Does the policy cycle reflect the policymaking approach in Ghana?

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Based on two cases involving 60 interviews and secondary evidence, this paper investigated whether Ghana's policymaking approach accords with the policy cycle. The evidence showed that the Ghana industrial policy was largely compliant with the model. But the free senior high school policy bore little resemblance to it. Factors that determined whether or not policymaking followed the policy cycle included the salience of the issue, the sponsor of the issue, the political environment at the time, and the timing of the introduction of the issue. Four conclusions can be drawn from the Ghanaian evidence. First, the rough edges of the policy cycle can be trimmed and applied as a best fit model rather than a best practice model in any jurisdiction. Second, the policy cycle like other policy process theories should not be written off as inappropriate or inefficacious simply because practice failed to adhere to one or two out of the several elements of the theory. Third, an integrated policy process model is likely to be more efficacious than a single one, but there is inattention to such an idea. Finally, drawing lessons from policy process theories is a neglected area, which needs to be emphasized.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Public policy refers to "a series of intentionally coherent decisions or activities taken or carried out by different public and sometimes private actors...with a view to resolving in a targeted manner a problem that is politically defined as collective in nature" (Dupius & Knoepfel, 2013: 24). Policy scholars assert that public policy is best conceived in terms of a process (Bridgman & Davis, 2004; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). This is because policy decisions are not "something confined to one level of organization at the top, or at one stage at the outset, but rather something fluid and ever changing" (Gilliat, 1984, p. 345). Weible and colleagues agree, explicating that the policy process is the study of change and development of policy and the related actors, events, and contexts (Weible, Heikkila, & deLeon, 2012). This process involves negotiation, bargaining, and accommodation of many different interests, which eventually give it a political flavor. These political interactions happen within a network through which decisions flow, programs are formulated and implemented, and interorganizational dependencies and interactions take place. Thus, policymaking is not a simple but rather a complex dynamic process involving series of actions and inactions of varieties of groups with varieties of interests at different stages (Rashid, 2014).

Due to the complex and dynamic nature of policymaking and the amount of uncertainty involved in its development, many scholars and practitioners have recommended that public policy should be studied to better understand its various aspects, that is, the input and output of policy, as well as the players and factors involved in its making. The pursuit of these recommendations have resulted in the development of various analytical models, approaches, and concepts, which could be used to explain the policymaking process or the results or outcomes of policies. These theories and models are necessary and useful in guiding policy analysis, in helping to clarify and direct our inquiry into policymaking, in facilitating communication, and in suggesting possible explanations for policy actions (Bridgman & Davis, 2004; Nowlin, 2011; Sabatier, 2007). To successfully make policy, we need some guidelines, some criteria of relevance to focus our efforts and to prevent aimless search through seemingly infinite volume of data. Policy concepts and theories give direction to our inquiry (Bridgman & Davis, 2004).
Every country around the world therefore needs theories to guide it through policymaking to produce efficient and effective outcomes to meet the needs of the citizenry. Virtually, all the theories of public policymaking were designed by the developed industrialized countries as a function of their contextual circumstances. These theories have not been perfect in guiding policymaking in those developed countries. This is because policymaking is not a stringently rational endeavor, rather it is a complex and enthralling web of politics, policy, and administration (Bridgman & Davis, 2004). The reality is that "when electoral considerations, budget constraints and implementation problems pull in different directions, problems might be open to multiple solutions or no solution at all" (Bridgman & Davis, 2004, p. 23). In other words, models to do not guarantee desired outcomes; decision makers can commit grievous blunders even applying the most robust frameworks (Bridgman & Davis, 2004; Colebatch, 2005). Nevertheless, these theories have proven their worth in many instances in those countries in terms of shepherding them through in the design and implementation of actual policies that have produced the anticipated outcomes. The policy theories that are developed in the advanced Western countries have been embraced and applied as a generic code or standard across the globe irrespective of contexts. Nevertheless, the contextual circumstances in the developed world are completely different from those of the Third World. Public policies in developing countries possess certain peculiarities of their own on account of their being shaped by different sets of contextual factors: unstable social and political environment, lack of resources, inadequate capacity, elitist and exclusionary policymaking styles, and disregard of constitutions and constitutionalism (Mohammed, 2018). The question this raises is the following: Are developed countries’ policy theories appropriate for developing countries and are symmetrical outcomes attending the application of the developed world theories in developing contexts?

The aim of this article is to investigate whether the policy cycle that was imported from the advanced industrial countries into Ghana is appropriate for its context and whether it is actually guiding successful making of public policies in the country? Specifically, the paper asks the following questions: (a) Is the policy cycle being used to guide public policy making in Ghana? (b) To what extent is the policy cycle being applied in Ghana? (c) Is the policy cycle providing adequate guidance of Ghanaian public policy making? (d) What are the outcomes of the application of the policy cycle to the Ghanaian public policymaking process? (e) What challenges are faced in the application of the policy cycle in Ghana and what alternative models are proffered to best describe Ghanaian policymaking? This analysis is done using the Ghana industry policy (GIP) and free senior high school (FSHS) policy as cases. The GIP, which was promulgated in 2010, is a production issue policy (Fenna, 2004) because it aimed at increasing adequate guidance of Ghanaian public policymaking; and some others have bemoaned that implemented policies are usually not evaluated to determine their success or failure and to draw lessons for reform (Migule, 2016). The policy cycle is chosen for examination in this paper because there is the perception and the expectation among both authoritative and nonauthoritative actors in Ghana that the policymaking process ought to follow a standard sequence of steps reminiscent of the policy cycle. For example, the New Tertiary Education Bill, 2019 that has just been launched by the Akufo Addo government has been queried by the opposition, National Democratic Congress (NDC), and many academics and management of the universities in Ghana because it has not defined the problem that gave rise to the bill (Ablakwa, 2019). Nonauthoritative actors like the Ashanti King, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II has described the bill as one devoid of opportunity for wider public consultations for proposals to enrich the bill and address serious concerns (Baffoe-Donkor & Opoku, 2019). Others have lamented that the weakest link of the policy process in Ghana is the implementation stage (Mohammed, 2018), whereas some others have bemoaned that implemented policies are usually not evaluated to determine their success or failure and to draw lessons for reform (Migule, 2016). The policy cycle is selected also because it is the pioneer policy model and one that was the first to emerge via conflict and competition among two or more coalitions). Thus, the policy process models should not be construed only as the policy cycle; indeed, each process dimension has its place. The goal is to draw lessons from each of the processes (Weible et al., 2012). The policy cycle is chosen for examination in this paper because there is the perception and the expectation among both authoritative and nonauthoritative actors in Ghana that the policymaking process ought to follow a standard sequence of steps reminiscent of the policy cycle. For example, the New Tertiary Education Bill, 2019 that has just been launched by the Akufo Addo government has been queried by the opposition, National Democratic Congress (NDC), and many academics and management of the universities in Ghana because it has not defined the problem that gave rise to the bill (Ablakwa, 2019). Nonauthoritative actors like the Ashanti King, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II has described the bill as one devoid of opportunity for wider public consultations for proposals to enrich the bill and address serious concerns (Baffoe-Donkor & Opoku, 2019). Others have lamented that the weakest link of the policy process in Ghana is the implementation stage (Mohammed, 2018), whereas some others have bemoaned that implemented policies are usually not evaluated to determine their success or failure and to draw lessons for reform (Migule, 2016). The policy cycle is selected also because it is the pioneer policy model and one that was the first to go around the world. It is therefore selected in order to start the evaluation of the appropriateness or otherwise of Western policy models in developing context beginning with the policy cycle.
3 | THE POLICY CYCLE

