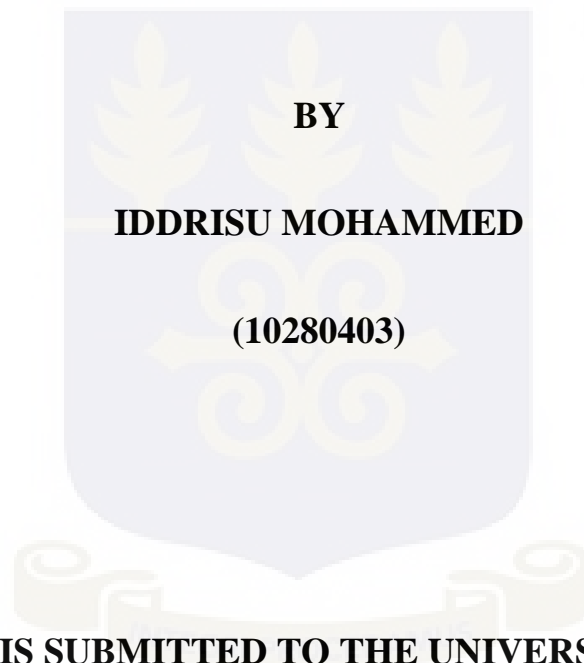


UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

**ACTUALIZING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL FOUR (4)
IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN GHANA.**



BY

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIRMENT FOR
THE AWARD OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION DEGREE**

JULY 2017

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work is the result of my own research undertaken under supervision and has not been presented by anyone for any academic award in this or any other University. All references used in this work have been fully acknowledged. I bear sole responsibility for any shortcomings

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CERTIFICATION

I hereby satisfied that this thesis was supervised in accordance with procedures laid down by the University.

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DR. THOMAS BUABENG
(SUPERVISOR)

.....
DATE



DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late father, Musah Iddrisu and my entire family.



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My first thanks goes to Almighty God for his abundant mercies with health, wisdom, guidance and endurance throughout my academic life in the University of Ghana. I am extremely indebted and grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Thomas Buabeng of Department of Public Administration and Health Services Management for patience, guidance, suggestions and above all the precious time he offered throughout the study period especially for painstakingly going through every page of this work to identify and make relevant corrections.

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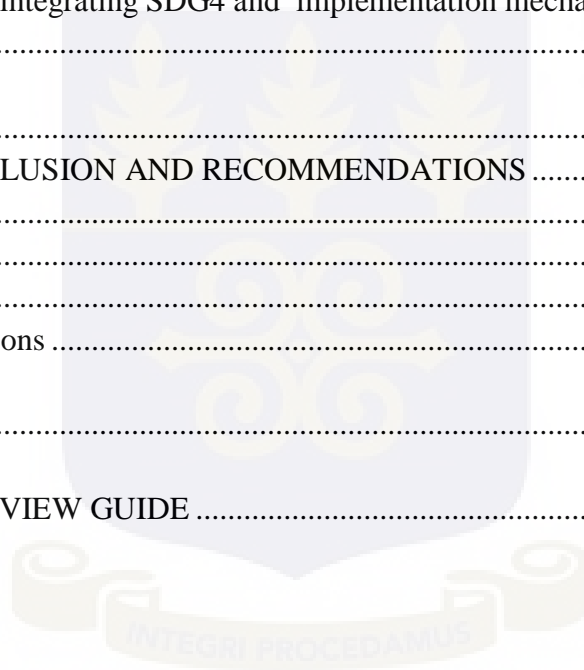
Last but not least, I extend my appreciation to Namumba North District Assembly, especially, Mr. Tackie Tawiah and the Staff of Nanumba North District Directorate of Education their support and responds anytime I call on them.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------|
| DECLARATION | i |
| CERTIFICATION..... | ii |
| DEDICATION | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT | iv |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | v |
| LIST OF FIGURES..... | vii |
| LIST OF ACRONYMES | viii |
| ABSTRACT | x |
| | |
| CHAPTER ONE | 1 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Study Background | 1 |
| 1.2 Research Problem..... | 6 |
| 1.3 Objectives of the Study | 10 |
| 1.4 Research Questions | 11 |
| 1.5 Significance of the Research | 11 |
| 1.6 Research Scope..... | 12 |
| 1.7 Chapter Outline | 12 |
| | |
| CHAPTER TWO | 14 |
| LITERATURE REVIEW..... | 14 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 14 |
| 2.2 Overview of SDGs | 14 |
| 2.3 Implementing Free Primary and Secondary Education policies in Developing Countries..... | 20 |
| 2.4 Implementing Free Primary and Secondary Education Policies in Ghana..... | 27 |
| 2.5 Monitoring of Free Primary and Secondary Education Policies | 32 |
| 2.6 Challenges of Free Primary and Secondary Education Policies | 36 |
| 2.7 The Way forward for Implementing and Monitoring SDG 4 Policies..... | 39 |
| 2.8 Theoretical Reviews | 42 |
| 2.9 Top-Down and Bottom-Up Implementation Approaches. | 42 |
| 2.10 The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)..... | 44 |
| 2.11 Conceptual Framework for the Study..... | 48 |
| | |
| CHAPTER THREE..... | 62 |
| RESEARCH METHODOLOGY | 62 |
| 3.1 Introduction | 62 |
| 3.2 Research Approach..... | 62 |
| 3.3 Research Design | 63 |
| 3.4 Study Area | 64 |
| 3.5 The Study Population | 66 |
| 3.6 Sources of Data..... | 66 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 3.7 Sample Size | 66 |
| 3.8 Sampling Techniques | 67 |
| 3.9 Instruments of Data Collection and Management | 68 |
| 3.10 Data Management and Analysis | 69 |
| 3.11 Ethical issues | 69 |
| 3.12 Field Experience..... | 70 |
| 3.13 Limitation of the study | 71 |
| 3.14 Lessons from the Field of Study..... | 72 |
| | |
| CHAPTER FOUR..... | 73 |
| DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS | 73 |
| 4.1 Introduction | 73 |
| 4.2 Implementation Mechanisms..... | 73 |
| 4.3 Monitoring and Enforcement Mechanisms | 89 |
| 4.4 Challenges of integrating SDG4 and implementation mechanisms | 99 |
| 4.5 Way Forward | 108 |
| | |
| CHAPTER FIVE..... | 111 |
| SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 111 |
| 5.0 Introduction | 111 |
| 5.1 Summary..... | 111 |
| 5.2 Conclusion..... | 118 |
| 5.3 Recommendations | 120 |
| | |
| REFERENCES..... | 124 |
| | |
| APPENDIX: INTERVIEW GUIDE | 136 |



LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1: Revised Diagramme of Acf | 48 |
| Figure 2: Conceptual Framework..... | 60 |



LIST OF ACRONYMES

| | |
|--------|--|
| ACU | Australian Cotholic University |
| ADBGB | African Development Bank Group |
| AU | African Union |
| BECE | Basic Education Certificate Examination |
| CAMFED | Campaign for Female Education |
| CDSHS | Community Day Senior High School |
| ECCE | Early Childhood Care and Education |
| EFA | Education for All |
| EMIS | Education Management Information Systems |
| ESP | Education Strategic Plan |
| ESPR | Education Sector Performance Report |
| FCUBE | Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education |
| GEQAF | General Education Quality Anaalysis Framework |
| GER | Gross Enrolment Rate |
| GES | Ghana Education Service |
| GIAS | Global Institute of Advance Studies |
| GMR | Global Monitoring Report |
| GoG | Government of Ghana |
| GPASS | Girls Participatory Approaches to Students Success |
| GPRS | Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy |
| GSGDA | Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| IISE | Institute of International Studies in Education |
| JAICA | Japan International Cooperation Assistance JAICA, |

| | |
|--------|---|
| JHS | Junior High School |
| MDGs | Millennium Development Goals |
| MMDAs | Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| NSDA | Nanumba South District Assembly |
| NSDDE | Nanumba South District Directorate of Education |
| OECD | Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development |
| PTA | Parent Teacher Association |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SEIP | Secondary School Improvement Project |
| SFP | School Feeding Programme |
| SHS | Senior High School |
| SMC | School management Committees |
| SSA | Sub-Sahara Africa |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| UIS | UN Institute of Statistics |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNECA | UN Economic Commission for Africa |
| UNESCO | United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children Emergency Fund |
| WASSEK | West Africa Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination |
| WEF | World Education Forum |

ABSTRACT

This study focused on actualizing Sustainable Development Goal 4 in Nanumba South District of Ghana. Ghana adopted the SDGs in 2015 and their implementation was launched in January, 2016. It is expected that both national and district level developmental plans are aligned to them. To achieve the research objectives, the study adopted the qualitative research approach and a case study research design to purposely interview officials of the Nanumba South District Directorate of Education and the Nanumba South District Assembly. The study discovered that Nanumba South District Directorate of Education and Nanumba South District Assembly have started to align their developmental and operational plans to achieve the SDGs in general and SDG4 in particular. It also found out that there exist both government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) sponsored policies, programmes and interventions such as scholarships, provision of educational materials and sensitization workshops to achieve the goal. Moreover, this study identified a number of monitoring mechanisms such as supervision, monitoring teams, review meetings and institutionalized data collection and reporting systems used to track the progress of educational programmes in the District. It also further identified a number of implementation challenges such as geographical, administrative, resources and socio-cultural factors affecting the implementation of programmes to achieve the goal. Relevant strategies to facilitate a successfully achievement of the goal are recommended.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The study seeks to explore programmes, interventions and structures put in place to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) four (4), which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. This chapter has been organized under seven sections including study background, research problem, research objectives, and research questions. The other parts cover significance of the study, research scope and organization of the study.

1.1 Study Background

Education is fundamental for global and national development acting as both a means and an end to development (Chege, et al., 2015) and for the achievement of all other global goals ranging from economic prosperity in the form of poverty alleviation to improved human health (United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) & United Nations Educational, Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2007). This necessitates the international community to prioritize the right to education as contained in various treaties and constitutions signed by national governments and being applied to drive economic development and social transformation (ibid). These conventions and treaties include declaration of Universal Human Rights (1948) and UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1966) among others (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007; Anlimachie, 2015). Similarly, national constitutions such as the 1992 Constitution of Ghana provided for educational rights and freedoms for various categories of citizens in the country; Article 25 and 38 as well as Education act 2008, Act 778 respectively make provision for the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities for all citizens and in achieving this, “basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all...” (Republic of Ghana, 2005).

The establishment of numerous developmental goals, targets and their associated indicators for education affirmed the international community's commitment to educational development in the last two decades (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Since 1990, varieties of education-related global goals and their identified targets and indicators have been initiated, namely, Education for All (EFA) goals mooted in 1990 at Jomtien Conference, which was later reaffirmed at the World Education Forum (WEF) in Dakar in 2000 (Tagoe, 2011). Consequently, these goals also found expression in the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs)-Goal Two (2) and Three (3) respectively and in the current SDGs, launched in 2015 as the United Nation 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Transforming our World. The agenda also include the education-related goal, SDG4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UN General Assembly, 2015), also referred to as Education 2030 (UNESCO, et al., 2015).

Prior to the launch of this grand developmental agenda, several other consultative processes and commitments were initiated and signed by member states, facilitated by UNESCO as well as other stakeholders in the education sector. These bodies and consultations include UNESCO and UNICEF, Global Education for All Meeting (GEAM) held in 2014 at Muscat, Oman, and other NGOs consultations and regional ministerial conferences among others, which all culminated in the Incheon Declaration adopted in May 2015 at the WEF in Incheon, Republic of Korea (ibid). Averagely, over 50 United Nations (UN) country-level consultations and national deliberations were initiated, of which one broadly focused on education at all levels (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2012 as cited in Burnett & Felsman, 2014).

These numerous broad consultations were aimed at constituting well-articulated and applicable global goals and targets and their associated indicators adaptable to country-specific context. It also took into consideration peculiar national arrangements, level of

development, national policies and priorities; emphasizing sub-teams such as equitable access and quality of education among others (King & Palmer, 2013; UNESCO, et al., 2015). Although, access to quality basic education was not clearly stated in the just ended MDG but “achieving universal primary basic education,” was popularized (Lewin & Akyeampong, 2009). Globally, the MDGs have achieved some success in areas such as poverty reduction, improved health, access to drinking water, eliminating gender disparity in primary education among others, the agenda had also encountered some short comings in some targets. Although MDGs targets helped to motivate efforts at achievements; in many respects they did not produce the desired outcomes like equity and quality of universal primary education. Substantial progress has been made in increasing enrolment at primary education level in developing countries from eighty-two (82) percent in 1990 to 90 percent in 2010, but quality of learning has continuously deteriorated (Waage & Yap, 2015).

Additionally, analysis of performance in South and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) on disparities in access and completion rate among and within countries revealed that majority of girls of school-going-age mostly in rural areas were still out of school (Education International, 2009). Although challenges such as poverty, armed conflicts and other emergencies also thwarted efforts to achieving the education targets of the MDGs, enrolment reached 78 percent by 2012 (UN MDGs Report, 2015). Arguably, global efforts at meeting educational goals were limited to getting every child into school with less emphasis on education quality, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and adult literacy. Despite the fact that Education for All and the MDGs target of achieving universal primary education by 2015 were particularly meant for developing countries, others found it less relevant (EFA GMR, 2015). Over all, it is estimated that majority of African countries have advanced in access to basic education by closing the gaps in universal primary education with 75 percent increase in enrolment and some like South Africa and Benin, even exceeding up to 90 percent. These

unprecedented achievements are attributable numerous EFA and MDGs initiatives implemented over the years (UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), African Development Bank Group (ADBG) , UNDP, 2011)

Since, the launch of the MDGs in 2000, Ghana governments have instituted various policy frameworks to achieve its targets by 2015, particularly MDG2: Achieving universal primary education by expanding access to children of primary school-age and closing gender gaps. ESP (2010-2020) for instance primarily targeted broad policy areas such as access to quality education, educational management, science and technology and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Effecting these policies required effective programmes and strategies, necessitating the introduction of Capitation Grant initiative by abolishing school fees at basic level of education, improving child care services, promoting gender equity at Primary and Junior High Schools (JHSs), by partnering NGOs and the introduction of Nutrition and School Feeding Programme (SFP) et al.

Invariably, the net effect of these strategies produced impressive outcomes in Gross Enrolment Rate (GER), Gender Parity Index (GPI), Net Enrolment Rate (NER) and Net Admission Rate (NAR), albeit vary across regional and District levels. For instance, GPI increased from 0.95 to 0.96 between 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 academic years (Ministry of Education (MoE), 2015). However, primary school enrolments were not adequate to meet the MDGs universal primary education target by 2015, undermining equitable access to quality country-wide. The mix results attributable to MDGs globally are similar to Ghana as access to education, gender GPI and poverty reduction have been thought to be achieved, other indicators were not realized (UN, 2012) . However, it was argued that slow progress of the MDGs targets stemmed from policy design, content and implementation (Maya, Brett, & Sridhar, 2013). Basically, the MDGs targeted social, environmental and international development partnership albeit sidelined holistic sustainable development contained in

various UN frameworks over several decades (Cloete, 2015). The UN Rio+20 conference was therefore dedicated to extend the achievements of the MDGs into composite SDGs programme spanning over fifteen years (2015-2030) (Griggs, et al., 2014).

At the seventieth session of the UN General Assembly, member states adopted “the post-2015 development agenda: Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” Inherent in this agenda are 17 goals with 169 targets aimed at creating a world of free poverty, hunger, disease, fear, violence as well as providing universal literacy. Their vision also extends to providing equitable and accessible quality education at various stages of education among others (UN, 2015) . Included in these numerous goals and their targets is SDG4 which focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all with its ten (10) interconnected targets. This goal eventually found expression in ESP (2010-2020), which was reviewed in 2016 to reflect the SDGs targets in Ghana (MoE, 2016). Their study therefore intends to explore how the SDG 4 is being integrated by local governments in Ghana.

Although extended progress has been made in attaining universal primary education, refocusing on primary and secondary education in the post-2015 agenda is needed. Preferably, adequate attention should be paid to children from minority, rural, urban slums and conflict-prone communities as well investing in quality and equitable education through reliable funding programmes (UN MDGs Report, 2015). It is therefore imperative for policy makers to be guided by experiences in the execution of policies and programmes within the MDGs framework to implement Sustainable Development related policies ((UNDP Ghana, 2015), particularly Goal four (4)-“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030.”

1.2 Research Problem

Some of the basic criticisms leveled against the MDGs were that they were limited in scope; narrowly defined towards social sectors; disaggregated leading to ‘vertical silos’; over emphasized quantitative measures and limitedly focus on the fundamental objectives in the Millennium Declaration (Vandemoortele, 2011). The outcomes of MDGs consequently shaped the debate around the SDGs. They are mixed views on SDGs with some analysis positing them as agenda in the continuum (UN General Assembly, 2015), while others view them as new set of developmental paradigm requiring fresh policy frameworks for its implementation (Loewe, 2012). Arguably, the implementation of policies and strategies globally to achieve the just ended MDGs has yielded varied outcomes across regions, countries and localities around the globe (UNESCO MDGs Report, 2015). Similarly, almost all SSA countries have instituted programmes to achieve MDGs education-related indicators such as universal access and gender parity. Although, results of these indicators had improved, albeit undermined quality performance and context-specific (Lewin & Akyeampong, 2009; MoE, 2015).

The operationalization of the MDGs and EFA in Ghana was done through her medium-term development policy frameworks such as GPRS I and II, Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA I) (2010-2013) and GSGDA II (2014-2017), Education Sector Strategic Plans among others, which provided mechanisms for planning, monitoring and evaluation through Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) as well as Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) (UNDP Ghana, 2015). In spite of the huge investments made by Ghana government and her development partners over the past fifteen years on the various policy interventions and reforms, resulting to expanded access at all levels, overall academic achievements-quality performance of students in deprived communities are still very low (Ansong, et al., 2015). They vary among and within

regions in the country especially along the north-south divide (Ansong, et al., 2015) and non-deprived and deprived districts dichotomy (MoE, 2015). Girls particularly in rural north get less of quality education as compared to their counterparts in south, urban and peri-urban areas (Akyempong, et al., 2007).

Furthermore, Ghana ESPR (2015) revealed gaps in educational access and quality indicators between Ghana Education Service (GES) categorized Deprived and Non-deprived Districts on one hand and National and Deprived Districts on the other hand. Although enrolments in both public and private schools at Kindergarten, primary and JHSs continue to progressively improve over the years, quality indicators such as completion rate and academic performance continue to drop, especially in the last two years. GER for primary, JHSs and Senior High Schools (SHSs) particularly peaked 110.4, 85.4 and 45.6 percent respectively for the 2014/2015 academic year for the national level as compared to 112.2 and 73.7 percent for the Deprived Districts. However, academic performance such as the 2014 Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results analysis revealed huge gaps in the performance of pupils from deprived and non-deprived districts in the country. While majority of pupils perform above average in the non-deprived districts in the four core subject areas with percentages ranging from 24.9% to 26.3% in all the four core subjects, the deprived districts recorded percentages from 8.1% to 13% below average in all the four core subject areas. These results are also reflected in the completion rates, varying between the deprived and the national coverages. For instance, for the 2014/2015 academic year, deprived districts recorded 94.9% as compared to 99.6% for the national level at the JHS level, which also reflects other levels of basic education (MoE, 2015).

The failure of these numerous interventions to yield uniform outcomes across board is attributable to fundamental structural challenges in the educational system, including limited supply of educational infrastructure and materials, high cost of education, transportation-

“scattered communities making them ‘hard-to-reach areas,’ low motivation of teachers among others (UNDP & Ghana Statistical Service, 2013; MoE, 2015). The challenges enumerated above justified the inequities and inadequacies of various policies and interventions being implemented across the country over the last decade. Thus, educational policies and programmes designed to take into consideration the different factors in rural and urban context, diverse economic and social conditions of people from different regions and localities, implemented by professionals within the field of education and focusing on human rights perspectives will help to achieve the relevant educational outcomes in Ghana (Abukari, et al., 2015; Anlimachie, 2015; Ansong, et al., 2015). A national EFA review reports submitted to WEF held in 2015 by Ghana on the post-2015 agenda- SDG 4 indicates that the goal focused on increasing equitable access to and participation in quality education; improving quality teaching and learning as well as improving efficient management of education service delivery as outlined in Education Sector Medium Term Plan (2014-2017) (UNESCO, 2015; ESP (2010-2020)). Thus, indicating Ghana’s plans towards achieving SDG 4.

The 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development, launched in September 2015, replaced the just ended MDGs, instituted in 2000 by the global community to be achieved by 2015. The two differ slightly in the sense that the SDGs processes were state-led, while the MDGs processes were led by international agencies. Specifically, SDG4 encompasses life-long learning from childhood through adulthood emphasizing key themes of quality education, learning, inclusion and equity, but MDGs 2 and 3 focused on universal primary education and gender equity in educational access respectively (UNESCO, 2016). Furthermore, SDG4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. To attain this goal and its specific targets requires effective and context-relevant policies and interventions as stipulated by Education 2030 Incheon

Declaration's indicative strategies. The indicative strategies include formulating policies and laws to safeguard free, fully funded, "inclusive, equitable, quality primary and secondary education..." (UNESCO, et al., 2015)

NSD in northern region is one of the Ghana Education Service categorized deprived districts lagging behind in most of the educational indicators on equitable access and quality at the basic level of education. Indeed, its 2010 population and housing census data District analytical report stipulates that 68.2% of age 12 and above had no education, only 24% had basic education and 6.3% attaining secondary education (Nanumba South District Assembly (NSDA), 2014).

Similarly, analysis of the performances of JHSs' BECE grades for 2014/2015 academic year for the District shows remarkable improvements in students' performance for the past three years. However literacy and numeracy skills of students are still low. Indeed, general pass rate was above 50% showing great improvement over past three years. But differences between rural and urban areas on one hand and between males and females on the other hand were wide. However, moving forward, at the Senior High School (SHS) level, the performance was not encouraging. Out of 445 students, those who passed core subjects, per GES standards, to qualify them for next levels of the educational system include English Language-46, Mathematics-1, Integrated Science-4 and Social Studies-65. Also, the disparities between males and females' performances were wide. All these challenges are attributable to relatively high pupil-teacher ratios. For instance, the average ratio for 2015/2016 academic year was 40:1, with an estimated 95 untrained teachers still in the system (NSDDE, 2016). These performances and challenges call for more interventions to bridge the rural urban gaps on one hand and the females and their male counterparts on the other hand. The challenges focus more on access to equitable quality education in Ghana. Quality indicators such as BECE results, end-of-term assessment scores, percentage of

qualified teachers, pupil-teacher ratio among others should be categorized into either rural or urban or deprived and non-deprived Districts to help monitor equity variables in the education sector (Roland, et al., 2010).

Although relatively few studies are available on achieving equitable quality education in Ghana in relation to the post-2015 development agenda, majority of them focused on impacts of the education-related MDGs, and proposals to tailor implementation programmes to local context and needs (Abukari, et al., 2015; Anlimachie, 2015; Ansong, et al., 2015; Ansong, et al., 2015), especially in the post-2015 agenda (MacNaughton, 2015) and to achieve SDG4 (Anlimachie, 2016). No work has however been sighted on mechanisms to achieve SDG4. The present study therefore specifically intends to identify implementation and monitoring mechanisms being put in place to integrate into local government development plans and to achieve SDG4 in NSD of Ghana.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to explore implementation and monitoring mechanisms to achieve SDG 4 which states that by 2030 ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Specific Objectives

Specifically, the research study sought:

1. To find out the implementation mechanisms to achieve SDG 4 in NSD.
2. To find out monitoring mechanisms put in place to track the progress of SDG 4 in the NSD.
3. To identify the challenges facing the implementation mechanisms to achieve SDG4 NSD.

