Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Cambridge Journal of Education

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ccje20

An evaluation of the Free Senior High School Policy in Ghana

Abdulai Kuyini Mohammed & Ahmed Bawa Kuyini

To cite this article: Abdulai Kuyini Mohammed & Ahmed Bawa Kuyini (2021) An evaluation of the Free Senior High School Policy in Ghana, Cambridge Journal of Education, 51:2, 143-172, DOI: 10.1080/0305764X.2020.1789066

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2020.1789066

CAMBRIDGE JOURNAL OF EDUCATION
2021, VOL. 51, NO. 2, 143–172
https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2020.1789066

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

An evaluation of the Free Senior High School Policy in Ghana

Abdulai Kuyini Mohammed[a] and Ahmed Bawa Kuyini[b]

[a]Department of Political Science, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana; [b]College of Design and Social Context RMIT University, School of Global, Urban & Social Studies, Melbourne, Australia

ABSTRACT

Based on 65 interviews and secondary information, this study evaluated the programme, process and political dimensions of the Ghana Free Senior High School Education (SHS) Policy. The evidence from the data showed that the programme and its political dimensions were emphasised to the neglect of the process dimension. Effectiveness, one of the criteria in the programme dimension, was somewhat stressed. The remaining five criteria, including Equity, efficiency and responsiveness, were ignored. Overall, the political dimension was the most popular focus given that the introduction of the policy itself had been positively welcomed and this served to bolster confidence in the political regime as a whole. Some of the five stages of the process dimension, e.g. agenda setting and formulation, were poorly executed or were skipped, and implementation was fraught with challenges, such as inadequate funding and limited space. Implications in relation to the Multiple Streams Model, policy success/failure theory and the political settlement framework are discussed.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 9 December 2019
Accepted 25 June 2020

KEYWORDS
Fee-free; secondary education; programme; process; political; evaluation; sustainability

Introduction

The quality of a country's human resources is positively related to its growth and development prospects. This is because an informed citizenry has capacity to craft the strategies, design and apply the tools, and to deploy efficiently and effectively the resources to compel socioeconomic development. However, this is achievable if all citizens have equal opportunities and access to education to build those capacities. This view aligns with the World Bank's statement that 'sustained poverty reduction requires a commitment to reduce inequality and improve access to opportunities for all citizens' (World Bank, 2015). In Ghana, enabling access and equal opportunity has been undermined by the differences in outcomes of the government's poverty reduction efforts between urban and rural communities and the northern and southern parts of the country (Cooke, Hague, & McKay, 2016; World Bank, 2011b). Inequality is also evident in access to education between rich and poor households and between the northern and southern parts of Ghana, with the school enrolment gaps between these groups widening over many decades.

In an effort to bridge the enrolment gap between the rich and the poor, the government introduced Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) in 1996 (Essuman, 2018).

CONTACT Abdulai Kuyini Mohammed Zaayura@hotmail.com Department of Political Science, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana

The intervention resulted in an increase in primary school enrolment country-wide, up to 57% in 1999 and 65% in 2004 (UNESCO, 2006). Free education, as per the Constitution and as per the FCUBE initiative, was offered to primary and junior high school levels only (Nsia, 2018). This led to a situation where enrolment rates were high at the primary (95%) and junior high (85%) school levels, but low (45%) at the senior high school (SHS) level (Ministry of Education, 2017). These statistics implied that five out of every 10 children who started primary school were unlikely to have the opportunity to attend SHS education (Business and Financial Times [BFT], 2019). Some citizens and researchers (e.g Kuyini, 2013; World Bank, 2010) believe that the low enrolment at the SHS level is not due to a lack of demand, but rather due to limited financial capacity on the part of poor parents to pay for SHS education. The President of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, subscribed to that view as far back as 2008, and argued recently that

> over the last four years, an average of 100,000 Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) graduates, who are placed in public senior high schools each year, do not take up their place due to poverty … this means in the next decade, about one million young men and women would have had their education terminated at junior high school. (Ministry of Education, 2017)

This he considered unacceptable. When he came to power as a result of the 2016 elections, Akufo-Addo introduced the Free Senior High School Education Policy (Mohammed, 2020). This replaced the Progressively Free Senior High School Education (PFSHSE) Policy of his predecessor. As per the PFSHSE Policy, parents were exempted from paying some of the costs of education, which include examination, sports and library fees, as well as those for entertainment. In contrast, the Free SHS Policy provides education free in its entirety.