A policy cycle is an orderly process depicting how societal issues or public problems are framed and ushered through step-by-step sequence of actions that show how the problem ought to be resolved. The term policy cycle refers to the recurrent pattern shown by procedures that eventually culminate in the development of a public policy (Savard & Banville, 2012). The policy cycle was first proposed by Harold Lasswell in 1951 (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003:11–2) and was subsequently adopted by others (e.g., see Brewer, 1974; Jenkins, 1978; deLeon, 1999; Bridgman and Davis, 2004).

In its original formulation, Lasswell segregated the policy process into seven sequential stages, an arrangement he believed that portrayed not only how public policies were in practice made but how they ought to be made: (a) intelligence, (b) promotion, (c) prescription, (d) invocation, (e) application, (f) termination, and (g) appraisal (Lasswell, 1971). By intelligence, which began the process, Lasswell meant the gathering, processing, and dissemination of information for those who participate in the decision process. The next stage is promotion, which involved the projection and privileging of particular alternatives by those engaged in making the decision. The subsequent stage, which is known as prescription entailed recommendation of a course of action. Whereas the fourth stage, which is dubbed invocation, concerned the development of sanctions to punish those who failed to abide by the recommendations of decision makers. The fifth stage, which was referred to as application, involved the putting into effect by the courts and the bureaucracy. The policy was then allowed to travel its life journey until it was terminated or annulled. In the final stage, which termed appraisal, the policy was assessed against the goals and objectives that were originally set for it (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

This pioneer examination of the policymaking process concentrated on decision making within government and virtually ignored external or environmental factors that shaped government’s action. It erroneously construed that decision making was restricted to or preserved for a small number of players occupying official positions in the public realm. The other criticism of the Lasswell’s model related to its internal logic, in particular, with regard to the sequencing of the stages where appraisal or evaluation preceded termination. The charge here is that policies would reasonably be evaluated before cessation of activities at all the stages occurs. Despite these shortcomings, Lasswell’s model was extremely powerful in shaping the development of a policy science (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Although not completely precise, it simplified the complexity of studying public policy by permitting each stage to be delinked or separated and investigated in relation to the issues, problems, and actors as well as their interactions before reintegrating the stages into a coherent whole (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

Lasswell’s model inspired the development of variants by other scholars (Lyden, Shipman, & Wilkinson, 1968). A prototype was a simpler version of the policy cycle designed by Brewer (1974). The version of Brewer contained six stages: (a) invention/initiation, (b) estimation, (c) selection, (d) implementation, (e) evaluation, and (f) termination. According to Brewer, invention or initiation represented the premier step in the sequence when a problem would be first identified. As he opined, this stage would be characterized by ill-conceived definition of the problem and recommended solutions to it. In the next stage, estimation focused on computing the risks, costs, and benefits inherent in each of the various solutions cataloged in the preceding stage. This would entail both technical evaluation and normative choices. The goal of this stage was to winnow down the infinite array of reasonable choices by excluding the impracticable ones and to one way or another rank the remaining alternatives in order of attractiveness. In the third stage, selection involved adopting one, or none, or some combination of the solutions remaining at the end of the estimation stage. The remaining three stages entailed implementing the chosen alternative, evaluating the outcomes of the whole process, and terminating the policy based on the conclusions derived from its evaluation (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

Brewer’s variant of the policy cycle improved on Lasswell’s original model. It extended the policy process beyond the boundaries of government in discussing the recognition of problems and elucidated the terminology for describing the various stages of the process (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p.13). In addition, it explicated that the notion of the policy process is a continuing cycle. It appreciates that most policies do not have a definite life cycle—moving from birth to death—but rather seem to recur in slightly different guises, another with minor or major modifications (Brewer and Deleon, 1983 cited in Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). The thoughts of Brewer stimulated the development of other derivatives of the policy cycle in the 1970s and 1980s: the most popular of which were couched in nuanced textbooks by Jones (1984) and Anderson (1984). Each of these versions had slightly different interpretations of the names, number, and order of the stages in the cycle.

Progression through the policy cycle is intentionally iterative (Freeman, 2013) in that policy tasks recur, and tools are also applied repeatedly to effectively address the unyielding problem. Policies are made through a policy style that engages concerned parties in creating new or revised policies within a given established setting (Maetz & Balié, 2008, p. 3). According to Knill and Tosun (2008, p. 9), policymaking is such that entails the presence of multiple constraints, (e.g., shortage of time and resources, public opinion, and, of course, the constitution), existence of various policy processes (dissimilar organizations that overlap and compete with each other), and an endless cycle of choices and policies (processes of a policy cycle), whereby the last stage leads straight back to the first, indicating that the policy cycle is incessant and unending.

The policy cycle portrays “an excessively linear view of policy” (Stone, et al., 2001, p. 8) because it interprets policymaking as a dis-aggregated series of discrete sequential steps with each stage informing the next in a rational fashion. The “...operative principle behind the notion of the policy cycle is the logic of applied problem solving...” process (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 13), which is articulated, balanced, objective, and logical (Sutton, 1999). Policy researchers have classified various activities per their relations to public policy such that the product is a collection of policy...
The policy cycle is segmented into a standard sequence of five major stages: agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy evaluation (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 13). However, other writers like Dye (2003) consider problem identification as a distinct stage. Some others insert policy change and policy termination as separate stages and not as part of the evaluation stage. The standard number of stages in the policy cycle is five: (a) agenda setting, (b) policy formulation, (c) policy adoption, (d) policy implementation, and (e) policy evaluation. This study adopts these five standard stages in its analysis; the five standard stages of the policy cycle are summarized hereunder.

### 3.1.1. Agenda setting

The first stage of a policy cycle is agenda setting or identification of public problems that require interventions. Countries are bedeviled by huge numbers of socioeconomic and political problems that demand intervention to create a better living. Problem identification arises whenever individuals or groups (mass media, interest groups, citizen initiatives, and public opinion) call for state action on an unacceptable situation (Dye, 2008, p. 31). By applying the policy cycle framework to guide the policy process, the need for a new policy, or new policy provision(s) within an existing policy, is identified and confirmed (Freeman, 2013). Societal problems are identified and ranked through publications (especially using media) but mostly depending on public demands, which requires action. Policy agenda denotes the process by which problems come to the attention of governments (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 13). The policy agenda arises from competition among voices seeking attention. It is determined politically with no guarantee that the most significant issues will make it onto the list. Agenda setting is the narrowing of an infinite array of possible policy problems to a few that command government attention (Bridgman and Davis, 2004).

