

**PUBLIC POLICY COMMUNICATION: A STUDY OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH
POLICY**

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INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

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DECLARATION

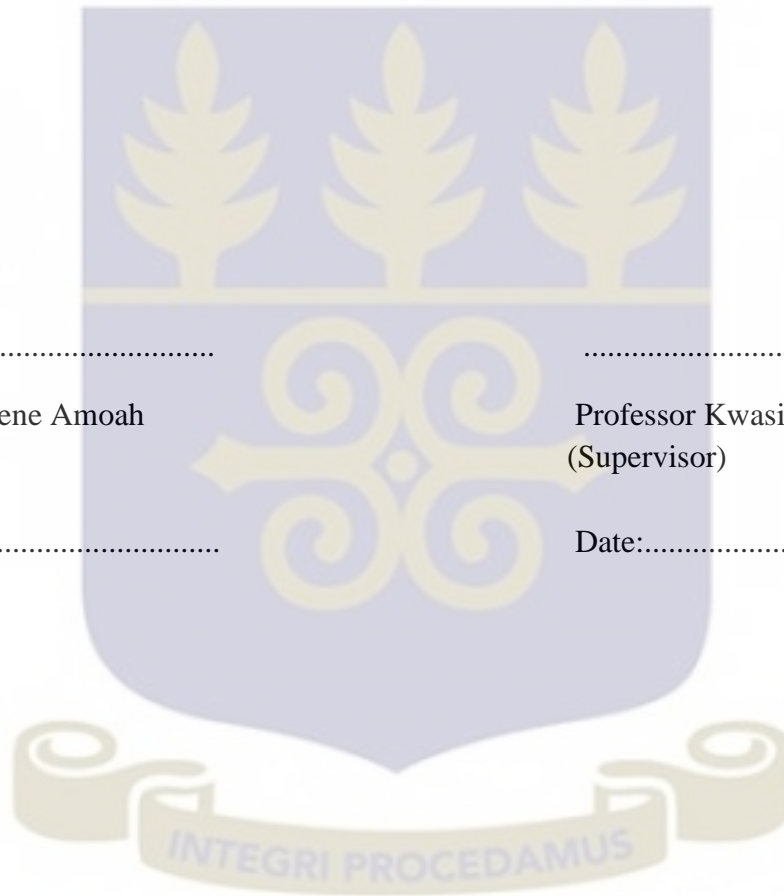
With the exception of the quoted references and acknowledged sources, I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own research undertaken under the supervision of Professor Kwasi Ansu-Kyeremeh at the School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon and that it has not been presented to any other examining body for the award of another degree.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Emmanuel Boroh Youri, for his constructive criticism and commitment to ensuring the completion of the work; and to our daughter, Isabel Igone Nminso Youri, I love you.

Also to my father, Louis Amoah; mother, Martha Amoah; brother, John Amoah and sister, Cecilia Amoah all of blessed memory. May you have peace in the LORD God Almighty.



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Indeed, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I am highly indebted to the almighty father, the God of Israel for His marvellous grace throughout my studies especially in completing this dissertation.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the communication channels used by the Government of Ghana to communicate the national youth policy to its ultimate beneficiaries, the youth. The policy communication between government and the youth was ascertained from two 200 undergraduate students of the University of Ghana between the ages of 15-34 who are aware of the existence of the policy. An interview guide and a survey questionnaire were utilised in collecting data and data were analysed with the help of Microsoft Excel and SPSS.

The findings of the study indicate that government employed communication channels that allowed for the exchange of policy information with the youth and the youth mostly utilised social media platforms to express their opinions and ideas to government concerning the policy. However, the awareness of policy details among the youth was low.

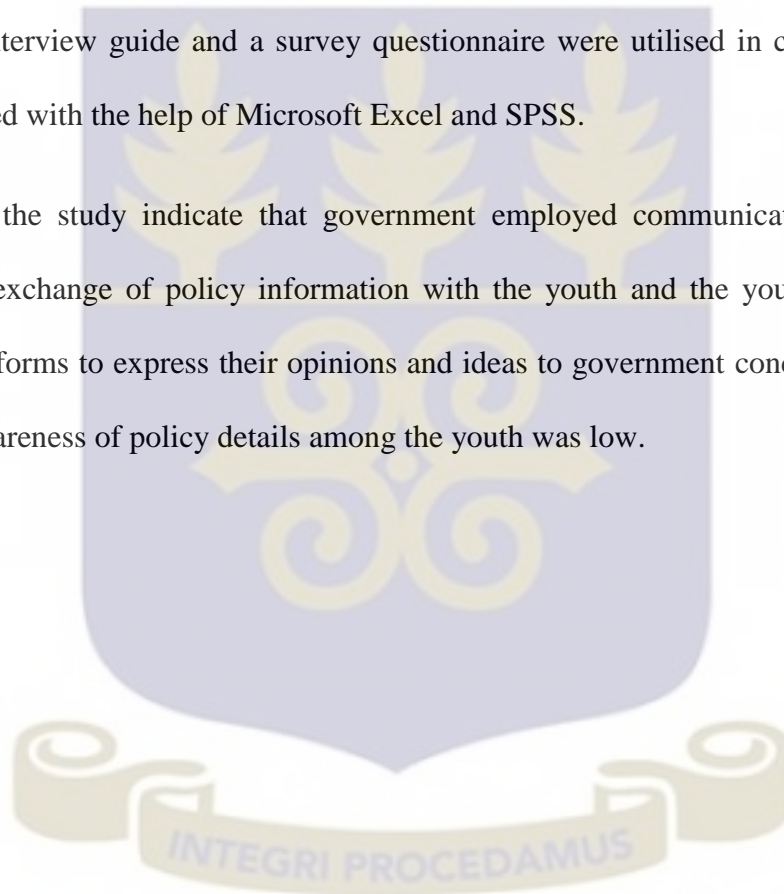
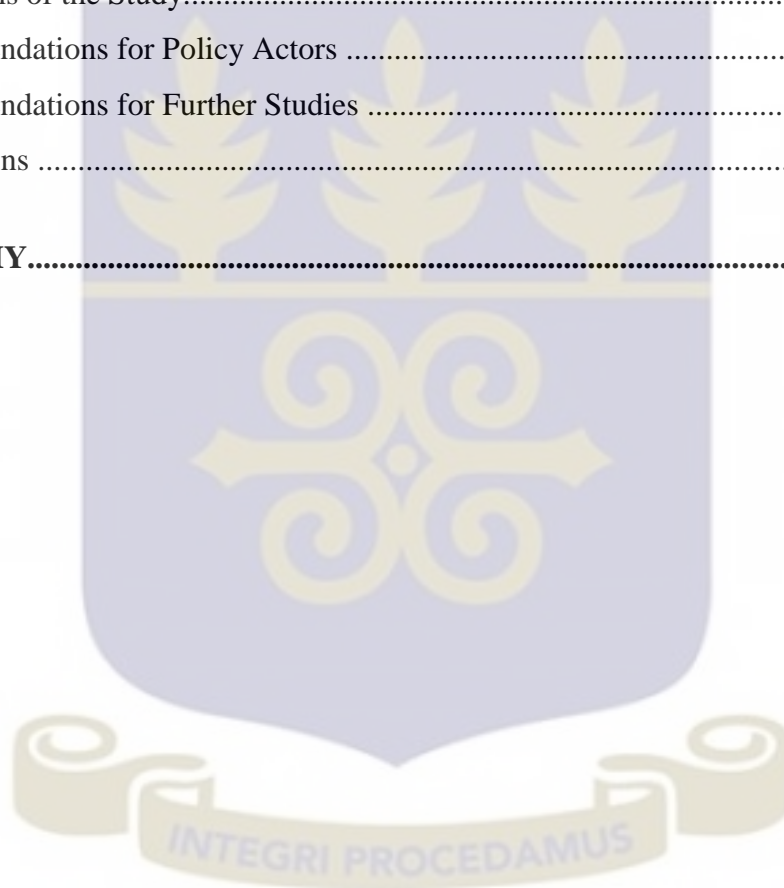


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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study by providing a general idea of its constructs, public policy and government-youth communication. This is followed by the statement of the problem that was researched into. The objectives of the study and the research questions are then outlined, and subsequently, the significance of the study, definition of key terms; and the scope and organisation of the study are presented.

1.1 Background of the Study

In recent years, governments around the world have recognised the need for a policy response to systemic youth issues. There has been broad international support for undertaking policy reforms that invest in youth. Organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) recognise youth (persons between the ages of 15-24 years) as a category of young people that should be treated separately from children and adults (World Health Organisation, 2002).

At national, regional and local levels, governments are quickly making youth, a national priority by developing policies that recognise youth as an important category of young people and are linking support for them to broaden outcomes and long-term goals. Scholars and policy makers have also developed new perspectives and tools for framing contemporary youth issues and have made the case for a more positive, proactive approach to providing support for the youth (Kamara, 2008).

Ghana, like many other developing countries, has designed a comprehensive national youth policy (Ghana National Youth Policy, 2010) which is believed to be based on a careful youth

needs assessment and the assessment of the needs of the Ghanaian society as a whole. However, the best policies are established when government and its citizens exchange opinions and ideas as two-way communication allows citizens to monitor government's activities; to enter into dialogue with government on issues that matter to them; and to influence political outcomes.

Thus, the establishment of a well-accepted and useful public policy depends on an adequate flow of information to intended targets of that policy. If adequate communication about proposed plans does not occur, this exchange cannot take place. It is, therefore, in the interest of governments to communicate effectively with citizens about the work they do (on behalf of their constituents) for the citizenry.

In order to ensure an adequate flow of information, governments adopt a myriad of channels in communicating with citizens including interpersonal interaction, such as community meetings and broad mass media such as radio, television and newspaper which provide opportunities for some level of interactivity between government and citizens. With the increasing use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), such as government weblogs and e-mail, the relationship between government and citizens has been transformed and to an extent has recorded an improvement (Griffiths, 2004; Kumar & Vragov, 2009; Parks & Schelling, 2005).

Without a doubt, ICT allows governments to share with the public a variety of information in unlimited quantities on demand. Technology is also available to allow citizens to bring issues of concern to the attention of local and national governments. Nonetheless, communication between government and citizens, especially in countries with large geographical areas, large population or a large gap between rich and poor, is a challenge (United Nations, 2008).

Therefore, the communication channels required by governments to create awareness of proposed new policies or policy changes seem a legitimate issue. For example, it would be useful to know whether broad mass media, internet coverage and visibility of key policy implementers such as policy communicators are enough to ensure an adequate exchange of policy information between government and its citizens. For the youth to be usefully engaged in a democracy, therefore, governments must communicate with them both to influence youth opinion in trying to maintain their legitimacy.

1.2 Public Policy

In the past few years, government's communication function has been gradually shifting to a situation where increasingly, emphasis is being placed on setting overall direction through policy and planning, stakeholders and citizenry engagements and sometimes,empowering stakeholders or partners to deliver programmes and services.

A public policy, also known as government policy, represents the product of an articulate process in which different actors and logics act. According to Jenkins (1978), a public policy is usually the outcome of a set of interrelated actions and decisions promoted by a high number of institutional and non-institutional actors, playing within different formal and informal arenas, mutually overlapping and interdependent, in order to tackle a public problem.

Atory, (1998) also explains that public policy is a series of actions enacted by political actors such as the president, cabinet ministers, political elites and administrators. Thus, public policy is aimed at guiding decisions and actions that are in relation to society as a whole and fundamentally crafted with a specific agenda and goal.

The development of public policy can be driven by a number of players including political leaders, government officials, government departments, a very powerful stakeholder such as an advocacy group or by the community or citizens and can be developed at both local government and national levels. However, government plays an important role in determining the national development policy. In this regard, policy development is seen as a process or series of actions or decisions by the government that is designed to solve public problems, whether real or imaginary (Atory, 2008).

Efficient policy communication by government helps in creating awareness of public policy details and is very crucial and key in mobilising support among the intended targets of the policy. Thus, free flow of information between government and its citizens is critical in ensuring that the citizens are aware of policy details so as to participate and take full advantage of the policies that are aimed at improving their wellbeing. Conversely, government's inability to ensure adequate information on public policy results in the failure to adequately address the challenges for which the policy is intended (Gyimah-Brempong & Kimeyi, 2013).

1.2.1 National Youth Policy of Ghana

Public policy issues that trigger public policy development can be divided into two categories: those already on the public policy agenda and those that are not. In a situation where an issue is already on the public policy agenda, it indicates that it has a sufficiently high profile and a formal process is likely to be in place. On the other hand, where an issue is not on the public policy agenda, it means that the job of the stakeholders or community is to provide information and education in order to take other steps to raise awareness and include it on the agenda.

Gerston (1997) suggests that an issue will appear and remain on the public policy agenda when it meets one or more of three criteria. It must have sufficient scope (a significant number of people

or communities are affected); intensity (the magnitude of the impact is high) and/or time (it has been an issue over a long period). The Government of Ghana has over the years, formulated and placed emphasis on some policies which meet these criteria.

The African Youth Charter (2006) on national youth policies calls on member states to develop cross-sectorial policies and programmes, which take into consideration the inter-relatedness of the needs of youth with a view to integrating and mainstreaming the perspectives of youth into decision making and development processes. According to Nwuke (2002) the development of the continent rests squarely on the youth and it is through them and by their agency that the vision and noble intentions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) can be realised.

Ghana is among a considerable number of countries which have a national youth policy. According to YouthPolicy.org, of 198 countries worldwide, 99 or fifty per cent (50%) have a current national youth policy. About 56 countries (28%) of the 99 countries with a national youth policy are revising their existing national youth policies or are, in a few cases, developing their very first national youth policy. Forty-three (43) countries or (22%) have no national youth policy yet. Of those, seventeen (17) states are in Africa, twelve (12) in Asia, nine (9) in Europe and five (5) in the Americas.