4. To find out strategies for effective implementation of policies and programmes towards achieving SDG 4.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the implementation mechanisms put in place to achieve SDG 4 the NSD?
2. What are the monitoring mechanisms designed to guide implementation of SDG4 NSD?
3. What are challenges facing the implementation mechanisms to achieve SDG4 in the NSD?
4. What are the strategies for effective implementation of policies and programmes towards achieving SDG 4 in the NSD?

1.5 Significance of the Research

The research will be significant in terms of research, policy and practice. For research purpose, the study seeks to provide bases for the adoption of relevant policies in the education sector to achieve SDG 4, which states that ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. As a new global development paradigm being incorporated into our current national policies, it is imperative to bring to bear the policy frameworks put in place to achieve the overriding SDG 4 within the next fifteen (15) years. This is particularly important for rural Ghana since majority of them lagged behind the just ended MDGs, especially the deprived districts because little research has been done in this area. Moreover, the study will contribute to the already existing literature on educational policies and programmes both nationally and locally as it intends to adopt global educational conceptual frameworks in its analysis. Practically, the study will provide adequate policy formulation and implementation guidelines to national and field administrators and managers in the education sector to effectively incorporate

context-specific strategies and programmes to achieve SDG 4 in the deprived and non-deprived districts of the country. It will also provide clues for them to design appropriate and effective monitoring mechanisms to track the progress of SDG 4 in the country as well as other related targets. Most importantly the perceived local and administrative implementation challenges will also be realized and contained during the implementation process. Policy wise, the study will aid district level educational managers to integrate locally relevant strategies into national decentralized policies within the short and long term to improve free equitable quality education in the country.

1.6 Research Scope

The study explores implementation and monitoring mechanisms to achieve SDG4 in NSD in Ghana. Using NSD as local government unit will limit the overall generalization of the results of the study. It is only confined to the four objectives identified for the study. The study adopts a qualitative research approach using in-depth interviews to find out implementation mechanisms to achieve SDG 4. This will also limit the generalization of the study.

1.7 Chapter Outline

The first chapter comprises; research background, problem, and purpose, as well as objectives of the study, questions, significance, scope and limitations and organization of the research. Second chapter focuses on the review of relevant literature on the policies, programmes and strategies implemented to achieve free primary and secondary education and gender equity since 2000 under MDGs 2 and 3 respectively as well as UN agencies' reports on the progress and achievements of MDGs 2 and 3. The policy frameworks and the preparatory reports on SDG 4 and their targets and proposed indicators will also be reviewed as well as Theoretical Perspectives on policy change and implementation. The third chapter encompasses the methodological approaches highlighting the profile of the case setting or

study area, source and sampling population, sampling techniques and size, method of data collection and its instruments, data processing and analysis, unit of analysis and ethical considerations. Chapter four encompasses presentation of data, analysis, and discussions of findings and finally, chapter five comprises of summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations, followed by references and appendices.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews empirical and theoretical literature on policy implementation and monitoring mechanisms. The first part of the chapter discusses SDGs overview, concepts of SDG4, implementing free Primary and Secondary Education policies, monitoring and challenges as well as the way forward for SDG 4. The second part review literature on theoretical reviews of top-down, bottom-up and also the Advocacy Coalition Framework also presents the conceptual framework for the study.

2.2 Overview of SDGs

The SDGs agenda came into fruition after the Rio+20(2012) provided grounds for intergovernmental negotiations to constitute a set of plausible and holistic SDGs. Apparently, the principles underlining the SDGs are drawn from the just ended MDGs (Olsen, et al., 2014). SDGs are anchored on the principles of UN charter and respect for international law. It is further grounded on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, various global human rights treaties, the Millennium Declaration and 2005 World Summit Outcome Document. Member countries therefore in 2015 reaffirmed all the UN summits laying foundation for the SDGs (UN, 2015).

The SDGs are part of the global goals instituted to build on the achievements of the MDGs which normatively expired in 2015. It is dubbed “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” which is intended to promote welfare of people and the planet as well as promote prosperity, peace and partnership (Nicolai, et al., 2015). It was adopted in September, 2015 by Heads of States and Governments as well as High level representatives in New York at the seventieth anniversary of the UN. All the 193 member

countries comprising both developed and the developing countries agreed on the agenda to be applied in all countries in the next 15 years (Klapper, El-Zongbi, & Hess, 2016).

The SDGs comprise 17 goals with 169 associated targets arrived at after a series of consultations and high level intergovernmental negotiations as well as recommendations of an open working group put in place by the UN Secretary General. These goals are universal and adaptable to peculiar national arrangements and developmental levels. It also takes cognizance of national policies and priorities. The targets are global in nature and serve as guidance for setting national targets in respect of real national aspirations and policies.

The 17 goals include:

1. Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere;
2. Ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition as well as promoting sustainable agriculture;
3. Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages;
4. Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all;
5. Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls;
6. Ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;
7. Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and moderate energy for all;
8. Promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
9. Building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation;
10. Reducing inequality within and among countries;
11. Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable;
12. Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns;

13. Taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts;
14. Conserving and sustaining the use of oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development;
15. Protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss;
16. Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels and
17. Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

Each of these goals has its associated targets meant to be achieved by 2030. Invariably, goal four which is under study has 10 interrelated targets ranging from target 4.1 to 4.b. It states that by 2030, member states should ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UN General Assembly, 2015). SDG 4 is a holistic and an adaptable goal reflecting the desire of stakeholders in the education sector to achieve the education and learning needs of the marginalized, under-served, and poor population of every country. Its scope expands beyond the MDGs, which was focused on attaining universal primary education and narrowing gender gaps between males and females. It underpins the core principles of EFA and the Incheon Declaration (2015) (Osorio, 2016). Its principles call for planning and contextualization of education, focusing on diversity, quality learning and education along the life course (Xavier & Margarita, 2016).

Over the years international aid meant for development has focused on education. Although donors after the inception of UN thought that state expansion will eventually bring expansion to schooling. However, in of wake of democratization across the globe, the educational

system has not expanded. To avert this phenomenon, donor partners employed broad strategic planning processes by 1990. This culminated the launch of the EFA concept by UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP and the World Bank. The EFA were related to the just ended MDGs and both were intended to be achieved by 2015. Although, advancements were made on these twin frameworks, their indicators fell below their targets by 2015. Beyond these agendas, a series of international conferences eventually led to the adoption of an integrated list of SDGs including SDG4 (ibid).

SDG 4 has 10 interrelated targets, which include:

- 4.1 : By 2030, ensure all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes;
- 4.2 : By 2030, ensure that all boys and girls have access to early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education;
- 4.3 : By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable technical, vocational and tertiary education including, university;
- 4.4 : By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship;
- 4.5 : By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable including persons with disabilities, indigenous people and children in vulnerable situation.
- 4.6 : By 2030, ensure that all youth and substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve numeracy and literacy;
- 4.7 : By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education

for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and culture's contribution to sustainable development;

4.a: Build and upgrade educational facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all;

4.b: By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships availability to developing countries, in particular least develop countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries and

4.c: By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small-island developing States.

It is increasingly evident that there exist strong links on issues of equity, equality and quality of children in relation to opportunities to participation in formal education, quality of their experiences in schools, learning outcomes and overall achievement (Wood et al., 2011; Kadle, 2013). Arguably, the conception of quality from structural and process lenses makes it difficult to measure, because inequity and inequality cannot easily be determined by the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom, but also the conditions under which teachers work as well as the socio-cultural and economic milieu that shape teachers work. Access to education is embedded in the conception of right to education as contained in international conventions and charters of human rights such as the declaration of human rights by the UN in 1948. Article 26 of the convention stipulates for free compulsory

elementary education at least, availability of professional and technical education and accessibility of higher education. It also further enjoined nations to direct education to the full development of human personality, advancing respect for human rights and freedoms as well as building common understanding, tolerance and friendship among different nations and different groups-religious or racial. (Nashimura, et al, 2015).

Free access to education may be referred to the provision of number of schools and their locations, the number of grades available as well as the appropriate mechanisms put in place to foster progression of pupils from primary to secondary and vocational levels (Geissinger, 1997). Broadly, it does not limit to the availability and proximity of places but encapsulates the supply and demand side of school participation. The supply side addresses the provision of infrastructure, teaching and learning materials and teachers while the demand side is normally influenced by family and personal characteristics (Sifuna, 2007). The apparent disparities in educational provision in communities underpin the development of strategies by policy planners to expand access and increase school participation especially in developing countries. It has been the primary policy goals of developing countries to broaden access to education in the past several decades (Sifuna, 2007; Nashimura, et al., 2015). Equity can also be conceived in terms of fairness, where pupil's social and personal situations do not undermine their route to achieving education potentials as minimum standards, where socio-economic backgrounds are not considered in distributing education benefits, but equal opportunities for all. It is often imperative for schools to provide equitable and quality education but normally academic achievements are hampered by disability, gender background, location-urban, rural or remote and socio-economic status (Komalavalli, 2013) Equitable education means ensuring that educational benefits extend to the most disadvantageous or marginalized regions, poorest, disabilities, remote localities and ethnic minorities through practical policies and initiatives. It involve adopting "policies, planning,

institutional structures, capacity, partnership and coordination to achieve the right of all children to education in their locality...” This is usually achieved by implementing these policies in a safe and child-friendly environment; attention is paid to diversity to reduce barriers to participation and learning.

However, most often than not in many countries, public spending on education is based on equal amount per child(horizontal equity), instead of considering disparities in schools and regions and the needs of the most disadvantaged groups(vertical equity) (UNESCO, 2015; Wood, et al., 2011; Kadle, 2013). Apart from viewing equity from either horizontal or vertical point, where the former tends to mean giving equal people equal opportunities or the later emphasizing treating unequal people equitably and basically structured to reduce inequality, albeit making horizontal equity a means to achieving vertical equity (Wood, et al., 2011; Brown, 2006). Quality education on the other hand is the one that focuses on basic learning needs and shapes the overall lives and experiences of learners. It also reflects the health, environment, content, processes and outcomes of learners and learning in general (UNICEF, 2000). Educational quality can be conceived as a productive system combining school inputs to generate the desire outputs and outcomes. School outputs may include test scores in subject area or number of students who obtained a particular qualification without delay. Thus school environment produces both input and constraints and also generates the desire outputs as goals the school (OECD, 2005 as cited in Wood, et al., 2011).

2.3 Implementing Free Primary and Secondary Education policies in Developing Countries

Education inspires individuals, communities, nations and the global community’s hopes; it is a route to getting people out of poverty, living more prosperous lives and developing wealthier and stronger societies. Above all it is a means and an end to development (Chege, et al., 2015), a process of changing people’s lives, unearthing human inherent potentials, so

develop to achieve peaceful and greater future. It primarily does not only imply a moral duty to promote quality education but vision of future investment (UNESCO; UNICEF; UIS, 2015). Many forums in national, regional and global context have reiterated the role of education in development (Chege, et al., 2015) and this culminated in to the development of national policy frameworks and plans to realize this most important right of the child.

Universal Primary Education was popularized in the 1950's mostly in developing countries with different conceptions including providing spaces for school-age pupils, enacting legislations to compel and encourage children to attend to school, emphasis on literacy or enrolment of pupils between the ages of 6 to 11. Its underlining principles encompass human rights, equity and socio-economic development (Nashimura, et al., 2015). The UN Declaration of Human Rights for instance, and similar other global conventions and treaties motivated further efforts to design policies and programmes to realize the right to education of the child. Furthermore, global goals such as the EFA Conference in 1990 at Jomtien, the Darkar Framework for Action as well as the MDGs, which all basically focused on education, engineered several policies and programmes in developing countries to achieve them within their stipulated period especially for EFA and MDGs by 2015 (Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009). The implementation of EFA and MDGs together therefore saw the design and adoption several policy frameworks to achieve their education-related targets especially MDG 2 and 3.

Prior to this period, during the independence era in the 1960's, countries invested in Free Basic Education to build human capital and propel economic growth and enhance political involvement of the masses, but could not fulfill their intended objectives as governments faced huge financial burden to create more access across their countries as the educational systems expanded (World Bank, 2009). In line with international efforts to attain Universal Primary education by 2015 (ibid) and achieve the EFA and MDGs education-related goals 2

and 3, several policy frameworks were instituted. These include laws mandating compulsory pre-primary and primary education and interventions such as full abolition of fees, elimination of tuition fees for a targeted group, provision of free school uniforms and other educational materials, financial incentives and public awareness campaigns etc. which largely increase school enrolment and other access-related outcomes such as school entry, attendance, continuous grade advancement among others, but called for further studies on the sustainability of these gains (Morgan, et al., 2014).

Results indicate that between 1999 and 2012 pre- primary and primary enrolments have improved by 64% and 20% respectively. This notwithstanding, it is estimated that 58 million children are out of school globally and about 100 million children have not completed primary education and inequality is still challenging the poorest and the most disadvantaged especially urban slums and rural areas as well as communities and regions within countries (EFA GMR, 2015). Thus, achievements of these discrete interventions were visible at the end of 2015: Available data indicate that at the end of 2015, out of school children have dropped by 42% globally and girls specifically have dropped by 47%. However, an estimated 58 million children are still out especially those between 6 and 11 years. These outcomes affirm the inability of the global community to fulfill the promise made in 2000 to achieve 100% universal primary education by 2015 (UNESCO, UIS and UNICEF, 2015).

Invariably, it was estimated that universal primary education could have been achieved by 2015 if the progress in reduction of out-of-school children had remained 1.9 million pupils between 2005 and 2008 as happened between 1999 and 2004 (UNESCO, 2014). For instance, Indonesian government has also instituted various interventions through policy frameworks such as The 2003 National Education System Law, which provided regulatory framework for strengthening the teaching force, reforming the curriculum and teaching methodology, improving school-based management and increasing expenditures to address

inequities, however, there are still glaring challenges engulfing the country's educational system. They include inequities along regional and socio-economic lines, financial sustainability of teaching reforms and inability of the education system to provide quality education to equip students for employment among others ((Julia, Wales, Syamsulhakim, & Suharti, 2014). Thus, the underlining challenges in most countries struggling to achieve universal primary education have been inadequate provision of resources and educational materials.

Generally, global analyses indicate impressive progress on the achievements of the MDGs and EFA. It is estimated that the EFA goal of universal primary education recorded 20 percentage points increase from 1999 to 2012 in 17 countries, 11 of which were in SSA, but as revealed above 58 million pupils are still out of school. Also, increasing access was challenged by high dropout rates in at least 32 countries, 20% of pupils in SSA could not reach the last grade and a further 100million pupils were expected not have completed primary education. Likewise, there has been an increase in progression and retention to lower secondary school level from 71% in 1999 to 85% in 2012, while the inequalities between the rich and poor widen. Additionally, literacy rates have improved over the years with a marginal drop from 18% in 2000 to 14% in 2015 or increased 8% between 1990 and 2015 (UNESCO, EFA GMR, 2015; UN MDGs Report, 2015).

Furthermore, progress on universal primary education since 2000 has been steady and narrowly widened across the developing regions around the globe. Statistical data available for these regions revealed that SSA recorded the highest progress of 20% between 2000 and 2015; followed by Southern Asia with 15%, Western Asia and North Africa 9% each, while Eastern Asia and Southern Asia recorded 1% each. Caucasus and Central Asia as well as Latin America and the Caribbean showing no improvement but still maintained high rate of

94% and 95% respectively as against SSA of 80%, South- East Asia of 94%, Southern Asia of 95% with North Africa reaching the highest of 99% among others.

Comparatively, developed regions recorded a reduction of 1% as against increment of 8% points for developing regions (UN MDGs Report, 2015). According to Tinker (2011), the introduction of school fees for instance, at the basic level in many African countries after independence to help governments meet their budgetary needs during economic down turn in the 1980's, contributed to enrolment decline and quality as many poor families could not afford the basic expenditures required to keep their children in school. The introduction of policies and interventions as a way of absorbing school fees in the 1990's and during the MDGs period further worsened quality of education; governments could not find enough school resources in a form of infrastructure, teachers and teaching and learning materials to match the increasing numbers of pupils. Parents' involvement in school management, reallocation of resources and targeted programmes in a form of cash transfers to the poor to take care of some additional cost from school among others were suggested to improve quality of education.

At the end of 2015 deadline for the MDGs, it is observed that Africa has recorded huge progress towards the attainment of its goals, despite the initial challenges faced to start off. Majority of the success areas include increase enrolment, gender parity, increasing women representation among others; demonstrating wider global partnership and international commitments to the agenda. As at 2012, progress in primary completion was encouraging with 67% primary completion rate, analysts had however posited that Africa would not be able to achieve its target by 2015 as an estimated only 20% of African countries had not reached the target. Additionally, youth literacy also recorded a boost of 75% between 2000 and 2012 with countries such as Botswana, Equatorial Guinea, Libya, South Africa Swaziland and

Tunisia achieving above 95 percent youth literacy (UNECA, African Union (AU), ADBG, UNDP, 2015).

Over the years attention has therefore been paid to designing and executing initiatives to facilitate the realization of the right to education and the overall universalization of primary education in Africa. Careful planning and execution underlines positive and sustained outcomes of these initiatives. However, access to basic education in SSA was the lowest in the mid-way to the achievement of MDGs by 2015 with over 25 million pupils still not in school at the primary level as compare to 75 million children at the secondary level. They were varied programmes to expand access to primary education to the detriment of quality, sustaining the large number of students from primary schools at secondary schools was a big challenge. Unequal participation was prevalent under the disguise of narrow definition of access which over looked the differing backgrounds children are coming from such as location, level of family income, gender among others. SSA quest to overcome numerous challenges such as poverty, hunger, low productivity and commerce among others will only be achievable if access to basic education is equitable and of high quality. These can be achieved through adaptable policies to include the disadvantage through national curriculum, educational practices and methods (Lewin & Akyempong , 2009). It is further argued that quantity sustainability as well as equity and quality should be the focus of the next stage of these policies across these countries (Ogawa, et al., 2009).

Countries in Africa in the mid-1990s started to implement fee abolition policies for universal primary education, notably Malawi and Uganda were the pacesetters after abandoning it 1980's (World Bank, 2009; Okamur & Yoshida, 2010). However, Kenya is one of countries in SSA that has introduced three fee abolition polices since its independence in 1963. The first one was in 1974 and the subsequent ones were in 1979 and 2003 respectively (Somerset, 2009) by providing initiatives to enhance access, retention, equity, quality and relevance in

the country's educational system. The impacts of these numerous initiatives were not encouraging, thus obstacles to equity, equality, quality and relevance were visible. It is therefore recommended that government should reduce educational wastage, improve infrastructure, recruit more teachers and strengthen monitoring and evaluation in order to achieve equity, equality and relevance (Njoka, et al., 2012; Muyunga, et al., 2010).

The implementation of numerous universal primary education policies further made attempt to decentralize education management in Kenya, however, factors such as gender, religion, ethnicity, and socio-economic background of children undermined equitable outcomes of the policies; equity for the marginalized population was therefore the concern pointed out to ensure the success of universal Primary education policies in Kenya (Nungu, 2010). Additionally, free secondary education introduced by the Kenyan government in 2007. Analyzing the factors that determine progression to secondary education and the strategies to improve it at the household level reveals that factors such as income level of the household; availability of schools; residence, sex and age of students as well as the direct and opportunity costs of secondary education underlie access to secondary education in Kenya. Infrastructural improvement; efficient application of human and financial resources; sustaining strategies to reduce poverty among others were the main strategies identified to help improve access to secondary education (Ngware, et al, 2006; Ohba, 2011).

While the negotiations for the post-2015 agenda were underway, it was observed that education was at the fore front of the agenda, focusing on equity and access to quality education. Quality was however narrowly defined in terms of literacy and numeracy, while concerns of measuring quality are not yet addressed in the new agenda. Teachers are central to quality education delivery but the broad consultations failed to engage the diverse context of teaching and learning, quality should therefore be regarded as a dynamic process and should be viewed broadly in any policy context (Ahamed & Sayed, 2015). The varied

outcomes of these educational indicators point to imbalances of the impact of the numerous interventions rolled out within the last fifteen years. It is quite clear that these challenges do not only limit to country level but influence local and regional divides within countries.

2.4 Implementing Free Primary and Secondary Education Policies in Ghana

Governments of Ghana over the years have instituted policies to realize Universal Primary Education in the country in fulfillment of international conventions they have ratified and Article 25 (1) of the 1992 constitution of Ghana which states among others that educational opportunities and facilities shall be made available to everybody and in realizing this, “basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all” and secondary education and other forms of education including higher education shall also be made available and accessible (Republic of Ghana, 2005). To fulfill this constitutional provision, Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) was launched in 1996 as a ten (10)-year programme designed to institute policy frameworks and interventions to attain universal primary education for all children of school going age (Basic Education Division, Ghana Education Service, 2004).

The FCUBE policy was operationalized through policy frameworks like the ESP (2003-2015), GPRS I and II, GSGDA I) (2010-2013) and GSFDA II (2014-2017). Various strategies and interventions contained in these policy frameworks to ensure the realization of FCUBE include Capitation Grant Programme, School Feeding Programme, Early Childhood Development Services; provision of free school uniforms; Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) programmes in Partnership with other NGO’s to improve GPI in schools among others. These interventions and programmes were put in place as part of other policies to at least serve as a starting point for full realization of FCUBE in Ghana (Issah, et a., 2007). Although these programmes took effect from 2005 onwards, they are contributing to the achievements of FCUBE and MDGs indicators in various ways such as improvement

in GER, GPI, NER and NAR. However, they are still serious challenges being encountered in the implementation processes, namely, insufficient teaching staff, inadequate infrastructure, socio- economic and cultural factors, and geographical obstacles such as distance to rural areas. Therefore, policies and interventions that are adaptable to the under-served areas and specific categories of people such as “over-aged out of school children”, distant school children, minority population etc. will address the current challenges, and example is complementary education. Also the implementation of these programmes requires strong government commitment, partnership, resource mobilization and strategic policy directives (ibid). Interventions that absorb direct cost of school materials such as school uniforms and stationary can help sustain access and enrolment and also cater for the opportunity cost of schooling for poorer households (Kwame, 2009).

As part of governments of Ghana commitment to achieving the EFA goals and MDGs, the Ghana Education Strategic Plan (ESP) (2010-2020), provided mechanisms and strategic goals for the plan period. The overall strategic goal is to ensure equitable access to quality and child-friendly universal basic education for all through various opportunities for all categories of children. The Plan also prioritized access and quality in line with previous strategic plans and their associated interventions in GPRS I and II. The ESP (2010-2020) specifically spells out strategies to improve equitable access and improve participation in quality education at the basic levels. These strategies include abolition of extra fees such as sports by 2010, expanding the SFP to reach other areas and extending it beyond 2011, provide school uniforms to the needy children from 2011 onwards, reduce distance from home to school for those from far areas, ensuring full enrolment of hard-to-reach areas children etc.

By the end of 2015, access indicators such as GER have exceeded the intended target of 100% to 107.3%, while NER have not been met and only improve to 89.3% as at the

2013/2014 academic year. This is similar to the completion rate as it recorded improvement up to 112.4 and declined to 97.5 by 2013/2014 academic year while overall enrolment have increased 7.4%, 5.5% and 8.0% for Kindergarten, Primary and JHSs respectively (MoE, 2015). Quality educational indicators such availability of professional teachers and basic infrastructure such as teaching and learning materials have also been irregular throughout 15 years, for instance, pupil-teacher ratio improved in 2003/2004 to 35:1 and declined to 36:1 in 2005/2006 academic year and the same results is observed up to 2013/2014 academic year of 32:1 Pupil-teacher ratio (UNDP Ghana, 2015). The outcomes of these indicators reflect the commitments of Ghana to attaining the MDGs through series of policy measures during the period under evaluation. These measures among others include improved provision of infrastructure; continuous implementation of the capitation grant; expansion of the school feeding programme; distribution of school uniforms and exercise books; improve service conditions of teachers and establishment of more schools. However, still the challenges being encountered in the sector include inadequate infrastructure and teaching and learning materials; low level of commitment among teachers; inadequate teachers at rural areas; high cost of education among others (ibid). The performance at the Senior High Level has been encouraging as GER has recorded a boost of two (2) percentage points for the 2014/2015 from 2013/2014 academic year, while GPI has also improved since 2013/2014 academic year with enrolment increasing 47.4% for females (MoE, 2015).