### 3.1.2. Policy formulation

Policy formulation is the exploration of the various options available for resolving a problem. It involves the assessment of possible solutions to policy problems. Policy formulation involves the development of alternative proposals for action. The process of defining, accepting, or rejecting options is the subject matter of policy formulation (Bridgman & Davis, 2004). "Policy formulation occurs in government bureaucracies; interest group offices; legislative committee rooms, meetings of special commissions; and policy-planning organizations otherwise known as think tanks" (Dye, 2008, p. 41). Policy recommendations are thereafter framed and circulated among responsible agencies and public through mass media with a purpose of laying "the groundwork for making policy into law" (Dye, 2008, p. 41). The relationship between the government and social actors is thus an important variable impelling the formulation of public policies (Savard & Banville, 2012). Planning, analysis (development of a political solution), and consultation (to test the acceptance of the policy by different interest groups) are essential tasks of this phase.

### 3.1.3. Policy adoption

Policy adoption or decision making is the stage where authoritative policy actors issue some formal or informal statement of intent to undertake or refrain from undertaking some action (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). The process of decision making involves the sequence of getting policy proposals out of debates and deliberations, selecting the preferred proposal or course of action, enactment of laws in parliament, and assenting to the enactment by the president (Bridgman & Davis, 2004). Some decisions are made via executive orders or court rule. Policy adoption entails choosing a proposal, developing political support for it, enacting it into law, and then deciding on its constitutionality (Dye, 2008, p. 32). Decision making is neither an independent stage nor synonymous with the entire policymaking process. Different kinds of decisions can result from a decision-making process. Positive decisions refer to the type of decisions that alter the status quo (e.g., shift from Cash and Carry System to National Health Insurance Scheme in Ghana). Negative decisions connote a choice to reject options to alter the status quo (e.g., refusal of Ghana Parliament to approve the Transition Bill). Nondecisions denote the act of filtering out certain options out of the agenda setting or policy formulation stages. Policy decision making is not only a technical exercise but an inherently political process. Public policy decisions create winners and losers (Bridgman & Davis, 2004).

### 3.1.4. Policy implementation

Implementation means carrying out programs of activities to achieve policy goals. It refers to "the translation of plans into practice"—"putting solution into effect" (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 185). This is when a decision is carried out through the application of government directives and is confronted with reality (Savard & Banville, 2012). Allocation of resources and assignment of responsibilities is significant at this stage if efficiency and effectiveness of policies are to be achieved. Put differently, at the implementation stage, "people are informed of the choice of government; policy instruments are created and put in place; staffs are instructed; services are delivered; and monies are spent" (Bridgman & Davis, 2004, p. 119). Civil servants' personal tendencies (ideologies, interests, thinking, etc.) can influence their perceptions and even their intentions when it comes to implementing a policy (Savard & Banville, 2012). Bureaucrats make policy as they engage in the tasks of implementation—making regulations, adjusting cases, and exercising their discretion (Dye, 2008, p. 57). Thus, policy success depends on how well bureaucratic structures implement government decisions (Knill & Tosun, 2008); otherwise all policies are bound to fail.
3.1.5. | Policy evaluation

The term evaluation is synonymous with three words: appraisal, rating, and assessment, all of which refer to the attachment of some scale of value to the outcome of policies (Dunn, 2015). Policy evaluation refers to the processes by which the results of policies are monitored by both state and societal actors; the outcome of which may be reconceptualization of policy problems and solutions (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 13) proposing changes and reforms (Dye, 2008, p. 32). Evaluation is done by both authoritative and nonauthoritative actors to determine whether or not policies are achieving their stated goals, at what costs and with what effects, intended and unintended, on society (Dye, 2008, p. 55). In most cases, evaluation is a rather formal component of policymaking and often carried out by experts (Knill & Tosun, 2008, p. 22), and it can be administrative (managerial performance and budgetary systems), judicial (judicial review and administrative discretion), and/or political evaluation (elections, think tanks, inquiries, and legislative oversights; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 210–216).

The strengths of the policy cycle are several: it breaks complex phenomena into manageable steps permitting us to concentrate on the different issues and needs of each phase in the cycle; it permits some synthesis of existing knowledge about public policy; it is a first expedition into complexity and provides a roadmap to future action; it organizes observations into familiar patterns; it brings a system and a rhythm to a world that might otherwise appear chaotic and unordered; and it is useful in helping us to understand the various activities, issues, and problems involved at different stages of the policy process (Bridgman & Davis, 2004; Dye, 2008; Freeman, 2013).

The weaknesses of the policy cycle are also numerous: It creates an artificial expectation of a reliable and predictable policy world; it risks imposing too great a neatness on policymaking that is renowned for complexity and discontinuity; it is presented as if policy making is a linear process; real policy making may be messy rather than orderly fashion depicted by the model; the model lacks the concept of causation; it does not accommodate the value-laden world of politics; and it misses power plays from which decisions emerge (Bridgman & Davis, 2004; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Knill & Tosun, 2008).

4 | PUBLIC POLICYMAKING IN GHANA

The policy cycle as described above is debated as portraying or not describing the policymaking style in Ghana. The description of policymaking in Ghana from the colonial period and after independence seems to exemplify both the opportunities and challenges of applying the policy cycle approach in a developing context. The political culture in the colonial period in Ghana was one which perceived the government’s power as imposed, absolute, brutal, and unaccountable. The colonial authorities consolidated their hold on Ghana through the establishment of a highly centralized administrative and bureaucratic apparatus located at the colonial capital and controlled by foreigners. The policy process began and ended with the governor (Asante, 2005). In other words, policy choices were decreed to serve imperial interests rather than those of the colonized. Thus, local problem identification and agenda setting were virtually absent; so too was policy formulation because no alternative proposals from indigenes were tolerated.

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah won independence for the Gold Coast (name of Ghana before independence) in 1957. Although Dr. Nkrumah gave Ghana a good start in her developmental race, his government quickly degenerated into a dictatorship with the declaration of one-party state in 1964 and a growing personality cult (Moss, 2007, p. 42). He dominated policymaking and decreed laws without recourse to parliament or the people, mimicking the policy style of the colonizers. From the overthrow of Dr. Nkrumah’s government in a military coup in 1966 to 1992, Ghana was ruled by a succession of military dictatorships. In the majority of cases, the formulation and implementation of policies was undertaken exclusively by politicians and a small group of bureaucrats with technical assistance solicited from multilateral and bilateral donors who often kept policy discussion opportunities away from the general public (Ohemeng, 2005). The domestic non-state sector had little or no opportunity to participate in the policymaking process (Amoako-Tuffour, 2008).

