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CENTRE FOR SOCIAL POLICY STUDIES

POLITICAL DYNAMICS IN THE ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL POLICY IN GHANA

BY

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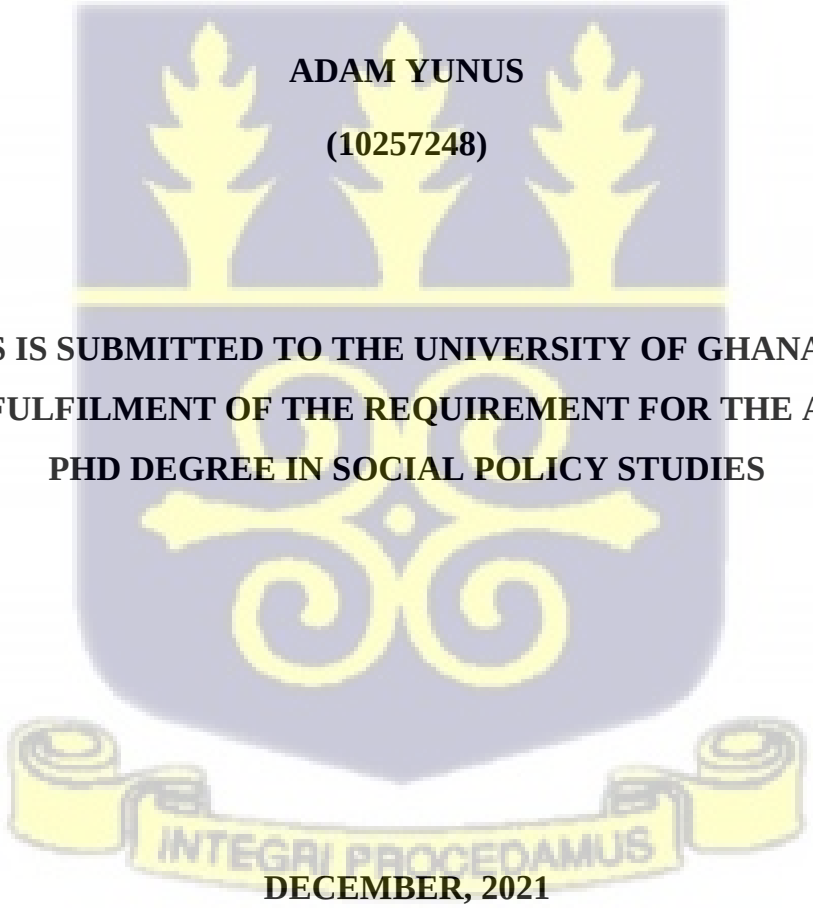
THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF PHD DEGREE IN SOCIAL POLICY STUDIES



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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this work is my own and that neither part nor whole has been presented anywhere for an award of an academic certificate. All references made to the works of others have been duly acknowledged

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DEDICATION

To God Almighty, the source of knowledge and to all those who strive to make quality education easily accessible to all people particularly, the underprivileged.

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ABSTRACT

The various political contexts under which free education programmes have been introduced in many developing countries account for the differences in the outcomes and benefits that such interventions have produced. Beyond the generic knowledge that politics matter when it comes to governments' commitments and dispositions to implement effective education reforms, the explanatory factors and the analytical approach on how exactly these contexts shape policy process have not fully been explored and applied to many education interventions. The Government of Ghana introduced a free Senior High School policy with the goal of achieving a functional secondary education for all with specific key milestones to meet. The political context under which the policy emerged and the manner of its adoption and implementation, however, put policy goals at risk. This study set out to explore how competitive partisan-politics shaped the adoption and implementation of the Free Senior High School policy in Ghana. The study employed a mixed method approach collecting both qualitative and quantitative data through the use of a concurrent embedded design. In this regard, 21 in-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders whilst 420 Survey questionnaires were administered on Parents, Students and Teachers. From a political settlement perspective, the study argues that Ghana's competitive partisan-politics helped shaped the Free SHS policy design, prescription and implementation. This specifically accounted for government choice of a universal approach and a presumed comprehensive policy package among others intended to achieve multiple objectives including political expediency to gain electoral support. The pursuance of the political expediency explained the hurried implementation of the policy and also a blurred policy posture as well as the political control over implementation machinery including the creation of a Free SHS secretariat. These circumstances equally explain why a universal policy intervention was introduced even under a competitive clientelistic setting. All of these have varied implications on achieving ultimate policy goal of equitable quality secondary education for all as government prioritised to achieve visible short-term targets. The study also noted the inherent opportunities under an emerging dynamics in state power alternations in Ghana beyond the weaknesses in short-term development agenda usually associated with countries with competitive clientelism. It thus therefore recommends among other things, the need to leverage this potential in order to help achieve long term social transformation and development.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

CDD	Centre for Democratic Development
CHASS	Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools
DFID	Department for International Development
ESID	Effective States and Inclusive Development
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
FSHS	Free Senior High School
GES	Ghana Education Service
GNECC	Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition
IDEG	Institute for Democratic Governance
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty
MOE	Ministry of Education
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NPP	New Patriotic Party
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PIAC	Public Interest and Accountability Committee
PTA	Parents and Teachers Association
PE	Political Economy
PS	Political Settlements
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SONA	State of the Nation Address

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and Background

The role of secondary education in laying the foundation for lifelong learning opportunities is widely recognised (Lewin, 2015; Carnoy, 2007). In particular, secondary education is believed to provide the means for skills development and the foundation for critical thinking which enables individuals to realize and develop their potentials whilst also serving as a bridge for both continuous training and the world of work (Lewin & Caillods, 2001; Addai-Mensah, 2000).

It is also generally acknowledged that education is a public good hence the state is expected to lead in its provision. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which Ghana is committed to, enjoins countries to ensure that by the year 2030, all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes (SDG 4.1). The SDGs envisage a world with equitable and universal access to quality primary and secondary education for all people. This is reinforced by Article 25.1 of the 1992 constitution of Ghana which stipulates that "secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular, by the progressive introduction of free education".

In recognition of global commitments to education development, governments in many countries especially in the developing world have embarked on educational reforms and policies which place equity and universal accessibility as their central objectives under a generally free education agenda (Verger, Novelli & Altinyelken, 2018). In particular, free secondary education policies have been adopted by governments in many developing countries including India, Uganda, Kenya,

Malawi, The Gambia with the aim of achieving the goal of providing all segments of society with quality secondary education (Brudevold-Newman, 2017; Essuman, 2018).

Available evidence however suggests that reforms in the education sector including free education programmes implemented in many countries have not yielded their full expected outcomes (Hickey & Hossain, 2019). This has led to various fields of study and approaches seeking to understand the realm of education reforms and the conditions that provide the needed environment for successful education reform outcomes. As a result, it has been identified that education policies and reforms just like general social and public policies can never be examined purely on its own as a single and discrete entity, and that, the policy making process does not happen in a vacuum but is subject to a range of competing influences (Forrester & Garratt, 2016). Parsons (1995) has long averred that the development process of social interventions and the manner in which they are implemented including those in education can influence the success of the policy and affects its expected outcomes. Baldock, Manning and Vickerstaff (2007) have also asserted that the making of social policy is driven by many factors including political context and that public social policies are usually designed to align with prevailing political negotiations and are often used as incentives to secure short-term political gains.

Consequently, some studies have provided evidence showing how the adoption, designing and implementation of social policy interventions including those on education, have been influenced by political factors. Carbone (2011) and Agyepong and Adjei, (2008) for example, have observed that public-social policy decisions and programmes that are made especially in developing countries are heavily influenced by complex historical, socio-cultural, economic, political, organizational and institutional contexts. They explained the influence of political factors on public-social reforms using the adoption, designing and implementation of the National Health

Insurance Policy (NHIS) in Ghana by expounding on how political considerations superseded technical directives in the policy development process. Abdulai (2021) also broadened the understanding of the political dynamics of social interventions by exploring the key drivers of political elites' commitment to social provisioning. He highlighted the key role played by transnational actors and domestic political arrangements in Ghana's introduction of the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) cash transfer scheme. All such studies bring to the fore the need to consider political context analysis in reform process to inform effective policy decision-making. Bruns and Schneider (2016) have actually asserted that, without analysis and understanding of the politics of reform and how to work within it, public social policies and reforms will always suffer from both technical inaccuracies and ineffective implementation leading to undesired outcomes.

In many parts of the world, particularly, in the global south, effective learning outcomes have not been achieved despite the implementation of several education reforms (Bruns & Schneider, 2016) leading to what education researchers have generally described as "the learning crises". This refers to the apparent improvement of school systems which have only been successful and evident in increased access/enrolments but has not resulted in enhanced quality or learning outcomes (Bruns & Schneider, 2016; Hickey & Hossain, 2019). A new wave of education research has therefore tended to look at the "learning crises" problem from a political perspective by looking at how the interests of ruling coalitions or political elitist groups and prevailing systems shapes and influences reforms and outcomes.

The government of Ghana in September 2017 introduced a free secondary education programme dubbed, "Free Senior High School" (FSHS) to remove the cost barrier to secondary education by making it free and generally accessible for all who complete basic school and pass the Basic

Education Certificate Examination (BECE). The policy shares the vision of the SDGs which envisages a world of equitable and a universal access to quality primary and secondary education for all and also seeks to operationalize the aspirations of the 1992 constitution of making secondary education ultimately accessible and free to all citizens.

The FSHS policy has been an agenda and an election campaign message of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP), one of the two dominant political parties in Ghana, since the 2008 general elections and remained an election manifesto promise until its introduction in 2017. The NPP maintained its stance in all those election campaigns (2008, 2012 and 2016) that a free secondary education for all who qualified was achievable and promised to ensure its implementation if voted into power. The National Democratic Congress (NDC), the other dominant political party, however maintained that an immediate and a universalistic approach to free secondary education as promised by the NPP would be difficult to effectively implement and rather favoured a gradualist approach or a progressive introduction of it (Abdul Rahaman, Abdul Rahaman, Ming, Ahmed and Salma, 2018). Since 2008, elections campaign in Ghana have been dominated by the discourse on the introduction of free secondary education. Some critics and political opponents had interpreted the FSHS campaign as a populist agenda calculated at winning the sympathy and votes of the people even though its proponent led by the NPP maintained its stance that it was necessary and resolved to implement same if voted into power.

Meanwhile, the NDC government in 2015 less than a year and half to the 2016 general elections introduced what it described as a progressive free Senior High School by abolishing all fees paid by day students. This is against the background of a stated position of the ruling NDC party on free secondary education which prioritised other constraints to secondary education such as infrastructural deficits (stated in the party's 2012 Manifesto). The party was also skeptical about

its effectiveness if a free SHS was implemented at the time (IDEG, 2017; Partey, 2017). Observers interpreted this move by the NDC government as part of the political dynamics and a manifestation of the competition in the programmatic politics in Ghana, where political parties are concerned with programmes and strategies that could win them electoral votes or support. When the opposition NPP won the 2016 elections, the newly elected president affirmed the party's commitment to fulfil its campaign promise of FSHS in his first state of the Nation Address in February 2017 and actually proceeded with its implementation (nine months into office) even before any effective public discussions were held or a probable parliamentary ratification.

It has been observed that these underlining dynamics to the policy discourse and its eventual implementation have some bearing with the nature of the political climate that exist under the prevailing competitive democratic politics in Ghana (Awal & Oduro, 2017).

1.2 Problem Statement

Since independence, Ghana has implemented several education reforms including free education programmes which are geared towards improving educational standards and achieving positive learning outcomes. However, as Akyeampong, Djangmah, Oduro, Seidu, and Hunt (2007) and Little (2010) have submitted, many of these education reforms and interventions have largely not succeeded in achieving either their intended policy goals or the overall desired education improvement. Specific free education programmes such as the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) have not been able to realize their full expected outcomes (Akyeampong, 2010; Nudzor, 2013) leading to a continuous gap in education progress. For example, a recent World Bank report on the state of global learning classified public basic schools in Ghana to be

among those experiencing the "Global learning crises" - schooling but not learning (World Bank, 2019).

Even with the implementation of a free secondary education, a recent World Bank (2020) study suggests that averagely 23% of basic school graduates are still not able to access secondary education. Ghana is likely to miss out on key education development targets, including the SDGs threshold of achieving universal access to quality secondary education by 2030, if efforts towards identifying and understanding what works or does not work, why and how, are not intensified.

Meanwhile, even though the knowledge and understanding of reform context or policy setting are critical for any reform success, and specifically, the understanding of how political systems and arrangements influence education reform process, it is generally under-researched (Bruns & Schneider, 2016). There is a noticeable research gap in understanding the way and manner political systems and arrangements become an explanatory factor to why education policies and reforms consistently fail to deliver the expected or desired outcomes especially in third world countries (Bruns & Schneider, 2016). Yet politics, according to Hickey and Hossain (2019) can be critical in influencing decision making on education policies and their accompanying programmes and the resulting degree of successes or failures in achieving their intended goals.

A few studies in Ghana have generally looked at the political economy of education reforms over the past years and have tried to examine ways by which the dynamics in Ghana's political landscape affect the development of the education sector. Abdulai and Hickey (2016) explained how the distribution of "holding power" within ruling coalitions under Ghana's political landscape shapes and influences patterns of resource allocations within the education sector to cause and deepen spatial imbalance in access to quality education provision. A study by Ampratwum, Awal and Oduro (2019) also showed how the existence of political actors and coalitions at various

governance levels under multiple constellations of power affected teacher accountability across selected districts in Ghana and consequently affected the quality of learning. Casely-Hayford (2011) contributed to the literature on researching into the political economy of education in Ghana by identifying political party manifesto and political commitment as key drivers in education reforms. Nudzor (2013) also analysed how changes in ideological perspectives, by both political and educational elites, in the space and time around the implementation of the FCUBE led to a "discursive shift" in both policy direction and language of implementation.

Assumptions that electoral competition sets the basis for patron-clients trade in a programmatic voting and provides the incentives for a continuous clientelism (Ampratwum, Awal & Oduro, 2019; Abdulai, 2017) are yet to provide the explanatory factors and the analytical approach on how exactly those contexts shape elites' commitment to education reforms and their disposition towards achieving policy objectives.

Few studies have been done on the Free SHS policy (expectedly, being a recently implemented policy) and have largely been confined to issues of policy feasibility, sustainability or policy implications on achieving quality secondary education. Essuman (2018) and Partey (2017) for example, have highlighted concerns on policy efficacy in achieving its objectives of ensuring equity, expanding access and improving quality. One empirical study by Abdul-Rahman et, al (2018) mainly looked at the effectiveness of the policy as a poverty reduction mechanism by exploring the significance of government funding in reducing the burden on parents.

Close to examining the implementation of the Free SHS from the underlying study context of political dynamics is a paper by Awal and Oduro (2017) which looked at the objective of the Free SHS in the context of Ghana's competitive political clientelism and how that could have influenced

and shaped the policy process. They argued that whilst the intent of the policy may be positive, the speed with which the government rolled the programme in the absence of a comprehensive policy is suggestive of government response in fulfilling its campaign promise in a short-term policy programming. Their paper highlighted political clientelism as a possible motivation for the introduction of the Free SHS programme. Their study also provided a reason and a gap for further empirical work to explore how the nature of the existing political arrangements in Ghana featured in the policy process of the Free SHS and an explanation to how and why a universalistic policy was introduced in a clientelist fashion.

Essentially, exploring the Free SHS policy process will provide greater understanding to the explanation on why and how political arrangements influence education reform and shapes policy process in a particular manner. Findings from the study will therefore be a key contribution to knowledge and also be useful for policy reworking.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study generally seeks to explore how competitive partisan-politics influenced and shaped the proposition and implementation of the Free SHS policy and the implications of that on theoretical underpinnings and for policy goals. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the rationale behind the introduction of the Free SHS policy
2. Examine the influence competitive partisan-politics had on the formulation of the Free SHS policy
3. Analyse the role competitive partisan-politics played in shaping the implementation of the Free SHS policy

1.4 Study Context and Research Questions

This study seeks to undertake an empirical examination of political clientelist assumptions in the introduction of the Free SHS policy which then shaped policy formulation and implementation. Theoretically, it also seeks to comprehend why and how uncharacteristic of political clientelist systems, a universal free secondary education programme was proposed and introduced. Political clientelism has traditionally been understood as the distribution of particularistic benefits to individuals or groups in exchange for political support (usually votes). According to Hicken (2011), political clientelism is the practice of reciprocal exchanges between a patron (usually a political elite or political group) who promises to provide a certain selective service in favour of a client (usually a particular group; a minority group, party supporters etc) in exchange of political support or votes. Clientelism operates in almost all political dispensations including democracies (Hicken, 2011). In modern democracies where political elites compete for votes, and in the context of this study, clientelism is manifested in patrons trading distributive benefits or particular public programmes (such as free education provision) for political support. Competitive clientelism also depicts the contest or competition by political coalitions/parties in exchanging special programmes for the votes of the people, usually done in an orderly but competitive manner in accordance with some underlying rules (Whitfield, 2011). Given Ghana's competitive clientelism, this study seeks to explore how and why a universal free SHS policy was proposed and implemented. Specifically, the following research questions guided the study;

1. What is the rationale for the introduction of the Free SHS policy by the government?
2. How has existing competitive partisan-politics influenced the discourse and development of the Free SHS policy?
3. How did partisan-politics shape the implementation of the Free SHS policy?

1.5 Significance/Rationale of Study

Policies (from their conception to implementation) do not stay fixed but are a process often reworked and negotiated (Forrester & Garratt, 2016). Studies on political context is increasingly becoming an important focus of academic studies and development research (Hickey & Hossain, 2019) and is used by many development oriented institutions across the globe (including DFID, OECD, ESID). The outcome of this study will be a contribution to this new wave of academic discourse and research. Abdulai and Hickey (2016) have raised concerns about the way and manner political clientelism has influenced social interventions in Ghana, and yet not much attention is paid to such matters in both policy and study approaches. Again, like many social reforms and interventions implemented in developing countries under multi-party democracies, the Free SHS policy has been perceived with the lens of political clientelism as far as the motive for its introduction and manner of implementation are concerned (Awal & Oduro, 2017). The study is therefore relevant in exploring such assumptions to understand how such political context influenced the Free SHS policy process.

Furthermore, the implementation of the Free SHS policy in Ghana is a significant social intervention with implications on national resource allocations and on education development in particular. With constitutional and SDGs development targets also connected to the policy, there is the need to explore the policy context and its implementation ambience to understand what works, how and why so. Again, at the launch of the policy, the President of the republic of Ghana, Nana Akuffo Addo reiterated government's inclination towards receiving feedback that aim at making the policy work better. Amidst take off challenges including concerns about fiscal and infrastructural capacity and with the policy still in its formative implementation period, any efforts geared towards policy negotiations and reworking must be evident, guided by research. Generally,

the findings and recommendations from this study will add to the growing knowledge and literature on the politics of education reforms in Ghana and the developing world at large.

1.6 Focus and Scope of Study

The Free SHS is an education intervention that seeks to address specific constraints to the provision of secondary education in Ghana. Even though a distinct policy document did not precede its implementation, an implementation strategy document existed to serve as a guide and a source of information for its implementation (MOE, 2017). In its strategy document and other official documents and pronouncements, the Free SHS has been described as both a policy and programme. Even though the study finds this to be problematic since a policy is distinctively different from a programme, both terms will conveniently be used interchangeably to refer to the Free SHS intervention. Also, the Free SHS policy seeks to address key challenges and constraints to secondary education provision in Ghana with specific targets in focus. This study however did not seek to assess the effectiveness of the policy in its ability to achieve stated objectives but focused on examining the political context under which the policy was introduced and how that shaped policy formulation and implementation. Also, with only three years into its implementation, it is likely the study could pick up on some of the teething and emerging issues likely to afflict any new policy or reform, even though the study context is premised on policy introduction, prescription and early stage of implementation.

1.7 Organisation of the Study

The study has been structured in nine (9) chapters. Chapter one gives a general introduction and sets the context for the study. Chapter two provides evidence on politics of social development presenting studies that have explored the influence of political context factors on social reforms

including education. The chapter also discusses the theoretical assumptions and the framework underpinning the study and which has been applied in the analysis and discussions of the findings. Chapter three specifically expounds on how political dynamics has shaped education policy making and reform process in Ghana over the years, providing an additional contextualization to the study. Chapter four provides a detailed methodology and the approach that was adopted for the study in the collection and analysis of data. Chapters five to seven address the three stated objectives of the study presenting and discussing the findings from data collected. Chapter eight distinctively presents an analytical discourse synergising study findings with the underlying theoretical framework and also highlighting the implications of that on achieving policy goals and shaping our thoughts and understanding of political settlements. The chapter, thus, presents useful contribution of the empirical data to existing knowledge as well as provides valuable information for policy lessons. The final chapter, nine, contains a summary of key the study findings and discussions, conclusion made on the study and also gives recommendations for the growth of knowledge and for policy reworking.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE STUDY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter generally discusses the theoretical and analytical framework of the study in two major dimensions. First, it provides evidence of empirical studies which have explored various political context dynamics in social provisioning across the globe. It does this after it has provided some brief insight on Political Settlements (PS), which is a key theory underpinning the study, and also undertake an analysis on the general political context on which the study is premised. The chapter then delves into the theoretical discourse of political economy of social development and the political settlement theory and explain their relevance to the study. The chapter also provides a discussion on Ghana's political settlements which has generally been described as 'competitive clientelism' and why the implementation of the Free SHS policy is a good test case for exploring how the dynamics in Ghana's political landscape influences and shapes education policy making and reforms. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the strengths and limitations for relying on the political settlements framework for the empirical analysis and discussion of the study.

2.2 Political Dynamics in Social Provisioning: Evidence from the Literature

This section provides the evidence on politics of social development presenting findings of empirical studies that have explored the influence of political dynamics on social reforms and development across the globe. The evidence from the literature highlights the various ways and forms under which social interventions and the education policy reform process in particular, gets politicized. This review highlights these dynamics and the issues that arise from the studies done on reform experiences across the globe in the context of the underlying study assumptions that,

political context play influential role in shaping education reform process. It explains how public-social policies adopted in developing countries and even in some advance societies have largely been influenced by the prevailing political context in that particular country. The review has been conducted around the major themes and key issues that emerged from the literature on the forgoing study contexts and has been discussed from the global, regional (Africa) and country (Ghana) perspectives. Key issues and themes that emerged from the review includes; *the parameters for measuring political settlement assumptions, the political economy drivers of education and social reforms and the general evidence on the politics of social/education reforms.*

2.2.1 Parameters for understanding Political Settlements– general analysis on studies and findings

Political Settlements (PS) can be understood as the nature of political arrangements prevailing in a state and the form and character of the struggle for state power by elites' coalitions or political groups (Muno, 2015). Studying and measuring political settlement has mostly been done under some proxy measures which are used to estimate and understand political settlement interplay in the social intervention process. Khan (2010) identified the main theoretical building blocks of the Political Settlements framework around *power* and *rent seeking* thereby making political survival a key agenda in elites' struggle for state power. In this regard, social interventions adopted in many countries have become avenues used by political elites as political survival strategies.

The literature highlights certain common underlying settings that are suggestive of an interplay of political clientelism, a manifestation of political settlements, with ruling elites' adoption of policies and their commitment to reforms. I have described these themes that emerges from the readings as *"parameters used to assess and analyse political settlements dynamics"* inspired by what Muno (2015) described as, measures to conceptualise political clientelism in the policy/reform process.

They include but not limited to; *reform design, policy (politics of) bundling and sequencing, policy timing/political timing, implementation approach* among others. Bruns and Schneider (2016) in their study of the available literature on politics of social reforms highlighted the forms and shapes in which political influences manifest themselves in the reform process. According to them, the implementation of education reforms is a protracted and politicized process that require continuous political engagement by reform teams. They asserted that most reform designs involving policy sequencing decisions for example are based on political calculations, deciding whether to introduce less controversial policies first or last and usually not based on technical logic. Another design issue they raised is on decision of policy bundling, whether to combine multiple reforms into one package or narrow the design to a few key reforms. According to them, political elites will normally seek to enact in a one go 'big bang' a set of complementary reforms that together maximize the chances of producing visible and early results. Tillins and Duckett (2017) also asserted that political elites will usually insist on implementing a reform or a policy at a particular time or period no matter the technical challenges once it meets their political objectives. These parameters and others have therefore become common indications that are used to assess manifestation of political motivations behind elites' commitment to social provisioning and are prevalent in the literature on the politics of social provisioning.

2.2.2 Political drivers of education/social reforms

Many of the researches that have been conducted on politics of education reforms have sought to explore the drivers behind such reforms, by examining the social, political and historical contexts under which those reforms have been adopted by governments as well as analysing the various actors and stakeholder interests. Bruns and Schneider (2016) for example, theorised such reforms

under democracies with tools such as voters' interests and elections drive education reforms due to the high incentive and urge to respond to citizens' education demand. Their study analysed the academic literature on the political economy of education reforms by comparing the findings of empirical studies and reform experiences undertaken in many developing countries. They observed that studies done on the politics of education reforms have largely been centred on exploring key thematic concerns about the main drivers behind reforms, reform designs and implementation approaches. Some of the key drivers of social/education reforms they identified from the literature include; *the role of informal systems/actors, Nature of political arrangements, Voter demands and response (Clientelism), Political party manifestos, Political will/commitments, Political Accountability and Social redistribution.*

Political arrangements, informal systems, political will/commitment

The study by Tillin and Duckett (2017) provided a wider understanding and a general perspective of how political actors including regimes, political parties, elites, institutions and their agents play influential role in shaping the debates and outcomes of welfare provision. The study explored the drivers of social service delivery across four major developing countries, Brazil, India, China and South Africa. They found that despite the differences that existed in the welfare arrangements and forms in these countries, politics remained a common driving force or motivation behind the provision and expansion of welfarism in all those countries. The study findings revealed that different political actors, ideas and institutions had influenced social delivery expansion in these countries, yet together, they all showed that politics matter in determining how social policy is framed and implemented. They averred that one distinguished feature of welfare provision in developing countries is the autonomous role of political leaders or "policy entrepreneurs" as they are called. They reiterated the view that political leaders use social policy and public expenditures

to gain public trust, accountability and support in order to prolong their stay in power as well as to achieve social redistribution. They also indicated that reformers or policy entrepreneurs usually commit themselves to change despite any odds especially in developing countries where institutions are less strong and less durable and there may be more opportunities for maneuvering around their constraints.

Our understanding on political economy drivers specifically on political commitment to reforms has also been broadened by Abdulai (2019) with an 'adapted political settlements' approach which explored the role played by transnational actors in Ghana's adoption of LEAP cash transfer scheme and identified that to be a key driver to political elites' commitment to social provisioning. His study explained that transnational coalitions through their use of 'soft power' influenced the adoption of social protection programmes in Ghana. Abdulai and Hickey (2016) also presented a key dimension on the drivers of politics of education reforms with their study on the politics of the education sector development in Ghana. They asserted that the apparent unequal access to quality education delivery with its spatial imbalance can be attributed to the existence of a sustained socio-economic order resulting from disproportionate exercise of holding power within ruling coalitions. They observed that, the politics of resource sharing and distributive power affects structural transformation and deepens existing spatial inequalities in access to and provision of education services. Their study revealed that the domain of power and resources allocation under an established informal order results in the distribution of benefits usually in an unfair and imbalance manner that impede national progress towards achieving spatially balanced education development. They also indicated that the negative effect that the existence of competitive political clientelism in Ghana (under its multi-party democracy) have had on the education sector reforms is traced to factors that include the imbalanced distribution of the holding power within ruling

coalitions as they influence ruling elite's policy choices and commitment to the implementation of realistic national education policy reforms. Their study also revealed that the absence of apparent political actors hailing from a part of the country explains the reason for the poor access to educational development in those regions more than any other factors. Their observation is a major contribution to the existing knowledge on understanding the political economy of education reforms by identifying the distribution of holding power within ruling coalitions as having a greater influence on the adoption and implementation of education policy and reforms.

Studying the political economy of Rwanda's primary education transformation by the ruling party, Williams (2017) applied the political settlement framework to examine the motivation for the adoption of fee-free primary education and how that impacted on learning outcomes. His study findings revealed that the policy succeeded in opening access but made education less quality especially for the very people it gave access to, the poor. The study attributed this largely to the absence of an effective opposition and the prevailing dominant political leadership in Rwanda's political settlement which enabled the ruling elites to freely introduce "transformative" and radical education reforms but in a way that compromised quality.

Kosack (2009) also highlighted the key role political will and commitment played in the 1987 education reforms in Ghana. He explained that the PNDC government led by Jerry John Rawlings sustained its commitment to invest the necessary resources to achieve specific objectives despite stiff opposition it faced. The study also challenged the assertion that investments in primary education are best served by democratic governments (with the PNDC military regime fronting the reforms). This position is supported by a similar work by Little (2010) who also recounted that the revolutionary PNDC government succeeded in carrying those radical reforms due to considerable high level political will it had and the support from the masses.

Clientelism, party manifestos, political competition and political accountability

In a foundational work, titled, "Drivers of Quality Education reforms, Hickey, Hossain and Jackman (2019) in Hickey & Hossain (Eds) provided us with the drivers and inhibiters of reform implementation and highlighted the complex role played by informal power which are less visible but contributes to undermine rather than support elites' commitment to reforms. They also alluded that the level of political competition or dominance influences reforms either negatively or positively. This is manifested in the extent or power of voter demands and response as well as policy background and political context. In a background review paper, Bruns and Schneider (2016) have observed that democracy and democratization with its channels such as voters' electoral choices have become one major theoretical conduit under which education reforms had been investigated. They explained that democratization produces multiple group and stakeholder interests, hence, reforms are largely the outcome of or response to group pressure such as voter demands.

A study by Berenschot (2018) examined Indonesia's patronage democracy and made comparisms within country variations of voting behaviour or clientelist politics. The study explored the factors which influenced electoral behaviour or voter demands as a driver of clientelistic politics by comparing rural and urban dimensions to voter demands and the factors that explained their variations. The study observed that the concentration of poverty in a particular settlement made clientelism more pervasive and increased the prevalence of voter demands or electoral demands on political elites. According to the study, spatial poverty as it termed, brought out clearly the cost or economic perspectives to political clientelism with the explanation that income level differentials was a key influencer of voter demand or patron-clients patronage. The finding of this study conforms to the general assumption that the prevalence of political clientelism varies among

advance economies, middle-income and developing countries, mostly being more pervasive in poor countries (Kitschelt &Wilkinson, 2007). Indeed, the study by Bardhan and Mookherjee (2012) in rural India also brought to bear the influence of 'elite capture' in explaining how inequalities in different socio-economic classes have played out with regard to political rights and participation, the ability to lobby as well as demand for clientelistic or political accountability in West Bengal, India.

An ODI study in 2015 also showed that electoral connection or what they describe as "relentless electoralism" contributes so much in determining the provision of social service in Ghana. That, the constant struggle for power and access to state resources makes political parties and political elites to respond to request from voters who have become more conscious on the request for public good. It asserts that electoral dynamics in Ghana has become an accountability mechanism used by political leaders to render social services to the electorates beyond the known clientelist approach. The study reveals that electoral competition has greatly increased and incentivized a strong focus on education policies and reforms especially on the adoption of fee-free policies at both primary and secondary education levels.

Ampratwum, Awal and Oduro (2019), in Hickey and Hossain (Eds) studied Ghana's decentralised education system and how power relations between political elites and poor groups within the local government structure affected teacher accountability. It explored which political drivers existed at the grassroots level administration and how their interactions impacted on quality educational delivery with their specific roles in teacher accountability issues. They observed that an existing power struggle and electoral competition between political party actors in one particular political jurisdiction affected the effective monitoring and management of teacher services such as attendance. They undertook a comparative study of two districts with political settlement

variations and educational learning outcomes to observe the influence the former had on the latter. Their findings concluded that the presence of power struggle for electoral fortunes between party actors made government functionaries to concentrate on providing physical school projects rather than on non-physical projects such as teacher accountability. They also observed that the absence of a strong political competition in a district incentivized collaborated efforts towards providing effective teaching and learning. Thus, the study revealed the negative effects that political struggle had on effective learning activities in these districts.

2.2.3 Global prevalence of politics of social service delivery

Several studies done across the globe have generally shown how political factors and motives get interwoven in the social reforms and policy adoption, development and implementation process. In assessing the challenges facing the SDGs educational goals, Bruns, Macdonald and Schneider (2019) explored the political influence on implementing quality reforms using teacher policy reforms as a case study from experiences in Chile, Ecuador and Mexico. They suggested that the general goals in education reforms are usually not in conformity with that of political agenda of political elites who usually serve as reform champions. Their study findings revealed the presence of clash of objectives between education policy goals and the agenda of political elites as a source of reform challenge that must be navigated properly in order to realize the benefits of education policies and reforms. Their study also showed the levels and forms of politicization of reforms and policies that affect teacher unions and that the more teacher unions become much politically influenced, the more likely that they will lose out on teacher policy reforms aimed at increasing quality and accountability. On the other hand, as teacher unions become more professional and less politically inclined, the likelihood of having clashes with political elites is high as the former

insist on standards and quality assurance against the latter's objective of undertaking reforms which has in mind clientelist support or patronage.

Another study by Bigham and Ray (2012) explored the influence of local politics on educational delivery decisions and its consequences on learning outcomes in a local school in Texas, USA. The study revealed that politically driven education policy decisions were imposed on education managers by political leaders who were also responding to pressure from parents/guardians. The study showed that political dynamics were always dominant in public school system and it becomes incumbent to acknowledge this reality and work through it to arrive at what would eventually produce better educational achievements. Their study adopted a causal-comparative approach to understand the motivation behind a decision on educational curriculum and assessment in a school district and the impact it had on learning outcomes. The study revealed that school managers took a politically motivated decision to alter curriculum with very little attention paid to technical or professional imperatives.

Kelsall (2020) also compared the experiences of four developing countries (Rwanda, Bangladesh, Uganda and Ghana) in the implementation of maternal health policies. The study compared the experiences of these countries in reducing maternal mortality in the context of policy uptake and implementation process relating them with the underlying balance of power and institutions, that is, the political settlements prevailing in these respective countries. The study sought to test the political settlement thesis on how two different contexts, 'dominant' and 'competitive' clientelistic settlements presented ruling coalitions with different capacities to successfully design and implement policies or social interventions (Khan, 2010). That, a dominant settlement with its firm hold on power, largely uncontested, will have a better capacity to design and implement transformative policies than a competitive settlement type that faces imminent and constant threat

of removal. The study findings appeared to have confirmed this thesis as it observed that Rwanda's dominant developmental settlement promoted efficient and effective maternal health process through hierarchical performance mechanisms. In contrast, the study noted that Ghana's competitive clientelistic politics encouraged undisciplined public sector expansion and populism, prioritising visible infrastructural investments over functioning systems. Rwanda has the best maternal health record whilst Ghana has the worst record across country – studies. The study findings also deepened our understanding of political contexts explaining variations in efficient social policy delivery with Uganda and Bangladish which are less clear cases of the two settlement types – more of intermediate type but still presented characteristics of inefficiencies in their maternal health systems. In these later contexts including the case of Ghana, the study observed 'Pockets of effectiveness' with the citing of isolated efficient delivery practice or performance within country comparisms.

A study by Hossain (2020) analysed how politics shaped the implementation of a national education assistance scheme in Bangladesh, dubbed, the Primary Education Stipend Project, examining the interface of state infrastructural power and local power relations which occurred in the process of implementing the intervention. The study assumption rested on the considerable political interests and actors behind the reform/scheme and their active involvement in its implementation process as well as the state capacity to follow institutional structures and procedures to achieve reform objective. Study findings showed that apart from raising educational standards, the reform was motivated by government' s desire to reach 10 million mothers with messages as well as money which were both 'visible programmes'. The study also observed that, government showed very little commitment towards improving the scheme and redressing challenges, but was very concerned with ensuring money package reached beneficiaries. This

disposition by the government, the study explained, is due to the desire to increase its popularity and also get channels through which to reach the populace.