The Free SHS idea and the mode of implementation have both produced intense debate. While some people argue fee-free secondary education is preposterous and inconceivable, others endorse it as a strategy for poverty reduction and a means to supply the requisite skills and talented workforce for Ghana's socio-economic transformation (Essuman, 2018; Oduro, 2019). More importantly, the debate is underpinned by concerns about cost, sustainability, human resource development and politics. Some have argued that the policy was rushed for political reasons and without full consideration of the cost implications. To those holding this view, Free SHS is too expensive, and relies on oil revenue and international donor support, which are both unreliable in the long term (Cudjoe, 2018; Oduro, 2019). Others have argued that the rush to implement the policy implies that Free SHS is unlikely to meet the recommended standards of policy making (McConnell, 2010b), which could lead to failure.

On the basis of the observations made here, the aim of this study is to assess the Free SHS Policy in its programme, process and political dimensions. This study is different from previous work on secondary education in several important respects. Previous research either focused on programme effect; the cost burden and implications (Bennell, Bulwani, & Musikanga, 2005); inequity in access (Govinda, 2003); relevance to the job market (African Economic Outlook [AEO], 2014); improvement of quality and skills levels (Lauglo & Maclean, 2005); or benefit targeting (Werner, 2011). This study pays attention to all these variables. In addition, it assesses fee-free secondary education

from its process and political dimensions – both of which are neglected areas of analysis in the literature.

The key research questions are

- What are stakeholder perceptions about the implementation of the Free SHS Policy in terms of its programme, process and political dimensions?
- What challenges confront the implementation of the Free SHS Policy and how can they be overcome?

Literature review

Article 13 (2b) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states: 'Secondary education in its different form … shall be made generally available and accessible to all and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education.' However, few African countries are meeting their obligations under this article.

Lewin (2011) admits to the neglect of secondary education in policy making in Africa, stating that many a time, secondary education policy comes from the residues of other policies. He advocates for the incorporation of the financing of secondary education in national policy planning, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Since free universal primary education has increased several-fold the number of children completing that level of education, Lewin argues for a similar level of investment and financial lifeline for secondary education as for primary education in order to increase access. His call is timely because Target 1 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) states that by 2030, all boys and girls should complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education that leads to relevant and effective learning outcomes. Promoting equality (in terms of gender, geography and so on) and removing disparities in the school system cannot be achieved without expanding access to education at the secondary level.

The challenge for expanding access to secondary education in Africa is blamed on the continent's vulnerable economies (Bregman & Stallmeister, 2002), which have led to a very high average cost for education. To make secondary education accessible, universal, affordable and equitable in Africa, there is the need to increase the secondary education budget and exact efficiency internally so as to achieve cost-effectiveness (Lewin & Calloids, 2001). The prohibitive cost of funding the secondary education boarding system in African countries is seen as a legacy of colonialism. That legacy is ill suited to the type of mass schooling today, when viewed against the cost of establishing and running schools (World Bank, 2005). Akyeampong (2005) and Bennell et al. (2005) made a similar argument in relation to Ghana and Zambia, where the cost of boarding school is far higher than that of day school.

Despite these challenges, several African countries, including Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, have in recent years implemented one form of free secondary education (FSE) with different outcomes. Uganda pioneered the introduction of contemporary universal fee-free secondary education to Sub-Saharan Africa in 2007 (Essuman, 2008). The introduction of FSE was prompted by factors such as the increased enrolment and completion of fee-free primary education by 136%; the deficit in the transition rate to secondary school which stood at 80%; and commitment to the fulfilment of President Yoweri Musevini's re-election promise of fee-free secondary education in the 2006 campaign (Werner, 2011).

Thus, the goals of the Ugandan FSE Policy were to: increase universal access to secondary education; increase quality of education; and sustain the gains of universal primary education (" Essuman, 2008). The programme was piloted for a year before its full-scale implementation in 2007. The pilot programme targeted more of the country's low-income rural households (Werner, 2011). Cognisant of the imminent implementation bottlenecks, the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports instituted strategies to reduce the unit cost of secondary education, create more space for students and increase efficiency. Among others, these strategies included: an increase in teacher–student ratios; a reduction in class sizes; and the rationalisation of teacher workloads (Jacob & Lehner, 2011). An earlier study by Asankha and Takashi (2007) found that the policy had a considerable impact on secondary school enrolments, especially for girls from poor households. Specifically, enrolment increased from 412,367 in 2007 to 1,194,000 in 2010 (Jacob & Lehner, 2011).