Likewise, the MoE (2015), has outlined a number of new programmes and projects being rolled out to expand access to equitable quality education in the next fifteen (15) years. Among them include the Complementary Basic Education Programme to provide numeracy and literacy skills to children using the mother tongue with support from USAID; continuous replacement of dilapidated structures and elimination of schools under trees in deprived communities; training of additional teachers at various teacher training institutions in the

country and under the Teachers Diploma in Basic Education (UTDBE) programme; the continuous implementation of the GPEG grant project and the Girls Participatory Approaches to Students Success (GPASS) programme among others. At the second cycle level of education, a number programmes are also being implemented to improve access and equitable quality education. These include implementation of progressively Free SHS education by subsidizing cost of education which took off in the 2015/2016 academic year and the construction of Community Day Senior High Schools (CDSHS) project under the Secondary School Improvement Project (SEIP) in 125 low-performing schools in the country. Additionally, the IE policy is being rolled out as heads and staff of schools have been trained to identify students with special needs and disability. Sensitization and dissemination workshops and programmes have been carried out to raise the awareness of stakeholders such as parents, media, NGOs and opinion leaders among others on the importance of IE and the dangers of exclusive education (MoE, 2015; 2016). These sector wide achievements are broadly evaluated and might not give the true reflection of specific operational areas in terms of geographical location, levels of education and special education.

Invariably, in line with the EFA and MDGs, Ghana carried out comprehensive educational reforms in 2007, which provided for some major changes in the education curriculum and the duration of various levels of education. Kindergarten education specifically was introduced as part of the formal system of education which hitherto was the reverse, however Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary Schools were renamed Junior High and Senior High Schools respectively with SHS extended to four years. As part of the reforms, educational decentralization as part of Ghana's Decentralization policy shall come into full effect in the subsequent years (World Bank, 2009).

The design and implementation of these policies since 1990s did not yield the intended outcomes towards universalizing basic education and providing access to post-basic education. Challenges such as low enrolments; various forms of levies were still in place as factors identified to be militating against the success of these policies. To mitigate this, GES directed the abolition of all forms fees at the basic level, prompting a policy alternative to still expand access to basic education through enrolment drives with a World Bank partnered project to provide financial support to Districts with equity problems. Thus, Capitation Grant was piloted in 53 Districts for the 2004/2005 academic year with support from UK Department for International Development (DFID) (Yoshida & Okamura, 2010).

The results of the implementation of Capitation Grant Policy like other initiatives expanded enrolment of 17 percent over the past fifteen years, however the challenges associated with it are inadequate infrastructure to accommodate the increasing numbers and the need to train head teachers regularly to manage the fund properly (Yandana & Ampiah, 2015). Additionally, the grant as a pro-poor policy has helped the poor in particular to enrol their children in school; access has improved within the short period because of the cost-effectiveness of the grant initiative and consequently has attracted support to the educational system from other stakeholders in education. However, some of the underlining factors to ensure proper functioning of the grants include regular training of District officers on implementation guidelines of the grants; reliable school enrolment registers to facilitate transfer of the grants to the appropriate schools and effective and transparent management of the funds. Studies are therefore required to ascertain the impact of management of the Capitation Grants on school- community relations there by fostering community participation to improve access and quality of education (Fredriksen, 2009).

Similarly, School Feeding Programme, closely-linked policy with Capitation Grants has also been implemented since 2005, first as a pilot programme, which expired in 2010 in some

selected Districts and schools across the country. It is intended as part of a series of interventions to achieve EFA and MDGs and also combat other poverty related household obstacles limiting access to education in a form of enrolment, attendance and performance as well as local food production. As a nationally designed policy in form and content, it could not respond to specific contextual factors that could have helped in its smooth implementation and success, especially targeting those who are needy and deserve to benefit from the programme (Sam & Essuman, 2013).

Some other specific challenges identified with it during the implementation period were waste of instructional time during the serving and eating of the meals which ultimately pose challenge to education quality; sustainable funding and continuity of the programme as well as the coverage of the programme which only include kindergarten and primary schools. Eventually, collaboration among stakeholders; legal framework to ensure its sustainability in terms of funding; transparency in the execution of the programme and adequate logistics to ensure its efficient delivery are some of the underlining factors that can be addressed to ensure its success. However, future studies on its impact on learning achievement in terms of test score and cognitive development as well as overall educational achievements are imperative (Majid, Ngah, & Sulemana, 2013). Apparently, the broad achievements of the universal primary education in Ghana are improvement in enrolments rates across all levels of education over the past fifteen years. This notwithstanding, substantial progress has been made in all other indicators such completion rate, transition and some level of academic achievements. However, the biggest challenge is quality of educational provision across all levels of education in the country.

2.5 Monitoring of Free Primary and Secondary Education Policies

Since the launch of the EFA and MDGs in 2000, the international community led by the UN has instituted global level monitoring mechanisms to track the progress of these twin goals

over the past fifteen years. The monitoring was led by institutions such as UNICEF, UIS and the global monitoring teams, especially for EFA. Two years after the declaration of EFA and MDGs, the 2002 EFA monitoring report was dubbed “Education for All: Is The World on Track ?” It was particularly designed to ascertain whether the global community was responding to the commitments made at the WEF in Dakar (Senegal) in 2000 and Millennium Declaration which culminated in to the MDGs. The resolution at the forum indicated that all stakeholders to the commitment should be responsible for their record in meeting the pledge they made at the forum. While national governments were responsible for designing policies and interventions to meet the goals, the international community committed to providing adequate resources to help achieve the goals. To ensure proper accountability for execution of these agreements, the EFA Monitoring Report was established, to be produced by independent international team based in UNESCO (EFA GMR , 2002).

The monitoring of the MDGs in general was the responsibility of the UN agencies on behalf of the UN. The UN Statistics Division particularly had the responsibility for coordinating global data and preparing data estimates of reports for the UN General Assembly meetings. Their work was expected to spanned over the fifteen-year period with the sole aim of producing certified data for specific indicators expected to be measured. The division also primarily helped countries to produce data for tracking both national and global goals by working together with other stakeholders to equip countries to improve data quality and availability for all indicators. The data for monitoring the indicators must exhibit qualities such as appropriateness of the indicator to measure the intended goal; availability of data for countries; accuracy of the data etc. For universal primary education, indicators used at all levels were net enrolment ratio; survival rate to grade 5 and literacy rate of 25—24 year-olds

as well as gender parity at all levels of education for MDG 2 (United Nation Statistics Division, 2002).

Apart from the global monitoring report, individual countries also instituted EFA and MDGs monitoring reports to monitor progress within their individual countries in collaboration with other international agencies within the UN system. Monitoring of the EFA and MDGs in Ghana in particular was done through the Education Sector Strategy Plans series over the last fifteen years and even continuing into 2010 to 2020. Monitoring of educational access and quality is based on the indicator system, where a set of indicators are used as the bench marks for monitoring and evaluation using quantitative and qualitative data. The indicator system was used to address issues such as understanding fully the state of the implementation targets of the ESP; to maintain focus on areas that need attention during the implementation processes; mobilizing support for educational interventions and providing feedback to all partners (MoE, 2003).

As outlined in ESP(2010-2020), monitoring of educational outcomes and other related variables through out the educational system need be carried out using a streamlined strategy. The plan outlines a *result-oriented* monitoring and evaluation system to examine educational outcomes; detect operational and funding barriers and institute strategies to improve quality educational outcomes through out the country. Thus monitoring and evaluation primarily intends to ensure accountability, enhance efficiency, resource maximization and effective decision making that shapes future policy implication. It embodies a monitoring and evaluation framework designed to annually assess all sectors of the educational system; gather and publish information; analyze information on sectorial basis; use indicators for evaluation and periodic reporting. Holistically, the framework is characterized by a multi-level monitoring and evaluation system, which is based on decentralized, centralized and external monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The strive by MoE to generate available and reliable data and information necessary for planning, policy formulation and implementation of programmes and projects in the education sector of the country motivated the launch of a composite data collection and information management mechanism called Education Mangement Information System (EMIS) project in January, 1997 with support in various forms from global institutions such as Harvard University and World Bank, with governement of Ghana providing additional funding. In line with FCUBE, the recently established EMIS is an improvement of the already existing EMIS launched in 1988 by the MoE as part of the then educational reforms. But now UIS is giving technical support for the project (MoE, 2014). Before 2007/2008 academic year, the EMIS department of MoE had collected education statistics from districts through annual census and in the process, clean and validate data before its publication using other statitical tools. Currently, the MoE plans to fully employ the EMIS for furthure planning and budgeting. EMIS, in line with decentralization was expected by 2015 to collect and publish data at the District level on the internet and make national data available to all stakeholders in education through online. It was also supposed to enhance data collection on private sector involment in education and increasing demand for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) education as well as provide detailed information concerning disadvantaged and deprived areas (MoE, 2012).

The use of data and information in any eudactional system is paramount to the planning, formulation and implentation of programmes, projectts and interventions because numbers are involved at each stage of the education provision processes. Nontheless, the data and information to be generated must be accurate and devoid of discrepances in order to forstall any shortage or excesses in the provision of educational resources for quality and equitable education. Over the years, the Ghanaian educational system has encountered obstacles in implementing well-designed policies because of inaccuracy and unavailability of the data

needed for planning and implementation. For instance, the late release of Capitation Grants funds to schools has been attributed to inaccurate enrolment figures submitted by heads of schools from various Districts.

2.6 Challenges of Free Primary and Secondary Education Policies

The implementation of direct and indirect policies and interventions to realize Universal Primary Education like any other human endeavour encountered some challenges, which militated against its success in the last fifteen years. Despite the fact that about fifteen countries have enacted legislations and initiated programmes abolishing school fees, thereby improving enrolment ratios, 58 million children were still not in school as at 2012 and reducing these number has been difficult. There has been substantial progress in reducing gender gaps at all educational levels, especially in Africa where the completion and transition rates for girls is much lower than boys. Gender parity has been achieved in enrolment at primary, but widened at secondary and tertiary levels of education. Thus, visible challenges that need to be addressed in the post-2015 agenda include expanding access to reach the most disadvantaged such as rural communities; increasing enrolment rate at secondary and other higher levels using gender responsive policies and initiatives ((UNECA; AU; ADBG; UNDP, 2015; UNESCO, 2015).

In SSA in particular, some of the pronounced challenges include financial sustainability, lack of targeted programmes to the most vulnerable and the need to ensure quality alongside other indicators like access and equity. After the launch of free universal primary education initiatives such as fee abolition, countries experienced upsurge in their enrolments rapidly, but economic crises and other political factors made it difficult to provide adequate facilities to contain the numbers. Also, fee abolition initiatives in SSA countries did not take in to consideration the backgrounds of pupils being enrolled, because they are nationally designed holistically to be applied throughout the country. An average of 90 percent children were

enrolled following fee abolition in 2006, however most of them especially children from rural communities with socio-economic challenges could not complete full primary cycle education. The direct and indirect costs of fees abolition is a huge burden to poor households particularly the opportunity costs of schooling and provision of labour in a form of support to the family by the child. Impact of fee abolition on quality education has been a formidable obstacle to contend with, countries on the drive to universalize primary education focused on improving access at the expense of quality of learning outcomes, indeed recent moves to achieve the EFA goals rather centered on improving literacy and numeracy skill in many countries (Fredriksen, 2009; Nashimura, et al, 2015).

Similarly, financial challenges in terms of inadequacy of the funds posed serious problems to school management as parents are made to understand that it is total fee abolition and absolve themselves from supporting the schools financially in many countries. These attitudes are compounded by the inability of governments to release the funds to the schools in time, but could only do so if funds are available in the national coffers. Additionally, administrative obstacles observed after the introduction fee-free primary education has to do with the mode of implementation. Usually in most African countries implementation of policies is often top-down leaving no room for field level bureaucrats to play key roles in the implementation processes. Following the introduction of Capitation grant initiatives, school managers had only being trained on accounting and some aspects of school management however, managing these funds are more than that. It requires series of planned activities to be effective (Ogawa, et al., 2009). Recent experiences in many countries like Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique learn credence to this fact. Following the fee abolition in Ghana enrolment went up by 14 percent in the beginning, and schools had problems providing places for these numerous children.

Educational policies in Ghana since independence have been *Universalist* in approach, especially the free basic and higher education until 1980's when Ghana under severe economic challenges introduced policies to cut spending on education. Although, in the last fifteen years, purposive well targeted interventions to address inequities in educational system such as the Capitation Grant and School Feeding Programme as part of initiatives to achieve the MDGs were instituted. These programmes invariably have improved the education sector, challenges such as policy formulation and implementation "inefficiencies" are serious obstacles to sustaining these programmes (Abukari, et al., 2015). Immediately after the launch of the Capitation Grant initiative in 2005/2006 academic year, an impact assessment by the planning and policy division of UNICEF revealed the challenges the initiative was encountering at the initial stages, they included insufficient school infrastructure; shortage of teachers; repetition and drop-out rates; adverse effects of socio-cultural practices and geographical challenges in terms of reaching rural areas.

The sudden increase in enrolments necessitated demand for construction of additional 1,084 classrooms each year which was not possible immediately, spillover effects of the overcrowded classrooms when it rose from 34.9 to 35.7 at the national level was requiring quick responds by governments to employ more teachers. (Issah, et al., 2007). Although Ghana has adopted several strategies to ensure equitable access and quality in her educational system, the challenge still remains that these policies are implemented without due regards to the rural-urban dichotomy in the country. It is therefore imperative to point out that well designed strategies that are appropriate to contextual arrangements such as geographical locations and socio-cultural conditions of a particular area will yield maximum educational outcomes than wholesale implementation of policies in the country. Challenges such as cost and geographical distance are identified as obstacles to equitable access and quality in educational provisions. Similarly, inadequate funding, poor monitoring and evaluation are

also apparent obstacles to providing quality and equitable educational services in the country (Anlimachie, 2015).

Assessment of MDGs 2 and 3 at the end 2015 revealed that most of the initial challenges confronting universal primary education are still prevalent after the expiry date of the attainment of the goals. Persistent challenges such as infrastructure and other teaching and learning materials; high levels of teacher absenteeism; refusal to accept postings to deprived areas by teachers; low retention of trained teachers and increasing cost of education are among the key challenges militating against achievement of universal primary education in Ghana. Although pupil-teacher ratio in Ghana is within the required range, quality of education is still a daunting challenge. Availability of teachers does not guarantee maximum output from them especially where they are found not to be regular to perform their assigned duties. Supervision has been found to be poor over the years leading to continuous teacher absenteeism. Despite the fact that government continuous to provide infrastructure and teaching materials in form of text books, some deprived communities are still under-served to ensure equitable distribution of educational resources and provision of quality education (UNDP Ghana, 2015). Furthermore, it is argued that giving educational policies' formulation and implementation human right perspectives will guarantee education for the marginalized, poor, disadvantaged and hard-to-reach children in their respective settings. This will particularly be appropriate in the post-2015 agenda for SDGs (MacNaughton, 2015; Anlimachie, et al, 2015; Abukari, et al, 2015).

2.7 The Way forward for Implementing and Monitoring SDG 4 Policies

The SDGs can be achieved by 2030 if the global community records faster rate of progress. This can only be realized if governments and their citizens put in more efforts to attain the goals and their targets by adopting actions towards national aspirations. To easily attain the targets, the global community must progress in line with high performing countries. It is

worth noting that countries have already made progress towards poverty and maternal mortality reduction (Nicolai, et al., 2015). These authors further argued that analysis of global indicators points to the fact that countries must be encouraged by the global community to put in place national level implementation plans as soon as possible. Also, in putting in place these implementations plans, variations within countries must be considered to ensure adoption of flexible implementation plans. Additionally, the SDGs agenda must be implemented with its underlining principles of inclusivity, leaving no one behind and lessons must be learnt from high performing countries that has already chalked successes in the previous agenda.

It is therefore imperative to expand educational processes and institute specific targets in respect of primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education within the framework of the SDGs. These must be put together in inclusive and participatory processes involving community members through their political representatives. The processes of accountability of educational institutions must be expanded through measures such as communication technology, social interaction and local forms of education to all diverse communities. The SDGs recognized adult education as a “lifelong learning” approach and as an essential tool to ensure that “no one is left behind.” (Osorio, 2016). Osorio-Vargas (2016), also indicated that the outstanding challenge is ensuring access to public education, which invariably implies providing quality education.

Narrowly expanding enrolment in primary and secondary levels of education is not the aim. But children understand what they read, develop basic mathematical skills, understand issues of citizenship and political participation. The measure of quality education should be hinged on providing educational infrastructure for children and youth in vulnerably situations such as national disasters, wars and conflicts. Quality educational systems must be evaluated in terms of their ability to retain students in schools. Apparently, inclusive and quality education

are important facets of educational justice as stated in SDG4. Thus, there is the need for a political intervention by local and national bodies to implement this goal.

The 2030 Education Framework provides member states a forum to reaffirm the vision of EFA and the international and regional human rights treaties that advocate for the right to education. Their overriding aim is to improve lives through education as a tool for development and for the achievement of other SDGs. They intend to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030.” This goal is holistic and universally designed to complete the “unfinished business” of EFA and the education related MDGs and to address challenges of education in general.

The underlining principles of this framework encompasses inclusion, equity, gender equality, quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. The “Education 2030 Framework for Action” provides guidance for executing Education 2030 agenda. It spells out how to actualize SDG 4 at national, regional and global levels. It intends to guide member states in implementing, coordinating, financing and monitoring SDG 4 to realize inclusive and equitable quality education leading to lifelong learning and opportunities for all. Its strategies aimed to help countries design contextually relevant policies in respect of national policies and priorities (UNESCO, et al., 2015). The implementation of SDG 4 for the next fifteen years requires national governments and other stakeholders in the educational sector to act according to these guidelines:

1. Institute legal and policy frameworks to promote accountability and transparency in the implementation of SDG 4 at all levels.
2. Global, regional and national governments must collaborate to coordinate and monitor the implementation of SDG 4 based on data collection, analysis and reporting at the national levels within the guidelines of regional bodies, mechanisms and strategies.

2.8 Theoretical Reviews

National governments' quest to improve the lives of their citizens in line with global standards adopt internationally agreed goals adapted to country-specific contexts. The attainment of these goals require the implementation of specific programmes and policies at various levels of governance within a particular country context. Policy implementation has been conceived differently by various actors. According to Anderson (1990), implementation means putting policy or programme into effect immediately after passing a law to give it a legal or public backing. It is viewed broadly as an attempt to administer the law involving various institutional actors, organizations, processes, and techniques to actualize adopted policies with the overall aim of achieving the policy or program goals. Policy implementation also "encompasses those actions by public and private individuals (or groups) that affect the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions." The transformation of decisions into operational terms and the efforts to realize the modifications required by policy decisions are paramount here (Van Horn & Van Meter, 1977).

2.9 Top-Down and Bottom-Up Implementation Approaches.

Several approaches have been adopted in the process of implementing public policies over several decades. The latter two common approaches are top-down which was first championed by Van Meter & Van Horn (1975) and later by Mazmanian & Sabatier, (1983) and Edwards, (1980), while the bottom-up was championed by Hjern & Porter (1981) and other authors. Th top-down approach begins with the policy intent by central government posing question such as to what extent were the actions of implementers agreed with the original objectives of the policy decision? To what extent were the objectives achieved overtime? The top-down approach as posited by Mazmanian and Sabatier first identified a variety of legal, policital and "tractable variables" affecting different stages of policy implementation process. The numerous variables identified by them were regrouped into six

sufficient and important conditions for effective implementation of a legal objective. These include clear and consistent objectives, adequate causal theory, the structuring of the implementation process, committed and skillful implementing officials, support of interest groups and sovereigns and changes in socio-economic conditions. Although several contentions have been leveled against Sabatier and Mazmanian framework, overall its utility cannot be over emphasized. It essentially recommends legal structuring of the implementation process, offers understanding of variations in programme performance among others. It has however been criticized for putting too much emphasis on “clear and consistent objectives,” and its inability to account for policy change over time.

Invariably, the bottom-up proponents also criticized top-down approach by Sabatier and Mazmanian for focusing on decision makers instead of the actors involved in the decision making process, its inapplicability in a situation where there is no dominant policy of agency, inability to capture the strategies adopted by street level bureaucrats and the target group to implement the policy. Based on the above criticisms, the bottom-up approach was proposed by Hjern & Porter (1981) and other authors. It primarily starts from a policy decision and focuses on the extent to which its objectives are achieved over time and the associated reason behind that. It also involves identifying the network of actors involved in the service delivery process, asks questions about goals, strategies, activities and contacts. These contacts are used as strategies for identifying the local, regional and national actors involved in planning, financing and execution of relevant governmental and non-governmental programmes (Hjern & Porter, 1981). In synthesizing the top-down and the bottom-up approaches, the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) was developed out of the defects identified from the two approaches.

2.10 The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF).

The ACF was developed out of the shortcomings of the top-down and bottom-up implementation challenges and criticisms over several decades. It synthesizes some of the propositions of both the top-down and bottom-up approaches to policy implementation and developed a composite policy making and changing approach to deal with the problems of public policy. It was primarily developed to respond to the search for alternatives to the mechanistic stages employed in public policymaking processes, combining both features of top-down and bottom-up approaches to policy implementation and to integrate technical information into playing very important role in policy processes in order to deal with substantial goal conflicts and technical disputes among others (Sabatier, 1998; Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

It advocates for dealing with policy issues by starting from the policy problem or policy subsystem rather than the law, where the strategies adopted by actors in both public and private spheres are analyzed to deal with an issue consistent with their objectives. It employs the top-down proponents' propositions that legal and socio-economic factors structure the behavioural options of actors as well as fundamental assumptions underlining the adoption of strategies and programmes, thus leading to the incorporation of the effects of socio-economic changes external to the policy subsystem on actors, resources and strategies in ACF. It also includes manipulation of legal instruments of programmes, the need to improve understanding of the nature of the problem and the impacts of previous policy instruments. On the other hand, in drawing from the arguments of bottom-uppers, the ACF contends that actors from different institutions are aggregated into different coalitions consisting of politicians, agency officials, interest group leaders, intellectuals among others sharing common beliefs on fundamental policy issues, thus leading to policy change in a given political subsystem or institutional arrangement. Various coalitions come with their strategies

for policy change and for achieving varied objectives, which are mediated by a third party actors to reach consensus on a proposed strategy to form a legal or policy instrument to modify one or more governmental action plans and programmes-policy outputs at operational levels to be binding on all (Sabatier, 1986). The above processes are underpinned by knowledge development through learning, building policy networks and participating fully in all policymaking processes. Consequently, policy actors engage in adaptive decision making and continuous adjustments of rules over time (Polski & Ostrom, 1999). ACF was originally premised on the assumption that to understand policy change in industrial societies, the fundamental unit of analysis is policy subsystems embodying both public and private organizational actors primarily concerned with a policy issue (Sabatier, 1986).

