

# Pathways to low educational attainment: Why educational financing should target multidimensional poverty

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# Background - Quality

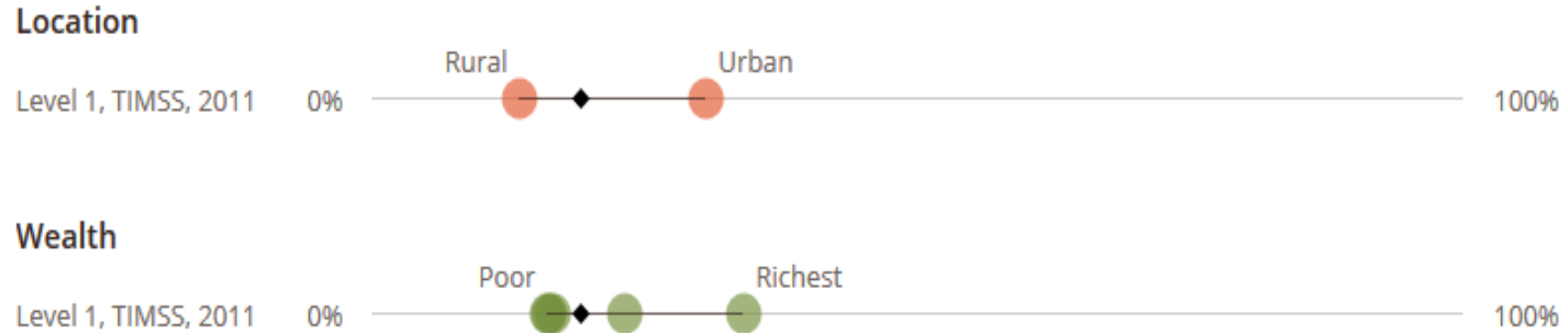
- Generally low quality of education in Low and Middle Income Countries(LMICs)
  - About **90%** of school-age children in SSA not achieving minimum proficiency levels, compared to **14%** in North America and W. Europe (UNESCO, 2017)
- Apart from quality, significant challenges of inequality in educational outcomes
- Benefits of educational improvements not equitably distributed
  - learning outcomes
  - access
  - transition
  - dropout
  - repetition
- Inequalities related to **poverty** - income, geography, gender, disability....

# Context of Study: Ghana and Malawi

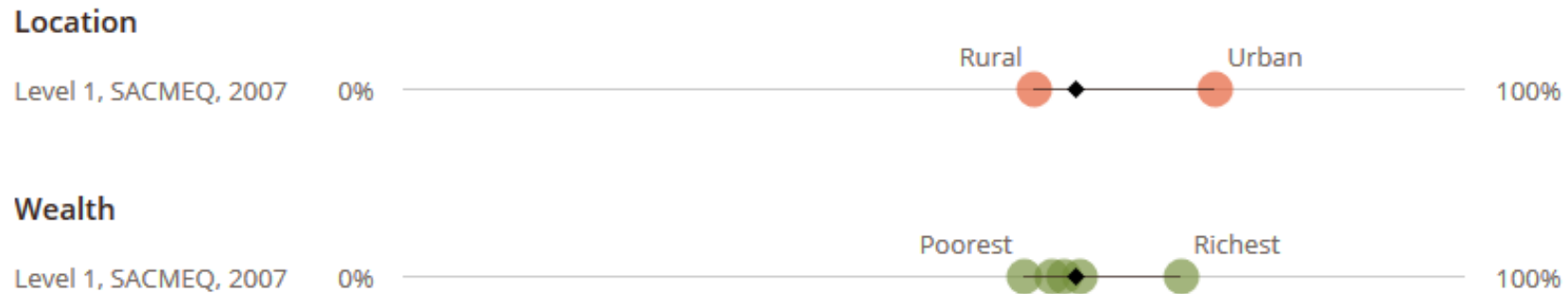
- British colonies and educational policies influenced by the British educational system
- Free Primary Education (FPE) policies in 1994 and 1996 respectively
  - Malawi FPE focused on quantitative expansion, eliminated all fees such as tuition fees, uniform, textbooks
  - Ghana FPE prioritized qualitative improvement, initial reduced fees/costs, followed by abolishment of fees and costs much later (Inoue & Oketch, 2008)
- Recently introduced free secondary education
- Different economic positions with implication for education financing
  - Ghana: lower-middle income, *large urban* population (66%)
  - Malawi: lower income, *large rural* population (83%)