The launch of the free secondary education policy in Kenya in 2008 was partially to fulfil the government's political promise to that effect in the 2007 general election campaign. As in the case of Uganda, the aim of the FSE Policy was to increase universal access to secondary education for children from poor households in particular, as well as to enhance the quality of that level of education. Similar to the Ugandan case, the Kenyan FSE Policy was partial because the government largely absorbed tuition fees at public day secondary schools and capitation grants for secondary school students. But parents and guardians paid for boarding and other costs like textbooks and stationery. Thus, the introduction of FSE in Kenya substantially reduced, rather than totally abolished, fees (Essuman, 2008). The FSE Policy led to an increase in the rate of transition from primary to secondary school (Radoli, 2011). According to Brudevold-Newman (2017), the policy led to an increased educational attainment of about 0.8 years of schooling. The unintended consequences of the introduction of the FSE were: large class sizes; an increased number of untrained teachers due to the increased student numbers and the unavailability of trained teachers; and a growing government deficit due to the costs incurred in funding the FSE Policy (Otieno & Colclough, 2009).

Similarly, the Government of Tanzania launched an FSE Policy in 2014, part of a combined free and compulsory primary and lower secondary education programme for all citizens (Ministry of Education & Vocational Training, 2014, p. 3). As part of that effort to enable access, it abolished all fees and additional financial requirements for lower secondary education in 2016 (Godda, 2011). The subsequent increased enrolment led to several implementation challenges, including strain on the work of school principals and funding inadequate to allow schools to meet the logistical and academic needs of schools and students.

The similarities of the Ugandan, Kenyan and Tanzanian FSE policies to that of Ghana are that they are all aimed at broadening access to secondary education, particularly for students from poor households, as well as enhancing the quality of education. The policies were also to fulfil election campaign promises, which were made by the governments of the respective countries. The dissimilarity between Ghana's policy and that of the aforementioned three countries is that the former's FSE is total, whereas those of the latter are partial. In terms of outcomes, the policies led to increased enrolment rates in all jurisdictions. However, challenges in terms of a lack of infrastructure, a lack of trained

teachers, huge class sizes and a reduction in the quality of education, among others, bedevilled the policy in each of the countries.

Theoretical framework

This study is guided by three important theoretical considerations in public-policy making. They are: the Multiple Streams Model (Kingdon, 1984), which has guided analysis of the development and implementation process for Free SHS since 2016; McConnell's (2010a) three reconcilable dimensions for assessing policy success, which guides analysis of the extent to which it has been successful, with respect to the programme, process and political aspects of the Free SHS (McConnell, 2010b); and the political settlement framework, which assesses how the contestation for political power by the two dominant political parties in Ghana, the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC), is pitched on which approach to providing a fee-free SHS education is superior.

The Multiple Streams Model

The Multiple Streams Model was developed by Kingdon (1984). The theory states that there are three separate and independent streams entailed in policy making: the problem stream; the politics stream; and the policy stream. Components of the problem stream embrace the issues that 'policy makers and citizens want addressed' (Zahariadis, 2007, p. 70). The politics stream is made up of the national political environment, which can embrace public opinion and the partisan control of policy-making institutions. Finally, the policy stream is made up of ideas and solutions, which are designed by experts and policy specialists, and readied for execution. Policy change happens when a 'window' of opportunity opens and a policy entrepreneur combines the three streams by applying an idea from the policy stream to an issue in the problem stream at a time when the problem/solution coupling is acceptable within the political stream (Nowlin, 2011).

An important supposition of the Multiple Streams Model is that each stream functions autonomously of the others. The separate streams implied in the Multiple Streams Model means that engagement in one stream precludes involvement in another (Sabaatier, 2007). Nevertheless, Boscarino (2009) and Robinson and Eller (2010) showed in their studies that many people and organisations engage in both problem identification (the problem stream) and policy proposals (the policy stream).

Contemporary research has also modified the Multiple Streams Model (Ness, 2010; Ness & Mistretta, 2009), allowing it to draw attention to institutional variables (dubbed policy milieus), which embrace establishments like state government arrangements and state higher education governance configurations. The adjusted model extends the policy stream into a 'policy field' that makes up the politics and problem streams, with the underpinning supposition that 'policy trends and information are present throughout the policy process' (Ness & Mistretta, 2009, p. 492 cited in Nowlin, 2011). Policy entrepreneurs, like in the original Multiple Streams Model, strive to amalgamate the streams (in this case the politics and problem streams) when a window of opportunity opens (Nowlin, 2011).

