally, no formal (primary schooling) is required by the masters, yet this seemed to be changing.

Even in quite remote places, apprentice systems have been set up. During the fieldwork it was noted that apprenticeship opportunities are perceived to be better or more elaborate in the southern parts of the country and pursuing this type of training is often a reason for children to migrate south [Hashim 2005]. However, as Iman Hashim [2005:20] also commented, the merits of apprenticeships is questionable, “particularly given the vast number of individuals that were being trained in a limited number of occupations and the low returns of such occupations, especially in the North.”

1.3.1.2 Research villages in the Garu-Tempene district: Kugri and Vambara

Situated on the road to Nakpanduri, about 18 kilometres from district capital Garu and 10 kilometres from Pialogo is the village of Kugri. Nearby Kugri, accessible by a few small tracks, lies

¹ SS schools are usually boarding schools, but pupils mostly spend their weekends at home

the village of Vambara. The second fieldwork period took place in these two villages. During this period, schools in neighbouring villages of Senebaga and Dusbuliga were also visited. Few communal facilities are available in this cluster of communities; it is a relatively remote area barely served by public transport. According to local informants, the soil is more fertile and the landscape is a little greener than in Pialogo.

In both Kugri and Vambara schools, the head teachers were the only trained teachers. In Kugri, he was the only government appointed and paid teacher. At the start of the school year 2005-2006, a reshuffling of head teachers had taken place within the area. The new head teacher in Kugri had previously been teaching in the nearby village of Songo; the former Kugri head teacher had moved to the school in Vambara, his home village. The head teacher in Senebaga had until that time been teaching in Vambara.

Kugri Primary was one of the first primary schools in the area and is still housed in a relatively old-fashioned building. It was opened around 1960, closed in the late 1960s, only to be reopened in 1984. In the school year 2005-2006, it counted 216 pupils: 125 boys and 91 girls. The school in Kugri had only one trained teacher at the time of the study; the other classes were taught by 4 volunteers who seemed to be present less frequently than the volunteers in Pialogo. Two of them had started teaching around three years ago and two had commenced more recently. They all had about 9 to 10 years of education, but no specific training.² Accounts from teachers and villagers indicated that the introduction of the free school lunch a few years ago had, just like in Pialogo, created a rush of pupils. Most of them, however, had dropped out in the time that the school was malfunctioning (there had been no volunteer teachers and the only trained teacher, who was also the headmaster, had often been absent).

The most remote school of those studied in Garu-Tempene, was Vambara Primary. It counted about 200 pupils (12 boys, 80 girls), with over 100 pupils in primary 1. The school had recently been moved into a brightly painted European Union funded building, which was a big change from the simple mud construction that it had previously occupied. Four teachers were at the disposal of the Vambara community; one (trained) headmaster, one pupil teacher (government-paid) and two volunteers, who were paid a small allowance by the PTA. Three of them came from the same family, which held a chieftaincy position in the community. In contrast to the Pialogo and Kugri schools, Vambara did not participate in the CRS Food Programme, allegedly because the food could not be delivered due to the bad state of its access roads.

The poor quality of these two more remote schools cannot be denied, based purely on the limited progression of students into secondary schools. Pupils who complete Kugri Primary, for example, usually choose to continue their schooling in Garu. Although JSS schools are not allowed to set entry exams and should accept all children who have completed primary school, the research found that it was very common for those who have completed Primary 6 in Kugri to be told to repeat class 4, 5 or 6 in a primary school in Garu, before entering secondary school.

² Two older men had been government paid (yet untrained) teachers in the past, but had been forced to stop in the early nineties, when it was government policy to dispose of all untrained teachers in an effort to raise the quality of basic education. According to their own accounts, they had been asked to return to the school by the PTA and head teacher.

Not only was there a lack of (qualified) teachers, a problem with absent teachers was also observed. During the several visits to the school in Kugri for example, it was not uncommon for only one or two teachers to be present for the 216 pupils, and that, especially in the lower classes, chaotic and aggressive confrontations broke out between children. On the other hand, very motivated volunteer teachers were observed as well. Young volunteer teachers, temporarily teaching in their home villages during their vacation from training college, appeared very motivated and committed.

The recent re-shuffling of teachers had, according to most informants, made the head teachers take their new appointments more seriously. A GES official told me that it was a well-known strategy to appoint a head teacher to the school in his home village if he was not doing his job right (i.e. frequent absences).

For JSS education, most pupils from Kugri travelled to Garu, around 18 kilometres away. Some travelled to the nearer school in Dusbuliga, but this (rural) JSS was considered to be of a lesser quality because there were considerably fewer teachers. In interviews with girls in the highest class in Kugri primary, it appeared that several girls were repeating the class, because their parents were not able or willing to let them attend JSS yet. The distance was considered to be too far for girls to travel by bike (most girls in this class had a UNICEF sponsored bicycle) and finding a host family was considered problematic. The fact that these girls were expected to repeat at least two primary classes in Garu meant that a delay was created in their education.

1.3.2 Wa-East district, Upper West Region

The last fieldwork period took place in the village of Dupare, in the Wa-East district in the Upper West Region (UWR). The UWR is, with only 31 inhabitants per km², the second most sparsely populated region in Ghana. This is in great contrast with the UER, which has a population density of 104 inhabitants per km² [GSS, in Van der Geest 2004]. The average family size was around 7 and more than one family can live in the same compound or house; for example, the families of two brothers or a father and his sons.

Dupare lies in the Wa-East district, formerly a part of the Wa district, which was split during the recent administrative reforms. Funi is the official district capital, and lies about 120 Kilometres from Dupare. However, at the time of study, educational matters at a district level were still coordinated from the city of Wa.

Vegetation is denser and greener than in the UER, which is partly due to the considerably lower population density in the area. Dupare is not far from the Mole National Park and many wild animals live in the forests surrounding the village. In contrast to the research area in the UER, where most land is used as farmland, there is still much uncultivated land, or “bush”, in this area. As in most of Northern Ghana, the region is heavily agrarian though, despite the process of de-agriculturalisation taking place [Van der Geest 2004:89]. Even the self-employed, or people with government jobs, are inclined to farm to supplement cash income or to save on food expenditures.

As in the two other Northern regions, the level of education among the population in the UWR is low, especially compared to southern Ghana. In 2000, nearly 70% (65.1% males and 73.9% females) of the population in the Region aged 6 years and above, had never attended school [Ghana

Statistical Service 2000]. Of the population who had attended school, 45% attained primary level, 24% reached middle school/JSS, and 12% completed secondary school.

Wa-East district hosts 53 primary schools; a total of 8389 pupils were enrolled in school year 2005-2006. These pupils were not equally distributed throughout the different grades: 33% of the 8389 pupils were in Primary 1, whilst only 8% were in Primary 6 (20% in P2 and 8.5% in P5). There were almost as many girls (49%) as boys (51%) among the lower primary school pupils, but in the upper primary classes a gender gap was evident. Only 35% of the pupils enrolled in class 5 and 40% of pupils in class 6 were female. This widening gender gap in the course of primary education also occurs on a regional level. It can be observed that “the proportion of girls progressing to the next grade reduces from one grade to the next, such that there is a widening (though small) gap between boys and girls” (obtained locally from the Ghana Education Service in Wa). Figures obtained from the Education Services in Wa about the Wa-district, which Dupare was until recently a part of, show that drop-out in primary school was high between 2001 and 2003. An average percentage of only 70% completed primary school (girls: 56.6%). There were 108 trained primary teachers working in the district in 2005-2006 (95 male teachers, 13 female); in addition, 55 untrained teachers, (among whom only 5 female) were employed (untrained teachers are employed by the government and have to meet certain minimum criteria and complete a short training); 16 Arabic teachers worked in the district, as well as 10 teachers categorised as “others” (= probably volunteers). On average this comes down to a ‘pupil-trained teacher’ ratio of 1:77 and a ratio of 1:52 for ‘pupil-teacher in general’.

Over the last few years, in several communities in the district, pre-schools (kindergartens) have been established; in 2005, 23 of these schools existed for children of 2-5 years old. Of the 2267 children registered, proportions of boys and girls were roughly equal.

1.3.2.1 Research village in Wa-East district: Dupare

The village of Dupare has approximately 670 inhabitants, living in 75 compounds. There is no electricity and no telephones. It is accessible by several dirt tracks, of which the largest leads to the village of Bulenga, about 4 km away. From Bulenga, a 50 km dirt road with “shared taxis” leads you to the city of Wa. Wa is the regional capital and has most facilities (even a branch of the University of Development Studies). Bulenga is a village with more facilities than Dupare, but it also lacks electricity and communications.

Dupare has a nucleated structure, which is in contrast to the dispersed character of villages found in Garu-Tempane. The mud houses people live in are attached or close to one another; with the exception of a few Fulani households living outside the village. Farming plots surround the village, but can also lie up to 10 km away “in the bush”. There is an old mosque, a new mosque under construction, and one water pump, which does not always operate properly. There are no real shops, yet some people sell some products (tins, matches) from their homes or mangos from under a tree. There are several places where people gather; trees offer shade from the burning sun, and wooden constructions are built under which people relax during the hottest hours of the day.

The school is at the edge of the village, not far from the village’s only water pump. It is a relatively new building, with three rooms. A few latrines had been built, but they are usually closed. At the end of the day, when the cows have been brought back into the village, boys (both school-going and not) gather on the fields in front of the school to play football. On the other side of the village,

about a kilometre away, there is a small lake that was created by a dam. Those families, who do not contribute to the pump repairs or maintenance, use the lake for drinking water for themselves and their livestock, for washing clothes and for irrigating the garden plots that lie next to the lake. There is no market in Dupare, but the weekly Bulenga market 4 km away is frequently attended by many villagers to buy or sell food stuffs and other products.

All households are engaged in farming; some have dry season plots as well, near the dam or in the village itself. The crops produced on the farms include guinea corn, millet, rice, corn, cassava, yam, ground nuts and beans. The crops are similar to what is produced in the UER, but the conditions in the UWR allow yam and cassava to be produced before sowing the millet. In contrast to Garu-Tempane, farmers use no or hardly any chemical fertiliser, because of more fertile soil. Most families have at least a small number of fowl, goats, sheep or pigs and a minority also has cows. Partly due to a project by the NGO ADRA, an increasing part of the population owns one or more bullocks, for pulling carts and, most importantly, ploughing the land.

Women often cultivate a selection of vegetables. They farm together and use the money to solve “pressing problems” or educational needs. There is also one youth group that is in charge of forest conservation, protecting it from fires and other hazards.

A large majority of the Dupare people are Muslim, followed by those who “pray to the small gods” (traditionalists). The Dagarti people constitute the Christian minority in the village. The majority of the village was of Wale origin, the dominant ethnic group in the district. Also, there were several families involved in the fieldwork that were of Dagarti (Dagaaba) origin; this concerned people who had relatively recently migrated from other areas and who usually lived on the village’s edges. As Christians in a predominantly Muslim community, Dagarti people are often engaged in beer brewing, selling and pig rearing. At the most outer boundaries of the village there were at least two large Fulani (Peul) families. They had moved to the village between five and ten years prior. In exchange of milk, some foodstuffs and money, they were in charge of caring for the cattle of well-to-do Wale people in the area.

The level of interaction that the Fulani families showed with the Wale people differed from person to person and child to child. Ahmed (14), for example, one of the Fulani boys, was fluent in the Wale language; his sister Vati (10), however, hardly spoke the language. According to her parents, this was because she rarely associated with the “village girls”.

There were six clans in the village (related households from common descent for whom intermarriage is prohibited). These clans do not include the Fulani and Dagarti people, who only recently moved to the village and are commonly seen as outsiders. The most prominent clans were the Chief’s clan, the clan of the Chief-Imam and the Earth Priest (Tendaana) clan, which was the first clan to settle in the area. The remaining three clans were said to have moved to the village later. Village Chiefs always belong to the Chief’s clan, but can come from various families and households within the clan, which live dispersed throughout the village.

A few months before the study took place, a new Chief had been selected; an older, educated man, who was employed as a nurse in Wa. Yet, because he lived outside the village, a Chief’s representative - an old illiterate man - had been appointed. However, many of the Chief’s

representative's tasks were in turn conducted by his son, a charismatic man in his sixties. The chief's representative's son was therefore an important figure in the village.

The first generation of adult males who had completed at least primary education, were now in their fifties and sixties; they had started their education before independence in 1957. Among them were the SMC (School Management Committee) Chairman and the current Chief (working as a nurse in Wa). The SMC Chairman was not officially employed, but often fulfilled tasks for the government or NGOs when a census or other data was needed. Another older literate in the village was a Dagarti man, whose niece had moved in with him with her children.

There was also a group of educated inhabitants in their twenties; there was a shop-owner who had dropped out of JSS and the two Plan volunteers had also attended school up to JSS. There were also the educated people who had moved away from the village and were now working (or looking for work) in urban centres.

All the educated men in the village still considered farming as their primary occupation, but they were not among the most successful farmers in the village. There is a local term for people who have been formally educated, but who are still working as farmers in the village: Akariyang. This term differs from those used to describe literates in general or people working in government or white collar jobs.

Dupare Islamic Primary was opened in 1989. Before 1989, it had been an Arabic school, where Arabic and the Koran were taught; parents from Dupare, who desired a formal primary education for their children, sent their children to the neighbouring villages Bulenga and Goripie. Initially, it was a mud structure, built by community members. In 2002 the current building was erected by the government.

Until 1995, when the former head teacher was employed, there had been only 1 trained teacher, together with 1 or 2 untrained teachers and Arabic teachers. According to data from the former head teacher, there had been a small increase in pupils during his employment; in 1995, 83 pupils were registered, and at the end of his term in 2005, this number was over 100. Between 2003 and 2005, Animata, my interpreter, had worked in the school as a "rural education volunteer" for the rural education volunteer programme, sponsored by the NGO Action Aid.

90 pupils were registered in Dupare Islamic Primary at the start of the year 2005-2006; a few were added to P1 during the first months. The decrease in pupils from the year before could be attributed to the opening of the private kindergarten (see below). The distribution of pupils was as follows:

Table 4: Pupils enrolled in Dupare Islamic Primary for the school year 2005-2006

Grade	Number of pupils
P6:	11 (8 boys / 3 girls)
P5:	9 (8 boys / 1 girls)
P4:	13 (6 boys / 7 girls)
P3:	12 (5 boys / 7 girls)
P2:	22 (14 boys / 9 girls)
P1:	23 (16 boys / 15 girls)

Reflecting the district-level data, the gender gap is most evident in upper primary grades, and upper primary class sizes are considerably smaller than the lower grades. However, the latter observation is weak in Dupare compared to the rest of the district, where a third of a school population is usually found in P1. The introduction of a kindergarten in the village (despite its irregular opening hours) probably played a role in this. Registers showed that in the preceding school year (2004-2005), P1 had initially counted over 45 pupils. According to local accounts, many parents had taken their children out of P1 during the school year and enrolled them into the kindergarten. Many of the children who would have been enrolled in Primary 1 for 2005-2006, were now in the kindergarten. This kindergarten is privately owned by the Early Childhood Development Centre in Wa; parents pay 20.000 at the beginning of the year (almost 2 euros) for their children to attend. At the time of the study, 84 children were enrolled in the Dupare Kindergarten (37 boys/47 girls).