2.2.4 The politics of social service delivery – Evidence from Africa

Several political economy studies have also focused on the context of Africa's peculiar political and social-cultural setting which comes with its own challenges. Many of the development challenges plaguing African has a lot to do with its inherently weak political and administrative institutional structures (Booth, 2015). In this regard, many research works have focused on finding unique ways (context tailored) to address these challenges. In a specific attention to African context, Kelsall, Mitlin, Schindler and Hickey (2021) in their 'African Cities Research Consortium publication, developed a conceptual framework that captures how the interaction of politics and political economy with city systems is shaping the prospects of African cities to generate sustainable processes of inclusive development. The framework, which they called 'politics, systems and domains' integrates political settlements, city systems and urban development domains to provide new insights into the challenges of development in Africa and to guide the work of political and policy actors responsible for promoting and implementing reforms in Africa. Their study highlighted the key role of institutional structures in the development of African economies, inspired by Booth (2015), and explored how that facilitated both national and local level development in major cities, urban or local areas.

Some studies have tried to provide evidence on the role of institutional structures in the development of African economies. Porisky (2020) studied the politics of distributing social transfers across four counties in Kenya by comparing the role played by 'state infrastructural power' - the state capacity to penetrate civil-society with politically motivated programmes (Mann, 1984) in the welfare distribution process. The study was motivated by the assumption that social

transfers and other public goods implemented in competitive electoral environments may be prone to politicization, as political actors seek to distribute social transfers in ways that build popular support (Driscoll, 2018). The findings indicated that even though state infrastructural power played central role in mediating the implementation of social transfer programmes, formal guidelines for programme implementation were followed. It however, also, noticed that the pivotal involvement of key political actors, specifically, the area member of Parliament in the distribution process made the scheme to appear like a "constituency-level patronage resource". Mitlin (2020) also analysed the politics of shelter provision in three African cities, focusing on 'informal settlements' in sub-national spatial demarcations in the study regions on the needs of and provision for both low and middle-income residents. The study observed that in all three cities, both national and local political elites sought to influence housing outcomes to help gain legitimacy. It highlighted the prevalence of territorial politics controlled by elites to influence electoral outcomes.

Some studies done in Africa have also used PS approach to explain how and why social development has eluded many societies or some specific sectors of their economy with high expectation of leading growth and development. Mohan, Asante and Abdulai (2018) in their ESID research publication studied the underlying factors responsible for the limited impact that the oil exploitation in Ghana has had on the people despite the country's internationally acclaimed high oil governance legislation status. The study used political settlement framework to explain the nature of elite-based political coalitions and its effects on Ghana's hydrocarbons operations. Their study findings revealed that the problem with slow pace of the oil boom ability to spearhead growth is more linked to the 'resource curse' thinking than good governance. They argued that inter-coalitional rivalry has generally undermined the benefits of Ghana's oil and an explanatory factor for the limited societal benefits. Osei, Ackah, Domfe and Danquah (2015) also sought to assess

the role that political and institutional factors play in shaping the economic growth outcomes in Ghana. They used a political settlement typology developed by the ESID research centre which categorised political settlements according to political competitiveness and bureaucratic sophiscation. They concluded that the rising role of personalisation in institutional processes and the lack of impersonal application of rules accounts for rising prevalent of 'deals' environment where rules are less applied in the state administrative set up contributing to weak structures that weakens the state capacity to maintain and sustain growth.

Some other studies have also looked at the politics of social reform process in Africa looking at how political expediency have taken center stage in the reform process at the expense of technical efficacy. Lavers (2020) for example studied the adoption and implementation of health insurance in Ethiopia and examined the influence of party and state actors in deciding for a universal coverage. The study concluded in its findings that, regions with high levels of state 'infrastructural power' promoted and achieved health access more than areas with limited state infrastructural powers. Agyepong and Adjei (2008) and Carbone (2011) did a similar study by looking at the process that led to the development and adoption of an ambitious health reforms in Ghana in 2004. They observed that the adoption and development of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) was largely influenced by patron-clientelistic consideration used to achieve political accountability with one effect being employing a universal rather than a distributive targeted approach. Their studies suggested that political associates had the power to veto evidence from technical working groups regarding themes on minimum benefit package and premium, premium-exempt groups among others. Also, Tweneboah-Koduah (2018) asserted that political clientelism became a key feature in the implementation of Ghana's pivotal poverty alleviation social protection programme, the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP). His study

examined the role of political clientelism in the selection process of beneficiaries of the programme. The study findings established that mandated eligibility criteria for the selection of the beneficiaries were observed more in breach than in compliance as selection was contingent more on the individual's political support for the party of the ruling government.

Some other studies have also analysed and highlighted the politics of education reforms in many Africa countries from both theoretical and general perspectives. Languille (2015) in his study "scramble for textbooks" in Tanzania investigated the textbook crises that hit the country's education system in the early 2000s. The study revealed that power relations within the ruling coalition influenced and shaped market systems in the supply of education materials with the imperfections resulting in the shortages of teaching and learning materials. The study findings suggested that the government's decision to resort to state control of textbook regime in Tanzania was largely influenced by the power relations dynamics within the ruling coalition and capitalist class and was a key explanation to the crises more than other perceived contributing factors such as corruption. Nudzor (2013) also analysed the theoretical perspectives surrounding the implementation of the free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (fCUBE) in Ghana in order to understand policy intentions and implementation approach. In that study, Nudzor explored the extent to which the ideological views of educational elites impacted or manifested on the implementation process of the policy. He argued that owing to the ideological circumstances around the space and time that the fCUBE policy emerged, it got rooted in the social democracy political ideology. The study observed however that, the emergence of neo-liberalism or the globalization of capitalism at the time of implementation appeared to have had some effects and an ideological shift in both policy direction and language of implementation.

In their study of what they described as "one state, two-school systems" Braimah, Mbowura and Seidu (2014) qualitatively investigated the politics of senior high school duration, content and structure in Ghana and alluded that political experimentation of education reforms by successive governments denied the country the opportunity to realize the ideal educational system. They alluded that education matters became the source of major political campaign messages in the elections of 1996 and all subsequent general elections. Accordingly, education became the epitome or central political technique based on individual political and ideological consideration to canvass for votes. Little (2010) corroborated this with a study that highlighted how education policy became the spotlight in recent elections in Ghana including the 2008 general elections with each of the major political parties presenting detailed education plan in their manifesto. Expectedly, once the party won elections, they were politically "obliged" to implement their campaign promise often without recourse to technical direction and without a deep national discourse. Little (2010) also recounted how during the 2002 education review the objective of equitable access was not achieved due to political meddling in the technical procedures especially regarding the selection of primary schools for the school feeding which was meant for schools in deprived communities but had onboard schools from major cities as well.

2.3 Theoretical Foundation of the Study

The second section of this chapter delves into the theoretical foundation of the study which is centered on political settlements situated under the general discourse of political economy of social development.

2.3.1 Political Economy Analysis

This study is generally pursued from the theoretical perspective of political economy of social reforms and applies Political Settlement (PS) as its analytical tool. Political Economy (PE) as a field of study generally explores the intersection between power, interests and development, with the understanding that factors such as power and interests are always crucial in determining socio-economic development outcomes (Hickey & Hossain, 2019). In other words, PE explains how decisions to do (or not to do) things are shaped by group interests especially the powerful in society. Political economy analysis begins with the assumption that decision making process in society is political in nature and involves the making of choices influenced by various interests of powerful groups as well as the economic reality of limited resources (Di John & Putzel, 2009). This economic constraint of limited resources presents a political constraint of competing interests over limited state resources which then results in *mechanisms* that societies use in making decisions (including policy choices) in the face of conflicting interests. Understandably, traditional political economy works such as Walter Rodney's expositions on Africa's political economy development therefore focused primarily on the 'mechanisms' that identifies the obstacles and constraints in the decision making and policy choices process (Rodney, 2018). The political economy process is therefore seen as "the interaction of political and economic processes; the distribution of power, wealth and interests between different groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships over time" (OECD, 2011).

Contemporary studies in political economy have increasingly sought to identify opportunities in the midst of the constraints for leveraging policy change and supporting reforms by exploring what works under different country contexts (exemplified in various political economy frameworks developed by various research and development agencies). Acosta and Lettit (2013) have also

recounted that contemporary political economy analysts building on historical approach systematically combines instruments of economic analysis to understand political issues such as competition for electoral votes, distribution of scarce resources, the formation of interest groups and coalitions, advancement of political careers and electoral dynamics. Poole (2011) in this regard, broadened our understanding that the interaction of political and economic process includes how power and wealth are distributed and contested in different country and within country (sector) contexts with the resulting implications for development outcomes.

Invariably, political economy analysis improves our understanding on what drives political behaviour, how this shapes particular policies and programmes, who are the main "winners" and "losers", and what the implications are for development strategies and programmes (DFID, 2009). It is thus concerned with understanding the interests and incentives facing different groups in society (and particularly political elites), and how these generate particular outcomes that may encourage or hinder development.

A combined approach of political economy and power domain – the foundation of contemporary political economy analytical frameworks

The interactions of political and economic processes in society, the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, as well as the processes that create, sustain and transform these interactions over time shapes decisions (OECD, 2011). This interaction identifies the usage of visible power where goals and agenda are pursued through formal rules, established structures, institutions and procedures of decision making as well as hidden power where power holders through informal means determine which issues gets to the decision table and how they get resolved (Acosta & Lettit, 2013). The approach also highlights the process of identifying key drivers of policy change and issue selection and how to always unpack the 'black box' in the policy process (DFID, 2009).

The political economy –power domain relations can therefore be located under the classical studies of politics and power, when politics was seen to be power relations among groups in society (Lukes, 2005). More related to the understanding of this intersect between political power and policy decisions are classical definitions of politics by Harold Laswell as "who gets what, when and how" and that of David Easton as an "authoritative allocation of values". Both definitions of politics reveal a key dimension of competing interests in the allocation and distribution of power and resources and how government and other political actors negotiate decisions and policy choices (Zuckerman, 1989). The focus of political economy –power relations can therefore be pinned to understanding how these various factors of power dynamics affect or are affected by the nature of development outcomes and how this is manifested through the pursuits of goals and group interests.

These postulations also correspond with power and resources constellations model used to explain social policy and welfare provisions. The power constellations model postulates that, political system represents class interests and negotiated compromises hence becomes a central focus in the policy making process (Acosta and Pettit, 2013). Lavers and Hickey (2016), conceptualizing the politics of social interventions in developing countries, linked the different strategies and outcomes in social reforms to the differences in political discourses and arrangements across the global divides. They explained that power relations play critical role in policy making and highlights the influence of social mobilisations of political groups, class alliances and interests on resource allocations. Their perspective is also in line with Khan's approach (theorised under his narrative on political settlements) towards understanding the patterns and evolution of distribution of power in particular societies when he classified sets of institutions and power relations as constellations

that characterise the social order in a particular country context within the global economy (cited in Behuria, Buur & Gray, 2017).

From the forgoing theoretical underpinnings on the political economy of social reforms and power dynamics arises various forms of political configurations and frameworks which exist and are applied in different country contexts used to explain the nature of social provisioning, its successes or failures. One of such political frameworks is Political Settlements (PS).

2.3.2 Political Settlements (PS)

Political Settlements is one of the contemporary theoretical and analytical approach to explaining the differentials in political context and political elites' behaviour and commitment to social reforms. Political settlement has over its transformation period received a much more specific meaning as a discreet political economy analytical framework that provides a novel way of understanding the drivers and outcomes of contemporary socio-economic change (Behuria, Buur & Gray, 2017). Mushtaq Khan in popularising the PS theory explained that every state is based on a political settlement that represents the outcome (and also an ongoing process) of contention and bargaining between elites, between social groups and those who occupy authority within the state (Khan, 1995). He observed, in his starting-point of the PS theory (and actually supported by increasing scholarly works since then) that the divergence in development outcomes across countries is explained by the underlying power patterns that determines how institutions work (Booth, 2015). Thus, the PS theory explains the nature of political arrangements prevailing in a state and the form and character of the struggle for state power by elites' coalitions or political groups. Khan's theorisation also presented an intuitive sense of understanding that PS refers to a prevailing political order or to a specific peace agreement that emerges at the end of a war (Behuria, Buur & Gray, 2017) or societal disorder. This 'truce' perspective is supported by DFID's

description of political settlement as "an expression of a common understanding, usually forged between elites about how power is organized and exercised" (DFID, 2010).

Khan (2010) identified the main theoretical building blocks of PS framework to be; *power, institutions and rents seeking*, when he further explained Political Settlements as "a combination of power and institutions that is mutually compatible and also sustainable in terms of economic and political viability". Popularised by the earlier works of Mushtaq Khan in the mid-1990s and early 2000s, political settlement has since then received extensive attention in academic studies and in research and development circles across the globe and has been used as an analytical approach to explain how existing political arrangements influence public policy process. The PS framework has over time been developed through extensive research works and development experiences by many initial researches including Leftwich (2005), Di John and Putzel (2009), Whitfield (2011) and Hickey (2011) among many others. The PS framework has also been made more relevant by prominent development and research outfits including the Effective States and Inclusive Developments (ESID), the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) the Department for International Development (DFID) among others who have adopted the framework in their research works and development practices.

The analytical starting point for the political settlements approach is the identification of the underlying distribution of power in society that depends on economic structures as well as the history of political structures (Khan, 2010). Accordingly, a political settlement emerges when the distribution of benefits supported by its institutions is consistent with the distribution of power in society, and the economic and political outcomes of these institutions are sustainable over time (Khan, 2010; Abdulai & Hickey, 2016). The historically specific dynamics of political settlements is therefore what explains the differences in performance between countries with apparently

similar endowments or disadvantages as well as intra-state spatial development imbalances. Whitfield (2011) has contributed to this understanding of political settlements with explanations on policy networks and power dynamics in society and indicated that policies are usually driven by the values of different social actors with different ideological positions, and to the extent that they invariably entail intra- and inter-generational redistribution issues.

Gray and Whitfield (2014) have asserted that the development imbalance among countries can be attributed to the nature of economic structures of developing countries which create strong incentives for the emergence of patron-client networks and the domination of personalized politics. According to them, it is the differences in economic structures between developing countries and advanced capitalist countries that lead to the relative dominance of clientelist politics in the former, and their diminished role in the latter. And as expounded by Khan (2010), a kind of political arrangements therefore emerges where there is a political trading that occurs between elite class seeking power and social groups in society who holds such powers and how such power resources are traded among those seeking political power and the various segments of society, making Political Settlement basically an outcome of political bargains in society.

Towards understanding the dynamics of political settlements – the discourse and the debates

Almost everyone agrees that 'politics matter' for development, but there is little consensus about what this actually means and how (ESID, 2016). Hence, studies have attempted to provide the formulae towards reaching some universal understanding on how to move away from "best practices" to an approach of what works given a particular context, which is what political settlements analysis is concerned with. The proliferation of political settlements research has provided significant insights into the PS approach and given varied explanations to the exact

manner and forms by which political settlements come to prevail in society and influence socio-economic change. The debate has largely been bothered on the core conceptual issues such as, what essentially constitutes the 'settlements' under the political settlements as well as on methodological features (typified in recent works of: Khan, 2018; Kelsall, 2018; Behuria et al, 2017 and studies by ESID). This section of the chapter will give some illuminations on the core issues that arises from the literature as far as the conceptual discourses and debates are concerned.

Khan's ideas in both his original work and subsequent writings place emphasis on the distribution of power in society that together with specific formal and informal institutions create a social order to effectively achieve political and economic sustainability (Khan, 2018). His ideas place much relevance on "some interactions" that create a fairly robust social order (which he calls 'interactive order') and are identifiable, enforceable but are not necessarily the outcomes of conscious efforts or agreements of formal institutions. These postulations by Khan has however been contested in different ways (not fundamentally in opposing ideological stance) particularly regarding how the 'social order emerges'. Kelsall (2018) for example, in response to Khan's 'interactive social order' has raised concerns about political settlement likely to suffer both conceptual and methodological ambiguities (particularly, from Khan's approach). He rather placed key emphasis on the centrality of 'a planned order' arising from a certain 'agreement' between powerful elite groups. Kelsall contended that what results in political stability is an explicit agreement between contending groups, mostly elites (this, he hints, is well intimated in Khan's original works) and has very little to do with the distribution of organisational power among all social groups, at the micro level of society (as Khan portrays in his continues work on PS framework). Putzel and Di John (2009) also brought some perspectives in an earlier work and have long contended the idea of referring political settlement to a 'common or formal understanding between elites' as portrayed in some

recent works including that of Kesall (2018). In their view, that downplays the extent to which political settlements are bargaining outcomes among contending elites, social groups and social classes, on which any state is based. They seem to agree with Khan's original viewpoints (1995, 2000) in a way, of an existing contention and an interactive bargaining between those who occupy the state and society more widely.

Putting all the conceptual stances and discourses together provides some understanding of what political settlements is or is supposed to be – and also in agreement with what we can consider to be Khan's simplified political settlements explanation = as a 'social order' that describes how a society solves the problem of violence and achieves a minimum level of political stability and economic performance for it to operate as a society (Khan, 2010). This understanding of the social order relates well with the 'social contract and the political order' under traditional political science studies postulated by medieval political thoughts where society and its inhabitants 'agreed' to live under some form of rules and regulations in order to achieve a peace and order in society (even if PS has still not settled on the rule of law or planned order debate). Indeed, the OECD (2011) in a working paper perceived political settlements "as the continuum from negotiated peace agreements to long-term historical development, in the latter sense approaching the concept of a social contract". Dressel and Dinnen (2014) in their paper titled "Political Settlements, old wine in new bottles" placed emphasis on the 'welfare state' in conceptualising the core value and essence of political settlements. Both papers attempt to liken political settlements to the 'political order' that emerged from the social contract.

New wave of researches have upgraded the discourse on what exactly should constitute political settlements from perhaps theoretical terrain to a more pragmatic approach. The Effective States and Inclusive Development (ESID) for example, has tuned our understanding (with over a decade

experience of researching into politics of development) to how politics shapes development across a range of settings and sectors, how it matters to inclusive and social development and also how it plays out in different contexts. ESID research findings largely posit that, one size does not fit all contexts when it comes to development and highlights the interplay between 'Context' 'Capacity' and 'Coalitions'- what they describe as the three Cs of inclusive development, to understand why and how development progresses differently under different environments. They situate 'Context' as the power configurations (political settlements) that exist to shape leadership in varied ways to provide incentives or constraints that influences elites' commitments to development. The 'Capacity' looks at the abilities possessed by state organisations to be able to execute policy reforms (especially in the context of African countries where state institutions are thought to be weak) and interplay with informal structures. The last 'C' Coalitions in ESID's framework looks at the various actors and the alliances that they struck and the abilities of such alliances to overcome constraints and to initiate, promote or frustrate/block new agendas. ESID work shapes the discourse and provides some focus on specific angles to undertake a political settlements approach.

The discourse towards reaching a conceptual convergence on PS brings out two key issues that could shape approach and framework. The first is that, political elites' or ruling coalitions' capacity to deliver effective development outcomes depends much on the kind of bargaining that prevails; and the second is the role and power of institutions (both formal and informal) in shaping policy reforms and outcomes. This is what invariably defines political settlements dynamics and eventually guides its approach and frameworks. But, perhaps more significantly, for the need to achieve some level of conceptual convergence is due to the growing need of using political economy analysis in development practice amidst complex political dynamics and institutional

arrangements in diverse country contexts. Methodological understandings and frameworks are ever relevant to allow for empirical approach and application of models by development organisations.

2.3.3 Manifestations of Political Settlements – the Main Typologies

Khan (2000; 2010) in building his critique on institutional performance presented us with broad classification of how institutions and power combine to produce different typologies in different contexts and periods. His classification primarily focused on the extent to which holding power is based on formal institutions or structures and how that is able to enhance growth and produce effective outcomes. Resulting from this, Mushtaq Khan showcased the 'capitalist and clientelist political settlements' as the key and notable typologies or classifications of political settlements (Khan actually draws attention to other typologies which he considers to be less significant in contemporary societies). According to Khan, capitalist political settlements exist when formal structures work in impersonal and productive manner following rules and order and the 'holding power is to a large extent aligned with formal rights and institutions. He explained that, this is most likely to produce productive outcomes (even though it does not guarantee transformational development) and add that very advanced economies are close to reaching such political settlement (Khan, 2010).

Clientelist political settlements

Khan's attention is concentrated on another broad group of political settlements which are 'clientlelist' in form and practice and is largely manifested in the exercise of personalized power (Khan, 2010). He explained that, the holding power under clientelist political settlements largely reside with informal systems where powerful groups can influence development outcomes

according to established order, with the enforcement and operations of formal institutions constrained by the exercise of personalized power. According to him, clientelist political settlements is what commonly prevails and characterises contemporary developing countries and even some 'advanced' societies and 'democracies'.

Further studies building on Khan's typology (including Khan's own) classified the broad clientelist political settlements into two main types: *dominant party/ruler and competitive clientelistic political settlements* according to the nature or structure of the ruling coalitions and how much holding power they wield in relation with excluded factions. Levy (2012) placed the distinction between the two typologies to be on the different ways they achieve and sustain stability and the different relationship that exist between the rulers and the ruled. Generally, in a dominant party/ruler' political settlement, political power is concentrated within the hands of a dominant party or leader and there is relatively little chance, in the short to medium term, of the ruling coalition losing power to oppositional forces. Barring extreme levels of dissatisfaction, there is an "equilibrium" where the status quo remains of a 'principal'- political leadership and others in the country as 'agents' or subjects (Levy, 2012).

In a competitive clientelist settlement, however, elites' coalitions exist as rival groups and agree on peaceful rules likened to a 'truce' for political competition in order to maintain stability and the possibility of the ruling elites losing state power to rival factions is very high (Levy, 2012). Facing periodic elections, the ruling coalition according to Khan (2010), has a short time horizon and for that matter a weak implementation and enforcement capabilities for sustained development outcomes. Invariably, the disposition and commitment of the ruling party towards adopting and implementing transformational development agenda is shaped by this competitive clientelism. In many of the contemporary developing societies under competitive clientelism, ruling coalitions

exist as political parties and are vulnerable in power because of the existence of strong opposition parties and strong lower-level factions of ruling coalitions that put pressure on elites for distributional benefits (e.g. party foot soldiers). Not knowing how long they will be in power, competitive clientelism tends to make the elites to focus on short-term visible symbols of development that can enhance prospects of their political survival (Oduro, Awal & Ashon, 2014). Consequently, the political class is unlikely to prioritize policy options that support long term investment, inclusive growth and the structural transformation of the economy – since all these things require long term planning (Whitfield 2011),

Applying political settlements typologies in development contexts

Since the emergence of Khan's works on political settlement in development paradigms in the 1990s, the political settlements approach has proliferated in donor programming and academic scholarship and research in developing economies including African countries and has been used as an analytical tool in studying and understanding drivers and outcomes of contemporary socio-economic change (Behuria et al, 2017). The Effective States and Inclusive Development (ESID) for example, has provided us with extensive and sustained research work focusing on developing countries (with several of them being in African contexts) under their project dubbed 'politics of inclusive development'. These and several other studies have explored the extent to which clientelistic political settlements, has manifested in development spheres in implementing development programmes including social protection and interventions in many parts of the world, particularly in developing countries to produce different outcomes.

Since then, Khan's typologies have been developed into new models and analytical frameworks by both academic and development-oriented institutions, some appearing to be more pragmatic

and methodological in development application. ESID, for example, through its leading experts, Sam Hickey and Tim Kelsall in one of its recent works on political settlements approach (ESID, 2020) developed essential guides in deploying political settlements analysis to country specific studies. The ESID's essential PSA guides, building on existing typologies categorised countries' political settlements according to two dimensions. The first is the 'social foundation', which captures the demography of power and the other is the 'power configuration', which captures power geometry (ESID, 2016). The social foundation is explained as where powerful groups exist and can influence decisions and shape the basic rules of the game depending on their strength and ruling elites respond to these groups either through co-optation, or repression. Groups who are co-opted receive benefits and are included in the settlements whilst those that are repressed or marginalised are treated as 'outsiders', and are excluded from the settlements. According to the framework, the larger the share of the powerful population that is co-opted, the broader the social foundation and the broader the social foundation, the more committed governing elites will be to deliver inclusive development benefits. The second, configuration of power also describes how power is arranged and organised within a state. According to them, if the top political leadership and its allies are strong relative to their own followers and opponents, then power is concentrated. However, if they are relatively weak, then power is dispersed. In concentrated configurations, the top leadership can dictate terms to other groups in the polity; decision-making can be quicker and implementation more predictable (doesn't guarantee better outcomes though). In dispersed configurations, however, top leadership cannot dictate terms: decision-making is more likely to be characterised by bargaining and struggle, with implementation less straightforward. (ESID, 2020). This new ESID PSA typology complements previous typologies by providing primary guide on how and what to focus on in implementing reforms and development policies.

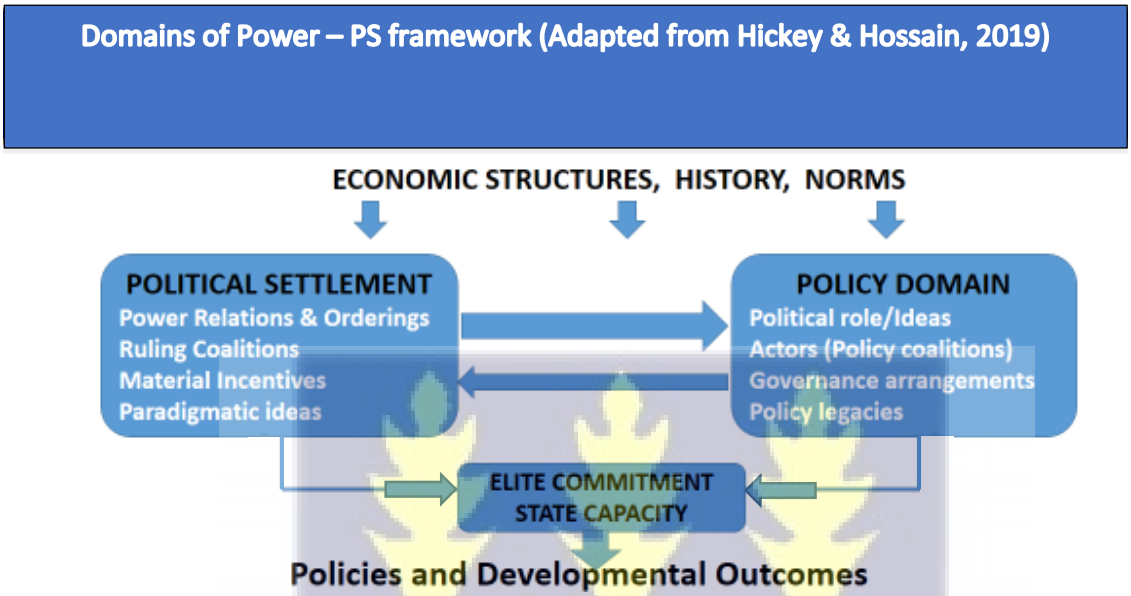
Booth (2015) provided us with perhaps a more pragmatic analytical tool of principles and questions, a kind of a 'check list' to apply for each specific country context in applying political settlement to development. Booth's 'check lists' asked questions on: the policy puzzle that explores the dynamics of the policy environment; the nature of political settlement that exists; the origins and historical analysis of existing structures; analyzing the implications of what emerges for policy and practice. Kelsall (2016) also built on existing typologies and present another dimension to the PS typology by categorizing all political settlements into three 'ideal-types'. The first and most ideal is the developmental states, characterised by an inclusive settlement and a bureaucracy that operates on impersonal norms and formal structures. The second is a predatory settlement which are almost opposite to the first one. It is characterised by an exclusive settlement with driven elites and a bureaucracy with patron-client relations. The last category of political settlements is the hybrid settlements which are between these two extremes types. These discussions on the conceptual issues and methodological framework is relevant to the study as it attempts to attain some convergence that seeks to provide focus and a particular perspective (s) in guiding analysis and discussions on the framework that is guiding this study.

2.3.4 The political settlement analytical framework

This study has adapted a framework developed by Hickey and Hossain (2019) in attempt to understand how political and institutional factors interacts to shape the thoughts and commitments of political elites towards implementing development policies. In applying the PS analytical assumptions to the political economy of social reforms, Hickey and Hossain (2019) used a framework they termed "*the domains of power*" that looks at the interaction between the broad configuration of power within society and the policy domain that prevails in the social delivery

setup. This study adopts and adapts this framework and affirms its suitability to the context of the study.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework



The political settlement analysis generally attributes the differences in development outcomes, precisely, state capabilities and political will or commitment to (dependent on) different political settlement contexts which is also defined by existing power domains or distributions and structures. The framework explains the key incentives or disincentives that drives elites' behaviour and commitments towards structural transformation and development. Thus, policies and the forms in which they come out (get implemented by the ruling elites) are the outcomes of the interactions between prevailing political order and existing institutional arrangements, both formal and informal, within the terrain of social service delivery. But this interaction is generally contingent on an established social structure of norms, economic and historical factors which explains why a particular prevailing order exist.

This framework resonates with Khan's (2010) political settlement analysis on understanding the distribution of power which he described as a holding power of different groups contesting the distribution of resources. He expounded that the holding power is partly based on resources or wealth as well as on historically rooted capacities of different groups to organize or mobilise. Khan's own PS framework exploits the interactions between institutional structures and power distributions in society that combine to produce viable economic outcomes and political stability.

The relevance and appropriateness of the above framework in analyzing the political economy of education in the context and perspective of Ghana has also been examined by Abdulai and Hickey (2016). Their study explained that the domain of power and resources allocation under an established informal order results in the distribution of benefits usually in an unfair and imbalance manner that impede national progress and create uneven development. Studying the politics of the education sector development in Ghana, Abdulai and Hickey (2016) asserted that the apparent unequal access to quality education delivery with its spatial imbalance can be attributed to the existence of a sustained socio-economic exclusion resulting from disproportionate exercise of holding power within the ruling coalitions. They explained the negative effect that the existence of competitive political clientelism in Ghana (under its democratization) have on the education sector reforms tracing the factors responsible to include the imbalance distribution of the holding power within ruling coalitions as having effects on ruling elite's policy choices and commitment to the implementation of realistic national education policy reforms.

The framework also sits well with this study's perspectives which emphasise the interaction that exist between ruling coalitions and institutional arrangements that prevails and how that shapes their capacity to implement transformational policies. Consequently, the framework helps to

understand the form and shape of how and why the Free SHS policy was adopted, formulated and implemented the way it has guided by the prevailing interests of different coalitions at stake including the ruling party, opposition, electorates and other competing interests and distributive pressures (such as party foot soldiers, financiers and functionaries)

2.3.5 The relevance of political settlement framework to public-social policy making – why political settlements matter

Political settlement has become a popular analytical framework used by academic researchers, research and development-oriented organisations to study and understand the exact ways (how) political contexts influence or affect (or in other way are affected by) public policy decision making. Over the past decade, in particular, the international development community has taken political settlement development framework seriously (evident in the use of the framework in several development intervention programmes/projects). The relevance in applying PS approach to development is primarily put on the increasing conviction that, politics matter when it comes to the state or government disposition and capacity in implementing social policy interventions, as no amount of evidence of the instrumental efficacy or of the intrinsic value of a particular social policy will lead to their adoption or effective implementation if they are not deemed to be politically feasible (Khan, 2010; Hickey & Hossain, 2019).

Gray (2015) has also added that having a political settlement analytical lens takes the researcher beyond a narrow focus on formal institutions to examine how distributions of power among groups affect the way that institutions work. Consequently, political settlements analysis expounds on the "power and interests" dynamics to help analyse the prospects and challenges of any development agenda, programme or policy change. It analyzes the interests and power of various stakeholders likely to benefit or be affected by any proposed development agenda or policy change, thus, the

influence they have over it and to what extent they can help to enhance or frustrate/block the proposed change.

Several academic researches using the political settlement approach have been very useful in providing understanding to many countries' developmental issues. Abdulai and Hickey (2016), for example, have used PS approach to broadened knowledge on the factors accounting for the continuous regional and spatial development imbalance between the South and North divisions of Ghana. Development oriented institutions and global research centres such as the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the Effective States and Inclusive Development (ESID) among others have adopted the PS framework as benchmarks in their respective works (Levy 2012) which has enlightened and guided development practice and reforms especially in developing countries. ESID for example with its considerable volume of political settlement researches across the developing world has influenced development benchmarks in considerable manner by providing typologies that request development and donor agencies to go beyond hitting core policy targets to taking initiatives to support 'secondary' elements such as good governance structures, civil society strengthening among others, since these are the systems that work against transformational change (Kelsall, 2018). The relevance of the political settlement approach as a good contour for working through development challenges has also been notified in some global development oriented benchmarks including the World Development Report of 2017 by referring to the framework as a positive guide to understand the drivers of change (World Bank, 2017). By and large, political settlements analysis helps to explain what the incentives and behaviour of political elites are towards a particular development intervention and also to know which implementation strategies to adopt.

2.4 Competitive Clientelism and Ghana's Political Settlements

Ghana's political settlement has been considered to be that of a competitive clientelism, as available evidence in the literature containing studies done on Ghanaian politics and development including Hickey and Hossain (2019); Abdulai and Hickey (2016; 2020); Oduro, Awal and Eshon (2014) and Whitfield (2011) have all described Ghana to be experiencing 'competitive clientelism' under its fourth republic constitutional democracy. Political clientelism the broader concept under which competitive clientelism emanate generally manifests in the exchange or trading of political power (votes) with the provision of public goods (social programs/services) between political elites and the masses or the distribution of goods and services mostly of visible nature in exchange of votes or political supports (Stokes, 2011). The nature of the political dispensation that currently exists in Ghana is shaped by a competitive partisan party-politics. Since the launch of the fourth republic in 1992/1993, Ghana has practiced a multi-party democratic political system which has translated into a political game of a highly contested electoral competition between two major political parties or political traditions, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) with social and liberal democratic ideological orientations, respectively. Power has exchanged hands between these two political traditions on three different occasions (in 2000, 2008 and 2016) whilst both parties have won a keenly contested national elections four times each since 1992 in the same space intervals of every eight years. Interestingly also is the political trend that power exchanges hand every eight years since the beginning of the fourth republic in a relatively peaceful manner on each occasion (Oduro et al, 2014). This descriptive account of Ghana's current political dispensation (of twenty-eight years, from 1992 – 2020) clearly depict a certain prevailing 'political order' that fits into political settlement framework of 'power bargaining' between elite groups in society which results in a prevailing social order (Kelsall, 2018). Oduro et. al (2014) again explained that Ghana is currently under a political economy

context in which not only is the political system structured around a mutual patron-client relationship, but that relationship sits in the context of intense political competition that influences interests and choices, including of ruling elites. Ghana's situation also fits Kelsall (2018) exposition that "it is the presence of a balance between competing political elites, with formal and informal institutions distributing resources in a way that is broadly commensurate with relative power in that society, that explains why comparative stability and social order have emerged in societies not considered to be experiencing open conflict or disorder".

Building explanations on Ghana's political settlement, Hickey and Hossain (2019) have related that the highly competitive nature of Ghana's electoral process and the constitutionally imposed four-year-term limits have combined to generate strong pressures for governing parties and elites to answer to the short-term socio-economic needs of voters and their supporters, and the needs of their own short-term political survival. This political context provides a strong incentive for ruling elites to adopt politicized approach to public policy formulation and implementation resulting in the public bureaucracy becoming increasingly personalized and informal in character. Whitfield (2011) also emphasized that the prevalence of the competitive "two-party system" reflects a growing political polarization, which is both shaped by and sustains an informal patronage system which undermines formal institutions and makes them weak. It asserts that the established power domains with its coalitions creates the informal systems which controls what get implemented and according to personalized group interest rather than prioritizing what can induce actual social progress and public good.

