

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

EXAMINING THE POLITICS OF SOCIAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: A
CASE OF FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL POLICY IN GHANA

BY

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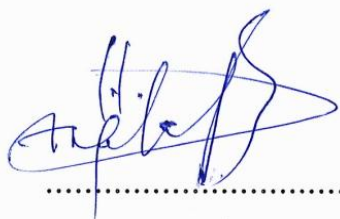
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DECLARATION

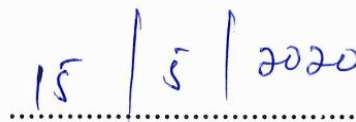
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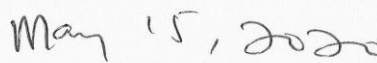
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CERTIFICATION

We hereby certify that this research was supervised in accordance with procedures laid down by the University.



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DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to the Almighty God, the source of my knowledge and strength. I also dedicate this work to my wonderful and amazing family for their support especially my mother Mrs. Pearl Bonnie for her relentless prayers.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
CERTIFICATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xi
ABSTRACT	xii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Problem Statement.....	6
1.3 Research Objectives.....	10
1.4 Research Questions.....	10
1.5 Justification and Significance of the Study.....	10
1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study.....	11
1.7 Organization of the Study.....	12
CHAPTER TWO	13
LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.0 Introduction.....	13
2.1 Democracy and Social Policy.....	13
2.2 Electoral Politics and Social Policy.....	14
2.3 Public Policy Cycle Framework.....	16

2.3.1	Agenda Setting	17
2.3.2	Policy Formulation and Adoption	18
2.3.3	Policy Implementation.....	19
2.3.4	Policy Monitoring and Evaluation.....	20
2.4	Social Policy Implementation	21
2.4.1	Policy Content	21
2.4.2	Policy Context	22
2.5	Policy Strategy	24
2.5.1	Communication Strategy	24
2.5.2	Resources strategy	25
2.5.3	Timing strategy.....	25
2.5.4	Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy.....	26
2.5.5	Policy Actors	27
2.6	Challenges of Social Policy Implementation	30
2.6.1	Lack of clear definition of policy goals.....	30
2.6.2	Overambitious policy goals	30
2.6.3	Limited resources for implementation.....	31
2.6.4	Lack of continuity and commitment for policy	31
2.6.5	Lack of coordination.....	32
2.6.6	Public sector corruption.....	33
2.7	Social Protection and the Right-Base Theory	33
2.8	Social Policy Implementation: An Empirical Literature Overview	35
2.9	Implementation of Educational Policies in Ghana: Issues and Trend.....	37
2.10	Free Senior High School Policy in Perspective	41
2.10.1	Progressive free SHS education programme	42

2.11	Free SHS Policy: Clientelistic or Programmatic Policy?	44
2.12	Research Gaps	46
CHAPTER THREE		48
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		48
3.0	Introduction	48
3.1	Research Approach	48
3.2	Research Design	48
3.3	Sources of Data	49
3.4	Study Population	50
3.5	Sampling	50
3.6	Data Gathering Instrument	52
3.7	Data Gathering Procedures	53
3.8	Data Analysis	54
3.9	Ethical “Considerations	55
3.9.1	Permission to conduct study	56
3.9.2	Right to full disclosure	56
3.9.3	Informed Consent and voluntary participation	56
3.9.4	Anonymity and confidentiality	56
CHAPTER FOUR		57
ELECTORAL POLITICS AND FREE SHS EDUCATION POLICY		57
4.0	Introduction	57
4.1	History and Legal basis of Ghana’s Free SHS Policy	57
4.2	Electoral Politics, democracy and the current Free SHS Education Policy	59
4.3	Progressive/Targeted verses a Universal Free SHS Program	61
4.3.1	Progressive/Targeted Free SHS Programme	62

4.3.2	Universal Free SHS Programme.....	64
4.4	Politics and the Implementation of the Universal Free SHS.....	66
4.5	Complexities in the adopting Ghana’s Free SHS Education Policy	67
4.6	Chapter Conclusion	68
CHAPTER FIVE.....		69
CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FREE SHS IN GHANA.....		69
5.0	Introduction	69
5.1	Assessment of Implementation Process of the Free SHS policy	69
5.2	Challenges of implementing Ghana’s Free SHS policy.....	70
5.2.1	Political influences	70
5.2.2	Sustainable Funding and Infrastructural Challenges	72
5.2.3	Limited stakeholder involvement	74
5.2.4	Lack Knowledge and Clear Policy Guide for Free SHS	76
5.2.5	The ‘Top-Down’ Implementation Approach.....	78
5.3	Towards Quality SHS Education: Addressing the Challenges	80
5.3.1	Assessing Demand for Infrastructure	81
5.3.2	The Double Tracking System.....	81
5.3.3	Collaboration with External and Internal Stakeholders.....	82
5.4	Chapter Conclusion	83
CHAPTER SIX.....		85
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....		85
6.0	Introduction	85
6.1	Summary of Key Findings	85
6.1.1	Research Objectives	85
6.1.2	Key Findings of the Study	86

6.2	Conclusion.....	86
6.3	Recommendation.....	88
6.4	Implications for Future Research	90
	REFERENCES	91

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1:	Statistics of CSSPS Placement and School Enrolment	-	-	41
Table 2:	Northern Scholarships Admission and Placement Trends	-	-	41
Table 3:	A Summary of Respondents Interviewed	-	-	49

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSO	Civil Society Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPP	New Patriotic Party
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
JSS	Junior Secondary School
NAGRAT	National Association of Graduate Teachers
CHASS	Conference of head of Assisted Secondary Schools
CSSPS	Computerised School Selection and Placement System
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examinations
CHPSS	Conference of Heads of Private Second Cycle Schools
SHS	Senior High School
GETFund	Ghana Education Trust Fund
CPP	Convention People's Party
NDC	National Democratic Congress
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goal
GNECC	Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition
GOG	Government of Ghana
MOE	Ministry of Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development

ABSTRACT

The strength of democracy is reflected in the expressions of mass demands for better social safety nets especially in the sectors of health and education services. However, for mass demands to be translated into policy, there need to be an opportunity that numbers can mobilize, and that mobilization counts politically. The strength and quality of democracy makes it possible for civil society, popular organizations and political parties to emerge and consolidate as organizations that can serve to mobilize voters and put demands for networks of social protection on the agenda. In the context of Ghana's education policy, this study: i) explore the influence of electoral politics on the adoption and implementation of the Free Senior High School (SHS) education policy; and ii) examine the emerging challenges associated with the implementation of the Free Senior High School (SHS) education. In addressing these objectives, the study adopts a qualitative research approach. Semi-structured interview guide was used to interview key stakeholders in the implementation of the Free SHS education policy in Ghana who were purposively selected from a cross section of management of second cycle institutions, public sector organizations, civil service societies, and political parties. Using a systematic content analysis for analysing the interview data gathered, the study finds that the free SHS education policy was a major political tool for winning elections. Particularly the adoption and implementation of the free SHS social policy was considered a political tool to win votes, although it was a constitutional right and was in line with the national development agenda and a provision of the 1992 constitution. Notwithstanding the policies relevance for bridging the inequality gap and promoting national development, various challenges categorized into: i) institutional and ii) infrastructural challenges hamper its implementation success. Thus, the Free SHS education policy currently suffer from politicization and over-centralized administration which has led to the delay in achieving desired outcomes. Other infrastructural challenges also include the supply of logistics and financial constraints as a result of delayed payment of school grants to both suppliers and heads of schools. Among others, this study therefore recommends that stakeholder collaboration should be strengthened with clear policy guidelines developed and communicated to all relevant stakeholders for effective implementation.

Keywords: Education Policy, Free Senior High School, Social Policy, Politics, Ghana

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Globalisation has been a driving force for the adoption and implementation of particular forms of social policies that yields different impacts and outcomes on national development for different economies (Lee & Vivarelli, 2006). However, the development of social policies must be understood in the context of the peculiar economic and political development of the region or country at large. In terms of economic development, factors such as trade liberalization and capital market mobility increases volatility and thus threatens jobs and real wages resulting in economic downturns. Hence, governments are faced with social issues ranging from higher unemployment, lower real wages, poverty and declining standards of living. As mechanism to curb or minimize escalation of citizen's discontent, governments develop and implement policies that serve as social safety nets (Huber & Stephens, 2012).

The contribution of social policy in the scheme of development is to provide guidelines and interventions for the changing, maintenance or creation of living conditions that are conducive to human welfare. An important element or contextual factor in social policy development and implementation is its political context. The nature of the political regime (authoritarian or democratic) influences the structure and functions of institutional arrangements as well as the capacities for extraction of the resources necessary for financing social programs. The experiences of communist and East Asian developmental states suggest that policy makers can respond to the welfare needs of citizens even when civil rights are curtailed, leaders do not have

to renew their mandates or gain office through competitive elections, interest groups are denied autonomy, and power is monopolized by a political elite (Haber, 2007). Although some disagreement exists, the quantitative literature seems to support this contention that democratic regimes spend more than non-democratic on particular social programs (Mulligan et al., 2004; Avelino et al., 2005).

However two defining features of democracy are seen in the periodic renewal of the mandates of political leaders through competitive elections, and a set of basic rights of expression and organization that facilitate the exercise of political choice. Empirical evidence suggests that democratic regimes, owing to their need to cater for a broad electoral base, will have more extensive social policy commitments (see Lee & Vivarelli, 2006). The logic is that competition among political candidates will lead to social policy expansion to reach new groups of voters. Likewise, democratic freedom permits interest group organization and pressure for the increase of social spending (Haggard & Kaufman 2008).

The strength of democracy is reflected in the expressions of mass demands for better social safety nets especially in the sectors of health and education services (Abdulai & Hickey, 2016). However, for mass demands to be translated into policy, there needs to be the opportunity that numbers can mobilize, and that mobilization counts politically. The strength and quality of democracy makes it possible for civil society, popular organizations and political parties to emerge and consolidate as organizations that can serve to mobilize voters and put demands for networks of social protection on the agenda. Hence it can be said that social policy and democracy develop hand in hand, in the sense that social policy is necessary for democratic stability.

Social policy impacts the political system and democracy through social cohesion (Bangure & Hedberg, 2006). The principle of democracy is to allow the less privileged to be able to use the democratic process to influence the outcome of policy making. Democratization has also helped improve social policy in the sense that it enables mobilization of new social groups, such as civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to heightened political awareness and sway political opinion in favor of the introduction of a particular policy (Kwon, 2002).

However, the consequence of democratization on social policy is that in context of heightened electoral competition, politicians appeal to voters by offering social policy promises. Yet, they fail to internalize the long term fiscal implications of programmatic expansion. This in turn signifies a distinct loss of capacity to respond to the needs of the populace, but rather implementing self-serving policies (and corruption) that bear no relation to the needs of the population or the economic interests of investors (Mkandawire, 2004). In addition, citizens judge governments on a broad range of issues with only one instrument: their vote. In such situations, they may downgrade the performance of a government on the economy or on welfare development in their scale of preferences in making decisions about how to vote.

In most developing countries like Ghana, social policy reforms have taken place over the decades particularly in the aspect of health, pension and education. The rationale for the social reforms is the increasing importance of human capital to national development and global competitiveness. As result, the state has an oversight responsibility to formulate and implement policies and programme that will enhance the capacity of its human capital to become more competitive in the global economy (OECD, 2004:3). However, the increasing force of democracy and public accountability has placed a strong demand on political authorities to use

state resource to meet social demand (Welmond, 2002). This is also premised on the fact that the government or the State has the constitutional mandate to protect and ensure the human right of its citizens.

For example, Article 25 (1) of the 1992 constitution of Ghana states: “All persons shall have the right to equal education opportunities and facilities ...”. With a view to achieving the full realisation of that right, that constitution further adds that: “(a) basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all; (b) secondary education in its different forms including technical and vocational education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular, by the progressive introduction of free education”.

Article 38 (1) further stipulates that “The State shall provide educational facilities at all levels and in all the regions of Ghana, and shall, to the greatest extent feasible, make those facilities available to all citizens.

Ghana as a country has gone through various political regimes from colonial rule, democratic and military rules to the period of independence, hence the reforms on educational social policies has been evolving as issues of equitable access to quality education at all levels came to the fore. Governments under the various regimes have introduced educational policies through the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service and other state agencies to ensure effective coordination of functions and resources needed to implement the policy agenda. A case in point is the implementation of Free Compulsory Basic Education scheme during the Nkrumah regime of 1961. The policy was to enhance equity which was denied by the colonial rule. The policy sought to increase enrolment at the basic level up to the tertiary levels. The policy encountered oppositions from political parties with the idea that abolishing of school fees could not make education ‘free’ as the CPP promised. After all, what it did was that it shifted the financial

burden from individual citizens to various levels of government. The government in turn had to pay for education by extracting funds from the people through taxes (Asare-Bediako, 2014).

Over the years, policy of free basic education has been maintained by successive government as a policy for having a large political constituency supporting it which will constrain efforts of politicians to change the status quo (Pierson, 2001). In recent times, the extension of the free education policy to the second cycle institution had been the campaign message of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) since 2008. The justification for their intention is backed by law and also the enrollment in second cycle institutions has been decreasing due to the poor economic situation in the country. Hence, the policy would seek to remove the financial burden from care givers and increase enrollment. This with the promise to revamp other collapsing social policy is believed by many observers as the most influencing factor that won the New Patriotic Party (NPP) political power in 2016. This plausibly gave the party credence in the implementation of the Free SHS policy which started in 2017. Government is collaborating with various partners to implement co-programmes and interventions such as the Secondary Education Improvement Project, the expansion of physical infrastructure, and free supply of core subject text books to students (Dwamena, 2017).

Again, there have been lots of political talks on the challenges emerging – from inadequate institutional capacity, to inadequate infrastructure and more importantly the financial sustainability of the policy. Whilst some many see the policy as having potentially transformative economic and social impacts, particularly for girls, others have more negative views with respect to the weaknesses highlighted in the school systems (Brudevold-Newman, 2017).

1.2 Problem Statement

The standard of secondary education in Ghana has over the years experienced a decline and its effects have raised issues of tailored made interventions by governments and other educational institutions (Duncan-Adanusa, 2006). The decline in the quality of education which has been a subject of discussion in contemporary education literature has had negative effects on students' performance in examinations.

Despite broad agreement that education provides pathway to development, universal enrolment and completion continue to remain elusive even in settings where concerted effort have been made to remove material and structural barriers- namely fees and other school related costs (Williams et al., 2015). Quist (2003) identified financial constraint as the main cause accounting for low quality education in the second-cycle institutions. In his view, budgetary allocation for education sector is inadequate and about 90 percent of the proportion for secondary schools goes into wages and salaries and the rest for educational investment. The consequence of this is unimproved teaching infrastructure (class rooms, work-shops, libraries, laboratories, furniture) and materials (text-books and other teaching materials).

The problem is further exacerbated by inability of government to give enough motivation to teachers and to produce qualified personnel to support increased number of students necessitated by expansion of secondary schools across the country (Sekyere, 2009). In an attempt to put measures in place to curb the challenge, successive government in Ghana have formulated various policies aimed at eliminating possible barriers to quality education through improving the infrastructure, logistics and human resource base of the education sector. Notable among these efforts were the passage of the 1961 Education Act which introduced the 'Free Textbook Scheme' to provide every pupil/student access to basic textbooks for learning and the

establishment of two public universities (Cape Coast University, 1962 and University of Education in Winneba, 1992) to train teachers to provide tuition at the second cycle and higher levels of education (Darko-Ampem 2002). In addition, community secondary schools were established in the country with at least one of them in each district and upgraded to a high performing school with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities (Mfum-Mensah, 2003).