Seven children from Dupare were registered in kindergarten, primary or JSS at the so-called Parish school St Augustine's, approximately 4 km from the village. This school had opened in 1996; at the time of the research 337 pupils were enrolled in the primary classes of this school. These children came from Bulenga as well as the surrounding villages. 7 trained teachers were employed at this Parish school, which was by far the greatest number of teachers in any school of the district. Unlike Dupare Islamic Primary, and other primary schools in Bulenga, St. Augustine's charged a fee of 80.000 cedi in addition to more common fees levied by the PTA and the food programme. However, this fee was only levied for children from outside the Bulenga community; according to the staff, this was because the Bulenga community had assisted in building the school.

Dupare Islamic Primary had four government teachers (of whom one trained teacher, one untrained teacher and two Arabic teachers), and one unpaid teacher. The head master was a Dupare native, from the Chief's clan, who now lived in nearby Bulenga. The untrained teacher was following a teaching course through distance learning. His English, however, was poor due to a long stay in Francophone Africa. The two (paid, but untrained) Arabic teachers were literate in Arabic, but not in English. They both lived in neighbouring villages. Ibrahim was the fifth teacher at the school during the research; he was unpaid. He had not been trained formally, but he had worked in a catholic school for a long time, where they had taught him several teaching methods and children's songs. At the time of the research he was very active in teaching as well as in organising after-school activities for "boy scouts". He hoped that the community, through the PTA, would start paying a compensation for his services.

Until about six months before the fieldwork took place, Animata, my interpreter from Bulenga, had been teaching as a volunteer at the school. Animata, who had completed Senior Secondary School in Wa, but who had not managed to continue her education, had received a small financial compensation as well as some training through the “Rural Education Volunteer Programme” by Action Aid. It had been the programme’s objective that the community would take over the responsibility for paying the volunteer teacher after the end of the programme. However, for some reason or other, this had not occurred and she had decided to stop teaching. Apart from Ibrahim, who was originally from another area in the region, all teachers were from Dupare, Bulenga or another neighbouring village. The kindergarten was led by the headmaster’s wife.

In Dupare, there was also a night school for local literacy, but it was not in operation during the study. Various reasons for its temporary closure were given by the teachers, including the relatively low temperature at night during this time of the year, a lack of kerosene for the lanterns and disagreements among the teachers. Several cattle boys, who did not attend formal school, said they usually attended night school; this was also the case for girls whose fathers refused to send them to school.

Another form of education in Dupare was the Koran school, where Koranic laws and prayers were taught to children, though not regularly. Vocational training (and apprenticeships) was difficult to find in Dupare, some children had left the village to attain this type of training in Wa, or sometimes in Bulenga.

1.3.3 Overview research villages

All villages were located in relatively remote areas with few facilities in terms of health care, communications and transport. The research village in the UWR was situated within a more fertile and less densely populated area than the first research villages in the UER. Another important difference between the villages in the two regions was their structure; in the UER, the villages were dispersed and boundaries unclear, but in the UWR the village was nuclear.

All villages were situated in areas with low educational attainment figures, compared to the rest of Ghana. No more than a dozen parents could be found in any of the villages who had completed at least primary education. Dupare, despite its remote location, probably had the largest group of educated adults. Furthermore, the regions are characterised by low numbers of people who are formally employed. Statistics show that in the Upper Regions less than 5% is employed, and it can be assumed that they are found mainly in the larger urban centres.

Both districts had estimated Gross primary enrolment rates of around 60% (this data comes from the Ghana Educational Service in Bawku and in Wa, 2003/04). Yet, these are likely to have gone up since then. In all schools there was a strong concentration of pupils in the lowest class (in UER this was primary 1, in Dupare this was kindergarten). Overall, class sizes and shares of girls in particular, decreased in relation to class level. This reflects trends that could be observed on district levels as well. It appeared that this unequal distribution of pupils over classes was to a large part due to increased admission rates at the most recent enrolment period. However, repetition in the lowest classes, as well as high levels of drop-out, further explains this situation. Registers from Kugri and Pialogo indicated that the introduction of the food programme had created explosive admission rates. Apparently, many of these children had dropped out within a few years.

In all schools there was an overrepresentation of boys in the three highest classes, while in the lower classes, the ratio was equal or even reversed. The overall gender ratio for all schools was approximately 60:40 (boys:girls). Statistical data obtained from the GES in Garu and Wa shows that these patterns are representative for the research areas. They are higher, however, than the averages for the regions (UER and UWR).

It was observed that especially the most remote schools did not have sufficient government-appointed teachers. Dupare Islamic Primary had two Arabic teachers who were appointed by the government, but they were illiterate in English and could only teach Islamic subjects. These observations indicate how remoteness can affect the quality of the school; this seems mainly due to teachers' unwillingness to work at schools further than about 12 km from (semi-) urban centres. In Dupare the pupil-teacher ratio was more positive, but this was also due to the relatively low number of pupils who had actually entered the primary school. The number of trained teachers in the school was especially low in comparison to the neighbouring "parish school", which was also attended by children from Dupare. In all schools there were volunteer teachers (community members) helping out, in most cases they were financially supported by the parents.

Non-formal education activities were present in two villages. It was observed that these non-formal education forms sometimes worked as a bridge school for older children who had not been enrolled in primary school. Another important non-formal education form was the apprenticeships for children with and without a formal education. They could be obtained in the children's own area, but it was also recorded that pupils travelled to more southern, and thus more urbanised, areas to learn these practical skills.

1.4 Who goes to school and who does not?

Before entering the central data about the way education is perceived and the way this influences school enrolment and attendance, it is important to get a general idea of the educational situation in Pialogo-Kugri-Vambara and Dupare. Who go and who do not and how can the different groups be categorised in terms of family background, ethnicity, religion and gender? What is the reality behind the enrolment percentages? How is it distributed: are there many families without any children in school or do virtually all families have some of their children in school? Furthermore: is drop-out an issue? Even though such questions in principle have a quantitative character, the qualitative research undertaken did reveal some clear indications. This section is aimed at providing a descriptive background. The underlying causes of the situation observed will be analysed further on.

1.4.1 Pialogo-Kugri-Vambara

In the research in Garu-Tempane, only one household with children of school-going age without any school-going children was identified. Virtually all households thus had at least one child in primary school, JSS or SSS. Several families appeared to have only quite recently enrolled the first child, which was also reflected in the overcrowded Primary 1 classes (or kindergarten). There were several families in which all children had been enrolled in school at some time, but in none of the families had all children continued up to Senior Secondary level or further. Most typical were households that had most children in school (especially the younger ones) and one or two "in the house" or working or living elsewhere in Ghana.

The three religious affiliations were present in the schools (traditionalist, Muslim, Christian). This also applied to all ethnic groups present in the community (Kusasi, Yaares, Bissa and Fulani), but the Fulani seemed underrepresented, especially in the more remote areas of Kugri and Vambara. Despite regional figures showing virtually no gender-gap [Ghana Statistical Service 2005], a strong over-representation of boys in the higher classes could be observed. However, not many girls could be identified among the non-school going children in the village. We were told that girls were often living with relatives or working outside the region, usually in the south.

The socio-economic picture in relation to education is interesting. The economic status of a household was no guarantee for the education of its children. There were poor households with (virtually) all children in school. It was not unusual that families without livestock, living in small huts without tin roofs (a sign of wealth) had all children in school and even some in secondary institutions; yet in this respect it should be questioned whether their current economic conditions had been influenced by the costs of investing in the education of their children. At the same time, for example, most children of the clearly two “better-off” households in Pialogo (evident from the possession of cattle, motorbikes, personal wells, fridges, etc) were not attending school during the study. Alternatively, it can not be denied that social stratification does play a role in education patterns. In many cases the “native” volunteer teachers in the schools were both born in, or closely related to, the chief’s clan, a lineage which traditionally has access to good resources. A more detailed analysis of the relation between the financial situation of households and their opportunities and/or willingness to invest in education, will be given later on.

Despite its remote location and non-participation in food-programmes, school enrolment was relatively high in Vambara. In contrast to Pialogo and Kugri, community members, who were randomly selected for interviews, stressed that all children present in the community were - since recently - attending school and it was indeed difficult to identify children who were not.

1.4.2 Dupare

In Dupare, it can be estimated from the low number of pupils in the school in Dupare, compared to the size of the village, that enrolment percentages of children of primary school age were below 50%. This was further confirmed by prominent community members. The chief representative’s son, for example, said: “Yes there are many children who do not go to school here, even more than those who go. Some will go later, some will never go.” It should be noted, however, that the malfunctioning (privately set-up) kindergarten was overcrowded with over 80 children. In fact it had taken on the role of primary 1, especially because the head teacher (whose wife operated the kindergarten) generally requested pupils to pass through kindergarten before entering school.

The division of school-going and non-attending children showed some interesting characteristics in Dupare. No Fulani children were enrolled in the school; the two large Fulani families living on the edge of the village had not enrolled any of their children. The few Dagarti families, the other ethnic minority group in the village, however, appeared to show patterns similar to those of the Wale majority; one or a few children per household were enrolled. According to the villagers, there was only one family in the village who had sent all children to school; the PTA chairman’s family. As we will see later on, however, most of his children were attending a different (more expensive) school, outside the village. It should be taken into account, however, that there were more households in

the village with all young children in school (or kindergarten), but the PTA chairman's household was the only family with also older children all still in school.

Children from Muslim and "animist" background as well as some of the Christian Dagarti children were among the Dupare School children. Children from all village clans were represented in the school. It was remarkable that even between households in the same families/compounds strong differences in terms of educational behaviour could be observed. The son of the chief's representative, for example, one of the wealthiest persons in the community (evident by his large cattle population as well as his recent trip to Mecca), was keen on investing in education and had sent all his youngest children to the Parish school. His father, however, denied his last born daughter (from his seventh wife) an education. Also, in the household where I stayed, stark contrasts could be discerned. Even though one of their family members, the village chief, was working as a nurse in Wa, there were still children in the family who were not attending school. Even in the few households with literate heads or members, not all children were enrolled.

Concluding we can say that similar school attendance patterns could be distinguished in all three villages. Yet enrolment rates were lowest in Dupare, in the UWR. In all villages, most households by far had at least one child in school, yet the two large Fulani families in Dupare formed an exception as none of their children were in school. In all villages, it was rare for all children of school-going age in one household to be attending school, especially if there were several children. The economic and social status of a household seemed to be only weakly related to the school enrolment. In the different settings, it was not uncommon that children from the well-to-do families or the chief's family had either never started school or had dropped out.

It appeared that it was the most common to enrol children who are reaching the age of enrolment. However, in all villages, children of school-going age could be found who were not going to school. Some of them had dropped out, others had never been to school. These cases were by no means exceptional, which suggests that the norm to send every child to school may be very recent (or temporary), but also that many drop out soon after their enrolment. Among the pupils in the lowest class were also children aged 12 or even older. As a teacher commented, "Over here, age does not determine your class." In the lower classes gender ratios were about equal, whilst girls were strongly underrepresented in Primary 5 and 6.

These general observations raise the following questions: which ideas underlie this pattern of sending some, but not all, children to school? Who are the children who are not in school and why are they not in school? Why are the Fulani so underrepresented and why are there so few girls in the higher classes? Why are so many people now enrolling their children, whilst they failed to do this in the past?

Chapter 2

The Community's Perception of Education

“The way our parents suffer... when we grow up, we don't want the same. We want a place where we work for the government.” (Mary, 12, class 5, Pialogo, living with grand parents, parents are labourers in the South).

In the preceding chapter, we have seen that an increasing number of children in the research areas go to school, but that some groups of children remain difficult to reach. We have also seen that certain groups, such as girls and Fulani, are underrepresented in school. Cultural, financial or social factors can partly explain why children do go to school or not. However, it has also become clear that some barriers are more likely to be overcome if parents and children clearly see the benefits in the completion of a formal education [Matz 2003; Kielland & Tovo 2006].

From a development perspective, there are many reasons to attempt to raise basic education figures in poor areas. Plan Netherlands, for example, stresses that it is not only “the intrinsic right of every child”, but that education would also break the cycle of poverty in the four following ways [Plan Netherlands 2005:18-19]:

- As a gateway for economic growth for individuals and societies
- By improving health and nutrition
- By enriching lives directly (e.g. the pleasure from intelligent thought and the empowerment it gives)
- By promoting social development through strengthening social cohesion, promoting democracy.

Yet, especially if compulsory education is not being actively enforced (as is the case in the research areas), parents and children need to see the benefits of education, in order to invest money and efforts. This chapter therefore looks at the purposes of education as formulated by parents and children. In this context, it is also examined what behavioural changes schooling is believed to instil in children. The observed attitudes and perceptions relating to education do not all necessarily lead to low enrolment; they might also be considered to contribute to the growing primary enrolment figures in the area. In Chapter 3 we will look at other factors influencing the (non-) enrolment of children in primary school.

2.1 Parents' reasons for enrolment

We will here first look at the view of the parents, as they are usually the ones who decide if a child is enrolled into primary school or not. In communal meetings and individual interviews in all villages, adults could easily, without too much thought, bring up reasons for sending children to

school. Education was in the first place perceived as a way to achieve economic advancement. In many cases, it was stressed that the current economic situation of the family was problematic, and that change was needed. Many parents commented: “I don’t want the children to be suffering like me.”

In this context children and almost all parents mentioned white collar (*Nasala*³) jobs that could be obtained after completing a formal education. The aspired positions were mainly teacher, nurse and doctor:

Two women in Pialogo, who recently enrolled two boys of their family said, about the future of their children, “Those who attend school, if god bless, they complete and get a job, here or in another area.”

A father in Dupare said: “It can also help us personally, because if a child goes to school, and becomes a doctor, or as a teacher, he can help people in Dupare.”

A mother, the former chief’s wife in Dupare, commented: “I agreed with my husband sending the children to school because it’s good to send your children to school; it can help you in the future. When they get higher, they can get something to help us.”

A father in Kugri who had recently returned from living in the south, and all whose children were in school apart from one ill boy, said (about his motivation to enrol his children in school): “I am praying to the small god that my children will grow up and become big men on the Nasala side (...) If I look at my age mates who sent their children to school, their living condition is good. So I advised myself to send them.”