Prominent events that led to the new democratic dispensation in Ghana (1993 to date) were the military rulers’ decision to return the country to democracy, the lifting of the ban on political parties, the conduct of multiparty elections in 1992, and the start of the Fourth Republic on January 7, 1993 (Frempong, 2007). It is important to note that in the new democratic dispensation, the structure and practice of the political system from 1993 to 2000 was different from that between 2001 and the present time. The political system and practice from 1993 to 2000 was such that there was a shift from successive military rule to multiparty democracy, but this change failed to expand access of the public to participation in national affairs. Having transformed itself from a military government (1982–1992) to an elected government, the NDC administration during its first term (1993–2000) continued its authoritarian behavior in policy development and implementation (Boafo-Arthur, 1999). Although the NDC government was irritated by dissent and public discussion of government proposals and decisions, civil society organizations were emboldened by the clauses on plurality in decision making in the 1992 constitution to stake their claims. In particular, Article 35 (paragraph 6 [d]) of the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution enjoins the state to make democracy a reality by taking appropriate measures to give “possible opportunities to the people to participate in decision-making at every level in national life and in government.” Accordingly, think tanks were not only able to disseminate the results of policy-relevant research but also educated the public on policy choices (Amoako-Tuffour, 2008).

The political system and practice from 2001 to 2016 was ushered in by the 2000 elections, which marked a watershed in Ghanaian
politics. The long-ruling NDC government was defeated to enable the National Patriotic Party (NPP) alternate power with it. The NPP government under President J. A. Kuffour (2001–2004 and 2005–2008) made initiatives to democratize public policymaking. Some of these initiatives included the weekly “meet-the-press” (to let ministers talk about development in their sectors), and “people assembly programs,” designed to provide a platform for direct interaction between the people and the president (Daily Graphic, 2005). Disagreements on policy choices especially among elected officials across the political divide were discernible over cases such as the adoption of National Health Insurance Scheme and the sale of Ghana Telecommunication Corporation to British Vodafone. The incarceration of NDC government politicians and ministers by the NPP administration exacerbated the acrimony between the two parties. That acrimony failed to fade away in the two succeeding NDC governments of late President Atta-Mills (2009–2012) and President Mahama (2013 to 2016; Mohammed, 2013).

The political system from 2017 to date is such that a third alternation in power occurred following the defeat of the incumbent Mahama-led NDC government by the Akuffo-Addo-led NPP in the 2016 elections. By this third alternation in power, it appears that Ghana’s democratic experiment is consolidating. As Ghana’s democracy is consolidating, it is expected that policymaking will be more structured and guided by relevant policy process theories like the policy cycle. The cases that are discussed here interrogate whether these expectations are being met.

5 | METHODOLOGY

A case study design was adopted where two cases, the GIP and the FSHS were examined to determine their compliance with the policy cycle. The cases were selected for a variety of reasons. In the case of the GIP, it was chosen because first, it provided a fresh start for Ghana to develop a viable industrial policy after several failed attempts since independence in 1957. So it will be interesting to know whether policymakers drew lessons from past failures and mistakes to inform the GIP. This is important because without policy learning, policy reforms cannot be made, and policymaking cannot be improved. Second, the GIP was selected because it deviated from the approach to policymaking in Ghana, which is largely elitist and exclusionary—a legacy of the country’s colonial rule, authoritarian one-party government, and military dictatorships (Mohammed, 2013). The GIP was inclusive and participatory including all major stakeholders such as large, medium, and small industrial manufacturers, think tanks academics, and trade associations. One of the advantages of participatory policymaking is that it ensures that the input of stakeholders outside government reflect in and enrich the content and outcomes of policies. One of the objectives of this study was to measure just that. Third, the GIP was selected because it exemplified the challenges and characteristics of policymaking in a developing context like Ghana: inadequate capacity, lack of resources, and unreliable, dated, and limited access to information.

The FSHS policy was also chosen for several reasons. First, rarely, if at all, in Ghana’s history had policy ideas been mooted and held waiting for a long time before development and implementation like in the case of the FSHS policy. So this study investigated the reason for the patience in the long wait because politics is characterized by expediency to deliver policies to shore up political support. Second, the FSHS policy is a superlative in Ghana’s traditional elitist and exclusionary approach to policymaking. This is because the policy’s development was perhaps more elitist and exclusionary than the making of any policy in Ghana’s new democratic dispensation. The FSHS process did not only exclude non-governmental actors but also authoritative actors like legislators by precluding the process from parliamentary deliberations. So this paper investigated why exclusionary policymaking still thrives in a new democratic dispensation. Finally, the FSHS policy was selected because it fulfilled a political campaign pledge and a party manifesto promise. This is seldom the case in a developing context like Ghana where politicians are renowned for reneging on their manifesto and campaign promises. This study therefore sought to understand why politicians fulfilled their campaign and manifesto promise.

The empirical basis of the cases was information from 60 interviews with members of the governmental elite and civil society organizations and secondary sources. Purposive sampling procedure was used to select the participants from these specified sectors, in order to extract salient and diverse information pertaining to key domains of the industrial sector and school system where the implementation of the new policies were more likely to transform manufacturing, teaching, and learning. The questions of the interviews centered on perceptions of the GIP and FSHS policies and the participants’ experiences with their development and implementation, including the challenges. The interviews that were conducted from January to July 2019 by the author were face-to-face and open-ended. The interviews were conducted in English and in local languages with each interview lasting between 45 min and 1 hr. Respondents were given code numbers, and their responses were recorded against their respective code numbers. Responses were written down in a notepad and were transcribed. All quotations throughout the paper are taken from the interviews.

Government ministries, department and agencies (MDAs) from where respondents were drawn included among others the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, and National Board for Small Scale Industries (see Table 1). The respondents came from key stakeholder groups of the industry and basic education sectors (Table 1). The respondents were chosen because of their connection to the development and implementation of the GIP and FSHS policy. Most of the interviewees are also decision makers and control officers in their own right.

The interviews provided a means for exploring complexity and detail of process that could not be examined by alternate more structured instruments such as questionnaire or analysed using quantitative methods (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). Secondary information was collated from published documents on the cases including progress reports on the policies, newsletters, journal articles, budget
TABLE 1 Categories of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governmental actors</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Respondents’ code numbers</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Trade and Industries</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>#1 to #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana Export Promotion Council</td>
<td>#4 to #5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>#6 to #9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Board for Small Scale Industries</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>#10 to #13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>#14 to #16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana Education Service</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>#17 to #19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Enterprise Foundation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>#20 to #22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Enterprise Commission</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>#23 to #24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-governmental actors</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Association of Ghana Industries</td>
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<td>#25 to #27</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>#32 to #35</td>
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<td>Suame Magazine Industrial Development</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Private Enterprise Foundation</td>
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<td>IMANI Ghana</td>
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The policy cycle as used here refers to the one that was originally developed by Lasswel (1951) with seven stages and modified and refined to one containing five standard stages. These standard stages include agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. In this study, if the making of the GIP and FSHS policy followed the five standard stages, then Ghana's public policymaking approach accords with the policy cycle. On the other hand, if the making of the policies deviated from the stages' heuristic, then Ghana's public policymaking approach does not accord with the policy cycle. The reasons for the compliance or non-compliance of the cases with the model are then investigated. Thus, the stages in the policy cycle become the independent variables, whereas the stages or processes that were involved in the making of the GIP and FSHS become the dependent variables.