The original ACF composed of two main parts, namely policy subsystems and external factors (perturbations). The policy subsystem comprises of special participants to influence policies, the individual and the belief systems and advocacy coalitions, while the external consisted of stable system parameters-constitutional and social structure and natural resources as well as external events such as public opinion, socio-economic conditions, governing coalitions and changes from other subsystems. Other changes can come from past implementation experiences leading to change in values, knowledge and strategies of policy participants in the subsystems or outside the subsystems such as higher authorities or the general public (Weible, Heikkila, deLeon, & Sabatier, 2012). Its application at this stage was to understand and explain belief and policy change where there was goal disagreement and technical disputes involving multiple actors from several levels of government as applied in case studies by Zafonte & Sabatier (2004) and Sato (1999) among others.

ACF has been revised by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993, 1999, 2005, 2007 et al.) with additional assumptions and variables. Some of the current assumptions in the policy subsystem relates to the cognitive abilities, motivations and beliefs of participants; the

tendency of policy participants to join coalitions; the likelihood of some participants to be neutral and turn to “policy brokers”; the use of different forms of resources and the venues by coalitions through which they influence policies. The components of the framework at this stage include relatively stable parameters, policy subsystems, belief systems, advocacy coalitions and mechanisms for policy change, with each consisting of a set of variables (Fischer et al, 2007).

Invariable, the advocacy coalition opportunity structures were introduced to intervene between stable parameters and subsystems with a variable like degree of consensus needed for a major policy change and openness of the policy subsystem (Sabatier, 2007). The focus of the framework at this stage is also to outline how policy change occurs within a particular subsystem by describing and explaining the theory of advocacy coalition , policy learning and policy change. Variables and their relationships to each other are also identified at this stage. Thus, different coalitions within the policy subsystem seek to translate their beliefs into policy by competing among one another through strategies aim at influencing decisions-policy outputs and impacts. Elaborating on the assumptions further ACF posits that its contributions to understanding of policy process and change can only be realized atleast ten years or more after its application (Weible & Nohrstedt, 2012). Its primary units of analysis continue to be the policy subsystem, including relevant actors to shape policies and politics in respect of a particular policy issue within a territorial and rational boundaries (Jenkins-Smith et al, 2014). Members within the particular policy subsystem continuously change their intentions regarding policy beliefs after going through negotiations as mediated by “policy brokers” (Pierce, et al. 2016). Consequently, policies change in favour of winning coalitions beliefs-major policy changes occur by alterations in policy core beliefs, while minor changes occur in secondary beliefs. The basic factors causing changes in policy change are external events outside its policy subsystem and internal events within the policy

subsystem as well as learning and negotiations (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Thus, policy change comes about as a result of alterations in governing coalitions or imposition by higher authority (Pierce, et al, 2016).

Originally ACF was premised on the believe that policy change emerges out of participants in conflicting and adversarial competition in the policy subsystem. However, in recent application of the framework by Sabatier and Weible (2009), it was modified to study collaborative policy subsystem in the policy making and changing process. The modifications are charatecterized by cooperative coalition, shared access to decision-making authority, existence of consensus-based decision-making institutions and policy designs emphasizing win-win and voluntary solutions (Weible & Sabatier, 2009). However, by implication, the study found out that collaboratuve policy systems might lead to no action but noise as participants stick to their value-based positions although agreements are reached, despite the fact that they provide arenas for science-and evidence-based decisions to guide policy directives. The latest revisions of the ACF identified third and fourth paths to policy change. With the third one idenfying internal system events (Sabatier & Weible, 2007), while the fourth policy change built from alternative disputes literature which occurs through negotiations and agreements involving two or more coalitions. The fourth coalition actually built from previous ACF work on the conditions facilitating cross-coalition learning (Jenkins-Smith, 1990) , where “professional forums” create institutional settings through which coalitions engage in negotiations, agreements and implementation of agreements. Sabatier & Weible (2007) identified nine conditions affecting the likelihood of policy change through the fourth path, namely, hurting stalemate, effective leadership, consensus-based decision rules, diverse funding, duration of processes and commitment of members, focus on empirical issues, building trust and lack of avenues. Current assumptions of ACF models include scientific and technical information playing role in policy process; time period of at

least ten years needed to understand policy perspectives; policy subsystems are basic units of analysis; actors from all levels of government, consultants, scientists, media, among others are involved in policy processes. Also, policies and programmes are thought to be translation of beliefs (Sabatier, 1998) and model of an individual who is bounded rationally with limited abilities to perform several tasks (Weible, et al., 2009). The revised ACF is illustrated below:

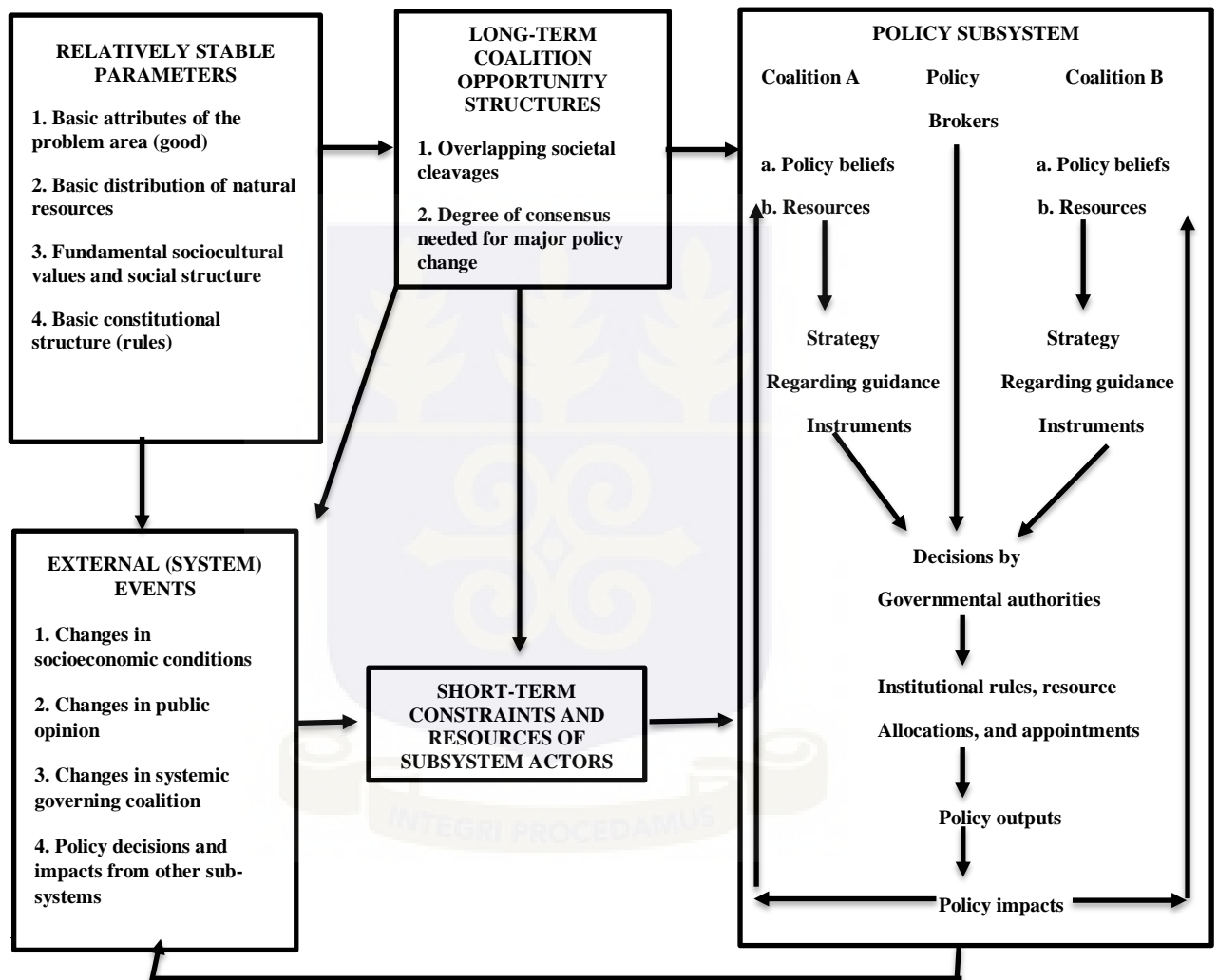


Figure 1: Revised Diagramme of ACF (Source: Sabatier, 1998)

2.11 Conceptual Framework for the Study

The study is guided by ACF for the development of a comprehensive context-specific framework for analyzing the research data. The use of the model as a reference point is essential and relevant to the study, but because of its inability to provide context-specific

variables for analysis, it serves as a guide to the development of a conceptual framework to reflect the context of the study. The conceptual framework developed consists of dependent variable-SDG 4 and the independent variables are implementation mechanisms, monitoring or enforcement mechanisms and challenges being encountered in putting in place these mechanisms.

Implementation Mechanisms

Implementation narrowly entails all the processes, structures and activities designed to apply the policies passed by the legislative arm of government. These activities or structures include the creation of the administrative departments, agencies or assigning new responsibilities to new or existing organizations or bureaucratic structures. These new or existing structures are supposed to translate the laws into operational rules and regulations. These processes also include recruiting new personnel, designing new contracts, projects, programmes, expending money and performing discrete tasks. All these processes constitute decisions by bureaucrats which determine the policy (James, 1982). The processes are precipitated by different coalitions coming together with their strategies for policy change and for achieving varied objectives, which are sometimes mediated by a third party actor to help them reach consensus on a proposed strategy to form a legal or policy instrument to modify one or more governmental action plans and programmes-policy outputs at operational levels to be binding on all (Sabatier, 1986). Thus, implementation marks the formal adoption of a programme in legislation although sometimes implementation never occurred. Implementation can also broadly be conceived as the process of acquiring resources, interpreting and planning specific programme requirements derived from a broad mandate in the legislation as well as organizing and providing benefits. The general outcome of all these activities are concrete policies and programmes. Implementation also marks the next stage after the passage of the law authorizing a programme, a policy, a benefit or some

kind of tangible output. It further outlines a set of activities designed to actualize the statement of intention about programme goals and their expected outcomes by government officials as it primarily intends to put the programme into effect. In effect it calls for the acquisition of resources which include personnel, equipment, land, raw materials and funds. Officials are supposed to be engaged in planning and interpreting the statutes. The import and the meanings of the statutes are elaborated into concrete directives, regulations and programmes plans and designs (Ripley & Franklin, 1986), reached out of collaborative negotiations by various advocacy coalitions within a policy sub system (Sabatier & Weible, 2009). Attainment of policy goals and targets requires assessment of previous implementations period, to enable already existing policy tools or instruments to be fine-tuned into set of operational plans for policy problem resolution and the achievement of goals (Howlett, 2009). Van Horn and Van Meter (1975) also argued that policy implementation stage has not started until goals and objectives have been established by prior policy decisions. It takes place only after legislation has been passed and funds committed.

- **Policy Frameworks.**

According to Pressman and Wildavsky (1984), *we can work neither with a definition of a policy that excludes any implementation nor with one that include all implementation. There must be a starting point. If no action is begun implementation cannot take place. There must be also an end point. Implementation cannot succeed or fail without a goal against which to judge it.* This elaborate assertion implies policy and implementation cannot clearly be separated from each other because without any original plan or mechanism there is nothing to implement. Implementation can only be said to be taking place when there exists some kind of guidelines spelling out the details rules of operations and standards as well planned allocation of resources. Thus, implementation primarily begins with understanding policy outlines, purposes and the resources needed to put it into effect. Without any of these policy

exists not less implementation. Implementation encompasses carrying out, accomplishing, fulfilling, producing and completing something. It is apparent that it is only a policy that is implemented. That is something must be put in place before one can talk about implementation, otherwise there will be nothing to move towards in the process of implementation. Policies generally contains both goals and the means of achieving them (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984).

National policies are designed in different forms and with various intentions such as policy statements, sectoral adjustment programmes, framework documents or master plans. It is therefore appropriate for any national policy document to establish its implementation framework by outlining policy goals and modalities of implementation. The document must offer guidelines for implementation focusing primarily on funds. The design of policy plans and accompanying programmes and discrete plans amounts to proper preparation for implementation especially when initial formulation is not complete or clear. Depending on national arrangements, educational policy implementation may be composed of public budgets, medium and long-term development plans and outline of specific programmes and projects (Jallade, Radi, & Cuenin, 2001).

The policy basis of the ESP (2010-2020) is to implement the provisions of the 2008 Education Act that focuses on access, decentralization, inclusion, quality and system of monitoring. It is also to implement STME, ICT and the IE policies among others.

Monitoring and Enforcement Mechanisms

To achieve successful implementation, mechanisms and procedures must be established to ensure that implementation agencies and government officials adhere to policy or programme prescriptions and standards. Officials in the organizational hierarchy must be whipped in line with policy objectives, although specifying plans and standards may not

guarantee programme performance (Nagel, 1997). This necessitates the establishment of proper institutional mechanisms, structures and directives to ensure that implementers' actions are consistent with the policy standards and objectives. Neustadt, (1960) as cited in Van Horn and Van Meter (1975), observed that presidential directives and orders in themselves are insufficient but requires *action forcing mechanisms*.

Monitoring in education primarily focuses on monitoring education systems at different levels. It is composed of a system of information collection procedures and instruments, information storage, reporting procedures and evaluation and thus encompasses three critical components-regular collection of information, evaluation of information and feedback action (Plomp, Huijsman, & Kluyfhout, 1992). It can also be primarily conceived as the systematic process of collecting data using school level information, including specifying information to be collected, summarizing and analyzing the information, spreading the results and taking a feedback action. It is concerned with the formal system of education information management and collection of inputs or administrative data and performance monitoring where by performance information is specified and aggregated, for example school report cards (Eddy, Ehren, Bangpam, & Khatwa, 2014).The organization being monitored can be modelled as a system composed of context, inputs, processes and outputs. Similarly, monitoring systems require regular collection of information about the rate of change of a system, which is connected to an institutional action. The key elements underlining monitoring are information, evaluation and action. However, monitoring can also be classified as compliance, diagnostic and performance monitoring (Richards, 1988)

However, recently monitoring educational projects has also received impetus. In several respects, educational projects aim to provide some level of educational change in educational subsystems. These may include providing text books to improve learning, organizing in-service training programmes for teachers among others. Every project monitoring activity

intends to inform implementers and owners of the project about the progress of the implementation process. Monitoring activities are instituted in line with project management and seeks to find whether progress are in line with project standards. Monitoring educational of projects can therefore be directed to inputs, processes and outputs. Inputs monitoring ascertains whether both human and physical resources are applied as planned. It is often directed to the input of projects in an educational system. Such as seeing to the distribution of textbooks and delivery of in-service training programme to teachers. Process monitoring on the on the other hand tracks the progress to assess the level a project is yielding the intended output. For example, the usage of textbooks and pupils performances, while output monitoring assesses the extent to which a project is yielding the desired objectives such as mastering of content of textbooks (Plomp, Huijsman, & Kluyfhout, 1992).

Rossi and Freeman (1989) as cited in Majola (2014) opined that monitoring is normally undertaken to track the performance of projects, policies and programmes. It is purposively intended to satisfy the needs of evaluator, programme managers, policy makers and stakeholders. Likewise it can be used to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of a project, outcomes and continuity. Monitoring can further be categorized as implementation or results monitoring.

But the focus of the study is implementation monitoring, which seeks to track inputs, activities and outputs applied to achieve a specific goal (Shabalala, 2009 and Rossi and Freeman, 1989 as cited in Majola, 2014). It tracks the means and strategies-inputs, activities and outputs planned and documented in multi-stakeholder partnership for work plans and budgets-use to achieve a given outcome. These inputs, activities and outputs are required to deliver the desired targets and outcomes. Outcome and implementation monitoring both track progress and performance against outcome indicators and targets. A systematic collection of data based on specified indicators is core to monitoring (UNESCO, 2009). That

is monitoring is a continuous function intended to provide project management and stakeholders early indications of progress or otherwise of an ongoing project or lack of thereof in the achievement of programme or project objectives (Majola, 2014). Indeed monitoring project activities requires tracking the amount of products delivered or services rendered for a specified period of time. This process constitutes good management, for instance the number of training delivered or the number times a school is visited (Day-Miller & Easton, 2009).

Monitoring and evaluation are integral part of any policy cycle, which involves compiling and analyzing information to enable actors learn from one another's experiences and indicate how to make improvement in policy and practices. Many countries have instituted effective information management systems with the intention of producing good quality data for policy makers. However the life-span of these data systems are short-lived and unable to reach systematic and sustainable levels as a result of inappropriate planning and understanding of country's context. This normally leads to frustration in the decision making process, poor decision-making and bad governance (UNESCO, 2013).

Monitoring in education for so many years has not changed. The most common form of monitoring system is supervision, which involves examining what takes place in schools and classrooms by visiting schools and reporting. Although several other alternative models of monitoring systems have been devised to augment the classical supervision system, for instance, improving control and support quality of schools. This notwithstanding, supervision or inspection systems are the key monitoring tools employed most by governments, albeit in conjunction with additional systems such as examinations, test systems, school league tables and school evaluation reports (Grauwe, 2008). In educational management, monitoring embodies series of inspections designed with the intention of ascertaining the extent to which activities are yielding their intended outcomes. Any

nationwide monitoring and evaluation system is intended to determine the achievement of objectives established in a legislation, educational policy or curricula (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crscent Societies, 2002).

The system of collecting and analyzing information to track progress against set plans and check compliance to established standards also helps to identify trends, patterns and adaptive strategies in monitoring process thereby informing the decision of project or programme management. It also establishes the links between inputs, activities, outcomes and goals. Monitoring in this context can be categorized into results, process, and compliance as well as context, beneficiary, financial and organizational monitoring (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crscent Societies, 2011). Adaptive policies can only function in a situation where monitoring policy implementation in line with intended objectives are available. However, most policies do not have regular in-built monitoring mechanisms. Monitoring may take the form of formal reviews which may be designed into policy implementation using monitoring mechanisms and triggers. Review can be planned periodically to detect unanticipated issues and appropriate and further responses instituted again (Swanson, et al., 2010).

The increasing rate of expenditure on education has precipitated the demand for information and accountability for quality education. This has necessitated the establishment of monitoring systems in most industrialized countries. Similarly, governments in less developed countries have also shown interest in establishing equivalent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. In some cases, the approaches are regional such as the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ). The emerging challenges after the Dakar Global Forum were apparent necessitating the adoption of new approaches for proper measurement of progress in educational sector.

This includes the current Education 2030 framework, an agenda which covers several themes: quality, gender, adult literacy, youth and skills among others. The framework lays emphasis on developing an evidence-based and dynamic monitoring and evaluation system. Generally, the SDGs focus on good governance and accountability (UNESCO, 2016). Consequently, countries are expected to design monitoring, follow-ups and reviews for evidence based-policies. These follow-ups and reviews are to be carried out through monitoring, reporting and evaluation policies as well as systems and tools that are fundamental to the achievement of Education 2030 agenda. Essentially, monitoring quality education requires a multifaceted approach encompassing system design, inputs, content, processes and outcomes. Countries are therefore required to institute effective and robust monitoring and accountability systems reflecting national arrangements in partnership with civil society (UNESCO, et al., 2015)

Challenges of SDG4 Implementation mechanisms

The influence of socio-cultural, economic and political factors on policy planning has been daunting challenges in policy implementation in any context. Public policy analysts has over the years confronted with the problem of identifying factors acting against the success policies and plans. Although the impacts of these factors on successful implementation were undermined, albeit received serious attention in current policy implementation analysis. Similarly, implementation gaps emerge from policies themselves or from the environment in which the policy is formulated.

Apparently, top-down implementation planning creates policy implementation problems emanating from policy itself, especially when the grassroots target groups are not allowed to participate in the planning and implementation process (Makinde, 2015). In the last two decades attempt have been made to achieve gender equality, but challenges such as structural and cultural arrangements have hindered all attempts to advance female participation in

education and all aspects of social life. Although improved progress has been made to close the gender gaps, however, some of the barriers still remained and become more apparent in the different levels of education. These disparities are shown by various indicators such as completion rate for girls at primary levels and low progression to the secondary levels of education. These challenges must be tackled in the next stage of global development agenda (UNECA; AU; ADBG; UNDP, 2015)

In building on the achievements and the lessons learnt from the implementation of the MDGs, new interventions will have to be targeted at children from minority populations, those engaged in child labour, those with disabilities, conflict situation and urban slums (UN MDGs Report, 2015). According to Lewin (2007), challenges of expanding access to primary and secondary education in SSA can be categorized based on contextual factors. In the study of diversity in access in Africa, Lewin, ranked the countries under study into five groups based on contextual factors. Ghana was placed in group 4 with average primary enrolment rate and low secondary enrolment rate.

Factors such as high repetition and school drop-outs were blamed for these obstacles. Drop-outs were attributed to poor performance, affordability and loss of interest among others. Based on these findings, Lewin contended that varied contextual challenges require diverse strategies in order to achieve universal access, quality and equity at the secondary levels of Ghanaian educational system. He further posted that Ghana and her group members need to adopt strategies to maintain the rate of universal access and improve achievement at the basic levels of education. There are several relationships between primary and secondary education expansion in areas such as the supply of teachers, financial resources and different approaches to reduce differences in gender disparities (Lewin, 2007). Anlimachie (2015), therefore posited that diversity and unique characteristics such as geographical, social, cultural and economic contexts between rural and urban Ghana generate wide range of

implications for equitable quality education in rural Ghana. Thus implementation of any intervention in rural Ghana will largely be limited by geographical, socio-cultural and economic (resources) factors in particular context.

- **Geographical Factors**

Most rural settlements in Ghana are dispersed and as such accessibility becomes a huge problem, especially to remote rural communities (Anlimachie, 2015). In most cases, schools accessibility are limited by water bodies in Ghana. Efficient execution of any project component is determined by the speed, cost, quality of final product or service, accessibility of services to the intended beneficiaries and replicability of the project. In terms of accessibility of services, the main objective of any project or programme is to ensure that services or benefits reach the targeted population in time. The target population may be defined in terms of their geographical location, economic and demographic characteristics (Valadez & Bamberger, 1994).

In these communities, the dependency ratios are very high and families are not in position to provide the basic needs of their wards on one hand and on the other government expenditure on infrastructure and services rank low in these communities, despite the fact that these communities are the agricultural hubs of these countries. Children from these communities hardly progress through the educational ladder and most often than not used as child labourers in the agricultural fields. Interventions in these communities tend to produce negative results.

- **Socio-Cultural Factors**

Several societal attitudes or behaviours affect the level to which beneficiaries of a project or programme respond to the services delivered. In education in particular illiteracy has direct consequence on the value placed on education by a particular group of people especially rural dwellers. The significance of education to a large extent are not prioritized by indigenous

population and consequently undermine their response to the intended outcomes of a project or programme objectives, for instance improving academic performance. Similarly, cultural practices such as early marriages are encouraged in most rural settings especially elopement. Teenage pregnancy, another societal problem most often than not obstructs or ends female educational development in most rural communities in Ghana (Anlimachie, 2015). Attitudes of parents, guidance and children at large is a key determining factor to educational attainment. Situations where parents are not enthused to prioritize education, children responses to educational services are low.

- **Resources**

Anlimachie (2015) and Lewin (2007) opined that a high percentage of rural population in Ghana and SSA fall under low income groups and below the poverty lines. Incorporating SDG 4 in local government development policies frameworks is crucial for attainment of Ghana's short and long term developmental goals. Although governments have demonstrated their commitment to the attainment of the SDGs by 2030 through several fora and the launch of its attainment in 2016, mainstreaming them into local government policies is rather crucial. However, these processes require serious planning and resource allocation as the educational sector is already battling with numerous educational challenges for the past two decades.

- **Administrative Challenges**

Programme planning and implementation in Ghana and most developing countries are top-down where the executive or senior officials dictate the programme content and standards. This leaves local level implementers no room to determine what goes into programme or project planning and implementation. Similarly, implementing and monitoring these programmes is essential for successful implementation and overcoming implementation challenges. Therefore, exploring these mechanisms provides a fundamental step towards

successful implementation of Plans to achieve SDG 4 in Ghana and NSD in particular. The relationship between the independent variables -implementation, monitoring mechanisms and associated challenges on one hand and the dependent variable-SDG 4 is illustrated in Figure 3 below.