2.4.1 The Free SHS policy - a suitable case for testing Ghana's political settlement

The relevance of using the PS approach to understand and undertake development interventions has already been established in earlier sections of this chapter and that provides the justification

for applying the PS framework on the Free SHS policy process. The implications of competitive political settlement on social interventions such as the Free SHS has been explained by Abdulai (2019) who stated that in countries which are characterised by competitive clientelism; "there is a tendency for ruling political elites to focus on a broader geographical coverage in the distribution of social assistance, rather than targeting limited public resources to more deprived areas". In other words, the need to appease a wide spectrum of voters in order to win their support becomes a key driver in adopting social interventions. This according to Abdulai (2019) provides one causal proposition to test how political settlement dynamics shape the introduction or evolution of social intervention programmes by ruling elites. Another proposition his study suggested is that, under a competitive clientelistic political settlement, ruling elites prioritize reforms which are visible to prospective voters so they can attribute performance to the regime ahead of elections. Abdulai and Hickey (2016) also observed that ruling coalitions have become more programmatic and uses social interventions as their bargaining power in the patron-clients trading.

Both the context under which the Free SHS policy was introduced and the partisan twist to its discourse including manner of its implementation relent itself to this element of political settlements. Since 2008, the FSHS agenda has dominated electoral campaigns in Ghana with its discourse characterized by partisan-politics. Whilst the NPP and its flagbearer, Nana Akuffo-Addo, constantly maintained that a universal free secondary education in Ghana was achievable in the immediate term and would implement same when voted into power (NPP Manifestos, 2008, 2012 and 2016), the NDC thought otherwise, and maintained that a free secondary education should be introduced gradually or progressively in accordance with the provisions of the 1992 constitution (reference to NDC Manifestos, 2008 and 2012). By the time of election 2016, the position of the then ruling NDC on the implementation of a free secondary education had

'softened' having begun its implementation with the introduction no fees for all Day students in 2015 (something they had not considered as topmost priority in secondary education according to the 2012 NDC Manifesto). Analysts interpret these contexts as a manifestation of the competitive partisan electoral dynamics reflective of Ghana's political settlement.

Also, the partisan competitive background to the advocacy and discourse on the Free SHS, which gave very little attention or room for technocratic or civil society inputs (Partey, 2017) gives meaning to weak institutionalism which strengthens the reliance of informal structures in the policy process (Booth, 2015). All these contexts and its dynamism contribute to shaping the FSHS policy in both prescription and policy contents as well as manner of its implementation.

Indeed, observers have implied another agenda to the implementation of the Free SHS apart from the stated objective of achieving an equitable quality secondary education for all. Awal and Oduro (2017) have imputed political settlement dynamics in the way and manner the FSHS policy was introduced and implemented explaining that the speed with which the government rolled the programme out and the absence of a comprehensive policy, seems to suggest that the government is responding to its campaign promise. They explain that Ghana's competitive electoral politics has the tendency to generate perverse incentives for ruling coalitions to look for and implement short-term policy responses at the expense of long-term policy choices. Both Partey (2017) and Essuman (2018) in their opinion papers have suggested political motive as an objective for the government introduction of the FSHS.

2.5 Conclusion: Summary and Limitation of Study's Theoretical Framework

It is increasingly becoming safe to asserts that any social delivery or intervention including education reforms needs to be understood not only in a technical sense, but as a domain that

provides a huge political incentive for ruling elites to control and use as a means for achieving political accountability. The idea of linking the implementation of social reforms and public policies by ruling elites to political interest and expediency is also generally been considered a reality in the political clientelism discourse. However, measuring or assessing political settlements including its variant political clientelism, involves the ability to analyse and explore "hidden or secondary motives" (as originally stated by North, 1990) has always remained a challenge. Some studies like Muno (2015) and Hickey and Hossain (2019) have raised key methodological concerns which has resulted in many approaches including resorting to the use of proxies like corruption and political recruitments as factors to establish political elites' multiple intentions in introducing social reforms. Another challenge associated with using political settlement approach to analyzing the political economy of reforms especially in developing countries, as observed by Khan (2010) has also been the extreme role played by informal systems and actors considering the active and powerful roles by the ruling elites' members (like party functionaries) in the informal policy set up. These complexities with the informal systems and arrangements and their involvement in the policy process, according to Muno (2015), can however be addressed with innovative frameworks that is able to map the various actor interests including hidden and stated objectives.

Generally, the political settlement analytical approach seeks to unravel an assuming clash of rent-seeking motive versus public good objective in the adoption of social reforms by political elites. But the complexities involved in doing so requires a good approach that include having good knowledge and understanding of the context (Booth, 2015), something of which this study is guided by.

CHAPTER THREE

SECONDARY EDUCATION AND THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION REFORMS IN GHANA – AN OVERVIEW

3.1 Introduction

Chapter three of the study generally expounds on the interaction of politics and educational reforms in Ghana which provide further context to the study by showing how political dynamics has influenced and shaped education policy development and reform process in the past. It provides a historical trajectory on how secondary education provision (in particular) and its reforms in Ghana has been interwoven with political decisions and uncertainties particularly, due to the prevailing competitive partisan politics in Ghana.

Ghana has in the past implemented several educational policies and reforms that have sought to improve education delivery and also make it generally accessible to all. However, the experiences with the implementation of such education policies and reforms have produced mixed outcomes and results partly due to the political context under which such policies and reforms have been undertaken (Akyeampong et al, 2007). The chapter therefore examines the several circumstances under which reform processes have been hampered by political factors. The second segment of the chapter significantly delves into the growth and trajectory of free education in Ghana outlining the various drivers and factors that have contributed or in some rare cases hampered its development.

3.2 Secondary Education Delivery in Ghana

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is ultimately responsible for education delivery in Ghana, and specifically for education policy formulation. There are a number of agencies reporting to the

Ministry, the largest being the Ghana Education Service (GES), with the responsibility for delivering pre-tertiary public education, which includes senior high school or secondary education. With secondary level education, the MOE and its main implementing body (GES) are responsible for ensuring the provision of equitable and quality secondary education for all children at their appropriate school-going age irrespective of socio-economic background, gender, disability, gender, religion or geographical location (MOE, 2019). Among the functions of the Ministry is to advise Government on educational policies and issues at all levels of education. At both the MOE and GES, there is a department or a division directly in charge of secondary education matters. Private sector participation in education delivery is high in Ghana with almost one-third of second cycle institutions being privately owned or managed (MOE, 2018). The MOE has the mandate and task of supervising the activities of private SHSs in the country, done mostly through its agencies such as the National Inspectorate Authority which act as an independent assessor and regulator of all Schools, both public and private. The total number of SHSs including TVET schools in Ghana stands at 1, 038 comprising 721 public SHS and 317 private SHS (GES, Register of second cycle schools, 2020).

Over the past years, access to secondary education had remained low with gross enrollment ratio as low as 50.1% as at 2016 (MOE, 2018). Indeed, several studies including Addae-Mensah (2000), Akyeampong (2010), Little (2010) and Education Sector Reports (MOE, 2016; 2017) had actually cited access to secondary education as one of the major constraints to secondary education in Ghana. Many of such studies also cited financial barriers (for Parents in particular) but also for government, limited fiscal space, as the greatest constraint to access to secondary education especially for people from deprived backgrounds. Available official statistics also shows evidence of significant numbers of students who are placed by the Computerized School Selection and

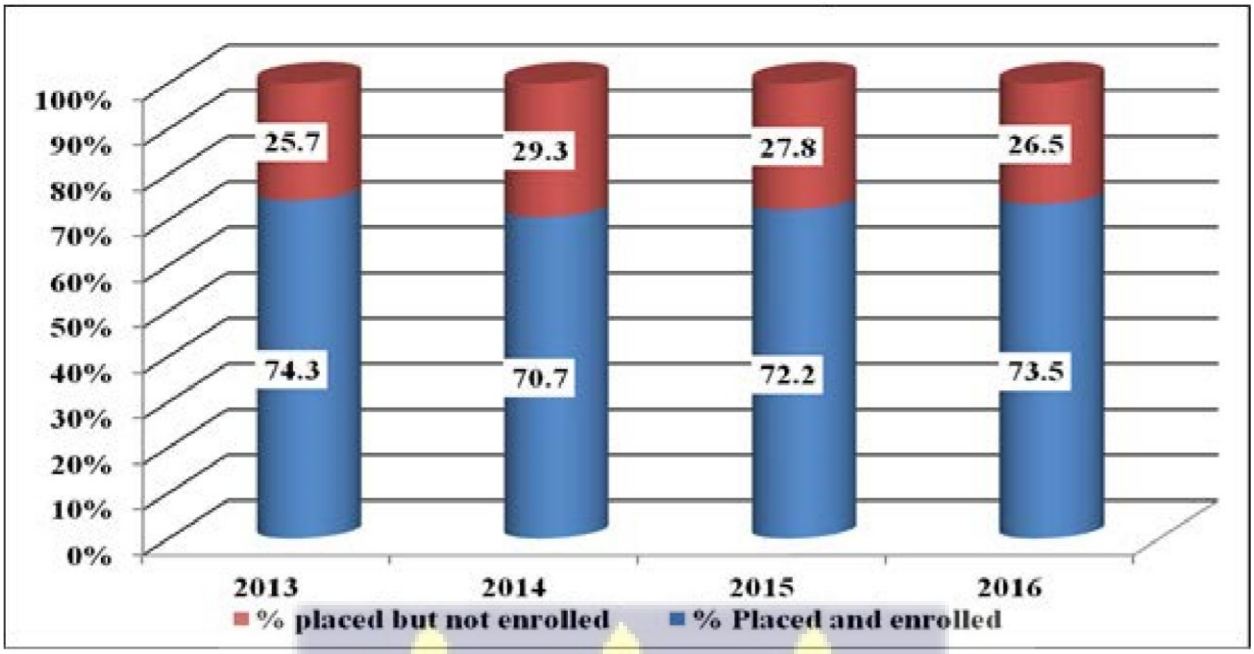
Placement System (CSSPS) but do not actually enrol, for reasons including challenges in paying fees according to MOE year in–out reports. In 2016, the last academic year before the implementation of the Free SHS for example, 111,336 representing **26.5%** of students who qualified and were placed in their respective chosen schools by the CSSPS did not enrol. Averagely, about 27% of qualified and placed BECE candidates do not enrol after being placed in respective SHSs, a gap which education authorities and studies attribute to financial incapacity of parents/guardians. (See Table 3.1 and Chart 3.1 for details).

Table 3.1: Placement and Enrollment Trends for 1st Year – SHS (2013 - 2016)

SN.	YEAR	Total Registered	Number Placed	Total Enrolled	No. not Enrolled	% not Enrolled
1	2013	391,032	352,202	261,598	90,604	25.7%
2	2014	422,946	386,412	273,152	113,260	29.3%
3	2015	440,469	415,012	299,649	115,363	27.8%
4	2016	461,009	420,135	308, 799	111,336	26.5%

(Source: MOE, 2017)

Figure 3.1: Placement and Enrollment Trends for 1st year SHS (2013 - 2016)



(Source: MOE, 2017)

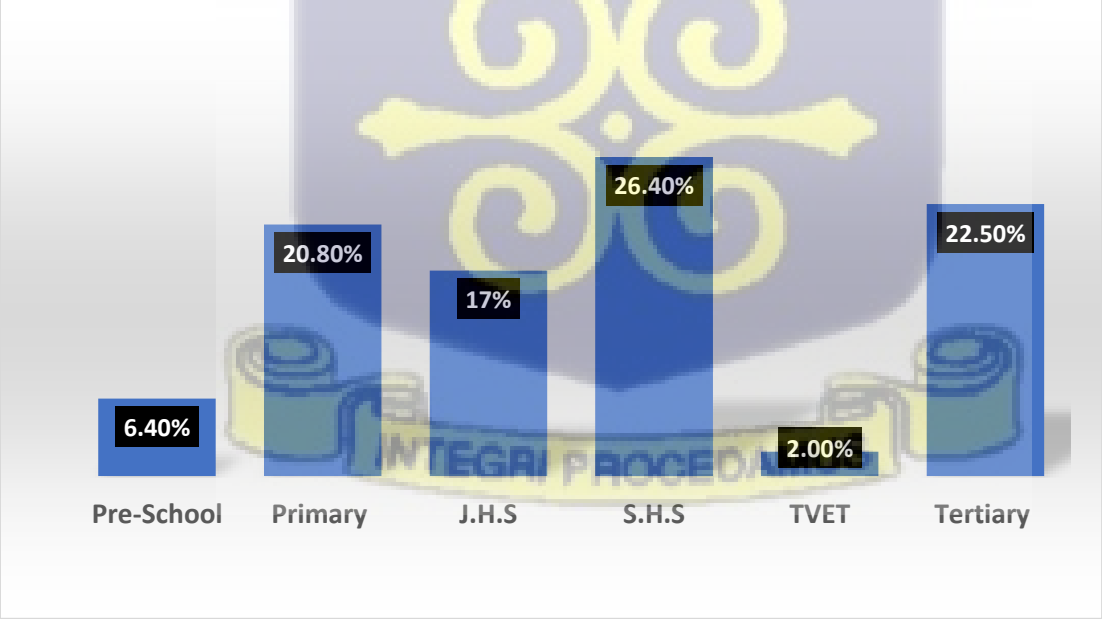
3.2.1 Financing secondary education in Ghana

Secondary education has largely been financed by government since the beginning of the fourth republic. Major costs of secondary education are borne by Government including tuition, infrastructure provision, textbooks and teaching and learning materials among others. Parents or students contributed towards the education of their children, through the payment of school fees approved by the Ghana Education Service and charged to all students. The funding of education has therefore been guided on some form of a cost-sharing arrangements between Government and Parents, with the later paying for some basic utilities, academic and facility user-fees and feeding (for boarders) in the form of school fees. Even though the 1992 Constitution (Article 25.1) legislated for a progressive free secondary education, its complete implementation has remained 'on hold' until the introduction of the free SHS in 2017. In the 2015/16 academic year however,

Government begun a progressive or gradual introduction of a fee-free secondary education with Government absorbing the school fees of all Day students (GOG, 2017).

Until the introduction of the Free SHS programme, secondary education was the second (sometimes third) highest consumer of government education sector expenditure, often behind primary education (MOE, 2018). Since 2017, however, secondary education (SHS) has become the highest consumer of the education sector expenditure accounting for 26.4% above all other levels and programmes (Pre-School, Primary, JHS, Tertiary, and TVET) according to the 2019 Education Sector Performance Report of the MOE. A CDD report (2020) also indicated that, whiles primary education received 30% of education sector budget between 2007 and 2010, its share dropped to 18% between 2017 and 2020 in favour of secondary education which share went up from 15% to 35% of the budget during the same period (CDD, 2020). This is most likely due to the large funding involved with the introduction of the Free SHS programme. Figure 3.2 shows education sector budget per education level.

Figure 3.2: Expenditure by level of education for 2017



(Source: adapted from MOE, 2018)

With huge expenditure involved in the implementation of Free SHS, the government had to look for alternative sources of funding for secondary education expenditure beyond the usual government budgetary allocation. The government in 2017 during its annual budget and economic policy statement declared its intention of using petroleum revenue, specifically from the Annual Budget Funding Amount (ABFA). Consequently, with the introduction of the Free SHS in September, 2017, the government accessed 27.3% of ABFA revenue amounting to GHS 212 million from the total amount of GHS 400 million spent on Free SHS in its first year of implementation (MOE, 2019). The rest of the amount of GHS 188 million was supplemented by additional government budgetary support. It is estimated that an amount of GHS 1.2 billion or beyond has been spent on the Free SHS programme with three years of inception, from 2017/18 – 2019/20 academic years (MOE, 2020). From 2018 onwards the funding of secondary education, mainly the Free SHS was placed under the auspices of the National Scholarship Secretariat (GOG Budget Statement, 2019).

3.3 Major (Secondary) Education Reforms in Post-Independence Ghana

The 1961 Education Act

Since independence, several education reforms have been initiated by governments with the aim of finding solution to the numerous problems facing the education system. The first major post-independence education reform in Ghana was undertaken through the 1961 Education Act (Mankoe, 2004). The 1961 Act was actually a continuing phase of the earlier 1951 Accelerated Development Plan adopted when Ghana attained internal-self-government under Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. The main focus of the 1961 Act was on the expansion and restructuring of secondary education and post-secondary technological and managerial training in technical institutions (Adu-Gyamfi, Donkor and Addo, 2016). It provisions were mainly on the management, supervision and

regulation of secondary education including the regulation of private sector participation. The Act also sought to legislate the provision of free, universal and compulsory basic education for all children from six years of age which had been introduced by the 1951 Accelerated Development Plan.

The 1974 Education Reforms

Probably, the first major attempt to embark on a massive education restructuring after Independence and the overthrow of Nkrumah's government was the 1974 Dzobo Education Reforms under the regime of the National Redemption Council. The Dzobo Education Reforms was significant because it marked the introduction of new reforms that were different in structure and content from the type of education Ghana had experienced since independence and actually undertook a comprehensive review of the entire formal educational system (Keteku, 1999; Mankoe, 2004). The reforms introduced the concept of Junior Secondary School and Senior Secondary School changing from the traditional, Primary-Middle-School, Ordinary & A level to a Primary-JSS-SSS and also reduced the number of years spent in pre-tertiary education from seventeen (17) to thirteen (13) years. The reforms also formalized pre-school education – Kindergarten education, even though it was largely provided by the private sector (Boakye, 2019) which made it largely inaccessible to many especially those in rural areas. It also sought to introduce skill-based subjects at pre-tertiary level. Again, due to military intervention which led to regime change few years after the introduction of the reforms, the restructuring process did not function properly as envisaged (Adu-Gyamfi, Donkor & Addo, 2016).

The 1987 Education reforms

The 1987 Education reforms would probably be remembered for several reasons. The first is the strong political will and commitment that accompanied the reforms which caused significant

changes to the educational system and secondly, the timing the reforms was introduced following a longer period of general instability in the socio-political fabric of the Ghanaian society which had also affected education delivery (Akyeampong, 2010). The reforms were based on the proposals or recommendations of the Evans-Anfom chaired committee set up in 1984 by the PNDC regime. The main components of the 1987 reforms could be described as 'recap' and implementation of the earlier 1974 recommendations. As Little (2010) observed, "the 1987 reform was an attempt to put into practice the recommendations of the 1974 proposals" The reform however introduced some changes to the existing recommendations and practice. For example, the reforms further reduced the thirteen (13) earlier reduced from 17 years to twelve (12) years, making the duration of secondary education three instead of the four years. The reforms were also noted for its nexus with skills training and education as well as on financing of education

One key feature of the 1987 education reforms which is significant for this study is the supposed connectivity of the reforms with the foreign or donor community/external influence as part of the general inducements or conditionalities associated with the structural adjustments programme (SAP) implemented by the PNDC government at the time (Nudzor, 2017; Braimah, Mbowura & Seidu, 2014; Akyeampong, 2009). This led to the government cutting down its expenditure on education and introducing cost-sharing between the Government and beneficiaries or Parents at both pre-tertiary and tertiary levels. For example, the reform led to the removal of boarding and feeding subsidies for secondary and tertiary institutions and removal of student subsides in tertiary education. (Little, 2010). This example of the interaction between Government and donor actors acting as a driver of educational reform or change brings into focus the context within which the study seeks to examine the education reform process and political context and explore its implications on reform process, this will be analysed (later in this chapter).

The 2007 Education Reforms

The last major reform in the education system was the 2007 Education Reforms. In Janaury 2002 the Kufour-led government inaugurated a presidential committee led by Prof Anamuah-Mensah to undertake a comprehensive review of the entire formal educational system in Ghana. This eventually led to the 2007 education reforms after the government had adopted the committee report and issued a white paper on it. It was tasked to review the entire educational system in the country with the view to making it responsive to current challenges (Braimah, Mbowura, & Seidu, 2014). The 2007 education reforms certainly taken (or supposed to) its recommendations from the 2002 Anamuah-Mensah committee brought some changes to secondary education system. Among other things, more significantly, changed the duration of secondary education from three years to four years. Less significantly, it changed the existing names, Junior Secondary School (JSS) to the current Junior High School (JHS) and Senior Secondary School (SSS) to Senior High School (SHS). However, as later analysis in subsequent sections will show, many recommendations given by the technical committee were put aside by the Government White paper (Adu-Gyamfi, Donkor & Addo, 2016), typifying the trajectory of several education reforms, often Government led. This is what raises concerns of political influences or partisan-shaping of education reforms in Ghana.

3.4 The Nature, Form and Shape of Education Reforms in Ghana

The fact that all major education reforms had been spearheaded by government or regime change is evident in several studies (Nudzor, 2017; Adu-Gyamfi, Donkor & Addo, 2016; Braimah, Mbowura & Seidu, 2014; Akyeampong, 2010). Consequently, the balance of power between the different actors in the education sector and their specific interests, helps to explain how reforms actually play out in practice, including why some reforms in their entirety or part gain priority over others and why some are left partly or wholly not implemented. Studies have shown that past

reforms have been characterized by political colourisation and directions. Owusu-Kwarteng et al (2018), Adu-Gyamfi et. al (2016), Braimah, Mbowura and Seidu (2014), Little (2010) have all revealed that, reforms and reviews done over the years have largely been fronted by political elites who try to use reforms and reviews to achieve other motives beyond educational improvement goals. Evidence from these studies also revealed that, the ability of political elites to frequently change and launch reforms to the educational system makes the educational system very susceptible as politicians could manipulate the system to suit their whims and caprices anytime they came into power.

3.4.1 Political decisions on secondary education reforms - implications

Adu-Gyamfi, et al (2016) and Braimah, et al (2014) provided a historical trajectory of how reforms within the secondary education sector in Ghana has closely been associated with changes in political regimes. Both studies cited the significant case of the increase in the duration of senior high school from three to four years by the government of New Patriotic Party (NPP) in 2007 and its immediate reversal of same by the government of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) when it assumed power in 2009, both decisions taken without reaching national consensus and with very little or no public engagement. The study by Braimah, et al, (2014) revealed that such political decisions usually brought further crises to the education sector as it led to the government taking desperate measures to mitigate the negative effects of those policies. They asserted, for example that, the re-reversal of the four year SHS duration to three years without waiting for the first batch of the four-year duration to complete, (certainly due to campaign promise as stated in their manifesto) brought a clash of two batches of SHS students completing the same year and writing the WASSCE the same time in 2013. This doubled the usual number of students' intake to tertiary institutions and made the government to introduce some desperate measures including

lifting the admission quota it had imposed on Teacher Training Colleges across the country. The objective was to allow those institutions to also increase student intake. Meanwhile, the quota system was meant to curtail the huge budget allocation as allowances to teacher trainees. The government therefore consequently abolished allowances to teacher trainees since the increase in student intake had a huge financial implication, a decision that received condemnation from students, Teacher Associations, Parents and other stakeholders in education.

Amparatwum et al (2019) has asserted that the frequency of reforms within the education sector in Ghana tends to increase under the conditions of intense electoral competition at the expense of both coherence and technocratic control. Braimah et al (2014) for example highlighted on how free secondary education issue became a central campaign message in the 2012 general elections. They aver that the situation brought pressure on the ruling party (NDC) after it won the election to fulfil its promises on its own approach to free secondary education including establishing 200 community day SHSs and ten Teacher Training Schools to increase access and improve teacher quality respectively. Subsequently, leading to the 2016 elections the NDC government introduced a progressive free secondary education, something they had previously been skeptical about (Partey, 2017). According to Casely-Hayford (2011) such existing tensions also leads to an increasing politicization of education resulting in bureaucrats' fear of victimization by political actors within the education sector anytime there is a change of government.

3.4.2 Regime change tantamount to new reforms

Study findings provide wide public perceptions about education reforms as being synonymous to change in government as reforms had always been associated with a particular government or regime as and when they came into power. The assertion about the frequent policy changes in the educational system by political elites motivated by political consideration, for example, has well

been investigated by Braimah, Mbowura and Seidu (2014) and Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh and Addo (2016). They advanced that the management and reform of education in Ghana since the fourth republic have become synonymous with a change in political power and that has created instability in the structure and content of the educational system often occasioned through political jangling than a national consensus. In their study titled, "One State, Two School Systems: the Instability of Ghana's School System", Braimah et al (2014) bemoaned the fickle nature of Ghana's school system. They cited the case of the parallel existence of two streams or badges of SHS final year students at the same time in 2013 due to reversal and counter-reversal of SHS duration by the NPP and NDC governments. Those political decisions had negative glaring effects on learning and education policy. Nudzor (2013) has also examined the implementation of FCUBE and observed how two different regimes existed at two different periods during the policy process which brought ideological shifts to the policy at formulation and implementation stages.

Studies have also associated political reasons and ideological factors to many of the reforms undertaken in Ghana. In Boakye (2019) education experts expressed their opinions on how they understood education reforms. A former Director-General of the Ghana Education Service for example indicated;

"*A lot of these reforms are purely political in nature. They have been inspired by politicians and key technical people who are connected to politicians. Not a lot of public consultation was done in relation to the 1987 and 2007 reforms. They will tell you that they set up a review committee so that everybody can come and say whatever they want. But in the end, it was the political considerations of the ruling government that mattered" - (An interview quote from Boakye, 2019).*

Little (2010) also cited the case of school feeding programme which was intended to improve school attendance and increase access in the deprived communities but was extended to some schools in big cities because of political reasons. According to Little, the programme was used as a vote buying channel from the large voting community in the big cities.

3.4.3 Political directives versus technical imperatives

The enduring tensions between the political maneuverings and the technical imperatives of reform seem to have characterized major education reforms in Ghana over the past years. Various studies have provided us with a trajectory of how the provision of education and reforms in Ghana have been closely associated with the active role and involvement of political elites, in many instances leading the reform processes (Akyeampong, et al, 2007). According to Little (2010), many key decisions affecting education continue to be made outside of the Ministry of Education. The account by Little (2010) detailed how political imperatives took control over reform process with a case study of the 1987 education reform when government's determination to overcome resistance by all means possible, transferred three important units from the GES - Supplies, Curriculum Research and Development and Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation - to the Ministry of Education to put the process under political check and control. The study quoted a former Director General of the GES at that time recalling how the GES was sidelined by both government and its allies during the implementation process;

"... The Secretary for Education told the GES that if they are not prepared for the implementation of the reform they will all be removed from office by revolutionary order" - (An interview quote from Little, 2010).

The study also explored the processes leading to the 2007 reforms where the government established a separate 30-member committee in 2002 to undertake widespread consultations

towards reforming the educational system. This was against the background of the Ministry of Education led Education Sector Review project which was to feed into a long-term plan for education, the Education Strategic Plan (ESP), 2003-2015, developed largely by professional educational planners, who were well aware of the discourse on basic education framed in the language of Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In the nutshell, the government to some large extent implemented recommendations by its established review committee and its commitment to the ESP was questioned especially by the international community (Little, 2010). Pedley and Taylor, (2009) also added that, the agenda of the president's 30-member committee appeared to enjoy greater influence than the agenda embedded within the ESP and also suggested that presidential associates and advisers had more influence than officials, consultants, and donor agency staff working in or with the Ministry of Education.

Little (2010) has provided further evidence on the clash of technical procedures and political intentions asserting that by the time the new reforms were introduced in 2007 when some of the original recommendations made in the 2002 report had been changed. The most controversial of them being the duration for secondary education which was extended from three to four years which was not recommended by the technical review committee.

Another instance to exemplify the neglect of technical directives for political imperatives can be found in the propositions of the 2007 Anamoah-Mensah committee recommendations. Even though the committee itself recommended for a free universal education at the basic level whilst maintaining a cost-sharing at the Senior High School and Tertiary levels, just a year after in 2008, the NPP (the same ruling government) with its flagbearer were promising free SHS in their 2008 electioneering campaign. Again, whilst the committee recommended for the blend of local

Ghanaian language and English language as the medium of instruction, cabinet decided otherwise and made English the medium of instruction (Little, 2010).

The creation of informal structures by political elites running parallel to existing formalized technocratic institutions also affirm the tension between political directives and technical imperatives in most reform process. Studies including Akyeampong (2010), Pedley and Taylor (2009), Akyeampong et, al (2007) have all affirmed that the power of political directives over technical dimensions in policy formulation and planning appear to have strengthened as the gatekeepers who controlled access to policy formulation were the political elites even though the MOE usually carries the formal mandate of formulating education policy.

3.4.4 Donors/transnational actors as 'silent' drivers of education reforms

Evidence from the studies suggest that transnational outfits or foreign donors including development partners such as the IMF and World Bank and other international development agencies play instrumental roles in shaping education reform in Ghana. In his ideation studies on past education reforms in Ghana, Boakye (2019) found evidence suggesting that the 2007 major education reform was meddled with foreign influence. His study identified multilateral organisations as key actors who influenced the 2007 education reform process through certain mechanisms. He identified these mechanisms as ideas, financing of programmes, aid conditionalities, conferences among others. The study quoted the Chairman of the reform committee, Prof. Anamuah-Mensah, who had indicated in an interview that, foreign interventions played key roles in reform directions. According to him, the foreign actors through multi-national corporations always had an agenda, so they subtly played them out in the name of assistance and aid but eventually made it a condition for you to be able to access any form of help from them. Nudzor (2017) and Akyeampong (2009) have both mentioned a key connectivity between the 1987

education reforms and foreign/donor influence. They aver that, the direction of the reforms was part of the general inducements or conditionalities associated with the Structural Adjustments Programme (SAP) of the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) in 1983 implemented by the PNDC government.

Indeed, these observations have been corroborated by Abdulai (2020) in using the 'adapted political settlements framework' to explain the dynamism involved in the adoption and implementation of social reforms in Ghana. He explained that the political context to reform and policy process goes beyond domestic political calculus, and explicitly incorporates the influence of ideational and transnational factors.

3.5 Free Education in Ghana – The Evolution

Ghana has since independence promulgated and implemented various free education programmes/policies in different forms and at different levels of education. Free education policies have been implemented in Ghana at different times as a remedy to achieving many education goals, particularly to increase access. In this regard, many free education policies and programmes have improved education delivery immensely and made greater impacts in opening access to schooling. However, apart from the fact that they do not primarily or directly address other facets of secondary education such as quality, free education policies themselves again, do not absolutely address the bottlenecks associated with improving educational access. The 2002 Presidential Commission on Education Reforms in Ghana which examined the reasons for the low access to secondary education for example, blamed it on a number of factors including inadequate facilities and infrastructure, parents unable to afford secondary fees, a lack of alternative tracks for students with different interests and abilities, inability of students to meet the minimum requirements for further education and a lack of interest in further education (GoG, 2002).

The trajectory of free education in Ghana begun with the pre-independence accelerated development plan of 1951 through to current existing legislative provisions under the 1992 4th Republican constitution. Free education policies and programmes in Ghana since independence have been implemented as independent or separate interventions and as well as part of general education reforms in response to changing educational needs at the time (Akyeampong, 2010).

3.5.1 Regulatory and legislative frameworks

This aspect of the chapter discusses the core regulatory and legislative frameworks of free education in Ghana.

The 1951 Accelerated Development Plan

The first major effort made at making primary education accessible to all with virtually no cost implication was the introduction of the Accelerated Development Plan for Education (ADPE) in 1951 by the newly formed internal self-government of Dr Kwame Nkrumah and the CPP. The ADPE was a massive education development agenda that sought to use education to spearhead the development agenda of the country as envisioned by the new government and also to reverse the existing trend of educational accessibility being the preserve of the few elites in the Gold Coast (Graham, 1976).

As the ADPE sought to expand the provision of education at all levels and provide same to the citizenry with the state bearing the cost implications, it granted financial support to a large number of non-assisted schools, expanded facilities at the primary level with a view of laying the foundation for universal primary education in the country. A tuition free elementary education for children between the ages of six to twelve was thus introduced (Asare-Bediako, 2014). As the government's ADPE agenda had made massive improvement in expanding education facilities

across the country, making education provision free, universal and compulsory still remained a matter of principle and a vision.

The 1961 Education Act

Certainly by 1961, it had become sufficient to make it possible for the Government to introduce free compulsory elementary school nationally. These measures laid the foundation for the greatest revolution in Ghana's education history (Graham, 1976). As a result, there was the introduction of fee-free elementary education, teacher training, and university education as well as the supply of free textbooks across all levels. It was the Education Act of 1961, actually, that provided the first legal fabric to the principle of free and compulsory primary education by providing a legislative instrument which also defined the general scope of education delivery in the country (Graham, 1976). Among key other things, the Act gave the principal legislation on the right to be educated by providing that every child who attained the determined school going age was to attend instructional course in a school accredited by the Ministry of Education (Akyeampong, 2010). The goal of the 1961 Act, thus received the foundational compliment of the ADPE which had ensured rapid expansion of infrastructure and other educational facilities. Together, the 1951 Accelerated Development Plan and the 1961 Education Act, launched a massive start of a universal free primary education in Ghana. Under the general agenda to make education at all levels accessible to the people, tertiary education including university education, during this period was also free, even though there was no particular legislation clothing that (Yusif & Yussof, 2010).

There was an apparent lack of Government's disposition towards the adoption or intensifying of free education policies during the periods of post 1987 reforms. This was evident in the attempt to introduce a cost-sharing principle (as part of the structural adjustments programme) at the tertiary level of education in 1988 under the tertiary education reform programme, particularly, the

universities which had remained largely free. Indeed, by 1991 fee payments had been introduced at the various public universities for the first time. Also, the 1992 constitution provided a legislative shield for this when together with secondary education, free tertiary education was only provided for as a futuristic agenda subject to availability of resources.

The promulgation of the 1992 4th Republican Constitution and Free education

The return to constitutional rule in 1992 reclaimed the duty of the state to provide an absolutely free and compulsory basic education for all. This was a constitutional provision under the 1992 4th Republic constitution dubbed "the Free, Compulsory and Universal Basic Education (FCUBE). The FCUBE also provided an action plan for the period of ten years (1996-2005), which served as a roadmap within which all necessary programmes and policies should have been introduced to achieve the objective of a universal participation in primary education.

The primary achievement of FCUBE in its foundational operation in 1996 was that it made the tuition of basic education free whilst certain cost items of primary education such as examination fees, sports levies, etc were still borne by parents. The remaining cost elements borne by parents equally made the compulsory aspect of the FCUBE difficult to enforce as these cost elements could still pose as barriers to accessing primary education especially by the poor (Little, 2010; Akyeampong, 2010). Subsequently, in 2005, the government worked to meet the constitutional threshold of FCUBE by eliminating all the outstanding cost elements in the provision of basic education by introducing the Capitation Grant which sought to absorb all the identified expenses and costs at the school level borne by parents. With the Capitation Grant, government directly transferred funds as payment for the recurrent expenditure to schools which would have been paid by parents. Various studies done on FCUBE since its implementation have suggested positive

impacts as far as expanding access to basic education is concerned (Akyeampong, 2010; Little, 2010).

The SDGs and other education development targets

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations and other education attainments benchmarks such as the "Education for All' (EFA) have served as motivation and the platform for measuring and assessing the performance of countries including Ghana in their milestones towards education attainments. UNESCO's EFA for example provided a key motivation for Ghana as it worked tirelessly to achieve a free and compulsory primary education for all by 2015. The SDGs escalates this threshold stipulating in its Target 4.1 that "By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes". Having signed to the SDGs as a member of the UN, Ghana is obliged to attain this education threshold as various country development assessment will be inclusive of the milestone that has been reached regarding SDGs and other education targets.

3.5.2 The role of political party manifestoes

Political parties with their Manifestos are increasingly becoming important source of policy making and national agenda setting. Ayee (2016) has explained the significance of Manifestos in electoral politics as it influences electorates' voting choices. He argued that Ghanaian electorates consider political party messages that are more appealing to decide which political party to vote for. Indeed, modern political party manifestos can be considered as a social contract between the political coalitions, if voted into power, and the citizenry – a matter political parties are increasingly becoming conscious of (see introductory notes of NPP and NDC 2020 manifestos).

The Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD) in a piece titled, 'the Manifesto Project' emphasises the growing importance and value of manifestos in modern democracies (CDD, 2020).