The trend of global development has had significant impact on educational policies with the aim of improving quality in education, especially in regards to access and affordability of educational services. It is against the backdrop of salvaging the country's educational system, particularly the Senior High Schools, from its declining quality that the Ghana government in 2003 introduced a broad policy document entitled "Education Strategic Plan" (ESP). It outlines policies, target and strategies of ameliorating the education sector. The implementation period for the document spanned from 2003 to 2015 (Duncan-Adenusa 2006).

The Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) Programme in Ghana was a step towards free and universal formal schooling. The reform of education in 2007 in Ghana meant that free education has been extended from six to eleven years. This includes early childhood and junior secondary school (JSS) (Yamada & Ampiah, 2009). The goal of bringing universal primary education has led to a higher spending on education: from 1999 to 2006 there has been an increase in spending from 3.7 to 5.1% of GDP. Half of this spending was dedicated to basic education (Yamada & Ampiah, 2009:64). The introduction of a free basic primary schooling was marred with difficulties such as increasing dropout rates and low school enrolment. Therefore these educational reforms did not seem to meet the expectations in terms of coverage, quality, equity and the economic development needs of Ghana.

In recent times the New Patriotic Party (NPP), championed its campaign on the Free Senior High Secondary Education policy. Following the implementation of the policy in 2017, emerging issues of the political, social and financial sustainability of the policy have been raised by various stakeholders such as the opposition political parties, National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT), and Conference of Head of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS). Among the complaints they raised were rushed rolled out of the policy with no broader stakeholder consultations. According to Nyadroh (2017), this has attracted several major challenges faced by the policy. Some of these include the lack of adequate facilities to accommodate students has led to overcrowding thereby hampering effective teaching and learning. In some cases pupils who completed previously were not captured by the Computerised School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) leading to a backlog of students awaiting admissions. More so some female candidates were wrongly placed in male schools, and candidates who selected boarding schools were also placed in day schools far away from their areas of residence (Nyadroh, 2017).

Although, the overall aim of a social policy is to enhance equity and fairness of all members and sectors of society by balancing the existing conditions. Yet, prior educational policies such as the school feeding programme has been criticised by some scholars on the basis of worsening the existing inequality gap in education between Northern and Southern Ghana (Abdulai & Hickey, 2016; Abdulai & Hulme, 2014; Abraham, 2017). For example, a critical look at the 2014 Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE) results shows that only 33% of students qualified from the three Northern Regions and over 60% of students qualified from Greater Accra and Ashanti Region only (Abraham, 2017). The policy if not prioritised will create undue added advantage for those in the south, whilst creating added disadvantage for those down north. In the

context of Ghana's educational sector, Abdulai and Hickey (2016) reveals that the allocation of resources over a 15 years span were informed by the incentives of the competitive clientelist political settlement. This worsens the existing inequality situation, threatens national unity and consequently makes development inclusive.

Although proponent of the free SHS policy, which currently being implemented, would argue that the policy provides equal opportunity to all qualified students, it is unfair to disadvantage people in the same way as the general population. Indeed, equal treatment of unequals will rarely translate into fairer distributions in terms of impact or outcomes. Another important emerging issue is the exclusion of Conference of Heads of Private Second Cycle Schools (CHOPSS) and the concerns of private schools in regards to the free SHS policy. Whilst the exclusion of CHOPSS from the Free SHS policy threatens the policy's survival, CHOPSS has formally expressed their opinions and called on the Government to include private schools in the implementation of the Policy. Private SHSs contributes significantly not only to the educational sector but also in the area of job creation and to the growth of the economy. Therefore if all private SHSs close down, access to secondary education for the more than 50,000 students currently enrolled by the private SHSs would be jeopardised. The seeming rushed rolled out, lack of broader engagement with relevant stakeholders among other things have raised suspicions that free SHS policy is driven by politics. This is in view of the fact that lack of coherent and well-designed policies in Ghana have often led to public spending perceived to win votes (Whitfield, 2010) – particularly with the increasing competitive elections in the country (Appiah & Abdulai, 2017). Again, the introduction and implementation of notable social intervention policies like NHIS and LEAP have been linked with electoral calculus (Grebe,

2017; Ragno et al., 2016). This study therefore attempts to explore the politics surrounding the Free SHS policy.

1.3 Research Objectives

The general objective of the study is to examine the politics of implementing the free senior high school (SHS) policy in Ghana. Specifically, the study sought to:

- a. Explore the influence of electoral politics on the adoption and implementation of the free senior high education policy in Ghana.
- b. Examine the emerging challenges associated with the implementation free senior high education policy in Ghana.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the objectives above, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

- a. How has electoral politics influenced the adoption and implementation of the free senior high education policy in Ghana?
- b. What are the emerging challenges associated with the free senior high education policy in Ghana?

1.5 Justification and Significance of the Study

The reason for conducting the research emanates from the fact that secondary school education in Ghana has gone through many educational reforms to improve the standard of education for social and economic development of the country. In spite of the efforts by successive governments, there is continuous criticism from various stakeholders about the low quality of

education at the Senior High School (SHS) level, which is the link between the primary and higher stages of learning. The outcomes, policy implications, and recommendations that emerge from this study will generate interest for further research into other aspects of education in Ghana.

Also, the study attempts to contribute to the existing knowledge and emerging literature on Quality Education. The findings of the study would be made available to students, researchers and other stakeholders in the areas of development, public policy, and education studies among others for reference purposes. Furthermore, the research will inform government, policy makers and development partners of the relationship between education quality in the secondary education and development.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study does not claim to be exhaustive. It was limited to examining the Free Senior High Policy in Ghana, its objectives, the role of politics in implementing the policy, as well as challenges confronting the policy. The policy was also assessed within the context of Public Second-Cycle Institutions in the Accra Municipal and Adentan Municipal Assemblies – from the period of implementation in September 2017. A major limitation of the study is that finding literary works on free senior high education in Ghana was a challenge. Lessons therefore had to be drawn from documentation from developed and developing countries where policies and issues concerning free senior education has been implemented over a long time.

Another major setback to the researcher was time constraint, as the respondents may not want to spend so much time filling questionnaires. More so the unwillingness of policy think-tanks to provide the relevant information needed for the study because of the complexities of the contexts

and situations unique to the policy there were bound to be problems in the data collection. In the midst of all these limitations, however, the researcher employed all necessary, effective and efficient actions to arrive at valid and reliable findings that informs public policy.

1.7 Organization of the Study

The study is presented in six chapters. Chapter one presents the background of the study, statement of the research problem, research objectives and questions, significance of the study, scope and limitations of the study. Chapter two reviewed relevant literature: both theoretical and empirical. This is to ensure familiarity with the concepts being discussed, existing body of knowledge, and to position this study based on its contribution to existing knowledge.

Chapter three discussed the methodology which consists of the procedures and methods used in gathering both primary and secondary data in order to achieve the objectives set. The population, data collection tools and procedure, as well as the analysis of data based on which conclusions are drawn for this study. Whilst chapter four presents the key findings from the data analysed in regards to the research questions of the study, chapter five analysis and discusses these key findings. It establishes the extent to which the theories propose and empirical finding relate to practice.

Finally, chapter six contains the summary of the study, informed conclusions, implications for policy and practice, and recommendations for key institutional stakeholders as well as for future research. Finally, the reference list of material used and appendix which comprises of the sample interview guide, and other relevant document will be presented.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature on the subject matter of democracy, electoral politics and social policy adoption and policy implementation. The review also discusses theoretical framework that explains the relationship between the concepts in the study, it also reviews empirical studies that provide more meaning to the concept of social policy – particularly educational policies, its prospects as well as challenges thwarting their implementation.

2.1 Democracy and Social Policy

Different political institutions and arrangements tend to favour particular social policy as they tend to produce different political capacities for extraction of the resources necessary for financing social programs (Abdulai & Hickey, 2016). Thus the type of political regime (Elitist/populist, democratic/authoritarian, right fascist/stalinist, colonialist/nationalist, etc.) has enormous implications for social policy adoption. In a democratic regime with a relatively high level of economic development, the necessary conditions of welfare are often pushed by the masses which contribute greatly to the adoption and expansion of the welfare systems (Lee & Vivarelli, 2006). Democracy and the principle of social policy are both dynamic and permanent processes which reinforce each other. Whilst one is driven by power struggles and quantitative aggregation of social interests, the other is pushed by the effort to minimize social need. The right to vote for all and the ‘time rhythm’ inherent in a democracy impact on social policy in the

sense that it fuels the expansion of social policy and shape it in a way conducive mainly to well organized groups and increases vertical solidarity (Zacher, 2000).

Democratic political institutions provide political incentive structures necessary for inducing better policy choices. As democracy develops, the nature of the electorates systematically changes in both the level of political division and the sources of division. Moreover, citizens appear better able to use elections as a means of meaningful political choice, which is the ultimate objective of democratic electoral politics (Dalton, 2008). Therefore the selection of social policy problems and issues depends not on social needs but rather on whether they fit the electoral issue attention cycle (Zacher, 2000). For example, electoral systems or the manner in which votes are cast in a general election are translated into seats in the legislature, which influence key governance dimensions and dynamics. Electoral systems can also help shape the calculations of politicians about policy choices and they also provide different incentives to make narrow or broader based appeals to the population, depending on whether the electoral system encourages the proliferation of political parties or not. Understanding electoral incentives is therefore important to understand how institutional rules of the game interact with stakeholders on the demand as well as on the supply side (Birch, 2007).

2.2 Electoral Politics and Social Policy

Electoral politics provides a means for society to make collective judgments about past policies of governments and the direction future government should follow. Often, elections represent a competition between groups and their contending interests within a nation. It prompts accountability in two ways: they allow for political competitions and help governance to be more efficient by weeding out incompetent politicians and giving those in power an incentive to

put in effort (see Abdulai & Hickey, 2016). Elections are believed to provide suitable incentives for efficient governance. However governments have an additional motive to renew their legitimacy in the periodical recurrence of elections. Therefore, electoral pressure may lead politicians to manipulate social policy in order to increase their chances of re-election. Studies have shown that before elections, public spending increases while revenues fall thus leading to a large budget deficit in election years (see Chambas, 2005; Baumgartner et al., 2004). Further, in developing countries, much of the election-oriented policymaking affects the expenditure side, because increases in public spending have a very direct and immediate impact on voters' welfare (Chambas, 2005).

Citizens have needs and interests that they expect governments to address. As a result, citizens have become active, competent agents with whom the state (government) negotiates the format of the policies to be applied and defines rights and obligations (Baumgartner et.al, 2004). In democratic societies, political parties aggregate these demands from diverse groups and articulate public policy options to respond to them. Elections provide voters the opportunity to choose among political parties offering distinct proposals for addressing societal needs. Through their efforts to control and influence public policy, political parties play an intermediary role, linking citizens to their representatives, and serving as the primary channel for holding the government accountable for its performance (Abdulai & Hulme, 2014; Abdulai & Hickey, 2016). Thus, party policy development (the process whereby political parties formulate and seek to implement their proposals for governmental actions) is central to the healthy functioning of a representative democracy (National Democratic Institute, 2013).

Political parties face a number of challenges in fulfilling their policy formulation role. Particularly in fledgling democracies, parties may: lack clear ideologies; fail to articulate

distinctive and coherent policy proposals; have weak structures that remain dormant outside election campaign periods; have narrow and/ or shifting support bases that are defined by personal, regional or ethnic ties; and struggle to conduct cohesive action in Parliament (National Democratic Institute, 2013).

2.3 Public Policy Cycle Framework

Public policy broadly emphasises government's attempt to strategically satisfy the needs, demands and desires of the public by developing and institutionalising political processes that employ mechanisms to realise societal goals (Hanekom, 1987). It has more recently been described as "a process in which decision makers, working within or close to the machinery of government and other political institutions, produce public actions that are intended to have an impact outside the political system" (John, 2013). The public policy cycle is a product of a complex political process in which there are many actors: politician, pressure groups, civil servants, publicly employed professional and even sometimes those who see themselves as the passive recipients of policy (Hill, 2013). According to Nagel (2001: 71), the policy cycle explains how the policy-making process unfolds, and it is a multidisciplinary problem-solving investigative process that studies the type, origins, and repercussions of public policies, were independent processes. It also highlights the significance of the policy domain or subsystem as the key level of analysis.

According to Dunn (1995: 16), public policy development takes place over five phases: i) Agenda setting (when officials place problems on the public stage); ii) Policy formation (when officials formulate policies to deal with a problem; iii) Policy adoption (the adoption of a policy with consensus); iv) Policy implementation (where the adopted policy is executed by the

administrative units which organize financial and human resources to fulfil the policy; and v) Policy evaluation (where auditing and accounting units in government determine whether government are compliant with statutory requirements of a policy and achieving its objective).

2.3.1 Agenda Setting

This phase of the policy cycle has to do with problem identification and issue selection. Problem recognition itself requires that a social problem has been defined as such and that the necessity of state intervention has been expressed. The second step would be that the recognized problem is actually put on the agenda for serious consideration of public action (agenda-setting) (Baumgartner et al., 2004). The agenda is nothing more than “the list of subjects or problems to which governmental officials, and people outside the government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time. The means and mechanisms of problem recognition and issue selection are tightly connected with the way a social problem is recognized and perceived on the public/media agenda. The involvement of particular actors (e.g., experts), the choice of institutional venues in which problems are debated and the strategic use of media coverage have been identified as tactical means to define issues (Baumgartner et.al, 2004).

Agenda-setting results in a selection between diverse problems and issues. It is a process of structuring the policy issue regarding potential strategies and instruments that shape the development of a policy in the subsequent stages of a policy cycle. The crucial step in this process of agenda-setting is the move of an issue from its recognition (frequently expressed by interested groups or affected actors) up to the formal political agenda. This move encompasses several sub-stages in which succeeding selections of issues under conditions of scarce capacities of problem-recognition and problem-solving are made. Whilst problem recognition and problem

definition in liberal democracies are said to be largely conducted in public, in the media or at least among domain-specific professional (public) communities, the actual agenda-setting is characterized by different patterns in terms of actor composition and the role of the public (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Frequently, governments are confronted with forced choice situations (Lodge & Hood, 2002) where they simply cannot ignore public sentiment without risking the loss of legitimacy or credibility, and must give the issue some priority on the agenda.

The confluence of a number of interacting factors and variables determines whether a policy issue becomes a major topic on the policy agenda. These factors include both the material conditions of the policy environment (like the level of economic development), and the flow and cycle of ideas and ideologies, which are important in evaluating problems and connecting them with solutions (policy proposals) (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). Within that context, the constellation of interest between the relevant actors, the capacity of the institutions in charge to act effectively, and the cycle of public problem perception as well as the solutions that are connected to the different problems are of central importance (Baumgartner et al., 2004).

2.3.2 Policy Formulation and Adoption

During this stage of the policy cycle, expressed problems, proposals, and demands are transformed into government programs. Policy formulation and adoption includes the definition of objectives (what should be achieved with the policy) and the consideration of different alternative actions (Dye, 2002). Some authors differentiate between formulation (of alternative actions) and the final adoption (the formal decision to take on the policy) (Stone, 2002).