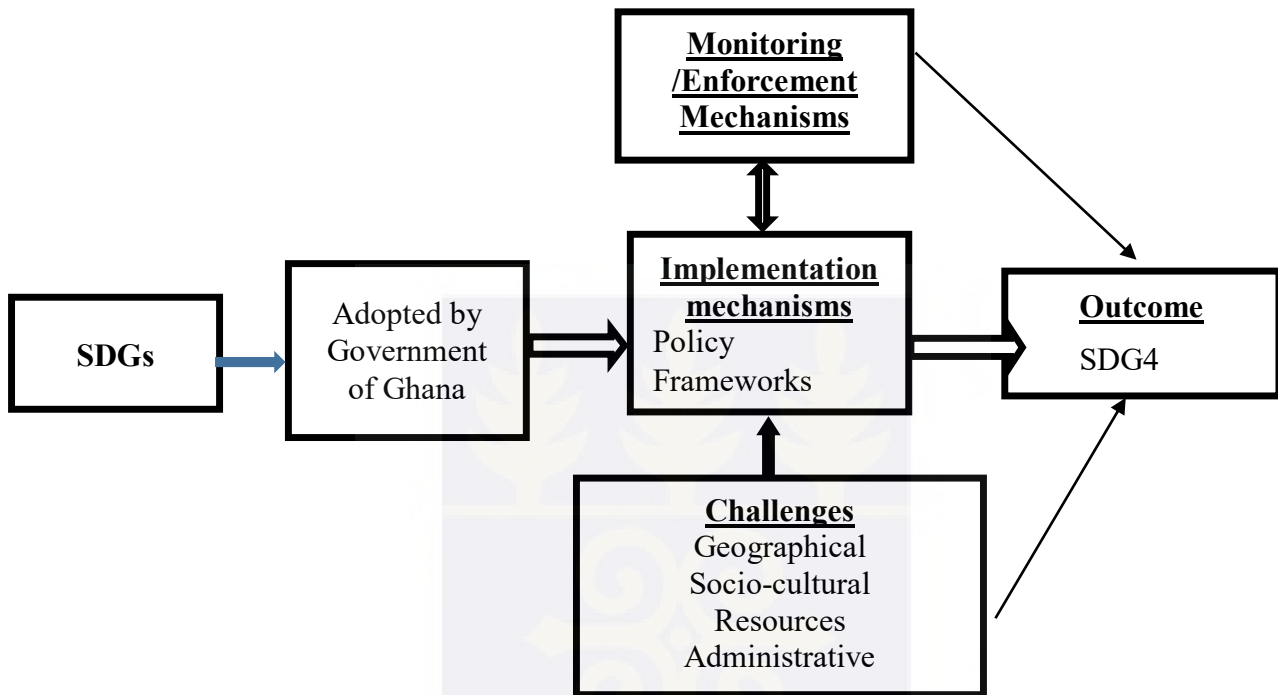


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework.

Source: Framework relating the main variables of the study (2017).

2.11 Conclusion

The implementation of numerous policies and interventions in Africa and Ghana in particular over the past two decades yielded varied outcomes in the mist of daunting challenges. Their overall impacts, both positive and negative provide useful lessons for governments to design policies that respond to diverse categories people taking into consideration socio-economic, cultural and geographical backgrounds during both formulation and implementations processes. Thus, in line with the global community’s vision to develop human capabilities and potentials to drive their own development and to achieve other SDGs, the education-related goal of the SDG4 which states that ensure inclusive and equitable quality education

and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030 is encompassing and holistic. It is primarily meant to complete the “unfinished Business” of the EFA and MDGs agenda and by extension guarantee ‘human rights’, “social justice, inclusion” and protection for all. Therefore, Government of Ghana (GoG) being signatory to these declarations must design policies and interventions to achieve this overriding vision



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The study seeks to explore the policies and mechanisms put in place to achieve SDG 4 in NSD in the Northern Region of Ghana. This chapter presents the methodology employed to carry out the study. The chapter discusses the methodology of the study which covers research approach, research design, study area study population, sources of data and sample size. The other foci are sample techniques, methods of data collection and instruments, data management and analysis and ethical issues.

3.2 Research Approach

The research adopts a qualitative approach to explore the implementation and monitoring mechanisms put in place to actualize SDG 4. Qualitative research strategy entails the elaborate use of words instead of figures in the data collection and analysis processes and it is normally largely inductive, constructive and interpretative in nature, albeit all qualitative researchers do not subscribe to all of them (Bryman, 2015). It seeks to understand the whole issue or unit under discussion instead of breaking it down to variables. There are different types of qualitative research, which include interpretative studies, case studies, content analysis, ethnography, grounded theory, historical studies, and narrative inquiry among others (Ary, et al., 2014). This study however focuses on case study design by employing qualitative research methods of data collection to identify and discuss the policies and structures designed to ensure that equitable and quality education is achieved in the District. The adoption of this methodological approach provides opportunity for the study to ascertain the nature and content of policy implementation plans and frameworks designed to guide the integration of SDG 4 into the local level policies to be achieved by 2030. The setting is NSD in the northern region of Ghana. The adoption of SDGs in Ghana requires local governments

to design their developmental and operational plans in line with them using national level policy documents. The study therefore finds out whether these policy documents are available at the Districts level to guide local level implementers to align their plans with the SDGs in general and SDG 4 in particular. Adopting this approach helped to understand the perspectives of the local level implementers on the SDGs integration and achievement process and obstacles.

3.3 Research Design

The study adopts case study as the research design. Case study focuses on undertaking research on a single individual or situation enabling the researcher to answer specific questions, being mindful of how a phenomenon is shaped in particular context (Baxter & Jack, 2008) . Case study can also be viewed as an empirical process that examines issue or phenomenon in real life situation especially when the phenomenon and its context cannot be easily distinguished (Yin, 2009). It is primarily used to describe a particular real life event that occurs within a specific setting. Majority of case studies are carried out as independent methodologies, albeit sometimes used as complementary to other methods like survey or for further investigations. The study adopts exploratory case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008) to found out the implementation and monitoring mechanisms and the challenges facing these mechanisms to SDG 4 in NSD. Researchers may use case study to find out the introduction of a programme or phase of development of an organization or a policy. Findings are systematically recorded by identifying the relationships between dependent and the independent variables using well planned methodology. The most common methods of data collection are observation and interviews but other techniques can be employed (Bell, 2010). Thus, the analysis of the dependent variable-SDG 4 and independent variables - implementation and monitoring mechanisms as well challenges facing the integration processes is done within the case's context thereby relating the case to its context. Here, NSD

is used as a case to find out how SDG 4 is being integrated into local level development plans. Thus, its context might shape the integration of SDG 4 by the local government.

3.4 Study Area

It is important to contextualize the study within an environment in order to understand the topic under consideration. This section reviews the profile of NSD.

Profile of NSD

It is located between latitude 8.5⁰C N and 9.0⁰C N and longitude 0.5⁰C E and 0.5⁰C W of the Greenwich Meridian, dividing the District into two equal parts. The District covers a land mass of 1,789.2 Km Square. It is located in the eastern corridor of Northern Region of Ghana and shares boundaries with Zabzugu Tatale District and the republic of Togo to the east and East Gonja to the west. It also shares boundaries with Nkwanta District of the Volta region to the south-east, Nanumba North District to the north and Kpandai District to the south-west. The District is located in the tropical continental climate zone with the mid-day sun always overhead. This results in temperatures ranging between 29⁰C and 41⁰C and once a while 45⁰C. It is also like any other part of West African sun-region affected by the wet southwest monsoon and dry northeast trade winds. The rainfall season always last for period of six (6) months, from May to October, while other half of the year comes under dry season, when it comes under the dry north east trade winds. Population wise, NSD in 2010 was 93, 464 of which 46,776 were males and 46, 688 were females respectively. The District is predominantly rural representing 82.1 percent of the population, while 17.9 are urban dwellers. This population distribution reflects the composition of the two major tribes, Nanumbas and Konkombas as well other smaller tribes likes Basares and Ewes. The mean age of the population of the district is largely rural making it possible for majority of the inhabitants to face severe equity challenges. The policies must therefore be flexible to adapt to each sector of the society. Similarly, majority of the inhabitants are traditionalists of 47.8

percent, followed by Muslims of 27.2 percent and Christians of 20 percent respectively. The differences in all these socio-cultural dimensions must be taken care of by any applicable educational policy in the country.

According to the 2010 Population Census District analytical report there were twelve (12) pre-schools, one hundred and nineteen (119) Primary schools, eighteen (18) JHS and one (1) Senior High School. Pupil enrolment at kindergarten stood at 8, 831, Primary: 17,198, JHS: 3,052 and SHS: 1,649, while teacher enrolment stood at Kindergarten: 106, Primary: 64, JHS: 150 and SHS: 34 (NSDA, 2015). Literate population in the district is estimated at 18, 478 representing 32.5 Percent of the total population comprising of 39.4 percent of males and 25.8 percent females. Persons who are literate English Language is 47.5 percent with 45.8 percent representing those who can read and write minimal English and Ghanaian Language respectively, while only 6.2 percent can write only Ghanaian Language. This pattern also reflects various age groupings as persons of age 12 to 14 represent higher percentage of those who are literate in English language. Furthermore literacy for both male and females varies too as female persons of age 40 to 44 of 13 percent are literate in Ghanaian Language. Thus, policies must therefore adapt to the needs of these categories of people for them to develop themselves in line with human rights approach to educational provision in the country.

The economically active population of 15 years and above is 79.3 percent and the economically not active is 20.7 percent. Within the economically active population 98.7 are employed while 1.3 percent is not employed. Among the economically active population , those who were in school was 41.percent, 27.5percent did home duties , too old or young is 22.3 percent, disabled or sick 4.3 percent and pensioners of 0.6 percent. Furthermore, a high proportion of the economically active population was males of 81.4 percent and 17.7 percent females. About 85 percent of the employed were engaged in skill agriculture, forestry and

fishing, depicting the agrarian nature of the District. Services and sales workers constituted 6.5 percent, while craft and other related trade workers were 5.4 percent.

3.5 The Study Population

The study population includes field level administrators of NSDDE and the NSDA. These individuals were targeted because they are part of the field level implementers of educational policies at the District level and also play key roles in the drawing up of local level development plans as well as monitoring the implementation processes of policies and therefore have knowledge of the issues under discussion.

3.6 Sources of Data

The study made use of both primary and secondary sources of data to address the objectives of the study. Primary sources of data include information taken from the sample or target population through face-to-face and follow ups telephone in-depth interviews. This was aimed at obtaining interviewees' perspectives on their preparedness to integrate SDG4 and the challenges they are facing in doing so (Patton, 2013) in the NSD. The participants include officials of NSDDE and the NSDA in the Northern Region. In all 16 officials were interviewed. Secondary sources of data that were used include reports by the UN and UN agencies on EFA, MDGs and SDGs as well as reports of the education sector in Ghana including ESP and ESPR for the past fifteen years to identify the policies put in place to achieve the EFA and MDGs goals. Reports of the NSDA and NSDDE, desk studies of related works, available literature such as books, journal articles were all reviewed to get firsthand information on the topic.

3.7 Sample Size

A total of 16 respondents were interviewed. They included ten (10) officials and six (6) in NSDDE and NSDA respectively. The respondents in NSDDE consisted of Assistant Director for Finance and Administration, Assistant Director for Planning, Assistant Director

for Human Resource Management and Development, Assistant Director for Monitoring and Supervision, District GES Accountant, Training Officer, Girl-Child Education Officer, the Statistics Officer and two Circuit Supervisor. Officials at NSDA included Deputy Coordinating Director in charge of Administration, Senior Planning Officer at the NSDA, Two deputy planning officers, Deputy Director in charge of Human Resources and District Accountant. Official of these categories were selected because they are front line planners and implementers of local level policies in the District. The inclusion of the statistics officer was get to in-depth understanding of the data monitoring systems raised by the Monitoring Supervision department during the their interviews, especially the EMIS. It is worth pointing out that both the District Director of Education and the District Coordinating Directors delegated their deputies who are involved directly in the planning and implementation of the District level Development plans for the face-t-face interviews.

3.8 Sampling Techniques

As an exploratory research, a purposive sampling technique, which is also a non-probability sampling technique (Doherty, 1994) was used to select the 16 participants within the NSDDE and the NSDA. Non-probability sampling focuses on selection of a population that possessed characteristics of a population that can be assumed as representative of a wider society, but in smaller numbers. This allows generalization to be made from a small population to big population (Higginbottom, 2004). In total, 16 in-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured questions with the selected officials at the District level. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select cases which possess the characteristics of what he or she is interested in and provides opportunity for the researchers to think carefully about the size of the population they are interested in and the sampling is done on that basis (Silverman, 2014). The selection of NSD is thus based on the fact that it is one of the deprived districts grappling with numerous development issues, especially quality education. The study was to find out

whether the country is ready to integrate the SDGs and SDG 4 in particular at the local government level. Therefore, the selection of officials was purposive in order to get appropriate responses from them especially because they are the front line policy planners and implementers at the local levels in the country. Thus, they possess the qualities and knowledge of planning and implementation of government adopted policies in the country.

3.9 Instruments of Data Collection and Management

Both face-to-face and telephone interviews were conducted involving 16 interviewees from the NSDDE and NSDA using an interview guide to streamline the questioning in line with the objectives of the study. Semi-structured and other open-ended questions were also employed to administer the interview. This gave participants the opportunities to illustrate their ideas, perceptions, feelings, opinions and knowledge (Patton, 2013) concerning the topic under discussion. In-depth interviews used in qualitative research allows a careful selection of small group of people with certain unique characteristics pertaining to the study. In-depth interviews are appropriate for obtaining adequate information about a person's thought, attitude or if the researcher intends to get more understanding of an issue under investigation. The data outcomes are context-specific in providing a complete picture of a programme or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Notes were taken by the researcher during the discussions.

The in-depth interviews were also recorded using a voice recorder, which allowed the researcher to keep contact with the interviewees, while recording the information (Bell, 2010). It was further transcribed, sorted and analyzed. Reports on education in the district were also reviewed to identify the policies and structures put in place to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education in the district. The two main data collection instruments used were the interview guide and the mobile phone recorder used for recording the responses of interviewees. The interview guide on the other hand contained questions to guide the

researcher during the interviewing process. It was made up of three main parts, namely the introduction of the topic and the background of the researcher. It is further sub-divided into three sections based on the objectives of the study-implementation and monitoring mechanisms, the way forward for achieving SDG 4.

3.10 Data Management and Analysis

The data collection process and management lasted for one and half months starting from the end of April, 2017. The interviews in the voice record form were transcribed into text. The interviews were supported by the hand written notes together with the secondary documents. The transcribed interviews were analyzed using the qualitative analysis techniques proposed by Yin (2014) as cited in Boateng (2015). The recorded interviews were manually transcribed into written form together with the hand written notes. The data was then sorted and categorized into themes based on the objectives of the study for easy analysis. The results contained verbatim information in relation to the topic and context of the study (Patton, 2013). The themes included implementation mechanisms sub-divided into policy frameworks, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, integration and implementation challenges and the way forward. The data was then analyzed and discussed through description and explanation of data by narrating and supporting the narratives with direct quotations from respondents. The primary data was compared with the literature reviewed to verify differing and similar conclusions.

3.11 Ethical issues

Ethical issues about the study were all addressed in line with the prescribed standards of social science research. During both the review and the analysis processes, all cited works were duly acknowledged to avoid plagiarism. During the data collection processes, participants were not in any way deceived about the purpose and the impact of the work. Thus, data presented by the respondents were objectively analyzed and presented without

any massaging or falsification of any part of the data to suit the desired interest of the researcher (Miller & Whicker, 1999). The processes started by taking an introductory letter from Department of Public Administration and Health Services Management of University of Ghana Business School to the NSDA and NSDDE for approval and assignment of officials for the interviews. Permissions of participants were sought before interviews were recorded by explaining to them the purpose of the recordings and who will have access to them (Bell, 2010). Confidentiality of the information was explained to the participants to fill secure to provide answers. Furthermore, no participant was forced to take part in the interview processes, but all voluntary accepted to take part, hence respondents decided their own time for the researcher to engage them appropriately.

3.12 Field Experience

It is not uncommon to encounter difficulties in the field studies especially when the setting of the study involves long travelling to meet the respondents. These difficulties may include unwillingness of some key targeted respondents to participate in the research processes; limited time for the participants to participate in the interview and sometimes language barriers. This study was no exception in terms of the difficulties enumerated. In fact, at the time of my visit to the District, most of the officials were engaged in several outside official duties out of the District capital. This compelled the researcher to stay for one and half weeks waiting for the District Director's response. In fact, initially she rejected the conduct of the research in his office and it took me a full week to convince her on the purpose of the work. However, she even later excluded herself from the whole study as a key respondent and delegated her deputies to do so. To ensure appropriate responses from the participants, they were given copies of the interview guide to familiarize themselves with the nature and content of the questions to discuss. Even with this, some were afraid to participate. But on the whole the process was successful.

Although at NSDA one of the key respondents happens to be an alumna of the researcher former school, making it simple for him to interact with participants of the Assembly, on the whole the processes was a little bit bureaucratic as the District Coordinating Director directed who to take part in the interview based on the topic. Generally, conducting most of the interviews were quite stressful. After the Directors assisted me to purposively sample some of the participants, it appeared during the interviews that not all of them had fair knowledge of the topic under discussion. This compelled me to spend time explaining some of issues and concepts of SDG 4 to them, resulting in the interviews lasting longer than scheduled and further making transcribing of the recorded interviews very difficult. But generally, the whole process offered a unique opportunity for the researcher to learn.

3.13 Limitation of the study

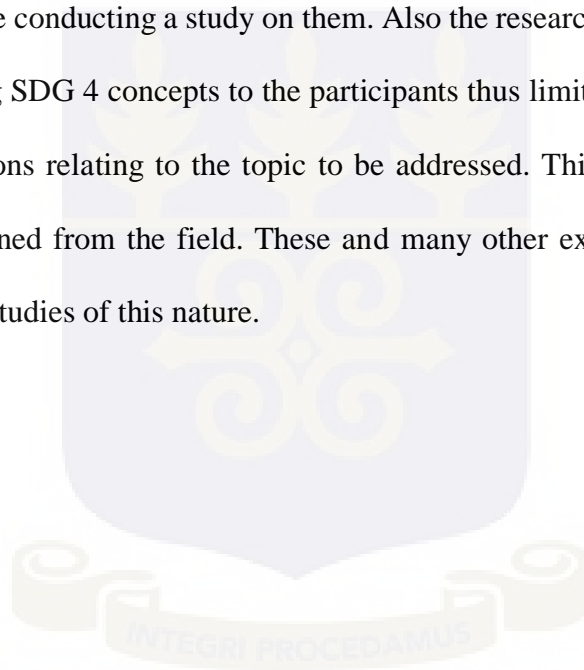
The study sought to ascertain from the perspectives of the local level officials how SDG 4 is being integrated in to local government policies through policy directives from national bureaucrats. However, most of participants were not even fully aware of what SDG 4 is all about limiting their ability to appropriately respond to most of the questions. This challenge was addressed by thorough explanation of the goal by the researcher to the understanding of most the respondents. Consequently, respondents understanding of and responses to the issues under discussion affected the outcome of the collected data. NSD was used as the study area and the findings of the study apparently reflected the knowledge of administrators within that jurisdiction there by limiting the possibility of generalizing the findings of the study country wide.

It is worth noting that SDGs is quite new and therefore the expectations of the study may not adequately be met because nothing after one year of its adoption shows the country is responding to its targets. Although participant revealed they have been recently directed to integrate them into their developmental and operational plans, but no policy frameworks are

available to guide them. Nonetheless, outline some of the few things they are doing in respect of SDG 4 in the District.

3.14 Lessons from the Field of Study

The whole study process and period offered the researcher some few lessons. The researcher is convinced that study of this nature needs adequate time and resources especially when the study entails a large number of people more than the population in the study. It is apparent that some of the participants were not aware of the adoption of SDGs in Ghana let alone SDG 4, therefore it is appropriate to ascertain the level of knowledge of participants of topics of these nature before conducting a study on them. Also the researcher realized that he spent good time explaining SDG 4 concepts to the participants thus limiting the available of time for important questions relating to the topic to be addressed. This ultimately affected the quality of data obtained from the field. These and many other experiences will guide the researcher in future studies of this nature.



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and discussions of findings from the field of study. The discussions are presented under four (4) main themes in line with the objectives of the study. These include implementation mechanisms, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, challenges facing mechanisms and the way forward and for achieving SDG 4. The main themes also contained sub-themes discussed under each of them. In all, 16 respondents including 10 officials of the NSDDE and 6 official of the NSDA were interviewed. The selection was done through purposive sampling technique, however, the selection excluded the District Director of Education, who opted out with the reason she is a newly appointed director just posted to the District barely a year ago and does have any input to make. The responses and the secondary data sources were analyzed and discussed in line with the conceptual framework developed from ACF as well as the objectives of the study. Out of the total of 16 participants, 12 were males and 4 were females

4.2 Implementation Mechanisms

Achievement of SDG4 requires GoG to integrate the goal into national and local level policy and strategic plans. Indeed findings of the field study revealed that GoG through various ministries and departments have directed District level implementers to align developmental and operational plans to the principles underlining these goals by integrating them into them. The ESP (2010-2020), which is currently in operation has outlined a number of interventions and strategies to achieve goals such MDGs, EFA, but now the SDGs-education related goals. Lewin (2007), therefore, argued that varied contextual challenges require diverse strategies in order to achieve universal access, quality and equity at primary and secondary levels of Ghanaian educational system. The SDGs were launched in January, 2016. It is therefore

expected that policy makers and implementers have started aligning their plans and strategies to these goals by integrating them into them in order to achieve their targets as directed. Thus, both national and local level bureaucrats are expected to be aware of these goals and their targets as well as government policy decisions to achieve them.

However, in an attempt to find out the plans put in place to achieve SDG 4 in NSD, the respondents were asked whether they were aware of the SDGs and what they know about them. It is quite interesting to find out that, out 16 respondents, 12 of the officials indicated they were aware of them but through the government directives in the case of NSDA; news and internet sources in case of NSDDE, while four indicated they were not aware. Below are samples of their views:

“Sometimes I don’t take keen interest in these political issues, I take it as political, even though sometimes I hear it in the news...you see sometimes I hear it in the news but pay no attention.”

Another official also stated:

“I have not participated in any workshop on SDGs, I have not had any meeting of any sort on that, but as somebody in education, I think I have that interest about my area. So I know there are still issues connected to poverty, issues of sanitation and issues of education and that is the area I have my interest.”

Even more striking was the fact that only seven of the officials were aware that goal 4 focuses on the education. Upon further questions to ascertain what SDG 4 is all about per their understanding none could actually tell me exactly what SDG 4 is all about. Those who were not aware of SDG4, however, indicated that they only have little knowledge on SDGs. In fact only three respondents indicated that they are ESPs in the country that are normally aligned with these global goals and that their performance both national and local are measured by these goals. Those officials who indicated they have little knowledge on the

SDGs indicated that they have just heard of them, but as a District they have not planned anything on them as one respondent disclosed:

“Actually as a District I don’t think we have ever sat down to plan on those issues.....where I heard about this thing is just last week we returned from a workshop on preparation of ADIOP, Annual District Operational Plan...that is where we heard about the inclusive and the equitable quality education...”