Only a few respondents mentioned so-called “small jobs” such as carpentry, voluntary teaching and vocational work. Being able to start a business was never brought up in this context. “Good jobs” were clearly associated with white collar and (mainly) government jobs. Improving career chances as a (commercial) farmer was never brought up as a perceived consequence of education. Hardly ever was education described as a way to better farm production, the traditional occupation in the area. Leaving the traditional farming life seemed not to be considered a major problem and it was remarked that educated children could provide for their parents financially instead of through work on the farm. Also, it is common in the area that educated people still exploit some farm land. Illiterate men at a focus group discussion in Pialogo assured me: “Those who have been to school, they even farm more; that is because they hire labourers who work for them.”

Even relatively well-to-do farmers stressed that if they would have been educated, they would have been better off, referring to age-mates who had completed an education and were now gainfully employed. As the following remark from a relatively well to do farmer revealed, educated children can also mean status for the parents. He said: “It is very painful for me that that are no literates in my house. If you have a problem, the literate person in your family will lead you to the *Nasalas*.”

³ *Nasala* can best be translated as governmental or white collar but it is also the word that is used for white people and for the English language. (Ghanaian) government officials working for the GES for example were also called “school *Nasalas*”.

2.2 Benefits for farming

The above comments show a quite negative attitude towards the traditional occupation of farming and a low confidence in farming as a satisfactory way of earning an income. However, it should be noted that in the (more fertile and less densely populated) village of Dupare, ideas about farming were not as negative as in the barren Upper East. In Dupare, ideas varied about the benefits education could have on food production and farming.

A man in a focus group discussion held in Dupare said: “When you get to a certain level, that you are able to read and write and learn about farming skills, you can have better yields. You can read the instructions on pesticides and fertiliser.” Some people referred to certain rumours about the need of an education: “They are saying that, in a certain time, you cannot farm anymore if you have not been to school. In some time to come, farming won’t be a gift anymore.”

Especially in Dupare it could be observed that the educated men who had stayed in the village were not the most successful farmers. Respondents confirmed this, but sometimes blamed their “lazy characters” and said it was not the education as such that had made them this way. As one man (uneducated, with small children, no animals) said: “Some literates, through education, when they farm they get better yields. But some don’t even farm, they are not serious. But some are serious.”

Yet, also in Dupare, negative opinions could be heard about the future of farming. A Dagarti woman commented: “Farming is good, but involves a lot of energy; you grow old quickly. Someone with a Nasala job will be healthy and live long.” Her neighbour added: “I encourage them to go to school, because they can be useful people when I am dead. Only farming cannot make a good living.”

In the literature on education in Ghana, mention has been made of a fear for alienation of the traditional ways of living among parents as an obstacle for universal access to formal education [Care International 2003]. The comments presented above challenge this idea or at least imply that such ideas may be changing in Ghana. Also, when we asked whether parents were afraid that their children would not learn how to farm if they would go to school, this was strongly denied. Parents stressed that children could learn more traditional skills after school hours and in weekends. The following record of a conversation gives an impression of a representative opinion:

Researcher: “Are you not afraid that your school going children won’t be able to farm well?”

A father of young children in Dupare: “It depends on the individual child. Some children even farm to further their education when their parents die.”

Researcher: “But if they are in school, they cannot practice their farming skills.”

Father: “Normally, after closing, they come home to farm and see how parents farm.”

Researcher: “Is it not a problem when the farm is far away from the house?”

Father: “No. They can farm in weekends and during holidays. Some of the school children farm even better than those who are not in school.”

It hence appears that despite the fact that education was so strongly associated with the *nasala* (government/ white people’s) world, alienation of children from their traditional occupation was never brought up by parents as a negative aspect of education. In response to hints about such a possible alienation from the farm work and agriculture, parents stressed that those in school were helping their parents on the farm outside school hours and no parent complained about school

children refusing to do so. “When a child comes home from school, it will learn how to farm. That is how we eat. The girls, every girl learns how to sow, how to wash bowls, and how to prepare food.”

Farming skills and schooling were considered to be two separate forms of education. Most parents stressed that learning how to farm was in the first place the responsibility of the family, not the school. Mo (44) in Dupare said: “Farming is from our ancestors. We teach our children how to grow their food. It’s like a school, but we do it.”

Only in rare cases did parents refer to the subject “agric” that is taught in school and said that formal education could help the family farm. A father in Kugri said: “Yes the school children tell us about the subject *agric*. Even if the child comes back to farm, it will be able to use it.”

The illiterate parents didn’t seem particularly concerned about their farm’s future, even if all their children were in school. Parents stressed that some children would either drop-out and if - albeit unlikely - all children would manage to get *Nasala* jobs, they would send money or come to the farm when the parents become too old. As the following remark illustrates, parents usually had confidence in the loyalty of their children. A woman in Pialogo, who had struggled to enrol all her children in school, said: “Now that the government is saying that we should put all children in school, by God’s power, it will work out well. If the kids can continue they won’t leave us behind. If my husband had attended school, life wouldn’t have been like this...”

The way in which the school system in (Northern) Ghana accommodates child work might play a role in this. Primary school closes around one o’clock, which means that children can farm or do household work in the afternoon. Also, especially in Garu-Tempane, fields are normally situated close to the house, which makes helping out by school children more likely. On the other hand, Senior Secondary School (and possibly training college and a formal job) means leaving the village, only to return in weekend or holidays.

Parents with another, traditional occupation (besides farming) saw education as an additional asset rather than an obstacle to learning this trade. The comments made by a traditional medicinal herbalist with school-going children, about his successor, reflect this: “I have inherited this work from my father. I, in my turn, will teach it to one of my children. I have to select one of them who is observant. It can be one who is in school. It will be very good if he can identify the herbs and write down the names.” This observation shows parallels with data collected in Burkina Faso [De Lange 2007] showing that literacy can indeed be seen as beneficial in the conservation of traditional (animist) rituals.

2.3 Alternative benefits

Besides these perceived benefits, which relate to future income-earning opportunities, most people also mentioned other, more instrumental or intrinsic expected gains. Firstly, people referred to the practical benefits of knowing how to read and write, especially for activities outside the village or contacts with the outside world (reading signboards, reading letters, speaking English with Ghanaians from other ethnic groups.) Adults emphasised that they had seen other people benefit from education and that they therefore regretted that they were illiterate themselves. These utterances all referred to a growing exposure to the literate world and also highlight the fact that in Ghana many languages exist, that the own linguistic area is rather small and the fact that people they can depend on, often do not speak their language. In this way, literacy was associated by many

with freedom and independence. Yet, benefits mainly referred to life outside the own village or were associated with projects set up by NGOs or government (such as programmes of traditional birth attendants). The following remarks were made by illiterate community members on the benefits of education that are beyond getting a “Nasala job”:

A woman during a gathering in Pialogo: “If you travel and you cannot read the signboards, you can get lost”.

Another woman: “I am a TBA (Traditional Birth Attendant). If I were literate, I could register the dates of birth.”

Women in women’s group, Pialogo: “If you go to the clinic, those who are educated can talk to the nurses. They speak English, we don’t.”

A father: “We are being cheated because we are uneducated! That’s why we want our children in school.”

Father, relatively poor, Vambara: “The educated person will have personal freedom ... If you can read and write, you can have secret letters and just keep them for yourself.”

A woman in Dupare: “Today, the world has changed. If they travel, they will have problems.”

Intrinsic benefits largely referred to the influence education would have on the personal and social development of a child. Especially women stressed that education would allow children to develop mentally in a more general sense. Many illiterate parents considered knowing how to read and write a precondition for a complete “eye-opening”. In a way they acknowledged “the pleasure of intelligent thought”, that Plan mentioned as a benefit of education. This sentiment was not limited to younger people:

A grandmother in Kugri: “I sent him to school to add sense.”

A mother in Pialogo: “We don’t want our children to be blind like we are. We are blind in today’s world.”

In Vambara, an elderly widow told me: “Now, everyday people are talking about education. Eye opening is good, even if you don’t get work doing. Yes your eyes can also be opened without the book, but that will be only half.”

It appeared that these ideas were for a part based on messages spread in sensitisation campaigns, but also on observations made in their own households. Virtually all parents with children in school confirmed that they had observed changes in the school-going child, compared to their out-of-school siblings. A mother in Dupare, with 2 children in school and several out of school, commented: “Yes, the child in school has changed. The thinking is different. Those who are not in school, their aim is to play, play and sleep.”

However, especially mothers were keen to emphasise that “those staying at home” were not less appreciated. A mother of nine children (some educated, some not) in Dupare, had certain ideas about children in school and out of school and stressed that those working on the land were indispensable: “Those going to school are wiser than those who farm. But it’s because of those farming that I am not starving!”

Even those with few or no children in school, often due to money problems or disease, praised the benefits education would have. Sam (Pialogo, 5 children, none in school, alcohol problem):

If there is a uniform and there is food, it will be good to send your child to school. Nowadays, if you are not educated, there is a problem and you will have to rely on the educated. They say it is possible for every child in this modern world to have its eyes opened (...) If you have a child and you do send it to school, it is useless because it does not have its eyes opened.

2.4 Benefits for “development”

References were made to the development of the village as a whole, in addition to the developments at child- or family level. The references seemed to mainly entail the powerful positions an educated person might fill. Educating village children means gaining influence on an administrative level. In Kugri, the chief, uneducated himself, appeared to see clear benefits in educating his community members: “It is very important; without education there is no development for the community. If one of us can become a president, DCE (district chief executive) or vice president, that will be very good for the village. So it’s better to go to school.” A father in Kugri added: “They (=educated people) are the very people to write down that we are lacking a clinic. If we lack anything in this community, they will be able to help us.”

In Dupare too, references were made to “development”, especially in a few group discussions held with parents, in particular fathers. Some of them seemed to have adopted the discourse of the state, and mainly stressed the benefits the entire society would have from an educated population: “We need educated people so that there will be some people to develop this country Ghana.”

Hardly ever though was education brought up as a powerful instrument for organising villagers to improve their position. In Dupare, some references were made to the (paid) activities a few educated men in the village carried out for government or NGOs. They mainly referred to the SMC (school management committee) chairman, for example, who had worked for the national census and election committees as well as to those who were now working as volunteers for Plan, and were setting up a programme in the area.

2.5 Benefits according to children

For many children in school it was the main aim to get a white collar job and earn money and “get an easier life than our parents.” Especially the children from the most deprived families saw education as the main way to get some financial security in the future. In the children’s views too, government jobs, as well as practical consequences, played a role. The following comments from children give an impression of their perception of education and their motivations.

Habiba (boy, 13, class 5, Pialogo): “I am very serious about school. If you go to school and your father is not alive, you will not suffer.”

Seidu (16) enrolled himself when he realised the importance of school at the age of about 12. He clarified: “I decided to go because when I was in the house and people would send us a letter, other people had to read it and they would know all our secrets”.

Habiba (class 5): “I don’t want to be farming in the future, because it is tiring work. That’s why I want to go to school.”

Awinbi, who started school at age 16 after coming back from the south, kept both future options in mind: “If god bless, I get through. If not, I will be a farmer.”

Children who were not in school, usually also had clear ideas about the benefits of an education.

Oufeda, who grew up as a maid living with relatives (12, Dupare, son of the chief’s representative), said: “When I see school girls, I want to be like them. They are different. When they are walking and they something written on the roadside, they can understand it.”

A Fulani boy (13) in Dupare too, who had never been to school, said he wanted to go to school to be employed. “I don’t want to be looking after cattle continuously. I want to be a teacher or a Koranic teacher.”

In Kugri, two boys (14 and 15 years, herding cows) were strongly motivated to go to school, but their parents refused. One of the boys said: “If you don’t go to school, they can cheat you and you cannot read signboards. That’s why we are very serious about school. We don’t mind we will have to be in class with the small children.”

2.6 Views of educated parents

In all villages, there were a few (male) parents, who had received some years of primary schooling in the past. The degree to which they felt they had benefited from their own education varied. They all agreed, however, that it had made them more motivated to send all their own children to school. A father in Pialogo, with three years of Primary schooling, said: “No, I don’t see any benefits of the education, only my children are benefiting from it, because I have sent them to school.”

A blind father in Dupare, on the other hand, who had enjoyed 5 years of education in the past, was certain to have benefited from it and hence derived the benefits of education from his own experience.

Still, these five years have benefited me. It’s because of that that I do not joke about education for my children. For example, when I travelled to Tamale a while ago, I lost my ID card. Someone found the card and it’s through education that I got it back. But it’s not just that, when I go to hospital, it helps. You can construct some broken sentences to save yourself. Education is good, that’s why I don’t allow my children to sit in the house. Education helps you to know a lot of places.

2.7 Benefits of only primary education?

A few important observations should be taken into account when analysing the comments made by the parents. The value attributed to education such as “opening minds” and the way it would make travel, business and hospital visits easier, could be understood as references to the merits of *elementary* education. Most initiatives and education targets similarly focus on these basic forms of education. The UN MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), for example, aim at getting all children in school up to at least Primary 5. Many other efforts aim at a minimum of six years of primary

school for every child. During this study, however, it became clear that the respondents (children as well as parents) regarded 5 or 6 years of schooling rather useless. It appeared that the majority considered SSS (12 years of schooling) the minimum requirement.

This idea was further confirmed by the fact that young people who had stopped their education during or after completion of Junior Secondary School were consistently called “drop-outs” and were usually categorised as “illiterates”. According to many parents “they are still blind, only less blind than we are.” It was repeatedly stated that the money spent on the education of these “drop-outs” was largely wasted money. Not only the fact that they had not been able to find the desired white collar-job, but also the belief that they would not be able to read and write well, made parents hardly value the education of these people.

A father attending the PTA meeting in Pialogo remarked, “SSS (12 years of schooling) is the minimum. It’s because of the poverty that we do not continue.” A village elder (with some years of education) added, “When they get to class 5, that’s when the education starts.”

The comment of a relatively well-to-do father in Pialogo not only shows the status that is attached to having a literate person in the house; it also indicates that this father considers his children who enjoyed more than 9 years of school “illiterate”:

I enrolled three of my children, but they ran away to Kumasi. They completed primary school and went to JSS, but they failed JSS and ran away. I have tried and I have failed. I want to have a literate person in the house, but I have failed. It’s painful not to have a literate person in the house.

His neighbour, also a relatively well-to-do farmer said: “completing Primary and JSS has no benefits. All it means is that you get yourself into debt... That’s what happened to me.” When asked if learning how to read and write wasn’t a benefit, he responded, “He would not have failed if he could read and write, would he?”

A Fulani widow, however, in a very difficult financial situation, was one of the few who considered finishing only Primary school beneficial, albeit on the false assumption that one could become a volunteer teacher after primary school. “If you complete P6 it’s good. You can become a volunteer teacher. We pay them 3000 every term.”

