

# Rodney Buadi Nkrumah

Ph.D. in Social Work, McGill University,  
Director: Vandna Sinha

## ADDRESSING EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN BASIC EDUCATION ACCESS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA; FROM MACRO-LEVEL INDICATORS TO MICRO-LEVEL EXPERIENCES

The coming into force of international development frameworks like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and subsequently the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has changed the dynamics of global discourse on development. Particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and the global South in general, attention has increasingly focused on the attainment of universal basic education as a precursor to national development. Accordingly, what is adjudged as “development” in education has been aligned with measurable goals and targets using specific indicators (Mortala, 2011; Unterhalter, 2014). This inherent concentration on indicators has stimulated two key trends in SSAs education landscape. First, it has placed immense pressure on governments and their development partners to implement policies and programs that tend to focus on improving national statistics on school enrolment, attendance and completion. Secondly, it has also drawn education and development research in the direction of using big quantitative datasets to project macro-level results in the education field. For instance, the attainment of high gross and net enrolment rates in primary school, the participation of more girls in basic school, and the provision of new educational infrastructure in hitherto geographically remote areas have been highlighted in recent literature as measurable indicators to underscore the successes chalked in education (Balwanz & Darvas, 2014; Lewin, 2009; İscan, Rosenblum & Tinker, 2015; Unterhalter, 2014). Though these education indicators help highlight major successes in the expansion of educational access at the macro-level, they are less effective in exposing prevailing inequalities regarding navigation of access. These are further compounded by layers of poverty, gender inequality, disability and rurality which intersect to hinder access to large sections of children, especially those in rural and peripheral regions (Darvas and Balwanz 2014). Based on an on-going literature review for my comprehensive examination, my presentation argues that the stark disparity between macro-level results and micro-level experiences of inequality faced by some children goes to suggest that the indicator approach to studying macro-level educational trends may obscure experiences of injustice and inequality regarding educational access for some groups of children. A shift in the dominant indicator approach of conducting educational research is thus needed to unravel existing inequities and injustices regarding access.