But upon further deliberations and discussions with them, findings of the study revealed that SDGs have not been integrated into their current development and operational plans, albeit some objectives are already focusing on them. This confirms the National Development Planning Commission’s (NDPC) report that the Commission will ensure that the SDGs are properly reflected in subsequent medium-term development frameworks and it will provide relevant guidelines for MDAs and MMDAs to prepare their development plans (NDPC, 2015). Although government has directed them to align their plans with them but government is still in the process of providing a comprehensive implementation guidelines and frameworks on them. Further discussions with them revealed that their current development and operational plans already have some aspects on the SDGs which they are already implementing in the District to achieve especially SDG4 as explained by officials’ base on their understanding under the following sub-themes.

- **Policy Frameworks.**

In line with the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, the current Local Government System Act 1993 (Act 462), the National Development Planning Commission Act 1994 (Act 479), the National Development Planning System Act 1994 (Act 480) and Local Government (Urban, Zonal, Town Councils and Unit Committee Establishment Instruments), it is within the mandate of District Assemblies, in collaboration with other subsector departments, agencies and NGO’s, to institute development plans and programmes to oversee overall development

of areas under their jurisdictions (NSDA, 2014). As planning authorities under the above legal provisions, they are also supposed to design effective strategies for local mobilization of resources and to ensure their prudent use. In line with the overall national planning frameworks, every district designs District Medium-Term Development Plans (DMTDP) for every four years. Currently, all Districts are operating under 2014-2017 (DMTDP) in line GSGDA II (2014-2017). These plans outline the programmes and their implementation and monitoring modalities within the planned period under the overall national and sectoral plans and implementation frameworks. The plans are also in tune with the achievement of broad government policy objectives.

The NSDA's DMTDP (2014-2017) overall goal of the District in collaboration with private and public sector agencies is aimed at facilitating the socio-economic development of the area through effective and efficient mobilization of human and natural resources for provision of basic infrastructure and undertaking efficient service delivery in a sustainable manner to reduce poverty and promote gender equity. However, in line SDG 4, the District's objective is to increase access to quality education by December, 2017. Invariably, the NSDDE operational plan (2017-2019) also shares similar objectives in line with the ESP (2010-2020) of promoting access to and participation in quality education at the basic level in the District. Analysis of participants' responses and the above documents as well as other literature revealed the following findings:

Availability of different forms of resources including financial, human or material determines the extent to which the objectives of a particular policy can be achieved (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). With this, respondents were asked about plans to achieve SG4 in NSD. SDG 4 states that by 2030 ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. All the respondents in one way or the other were able to identify series of policies and their corresponding resources instituted to achieve

SDG4. These include IE policy, eliminating schools under trees by providing physical infrastructure, material resources and human resources (MoE, 2015). Infrastructure according to respondents constitutes the provision of class rooms, teachers' quarters with other auxiliary facilities such as toilets, urinary places, sources of water, electricity and recreational facilities. The provision of infrastructure to basic schools is the mandate of DAs at the local levels as contained in Education Act 2008 act 778 which states that DAs are supposed to provide the needed infrastructure and other facilities for the education of the population under their area of authority. Respondents thus believe that the provision of infrastructures is a core function of the DA especially at the basic level of the education in Ghana as observed by one respondent:

“As an assembly we are in charge of planning, not only planning, but also implementation and I can say that about half of our budget, annual budget goes into education and health, if you look at the programmes and projects that have been implemented over the past 4 years or more, more than half of the budget went to education, provision of school infrastructure, we have put up a number of class room blocks, 3 units, 6 units across the District...”

Indeed respondents added that these infrastructural facilities are provided with the support of NGOs and the communities themselves. These infrastructure as respondents revealed, some of them come with the auxiliary facilities. For instance, basic schools with auxiliary facilities per 2016 data reports include toilets: sixty-eight (68), electricity: fifteen (15), urinals: eighty (80), water sources: thirty (30) out of one hundred and twenty-four schools (124). While some have been upgraded to make them child and disability friendly and gender sensitive as well as safe and inclusive (UNESCO, et al., 2015). Thus all structures now have ramps and wide entrances to make accessible to the physically challenged as stated by one official:

“I think government now come with policies that are inclusive in nature to the extent that the structures they put up these days are disability friendly. All the new buildings that are springing up there are ramps that pupils on wheel chairs will be able to climb, we have them in this district....”

It is further intended to reduce distance between schools by refocusing on under-served and “overseas” communities as well elimination of schools under stress there by creating equitable access to education (Lewin 2007). Governments have over years instructed DAs to provide at least one school every year in full of their commitment to provide free accessible education throughout the country. Thus, respondent at NSDA revealed:

“Education is paramount to us, the illiteracy is quite high and the only way to get off the system is to ensure that if we did not get the opportunity to go to school, every child should have access to go to school...”

The provision of infrastructure (Sifuna, 2007) is central to the achievement SDG 4. Indeed about ten respondents indicated that the provision of infrastructure with auxiliary facilities is intended to expand equitable access to quality education and to cater for increasing enrolments in the District. The provision of infrastructure is therefore paramount to District, especially majority of over 70% are rural inhabitants scattered around every part of the district. This notwithstanding, GER as at 2015/ 2016 academic year was 93.8% against national targets of 100% and achievement of 107% as at 2015. Further questions to find out the infrastructural provision at the SHS level revealed that Assembly does involve in the planning implementation of pre-tertiary educational policies including second cycle institutions such as SHSs. They however indicated that as part of the progressive SHS policy which commenced in September, 2015, and under general programme called the SEIP, government of Ghana initiated a CSHSP provide construct 200 Community Day Senior High Schools in almost all rural Districts across the country and the District is a beneficiary. The primary purpose according respondents was to expand and ensure equitable access by

decongesting the current SHSs. The project is being funded by government of Ghana through the Get Fund. The construction of these 200 SHSs is in line with ESP (2010-2020) to increase equitable access to high quality second cycle education in the country (MoE, 2015).

Furthermore, respondents revealed that in addition to the provision of infrastructure across all parts of the District, government through GES has for past three years redeployed newly trained teachers from the southern urban cities of the country to the District every year. The aim of this exercise according to officials is to improve equitable quality education in rural Ghana. A respondent observed:

“Quality we still have a long way to go because if you look at the trained-teacher, pupil-teacher ratio, I think the pupil teachers are still many in the system. GES should be able give us the figures... even though for the past two years we had a lot of newly trained teachers posted, especially from the south. I think this year alone we had about three hundred or so for 2016/2017 academic year. About three hundred were posted to Nanumba South, so that has also beef up our trained-teacher pupil-teacher ratio...”

Respondents also revealed that the NSDA has continued to sponsor trained teachers undergoing training at the various educational institutions in the country through the District Assembly Common Fund (DAFC) under bond to come back and serve the District after completion. Invariably, the study also revealed that on-job training programmes such as Untrained Teacher Diploma in Basic Education (UTDBE) programme (MoE, 2015) have been instituted upgrade teachers knowledge and skills on current curriculum content and modern education trends from Senior Secondary Schools Certificates to Diploma-holding teachers. The District according officials sponsored forty teachers through GPEG to undergo programme. However, numerous other teachers went through the programme on their own. This programme was actually meant to improve the provision of quality education in 75 Districts across the country. It is estimated that as of June, 2015, over 6000 were being

trained under the programme with funding from Ghana Partnership Education grant (GPEG). Most of these teachers are those serving in many deprived Districts especially “overseas” communities in these Districts, thus providing these training Programme for them is by extension providing equitable quality education across board. The focus of quality learning is underpinned by four principles, namely, knowledge acquisition, learning to co-exist, learning to acquire relevant skill and its application. These make learning holistic and a prime determinant of quality (Delors et al, 1996 as cited in UNESCO, 2005). Respondents further posited that the redesign of educational facilities and training of more teachers are key to providing quality education the District. This confirms UNESCO (2009) position that commitment to quality education is underpinned by providing adequate facilities, well-trained teachers relevant curriculum content and well-defined learning outcomes.

The study further revealed that apart from the infrastructure and human resources, material resources such as school uniforms, school sandals, text and exercise books and other related teaching and learning materials are provided to basic school pupils free of charge in the past two years (Morgan, et al., 2014). Respondents explained that free education implies elimination of cost barriers to education and as such governments have continued to provide these free materials identified above in responds to the cost barriers preventing numerous out-of-school children from accessing quality education in most deprived Districts in the country. The District, officials revealed happens to be one of the beneficiary Districts in country as an official at the NSDDE noted:

“There is this free uniforms initiative by the government to supply free uniforms to pupils and also free exercise books given and there is school feeding...provided by the government to ensure quality and equitable education in the country and this District is a beneficiary.”

The provision of these materials-school uniforms and stationary have encouraged and improved enrolments in last three years. These are interventions that absorb direct cost of schooling, helped sustained access and also cater for the opportunity cost of education for the poorer households (Kwame, 2009). These interventions are also in line with government policy commitments in ESP (2010-2020) which stipulate among others government is committed to motivate parents and pupils through fee abolition programmes, provision of school uniforms reducing distance between school and home and also increasing the salaries of teachers in deprived areas by 20%. However, some of these things have not been done. They unanimously contended that pupils who will otherwise not attend school because of appearance are now in school including even pupils in the most deprived communities in the District. Another official remarked

“Somebody appearing with his or her home ratchet attire will not want to go to school because he or she will be stigmatized or mocked at.”

In ensuring access to equitable quality education, the provision of infrastructure, teaching and learning materials and teachers address the supply challenges, while family and personal characteristics influence demand challenges (Sifuna, 2007). Although it has been the goals of policy makers to design strategies to expand access and increase school participation, particularly in developing countries during the past two decades, these objectives are undermined by the nature of the formulated strategies, which invariably lead to disparities in education provision in many communities in these countries (Sifuna, 2007; Yandana & Ampiah, 2015). Admittedly, officials revealed that providing access to equitable quality education is their nightmare for so many years, however, because of inadequate strategies to respond to the diverse needs of the vast number of communities in the District, they still have a long way to go.

- **Implementation Programmes**

Apart from the categories of policy interventions and the resources identified above, the officials also gave further details of existing and new programmes, with some in the form of full or partial scholarships that are being implemented to achieve SDG4 in NSD. These programmes they are instituted by either government, NSDDE or other stakeholders like NGOs among others in the District. Some of the programmes they identified included existing programmes that were being implemented during the MDGs period are still running and those that have just been put in place and are being implemented to ensure equitable quality education in the country and the District in particular. The continuing programmes in the form of full scholarship from the MDGs period include CAMFED, Capitation Grant, School Feeding programmes (Issah et al, 2007), GPASS, and complementary education (MoE, 2015), especially at the primary and JHS levels. On the other hand, the new programmes include sensitization activities, the SEIP and the Progressively Free SHS at the SHS level as well as capacity building workshops for both staff and parents alike.

All these programmes, officials revealed, provided resources for their implementation. All the 10 respondents at the NSDDE pointed out that with the introduction of the IE policy under Education Act 2008 to provide access to equitable quality education in the country, the District in line with GES directives has embarked on vigorous sensitization programmes to increase enrolment especially on the need to send the girl child and the disable to school. These programmes are carried out through the Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and the School management Committees (SMCs) structures at various circuit centres in the District. According to officials the main stream schools have being designed to include all categories of students and especially make the school environment disability friendly. The District runs the integrated type of IE where all categories of pupils, irrespective of the students' background stay together in the same school system, although in some parts of the country

the segregated type is being run where pupils with special needs are accommodated in separate designed schools exclusively for them. An official at the NSDDE explained:

“Here we are implementing government pre-tertiary education policies and the strategy is to include disadvantaged children within the existing educational system,...the main activities are numerous we have organizing sensitization workshops for parents of those with special needs...is unfortunate in the District we don’t have specific institution called a special education institution. So what we run here is the integrated type where those with special needs find themselves in the mix of those who are not special...”

Likewise, teachers with disabilities are also invited to talk the children with special needs on the importance of education and these sensitization programmes expected to be carried out with the help of various stakeholders such as the media and NGOs within the District. It has resulted in the improvement of enrolment in the District in the past three years, thus another official at the NSDDE observed:

“We reach to families through PTAs and SMCs meetings to encourage them to bring pupils with disability to the main stream schools by discouraging them for sending them to specials Schools...”

According to the MOE (2015), these sensitization programmes are national programmes being carried out to expand on the importance of IE and the dangers of exclusive education in general. In fact these sensitization programmes are not limited to only the disable, but the girl child and the general enrolment drive as well as the falling standards of education in the District, where they are reaching to all diverse communities in the District and hopes to continue, indeed a respondent at the NSDA revealed:

“We are to hold an educational colloquium this year to discuss pertinent issues affecting education in the District especially the falling standard of BECE...”

The NSDDE has also established a desk for community participation with the role of advocating against socio-cultural practices affecting education in the District and also in collaboration with NGOs, the capacities of PTAs and SMCs have is being built to play their role in sustaining the girl- child in school.

Moreover, respondents also revealed that two existing important scholarships programmes are still running at the primary, JHSs and SHSs levels of education in the District. These include CAMFED and GPASS. The CAMFED scholarship programme is an NGO-sponsored programme that provide educational materials in the form of exercise books, uniforms, sandals, sanitary pads among others to only the girl-child in order to improve gender parity under the MDGs at the basic level of education in the District (Issah, et al, 2007). They also pay for their examination related costs in the schools. In fact officials revealed that NSD is also beneficiary and is being run in their partner schools in District. They indicated that, in their view, the programme, is one of the comprehensive programmes they have seen so far in the District. Another official NSDDE therefore explained:

“Their Programme is like a full scholarship focusing more on female education and providing tremendous support by paying fees, providing them with other bursaries, they provide them even with sanitary pads just to eliminate the barriers that keep the girl-child away from school...”

The programme is not only found at the JHSs level, but at the SHSs level in the District, where beneficiary students at the SHS level are given full scholarships comprising payment of full school fees, provision of the same items as in the JHSs and additional daily spending monies in beneficiary schools. Respondents explained that the provision of these packages are in line with government and stakeholders efforts to bridge the gap between female and male education especially in rural Ghana (Osorio, 2016). Expressing their views on the impacts of the programme so far, respondents pointed out that the programme over years

have helped to improve female students' attendance, completion and achievements. They argued that most girls who will otherwise not in school are in school because of the programme as an official at the NSDDE observed:

“Basically the performance of the children have improved, even though some are doing better than others because of the help...you know you can't get 100%, but some are doing better now...”

Government as part of the World Bank sponsored programme-GPEG introduced a similar scholarship package-GPASS to only needy girls at the JHS levels who are not benefiting from the CAMFED scholarships. The GPASS programme covers 14 schools in the District, which is part of seventy five Districts covered by the programme at the beginning of 2013/2014 academic as three-year programme. It also distributes almost the same materials to beneficiary students but do not pay examination registration fees and done by CAMFED and the programme is not at the SHS level. A respondent at the NSDDE revealed:

“I think it is just like CAMFED, they also provide educational materials for their girls. I think what CAMFED does and they don't do is paying of school fees, they don't pay fees for the children, but they provide them with books, pens and pencils, uniforms, sanitary pads among others...”

Officials also contended that the programme is bridging the GPI in the District. Girls in the District hardly progress SHS and tertiary levels of education as compared with their male counterparts. Like CAMFED it is also intended to eliminate cost barriers (UNESCO, et al., 2015) that prevent girls from accessing both basic and second cycle education as compared with their male counterparts in the District.

Another closely linked newly sponsored scholarship programme is the SEIP introduced in 2014/2015 academic year at the SHS level by government of Ghana in partnership with World Bank in 125 Districts (MoE, 2015) in the country and fortunately according to

officials, NSD was part. In an interview with officials of the NSDDE, it was revealed that this scholarship package is part of a variety of projects under SEIP programme. This, they explained include 23 SHSs, improving on existing facilities of low performing SHSs like libraries, laboratories, class rooms among others. The scholarship packages are expected to cover 10,000 students for the next five years starting from 2015/2016 academic year (MoE, 2015). An official at the NSDDE revealed that the programme covers only day students living in the immediate surroundings of the school and are also attending WSHS. He stated:

“Basically it is supposed to be for day students, it is supposed to take care of only day students, who are within the immediate surrounding of the school covering 60% girls and 40% boys and it is supposed to improve their attendance, so at least each one of them should in a term have not less than 80% attendance.”

Officials at the NSDDE that disclosed the selection of beneficiaries on to the programme is supposed to start from JHSs within the vicinity of the District, targeting only needy but brilliant students. These are students who passed their BECE examination and cannot afford to SHS. The programme, respondents revealed, is purely cash transfer (Tinker, 2011) from scholarship secretariat to beneficiary schools. Each beneficiary student is entitled to GHC50 every two weeks for all the three terms in a year and for the whole three-year period the child stays in school (GES, 2014). The programme manual indicates that each student is supposed to receive GHC50 for seven times in a term, however, according to one respondent, because of administrative obstacles, the moneys are not reimbursed as required by the programme directives, he observed:

“We were told that every two weeks they are supposed to be given GHC50 each to take care of their education needs, but because the systems are not going on well, usually the moneys come in an accumulated form...”

Respondents also disclosed that the primary aim of the programme is to improve enrolment and academic performance at the SHS level. According to MoE (2015), this SEIP is supposed

to improve the results of West Africa Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSEK) results through quality improvement measures such as school performance partnership, where each beneficiary school will receive \$120,000 over five-year period to improve on quality and access in those schools. Also to provide leadership and management training for management of the 125 beneficiary schools. Similarly, as outlined in the programme reference manual, SEIP is supposed to ensure that students from low income families are able to access secondary education, improve retention, completion and attainment rates in SHS for girls and other vulnerable groups. It is also to improve equity in secondary school access and retention in the under-served Districts. This is in line with developing and African countries' commitment to provide opportunities for young people who will otherwise not be able to afford to continue their education by making available adequate number of scholarships in these countries by 2020 (UNESCO, et al., 2015).

Another important programme, respondents identified that is targeted at rural schools in selected communities is SFP. Officials explained that this programme was instituted by government of Ghana as part the discrete specific programmes instituted in 2006 to achieve universal primary education. It was piloted in some few schools in the District. Currently officials disclosed that the programme being run in 28 school across the District, where a free day meal is provided to children of these beneficiaries' schools. It is intended to increase enrolment and improve retention in these schools. Thus an official at NSDDE remarked:

“There is school feeding where children are fed in the school and they learn efficiently. It is to ensure that they do not sit on empty stomachs in the process of learning.”

It is one of governments' commitment to expand educational access in some selected District in the country as outlined in ESP (2010-2020).

Respondents also contended that in order to integrate out-of-school children into the main stream educational system, a complementary education programme is being implemented by an NGO called School for Life (SFL). This programme, respondents revealed is intended to provide basic numeracy and literacy skills to pupils of school-going age who are out of school system. They revealed that the programme enrolls more pupils more than their normal enrolment drives initiatives as a respondent at NSDDE revealed:

“Those who would have been in school but because of one or two challenges are not in school. So they go to these communities identify these children and get a facilitator and train and him or her... where the facilitator will take them through the classes using the local language of the area for about six months and they will now integrate them into the normal school system.”

Additionally, the organization also provides teaching and learning materials to some selected schools and even sometimes train both officials and teachers to replicate their models of learning in schools of the selected communities they are working in using their manuals. Programme of this nature targets over-aged out-of-school children, children from long distance communities and minority populations among others to arrest the current educational challenges especially this type of complementary education (Issah, et al., 2007). It is primarily intended to provide literacy and numeracy skills using the mother tongue (MoE, 2015).

Apart from these specific policies targeting poor and deprived districts to ensure equitable quality education, officials also identified other strategies that are being implemented to expand free access to education to all basic education pupils throughout the country. These include capitation grant programme and Free Progressive SHS strategies. The capitation grant according to officials were instituted in 2005 to achieve universal primary education as required by the MDGs and the EFA goals. It was first piloted in 53 Districts for the

2004/2005 academic year by government of Ghana with support DFID with the aim of expanding access and universalizing basic education (Yoshida & Okamura, 2010) and also intended to address inequities in the Ghanaian basic educational system (Abukari et al, 2015) as well as full the FCUBE policy as outlined in the 1992 constitution and Education act 2008. Respondents asserted that in line with Articles 25 and 38 of the 1992 constitution of Ghana the capitation grant programme was instituted to transfer cash (Tinker, 2011) to various districts to pay for sports and cultural fees and some component retained to pay the subsidy for BECE examinations (MoE, 2015). The grants according to officials has the national, regional, District and school components. Currently, it is the main source of funding to the Districts as one official asserted:

“Our internal generated funds is only capitation...once a while they pay it through the schools, we take a percentage and pay it to the sport accounts and even with that self you pay and component to regional and national levels respectively.”

Apparently, the capitation grant is for the primary and JHSs levels in the whole country. However, in 2015, government acting in line with constitution, officials disclosed, instituted the Progressively Free SHS strategy which was targeted at only day students in rural communities in Ghana. The policy only intended to absorb some aspects of schools' cost. The programme was intended to review all scholarships at the second cycle levels of education and to provide concrete recommendations to enhance current targeting mechanisms, which led to its launched in 2015 (MoE, 2015). Respondents however, confirmed that there is new policy that has just been announced by the new government to make SHS education completely free starting 2017/2018 academic year.

4.3 Monitoring and Enforcement Mechanisms

Monitoring in education may either focus on monitoring educational systems and subsystems at different levels or monitoring educational projects (Plomp, et al.,1992). It can be directed

to track the performance of projects, policies or programmes. Implementation monitoring seeks to track the inputs, processes and outputs applied to achieve a specific goal (Majola, 2014). The Education 2030 Framework for Action requires countries to design follow ups and reviews through monitoring, reporting and evaluation of policies to track the progress of SDG4 (UNESCO, et al., 2015).

The objective of this section was to find out the systems put in place to ensure that the plans instituted will achieve the intended SDG4 targets. Almost all the officials asserted that monitoring of educational programmes to achieve any of the global goals are streamlined into the structured monitoring systems put in place by GES, albeit some few programmes come with their specific monitoring strategies. Ten (10) of the respondents identified supervision, monitoring teams, review meetings, data collection and reporting systems and examination results as most of the common monitoring mechanisms to track application of resources allocations in projects, plans, or programmes to achieve any educational goals and as well SDG4 in the District. Supervision is the traditional system of monitoring educational systems and subsystems. The officials explained that it involves regular or periodic visits by officials to schools to observe at firsthand what is going on in the schools. The officials said that it consists of two main forms, namely, brief visits and intensive visits. All visits aimed to observe what is going in the school and collection of information on teaching and learning process or obtain information on school inputs such as text books, number of teachers, teaching and learning materials, implementation projects, teacher and pupils' attendance among others. Additionally, these visits also involves distribution of government assisted resources such as uniforms, exercise books, sandals among others. Thus a respondent at the NSDDE observed:

“You just talked about... the girl-child education officer. If you want to do any effective work about the girls, the girls are not in the office here, rather they are in

the schools, so you will be moving out there...so any other officer here is supposed to be visiting the schools because the schedules you have has a link or the practices are in the schools.”

In the case of the intensive visits, officials explained that it is important for an officer or supervisor to once a while to be in a school for about a week to observe what is going on in the schools. It primarily entails tracking the activities that are happening in the school’s premises as one respondent explained:

“We always one...track the activities that is checking on whatever thing you are interested in. For instance, if it is teacher attendance you want to check on... how often teachers attend school...there this book called teachers attendance register...”

Similarly, both of these modes of supervision can aim at the application of resources either provided by government or any other stakeholder in the educational system. For instance, an officer can visit to find out the number of text books available in a school, how meals are prepared and distributed to children or the application of funds such as capitation grants projects and activities. An officer at the NSDDE explained:

“Intensive visits can take you a full week in a school and that one you inspect every aspect of whatever the school is doing on sanitation or on academic work or on anything...”