The main goal of Ghana's national youth policy is youth empowerment with the intention of providing guidelines for all stakeholders involved in the implementation of youth development policies, programmes and projects. As its agenda for the youth (defined as young people between the ages of 15-35 years) government promised the effective mobilization of the youth, the productive engagement of their talents and energies and the creation of an environment enabling the youth to realize their full potential.

The policy is also intended to portray the country as being committed to international conventions and charters it has signed relating to the youth. It was launched in August, 2010 by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, as a means of raising general awareness of the existence and content of the policy.

The policy, with twelve (12) sections, on the theme “Towards an Empowered Youth, Impacting Positively on National Development” has 19 priority areas including education and skills development; gender mainstreaming; health, HIV and AIDS; nationalism and conscientisation of the youth. The policy addresses the needs of the youth; pays special attention to identifiable groups such as students in tertiary institutions, female youth, youth at risk and youth with special talents.

The rights of the youth as well as the obligations of the various stakeholders are clearly spelt out in the policy. Implementation mechanisms to ensure a successful execution of the policy are also presented in the policy. However, an action plan to outline comprehensive strategies, projects and activities, time frame with respect to immediate, short, medium and long term goals and the budget lines that will achieve its desired objectives, are yet to be developed.

As a recently drafted national youth policy, efforts are being made to reach all the major stakeholders and mass audience with the goal of creating awareness to the targets through interactive communication. For instance, there has been an exhibition of the policy on the National Youth Authority’s stand at the National Policy Fair organised by the Ministry of Information and Media Relations from 2010-2013.

1.3 Government Communication

Over the decades, communication between government and its citizens has been developed. The process was from the very beginning and for the most of the period driven by the intrinsic need of governments to collect taxes, hence, communication between government and citizens was predominantly one-way. Thus, citizens were not regarded as partners in the communication process with the government (Vintar, 2000).

Since in the past there was no interest among governments to have well-informed citizens, government information systems built were designed to supply the necessary information in a one-way manner from government and its departments to citizens. Consequently, government agencies had reasonably good access to necessary information about their citizens and organisations, while citizens were constantly very poorly informed about the government and its activities.

However, in the last few years, government communication has witnessed a continuing shift from hierarchical, top-down communication to a deeper understanding of the communication process that is interactive and participatory. This change in perception about the nature of the communication process as a two-way interactive process, coupled with the significant diffusion of democracy in recent times, are working in favour of a more participatory decision-making process in governance and of communication as part of the process (Vintar, 2000).

Many new information needs of the governments have been developed and citizens are becoming an important source of information. Consequently, information systems that are more citizen-centred instead of government needs-oriented are being designed to facilitate communication between government and its citizens (Zwahr, Rosseln & Finger, 2005). This new

paradigm is based on the new principle of predominantly ensuring two-way communication channels needed in order to improve relationships among stakeholders.

Thus, government and its citizens are now regarded as subjects of the new information systems, with their own information needs (partnership role). Additionally, citizens are regarded as customers of governmental services (Torres, Pina & Acerete, 2006). Government officials are finding that there is a need for new tools for better gauging and understanding of the preferences and needs of citizens in increasingly diverse communities. In other words, better tools are needed for re-engaging citizens in the dialogue about national direction and improvement.

1.3.1 Government's Communication of Public Policy

The ability of government to effectively communicate with its youth is a basic function of modern governance as effective communication of a clear vision for a nation as well as the policy choices and opportunity costs arrived at on the youth's behalf is imperative in earning the legitimacy of public authority. Essential to this aim of legitimacy is the capacity to carry out two-way symmetric communication with citizens in a meaningful and continuous manner so as to raise awareness on policy details.

Two-way symmetric communication process is not a unidirectional transfer of information and policy choices but, it involves interaction or engagement in that policy choices are shaped and information framed in the course of the communication to and from government and citizens. Consistent with this new concept of citizen engagement and the emerging public policy community, there is increasing interest in the inclusion of citizens in policy activities employing two-way symmetric communication. Thus, governments are gradually depending on input from actors across the stakeholder community in steering policy (Crozier, 2008).

However, Livingston, Odugbemi & Brown (2009) indicate that many countries lack a culture of consultation and participation and this is exacerbated by low literacy rates and lack of information provision as government communication entails not only communicating messages but, also requires a firm understanding of the substance of government policies. The lack of professionalism in government communication in developing countries such as Ghana also presents a serious challenge in policy communication.

Nonetheless, enhanced citizens' awareness of government policy priorities is a key indicator of effective government policy communication which can be achieved through enhanced citizen participation. It is imperative that citizens are made aware of policy priorities because information generated from two-way communication flows can be used to improve the delivery of public services in response to citizens' needs and preferences. Effective two-way communication between the government and its citizens strengthens legitimate public authority; and that in turn, increases the likelihood of attaining good governance outcomes. Effective public policy communication efforts which enable citizen participation are fundamental to a well-functioning government.

Thus, successful policy implementation relies heavily on communication and information processing of demands and supports which takes place through a diversity of channels ranging from face-to-face interactions to secondary political structures such as interest groups, parties, opinion leaders, mass media, legislatures and relevant unorganised publics (Easton, 1965).

1.3.2 Two-Way Channels of Government Communication

The objective of government for encouraging youth engagement in an interactive manner is to improve the efficiency, acceptance and legitimacy of the political processes (Sanford & Rose, 2007). By providing interactive channels that allow for feedback, government is able to have

two-way symmetrical communication with its citizens. Yet studies show that governments prefer to use their websites to distribute information rather than having interactive communication with citizens (Coleman, 2005; Wang & Lim, 2011).

Government-citizen communication channels with interactive potential are key in the policy communication process. Broadly put, these channels can be classified under broadcast media, print media and information and communication technologies (ICT's). Broadcast media channels include television and radio. These channels largely give opportunities for conveying information in an interactive manner through, for instance, live studio audience, phone-in, text-in, and question-and-answer segments. Print media includes newspaper, leaflets, billboards, posters and notice boards and also give opportunities for interactive engagement between governments and their citizens but offer low level of interactivity.

Additionally, active youth engagement with ICTs provide a direct communication channel that facilitates government-citizen communication by combining the mass media's ability to reach a wider audience with the interactivity resulting in a virtual space where citizens can influence and be influenced by the dialogue over policy matters. Thus, government information can be conveniently accessed by the youth in an interactive manner. This is because ICTs enable mass self-communication whereby individuals and groups can enter the public sphere by communicatively framing issues that challenge or legitimise official government discourses (Castells, 2007).

The internet also provides policy actors with new tools for organisation and communication across cyber society and enables networks of individuals - both in the political community as well as government officials - to connect to networks that transcend institutional boundaries (Dutton, 2007). However, it is obvious that the introduction of modern technologies represents

tremendous opportunity and at the same time challenge to redefine relationships between government and its youth.

Moreover, these new channels of communication between government and its youth can be initiated by either party (Bryan, Tsagarousianou & Tambini, 1998). However, how successful the government-citizen communication process is, is influenced by who initiates the communication since one who initiates a communication, affects applications of the communication channels and in turn influence how citizens perceive and respond to the opportunity provided (Wang & Lim, 2011).

In today's national contexts, the use of multiple channels of interactive communication is a necessary condition for citizens to cultivate a sense of ownership of, and engagement in, the governance process. The legitimacy of public authority therefore requires effective government communication utilising interactive communication channels.

1.3.3 Government Communication as a Policy Instrument

Communication is an essential part of governance and the promotion of dialogue through two-way symmetric interaction and sharing of information significantly contributes to effective communication. Through effective communication, relationship between government and its citizens is cultivated which results in improvement in the understanding of citizens needs and enabling government to respond appropriately.

Grönlund (2005) explains that government has an obligation to ensure data accessibility to a broad segment of the public. It is therefore, important to identify and use communication policy tools that take into consideration socio-economic distinctions such as identifying youth communication needs, so that the information disseminated are simplified in an interactive

manner. Many researchers believe it is very important to satisfy public needs and that they recommend that every government be citizen-oriented.

1.4 Problem Statement

The Ghanaian youth need to be aware and have knowledge about the national youth policy to be able to take advantage of the opportunities it presents. Consequently, a deficit in particular information of the policy can impede the progress of not only the youth but also affect policy practice in general. Thus, the youth are likely not to accept and participate in the implementation of a policy if they do not have enough knowledge about that which they have to contribute to.

Therefore, in order for the youth in Ghana to exhibit unambiguous awareness and possess reliable knowledge of the national youth policy meant for them, it is incumbent on the part of the government to employ channels that allow for two-way communication to facilitate government-youth communication of the policy. Two-way communication channels allow interaction or engagement in a manner in which policy choices are shaped and information framed in the course of the communication to and from government and the youth.

However, research indicates that knowledge of government policies appear to be generally poor among the general populace, except among those who have special interest in the policy or who are studying a related course by virtue of academics (Shanahan & Elliott, 2009). This challenge is no different in Ghana as information on the development and implementation of youth policies in Africa is hard to find, Gyimah-Brempong & Kimeyi (2013). The researchers attribute this to the poor or negligible attention given to public policy communication.

It is with this concern that this study focuses on investigating the communication channels used by government not only to convey to the youth correct and exhaustive information in relation to the substance of the national youth policy.

1.5 Research Objectives

The overall aim of this research is to investigate the communication channels used by the Ghanaian government to communicate the national youth policy and examine the level of awareness exhibited on policy details by the youth who are the ultimate beneficiaries of the policy. In order to accomplish this, this research covered the following specific objectives:

1. To identify and examine the communication channels used by the government to facilitate government-youth communication of the national youth policy.
2. To determine the most common of the government communication channels through which the youth communicated to government their opinions and ideas about the policy.
3. To find out the level of awareness of the youth of the national youth policy.

1.6 Research Question

Effective policy communication is an essential ingredient for effective implementation of public policy. Accordingly, through literature review and empirical evidence, answers are sought for the following question:

1. Which communication channels were used by the government of Ghana to facilitate awareness of the national youth policy among the youth?

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that it helps in adding to existing literature on communicating public policies in a constitutional democracy. To the best of the knowledge of this study, very little research has been conducted on public policy communication especially in Ghana. This study thus, helps fill the knowledge gap due to lack of research on policy communication in developing countries more especially Ghana, a country globally recognised to be making remarkable strides in its democratic governance.

Additionally, since it is not enough for governments to engage citizens only during election times or during crises, the research provides relevant information to help government improve upon its policy communication efforts with its citizens in general and the youth in particular. In order to significantly shore-up the amount of knowledge that citizens demonstrate on public policies that affect them, governments must be made aware of the need to interact with their publics including the youth so that no opposing forces dominate the public agenda.

Also, the study determines whether the channels employed by government gave opportunity to the youth to forward their comments and suggestions on the policy so as to significantly foster the possibility for the youth to knowingly and empirically assess policy benefits. Similarly, the outcome of this research is relevant to both government officials and researchers as it enables them know the most notable channels the youth employed in sending feedback to government. Accordingly, the research results serve as a basis for government officials to develop efficient communication strategies so as to ensure adequate exchange of opinions and ideas between government and its citizens towards ensuring adequate communication of policies.

Again, this research offers an opportunity for media operators to recognise how their channels are used by government to convey policy information to the youth and conversely how the

youth utilise their channels to make their opinions, suggestions and concerns known to government. The findings also serve to provide a reference material for policy communicators and students of communication studies in relation to the importance of communication to ensure an adequate flow of information between governments and the youth.

Ultimately, this study contributes significantly to promoting awareness of the importance of communication channels that promote participatory practices that might contribute toward more effective and efficient policy interventions so as to ensure an informed society and empower citizens in policy discussions.

1.8 Scope and Organisation of the Study

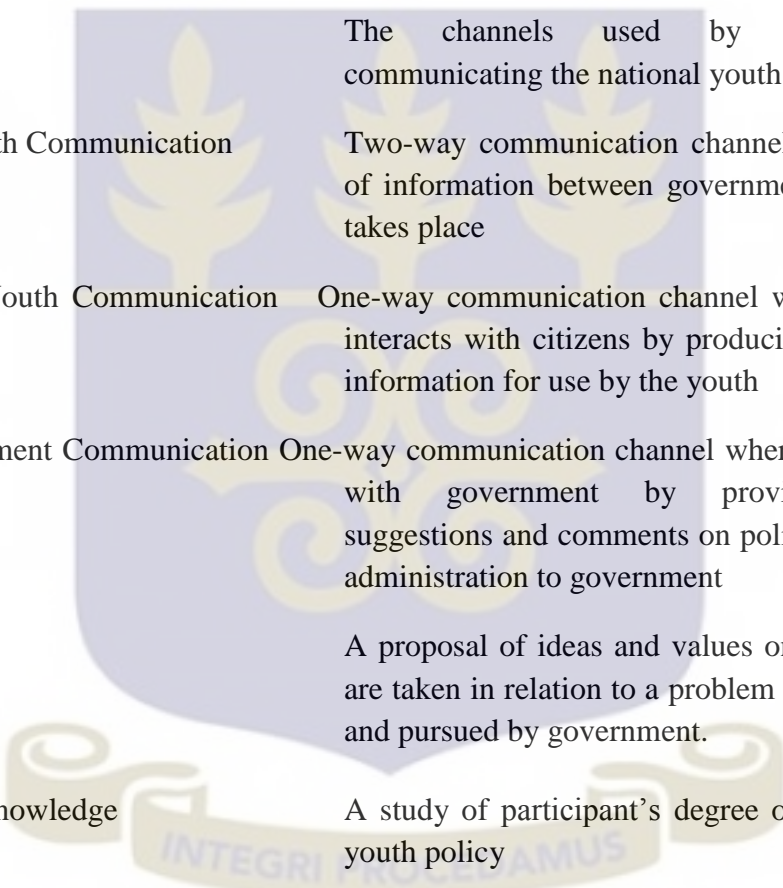
Since the aspects of the chosen problem area of this dissertation are quite involving, the researcher narrowed down the focus in line with the aim of the research, which is to examine the two-way symmetric communication channels adopted by government to communicate the national youth policy to the youth. Also it establishes the level of knowledge evinced by the youth who are the major stakeholders of the policy.