Applying a comparative case study approach, Ness and Mistretta (2009) show that the modified Multiple Streams Model accounts for the policy design differences in two contexts. Ness & Mistretta (2009, p. 509) concluded that the modified Multiple Streams Model furnished relevant information regarding policy design choices in terms of need-based as opposed to merit-based approaches (Ness, 2010).

Existing research supports the benefits and practical applications of the multiple streams model (Boscarino, 2009; Ness, 2010) and the revised model moves beyond agenda setting by offering empirical insights into policy design choices (Ness, 2010; Ness & Mistretta, 2009). However, it seems to have only been tested within the higher education domain, so further work is needed to test this model empirically across various policy domains. In applying this model to examine the Free SHS Policy, this study contributes/extends knowledge in this field of policy making.

McConnell's theory

Policy success or policy failure has traditionally been seen though the prism of whether or not the programmatic goals of policy are achieved. Assessing the success or failure of a policy from the standpoint of its programmatic goals alone is flawed or misleading. This is because McConnell (2010b) suggests that apart from programme failure, other dimensions of policy success or failure exist and must be addressed if failures are to be avoided. A second general source of policy failure identified by McConnell (2010a) is process failure. This means policies can not only fail in substantive, technical terms (objectively or as perceived to be failing to deliver expected material outcomes) as is typically the case with programme failures, but also in process terms – as simply being unable to proceed from idea to reality through the successful completion of the many stages of a policy process (Bovens, Hart, & Peters, 2001; Brandstrom & Kuipers, 2003).

In this process sense, a policy is often judged a success if it successfully goes through a complex, veto-point-filled and multi-actor approval process to creation and implementation, regardless of its actual ability to 'deliver the goods' in terms of its substantive programme effectiveness or efficiency (Lindblom, 1959). Howlett (2009) has arranged these kinds of process failings according to where they occur in the policy process. These include situations at the agenda-setting stage in which overreaching governments take on too many simultaneous initiatives, and at the formulation stage where they attempt to address 'un-addressable' or 'wicked' problems where neither the cause of a problem nor the solution to it is well enough known (Churchman, 1967) to generate feasible policy alternatives. Another situation is at the adoption stage, where institutional venues designed for serial or seriatim processes may bog down policies (Jones, 1994) or where governments engage in log-rolling and other forms of bargaining behaviour which undermine the integrity of policy proposals (Anderson & Heywood, 2009). The others are at the implementation stage, where governments take on the implementation of too many policies beyond their organisational capacity to provide results (Meier & Bohte, 2003), or at the evaluation stage, where they fail to evaluate properly the results of their policies and thus fail to incorporate this knowledge into subsequent policy reforms (" May, 1992).

Often, in Ghana as elsewhere, only the programme dimension is evaluated (see Ayee, 2000; Mohammed, 2014 among others). However, this approach to the evaluation of policy performance captures only part of the story, not the whole story. To capture the

whole story, the other dimensions of policy success or failure, that is, process and political dimensions, should also be assessed. Assessing polices along the three dimensions furnishes important insights into the nature of policy success or failure, which helps unify and clarify the existing literatures on both policy learning and failure, while simultaneously pointing towards means and mechanisms through which common sources of failure can be avoided or overcome (Fawcett & Marsh, 2012). The evaluation of the performance of the Free SHS Policy is also done along the three dimensions: programme; process; and political.

A final source of policy failure identified by Boven et al. (2001) and agreed to by McConnell (2010a) is the political dimension of assessment, which denotes the way in which policies and policy makers become represented and evaluated in the political arena (Bovens et al., 2001, p. 20). In specific terms they state that:

> Indicators of political failure or success are political upheaval (press coverage, parliamentary investigations, political fatalities, litigation) or lack of it, and changes in generic patterns of political legitimacy (public satisfaction with policy or confidence in authorities and public institutions). (Bovens et al., 2001, p. 21)

Even in applying the three dimensions (programme, process and political) to assess policy performance, we will still be confronted with the problem of the extent to which an objective assessment is possible (Marsh & McConnell, 2010). Bovens, Hart, and Kuipers (2006) presaged this criticism when they declared that 'policy evaluation is an inherently normative act' (2006, p. 319) – 'nothing but the continuation of politics by other means' (Bovens et al., 2006, p. 321). This makes accommodating multiple criteria and dimensions of the evaluation of policy performance a more illuminating pursuit than a single one or very few ones. Nicklin agrees, arguing that: 'Multiplicity is liberating, opening up evaluation to new elements' (Nicklin 2019: 187).