Ministerial bureaucracy and top civil servants play crucial role in the policy formulation. The final decision on a specific policy remains in the realm of the responsible institutions (mainly

cabinet, ministers, Parliament), this decision is preceded by a more or less informal process of negotiated policy formation with ministerial departments (and the units within the departments), organized interest groups and depending on the political system elected members of parliaments and their associates as major players. When it comes to the final adoption of a particular policy option, the formal institutions of the governmental system move into the center. Policy formulation and adoption in western democracies, proceeds as a complex social process, in which state actors play an important but not necessarily decisive role (Stone, 2002).

2.3.3 Policy Implementation

The decision on a specific course of action and the adoption of a program does not guarantee that the action on the ground will strictly follow policy makers' aims and objectives. The stage of policy implementation involves the enforcement of a policy by the responsible institutions and organizations that are often, but not always, part of the public sector (Hill & Hupe, 2002). Policy implementation follows basically, three theoretical perspectives – namely: i) top-down model (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973); ii) bottom-up model (Sabatier & Weible, 2014; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973); and a hybrid of both models (winter, 1990).

According to proponents of the top-down model (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973), the main emphasis of this implementation approach is the ability of decision makers to produce unequivocal policy objectives and on controlling the implementation stage. However, the bottom-up model takes a different turn. The bottom-up proponents view local bureaucrats as the main actors in policy delivery and conceive policy implementation as negotiation processes within networks of implementers (Williams & Onibon, 2009; Lipsky, 1980). Hybrid theories also try to overcome the divide between the other two approaches by incorporating elements of

top-down, bottom-up and other theoretical models (Winter, 1990). However, Hill and Hupe (2002) offer three core elements that a policy implementation framework should contain. First, they suggest that an ideal process of policy implementation should include specification of program details. Thus, how and by which agencies/organizations should the program be executed? How should the law/program be interpreted? Secondly, an ideal policy implementation process should include a framework for allocating resources. This includes how budgets are distributed and how personnel will execute the program. It also bothers on the units of an organization in charge of the execution. Lastly, an ideal policy implementation process should clearly outline how decisions of single cases will be carried out.

2.3.4 Policy Monitoring and Evaluation

Policy evaluation takes place as a regular and embedded part of the political process and debate. Therefore, scientific evaluation has been distinguished from administrative evaluations conducted or initiated by the public administration and political evaluation carried out by diverse actors in the political arena, including the wider public and the media (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Not only scientific studies, but also government reports, the public debate and activities of respective opposition parties embrace substantial elements of evaluation. While evaluation research sought to establish evaluation as a central part of rational evidence-based policy-making, activities of evaluation are particularly exposed to the specific logic and incentives of political processes in at least two major ways, both of which are related to blame games (Hood, 2002). First, the assessment of policy outputs and outcomes is biased according to the position and substantial interest, as well as the values, of a particular actor. In particular, the shifting of blame for poor performance is a regular part of politics. Second, flawed definition of policy aims

and objectives presents a major obstacle for evaluations. Given the strong incentive of blame-avoidance, governments are encouraged to avoid the precise definition of goals otherwise politicians would risk taking the blame for obvious failure.

2.4 Social Policy Implementation

Egonmwan (2009) explained that social policy implementation involves translating policy objectives into concrete reality and it involves the process of converting inputs (financial, information, materials, technical, human, demand and support e.tc.) into outputs (goods and services). Implementing social policies also calls for the mutual adaptation in which policies and programmes adapt to their environment and each alters the other. This suggests that implementation is a phase in the life cycle of policy and indeed the most crucial of all the other phases (Egonmwan, 2009).

2.4.1 Policy Content

The content of a policy or programme is influenced by the social, political and economic interest and change that is demanded, to the extent that those whose interests are threatened by such policy are bound to oppose it, and those who stand to gain are bound to press for such policy (Bell & Stevenson, 2015). Sometimes, this generates conflict and competition and may make implementation more difficult. Social policy implementation is also affected by the degree of behavioral change envisaged for its intended beneficiaries. Programs that are designed to achieve long range objectives may be more difficult to implement than those whose advantages are immediately apparent to the beneficiaries (Egonmwan, 2009). However, a policy does not

always originate in the identification of a need, it can be brought forward because of approaching elections or because the coalition in power pushes through the agenda.

Clarifying the reasoning behind a policy, the characteristics of the issue it is supposed to address, and the way policy makers analyze these issues help make sense of implementation and can contribute to bringing stakeholders on board to support the policy reform (Bell & Stevenson, 2015). Therefore, the way a policy is debated and framed, the logic it suggests between the policy problem and the solution it offers and the feasibility of the latter determine to a great extent whether a policy can be implemented and how (Nilsen, 2015).

2.4.2 Policy Context

This refers to the elements that constitute the environment in which policy implementation unfolds: the institutional settings, existing policies and the events originated outside of, but connected to, the implementing system (Fullan, 2015). The institutional setting comprises the formal and informal social constraints that regulate the implementation process, which may be considered as fairly stable parameters (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). Constitutions, laws, rules, conventions, norms or habits, also determine the speed at and extent to which a policy gets implemented (OECD, 2008). The system of governance also plays a determinant role in policy implementation, for instance in centralized government systems, the state play a major role in defining and delivering the policy, while in a decentralized system, policy implementation is a shared responsibility between the state, local government authorities and other supporting agencies and departments (OECD, 2016). The institutional structures also determine the decision making and governance process involved in policy implementation.

Williams and Onibon (2009) admitted that social policy implementation is a function of government bureaucracy. The effectiveness of policy implementation is largely determined by the efficiency and competence of governmental implementing agencies. Where there is organizational fragmentation, it may hinder the coordination that is necessary to successfully implement a complex policy especially one that requires the cooperation of many people. It may also result in wastage of scarce resources, inhibit change, create confusion, lead to policies working at cross-purposes and, at the end, result in important functions being overlooked (Workman, Jones & Jochim, 2010). The policy context is also defined by the level of compatibility with other policies in the sector. Complementary policies are thus instrumental in understanding implementation outcomes and their sustainability. However, in cases where there is misalignment; implementation becomes almost impossible (OECD, 2010).

The implementing environment is also shaped by the societal trends and events that may have repercussions on the policy. Whether they are of political, social, economic, or demographic environment, they can affect the possibility of a policy being implemented according to its statute's objectives (Wurzberg, 2010). Bell and Stevenson (2015, p. 148) noted that the socio-political environment "shapes the context within which policy is framed and enacted". The sociocultural forces also define the values prevailing in a given system, and therefore contribute to filtering the educational issues and policy solutions that are acceptable socially (Malen, 2006, p. 89). The institutional and societal contexts therefore have a mediating effect on the politics of implementation, because they define the issues that can arise and the policy solutions offered. They also shape and constrain actors' strategies as well as their implementation plan.

2.5 Policy Strategy

Effective implementation of social policies is a dynamic process that requires strategies such as communication, resources, disposition/attitude and efficient bureaucratic structures.

2.5.1 Communication Strategy

Knowledge is also a source for actors to shape and revise their beliefs, which impacts their attitude in the implementation process. Understanding the mechanisms through which actors learn and process information is crucial to manage knowledge for effective implementation (Fuster & Köster, 2016). Communication is an essential ingredient for effective implementation of social policy. The language of a policy may not necessarily be understood by the actors who are expected to implement it (Hill, 2006). Making sure the key message and logic of the policy are transmitted correctly to actors, there is the need to build consensus around the objectives, tools and other means to achieve the policy goals (OECD, 2010).

Through communication, orders to implement policies are expected to be transmitted to the appropriate personnel in a clear manner while such orders must be accurate and consistent. Inadequate information can lead to a misunderstanding on the part of the implementers who may be confused as to what exactly are required of them. In effect, implementation instructions that are not transmitted, that are distorted in transmission, that are vague, or that are inconsistent may cause serious obstacles to policy implementation. Conversely, directives that are too precise may hinder implementation by stifling creativity and adaptability. Such precise directives do not leave room for implementers to exercise discretion and flexibility where and when the need arises.

2.5.2 Resources strategy

The inputs necessary for policy implementation consist mainly of the funding, technology and knowledge available to the actors, as well as their capacity to use them. The amount, quality and distribution of these resources allocated to implementation determine to a great extent whether and how a policy is implemented (Wurzburg, 2010; OECD, 2010). A recurring issue with resources is not only about whether they are available for implementation, or in sufficient quantities, but how they are used, and what for (OECD, 2015).

Resources include both human and material factors. With respect to human resource, these include adequate and competent staff to ensure that policies are carried out as stipulated. Material resources on the other hand, include facilities such as land, equipment, buildings, and funding among others. Without sufficient resources laws will not be enforced. Services will also not be provided and reasonable regulations will not be developed.

2.5.3 Timing strategy

The timing and pace set for implementation determine to a large extent how the process unfolds. An implementation strategy defines a timeline common to the main stakeholders, even though it is complex to define when implementation starts and when it stops (Hill & Hupe, 2002). The effects of timing and pace on the implementation process are uncertain, but should not be overlooked because they are directly linked with the scope of implementation and its potential outcomes. The pace of implementation is linked to the nature of the change the policy aims for: even comprehensive reforms may start with incremental changes, before the systemic changes can be effective. The effect of timing on implementation thus depends on the degree of acceptability of the policy, and on the system's capacity to implement. Taking into account the

time dimension in implementation requires policy actors to adopt a long-term perspective on policy, while keeping up the dynamic of the process in the short-term (Hill & Hupe, 2002).

2.5.4 Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy

Monitoring and evaluation are very crucial part of the policy implementation process because it enables a comprehensive assessment of effectiveness and impacts of the policy by implementers. In complex systems, the data collected through monitoring can also serve to hold stakeholders accountable throughout the system. Up-to-date data contributes to measuring progress of the implementation process. In some contexts, studies have found that having higher accountability standards on policy implementers resulted in a more effective and qualitative implementation (Budd et al., 2012). For social policy implementation to achieve its intended objectives, monitoring should be on-going, co-ordinated and allow other actors to make an input in the process (Khosa, 2003:47).

According to Aminu et al. (2012:03), collaborated monitoring of social policies allows for diverse opinion and broad perspective on the extent to which each implemented policy meets the set objectives. Monitoring informed by diverse opinion and broad perspective is suggestive of a process that allows detailed reporting and feedback. Jones (2011:1) points out that monitoring of social policy are capable of establishing human resource capacity challenges that face institutions that are responsible for implementing policies. Identification of policy implementation challenges encourage solutions to challenges and lead to improved accountability (Aminu et al., 2012:48). In general, monitoring and evaluation practices explore five criteria for assessment of policies. These criteria are used to provide the decision-maker with essential information in connection with present and future decisions concerning the policy:

- i. Impact: Measure both the positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, changes to and effects on society caused by the policy under evaluation.
- ii. Effectiveness: Measures the extent to which the objective has been achieved or the likelihood that it will be achieved.
- iii. Efficiency: assesses the outputs in relation to inputs, looking at costs, implementing time and economic and financial results.
- iv. Relevance: gauges the degree to which the policy at a given time is justified within the organizations' environment and development priorities.
- v. Sustainability: measures the extent to which benefits are gained from the policies relative to the period without the policy.

Cerna (2014) among others however, argue that too much monitoring and evaluation can have negative influence over the implementation process. Hence, monitoring mechanisms should thus be designed to be flexible, support the policy goals, and provide public information without weighing down on beneficiaries activities (OECD, 2010).

2.5.5 Policy Actors

One of the primary factors in all stages of the social policy process is the involvement of all actors (role-players and stakeholders). Involvement of all the actors harnesses the resources in a coherent and purposeful way (Ijeoma, 2008). Roux (2005), explains that the extent of involvement of all the actors depends on the nature of the policy. This suggests that intensity and

vigour of involvement of actors in the policy process, centres on the interests of actors interlinked with the stage of policy process. Social policies are implemented by individuals and organizations, making them central to the implementation process both because of their own characteristics and their interactions with other determinants (Nilsen, 2015).

Implementation of social policy involves various actors at various levels, each having a particular interest in the programme. The actors may refer to individuals or collective entities, both formal (e.g. labour unions, implementing agencies) and informal (e.g. parents, political coalitions). The actors can further include formal implementers benefiting from an official mandate to implement, intermediaries or providers involved to deliver the effective service, lobbies and constituency groups, recipients and consumers of the policy, the media, and even policy evaluators (Burns & Köster, 2016). The national government also has relevant institutions, such as evaluation, inspection or improvement agencies, research agencies, teacher training institutions, national leadership or teacher institutions, ministries of education and their staff and unions. Policy implementation is also determined by actors interest, which is defined as “the complex web of values, views, orientations, dispositions, preferences, and convictions that shape their perceptions of public problems and the policy solution that may be attached to them” (Malen, 2006, p. 87). The way the implementers exercise their discretion depends, to a large extent, on their disposition toward the policy. Therefore the level of success will depend on how the implementers see the policies as affecting their organizational and personal interests. For example, Ejere (2011) argued that civil servants attitudes and behavior influences the direction of education policy outcomes. Thus, where a policy will result in reduction of pay, low self-esteem, or loss of position to the implementers, the attitude/ disposition will be affected

adversely. On the other hand, if a policy will enhance the status, the pay or the self-esteem of the implementers, such implementers will be favorably disposed to it.

Actors' interests may be in competition between individuals, between interest groups, and sometimes between individuals and the organization they belong to. Competing interests may affect a policy's implementation process by creating ongoing conflicts between stakeholders. Actors' interests thus affect implementation primarily through political games and tensions, leaving some room to arbitrate and decide which policy elements and tools to favour in the implementation process. Furthermore, actors' ability to influence policy implementation process is determined by their capacity (such as prestige, connections, individual attributes) and their skill and will to make these resources a tool for political influence (Malen, 2006).

The capacity of Institutions/organizations such as schools and implementing agencies is determined by the quality of their human resource on the one hand and by their organizational setting, on the other. Bell and Stevenson (2015) explained that organizational principles, structures and internal procedures shape the way organizations' react to a given policy. Thus, the power base and strategies of actors and institutions involved in implementation can influence the course of implementation. The more active, the expert and personnel possessed by the implementing agency, the greater the support of the political elites received by such agency and the greater access to resources it has, the more it is likely that such agency can implement programmes successfully. The characteristics of the various institutions and regimes as well as the compliance culture of the people equally influence the implementation process and response of the people (Egonmwan, 2009).

2.6 Challenges of Social Policy Implementation

Social policy implementation has been a major challenge for most countries around the globe and most especially developing countries. These challenges constitute implementation gaps which affect the desired outcome of the policy. Implementation challenges usually occur when there is a gap between the stated policy and the achievement of the benefits of the policy by the target community. There could be implementation gap as a result of many factors, which could arise from the policy itself, the policy maker, or the environment in which the policy has been made. Few of the challenges are discussed below.

2.6.1 Lack of clear definition of policy goals

Most governments in developing countries have the obvious tendencies of pursuing multiple goals which often lack clarity and consistency with demands of the people (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). The clarity of the policy goals and their order of priority in the policy statutes impact the operational stage of the implementing agencies. Even further, different actors may have different interpretations of the policy goals, whether desirable or not, there is a possibility that actors may interpret and implement a policy differently because they do not understand nor comply with its spirit (Makinde, 2005).