The utterances of an old man, whose two oldest children were in JSS and now working in “Kumasi” show his hopes that they would continue their education, as well as the clear belief that completing even JSS was not very relevant. I asked him if he believed he had wasted the money he had spent on their education. He responded, “I have not wasted it. I know that they still continue. If you do your work and you don’t finish it. You have to go back and finish!”

During the discussion the impression was created that this strong association between literacy and white collar jobs is changing, which might be related to the fact of growing enrolment figures in the country. A father who said that the costs were too high to enrol all his children into school, remarked: “When you travel, you will benefit and also in the past you could sell your produce locally in the village. Today you have to go to markets where the sometimes have written down the

prices.” His wife added: “In the past you could be a seamstress or hairdresser without any schooling. Today they only take you as an apprentice if you can read and write.”

It should be kept in mind that finding a formal job as the main motivation behind school enrolment also has its downside. The percentage of the population that will in reality find a salaried, formal job is much smaller than the amount of formally educated people (only about 5% of people in the Northern Regions are formally employed). Some people had already faced this reality. Zacharia’s (18) father, for example, told me, “I sold bullocks for the education of my children. Now some completed and cannot find jobs. How do I get my bullocks back?”

Nevertheless, overall most people were still quite positive about the job prospects of their children (those with a secondary education). Even Zacharia’s father was not discouraged to enrol his other children; even his youngest children were in school. He said: “If we enrol all, maybe one will turn out with good results. School is just like farming. You start sowing when it rains. Some germinate, some don’t. You cannot say because last year there were low yields, you stop farming. When a child is struggling, you have to support it.”

During a focus group discussion with fathers of children in kindergarten, they also acknowledged that not all children will become “teachers and doctors”. Yet they added: “because of hope, we enrol many.” A family in Dupare with many children, who had only recently started sending their children to school, explained why they now had *all* their children in school. “At first we did not send the children. Now, we still carry their burden. If results after JSS are no good, we will send them to do hairdressing.”

2.8 Who/what is the motivator?

Both Christian and Muslim parents said that their religious leaders encouraged them to send their children to school. In fact, the message to educate children came from all directions: from religious leaders, from the Nasala people (government officials) and the “whites”. One man in Pialogo explained: “In the mosque, they advise us to enrol all children and also when we meet literates, they say the same thing to us.” Awinbi (16, class 1): In the mosque, they normally say that if there is a child in the house, you have to make sure that it goes to school.” Christian churches have also long played a role in education, by building schools as well as by promoting education during sermons. However, as one man explicitly admitted, people did not automatically follow the advices given: “In church they say, we should send all children to school. I will agree to them, but I will know my own decision”.

In addition, the officials from the district’s Ghana Education Services visited communities to “sensitise” community members on the importance of education. In Pialogo and Kugri, such meetings, which focussed specifically on girl child education, were observed. Many of the “benefits” brought up by the officials to encourage enrolment were similar to those mentioned by parents in interviews. No “sensitisation meeting” was held during my stay in Dupare, but respondents stressed that they had repeatedly taken place in the past few years. Notwithstanding the low enrolment rate in the village it was commonly stated that: “They don’t need to come again, we know about the importance of education”. A Dupare mother said: “I heard about the new law:

that we will be taken to court if we do not send our children to school. But there is no need to cane me again, as I have already caned myself about not sending my children to school.”

Radio was also mentioned as a source of information about the benefits of education. As one informant said, “On the radio we hear plenty of information about education. They say it is very fine and they say everyone should send their child to school.” Despite the remote and isolated nature of Kugri and Vambara, the education campaign appeared to have reached these communities. A woman commented: “It’s now compulsory. In meetings and radio they tell us that you cannot keep your child in the house.” Even though basic education has been compulsory in Ghana for many years, several parents stressed that “education was now really compulsory”, implying that this had not been the case before. These findings suggest that putting emphasis on the obligations of parents to send a child to primary school can make a difference, even if these laws are not enforced. In focus group meetings, community members even suggested to punish (fine or jail) parents who were refusing to send their children to school. Several parents themselves considered it to be insufficient to leave it up to the parents to decide about enrolment for their children.

2.9 Perceptions of quality

Chapter 2 provided some information on the “perceived benefits of education.” Not much is known about the perceived quality; i.e. the degree to which, in the eyes of the community, objectives will be reached through school attendance. Do they believe the children will actually be able to read and write sign boards and letters and eventually get the desired Nasala job by attending school? This is important, as it is mainly the *perceived* quality (which is of course strongly related to the real or objective quality) that influences decisions of parents and children about enrolment and attendance.

According to many parents, as well as teachers, not much was needed to assure quality education. As the following remark (man, Pialogo), illustrates: “As long as teachers are present and teach, and the children have food, there will be learning”. Yet, taking into account that even these standards are not always attained in the research villages, do the parents and children feel that there is enough learning going on?

Complaints were heard about different aspects; in Pialogo, parents complained about the lack of a kindergarten as well as the fact that only a few classrooms were closed structures. In Vambara people were disappointed that there was no school lunch served (due to the bad roads leading to the village). In others schools complaints could be heard about the late or insufficient delivery of grains for lunch by the NGO.

The main criterion, however, for community members to determine the quality was the number of teachers. In Pialogo, people were quite satisfied with the total amount of six teachers. In other villages, all more remote, people complained about the lack of teachers that had been sent to them. According to teachers as well as some parents, Ghana Education Services had sometimes sent them teachers, but they had always left soon after their arrival: “Some come and leave when they see it’s a village. They say they have to prepare something and will come back, but we never see them again.” Teachers and PTA members blamed the absence of teacher bungalows for this (yet in

this sense it should be noted that Kugri, for example, did have an empty bungalow that was originally built for another project).⁴

Parents only rarely distinguished between volunteer, untrained and trained government-paid teachers when talking about quality. Yet the fact that they had to pay for the community appointed teachers with PTA fees was brought up as an obstacle. They therefore preferred government paid teachers.

The large number of pupils in the lowest classes in all villages in Garu Tempane was not often brought up, yet it was mentioned with regard to the apparent need for a day nursery. Some parents even considered large classes as advantageous, because it would “prevent teachers from being lazy.”

In Kugri and Vambara parents’ assessment of the quality of education was more critical than in Pialogo. However, people generally felt that the quality had improved over the last few years, a view which was mainly based on the arrival of more (volunteer) teachers. Whilst previously hardly any lessons were taught, there were now at least some teaching activities, albeit irregular and by uncertified teachers. Several parents said that the employment of these new teachers had been a reason for sending their children to school. A mother told us: “There has been a big change in the school. In the past there was only one teacher for six classes. Now they will learn and tell their parents. That’s why there are now more children in school.”

The PTA and SMC chairmen in Kugri appeared more critical than “ordinary parents”, which could also be related to the fact that they were educated themselves. They had told us about their children not being able to proceed to (junior) secondary schooling, because the level was too low. Remarkably, this was not frequently brought up by other parents, probably because many parents were not aware of this because they only had children in the lowest classes.

Even though not many parents openly disapproved of the education offered, more implicit ideas about the quality could be discerned from other utterances and attitudes. In the first place, the fact that parents considered only secondary school graduates “literate” reflects their idea that most children will not or only poorly be able to read, write or speak English after completion of primary school. Also, the numerous references to the expectation that only few children (“the smart ones”) would be able to complete primary or JSS successfully, indicates that it is anticipated that the education as it exists in the village only suits a minority of the children. Apparently, aspects that an outsider may characterise as indicators of poor quality education were more or less accepted as a given situation and they were not brought up as de-motivating to send children to school.

The fact that the relevance and usefulness of an education is mainly seen in the higher education and the white collar job can be partly explained by the low expected yields of primary or JSS education. It is not surprising that in such a context, in which elementary schooling is believed to

⁴ Education officials in Garu confirmed that appointing teachers to remote rural villages such as Kugri and Vambara was problematic. They admitted that they often did not even try to send teachers to remote places, because they would be afraid of “scaring off” teachers and losing them for the district.

have hardly any long-term consequences - and secondary schooling is considered a privilege for few - not all bets are put on education.

In Dupare many people considered the quality of education offered in their village low; the better results gained at the nearby “parish school” seemed to have created more awareness about the poor quality in their village school. Most parents admitted that after primary school, it should not be expected that the child could read or write. After JSS, this was also not sure, but some people pointed out that some people after JSS, such as Ali, were indeed able to read and write. Some parents openly declared that it did discourage them that after Primary 6, children would not be able to read and write. A father said: “When you are farming alone, you think about your child who is idle in school, but still not able to read and write. We have not yet taken children out of school, but maybe it will happen in the future.” Fathers also complained that the poor teaching could lead to drop-out: “Because of poor teaching, many children get discouraged and sometimes they stop.”

Teachers in Dupare said they had received complaints from parents about the low number of children actually gaining Nasala jobs, which was not entirely justified, as the school had only been open since 1989. A (former) volunteer teacher in Dupare:

Parents tell you, when they don’t want to pay fees, that since school opened, no-one has gone to tertiary institutions. We tell them they are still in the process. Some are at poly-technical school or a training college, but it’s true that only a minority goes to college. But it’s like farming, even if we farm, not everyone will have a good harvest.

It was difficult to gain insights on children’s perception of the teaching. Perhaps because having a critical view is generally not encouraged in the schools, few critical remarks could be noted in this field, both from school-going and non-enrolled children. Nevertheless, some school children acknowledged that teaching was much better in the nearby urban centres. The main difference, they found, was the higher number of teachers in larger towns. In Kugri girls complained about the physical punishment for late comers by the (male) class prefects. “Both boys and girls come late, but it is mainly girls they will beat. Boys are the majority, they will tease us. Teachers do not cane us.”

Ideas about education could also be derived from the fact that around seven children from Dupare were attending school at the “Parish school” instead of the village school. The Parish school levied higher fees (7 euros a year) than Dupare Islamic Primary and it was a Catholic school. All the people from Dupare who had sent their children to this school were Muslim, yet they were generally better off. Their choice for the Parish school was mainly based on a perceived quality difference between the two schools. In a group discussion with parents of pupils in the village school, most people agreed that children would learn more in the Parish school than in their village school. This was attributed to the large number of teachers, but also, repeatedly, to another factor: discipline. Strikingly, this “discipline” was not only mentioned with regard to the way children were educated but also the way relationships with parents were maintained: “At the parish school, there is discipline. Parents are forced to help building latrines, and if you refuse you have to pay money. It is a better school.” And, “The parish school is different. The parents have to do communal labour, if you refuse you pay 20.000 or the child is sent home.”

The Chief's representative's son (well-to-do, but illiterate) had also recently enrolled his children in the Parish school, despite the fact that he was the vice PTA chairman of the village school. He explained:

Over there, is discipline. If one is absent, he will get a severe punishment, so the child will be the first person to want to go. At first I had enrolled my son here. Somebody else sent his child to the Parish school. I asked them both to write the English alphabet. The one in the Parish school was able to do it perfectly, but my son was not able to write at all.

2.10 Concluding observations

The data show that even in remote areas such as Kugri, Vambara and Dupare, primary education was considered as a clear option by most people. By the majority it was considered to be a way to ameliorate their situation. A family member with a government job or even a powerful (administrative) position was believed to be a great advantage. Other reasons given referred to travel, trade and other activities outside the farm and village. Even though in most villages the quality of teaching, safety in the schools and presence of teachers was questionable, it was better than it had been in the years before. It appeared that the emphasis put on primary schooling now being *really* compulsory, together with reduced costs and the influx of volunteer teachers, had created the high enrolment number in the last few years.

It should be noted, however, that people usually believed that only senior secondary or tertiary education would lead to valuable yields (economically, instrumentally or intrinsically). An education shorter than 9 years was barely valued. Not only for economical benefits, but also in order to attain sufficient literacy and numeracy skills, a primary (or even basic, 9 years) education was regarded insufficient. Also for daily life, such benefits were considered very meagre because it was considered unlikely that a child would be able to properly read and write after primary or JSS.

Conversations with children in the three highest classes also indicated that their motivation was purely in succeeding and getting the government job. Going far in education was seen as a way of securing a better future and especially the poorest children seemed very motivated. It was anticipated by parents that only a few children would manage to succeed in school. Ironically, the prevailing expectation that most children would fail in school, and drop out before finishing at least Senior Secondary School, often motivated parents to enrol many children. This expectation was not considered a problem by all parents, because it was considered convenient to have some children full-time on the farm. As the PTA chairman in Pialogo put it, "You have to enrol them all. Normally some stop. Those who stop will do the farming for me." Some children seemed to have adopted this view. When I asked Awinbi, for example, (primary 1, 16 years old) if he planned to send his future children to school, he responded, "I will enrol them all. Those who pass, it's their luck. Those who fail and stop, that's their luck".

Even though most parents stated that it was desirable to enrol many children, having *all* children in school was not considered the best strategy by everyone. Especially in the more fertile village of Dupare, parents conveyed that it was inconvenient regarding the work on the farm and the costs involved with (secondary) education and that "keeping some in the house" was the best option (see next chapter on child work as obstacle to education).

The reasoning of parents in decisions on education hence appeared to differ from the “official discourse” as advocated by the government and international community. In some cases the motivation of enrolling children into school was indeed based on the practical benefits all people can have of education for daily life in a modernising world. In most cases, however, basic education was appreciated as possibly leading to secondary, tertiary education and a formal job, but was not really valued on its own.

Drop-out occurred mainly in the first year of enrolment as well as in the two highest classes. Dropping-out was described by parents as a somewhat natural selection process, based on the character and “smartness” of the child. According to parents and children, it was often the choice of the child to stop during Primary or Junior Secondary. “Simple refusal” by the youngest children and a desire to earn money elsewhere, were mentioned as common reasons. It was difficult to obtain their own views on the subject, because of their young age. Not continuing to Secondary School was usually attributed to a lack of money or poor results.

It appeared that parents (and children) mainly looked at the amount of teachers and their presence, to determine if a child would learn anything in school. Although people did not often openly criticise the quality of education offered, they were aware that often basic skills would not in all cases be attained by completing primary or even JSS school. It appeared, in many cases, that this made parents less motivated to send children to school.

Parents also looked at the numbers of children from the community who had actually found Nasala jobs, to find out if the schooling in their villages would lead to desired results. The exceptional success stories seemed to be encouraging; the “hope” that perhaps one of their children would succeed was in many cases enough to enrol them in primary school. As the next chapter will show, parents did not always actively try to make children continue their (primary or basic) education. As we will see, keeping a child in school may mean more sacrifices or efforts that are not easily made. The child itself may be unwilling to attend regularly. Also if it reaches an age at which it can do meaningful economic or domestic activities, keeping a child in school calls for different solutions.