Political settlement framework

A political settlement is variously defined. Khan (1995, p. 7) takes it to mean 'an inherited balance of power'. For di John and Putzel (2009, p. 4), it refers to 'the balance or distribution of power between contending social groups and social classes, on which any state is based'. In the view of the UK Department for International Development [DFID – UK] (2010, p. 22), it denotes 'a common understanding, usually forged between elites, about how power is organized and exercised', whereas Khan's (2010, p. 4) reformulation of the concept is 'a combination of power and institutions that are mutually compatible and also sustainable in terms of economic and political viability'. To Laws (2012, p. 1), it connotes 'informal and formal processes, agreements, and practices that help consolidate politics, rather than violence, as a means for dealing with disagreements about interests, ideas and the distribution and use of power'.

This paper adopts Laws' (2012) definition because it is the one that best describes the contestation of ideas between the two major political parties in Ghana, the then ruling NDC and the then opposition NPP. The contestation of ideas was over which party's approach is best in introducing free SHS into the country's education system. While in the 2012 election the then ruling NDC won power to govern on the promise of introducing a progressively free SHS, in contrast, the then opposition NPP, which was bent on

unseating the NDC government in the next election in 2016, proposed a rival option of making SHS education instantaneously free in its entirety (Oduro, 2019). The NDC's premise was that an instantaneous free SHS education would confront a striated public budget, infrastructure inadequacies and deteriorating teaching and learning outcomes (Oduro, 2019). The NPP derided the NDC's claims and argued that Ghana has the fiscal capacity (especially from oil revenue) to deal with such challenges (Oduro, 2019). The political settlement over the contestation of the approaches was that the party that would win the 2016 election and have the people's mandate to govern the country would be the one whose approach would be adopted. The NPP won the election and rolled out its Free SHS Policy in 2017. The challenges that are now facing the Free SHS Policy have once again sparked public debate as to whether Free SHS is indeed a viable option, as compared to the opposition NDC's Progressively Free SHS Policy.

Political settlements analysis has been applied in different settings to resolve problems. It has been applied to elucidate why some states endure while others break down (World Bank, 2011b). It has also been applied to understand why some peace initiatives culminate in more participatory designs of politics and development than others (Rocha Menocal, 2015). In other cases it has been employed to explain why some countries are able to embark on successful industrial policies and/or generate and sustain economic growth (Pritchett, Sen, & Werker, 2018). Furthermore, it has been used effectively to implement gender legislation (Nazneen & Masud, 2017); in others it explains why some nations introduce more effective and inclusive health and education policies than others (Hossain et al., 2017; Levy & Walton, 2013).

A recurring theme in most of these analyses is that political context or underlying power dynamics shape institutional and policy performance. More specifically, it suggests that power dynamics exist in Ghana in relation to how the approaches to a fee-free senior high school education have shaped and continue to shape electoral fortunes and, for that matter, the power balance between the two major political parties, the NPP and the NDC. The political context that birthed the controversy over which approach to adopt to make senior high school education free is that since the inception of the new democratic dispensation in Ghana in 1993, there have been three alternations of power between the NDC and NPP, in 2001, 2009 and 2017. Competition between the two political parties has thus become so keen that there are high stakes in every election, and that one of the potent means to undo each other is to engage in contestation over policy ideas. This is because voters' perceptions of which party has superior policy proposals wins their hearts. Political settlements analysis is thus a valuable counterbalance to the good governance agenda, 'golden thread' narrative or 'best practice' technical advice (Cameron, 2012; Fritz, Levy & Ort, 2014).