6 | CONGRUENCE OF GHANAIAN POLICYMAKING PROCESS WITH THE POLICY CYCLE

The cases that are examined here are the GIP and FSHS policy. They are assessed in relation to whether they followed the policy cycle model in their development, implementation, and evaluation. Insights from this assessment are then used to highlight the opportunities and difficulties of using theories developed from the Western world to guide policymaking in a developing context like Ghana. These insights are useful in informing the development of a practical model of policymaking that takes account of the contextual conditions of Ghana.

6.1 | Case 1: Ghana industrial policy

The GIP was developed to provide clear and transparent guidelines for the implementation of the government's industrial development agenda with a focus on the growth, diversification, upgrading, and competitiveness of Ghana's manufacturing sector. The GIP specifically seeks to address an array of challenges the manufacturing sector faces that affect production capacity, productivity, and product quality (Zakria and Bolly, 2013). The GIP is assessed here in terms of whether the policy cycle (containing the five standard stages identified earlier) approach was used to guide its making.

6.1.1 | Agenda setting

In terms of agenda setting, the problem of a weak industrial base as the bane of Ghana's underdevelopment was identified. A respondent senior bureaucrat of MTI stated that "as decision makers in the ministry, we as top bureaucrats together with the sector minister identified that the underdevelopment of Ghana is due to her status as a primary commodity exporter." He elaborated that "we lamented Ghana's state of affairs where she relies almost entirely on three primary commodities which are namely cocoa, minerals and timber for her export revenue." He explained that "these commodities attract fluctuating and decreasing prices on the world market." This, he attributed to the fact that "as incomes rise in the developed countries the income elasticity of demand for primary commodities decreases." But that "as income in developing countries rise, the income elasticity of demand for manufactured goods, which Ghana as a developing country buys, increases." The result of this structure of the Ghanaian economy is that "Ghana pays more to the developed countries than it receives from them." The consequence is "an unfavorable balance of payment that is not offset by domestic market-led production or export to other developing countries." He concluded that "this primary
commodity-oriented and uncompetitive Ghanaian economy led to the introduction of the GIP to accelerate the pace of industrialization of the country” (Respondent #2, January 14, 2019). Zakaria and Boly concur, confirming that “the GIP was developed to promote competitiveness and enhance production with increased employment opportunities and prosperity for Ghanaians, fair prices for consumers and better quality products for both domestic and international markets” (Zakari & Boly, 2013, p. 6). One interviewee from private enterprise foundation (PEF) said that “private sector industrialists and commentators were already informally discussing the country’s weak industrial base as the source of the uncompetitive nature of her economy” (Respondent #39, May 18, 2019). A respondent from association of small-scale industries added that “when the government formally identified the low industrial base of the country as a problem needing authoritative response it did so from the filters of the informal private discourses” (Respondent #35, April 30, 2019). This evidence shows that the GIP policy incorporated a problem identification and agenda-setting stage akin to the policy cycle. And although only authoritative actors represented by top bureaucrats in the MTI and the sector minister defined the problem, they could not have done so without the input and prompts they picked from the private sector stakeholders.

6.1.2 | Policy formulation

In terms of the formulation of the GIP, an informant of AGI confirmed that “it involved an analysis of options and extensive consultations with stakeholders to ensure that the industrial policy was broad-based and embraced by all stakeholders” (Respondent # 27, April 8, 2019). As a senior bureaucrat of MTI concurred, “the first stage of the policy formulation exercise embraced two trade and industry stakeholder forums which were held in October 2006 and September 2007.” He said that the sector minister organized the forums to introduce government’s objectives concerning Ghana’s trade and industrialization policy (Respondent #2, January 8, 2019). An academic revealed that “as part of the policy formulation stage the MTI organized a workshop at which over 500 policy options were developed by participants.” In a follow up workshop, he added, “the 500 policy options were examined, fine-tuned and made accessible to the stakeholders to express opinions regarding which ones were appropriate for which sectors.” He said further that “on the basis of the input from these consultative forums, the key thematic areas of Ghana’s industrial policy were articulated by stakeholders” (Respondent #17, March 18, 2019). A respondent from the Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PPME) Division of the MTI intimated that “my outfit augmented the work of the consultative forums with a review of studies and reports on industrial development, trade and competitiveness in Ghana as well as our own background research” (Respondent #4, January 7, 2019). Another interviewee from the same division added that “experts and consultants further refined and developed these options into various thematic areas taking into consideration Ghana’s development experience and goals, cost effectiveness, best practice, and insights from focus group meetings.” She elaborated that “the viability of the options was assessed using comments and suggestions in the inception reports of experts, consultants and focus group.” Furthermore, she said, “the thematic area options were presented to stakeholders for consideration at other round tables in September 2008 and November 2009” (Respondent #5, January 8, 2019).

A respondent from PEF confirmed that “the further rounds of consultations affirmed stakeholders the opportunity to make recommendations, reject some of the policy alternatives and include fresh ones under each thematic area” (Respondent #40, May 21, 2019). Another informant of the PPME revealed that “further rounds of consultations with relevant stakeholders re-validated the agreement concluded during the previous forums and provided a guideline for experts/consultants to choose strategic alternatives.” Overall, he said, “the experts pinpointed 21 strategic thematic areas based on expert advice.” He illuminated further that “the process was progressed further when the MTI in conjunction with the experts reviewed the recommendations in detail in line with the outcomes of the various consultative forums and the overall national development agenda and produced a final list of policy recommendations.” He digressed that “these final recommendations were presented as industrial policy prescriptions in the industrial policy document.” He emphasized that “no other ministry was involved in this final stage of the GIP formulation.” He also said that “the MTI together with consultants drafted the components of the industrial policy document.” The drafted document was, as he revealed, “cut across 21 policy thematic areas which were then grouped into four classes.” The four classes, as he revealed, included production and distribution, technology and innovation, incentives and regulatory regime, and cross-cutting issues (Respondent #3 January 6, 2019).

6.1.3 | Policy adoption

The earlier decisions that were taken at the stakeholders forums were the approval of the GIP policy objectives and the adoption of the 500 policy options. In respect to the development of the 500 policy options, for example, an AGI respondent suggested that “one of the ways of accelerating industrialization in Ghana is to give tax holidays to newly established industries to enable them to stand on their feet” (Respondent #26, April 6, 2019). An interviewee of Securities and Exchange Commission opined that “factor inputs which are imported by industries at the initiation stage should be exempt from import duties to reduce their establishment cost” (Respondent #24, March 25, 2019). An informant from Ghana Export Promotion Council proposed that “to make Ghana industrially competitive, Ghanaians should be encouraged or even compelled to consume made-in-Ghana goods” (Respondent #4, January, 2019). On her part, a Ghana Chamber of Commerce respondent advocated that “Ghana should adopt a policy of protectionism and only open up to the outside world when Ghanaian manufactured goods become globally competitive” (Respondent #28, April 19, 2019). In regard to the adoption stage, an interviewee from the PPME revealed that “that stage was ushered in when in April 2009 the GIP document was presented to Cabinet to begin the
process of ratification." The presentation, as he said, "was done via a Cabinet Memorandum by the sector minister for approval by members of cabinet." He revealed further that "the policy was approved and entered into force in June 2010" (Respondent #4, March 22, 2019). He stressed, in addition, that "the industrial policy document, did not pass through the parliamentary process, as only laws and regulatory documents pass through Parliament." He finally revealed that "once Cabinet endorses a policy document in Ghana, it becomes a working document that needs to be implemented by the respective MDAs." This evidence means that the adoption stage of the GIP process was restricted to politicians, that is, Cabinet.