2.6.2 Overambitious policy goals

The politicization of social policies in Africa has led to the formulation of over ambitious policies by political parties to win political capital coupled with excessive bureaucratic procedures (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). It appears to suggest that policies or programs that do not involve the targeted beneficiaries in their formulation and execution will struggle to be sustained.

This is because the target groups are hardly involved in policy design or implementation: they are onlookers, rather than participants. According to Egomnwan (2009) the desire to establish the legitimacy of the political regime by providing tangible evidence of improving conditions, creates a situation in which the political leaders are likely to adopt policies that led to improvement of conditions of life, but may not be realizable because of its overambitious nature. Therefore the scope, comprehensiveness and operationability of policies formulated gave rise to serious bottlenecks during implementation.

2.6.3 Limited resources for implementation

Human, financial and physical (infrastructure) resources are very necessary for effective policy implementation. Implementing agencies in most cases lack appropriate modern technology, managerial skill and administrative capacity that are prerequisite for effective policy implementation. The procedures adopted in policy implementation are such that are not consistent with policy goals (Ankomah et al., 2005).

2.6.4 Lack of continuity and commitment for policy

Policies formulated based on political promises and party interests often are not continued when there is a change of government. Change in government more often is accompanied by change in priorities. The situation tends to make implementation more difficult in terms of switch over to entirely different priorities and objectives which require new organizations, personnel, resources and technology which are not always easy to provide. This led to abandonment of many policies.

On the other hand, politicians in their effort to quickly satisfy the demands of the people formulate policies that provide short-lived solutions and fail to address the actual problem in the long run. The winning of elections is held as more important than the sustainability of policies and the attainment of their core goals (Makinde, 2005).

2.6.5 Lack of coordination

Many public policies require the involvement of many agencies at different levels of government. The absence of coordination and clear definition of responsibility among the various agencies involved can lead to implementation failure (Bouckaert et al., 2016; Christensen & Lægreid, 2007). Policy implementation cuts across the functional and sector divisions of many institutions which is a factor that further complicates institutional placement of policy. Where institutional placement of policies is the case, ministries and departments share and compete for responsibilities and authority on the implementation, with the result of this being duplication of effort, bureaucratic infighting, insufficient technical expertise in any single agency.

Weaver (2010) argues that where duplication of effort and bureaucratic infighting exists, the desire of the existing agencies and their political patrons is to protect their ‘turf’, jobs and constituencies. He notes that this sometimes leads to allocation of responsibilities for programme implementation that reflects realities of the distribution of political power more than what is required for efficient and effective administration. Weaver further observes that programme structures that require multiple approvals by agencies with very different objectives may lead to stalemate and inaction while poor coordination mechanisms between multiple implementing

agencies may lead to breakdowns and or delay in programme delivery, bureaucratic ‘runarounds’, poor services delivery and cost overruns (Weaver, 2010).

2.6.6 Public sector corruption

The corrupt tendencies of public officials and politicians no doubt have a far reaching consequences on effective implementation of public policies. Corruption has pervaded every aspect of our societal life (Mkandawire, 2004). It can be seen not only in inflation of contract figures or percentage negotiations, but outright diversion of monies meant for one programme or another (Bolaji, 2014). Corruption is a major threat to policy implementation and sustainability. Corruption penetrates the implementation process, which has mutated public policies and made the desired goals unachievable. In conclusion, effective and successful policy implementation is the key to national development. It is a building block that facilitates socio-economic and political progress and can only be achieved not only through a continuous political commitment and clear definition of responsibilities and coordination, but also through genuine commitment to eradication of corruption at all levels of government.

2.7 Social Protection and the Right-Base Theory

In the social protection literature, some scholars view social protection policies as a right. These arguments have bases from the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of 1980s and 1990s, where foreign aid were largely focused on empowering citizens and to bridging inequalities in society as of less emphasis placed on social services. In this period, governments were encouraged to pass laws that sought to promote democracy, good governance and thereby making social protection a right for citizens. Argument for social protection as a right is also

enshrined in various international human rights instruments and reports such as that the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) (see Abdulai et al., 2019). For example, the ILO (2012) view social protection is a right if it is universal of protection and benefits, adequate and predictable of its benefits, has accessible complaints mechanisms, as well as respects the rights and dignity of its beneficiaries. Observation of these rights can only be sustained and enforced when they are imbibed into legal frameworks (Devereax et al., 2011; Sepúlveda & Nyst, 2012). In other instances, excessive politicization and manipulation of social protection laws and enforcements process have made these policies vulnerable to regime changes (see Sepúlveda & Nyst, 2012).

In Ghana for example, most social protection policies including free basic and SHS education, health, and other socio-economic policies appears to have their grounding in the section on Directive Principles of State Policies of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana (Abdulai et al., 2019). Besides enforcing these policies, the right-based theory also requires that enforcers/administrators of these policies should be held accountable for their service. Thus, there should be compliant and enquiry channels that beneficiaries may use to seek redress and get their grievances addressed (Tessitore, 2011). Hence, social protection programmes need to incorporate compliant mechanisms. Proponents of the theory also argue for the participatory channels to include beneficiaries in decision making regarding framing and enforcing the social policy. According to them, this will help address information and power imbalances that usually exist between administrators/government and beneficiaries towards reducing abuses of the policy by local elites (Abdulai et al., 2019).

2.8 Social Policy Implementation: An Empirical Literature Overview

Various prior studies have reiterated that social policy implementation has been one of the major problem confronting developing countries. For instance, Ahmed and Dantata (2016) in a study on problems and challenges of policy implementation for national development concluded that effective and successful policy implementation is the key to national development. It is a building block that facilitate socio-economic and political progress and can only be achieved not only through a continuous political commitment and clear definition of responsibilities and coordination, but also through genuine commitment to eradication of corruption at all levels of government.

Ojha (2013), in his study, also explored the issues and challenges of implementing right to education amongst teachers, parents and children in some rural schools of Haryana. He found that after two years of policy implementation in Haryana there has been some progress only in terms of enrollment/basic infrastructure. But towards guaranteeing quality education in terms of student learning, the state has not achieved much. Same is the case with regard to its awareness and understanding among its various stakeholders. The study therefore recommends an urgent intervention by the government to strengthen the operational aspect of the policy. In the context of Ghana, Oppong (2013) explored the politics of public policy implementation with a keen focus on the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund). The study revealed that its implementation has generated conflict among competing forces including disagreements, suspicions and an effort to sidestep frontline institutions and individuals tasked with the responsibility to administer the fund. Highlighting political interferences, the study revealed have undermined the attainment of the objectives of the Fund. The study recommends a depoliticized

process of application of GETFund so as to make it free from the manipulations by politicians and their bureaucratic collaborations.

In a study by Ahmad et al. (2012) titled: “Implementation gaps in educational policies of Pakistan: critical analysis of problems and way forward”, revealed that lack of continuity in successive government policies, corruption, inadequate financial allocations, lack of training for human resource, lack of visionary leadership, lack of political will on the part of successive governments, poor follow ups, poor monitoring system, poor policy evaluations, centralized approach in implementation, lack of political stability and decaying institutional disciplines are the main causes that have plagued the process of educational policy implementation in Pakistan. On the basis of this critical analysis, their study concludes that although the regularly stated policy goals in Pakistani education are sublime and ideal, yet, face weak institutional structures and frequent political interventions due to the above identified reasons. The policies remain unfulfilled and do not achieve the desired results. Ahmad et al. (2012) therefore offer a number of recommendations. Firstly, policymakers and policy implementers need to be taken on board before, during and after the policy formulation, implementation and policy evaluation stages. This will generate commitment, strong will, motivation and strong individual and institutional support for the implementation of the policies. Secondly, there should be an increased budgetary allocation for educational projects to improve the process of implementation if it is carried out with professional fervor, professionalism and commitment by showing zero tolerance to corruption in all forms.

Other studies such as Makinde (2005) also investigates the problems of policy implementation in developing nations – presenting the Nigerian experience. The study found that some implementation problems are caused by corruption, lack of continuity in government policies,

inadequate human and material resources. The study consequently concluded that it is apparent that policies are rolled out regularly in developing nations but, most of the time, without achieving the desired results. Carbone (2012) in his study on how new democracies deliver social welfare, particularly health policy in Ghana and Cameroon emphasised that democratic reform processes often go hand in hand with expectations of social welfare improvements. Evidence from the study showed that democracy can indeed be instrumental to the expansion and strengthening of social policies. The development of a public sphere and the emergence of democratic politics thus created new incentives for politicians to pay growing – if certainly not exclusive – attention to policies oriented towards large sections of the electorate. It is in this context that the process of health policy-making ceased to be the exclusive preserve of government and donors' agencies, rapidly politicizing to become an ever more prominent public matter and, ultimately, a major electoral issue.

2.9 Implementation of Educational Policies in Ghana: Issues and Trend

Ghana has undertaken numerous educational reforms since independence with the aim of establishing a better educational structure or systems that will meet the developmental needs of the country. Various political regimes have played an important role in the direction of education policies as have external priorities and issues of resource availability. Populist regimes, both democratic and military, have both pushed education reform hard and mainly in the direction of increased opportunities for the rural poor, improving quality and maintaining and improving standards. For example, Nkrumah's Accelerated Development Plan (ADP) of 1951 was even more radical and promoted both supply and demand-led strategies. Fees for primary education were removed, large numbers of new teachers recruited and trained and schools

expanded. A revised structure of education was proposed and introduced gradually. After full independence in 1957 and the introduction of the Education Act of 1961 tuition fees for middle school were also removed. Scholarships for primary, secondary and tertiary education were introduced to increase the demand for education from students in the Northern and Brong-Ahafo regions. Up to this point the policy emphasis was on increasing access through enrolment (Akyeampong et al., 2007).

After 1966, policies for basic education and in education more generally focussed on standards and the quality of education experienced by children once they had enrolled. This included a focus on the content of curriculum relevant to the world of work in the post primary grades and a proposal that children be selected for the academic stream of secondary after two years in middle school. Those not selected would follow a further two years in 'prevocational' classes prior to leaving school. This policy was perceived by many as elitist and pampering to the needs of the middle classes and by 1972 the pendulum had swung back from standards and quality to access. By this time large numbers of children from the poorer households had gained access to primary education and their aspirations now were for improved access to secondary, especially to the academic rather than the vocational stream of secondary (Akyeampong, et al., 2007).

Policies to create a basic education stage, common to all children, and covering primary and the first three years of secondary (junior secondary) were promoted as part of the New Structure and Content of Education (NSCE) in 1974. The NSCE also recommended changes in the curriculum that would make the experience of primary and junior secondary education more practical and skills-oriented (Akyeampong, 2009). In essence the NSCE proposals became the blueprint for the 1987 and the 1996 reforms which emphasised increases in enrolments in basic education as well as changes in the content and relevance of the curriculum. To increase the demand for

education among girls, scholarship schemes were piloted. Teachers were given incentives in addition to salary through housing, prizes for teaching and training schemes.

By the mid 1990s the focus of attention had reverted to the question of standards when the performance of the first junior secondary school cohort of students was lower than expected. The 1996 FCUBE programme benefited from constitutional change. Article 38 (2) of the 1992 constitution required that the government develop a plan for implementation within the following ten years, for the provision of free, compulsory and universal basic education. These gave legal force to the provision of basic education across the country (Akyeampong, 2009). The political will that had driven the 1987 reforms remained and finance from the international donor community continued to flow. This time teachers were better prepared for the reforms through extensive upgrading programmes (Kosack, 2009). The technical challenges faced in the development of large scale distance education programmes for teachers were great and the supply of untrained teachers and of trained teachers struggled to keep pace with increases in school enrolments (Akyeampong, 2009).

Fierce competitive elections have triggered various educational reforms in the fourth republic. Following the elections of the NPP government into power in 2000, a process to review the existing educational system was initiated. This was hinged on the desire to see what concrete steps needed to be taken to put Ghana's education on track to deliver the kind of educational output relevant for self-actualization of the individual and for enhanced economic productivity within a globally competitive environment but also as part of an election manifesto promise (GoG, 2003). Party manifestos since 1951 has repeatedly captured topical developmental issues, that is likely to secure electoral advantage and hence allow for policy pursuit in line with party ideological position. For example the manifesto of CPP in 1951 contained promises including

free primary education, industrialization, and jobs for all. These promises were well crafted by CPP as a political actor to enable it secure electoral victory and mandate to govern. In the similar vein chapter three of the NPP 2000 manifesto elaborated extensively how the party when elected into office would structurally change the education of Ghana (NPP Manifesto, 2000). The party, after winning the elections and assuming power in 2001 was convinced that it has become necessary to set up a committee to review the entire educational system, with the view of making it more responsive to current challenges, the committee was set up in 2002 under the chairmanship of Jophus Annuah-Mensah. A complete review of the entire educational system includes the philosophy of education, secondary/technical/vocational education, professional development and financing education among other issues (GOG, 2003).

The report of the review was subjected to parliamentary scrutiny, the approval process experienced strong polarization between the two political parties (NPP and NDC). Eventually, the legislative process resulted in the passage of the 2008 Education Act (Act 778). The polarization that characterized the 2007 educational reform can be viewed in the light of partisan influence on policy; the recommendation to extend the duration of SHS from 3 to 4 years was approved by parliament which paved way for implementation. In the year 2001, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) under the leadership of Mr. John Agyekum Kuffour changed the senior secondary education from the three years system to a four years system. However in 2008, the change in government saw the National Democratic Congress (NDC) revert the decision back to three years. During the run up to the parliamentary elections in December 2008 both the right of centre NPP and the left of centre NDC promised increases in access and quality at all levels. The NPP stressed quality and standards at all levels rather more than the NDC who emphasised expansion of pre-school education and teacher training, an expansion of technical schools, while

at the same time proposing a reduction for the senior secondary stage from four years to three. The present structure of education, which starts at the age of six years, is a six-three-three-four (6-3-3-4) structure representing, six years of primary education, three years of Junior Secondary School, three years of Senior Secondary School and four years University course (Djangmah, 2009).

The inconsistency of the structure of Ghanaian educational system is as a result of “over politicization”. Political parties after gaining power seek to provide reforms that they deem fit especially regarding their quest to provide quality education for Ghanaian (Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh & Addo, 2016).

2.10 Free Senior High School Policy in Perspective

The 2008 and 2012 manifestos of the NPP, promised the implementation of free universal secondary education, which entails free admission, tuition, learning materials, and feeding. The justification of the policy was grounded in the 1992 Constitution, Article 25 , 1(b) which states that: “Secondary education in its different forms including technical and vocational education shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular, by the progressive introduction of free education”. Further to this, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs), 4 target 1, also states that “by 2030, all boys and girls complete free equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes”. Notably, the free SHS policy has not been the first in this strive to ensure free secondary education. Interventions by past government include the:

- i. Free secondary education for Northern Students
- ii. Cocoa Board Scholarships/ Bursaries

- iii. Merit Scholarship for Secondary Schools
- iv. Hardship Scholarship
- v. Senior High School Subsidy

2.10.1 Progressive free SHS education programme

The effects of these interventions had increased SHS enrollment by almost double, that is 393,995 in 2007/2008 to 787,861 in 2015/2016 academic year (GES, 2016). Despite the figures, large numbers of students continue to be denied of secondary education. On an average, over 140,000 students are either not Placed by CSSPS or are placed but do not enrol largely due to financial barriers every year. Out of the number placed by CSSPS yearly, over 25% do not enrol (GES, 2016). Whilst Table 1 shows details of students placed by CSSPS into SHS/TVET operated under GES, Table 2 also shows that the Northern Scholarship scheme is not sufficient in tackling the problem.