In view of these, this research is presented in five chapters. Chapter One provides the background to the study, the statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions and the significance, scope and synopsis of the organization of the study. Chapter Two discusses the theoretical background of the study and a review of relevant literature. Thus, key theories and previous studies related to the research area are presented in this chapter.

The focus of Chapter Three is the methodology of the research, which explains the sampling and data collection methods as well as the reliability tests of the measurement tool used. Chapter Four, illustrates and explains the results of the findings of the research, while Chapter Five is a

conclusion of the study. It offers a discussion of the findings in relation to the research objectives, the theoretical and practical implications of the research. Limitations and suggestions for further research are also provided in this chapter.

1.9 Operational Definitions



Communication	The channels used by government in communicating the national youth policy
Government-Youth Communication	Two-way communication channel where exchange of information between government and the youth takes place
Government to Youth Communication	One-way communication channel where government interacts with citizens by producing and delivering information for use by the youth
Youth to Government Communication	One-way communication channel where the youth relate with government by providing feedback, suggestions and comments on policies and issues of administration to government
Public Policy	A proposal of ideas and values on which decisions are taken in relation to a problem or issue identified and pursued by government.
Awareness and Knowledge	A study of participant's degree of exposure to the youth policy

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the theoretical framework guiding the research, review of similar works carried out by other researchers as well as literature related to the research problem which was presented in the previous chapter is outlined. In this section, the public relations model underpinning the research is described and critiqued in its application to government-citizen communication.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research is based on Grunig & Hunt's (1984) influential work in the area of communication which describes four classic public relations models namely press agency/publicity, public information which are one-way communication, two-way asymmetric, and two-way symmetric which are two-way communication. For the purposes of this research, however, emphasis is placed on the two-way model.

2.1.1 Two-way Model of Communication

In order to better understand two-way communication, it is imperative to first examine all four models of communication designed by Grunig & Hunt's (1984). With regard to the press agency/publicity, communication activities are designed to achieve favourable media attention and it is characterised by generating media coverage, often through deception. As proposed by Grunig & Hunt (1984), the press agency/publicity model is dominated by persuasive communication from an organization to its audience aimed at manipulating audience attitudes and behaviours. Thus, truth is "not essential" in communication and often underpins organisational propaganda (Grunig, 1984:22).

The second model, public information involves a distribution of objective information about an organisation to a public and is frequently linked with the concept of public relations as propaganda. This model is concerned merely about communicating truthful and comprehensive information to key stakeholders. Thus, an organization only provides accurate information about the organization to the public but does not volunteer negative information.

These first two models of press agency and public information are unsophisticated models that involve the generation of messages to publics where information flows one-way from the organisation through media channels to target publics (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig 1995). These models prioritise the top-down flow of information from organisation to stakeholder (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). In a more recent work, Grunig (2001) claimed that these one-way models are always asymmetric, since the sender of a message is only concerned with the transmission of the message and does not take the receiver into account.

The third model is the two-way asymmetric model which is a form of scientific persuasion; it is imbalanced as communication is in favour of the organisation (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). This model is a system that allows an organisation to put out its information and to receive feedback from its publics about that information. However, the organisation does not necessarily respond to that feedback in the way the public has requested. Under this model, an organisation would not change a decision as a result of feedback but, might concentrate on putting across its preferred option to publics in a more favourable and effective way.

Thus, the two-way asymmetrical approach is characterised by gathering information from target publics in order to devise effective message strategies which may be used to persuade or manipulate publics (Dozier et al. 1995). Grunig & Hunt (1984) state the aim of two-way asymmetric communication is to change public attitudes and behaviour instead of changing the

organisation as communication is planned and managed in order to achieve the change in public attitudes and behaviour.

The fourth model, which is two-way symmetric, advocates free and even information flow between an organisation and its publics which leads to mutual understanding and responsiveness which may result in either the organisation or its publics being persuaded to change their position. Thus, two-way symmetrical communication is founded on dialogue where relationships are built based on interaction as Cain (2009) points out that it is in this interaction where both participants can engage in decision-making processes and share ideas.

This perspective places an implicit value on relationships, going beyond the achievement of an organisational goal and instead working to achieve “mutual understanding” between organisation and stakeholder through “dialogue” and “feedback”(Grunig& Hunt, 1984:22). Consequently, the model elicits the exchange of information and adoption of accommodative positions by the organisation and its stakeholders in achieving a “win win” outcome (Deetz & Kuhn, 2008:190).

Symmetrical public relations connote “the use of bargaining, negotiating, and strategies of conflict resolution to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes, and behaviours of both the organisation and its publics” (Grunig, 1989:29). Two-way symmetrical communication, thus, promotes the exchange of information on both sides of the organisation-stakeholder relationship in a manner in which each participant in the communication process is equally able to influence the other.

However, the model is regarded as equally effective if the characteristics of neither group changes as long as both communicate well enough to understand the position of the other (Grunig& Hunt, 1984).In previous works, Grunig& Hunt (1984) advocated the two-way

symmetric model alone as the ideal form of public relations, but later Grunig (2001) acknowledged that this model by itself might be inadequate for the contemporary public relations practitioner.

Instead, a model somewhere between the symmetric and the asymmetric, a concept Grunig (2001) called a new model of excellent, two-way public relations was proposed. The excellence model of public relations demonstrates a process in which communication reaches consensus and emphasises mutual understanding (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006; Henderson & Bowley, 2010). However, the inclusion of the principles of two-way symmetric communication is regarded as paramount.

Bowens, Rawlins & Martin (2010) posit that two-way asymmetrical communication is unbalanced and is in the favour of the communicator as the communicator attempts to persuade their stakeholders and wider publics by selecting and distributing messages or content that would resonate with them. Consequently, the communicator wants the stakeholders and wider publics to adopt the attitudes and beliefs that are favourable to the organisation. On the other hand, two-way symmetrical communication is described by Grunig & Hunt (1984) as more of a dialogue rather than a monologue and as stated by Tymson et al. (2006) the symmetry in this type of two-way communication is balanced and used to gain mutual understanding in the organisation-stakeholder relationship.

(Grunig, 1989) praised the two-way symmetrical as the most excellent of the models. The author labelled press agency/publicity as propagandistic public relations and public information as journalists-in-residence where dissemination of information is absent of any negative information while labelling two-way asymmetrical communication as manipulating publics to accomplish organisational goals. Grunig & Grunig (1992) posit that the two-way

symmetrical/excellence model is not only the most ethical approach to public relations, but that this approach is also the model most effective in meeting organisational goals.

Although, public relations is in favour of two-way symmetrical communication, Bowens et al. (2010) posit that in modern public relations, practitioners use a mix of the models in their tactics and communication tools for a public relations campaign.

2.1.2 Critique of Two-Way Symmetrical Model of Communication

There have been long-lasting arguments about the advantages of Grunig & Hunt's (1984) four models of public relations and whether the two-way symmetrical model of public relations excellence has become over-idealised leading to shortfalls in both public relations theory and practice.

The idea that the model is normative is opposed by Dover (1995) who declared it did not have a place in the practice of public relations and is a little more than an academic concept and rarely practiced while Pieczka & L'Etang (1995) suggest it was a utopian ideal.

Edwards (2006) argues that the narrow approach in which the model relates specifically to public relations as a management function within corporate organisations risks over-simplifying the complicated nature of human behaviour. Therefore, suggesting that in reality, unofficial organisational hierarchies and internal power struggles are likely to interfere with the function of the models formalised communications process.

This over-simplification of human and organisational behaviour is also identified by Leitch & Neilson (2001) and Karlberg (1996) who criticize the model for failing to take account of the publics' multiplicity. Leitch & Neilson (2001) argue that publics are not fixed categories waiting to be identified but rather are constructed and reconstructed through the discourses in which they

participate while Karlberg (1996:266) asserts that the model only allows public relations practitioners to view the public as “primarily consumers and the public sphere primarily a marketplace”.

Another criticism that is sometimes levelled at the model by other researchers is that the organisation becomes the object-viewer and publics are merely reactionary, existing and having importance only as a response to that organisation (Botan & Soto, 1998). This indicates that in reality communication relationship between an organisation and its publics is mostly considered from the point of view of the organisation which is tantamount to two-way asymmetric communication.

Though, two-way symmetrical communication reflects an open system approach, the model underplays the structures of power, the expression for organisational action and agency. Consequently, issues bothering on the imbalance of power between different stakeholder groups are also raised. It is argued that organisations will always look after their own interests and side with the stakeholder with the most power, which can lead to the practice of two-way asymmetric communication.

Leitch & Neilson (2001:129) also argue that because stakeholders and corporations are seldom in equal positions, organisations will always benefit by looking after their own interests. This also leads to asymmetrical communication because the power will lie with the organisation.

Additionally, Theunissen & Wan Noordin (2011) add that this approach downplays the complexity of the communication process as the approach focuses on a planning process for organisations to adapt to its environment and aim to achieve two-way symmetrical communication.

Furthermore, Hutton (1999) believes that although the model represents an important step forward in theory development, it does not clearly explain and offer theoretical foundations for all of the real-world public relations practices occurring under various situations. He adds that the model fails to provide practical methods for achieving success in public relations.

However, the prominence of Grunig & Hunt's (1984) models of communication cannot be overestimated. Laskin (2009) describes the model as the most dominant theoretical perspective in public relations while other theorists assert that it was impossible to even discuss paradigms in public relations without referring to the symmetrical model (Botan, 1993). Besides, this model is the major framework that has guided public relations scholarship for the past 30 years (Botan & Hazleton, 2006). According to (Grunig et al, 2002) many researchers believe the models played a crucial role and occupied a critical place in the theory of excellence and that the two-way symmetrical appeared to be a normative model for public relations.

2.2 Review of Related Studies

Ifukor (2013) in a study among rural dwellers in Nigeria found that town-criers, marketplaces, socio-political meetings and traditional festival represent the main channels of communication that are utilized in information acquisition and dissemination. The rest are role play, songs and dance, demonstration, lecture and exhibition, GSM handsets, television, radio, and newspapers. The outcomes of this study demonstrate that the channel of information dissemination or communication is very important as the researchers recommended modifications in the modus operandi of communication agents by taking the characteristics of the people they are dealing with into consideration.

Similarly, it was noted by Munyua, (2000) that focus should not shift from the traditional media of communication, rather, both the traditional and modern information communication technologies (ICTs) be employed simultaneously to speed up the circulation of information. However, research evidence has suggested that the choice of medium of communication is dependent on several factors such as the media profile, the target public profile, time factor, competition and cost of the communication tool (Ajala, 2005).

Furthermore, in a study of policy communication, Maggiolini, Pomatto&Seddon (2013) conducted an exploratory study titled *Communicating Public Policies in Italian Newspapers*. The study, which was about journalistic coverage of public policy, focused attention on news media in Italy. The researchers conducted an analysis of 2700 units of articles on policy issues in five main Italian newspapers - *Corriere della Sera*, *la Repubblica*, *La Stampa*, *ilGiornale*, *il Sole 24 Ore* - within 15 February to 15 March in 2011 and the same period in 2012. The analysis focused on each article published in the considered periods within the national pages of the five aforementioned newspapers presenting at least one reference to policy measures within the headline, subheading, and subtitle or picture material.

At the end of the analysis, three specific dimensions of adequacy of public policy communication through newspapers were found. The first was the significance of the considered policies, the second the focus on its substantial aspects and the third was stimulation of a reflective approach in the reader. The findings of the study suggest that public policy communication by the major Italian newspapers depended on important variations, specifically, under three profiles - the quantity and visibility of the articles, the considered themes and the actors intervening. It was recognised that the amount of public policy articles and their reference

on the front page significantly grew in every newspaper. Also, the amount of articles that deal with labour and employment tripled from 11.6 per cent to 32.7 per cent over the same period.

In another related study in India, it emerged that about 75 per cent of India's youth prefer social media over phone calls to communicate, including communicating with government. The findings indicated that the youth are collaborating through social networking tools and building virtual communities aided by affordable bandwidth and smart devices. The exhaustive study by India's largest software services exporter was conducted as a part of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) Gen-Y survey 2012-13 and covered nearly 17,500 high-school students across 14 Indian cities. Nearly three out of four students cited "Research for School" as the main reason to access the internet followed by social reasons like chatting and connecting with friends (62%).

Seventy-four per cent of those surveyed said they use facebook the most to communicate while 54 per cent conceded to use SMS, both significantly higher than the number of students who said they use voice calls (44%) for the same purpose. The survey findings revealed that social networks like facebook, twitter are the primary and clear favourites among today's youth to connect with their peers with 92 per cent of the respondents preferring facebook. Interestingly, preference for facebook is equally high among respondents in both metros (92%) and mini-metros (91%). Seventy-four per cent (74%) of the respondents said that they prefer social platforms to communicate instead of calls and mails. Besides, the youth have graduated to utilising the full potential of smartphones and almost 70 per cent of the students surveyed carry a handset.

Similarly, digital publisher Sound Alliance commissioned a national survey in Australia which found that young people are constantly checking their phones for facebook, instagram, Twitter feeds, new emails and texts due to fear of missing out and the fear of not knowing. The survey

which was conducted on almost 2,000 youths aged 16 to 30; found that over half of the young people obtain their news from the social media rather than television or newspapers. Although 22 per cent agreed with the statement that social media is a waste of time, 93 per cent used facebook daily.

A related study focused on government communication in China conducted by Wang and Lim (2011), examined Chinese citizens' attitudes towards the use of official and unofficial channels in both government to citizen and citizen to government communication. The study which was conducted through an online survey employed a pre-tested on-line questionnaire comprising both closed and open-ended questions to investigate citizens preferred channel choices of receiving public information and for expressing their personal opinions. A sample size of 107 respondents was used in the study.