# Educational Inequalities – Ghana and Malawi

## Maths achievement Ghana



## Reading achievement Malawi



# Inequalities – schools with persistent low attainment

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## Twifo Attimokwa Assembly moves to stop zero percent performance in BECE

August 31, 2018 General News 1 Comment

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The Twifo Attimokwa District Assembly in the Central Region has instituted measures to end the persistent zero percent scores in the Basic Education Certificate Education (BECE) by some schools in the District. The Assembly believes that the problem should be addressed in order not to deny children the opportunity to access the Free

## BECE: 'Zero percent surprised me'- Head of worst performing school hopes for the best

Source: Ghana|Myjoyonline.com  
Date: 13-06-2016 Time: 04:06:55pm

## Mzimba is worst primary school exams performer

October 31, 2018 Nyasa Times Reporter 19 Comments

Mzimba has slipped to the worst performer in primary school leaving certificate examination (PSLCE) for the past three years, slipping from the best performer, a situation which has worried education officials in the district.

This has prompted the education officials to devise ways on how best to reverse the worrisome situation by, among other

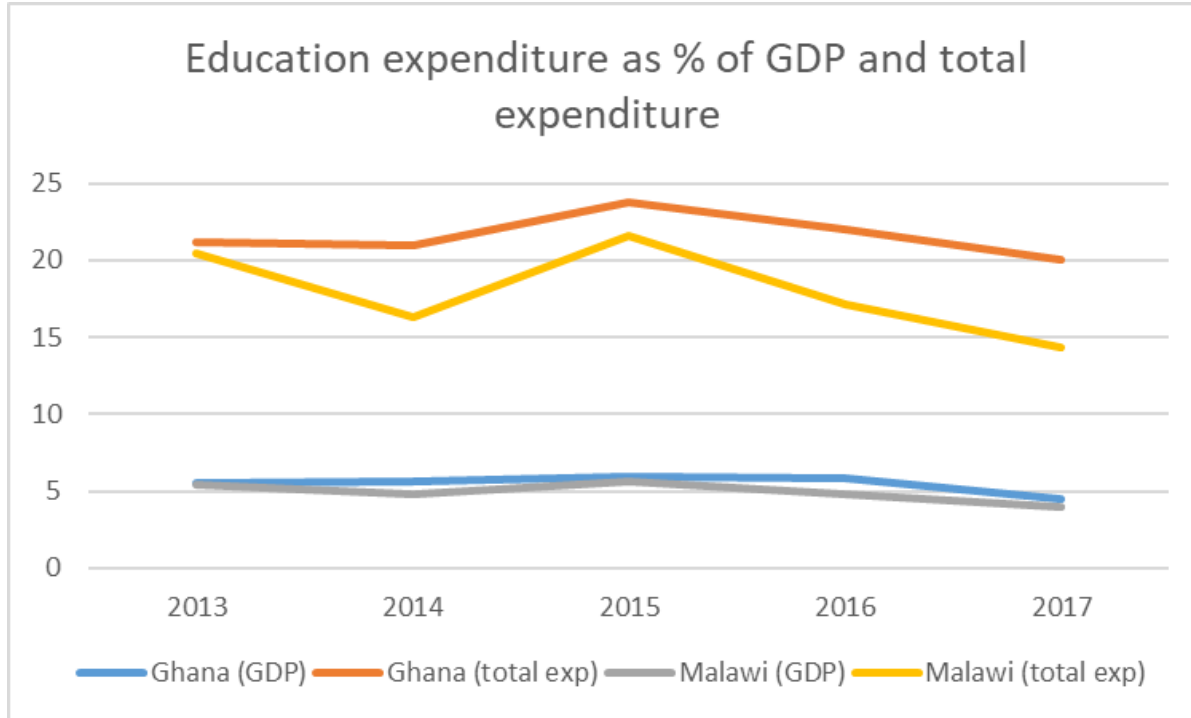


- Low attainment mainly in poor and marginalised communities
- These represent so-called learners at the 'bottom of the pyramid' (BoP)