Basic education funding in Ghana

The basic education system in Ghana is organised such that primary school spans six years, junior high school has a three-year duration, senior high school has a three-year timeframe, and a university bachelor's degree takes four years to acquire. Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) was launched in 1996. FCUBE had the goal of achieving universal primary education by 2005. The FCUBE aimed to improve the quality of teaching and learning; improve management efficiency and sustainability; increase access and participation; and decentralise the management of the education sector (Ministry of

Education, 2006, p. 15). Other key measures to support the FCUBE were the Capitation Grant established in 2004–2005 on a pilot basis and extended nationally in the 2005/6 academic year; the School Feeding Program; the Free Exercise and Textbooks Programme; and the Free School Uniform and Sandals Programmes (Essuman, 2018). The combined effect of these measures was increased school enrolment, for example, an increase of 14.5% in the 53 pilot districts (Ministry of Education, 2007).

The increased enrolments culminated in other issues, such as difficulties in handling large class sizes, delays in the transfer of funds to schools, and inadequate textbooks and teaching and learning materials, as well as unwieldy procedures and inadequate capacity for accounting by heads of schools (Ampratwum & Armah-attoh, 2010). Many of the FCUBE support measures were limited to primary and JHS sectors and not SHS. The net effect of increased primary school enrolments was increased demand for secondary education, necessitating the Free SHS Policy.

Key SHS measures

As mentioned earlier, the Free Senior High School Education programme was introduced in September 2017.The sum of GHS12,178,544.00 (USD 2,744,334.00) was released to the Ministry of Education for the first term of the 2015/16 academic year to fund the SHS level of education (Ministry of Education, 2015). The policy as is currently being pursued is supposed to cover the full cost of education.The sumofUSD100 million (GHS400 million) was released by the government to absorb the cost of senior high school education and make it entirely free for the 2017/18 academic year (Ministry of Education, 2017).The Government of Ghana and the World Bank Group alsosigned aUSD 156 million financing agreement to improve equal access to secondary education in under-served districts throughout the country. The fund was to help enrol 30,000 new senior high school students, improve learning outcomes for 150,000 students in low performing schools and communities, and provide an extra 2000 senior high school teachers, head teachers and other education officials (World Bank, 2014). Spending a significant USD 256 million to meet the cost of secondary education in Ghana in one year is unprecedented, with no definite way of revenue generation. The government gave assurances that the policy would be funded by proceeds from the country's natural resources,more specifically, oil revenue. However, this natural resource is finite, and the question therefore arises: when it is depleted, how will the policy then be funded? A question such as this raises concerns about sustainability.

The recommendation of the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the African Union is that 6% of a country's gross domestic product (GDP) should be allocated to the education sector. For 2011, 2012 and 2013, as well as for 2014 and 2015, Ghana met the target by recording 6.5%, 7.6% and 6.1%, and 6.2% and 6.3% of GDP respectively. However, in 2016 the figure dropped to 5.1%, plummeted to 4.5% in 2017 and then tumbled further to 4.2% in 2018 (Ministry of Education, 2018). From the figures reported here, it is 2017 and 2018 which paradoxically had the lowest shares of education expenditure as proportions of GDP. We say paradoxically because 2017 and 2018 should have had the highest figures, since it was in these years that the Free Senior High School Policy, which is very costly, was introduced. It is against this scepticism and concern surrounding the

sustainability of SHS education financing that this study assesses the prospects and challenges of developing and implementing the free senior high school education policy in Ghana.

Methodology

Design and participants

This study employed a mixed-method methodology involving the analysis of interview and secondary information. The interview participants (the sources of the primary data) were from key stakeholder groups in the basic education sector, including senior bureaucrats, district directors of education, school principals, teachers' association members and parent groups. A key limitation is that the primary voices of politicians like the President, the Ministers of Education and the Minister of Finance could not be captured because access and participation had to be negotiated and this proved quite difficult to obtain. Nevertheless, secondary evidence attributed to these political decision makers was used as counterpoints to the views of other stakeholders.

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants from these specified sectors, in order to extract salient and diverse information pertaining to key domains of the school system where the implementation of the new policy was more likely to transform teaching and learning. The sampled interviewees (N = 65) included functionaries of the Ghana Education Service (GES) (three senior bureaucrats); management from public senior secondary schools (three respondents each from two schools from the southern, middle and northern parts of Ghana); and District Directors of Education (two each from two districts in the southern, middle and northern parts of Ghana). The respondents outside government included the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) (three respondents); the National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) (three respondents); the Association of Private Senior High School Education Providers (APSHSEP) (three respondents); parent–teacher associations (three respondents each from two schools from the southern, middle and northern parts of Ghana); the Coalition of Concerned Teachers Association (CCTA) (three respondents); and IMANI Ghana (two respondents). They were chosen because of their connection to the development and implementation of the Free Senior High School Policy. Most of the interviewees are also decision makers and control officers in their own right. For example, the GES is charged with the implementation of the policy by allocating the needed resources, including human and financial, to the senior secondary schools. The selection of the respondents from the three parts of Ghana was to ensure regional balance and to permit comparison of urban and rural districts' performance in the outcomes of the implementation of the policy.