6.1.4 | Policy implementation

Pertaining to the implementation stage, the Industrial Sector Support Program was responsible for converting the policy’s intentions into practical expression. This meant ensuring the execution of projects and programs to achieve the goals of the policy, which as stated, was for players to produce high-quality and competitive products to gain access to the international market. The policy was to be implemented over a 5-year period. However, the implementation was patchy at best for several reasons. As an AGI respondent lamented, "the policy document provided for the establishment of a secretariat to implement the policy." However, he bemoaned that "the secretariat was never created." He added that "the creation of an Industrial Development Fund, into which Ghana Government was supposed to lodge seed capital for donors to then contribute to, was also never created." He said further that "government gave the MTI a small amount of funds to execute a very narrow band of activities under the policy." But "because the money was meager virtually all the activities in the four thematic areas could not be carried out" (Respondent #25, April 4, 2019).

6.1.5 | Policy evaluation

In regard to the evaluation stage, the GIP has not been evaluated to determine its performance. As a respondent from association of small-scale industries intimated, "policy evaluation seems to be the missing link in the Ghanaian policymaking process." Not surprisingly, he queried, "the GIP has not been evaluated eight years after its implementation" (Respondent #33 April 21, 2019). Without evaluation, another respondent bewailed, "it is difficult to determine whether the policy is a success or failure; it is also impossible to glean lessons that can be used to inform policy reform" (Respondent #44, June 9, 2019).

6.2 | Case 2: FSHS policy of 2017

Nana Akufo Addo, now president of the republic, declared FSHS as a government policy, which was launched in September 2017, and its implementation commenced henceforth (Cudjoe, 2018). The remit in this section, like in the preceding one, is to assess whether the development and implementation of the FSHS policy followed the policy cycle (containing the five standard stages mentioned earlier) approach.

6.2.1 | Agenda setting

Problems consist of matters on which policy actors, either inside or outside of the government, would like to secure action (Anderson, 2006). Problems do not exist in themselves; they become known through grids of evaluation and judgment by these actors about objects that are far from self-evident (Rose & Miller, 1992, p.176). However, in the case of the FSHS policy, it was clear that the problem that gave rise to it was exclusively defined by governmental actors to the exclusion of non-governmental players. As one IMANI Ghana respondent intimated, "the promises and challenges of instituting a Free SHS policy are wide ranging and needed broader consultations to determine whether Ghana really had a problem of out of pocket payment for senior high school education" (Respondent #45, June 11, 2019). A Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) respondent queried that "the President by announcing the FSHS policy on his campaign trails in 2012 and then in 2016 suggested that he had a solution to a problem that was yet to be defined upon winning the elections and assuming office." So he added, "the Free SHS process was akin to a situation where a solution was already in hand and was looking for a problem to apply to" (Respondent #47, June 19, 2019). In fact, he added a National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) informant, "the FSHS process was turned upside down where instead of starting from problem definition or agenda setting and working through to a decision and its execution, we had a solution that was now looking for a problem to solve" (Respondent #52, July 9, 2019).

6.2.2 | Policy formulation

The FSHS process jumped the policy formulation stage because no alternatives were allowed to be canvassed. As one Association of Private High School Education Providers (APHSEP) suggested, "a pilot scheme to test the viability and sustainability of the FSHS policy would have been the first step to take" (Respondent #57, July 9, 2019). On his part, an IMANI Ghana respondent contended that "a targeted approach rather than a blanket style would have made the policy sustainable." By targeted approach, he explained, "I mean introducing quotas and scholarships to disadvantaged students to eliminate the cost barrier and enhance access." The targeted approach, as he added, "will exclude the financially capable parents and guardians who can pay for their wards" and education (Respondent #46, June 16, 2019). He revealed that research has indicated that a disproportionately large number of students who get enrolled in high-ranking high schools and tertiary institutions come from fee-paying schools (Cudjoe, 2018). In these schools, he revealed, parents and guardians
"pay fees that are sometimes twice or more than which was originally charged in the secondary schools." He concluded that "a targeted approach would have been the way to go because it would have relieved the state of the financial load and would have afforded fiscal space to concentrate on other equally important sectors of the economy" (Respondent #46, June 6, 2019). Another respondent of IMANI Ghana argued that "a targeted approach would have been appropriate because economic growth is responsive to progressive taxation." He expatiated that "if the state is intent on assuming responsibility for the free provision of every major welfare service then it is inevitable that it will hike taxes." He further said that "studies have indicated that for every dollar or cedi disbursed for the provision of social welfare services the taxpayer loses more than in a situation where the cedi purchases the service directly" (Cudjoe, 2018, p. 2). He concluded that "this implies that taxation is not always an efficient way of redistributing resources from high income earners to poorer segments of the population." On his part, an informant from NAGRAT suggested that "a public private partnership (PPP) arrangement would have been the most cost-effective way of making education at the basic level free in Ghana." He revealed that "in other jurisdictions where PPP is in vogue the government injects substantial amounts into education in addition to providing lofty subsidies to meet the expenditure in grant-aided high schools, that is, schools that are privately owned" (Respondent #56, July 20, 2019). An IMANI Ghana interviewee concurred, explaining that "in Uganda for example, a PPP arrangement for free education is such that owners of private high schools have partnership with government that permit eligible students to study in lower secondary education" (Respondent #51, June 23, 2019). Barungi (2014) confirms this when he claims that most PPP private high schools have been helped through access to some funding and material support that have impacted positively on educational outcomes. Barrera-Ossorio and colleagues' studies indicate that in Uganda, PPP arrangements with the state have bettered the test scores of students in low-cost private schools by 0.2–0.3 standard deviations, in both English and mathematics (Barrera-Ossorio 2015). An academic queried that "despite the many alternative proposals for achieving free basic education in Ghana that are financially less burdensome to the state, the Akufo Addo government decided to ignore them and rather got fixated on this expensive FSHS option" (Respondent #58, July 25, 2019).