## Key Issues and Gaps

- Historical emphasis on country-level performance with little attention to within-country socioeconomic inequalities in outcomes in LMICs (Wagner2018)
- Improving equity for poor and marginalized children and youth has been a perpetual challenge in LMICs (UNESCO, 2010; Wagner, Wolf, & Boruch, 2018)
- Little understanding of the pathways to poor educational outcomes for learners at the BoP in LMIC context
  - Knowledge of barriers but gap in understanding of pathways from barriers to attainment
  - Few studies exploring perspectives of key stakeholders directly affected by low educational outcomes to understand mechanisms of effect

# Context - Education Financing in Ghana and Malawi

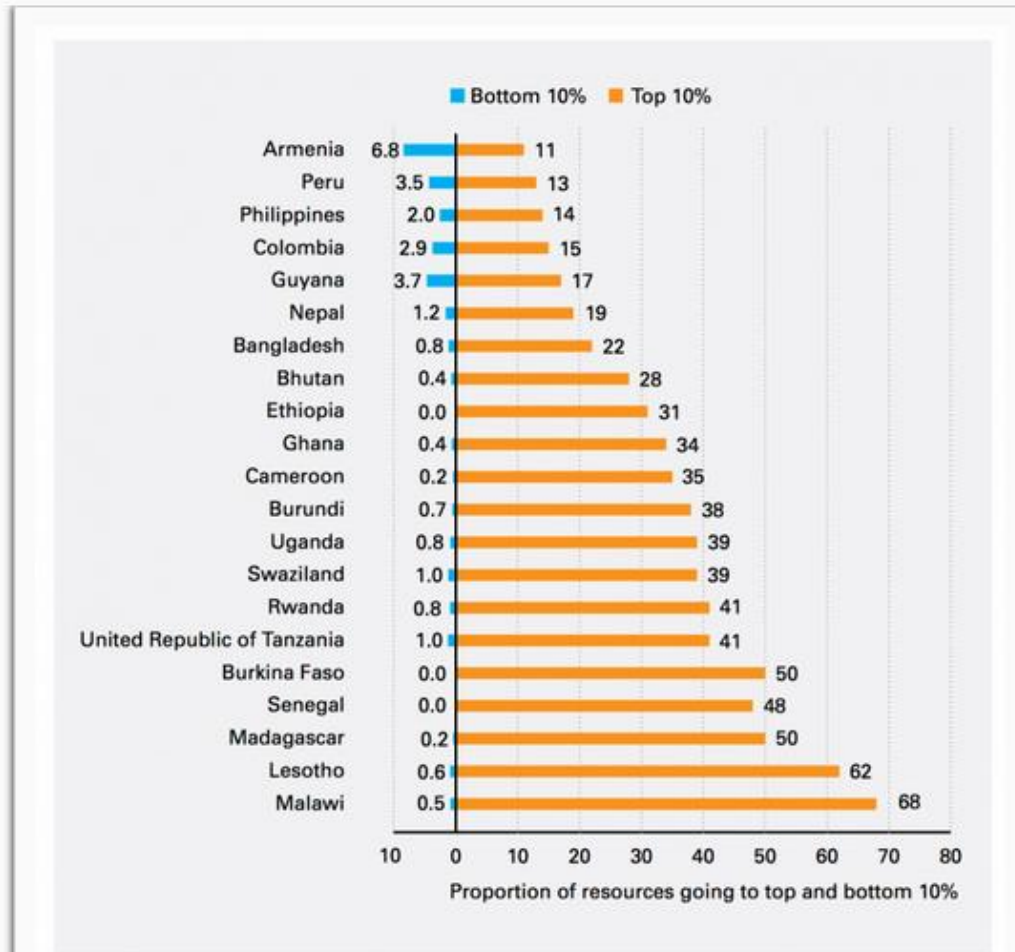


Decline in education expenditure in recent years – some LMICs spending more

- Majority expenditure on remunerations (75%-80%)
- Primary education spend of education budget 2014
  - Ghana (21.7%)
  - Malawi (49.5%)
- Funding per student low
  - Ghana ~\$120
  - Malawi ~\$32
- Only small amount devoted to capital expenditure
- Changing priorities of donor funding

# Inequality in educational financing

Percentage of public education resources going to the 10% most educated or 10% least educated students  
*Investment Case for Education and Equity (UNICEF - 2015)*