Even though the 1992 constitution of Ghana has enshrined in it the need for a free secondary education for all, heightened public interest and discourse on the free SHS was kindled by a political party election manifesto. The manifestos of the two major political parties, NPP and NDC in the past recent elections both have sections on education which speak to free education matters. The following quotes are excerpts from the Manifestoes of the two major political parties stating their approach and commitments towards providing free education:

"Ensure 100% access for all children of school going age in compliance with the constitutional requirement of FCUBE" – (NDC Manifesto, 2012)

"We are fully committed to making secondary education free for every Ghanaian child. By free SHS we mean, free tuition, admission, textbook, library, science centre, computer, examination, utilities, boarding and meals". – (NPP Manifesto, 2012)

"Redefine basic education to include Senior High School (SHS), covering vocational, agricultural and technical schools, and make it available for free on a universal basis to all Ghanaians" – (NPP Manifesto, 2016)

"We are committed to implementing a better and improved Free Secondary Education Programme, and... Expand the Free SHS programme to cover students in private Senior High Schools in underserved/deprived areas" – (NDC Manifesto, 2020)

3.5.3 Assessing free education programmes implemented in Ghana – the FCUBE in perspectives

How earlier free education programmes or policies in Ghana have fared contributes to the discourse on the free SHS implementation. The FCUBE, until the introduction of the free SHS remained the only universal free education programme being implemented in Ghana. Apart from the generally observed challenge identified with free education programmes especially in developing countries, including its sole targeting of removing cost barriers as against other constraints to education, studies have identified other challenges with the implementation of the universal free basic education programme, the FCUBE in Ghana. Even though evidence exist in abundance to show that the implementation of FCUBE since 1995 has contributed immensely in increasing access to basic education (Akyeampong, 2010; Little, 2010), evidence equally shows many challenges with primary education including large population of children still being out of school (CDD, 2020). And even though FCUBE also emphasised the importance of improving quality (like free SHS), it has remained harder to achieve (Akyeampong, 2010). Quality issues remain a major concern with public basic schools as 75% of primary 6 pupils are not proficient in English and Mathematics with 50% of primary 2 pupils unable to read a single word (CDD, 2020). With what could probably be directly attributed to FCUBE is the observation that, demand for public pre-primary and primary school continues to dwindle and weaken in favour of costlier private schools (even among poorer households and communities), CDD (2020); World Bank (2018).

The forgoing hitches associated with the implementation of the FCUBE is one reason for which some observers and analysts have become skeptical of the implementation of a universal free SHS

as the FCUBE is considered a precursor to a free secondary education (the FSHS) hence the success of the later could be judged on the fortunes of the former.

The observations made by Nudzor (2013); Little (2010) and Akyeampong (2009) regarding the context under which the FCUBE was implemented provides the common ground and linkages that could be likened to the case of the FSHS. Their studies make observations to the effect that the political contexts that surrounded the implementation of the FCUBE contributed to its challenges towards achieving the objectives of the intervention. Little (2010) for example raised concerns about local politics interferences in technical directives in the location of primary schools (for political reasons). Nudzor (2013) also raised ideological clashes that befell the FCUBE process at policy inception and implementation stages which led to a shift in policy focus and approach. The above challenges and its associated perspectives with the implementation of the FCUBE provides the foundational fear and pessimism with which many have perceived the introduction of the free SHS programme.

3.5.4 Free secondary education in Ghana – past dispersed interventions

As indicated earlier (under the evolution of free education in Ghana) secondary education had remained partially free, with government bearing tuition cost and other capital expenditure. Even though the 1992 constitution makes provision for a 'futuristic' free secondary education for all, successive governments since 1992 seem to have limited their capacity to provide free education to the basic level, until in 2014/15 when the NDC government introduced what it described as the progressive free secondary education with Government's absorption of school fees paid by all Day students. But before the introduction of the progressive free secondary education, several dispersed interventions have existed which sought to alleviate the financial burden to accessing secondary education by certain disadvantaged groups in Ghana.

Students from Northern extraction scholarship

The Northern Scholarship Scheme (as popularly referred to) was a major free education intervention programme initiated under the 1951 Education Development Plan under Kwame Nkrumah. It was a deliberate policy to bridge the educational development gap of regional imbalance between the south and north of the country. It provided free secondary education for children of northern Ghana parentage or descent in the form of scholarships and feeding grants. The programme had operated successfully and consistently for the past years and was only abolished or replaced with the introduction of the free SHS policy in 2017

The Ghana Cocoa Board scholarships/bursaries

The Cocoa Board scholarship was introduced in the past as a state scholarship scheme mainly to fund the education of children of cocoa farmers and workers related to the industry who were largely perceived to be hailing from poor backgrounds. It was later extended to cover brilliant but needy students. This covered secondary and tertiary levels of education as basic education had largely been free over the past periods.

The Progressively free secondary education

Prior to the introduction of the free SHS programme in 2017, the NDC government in 2015 introduced a programme to make secondary education free through a gradual process by first absorbing fees charged to day students. Under this programme, 12 recurrent fee items were absorbed by Government for all day students (320,488 students) at a rate of GHS162 per beneficiary student per year at the time (MOE, 2017). The absorbed fees included among other things, examination fees, library fees, development levy, utilities etc. Although the above fee items were absorbed, there remained outstanding fees especially, fee items payable once by first year students including items like admission fees, uniforms etc as well as the cost for boarding facilities.

Under the programme the fees of all day students in second cycle schools were absorbed by government, hence no day student was required to pay any form of fees at school (GES, 2015). This excluded tuition fees which was already free prior to the introduction of the policy.

3.6 The Free SHS Programme

Perhaps, what can be described as a massive gain in the free education regime in Ghana in recent times is the implementation of a universal free secondary education policy dubbed "Free SHS" in 2017 by the government. The Free SHS policy can also be seen as a fulfilment of a provision in the 1992 constitution which admonished for the introduction of a free secondary education. Under the policy, all expenses hitherto charged by the Ghana Education Service (GES) on parents have been absorbed by the government. With the introduction of this policy, primary and secondary education in Ghana become free, joining few countries in the world which have fulfilled one key target of global education development agenda, particularly, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs).

The Free SHS programme implemented in 2017 probably can be described as the most audacious attempt to reform secondary education as far as increasing access is concerned. It is an effort to actualise the constitutional provision in Article 25 of the 1992 Constitution which urges for the provision of free secondary education to all. It is an advancement of the existing progressively free secondary education as the new policy caters for all other itemised bills (as mentioned earlier) including boarding expenses and an added "unusual" provision of lunch to day students. Under this programme, no child in Ghana has to pay anything to acquire secondary education as all necessary fees has been absorbed by government. One key intention of the policy as stated in various official government documents and pronouncements is its resolve to redefine basic education to include senior high school so that transiting from junior high school to senior high

school becomes a natural progression without any barrier. Indeed, the FSHS policy has increased senior high school enrolment at 74.68% of eligible children in 2019 as against 68.9% in 2016 before the implementation of the policy (MOE, 2020). As at the 2019/20 academic year, over 1.2 million students have benefited from the free SHS (CDD, 2020) and total enrolment in public SHS stood at 1.25m as at 2020 academic year (MOE Press briefing, June 6, 2021). Table 3.2 compares enrolments trends before and after introduction of FSHS.

Table 3.2: Enrolment trends analysis of students before and after Free SHS (2014-2019)

Year	Total BECE registered	No. placed	No. enrolled (%)	Placed – but not enrolled	% Placed but not enrolled
2014	422,946	386,412	273, 152 - 70.7%	113, 260	29.3%
2015	440,469	415,012	299, 649 - 72.2%	115, 363	27.8%
2016	461,009	420,135	308, 799 - 73.5%	111, 336	26.5%
After Free SHS Implementation					
2017	468,060	424,224	362, 075 - 85.4%	62, 149	14.6%
2018	509,824	442, 134	387, 592 - 87.7%	54, 524	12.3%
2019	512,083	459, 912	404, 856 - 88.0%	55,056	11.9%

(Source: Adapted, MOE, 2020)

As can be observed from Table 3.2, enrolment trends improved after the introduction of the FSHS policy reducing the average non-enrolment rate from over 26% to about 12%. However, it has equally been observed that, significant gaps still exist as national gross enrolment is below 75%

even after the implementation of FSHS (World Bank, 2020) with about 25% of JHS graduates still not accessing secondary education due to qualification thresholds as well as some other factors making people not enrolling despite being placed into SHSs (refer, Table 3.2). The importance of examining the context of policy intervention to understand implication for achieving specific policy targets as well as general policy goal is therefore increasingly relevant.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided some elaborative context on Ghana's own experiences with the politics of education reforms and policy making. It has given a trajectory of how political directives have persistently interfered in education reform process showing that in many instances technocratic and bureaucratic details have been side lined and replaced with political directives. This has equally been present in the evolution and adoption of free education interventions where political actors and interests played pivotal roles in successive education programmes. The active role of political drivers in the education delivery process coupled with the frequent clash between technical imperatives and political directives have had various negative implications on positive learning outcomes. This trajectory provides useful lessons for the newly adopted free SHS policy and towards improving our understanding of how (in specific ways) political context influence the education reform process.

CHAPTER FOUR
METHODOLOGY AND STUDY APPROACH

4.1 Introduction

This study is situated within an underlying postulation that partisan politics with its competitive clientelism influenced the introduction of the Free SHS policy and shaped policy formulation and implementation. By this, the study seeks to explore why and how the Free SHS policy was introduced and the reasons for the manner and approach to its implementation. This chapter therefore describes in details the overall plan of action that was used to guide the study specifically in the collection and analysis of data as well as for reporting the findings and discussions in addressing the research questions and responding to the study objectives.

4.2 Study Approach and Philosophical Foundation

The study is guided by the philosophical foundation of pragmatism. Pragmatism is considered a 'unique' philosophical foundation that attempts to bridge the two known paradigms of realism and interpretivism which are considered traditional philosophical guides to social science research (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998). Studies around the politics of education reforms are often complex because of multiple stakeholder interests (Muno, 2015). Juxtaposing this with the recommendation for the use of dynamic methodological approach for studies involving educational issues (Nudzor, 2009; Lauer, 2006), the study relied on a paradigmatic foundation that permits the flexible use of different and appropriate methodologies to understand properly the issues being studied (Shannon-Baker, 2016). Pragmatism allows the combination of methodologies from different philosophical orientations in the same study to provide a more detailed understanding of the phenomenon being

observed and also allows the researcher to achieve two key principles of subjectivity and objectivity in data collection and analysis (Shannon-Baker, 2016).

In this regard, the study adopted the mixed methods approach by combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. As Creswell & Clark (2011) explained, the use of mixed methods itself provide a more complex understanding of a phenomenon that would otherwise not have been accessible by using one approach alone. In other words, apart from building on their complementary strengths and adjusting for their weaknesses (Punch & Oancea, 2014) which is usually associated with the use of mixed methods, pragmatism as a methodological approach, guiding mixed methods studies, allows the researcher to reach multiple and varied stakeholders in practicable ways possible according to what works best for the particular research problem being investigated (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998; Shannon-Baker, 2016). In this study context, the use of the qualitative method allowed for the deeper understanding of the opinions, experiences and thoughts of policy makers, experts and key informants to be effectively explored, whilst the use of the quantitative survey enabled the study to reach other key stakeholders in their appropriate numbers and in some definite thematic scope. The study is also mindful of the theoretical perspectives from which the research problem was generated, the political settlement framework which was used to guide the analysis of the information and knowledge that has been generated from the studies.

4.3 Study Design

Research designs are the procedures and processes used for collecting, analyzing, interpreting and reporting data in research studies (Creswell, 2003). The research design used for the study is the concurrent embedded mixed method design. This is a research design used in mixed method

studies which requires data to be collected at the same time or in parallel within the same study and one method (qualitative or quantitative) dominating while the other is embedded or "nested" within (Aultman, 2020). In this particular study, the qualitative method dominated the quantitative approach due to the exploring nature of the study. Hence, the quantitative method was secondary and provided supportive role to the qualitative method in the data collection and analysis procedures. The concurrent embedded/nested design was also deemed to be appropriate for this study for other reasons. First, was due to the different multiple-level of the study units and stakeholders involved in the study which required different means to reach them and secondly, it was appropriate for addressing different research questions which were connected to each other and needed to be addressed simultaneously to make data analysis comprehensible.

The complementarity of the two methods (qualitative and quantitative) were achieved in many ways; in several instances, it brought comprehensive understanding to issues as the different data sources and study units corroborated or in very few cases produced varied findings on research questions. In many other cases, qualitative information gave more insights to the issues that emerged from the survey, whilst the quantitative survey was used to address specific research questions. In many instances, the results of the survey supported the findings from the interviews whilst in few instances, survey information provided varied stance to the issues being investigated. Actually, Creswell, Plano, Clark, Gutmann and Hanson (2003) have contended that concurrent nested mixed method design is ideal for studies involving educational policies or reforms due to the multi-varied stakeholders involved. The design is also considered to be ideal for studies that are limited in resource and time (Creswell et al, 2003) as applicable to the current study.

4.4 Data collection

The overall plan of action for collecting, analyzing and interpreting data obtained from the field is critical as it represents how the research questions have effectively been addressed. The study collected data from both primary and secondary sources seeking to address key study questions on; why and how political arrangements shaped the introduction and implementation of the Free SHS policy. Primary data were collected by combining the use of semi-structured interviews and the conduct of standard survey. Respondents for the study were selected from a broad spectrum of key and primary stakeholders in secondary education delivery, comprising teachers and head teachers, parents and students, policy makers, policy experts and civil society actors.

Data Sources: Secondary and Primary Data

Documentary research is a key component for the study of this nature that has a broader spectrum of education reform and policy making under a political context. Sources of documentary data included relevant policy documents on the Free SHS policy, political party election manifestos, review and opinion papers, official statements from government functionaries and political opposition on the Free SHS policy, government fiscal statements on education sector financing, official Government reports on the Free SHS policy, published articles on the Free SHS among others.

Primary data was collected from key and primary stakeholders in secondary education delivery and policy making in Ghana focusing on the formulation and implementation of the Free SHS policy. The targeted study population and study units included, MOE/GES officials, education/policy experts, civil society actors, political elites from the two major political parties in Ghana, members of Parliament serving on the education committee, policy consultants and

academics, head teachers and teachers of Senior High Schools (SHS), parents and students who have been direct beneficiaries of the Free SHS policy.

4.4.1 Study location and population

Greater Accra region was chosen as the location for this study. The region is believed to have some fair representation of the characteristics and variations that exist in the general study population. The Greater Accra region is the national political and administrative capital of Ghana. It is equally the leading commercial and business capital of Ghana (World Bank, 2020). It is the region with the highest population in Ghana with a population of 5,446,237 representing 17.7% of the total population of Ghana according to the reports of the 2021 national population census (GSS, 2021). It is ironically the smallest region (in size) occupying an area of 3,245 square kilometer representing only 1.4% of the total land area of Ghana. It is however the most heavily and densely populated due to its high population with a population density of 1,523 per square meter (GSS, 2021). The region is bordered by several other regions, on the east by the Volta region, north by the Eastern region, west by the Central region and the south by the Gulf of Guinea. Because of the region's unique characteristics as the national capital, commercial and business city and also location, it has seen the highest in-migration and also possesses the highest growth rate within the country (GSS, 2021).

Socio-demographic characteristics of study area

The Greater Accra region has a population which is cosmopolitan and multi-faceted in nature containing diverse features and characteristics of the national population. The region has urban, semi-urban and rural settlements with about 84% of its population living in urban and peri-urban centers (GSS, 2010) but with a large proportion of its land area in a rural setting. The region therefore reflects all types of settlements typical in Ghana. The region's settlements comprise all

the different major ethnic groupings or peopling of Ghana. Its population dynamics consist of; Akan, 39.8%, Ga-Adangbe (the original settlers) 30.7%, Ewe, 18%, and Mole-Dagbani, 8.6% with about 1.3% of its population being immigrants from outside Ghana (GSS, 2010). The population of the region shows some representation of the general study population and may be described as a microcosm of the national population. The region also has a rich educational profiling with 52 public second cycle institutions with each MMDA having at least one second cycle institution. The region also has both well-endowed and less-endowed types of SHSs according to the GES classification of schools. The region has 3 of the 15 public universities in Ghana with several private universities and many professional educational institutes.

Political and Administrative structure of study area

The region has a decentralised governance system based on the local government administration in Ghana. The region is divided into 29 MMDA's (comprising: 2 Metropolitan, 23 Municipal and 4 District Assemblies). Each District, Municipal or Metropolitan Area is administered by a Chief Executive often called MCE or DCE who represents the central government but deriving authority from an Assembly headed by a presiding member elected from among the members themselves. There are 34 electoral constituencies, hence the same number of members of Parliament in the region. The region is also noted for its dynamic partisan politics with unpredictable electoral outcomes in national elections since the beginning of the fourth republic (Ninson, 2016). It is considered one of the most swing regions when it comes to general elections with the two leading political parties interchanging as the party with the highest number votes and parliamentary seats during national elections.

4.4.2 Sampling and sampling technique

The target population in the chosen study area is huge for which time and resources constraints would not make it possible to include all of them in the study. The study employed the multi-stage sampling technique to guide the sampling process in order to achieve comprehensive and true representation of the general population and particularly with the diverse and multi-faceted feature of the population. The multi stage sampling technique is ideal for a study which has multiple groups, levels and units within the general population (Creswell, 2003) typical of this study's population.

The first stage of the sampling process was the use of stratified sampling using the already existing stratified district administrative structures of 2 Metropolitan, 23 Municipal and 4 District Assemblies (MMDAs). Using a combination of proportional and simple random sampling techniques, the study selected 1 Metropolitan Assembly, 2 District Assemblies and 3 Municipal Assemblies making a total of 6 MMDAs used as the sampled locations for the study. Using a simple random sampling, one (1) SHS was selected in each of the sampled MMDA making a total of six (6) sampled SHSs used for the administration of survey questionnaire on teachers and students and the conduct of in-depth interview with Head teachers from the sampled schools. The corresponding communities in the district (MMDAs) where the sampled schools were located were automatically selected for the administration of survey questionnaire on Parents who had their wards or children in SHS.

Purposeful sampling method was used to guide the selection of respondents for the experts' in-depth interview and other key informants' interviews conducted for policy makers, political elites, policy experts, civil society actors and education officials. A purposive sampling was considered ideal for this since it enabled the study to reach the targeted study audience who were considered

to be key source of information and had considerable knowledge on what this study sought to explore (Silverman, 2010).

Sample size and variations in sample units

The use of stratified sampling based on the already stratified structure of the MMDAs and the systematic random sampling used to select the study unit reflected the variations that existed in the study population. The MMDAs shows a stratification of districts which consist of a collection of smaller towns or rural settings, whilst the municipals are characterised by peri-urban settlements and the metropolitans largely urban. The 6 SHSs and communities sampled for the study therefore reflected the variations of urban, peri-urban and rural settings at the community level. The sampled schools also manifested GES classification of schools into well-endowed (elite/class A) and less-endowed (classes B and C) schools, at the school level. Again, in selecting the students for the survey, a combination of systematic and a simple random sampling techniques were used. The use of systematic random sampling process in the selection of students' respondents was to ensure that the various variations in Form/level, Programme of study, Gender, Residential status and Track system. These variations were necessary in highlighting any possible differences and experiences in the implementation of the free SHS policy both across and within schools.

The sample size chosen for the quantitative survey was 420 respondents. This was arrived at using the Cochran's formulae because the size of the study population is large and also presumed to be unknown (Israel, 1992). The Cochran formula calculate an ideal sample size given a desired level of precision of 5% or 0.5, a desired confidence level of 95% and the estimated proportion of the attribute present in the population expressed as ((1.96)2 (0.5) (0.5)) / (0.05)2. This produced a figure of 384 which was then increased to 420 to strengthen and also allow for proportionate distribution among the three study units. A 420 sample size is also considered a big number (N)

acceptable for any statistical analysis and a study of this nature (Silverman, 2006). Following the determination of the sample size, 70 respondents comprising (40 students, 10 Teachers and 20 Parents) were allocated to each sampled district comprising one SHS and the corresponding communities in the district.

The sample for the qualitative interviews conducted was reached by saturation at interview number 21 but the purposeful sampling technique used ensured that all key identified varied stakeholders had a representative voice (as evident in the respondents' background information).

4.4.3 Data collection processes/Instrumentation

Data was collected through the conduct of in-depth interviews by the use of self-prepared interview guides (for qualitative data) and the administration of survey questionnaires with the use of semi-structured self-developed questionnaire (for quantitative data) and documentary reviews (for secondary data). The duration for the collection of field/primary data was for a period of 8 months, from July, 2020 to February, 2021.

Conducting the study at a difficult period of Covid-19 pandemic combined with the political sensitivity nature of the topic made access to schools difficult and burdensome. The researcher was however, fortunate to have been connected to the National President of CHASS who showed interest in the study and gave maximum support by availing himself for the first interview of the study and also facilitated entry to schools. His interview session was also eye opening (being the CHASS president) to many issues that the study later explored in its subsequent interviews with Head teachers and policy makers. He also invited the researcher to a regional CHASS meeting where he introduced the researcher to the other colleague Head teachers whose schools had been sampled for the study. There was so much enthusiasm among the other study units like civil society

actors, political elites and policy actors and even the Head teachers after the researcher had interacted with them. Since the head teachers approved and showed interest in the researcher's work, visit to the school and subsequent interaction with students and teachers were made easier. The head teachers further introduced the researcher to the schools' PTA (now Parents Association) executives who assisted in reaching Parents in the communities.

Information on qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews which were conducted with 21 respondents comprising: 6 Head teachers of SHSs, 5 civil society leaders, 4 Policy experts and 6 Policy makers (comprising 2 education officials, 4 political elites belonging to NPP and NDC). Three different sets of interview guides were used depending on the type of study units involved; political elites/policy makers, policy experts/civil society leaders and Education officials. All interviews were recorded (with the consents of respondents) and transcribed. Field notes were also taken during interviews.

The quantitative data was collected at two units or levels: the School, comprising Teachers and Students, and at the Community level comprising Parents whose wards or children were enrolled under the Free SHS. Fortunately, all students enrolled in public SHS at the time of the study were beneficiaries of the free SHS programme which provided bigger accessibility to parents in the required category. Close-ended questionnaires were used and were self-administered (for students and teachers) and with the guide of the researcher (for parents who were not literate). Tables 4.1 and 4.2 provide details on data collection (sources of data information and of the survey conducted by the study).

Table 4.1 data information, source, collection and analysis method

Research questions	Approach	Data source/instrument	Analysis
(1) What is the rationale for the introduction of the Free SHS policy by the government?	Qualitative	In-depth interviews (Policy makers, Analysts)	Thematic framework
(2) How did partisan-politics influence the discourse and development of the Free SHS policy?	Both Qualitative & Quantitative	In-depth interviews Survey questionnaire (All study units)	Thematic framework Descriptive statistics
(3) How has partisan-politics shaped the implementation of the Free SHS policy?	Both Qualitative & Quantitative	In-depth interviews Survey questionnaire (All study units)	Thematic framework Descriptive statistics

(Source: Author, 2020)

Table 4.2: Breakdown of sampled units for administering questionnaires

Name of School (SHS)	Name of Community	District	No of Respondents
1. Armed Forces SHTS	Burma Camp	La Dade-Kotopon Municipality	Students: 40 Teachers: 10 Parents: 20
2. St Mary's SHS	Korlebu /KorleGonno	Ablekuma South Municipality	Students: 40 Teachers: 10 Parents: 20
3. Presby Boys SHS	Legon /Madina	La-Nkwatanang Madina Municipality	Students: 40 Teachers: 10 Parents: 20
4. Accra Academy SHS	Kaneshie /Bubuashie	Accra Metropolitan	Students: 40 Teachers: 10 Parents: 20
5. Ningo-Prampram SHS	Ningo-Prampram	Ningo-Prampram District	Students: 40 Teachers: 10 Parents: 20
6. Osuduko SHTS	Asutsuare	Shai-Osudoku District	Students: 40 Teachers: 10 Parents: 20
Total number of questionnaires administered: 420			

(Source: Author, 2020)

4.4.4 Some encounters during data collection

The political dimension to this study generated some partisan-politics interests and encounters at some points during data collection which generated both excitements and challenges. An encounter with one teacher in a school perhaps summerises the few difficult moments the researcher had to overcome. The said teacher felt that the study is a sponsored project by the government as he ranted, "*...this is clearly a sponsored research by the government to see its popularity with this policy, I will not complete the questionnaire...*". He will not succumb to any explanations given by the researcher on the purpose of the study not even with all relevant introductory letters and explanations by the head teacher. Otherwise, there were so much enthusiasm, interest and zeal from the respondents across all study units particularly, Parents, Civil society actors, Political elites and Policy experts on the study. Due to the same partisan-politics dimension and political sensitivity nature of certain aspects of the study which reflected in the study protocols and research questions, it was critical to manage respondents' bias, pre-conceived ideas and emotions by ensuring that respondents' responses stayed within the focus of the study. Thus, the likely subjectivity and the bias of both the interviewer and respondents were to a large extent bracketed.

The general restrictions to social life occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic brought some difficulties and the need for extra hard work in the data collection process. For example, at that time of this study, entry to schools had been restricted (and not even Parents of students were allowed into schools for visitations). The researcher relied on both formal and informal gate keepers to gain access to schools. Apart from the possibility of sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys could introduce some margin of error in the analysis and findings.

4.5 Data Analysis

Data and analysis of results and interpretation was guided by the framework and assumptions of the study. Merging of qualitative and quantitative data were done at the analysis and discussion stages of the study. The researcher used thematic analysis to organize the qualitative data to arrive at useful themes and subjects emerging from the data. Thematic analysis is the process that identifies, analyses and reports the occurrence of themes in the data collected from the research areas. The enumerated steps are what has been recommended in the literature on how to organize qualitative data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis follows six basic steps as follows: thorough reading of the transcriptions to help researcher have in mind what exactly is in the data; generating initial codes by putting labels or descriptions on a list of ideas developed from the transcription; searching for themes where related codes are organized and reviewing them; defining and naming themes and finally producing a report out of the analysed data.

In this regard, the researcher went through the following processes as far as analyzing qualitative data collected were concerned; first transcribed interview recordings to arrive at a data, familiarization with the information in the data by thoroughly reading the transcriptions. This helped the researcher to know exactly what issues are arising from the data. Initial thematic codes were developed which involved putting labels or descriptions on a list of ideas emerging from the data. The process continued by searching for themes where related codes are organized under different themes. Reviewing existing themes to see if they conform to issues that have emerged from the data. The thematic analysis process was also aided by the qualitative data analysis tool, NVivo which made it easier and more effective to identify common themes in the data.

The data collected from the quantitative survey was analysed through descriptive statistics and with the use of quantitative software, the SPSS. This was useful in knowing the relationships

among the variables and also which responses have been given by which type of respondents or stakeholders.

4.6 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability of data collected and analysed were improved through certain measures. First, the study with its approach and instruments received ethical and academic approval from the appropriate authorities. Data collection instruments were also properly scrutinized by study supervisors and pre-testing of instruments were done before the conduct of the actual research which enabled the researcher to get acquainted with the instruments and also allowed for further corrections where it was necessary as advised by Bryman (2016). Finally, the data collection process went through 'double-checking' and quality control from the development of instruments, its execution to analysis of results. Self-reflectivity was a guiding principle for the researcher in order to stay away from any likely personal biases due to the nature of the research topic thereby also ensuring objectivity. Study findings were also related to the existing knowledge in the literature.

4.7 Study Protocol and Ethical Considerations

Key important ethical issues such as consent and confidentiality under this research were treated with utmost concern and importance. The consent for the use of all participants were sought by getting approval from appropriate authorities such as GES, PTAs and CHASS for the school level before any data was collected. Participants' own consent were also sought before any interview session for audio recording and for the administering of questionnaire. Also, the researcher carried and provided introductory letter and School's identity to every place visited for data collection.

For interview sessions, respondents' consents were sought (both written and verbal) and the confidentiality of any information given was clearly stated. As such, all information given by

respondents were only used for the purpose of this study. The researcher also adopted a self-intuited style of a continuous show of appreciation to respondents in the course of their engagements. Good appearance and show of etiquettes were also considered fundamental and demonstrated as it helps in getting respondents to be in their comfort zones during interview sessions as advised by Punch (2005).

CHAPTER FIVE

EXAMINING THE RATIONALE FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FREE SHS POLICY

5.1 Introduction

The reason(s) and circumstances for which governments in many developing countries introduce education reforms have become the focus of new wave of academic research seeking explanations to reform approach, failures or successes (Hickey & Hossain, 2019). Forrester and Garratt (2016) have also contended that, education policies and reforms just like general social-public policies can never be examined purely on their own as a single discrete entity, but is subject to a range of competing interests. Even though the objective(s) or reasons for which education interventions undertaken by governments are often ostensibly known or stated, there are usually also other competing interests and motives which influences the policy process to affect what eventually gets implemented and how it is done (Bruns & Schneider, 2016). This chapter of the study examined the rationale for the introduction of the free SHS policy in the context of relevance and the motive (s) behind its introduction as guided by Spicker (2006) who averred that the key components in examining the rationale for any social policy intervention is seen in the relevance and intentions behind its introduction.

The chapter also (being the first empirical chapter) provides the demographic information of respondents who were involved in the study and the specific ways data was collected as far as the issues under the objective were concerned. The chapter finally summerises the main arguments raised in the analysis and discussions of study findings on the themes and research question(s) being investigated in the light of study objectives.

5.2 Primary Information and Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Respondents used for the study were selected from a broad spectrum of stakeholders in secondary education delivery, which comprises policy makers (political elites and education officials), parents, teachers and head teachers, students, policy experts and civil society actors. The following is a summary demographic characteristics of respondents used for the study.

5.2.1 Respondents used for Survey - Summary of demography variables

Variable	Respondents – 420	
Gender	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
Male	199	47.4
Female	221	52.6
Age	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
15-20 years	235	56.0
21-25years	6	1.4
26-35years	24	5.7
36-45 years	79	18.8
46 years above	76	18.1
Religion	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
Christianity	226	53.8
Islam	189	45.0
Traditional	2	0.5
Other	3	0.7
Ethnicity	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
Akan	180	42.9
Ga-Adangbe	91	21.7
Ewe	58	13.8
Mole-Dagbani	53	12.6
Others	38	9.0
Residential (Parents & Teachers)	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
Rural	53	29.4
Peri-Urban	43	23.9
Urban	84	46.7
Marital Status (Parents & Teachers)	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
Married	127	70.6

Single	35	19.4
Divorced	13	7.2
Widowed	5	2.8
Occupation (Parents only)	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
Self employed	48	40
Formal	34	28.3
Farming	15	12.5
Unemployed	7	5.8
Retired	16	13.8
Educational level (Parents only)	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
No school	14	11.7
Primary	5	4.2
JHS/Middle School	38	31.7
Secondary/Tech/Voc. School	20	16.7
Tertiary	43	35.8
School Classification (Students only)	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
Well-endowed	91	37.9
Less-endowed	149	62.1
Residential status (Students only)	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
Boarding	201	83.8
Day	39	16.2
Track System (Students only)	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
Single track	44	18.3
Double track	196	81.7
Programme of study (Students only)	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
Gen. Science	47	19.6
Gen. Arts	66	27.5
Business	78	32.5
Tech/Home Econs	39	16.2
Visual Arts	10	4.2

The demographic information provided in the study was significant in various ways as far as ensuring variation and fair representation was concerned. At the school level, the demography of students sampled for the study reflected variations in level or year, gender, track system and residential status as well as school status or grade. The fair representation of respondents across study units in general was necessary as their backgrounds could

shape their experiences with the Free SHS policy differently. Also, the diverse ethnic composition in the demography shows the dynamic and national representation of the study.

5.2.2 How data was collected

Within the general study design of a concurrent nested mixed method, the study conducted both a survey and face-to face interview. Questionnaires were administered on teachers, students and parents seeking their views on specific issues which include, the relevance of the FSHS policy to the citizenry and what specific benefits it brought to the people. The study used both in-depth interviews and survey to solicit the views of respondents on what they consider to be the key motivating factors for government introducing the FSHS.

5.2.3 Assessing public awareness on the Free SHS policy

To ascertain knowledge on the subject of study among respondents, the study through survey first assessed public awareness on the Free SHS programme being implemented in the country. This was useful in providing the guarantee that respondents have knowledge on the policy and are in the right position to respond to issues on it. To be able to assess the knowledge of a large number of the study population on the subject, the study used survey questionnaire to gather the views or responses from varied stakeholders consisting of parents, teachers and students. The survey asked respondents if they were aware of the Free SHS programme being implemented by the government. The results as presented in Table 5.1 shows a high level of public knowledge and awareness on the implementation of the Free SHS policy with an overwhelming **98.8%** of the respondents indicating they have knowledge of the Free SHS policy introduced by the government. See Table 5.1

Table 5.1: Respondents' awareness of the Free SHS policy

Responses	Aggregate Response	
	Freq.	Percentage %
Yes	415	98.8
No	3	0.7
Not sure	2	0.5
Total	420	100%

(Source: Field Survey, 2020)

When the study compared the level of public knowledge of the FSHS policy with other past or current free education policies or programmes implemented in Ghana prior to the introduction of the Free SHS programme the study observed a relatively very low level of awareness among respondents particularly parents and students. The study further observed that the heightened partisan political context leading the introduction of the Free SHS was a contributing factor to the popularization of the policy compared to other existing free education programmes such as the FCUBE and the Northern Scholarship Scheme. This observation from the study was useful as it provided further impetus to explore, in what ways the heightened political context to the introduction of the FSHS policy influenced its processes and outcomes.

5.3 Analysing the Relevance/Justification for the Introduction of the Free SHS Policy

The proposition for a Free SHS policy was kindled under a political campaign where divergent views emerged under intense public discourse. Also, when government announced its intention to implement the programme few months into assuming political office, it was received with some reservations as some segments of the population including civil society questioned the country's

readiness and government's preparedness to implement the programme on such universal scale as proposed (GNECC, 2017). Against the background of an apparent lack of a national consensus on the introduction of the policy, the study preliminary sought to examine the basis or justification for introducing the policy from the perspectives of policy makers, policy beneficiaries and the general policy community.

The general observation from the study indicates an overwhelming public endorsement of the Free SHS policy. Respondents from the survey massively support the introduction of the policy. As can be seen from Table 5.2, the large majority of respondents (88.6%) perceived the introduction of the Free SHS programme as necessary.

Table 5.2: The views of respondents on the necessity of the Free SHS policy

	Frequency and Percentage %			**Aggregate Response**	
Respondents / Responses	Teachers	Students	Parents	Freq.	Percentage %
Necessary	57 95.0%	214 89.2%	101 84.2%	372	88.6
Not Necessary	3 5.0%	20 8.3%	17 14.2%	40	9.5
Don't know	0	6 2.5%	2 1.6%	8	1.9
Total	60	240	120	420	100%

(Source: Field Survey, 2020)

The study sought deeper insights on the public' acceptance of the Free SHS through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. Responses from the interviews largely affirmed the findings from the survey. In declaring their support to the introduction of the Free SHS, policy experts and stakeholders explained the contexts within which they justify the Free SHS policy. Head teachers

of SHSs, particularly, gave a vivid account of the ordeals many students and their parents went through due to their inability to pay school fees prior to the implementation of the policy. The narration by the national President of the Conference of Heads of Assisted Senior High Schools (CHASS) on the existing situation before the free SHS policy was introduced can described as a near lamentation as he recounted;

> We were having a large number of students (across the nation), who were always owing school fees. In fact, over 30 percent of them and you would see their parents coming to the schools every now and then to plead to be given time to settle the fees. Sometimes the issue prolongs into examination period and such students were denied writing examination because the parents have pleaded to the last minute and cannot do otherwise. When it gets to that time, to register for the examination their parents are not able to provide and so they lose out in writing final examinations. (In-depth interview, Accra, July 2020)

Even though civil society had largely been apprehensive on government ability to sustain a free secondary education programme particularly within the limited fiscal space government was operating (Partey, 2017), the general impression among respondents from civil society was supportive of the policy. A leading member of the national civil society forum on the introduction of the FSHS propped this response when asked about the necessity of the Free SHS as he explained;

> Yes, there was the need, you have to look at what was happening before the policy then you would realize there were a lot of children who could not make it to the secondary school. It was because of space, secondly, it was because of funding. (In-depth interview, July 2020)

Even in view of the main political opposition, they disagreed with government approach, but once the policy has been implemented it will support it and ensure its proper implementation when they

get the opportunity to do so. This is understood in the remarks by the opposition (NDC) spokesperson on education, also the ranking member on the education select committee of Parliament;

> Well, we didn't say that it wasn't time for it to be done. We were saying that it was important to look at the elements that would be in place to allow for a meaningful implementation of the program. But now it has been implemented, so we will ensure that it is properly done when we come into power (In-depth interview, November 2020)

The introduction of the Free SHS programme thus appear to be justified on the anticipation of the policy addressing some key constraints in secondary education provision. But, as earlier alluded, the discourse surrounding the policy context equally appeared contentious, non-consensual and divisive especially on policy approach as divergent views were expounded during the policy discourse (GNECC, 2017). But the government insisted on a particular direction and approach with which it carried out the policy. What then were the motivation (s) behind government introducing the policy amidst the apparent lack of national consensus?