6.2.4 | Policy implementation

The FSHS process has a clearly identified implementation stage. The Ghana Education Service is the implementing and monitoring agency that is overseeing the provision of infrastructure, deployment of resources, including personnel to the provider institutions, and the supervision of performance of the policy. Management of the senior high school provider institutions is responsible for the direct implementation of the policy. According to Cudjoe (2018), the main source of financing for the FSHS policy is oil revenue, supplemented by Government of Ghana (through taxes, fees, and levies). In the 2018 budget statement, a total of GHS 1.34 billion from these two sources was voted for the implementation of the FSHS policy (Cudjoe, 2018). A voluntary education fund is being proposed to support education. However, the volatility surrounding oil revenues and uncertainties about the set-up of voluntary education fund raises questions surrounding the sustainability of these funding sources. This is particularly so when considered against the backdrop of Ghana's low non-oil revenue mobilization. According to 84% of the respondents, other challenges that have bedeviled the implementation of the FSHS policy include inadequate teaching staff, low quality of educational outcomes (in terms of access, test score, equity, delivery, etc.), low retention and completion rate, and redundancy of most private education institutions.

6.2.5 | Policy evaluation

The evaluation stage of the policy has not yet been reached as implementation of the policy commenced in 2017. But if past experience is anything to go by, it is unlikely that a formal ex post evaluation will be instituted even if a decade elapses after the implementation of the policy. As mentioned earlier, the Ghana National Development Planning Commission queried that there is no system of active evaluation of national projects and programs, making the evaluation aspect of policy virtually non-existent in Ghana. The few projects that undergo proper evaluation are donor funded, which have strict evaluation conditions (Mingle, 2016). However, process evaluation is being done by nonauthoritative actors like GNAT, NAGRAT, and private senior high school providers. According to a respondent of APHSEP, "the implementation of the FSHS policy has rendered the over 300 private senior high schools across the country redundant" (Respondent #56, July 24, 2019). This is because "there is a mass drift of their continuing and prospective students to enjoy the so-called free senior high school education in the public schools." He said that this has led to a
The analysis in this study showed that one of the cases, that is, the GIP was largely compliant with the policy cycle. The other case, the FSHS policy was inconsistent with it. The cases revealed certain truths and untruths about the policy cycle as a normative guide to policymaking in a developing context. In regard to even the compliant case, consistencies and inconsistencies with the policy cycle were detected. In terms of the consistencies, the stages of the GIP process were clearly segmented and discernible although they did not represent separate discrete stages as implied by the model. Rather the boundaries between the stages were fluid and the activities of subsequent stages were commenced only after the outcome of the evaluation of the preceding stage's work, which was favorable. Otherwise, actors considered afresh the issues and problems of the defective stage(s) to achieve a satisfactory performance before proceeding to the next stage. This evidence of the interaction between stages in the GIP process supports Howlett and Ramesh's view that the policy cycle is an analytical devise that breaks the complexity of the policymaking process into any number of stages and substages, each of which can be examined alone or in regard to its relationship to any or all the other stages of the cycle (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 13–14). Another consistency of the evidence with the model is that different issues and different mixes of actors were involved at each stage. For example, the decision to categorize the issues for discussion at the policy formulation stage included diverse members of the policy subsystem, that is, those with “some minimal level of knowledge in the subject area” (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 148). Such participants are described as members of a policy subsystem because they have the capacity to comment, even if hypothetically on the feasibility of options offered to address policy problems (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). In the case of the GIP, the members of the policy subsystem included, among others, the MTI, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, National Board for Small Scale Industries, and Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. Others were AGI, Ghana Chamber of Commerce, Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research, University representatives, and PEF.

Pertaining to the inconsistencies of the GIP with the model, the problem identification process was largely dominated by governmental actors. This is because they alone in their corridors of power formally identified the low industrial base of the country as a problem needing authoritative response before they invited non-governmental actors to confirm or reject the preposition. This is not unusual or an anomaly because Anderson argues that “problem definition can be either a top-down or bottom-up process” (Anderson, 2006, p. 83). But as Bridgman and Davis (2004) opine, because much of public
policymaking now rests on an exchange between citizens and their governments to gain legitimacy, it would have been appropriate to make the GIP problem identification and agenda setting a pluralistic exercise.

The GIP was also incongruent with the policy cycle because the evidence showed that the evaluation stage was conspicuously missing. Typical of all public policies and programs in Ghana, the GIP was not evaluated for its outcomes in the nearly a decade after its implementation. Stakeholders in the private sector have been calling for such an evaluation, but their calls have fallen on deaf ears. But without evaluation, the policy cycle is not complete—a point that is overstretched by Bridgman and Davies when they argue that “a policy process that does not include everything from problem identification to implementation to evaluation has less chance of success” (Bridgman & Davis, 2004, p. 24). The conspicuous absence of the evaluation stage in the GIP process underscores the point made by Dye that careful, unbiased, scientific appraisal of the present and long-term impacts of policies on both target and nontarget situations or groups, as well as an assessment of the ratio of current and long-term costs to whatever benefits are seldom identified, examined, and appraised (Dye, 2008, p. 55). This implies that the cyclic nature of the policy cycle is always compromised by lack of evaluations, thus affecting other stages of the cycle. This is because without evaluation, there will be no feedback loop, which will identify new problems and will set in motion the policymaking process once again, creating an endless policy cycle (Knill & Tosun, 2008, p. 20). Nevertheless, the GIP process is instructive in terms of simultaneously conducting analysis and evaluating the output of the analysis at each stage. The GIP approach thus defied the traditional policy cycle, which is characterized by evaluation happening at the very end of policymaking. The GIP evaluation approach speaks to Hudson and Lowe (2004) who criticized the evaluation approach of the policy cycle as rational, retrospective, and entailing summative judgments. In reaction to the policy cycle’s rational orientation, a bottom-up approach to evaluation has appeared, which is formative, predicated on qualitative evidence, and embraces the active participation of stakeholders, with feedback appearing as the policy that is being rolled out instead of after policy implementation (Parsons, 1995).

In regard to the non-compliant case, that is, FSHS policy, the way the process proceeded and got to the implementation stage bore little resemblance to the policy cycle. The stages were not only jumped, but also the whole process was turned on its head whereby instead of starting with a problem, a solution was found and was looking for a problem to solve. The FSHS process is therefore consistent with Kingdon’s view that solutions are not necessarily developed in response to emerging policy problems. Instead, actors in the policy arena develop solutions that appear to be in search of a problem (Kingdon, 2010). The president, in creating FSHS as a solution to the inability of parents to afford senior high school education, was not prepared to countenance queries to his solution. Such queries centered on the inattention to viable alternatives to FSHS, the formidability of state funding of FSHS, and the doubts about the sustainability of FSHS. This recalcitrant stance appears to buttress Cook’s (1997) point that the primary goal of the politician is to be re-elected and not to adhere to recommendations based on scientific and technological evidence (Sanderson, 2002, p. 5). The FSHS idea was a political strategy, which was calculated to shore up support for a presidential date, such as Nana Akufo Addo who twice unsuccessfully ran for president and was bidding for the third time. He therefore wanted a message or pledge that would sell and that would garner votes. In his first attempt, he competed for the presidency in the 2008 elections and even though he won the first round, he lost to his contender, Professor John Atta Mills in a run-off. In the 2012 election, he contested against John Mahama, and it was in the electioneering campaign then that he introduced the FSHS pledge, but it did not wash, and he lost the election to John Mahama. He still believed in the FSHS idea and thought that its introduction in 2012 was not the opportune time. But he believed it was opportune in 2016 when President John Mahama’s popularity was plummeting in the polls. Indeed, he did win the election, and in order not to renege on his pledge, he introduced the FSHS policy. In this case, the introduction of the FSHS policy seemed to largely follow the multiple streams model rather than the policy cycle.