- Larger proportion to the most well-off in both countries
- Sometimes unintended consequences of policies to achieve equity



## Aim

- Explore stakeholders' lived experiences of schools with low educational attainment and student progression
- Specifically,
  - To examine stakeholders understandings of why students in these schools attain low educational outcomes
  - To understand the mechanisms by which identified barriers influence educational attainment in these schools

# Methods

- **Participants and Data**
  - Schools with low educational attainment ( $n=11$ ; Ghana~5 & Malawi~ 6)
  - Participants ( $n=102$ ; Ghana ~42; Malawi~60)
  - head teachers, teachers, students, parents, & school supervisors
  - Gender: Female=45% Male=55%
  - Age range: Ghana~ 12-64 & Malawi~ 14-85
- **Data Collection Procedure**
  - Semi-structured interviews
- **Ethics**
  - Comprehensive ethical approval process
- **Data Analysis**
  - Thematic analysis
  - Theoretical coding to map pathways from identified factors to attainment
  - Aim is to build theoretical understanding

# Findings

# Multidimensional Poverty

School resource poverty

- Adverse learning environment
- Inadequate learner participation
- High student-teacher ratio

Accessibility poverty

- Absenteeism
- Tiredness
- Limited opportunity for school/community engagement
- Limited background knowledge

Household poverty

- Hunger
- Child labour
- Inadequate learning resources
- Inability to pay levies

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

# School resources poverty

## Adverse learning environment

“We need a lot of resources especially in ICT. Because you know what you’re talking about but to them it’s completely new. Look at a concept like internet. It is very difficult to explain that to them... If you don’t do the practical, it becomes very difficult for them.” (Teacher, Ghana, Male)

*It is very difficult for teachers to assist individual learners; so that is the challenge they are overcrowded in the classrooms so only a few benefit from the learning process; (...).” (PEA, Female, Malawi)*

*“(...) and also maybe poor infrastructure; because there are other classes’ pupils are learning under the tree because of lack of school block; (...).” (Teacher, Female, Malawi)*

*“the challenges in the school include inadequate furniture for kids, leakages in roofing of teachers’ bungalow, broken doors and windows, leakages in the roofing of the classroom blocks, non-availability of electricity (...).” (Parent, Ghana)*

*“We wait for others to use books. By the time we get books, our friends have finished exercise and teachers are marking. When we finish you find the teacher is tired.” (Student, Male, Malawi)*

- Learning under trees

Seat on the floor

Sharing of books

Waiting to use books

- Low quality

Teacher interaction

Individualised

Acc...

“As I said earlier how to explain certain concepts is quite difficult I remember once I was teaching acids and bases and I wanted to define what acid was realizing that the definition in the text book wasn't going to help...so I asked if they've seen the battery of a motor bike before. Some said yes some said no. I wanted to refer to it and say that the liquid in it is the acid. And I wanted to show them how it reacted to things but I just couldn't show them.. So I just have to teach the theory like that ...” (Teacher, Male, Ghana)

Tiredness

“Most of the time teachers are absent from school during rainy season” (Student, 15 years-old, Male, Malawi).