5.4 Motive (s) behind the Introduction of the Free SHS Policy

The politics of education reforms and social provision postulates that ruling elites become committed to implementing reforms and interventions when there is a political motivation to do so (Bruns & Schneider, 2016). Therefore, the assumption that there could be multiple objectives or intentions when government sought to introduce the Free SHS policy especially considering the political context from which the policy emerged is worth examining. In this regard, the study sought to explore the motive(s) behind the introduction of the FSHS policy, mindful of its general public acceptability (as observed earlier in the study). The study therefore explored evidence on

the common notions or themes which emerged from the policy context and the discourses that ensued before its implementation.

5.4.1 Making secondary education easily accessible to all

Indeed, increasing access to secondary education has widely been cited as the primary challenge facing secondary education delivery in Ghana and this has also been largely attributed to cost barrier and lack of space (Akyeampong et al, 2007; MOE, 2017). This is in agreement with some understanding that funding has been the main barrier to secondary education for many segments of the population, a reason for which the SDGs prescribed a free secondary education for all as one of its key targets (SDGs 4.1). The study explored the views of key policy stakeholders, particularly, policy makers on what they sought to achieve with the implementation of the Free SHS policy. There appeared to be a consensual understanding among respondents that the Free SHS policy was implemented with a primary objective to expand access to secondary education through the removal of cost barrier. The Executive secretary of the GES Council also the immediate past Director of secondary education at the GES expatiated on what the purpose of the Free SHS policy was;

> You know when a nation or a country wants to progress in development then you have to develop your human resource and that is what was taken into consideration. Now if all or most children have access and there is equity for every child irrespective of where the child is, to be able to afford going to school, then whatever is the policy with the aim of sending every child to school would be achieved. So mainly that was what pre-empted this policy. (In-depth interview, December 2020)

In interrogating policy makers/the political elite on what the agenda of government was for introducing the Free SHS policy, a government official expatiated on the human capital improvement that such a policy will bring. He explained;

> For Ghana to develop you need all parts of the country to develop, not a section of the population, and we need to develop a generation of professionals who will spearhead the development of the country. The NPP government had made it a manifesto promise right from the 2008 elections to ensure that every child in this country get a minimum of secondary education and this is the time. (In-depth interview, December 2020)

Even views from the political opposition appear to be in uniformity with this general understanding as commented by a former Minister of education in the previous NDC government;

> The constitution of the republic under the directive principles of the state policy talks about providing equal opportunities and access to education. In fact, there is a section of the constitution that actually mandates that we ought to make education free and so it has been part of the Ghanaian public debate.....So, yes, fundamentally, I will say it is intended to open access to secondary education, but the approach used will tell you if it is also calculated at achieving some other motives. (In-depth interview, January 2021)

The various views from civil society and policy experts also supports what the FSHS was meant to address. Free secondary education seeks to remove financial barrier to getting access to secondary education which has always been considered as a key hindrance to continuous education (MOE, 2017; Akyeampong, 2010; Addae-Mensah, 2000). A recent Afrobarometer report in Ghana (CDD, 2019) for example, indicated that Ghanaians ranked access to social services particularly health and education very high amongst the issues that they wanted to see addressed by their

political leaders. It thus appears, government knew for certainty that limited access to secondary education is a fundamental problem recognised by civil society and citizenry in general, and by the government itself and see a Free SHS policy as a solution to addressing it.

The study however, also observed certain indications that are suggestive of political expediency in the introduction of the Free SHS in both the responses from the interviews as well as from the general policy discourse giving relevance to the need to further explore the motivations behind the Free SHS policy. Many had associated political interests to the manner and form the policy was implemented including its timing. The study therefore probed to understand such political assumptions associated with the implementation of the Free SHS.

5.4.2 Free SHS and political expediency

One significant observation made from the data gathered (in both the interviews and survey conducted) was the presence of a second motive behind the introduction of the Free SHS policy by the government apart from making secondary education accessible to all. Political expediency has often been perceived as a strong motivation with the implementation of many education reforms by ruling coalitions in developing countries (Bruns & Schnedier, 2016). This was certainly a key proposition for this study considering the strong political contestation to the policy and the approach adopted by government in the policy process. Analysis made from data were suggestive of political expediency behind government' implementation of the Free SHS policy, particularly the way and manner it did it. Indeed, the study observes and contends that government in introducing the Free SHS policy had another motive (beyond the desire to expand access to secondary education), which is to capitalize on the popularity of the policy and make a political capital out of it.

The sense the study made from interview responses corroborates the political motive assumption and further gives indication on exactly how it played out. During an interview session, a member of the ruling coalition after a spontaneous laughter, when quizzed about government motive for introducing the FSHS remarked;

> As for this one, you are pushing me to the corner. I am only a chairman of the education committee. But you know the answer already. Well, I will say it was very much to improve literacy and also as the constitution talks about it, it helps in development in the country because people would know how to read or write. Behind this is what you are thinking, [laughter]. And so, I will say that beside everything we took advantage of that constitutional provision and also looked at the development that it will bring, as for the political thing, it was secondary. (In-depth interview, November 2020)

Even though the member of the ruling coalition agrees in his response to a political expediency as a secondary motive behind the introduction of the Free SHS, a careful look at his remarks in the same response suggest it was a key agenda and did not appear to be second to a primary objective, or in any particular order of priority. Actually, judging from what Whitfield (2011) has asserted, that political leaders may genuinely support some shared national goals, but find that the exigencies of political survival force them to behave in ways that undermine those same goals. Even if the expansion of access to secondary education appears to be the main policy motive behind the FSHS, policy prescriptions, implementation arrangements and government own disposition are suggestive of another 'superior' different motive.

The political expediency assertion often became more pronounced when interrogating the approach adopted by the government as far as the policy process was concerned. Policy experts in

this regard explained how political elites hide behind social programming to launch their political agenda of votes seeking. Two interview quotes in this regard throw more light on the issue;

> I think that the main one is the political agenda, it became a manifesto issue. If you listen to the president or his vice, the first thing they mentioned is "Free SHS, we have delivered". So even in their pronouncement the FSHS is the biggest achievement, the other ones they have not to say they have achieved this or that, but for FSHS they say is 100%. I think that as for the FSHS, it was for political expediency even though they had constitutional backing. And so, if it has a constitutional backing, why rush it? (In-depth interview, August 2020)

Another public policy expert explained this as follows;

> Certainly, ok the next election there would be a question of whether you fulfilled your campaign promises or not, there is a post electoral accountability or performance voting that you have to expect from Ghanaians and how you answer that post electoral accountability would certainly be a motivating factor in any government policy agenda, policy implementation and the speed in which the policy is implemented (In-depth interview, December 2020)

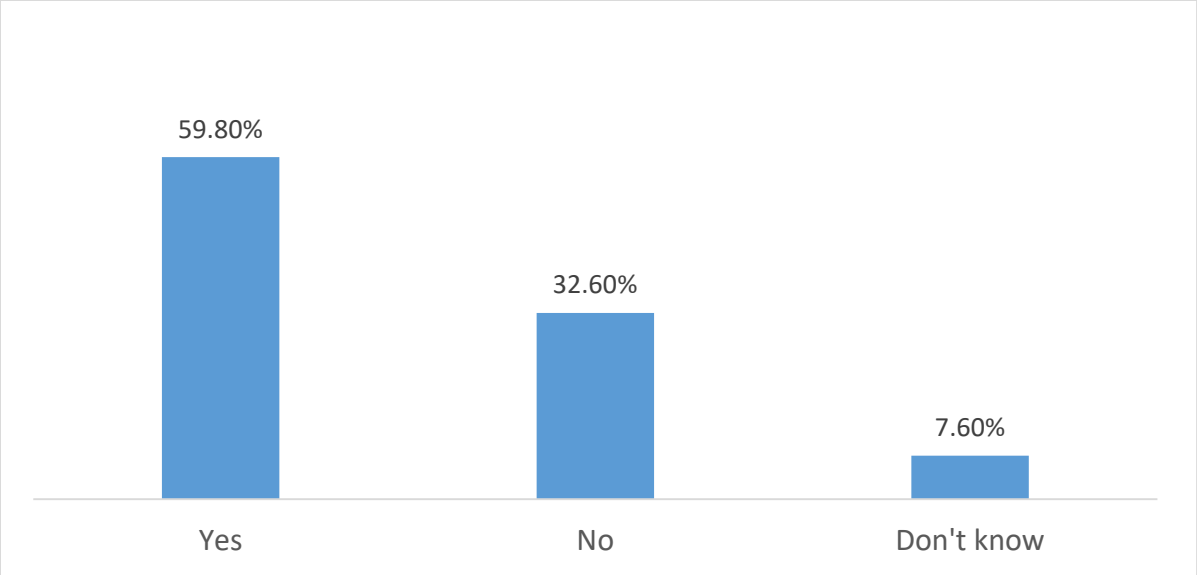
Indeed, the above information gives strong affirmation to the assumption of political expediency as a motivating factor for the implementation of the FSHS. It highlights political accountability where the FSHS has been used by the government as a vehicle to request for a renewal of political mandate in subsequent elections. In effect, in introducing the FSHS policy the government had in mind a political motive of using the policy to campaign and request for the votes and support of the people and at the same time fulfilling a constitutional obligation. This a policy expert explained; *"political clientelism is about building patronages and being rewarded by your clients who are the voters for fulfilling campaign promises"* (Field interview, 2020).

These feedbacks on political expediency also relates well with what is known in the literature, that political elites use education reforms to achieve political accountability and to showcase electoral connection or what studies have described as 'relentless electoralism' (Casely-Hayford, 2011). The explanation that the constant struggle for power and access to state resources makes political parties and political elites to respond to request from voters who have become more conscious on the demand for public good and social services.

Views of policy beneficiaries

The study sought the views of primary policy stakeholders (Parents, Students and Teachers) who are direct policy beneficiaries and influencers on what they perceive to be the motivation for the implementation of the Free SHS policy by the government. The study posed a direct question to respondents on the point of political expediency as to whether they subscribe to the view that, the policy was to fulfil a campaign promise and to win the votes of people. The responses from the survey reasonably affirms political motivation backing the Free SHS policy. The result is presented in Figure 5.1 as follows:

Figure 5.1: Do you think that the government is implementing the Free SHS policy mainly to fulfil its campaign promise and to win the votes of people?



(Field Survey, 2020)

As can be seen from Figure 5.1, 59.8% of the respondents are of the opinion that the Free SHS policy was introduced by the government to fulfil a campaign promise or to win votes. From the aggregated response of the survey, beneficiaries of the policy consider political expediency as a motivation behind the introduction of the Free SHS policy by the government. This further supports what has earlier been established by the study that in implementing the Free SHS policy, was an unstated motive of galvanizing political support in electoral voting.

5.5 Why Government introduced the Free SHS policy – clash of intentions/motives

Perhaps, what is more critical and relevant is not which motive was primary or peripheral, but how these motives weighed or occupied the minds of political elites who introduced the policy. Whitfield (2011) expounding on political settlement framework, has averred that ruling elites across developing countries want three things: political stability, secure incumbency, and rapid economic development for their countries. She further observed that the need to stay in power trumps all others and affects socio-economic development in particular.

As can be observed from the study, there appeared to be "competing" intentions behind the government implementation of the Free SHS policy. One is a clearly "known" and stated objective to expand access to secondary education concomitant with another unstated and 'hidden' objective of a political convenience of securing electoral sympathy. The viability of two such objectives or intentions 'co-existing' (especially one being political and other technical) and their accomplishments within one same policy prescription is worth examining.

In assessing the challenges facing the SDGs educational goals, Bruns, Macdonald and Schneider (2019) identified the existence of parallel objectives of education policy goal and the agenda of political elites as a clash and a source of reform challenge that must be navigated properly in order to realize the full benefits of education policy and reforms. Their study (in a cross-country analysis) suggested that the general goals in education reforms are usually not in conformity with that of political agenda of political elites. They assert that the real benefits of education reforms are usually long term often beyond the political tenure of political leaders whose main objective is to maintain short term political power.

Another key implication to this *"clash of motives"* is the effects on policy implementation which has often led to what Nudzor (2013) has described as "discursive shift in policy directives" where there is a strategic change between stated policy directions and when policy is being implemented. It also amounts to what the literature refers to as *"policy bundling"* where policy makers attempt to achieve multiple goals or targets with one same policy prescription (Bruns & Schneider, 2016). In such above context of clash of intentions, key policy champions with their policy prescription and in their approach become biased towards one particular policy direction or target, usually pursuing their political interest.

Hopkins (2006) is however with the opinion that, ruling elites are not always in dilemma in implementing education reforms. They, ruling elites believe that it is possible to pursue and achieve both objectives at the same time (especially under new democratic politics) by successfully implementing education reforms to achieve desired education goals whilst achieving a political motive all together. This current study identified the Free SHS policy to be facing an *"implementation paradox"* in pursuing multiple policy targets of increasing access, improving quality and ensuring equity existing alongside pursuing political motive. Through in-depth interviews and general analysis of data, the study observed that the policy in both its disposition and implementation is more inclined towards increasing access than improving quality and ensuring equity with policy package concentrated on cost removal. It was least surprising, though, when in an interview with the coordinator of the Free SHS Secretariat, he described the Free SHS policy as an automatic national scholarship scheme for all Ghanaian children, indicating where the focus of the policy resides; removal of cost barrier to accessing secondary education. Policy analysts explain the rationale for this, that pursuing access goal is catchier, more visible to the people and can also be achieved within the short-term political tenure, which also satisfies performance voting threshold. A policy analyst illustrated this in the following narration;

> Well, I can't really speak for government but I can probably understand the dynamics. There is the issue of the political expediency that I mentioned. It is politically expedient to increase the space, you want to touch every part of the country. We believe in numbers and so it is easier to say we provided free education for hundred thousand pupils than to say we provided twenty thousand with more quality (In-depth interview, December 2020)

How the identified political motivate featured in the Free SHS policy process and shaped policy direction, prescription and implementation is what this study further explored in subsequent chapters.

5.6 Conclusion and Summary of Main Findings

This study in its first empirical chapter has examined the rationale behind government's introduction of the Free SHS policy. The findings first revealed that the Free SHS policy enjoyed an overwhelming endorsement by the general public as they see it as a necessary intervention (not withstanding divergent views on policy approach). The study further explored the intentions for which government introduced the Free SHS policy and what it sought to achieve with it and identified two motives. By no order of priority, one intention, which was clearly stated, sought to address key existing gap in secondary education provision which is making secondary education easily accessible to all (actually for those who qualified) through the removal of financial impediments. The other unstated objective was a political expediency of maximizing electoral supports and gaining popularity in a voter-buyer clientele fashion using the Free SHS policy as the rent seeking commodity.

The bundling of the two 'parallel' motives intended to be achieved under one single policy led to a clash of objectives or motives. In the outcome, the political expediency motive appeared to have weighed higher than the other as demonstrated by government disposition which significantly influenced the policy process to shape prescription to tilt or be inclined towards pursuing visible target of increasing access to secondary education. The dominating political motive further led to the 'politics of numbers and convenience' which largely influenced the adoption of a particular policy approach as analysed in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER SIX

THE INFLUENCE OF PARTISAN-POLITICS ON THE FREE SHS POLICY DISCOURSE AND FORMULATION

6.1 Introduction

Few months into office, the government quickened the implementation of the Free SHS policy amidst public apprehension and an apparent lack of national consensus with some reservations over government's preparedness in introducing the policy and the approach to its implementation. This chapter examines how competitive partisan politics took centre stage in the development process of the Free SHS policy with respect to policy discourse and policy prescription. It examined this under the following sub-themes that emerged from the findings (both data and literature): *Universalism versus Targeting - the politics of numbers and approach to social interventions; Competitive partisan-politics and the Free SHS Policy design/package; Competitive electoral politics and limited stakeholder engagements.* The chapter first undertakes a thorough contextual analysis on the path to formulation identifying the roles played by political context and how that influenced and shaped the policy development process.

6.2 Contextual Analysis of the Free SHS Policy – the Origin and the Discourse

The background discourse on the Free SHS is very paramount to understanding how that shaped the policy process and implementation. Even though the 1992 constitution of Ghana stipulated for a 'futuristic' introduction of free secondary education, the heightened public interest and discourse on the subject was kindled by a competitive partisan-politics machinery of an electioneering campaign (Partey, 2017; Awal & Oduro, 2017). The Free SHS policy was a major campaign promise which occupied a significant space in the political discourse preceding three keenly contested general elections (in 2008, 2012 and 2016) with varied opinions expressed about its

necessity, timing and the approach. The study therefore, in this section, examines the discourses that ensued in the formative stage of the policy and interrogates why and how various perspectives found expression in the policy formulation and implementation.

Nudzor (2009) has conceptualized that policy discourse is a key approach to understanding the contextualised nature of education policy making and how they shape its process. The prolonged electoralism and contestation surrounding the Free SHS policy (from 2008 to 2016 elections) subjected it to an extensive policy discourse (even if done in the spectrum of partisan-politics) and provided enough space for both divergent and convergent views to be divulged. As the study has emphasized, there appear to have been some level of consensus on the need for a free secondary education in Ghana during this prolonged policy debate (despite the partisan-politics gimmicks). However, what highlighted the different perspectives to the policy is the approach in policy prescription and subsequently, manner of its implementation. The study therefore examines the views and positions held by the main political coalitions (NPP, NDC) and the broader civil society on *the key issues* that emerged from the discourse as evident from the literature and data gathered from the field.

6.2.1 The feasibility debate and political twists

The State for that matter Government's capacity to introduce and sustain a universal Free SHS programme was one major issue on the policy discourse. Even though, civil society somewhat managed to get their views put across, the heightened partisan-politics perspectives seemed to have overshadowed those views. Whilst the proponent of the policy (the then opposition NPP, from 2008 to 2016 election periods) maintained that, such an intervention and approach was feasible, the then party in government (NDC) cautioned against its wholesale introduction whilst civil society was largely enthused about it but skeptical about government ability to sustain both funding

and quality if universally or wholly implemented (Abdur-Rahman et al, 2017; Partey, 2017). The divergent and convergent views that ensued in the policy discourse are well elaborated subsequently.

The position of the NDC

The NDC party certainly did not agree to a wholesale implementation of a Free SHS policy as they indicated in their 2012 manifesto that the 1992 constitution did not prescribe for the immediate implementation of a free secondary education, since it was not part of basic education as defined by the constitution. The party therefore rather believed in following a progression to ensure universal access to secondary education by addressing key constraints to access which they had defined to be lack of space (infrastructure) and human resource – teachers (refer: NDC Manifesto, 2012). However, the party seemed to have relaxed its position when in implementing their progressive free secondary education in 2015 abolished school fees payment for all Day students in public SHSs across the country with the promise to subsequently extending the facility to include boarding students. In probing this seemingly spiral standpoint of the party, the response by a leading member of the party (actually the party's spokesperson on education) during field interview seemed to confirm this study's understanding of the party's shifting position on the feasibility of a free secondary education in Ghana;

> We believe that there is nothing wrong with government absorbing the full cost of educating its citizens. It is perfectly doable and we believe as a nation we have reached the stage where this can be done, applying our oil resources, but like I said oil is a finite resource so we ought to look at alternate ways of funding and sustaining the policy (In-depth interview, November 2020)

The party had even gone ahead in its 2020 manifesto to promise extending Free SHS to cover private SHS schools in deprived communities across the country to further increase what is already an acknowledged burden to government, something the party had earlier contended.

Observers interpret this apparent shift in position by the NDC on the Free SHS as expressed in the implementation of the progressive free secondary school in 2015 (a year to the 2016 general elections) as well as its publicly expressed views as a manifestation of the competitive partisan electoral system prevailing in Ghana, where political parties' programmatic agenda is tied to electoral and anticipated voters' wishes and demands.

The position of the NPP

The NPP party had (since 2008 elections) maintained its position, intention and "readiness" to implement a universal free secondary education. The party (through its flagbearer) believed it was time the country fulfilled that constitutional mandate and which in their view was attainable if government sets its priorities rights. This is despite the party's "inability" to provide a convincing policy proposal showing policy roadmap including sustainable funding source (IDEG, 2017). Again, just a year before the 2008 general elections when the party through its flag bearer, Nana Akuffo Addo, first extoled that idea to the public, the NPP Government White Paper on the 2007 education reforms, maintained that cost sharing at the secondary education level was key to sustaining quality secondary delivery for all (GOG, 2007). What had changed in the space of less than a year for the party to be guided into a free secondary education agenda which required long-term planning and funding could be a subject of political contextualisation and assumptions.

Indeed, the response by a leading member of the ruling NPP (actually Chairman of the Parliamentary sub-committee on education) when quizzed about the readiness of the government

in introducing the policy only goes to reaffirm the political assumption that this study attributes to the prevailing context. He stated;

> I also asked questions at our high-level meeting, "are you sure we are able to do this, and they said yes, they have done the calculations and I said, well, I would like to see the figures". But clearly, we were going to cut down certain things, and so some of us at that time were of the view that we should start gradually and be able to identify the people who really needed it. And so, if Ghanaians can be sincere with themselves, then let us give it to people who could not pay their fees and let's concentrate on the farming communities and the others and let them enjoy that (In-depth interview, December 2020)

Civil society perspective

The Civil society was generally perceived to be skeptical about government's preparedness to implement the policy on a universal scale. The study found civil society's view on the feasibility to be mixed (with both skepticism and optimism) and somewhat restrained. For some public-social policy analysts and practitioners, secondary education being a public good demand that the state must lead in its provision and that include the state finding ways and means to provide funding for it no matter the cost. Making an opinion on this, one policy analyst discussed the issue from the general perspective of financing education;

> There is a problem in our financing education which really is about our efficiency. So, it is not about if there are resources or not but are the resources that we have being efficiently used? There is a lot of rot in the education spending that we have and so if we are able to deal with the inefficiency in our education spending, then certainly there would be a lot of fiscal space that we can invest more to get this done (In-depth interview, September 2020)

The words of one civil society actor however showed the nuances on the issue. He explained;

> Well, it depends, bearing the cost is an issue of give and take. If government is able to trim its budget in certain areas, then it should be able to have sufficient funds to do that. If it is not able to do that in which we are seeing, none of the parties would be able to take the difficult decisions about cutting down cost in other sectors, then government cannot do it (In-depth interview, November 2020)

Government eventually implemented the Free SHS with its originally held position, a universally covered free secondary education in all public SHSs. What the motivating factors in government insisted approach were is explored in the subsequent section of the study.

6.3 Universalism versus Targeting: Approach to the Free SHS policy

The general debate in social policy cycle over the efficient way to deliver social intervention extended to the Free SHS policy discourse. This is a debate on approaches to social intervention that has been shaped by various models of social welfare and policy process from the traditional Lowi's (1964) "policy arenas" to Esping-Andersons (1990) welfare regimes. In a relatively recent study, Mkandawire (2001) advocated the need to consider the objective of social interventions in deciding its beneficiary scope. This current study therefore explored what the standpoints were and how partisan politics with its competitive clientelism eventually influenced the choice of government approach.

Even though the ruling NPP had always maintained a free secondary education for all, a scrutiny of views within party hierarchy conducted during the study reveals a seemingly lack of consensus on the approach. In the discourse to the implementation of the policy, some leading members of the party, including the Minister of Finance, had publicly pronounced their preference for targeting against a universal implementation. The targeted approach seemed to have resonated with some other leading members of the party. The Chairman of the Education Select Committee of

Parliament during field interview revealed that he and some leading members of the party raised concerns about the viability of doing a wholesale implementation. He indicated that some of them were with the opinion that the policy should begin gradually by identifying people who really needed it.

The deputy Minister of Education was however of the opinion that, the universal approach is what the 1992 constitution of Ghana had prescribed and what the government subscribes to. He retorted in an interview response;

> The constitution talks about making secondary education free and accessible to all. And if we say free, what do we understand by free? Why should it be free for some people only, we want every Ghanaian child to have pre-tertiary education and that is it... (In-depth interview, September 2020)

The forgoing context gives indication to the divergent positions on the Free SHS policy approach even within the ruling party. The position of civil society on this has been pretty of the known. Civil society has largely been vociferous and persistent on the need to consider a targeted approach to the implementation of the Free SHS policy. This was a position conveyed in a series of national civil society forums held in the month of August in 2018 across the country (GNECC, 2018) on civil society position on government implementation of the Free SHS.

What then could be the motivating factor(s) in government's insistence and adoption of the universal approach to the Free SHS in the face of an apparent lack of consensus across many divides including civil society discontent and amidst limited fiscal space?

6.3.1 Politics of numbers (votes) and convenience

What could be the explanation to government fixation to the universal and wholesale implementation of the Free SHS policy despite the lack of consensus could be linked to the political benefits associated with such an approach to social intervention. A careful examination on the discourse reveals the political dynamics at play including the politics of numbers. Political economy analysts expound that political elites would implement a social intervention no matter what, if it will win them the votes and support of the people (Mitlin, 2020). The argument on the importance political elites attach to numbers is further strengthened by the disposition of the political opposition to implementing a targeted approach. The NDC despite opposing the wholesale implementation of a Free SHS, equally did not place emphasis on targeting as the preferred option. In fact, the party did not favour targeting and rather chose universal approach even in their implementation of the progressively free secondary education in 2015 as all Day students across all public SHS no matter their backgrounds were wholly exempted from paying school fees, with the plan to extending the facility to include boarding students in subsequent years. In an interview with a member of the opposition NDC, he reiterated the party's belief in the state financing the education of its citizens at the secondary level.

A political analyst expounds on why political elites (across both political parties) preferred a universal approach to a targeted intervention.

> ...But I think increasing access is catchier, it gives you more votes in numbers. You can say because of our policy we were able to get hundred thousand more pupils, it sounds more impressive than to say, for example, by our policy, children in class 4 can read and write. It is politically more expedient, visible and easier to achieve. (In-depth interview, October 2020)

The decision in favour of a universal approach over targeting went beyond maximizing numbers/votes to an issue of *political convenience*. Political analysts hint of the government suffering political punishment from the main opposition if they had opted for any approach beside what they appeared to have promised the general public. Anything apart from the universal approach would have been politically suicidal as the political opposition would have capitalised on it and make the government unpopular by accusing it of not fulfilling its campaign promise. Indeed, the spokesperson on education for the opposition NDC had reiterated this point better during interview;

> If not for the political reason I believe government would have paid heed to the suggestions that those who could afford to pay the fees of their wards should be allowed to do so but that did not happen because government knew that if that idea were to be entertained there would be a backlash from their political opponents. So, it is a political reason (In-depth interview, December 2020)

Actually, the opposition had already sought to discredit the government when they lambasted the government for starting the implementation of the policy with only one stream of students, newly admitted first year students and excluded students in their second and final years in 2017.

Another key observation made from analyzing the data is the sense of *policy convenience* as another reason for government opting for a wholesale/universal implementation of the Free SHS. From the empirical analysis of the data, there appeared to be some 'difficulty' associated with targeting which had to do with identifying the right people who really needed the intervention in the midst of 'unavailable' data. But a careful analysis on the issue rather suggests policy convenience where policy makers preferred easy way out in implementation than following what is technically prudent. These are evident in the words of a technocrat at the Ministry of Education

when she intimated that the political elites ignored the advice they (as technical people) gave and went for what is suitable to them during the Free SHS policy development. She indicated;

> ….I don't know, but most of us as technocrats we are consulted and we give them advice but they go and do something else (In-depth interview, October, 2020)

From all indications, the government showed less interest in doing targeting or did not have the luxury of time to undertake an auditing of socio-economic background of students or their parents to know which people needed the intervention most in doing a targeted approach. Government certainly could not wait probably due to a calculated time to implement the policy. An interview response from a renowned civil society actor appear to be sympathetic to government disposition on this when he intimated the following;

> ...but the question we are asking ourselves is that, do we have any document which gives us the distribution of the poor in the country and regional level. And if we want to get that data before we implement, then that couldn't have been done at the time that it was going to be done. So the thing was to go full length and deal with the consequences as they come (In-depth interview, January 2021)

The above propositions on policy convenience appear to have been corroborated by the statement made by the National Cordinator of the Free SHS Secretariat which affirmed the argument on policy convenience when he suggested that government chose what was easy way out or perhaps more practical at the time over what he acknowledged to have been the ideal approach in implementing the policy. He explained;

> It is not that we didn't like the idea of doing the segregation to ascertain the actually needy people, but it will be difficult to be able to get to the real needy people, as shown in other free education schemes (In-depth interview, February 2021).

Programmatic parties and new dynamics in votes seeking competitive politics

The suggestion that it would be technically challenging to get to the real policy targets or the population that truly needed this intervention is somewhat problematic considering that other similar social interventions such as the LEAP has been able to reach same target population. Rather, there should be other compelling reason(s) that will push political elites, for example, to even abandon their ideological stance on social/public policy interventions. This is again captured in a statement by a leading member of the ruling party in an interview when he admitted that adopting a universalistic free education intervention is against the beliefs and philosophy of a center right party but the party had to undertake same. He touted;

> We are a political party that is center right, so we will be the first to show disinterest in running a wholesale free intervention policies like the free SHS (In-depth interview, February 2021)

The forgoing views also bring to bear the growing and changing dynamics in partisan-politics where political parties are becoming more programmatic than ideological (Abdulai, 2020). Indeed, political parties have become very competitive in programmatic agenda as they attempt to sway voters with promises of social programmes. In what has become known as 'relentless electoralism', electoral competition has become a strong incentive for the provision of social services (ODI, 2015) and has also become an accountability mechanism used by political leaders to render social services to the electorates beyond the known clientelist approach.

A political settlements analyst explained the dynamics involved in such programmatic competition as part of the new ways in votes seeking especially in developing democracies where patron-clientelism is already prevalent and political parties 'invent' many ways to woo voters beyond the normal clientelistic practices. He explained as follows;

> …It is politically more expedient and easier to achieve more votes with such supposed comprehensive programmes. And remember there was competition to differentiate or to brand their versions of education intervention. (In-depth interview, October 2020)

The forgoing contentions of programmatic politics where political parties compete and rely on special programmes to gets votes resonates with Abdulai (2019) who stated that countries which are characterised by competitive clientelism; "there is a tendency for ruling political elites to focus on a broader geographical coverage in the distribution of social assistance, rather than targeting limited public resources to more deprived areas". In other words, the need to appease a wide spectrum of voters in order to win their support becomes a key driver in adopting social interventions. Another proposition his study suggested is that, under a competitive clientelistic political settlement, ruling elites prioritize reforms which are visible to prospective voters so they can attribute performance to the regime ahead of elections. Abdulai and Hickey (2016) also observed that ruling coalitions have become more programmatic and uses universal social interventions as their bargaining power in the patron-clients trading. Both the context under which the Free SHS was introduced and the political twists to discourse and approach including manner of its implementation relent itself to these propositions.

6.4 Competitive Partisan-Politics and the Free SHS Policy Design/Package

The literature has expounded that policy designing and packaging have often revealed political intentions behind their introduction and have become one common means used to examine how political context shapes policy interventions. Studies by Hossain (2020); Tillin and Duckett (2017); Bruns and Schneider (2016) have all demonstrated in various ways how policy designs and form have been used as mediating elements to shape reform process. The adoption of a comprehensive approach with an ostensive absorption of all conceived cost elements in secondary education both

to the student and for schools in the Free SHS policy can be described as "unconventional" in free education programming or practice. Available evidence suggests that free education policies implemented in several jurisdictions do not usually attempt to absorb every conceivable cost element in education (Bruns, Macdonald & Schneider, 2019). This is typified in countries with acclaimed free education systems such as Finland and other Nordic countries which do not provide free package for every cost element to learners at the same time within one policy package under their free education programmes.

6.4.1 Meeting Voters' anticipation – and the 'comprehensive' free SHS package

As earlier discussed in the study context (chapter three), free education policies and programmes are not alien to Ghana as the country has seen the implementation of various free education programmes both in the past and in the present. However, unlike many of these known free education programmes such as FCUBE and other social intervention like LEAP which came to the policy consideration stage as a proposal from government or development partners, the context of the Free SHS policy was different, emerging as a campaign promise from a competitive political contest (as well established in this study). Invariably, none of these free education programmes implemented has the character of the Free SHS programme (a presumed comprehensive free package that includes, meals, textbooks/exercise books, uniform, and the absorption of all GES approved fee items in addition to free tuition. The problem may not probably be the universality or comprehensiveness of the policy, but what the policy has encircled itself with in determining and providing which cost elements constitute the free package (as the policy is presumed to be providing all the key ingredients needed to ensure effective teaching and learning).

In this regard, a public policy analyst commented on the ostentatious and flashy nature of the free SHS policy as far as its comprehensive package is concerned. He remarked;

> It appears we are trying to make everything free, even where it is not necessary. How can you be paying for BECE and WASSCE registration for students and be buying past questions for students {...laughter...}? It tells you the politics of it, to win elections. No government looking at the economic issues, talking about Ghana beyond aid etc, would do things like that and everything for free? We are not getting enough revenue, the tax net is narrow and we want to create a policy that makes everything free...? (In-depth interview, November 2020)

As already established, political expediency provided explanation to the adoption of a universal approach, the policy's presumed comprehensive package emanated from a similar political underpinning and populism. This study finding shows that, as typical of many implemented education interventions in developing countries, the ostensive provision of many free items under the Free SHS policy package was a "populist approach" to achieve partisan political interest and ambition. Expert interviews conducted during the study expounded on why the government was keen on providing many freebies within the policy even when it was considered by many, including policy experts, not plausible to do so. A public policy expert explained the dynamics in why political leaders entangled themselves with pursuing such free programming;

> It will be politically suicidal to come and tell parents to pay for some items. Because you promised to provide a FSHS and they voted for you. You will be politically punished by your opponents because of competitive politics. Remember, the opposition even criticized the government for not starting wholesale with all the streams in 2017 when the policy begun. So the FSHS is a popular policy and politically make sense but technically may be unwise in some of its approach (In-depth interview, September 2020)

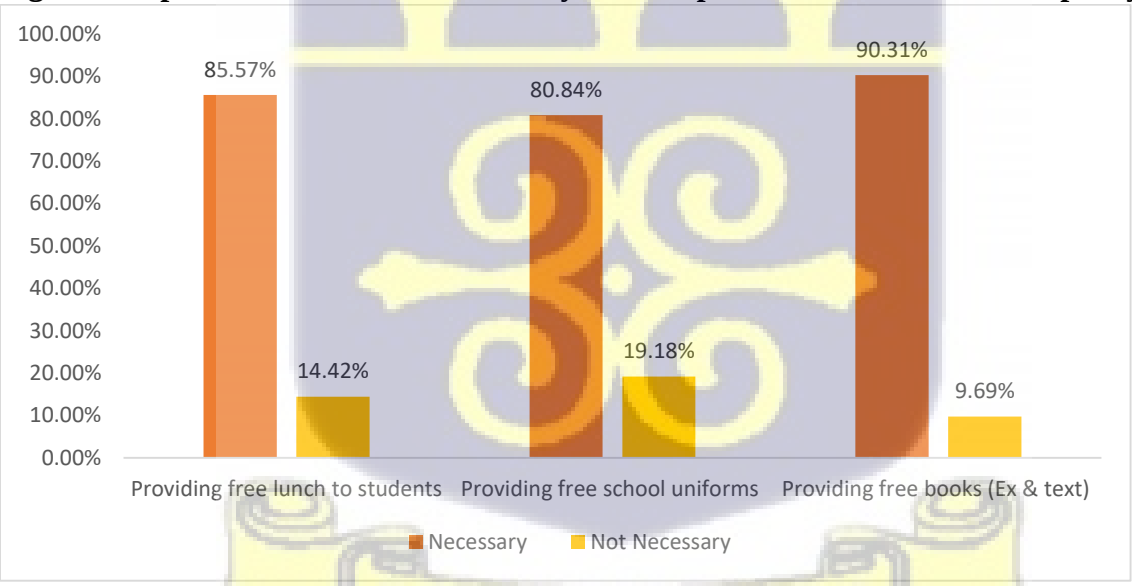
The understanding from the above expositions is that once the party had promised a free secondary education where government will absorb all the cost involved in going to school, it was bound to

fulfil that promise in the manner that meets the expectation and understanding of voters on the promise (s) made even if that was not the intended package.