Table 1: Statistics of CSSPS Placement and School Enrolment.

Year	Total Registered (BECE)	No. Placed	No. Not Placed	Total Enrolled	Placed but not Enrolled (b-d)	
	A	B	C	D	Number (e)	%
2013	391,032	352,202	38,830	261,598	90,604	25.7%
2014	422,946	386,412	36,534	273,152	113,260	29.3%
2015	440,469	415,012	25,457	299,649	115,363	27.8%
2016	461,009	420,135	40,874	308,799	111,336	26.5%

Source: Ghana Education Service (2016)

Table 2: Northern Scholarships Admission and Placement Trends

Year	No. Registered	No. Placed	No. Enrolled	No. Placed But Not Enrolled	% Placed But Not Enrolled
2012/13	109,271	98,046	81,611	16,435	16.80%
2013/14	128,140	115,379	105,738	9,641	8.40%
2014/15	148,147	136,295	122,370	13,925	10.20%
2015/16	158,147	146,205	130,873	15,332	10.50%

Source: Ghana Education Service (2016)

In the quest to reverse this trend, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) implemented the Free Senior High School policy with the objective to:

- i. Address inequality and ensure equal opportunities for all students through the removal of cost barriers.
- ii. Enable students who otherwise would have terminated at the JHS level to acquire functional and employable skills through the acquisition of secondary education
- iii. Enhance the human capital base of the country by making Secondary Education the minimum academic qualification in Ghana
- iv. Improve quality of secondary education through reforms by ensuring systems improvement , accountability for performance and leadership

- v. Improve competitiveness of Ghanaian Students to match the best in the World (NPP, 2017).

The Ministry of Education following consultation with stakeholders have developed a road map which was subject to the approval of cabinet for the progressive introduction of free secondary education in Ghana (NPP, 2017). The Free SHS/TVET Programme is a Package comprising: i) removal of cost barriers; ii) physical expansion of school infrastructure; iii) improvement in the quality of secondary education; iv) equity; and v) acquisition of skills for employment. The policy was implemented at the beginning of the 2017/2018 academic year. The eligibility criteria include, the candidate should be a Ghanaian, must have written Basic Entrance and Certificate Examination, should be placed by CSSPS into a Publicly funded Second Cycle Institution. To ensure equitable access, 30% of places in the 82 elite schools will be reserved for entrants from public Junior High Schools. Duration of Funding for beneficiaries shall be three (3) years. The policy has been rolled out without a published policy document, but guided by an implementation plan.

2.11 Free SHS Policy: Clientelistic or Programmatic Policy?

In political sense, the notion is that governments' pursuit of policies is driven by clientelistic tendencies. Clientelism as defined by Fox (1994) is the exchange of political rights for social benefits. Essentially, clientelism seeks to posit some form of exchange of benefits or favours between a patron and a client where the former gives and the latter receives for purpose of political support. This form of relationship is alien to the tenets of democracy. A central feature of clientelism is that an individual's resources and not ideas determine how political competition

can be fought and won. Therefore, a candidate may be very terrible but can easily win political competition if he or she is able to mobilize and distribute enough benefits to as many clients as possible. However, this is oftentimes confused with programmatic politics where a candidate's policies receive buy-in and acceptance of the masses through democratic campaigns. Although it is recognized that there is a very thin line between clientelistic policies and programmatic policies, it is important to note their distinguishing characteristics in order to generate public support which is key to their successes. For example, if government is providing food subsidies to communities because they voted it into power then such action can be called clientelistic drives and the bargaining chips are the food subsidies. On the other hand, if a government promises a programme of food subsidies distribution to all citizens then the government is pursuing programmatic policy and the food subsidies are the policies.

The Free SHS is an example of programmatic policy. However, it has been misinterpreted by some critics to be a political tool ostensibly for electoral benefits. Clearly the Free SHS policy is not tied to a vote because it is universalistic and as such non-voters and non-voting populations are entitled to its benefit on equal basis. From both theoretical and implementation perspectives, the Free SHS hardly lives up to the definitions of clientelism and cannot accurately be linked to vote buying drives. Moreover, beneficiaries of the policy do not undergo any checks to determine whether or not they voted for the party that introduced them, and the electorate as a whole has a clear idea of what the policy is. Although the 2016 elections outcome may have incentivized the NPP party, now the ruling government to accelerate the rolling out of the Free SHS policy but to suggest that the policy had patronage networks would be inappropriate because there is no implicit threat to be cut off from the policy if one did not vote for the government.

2.12 Research Gaps

From the foregoing literature review, it is gathered that social protection policies often entails major state programmes that are used to promote democracy and inclusive government towards socio-economic development of a nation. It has presence in both developing and developed countries. However, such programmes are well structured and enforced among developed countries such as Finland, USA, and Canada. In the case of developing and African economies, social protection policies and programmes are frost with partisan politics in addition to several other legal and institutional challenges.

Notwithstanding the copious studies on the field of social protection and the politics surrounding it, the review reveals that very limited attention has been paid to how partisan politics influence the formulation and implementation of social protection policies in the context of education. It is well established in the literature that government provision of basic, secondary and tertiary education to increase enrolment and extend its coverage to the less privileged also qualify as a social protection policy. Hence, this gap requires scholarly attention. Again, the above review reveals that most social protection policies – irrespective of national income status often bypasses the traditional public policy formulation process in their initial stages. Why do most social protection policies bypass the traditional public policy formulation process? Knowledge on this question also begs for understanding in the social protection policy literature.

Lastly, the literature review above also reveals a contradiction between theory and practice regarding social protection policies being a right. Whilst most legal regime including that of Ghana's make clear provisions for citizens to benefit from certain social protection programmes and policies, the situation is far different on grounds. Administrators/managers of the policies see themselves in the position of doing beneficiaries a favour as there is usually limited or no avenues for channelling

grievances and/or holding for Administrators/managers of social protection policies accountable.

Why this gap in theory and practice? In the above review, limited studies (see Abdulai et al., 2019; Sepúlveda & Nyst, 2012; Tessitore, 2011) attempted to address this although not in the context of educational social protection policies.

In the midst of these numerous research gaps identified, this study focuses on how electoral politics influence the adoption and implementation of educational social protection policy, explore the extent to which educational social policies can be a right, and to examine the emerging challenges associated with the implementation process of such policies.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used to gather and analyze data for this research. Specifically, this chapter outlines the research approach and design, population and sample size as well as the sampling technique or instruments used. It also includes the various data sources and data gathering instruments used. The data collection process, data analysis procedures, and the ethical considerations are further discussed here.

3.1 Research Approach

This study draw on a qualitative research approach to addressing the research problem and arrive at its findings and conclusions. Qualitative methods are suitable for an assessment of social dimensions of this nature. Kothari (2004) contend that qualitative methods help the researcher to portray how people feel as well as their motives and desire for a phenomenon. The literature review indicates that almost all or most studies that used quantitative methods are usually unable to properly show this perspective in their empirical studies which attempted to evaluate social policy implementation in their own research context. Hence, to assess the practice in Ghana, the use of a qualitative method cannot be overemphasized.

3.2 Research Design

The study used a case study design which is qualitative in nature and allows for both descriptive and exploratory processes. A descriptive study is undertaken to “understand the characteristics of

a group in a situation of interest. It aids in thinking systematically about aspects of a given situation and offer ideas for further research or help make certain simple decisions” (Sekaran, 2003). This study goes beyond describing the variables to explore the policy adoption and implementation process within its context, using a variety of data sources to answer the “how and why” questions, thereby understanding the relationships among factors of interest (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses, which allows for multiple facets of the policy implementation process to be revealed and understood. The study explored the causal relationship between electoral politics and social policy adoption and implementation.

The choice of this research design is because it is the most appropriate approach to answer the research objectives. A qualitative research method involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. This has been a consideration in the proposition to interview individuals for their perception of the conditions and social values of the time. Qualitative method is best suited for this research because it looks greatly into peoples own perceptions and assessments about the free SHS program. Qualitative research provides a stronger consideration to the feelings, experiences, beliefs and attitudes that individuals have concerning this policy.

3.3 Sources of Data

As in many other social science researches, the data for the study was sourced from primary and secondary sources. The primary data comprise in-depth interviews collected from selected individuals and officials involved in policy making and implementation process of the free SHS

policy in Ghana. Secondary data on the other hand was obtained from peer-reviewed journals articles, archive material covering policy documents, evaluation reports on the free SHS policy, Cabinet papers and committee reports, statements by Ministers, minutes of meetings, published interviews and Party Political Manifestos.

3.4 Study Population

Population is the entire aggregation of cases that meet a designated set of criteria (Polit & Hungler, 1999). It includes all people or items with the characteristics that the researcher wishes to study. Target population is the population with which the researcher would like to generalize his or her results.

However, for the purpose of this research, target population comprises of all public second cycle schools in the Greater Accra metropolis, and all institutions and agencies such as officials from the Ghana Education Service; Ministry of Education; Heads of Second Cycle schools; National Association of Teachers (GNAT); National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT); among others playing a role in the implementation of the free SHS policy in Ghana.

3.5 Sampling

The research used a purposive sample in that the potential respondents were known in advance, and their selection was based on the fact that the groups had the relevant knowledge and experience to contribute to the study (Morra & Rist, 2009). In a qualitative study, the sample size is relatively small as the purpose of the study is to make an in-depth analysis of the topic and not to study a representative sample of the population.

On a whole, seventeen (17) interviews were conducted with different key informants from different institutions. The institutions were sampled based on their direct role in the implementation of the free SHS policy. The research conducted the two interviews in each of the three schools located in the greater Accra Region of Ghana, the defining characteristic for the schools sampled include Only girls school with a day and boarding facility, only boys school with a day and boarding facility, and a mixed school; hence making a total of three (3) schools. The schools are at the receiving end of the policy and they see to the day to day operation of the policy, hence their significance to the study.

The implementing agencies or institutions sampled included, the secretariat for free SHS at the Ministry of Education (Free SHS secretariat one interview), Ghana Education Service (Greater Accra regional Office, two interviews), and Association of heads of Public Schools (two interviews), New Patriotic Party (two interviews), Conference of Heads of Private Secondary Schools (CHOPSS) (two interview), and the Computer School Selection and Placement Secretariat (CSSPS) (two interview). These institutions/ agencies were sampled due to their direct involvement in the policy, the ministry of education plays oversight role, and the GES is the main implementing agency for the policy, because it oversees the operationalization of government educational policies across all levels of educational cycle in the country. Other institutions play complementary roles at various phases of the policy.

Table 3: A Summary of Respondents Interviewed

Institution	Designation of Respondents	Number
Free SHS Secretariat	Assistant Director	1
Accra Girls SHS	Assistant Head 1	2
	Assistant Head 2	
Presbyterian Boys SHS, Legon	School Head	1
West African SHS	School Head	2
	Assistant Head	
Ministry of Education	Administrative Officer	2
	Assistant Director	
New Patriotic Party	Free SHS Committee Member	1
Conference of Heads of Private Secondary Schools (CHOPSS)	Assistant Head	2
	School Head	
Association of Heads of Public Schools	School Head	4
	Assistant Head	
	Assistant Head	
	School Head	
Computer School Selection and Placement Secretariat (CSSPS)	MIS Officer	2
	Administrator	
Total Respondents		17

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This refers to the tool used for primary data collection. For the purpose of the study, a semi structured interview guide was used to obtain information from the key respondents. Based on

the review of literature and the resulting research questions, interview questions were planned and worded to ensure that there was no ambiguity, and were clearly laid out (Babbie & Mouton, 2007). A semi-structure interview guide was appropriate because it allows respondents to better express their opinion and experiences on the free SHS program in Ghana. The interview guide was designed to reflect the research objectives and research questions, the interview questions were derived from the main research questions and sub questions were generated to probe for more detailed responses.

The strength of the structured interview guide is that it increases the comparability of responses and ensures responses to all questions for every interviewee. It also enables an easy organization of data for analysis. However, the weakness of the structured interview guide is that it allows much flexibility, and some responses might not be relevant to the researcher.

3.7 Data Gathering Procedures

The process of data collection was done systematically. The researcher obtained an introductory letter and ethical clearance from the Department which was used to formally seek the consent of the key respondent of the study. After clearance was sought from the target institutions, the researcher further explained the purpose of the study and the procedure for which data will be collected. The interview was conducted in person. The interview was manually recorded, in the form of notes, which the researcher used in the analysis. Permission was sought from the respondents to record the conversations to allow for accurate transcribing. The respondents were made to understand that the interview session would last for at least 45 - 60 minutes.

Given that this study fell within the qualitative approach, the question of validity became important. The use of multiple sources of information to assess a particular area thus was important, and increased the validity of the findings. All of the data were treated with due care.

3.8 Data Analysis

There are different approaches to the analysis of qualitative data, but qualitative data is mostly analyzed as narratives. Qualitative analyses all seek to make sense of the data produced through categorizations and connections which are in line with the set objectives and research questions. Data obtained from the interview were all transcribed into text, coded and categorized into themes which are central to the objectives (see Miles & Huberman, 1994), and results were explained using secondary data. Cope (2010) and Miles and Huberman (1994) suggests that coding as a way to make sense of and reduce large quantities of qualitative data into meaningful clusters. Through the arrangement of text by topic and by breaking text down into smaller “packages” coding allows the researcher to make sense of the data and begin to pay special attention to its content (Cope, 2010). Furthermore, coding allows for the organization of data in order to be able to address specific research questions by grouping, finding, and pulling out different codes (Cope, 2010). This allowed for the ideas within the textual documents studied to be separated and organized in order to answer the specific research questions of this study.

Based on Miles and Huberman (1994), a thematic content analysis was used to analyse primary and secondary data. Content analysis is described as a ‘systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding’ (Stemler, 2001). Krippendorff (2018) argues that content analysis is “a research technique for making reliable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful material) to the context of

their use” (p.29). The goal of content analysis is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study. Qualitative content analysis may be seen as a research method involved with the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or pattern.

However, one challenge of content analysis is that it fails to develop a complete understanding of the context, hence the use of process tracing to ensure the reliability and validity of the study. Process tracing is defined as the systematic examination of diagnostic evidence selected and analysed in light of research questions and hypotheses posed by the investigator. Process tracing contributes decisively both to describing political and social phenomena and to evaluating causal claims (Collier, 2011). Secondary data also serve as good materials for comparing some ideas from the field that are similar to the theoretical approaches or empirical findings.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

To demonstrate ethical responsibility, this research was conducted within the norms of ethical research in both literature and empirical study. Bless and Higson-Smith (2000) argue that the general aspect of the ethical rights of a participant is the right to privacy, voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality. Academia requires that when the participants are engaged, that this be done in an ethical, professional and acceptable matter. The section below discusses the measures undertaken to ensure that co-operation was secured in an ethical and acceptable manner.

3.9.1 Permission to conduct study

The data gathering instrument was submitted for approval prior to data collection. Permission was also obtained from the School and the various institutions sampled before the study was conducted.