The study found that citizens had different preferences for channels for government to citizen and citizen to government communications. Additionally, the differences in official and unofficial channels of government to citizen communication were insignificant while that of citizen to government communication was found to be significant.

Furthermore, the Newspaper Association of America Foundation as part of its long-standing emphasis on young print media readers particularly newspaper commissioned the Nelson Family Foundation to conduct a survey on media usage of young people. In the survey, conducted in January 2010 among 8 to 18 year olds Vahlberg found out that technology has powered an explosion of media usage among young people in the last five years - so much so that young people spend about as much time consuming media every day (7 hours, 38 minutes) as their parents spend working.

This staggering amount underestimates the media usage of young people as factoring in the additional media consumed in multitasking; young people pack 10¾ hours' worth of media content into every day. That figure does not include time spent talking or texting on cell phones or using computers for schoolwork. That is an increase of almost 2¼ hours of daily media exposure in the last five years. However, in stark contrast to this media abundance and growth in media consumption, reading of newspapers and magazines (print or online) commands only an insignificant portion of their time and a declining portion at that.

Out of the 458 minutes the average young person spends with media every day, only three minutes a day are spent reading newspapers indicating a drop of three minutes from an average six minutes in 2004. Magazine reading also dropped from an average of 14 minutes a day in 2004 to nine minutes in 2009. Additionally, online readership does not make up for the loss in print readership as the young people surveyed reported spending an average of two minutes reading newspapers or magazines online in 2009. Those who said they do read print newspapers spend an average of 14 minutes a day at it, down three minutes from 2004.

In fact, print is the only category of media consumption to lose ground among young people in the last five years. Within the print category, just newspapers and magazines declined. Book reading held steady over the last five years, actually increasing from 21 to 25 minutes a day in the last 10. Interestingly, usage of other media did not appear to affect the amount of time spent with print media; light and heavy media users spend about the same amount of time with print. However, youth without televisions in their bedrooms or who live in houses where the TV is not always turned on spend more time reading. Data was collected from Oct. 20, 2008, through May 7, 2009, through an in-classroom, anonymous, 40-minute written survey of 2,002 young people ages 8 to 18 from across the country. A subsample of 702 filled out weeklong diaries, recording

their media usage in half-hour increments. Valhberg compared the 2009 results with similar surveys conducted in 1999 and 2004.

The imperatives of these reviews are to draw parallels and differences in the myriad of channels used in communication policies to the youth in different countries. The present study nevertheless, took a step further to investigate the communication channels employed by the youth in a Ghanaian university setting to communicate back to government about the youth policy.

In an investigation of the development of two similar national portals offering online public services to citizens in Denmark and Norway, Furuli & Kongsrud (2009) conducted a case study in which interviews with key persons in the Borger.dk and Mypage projects were carried out. The Norwegian Mypage is a collection of personalised services, where authentication is required in order for the individual user to access his or her own services. Denmark chose to gather both public information and self-service operations in one portal; Borger.dk.

The Danish Borger.dk had approximately 250,000 users two weeks after the portal had been deployed while Norway's Mypage had 100,000 users three weeks after being deployed. The findings of the study indicated that citizen portals are developed to give a more open government administration and to give citizens easy access to public information and services.

Another related study by Pippa (2003) asserts that the media play a key role in setting the developmental agenda in every country. The researcher emphasized that the media as an agenda-setter for policy makers strengthen government responsiveness, citizen participation and government accountability to the citizenry. The media is also argued to promote transparency

and accountability as it affords both the policy makers and recipients to be on the same levels of understanding and engaging in effective implementation of the policies.

However, he seem to have failed in acknowledging the fact that the trend in policy communication remains dynamic as a result of advent of technology which provides several media outlets for communication of government policies. The choice of these media forms has a potential to influence the successfulness or otherwise of the policies as media preference by recipients, especially since the youth vary due to diverse backgrounds and orientations.

Furthermore, the communication channels adopted by a government are very crucial as their effectiveness and efficiency are likely to prevent misinformation or false information about policies concerning the citizenry especially the youth. This view was emphasized by Sawyer (2007) that false information or miscommunications could have dire repercussions on the state as the miscommunications predispose people to malice and conflicts.

These consequences of miscommunication are attributed to the fact that like any other basic human need, information dissemination or communication is essentially needed for peaceful co-existence and survival (Echezona, Ozioko & Ugwuanyi, 2011). This implies that irrespective of how good national youth policies are, there would be threats to their successful implementations if not well communicated.

Another related study was conducted by Walgrave, Soroka & Nuytemans (2007) on the mass media political agenda-setting power in relation to the media, parliament and government. Relying on time-series and cross-section analyses over a period of eight years from 1993 to 2000, the authors ascertained that although Belgium was characterised by a closed political system, the media do to some extent determine the agenda of parliament and government. The

research data covered all major issues across six major aggregated issue categories in five newspapers and four TV stations among others.

The findings indicate that mass media do lead the political agenda to some extent; that is, both the parliamentary and the governmental agenda appear significantly affected by coverage in the mass media. Mass media is therefore seen as pivotal in government communication and coverage does affect the topics that receive attention by Belgian policy makers. Mass media clearly played an independent role in determining policy makers' attentiveness to issues. However, there is systematic variation in media effects.

Besides, newspapers exert more influence than television. Thus, newspapers appear to have a larger political agenda-setting effect than TV news. This need not indicate that television does not matter but the results suggest the importance of newspaper content in the empirical study of agenda setting by mass media. Parliament and by extension the general populace are somewhat more likely to follow media than government, and media effects are larger for certain issues (law and order, environment) than for others (foreign policy, economic issues).

Additionally, a study by Lane (2003), examined the relevance of Grunig & Hunt's theories to public relations practitioners' roles in a public sector organisation (South East Queensland Schools) placing emphasis on the two-way symmetrical model. The study adopted an exploratory descriptive analysis to establish which of the models best describes the public relations practices in the selected schools. One hundred and forty-eight (148) schools were surveyed for the study and instruments used for data collection were questionnaire and case studies which were combined to produce both qualitative and quantitative data. Questionnaires were e-mailed to the schools. Findings clearly established the practice of public relations in the

schools surveyed but, interestingly, practitioners in some of the schools largely lacked training in the field.

Additionally, it was observed that some schools took an approach that combined both asymmetric and symmetric communication models. Thus, in some situations, the schools responded to the request of one group (parent), directly signifying two-way symmetric communication. While in other situations, they incorporated suggestions from another group (students) on fine details once that decision had been made which indicated asymmetric communication. More so, the researcher's suggestions earlier that two-way symmetric communication may be difficult to establish in schools was supported by the findings.

Moreover, Thomas & Streib (2003) examined data from a telephone interview of 827 Georgian residents randomly selected and interviewed from January 19 to February 10, 2000 on a variety of public policy issues by employing a weight of the most recent United States of America data on adults with a working telephone in the Georgian state. The respondents were first asked about their use of communication tools such as cell phones, e-mail and the internet.

The results indicated that the usage levels for the three communication tools were about the same. The use of cell phone had the highest usage levels with nearly 65 percent reporting use of cell phones. Those who accessed the internet were 53.8 per cent and e-mail were 47.9 per cent indicating that the use of these two fell short of this level. It was realized that the findings were consistent with other national survey data which showed the proportion of Americans who used the internet increased from 14 per cent in 1995 to 41 per cent in 1998 (Norris & Demeter, 1999).

Again, it was established that 38 percent of the internet users representing 168 of the survey respondents reported using a government website sometimes during the previous twelve months confirming the prediction of a substantial use of governmental websites. Reasons respondents gave for visiting governmental websites included looking for specific information (getting directions, obtaining tax forms, looking for a job and so forth) and expressing an opinion which had a smaller percentage (32%). Another prediction that citizens access governmental websites more often to obtain information than to communicate was also confirmed. As such, the internet becomes a one-way communication tool relative to government.

While most of these studies focused on only the usage of policy communication channels, this study also sought to focus on how the channels facilitated the awareness level of policy details by the youth who are the major beneficiaries of the policy.

2.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the review of research literature in relation to the research area from a number of secondary sources such as internet, books, white papers, conferences and journals. Grunig & Hunt's model of public relations informed the theoretical framework for this study. In discussing the framework, emphasis was placed on the two-way model of communication. The thorough discussion on the model brought to the fore, all the elements that make up the two-way symmetrical model. Also, the long running disputes among researchers about the merits of the two-way symmetrical model were also delved into and practical cases in which the model was adopted in government-citizen communication were reviewed.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Two research methods, qualitative and quantitative were employed in collecting data for this study. This complementary research methodology is referred to as “triangulation” (Babbie, 1994) and defined by Bertrand & Hughes (2005:239) as “the use of more different research approaches (of data gathering or of analysis and interpretation) to the same question”. Triangulation is seen as an appropriate tool by several scholars (Blankson, 2000; Valeda, 2002).

3.1.1 Interview

In order for the researcher to gather qualitative data, a semi-structured interview with an official of the National Youth Authority (NYA) was conducted. According to Lidlof & Taylor (2002:173) interviews help “to understand the social actors experience and perspective”. The interview provided a very in-depth source of data because the information provided is first hand, presumably accurate, and revealed the world of the interviewee, his emotions, and thoughts about the world around him (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). This approach elicited substantial and fully engaged responses that adequately threw more light on the policy communication channels.

3.1.2 Survey

To gather quantitative data, a survey was conducted among undergraduate students of the University of Ghana. The term survey is commonly applied to a research methodology designed to collect data from a sample of specific population and typically utilises a questionnaire or an interview as the survey instrument (Robson, 1993). The use of survey is important as it provides

the research with data that lends itself to statistical analysis in order to allow generalisation of results (Saunders, Louis & Thornhil, 2003).

According to Baxter & Babbie, (2004), surveys have advantages and weaknesses. By standardizing the survey, the researcher risks "fitting round pegs into square holes" by developing general questions relevant to all respondents rather than questions most relevant to each given respondent. In addition, survey research can be inflexible at times when the researcher is constrained to the original design throughout the study.

The advantages of the survey method however, outweigh its disadvantages. The cross sectional survey in particular, allows the researcher to gather large data reflective of a large population. Surveys also allow or help in analysing data easily given the many variables that are analysed. In addition, the standardized questions used in a survey render studies such as this immense strength in terms of measurement (Baxter & Babbie, 2004).

Another merit of survey is the cost-effective nature inherent in employing this design. Surveys allow a large collection of data in an inexpensive way. Generally the information that is acquired in a survey is broad and sometimes, quite detailed. Since, data acquisition for research is mostly costly; survey provides avenues to cheaply collect data for research analysis.

3.2 Population for the Study

Romano (2004) describes accessible population as the target population that is reachable to a researcher because of geographical, temporal, or cultural characteristics. Target population includes a set of people or events to which researchers wish to generalise the results of their study. Consequently, the selection of participants for any research has implication for data

collection and data available for analysis (Burgess, Pole, Evans & Priestley, 1994). This helps to define the limits for generalising the findings (Eisenhardt, 1989).

3.2.1 Survey Population

The population for the survey is undergraduate students of the University of Ghana, Legon. According to the University's website, the student population for the 2013-2014 academic year stands at 26,754 with undergraduate population of 26,154 students and a male to female ratio of 2:1. The researcher believes that the use of undergraduate students provides an immense opportunity to determine the level of knowledge and awareness of the national youth policy from an identifiable group of young people who are well educated, have different backgrounds and orientations and do not only have access to a wide range of channels used by government to communicate but have the ability to use them.

Thus, the population for the survey represents an informed number of young people who, as the researcher believes or expects, have some level of awareness of the policy, as well as the ability to utilise channels employed by government in informing stakeholders and benefactors of the policy.

3.2.2 Sampling

According to Cooper & Schindler (2003) sampling is important for compelling reasons such as lower cost, greater accuracy of result, greater speed of data collection and availability of population selection. However, sampling requires that the researcher thinks critically about the parameters of the population from which the sample is to be drawn and carefully chooses participants on this basis (Silverman, 2005).

Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method, was used to select a government agency, the National Youth Authority, for this part of the study. The Authority is the government agency under the Ministry of Youth and Sports directly responsible for the implementation of the national youth policy. With the help of a recruitment guide, a government official, Mr. P. K. Mensah, was purposively selected and interviewed.

Mr. Mensah, is a Deputy National Coordinator in-charge of Programmes and Organizations who has an, in-depth understanding of how the Authority works with its stakeholders in order to achieve its aims. Additionally, he has also worked closely with numerous stakeholders especially the youth and has crucial insight about the various channels of communication employed by the government to communicate the youth policy.

According to Hsieh & Shannon (2005) qualitative researchers often select purposive samples because of the particular research question(s) and also the consideration in the resources available to the researcher. The research question for the study seeks to examine the communication channels used to communicate the national youth policy in an ever increasing interactive and collaborative environment and find out respondents' awareness of policy details due to the use of interactive channels with government.

3.2.3 Survey Sample

The researcher employed purposive and convenience sampling techniques in selecting 200 respondents, within the youth age bracket of 15-34 as stipulated in the national youth policy, from the University of Ghana who are aware of the existence of the policy for the survey. The purposive sampling was used because the researcher targeted youth who are believed to be aware of the national youth policy and belong to the stated age category. Thus, students were screened to purposively select those who are aware of the policy to participate in the research through the

use of a screener question. Purposive sampling is a non-probable sample and it does not follow guidelines of mathematical probability unlike probable sampling in which each unit's chance for selection is known using mathematical guidelines (Wimmer & Domnick, 2006).