The case of mother Mary and her family, in a community quite far from Pialogo primary school, shows a mother’s determination to educate her children and the way she deals with the prospect that only a few children will succeed. Yet it also illustrates her relatively powerless situation as a woman. Out of her five children, the oldest two were living with relatives in Kumasi. Number two and three were enrolled in the village school (not Pialogo) in classes 1 and 3. Her youngest child was too young for school and the oldest son in school had - until recently - lived in the town in Nakpanduri with his grandmother, to attend school. According to Mary, her son was in Nakpanduri because schools were better over there. Yet, when she noticed that her mother (= the boy’s grandmother) was not serious about his school and failed to pay fees and buy pens for him, she decided to take back her boy. She explained: “They wanted to make him take care of the animals over there. Will I let my child be spoiled? No! That’s why I took him back here... I want him to learn. If he learns he can do any white coloured job.”

Yet when I asked her if every child should be in school, she answered: “It’s because of the whites that we send them to school. If you enrol many children, and if one drops

out, it means he doesn't want to be educated. It's no problem." Her accounts about her older children also show the different reasons why children can stop. They were both in school, in classes 2 and 4. The first one was told to stop by his grandfather. "Because I am a woman, I didn't have a hand in it". About the second child: "The other one just refused. I've tried everything. It's his character."



Boys playing in their free time



Children playing outside their local primary school

Chapter 3

Other Factors Influencing Primary Enrolment

We have seen that all parents desire to enrol *many* or *all* of their children in school given the opportunity. Even though many children (of varying ages) have been enrolled in (especially) the last two years, it was still easy to find children of primary school age who had never been enrolled or who had stopped attending. Looking at the data presented in the preceding chapter, it can be anticipated that, in contrast to what is often claimed, the non-enrolment of the child cannot be attributed to “ignorance”, or an idea that there are no benefits to education. Also, fear of alienation of the traditional cultures seems to not be a barrier to education. As we saw above, people did certainly see benefits, yet many did not consider it a priority to send and keep *all* of their children to school. In this chapter, the varying factors that may have influenced this behaviour will be presented on the basis of interviews with parents and children and observations in the villages.

3.1 Recruitment and child agency

Both from the parents’ accounts as well as from the conversations with the children out of school themselves, it could be concluded that decisions concerning school enrolment are, in most cases, made by parents (and more precisely the father or grandfather). An educated older sibling had also played a role in the decision to enrol children in many families. Having said this, it should be noted that children are at times involved. It was clear that the - usually older - children who had left home (and school) to work in the south had usually done so on their own initiative. Also, the numerous older children (>10 years) who could be found in lower Primary, had usually enrolled on their own initiative.

The school calendar, as well as the way in which recruitment takes place, can have an important impact on the numbers of children attending school in a community. In most research villages, the main moment of recruitment was after the long holidays, in September. This was not always considered favourable because it is a busy period on the farm when the help of a child could be beneficial and parents are busy. In Pialogo, it was observed in interviews and registers that children could start school at different times of the year; in other schools it was generally limited to once a year, “in order to avoid chaos”, as a headmaster put it.

As we have seen in Chapter 1, recruitment of children for Primary 1 was not subject to an age limit. In the lowest classes, children of 12 or even older could be identified, in all schools. In Dupare, older children were even expected to go through kindergarten, before starting Primary 1. Even though allowing older children into lower classes might also have negative consequences, it definitely worked positively on recruitment figures as it allowed all children to start school, no matter at what age.

Especially in Pialogo, several older children could be identified who had actively sought their way to school, usually at an older age. In Primary 4, for example, there was Noah, aged 17, who told me his story. He was living with his blind mother and his father's second (widowed) wife who was suffering from epilepsy. His (half-) siblings had all travelled to Kumasi, except for one brother who was attending Senior Secondary School in the nearby village of Tempane. According to Noah, his brother could pay the secondary school fees by working in the holidays on farms in the south. Ironically, the death of his father had allowed him to start schooling in Primary 1 in 2002, at the age of 15, as he said he "wasn't aware that school is good myself. My father did not want my brother to go to school, because there was work in the house to do. I never asked for myself when he was alive, because I was afraid to do so."

Noah had the responsibility for the family's food supply; he farmed millet and some soy beans, but no dry-season gardening. This food production was for family consumption and usually no surplus could be sold at the market. The family had received some help from the director from the blind mission (originally a native to Pialogo) who had recently given them some groundnuts to sow. Also, neighbours sometimes lent out their bullocks to him for ploughing, so he did not have to do all ploughing manually. Obviously, there were quite some financial barriers for Noah. There had been times that he could not pay the requested (PTA) fees, but a teacher had helped him. The uniform he was wearing had been supplied by the district assembly. Noah seemed determined to proceed to Senior Secondary School; he thought he might do like his brother and work in the holidays to pay the fees. He was planning to be a JSS teacher, so that he could go and live in Garu. According to him, his brother might come back by then to stay in the house and care for the family.

So, the fact that older children are allowed to enrol into the first class, makes it possible for some older children to enrol themselves. In this way it raises the chances of an education. On the other hand, it was also observed that parents "waited" with enrolling a child, because age-limits were not adhered to anyway. Not only did this lead to classes with pupils of varying ages, it also weakens social norms on compulsory education for children above the age of six. As we have seen, non-formal education in some cases worked as a bridge school, allowing children to start primary school at the middle or upper level.

3.2 Costs of education

In spite of the introduction of the capitation grant, which was aimed to replace all fees levied, "lack of money" was still the main reason given by parents for the fact that (some of) their children of primary school age were not attending school. Teachers and governmental officials insisted that this could only be a question of "wrong priorities" and seemed to show little understanding for the poverty argument. A female GES official, for example, reacted to parents at a PTA meeting who remarked that it was due to poverty that not all children were in school: "Now there is the capitation grant. You don't have to pay anything, so what is the problem? Only the uniform you have to buy. The child did not ask to be born. You are responsible for it!"

However, several household heads persevered in interviews that the indirect financial costs were the main barrier to education for all their children. This argument was mainly brought up by the poorer households, i.e. those without or with only one or two cows, goats or other livestock and/or without able-bodied men to work the land or successful migrated family members in the south.

Expenses that were mentioned included the costs of uniforms, exercise books and pens/pencils and sometimes, a table and chair for homework. In addition, it appeared that there were still certain fees levied, even though no cases were observed or mentioned of children being sent home for not paying these fees.

A relatively poor father of a ten-year-old boy who had never been to school (and a daughter who was in primary 5): “Costs of the SSS are too high. If costs would not be that high, we would send them all to school. They don’t have anything to do, they just sit at home. They do look after cows in the rainy season, but we could also peg them.”

The cost of a uniform was frequently brought up by parents and children; (30.000 to 50.000 cedi, roughly 2.5 to 4 euros). It should be noted that in the lower classes, many children did not wear the uniform, yet especially in the eyes of the older children (and their parents) not wearing a uniform in school was considered shameful. Since recently, local authorities sponsor “the most in need” by supplying them with uniforms and some children in school had benefited from this programme. In particular the poorest community members stressed that wearing a uniform was important for their children, even though it was not in all cases strictly compulsory. They emphasised that without a uniform, a child would feel different and would run the risks of being bullied or at least stereotyped as a poor child by other children.

A second major cost for parents was the PTA fee, which was charged in all schools to compensate the volunteer teachers for their work; usually an amount of approximately 25 cents per pupil per term (2000-3000 cedi). Even though the introduction of the capitation grant meant the abolition of most of the fees, such as the “sports and culture fees” and “school maintenance fees”, the PTA fees have increased since then. The capitation grant and the parallel education campaign have increased enrolment figures. The resulting lack of teachers has been largely met by volunteer teachers who are paid by the community, through the PTA fees.

Another fee that was still levied in (mainly the higher classes of) all schools was the so-called exam fee, to compensate for the costs for photo-copying and paper for exams. According to the teachers, the capitation grant was not sufficient to cover these expenses. Another cost associated with primary education was the money given to school children to buy porridge or sweets from the women-vendors at the school. Such pocket money for school children was commonly considered as a means to encourage children to go to school and was even observed in very poor households.

The view from school children reveals that even very low costs sometimes posed a problem when there was no structural source of income in the home. Children stressed that paying fees was in particular problematic in the time of the year when farm stocks were running out but harvests were not yet ready for sale. “In the rainy season, even 2000 or 5000 cedi (18 - 45 eurocent) can be a problem. My mother will tell me that she has nothing to sell in the house.” The poorest children appeared very worried about their educational future and often had to rely on gifts of co-villagers and acquaintances, for example with an old uniform. It turned out that, in exceptional cases, some teachers helped these children pay the small fees. A boy in Pialogo, whose father died, for example, told me that his teacher Mary had paid his PTA fees. Overall, it appeared that families in crisis (death of a parent, disease or a handicap), which did somehow not receive governmental level support, could find sending even just one child to school problematic. Enrolling several children in school was considered problematic by a much larger group of poor parents.

Another group of parents, however, stressed that the costs for basic education were low, yet they often referred to the high costs of secondary education as an explanation for not enrolling all children. This awareness of the high costs of secondary schooling, in combination with the assumption as discussed above that basic education as such had no benefits, led to the decision not to enrol a child in school at all. A father in Pialogo, with 2 children in school, 1 child not in school, and relatively well-off, told me: “If I enrol all my children then I can’t take care of them to make them go further ... JSS, and Primary, that is not expensive, it is the SSS and university level that is expensive. Primary and JSS has no benefits, only if you continue.” Apparently, costs at the secondary level also work as an impediment on the primary level, because so little value is attributed to completing primary school alone.

A mother in Dupare explained how school going children put a continuous financial burden on the household: “It’s not easy to send children to school. Last month, 2 came for exam fees, 5000 cedi (45 eurocents) and the one from Wa came for 10.000 (90 cents)! It’s because of those costs that we fear sending all. When they get to a certain point, it will involve costs. It can still be a problem to get 5000, but as compared to other costs, it is not much at all. For example, going to the corn mill costs 3000 cedi (25 eurocents). We use a bowl every day. It’s all the costs together that make it difficult.”

In addition, costs of uniforms and fees levied also posed a problem for children who were very motivated to start school, but whose parents refused to allow them or support them to go. In this way, it directly limited the agency of children with respect to education. Two boys in Kugri, for example, told me about their attempt to enrol themselves in the nearby primary school, which was foiled by the uniform requirement:

One day in November, it was millet harvesting time, we went to the school. We reported ourselves, but the head teacher was not there. The teacher told us to buy a uniform; he said that otherwise it would look like we were just going to our uncle’s house. We still have not found the money for it. That’s why we stay out of school.

A girl in Dupare (12), who had just returned from living with relatives, also felt that it was the costs that stopped her from enrolling herself in school. She, however, was now making a plan to be still able to realise her dream. “I am making a vegetable garden for myself... My uncle gave me some seeds. I will sell the vegetables and use the money for night school. If I do well, may be I can go to primary school later.” A form of agency among children, to overcome these financial barriers to education could be observed in other places too. Children were encountered who had earned money for their uniforms themselves. A girl (15, P5) Kugri: “I got my uniform when I worked for a woman in Garu, selling drinks made of the baobab tree.”

It was also observed that the requirement of “a neat appearance” involved costs which could pose a barrier. The lack of a uniform was often condoned, in the lower classes. It was general consensus, however, that a child could not be sent to school in rags. During my stay in Dupare, one girl was sent home because her hair was too long. It took over a week until she had shaved her hair and returned to school. Buying shaving blades or going to the local hairdresser’s costs money which is often not immediately present. In JSS schools, there were more requirements. At the JSS in Bulenga, it was so-called “flip-flops” that were not allowed. Pupils were requested to wear some

form of proper shoes. During the study, this was the direct reason for Said, born in a poor family with a blind father, to be out of school for almost a week. Relatives in Wa, finally assisted in finding the money to buy him a second-hand pair of sandals at the market so that he could return to school. Concluding, we can say that costs associated with education still play a role in decisions about primary education. People welcomed the “capitation grant” which meant a strong reduction in fees. Yet the resulting influx of many new children and insufficient staffing also meant that PTA fees (to pay the volunteer teachers an allowance) had risen. At the time of study, some officials spoke about financially supporting volunteers. The costs of a uniform constituted a major impediment to enrolment for poor parents, but also for older children who desired to enrol themselves without parental support. Programmes were in place to supply the most in need (such as orphans) with uniforms. It could, however, be more helpful to reconsider the uniform policy in primary schools. Many children were not wearing uniforms anyway, especially in the lower classes and the poorest children were wearing torn uniforms. Finally, it became clear that costs at the secondary level formed an obstacle to primary enrolment. As we saw in Chapter 2, hardly any value was attributed to completing only primary school. Parents were hence likely to invest in and support only the amount of children they could support all the way through (senior) secondary school.

3.3 Child labour

It has been repeatedly shown that child work and low education figures are related problems [Guarcello et al. 2006; The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006]. Reducing child work is considered critical to achieving Education for All. At the same time, it has also been observed that causal links between work involvement and school attendance cannot be definitely established [Guarcello et al. 2006:6]. Also, there are reports that school and work can sometimes be combined successfully and that, in some cases, earning an income can help children to achieve educational goals [The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006]. The relative success of working children in attending school is different across countries. These differences are explained by variations in nature and intensity of work carried out by children, as well as structural distinctions in the way that the education systems accommodate the exigencies of child work [Guarcello et al. 2006:2].

Existing data show that the research areas have high numbers of children performing economic and domestic activities. According to a national census [Ghana Statistical Service 2003] the number of working children in the Upper East Region, represents a little over one in three (34%) of the total population aged 7-14 years. The proportion of males of school going age who are working is 35.3% and that of females is 32.7%. According to this census, almost all of these children are engaged in agriculture (78%); others are involved in production and transport equipment (9%), service work (8%) or sales work (4.4%). According to the census, only 3% of the working children are employed as domestic helpers.

According to the same census, almost 50% of the children aged 7-14 in Wa district (Upper West Region) were engaged in some economic activity. Among the working children in the district, 85.6% of the children were engaged in agriculture and related work. One in twenty were Service Workers (5.8%) and 2.7 per cent were Sales Workers, or were in ‘Production, Transport and Equipment’ and related work.

It is clear that in the studied areas, many children were engaged in economic activities, mainly agriculture. Domestic work in the own home, albeit not a significant part of these statistics, is also known to be a major activity for rural girls [Kielland & Tovo 2006]. In the following section the question is reviewed whether these economic and domestic activities formed an obstacle to education. It will appear that economic status of the family plays a surprising role. As the nature and intensity of child labour is likely to be area-specific, we will present data from the UER and UWR in separate sections.

3.3.1 Child labour in the Upper East Region

Among the poorer households in the UER, household or agricultural tasks of children were hardly ever brought up as a reason for children not being in school. Children and parents alike stressed that non-attending children were “doing nothing” and were “just sitting in the house”. This is not surprising, since these households usually had no or hardly any animals to look after, and often very little cultivable land. Moreover, this idea may be exaggerated due to the season in which the fieldwork took place (there was at that time hardly any work to be done on the farm). Also, girl’s domestic work is often not recognised as real work or labour.