Meeting Voters anticipation - Evidence from the Survey

To provide supportive evidence on the assumption made that, what appear to be "unnecessary" in the Free SHS package was actually intended to satisfy voters and meet their expectations, the study sought the views of primary consumers of the policy on the necessity of these 'unconventional" provisions. The study asked respondents to indicate the necessity or otherwise of these provisions under the Free SHS policy key among them being what can be described as freebies; the provision of stationaries, school uniforms, lunch, past questions etc. From the survey conducted, respondents overwhelmingly endorsed the provision of such freebies. The responses from the survey is shown in figure 6.1.

Fig 6.1: Respondents view on the necessity of some provisions in the free SHS policy



(Field Survey, 2020)

As can be seen from figure 6.1, vast majority of respondents comprising teachers, parents and students endorsed government provision of such "freebie". Thus, contrary to views held by civil

society actors and by policy practitioners (as mentioned earlier in the policy discourse section), respondents seem to consider these "unconventional" provisions under the policy as relevant. This general approval by the respondents from the survey resonates with the explanations provided by experts suggesting that the government's provision of these freebies was a clear response to populace expectations typifying the patron-client relation under political clientelism. As opined by political settlement scholars (Khan, 2010; Hossain, 2020), it appears political elites (patrons) know the nature of the demands of the electorates (their clients) and they respond to it appropriately knowing very well it will also play to their political advantage.

6.4.2 Displaying political ownership and the Free SHS policy design

In order to showcase political ownership of policies and to show political accountability, Hossain (2020); Bardhan, Pranab, Mookherjee and Dilip (2012) have postulated that, ruling elites design policy packages which must always look distinct and unique from what is in existence or usually their political opponents had proposed or implemented. This proposition seems to resonate with the designing of the Free SHS policy package. Prior to its introduction, a prototype of the Free SHS policy, the progressive free secondary education had been implemented by the opposition party the NDC (then in government). Indeed, the need for a distinction in policy package was expectedly conceivable, (especially for some category of expected beneficiaries) since fees paid by day students for example, had already been absorbed by government under the progressive Free SHS policy prior to the introduction of the Free SHS policy. There was therefore not much to showcase in the new policy as far as the benefits for day students was concerned. It is therefore suggested that the introduction of 'unconventional' facilities like free lunch for day students, free uniforms, exercise books, distribution of examination question papers among other freebies which are not known content of free education packages under best practices. Also, such freebies have

not originally been identified with the official policy document but 'suddenly' appear as part of the Free SHS package. The statement by a political settlements analyst agrees to this proposition when he intimated the following;

> Remember there was competition to differentiate or to brand their versions of education intervention. So NDC said progressively free education and NPP said free education now. And remember the NDC had gone ahead to implement a partial free SHS. So their policy needed to be unique. That explains why there is free lunch, free everything (In-depth interview, October 2020)

The study therefore suggests that the Free SHS policy was designed in a way to look different from what was existing. To expatiate this assertion, the study analysed views from policy experts and official proclamations especially on political platforms. A policy analyst shared his views on this contention indicating that there was competition to differentiate and to brand their versions and positions on free education with the NDC's insisting on a progressive free secondary education whilst the NPP insisted on free secondary education immediately.

In defending the policy package and design of the Free SHS programme, a political elite from the ruling party brought out the nuances in the political ownership discourse even clearer, as he distinguished the government 'holistic' package from the progressive approach by the previous government. He remarked;

> We had our program already and so it wasn't based on what they did. We programmed for it in 2012 so as to do it well. We came to implement it right away what we had in mind and not what they were doing. What they were doing, they were paying for day students and not boarding students everything was less than 40 cedis yet they couldn't handle it and couldn't pay the debt. But ours is holistic (Field interview, November 2020)

The weight of the competition for policy ownership and the show of accountability strongly came to bear during the period leading to the general elections of December 2020 when the two leading political parties and their flag bearers were on political campaign fracas as to who first or actually introduced the FSHS policy *(Daily Graphic, November, 26, 2020).* And indeed, the crust in that brawl was to be settled just by knowing what constituted the package in each of the packages the political leaders had introduced. This give credence to the underlying assumption that policy design and distinctiveness is often used to demonstrate political ownership of policies or interventions.

6.5. Limited stakeholder engagements on Free SHS policy: An outcome of competitive electoral-politics

One key pre-requisite for policy effectiveness and sustainability is the extent to which the policy community, particularly, key stakeholders participate in the policy process. The ESSA Series (2015) highlights that effective stakeholder engagements create a congenial atmosphere where stakeholders are able to reveal relevant needs and suggest possible ways of engendering efficient policy formulation and implementation regime in addressing pressing issues. Henderson & Mapp (2002) have also contended that the responsibility for children's educational development is a collaborative enterprise among parents, school staff, community members and educational authorities. The risk of making certain policy decisions without effective stakeholder engagements can therefore be too high to entertain.

Due to some presumptions which the study will further explore. it appears very limited stakeholder consultations were done on the FSHS policy process. This is evident in some study findings including this very one. In the results of the survey conducted in this study, Teachers and Parents

who are key stakeholders in secondary education delivery largely indicated that stakeholder engagements were not effectively done or were not done at all (See Table 6.1).

Table 6.1: Views of key stakeholders on free SHS policy engagements

Respondents/Responses	Frequency and Percentage			
	Teachers (%)		Parents (%)	
Somehow	14	23.0%	15	12.5%
Effectively done	09	15.0%	24	20.0%
Not effectively done	19	31.6%	40	33.3%
Not aware of any consultations	18	30.0%	41	34.1%
Total	**60**		**120**	

(Field Survey, 2020)

As seen in Table 6.1, only 15% of teachers and 20% of Parents were of the view that effective stakeholder consultations were done 0n the FSHS process. Indeed, other key and primary stakeholders during the study interviews reiterated that very limited stakeholder consultations took place. When implementation kick-started after the launch of the FSHS policy in September, 2017, a national civil society coalition in education, the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC) in a position paper bemoaned the non-involvement of the coalition in the development and implementation of the Free SHS (GNECC, Position Paper, 2017) and actually admonished education authorities to take civil society participation in education policy making process more seriously. In an interview with its National Coordinator, she offered an explanation to the poor consultations made on the Free SHS policy.

> There was no policy to enable stakeholders get a sense of how the whole thing was going to be structured and even though over time some document came out as the policy, it is unlike a policy, because, a policy should be in the public. But this is something that there is the attempt

> to keep it covered and so the approach towards rolling out the Free SHS programme was not good, even though as a Coalition we welcome it because it is giving opportunity to a lot more people to get access to secondary education (In-depth interview, October 2020)

Similar sentiments have been expressed by other civil society groups. The president of the Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS) another key stakeholder to the Free SHS policy agreed to the forgoing and also attempted some explanation to the poor public engagements on the Free SHS policy process;

> I think there was no room for better and more effective consultations to have been done but as I said from the beginning, the politician has it target already so sometimes we even see the consultation done for doing sake. So, there was no room for more consultation because if the consultation were done as we expected, maybe through our advice they wouldn't have implemented it the way they have done now. (In-depth interview, October 2020)

These observations made by the study on the poor civil society engagements in the Free SHS policy process resonate with findings from Kyeremanteng (2018) whose study extensively explored the stakeholder engagements in the Free SHS policy process. Her study revealed that the speed and the manner with which the policy was implemented did not permit any effective and broader consultations.

In trying to understand why and how a critical and massive education intervention such as the Free SHS will be implemented without considering the necessary public inputs, an explanation by a political analyst highlighted the political nuances of the policy making process in a competitive political clientelistic environment such as existing in Ghana. He expounded as follows;

> On the face of it you get a one million plus vote and endorsement to go out there and implement your policies then it will appear to you that you don't need any consultation, election is the

> consultation. So, they tend to see that our elections results give them the popular backing to go ahead and implement these policies in the manner that is fair and better for Ghanaians (In-depth interview, November 2020)

Another policy analyst throws more lights on why wider stakeholder consultations were sidelined, despite its relevance on such a significant national social intervention. He explained that, a healthy and effective policy engagement process is politically risky to undertake as he remarked, "*Consensus building is difficult and messy, but necessary"* (Field interview, 2020)

What this implies is that, political elites take winning of elections as an approval of their policies and intended programmes. They therefore become less persuaded to engage in rigorous policy consultations before implementing them and do not fancy policy re-negotiations that is likely to alter the nature and form of the policy which has been drafted in accordance with the promise they made. Political elites go strictly to the policy plan as contained in their original campaign instrument as any attempt to revise them will be politically bastardized unless the dynamics of the contest changes.

Another observation that can be inferred from the study in explaining the poor consultations has to do with the timing for the programme. The government had announced its intention and 'readiness' to implement the policy just few days into office (SONA, 2017). Government was certainly in hurry to introduce the programme in a limited time frame. This is evident in the expressions made by the Director of Secondary education whose directorate the implementation of the policy falls. She remarked;

> As for that one (consultation process), it was so political so I don't know, I can't say much about that. People were not happy, but it had to be implemented at that moment. They were just in hurry. (In-depth interview, October 2020)

The study in its next section will further explores the timing of the implementation of the Free SHS policy to bring some understanding to the motivating factors responsible for what this study observes to be 'political timing' on the implementation of the Free SHS programme.

6.6 Conclusion and Summary of Main Findings

In the nutshell, this chapter has examined how the competition for electoral votes by political elites took a centre stage in the Free SHS policy discourse and policy development process. The study specifically observed that the stern competitiveness of Ghana's electoral system made political elites to present programmatic agenda in exchange for votes. Once given the mandate, the government felt politically obliged to implement the policy to the fullest details as it has been promised, failure of which government may suffer politically. That, the constant struggle for power and access to state resources makes political parties and political elites to respond to request from voters who have become more conscious on their rights to the provision of public good and services by political leaders.

The prevailing competitive partisan politics, in this regard shaped the Free SHS policy approach and prescription in both design and packaging. Government insistence on universal approach and the seemingly comprehensive package were motivated by the need to reach out to many people as much as possible as well as to satisfy the expectations of the electorates with an ostensibly free secondary education that will not ask for any form of payments or contributions from parents. This was also intended to meet voters' expectations in accordance with what has been promised during campaign periods.

Again, in order to showcase political ownership, the study observed that the policy prescription was particularly designed to look unique and distinct from what previously existed or has been

implemented by the political opposition, in order to achieve and command political ownership and also to showcase government responsibility and political accountability in the face of programmatic competition prevailing in Ghana's competitive clientelistic settlement.

The study further observed that, political parties take their electoral victories as an endorsement of their manifesto proposals hence go ahead to implement them with no or very little public/stakeholder engagements. This approach lead to a model of public policy making which has very little room for public inputs or national consensus building.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HOW PARTISAN POLITICS SHAPED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FREE SHS POLICY

7.1 Introduction

As established in the literature, pursuing political motive can have a huge influence on how general policy objectives could be achieved in respect of policy approach and implementation. Even with "genuine" intentions, Hogwood and Gunn (1984) averred that the political and administrative actions at the frontline of implementation are hardly ever perfectly controllable by policy objectives or programs. In this context, the Free SHS programme faced multiple challenges. First, the policy emerged from a political clientelist background which already made it susceptible to political manipulation especially by policy champions pursuing political expediency. Secondly, with politically coated policy process – as evident in previous chapters, the policy was geared towards encountering clashes between political directives and technical imperatives. Whitfield and Therkildsen (2011) have argued that ruling elites choose policies and implementation arrangements as part of their strategies for maintaining ruling coalitions and/or winning elections and such strategies affect certain features and also how capable they are able to implement the reforms.

This chapter of the study therefore analyses the ways and forms by which the clientelistic partisan outlook of the Free SHS policy manifested itself in implementation. It actually set out a key dimension of the study by highlighting how the exigencies of competitive partisan politics 'forced' the government to implement the Free SHS policy in a particular manner. Through information gathered from both field data and literature the study examined this under the following themes

and parameters: *Political timing and the hurried implementation of the Free SHS; Free SHS policy posture, clarity and public dissemination; policy centralization and political control of Free SHS.*

7.2 Political Timing and the hurried implementation of the Free SHS Policy

Researchers in political economy of education reforms aver that policy timing is another parameter that can be used to assess or estimate assumptions of political motives or clientelism (Tillins & Duckett, 2017; Bruns & Schneider, 2016). According to them, political elites will insist on implementing a policy at a particular period irrespective of any technical challenge provided it meets a particular political target. The implementation of the Free SHS in September 2017 few months after the government had assumed political power was seen to be a "rushed" programme by many stakeholders (GNECC, 2018; Essuman 2018; IDEG, 2017; Partey, 2017). Many observers, including government functionaries, policy analysts, civil society actors and other stakeholders (in this study) sought to give reasons for the hurried manner with which the policy was introduced. Nana Akuffo Addo, whom this study identified as the number one policy champion of the policy himself sought to justify the hurriedness of the implementation of the programme. In his maiden State of the Nation Address (SONA) in February, 2017, he remarked;

"If I am in a hurry, I am in a hurry to ensure that every child born in this country attends school from Kindergarten to Senior High School; in other words, that is the basic education that each child is required to receive" (Nana Akuffo Addo, 2017)

The deputy minister of education, Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum during field interview also sought to explain the rationale on the need to quicken the implementation of the Free SHS policy as was done, as he intimated;

> "If this country wants to transform the next generation of people, then it must be through education and it must be done now, not later" (In-depth interview, November 2020).

However, there were apprehensions among policy experts, technocrats, civil society groups and other primary stakeholders regarding government's preparedness and also the need for sufficient stakeholder engagements and some consensus building to have been reached before the take-off of the programme whilst some observers presumed political convenience to the hurried implementation. This study therefore examined the timing for the implementation of the Free SHS exploring the reasons for government not paying heed to the need for a satisfactory engagements or for a national consensus to be reached on which way to go as far as policy approach is concerned. The study examined this from an underlying notion of a political convenience in the timing of the policy. Policy analysts and experts expounding on how the timing of the implementation of the Free SHS have juxtaposed it with the nature of the competitive partisan political arrangements existing in Ghana. It is believed that the timing was politically calculated to achieve a target of the government using it to seek political favour from policy beneficiaries (Parents and Students in particular) as well as fulfilling a major manifesto promise. When asked if the government couldn't have taken its time to implement the programme in the second year perhaps, and not to hurried it, a ranking member of the Parliamentary select committee on Education, a member of the main opposition NDC retorted;

> They would have been punished politically if they hadn't rushed to do it from the first year. Because remember that we had canvassed for a progressive implementation and they had canvassed for a wholesale immediate implementation. So having won power in 2016 and beginning their governance in 2017, they obviously had to move in to implement one of their key campaign policies (In-depth interview, October 2020)

A renowned public policy expert also expounded on the political connotations on the issue explaining how political contest and the competition for votes had a strong dictate on policy timing;

> It was purposely done to meet the four-year electoral term which would give the mandate that yes, they were able to deliver and these were their graduates; that is one. And also, the fact that those students who the policy targets were around fifteen sixteen years at the time this thing was introduced would have turned eighteen years plus and would have reached the voting stage. And if you look at the number of students, it is significant number when it comes to voting. It's not only the students but also their parents (In-depth interview, September 2020)

Clearly, what the study describes as 'political timing', in government wishing to use the Free SHS to achieve an immediate electoral accountability and also using the policy for rent seeking having understood the 'gesture' as a perfect commodity on a high clientele' demand, was what prompted the 'rushed' implementation of the Free SHS. Once they deliver it promptly, it will pay off at the right political harvest time. A renowned political analyst explained this in a more dramatised manner, bringing political clientelism to bear on the issue;

> Political clientelism is about patronage, building patronage and so now people are saying that we would vote for you. When the president went round in regions, we have some people who raised their voices loudly and said that at the appropriate time they would reward him. And that is patronage, there are people saying that they would reward him, because of the Free SHS, saying, if not for you, my children would not have been able to go to secondary school' (In-depth interview, October 2020)

All the foregoing observations have demonstrated how political convenience dictated the Free SHS policy process with specific reference to the timing of its implementation explaining why government had to rush with the implementation of the policy.

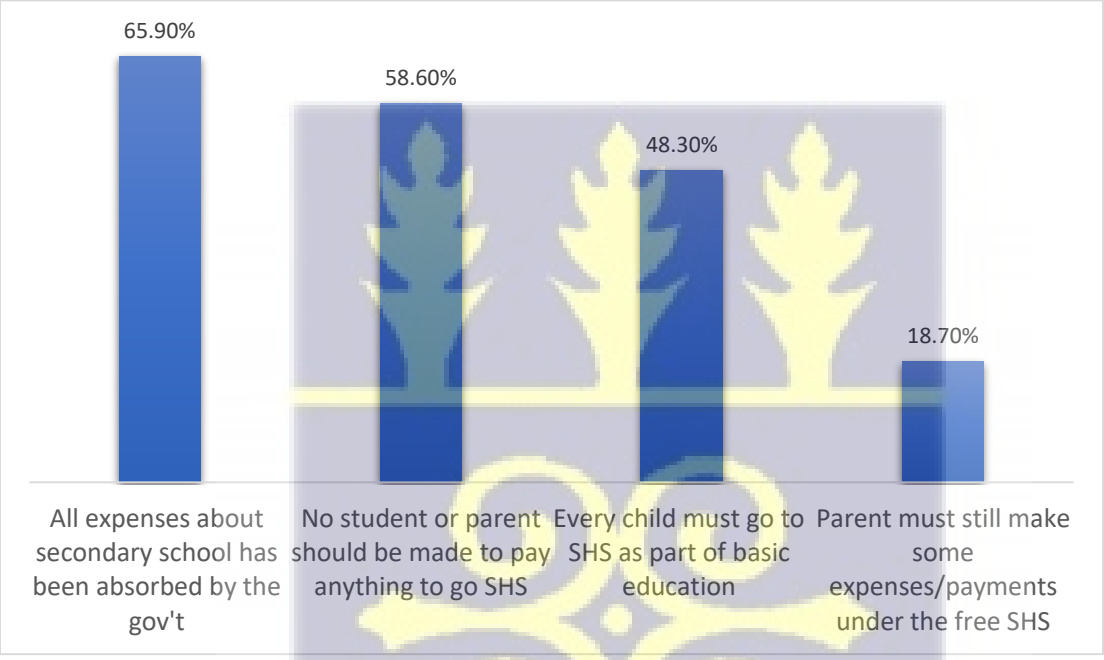
7.3 The Free SHS Policy Posture, Clarity and Public Dissemination

Policy dissemination is an important element of the policy process and how government disseminate policy implementation to the public is another means to testing what the policy is intended to be used for (Sydney, 2007), and provides a signal of what political elites seek to achieve with the policy. Just like many other intended social reforms in developing democracies, between policy intentions and actual implementation occurs many modifications or variations to policy prescriptions (O' Toole, 2000). What government communication machinery told the public regarding the Free SHS package appears not to be exactly how it manifested at the implementation level. Policy ambiguity, as explained by Cairney (2019) as a lack of knowledge about a policy problem or its solution, has the potential of a policy being given different interpretations by policy consumers.

In this regard, the study used survey to ascertain public understanding of what the Free SHS policy meant as far as the policy package was concerned. It observed that public understanding of the Free SHS policy particularly, by parents who are primary consumers of the policy, was not exactly the same as what the policy actually contained. The Free SHS policy certainly cannot be expected to be providing everything needed by a student to go to school or acquire secondary education (evident in the FSHS Strategy document itemizing which fee items government has absorbed). The study findings however showed that the public largely understood the Free SHS to mean government absorption of every cost element of secondary education with no financial burden

placed on parents or students. In the survey conducted, the study asked respondents (Parents) to indicate their understanding of the Free SHS programme introduced by the government through the statements provided. The feedback from the survey shows (as evident in figure 7.1) that many parents largely understood the Free SHS programme to mean that all expenses involved in their wards attending SHS has been absorbed by the government and that there was very little or no financial obligation placed on them as far as going to school was concerned.

Fig. 7.1: Parents understanding of the Free SHS policy being implemented by the Government



(Field Survey, 2020)

As can be seen from the responses in Figure 7.1 65.9% of the respondents have the understanding that by Free SHS, all expenses involved in secondary school has been absorbed by government. Similarly, 58.6% of respondents are with the thought that no student will be asked to pay anything in school. Less than 19% of parents had the thought that there was some form of financial obligation still placed on parents even with Free SHS. This 'misunderstanding' from parents is not far-fetched because that was the government posture in communicating the policy package to the

public, throughout the policy process. For example, the Free SHS implementation strategy document (MOE, 2017) indicated that government had removed the cost barrier to secondary education by absorbing the cost elements in accessing same, even though it itemized the GES approved fees as the absorbed cost items, when in actual fact there were other non-regular or non-recurring expenses and levies incurred and hitherto charged in schools beside the approved school fees (this was also evident in interviews conducted in the study).

Most importantly is the fact that neither the programme implementation document nor its various dissemination channels including official pronouncements had indicated to the public or beneficiaries which cost components or items were to be borne by students or parents. In communicating the policy to the public, the emphasis and the highlight had always been placed on the fees components absorbed by government ignoring any other cost elements to be incurred by the school, students or their parents. For example, none of the three visible public pronouncements by the number one policy champion, Nana Akuffo Addo, on the introduction of the policy had made mention of other costs elements (both direct and indirect) which were to be borne by parents. In all such pronouncements (The first state of the Nation address, 2017; the Okuapeman SHS speech, February, 2017 and the Speech at the launch of the policy in September, 2017), the president highlighted what the free SHS entailed;

"*By free SHS, we mean that, in addition to tuition which is already free, there will be no admission fees, no library fees, no science centre fees, no computer lab fees, no examination fees, no utility fees; there will be free textbooks, free boarding and free meals, and day students will get a meal at school for free*" (Nana Akuffo Addo, 2017)

Even though, as in the words of the President, he wanted to spell out clearly what government intended to do with the Free SHS so that no one was left in any doubts, the implementation of the

policy eventually included other items which were not contained in any of the public pronouncements, such as the provision of free school uniform, exercise books, free past question papers among some others (even though, these items were provided only one time to students).

This government's posture and the ambiguity of the policy was further demonstrated by government' directives regarding PTA dues and the mode of its collection. Even though the government singled out PTA dues as the only approved levy by GES to be paid by parents, it dispirited and actually "discouraged" its payments with the directive not to use the school or students as points of collection (which had previously been the case) and also emphasized that it was purely voluntary and not compulsory on any parent. What this effectively means is that, even though government (GES) approved the collection of PTA dues in schools, government equally did not want parents and the public to feel that there is such fee item or levy to be paid by parents under the Free SHS policy. And the government knew if they were to maintain or entertain the practice of collecting the dues through students with possible sanctions for non-payments, they will be lambasted by the opposition and sections of the public for reneging on their Free SHS promise. These political dynamics is what possibly dictated government posture on the item of the collection of PTA dues and some others associated with the implementation of the Free SHS programme.

These complexities were vividly explained by the Chairman of Greater Accra region Parents Association as he recounted the difficulties with the collection of PTA dues and its activities with the advent of the Free SHS;

> If you look at PTA dues and levies for example, PTA dues and levies have been cancelled. We have been told that we cannot collect dues, but take only voluntary contributions from parents, and that is not dues or levies. See in one particular school, we have PTA paying

> watchmen and it is these dues that we collect from parents, how much? Just twenty or thirty cedis. When you arrive at school, you give the money through your ward to come and pay or pay yourself when you come and drop your ward, and then we use these monies to pay for security and other things like sanitation. Now you have taken the element of levies and dues out. So what happens to the security of the young girls? You know when you make something like a voluntary contribution, people take it for granted because they say government has said you shouldn't collect anything from us (In-depth interview, October 2020)

All the forgoing expositions on government posture left many parents with the understanding that all expenses in secondary education for both the school and students (parents) have been or would be catered for by the government when actually the Free SHS did not and actually might not be able to cater for every cost element. Even with the policy, there were recurring expenses for both the schools and students which parents or their wards were responsible for providing them. However, many parents were with different understanding (as shown in the responses from the survey) that government would supply all items hence did not consider them as part of their responsibility, when in reality such provisions were not part of the Free SHS package. Indeed, in-depth interviews with head teachers highlighted vividly the effects of this lack of clarity in policy dissemination. One headmaster remarked;

> The provision of textbooks for example, is done when you're in your first year, but you return them when you are moving to second year for others to use. So for your second and third years, your parents would have to buy the books and also for all elective subjects. So the Free SHS is not absolute as the way it is being said. And when you are admitted into form 1 and you're given exercise books, its only 10 exercise books. When you are done with these books, it is your parents who are supposed to buy the rest for you. But some parents are not providing

because they argued that government has already provided for the books (In-depth interview, September 2020)

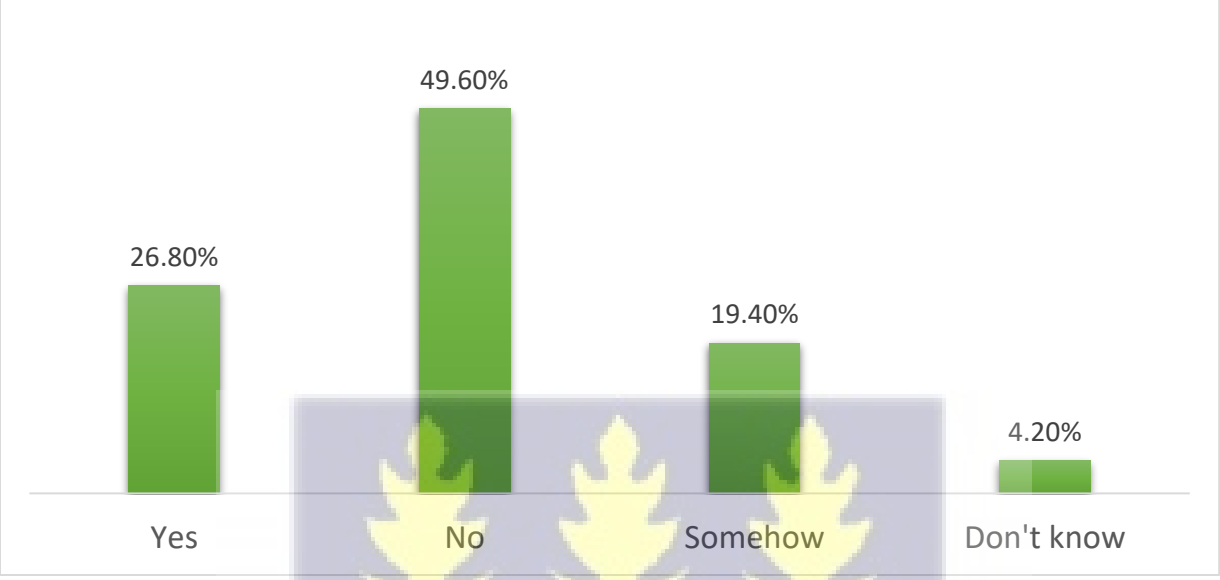
This lack of clarity in certain aspects of the policy is portrayed in the forgoing quote when government had mentioned the provision of textbooks as part of the policy package when actually, not all required textbooks were provided. This situation of 'policy blurring' as described by Nudzor (2013) creates misunderstanding among policy consumers at the implementation level. The ambiguity with the Free SHS policy package is further portrayed when in the programme implementation document, the policy listed all the cost items which the Free SHS policy covers which includes hitherto approved fees charged by the GES which was made up of re-current termly fees and one-time first year admission fees. The mentioning of which items the Free SHS policy will cover in itself, in the view of this study, presupposed that not every single cost item would be covered by the policy. This view is strengthened by Yamada and Ampiah (2009) when they made a distinction between visible and hidden or private cost of secondary education in Ghana and explained that there are many cost items in secondary education which are outside what education authorities usually itemise as school fees.

Evidence from Survey shows Parents continue to provide some items under Free SHS policy

Findings from the study shows that parents were still, directly and indirectly, incurring some expenses under the implementation of the Free SHS policy. The study in the survey asked respondents (parents, students & teachers) if government was providing all what is required and (if no), to indicate which items they still spend on or provide. As shown in Figures 7.2 and 7.3 parents/students still provided some items by themselves. The study first sought to ascertain if

government was providing all things needed by schools and students to ensure smooth academic work. The result is as shown in Figure 7.2:

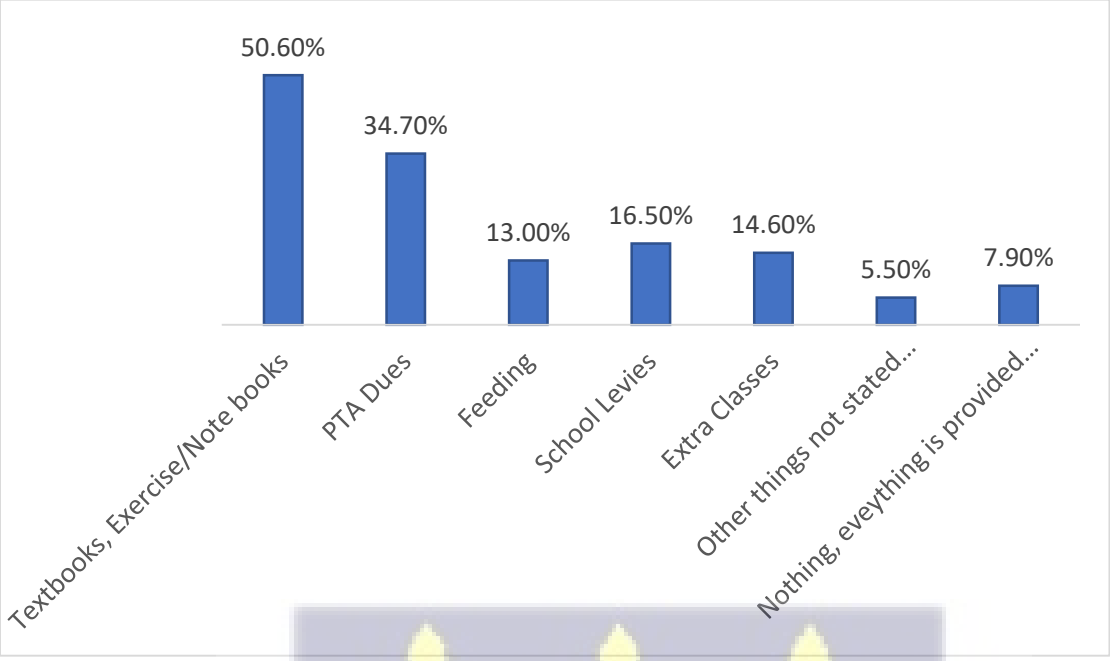
Fig. 7.2: Is Government providing all the things needed by students and schools under the Free SHS programme?



(Field Survey, 2020)

From the data above **49.6%** of respondents indicated that government was not providing all the things needed in schools whilst 19.4% saw what government was providing to be unsatisfactory. Only 26.8% thought that the government was providing all the things needed as understood from the public policy dissemination. To ascertain this claim, the study asked respondents to indicate which specific school needs or items parents or students were providing for themselves. The responses as shown in Figure 7.3 indicated that parents were still spending on some school items particularly on textbooks/stationery.

Fig. 7.3: School items that parents were still providing under Free SHS



(Field Survey, 2020)

As can be seen from Figure 7.3 respondents indicated various items which parents/students were still spending on with the highest (50.6%) being on textbooks/stationery. The higher percentages for textbooks and PTA dues were understandable since they were two main items the Free SHS package did not wholly cover or cover at all even though they did not appear so in the public policy posture.

Indeed, the observation of ambiguity in policy posture with the Free SHS has equally been noticed by the Public Interest and Accountability Committee Report (PIAC) on the implementation of the Free SHS in its 2019 report as well as a similar report by the national civil society on education, the Ghana National Education Coalition Campaign (GNECC) in 2018. In both reports, government attention was drawn to make clearer to the public what constituted the free package under the Free SHS policy. The PIAC report for example related the case of elective textbooks which are not covered under the Free SHS policy but has not been clearly communicated to parents and the

public by government. This, according to the report, has led to a situation where some parents refused to take responsibility for the purchase of these textbooks for their wards because in their minds, government has made provisions for all such items under the policy.

All of the above illustrations and findings show that, the posture of government communication "did not make any distinction between public and private cost of education" as Nudzor (2013) puts it, by not highlighting what was not being provided for by government under the policy. This gap between political communication and language of implementation rather gives popularity to the policy and attract public favour to the government but makes policy implementation challenging.

7.4 Policy Centralization, Informal Systems and Political Control of Free SHS

As espoused in the background to the study, that education reforms have often become more political a process than following technical imperatives (Little, 2010). Kelsall (2016) has also described the existence and dominance of informal systems over formalized systems as a feature of a weak developmental political settlement. And with an assumption of a political expediency motive associated with the introduction of the Free SHS policy, the study sought to examine the presence and reasons for the political imperatives that took control over the implementation process of the policy. Bruns and Schneider (2016); Abdulai and Hulme (2015) have also highlighted on the use of informal institutions and systems created by political elites when intending to use reforms or policies to derive a certain political benefits. Being a major flagship programme of the ruling party touted under a keenly contested political competition and with so much anticipation from the populace, the Free SHS programme was bound to be handled not only as a social reform but also and probably with a higher priority as a political program to be executed

and achieved by every means possible. The analysis of study findings shows how specific mechanisms were used by political elites to sideline bureaucratic imperatives.

7.4.1 The Free SHS Secretariat and political control of the policy

The government established a Free SHS Secretariat under the Ministry of Education (headed by a party functionary) as the central agency to coordinate the operations of the programme and also give guidelines and instructions for programme implementation (MOE, 2017). This is against the background of an existing Ghana Education Service (GES) being the implementing body of all pre-tertiary education programmes. The study sought to apprehend the purpose for establishing a Free SHS secretariat and how its related activities could be interpreted as seeking to centralize and politically control the implementation of the Free SHS programme. Political analysts explain that the creating of special offices like the FSHS secretariat alongside existing formal structures is a common characteristic of implementing political programmes which always sidelines mainstream offices to enable them achieve their political objectives. A renowned political analyst explaining the rationale behind the FSHS secretariat retorted;

> That is another thing about the implementation of these political programmes, we create special vehicles for them without the mainstream so even you go to the Ministry of Education and there's a Free SHS Secretariat meanwhile we have the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service that has the mandate and manpower to do it. So why create a special vehicle? Because a campaign promise must be fulfilled (In-depth interview, October 2020)

Also, the explanations given by the National Cordinator of the Free SHS Secretariat on why the secretariat was established, rather exposes the political undercurrents in the operations of the secretariat. He spoke about the reasons as follows;

> It is all about the strategy of the funds that were allocated to the FSHS programme. Free SHS is a scholarship that was implemented to be for parents and students. It is a national scholarship scheme. So GES says we are charging this fees on each student and government says, okay, I will pay for each student and I will create a secretariat that will take all the bills for these students and manages such funds. So the management of the fund had to be separated from the GES because if the management are the same, what could potentially happen is the up scaling of fees at any short interval. So it is about the efficiency of the funds that we are using for the free SHS. Secondly, to check the growth of fees or to control fee increment (In-depth interview, December 2020)

The element of political control of the Free SHS programme by the central government can be perceived in the forgoing response. First, fundamentally the Free SHS programme looked more of a funding scheme as emphasis and focus of the programme was more on government absorption of fees approved and charged by the Ghana Education Service. Expectedly, one key element of importance to government would certainly be its ability to always meet the financial obligations under the programme, which is, being able to pay fees approved by the GES. The government might therefore take keen interest in the determination of fees charged and to ensure that they were always within the limits and funding capacity of government, especially with the huge financial burden involved. This observation is acknowledged in the interview response given by the national coordinator of the Free SHS Secretariat (cited above) when he indicated that one of the motives for government establishing the secretariat was to check any undue rise in the cost component of the FSHS programme.