- Seasonality of learning

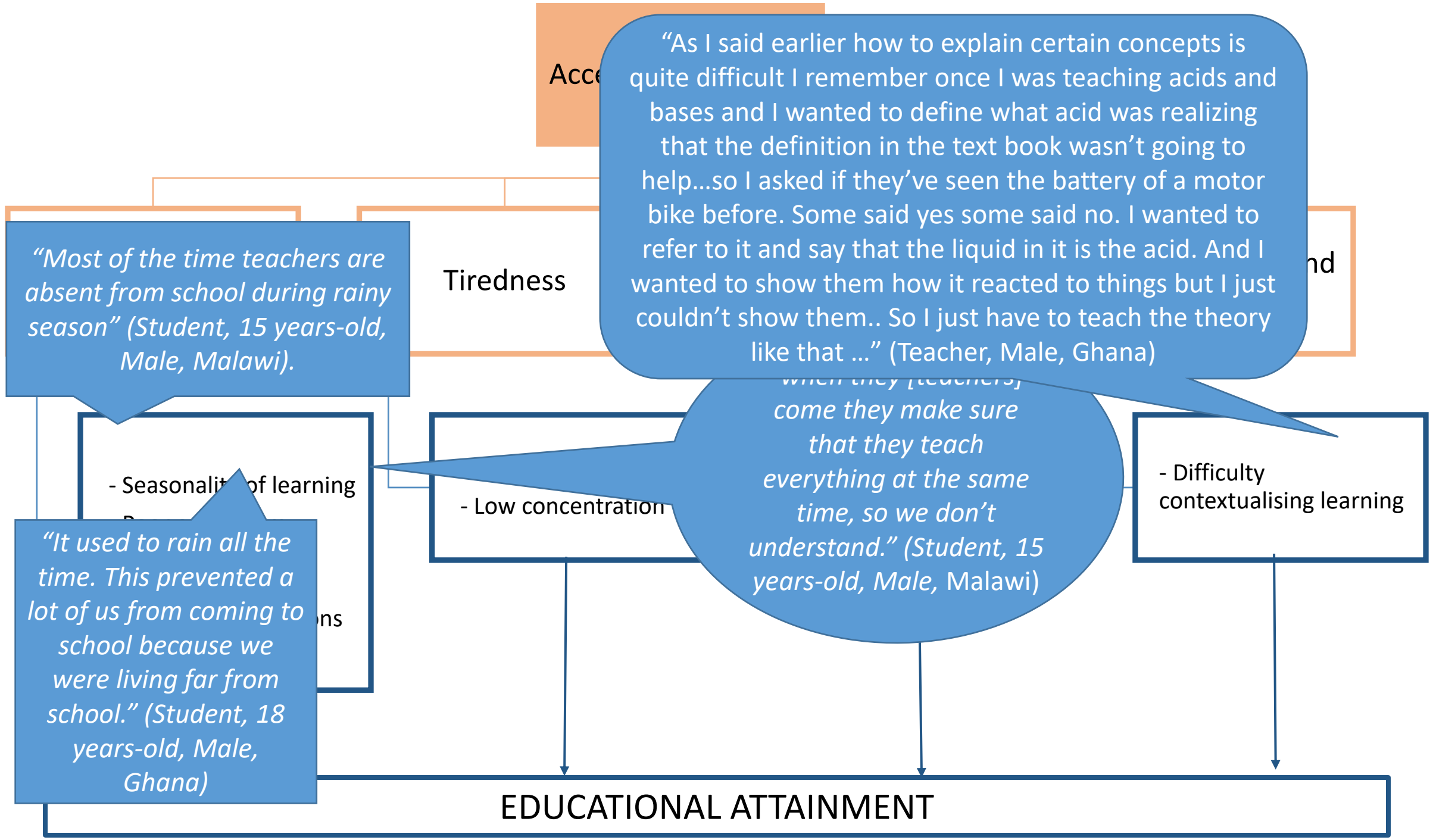
- Low concentration

- Difficulty contextualising learning

...when they [teachers] come they make sure that they teach everything at the same time, so we don't understand.” (Student, 15 years-old, Male, Malawi)

“It used to rain all the time. This prevented a lot of us from coming to school because we were living far from school.” (Student, 18 years-old, Male, Ghana)

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Household poverty

Inadequate learning resources

Inability to pay levies

*"We go to school without food therefore we lose concentration in class." (Student, 14 years-old, Male, Malawi).*