Sometimes, inactivity was brought up as a reason for starting school. Awini, for example, had started going to school (Primary 1) at age 16, a few months before the interview took place. “After I came back from Kumasi, where I worked for relatives, I decided to go to school, because there was nothing to do. I was just sitting in the house doing nothing.”

Through observation in the community, however, it was possible to get more information on the activities of these children and to nuance this idea of idleness. Girls and boys were observed fetching water for their household or for neighbours who would give them a small coin. Another activity frequently observed among boys was driving donkey carts to town, for parents or other community members. Furthermore, boys seemed to enjoy wrestling and chasing birds with catapults. The (few) girls who were still in the village but not in school, seemed to spend more time in and around the house, busying themselves with household chores.

It was quite obvious that better-off households had more tasks for the children that would generate money for the household. The work mentioned included taking the cattle, goats or sheep to drink and graze, and watering the crops. In Pialogo it was stressed that the care for the animals was only needed in the rainy season, when the crops must be protected from the cattle. As could be observed around the village during the study, in the dry season cattle would normally roam around by themselves. Also, the need for herding cattle, also in the rainy season, was appreciated differently, among different families. It appeared that in many cases, children out of school did guard the animals in the rainy season, but in Pialogo this was only given in a few cases as the reason for their non-attendance/non-enrolment. Most families admitted that it was possible to “peg” or “tie” the cattle in the morning until after school-hours when the children would take them out to drink and eat. Otherwise, water, leafs and other food would be collected for them, so they did not have to be taken out into the bush. Distance to a well or other drinking spot also influenced the decisions taken. If the well was far away it would take too much time to do it after school hours.

The different views seemed to depend partly on the size of the cattle population; it seemed that the larger the herd, the higher the chances that it needed supervision, since large herds could not

easily be pegged, tied and fed. The few (better-off) families with the largest herds, however, did not ask to children to mind them. They had usually made arrangements with the Fulani people.

Among the Kusasi (and Yaares) people in Pialogo, herding was considered inappropriate for adults; it was believed that adults would not pay attention to the animals as much as children would. Consequently, it was usually the children who did the herding, even if adults were available. It was believed that Fulani, however, were “created by God to look after animals”, as it was repeatedly stated, though in a somewhat laughing manner. Arrangements between Fulani and Kusasi people normally mean that the Fulani will look after the animals, in exchange for the milk and calves and sometimes some cereal or money. Fear for theft of the cattle, seemed to be an important reason for cattle-owners not to let them roam by themselves or give the cattle to strange Fulani.

It is difficult to determine to what degree herding the cattle prevented the kids from going to school. According to Pialogo’s head master, cattle clearly had a negative effect on education. He said “enlightened” people were increasingly turning away from this traditional way of investment, also due to the difficulties to combine it with the education of children. He said: “As long as there are cattle, not all children will go to school in this village.” Indeed, several cases were encountered, mainly in the more remote areas, where children were not sent to school, or were even taken out of school, because of the care for animals. A boy (14) near Kugri told me: “I was attending and stopped school. I stopped on a day like this. My father told me not to go. He asked me to take care of the cows and sheep. The boy who was taking care of them before had left to Kumasi. In dry season, we now do the onion garden.” This boys’ father confirmed this story, and gave the following explanation that shows both his awareness of the importance of education, but also the practical problems involved:

We know that today your children have to have their eyes opened and that they have to be able to read secret letters. Farming is no good anymore. But you need to select one to look after the animals. We cannot peg them, because the water to drink is far away. They need to go there all day and come back. And also, if nobody is looking after the animals, they get stolen!

Not only the care for the cows was mentioned; several parents stressed that it was convenient to have at least one child in the house to send for errands. Tasks such as giving a message to neighbours, getting fire or fetching water were mentioned. Having a child in the house for such errands was considered convenient, but it was usually not described as indispensable.

Household chores such as preparing food, looking after siblings and cleaning are usually carried out by girls and women. When asked, parents emphasised that girls could help their mothers after school and that school hours were limited to around five hours. Neither was (in Garu-Tenpane) working the land to grow grains for subsistence often mentioned as an obstacle to schooling. It was declared that children could perform these tasks in weekends, after school (after 1pm) and in holidays. In this respect, it is important to note the fact that - in contrast to many other villages in Ghana - most people have fields close to home, which makes it easier for children to combine schooling with helping on the farm.

However, some people, like those without their own ploughing bullocks, explained that they were not always able to organise the work “outside school hours.” They had to “rent” bullocks from

others, which meant that they were dependent on the availability of the bullocks. As all people want to plough at the same time after the rains, they are often obliged to ask their children to help them and take a few days off from school.

Hashim [2005:8], who also studied education in the area in relation to child labour and child migration, made similar observations and made the following, relevant analysis. She considers the likelihood of a child's enrolment as:

An outcome of the different ways in which households were organised, the manner in which household's member's time was occupied and the types of assets they invested in, including human capital. For example, the teachers rarely kept livestock, preferring instead an alternative means of investing their savings. Consequently, they would be less likely to require a child in the house as a cattle-herd. This, coupled with the fact that teachers valued education for education's sake, rather than simply as a means of securing a livelihood meant that children in these households were more likely to be able to attend school.

The following case study from Kugri shows how a child's activities can prevent a child from going to school. Despite the simple housing, these families were not the most destitute: all children we interviewed were from families owning cows as well as well-maintained houses with zinc roofing.

We interviewed three boys (12,13,15) and a girl (15). One of the boys had attended school for a year or so; the girl was doing an apprenticeship with a seamstress in the community. All had their own rice farms, to grow rice to hand to their mother and other father's wives and to sell some to buy clothing. Especially two boys were very keen to return to school. They had already tried to start school, because "we are just sitting in the house, doing nothing. One day, in November, we went to the school but they said we needed a uniform. That otherwise, we would just look like we were going to our uncle's house."

Their parents, in a group discussion, recognised the benefits of education, yet stressed they needed some boys to look after the animals. "We know that today every child needs to go to school. But we select one to look after the animals. We need someone to do that, otherwise someone may steal them. It's not possible for children to do it after school; the drinking water (for the animals) is very far."

This is clearly an example of children who are excluded from education, because their parents feel they need them for alternative activities. This should not be seen as caused directly by poverty; it is rather a consequence of assets present in the household. This situation has been described in literature on child labour. Kielland and Tovo [2006:16] have written: "the more land and livestock, the greater the need for children's help in cultivating the land and tendering the animals. And the more productive these assets are, the more family loses by not exploiting them fully." They concluded:

This means that the poorest households in poor communities, with little or no assets and property, will sometimes not loose much by sending their children to

school (the opportunity costs will be null or low.) Those with slightly more assets, on the other hand, may need their children to make their assets fully productive and are more likely to keep their children working instead of sending them to school (the opportunity costs of children's schooling will be higher than for the poorest). Finally, those with yet more assets may be able to afford hired help and consequently their children will have a greater chance of being sent to school."

This case seems to confirm this theory: the slightly better off have more reasons for keeping a child in the house to work.

3.3.1.1 Child labour migration from the UER

Child labour migration is a common phenomenon in the area. In 2001, it was found that 15% of the child population had migrated out of the village without their parents and that 50% of the households had reported having a child living elsewhere. The migration of a child does not in all cases form an obstacle to its education and in some cases it can even be beneficial in terms of formal or non-formal education [Hashim 2005]. However, in many cases we encountered, child labour migration appeared to be an impediment to attending formal, primary education.

We met several girls who had never been to school, who had missed several years of schooling or who had started at a very late age. In virtually all cases, this was related to a long stay in the south to work as domestic servant, on cocoa farms, or as child carer. Many children said that they had wanted to start schooling in the south, but that their relatives (or parents) had refused to let them. However, it is of course not sure if they would have been in school if they had stayed with their parents.

A 12-year old girl we met in Kugri had recently started schooling again. In fact it was her uncle's "employment" as a volunteer teacher that had motivated her to go back to school. Neither the fact that she did not have a uniform, nor the fact that she was the oldest in her class (P2) had discouraged her:

When I was young, they sent me to Kumasi. I had to do weeding until evening time. I came back three years ago. In Kumasi, I wanted to enrol, but they said it's very expensive. It was 10.000 per month. So I could not attend. When I came back, my father was insulting me about not going to school.

It hence appeared that many girls were denied an education during stays in the south or elsewhere, "to help relatives". This is surprising because, generally, enrolment figures are higher in the south. Yet apparently their status as a migrant (child) had made a difference. Also, it was observed that there were children who had left school and migrated to the south for work or an apprenticeship. As has also been commented on by others [Hashim 2005], it was not always clear whether the drop-out was the result of a desire to migrate or that it had been the other way around. This topic of girl's labour migration will be discussed in more detail below.

Independent migration of boys does also occur and it may influence enrolment figures. Those cases we encountered during the study, however, they concerned mainly older boys who were beyond primary school age at the time of migration.

3.3.2 Child Labour in the Upper West Region

The data on child labour as an obstacle to education presented a different picture in Dupare. In this village (situated in a not densely populated, more fertile area), help on the farm was more frequently brought up as a reason for not sending a child to school. “Those on the farm have to provide for those in school”, was an often heard remark. A group interview with out-of-school boys also indicated that their work was a major reason for not attending school. They told us: “When we ask our parents why we are not in school, they ask us who is going to take care of them if we go to school as well.” Two young farmers, who had so far enrolled all their children in nursery and primary school, conveyed to me, in an informal conversation, that it was their plan to later take some children out of school to help them on the farm. “We enrol them all now. Maybe later, we take some out of school to help us on the farm. They can work on the land, or they can fetch water for us.” Many stressed that it was not actually working on the land that children were expected to do, but rather tasks such as running errands etcetera.

The fact that in Dupare farming was considered less compatible with school attendance than in Garu-Tempane may also be related to the geography of the village. In contrast with the UER, fields in Dupare could be situated as far as 10 kilometres from the village, which makes it more difficult to combine school and work. Also, children’s help with herding cattle was considered more necessary in this area than in the UER, which could again be related to a different geography (bush land) and different ways of taking care for the animals. During a few family case studies, it became clear that boys had been taken out of school for this purpose. It was not uncommon that people had acquired cattle and consequently taken a boy out of school. This might be related to the fact that over the last years, more people in the village had obtained bullocks through loans obtained from an NGO (ADRA). As was the case in the UER, herding animals was seen as a typical activity for children, not adults. When we asked why Isaac, a man in his early twenties was the only adult in the village doing the job, it was remarked that he was “a social misfit who was too stupid to do other things.”

One day of observation was spent with a group of boys, aged 8 to 14 who took the bullocks out to the dam for food and water. Observing their work revealed that this work was much less harmless than is often assumed. The boys climb trees and use cutlasses for cutting braches off. Furthermore, the bullocks can be violent and the boys then have to run for shelter. A Fulani boy (13) also explained why herding cows was a dangerous job: “Taking care of animals is very dangerous, when you try to defend animals from armed robbers they can kill you and you can kill someone. And also when you have problems with the farmers, they can threaten you with a gun.”

A group interview with several cattle boys indicated that some of them had indeed attended school for several years. The need to herd cows had been a reason for their drop out, yet often in combination with other circumstances. In many cases, they admitted that they had not liked school and that their performance had been poor. This was also the argument used by drop-outs, who emphasised that the child was not motivated to go to school. Moreover, they blamed the bad quality of the school for this.

Household work for girls, including the care for siblings, was hardly ever mentioned as a reason for not sending girls to school. It was stated that girls could help their mothers after school. From interviews with young girls, however, it appeared that household activities mainly worked as an obstacle for those girls who were living with relatives who were not their own parents. In the West-

African region, it is common that girls are placed with relatives in cities or other villages; in northern Ghana the girls are often sent to relatives in the south.

Rita (14) was one of the few girls who had stopped schooling to help her mother with her (economic) activities. Rita's mother headed a family with hardly any income and searching for firewood was their major way to gain an income. Rita, who had only recently started primary school, left school during my stay in the village. It was stressed that it was not the age difference with her classmates, but mainly the help that she needed to give to her mother, that made them decide to stop schooling. Her teacher had opposed the decision, but also acknowledged that the family was poor and that Rita's single mother needed help.

3.3.3 Work after school

School-going children, especially girls, also perform a range of domestic and economic activities. All girls described comparable busy schedules of work they had to do before and after school. In the morning, before school, they would have to fetch water and heat food from the night before, and sweep the yard. After school, many had to water onions with their mother, fetch water from the borehole again, wash bowl, and prepare food. Another important activity that girls carried out - often together with their mothers - was collecting firewood (often by using a cutlass) for cooking. They said that after supper they would have some time to "revise their notes". None of the girls described play with friends as an after school activity.

Boys' activities mainly entailed care for animals and poultry and revision of notes. According to the children's accounts, in the agricultural season most children worked on the land in the early morning and after school, and no time for homework was possible. Some admitted that it was often difficult to keep their eyes open in class during this season.

It was observed that school going children took over herding and farming tasks from their siblings in the weekend. Especially in Dupare, where herding by children was most obvious; working children were allowed to rest in the weekends, or otherwise work on their personal fields.

3.4 Gender

Gender is an important issue in the education debate. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for every 100 boys there are only 77 girls in primary school and girls are less likely to complete school [UNICEF 2005]. In the research areas as well, the problem of non-enrolment and drop-out appeared more prevalent among girls than among boys. Whilst gender ratios are relatively equal in the lower classes, there is an overrepresentation of boys in both higher primary classes and Junior Secondary School. I tried to get insights into the reasons behind this persisting phenomenon by asking specific questions in interviews with parents and (groups of) girls. In addition, the girl-child officers at the GES in Bawku (until recently responsible for the research area) were interviewed. A third way of collecting information on this issue was attending two meetings on girl-child education in the research villages, organised by the GES. For these meetings, parents gathered in classrooms to discuss the issue of girl-child education with the GES officials, who had come to their village from Garu to sensitise the population on girl-child education.

In the higher classes I asked girls how many girls in their class had left school and where they had gone. In Garu-Tempane, two main reasons were brought up: marriage or pregnancy and "migration

to the south". In Kugri, a fifteen-year old girl in Primary 5 told me: "When I started we were 8 girls, there are only 2 left." This remark illustrates a very common development in primary school classes in the region.

The GES officials in Bawku had similar explanations for the low numbers of girls in higher classes: teenage pregnancy and migration to the south. These early pregnancies were mainly blamed on modern things like "record dancing", video shows and the long celebrations that are common at funerals and weddings in the region. There was a programme in place to assist pregnant girls to "properly deliver the child", but it was emphasised that the girls should return to school and that the pregnancy should not mean the end of the educational career. Efforts were made to trace the baby's father, for financial compensation. The major preventive programme consisted of the so-called "Sara" comics and video series which were shown or lent to girls in schools in the area. It seemed, however, that these sensitisation visits remained mainly limited to the more urban schools. The *Sara* programme focuses on abstinence and retention, on "the possibility of friendship with boys, until school has been finished."