Invariably, respondents have also revealed that all officers in the NSDDE are monitors in one way or the other because each schedule requires monitoring to collect information, evaluate the information and action taken on it (Plomp, et al., 1992; Eddy, et al., 2014). So everybody does monitoring as one respondent observed:

“Monitoring, we have supervisors in the supervision unit... we have Assistant Director for supervision and we have the circuit supervisors, sometimes even the District Director goes with the PRO, then the internal auditor...”

And another responded explained:

“So we have independent monitoring unit here, those who go out to do the monitoring apart from the Assistant Director for supervision and the circuit supervisors who do daily monitoring, this one they do a selection of schools from the various circuits to go and monitor and see what they have been receiving from the circuit supervisors (ibid)...”

This system of monitoring or mechanism is one of the oldest systems in educational systems across the globe. It basically involves examining what takes place in schools and class rooms by visiting schools and reporting. Although it is now complemented with other mechanism such as test systems, school league tables and school evaluation reports (Grauwe, 2008).

Additionally, respondents also identified monitoring teams as of the key mechanisms used in the District to monitor the implementation of educational projects and programmes in the educational sector. Educational project monitoring tracks the progress of means or the application of resources to achieve a particular goal or objective. It tracks inputs, processes and outputs of projects (Majola, 2014). Thus official revealed that during the implementation of educational projects and programmes, both internal and external monitoring teams come around to inspect the implementation of these projects and programmes as explained by an official at the NSDA:

“Yes we have monitoring team, the monitoring team is made up of the District planning coordinating unit...and this monitoring team goes round once a while to see what is going on, apart from what the circuit supervisors do as their core mandate...”

Furthermore, officials indicated that these teams when they come around they enquire to ascertain the input levels employed in executing a particular project or programme and also observe the project executing processes. If it is an infrastructure, they evaluate the entire project using the prescribed project requirements and standards by juxtaposing it with the engineering requirements. For instance, a three (3) unit classroom block must have all the

inclusive features as required by law. With the introduction of IE policy in Ghana, officials pointed out that, any classroom or its auxiliary facility must have features that are friendly to the disabled or any other group of students. For instance, ramps and large doors with specific engineering specifications. Respondents also pointed out that these internal monitoring teams go to schools to see at first hand the teaching and learning processes going on and schools' inputs such as teaching and learning materials, progress of projects going on among others.

Apart from the internal monitoring teams, respondents also indicated that external monitoring teams come around to monitor what goes on in their offices and the field at large. Mostly, these teams come from project secretariat or government agencies implementing the project. In the case of government sponsored interventions such as Capitation grants and GPASS at JHS levels, monitoring teams come from MoE and sometimes partner agencies such as World Bank auditors. Sometimes, officials revealed that external auditors or teams usually come around to review their monitoring reports or go to the field to observe at first hand the implementation processes of programmes to ascertain whether materials supplied have reached their intended beneficiaries. For instance, a respondent at NSDDE explained:

“For GPASS, once a while they do come around to check reports of the programme in the office here. But another time they went to the field to monitor what is happening there...”

Another officer at NSDA observed:

“And we also have external bodies that comes once a while, at the regional level, you know one of the functions of the Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) is monitoring of the activities of the district assemblies, coordination and monitoring... so once a while they still come around to see what is happening especially in schools,...they interview few teachers,... pupils... and... the community members.”

Similarly, for government sponsored programmes like SEIP and GPASS, scholarship secretariat normally comes around to monitor or review their reports to ascertain what is going on as one official revealed:

“There is another package apart from the SEIP, school partnership programme, they come... from the regional secretariat and sometimes from the scholarship secretariat. When they are coming, they give signals, we are coming for monitoring and they come and interview cross section of students and staffs.”

Monitoring in this light is not only limited to local context, but global institutions have also developed similar monitoring systems in the past. For instance, the MDGs and the EFA monitorings were led by global monitoring teams such as UNICEF, UIS and other global monitoring teams (EFA GMR, 2002).

Invariably, the implementation of similar programmes by NGOs like CAMFED Ghana also adopt these monitoring strategies in different forms. In a follow up telephone interview with an officer at NSDDE, he revealed that CAMFED Ghana has also instituted different types of monitoring teams within their established structures such as monitoring and evaluation units at regional and district levels. These teams, he explained come around to see the selection processes, distribution processes and ad hoc visits to check the usage of materials given and pupils' attendance. In conjunction with this system is the review meetings. Officials at the NSDA asserted that they organize regular review meetings and subsequent follow ups review meetings to find out the extent to which various departments are achieving the objectives of policies and programmes being implemented in the District. They contended that various heads of departments are invited, including stakeholders in educational sector in the District. It is sometimes extended to even include the general public. The officials disclosed that at the review meetings various heads of departments are required to explain the progress of their sectoral activities and programmes in the meeting as one official retorted:

“GES, yes one of your activities for the year was to increase enrolment, so since September to march we have two quarters, tell us what you have done so far, so circuit by circuit they tell us....”

Reviews are planned periodically to detect unforeseen factors that may militate against the progress of a programme leading to the establishment of further actions and responses (Swanson, et al., 2010). Similar to these review meetings is a common strategy being organized across all districts in the country called School Performance Appraisal Meetings (SPAM) as officials indicated. According one official at NSDDE, this SPAM meeting is a regular annual meeting where stakeholders in the educational sector come together to deliberate on the achievements and challenges of the past year and propose remedies as well as set targets for the next year as explained:

“This is a meeting where stakeholders in education are brought together to examine the challenges detected as a result of completing the School Reports Cards...”

At the meetings, stakeholders deliberate on how to overcome the challenges by proposing the way forward for the schools and the District.

Analysis of the data also revealed that, in addition to the above mentioned systems of monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, the District educational system and partner agencies also employ a set of data collection and processing systems designed purposely to track the progress of educational goals using available data at the school level (Plomp, et al, 1992). These data or information when collected is taken to regional, national and sometimes global levels. Some of the key mechanisms they identified include annual, quarterly and monthly reports. The others include School Reports Card (SRC), EMIS and the regular examination systems. Some officials at the NSDDE revealed that as part of their core monitoring duties they are supposed to prepare reports regarding the implementation of any

programme, policy of project in the District, which include annual, quarterly and monthly reports. Thus an official at the NSDDE illustrated:

“For instance this enrolment figures we are talking about, when they are taking here, they are sent to regional statistics and they will be collated and sent to the national level. So we report quarterly.”

Further analysis showed that, in line with the above mentioned system, officials also identified SRCs as one of the common tools employ in monitoring educational inputs, processes and outputs. Analysis revealed that the SRCs capture detailed information about every school spanning from personnel to even donor sponsored projects as a respondent at NSDDE remarked:

“Even...there is what we called the School Report Cards. It is another document that capture a number of things....It is normally generated by the District Education Office, which seeks information concerning the School such as donor funded projects in the school or materials given to the school... and sent to the regional level.”

Likewise, the implementation of other programmes such as GPASS and SEIP have similar reporting, albeit in-built systems. In the case of SEIP and even GPASS for instance, officials disclosed that both the school level officials and the NSDDE prepare and copy annual reports to regional and national scholarship secretariat as part of their routine monitoring activities. These reports are examined and remedial actions are taken to surmount the emerging challenges of the Programme under evaluation. One official therefore revealed that:

“For SEIP, the policy was done with its policy monitoring and control measures we are abiding by strictly. For instance, in terms of selection, it is not an event but a process to the extent that even well before the potential beneficiaries get to Senior High School, you can actually identify them pending their entry...”

Additionally, as part of monitoring and accountability systems, reports of the distribution of the monies or items must include a signed lists of beneficiaries as he continued to explain:

“The policy is that parents will have to come and sign and witness that the monies are handed over to their beneficiaries...”

Invariably, CAMFED Ghana has similar systems as officials indicated, parents will also have to come and witness the distribution of items to their intended beneficiaries. Officials further asserted that all these processes are in-built mechanisms designed to ensure that the resources supplied get to their intended beneficiaries, this, officials argued has had huge impact on the implementation processes of the programmes.

Analysis of the data also revealed that contingent with the above mentioned reporting systems is composite data system that normally capture almost all the school inputs resources and other information required by national and regional headquarters. Thus five official revealed that there is a data system called EMIS, which is an annual census data collection system designed by GES to present a complete picture of the resources including human, material and financial resources available in every school, district, regional and the nation at large. An official at NSDDE explained:

“EMIS is just a complete data about the school, every school has one, where complete data of what is material and non-material resources everything captured...”

Further questions on the EMIS revealed that the information collected by this system is eventually published by GES. The MoE is of the view that EMIS is one of the main data and reporting mechanism that collects data on quality related inputs such as textbooks, teachers, class rooms, furniture among others annually and published (MoE, 2015). The Ministry, in their 2015 ESPR revealed that this system was to be reviewed by 2015 to collect data at the District level and make national data available to all stakeholders in the education industry in the country (MoE, 2012). Officials added that when this EMIS data is collected, it is processed and copies are given to schools and the District as one official explained:

“EMIS is something that is taken annually...it is national and international database taken its roots from each District and from each school...so later we realized at the end of the first term and even second term some schools still admit students, meanwhile you took data of the very academic year in the first term. If somebody picks that data from headquarters, Ministry of Education and come down to the school there may be variations because after you took the data some enrolments, staffing and other issues have increased again.”

This system consequently provides basis for national and GMR. Coupled with this EMIS is the traditional test and examination systems designed to track school level output indicators such as performance, completion and access. These systems, officials asserted are employed to evaluate the impact of any intervention in schools, districts, regional and national levels. Thus, programme managers at the district, regional and national levels request for end-of-term or year examination results to assess the impact of any intervention at the local level. Officials revealed that the scholarship secretariat requests for the termly performance of students to be sent to them for onward evaluation and feedback action as an official at the NSDDE explained:

“There is a monitoring to ensure that the investment in the beneficiaries are not going down the drain, extra-classes are provided to them, then monitoring of their performance is done termly...through the general examinations output. Their results, termly results are collected analyzed and submit to the scholarship secretariat for them to assess and actually see the progress they are making ...”

Plomp, et al. (1992) described this process of monitoring as basic form of monitoring educational systems which encompasses three critical components, namely, regular collection of information, evaluation of information and feedback action. Almost all the above identified mechanisms are mostly the traditional systems of monitoring mechanisms existing in various organizations across the country and the world at large, albeit in different forms and content. This notwithstanding they are still very useful and applicable to most of the

programmes and policies being implemented at various levels of the educational system in the District.

4.4 Challenges of integrating SDG4 and implementation mechanisms

Planning and implementation based on the top-down approach creates challenges reflecting policy design, especially when target groups are not allowed to participate in the planning and implementation processes (Makinde, 2015). Any planning and implementation process that seeks to involve the target population has the greater chance of achieving its objectives or targets. This section presents the challenges NSDA and NSDDE is facing in the process instituting and implementing more plans and programmes to achieve SDG4. Challenges facing implementation mechanisms, interventions and programmes to achieve SDG4 NSD are discussed below.

Officials expressed their views on the recurrent challenges limiting the impact interventions designed to achieve educational goals in different ways. According to Van Horn and Van Meter (1977), political, economic, social and contextual variables determine the success or otherwise of any policy planning and implementation process in any locality. These factors can either facilitate the success or the failure of a programme in a particular environment. Similarly, it is argued that despite the fact that huge investments have been made by governments and other development partners over the past fifteen years on the various policy interventions and strategies, results of MDGs education-related indicators such as access and gender parity however were context-specific (Lewin & Akyempong, 2009 & ESPR, 2015). Waage and Yap, (2015), also contended that the targets of the MDGs encouraged countries towards achieving universal primary education, but in varying ways, they did not produce the desired outcomes like equity and quality of universal primary education.

Analysis of the challenges facing the implementation of programmes to achieve SDG4 revealed that these challenges can be categorized into geographical (Anlimachie, et al, 2015; Issah, et al, 2007), socio-cultural, resources (Anlimachie, et al., 2015; Van Horn & Van Meter, 1977; Issah, et al, 2007) and administrative (Van Horn & Van Meter, 1977) factors.

- **Geographical Factors**

Geographically, NSD has dispersed settlement patterns (Anlimachie, et al, 2015), especially as majority of the inhabitants are rural dwellers. Access to these communities is a major obstacle to delivering and monitoring educational inputs, activities and even assessing outputs. Respondents disclosed that the vast, diverse and dispersed nature of the District poses serious challenge to application of equity and quality related inputs and processes such as deployment of teachers, infrastructure, and teaching and learning materials, food, and others items among others. These communities, incidentally are the hard-to-reach areas (Ghana Statistical Service, UNDP, 2013 & MoE, 2015) and mostly under-served (Osorio, 2016) in terms of equity in the distribution of educational resources and programmes' materials as a respondent at NSDDE lamented:

“I think the major challenge is...you know our schools are far from one another, so how to get to the school is major challenge.”

The difficulty, according to officials is not only about the distance between schools and communities, and even worse is the fact that some communities are located “oversea” across “Oti” River close to eastern borders near the Republic of Togo. Items or educational materials that are sent to these communities get stacked at the river, where the only alternatives are the use of boats and motorbikes with the help of teachers resulting in additional cost of transportation (Ghana Statistical Service, UNDP, 2013) as another respondent explained:

“Another challenge is: there are schools at the “overseas” area, the challenge is getting the items to the schools. You know the vehicle cannot cross with the boat. They use boats to cross, so what we do normally is that the vehicle will be parked, then the boats will convey the things...”

It was further revealed by officials that equitable distribution of teachers is also undermined by these geographical barriers as most teachers do not want to accept postings to the hard-to-reach areas. This leads to frequent teacher absenteeism, especially those who accept these postings but unpunctual. Thus, apart from infrastructure; teachers’ absenteeism and refusal to accept postings to deprived areas have been identified as key factors militating against universal primary education in Ghana (UNDP Ghana, 2015). Also, majority of the student population is in the typical rural under-served areas and monitoring these schools becomes even more challenging because of inadequate funding. A respondent at NSDDE disclosed:

“For challenges, as I talk to you now...this is two years...the Director has not been able to resource circuit supervisors and whoever wants to go on monitoring.”

These geographical factors largely account for the inability of the District to provide access to equitable quality education in the District.

- **Socio-Cultural Factors**

Social and cultural characteristics of a group of people in a particular geographical area largely shape their attitudes towards programme implementation. The attitudes of parents, guardians and children alike to a large extent affect the outcomes of any implementation programme meant to achieve a particular goal. Officials at both the NSDDE and the NSDA identified some of the socio-cultural factors undermining effective implementation of programmes to achieve educational goals in the District. Common factors they identified include illiteracy, early marriages (Anlimachie, 2015) and teenage pregnancies. Two respondents at the NSDDE lamented that the phenomenon of early marriages especially elopement and teenage marriages are some of the social problems the District is still battling

with. They contended that sometimes the investments (Lewin & Akyempong, 2009 & ESPR, 2015) being made on especially female education tend to produce no fruits (Akyempong, et al, 2007). This is because sometimes they drop out school due teenage pregnancies or get eloped to suitors at the tender ages as a respondent at NSDDE complained:

“In terms of gender parity we have a problem in the District, just as we have it in most rural districts in Ghana. I don’t know, it is both cultural and economic, such that the issue of girls when they are getting matured being eloped into marriage to men either for cultural reasons or economic reasons is actually affecting the completion rates of our girls in schools.”

They revealed that what is worrisome about these practices is that these girls are under-age and Ghanaian laws frown on these actions but unfortunately are not applied. They revealed that to step up efforts to surmount these phenomena, a desk has been set up for community participation. The officer in charge have been advocating against these practices in addition to the regular sensitization programmes been carried out. Officials also attributed these to high illiteracy rate in the District as one respondent observed:

“Because of the size of the District and the schools you can’t get to all the schools and educate them more on the importance of education and the effects of these force marriage..., teenage pregnancy.... So here too it is rampant because of the illiteracy rate...”

It is imperative to point out that whether for economic or cultural reasons, the influence of these practices on educational outcomes in NSD is enormous. It undermines completion and access rates which are the key to measuring equitable access and quality of education. Similarly, the impact of cash transfer programmes are often limited due to the misapplication of these funds. Parents and students alike do not actually know the purpose of these programmes. For instance, the biggest obstacle to SEIP is the understanding of the purpose of the package as one official explained:

“Unfortunately some parents and students see it as a package that is meant to improve their economic lots, so it is misapplied...”

The impact of the misapplication of these programmes would naturally affect quality indicators such as completion rate and performance (Sifuna, 2007).

- **Resources**

Resources are vital to the planning and implementation of any policy or programme. These resources may include financial, human or material (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). Officials at NSDDE and NSDA revealed resources are their biggest challenge. A senior official at NSDA revealed that inadequate funding has compelled them to engage the services of community members under an initiative called Self-helped projects, where communities are encouraged to raise structures such as school buildings or teachers’ quarters. A budget is subsequently raised by the assembly to assist in the completion of the project especially roofing as he observed:

“Currently, Montanaayili here... they are currently putting up I think four rooms self-helped project. Hopefully, when the new District Chief Executive comes we will raise budget to help them roof it.”

The NSDA is the sole provider of infrastructure at the basic level of education as required by law. However, the main sources of revenue to the assembly is the DACF and IGF, both of which officials indicated are not regular or sufficient to provide all the necessary facilities in the District. They further revealed that apart from the DACF, which mainly comes from the central government, their IGF is inadequate to provide infrastructure because the number of markets from which they mainly generate the IGF are not many. Thus, a senior official at NSDA observed:

“Unfortunately we do not have any viable markets, if you take Lungni, Wulensi, Nakpayili; overseas there are no markets there. From Gambugu, Chichagi, Puduya... mention them we don’t have a market there.”

Although officials revealed that they have other sources of funding such as District Development Facility (DDF), but these funds come with conditions attached to them. According to officials at the NSDA, it is only the investment grants that can be used to build schools however, because of the conditions attached to them it is difficult to access it as a senior at NSDA observed:

“We also have what we called DDF, District Development Facility, it is also a central government fund strictly. It is a kind of donor fund, donors put their monies in one basket and every year for the past seven (7) years or so...the assemblies are assessed in terms of performance. You will have to meet the minimum conditions and scoring conditions, if you passed as an assembly you will get some portions of the money.”

The bigger challenge is also that the IGF is not enough to be used for development projects because it may take a long time before the project is completed but the DACF has serious challenges thus a respondent at NSDA revealed:

“And the common fund too, even though it is common but it is not as common as it is. As we speak now fourth quarter 2016 is yet to come, so assuming you have programmes to be undertaken, January or February 2017. These project would have to hold on.”

They lamented that even though there are donor organizations in the District like JAICA, Action Aid, et al., but they are not so much into education.

Officials at the NSDDE also raised serious concerns about unavailability of financial resources to run their own plans and activities. They explained that the only grant in addition to the capitation grant, they used to receive was GPEG but the programme has since ended in 2016 and there is no any other auxiliary source of funding apart from central government assistance which they have not received for two years now. An official at NSDDE therefore complained:

“And here is the case offices are dried. You sit in the office, financial assistance that are supposed to come from the government to support the running of the offices has not come.... You can tell the last time money has come yet work is expected to go on.”

Respondents also identified inadequate funds, in particular to expand or extend the programmes for more years. Officials asserted that programmes like GPASS and CAMFED are not functioning the way they used to do as GPASS set to end in 2017 and CAMFED Ghana has continuously reduced the number of pupils they sponsor every year. The SEIP programme has just begun. As a cash transfer programme, managing the fund to yield the desired outcomes is a major concern. Because of the economic background (Komalavalli, 2013) of the beneficiaries, families are compelled to use the monies for the up keep of their families. An official at the NSDDE office revealed that because the package is big, sometimes families do not use it for the educational needs of the students as he observed:

“When you give the monies to them, they are supposed to give it to their parents to keep and you know the financial situation in our country will sometimes compel, even the child to release the money because you have to choose between embarrassing the whole family and may be parting with the money that should have been used for your education in order to solve critical problems in the family.”

Invariably, human resource challenges are also factors undermining especially, the provision of equitable quality education in NSD as officials indicated. Provision of quality education is hinged on quality human resources therefore to achieve rapid national development, it is imperative to structure national budgets towards the provision of quality and compulsory universal basic education (UNESCO, 2006). Inadequate and unsustainable human resource (Anlimachie, 2015; UNDP Ghana, 2015) potentials in the educational system in the District is a nightmare to officials at NSDA and NSDDE. They explained that every year GES posts quite a huge number of teachers from southern region of Ghana to augment their already existing small numbers. However, there is high rate of teacher attrition which always creates

shortfalls in the educational system especially in the deprived rural communities. A senior officer at NSDA revealed:

“So a number of teacher trainees are also currently been sponsored so that when they complete they can come back and then augment the numbers. We realized that one serious challenge in terms of education for our District is the high attrition rate, people are posted two, three years, they have done the mandatory service, and then they want to go away.”

Still on human resource challenges, analysis of the data showed that with the introduction of the IE policies in the country, a lot is still needed in terms of the right human resources with the requisite capabilities to take care of all the diverse groups of students or pupils in the mainstream educational system. Officials at the NSDDE lamented that upon the numerous education and sensitization workshops they have carried out in collaboration with NGOs, no teacher has been trained to handle the different categories of children who are brought into the mainstream educational system. No attempt has been made to establish a special educational institution here too. Although governments through several fora have promised to provide training for teachers to be able to handle these children with other normal children in the classroom. These children includes disabilities, visually impaired, mental retarded, and the deaf and among others are part of implementing IE policy but no provision has been made for them as an official at NSDDE office remarked:

“Some people move their students somewhere to enrol them and we see it as a threat or challenge to enrol them there. Why not having that special school here yourself where you can take care of them instead of travelling all this while to Pong Tamale.”

Moreover, apart from the financial and human resource challenges they also identified material resource challenges. Although governments continue to provide textbook and other materials free of charge, sometimes these material are inadequate to satisfy the large number of pupils and students. They particularly complained of shortage of materials, poor materials

and_unavailable official equipment to run the administrative processes of the programmes in the offices or general government policies. For instance, officials complained that inadequate materials such as ICT equipment to process and send timely data to headquarters or scholarship secretariat or regional quarters of programmes undermine the smooth implementation of these programmes. This, a respondent stated:

“If they want something at the regional office... if not face-to-face interaction or they requested through mail. I could only take email address and turn on my phone Wi-Fi which will consume my credit. It is part of the sacrifice nobody funds it.”

The inability of the officers to process and send accurate data largely accounts for the late release of sponsorship materials or cash transfers in time, ultimately limiting the impact of these programmes being implemented. These challenges they explained are hindering effective implementation of programmes that are being run in the District.

- **Administrative challenges**

The establishment of institutional mechanisms, structures and directives ensures that actions of implementers are consistent with policy objectives and standards (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). Analysis of the data revealed that monitoring and accountability systems are in part not robust enough to ensure effective and efficient implementation of programmes and policies in the District. A respondent at NSDDE therefore revealed:

“We are supposed to introduce some local measures to suit our local conditions. For instance, is it not possible for us to find a way of mitigating the challenges facing the SEIP by ensuring that beneficiaries come with their basic needs before monies are released to them?”

They also complained of their non-involvement in the policy formulation, planning and implementation process (Abukari, et al., 2015) because all these processes are designed at the top level. According to officials, they hardly make inputs into these programmes to fit their local conditions. Respondents further revealed that these impediments coupled with

other limited human resource capabilities are hindering effective planning and implementation of educational programmes in the District especially as compared to other departments. They disclosed that they received less capacity building training programmes to even perform rudimentary administrative tasks as compared to other officials in other departments in the District as a respondent at NSDDE complained:

“No capacity building is given for data collection and sending except when they need arises they tell you to send... nobody give you that capacity, so when we match ourselves with colleagues at the assembly, the health, it’s like you are underutilizing your capacity in Ghana education service...”