3.9.2 Right to full disclosure

The institutions and respondents who participated in the study were fully informed about the purpose of the study by means of letters and word of mouth. The purpose and procedure of the study was clearly explained to all the respondents and all enquiries were duly clarified.

3.9.3 Informed Consent and voluntary participation

Participants were made to give their informed consent before data was collected. Participation was voluntary; hence participants were free to withdraw from the study if they wish not to participate any further.

3.9.4 Anonymity and confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality was ensured as personal details of participants were not indicated on the data collection instrument. Only the researcher handled the interview sessions and all information obtained were accessible only to the researcher.

CHAPTER FOUR

ELECTORAL POLITICS AND FREE SHS EDUCATION POLICY

4.0 Introduction

Based on the research methodology discussed in the preceding, key findings emerging from the analysis of qualitative data obtained from interview responses are presented in this chapter. The findings which emerged from the triangulation of field data with secondary data gathered from relevant peer reviewed journal articles are also discussed. This particular chapter therefore presents findings on how electoral politics influences the adoption and implementation of the Free Senior High School (SHS) Education Policy in Ghana.

4.1 History and Legal basis of Ghana's Free SHS Policy

This study found that the various public policies in Ghana have over the years been informed by the ideologies of respective political regimes. In other words, different political regimes adopt public policies based on their ideologies. However, the underlying principle of all the regimes are laid out in the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. The supreme law of Ghana mandates political leaders to adopt particular policies and programmes that seek to improve the wellbeing of all citizens. The 1992 Constitution contains extensive provisions aimed at protecting and promoting basic human rights and freedom in the development process. A number of articles enshrined in the Constitution emphasise inclusion and equality of citizen in various spheres of life such as health, education and socioeconomic status (see GOG, 1992). The President of Ghana, His Excellency Nana Akuffo Addo rehashing this in respect to education at a rally, he states:

“I am coming to truly implement the Free SHS policy...I will not give a promise to Ghanaians for which I know I cannot keep. Whatever I have said I will do, I will surely do it so Ghanaians can move on” (President Nana Akuffo Addo, a Speech during a political Rally Kumasi).

With reference to education policies, Article 25(1) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana accords all citizens “the right to equal educational opportunities, and facilities”. This provision covers both formal and information education from basic, secondary and at the tertiary levels. These constitutional provisions have played key roles in inspiring several developmental programmes aimed at reducing vulnerability and improving the educational system in Ghana.

“The free SHS was a constitutional requirement enshrined in the 1992 constitution under directive principles of state policies. It was not the first time education was made free in Ghana since there has been such scheme in Ghana and part of Ghana was still enjoying free SHS” (Public Relations Officer, Ghana Education Service – Greater Accra Region).

Particularly, Article 25(1) (b) states that:

“Secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular, by the progressive introduction of free education” (GOG, 1992).

It was however established that Ghana once had a Free SHS education policy. Data gathered suggests that under the colonial rule, several Ghana did not have access to formal education. Consequently, Ghana attained independence from British colonial rule in March 1957 under the leadership of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and his Convention Peoples Party (CPP). The CPP adopted far-left socialist politics and eventually declared a one party state. Based on the socialist

ideology of the CPP government, Nkrumah in 1961 sought to promote enrolment into formal education at both basic, secondary and tertiary levels by abolishing school fees.

Successive governments also introduced programmes and policies to deepen such earlier efforts of enhance equitable access to education by citizens from all parts of Ghana and particularly those from the Northern Region continue to benefit from these policies. However, sustaining these policies through tax funds has been the main challenge of successive government. This study concur with Asare-Bediako (2014) that imposition of taxes was the main source of funding these programmes. Hence, the opposition by citizens and other political parties in opposition (Pierson, 2001). The New Patriotic Party (NPP) in 2017 reinvented the Free SHS education policy as their flagship political policy.

4.2 Electoral Politics, democracy and the current Free SHS Education Policy

Whist some scholars have characterised Ghana's political environment as one of competitive clientelism in which two dormant parties compete in the use of elections as a mechanism for the distribution of patronage and state resources to reward followers (Hirvi & Whitefield, 2015; Abdulai & Hulme , 2014), this study reveals that Ghana' high democratic governance is informed by its multi-party state. This largely influenced the current Free SHS education policy. The nature of Ghana's democracy allows for multi-party systems, and citizens have the constitutional right to elect their government representatives. This implies that the voice of the people in some way influence the type of policies made by political parties. Again, the competitive nature of Ghana's elections means that political parties have to adopt and implement policies that can win them power. Equally the short electoral cycle (four years) also heightens the vulnerability of ruling governments because they need to implement policies that are short

term and have potential of being used as bargaining chips for renewal of mandate. Making the introduction of the Free SHS policy to be driven by this logic and not necessarily public demand or opinion.

“The citizen set the agenda and the politicians factor that into their manifesto. The citizens drive the political parties to translate their voice into social policy” (Circuit Supervisor, Ghana Education Service).

Given the implications that education bears upon the life conditions of ordinary citizens, political parties in their quest to win votes often articulate the voices of the citizens to drive their policy agenda. Public opinion necessarily reflects diversity of opinion among a group of people, and ensures democratic communications. A sound and effective public opinion can even shake the structures of political regimes. Hence, the strength of democratic system lies in respecting the mind power of the people. There should be free and fair interaction of thoughts for solving the collective problems. Public opinion acts as the guide to the government in respect of policy formation. Government functions in general on the basis of mandate received in elections and tries to win over the masses to fulfil the promises made during elections.

“To a large extent people are poor, therefore if they hear of free things they jump to it. So yes over the years in our democracy, the needs for people has translated into government bringing out policies to solve some of these problems” (Head of Administration, Accra Girls SHS).

Ghana as a democratic state has over the years sought to abide by the principles of democratic governance that advocates for attainment of socio-economic rights for all. Democracy ensures that every citizen has the equal right to influence the governance process and a vibrant political participation ensures that public officials are held accountable to the electorate. From this study, responsiveness is a strong indicator of democracy, in the sense that governments adopt policies

that are signaled as preferred by the citizens (see also Powell, 2005). However, to trace the nature of responsiveness, it is important to identify the extent to which government has captured the various interest of citizens and has articulated them into possible policy options offered by different political parties. Also, responsiveness was highlighted as the degree to which election mandates and commitments are converted into actual public policies. This position aligns with prior studies such as Diamond and Morlino (2004).

4.3 Progressive/Targeted verses a Universal Free SHS Program

Politisation of the Free SHS comes in as a result of different political agenda and ideologies of the different political parties towards increasing the pace of development. Various arguments suggest that the political environment has always been about politically motivated interest rather than planned policy strategies. As a result, Abdulai and Hickey (2016) view that government social spending has not necessarily benefited the poor. This has resulted in many citizens relying on patron-client relationships to gain access to basic social services and amenities, which on the long run results in the slow pace of development and increases the inequality situation in Ghana (Oduro, 2014; Abdulai & Hickey, 2015). For instance, the issue of Free SHS dominated electoral campaigns and political discussions in 2012. Party Manifestos of the two bigger political parties in Ghana captured the intentions of making secondary education free.

“The political divide and arguments were centered on timing, funding mechanism, availability and adequacy of resource and logistics. Therefore it is a fact that Politics has influenced the adoption and implementation of the free SHS policy. In the sense, the two political parties have it as part of their political agenda. The difference was the urgency and relevance placed on it” (Principal Officer, Free SHS Secretariat – Ghana Education Service).

The selection of social policy problems and issues depends not on social needs but rather on whether they fit with the electoral agenda of political elites. The content of a policy or programme is influenced by the social, political and economic interest and change that is demanded. Thus, the extent to which those whose interests matter are threatened by such policy and are bound to oppose it and those who stand to gain are bound to press for such policy (Bell & Stevenson, 2015). Hence, several political parties prioritized the Free SHS policy as it was identified as a popular demand by citizens. However, their implementation approach differed. Whilst the NPP government were of the view that the Free SHS could be implemented in a universal approach, the NDC including the other smaller parties such as the CPP government stood for a progressive and target roll out.

4.3.1 Progressive/Targeted Free SHS Programme

This study reveals that the NDC government, prior to their winning of the 2012 elections promised Ghanaians an increased subsidies to public secondary schools. This was aimed at reducing the financial burdens on parents and infrastructure in a progressive and targeted approach. Therefore, several infrastructural projects were undertaken. They built 200 new senior secondary schools with special focus on communities or districts with no such facility (NDC, 2012). Hence, the focus of the then ruling NDC government was to build the infrastructure needed to improve the quality of education and to support the implementation of Free SHS education following a progressive road map.

“The NDC, also had Free SHS in their manifesto but intended to roll out its implementation gradually and was going to be possible in the year 2020”
(Respondent, Free SHS Secretariat – Ghana Education Service).

The Mahama administration in 2014 started a progressive introduction of Free SHS education after consultations with stakeholders. This brand of Free SHS education was to start primarily with only day students. At his State of the Nation Address in 2014, Former President John Mahama announced that a road map would be presented to Cabinet for approval of the programme and subsequent implementation.

“Under the guidance of this proposed road map, we can anticipate that fees for day students will be abolished at an estimated cost of GH¢71 Million in the 2015/2016 academic year. Other reliefs in respect of the boarding students would be announced when the road map is published” (Former President Mahama, SONA 2014).

After improving infrastructure and initial enrolment of the day students, what followed was a national consensus on Free SHS education for all qualified students. The 2016 budget statement ushered in the start of the progressively Free SHS education with Government providing funding for the first term of 2015/16 academic year for 320,488 day students in public senior high schools (Ghanaweb, 2017). The progressive Free SHS education absorbed examination, entertainment, library, SRC, sports, culture, science development, science and mathematics quiz, ICT and curricular fees.

President Mahama subsequently proposed an extension to the progressive Free SHS programme to cover about 500,000 extra day students. Another 120,000 boarding students having been earmarked for the programme in a bid to increase the total number of students in senior high schools also benefited from the progressive Free SHS. According to the Ministry of Education, this interventions almost doubled SHS enrollment from 393,995 in 2007/08 to 787,861 in 2015/16 academic year (MoE, 2016). The Ministry however noted that, on average, over 140,000 students are either not placed by the Computer School Selection and Placement

Secretariat (CSSPS) or are placed but do not enroll largely due to financial constraint each year. Out of the number placed by CSSPS yearly, over 25% do not enroll.

“A study by the Ghana Education Service found that every year, there are over 10,000 students that passed the BECE examination but with good grades and cannot access secondary education as a result of lack of funds and other factors that hinder access to secondary education” (Public Relations Officer, Ghana Education Service – Greater Accra Region).

Although the CPP in their manifesto had a lay down master plan to also roll out a progressive free SHS for Ghanaians when given the mandate, this never saw day light. In the same vain, the PPP in their manifesto in the 2016 elections equally had same as a top of their priorities. But the truth remains that these smaller parties did not have the political vocals to get their message across to the populace. This finding buttress the views of Zacher (2000), that the necessary condition of welfare are often pushed by the masses, the right to vote and the time rhythm inherent in a democracy impact on social policy in the sense that it shapes and fuels the expansion of social policy and increases vertical solidarity.

4.3.2 Universal Free SHS Programme

Prior to the 2016 elections, the NPP argued that the road map as suggested by the NDC government was rather slow and incapable of achieving the free secondary educations for all Ghanaians attending public SHS. The NDC therefore faced heavy criticism for failing to deliver on its promises. The media and civil society organizations highlighted their achievements so far and criticized it based on its accessibility and usability (GNECC, 2016). Based on the dissatisfaction on majority of the populace and the vigorous campaign of the NPP, the elections went in favour of the NPP and in September of 2017, the Free SHS policy was launched.

A key informant informed:

“The Free SHS is a political tool. In 2008, the CPP under the leadership of Paa Kwesi Nduom, campaigned on the promise of Free SHS education. However, it did not gain much credence, probably due to the weakness of the political party. It was also taken over by the NPP in 2012, and much resounded in the 2016 elections. However the NPP thought and argued that the Free SHS can be implemented faster (and ‘NOW’) with the oil revenue which every Ghanaian should benefit from. In 2016 Free SHS policy became a viable and winning ticket that made Ghanaians give them the nod to power, hence the rapid implementation to gain the confidence and trust of the electorate” (Official, Free SHS Secretariat – Ghana Education Service).

In the NPP manifesto, Nana Akufo-Addo promised the implementation of Free Universal SHS Education by making secondary education free for every Ghanaian child – in line with the Constitution. Article 25(1)b of the 1992 Constitution states that, Secondary Education in its different forms, including technical and vocational education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular, by the progressive introduction of free education. That promise of free SHS was to encompass free tuition, admission, textbook, library, science center, computer, examination, utilities, boarding, and meals. The 2016 NPP manifesto, greatly emphasized the pace of implementation of the Free SHS policy which should be on a universal scale rather than the progressive and targeted approached as adopted by the NDC government. Particularly the adoption and implementation of the Free SHS social policy, was considered a political tool to win votes, although it was a constitutional right and was in line with the national development agenda.

4.4 Politics and the Implementation of the Universal Free SHS

The lenses through which government decision-makers filter information depends on the administrative and bureaucratic processes in which critical decisions are shaped and taken, and how policies are institutionalized. From this study, it is found that the time of implementing the Free SHS was critical to the sustainability of political tenure of the NPP government. Hence, the party immediately commenced the introduction of the Free SHS policy even though there was no proper evaluation.

“They made their intentions clear about the Free SHS policy and I think people voted for them for this reason. Because they don’t want to fail the people they hence have to implement policy right away because they are very much aware they will be going into the next election” (Public Relations Officer, Ghana Education Service – Greater Accra Region).

The effects of timing and pace on the policy are directly linked with the scope of implementation and its potential outcomes. In cases where policy roll out is too fast stakeholders may not be able or willing to implement. On the other hand, where the rollout is too slow, the process may lose momentum or drain the system’s resources. Therefore, it can be argued that the pace of implementation is linked to the nature of the change the policy aims for.

In a comprehensive reform, incremental changes is needed before the systemic changes can be effective. The effect of timing on implementation thus depends on the degree of acceptability of the policy, and on the system’s capacity to implement. Taking into account the time dimension in implementation requires policy actors to adopt a long-term perspective on policy, while keeping up the dynamic of the process in the short-term.

4.5 Complexities in the adopting Ghana's Free SHS Education Policy

In 2017, the NPP under the leadership of Nana Akufo-Addo assume the mantle of governance and by his first State of the Nation Address, it became clear his vision for Free SHS Education was going to be realized at the start of the 2017/2018 academic year. The importance of electoral politics in social policy adoption by political parties can be explained based on the political system run under the fourth republican constitution. Ghana has operated an executive presidency of four years period limited by a maximum of two terms. Due to the concentration of power in the Presidency, political pursuit of such office is often characterized by the winner takes it all competitions. Hence, compelling political parties to focus on vote seeking activities to sustain their tenure. Secondly education is very crucial for developing economies which makes it the more reason why governments place emphasis on education and make educational campaign electoral machinery. Thirdly, the executive branch of government is responsible for the functioning of public service including educational service provision and management. However, this study identify that the current Free SHS policy face several complexities as a result of the manner with which it is being implemented.