Actually, the study had observed from the interviews with Heads of schools concerns about government untimely release of subventions and under-payments of required fees, under the programme. For example, the President of CHASS, who is a member of the GES Council which

approves fees was emphatic that government was not paying the appropriate fees when it came to payment of WASSCE examination fees for practical subjects which was part of government absorbed fees. Thus, the political control of the FSHS policy was intended to achieve multiple objectives including influencing the determination of fees to be paid by government.

The reliance on informal structures also often led to tension between technocratic imperatives and political resistance where political elites often ignored technical advice from technocrats and rather put pressure on technocrats to succumb to political pressure to perform certain duties. In this regard, a Director at the GES shares her experience and challenges with working with the FSHS secretariat during the implementation of the free SHS programme

> As for the FSHS secretariat, hmm..., it was political. I had an issue with that and I am thinking because they wanted it fast that is why a secretariat was established but then it should have been incorporated under the GES, it shouldn't be different as if it is a whole agency which is not so. Though, till date we work with them. We worked together, had meetings on how to plan for the next term and all that. To me it should be under the GES. It was under the Ministry of Education and sometimes our works conflict (In-depth interview, December 2020)

The tension between technocrats and political elites as emerging from the data is a known characteristic of past education reforms in Ghana. Little (2010) for example, recounts such clash of political and technical imperatives on the duration of senior high school during the 2007 education reforms of the Anamoah Mensah led committee. In many of these cases, political imperatives triumphed and subdued technical directives. This is further observed by this study when senior policy makers who as technocrats felt powerless in providing the right technical directions to the FSHS policy implementation. Again, a top GES official expressed her frustrations over government political agenda overriding effective bureaucratic imperatives. She recounted:

> "I don't know, but most of us as technocrats we are consulted and we give them advice but they go and do something else" (Field interview, December 2020)

The study still observed other mechanisms, means and reasons which provided the motivation for government to take political charge of the FSHS policy process which included government interest in using the policy to distribute benefits to party functionaries.

7.4.2 Centralised operation of Free SHS and the vertical distribution of benefits

Another manifestation of the political control of the FSHS programme is its centralization of operational activities under the programme. This appears to have manifested generally in the area of procurement and supply of provisions, goods and services which have been controlled from the FSHS secretariat and other government vehicles such as the Buffer Stock Company. The centralization of operations under the programme and its ensuing activities appear to conform to the characteristics of the political settlements in Ghana which 'requires' that the demands and expectations of key interest groups such as voters and party foot soldiers are met as part of the political bargaining. It is also in line with Mushtaq Khan's framework on political settlements which describes two dimensions of power structural assumptions: horizontal and vertical distributions of power. According to Khan (2010), vertical distribution of power involves the relationship and sharing of benefits that exist between political elites and the subordinate members such as party foot soldiers, or sympathisers within the coalition. Whitfield (2011) explained further that ruling elites seek to build coalitions by extending policy favours that enhance the welfare of particular groups and individuals and by trading policy influence and access to state benefits for political funds used to maintain their ruling coalition.

Applicably, Abdulai and Hickey (2016) have argued that competitive clientelistic tendencies have been exacerbated in Ghana by the growing dispersion of power vertically within ruling coalitions,

particularly with influential party foot soldiers who engage in crucial vote-mobilization efforts for their parties, with ruling elites increasingly seeking to appease their base through the distribution of state resources. The creation of ad-hoc structures headed by party functionaries, centralization of operations of the FSHS including procurement and supply of materials have all been perceived within the political settlements lenses. A member of the political opposition alluded to this assertion as he responds to this observation;

> Well, the government has indicated that they wanted to centralise this and want to put feeding and other related things under the buffer stock company but we know that this is also political to some extent because many of those who have been given the contracts to supply food to the institutions through the buffer stock are members of the ruling party, chief sympathisers and party executives (In-depth interview, October 2020)

Some other observations have been made in reference to the centralised operations of the FSHS and its implications on the effective delivery of the policy process. For example, the report by PIAC (2019) on the monitoring and implementation of the free SHS indicated a non-involvement of schools in the selection of Suppliers and also the delivery of such supplies to schools has generally not been transparent. It further indicated that the Buffer Stock Company (also headed by a party functionary and responsible for food suppliers) does the selection of suppliers without consultations with the schools. The report raised concerns on lack of advice from recipient schools on the value of goods supplied to be a corruption risk as the lack of transparency and cost information provides cover for cost manipulation.

Another dimension and effect on the 'politicization' of the Free SHS implementation could be seen in the fear of victimization especially by technocrats particularly among education officials and Heads of Schools if found to be critiquing the policy implementation. Actually, this is a

manifest phenomenon observed during visitation to schools for interviews with Heads of schools in this study. One Head teacher gave an account on this and remarked;

> And I will tell you that some head teachers will never talk on this issue to you so it's like people are quite..... Why should it be so, and issues of education, those people have been trained. Teachers have been trained, so their inputs in the running of this is crucial. But when you say they shouldn't talk, that is where someone will say it has a political connotation but I think people should be allowed to suggest means and ways because anything that you introduce new will have its own problems and these problems will be identified by the stakeholders in that particular field (In-depth interview, September 2020)

In reality, some heads of schools sampled for interviews would have objected but for the conviction that the study was for academic purpose and also the researcher's reliance on strong networking. One head of school after knowing the subject of the study remarked "*Abrantie, wope wo ho asem*" in Twi, translated loosely to mean, "*My friend, you are looking for trouble for yourself*".

The expressions by the two head teachers shows how technocrats at the policy implementation level were afraid to make comments for the fear of victimization. All of the forgoing is explained by government desire to control the policy to enable it meet its multiple motives of political expediency along-side stated policy goals.

7.5 Conclusion and Summary of Main findings

This chapter has analysed the ways and forms by which competitive clientelistic partisan politics shaped the Free SHS policy process with specific focus on implementation. The study findings showed that the pursuance of political partisan interest reflected on the FSHS policy process in various ways and forms including policy timing, policy posture and public dissemination as well as the policy centralization and political control over implementation machinery by political actors.

The study observed that the hurried implementation of the Free SHS policy was politically calculated to achieve a political target. The study also observed that Government's public posture and disposition on the policy package was crafted to gain public admiration and political support and was actually not reflective of presumed public knowledge of the FSHS policy. Government was not providing everything needed contrary to what government posture through its political communications and language of implementation made it appeared. This lack of policy clarity described as 'policy blurring' led to misconceptions and misinformation on what contributions were to be made by parents as their responsibilities towards educating their children.

The study also observed that, in order to achieve its political motive for implementing the FSHS policy, ad-hoc structures with its associated use of party functionaries, were created to control the funding scheme and operations of the programme. With the free SHS secretariat being a political office and placed under the Ministry of Education, the tension between political and technical imperatives were heightened between the GES as the formal implementing institution and the Free SHS secretariat as a politically created informal structure. The study observed that, this centralization and political control of the FSHS programme became the channel through which the vertical distribution of benefits to functionaries of the ruling party were executed, which reflected in policy operations and procurement of goods and services under programme.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE FREE SHS AND COMPETITIVE CLIENTELISM: EMERGING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY GOALS AND THEORETICAL DISCOURSE

8.1 Introduction

The Free SHS policy process from its introduction to implementation presents a unique case for testing the political settlements assumption and framework. This chapter of the study engages in an analytical discourse that synergises the empirical findings of the study connecting with the underlying theoretical framework of competitive clientelism and also demonstrates the implications of that interaction on policy goals, for theoretical lessons and general policy discourse. The chapter specifically highlights the key emerging issues that arise from the complex ways in which the various facets of Ghana's competitive clientelism interacted with the Free SHS policy process to produce useful knowledge for both research and policy. The chapter also uniquely delves into the discourse on leveraging Ghana's competitive clientelism to provide new lessons for the political settlements framework.

This study generally observed that competitive clientelism explained the Free SHS policy process. Applying what Muno (2015) described as 'proxy measures' to estimate and understand political settlement interplay in social interventions, the preference of universal to targeted approach, adoption of ostensibly comprehensive policy package, the 'rushed' timing of the programme and the centralisation of its operations in the Free SHS policy process can all be described as manifestations of how competitive clientelism interacted with partisan politics to shape policy process.

8.2 Emerging Issues and Implications for Policy Goals and Lessons

Khan (2010) has suggested that in a highly charged and politicized reform process; what gets implemented including its outcomes depends more on the politics of the reform process as much as the technical design of the reform. It is therefore safe to suggest that, the context under which any public policy is implemented certainly has implications for achieving intended policy objective. Dye (2008) also submitted that one key benefit for understanding policy context in policy science is to be able to appreciate or determine the likely consequences it brings to bear on achieving policy goals. The main objective of the Free SHS policy is to achieve an equitable quality or functional secondary education for all in line with both national and global education targets including the 1992 constitution and the SDGs.

8.2.1 Continuous discourse and shaping of the Free SHS policy along partisan-politics

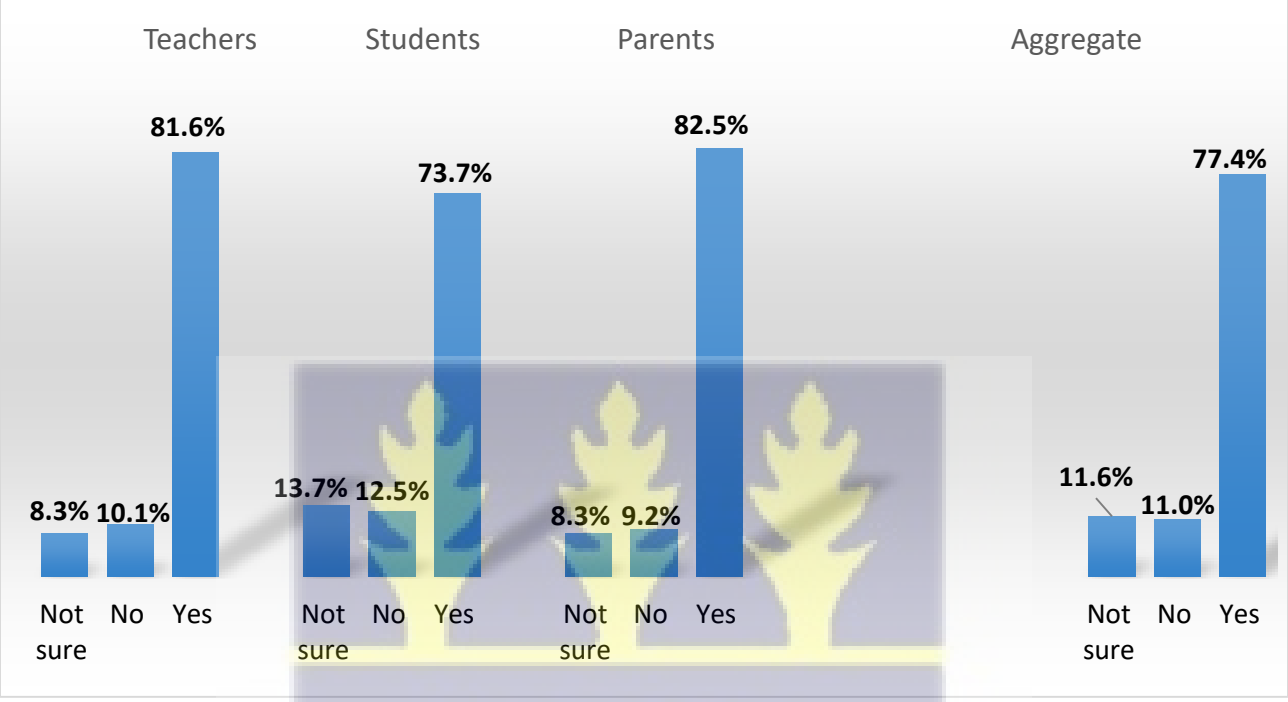
In the empirical analysis, the study gathered observations from respondents on how they perceived the likely effects of the partisan context of the free SHS. The feedback shows a sense of a continuous shaping of the policy along competitive partisan-politics. For example, a policy analyst explained that it will be politically difficult for any government to come and review any of the packages in the policy even if it technically makes sense to do so. He explained as follows;

> You will hear people say, when Akuffo Addo was there, everything was free, even chalk we did not buy, forgetting about the implications of when you weren't buying chalk what the children had to go through. So it becomes difficult to argue against a popular but technically unwise policy (In-depth interview, November 2020)

To scrutinize the extent to which partisan-politics has been tied to the Free SHS policy due to the key role played by political parties at policy context and insertion, the study through the survey asked respondents to indicate if the FSHS policy will be a factor in deciding who to vote for in any

subsequent general elections. The results as shown in Figure 8.1 indicates an overwhelming majority of respondents affirming that the FSHS policy can influence their voting choices in the next general elections.

Fig 8.1 Can the Free SHS policy influence your voting choice in the next general election?



(Field Survey, 2020)

As seen in Figure 8.2, **77.4%** of the aggregate respondents say that the FSHS policy can be a considering factor in making voting decisions in the next general elections. This implies that the citizenry (electorates) intends to judge political parties by either rewarding or penalizing them for their respective roles they played in the Free SHS policy process. Indeed, this observation from the study is supported by Abdulai and Sackeyfio (2020) who observed that the FSHS was going to be a key determining factor in the succeeding 2020 general elections. These observations highlight the growing significance of performance voting or post electoral accountability which is a key component of clientelistic political settlements. Political elites being fully aware of this political order of electoral accountability, equally sets out to showcase performance and

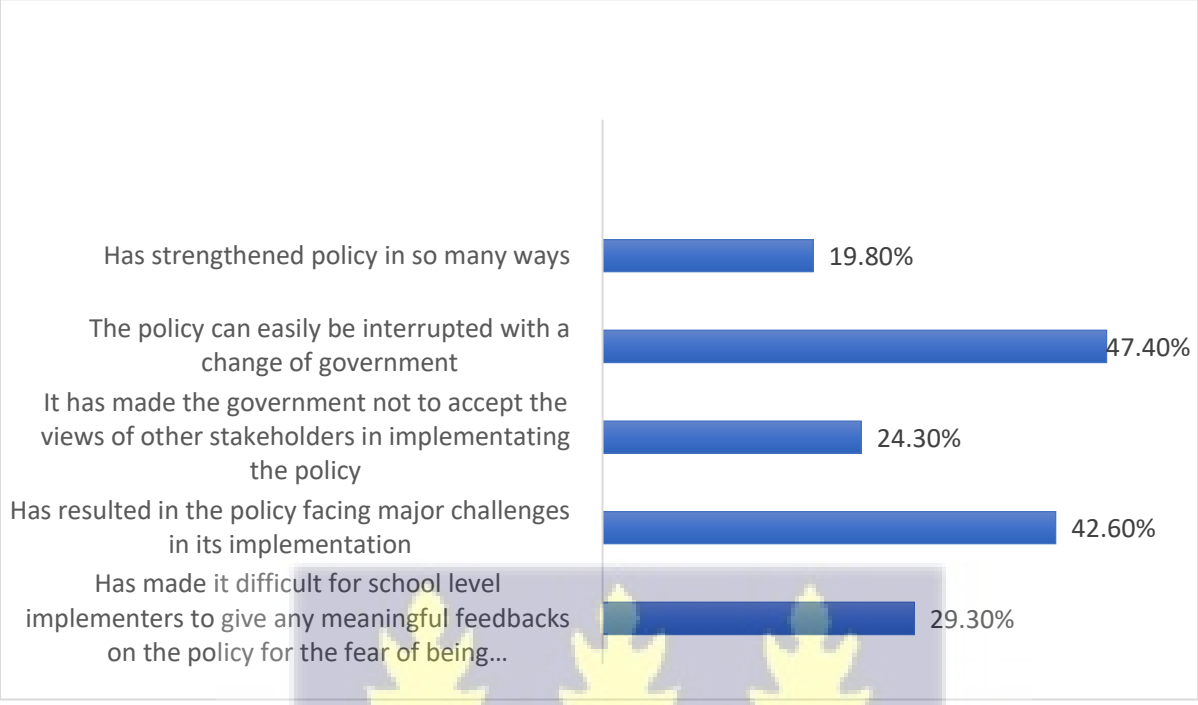
accountability by presenting to the electorates policies that meets their needs and demands. A policy analyst explained these political dynamics on the roles of the political parties further as he remarked;

> The NPP had made it a manifesto promise right from the 2008 elections up to 2016 elections and so it is about the dynamics, its time had come. So even for the NDC which for some reason did not subscribe to it. They still talked about progressively making secondary education free (In-depth interview, October 2020)

One implication is that, with politicians having in mind rendering accountability, it is meeting the interests and demands of voters which they pay attention to and become the guide to the policy process and reworking but not the technical or institutional observations that are made. Thus, the FSHS policy has been caught up in this milieu when the government has continuously been adamant to entertain suggestions for policy review and also as well the opposition's changing positions on policy approach. It further explains why there was a fracas during the 2020 elections campaign period as to who owned the Free SHS policy or who first introduced it. The policy has been tied to performance voting or post electoral accountability and remain a topic of partisan–politics discourse rather than a subject of national public policy analysis.

Responses from the survey conducted on same subject also raised some challenges likely to be associated with the policy key among them being political control and fear of victimization. Figure 8.2 provide feedback on respondents' views on which ways the Free SHS policy could be affected considering its context of continuous partisan discourse.

Fig 8.2: Respondents views on how partisan-politics has generally affected the Free SHS implementation



(Field Survey, 2020)

In the above data, respondents were asked to indicate which of the stated responses they align with as an effect of the partisan-politics context of the Free SHS policy. From the responses, there were key concerns about risk of political sustainability of the policy and implementation challenges. How the context of partisan-politics with its continuous shaping of the policy has implications for achieving policy goals are further anaysed.

8.2.2 Free SHS policy approach tilted towards increasing enrolments through cost removal

The approach, design and the disposition of the Free SHS policy is fundamentally tilted towards removing the cost barrier to secondary education, intended to increase access. The political motive associated with the programme made widening access its primary focus than other targets of the policy; ensuring equity and improving quality. Already, education policy analysts have observed and warned of the risk involved, the common feature associated with many education reforms

especially in developing countries, having multiple targets or objectives to achieve with one same policy prescription (Bruns, Macdonald & Schneider, 2019). According to them, increasing enrolments and achieving quality are almost parallel and is usually more demanding to achieve them together in one policy prescription as one objective is most likely to be submerged by the other if effective measures are not put in place.

The FSHS policy had made some gains in expanding access to secondary education by increasing SHS enrolment by 43% between 2016 when total enrolment stood at 881, 600 and 2019 when general enrolment went up to 1,264, 071 (World Bank, 2020). Again, Gross enrolments of secondary education in Ghana, according the same source, stood at 74% in 2019 three years after the implementation free SHS as against 68% in 2016 before FSHS. More significantly, FSHS intervention has reduced the annual average rate of those who are placed but not able to enroll from over 26% to about 12% as can be seen from Table 8.1.

These attainments notwithstanding, trends analysis on access shows that significant gap still exist. Gross enrolment has increased minimally only by 6% three years after FSHS. Also, even though the rate of enrolment has improved, the number of JHS graduates (BECE Candidates) who are not placed into any SHS largely due to some qualification criteria, remains significant as can be seen from Table 8.1. Together with those who are placed but still do not enroll (for other probable reasons), over 20% of JHS graduates do not access secondary education. For example, in 2019, the third year of free SHS implementation 107, 227 graduates representing 22% of total 512, 083 were either not placed or did not enroll though placed and were most likely not to access secondary education (if they do not enroll in private schools). See Table 8.1 for details.

Table 8.1: Access to Secondary Education: Trends Analysis (2014 –2019)

Year	Total Reg (BECE)	No. Placed	No. Not Placed	No. Enrolled (%)	Placed-Not enrolled (%)	Not enrolled of total registered – Transition rate
2014	422,946	386,412	**36,534**	273,152 (70.7%)	113,260 **(29.3%)**	149, 794 **(35.4%)**
2015	440,469	415,012	**25,457**	299,649 (72.2%)	115,363 **(27.8%)**	140, 820 **(31.9%)**
2016	461,009	420,135	**40,874**	308,799 (73.5%)	111,336 **(26.5%)**	152, 210 **(33.0%)**
			After Free SHS Implementation			**Not benefiting Free SHS**
2017	468,060	424,224	**43, 836**	362,075 (85.4%)	62,149 **(14.6%)**	105,985 **(22.6%)**
2018	509,824	442, 134	**67, 690**	387,592 (87.7%)	54,524 **(12.3%)**	122, 232 **(23.9%)**
2019	512,083	459,912	**52, 171**	404,856 (88.0%)	55,056 **(11.9%)**	107, 227 **(22.0%)**

(Source of information: MOE, 2019; Table constructed by Author, 2020)

- ***Universal quality secondary education unlikely to be attained (anytime soon) with current policy approach***

The political expediency with which the government implemented the Free SHS policy could likely influence how policy target of universal access to secondary education is achieved. Akyeampong (2010) and other studies have established that the constraints to increasing access to secondary education go beyond removal of cost barrier to include other things like lack of space or infrastructural deficit, retention among other things, culture and attitudes etc. Tamanja and Pajibo (2019) for example, have asserted that school retention is threatened by other socio-economic factors such as parental negligence, teenage pregnancies for girls etc. Whilst the SDGs target universal access to equitable quality secondary education for all, the approach of the FSHS appear to be concentrated on increasing enrolment figures. As it can be seen from Table 8.1, even

though enrolment keep increasing, non-enrolment figures equally remain high. Even after three years of Free SHS implementation, averagely more than 20% of JHS graduates do not get enrolled into SHS for reasons other than cost barriers which calls for a dynamic approach to be adopted beyond what the Free SHS appear to be implementing.

As earlier identified, increasing enrolments and access may not sufficiently guarantee equitable quality secondary education for all. The Free SHS has an equity principle of 30% admission quota for JHS graduates who complete public or government owned schools into top elite SHSs with minimal pass entry requirement. However, such an approach may not sufficiently address the prevailing inequalities and stratifications that exist in the secondary education system. Partey (2017) for instance, has suggested that equity in the light of achieving the FSHS goal should rather emphasize education support on grounds of needs so that students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds and who may not do well in their terminal examinations are given more support in their secondary education. The Free SHS policy approach limit the financing to a limited duration and time, which implies mass promotion and automatic progression from one form/level to another without recourse to performance or assessment. Again, there is also a challenge with completion rate as for example, 13.3 % of the total 362, 075 students who were enrolled in 2017 under the Free SHS programme, did not complete (using WASSCE exiting examination as measurement with 313, 838 candidates registered for the 2020 examinations). As the SDGs place emphasis on completion, the attainments of the Free SHS appear mainly to be focusing on enrolment.

8.2.3 Acquiring secondary education and diminishing parental responsibility

The role played by key stakeholders in education delivery particularly by parents has been perceived to be 'irreplaceable' (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Any policy reform or direction must therefore be seen to be clearly defining which aspects of education responsibilities is conceded to parents and other stakeholders. To assume that government alone can bear the general or absolute responsibility of providing education needs can have far reaching consequences on learning outcomes. The study observed that Government posture on the FSHS policy appeared to be absolute (when in reality it is not, but an outcome of the political dynamics at play with the introduction of the policy as the study has already expounded) and this has some implications for achieving the FSHS objective.

Observations from the study actually raises questions on Government ability or probably 'readiness' to take full responsibility to finance every cost element involved in the operations at the school level considering the limited fiscal space within which government is operating. This was made evident when Head teachers revealed that Government subventions to schools, covering Government's own absorbed fee items, since the implementation of the policy are either not up to the cut or are simply released at the time when its need and use has elapsed. The implications that this has on quality delivery is best explained in the following account from a Head teacher;

> Because government has made the Free SHS to appear absolute, in the sense that no pesewa is any child expected to pay in the school. Anything that demands payment of money government is taken it out. So, what it has resulted in is that, because the financial burden is too huge, we have not been receiving funds, first of all, on time, and secondly, it is not adequate. Now the challenge in release of funds is that it affects quality education because if you need money to carry out an activity and then the money is not brought at the time needed, when it is passed and the money is brought, you would not be able to achieve what you wanted

> to do with the money. Sometimes when the money comes it is not adequate, such that if you wanted to conduct an intensive examination for the children with regards to maybe all subject areas being covered and due to lack of adequate resources, you are tempted to see how you can minimize the questions, or the subject areas, just to be able to see if you can do something. So that is how it has affected, quality education (In-depth interview, September 2020)

The response by the leadership of CHASS actually affirms this account adding some specifications to the issues raised;

> Let me give you an example, the final year students are to write their examination, Government has released some monies for their practical but this is woefully inadequate, GHC15, because prior to Free SHS, each student was paying GHC30 per subject. Now, government is giving GHC15 for everything, so you can see that definitely at the end of the day quality would suffer, and this is what I said about the quantum, because the number is so huge. That is what is also causing the challenge (In-depth interview, July 2020)

For the leadership of Teachers (CHASS), government is likely to be overwhelmed by the size of budget involved in implementing the policy in its current form. The need for key stakeholders including parents to make some form of contributions is therefore necessary.

For some civil society actors and key stakeholders, there is competing interests and social demands on the state which will hinder the capacity of the state to single handedly finance secondary education. It must therefore look for other means including making parents who equally have primary role to play to contribute in any small way and this must be spelt out clearly to the public. A policy analyst similarly articulated this view;

> When you look at it well, you would realize that you cannot do everything, you cannot finance everything, otherwise you are going to reduce the quality. Parents for example need to contribute, but now the P.T.A is no longer in place and also knowing the fact that government

> money isn't enough for a lot of things (assembly halls, teachers' bungalows etc.), and so we can say that the policy has its positive and negative sides (In-depth interview, October 2020)

A Head teacher also brought out clear some operational cost items that hitherto would have been catered for through the schools' internally generated fund or the supports of PTA, both of which have now been weakened. She explained as follows;

> And it is not only the PTA, it is not only security, I'm talking even about sanitation, and you know numbers have gone up and you know sanitation becomes more of a problem. If you have seven hundred students previously and now the number has doubled, the waste that will be generated will be high, and the frequency of collection will also be high, so who pays for these services? These are some of the issues that I have with this implementation thing (In-depth interview, October 2020)

These observations from the study are equally corroborated by an implementation monitoring report by PIAC (2019) as well as a review report by GNECC (2018) to the effect that the free SHS programmes has diminished the important role played by parents and PTAs and strongly recommended for same to be restored. The PIAC report for example indicated that while the government moratorium on the operations of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) may have been well-intended, it has deprived schools of the additional support traditionally provided by PTAs particularly in the area of infrastructure indicating that most of the developmental projects that the PTAs initiated in schools have been abandoned since the introduction of the policy. All these observations and their implications on quality education delivery raises key concerns on achieving equitable quality secondary education for all by 2030 (Agenda SDG) and beyond.

8.2.4 Political parties' manifestos driving education reforms/policy making

One key observation made from the study which also supports the theoretical underpinnings of emerging competitive political clientelism in Ghana is the overly role assumed by political

coalitions in the making of public policies including those on education reforms. Manifestos of political parties are increasingly becoming public policy documents under Ghana's competitive party politics democracy. Promises made by political parties captured as agenda or programme of action as a 'Manifesto' (to be implemented when given political power) thus become the first source of policy option for ruling elites when voted into office. This observation has been acknowledged by policy analysts, academics as well as development practitioners. A political settlement analyst explained this emerging trend vividly in this account:

> There is a very worrying trend now in Ghanaian governance which is that we jump the intermediate step between manifesto promise and policy implementation. There is supposed to be an intermediate step which is taking that promise and now carrying out the consultations that would then turn the promise into policy proposals that can then be debated. But I think in the rush to outdo each other the parties just move from manifesto straight to implementation. And they say that it is because by winning the election it meant that Ghanaians agreed with the policy, and also means every aspect of your manifesto is approved which is really debatable (In-depth Interview, November 2020)

Speaking to the issue during the interview session, a policy analyst explained the effect such policy making trend has on national agenda setting.

> We are actually running the country with manifesto, and so the country lacks a shared common vision. I always say that, if you look at the directive principles of state policy, it is a shared common vision of Ghana. If you look at the manifestos of the political parties none of them have referred to the directive principles of this country. They are running the country with the manifesto which is not good, and that is why we made the point that the manifestos of the political parties must be tied to a long term development agenda of the country. And manifestos are created for four years and once you are running the country base on manifesto,

> the four-year cycle, you are leaving the country to policy discontinuity and that is what competitive clientelism does (In-depth Interview, October 2020)

Some development organisations have also acknowledged the growing influence of political parties' manifesto on education policy making and other social reforms in developing democracies. Many of them suggest the need to find a trade-off between election campaign promise/manifesto and national policy making agenda. The CDD Ghana in its project titled, 'the Manifesto Project' draws attention to the increasing and growing importance and value of manifestos in modern democracies (CDD, 2020). It emphasized the need to promote responsive and responsible manifestos to achieve inclusive development. Also, the Institute of Democratic Governance (IDEG) in its issue paper (IP-E-003-20) asserted that political party manifestos have become a primary means of localising the SDGs and the Agenda 2063 goals and calls on the National Development Planning Commission to influence political parties to align their manifestos to the various national development agenda.

In line with the politics of competitive clientelism, the political party that wins elections and forms the government is bound to implement its manifesto promises declared during electoral campaigns. And by so doing, political parties programmatic agenda becomes the source for medium-term national planning. Policy experts/analysts further explained why the Free SHS process did not follow conventional policy making procedure where polices are subjected to wider consensus and engagements. In an interview with a policy analyst, he relates the dynamics in the policy context of the Free SHS comparing it with another social intervention to show the weak policy development mechanism that ushered in the FSHS policy. He expounded;

> If you take for example LEAP and you take FSHS, you would see that the two contexts were completely different because LEAP came as a result of donor pressure, support etc so a lot of

> thinking went into its development and implementation. Free SHS came out of campaign platform promises so it wasn't constrained by all the donor requirements, have you done this consultation, let me see the financing plan and others. So that kind of gives you a sense of how the context influences the content and implementation (In-depth interview, October 2020)

Another policy expert also expatiated on the implication of the electioneering campaign origin of the FSHS as he describes the policy making process as "manifesto-driven". He relates the whole context to the nature of the 'political settlement' that exist in the polity of Ghana explaining that such a competitive political framework comes with a lot of votes seeking policy proposals and that is what shapes policy options. He further expounded that election results are seen as voters' approval to a particular manifesto agenda and an endorsement of that agenda as a government policy option;

> There is a phenomenon that has emerged over the three elections where political parties' manifestos have become policy document for governments when they come to power (In-depth interview, October 2020)

The above opinion seeks to explain how party manifestos have gradually transformed into public policy documents which political parties rely on to implement programmes when given state power. Indeed, the influences of manifestos on electorates' voting choices has been underscored by Ayee (2016) who argued that Ghanaian electorates consider political party messages that are more appealing and that the changing voting patterns in elections shows that the increasing influence of party manifestos cannot be ignored (Ayee, 2016)

8.3 Emerging Issues and Implications for Theoretical Discourse

Findings and observations made from empirical data have produced results and outcomes for theoretical illuminations that are of relevant for both research and policy development. Study

findings present us with the opportunity to explore new understandings of political settlements involving, particularly, the relationships between competitive clientelism, democracies and development focusing on specific country context. It explores the relationship between clientelism and a variety of political outcomes, such as electoral competition, accountability and the provision of public good among others.

8.3.1 Pursuing universalistic programming to achieve visible goals

The long standing debate in social policy discourse regarding most effective ways of delivering social interventions finds reminisces in the study context. Political settlements analysts aver that political elites under competitive clientelism pursue short-term goals which are usually universalistic in nature than targeted and redistributive programmes. Abdulai (2020) has explained that competitive clientelistic settlement in Ghana makes ruling elites to prioritize reforms which are visible to prospective voters so they can attribute performance to the regime ahead of elections. As observed in the findings from the study, the government insistence of universal implementation of the Free SHS policy was intended to achieve access on a large visible scale. In this regard, a political settlement analyst explained how focus on expanding access became the reason for the universal approach used by the government in the Free SHS policy. He explained;

> What we have seen so far is that, countries whose political orientation is essentially competitive clientelistic rarely deals with the most structural fundamentals that faces the country. There is a less conversation about the quality learning outcomes and we are more focusing on increasing access which has been traditionally what we see in Ghana, that access is quantifiable and easier to see but quality outcomes are minimal and not easily visible to the eye. That is one defect of a political settlement that is highly competitive, so all you need to

> do is to focus on the visibilities, what is visible in the eye of the voter (In-depth Interview, November 2020).

Generally, the competition for votes is what drives political elites' commitment to education reforms and inspires them to be more inclined to approach such as increased accessibility which has immediate visible outcomes and doing so on a larger scale.

Universal programmes are used to showcase political accountability and social inclusiveness

Electoral accountability and performance voting have become key motivation to ruling elites' commitments to pursuing general education reforms. This results in political parties becoming more programmatic than ideological. The implementation of such popular programmes are often used to render political accountability and achieve social inclusiveness. In line with Lowi's framework, such universal policies like the Free SHS are used for distributive purposes and are conflict-free, facing low opposition from interest groups. Unlike redistributive policies that are targeted at addressing development gaps with observable benefits, popular or universal programmes operates in arena of no conflicts and are generally inclusive which is usually preferred by ruling elites in a competitive clienteles political setting. This was evident in the huge public endorsement and large receptivity that the free SHS policy enjoyed despite various dissenting views and an apparent disagreement over policy approach.

In making a case for social inclusiveness as an expected positive outcome of the Free SHS policy following the discourse that ensued from the proposal by government to use petroleum heritage fund to finance the programme, the President of Ghana, Nana Akuffo Addo argued that funding the FSHS with the oil revenue presented an appropriate opportunity for all people irrespective of social status to benefit from the country's oil resources and for future generation as well, since in

his view, the youth constitutes the next generation for which the fund was kept and meant for (Launch of FSHS policy, 2017). The statement by the President also has inherent in it an attempt to use the free SHS to showcase political accountability in the usage of the country's resources especially considering that the provision of secondary education by itself is a public and collective good and the policy being implemented at a universal scale.

Programmatic politics: An outcome of Ghana's competitive clientelism

A key manifestation in the competitive political clientelism is the superiority of programmatic agenda over ideological stands by political parties which became evident when the government (which is a known right-wing party with a competitive market orientation) swiftly develops interests in free and universal social interventions. The words of a leading member of the ruling party describes these changing political dynamics better;

> We are a political party that is center right, so we will be the first political party to show disinterest in running a whole sale free intervention policy like the Free SHS. But we have been committed to many social interventions and free social schemes. We are not just interested in giving out free things, but we just need to get everybody onboard (In-depth interview, December 2020)

These observations conform to the assertion by Abdulai (2020) that the two major political parties in Ghana have become more programmatic than ideological in their approach to implementing social interventions. Indeed, political actors under a competitive political clientelism just have to be in the pole position to know the needs and demands of their clients (voters) and respond to them appropriately with programmes and packages even when they appear technically not plausible. The study observed an example in the Free SHS package of feeding students which appear 'unpopular' at least in the eyes of policy actors, and has actually been perceived to be

'unconventional' compared with other universal free education programmes implemented in Ghana and in many other jurisdictions. The responses gathered from the survey (as shown in chapter six), however showed an overwhelming endorsement for this particular package in the policy showing that patrons truly know the demands of their clients very well in the patron-clientele relationship.

Critically, this study observed that the desire to maximize electoral votes under Ghana's competitive partisan politics is what pushed the ruling party to introduce the Free SHS policy at a universal scale. Thus, in the theoretical sense, the study contends that competitive clientelism with its competition for more votes is what pushes political parties to engage in programmatic politics and become universalistic in their agenda setting than being particularistic. This proposition finds support with the nature of Ghana's competitive clientelism, which Abdulai (2017) and Little (2010) have described as "programmatic competition" where the voting choices made by clients (voters) are largely influenced by the promises in the form of programmes of action which are offered to them by patrons (political elites), resulting in "a programmatic patron-client relationship". These postulations together with other observations from the study provide new dynamics and leave us with some lessons for theoretical underpinnings.