Interesting insights on the local population's view on the problem were gained from the GES meetings in Kugri and Pialogo, where officials asked the parents why there were so many more boys than girls attending their village school. Various answers came from the audience that consisted of fathers, mothers and siblings of the school children. It was striking that "ignorance" was often referred to in these answers, nearly all of which were given by prominent community members:

Awini (Pialogo Chief's son, few years of education): "It's ignorance; at first we did not know because the government didn't tell us."

The night school teacher (finished JSS): "We in the Northern region think that there are no benefits in girl-child education because girls marry and then they belong to another family and we won't benefit anymore."

The Pialogo PTA chairman (uneducated): "At first we did not know that girls can do Nasala work (= government/ white collar jobs) too. Now, we know, I say it's ignorance."

In Kugri too, references were made to their own "unawareness" of the possibility for girls to have an education and get a paid job. In both villages, references to this "unawareness" were usually made using past tense, suggesting that they had recently become aware of the contrary. A father explained: "We see people in Nasala and we see that men are higher in position. And also; girls may marry before they have finished school." And, as a man said to the female GES officer: "At first we did not see a woman in a position like this!"

Another man confessed that bride price (paid to the bride's parents) played a role: "The reason why we do not send girls to school is because we were very interested in collecting cows (bride price)." This remark referred to the practice which is still very common in the area; when a girl marries, her family should receive a certain amount of money and/or animals. The bride price in the area consists of at least four cows, which is a relatively high price.

A woman blamed unwillingness of the men in the village for the low number of girls in the school: "It's the women who struggle, men just say 'we don't have money', meanwhile there are cows in the house. For a boy, they are willing to sell a cow." A young man in Kugri said: "Men think of

dowry, that's all, they want to give away their daughters for cows, so that they can have their sons married too."

These arguments also touched upon another relevant aspect of culture; the patrilinear and patrilocal kinship structure of the society. When a girl marries, she will become part of her husband's family. She will move to his compound and work for her new family (the bride price can be seen as compensation for her birth family.) The children she may deliver will be part of her husband's lineage rather than her own, even though it should not be forgotten that women often keep strong ties with their own family as well.

In this context, it is not surprising that parents may be less motivated to invest in education for their daughters than their sons. While it is traditionally the sons who will stay with their parents in the family house and continue the lineage, girls will move out and investments on education may only benefit her future household. Surprisingly, however, this argument was hardly ever brought up in interviews, which may well be a result of the campaign held on this issue by the government. The government's strategy to tackle this issue was to stress that an educated daughter would even help her own parents more, an idea that was frequently echoed in interviews. It may also be true that educated children - both boys and girls - are expected to leave the village for work anyway, and that gender differences hence do not play a major role.

Furthermore, labour migration of girls to the south was brought up as a major reason for girls not being in school. In Garu-Tempane this concerned mainly migration to the southern provinces of Ghana. People stressed the social pressures that played a role: "Some people will ask their children to bring sowing machine in Kumasi or Cote d'Ivoire. When they come back, others will be influenced." As has been documented by Hashim [2005], child labour migration to the south is a very common element of life in the district. Allegedly, most girls who stop schooling will leave their village to work in the south.

In Garu-Tempane, GES officials as well as many parents regarded the migration of young girls very negatively. They did not only refer to the fact that it undermines their education, but it was also strongly associated with "immoral behaviour" diseases such as HIV aids. GES official said: "They will get HIV and learn sexy dancing. Please, if you see your children dodge and go, please trace them and bring them back."

In addition, numerous references were made to the risk of pregnancy, which was considered a major obstacle for girls to achieve education. Earlier comments made on "ignorance" were done so mainly using the past tense; but "transactional sex" was brought up as a factor that still played a major role. A man: "Most will fall pregnant. So I think it's most important that parents fear that girls will fall pregnant and they will lose the money". Another man added: "It has to do with poverty. She will use herself to pay her needs like slippers and uniform and then fall pregnant." From the discussion it appeared that this argument was widely shared and that many parents had experienced cases of daughters becoming pregnant and stopping school. Girls in the higher classes in Pialogo stressed that they had repeatedly been warned, but appeared to not know ways to avoid pregnancy, apart from "not being with boys." In interviews too, some parents said that it was wiser to invest in a boy's schooling because of the risks of pregnancy for girls. "It's better to send a boy. A girl can fall pregnant and you will have wasted all your money."

In Dupare, conversations with girls gave revealing insights in the less “sociably desirable” reasons fathers still have for not sending girls to school. (Expected) labour migration of girls also seemed to play an important role. Oufeda (12, not in school)) told me about the argument of her father who happened to be the Chief representative: “When I ask my father why I cannot go to school, while my brothers do, he says that boys and girls are not the same. He says that if he sends the girls, it will be costlier than sending the boy. I see that he just does not want me to go to school. I told my father that if I go to school, I won’t drop-out, but he won’t listen.”

3.5 Ethnicity (with a special focus on the Fulani)

Especially in the village of Dupare, where three different groups lived in the village, ethnicity appeared to play an important role in ideas about education. The dominant ethnic group, the Wale, had strong ideas about the educational motivation of two ethnic minorities: the Dagarti and the Fulani. The Dagarti were clearly associated with educational success. The Dagarti people were frequently brought up as examples of how education could benefit in life. It should be noted, however, that references made to Dagarti seemed to be about Dagarti people “in general”, rather than about the few Dagarti families who had settled in the village and who were in some way a particular kind of people, because they had often left their own communities for some reason.

The semi-nomadic Fulani people, on the other hand, were consistently stereotyped as “not interested in education” by both villagers and officials. It was argued that their (traditional) ways of living made schooling no option for them: Fulani people are cattle-herders. Even though they are becoming increasingly sedentary, they still often take care for people’s cattle, in exchange for milk, cereal and sometimes money. It should be noted that these typecast of Fulani people is part of a larger negative stereotyping of this ethnic group as a backward and conservative tribe.

The enrolment figures among the different ethnic groups only partly confirm these ideas held by the dominant group. The few Dagarti families in the village did not have all their children in school and were not among the families in the village who had invested strongly in education. The (Wale) villagers explained this by the fact that these particular Dagarti people were “different”, and found themselves in specific difficult (economic or social) conditions; for example, they had migrated from elsewhere and could therefore not be seen as typical Dagarti people. Reflecting popular ideas, however, education figures of the Fulani, were very low. Of the two large extended families that were living at the village edge, none of the children had ever been to formal school. As one of the Dupare Fulani put it: “Among Fulani people, only one in hundred goes to school”. As we will see below, the reasons given for this by the Fulani people themselves deviated from the common explanation of a simple lack of interest.

The Fulani perspective on the benefits of education was similar to that of the rest of the villagers. The benefits of a formal education were mainly seen in the economic consequences of a paid job. A young Fulani father said: “The work I do shows me that education is good. For example, when I see people like you, or teachers, standing in the shade I think of myself having to stand with cattle in the sun all day long.” His younger brother, who was not enrolled in school but attending some lessons from an Arabic teacher, said:

All I know is that if you are highly educated, you can get employment. Some children, who are intelligent, teach others, they get paid, so they are also employed. I want to

be employed, because looking after animals is very dangerous. When you try to defend animals from armed robbers, they can kill you. We also encounter problems with farmers; they can threaten you with a gun if the cattle eat their crop.

A negative characterisation of the own traditional occupation appeared to be related to a perceived lack of respect: “When you look after people’s cattle, there is no respect. You get more respect if you go to school.”

Woman (2 children 0-2 years): “I am impressed when I see schoolchildren, because they will get employment (nasaal toma). That is important, because idleness is no good.”

A Fulani man with no children in school: “When a person goes to school, he can be a good person and help the family when he grows up.”

The Fulani children I spoke to also seemed very interested in going to school. Fatima and Ahmed were two children who often played with village children and said they would like to go to school, if they were given the chance. Fatima commented: “I want to go to school, because I want to be a literate; you can get employment through education. It’s better to be a teacher than a housewife.”

The comments as presented above show many commonalities with the comments made by Wale and Dagarti people in the village, whose participation in education was much higher. However, other comments also showed that Fulani people were less informed about details of education and future possibilities it may provide. Future prospects for an educated person were formulated in vague terms; they were usually talking about “helping the family” rather than about (particular) white collar jobs. This not surprising regarding the fact that Fulani people indeed have less access to information about (the benefits of) education and the sensitisation campaigns organised by the government and NGO’s. In the first place, this is related to the fact that none of the parents or children of the small community had ever been to school, and have thus had very limited contact with the education system. Secondly, it appeared that none of the Fulani people had ever been to the “sensitisation meetings” organised in the village. On the other hand, it appeared that these Fulani people did listen to regional and local radio stations, which for them probably also functioned as a way of information about education.

The above responses indicate that the assumption that Fulani are simply not interested in education, does not hold. While talking about the past, Fulani people spoke about “at that time, we did not yet have this idea of education”, suggesting that they did have this idea today. But, how then, do these people themselves explain that they have not enrolled any of their children in school?

The traditional occupation of cattle rearing was given as an explanation by a father (30, 4 children): “It’s the nature of our work we do. If a father is old, his sons have to take care of the animals. Even if a child is attending school, at a certain point it would have to stop to look after animals... and to do farming too.” A young woman, Habiba, told me: “It’s because we never see any Fulani teachers or nurses. If someone will start sending, others will follow. There are no Fulani workers, because Fulani people do not send their children to school. So, I don’t feel inspired.”

Other factors, that may play a role in the balancing act of other villagers, are also considered. Lack of money was never brought up as the explanation for not sending any of the children to school, yet it was suggested that sending *all* children to school would be too costly.

It appeared that, some Fulani parents opted for a different, non-formal, form of education for their child. It was planned that 14-year-old Ahmed would soon go to an Arabic school in a distance village. I asked his father to clarify this choice; he said:

Arabic is not better than English, it's a matter of preferences. You can read Koran and after that they will bring children to you so you can teach them. That will benefit him, because they will give you something and you will also be rewarded by God. .

In the research area Garu-Tempane the ethnicity issue appeared to play a smaller role. In these villages three ethnic groups could be found: Kusasi, Yaares and Fulani. They seemed to be equally distributed among the school population, even though the Fulani were again underrepresented. The likelihood of a child being in school was not evidently affected by the ethnic background. All villagers, from the dominant ethnic group and Fulani, stressed that education had nothing to do with ethnicity; this contrasts with the situation in Dupare. A widowed mother, with one of her six children in school told me: "It has nothing to do with being a Fulani or a Kusasi. It's about poverty. I don't have money to buy uniforms and pens for them, that's why I don't enrol them."

3.7 School-community integration and parent committees

Besides a favourable learning environment and the quality of teaching, the integration of the school in the community is considered a key characteristic of a quality school [Plan Netherlands 2005:22-33]. Integration entails the involvement of parents, attitudes towards teachers and involvement of local government. Well functioning community-based organisations like the PTA, school boards and the SMC (school management committee) are considered central instruments for communities to monitor and influence the access and quality of education [Plan Netherlands 2005:26-27]. Strengthening PTA and SMC committees is hence often one of the main interventions in order to improve access to, and quality of, education.

In Ghana, all primary schools officially need to have a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and a School Management Committee (SMC), whose members are elected by the parents of the pupils, gathered in general assembly. Committees consist of at least a chairman, a treasurer and a secretary; at least one of them has to be female. Their responsibilities include organising meetings with the parents to fix and collect fees for the payment of volunteer teachers and cooks. Also, they have to set up a plan with the teachers (SPIP), on how to spend the capitation grant. Communal labour by the parents and maintenance of the school should also be organised by the PTA or SMC.

Parent committees were in place in all research villages. Responsibilities of the different PTA and SMC were sometimes combined and often one of the two committees played a dominant role. In all villages, the committees had been elected more than five years earlier and no new elections had taken place since. Also, in all villages, it was usually only the (SMC or PTA) chairman who played an actual active role. Other executives were not always known by teachers and community members.

In Pialogo, the PTA chairman was an uneducated farmer, who was also active in activities and trainings initiated by agricultural extension services in the village. He had done some literacy

courses. Some of his grandchildren were still in school, yet some had dropped out. There was also a vice-chairman, yet it was unclear who, apart from the teachers who functioned as secretaries, were considered his executives. In Kugri, two fathers were in turn responsible for the SMC/PTA tasks. They had both had some education and seemed to take a quite active role. It was, however, not clear if they were taken seriously by the community and teachers, as one of them once appeared drunk at a general assembly with GES officials.

In Vambara, the PTA chairman was the village's tax-collector, who had had some education and who was related to the school's head teacher. In Dupare, the PTA chairman was a successful farmer who had enrolled all his children in school. In addition, there was a SMC chairman, who was one of the few older men in the village with a formal education. Even though at least one executive in every board was female, in none of the villages did women play an important role in the committees.

In all villages, meetings were organised by the committees and attended by men and women. In Dupare, however, women did not appear at all during a meeting about fees for the kindergarten. They said that they did not know whether they had been welcome. In Garu-Tempene, it was observed that fathers, mothers, brothers, grand-parents or other young educated people participated in the meetings. In Garu-Tempene the assemblies generally reflected the village population, as almost every compound had at least a child in school. However, especially in Dupare, only ethnic majorities were represented. Because the Fulani people did not have (many) children in school, they were underrepresented or even absent during the meetings. PTA assemblies are sometimes considered instruments for sensitisation on education and recruitment of pupils; yet it should be taken into account that not necessarily all parts of society are reached and that more active ways may be required (such as going to people's) houses.

Virtually all parents were aware of the existence of the parent committee in their children's school and they all said to regularly attend the meetings. Payment of fees and announcement of communal labour appeared to be central in their ideas about the purpose of these meetings. A commonly heard remark was: "They tell us about teacher payment and tell us what we have to pay for the cooks." Communal labour was also associated with the parent committees. As a father said: "At PTA meetings they tell us what work has to be done for the school." Parents in Dupare said: "They talk about what is necessary for our child who is in school. They advise us to let them bring a broom and clean the compound, and they ask parents to repair the roof."

"Teacher payment" refers to the fees that were collected for the volunteer teachers - who were usually from the community - an allowance of around 15 euros a month. It was usually the teachers and the chairman who asked the volunteers to help out. The decision about their compensation was, as remarked above, taken by the parents in general assembly. As no meeting on payment of fees took place during the study, it was difficult to find out if parents really participated in the decision making process. According to parents and teachers, however, it was the community together with the teachers who determined who would be paid what amount. It can be supposed, however, that certain power structures within the village play a role in these decisions. In Pialogo and Vambara, volunteer teachers were from the chief's family; yet this could also be related to the fact that chief's families are more likely to have members with a secondary education. The communal labour demands usually involved labour by parents and other family members to build structures for a school building, plant trees or build latrines.