Convenience sampling was subsequently used to capture participants who qualify to take part in the research after the screening exercise and are easily accessible and willing to be part of the research. Convenience sampling is a collection of readily accessible subjects, elements, or events for study (Wimmer & Domnick, 2006) and is the least costly to the researcher, in terms of time, effort and money (Marshall, 1996). Respondents at the various halls of residence were informally requested to participate and those willing to, participated. However many chose not to. Despite the assertion that convenience sampling is flawed because it unsystematically selects the respondents, applying the approach in this study is considerable because the available samples are helpful in collecting exploratory information and also helpful in producing useful data on the objectives of the study.

The procedure of the sampling was aimed at attaining a representative sample from the population. Table 3.1 indicates that almost half (49%) of the respondents were males while slightly more than half (51%) were females. The distribution indicates a higher willingness on the part of the females to partake in this research more than the males, even though, the ratio of male to female students is 2:1.

Table 3.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Profile	Characteristics	Frequency (N=200)	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>	Male	98	49
	Female	102	51
<i>Age Group</i>	15-19	105	52.5
	20-24	84	42
	25-29	10	5
	30-34	1	0.5
<i>Undergraduate Level</i>	100	65	32.5
	200	58	29
	300	42	21
	400	35	17.5

In relation to the age group, of the 200 who answered the questionnaire, about half (53%) were between the age bracket of (15-19); two-fifths (42%) were between 20-24 and less than one-tenth (6%) were between 25-34 years old.

Finally, with regard to the undergraduate level, it can be seen that one-third (33%) were level 100 students; about three out of ten (29%) were level 200 students; one-fifth (21%) were third year students whereas the fourth or final year students were slightly less than one-fifth (18%).

3.3 Data Collection

When collecting data, emphasis is placed on developing research evidence systematically and searching for a broad array of evidence which aims at either confirming or refuting findings of previous research (Hartley, 2004). According to Bryman & Burgess, (1994) data collection and recording have implications for analysis which links to the process of theorising and writing. In this regard, extensive primary data sources (from the field or survey) are used in this research.

3.3.1 Interview Guide

The researcher collected in-depth data through a face-to-face interview with the government official. The interview which lasted an hour was conducted with the aid of an interview guide which allowed the researcher to probe for further explanations. The interview guide had five questions focused on identifying and examining government policy communication channels in terms of whether they allowed for feedback from the youth who are the ultimate beneficiaries of the policy. The interview guide was sent a week ahead to enable the interviewee be abreast of information required.

The researcher took notes during the interview and also audio recorded the interviewee. The researcher being aware of the fact that privileged information about the interviewee may be known which could be damaging if made public (Hartley, 2004), the interviewee was given a pseudonym.

3.3.2 Questionnaire

Quantitative data was collected from 200 students of the University of Ghana employing a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed and pre-tested with ten undergraduate students of the University of Ghana. The pre-testing helped the researcher to reword some questions in order to get rid of ambiguities, double barrel questions and also eliminate unnecessary questions. The questionnaire had two sections - A and B and was made up of only closed-ended questions. It was designed in accordance with the research question to collect quantitative data.

Section A was made up of questions about different aspects of the national youth policy and its communication process to which respondents provided their responses. These responses enabled the researcher to find out from respondents the government policy communication channels through which they communicated their concerns to government. Section B of the questionnaire collected information on the demographic characteristics of respondents such as gender and

educational levels. The questionnaire was self-administered. Based on the responses to the two-way communication between government and the youth, the awareness of policy details by the youth was examined.

In order to ensure reliability of responses, respondents were assured that the research is for academic purposes only and any response provided would be treated with utmost confidentiality. Additionally, respondents were fully informed prior to the study about the potential risks and procedures involved even though the risks to participants are minimal and can be considered to be equivalent to the risks involved in their everyday work activities.

Hard copies of data are stored in a locked filing facility in the researcher's premises. Only the researcher and research supervisor have access to the raw data from the study. All these were aimed at instilling confidence in respondents to give reliable responses. As a result of these measures, information analysed in this study represent the exact data obtained from the field.

3.4 Data Analysis

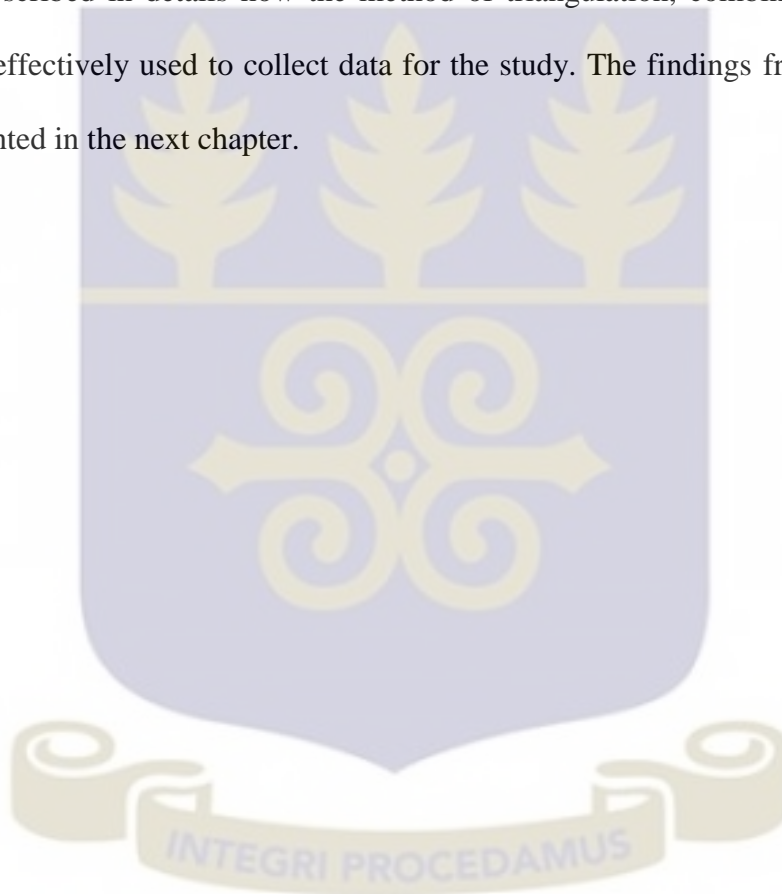
After data collection from the above named sources, the process of analyses commenced. To summarise and rearrange the data gathered, several interrelated procedures are performed during the data analysis stage (Zikmund, 2000). Consequently, both qualitative and quantitative techniques were utilised in the analysis of the collected data.

Analysis of the qualitative data gathered from the interview was based on the notes and transcriptions of the recordings and quotations which were used to bring out some of the strong thoughts and views of the interviewee. On the other hand, the data obtained through the questionnaire were coded using a coding guide. In analysing the data, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. This is the standard software used to analyse data collected

quantitatively. Descriptive analysis, frequency tables and charts were used in presenting the findings of the data. According to Creswell (1994), quantitative research focuses on examining a problem based on testing a theory and analysing it using statistical techniques.

3.5 Chapter Summary

Chapter Three described in details how the method of triangulation, combination of interview and survey, was effectively used to collect data for the study. The findings from the use of this method are presented in the next chapter.



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The data provides statistical and in-depth information on the communication channels employed by the Ghanaian government in disseminating and promoting the National Youth Policy (NYP), which was the purpose of this study. This is a summary of data obtained through the in-depth interview conducted and the survey. The survey data was analysed using SPSS.

4.1 Government-Youth Communication Channels

In the in-depth interview, Mr. Mensah, the interviewee, emphasised that the Ghanaian government employed two-way communication channel to raise awareness of the NYP, and described this communication as government to youth and youth to government communication. According to the interviewee, government considered the youth as fundamental actors with whom to develop an interactive partnership in the communication process as any youth policy is only feasible if policy information is able to reach the multiplicity of its major beneficiaries, in this case, the youth. Mr. Mensah said, *“government used a number of communication channels that made it possible to reach a large section of the youth across the length and breadth of the country”*.

The findings of the interview (Appendix 3) indicate that the National Youth Authority, its sector Ministry as well as government policy actors used their Facebook, Twitter, blogs, wikis and other social media tools to send policy information to the youth. Social media offered government the opportunity to communicate with the youth through dialogue with the potential for quick feedback from them. Policy information was usually informally expressed as views and

exchange of ideas between government and the youth, allowing either side to learn and be influenced by the other.

According to Mr. Mensah, for social media, the youth were able to participate in this communication process through feedback options such as discussion boards, fan sites and videos uploaded to YouTube. ICT provided an interactive channel which enabled “mass self-communication” through which government and the youth had the ability to enter the public sphere by advancing issues that challenge or authenticate official government discourses. In the survey (appendix 4), results concerning the use of social media by respondents to convey policy information to government indicate that more than one-third (32%) youth communicated to government through the social media. Social media emerged as the most frequently used channel by which the youth put across their concerns and opinions concerning the policy to government.

In the one-on-one interview, it emerged that broadcast media such as television and radio were also widely used by government to circulate innovative messages about the policy to the youth. Government officials appeared on television and radio to talk about the policy contents, for instance during the sector Ministry’s turn at the Meet-the-Press series organised by the Ministry of Communications and also talk shows. Broadcast media, according to Mr. Mensah, largely offered opportunities for the youth to convey information in an interactive manner to government through, for instance, live studio audience, phone-in, text-in and question-and-answer segments.

Similarly, about one-fifth (21%) of the respondents in the survey said they communicated through the broadcast media to government about the policy. Broadcast media ranked second as the most frequently used channel by the respondents to communicate with government concerning the policy.

Targeted policy information was also sent through emails of the respondents and text messages were also used to send information concerning policy programmes and consultative processes. The survey respondents engagement with government through ICT's was ranked third as close to one-fifth (16%) utilised this channel to send their concerns about the policy to government.

Likewise, the in-depth interview results indicate that the Ghanaian government also employed print media which included newspaper, magazines leaflets, billboards and posters to transmit policy information to the youth. Articles and publications among others about the policy were periodically published in these channels for the consumption of the youth. Mr. Mensah explained that print media offered government opportunities for interactive engagement with the youth although the level of interactivity offered was low. Feedback options for the youth included rejoinders, letters to the editors, opinion pieces etc. Survey results on the other hand shows that print media is the fourth most frequent channel through which respondents communicated to government about the policy. Print media had slightly more than one out of every 10 (13%) respondents using its feedback options to communicate their opinions about the policy to government.

The in-depth interview further indicates that government policy actors had direct contacts with many youth at various levels particularly the local government level through youth forums, workshops, policy fairs, national consultative sessions etc. There were also purposely designed interactive sessions by government in various schools, at the Youth Leadership Training Centres, cultural events etc. where policy actors imparted knowledge about the policy to the youth. According to Mr. Mensah,

“in 2012, over 100 delegates of youth organisations from the Western, Central and Greater Accra regions as well as representatives of some political parties participated in the Zonal Regional Youth Dialogue forum at Takoradi which was part of a nationwide interactive consultative process where over 500 youth with

varied backgrounds participated to solicit inputs for the Youth Policy Action Plan in four Zones”.

At the forum, the delegates discussed economic empowerment, human and technology development, culture, sports and national orientation which were among the 19 priority areas of the policy. The forum was under the theme "Review of Youth Development in Ghana since the launch of the National Youth Policy: Consultations for further action." Mr. Mensah further stated that personal interaction offered opportunities to government to receive policy information from the youth through face-to-face interaction where the youth replied government on issues of concern to them about the policy. The survey results indicated that over one-tenth (12%) adopted interpersonal interaction to express their views concerning the policy to the government.

Additionally, interview results show that a downloadable version of the policy was available on the Authority's website as well as the sector Ministry and official Government of Ghana websites. Information concerning the policy was also periodically spread through the website of other government agencies. According to Mr. Mensah, *“news stories targeting the youth were hoisted on the Ghana News Agency (GNA) and Government of Ghana websites concerning the Takoradi youth forum.”*

He further explained that the government portals also offered the youth the opportunity to communicate with government concerning the policy. On the website of the Authority, for instance, youth feedback options included blogs, youth dialogue and reprotalk. Concerning feedback on policy issues to government from the youth through government portals, survey results indicated that government portals ranks the least most frequently used channel by respondents. Specifically, less than one out of every ten (6%) respondents utilised websites of government to convey policy information to government.

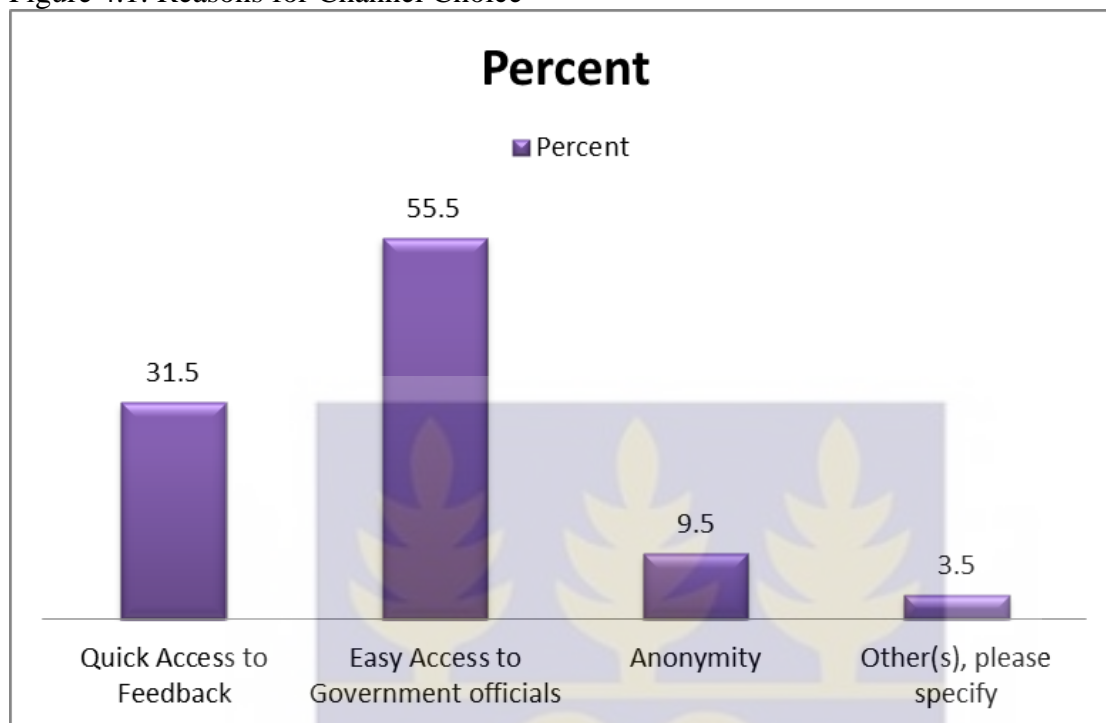
The reasons why both government and the respondents utilised the discussed channels in exchanging policy information was also delved into. Thus, government's reasons for the utilisation of discussed channels in conveying policy information to respondents was juxtaposed with respondents reasons for the choice of channels through which they also communicated to government their concerns and suggestions.