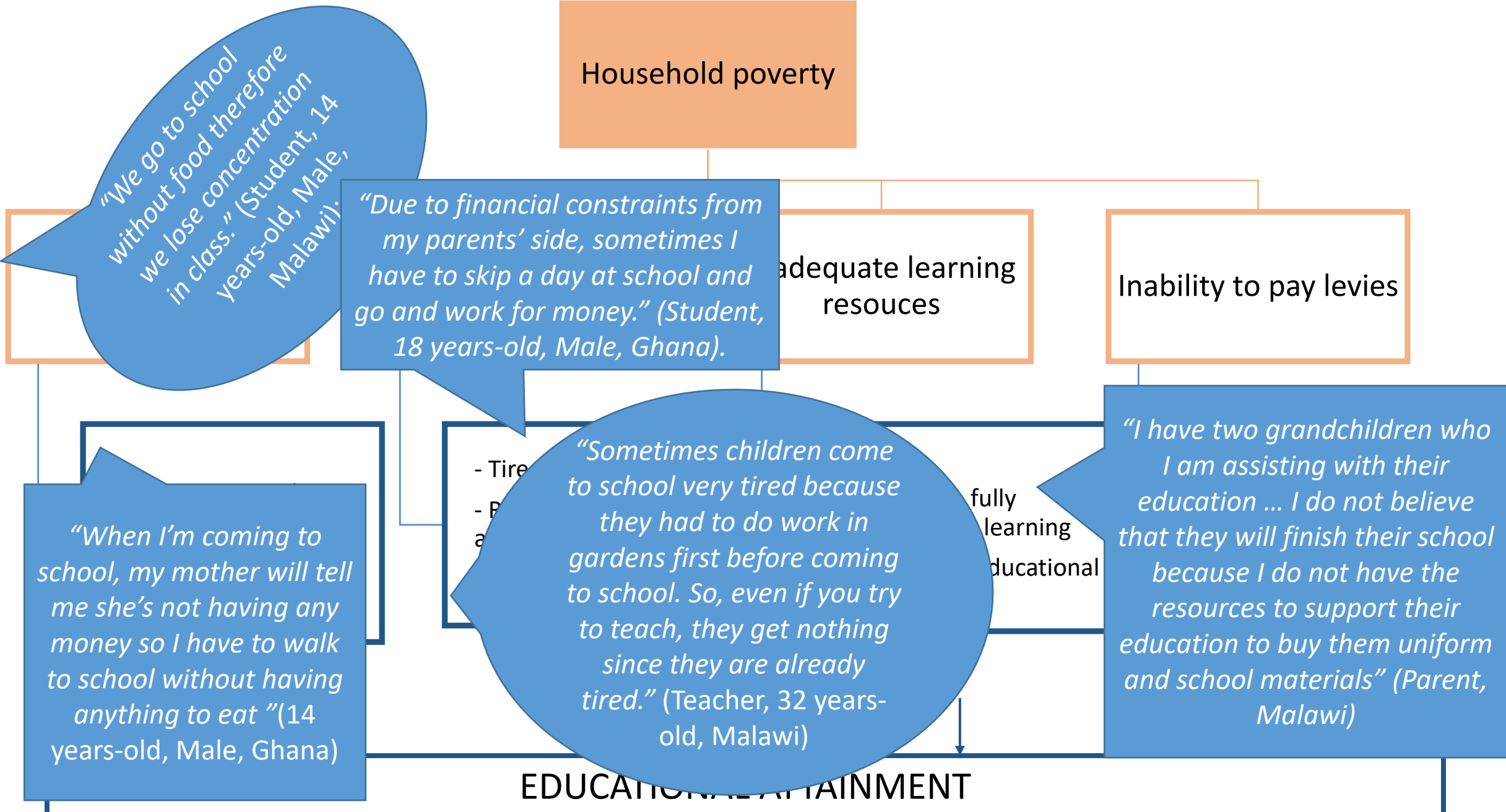
*"Due to financial constraints from my parents' side, sometimes I have to skip a day at school and go and work for money." (Student, 18 years-old, Male, Ghana).*

*"Sometimes children come to school very tired because they had to do work in gardens first before coming to school. So, even if you try to teach, they get nothing since they are already tired." (Teacher, 32 years-old, Malawi)*

*"I have two grandchildren who I am assisting with their education ... I do not believe that they will finish their school because I do not have the resources to support their education to buy them uniform and school materials" (Parent, Malawi)*

*"When I'm coming to school, my mother will tell me she's not having any money so I have to walk to school without having anything to eat "(14 years-old, Male, Ghana)*

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



## Some Reflections for Discussion

- Financing should address multidimensional poverty and target their pathways to attainment
- intervention targeted sector-wide consistent with the interconnectedness of SDGs (Editorial, IJED, 2016)
  - Interaction between these dimensions of poverty
- Educational financing should meet the ‘pathway test’
  - How does propose funding target specific barriers and their pathways to attainment ?



- Enforcing existing policies to the benefit vulnerable learners
  - Ban on school levies but alternative financial support needed
  - Who benefits from school feeding programmes?
- Reasonable school catchment distance to be travelled especially at primary school level
  - Interventions to ensure equality of access – bicycle schemes?
- School Resourcing is an essential condition for effective teaching

Thank You

Funders and Partners



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