The degree to which communities were prepared to contribute money and labour varied between villages and appeared to depend on the relation between the teachers and the community. In Pialogo, two volunteer teachers were recruited by the community who were collecting some compensation for them. Also, parents had participated in communal labour several times. In Dupare, however, a volunteer teacher who had been teaching in the village school sponsored by an NGO, had left the job when the NGO stopped her payment expecting the community to take over payments. Also, at the time of the study, a motivated and experienced volunteer teacher was teaching at the school, yet he had not yet managed to get any payment. It was not totally clear what were the reasons behind the refusal and we received conflicting messages about the issue. Some said they had never received a request for money; others stated, however, that the supply of sufficient teachers was the responsibility of the government and that they should not pay for it. Also, communal labour carried out by parents was difficult to organise in Dupare. Teachers had therefore mobilised the children instead, who were found constructing latrines near the school on school days.

During the study it appeared that in Kugri, the PTA committee could operate quite independently from the Education Services and bring about real changes. Apparently without informing the Education Services (which was not appreciated), the PTA in Kugri had decided to appoint one of the few SS-educated women in the community as a kindergarten teacher, for a small fee collected by the parents. According to this woman as well as the PTA chairman, the PTA had organised a meeting and decided to set up this kindergarten to look after these young children. The plan was to build a mud room for the nursery through “communal labour”, but at the time of research it was an open air school in the shade of the primary school structure. The targeted age group was 2 to 5 years old. Yet it turned out that teaching was irregular and monotonous. Nevertheless, it proves that even in remote villages with mainly illiterate parents, community involvement can lead to meaningful initiatives, even though more support is needed.

It is difficult to say to what degree PTA committees were able to improve the quality of the education offered. Obviously, community members could not (or hardly) influence the decision making about the allocation of government teachers that occurred on a district or regional level. However, it appeared that they were able to ask educated community members or outsiders to teach for a very small financial compensation. It should not be forgotten, however, that these “volunteer teachers” had usually not had any specific training. The fact that volunteer teachers were paid by community members seemed to encourage the volunteer teachers do their work, as they felt responsible towards the parents who were paying and who were usually from the same community. On the other hand, the amount paid was so low (usually around 15 euros), that volunteers often felt that they had to skip lessons to work on the land as well, to feed their families. Anyway, it appeared that volunteer teachers were sometimes held more accountable than official, government teachers. Also, parents could be worried about scaring away the teachers who were already in short supply in their rural school.

PTA's could also contribute to the material structure of a school, by organising communal labour. Yet, in reality, this was not without problems. Especially in Dupare, where enrolment was already low, teachers were worried about scaring parents away from the school, by demanding too much. A former teacher said: “The school children are not many, we want more, so if we ask communal labour they just refuse to send their children”. As we have seen above, the parish school apparently

encouraged parents to participate in communal labour in the school, by fining those who refused. Yet this, of course, could have the consequence that only the poorer parents would do the work, whilst the better would simply pay the fines.

Overall, the data suggest that there is a great potential in community involvement in education in the research villages. Data also indicates, however, that the existence of parent committees does by no means guarantee a certain degree of quality in the school. In Kugri and Vambara, for example, parent committees were in place even in the years when the school was hardly functioning because the (government paid) teachers were rarely showing up. And during the study, frequent absence of teachers could not be avoided. Even though “social distance” between teachers and community members was relatively limited [in comparison to, for example, observations made in Burkina Faso: De Lange 2007], open communication and negotiation between “community and school” was not without problems.

3.8 Concluding observations

Lack of financial means was still the main explanation brought up by parents for the fact that (some of) their children were not attending primary school. The costs of a uniform as well as the PTA fees, (mainly for compensation of volunteer teachers) were most frequently mentioned. Teachers and officials showed little understanding for the “poverty argument” and pointed at other expenses uneducated people make on cattle or during funerals and other social events. Parents and children, however, stated that even very low fees or expenses could pose a problem. It became clear that it was not in all cases the costs of primary school itself that worked as an impediment for primary enrolment, but rather the awareness of the high costs of secondary schooling, in combination with the assumption that only basic education had no benefits, which could lead to the decision not to enrol a child in school at all. Furthermore, it was observed that small fees levied and costs of a uniform sometimes limited the agency of children who aimed to enrol themselves, if their parents did not support them.

However, this did not mean that better-off community members generally had more or even *all* children enrolled in primary school. As has been described elsewhere [e.g. Kielland & Tovo 2006], better-off families have more cultivable land and more animals to look after, creating a larger demand for labour, including child labour. It became clear that families who did not belong to the poorest, but also not to the well-off, were most likely keep some of their children in the house to work. They used their labour to make their assets as productive as possible, but, unlike the affluent families, did not have money to hire other people for this work.

In addition, it appeared that in the barren area of Pialogo, people had lost their confidence in farming, which resulted in an increased motivation to educate their children. In Dupare, on the other hand, where agriculture is still relatively rewarding, it was a common strategy to keep back some children for the work on the farm. Also, in the UER, where fields are close to the house, children tended to work after school; working on the farm was not considered an obstacle to school enrolment. This, however, was much less common in Dupare where it was considered necessary by most parents to retain some children for farm work and herding, in order to ensure both short term and long term food security.

The herding of animals, the family's wealth, is a particular activity that should be taken into account when looking at the education of rural boys. Whilst small ruminants (sheep/goats) were often herded by young children (below school-going age), bullocks are traditionally tended by school-aged boys. Large differences existed between practices in the different research areas and pegging and hand feeding seemed an option in some area (Garu-Tempene), whilst impossible in others (Dupare).

There was a remarkable consensus among parents and children that household chores of girls could be done in the afternoons (when there is no school), even though this resulted in a heavy day schedule for girls. The common practice of placing girls with other families appeared a stronger impediment to enrolment. It was observed that the girls in the community who were out of school had often returned from stays with relatives or where living and working with relatives at the moment of study.

Ideas about teenage pregnancies and labour migration of girls seemed to prevent parents from sending their daughters to school, at least in the past. It was a common conviction that schoolgirls were very likely to be impregnated by adult, working men, because they would need money during their studies. It was also anticipated by parents that girls would, at a certain point, leave school because they would want to earn money for clothing and their wedding. These perceived barriers at the upper primary or secondary level, which are largely confirmed by objective statistic, hence worked as an impediment to girl-child enrolment.

In terms of ethnic differences, an under-representation of the Fulani people was observed in different degrees. In Dupare, for example, despite the fact they had become semi-sedentary, they had not enrolled any of their children in school. Lack of role models and lack of contact with the village community seemed to explain largely why few Fulani children go to school. Special attention would be needed for this group.

Although people did not often openly criticise the quality of education offered, they were aware that basic skills would not be attained after primary or even JSS. On a community level, several efforts to raise the quality of the schools were observed. In some villages, parent committees had managed to recruit volunteer teachers and pay them an allowance. Controlling the absence of teachers in general or raising the number of qualified teachers in their village schools, appeared almost impossible for the parents.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

Educational figures as well as interviews with parents and children indicate that primary education is booming in rural Upper East and Upper West Ghana. The amount of children that are enrolled when they reach the age for school enrolment was observed to have multiplied over the last few years. Also, many older children who were not enrolled had started attending recently. Overcrowded lower primary (or kindergarten) classes in 2005 and 2006 have been the result. Yet there are also still children who are not enrolled in school; in one village it was estimated that the majority of children was not attending school. It appeared that the economic and social status of a household seemed to be only weakly related to the school enrolment. In the different settings, it was not uncommon that children from the well-to-do families or the chief's family had never started school or had dropped out.

A major conclusion of this study is that all people could mention benefits a formal education would have for the child and its family. People mentioned practical benefits, during travel in different ethnic areas, but also used metaphors such as “eye opening”. However, the possible economic advantages of having a child with a Nasala (white collar) job were considered most valuable. Especially in the Upper East, it was stated that farming (“the traditional occupation”) was no longer favourable. People stated that “life had changed” and that in “today’s world” more money and different knowledge was needed. Virtually all people saw formal education as a clear option for their children, which is also reflected in the fact that virtually all families had at least one child in school, albeit since only recently.

The Fulani people, especially in Dupare, formed an exception. The large Fulani families who had lived in the village for many years had no children in school. There was a general conviction among people from the ethnic majorities that pastoralist Fulani children would not be interested in school and that their being “on the move” made schooling impossible. Interviews with Fulani people (including children), however, showed that they had become sedentary and saw similar benefits in education. A lack of role models in their own ethnic group and their (physical and social) position in the villages, were more important reasons for the fact that they did often not participate in schooling.

The results also show that little value was attributed to completing only Primary School, or only Junior Secondary School. It was asserted that more education was needed for a white collar job. This result is remarkable, especially in light of the Millennium Development Goals, which focus on the attainment of at least five years of primary education. It indicates that even children who would be considered “success cases” in the MDF statistics were drop-outs in the community’s eyes.

It appeared to be an increasingly common strategy to enrol many children, with the expectation that some would drop out during primary or JSS level anyway. This expectation was not considered a problem by all parents, because it was considered convenient to have some children full-time on the farm.

It is not clear if the current enrolment figures can be maintained or even increased. Staying in school strongly depends on the child's interest in school, and thus it will also be beneficial for enrolment figures if teaching is child friendly. Not only physical punishment by teachers, but also caning by class prefects were a source of fear, especially for girls. However, it should also be noted that for girls, schools were also often the only place where they could play. It became clear that girls above about ten felt very responsible towards helping their mothers after school and that there was a time for play only during school breaks.

For school children, the main aspiration was to get a white collar job and "an easier life than our parents". Education was by children considered to be some form of social security for unforeseen problems in the future and especially children from very poor households appeared very committed to succeed. This was also emphasised by teachers, who also said that children from better-off families often refused to go to school or work hard.

Children out of school regretted they were not in school, especially in the villages with the highest enrolment figures. Aspirations of a teaching job, but also the practical benefits of literacy were mentioned by them. Yet, on the other hand, in several cases, drop-out by (young) children had been their own decisions, not helped by parents seemingly incapable or disinclined to persuade their children to attend.

Costs associated with education and the desire to have the child around for small tasks or real work were both reasons for not sending a child to school. The first reason was mainly mentioned by the poorer households and referred to the PTA fees and costs of a uniform. Costs at the secondary school level were sometimes found to be a barrier to primary enrolment as well. It should be noted, however, that there were also very poor households who had all children in (primary) school.

Also, the better-off community members generally did not have more or even *all* children enrolled in primary school. As has been described above [e.g. Kielland & Tovo 2006], better-off families have more cultivable land and more animals to look after, creating a larger demand for labour, including child labour. It became clear that families, who did not belong to the poorest but also not to the well-off, were most likely keep some of their children in the house to work. They used their labour to make their assets as productive as possible, but did not have money to hire other people for this work. On the other hand, community members with (some years of) education generally enrolled all of their children, even though they also anticipated financial barriers at the (Senior) Secondary level.

In addition, it appeared that in the barren area of Pialogo, people had lost their confidence in farming which resulted in an increased motivation to educate their children. In Dupare, on the other hand, where agriculture is still relatively rewarding, it was a common strategy to keep back some children for work on the farm. Also, the location of the fields (close to the village or far away) seems to play a role. In all villages, school children were still active in farming work after school and in weekends. A fear for alienation of the traditional occupation could hence not be discerned.

Especially in those cases of children who had enrolled themselves at a later age, the work of the children allowed them to go pay the fees.

Herding of bullocks of children was a common activity for boys out of school. Under certain conditions (large herds and far away drinking spots) it was considered crucial that there would be a child to do this work, as it was considered shameful if an adult would do it. It is common for a parent to take a child out of school when he acquires some cattle. In other cases, parents stated that the child was only doing the job because "he had nothing else to do" and that other methods could be used (such as pegging) if money would become available to send the child to school.

It was believed that household work by girls - in her own household - could be combined with school, as school usually closes just after midday. Girls who had been placed with relatives elsewhere to help in the household, however, constituted a large part of the girls out of school. Independent child labour migration of girls and boys to the more developed south, was also considered a major reason for drop-out. However, this was mainly at the secondary level, even though some cases were observed in upper primary classes. Also, it is not clear whether the drop-out had been caused by the desire to leave and work, or that the decision to migrate had been taken after drop-out. Furthermore, it has been shown that independent child labour migration from the regions is sometimes done in order to increase (formal or non-formal) education chances [Hashim 2005].

The perceived quality of education was, according to parents and children, strongly related to the amount of teachers available in a school. It should be noted that the availability of teachers had a strong inverse correlation with the distance to administrative centres. In larger villages such as Garu, primary schools usually had at least one trained teacher per class, while areas more than 15 kilometres from Garu often only had one trained teacher per school. In the remote areas around Kugri and Vambara, there were and had been urgent problems with the supply of trained teachers.

An important observation was the fact that in all villages the teachers were originally from the same region and ethnic group as the school children and their parents. This not only meant that they could teach and communicate in the local languages, but it also explains their relative involvement in the communities.

An increased influx of pupils since the abolition of fees and the government campaign on the importance of schooling led to a demand for more teachers. Formally trained teachers could not meet the demand, and thus untrained teachers stepped in, and are now paid a very small amount (usually around $\frac{1}{4}$ of the trained teacher's salary) by the PTA - who collects this money from parents. The presence of local teachers in the schools, albeit untrained, motivated even more children to go to school (and parents to enrol them). Despite the positive aspect of an increased number of students, the promise of a free education, through the capitation grant, no longer held. Even though former costs such as culture and sports fees etc. had largely been abolished, there was now an increasing demand for contributions for (untrained) teacher allowance.

Overall, we can see that education is locally considered as the main way out of poverty, also by the poorest families. It appears that it is a common goal to have one child with a formal salaried job, rather than to make sure that all children in a household complete a basic education. Enrolling many children is seen as a way to raise the chances of at least one child reaching the government job. However, when children get older it becomes more difficult to keep them in school (as direct

and opportunity costs rise). Yet ideas seem to be changing and people seem to acknowledge that educating a child can lead to (economic) benefits other than a white collar job, such as hairdressing.

During the last few years it has become common practice to enrol children upon reaching the age of six. The current trends can be explained by the fact that “primary education is now really compulsory”, together with the abolition of most direct costs. Also, it should be taken into account that according to local views, there have been improvements in terms of access (reduction of costs) and quality (more teachers, albeit community paid volunteers). Increasing the amount of trained teachers in remote rural areas and developing a special focus on Fulani children, cattle boys and girls working in households, will help to make education a reality for all.

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