Thus, programmes and policies designed without reflecting on the context of implementation with respect to the people’s needs and local conditions are inherent obstacles that hindered the impact of government interventions in the past fifteen years. For instance, interventions such as school feeding and capitation grant policies are being implemented from the central government bureaucrats without enough inputs from local levels implementers in Ghana (Abukari, et al, 2015).

4.5 Way Forward

Implementing programmes and policies to achieve SDG4 requires concerted efforts by government and other stakeholders in the education industry. The targets are encompassing and holistic and relates with all the other targets in the goal. The world education forum in Incheon in 2015 declared their commitment to continue the “unfinished” business of the MGDs and EFA as huge progress have been achieved in access during the last fifteen (15) years. The member states promised to provide “twelve (12) years of free, publicly funded, equitable quality primary and secondary education in the fifteen years”. It is suggested governments and stakeholder in education should review curricula to ensure effective learning outcomes and strengthening institutions and school leadership through community involvement in education management among others to help achieve SDG4 (UNESCO, et

al., 2015). Implementing these policies requires national governments to adjust their national policy frameworks and institutional arrangements (Sabatier & Weible, 2007) to meet the set benchmarks in the next fifteen (15) years. Free, equitable and quality education is the corner stone and foundation of any educational system. Anlimachie (2015), identified national level interventions to help achieve access to equitable, quality education in the country. These include mobilizing the needed funding through efficient and fair tax systems and oil revenue, efficient payroll management and good wealth management systems.

Officials at the NSDDE suggested varied strategies and interventions to achieve SDG 4 in the District and the country at large. They include attaching enforceable mechanisms (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975; African Civil Society Circle, 2016) to achieve the goals of programmes and policies, training teachers, specialists and desk officers to handle IE in the mainstream schools as well as expanding facilities to train more experts on the new goals of education. They also suggested that government and donor agencies should put in more efforts to resource District education offices through permanent funding systems to implement government and other stakeholder sponsored programmes. Similarly, they posited that resource centres should be put in each District for IE policies, government should continue to eliminate schools under trees and redesign the curriculum (UNESCO, 2013) and the textbooks to reflect various diversities (MoE, 2015) and current global educational goals among others. They further identified effective monitoring and evaluation systems, involving more NGOs in education delivery, continuous provision of free school materials such as uniforms, sandals, exercise books, textbooks, feeding et al. (Kwame, 2009), involving parents and other stakeholders in education management and delivery and focusing and improving on vocational education for those sitting in the houses as well as teacher motivation as keen to the success of the implementation of SDG 4. Others identified instituting additional programmes to cater for the rest of the needy students, designing

efficient data management and transmission system and capacity building programmes for staff of GES in the District.

Integrating SDG 4 in to local levels development plans principally underpins the right-based approach to achieving universal primary education. That is making education available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable (Tomasevski, 2004) to all school-going-age children as required by international conventions and national constitutional arrangements. It is therefore fair for government and partners in the educational sector in the country to continue to invest in educational policies and programmes that seek to fulfill these human rights principles.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings and makes recommendations based on the findings. It also outlines the recommendations drawn from the conclusions made. The recommendations is built from the way forward for implementing SDG4 in NSD in particular and Ghana in general. The chapter is in three (3) sections. The first section outline the summary of the findings based on the four research objectives, namely, implementation and monitoring mechanisms, challenges and way forward. Although the SDGs are relatively new agenda meant to be achieved by 2030. Governments have therefore directed district level implementers to align their developmental and operational plans to them by integrating them into already existing plans. This study adopts qualitative research approach using both face-to-face and follow up telephone interviews to obtain responses from purposely selected respondents at NSDDE and NSDA all 16 respondents participated in the study.

5.1 Summary

The summary of the study findings have been organized in three main themes in line with the objective of the study as already identified and as well as subthemes.

- **Implementation Mechanisms**

The research was based on four main objectives. The first research objective identified and explore implementation mechanisms to achieve SDG4. The NSDMTDP (2014-2017) and NSDDE operational plan (2017-2019) outlined a number of programmes and projects being implemented in line with ESP (2010-2020) to achieve SDG4 in the District with overall goal of improving equitable access to and participation in quality education at the basic level. However, officials revealed that they are ready to integrate all the targets when

implementation guidelines and the necessary resources are provided. Thus summary of the findings under these objectives are as follows.

The study findings revealed that to achieve SDG 4 which states that by 2030 ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all requires governments to provide “free, publicly funded, equitable quality primary and secondary education” with nine years being compulsory in other consolidate the gains made over the last fifteen years of the MDGs et al. (UNESCO, et al., 2015). Although not all district level implementers are fully aware of these goals but the findings revealed that they have started and intend to align and integrate SDG 4 into their developmental and operational plans. Thus, respondents identified and explained a set of implementation mechanisms already in existence and new ones to achieve SDG 4.

The findings of the study revealed that several policies and programmes and their resources are in place to achieve SDG 4 in particular. These include IE policy, eliminating schools under tree, free basic education among other by providing infrastructure with its auxiliary facilities, human resources, financial resources and material resources. The infrastructure expansion as explained by officials is key to creating access to free, equitable and quality education. Few of the facilities are also provided with auxiliary facilities such as toilets, electricity, urinary, recreational facilities and among others as required by SDG4 implementation framework (UNESCO, et al., 2015) by DACF and DDF at basic level of education. Despite the fact that at the SHS level, it is revealed that Assembly do not provide infrastructure, they once a while assist. NSDA and the NSDDE provide quality human resources by sponsoring teacher trainees at various colleges of education and other educational institutions under bond. Government through the GES also have begun the redeployment of newly trained teachers from the Southern Ghana to the District in order to fill the staffing gaps. On-job training programmes such as the UTDBE have been organized

to train untrained professional teachers up-grade their skills. This is intended to equip them with the professional teaching skills to provide quality education. It was also revealed that only teachers in these deprived rural Districts underwent the training programme. According to officials, the District sponsored forty (40) teachers to undergo these programmes while numerous other teachers mostly from under-served rural communities went through the programme on their own.

Moreover, the findings of the study also revealed that, material resources such as school uniforms, sandals, text and exercise books among others are provided freely to students though on an irregular basis by government. The provision of these materials intends to make education accessible and affordable to students from the deprived rural communities in the country.

Apart from different forms of resources identified above, the findings of the study revealed that several existing and new programmes are being implemented by government and other partners in education to improve free access to equitable and quality education. Some of these programmes identified include sensitization programmes and workshops, complimentary education and school feeding programmes (MoE, 2015). The others are scholarship programmes such as CAMFED, GPASS and SEIP. The rest are Progressive Free SHS and the Capitation Grant Programme. The impacts of these already existing programmes are enormous. This study also revealed that access and quality indicators such as attendance, completion and achievements have improved over the past three years (Sifuna, 2007). Programmes such as sensitization, complementary education and workshops for parents have helped improve enrolment over the past three years.

- **Monitoring and Enforcement Mechanisms**

The findings of the study further revealed that monitoring of educational projects and programmes that are government sponsored are streamlined into the existing monitoring

structures of GES at various levels of education in Ghana. Nonetheless, programmes by NGOs and other stakeholders also have their accompanied monitoring systems, for example CAMFED Ghana. Some of the common traditional mechanisms identified by officials include supervision, monitoring teams, review meetings, data collection and reporting systems as well as yearly or termly examination results among others. Supervision is a traditional system of monitoring educational systems and subsystems (Grauwe, 2008). NSD like any other District uses this mechanism to monitor educational projects especially government instituted programmes and educational activities.

Secondly, during the implementation of both government and NGOs sponsored specific plans and programmes, monitoring teams are established at both District and Regional or national headquarters to periodically visit implementation areas. This is to either review official reports or track project or programme implementation activities on the field, specifically schools. For instance, programmes such as CAMFED, GPASS and SEIP are monitored by monitoring teams from District and regional quarters or secretariat. Furthermore, this study revealed that the NSDDE and NSDA organize review meetings and follow up review meetings to evaluate quarterly and annual activities, projects and plans of departments in the District. The NSDDE is usually part of this meetings. These review meetings are done periodically to assess the progress of plans and operational activities to ascertain the level of improvements and challenges (Swanson, et al., 2010). Coupled with these meetings are the annual SPAM meetings (Ankomah, et al, 2005). These meetings are organized by the NSDDE annually to review performance of BECE and WASSCE results and other educational inputs and processes. This mechanism examines achievements, challenges of the past year and the way forward by setting targets for the next academic year. Moreover, there exists a system of data collection and reporting mechanism for monitoring educational systems, plans and projects in the District. It is composed of quarterly and

annually reporting educational inputs and outputs to regional and national secretariat. Progress of implementation plans are also reported by District level implementers on quarter and annual basis to regional and national headquarters. These reports capture implementation activities including distribution of educational materials, funds, personnel and delivery of services. Government, NGOs and the District-instituted programmes all use these mechanisms. This notwithstanding, other programmes have in-built mechanisms of reporting, such as reporting with a signed list of beneficiaries in the case of SEIP, CAMFED and GPASS. In addition to these traditional reporting systems, the findings of the study revealed that GES has instituted a composite data collection and reporting system called EMIS which capture all inputs data beginning from the school, district and national level (MoE, 2014). These system according to officials eventually forms the basis of global reporting system by global reporting teams such as UNESCO.

Invariably, information of the impact or output of projects or plans are mostly determined by the traditional system of tests and examinations. It is revealed that projects and programme managers at the district, regional and national headquarters request for examination results to assess the progress of programme indicators and respond to emerging challenges during the implementation process. Despite the fact that these mechanisms are traditional system of monitoring and evaluating educational projects and plans, they are still useful in monitoring SDG 4.

- **Implementation and integration Challenges**

The findings of the study revealed that NSD encounter different forms of challenges to institute plans and implementing the existing plans and strategies to achieve SDG4. Analysis of the study categorizes these challenges into geographical, socio-cultural, resources, administrative challenges (Van Horn & Van Meter, 1977; Anlimachie, 2015).

Geographically, NSD has dispersed settlement patterns where communities and schools are distant from one another. These characteristics of the District pose daunting challenges for planning, implementation and monitoring. In terms of implementation, the findings of the study revealed that distributing educational materials such as uniforms, text and exercise books among others is quite challenging. According to officials, moving around the communities and the schools to distribute educational materials requires extra costs and life-threatening as a result of the existence of Oti River closer to Republic of Togo.

Similarly, socio-cultural factors such as early marriages in the form of elopement and social vices like teenage pregnancy are prevalent in NSD. Officials asserted that, these social obstacles hinder the impact of all the plans and interventions in the District as well as proper planning. This is because, these embedded practices and social vices obstruct the girl child education at teen ages. Thus, investment made on the girl child tend to produce limited results. Similarly, societal impediments such as illiteracy and poverty largely undermine the outcomes of many interventions meant to achieve educational goals in the District. This is because, while these programmes absorb the educational cost of attending school for these children, the opportunity costs of education to the family are not catered for (Fredriksen, 2009), consequently affecting the positive response of beneficiaries to these programmes and cash transfers.

According to Sabatier (1998), inadequate resources limits the extent to which actors in a policy subsystem influence policy change in the subsystem. Inadequate financial, human or material resources undermine effective planning and implementation. Indeed, analysis of findings revealed that NSD faces almost all the resource challenges identified by Van Meter & Van Horn, (1975). Officials at both the NSDDE and NSDA explained that their planning and implementation resources come from central government, for instance, DACF and government assisted grants in the case of NSDDE. However, they also revealed that these

sources of funding have not been regular. Officials at NSDA specifically pointed out that the fourth quarter of DACF for 2016 had not yet been released as at the time of my visit to the District in April 2017. These arrangements largely limits their capacity to provide educational infrastructure which they are mandated by law to do. For NSDDE, it was revealed that for two years as at the time of my visit in April 2017, no government assisted grants have been received after one of the funding sources-GPEG ended in 2016. Similarly, findings of the study revealed that funding for some of the implementation of programmes such as GPASS and CAMFED are now dwindling as some of them have reduced the number of students they sponsor. Invariably, programmes like SEIP according to officials does not absorb a good number of students' beneficiaries limiting its objective of providing equitable access to quality education. For example, for the 2016/2017 academic year, only 30 students were absorbed by the programme. Inadequate human resources such as teaching staff is a major challenges to NSDA and NSDDE as they are battling with high rate of teacher attrition. Although GES has adopted a strategy of posting newly trained teachers to the District, the numbers are limited as some of them leave after their mandatory service. Even more challenging is the fact that with the introduction of IE in the country no attempt has been made to equip teachers to handle diverse group of students who have been admitted into the mainstream educational system. Moreover, officials contended that the provision of materials such as uniforms, texts and exercise books are inadequate and irregular.

Analysis of the findings of the study showed that some of the common administrative challenges facing the implementation of educational plans in the District include ineffective monitoring and evaluation systems, non-involvement of district level implementers in implementation planning and lack of programmes to upgrade the skills of GES staff in the District to match up with the administrative standards required of any implementation programme. Some officials argued that inadequate funding and lack of well-designed

monitoring systems for specific plans and programmes hinder effective monitoring. Implementation planning is centralized at the top level bureaucracy. This limits district level implementers' ability to make inputs into the planning processes to respond to the diverse groups of students and pupils in the District. Similarly, officials asserted that in comparison with other departments in the District, GES staff receive less capacity building training programmes to abreast themselves with even the rudimentary of performing basic administrative tasks or even orientation workshop for newly recruited staff. These are some of the obstacles hindering planning and implementation of educational goals in the District.

5.2 Conclusion

This study specifically identified implementation and monitoring mechanisms as well challenges of achieving SDG4 in Ghana using NSD as case study. Actualizing SDG4 in local government in Ghana is critical to achieving the country's numerous developmental goals. However, this requires renewed efforts and commitments by governments and development partners in the education sector in Ghana to develop adaptable strategies and plans that would respond to diverse contextual conditions in various localities in the country.

Thus, the study discovered that local governments such as NSDA is prepared and started to integrate SDG4 into the development plans of the District. Although, SDGs are yet to reflect in subsequent national policy frameworks and strategic plans, which serve as planning and implementation guidelines for local governments and their departments. That is relatively few central government and local governments' plans are geared towards achieving global goals such as the SDGs and SDG4 in particular.

Admittedly, the study findings further revealed that there are relatively few plans: policies, programmes and strategies in place to achieve SDG 4. Some of these plans were already in existence prior to the adoption of SDGs in Ghana especially those that aim at achieving gender parity and universal primary education as explained by officials. Nonetheless, in

response to the challenges of implementing MDGs education-related targets and indicators, new programmes have been adopted by governments and other partners in education to as it were correct the shortcomings in the implementation of the outcomes of the MDGs and to some extent achieve SDGs too. Similarly, these plans outlined implementation and monitoring modalities of specific programmes, projects and interventions within the plan period, albeit streamlined into GES established implementation and monitoring structures. Thus, sometimes making monitoring less flexible and ineffective.

Although government through various ministries, departments and agencies have directed district level implementers to align their operational and developmental plans to the SDGs, the findings of the study however indicated that the response to these directives is still evolving. Specifically, NSDA and NSDDE development and operational plans face daunting challenges in responding to these directives. Similarly, there are various challenges facing local governments such as NSDA and NDDE in the process of integrating and implementing SDGs in general and SDG4 in particular in the District. Most important among them are resources and geography.

Moreover, findings from the field of study further point to fact that government and national level policy formulators do not involve district level implementers in the planning and implementation of educational programmes either adopted or mooted by national governments. This is a major implementation barrier to achieving educational goals in Ghana, which leads to limited outcomes of implementation programmes.

Consequently, it is apparent that NSD has taken steps in achieving SDGs 4 by adopting local level strategies such as complementary education and expanding infrastructure among others, however, a lot needs to be done to ensure that by 2030 most of the indicators of the target such as access, participation and completion are achieved. Similarly, a refocusing is

needed to achieve compulsory and universal free education as well as quality learning outcomes.

5.3 Recommendations

The Education 2030 Framework for Action (UNESCO, et al., 2015) outlines some of the indicative strategies to achieve SDG4 in the next 13 years. Contextualizing these strategies in Ghana will be relatively difficult especially because of funding. I therefore recommend that to achieve SDG 4 in Ghana, the following robust and composite strategies must be adopted. These strategies are reviewing curriculum to ensure quality and relevant learning outcomes, empowering institutions and school leadership through community involvement in educational administration and ensuring equitable distribution of educational resources as well as instituting comprehensive assessment systems to evaluate learning outcomes.

Since local governments such as NSDA and NSDDE are ready and started to integrate SDG4 into their plans, government and other stakeholders in the education sector such as NGO's and donors should support them to roll out long-term projects and programmes such as establishing upgrading skill centres for teachers; expanding ICT base learning to rural communities and adopting fully electronic data collection and management systems among others. These will help to achieve the goal within its stipulated time period.

Additionally, government should also develop plans to provide sustainable funding sources to support existing and new educational projects and plans through efficient broad based tax systems, managing the national wealth transparently and set side part of the oil revenue to fund the planned educational projects in next 13 years. Invariably, strengthening and designing robust and effective monitoring modalities is key to ensuring successful implementation of existing and yet-to-be instituted plans meant to achieve SDG 4. These modalities may include establishing effective accountability systems; involving parents and school management committees in the monitoring process and training and involving local

government officials and agencies in monitoring government instituted programmes and projects among others.

Similarly, government and central level bureaucrats should guide and encourage local assemblies to quickly and fully design plans and strategies aim at achieving SDGs education related goals-SDG 4 at the local levels and in doing so should take into consideration the different contextual factors by paying attention to rural and urban dichotomy, the diverse economic and socio-cultural conditions of target groups and ensure that the policies reflect human right perspectives as required by international conventions and national constitutions (Abukari, et al, 2015). Moreover, District level implementers such as NSD officials should be involved in planning and implementation processes to make inputs that reflect their contextual arrangements into the plans. Involving local level planners and implementers in central level planning is critical to the achievement of the SDGs-SDG4.

Invariably, in contextualizing SDG4 in rural Ghana, particularly NSD, it is imperative for governments and stakeholders in the education sector to adequately resource the District. This can be done by enforcing national laws and instituting bye-laws to stop early marriages and teenage pregnancies. The existing programmes should be expanded to absorb more needy students in the District. Also, additional well targeted programmes to the under-served and hard-to-reached rural communities must be instituted to cater for large numbers of schools and pupils in NSD. Teachers in the deprived communities must be motivated through a percentage increment in their salaries to reduce the high teacher-attrition rates in the District. There should also be adequate training of teachers to be able to handle the diverse groups of students in the mainstream educational systems and designing national curriculum adaptable to specific contexts in rural districts in the country (UNESCO, 2009). Above all, there should be a collaborative effort by the NSDDE and NSDA to effectively institute plans to achieve SDG 4 in the District.

- **Contribution to Future Research**

This study adopts single case study analysis to find out how SDG4 is being integrated, implemented and monitored in NSD. SDG 4 is relatively new and studies on this goal are limited. It is imperative to point out that if this study is replicated in similar districts, different results may be obtained. Also a comparative study of two or more Districts can be undertaken on this topic to examine contextual variations that will eventually produce different impacts by the implementation plans. In the same vein, this study can be replicated in the whole country to explore the country's preparedness to achieve SDG 4. Future research of case study type can be directed towards the impact of the new programmes being implemented to achieve SDG 4 in NSD and any other similar deprived districts.

- **Contribution to Theory**

The study reviewed literature on top-down and bottom-up approaches to implementation and the ACF. It eventually developed a conceptual framework out of these models which provided adequate understanding of how global goals are adopted and integrated into policy plans in the country. This study also reviewed the Education 2030 Framework for Action, which is the guiding international policy implementation framework gauging the implementation of SDG 4. It provides composite strategies to be adopted for successful implementation of SDG 4. With reference to ACF, the findings of the study revealed that policy change emerges in any policy subsystem as a result of changes in external systems or events. These may occur as a result of several factors including systemic changes in governing coalitions, public opinion, socio-economic factors among others (Weible, 2012). This imply that the change in the policy direction of the UN governing body invariably, calls for similar policy changes in Ghana. These changes can either be minor or major modifications to the already existing policies and plans (Sabatier and Weible, 2007). Similarly, the findings of the study also confirms the proposition of ACF that policy change

can occur as a result of impositions from higher authority (Pierce, 2016). The change in the policy direction of the UN external subsystem require government of Ghana and other government sub-sector agencies to respond by either conducting major or minor policy alterations in the government sub-sector policies. Therefore, putting plans and new policies in place to achieve SDGs is a response to these external policy changes as Ghana is signatory to these international conventions.

Furthermore, Sabatier (1986) argued that during policy change processes, negotiations by actors within a policy subsystem are constraints by resources and other external factors to achieve their objectives (Fischer, et al., 2007). Thus, in policy change processes, resources are needed for planning and implementation. The findings of the study confirms that local governments are constraints by resources and other administrative factors such as skills of local officials to effectively negotiate and plan for proper policy changes in their local areas. Similarly, the findings of the study validates Weible & Sabatier (2009) findings that coalitions using collaborative decision making process to carry out policy change or making are likely not to implement their agreements because of their deep held belief systems. Thus, the finding of the study revealed that socio-cultural challenges will certainly limit the full realization of SDGs in Ghana.

However, the study findings contradicts ACF initial assumption (Sabatier,1986) that coalition actors in policy subsystem compete under conflictual situations to achieve their goals and objectives because local governments collaborate with other actors in their jurisdictions to plan and implement policy changes. These actor include the media, NGO's interest group leader among others. This is confirmed by NSDA objective of collaborating with other subsector agencies to plan and achieve educational goals in the District.

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

I am student of University of Ghana and conducting a study on the Topic: Actualizing Sustainable Development Goal Four (4) in Rural Ghana: The Case of Nanumba South District in the Northern Region.

This interview guide is designed to find out the implementation and monitoring mechanisms (structures, policies, strategies etc.) put in place to implement Sustainable Development Goal Four (4), which states that By 2030, ensure that all boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes in the District. The researcher is a Master of Philosophy of student and conducting this study in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Master of Philosophy in Public Administration. The Findings of this study shall be used for academic purposes only and treated with the needed confidence.

I would therefore be very grateful if you could kindly respond to the following questions. Thank You Sir.

A. Implementation Mechanisms

1. Are you aware of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) launched in 2015 to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's)? Yes/No
2. If yes, please explain what you know about them.
3. Please kindly tell me what you know about SDG 4.
4. Do you know any plan (s) put in place by this district to implement SDG 4?
5. Please explain the plan(s) mentioned in question 4 above.
6. Which agency or organization put the plan (s) in place? Give 2 reasons to your answer.
7. When were these arrangements put in place?
8. Mention three (3) challenges facing the above mentioned arrangements.
9. Please state three ways by which the implementation of these programme (s) can yield the desire educational outcomes in this district.
10. In your opinion can these programmes promote lifelong learning in this district? Please explain.

B. Monitoring Mechanisms

1. Please do you know of any system (s) put in place to ensure successful implementation of the programmes mentioned above?
2. Please kindly explain how the system (s) works.
3. Who put in place these systems?
4. When were these systems put in place?
5. In your opinion are these systems effective in monitoring these programmes? Give 3 reasons.
6. Who are those responsible in carrying out these monitoring?
7. Mention 3 challenges facing these monitoring systems.
8. Please is there the need to put in place additional monitoring systems? Give reasons to your answer.

C. The Way Forward

1. Please will you recommend for additional plans to be put in place to achieve SDG 4 in this district?
2. Give three (3) strategies that you think can help achieve SDG 4 in this district.
3. Which organization or agency should put in place these strategies?
4. State three (3) ways by which the already existing programmes can effectively be implemented to achieve SDG 4 in this district.
5. Is there any additional comments you wish to make?

Thank you