8.3.2 Leveraging Ghana's competitive clientelism

Key observations from the study highlights emerging trends and lessons for our understanding of political settlements especially in developing societies. Numerous empirical studies and theoretical debates, example, Khan (2010) and Kelsall (2016) have perceived competitive clientelism and other variants prevailing in developing democracies to be weak and unfavourable and are often used to explain the inability of many African countries to achieve long term sustainable

development with states having unstable implementing capabilities due to the short-term horizon of ruling coalitions.

Ghana has been touted to be experiencing such short-term development approach due to its highly competitive clientelism. In as much as this study has observed these characteristics in Ghana's social policy making and development agenda, the study observed that Ghana's phenomenon equally presents some inherent strengths which can be leveraged to achieve transformative development. The study observed that Ghana's competitive clientelism settlements has the space for policies that can enhance social provisioning and social service delivery. For example, even though, the 1992 constitution of Ghana had enshrined in its provisions the need for a free secondary education, this was largely shelved until a competitive electoral politics moved it into public discourse. Competitive electoral politics popularised the importance of secondary education to the citizenry. Actually, some studies have also shown that competitive clientelism can be compatible with long term transformative development. Muno (2015) for example, contends that the reciprocal relationship, exchange of material and immaterial goods that exist under political clientelism can be conceptualized to be promoting responsible leadership and political or public accountability. Odijie and Imoro (2021) have studied how competitive clientelistic political setting existing in Ghana can be used beneficially to engender sustainable development. Using Ghana's Right to Information Bill as a case study, they argued that there are conditions under which elite commitment's to long-term development could be fostered and sustained even under Ghana's competitive clientelist political settings.

Indeed, as indicated by Awal and Oduro (2017), Abduali and Hickey (2016), Whitfield (2011) and by many others, Ghana's blend of multi-party competition and patron-client's politics generates stronger incentives for social provisioning including improving educational delivery and leads to

boosted public investments in public goods provisioning, even though, only in the short term. But the link between political accountability and competitive multi-party democracy provides strong incentives for political elites to become conscious of fulfilling voters' needs and demands. Abdulai and Sackeyfio (2020) in particular have noted that, competitive partisan politics in Ghana with its fiercely contested elections has helped to push education high on the policy agenda. It is believed that the patron-clients relationship in modern and emerging democracies leads to voters using the opportunity to make demands for the provision of social services. Thus, the rise of both clientelistic and programmatic political parties can be used as vehicles for transformative development leading to the request for adapting a suitable framework that can be leveraged to engender long term transformation (Booth, 2021).

Another dimension to the quest for an adapted PS framework to suit Ghana's political dynamics is the argument that even with political motives attached to social or education reforms, ruling elites may not always be in dilemma of either to pursue political expediency goals or achieving improved learning outcomes, as these goals are not necessarily always at variance (Muno, 2015). According to him, such complexities can be addressed with innovative frameworks that is able to map the various actor interests including hidden and stated objectives. This supports the call for the need to find a theoretical space for leveraging the possibility of ruling elites pursuing political expediency goals together with both short term and long term educational progress. Contemporary studies in political economy have also increasingly sought to identify opportunities in the midst of the constraints for leveraging policy change and supporting reforms by exploring what works under different country contexts.

CHAPTER NINE

SUMMARY OF STUDY FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Introduction

This study has looked at how partisan-politics with its competitive clientelism shaped the Free SHS policy process in Ghana from adoption to policy implementation. It is an empirical examination of how the context from which the Free SHS policy was introduced and the prevailing political settlements in Ghana combined to influence policy objective and shaped policy prescription – approach and design, as well as implementation. In its introductory discussions, the study laid the context from which it drew its relevance and then explained what the research sought to explore within that context. In its empirical chapters, the study centrally examined how a political context of competitive clientelism from which the Free SHS policy emerged shaped policy process, particularly, on policy intentions, prescription and implementation approach. The climax of the study presents us with critical theoretical concerns on emerging dynamics in different political contexts which compels us to think differently about the way political settlements manifest itself in different country contexts and in Ghana. This last chapter of the study therefore presents the key findings from the study based on the research objectives and key research questions and draw conclusions inferring from the key findings upon which policy and research recommendations are given.

9.2 Summary of Key Findings

The study has presented findings on the assumption that political dynamics interacted with the Free SHS policy process from policy inception to implementation. Gathering data from

different sources using a mixed method approach, the study established that Ghana's political settlement through its competitive clientelism created conditions by which the Free SHS policy was influenced by political motives which shaped policy process. The specific study objectives of the study were to; examine the rationale for the introduction of the Free SHS policy and the role competitive partisan-politics played in the policy discourse and formulation as well analysing how partisan politics shaped policy implementation. The key study findings are presented in accordance with the study objectives, assumptions and perspectives;

9.2.1 The Free SHS and the clash of intentions - political expediency versus equitable quality secondary education for all

The political context surrounding the Free SHS policy is what made many observers to associate political expediency motive with its introduction. Apart from its electoral politics origination and partisan discourse, the way and manner the FSHS was adopted and implemented exacerbated such assumptions. Using various sources to seek and analyse information, study findings showed 'multiple motives' behind Government introduction of the FSHS policy. The main stated objective of the FSHS was to achieve an equitable quality secondary education for all. Besides that, the study also observed a 'second' unstated motive of political convenience, using the policy to win the support and votes of the people. With one common approach used to achieve both objectives led to a 'clash' of motives with political expediency dominating the other evident in policy prescription and implementation strategies. Pursuing these two objectives at the same also led to 'policy bundling' as policy makers attempted to achieve the two goals or targets with the same policy prescription (Bruns & Schneider, 2016).

9.2.2 Partisan-politics shaped Free SHS policy discourse and prescription

The study findings showed that the pursuance of political partisan interest reflected on the Free SHS policy process in various ways and forms including policy discourse, approach and design. Evidence from the study showed that how the Free SHS programme emerged had far reaching bearing on the policy process. The contextual analysis on the policy showed a strong competitive partisan-politics and identified election campaigns and political party manifestos as the machinery used to usher in the free SHS policy.

The domineering political context and pursuing of political expediency led to 'politics of numbers and convenience' which largely influenced policy approach of universalism and a supposed comprehensiveness. The study also observed that the adoption of a 'comprehensive' package for the Free SHS policy with an "ostensive absorption" of all conceived cost elements in secondary education was meant to meet voters' demands and expectations coming from campaign promise.

The study findings also showed that, in order to showcase political ownership over the free SHS policy, the policy prescription was particularly designed to look unique and distinct from what previously existed or implemented by the political opposition. This was also used to prove political or public accountability in the face of programmatic competition prevailing in Ghana's competitive clientelism.

9.2.3 Competitive partisan-politics shaped Free SHS implementation

The study findings showed that the pursuance of political partisan interest reflected on the Free SHS policy process in various ways and forms including policy design, timing, policy

posture and public dissemination as well as the policy centralization and political control over implementation machinery.

About the timing of the policy implementation, the study described as 'political timing' the hurried implementation of the policy which was calculated at achieving a particular political agenda in earning political reward in terms of electoral votes. It further observed that Government's public posture and disposition on the policy package was crafted to gain public admiration and political support, and was not exactly equal to what was prevailing at the implementation level. There was an apparent lack of policy clarity described in the literature as 'policy blurring' (Nudzor, 2013) which led to misconceptions and misinformation on what contributions were to be made by other key stakeholders such as parents as their educational responsibilities towards their children.

The study also observed that, in order to achieve its political motive for implementing the free SHS policy, ad-hoc structures with its associated use of party functionaries, were created to control the funding scheme and operations of the programme. With the Free SHS secretariat (as an example) being a political office placed under the Ministry of Education, the tension between a formally implementing state institution, the GES and the operations of the free SHS secretariat as a politically created informal structure was a point of notice. The study observed that, this centralization and political control of the free SHS programme became the channel through which the vertical distribution of benefits to functionaries of the ruling party were executed, which reflected in policy operations and procurement of goods and services under programme.

9.2.4 Competitive programmatic politics explains universalistic approach

In its unique analytical chapter which synergised the findings of the study, the study observed that the political expediency motive to the policy made the government to prioritise short term policy target which was more visible to the voter and will attract immediate political reward. One key observation made from the study which explained why under a competitive clientelism the ruling coalition still promised and implemented a universal policy, is the nature of Ghana's competitive partisan politics. The keen contest among political parties make them adopt new ways and approaches to maximize electoral votes which results in parties resorting to clientelist trading using the provision of public goods and services which are equally in demand by voters and doing so with the wider population. This was evident in the huge public endorsement and large receptivity that the free SHS policy enjoyed despite various dissenting views and an apparent disagreement over policy approach. Also, unlike redistributive policies that are targeted at addressing development gaps with observable benefits, popular or universal programmes operates in arena of no conflicts and are argued for their inclusiveness which is usually preferred by ruling elites in a competitive clientelism political setting. In the process, political parties become in the description of Abdulai (2017) 'programmatic parties' tied with and respond to social programming more than their known political philosophies.

9.3 Conclusion

The competitive partisan-politics in education reforms showed manifestations in both the discourse and processes leading to the adoption and implementation of the Free SHS policy. This was shaped by partisan-politics interest which has implications for policy reforms and outcomes. This study has identified that the manner with which the free SHS

policy emerged through adoption to its implementation is explained by Ghana's political context of competitive clientelism. Even though the need to provide a functional secondary education to all people was a compelling reason for the introduction of the free SHS by the government, it was equally motivated by political factors which weighed higher on policy prescription and implementation manner. The ensuing interactions between political context and the free SHS policy process can be understood from some key perspectives. One is that, the quest to respond to electoral accountability by satisfying the voter is what defined how the free SHS was adopted and implemented. The implementation of the free SHS could therefore be seen as a response to rendering a political accountability by the government and as well as to winning electoral support. Again, this same context of maximizing electoral votes is what explained why a universal free secondary education was implemented under a competitive clientelism. Another conclusion made from the study is that Ghana's prevailing competitive clientelism has the space to enhance social provisioning and social service delivery. Generally, political clientelism is perceived in the negative sense, being associated with parochialism, where political elites seek their selfish political interests (Levy, 2014). However, the competition that exist for winning electoral votes under competitive clientelism makes political elites to get committed to implementing social programmes. There is the understanding that political parties in Ghana have become more programmatic than ideological. This could be considered as positive especially for the progress of social policy making. In other words, Ghana's current political dispensation of competitive partisan politics can equally be leveraged to enhance or promote transformative social development despite the pursuance of short term development agenda by political elites.

9.4 Study Recommendations

The way and manner competitive clientelism played out in the Free SHS policy process has produced various results and implications in terms of outcomes and lessons for both policy and research. Considering how policy context interacted with political arrangements to produce both familiar and unfamiliar outcomes, it is generally recommended, the need to strengthen understanding on the manifestations of political settlements and competitive clientelism in specific country contexts. The study also recommends the need to neutralize the bottlenecks that come in the way of education reforms due to Ghana's competitive clientelism to achieve transformative policy interventions. This can be achieved by leveraging on the inherent opportunities in the nature of Ghana's political settlements particularly, with its emerging trends and dynamics in state power alternations beyond the short-termism normally associated with competitive clientelistic states. The study gives the following specific recommendations based on its key findings and conclusions:

9.4.1 For future research – Towards a new PS framework to suit Ghana's emerging political dynamics

Ghana's political settlement context is continuously evolving with new dynamics. Building on earlier expositions made by the study on leveraging Ghana's existing PS typology, the study is of the conviction that the electoral dynamics and nature of Ghana's competitive clientelism has the space for policies and reforms that can enhance social provisioning and engender positive social service delivery. Even though Ghana is said to be facing short-termism stability

in its development efforts due to the nature of its political arrangements (Awal & Oduro, 2017; Whitfield, 2011), an emerging defacto two term electoral tradition provides that 'certainty' and stability to achieve transformational development. Abdulai and Sackeyfio (2020); Boakye (2018) and Ninson (2016) have all argued that Ghana is undergoing an emerging electoral dynamics under its fourth republic that is establishing a certain de facto two-term peaceful alternation of power between the two dominant political traditions. This according to Boakye (2018) present a new model of political context for Africa and emerging democracies. In the view of this study, this emerging electoral trend under Ghana's fourth republic provides some stability in governance that is required to achieve a transformative and developmental settlement. This study is of the opinion that Ghana's emerging state holding power dynamics, together with the strengths inherent in its current competitive multi-party democracy present a case for further studies to understand these new dynamics better and be presented as a suitable typology or model which can be used to foster transformational development agenda.

9.4.2 For policy lessons and implications

First, despite the huge partisan-politicisation surrounding the Free SHS, the policy enjoys popular support and endorsement even across political divides. This presents a unique way to undertake policy assessment and reworking with minimal threat of the ruling party suffering political punishment. In the view of this study, the political contest over who owns or was the first to introduce the free SHS policy (in which ever form) shows the political relevance of the policy and also presents a unique opportunity to leverage on by the government to undertake a holistic policy assessment and reworking without being politically disadvantaged. In other words, to avoid being politically punished, the Government of the day should take advantage of the goodwill of the policy to undertake a national dialogue on free SHS by bringing on board

key stakeholders including the political opposition to agree on a common direction for the policy. Such broad stakeholder engagement by the Government will usefully address the teething issues confronting the implementation and outlook of the policy. This will also purposely guarantee policy continuity for the free SHS no matter which political party comes to power.

Furthermore, considering the emerging trend in public-policy making under Ghana's competitive political settlement, there is the need to find a leverage in the education policy making process by finding a synergy or trade-off between manifestos and their adoptions as public policies. The state should take keen interest in finding ways and means to digest manifesto messages of the major political parties to the public through public and civic education. This will enable the public to be well informed on the various parties proposed programme of actions when voted into power. In this regard, the study lauds the initiative by the CDD on their project titled, "The manifesto Project" which seeks to provide public feed into political parties programming and make them more responsive and reflective to the needs and aspirations of the people. The study also supports the suggestion by IDEG for the NDPC to influence political parties to align their manifestos to various development agenda and reference them to the directive principles of state policy. This will also enhance long term education planning and development.

Finally, as part of the efforts towards ensuring political sustainability of the Free SHS policy and to de-politicise the policy reworking process, Government may consider mainstreaming ad-hoc political structures including the free SHS secretariat. This will formalize the operations of the free SHS and also reduce politicization and fear of political victimization among key

policy implementers. Such move will also promote policy ownership at the implementing level and will also fall in line with achieving what DFID (2010) proposes for attaining 'inclusive political settlement' where formal institutions and officials are strengthened to function properly in performing their primary duties.

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A pictorial description of study context

We have tied our nation's education discourse to competitive partisan-politics and that has implications for policy reforms and outcomes – **The Author**

List of Respondents for the In-depth Interviews

Name	Designation	Institution	Interview Code / Date
School level			
1. Madam Grace Mansa Eshun	Headmistress	St Mary's SHS,	HR 1, 29th July, 2020
2. Mr Kofi Yesu	Assist. Headmaster	Presby Boys SHS, Legon	HR 2, 14th Aug, 2020
3. Mad Sylvia Baaba Yankey	Headmistress	Osudoku SHTS	HR 3, 17th Aug, 2020
4. Mr Peter Djan	Headmaster	Ningo Prampram SHS	HR 4, 5th Aug, 2020
5. Mr S.A. Adama	Assist Head/ NAGRAT President, Gt Accra Reg	Armed Forces SHTS/ NAGRAT	HR 5, 3rd Aug, 2020
6. Mr Emmanuel Ofoe	Headmaster	Accra Academy SHS	HR 6, 30th July, 2020
Civil Society Stakeholders			
7. Alhaji Abubakar Yakubu	National CHASS President	Conference of Heads of Assisted Schools	SR 7, 20th July, 2020
8. Mr Amidu Ibrahim-Tanko	Executive Director	STAR Ghana Foundation	SR 8, 15th Sept, 2020
9. Dr. Vincent Eziah	PTA Chairman &Vice Chair, Regional PTA	SHS Parents Association, Greater Accra region	SR 9, 13th August, 2020
10. Mad Veronica Dzeagu	National Cordinator, GNECC	Ghana National Education Coalition Campaign	SR 10, 11th November, 2020
11. Mr Kofi Asare	Executive Director	Africa Education Watch	SR 11, 9th February, 2021
Policy Experts			
12. Prof Atsu Ayee	Public Policy Expert/ Lecturer	Department of Political Science, UG	ER 12, 12th Oct, 2020
13. Dr. Clement Adamba	Research Fellow	School of Education and Leadership, UG	ER 13, 9th January, 2021
14. Mr Mohammed Awal	Policy Analyst/ Researcher	Centre for Democratic Development (CDD)	ER 14, 16th September, 2020

15. Mr Anis Haffar	Educationist/GES Council member	GES Council/GATE Institute	ER 15, 8th October, 2020
Policy Makers/Political Elites			
16. Hon Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum	Deputy Minister of Education	NPP/Ministry of Education	PR 16, 3rd November, 2020.
17. Hon Williams Quaitoo	MP, Chairman, Education Select Com	NPP/Parliament	PR 17, 5th November, 2020
18. Hon. Dr. Clement Apaak	MP, Ranking Member, Education Select Committee	NDC/Parliament	PR 18, 10th September, 2020
19. Mr William Darkwah	National Cordinator	Free SHS Secretariat, MOE	PR 19, 20th December, 2020
20. Dr. Mrs Angela Tina Mensah	Executive Secretary /former Director, Sec Div	GES/GES Council	PR 20, 20th October, 2020
21. Hon Okudzeto Ablakwa	Former Deputy Minister of Education	NDC/Parliament	PR 21, 18th December, 2020

Appendices

Appendix 1A – Interview Guide for Policy makers/Political elites

1. Why was there the need for a free secondary education policy in Ghana?
2. What do you consider to be the motivating factor(s) behind the introduction of the free SHS policy by the government?
3. How ready was government to have implemented the policy at the time it did?
4. How satisfactory was government consultations with key stakeholders in the policy development process?
5. How is government realistically capable of absorbing every cost of secondary education as presumed in the policy?
6. Why has government not heeded to calls by key stakeholders to consider other alternative approaches (such as targeting) to the policy?
7. Why was the free SHS secretariat established when there is an existing body (GES) responsible for implementing education policies?
8. Would you agree that the free SHS policy package was purposely designed to be different from the existing progressive secondary education?
9. Is the nature of our partisan politics not directing education policy making in Ghana? (probe the role of partisan-politics)
10. How is the free SHS policy politically sustainable?
11. Do you agree to the assertion that the government introduced the free SHS policy for political expediency?

Appendix 1B – Interview Guide for Education officials/Head teachers

1. How justified was the need for a free secondary education policy in Ghana?
2. In your view, what was the reason for the urgency "the haste" in getting the free SHS policy implemented?
3. How satisfactory was government consultations with key stakeholders in the policy process?
4. How realistic is government presumed absorption of every cost element in secondary education?
5. To what extent does the free SHS policy in its current form addresses key policy targets of access, equity and quality?
6. In your view as a technocrat, how should an education policy that seeks to address challenges & gaps be developed?
7. With the free SHS policy politically driven, how do you see the sustainability of the policy in the future?
8. As an implementer of the free SHS policy, what are your observations as far as policy feedback is concerned?
9. Do you think that government now or future, may consider reviewing the free SHS policy package? Why and in which way?

Appendix 1C – Interview Guide for Policy Experts/Civil Society Actors

1. Why was there the need for a free secondary education policy in Ghana?
2. What do you consider to be the **main** motivation behind the introduction of the free SHS policy by the government?
3. How satisfactory was government consultations with key stakeholders in the policy process?
4. What do you consider to be the reason(s) for the hurried implementation of the free SHS policy by the government?
5. Why has the government not heeded to calls to consider other alternative approaches to the free SHS policy?
6. How is government realistically capable of absorbing every cost item of secondary education as presumed by the policy?
7. To what extent does the free SHS policy in its current form addresses key policy targets of access, equity and quality?
8. How has the political context under which the policy emerged shaped policy development and implementation?
9. Is partisan politics not directing social policy making including education reforms in Ghana? (probe the role of partisan politics)
10. How is the free SHS policy politically sustainable?
11. In your view, why was a free SHS secretariat established when there is an existing body (GES) responsible for implementing such policies?
12. To what extent does the free SHS policy in its current form addresses key policy targets of access, equity and quality?

Appendix 2 – Survey Questionnaire administered for the study

Survey Questionnaire
(For: Students, Teachers and Parents)

SECTION A (Demographic Characteristics)

Part I – For Students { }

1. Sex: a. Male [ ] b. Female [ ]
2. Age: .....
3. Ethnicity: a. Akan [ ] b. Ga-Adangbe [ ] c. Mole-Dagbon [ ]
   d. Ewe [ ] e. Guan [ ] f. Other [ ], please specify.....
4. Religion: a. Christianity [ ] b. Islam [ ] c. Traditional [ ] d. Other [ ]
5. Name of School: .....
6. GES classification: a. Well-endowed/ Elite [ ] b. Less-endowed [ ]
7. Track system: a. Single Track [ ] b. Double Track [ ]
8. Programme of study: a. General Arts [ ] b. General Science [ ] c. Business [ ]
   d. Visual Art [ ] e. Agriculture [ ] f. Home Econs [ ] g. Technical [ ]
9. Form/Level: a. Form 1 [ ] b. Form 2 [ ] c. Form 3 [ ]
10. Residential status: a. Day [ ] b. Boarding [ ] c. Hostel [ ]

Part II – For Teachers { }

1. Sex: a. Male [ ] b. Female [ ]
2. Age: .....
3. Area of Residence: a. Urban [ ] b. Semi-urban [ ] c. Rural [ ]
4. Ethnicity: a. Akan [ ] b. Ga-Adangbe [ ] c. Mole-Dagbon [ ]
   d. Ewe [ ] e. Guan [ ] f. Other [ ], please specify.....
5. Religion: a. Christianity [ ] b. Islam [ ] c. Traditional [ ] d. Other [ ]
6. Name of School: .....
7. GES classification: a. Well-endowed/ Elite [ ] b. Less-endowed [ ]
8. Track system: a. Single Track [ ] b. Double Track [ ]
9. Marital status: a. Married [ ] b. Single [ ] c. Divorced [ ] d. Widowed [ ]

Part III – For Parents { }

1. Sex: a. Male [ ] b. Female [ ]
2. Age: .....
3. Area of Residence: a. Urban [ ] b. Semi-urban [ ] c. Rural [ ]
4. Ethnicity: a. Akan [ ] b. Ga-Adangbe [ ] c. Mole-Dagbon [ ]
   d. Ewe [ ] e. Guan [ ] f. Other [ ], please specify.....
5. Religion: a. Christianity [ ] b. Islam [ ] c. Traditional [ ] d. Other [ ]
6. Name of School (where ward attends):.....
7. Marital status: a. Married [ ] b. Single [ ] c. Divorced [ ] d. Widowed [ ]
8. Educational level: a. No Schooling [ ] b. Primary [ ]
   c. JHS/Middle School [ ] d. Secondary/Tech-Voc [ ] e. Tertiary [ ]
9. Occupation: a. Self-employed/Business [ ] b. Formally employed [ ]
   c. Farming [ ] d. Retired [ ] e. Unemployed [ ] f. Other (specify).....

SECTION B

Part I - Examining the rationale behind the free SHS policy – (Tick as applicable, please choose more than one option where necessary)

1. Did you know of any policy that made secondary education free in Ghana before the implementation of the free SHS policy?

a. Yes [ ] b. No [ ] c. Not sure [ ]

2. Do you see the introduction of the free SHS policy in Ghana as necessary?

   a. Yes [ ] b. No [ ] c. Some how [ ] d. Don't know [ ]

3. In your view, what do you consider as the **main reason** for the introduction of the free SHS policy by the Government?
   a. To help the poor access secondary education [ ]
   b. To help the government to win elections [ ]
   c. Just to fulfil a campaign promise by the NPP [ ]
   d. To help the country to develop its human resource [ ]
   e. Other (specify).....

4. In your view, which of the following challenges warranted the introduction of the free SHS policy?
   a. Many parents could not afford to send their children to SHS [ ]
   b. Many BECE candidates could not qualify to attend SHS [ ]
   c. Inability of SHSs in the country to admit large no. of students [ ]
   d. Other (specify).....

5. In your view, were key stakeholders properly engaged in the implementation process of the free SHS policy?
   a. Yes [ ] b. No [ ] c. Somehow [ ] Not sure [ ]

How will you rate the **necessity** of the following packages in the free SHS policy?

Package/Service	Very Necessary	Necessary	Not Necessary
6. Providing free feeding for boarding students			
7. Providing free lunch for day students			
8. Providing free text books, uniform etc			

Part II - The role of partisan politics in shaping the development and implementation of the free SHS policy in Ghana (Tick as applicable, please choose more than one option where necessary)

9. Do you think that the government is implementing the free SHS policy **mainly** to fulfil its campaign promise?
   a. Yes [ ] b. No [ ] c. Somehow [ ] d. Don't know [ ]
10. Which of the following explains why government introduced the free SHS policy?
    a. To win the votes and support of Ghanaians [ ]
    b. For the majority of the population to acquire secondary education [ ]
    c. To appear accountable and gain popularity [ ]
    d. Because of constitutional provision to make secondary education free [ ]
    e. To make all Ghanaians benefits directly from the national resources [ ]
    f. Other (specify).....
11. What key role did the ruling political party (NPP) play in the adoption of the free SHS policy?
    a. They campaigned for it [ ]
    b. They ensured it is implementation [ ]
    c. Influenced the opposition to agree to the need for a free senior high school [ ]
    d. They made the importance of secondary education popular in Ghana [ ]
    e. Other (specify).....
12. What will you consider as a key **contribution** by the political opposition to the free SHS policy?
    a. They supported the policy but not in its current form [ ]
    b. Their government started implementing the policy but in different form [ ]
    c. Their criticism made the Government to improve on the policy implementation [ ]
    d. Other (specify).....
13. How has the partisan nature of the free SHS policy shaped its development and implementation?
    a. It has made the government **not** to accept the views of other stakeholders in implementing the policy [ ]
    b. Has resulted in the policy facing major challenges in its implementation [ ]

c. The policy can easily be interrupted with a change of government [ ]
d. Has made it difficult for school level implementers to give any meaningful feedbacks on the policy for the fear of being punished/antagonized [ ]
e. Other (specify).....

14. Do you agree that the free SHS policy package was intentionally designed to look different from the earlier progressive free SHS by the NDC government?
a. Strongly Agree [ ] b. Agree [ ] c. Disagree [ ] d. Strongly Disagree [ ]

15. Can the free SHS policy influence peoples' voting choice in the next general elections?
a. Yes [ ] b. No [ ] c. Somehow [ ] d. Don't Know [ ]

Part III – Exploring how political clientelism has contributed to achieving free equitable quality secondary education

16. What is your understanding about the free SHS policy currently being implemented by the Government?
a. All expenses about secondary education has been absorbed by the government [ ]
b. No student or the parent should be made to pay anything to go school [ ]
c. Every child must go to SHS as part of basic education [ ]
d. Parents do still make some payments to schools even under the policy [ ]
e. Other (specify).....

17. Do you share the opinion that government **alone may not be able** to provide **adequately** all the resources needed by schools to ensure effective learning as promised by the free SHS policy?
a. Yes, Government **cannot** provide [ ] c. No, Government **can** provide [ ]
b. Somehow, Government can only manage [ ] d. Don't Know [ ]

18. Which of the following do parents still spend on/provide for under the free SHS policy
a. Textbooks, Exercise/Note books [ ]
b. PTA Dues [ ]
c. Feeding [ ]
d. School Levies [ ]
e. Extra Classes [ ]
f. Uniforms
g. Other (specify).....
h. Nothing, everything is provided by government [ ]

19. Is Government **actually** providing **everything** needed by students and schools under the free SHS policy?
a. Yes [ ] b. No [ ] c. Somehow [ ] d. Don't know [ ]

How adequate are government provisions/supplies to students and schools under the free SHS policy

Item/Service	Good Enough	Enough	Somehow	Not Enough	Very Poor
20. Tuition/Teaching (T & L materials)					
21. Text books/Exercise books etc					
22. Food/Feeding					
23. School uniform & other uniforms/dresses					
24. Other school items					

Indicate your level of agreement/disagreement on the following statement on achieving the objectives of the free SHS policy?

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25. More JHS graduates are now able to go to senior high schools.					
26. There are still many JHS graduates who cannot have access to secondary education					
27. Students from deprived public schools are still unable to get access to well-endowed SHSs					
28. Some challenges associated with the free SHS implementation is affecting quality teaching & learning					
29. There is the urgent need for a review of the free SHS policy					

30. Which of the following do you consider as a challenge to the effective implementation of the free SHS policy?

a. Inadequate government supplies to schools [ ]
b. Delay in government release of funds [ ]
c. Non-availability of government funds [ ]
d. Lack of space in SHSs to admit students [ ]
e. Control of decisions and services by the central government [ ]
f. Continued public discussion of the policy along partisan lines [ ]

g. Other (specify).....

Appendix 3 – Ethical Approval from University of Ghana Ethical Committee

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES (ECH)
P. O. Box LG 74, Legon, Accra, Ghana

My Ref. No...ECH 168/19-20 ...

July 23rd, 2020

Mr. Adam Yunus
Centre for Social Policy Studies
University of Ghana
Legon, Accra

ETHICAL CLEARANCE
(ECH 168/19-20)

The protocol tittle below has been approved for a continuation of the study by the ECH Committee.

TITLE OF PROTOCOL: **A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT ANALYSIS OF THE ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL POLICY IN GHANA**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: **MR. ADAM YUNUS**

Please note that the final review report must be submitted to the Committee at the completion of the study. Your research records may be audited at any time during or after the implementation. Any modification of this research project must be submitted to ECH for review and approval prior to implementation.

Please report all serious adverse events related to this study to ECH within seven (7) days verbally and in writing within fourteen (14) days.

This certificate is valid till July 22nd, 2021. You are to submit annual reports for continuing review.

Please accept my congratulations.

Yours Sincerely,

Professor C. Charles Mate-Kole
ECH Chair

Cc: Dr. George Domfe, Centre for Social Policy Studies, UG
Dr. Abdul-Gaffaru Abdulai, University of Ghana Business School, UG

Tel: +233-303933866 Email: ech@ug.edu.gh

INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

Appendix 4A - Introductory Letter from CSPS for the collection of field data

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
CENTRE FOR SOCIAL POLICY STUDIES

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL POLICY STUDIES

5th August, 2020

Ref. No.: CSPS/GL1/128

The Director of Secondary Education
Ghana Education Service
Accra

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: ADAM YUNUS

Mr. Adam Yunus is a fourth year Ph.D candidate at the Centre for Social Policy Studies (CSPS), University of Ghana, Legon. His Ph.D dissertation is on the topic **"Political Settlement Analysis of the Adoption and the Implementation of Free Senior High School Policy in Ghana"**

His research strategy requires that he interview the Director of Secondary Education of the Ghana Education Service.

I would be most grateful if you could grant him the needed assistance in acquiring this information. The information collected will be used for his Ph.D thesis.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

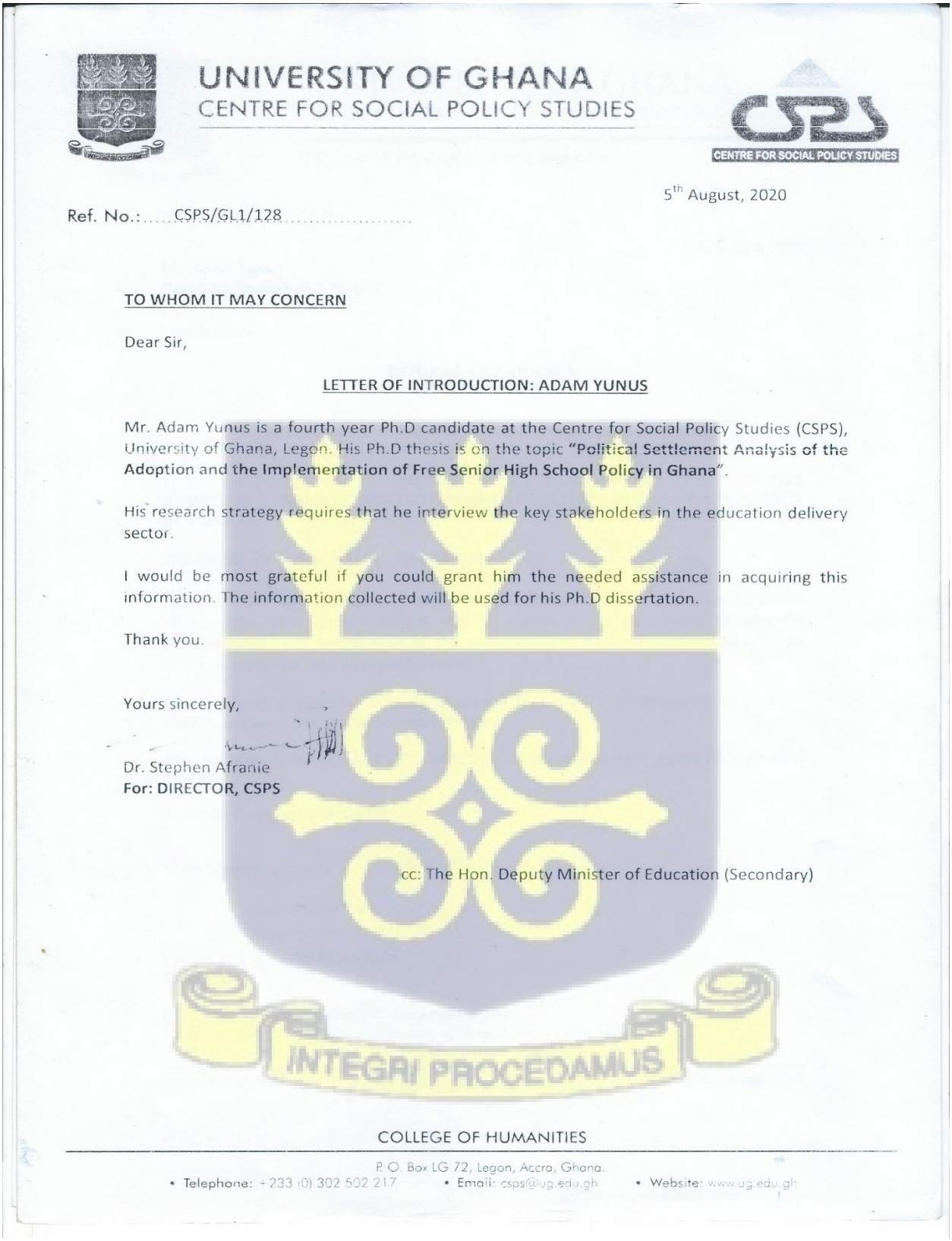
Dr. Stephen Afranie
For: DIRECTOR, CSPS

INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

P. O. Box LG 72, Legon, Accra, Ghana.
• **Telephone:** +233 (0) 302 502 217 • **Email:** csps@ug.edu.gh • **Website:** www.ug.edu.gh

Appendix 4B - Introductory Letter from CSPS for the collection of field data



UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
CENTRE FOR SOCIAL POLICY STUDIES

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL POLICY STUDIES

5th August, 2020

Ref. No.: CSPS/GL1/128

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: ADAM YUNUS

Mr. Adam Yunus is a fourth year Ph.D candidate at the Centre for Social Policy Studies (CSPS), University of Ghana, Legon. His Ph.D thesis is on the topic **"Political Settlement Analysis of the Adoption and the Implementation of Free Senior High School Policy in Ghana"**.

His research strategy requires that he interview the key stakeholders in the education delivery sector.

I would be most grateful if you could grant him the needed assistance in acquiring this information. The information collected will be used for his Ph.D dissertation.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Stephen Afranie
For: DIRECTOR, CSPS

cc: The Hon. Deputy Minister of Education (Secondary)

INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

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