According to the interviewee, government recognises the gradual shift of communication from hierarchical, top-down manner to a more interactive one. Therefore, government deemed it instrumental to ensure participatory communication through the usage of communication channels that not only allowed government to send policy information to the youth but also listen to them. Consequently, Ghana's youth policy communication channels were not unidirectional or top-down in terms of flow of policy information but symmetrical. Thus, the effective use of these multiple channels of interactive communication was a necessary condition to raise the youth's awareness of policy details so as to cultivate a sense of ownership of, and engagement in, the governance process.

Survey results also indicate that respondents chose channels for reasons such as convenience and anonymity.



Figure 4.1: Reasons for Channel Choice



The findings indicate that more than half (55.5%) of the respondents would choose a particular channel to communicate to government because they found that channel was easily accessible. About a third (31%) of the respondents utilised a channel that they believed provided quick feedback when communicating with government officials about the policy. Again, one-tenth (10.5%) of the respondents selected a channel because they wanted to maintain anonymity, less than one-tenth (3%) of the respondents considered other things for their choice of communication channel in reaching government officials.

4.2 Youth Awareness of the National Youth Policy

According to the interviewee, the adoption of two-way communication channels in the dissemination of the policy was aimed at ensuring adequate flow of policy information through the exchange of policy ideas and opinions between government and the youth so as to create

awareness among the youth to the existence and content of the policy. When the youth become aware of the policy, they will accept and take ownership of it.

Survey findings on respondents' awareness of the policy based on the knowledge demonstrated on eight (8) key policy areas are provided as follows.

4.2.1 Youth Policy Formulation Year

Respondents' knowledge concerning when the national youth policy was formulated was gauged. The policy was formulated in August, 2010.

Figure 4.2- Youth Policy Formulation Year

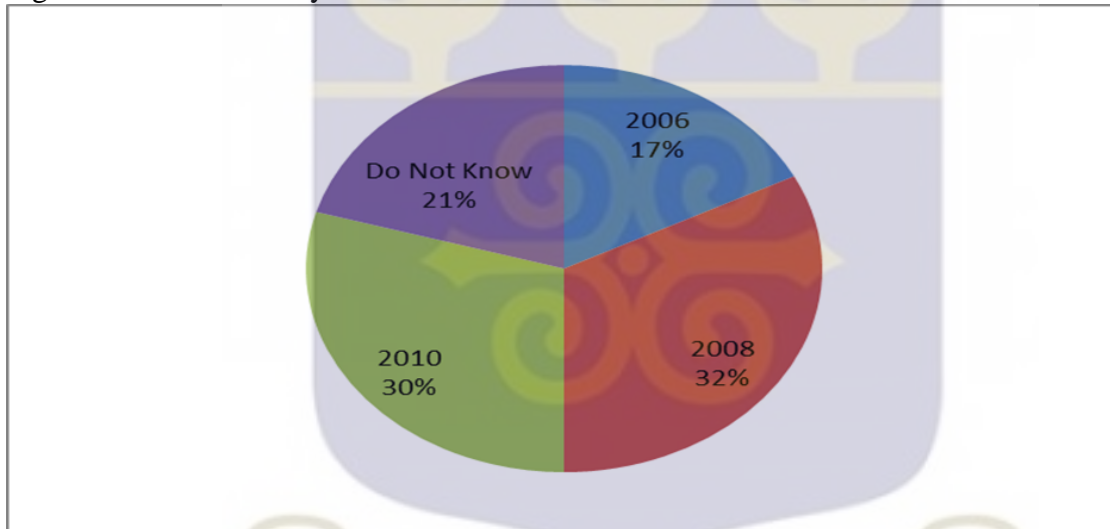


Figure 4.3, depicts respondents' knowledge of when the youth policy was formulated. From the chart, three out of every ten (30%) respondents knew that the policy was formulated in 2010 whereas nearly five out of ten (49%) of them had different answers about the year of the policy formulation. However, slightly more than two out of ten (21%) of the youth did not have any idea at all when the policy was formulated.

4.2.2 Youth Policy Implementation Ministry

The Ministry responsible for the implementation of the policy is the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Table 4.4 shows that 54 per cent (108) of survey respondents knew the right Ministry responsible for implementing the policy. However, 46 per cent of the youth who were aware of the existence of the policy could not correctly indicate that the Ministry of Youth and Sports was responsible for the formulation and implementation of the policy.

Table 4.1: Youth Policy Implementation Ministry

Ministry Responsible for the Implementation of the Youth Policy	Frequency	Per Cent (%)
Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Protection	13	6.5
Ministry of Finance	2	1.0
Ministry of Youth & Sports	108	54.0
Do Not Know	77	38.5
Total	200	100.0

Out of the 46 per cent of such youth, 38.5 per cent (77) did not attempt to find out the responsible Ministry while about 6.5 per cent (13) and 1 per cent (2) thought it was the Ministry of Children, Gender and Social Protection and the Ministry of Finance respectively whose responsibility it was to implement the policy.

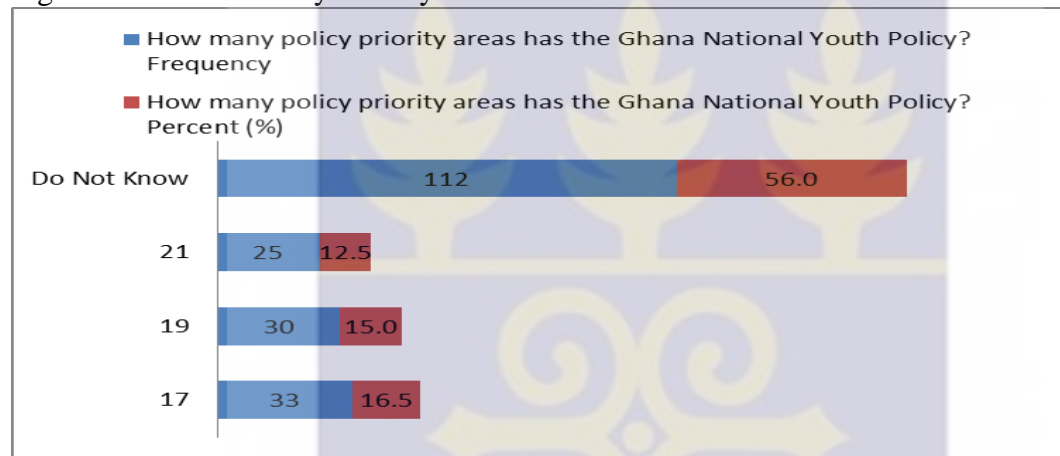
This data is an indication that close to half of the interviewees (46%) were unable to correctly identify the Ministry of Youth and Sports as the right Ministry mandated to execute the plans and programs meant to promote the welfare of the youth. Again, about two out of every five (38.5%) youth had no knowledge about which ministry's responsibility it was to ensure the functioning of the policy. Almost one out of every 10 youth (7.5%) wrongly assumed that the Ministry of

Finance or the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection was responsible for executing the policy.

4.2.3 Youth Policy Priority Areas

The national youth policy emphasizes 19 priority areas. Respondents' knowledge concerning the number of priority areas was ascertained.

Figure 4.3: Youth Policy Priority Areas



These findings show that nearly nine out of every ten (85%) youth were not conversant with the priority areas of the policy. While more than half (56%) of them were clueless, one-third (30%) provided different answers.

4.2.4 Youth Policy Stated Categories

The policy document clearly states one of its categories as in-school and out-of-school youth. However, table 4.5 evidently illustrates that seven out of every ten (70%) youth could not correctly identify a category stated in the policy.

Table 4.2: Youth Policy Stated Category

Policy Stated Category	Frequency	PerCent (%)
Mothers & Fathers	2	1.0
Family & Friends	23	11.5
In-School & Out-of School	60	30.0
Do Not Know	115	57.5
Total	200	100.0

Conversely, the data reveals that one-third (30%) of them demonstrated unambiguous knowledge of a stated category of the policy.

4.2.5 Youth Policy Vision

The policy has as its theme “Towards an empowered youth, impacting positively on national development”. Table 4.6 indicates respondents’ knowledge of the vision of the policy.

Table 4.3: Policy Vision

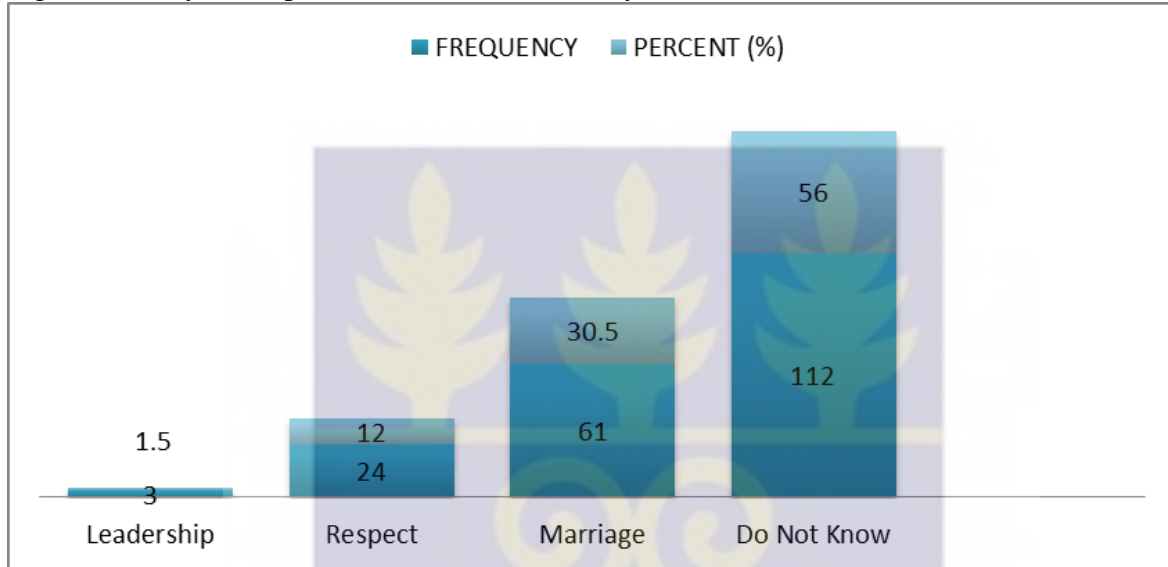
Policy Vision	Frequency	Per Cent (%)
To foster unity among the youth	9	4.5
To empower the youth to contribute positively towards national development	75	37.5
To promote youth participation in all sectors of life	16	8.0
Do Not Know	100	50.0
Total	200	100.0

The findings portray that more than half (62.5%) of the respondents were ignorant of the vision of the policy although more than one-fifth (37.5%) of them demonstrated knowledge of it.

4.2.6 Youth Policy Key Principles

The policy has ten key principles. Figure 4.4 depicts the knowledge demonstrated by respondents' in identifying key principles enshrined in the policy.

Figure4.4: Key Principle Not Stated In the Policy



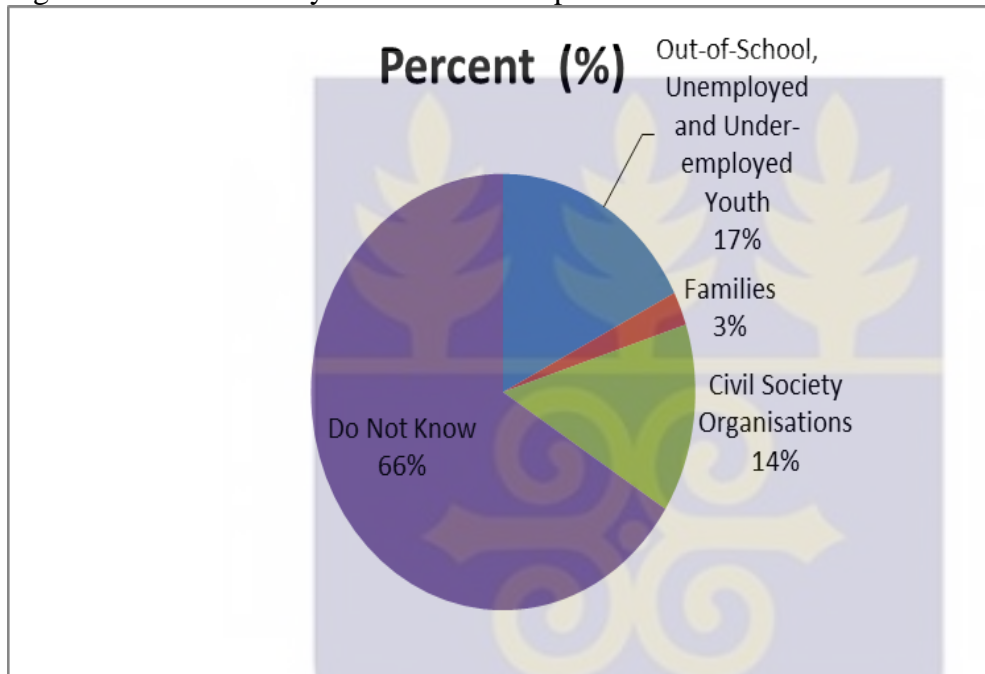
The number of respondents' who rightly indicated that marriage is not a principle found in the policy document were 30.5 per cent (61) whereas 12 per cent (24) and 1.5 per cent (3) correctly identified respect and leadership respectively as principles that the policy states. However, 56 per cent (112) had no idea about the stated categories.