Members of the executive are drawn from the largest political party in parliament, which by virtue of its majority has won the electoral mandate to govern. Thus, the government produces policies and due to its numerical advantage in parliament is able to dominate proceedings. This governance constellation gives the executive enormous power in determining general state policies and in particular what policy to pursue in the sphere of education as this sector touches a great mass of the Ghanaian population.

The political culture of Ghana has an impact on the way implementation unfolds. Some respondents from the Ministry of Education expressed their frustration at the way partisan politics has affected the Free SHS policy. It is seen as a tool to enhance legitimacy and re-election rather than as a tool to enhance development of comprehensive and coherent approaches to educational problem. The main argument arising out of the empirical analysis of both expert interviews and documentary material show how the adoption of free SHS track a common outcome of interest overtime. It also synthesizes the causal mechanism into a single analytical structure, that in democratic regimes, political parties have a higher propensity to influence policy changes made to education system through vote seeking mechanism.

4.6 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, the influence of electoral politics on the adoption of the Free SHS education policy was examined. This policy was found to have a history dating back to Nkrumah's administration in 1961. Whilst it was established that Ghana's democratic governance status and multi-party system gave political parties the legitimacy to implement a Free SHS policy towards realizing provisions of the 1992 constitution and to improve the welfare and socio-economic opportunities of the people of Ghana, political parties had their own interests. Thus, political parties saw the Free SHS educational policy as a bargaining chips for renewing and sustaining their mandate with the people of Ghana. However, various political parties offer different implantation approaches – universal and progressive/targeted.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FREE SHS IN GHANA

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the second research question which sought to address the emerging challenges in the implementation of the Free SHS education policy in Ghana.

5.1 Assessment of Implementation Process of the Free SHS policy

Policy implementation involves the process of interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieve them. It can be described as the connection between the expression of governmental intention and actual result. According to Dunn (2004), implementation is when an adopted policy is carried out by administrative units that mobilize financial and human resources to comply with the policy.

Based on the responses gathered, this study identifies that the processes of Ghana's Free SHS policy implementation was to characterized a number of key elements. First, there is the need for clearly specified tasks and objectives that accurately reflect the intent of policy. Secondly, there is also a management plan that allocates tasks and performance standards to subunits. Thirdly, there should be an objective means of measuring sub-unit performance. Finally, there should be a system of management controls and social sanctions sufficient to hold subordinates accountable for their performance.

However, the processes of implementing the Free SHS policy was rather characterized by high political influences. This was because those with interest in the Free SHS policy engage in

negotiations over the goals of the policy and conflict over the allocation of resources. This position agrees with Bell and Stevenson (2015). Thus, according to Bell and Stevenson (2015, p. 148), the socio-political environment of the nation shapes the context within which policy is framed and enacted because they define the issues that can arise and the policy solutions offered. They shape and constrain actors' strategies as well as the implementation plan.

5.2 Challenges of implementing Ghana's Free SHS policy

Several challenges were found to be bedevilling Ghana's Free SHS policy implementing process. Among the copious challenges, critical one's that require the attention of policymakers and government are discussed below. The inputs necessary for policy implementation consist mainly of the politics, funding, technology and knowledge available to the actors, clear policy and strategic guide, conducive environment for stakeholder consultation as well as their capacity to use them.

5.2.1 Political influences

The most critical challenge with the Free SHS policy is the politicization of its implantation. It was revealed in this study that the Free SHS policy since its inception has been politically motivation and a means for the current NPP government to get into power. Hence, a blind eye has been paid to the elements and the traditional processes of public and social policy implementation. Although policy implementation cuts across the functional and sector divisions of many institutions which further complicates institutional placement of policy, the current government paid little attention to broader consultation and prior analysis of the policy.

Where institutional placement of policies is the case, ministries and departments share and compete for responsibilities and authority on the implementation, with the result of this being duplication of effort, bureaucratic infighting, insufficient technical expertise in any single agency.

“The Free SHS policy so named did not go through the ideal policy cycle. It was pushed and implemented in a rush, in order to gain the confidence of the people. The process of consultation is not well represented and is often politically influenced”
(School Head, West African SHS).

Clear directives from the policymakers and active involvement of senior management (political leadership) as well as stakeholders through planning, are key to successful implementation of the free SHS policy (see also Kielstra, 2010). Policy implementation issues may not just arise within or among the implementing agencies, but also from “political masters” of those agencies (political executives and legislators) where politicians may intervene in agency decision making for political reason either before the agency make decision or by overturning decisions by the agency. Policy and programmatic implementation arrangement that suffer from political interference pose both the challenge of content and goal (Weaver, 2010). For example, comparing the free SHS to the free basic education policy, some respondents had major concerns.

“...education is the bed rock of every nation and development for that matter must be human centered. If you want to embark on any development that will have a far reaching outcome, target that welfare of the people. So, since that basic level is already free, the next level is ideally the SHS. Or, it could also be political move to target students who will turn 18 during the next election for their loyalty to the government that made it possible for them to school for free” (Asst. School Head, Accra Girls SHS)

The need to reap political capital from populist policy is also shown by the government disregard for basic needs of society such as failure to address that challenges confronting the basic education in Ghana to pursuing the free SHS policy. Although majority of Ghanaians find the free SHS appealing and a way to take away the financial burden, they also think that the attention should be focused on the basic level where a lot of challenges exist to make it really free before tackling the SHS level. Indeed, a cursory look at the basic level which is purported to be free shows that there are serious challenges at the level with different kind of support lacking. There still may be basic schools held under trees and several others not having desks and text books among others. Therefore, the argument is that the basic school rather needs support to produce students that the free SHS could absorb on the basis of merit and need towards addressing inequalities. Yet, the free SHS has been the driving point of politicians for reasons of political convenience. Various analysts are of the opinion that the challenges facing basic education in Ghana both private and public suggests that there is more that needs to be done.

5.2.2 Sustainable Funding and Infrastructural Challenges

The study also reveals that financial constraint and infrastructural challenges thwarts effort of implementing the Free SHS policy in Ghana. Inadequate infrastructure and supply of logistics (delay in payment of school grants to both suppliers and heads of schools) has been a major challenge in the implementation of the free SHS policy in Ghana. Most of the respondents affirmed that there is need for equipping the schools with adequate amenities such as class room buildings and dormitories, class room furniture, computer and other accessories as well as means of transport to ease effort in policy implementation.

As cited by a School Head:

“Since the free SHS is a policy that includes everything such as free books, school uniforms, cloth etc, these things are not adequate enough therefore it becomes a big challenge since the school is not required to sell anything extra to the students. Classrooms and boarding facilities to accommodate large student’s intake are the most pressing Infrastructural challenges for now” (Asst. School Head, Accra Girls SHS).

The amount, quality and distribution of these resources allocated to implementation determine to a great extent whether and how a policy is implemented (Wurzberg, 2010; OECD, 2010). The inputs necessary for Free SHS policy implementation consist mainly of the funding, infrastructure and technology available to the actors, as well as their capacity to use them. A recurring issue with resources is not only about whether they are available for implementation, or in sufficient quantities, but how they are used, and what for (OECD, 2015). Infrastructural constraint has threatened the success of the Free SHS policy and affected the quality of teaching, learning and the productivity of teachers. Conversely, improving infrastructure services enhances welfare and fosters economic growth.

Other constraint resources include both human and material such as adequate number of staff who are well equipped to carry out the implementation, relevant and adequate information on implementation process, and the authority to ensure that policies are carried out as they are intended. Facilities such as land, equipment, buildings, and funding among others are also needed for the successful implementation of the Free SHS policy. Without sufficient resources it means that laws will not be enforced, services will not be provided and reasonable regulations will not be developed. The introduction of the Free SHS policy in 2017 resulted in an increase in enrolment by 33.2% (Ministry of Finance, 2018). This has a great implication on the infrastructural and human resource capacity to absorb the overflow. The infrastructural

challenges as evident in the study has resulted in students travelling long distances to school, overcrowding in classroom and dormitory has resulted in outbreak of diseases, and the overrated teacher/student ratios has led to poor supervision of students. According to Hewlett Foundation (2008), all these have a negative implication on the quality education.

The response from a School Administrator:

“The infrastructural challenges has resulted in students travelling long distance as day students because the boarding facilities are not available, overcrowding of boarding facilities which leads to health issues, as a result of overcrowding students are not been adequately supervised hence they engage in social vices e.t.c” (School Administrator, Presbyterian Boys SHS, Legon).

Ankomah et al. (2005) explained that the quality of education is much higher and improves students’ achievement when the student-teacher ratio is lower in class. This is due to the fact that fewer students per teacher in a class improves the quality of interaction and for that matter raises accomplishment.

5.2.3 Limited stakeholder involvement

The respondents were also asked to assess the level of stakeholder involvement in the policy formulation process. Some respondents indicated that the stakeholders were involved through seminars and in some cases their views were sought prior to the workshop. Other respondents indicated that the stakeholders were not involved at all whilst some respondents were not sure of the stakeholders’ participation in the formulation of policies.

There is an institutional link between policy adoption and implementation. The institutional framework determines the nature of policy implementation and the relationships between the key

actors and structures involved. The institutionalization of the Free SHS policy is aimed at embedding the belief, norm, social role, particular value or mode of behaviour within an organization, social system, or society as a whole. It involves the creation or organisation of governmental institutions or particular bodies responsible for overseeing or implementing policy.

“We all know that every policy passes through certain stages. One, it ought to be formulated. Two, there must be sensitization. Three, implementation ... four, there must be evaluation. But this is just on paper. Yes, the action plan may be there as well as the objectives. But as to there being a sensitization workshop and all that follows, no, nothing like that” (School Head, CHOPSS).

Policy implementation cuts across the functional and sector divisions of various Ministries, Departments and Agencies which further complicates institutional placement of policy if not managed properly. Where institutional placement of policies is the case, ministries and departments share and compete for responsibilities and authority on the implementation, with the result of this being duplication of effort, bureaucratic infighting, insufficient technical expertise in any single agency, and overburdening of clients trying to access services. Although partnering with several agencies (unnecessarily) may result in wastage of scarce resources and inhibit change, create confusion, lead to policies working at cross-purposes and, at the end, result in important functions being overlooked (Workman et al., 2010), meaningful consultation is key to the survival and success of the Free SHS policy. Where there is organizational fragmentation, it may hinder the coordination that is necessary to successfully implement a complex policy such as the Free SHS – especially one that requires the cooperation of many people.

“The process of consultation is not well represented and often politically influenced. I say this because, coordination and communication across board was only just

about 35% which reflects the factor that so much more needs to be done” (School Head, West African SHS).

Lack of involvement in policy development is a serious challenge to policy implementation. Roseveare (2008) notes that designing good policies is not enough and that countries need to go beyond good policy designing to successful implementation. To effect successful implementation, policymakers need to build genuine consensus among all stakeholders so that they all work towards a common purpose as opposed to heading in different direction. To do this, all stakeholders have to be brought on board. Making change happens and pursuit of common purpose can cause some upheaval and therefore need for all to get convinced that the efforts pay off will be greater.

5.2.4 Lack of Knowledge and Clear Policy Guide for Free SHS

Challenges of policy implementation at times arise due to inability to look at the outcomes and analysis of strength and weaknesses of different system. Such ability points out at what works and what policies can actually deliver results. It also interrogates whether policies are consistent with the country’s objectives and priorities taking into account the institutional settings and arrangements, systems internal coherence while checking that policies are not pulling in opposite direction and contradicting each other (Roseveare, 2008). Peculiar to the Free SHS education policy, it was found that there is no clear policy framework guiding the implementation process.

“There are currently no clear policy documents or guidelines available for the general public and particularly, stakeholders of the education industry” (School Head, Presbyterian Boys SHS, Legon).

Although respondents with high political loyalty for the incumbent NPP government suggested that the Free SHS policy had a clear objective which is captured in the action plan, other respondents opposed to this with reference to the “back and forth” nature of the implementation process. However, the absence of policy document has raised issues on the sustainability of the policy. The clarity of the policy goals and their order of priority in the policy statutes impact the operational stage in the implementing agencies. Even further, different actors may have different interpretations of the policy goals, whether desirable or not, there is a possibility that actors may interpret and implement a policy differently if the policy procedures and guidelines are absent.

Policy documents are usually prepared by bureaucrats with little or no input from the implementer and other stakeholders who will be impacted either negatively or positively by the policy. At times, policy instruments are prepared and stakeholders asked to provide comments on the draft regulation or policy document. This makes it difficult for the stakeholders to own both the policy and the implementation process (Spratt, 2009). Communication is an essential ingredient for effective implementation of social policy. The language of a policy may not necessarily be understood by the actors who are expected to implement it (Hill, 2006). However, understanding the mechanisms through which actors learn and process information is crucial to manage knowledge for effective implementation (Fuster & Köster, 2016).

Very few structures are in place to facilitate vertical communication between administrative layers and to encourage bottom-up feedback. Similarly, the lack of mechanisms to facilitate communication within layers means there is limited mobilisation of opinions around particular issues with a view to influencing change. Both vertical and horizontal communication structures have an important impact on policy implementation and sustainability. Williams and Onibon (2009) admitted that social policy implementation is a function of government bureaucracy. The

effectiveness of policy implementation is largely determined by the efficiency and competence of governmental implementing agencies.

5.2.5 The ‘Top-Down’ Implementation Approach

Another institutional challenge of implementing the Free SHS policy has to do with the centralized administration of the policy which leads to several delays and high administrative cost in achieving desired outputs and outcomes. In a centralised (top-down) policy environment, key staffs from Ministry of education play a major role in determining priorities and the direction and pace of change. ‘Top-Down’ versus ‘Bottom-Up’ perspectives are at the heart of on public policy implementation discourse. Gaps in implementation can occur when policy is imposed from the centre with no thought given to how it might be perceived or received at the local level. Such disconnection between policy declarations and policy action has a tremendous impact downstream and potentially leads to demotivation and disengagement.

With the Free SHS, this disconnection occurred for several reasons. For instance, government declarations about priority objectives was largely linked to political considerations and strategic positioning in regard to accessing oil and international funds than to a determined resolve to support the Free SHS policy implementation. As a result, actors and bureaucrats at the lower ranks of the system ladder found themselves under pressure to forcefully put the policy into practice with limited resources and infrastructure. However, it is not a case of bottom-up approach to policy and action being preferred to top- down but that balance between the two is necessary.

Moreover, the way implementation unfolds depends greatly on whether change occurs as a top-down process or as a bottom-up process that originates in the schools. Emerging even within

traditional centralised systems are alternative centres and decentralising structures, such as those constituted by social partnerships, policy networks and corporate management. There is also a deeper understanding of the fact that some policies are better implemented in a top-down manner, while others are more likely to have staying power if they are incubated within the school environment itself. Furthermore, there is a deeper appreciation of the fact that school-based innovation is likely to be more effective when embedded in, and consistent with, a national framework.

A principal officer from a school explained:

“Because it is centralized it has made it very difficult for things to be done in a quick manner. Since the free SHS is a policy that includes everything such as free books, school uniforms, cloth etc, these things are not adequate enough therefore it becomes a big challenge since the school is not required to sell anything extra to the students. The centralization of these distributions makes the policy implementation a challenge” (Asst. School Head, Accra Girls SHS).