The multiple streams model argues that there are three separate and independent streams that pertain to policymaking: the problem stream, the politics stream, and the policy stream (Kingdon, 2010). Items in the problem stream comprise the issues that “policy makers and citizens want addressed” (Zahariadis, 2007, p. 70; which in this case in Ghana included how to make senior high school education affordable to all, particularly the poorer segments of the population). The politics stream embraces the national political environment, which can include public opinion (which in this case in Ghana was for a change of government and policy). Finally, the policy stream consists of ideas and solutions, developed by experts and policy specialists, waiting to be implemented (which in this case in Ghana included making senior high school education accessible, equitable, and affordable). Policy change occurs when a “window” of opportunity opens (which in this case in Ghana was the 2016 election to renew or disapprove the mandate of the incumbent government), and a policy entrepreneur (which in this case in Ghana, the president) merges the three streams by applying an idea from the policy stream (FSHS policy in this case) to an issue in the problem stream (in this case in Ghana was the burden of out-of-pocket payment for senior high school education) at a time when the problem/solution coupling is acceptable (in this case in Ghana the plummeting popularity of the then incumbent president at election time) within the political stream.

This account of how the FSHS policy was initiated and launched by President Akufo Addo is reminiscent of the approach to presidential agenda setting observed by Light (1991). The scholar evidenced that in choosing salient domestic issues on which to push for intervention, presidents are incentivized by three key factors: (a) electoral benefits, which are particularly crucial during a president’s first term—indeed President Akufo Addo introduced the FSHS policy in his first term, that is, 2017. At such a critical juncture, certain matters are regarded as very important to electoral victory and sustained voter support; (b) there is an expectation that issues which are emphasized
during a campaign trail would be acted upon—indeed, President Akufo Addo acted upon his 2016 campaign pledge to introduce the FSHS policy. And because history surrounds the office of the president especially, American Presidents often become mindful of their place in history. Likewise, President Akufo Addo thought that if he made FSHS a reality in Ghana, it would set him apart from other presidents who have not been able to achieve this since independence in 1957 and thus book his place in history; and (c) presidents assume office with ideological inclinations and personal promises and obligation that may dispose them to act on some matters, although these issues may be opposed by the legislature and objected to by bureaucrats. Nevertheless, the prominence of some matters makes intervention compelling. This makes presidents to have ideas of what denotes good public policymaking. Indeed, President Akufo Addo held onto the FSHS idea as a good policy for Ghana. This is evidenced by what he said at the launch of the FSHS policy on September 12, 2017 at a ceremony at the West Africa Senior High School. He said that “over the last four years, an average of 100,000 Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) graduates, who are placed in public senior high schools each year, do not take up their place” due to poverty. He explained that “this means in the next decade, about one million young men and women would have had their education terminated at junior high school” (Ministry of Education, 2017). He considered this unacceptable and was therefore determined to end it.

8 | CONCLUSION

Using two cases, this paper set out to investigate whether Ghana’s policymaking process is congruent with the policy cycle. One of the cases, that is, the GIP was compliant with the policy cycle except that the evaluation stage was conspicuously missing. Hence, when read with a policy cycle lens, the GIP process was incomplete due to the missing link (evaluation stage). Other areas of consistency of the GIP’s process with the policy cycle are the following: different issues and problems were handled at the different stages, different mixes of actors were discernible at the different stages, the subsequent stages businesses were informed by output of earlier stages, bargains and consensus enabled actors to reach decisions together despite their conflicting interests and values, and the process and content were intertwined and were not contending opposites. The areas of inconsistency of the GIP process with the policy cycle included the following: evaluation happened at each stage rather than at the end of the entire process as an ex post exercise and actors were not unitary players who expressed unambiguous and coherent policy preferences (actors had their different hopes, values, fears, hopes, and anxieties, which conflicted rather than converged), yet they made concession and bargains and built consensuses in order to reach decisions.

In regard to the deviant case, that is, the FSHS policy, the process bore little resemblance to the policy cycle. Unlike the policy cycle, which begins with problem identification and works through to policy formulation, policy adoption, implementation, and evaluation, the FSHS process started with a solution that was looking for a problem to solve. The FSHS process was reminiscent of Kingdon’s multiple streams model.

At least four conclusions can be derived from the analysis of the evidence in this paper. First, whether or not policymaking in a developing context like Ghana will follow the policy cycle approach is contingent on the salience of the issue, the sponsor of the issue, the political environment at the time, and the timing of the introduction of the issue. For example, in regard to the salience of the issue, citizens who care about an issue are especially likely to take elected officials’ actions on that issue into account on election day. This makes politicians responsive to highly salient issues. So the promise of a FSHS policy, unlike the GIP, was presented in the electioneering campaign as a salient issue and so had to be acted upon quickly by the president. He could not afford to follow the long drawn-out process in the policy cycle like the GIP process did. A quick route to delivering the promise was therefore adopted, which was to deploy the solution in search of a problem to deal with. Pertaining to the sponsor of the issue, the chances of an issue attracting government attention is a function of whether that matter is pushed by visible participants (for who chances increase) or hidden participants (for who chances dampen) in the policy process. Visible participants include politicians, political parties, and the media who champion particular issues. The hidden participants are specialist bureaucrats, policy advisors, and ministerial staff. So the president being the most visible participant was able to champion the FSHS policy.

Second, it is possible to combine elements of different policy theories to guide policymaking. The FSHS process combined the adoption and implementation stages of the policy cycle with the three streams (problem, policy, and political streams) of the Kingdon’s model. The main advantage of such a unified framework is that it allows scholars to take advantage of the cumulative knowledge of each of the frameworks. It also fills a lacuna in the literature where there is largely a fixation on investigating the strengths and weaknesses of policy theories or their appropriateness or otherwise for deployment in particular contexts. Efforts have not yet been made to integrate elements of the different policy process theories into a single framework for deployment to determine their efficacy in delivering the policy objectives.

Third, even in situations where practice fails to align exactly with the policy cycle or any of the other policy process theories, the model should not be written off. The reasoning here is that the many areas of the theory where there are compliances with practice should be the unit of analysis. Moreover, the model could be modified to suit practice instead of dismissing it as inappropriate or inefficacious. The expectation of such a religious compliance is not only difficult to obtain in practice but it also prevents assessment for outcomes and lessons in the disproportionately large number of areas where practice has been compliant with theory. Finally, lesson drawing from the practical application of the policy cycle to influence policymaking is a neglected area of analysis, which ought to be stressed.
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