This data indicates that almost nine out of every ten (87%) youth demonstrated ignorance with regard to the principles in the policy. Nevertheless, one could say that slightly more than one respondents out of ten (13%) knew the principles of the policy.

4.2.7 Youth Policy Identifiable Groups

The level of knowledge demonstrated by the respondents as regards the groups the policy identifies was also gauged. The policy captures it as “Identifiable groups under the national youth policy”.

Figure 4.5: Youth Policy Identifiable Groups



“Out-of-school, unemployed and underemployed youth” was correctly determined as an identifiable group in the policy by 17% (34) of the respondents whereas 14 per cent (28) and 3 per cent (6) thought that civil society organisations and families respectively were identifiable groups in the policy. However, 66 per cent (132) of the respondents expressed an honest opinion that they had no idea.

This data means that while about a fifth (17%) of the youth can correctly determine the identifiable groups the policy recognises; about nine out of every ten (83%) of them who are

supposed to be aware of the policy, could not indicate the identifiable groups for which the policy has been designed.

4.2.8 Youth Policy Sections

The policy is set out in twelve (12) sections. Table 4.7 indicates respondents' knowledge on the sections of the policy.

Table 4.7: Youth Policy Sections

How Many Sections Has the National Youth Policy?	Frequency	Percent (%)
10	20	10.0
12	20	10.0
14	17	8.5
Do Not Know	143	71.5
Total	200	100.0

Analysis of the data in table 4.7 indicates that only a tenth (10%) of the youth have accurate knowledge of the number of sections in the policy. Conversely, slightly more than seven out of ten (71.5%) completely had no idea although nearly a fifth lacked a precise knowledge of the number of sections found in the policy.

4.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings in conformity with the objectives of the research. The findings, collected from a government official and two hundred undergraduate students of the University of Ghana ranging from the age of 15 to the age of 34, indicated respondents possess unreliable knowledge of policy details and demonstrated low awareness of the policy content although there seem to be interactive communication of the policy between government and the youth.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Discussion

This study aimed at examining the communication channels used by the Ghanaian government in exchanging policy information with its major stakeholders, the youth. Consequently, the study was guided by three objectives which sought to identify and examine the communication channels adopted by government to facilitate government-citizen communication of the policy and then to ascertain from respondents the most common of those government communication channels through which they sent their opinions and views about the policy to government. Additionally, the study aimed to ascertain the level of awareness of the youth of the NYP.

Supposedly, government's initiation of policy dialogue through the usage of channels that allow for two-way symmetry or exchange of policy ideas and opinions between the government and the youth would encourage youth awareness of the policy.

5.1.1 Government-Youth Communication

Government's communication of the national youth policy was not unidirectional as the communication channels employed by government promoted the exchange of information between government and the youth. Thus, by providing interactive channels that allowed for feedback, government was able to have two-way communication with the youth.

The interview with the Deputy National Coordinator indicated that government regards the adoption of communication channels with interactive potential as key in creating awareness

among the youth, as the two-way communication model suggests (Grunig& Hunt, 1984). Taking cognisance of the different categories of the youth, government used multiple channels tailored to the information needs and unique categories of the various identifiable groups captured in the policy document. Broadly put, these channels can be classified under broadcast media, print media, social media, government portals, personal interaction and information and communication technologies (ICT's).

Analysis of the data as presented in the previous chapter revealed that, one of the channels through which government communicated the policy to the youth was through the social media. According to Issaka (2014), the use of social media in Ghana is on the rise especially among the youth and it is seemingly taking precedence over the traditional mass media. It is, therefore, not surprising that the social media is one of the channels employed by government to transmit policy information to the youth. Thus, social media's ability for rapid dissemination of policy content and the ability to lead informal conversations make it an important government policy communication channel.

The social media was the most predominant channel by which the respondents' expressed their views or comments of the policy to government. This finding suggests that the use of social media by government provided interactive opportunity through which the youth communicated directly to government their concerns and suggestions about the policy. This implies that the Ghanaian youth utilised feedback options such as blogging to communicate to government. This finding is consistent with a TCS G-Y (2013) survey conducted in June, 2013 in India and reviewed in Chapter Two which indicated that 75 per cent of Indian youth prefer to use social media to communicate with government

This finding also agreed with the findings in Australia where a national survey commissioned by digital publisher Sound Alliance (2013) found out that over half of the young people receive public information from the social media rather than television or newspapers.

Another communication channel used by government to communicate the NYP to the youth was the mass media (broadcast and print media). According to Walgrave, Soroka & Nuytemans (2007), the mass media are the fulcrum between government policy agendas and the public and the major channel through which government policy enters the public domain. However, according to TCSG-Y (2010) survey, print is the only category of mass media consumption to be losing ground among the youth although Walgrave et. al (2007) believe that compared to broadcast media, the print media is a major source of youth developmental issues for which policy makers resort to as evidential documents to push their agenda to target publics.

Broadcast media is the next significant channel after the social media employed by the respondents to communicate to government on issues of the policy. Respondents in this study reported to have engaged with the government about the policy through radio and television, a finding, supported by Ifoku's, 2013 study which identified TV and radio as important channels of policy communication. These interactive media gave platform for the youth to phone-in or send text messages to contribute or criticise short-comings of the policy, allowing for almost immediate feedback in many cases.

As indicated by the TCS G-Y (2013) survey, information accessed through the print media such as the newspaper is significantly toning down especially among the youth. It is therefore not surprising for this finding to reveal quite a poor percentage of the youth communicating to the government through the print media. However, as a medium that is long lasting or non-transient,

one would have found it interesting and advantageous that the youth would have utilised this channel to imprint their thoughts as a way of responding to the policy.

As indicated by Ifukor (2013) and reviewed in Chapter Three, communicating through interpersonal interaction on a face-to-face basis is still one of the main ways in which young people acquire and disseminate information. In fact, according to Dunn(2007), interpersonal interaction is the single most important means used by young people to communicate. It is, therefore, commendable that government used this channel to send policy information to youth. However, in this study, interpersonal interaction was not frequently used by the youth to disseminate their concerns and opinions to government.

Again, the findings of this study suggest that government portals were used by government policy actors as a channel to convey policy information to the youth. This finding confirms Furuli & Kongsrud (2009) study which indicated that governments designed portals to give citizens easy access to public information and services. However, the study respondents barely used government websites to send policy information to government even though the websites allowed respondents to ask questions and seek information directly from government officials online relevant to their needs and interests concerning the policy. Thus, among the survey respondents, sending feedback to government through government's own portals ranked the least among the channels the respondents used to communicate with government. This finding is consistent with the findings by Thomas & Streib (2003) whose finding indicates that the use of government's own websites by citizens to express opinions to government had a lower percentage.

The use of ICT was also reported as a channel by which government communicated to the youth in the awareness creation of the policy. This result is also consistent with a study by (Castells, 2007). His study suggests that, ICT creates a virtual interactive space for policy communication

between government and the youth to take place. Thus, government information can be expediently forwarded to the youth through ICT.

Respondents also used ICT to reach government. This finding again is consistent with finding in the USA by Thomas & Streib (2003 and Norris & Demeter (1999). Their findings suggest that the youth through email, text messaging and phone calls tried to give out information and express an opinion on governance issues. Both government portals and new ICTs are enabled by the use of the internet which serves as the “Invisible life” to government portals and ICTs.

The communication channels the study revealed to have been used by government officials in communicating the policy indicates that government adopted a two-way communication approach in disseminating policy information to the youth. This finding of the study corroborates previous research conducted by Sanford & Rose (2007) that indicates that interactive channels such as those used by government to convey policy information to the youth encourage feedback and promote government-citizen communication allowing for the exchange of policy information and ideas.

The ability of the government communication channels to allow the youth to communicate back to government seemed to have created a bridge between benefactors of the youth policy and beneficiaries alike. Graham & Avery (2013), cite Bertot & Jaeger (2010) assertion of the positive outcome of the use of two-way communication channels. This present finding reflects Bertot & Jaeger (2010) proposition that the growing use of two-way communication channels in policy communication is reducing and closing the communication barrier and gap between the youth and government.

Grönlund (2005) stresses that interactive communication channels between government and the youth builds and promotes a firm platform for stakeholder involvements in policy implementation decisions. By providing interactive channels that allowed for feedback, government was able to have two-way communication with its youth. Pavlik (1998: 137) posits that ‘interactivity means two-way communication between source and receiver’ in this case, the Ghanaian government and the youth. This also confirms Crozier’s (2008) findings that gradually, governments are seen to have dependence on the input of stakeholders and the youth (who are the targets and major beneficiaries of the policy) in order to direct the policy.

Additionally, the application of two-way communication channels between government and the youth in the policy dissemination process is as Wang & Lim, (2011) put it, reflective of the perception and response of the youth to the opportunity provided. However, government as the initiator of the communication process had influence on how citizens perceived and responded to the opportunity provided as suggested by (Bryan et al., 1998).

This is in line with the claim by Botan & Soto, (1998) who indicate that in reality, communication relationship between any organisation and its publics is mostly considered from the point of view of the organisation. Thus, according to Botan & Soto (1998) government becomes the object-viewer and the youth are merely reactionary, existing and having importance only as a response to policy communication by government.

However, findings of this research refute Leitch & Neilson’s (2001); and Karlberg’s (1996) claim that the two-way communication fails to consider the multiplicity of publics. Respondents of this survey knew the multiple channels government employed to communicate the policy to its multiple stated categories of youth. This is again in agreement with Botan & Soto’s (1998)

assertion that publics are not fixed categories waiting to be identified but rather are constructed and reconstructed through the discourses in which they share.

While governments' rationale for using two-way communication channels was to provide an avenue for the youth to give feedback to government policy communication ranging from ideas, questions, request for clarity etc., the choice or preference of a feedback channel varied among the youth as various considerations such as convenience or time is considered. Again the prominence of a channel and its level of interactivity in allowing placement of one's opinion, Maggiolini et al., (2013) and the control of the content of an opinion writer deter or discourage the youth to adopt a particular two-way communication channel.

Respondents' reasons for the choice of a channel varied from convenience, easy accessibility, quick access and anonymity. These reasons influenced the choice of channel the youth utilised to engage with government officials concerning the policy. These reasons provided by the respondents in relation to the choice of the channel vary to an extent from findings by Norris & Demeter, (1999). In their study, respondents visit governmental websites in hope of seeking specific information (getting directions, obtaining tax forms, looking for a job etc.). However, a small percentage of the respondents made use of the channels to express an opinion. It also differs from the findings of Ifukor (2013) as Ifoku's findings attribute choice of medium of communication to several factors such as the media profile, the target audience, time factor among others.

This finding reveals predominantly that the Ghanaian youth will choose a channel because it affords easy accessibility to government official. For example, if all channels are available to a youth in reaching the government, they will consider which channel will be easy to use in order

to reach government officials with their views. It is imperative to add that per the analysis, a number of the youth will want to choose a channel that will allow them to remain anonymous.

5.2 Awareness Level of the National Youth Policy

The research objective of the current study was to find out the youth's level of awareness of the national youth policy based on the exchange of policy information through the two-way communication channels used by government to facilitate government-youth communication of the national youth policy. The researcher's expectation was that if the two-way communication channels have been vigorously used to exchange policy information between government and the youth, the youth should demonstrate unequivocal or explicit awareness about the content of the policy.

As indicated by Pippa (2003) the use of interactive channels promote knowledge and affords both policy makers and recipients to be on the same level of understanding of policy details and engaging in an effective implementation of policy. Despite the use interactive channels by government that allowed respondents to have a say and be heard on the national youth policy, the respondents in this study were largely ignorant of the fundamental details of the national youth policy of which they are the ultimate beneficiaries and appear to display little interest in the policy due to their low insight of policy details.

The question on the policy implementing Ministry had the highest profile among the study participants as more than 50 per cent rightly indicated that the Ministry of Youth and Sports was responsible for the implementation of the policy. Although there was quite a strong awareness of the implementing ministry, more than half of the study participants lacked reliable knowledge of all the other policy details. In fact more than three out of every five respondents were

clueless about the vision of the policy and could not even identify the key principles underpinning the policy.

Overall, the youth who took part in the study had a poor or unreliable knowledge of policy details. There was a vague or low awareness of the eight policy details that was enquired of the respondents. This result is consistent with Shanahan & Elliot (2009) assertion that knowledge of government policy was generally poor except among those who had an interest in it or who were studying a related course by virtue of academics.

The seeming lack of awareness in the policy exhibited by the youth also points to the youth's apathy towards government policies and their cynical attitudes to it (Bell, Vromen & Collin, 2008; Bennett, 2003). These researchers suggest that the youth become more interested in government activities when it comes to politics and electoral processes. It is during such periods that the youth feel government has more relevance to their lives.

5.3 Which communication channels were used by the government of Ghana to facilitate awareness of the national youth policy among the youth?

In an attempt therefore to use the observations and findings obtained from this study to answer the research question above, posed at the beginning of the study, it is apparent that if Sanford and Rose's, (2007: 406) assertion that the objective of two-way communication is to "improve the efficiency, acceptance, and legitimacy of political processes" including policy implementation, then it can be concluded that the Ghanaian government's two-way communication of the NYP is not likely to have successfully achieved the desired results of creating awareness of the policy among its targeted audience.