This evident that a top-down policymaking style clearly prevails in the case of the Free SHS policy in Ghana. The prevailing view is that the central state apparatus is responsible for decision making and for taking initiatives. Thus, despite increasing reference to decentralisation, power is still concentrated at the centre, whereas elements of discretion are distributed to intermediary layers at the regional and municipal levels, the logic followed is de-concentration rather than decentralisation. In other words, sub-units of government find themselves having more responsibilities (in terms of implementing rules) but not necessarily more power (in making rules). Schools are not seen as sites of policy development but as policy implementers, as a result, there is a strong perception that the state (or its representatives at the intermediary level) should solve all problems, including petty ones.

5.3 Towards Quality SHS Education: Addressing the Challenges

The study found that these challenges can affect the quality of SHS education, because whatever affects the teaching and learning experience, and performance of students can ultimately affect the quality of education. The challenges over the implementation of the Free SHS policy in Ghana has resulted in heated political debate as education has become a key electoral issue over which the NPP and NDC have taken their stand (Abdulai & Hickey, 2016). The implementation of the policy is crucial for the country to advance its efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and maintaining the quality of education.

The World Declaration on Education echoed the significance of quality education to make it universally accessible and relevant. According to this declaration, access to quality education is a right to every child and that quality is a significant factor that determines enrolment, retention and achievement. The quality education include the following traits, “the learners (healthy, motivated students), processes (competent teachers using active pedagogies), content (relevant curricula) and systems (good governance and equitable resource allocation)” (UNESCO, 2005). Thus, the quality of education is expressed in terms of “inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes”. The inputs have to deal with the adequacy of infrastructure, quantum of teachers, teacher training and textbooks while the processes are related to the duration of the instructional period and active learning and outputs involve measurement of performances (examination marks and the rate of grading). The last component which is outcome concerns the ability of individuals to use the knowledge and skills acquired to secure employment which has the potential to reducing poverty level (Chapman & Adams, 2002). Findings of this study indicates that government is committed to addressing the challenges in order to satisfy the electorates.

5.3.1 Assessing Demand for Infrastructure

To determine future demand for infrastructure, it is necessary to consider the efficiency with which existing capacity is being used and how well the services generated are responding to users. The infrastructural challenge was not new as the NDC government, in 2012, pledged to build two hundred (200) senior secondary schools with emphasis on districts where there are no such schools (NDC, 2012). Consequently, efforts were made to secure funding (\$154million) from the World Bank to embark on the Secondary Education Improvement Project (World Bank, 20017). However, by the end of 2016, only 23 of the 200 promised secondary school had been completed. Hence, the party faced heavy criticism from the civil society organisations and its opposition party as to the location of the schools and lack of access especially for persons with disabilities (GNECC, 2016). In the 2016 elections, the NPP pledged to construct 350 secondary schools across the country, which the government is still yet to take a major stride towards its achievement.

5.3.2 The Double Tracking System

Recently due to the increase in enrollment and overcrowding of schools, the Ministry of Education introduced the double tracking system in the implementation of the free SHS. The system is said to divide the entire student body and staff into two different track so that when one track is in school, the other is on vacation. The aim of the system is to allow for schools to accommodate more students within the same facility, curb the menace of congestion, mitigate the cost of constructing new infrastructure within a short term, and give students more instructional hours and contact hours with teachers (Adutwum, 2018).

According to the Minister of Education, Dr. Prempeh, this system would close with enrollment gap of 181,993. However, the intervention is only to last for five years whilst government work on building the necessary infrastructure to absorb the excess. This intervention has raised concerns from various stakeholders, like National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) and Conference of Private Senior High Schools (CPSHS). The concerns of NAGRAT have been for government to tread with caution and initiate a stakeholder consultation. Since more than 8,000 teachers would be recruited, and it is to last for five years, what then is the fate of the teachers after the implementation period?

5.3.3 Collaboration with External and Internal Stakeholders

The study found that the Conference of Heads of Private Second Cycle Schools (CHOPSS) has been seeking collaboration with government in absorbing the excess enrollment in the public secondary schools. The concern of CPSHS is that the introduction of the double track system is the solution to the infrastructural problem facing second cycle schools. However, they suggest a meaningful partnership with government since the private sector can accommodate the increase. It has been acknowledged by the Ghana government that the provision of educational services cannot be shouldered by it alone without the involvement of the private sector like the Community Based Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations and Faith Base Organizations as well as other Development Partners (Addae-Boahene 2007). Collaboration with external and internal stakeholders has received attention in the media. Collaboration provides opportunities for other agencies in the education sector to dialogue and promote synergy and awareness of different issues in regards to the implementation of the policy (Addae-Boahene, 2007).

Notably, a trend in the Ghana's education system is increasing privatization. However, government is very much reluctant to engage private schools in the free SHS policy. Some issues raised are that methods and facilities used by private schools do not meet the standards of Ghana Education Service. And also that these private schools often recruit untrained teachers. However, these claims by Government has been confronted by CHOPSS who have argued that most of the well-endowed private schools had better infrastructure and facilities than the public schools taking part in the free SHS policy. The group also claims that the current form of implementation was not the best as it lacked the input of all stakeholders. Thus, people gaps in implementation at all levels of the education system need to be considered critically. Overlooking or ignoring a group of people or a level of operatives in the reform process can lead to serious implementation problems.

5.4 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, the key challenges thwarting the success and smooth implementation of the Free SHS education policy have been discussed. These challenges include limited stakeholder consultations, political influences, financial and infrastructural constraint, lack of clear policy guide as well as the adoption of a over centralization of the policy's implementation process. To correct these challenges and to improve the success and quality of the Free SHS policy, this study suggests that there is the need to ensure that the key message and logic of the policy are transmitted correctly to actors, build consensus around the objectives, tools and other means to achieve the policy goals.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the entire study which sought to examine the influence of politics on the Free SHS education policy and the resulting challenges that the policy faces. Having analysed and discussed interview data gathered from a cross section of relevant officials involved in the implementation of the Free SHS policy, key findings of the study in relation to the key objectives of the study are summarized with conclusions and implications drawn and presented here. The chapter ends with recommendations for policymakers, practitioners in the educational sector and to academia for further research on issues of social policy implementation.

6.1 Summary of Key Findings

In this section, key aspects of this study are summarized. The section is therefore organized under the precise objectives for which this study was conducted and key findings.

6.1.1 Research Objectives

Generally, the objective of the study was to examine the politics of implementing the Free Senior High School (SHS) education policy in Ghana. To achieve this broad objective, two main specific research objectives were formulated. First, this study sought to explore the influence of electoral politics on the adoption and implementation of the free senior high education policy in

Ghana. Secondly, the study aimed to examine the emerging challenges associated with the implementation of the free senior high education policy in Ghana.

6.1.2 Key Findings of the Study

With regards to ascertaining how electoral politics has shaped the adoption and implementation of the free senior high education policy in Ghana, the study found that the free SHS education policy was a major political tool for winning elections. Particularly the adoption and implementation of the free SHS social policy was considered a political tool to win votes, although it was a constitutional right and was in line with the national development agenda and a provision of the 1992 constitution.

The second objective of the study was to examine the emerging challenges associated with the implementation of free senior high education policy in Ghana. The study found that various challenges affected the implementation of the free SHS policy. These challenges could be categorized into two: i) institutional and ii) infrastructural challenges. Whilst the institutional challenges had to do with the politicization and over-centralized administration of the policy which has led to the delay in achieving desired outputs and outcomes, infrastructural challenges bothered on the supply of logistics and financial constraints as a result of delayed payment of school grants to both suppliers and heads of schools. The infrastructural and institutional challenges deserves the attention of policymakers, political leadership, and other stakeholder towards sustaining the Free SHS policy.

6.2 Conclusion

The development of any educational system and standards will be a mirage if viable efforts and structures are not put in place to ensure continuous improvements and sustainability of the gains

that have been made in terms of its quality. The government of Ghana, under the leadership of the New Patriotic Party rolled out the free Senior High School Policy, as a social intervention initiative with the overarching aim of improving equity and accessibility to educational services and in the long run enhancing the socio-economic status of the people, and enhancing national development. The implementation of the policy has been rapid owing to the campaign promises made by the NPP during the 2012 elections.

To ensure the policy's success, the current political leadership and policymakers will have to pay attention to the many different voices in and outside their parties, as well as to local and global moods. The policy arena and decision making processes have become a complex arena, in which players who are not necessarily from an elected regime or members of a ruling party, are present and partake in policy dialogue. The ability to lead certain ideology-based policy is dependent on the strength of the government that rules and the extent of the support among the voters and large interest groups. In other words, establishing social policy involved both component of ideological, politics, partisan and values.

The poor consultation in the policy's formulation and implementation level coupled with the weak administrative structures and infrastructural inadequacies at the various implementing institutions are among many factors which are also responsible for the gaps. Therefore, it can be concluded from the study, that the process of the free SHS policy adoption and implementation took place at the top or at the bureaucratic level and thereafter policies are cascaded to the bottom for implementation. Furthermore, democratically elected politicians, may receive bottom-up signals that favour reallocation or reform of social services, rather than (or in addition to) spending and expansion.

The adoption and implementation of the policy has been a political tool to assure electorate of the capability of the ruling NPP to fulfil its campaign promises. The challenges so far are very fundamental and critical to determining the quality of the education system in Ghana. Hence, there is a need for concerted efforts, through broader consultation, forging partnerships among state, school functionaries, voluntary agencies, parents and other stakeholders to bring about the desired results as far as free SHS is concerned.

6.3 Recommendation

In light of the findings established by this study, the following recommendations and policy directions are made to policymakers in government agencies and departments, the political leadership, and heads and management of second cycle institutions as well as to academia for further research.

The study foremost recommend that no matter how clearly and accurately the implementation orders are transmitted, if the resources (both financial and material) are less, the implementation will result in problems. There is a serious need to assess the academic and infrastructural capacity of the existing second cycle institutions. The free SHS has increased enrollment, however, not all the schools are able to absorb the number. Hence government should rethink its measures to ensure equitable distribution of students across the institutions. Government should also take measures to improve on the infrastructure of the schools to aid effective teaching and learning. Resources such as adequate and qualified number of staff, adequate financial support, equipment and buildings must be provided for better policy implementation.

The study also recommends that guidelines on the policy should be developed and communicated to all relevant stakeholders. Social policy implementation brings about change, hence the need for effective communication. It was observed in the study that most heads of schools are not so clear about the procedure of the policy in terms of admissions and daily operations of the school. The change from a fee- based education to a fee free education was too swift leaving them no room to adjust to the demands of the policy and more importantly, more in a confused state due to the already existing challenges and new challenges that has emerged as a result of the policy. Poor communication of the policy directives and procedures affects the support from the stakeholders, leads to less ownership of the policy by the stakeholders, lack of commitment on the part of the implementers, no collaboration and cooperation, less accurate and consistent approach towards the completion of the policy goals.

Hence government should develop a change management strategy and programs that would help align the school heads to the policy and allay the fears of being dismissed if policy directives are not implemented. Precise, accurate and clear policy directives produce creativity and adaptability which helps in the effective implementation as well. This intervention should go in line with a continuous training program for all heads of schools based on the characteristics of their institution, all boys, all girls, mixed, day or boarding schools. It must also be ensured that not just information rather highly relevant and adequate information is provided on the implementation process. In addition there must be effective communication between the target beneficiaries and the implementers of policy programs. Efficient communication networks, facilitated by internet-based links and clear procedural protocols can give school heads the reassurance that their voice mattered and that the system is there to support them.

Again, over-centralization of the policy has been a major challenge which has resulted in delay of important technical and administrative duties. Hence going forward the study recommends that some functions and fund should be decentralized to the regional offices of the Ghana Education Service, to allow for easy and responsive transactions. The step of decentralization should be strengthened. It will decrease the delays in implementation of measures taken at the central level and build a strong coordination between the schools and the inspectorate, more over it will bridge the gulf of mistrust and alienation.

Also, there should be provision for adequate monitoring of the implementation process. There should be direct monitoring in the form of inspection controls. Quality Assurance Unit should be well equipped in every regional office of the Ghana Education Service to ensure that processes are in line with the policy directives. Although heads of schools are at the implementing level, their influence of how to make the policy more effective is still relevant. Heads of schools can engage in or with the help of advocacy groups push for their concerns to be attended to. There is also the need to improve upon the maintenance culture, government can provide all the infrastructure and equipment needed however, if these are not well taken care of, there will always be a deficit which can be avoided.

6.4 Implications for Future Research

Further theoretical and empirical researches are encouraged to further examine various elements of this study. Such as examining the impact of the demography and sample size of the success of the free SHS policy; selecting specific school cases and implementing agencies from all the regions of the country to examine status of the implementation of the Free SHS Policy.

Other studies may be carried out to ascertain the impact of the free SHS policy on private secondary schools as well. A significant study would be to examine the trends of educational policies in the country, their relevance and impact on national development.

It is also suggested that a more comprehensive statistical tool can be used to measure the influence of key variables of free SHS policy implementation using other case studies.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Dear Respondents,

I am Angela Bonsu, a Masters' student of the University of Ghana Business School pursuing a post graduate degree in Public Administration. As part of the requirement for the fulfilment of the degree we are to conduct a research work for which my Topic is **EXAMINING SOCIAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN GHANA: A CASE OF FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL POLICY.**

Your Institution /school have been selected to participate in the study, due to your involvement as key actors in the implementation of the free SHS policy. I am grateful for your kind consideration to participate in the study and to provide valuable answers to the under listed questions relating to the topic. Please be assured that this is purely for academic purposes and your responses will be handled with uttermost confidentiality.

Preamble

The general objective of the study is to examine the politics of social policy implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How has electoral politics influenced the adoption and implementation of the free senior high education policy in Ghana?
2. What are the emerging challenges associated with the free senior high education policy in Ghana.

Name of Institution:

Position in the organization:

Research Matrix

Research Objectives	Research Questions	Interview Questions
<p>Ascertain the influence of electoral politics on the adoption and implementation of the free senior high education policy in Ghana.</p>	<p>How has electoral politics influenced the adoption and implementation of the free senior high education policy in Ghana?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you think of the political system of Ghana, in relation to the welfare of the people? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Do you think the needs of the citizens drive the agenda of political parties? 2. How would you assess Ghana's democracy in terms of citizen's voice translating into social policy? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Do you think citizens have the final say on the most important social issue by voting? 3. Has electoral politics influenced the adoption and implementation of the free SHS policy?

		<p>Probing Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. At what time was the idea of free SHS conceived? b. What are some of the political argument about the policy implementation? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. In your view do you think the policy is in line with the national development agenda? 5. Do you think the policy is well institutionalised in terms of the policy having <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear objective and action plan (probe for sensitization workshop on the sector policies within and across departments and agencies) • Roles and responsibility of key actors (probe for capacity and competence of human resource). • Adequate infrastructures and resources (probe for types of infrastructures needed and availability). • Coordination across implementation levels. (Probe for effectiveness of coordination activities).
<p>Examine the emerging challenges associated with the implementation free senior high education policy in Ghana.</p>	<p>What are the emerging challenges associated with the free senior high education policy in Ghana?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your overall assessment of the policy in terms clarity, consistency, relevance and public response?

		<ol style="list-style-type: none">2. What are the emerging challenges in regard to the implementation of the policy? (Probe for institutional and social challenges)3. Do you think these challenges can in any way affects the quality of education in the country?4. Do you think the current Government's response is sufficient to address the issue of free SHS education?5. What do you consider as critical success factors in improving the implementation of the free SHS policy?
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THANK YOU