The use of multiple channels of interactive government-youth communication described by the interviewee has not been effective in raising the respondents' awareness to policy details so as to cultivate among them a sense of ownership of, and engagement in, the policy implementation process. The strategies used by the government to create awareness of the NYP consequently need to be reviewed to make it more interactive and involving in order to create the desired level of awareness.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

Just like any other research, this study has its own limitations. Firstly, the sample size of 200 undergraduate students selected for the study limits the study. But for time and financial restraints, it would have been more desirable to cover a wider number of students or the youth in order to make generalisations of findings more credible and concrete.

Also, due to the specific provision made for the conduct of this research, government's communication of the policy was ascertained from the perspective of students of the University of Ghana only. The views of other categories of youth, government and its policy implementing agencies were not included.

Again, this research did not consider how government used feedback from the youth to be able to determine whether government-citizen communication of the youth policy was asymmetrical or symmetrical. Other issues affecting policy communication such as budgetary constraints of policy implementing agencies and inefficiency of public officials were also ignored.

Despite these limitations, the researcher anticipates that the findings of the study will contribute to the existing literature on the subject area and arouse interest for further studies in the area of policy communication in Ghana.

5.5 Recommendations for Policy Actors

Based on the foregoing findings the researcher suggests the following recommendations to aid government in improving its policy communication with its youth as well as increasing policy awareness among them.

1. Government should encourage the youth in particular and citizens in general to take passionate interest in the NYP. It would be to the advantage of government communicators and officials if they devise a more open two-way communication process to involve the youth in the policy communication and implementation.
2. Since social media is the most predominantly used communication channel by the youth to communicate their opinions to government, government should place emphasis on improving access to and usage of the various types of social media to permit a significant diffusion of policy issues as well as allow for more comments, suggestions and so forth from the youth to government.
3. Additionally, government, as the initiator of the policy communication process, bears a major responsibility for creating awareness. However, because effective policy communication is a two-way process, government should ensure that the youth have enough exposure to the policy details so as to allow for an adequate exchange of policy information.
4. Again, since the youth have access to many and varied communication channels, government should emphasise and improve two-way communication channels in order to provide more and better information to the youth as well as obtain useful comments from them on public policies.

5. Finally, respondents' awareness level of policy details was low. Consequently, government should ensure that the policy development processes are informed by input from multiple sources especially from people who are likely to be affected by the implementation of the policy decision so as to increase interest in and awareness of policy details.

5.6 Recommendations for Further Studies

Given the premise that replication of research is the mainstay of the scientific method and that empirical generalizations are central to knowledge development, the results of this research can hardly be considered conclusive. Additionally, with the development of generally any issue related to government policy communication and the many choices of communication channels available to citizens, some areas which were not covered by this research are quite important and could be further explored. Also, the limitations and shortcomings of this research provide implications for further research hence several extensions of this research could be made. The following directions for further research need to be acknowledged.

First and foremost, this research ascertained government's communication of the national youth policy from the viewpoint of students. Future research could be extended to include other categories of youth and how it can be harnessed to increase knowledge and awareness levels of policy stakeholders. This could further confirm or disconfirm conclusions arrived at in this research.

Again, the research employed a sample size of 200. Findings could be enhanced and validated by using a more diversified random sample since the main limitation for quantitative data collection that restricts the development of the findings is the sample size. Thus, a sample with a balanced

distribution among the various categories of youth across the ten Regions of Ghana could be helpful in improving the representation and generalization of the results.

Further research could be conducted to find out the underlying causes of the findings of this research and possible solutions suggested to government so as to enable government identify suitable channels and improve its communication efforts. Certainly more comprehensive suggestions can be made if factors such as access to technology, political climate and behavioural intentions are included in any future studies.

Furthermore, the sample for this research- undergraduate students of the University of Ghana - falls within just one of eight categories of youth identified in the policy. Replication of this research can be conducted using other recognised categories of youth so as to strengthen the implications of this research and also improve its external validity.

Finally, it is reasonable to presume that the research findings could be attributed to demographical variables such as age, gender and levels of education. It would therefore be an interesting extension if future researchers investigated whether perceptions vary among these identified variables. Certainly more studies are needed to further validate the results of this study.

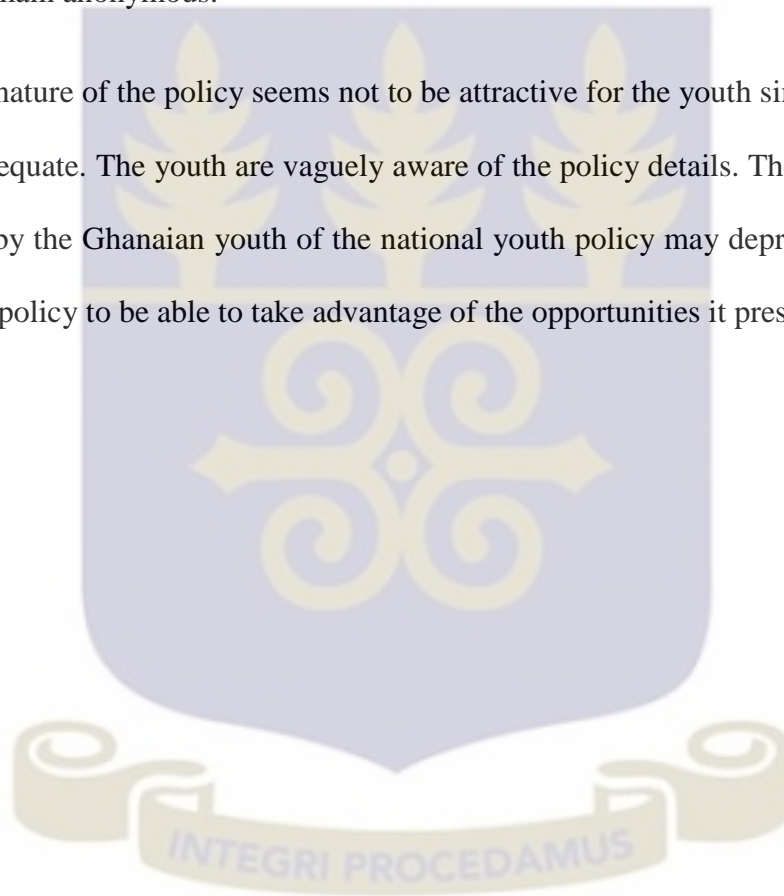
5.7 Conclusions

This current study set out to explore the policy communication channels used by government to communicate with the youth and vice versa in the promotion and dissemination of the national youth policy. An in-depth interview and a survey were conducted to obtain information for the purpose of this study. The analysis and discussions of the findings convincingly portrayed that the Ghanaian government applied communication channels that allowed for exchange of policy

information in facilitating government-youth communication of the policy. Due to the interactive opportunity the channels provided, it can be said that government made an effort to apply the two-way communication model.

Again, majority of students or the youth find it more interactive to participate in the policy dissemination process through the use of social media channels even though, some of the youth would want to remain anonymous.

Finally, the very nature of the policy seems not to be attractive for the youth since their insight of the policy is inadequate. The youth are vaguely aware of the policy details. The vague awareness of policy details by the Ghanaian youth of the national youth policy may deprive them of taking ownership of the policy to be able to take advantage of the opportunities it presents.



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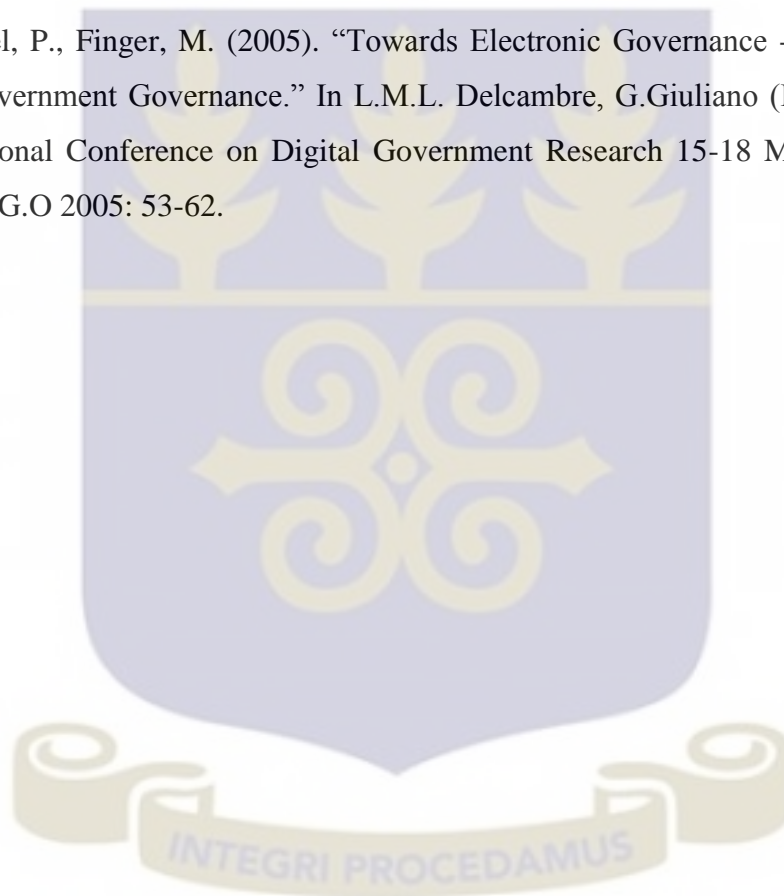
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Dear Respondent,

I am Margaret Magdalene Amoah, a student of the University of Ghana undertaking research on “Public Policy Communication: A Study of the National Youth Policy” in partial fulfilment for the award of Master of Arts (MA) in Communication Studies. I would be very appreciative if you could provide answers for this questionnaire to enable me have a reliable data for analysis.

IMPORTANT: This is purely an academic exercise. Hence all information gathered would be treated with utmost confidentiality.

1. What is your name?
2. What is your position at the National Youth Authority?
3. What is the role of the National Youth Authority in the implementation of the policy?
4. Who did government target in the communication process?
5. What channels were employed to communicate the policy to the targeted public(s)?
6. Did the channels allow for feedback, suggestions, complains or opinions from the youth?
7. What are the reasons for the use of these channels?

Appendix 2

**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

I am Margaret Magdalene Amoah, a student of the University of Ghana undertaking research on **“Public Policy Communication: A Study of the National Youth Policy”** in partial fulfilment for the award of Master of Arts (MA) in Communication Studies. I would be very appreciative if you could provide answers for this questionnaire to enable me have a reliable data for analysis.

IMPORTANT: *This is purely an academic exercise. Hence all information gathered would be treated with utmost confidentiality. Please choose the appropriate option(s).*

Screening Question: Do you know about Ghana’s National Youth Policy?

1. Yes

2. No

If yes continue

If no discontinue

SECTION A

Q1. Through which communication channel did you get to COMMUNICATE to government to government, your comments, suggestions and complaints if any, about the Ghana National Youth Policy?

1. Government Portals (Ministries, Departments, Agencies etc. Websites)
2. ICT (E-mail, SMS, Telephone etc.)
3. Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Blogs etc.)
4. Broadcast Media (TV, Radio, DVD etc.)
5. Print Media (Newspaper, Leaflets, Posters etc.)
6. Interpersonal Interaction (Government Officials, Policy Actors)

Q2. What is your reason for the answer to question 2 above?

1. Quick Access to Feedback
2. Easy Access to Government officials
3. Anonymity
4. Other(s), please specify.....

Q3. When was the Ghana National Youth Policy formulated?

1. 2006
2. 2008
3. 2010
4. Do Not Know

Q4. Which government Ministry is responsible for implementing the Ghana National Youth Policy?

1. Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Protection
2. Ministry of Finance
3. Ministry of Information & Media Relations
4. Ministry of Youth & Sports
5. Do Not Know

Q5. How many policy priority areas has the Ghana National Youth Policy?

1. 17
2. 19
3. 21
4. Do Not Know

Q6. Which of these is a category stated in the Ghana National Youth Policy?

1. Mothers & Fathers
2. Family & Friends
3. In-School & Out-of School
4. Do Not Know

Q7. Which of the following is the vision of the Ghana National Youth Policy?

1. To foster unity among the youth
2. To empower the youth to contribute positively towards national development
3. To promote youth participation in all sectors of life
4. Do Not Know

Q8. Which of these is not a key principle stated in Ghana National Youth policy?

1. Leadership 2. Respect 3. Marriage 4. Do Not Know

Q9. Which of the following is classified as an identifiable group in the Ghana National Youth Policy?

1. Out-of-School, Unemployed and Under-employed Youth
2. Families
3. Civil Society Organisations
4. Do Not Know

Q10. How many sections does the Ghana National Youth Policy have?

1. 10 2. 12 3. 14 4. Do Not Know

SECTION B
RESPONDENTS' BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Q11. Gender

1. Male 2. Female

Q12. Age

2. (15-19) 2. (20-24) 3. (25-29) 4. (30-34)

Q13. Level

3. (100) 2. (200) 3. (300) 4. (400)

Appendix 3

**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

Government-Youth Policy Communication Channels

NO	Government-Youth Communication Channels	Government to Youth	Youth to Government
1.	Broadcast Media	TV, radio, sound and video recordings	Phone-in, text-in, question and answer
2.	Print Media	Newspaper, magazines, newsletters, booklets	Letter to the editors, rejoinders, articles
3.	Social Media	Social networks sites, blogs, tagging, podcast	Discussion forums, blogging, comments
4.	ICT	E-mail, SMS, Telephone	Phone calls, SMS, E-mail
5.	Interpersonal Interaction	Focused group discussions, conferences, policy fairs	Question and answer
6.	Government Portals	MDA's Websites	RSSfeed, comments, chats



Appendix 4

**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

Youth to Government Policy Communication Channels

Communication Channels	Frequency	Percent (%)
Government Portals	12	6.0
ICT	32	16.0
Social Media platforms	64	32.0
Broadcast Media	42	21.0
Print Media	26	13.0
Interpersonal Interaction	24	12.0
Total	200	100.0