Instruments and data collection

The interviews provided a means for exploring the complexity and detail of processes that could not be examined by alternate, more structured instruments, such as questionnaires, or analysed using quantitative methods (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). The

questions in the interviews centred on perceptions of the new policy, as well as the participants' experiences with implementing the policy, including the challenges. Interviews lasted about one hour and covered participants' perceptions and experiences with the implementation of the new policy.

The secondary information was accessed via Desktop reviews collated from published documents on the Free Senior High School Policy, including progress reports, annual reports and budget statements from the Ministry of Education (MOE) and GES. Other sources of secondary information included newsletters, academic journal articles and press releases. The secondary information enabled better understanding of the historical context of policy making in regard to secondary education financing in Ghana. This information was distilled from data collected at different times across similar education policy areas, and this afforded the opportunity to describe, compare and explain change. Such comparison enlarged the scope of generalisations, provided additional insights and allowed for triangulation, increasing the validity of the research findings obtained from the primary data.

Data analysis: assessment of the Free Senior High School Policy

Following McConnell's (2010b) policy evaluation dimensions, as explained earlier, the Free SHS Policy is assessed with respect to its original programmatic goals. In order to capture all aspects of this policy domain, we also employed the six programme evaluation dimensions of Dunn (2012). They are: effectiveness; efficiency; adequacy; equity; responsiveness; and appropriateness. In line with Dunn (2012), the programmatic goals of the Free SHS Policy are evaluated on the basis of these six criteria. Primary data were thematically analysed and we extracted themes along the lines of McConnell (2010a, 2010b) and Dunn (2012). Secondary data, including policy documents/implementation processes, were analysed alongside primary data from the interviews. Our findings therefore reflect the key themes of the interviews as well as diverse information from secondary sources.

Results and discussion

Effectiveness

Effectiveness is the degree to which a policy or programme achieves its objectives. The objectives of the Free SHS Policy include: removing the cost barrier to education; enabling access to secondary education for all; improving quality and equity infrastructure expansion; and providing the requisite/essential skills for socioeconomic development (Essuman, 2018). This section assesses whether these objectives are being met based on secondary and primary data. In terms of the cost barrier, government (as per policy) has absorbed the one-time item cost for first-year students. Also absorbed are all recurrent fees for day and boarding students respectively, and meal fees for both boarders and day students. The government also agreed to pay GHS 20 per year per student to replace the portion of the parent–teacher association (PTA) dues devoted to teacher motivation (Prempeh, 2018) . This means the Free SHS Policy now and into the future is, and will be, far more expensive than the Progressively Free SHS Policy under former President Mahama-led NDC government.

Table 1. Senior high school expenditure, enrolment, SCRs, STRs.

	Progressively Free SHS period			Free SHS period		
Item	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Expenditure (GHS)	1,467,511,148	1713,539,729	2,440,895,453	2,780,734,965	2,817,594,239	3,168,480,397
Enrolment	273,152	299,649	432,780	472,730	500,000	600,000
Student– Classroom Ratio	39	37	35	48	50	52
Student– Teacher Ratio	19	20	20	26	32	43

Sources: Ministry of Education (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018); Action Aid (2019); BFT (Business and Financial Times) (2019)

Table 1 shows Senior High School expenditures, enrolments and student–classroom ratios as well as student–teacher ratios in both the Progressively Free SHS period (2014–16) and the Free SHS period (2017–19). Senior high school education expenditure has been on the ascendency from 2014–19). However, the increases during the Progressively Free SHS period (2014–16) were smaller compared to the increases in the Free SHS period (2017–19). The SHS expenditure, which was GHS 1.5 billion in 2014, rose to GHS 1.7 billion in 2015 and climbed further to GHS 2.4 billion in 2016. The mean SHS expenditure for the three-year period (2014 –16) was GHS 1.8 billion. In contrast, in the Free SHS period (2017–19) the outlay in 2017, which stood at GHS 2.7 billion, increased to GHS 2.8 billion in 2018 and rose further to GHS 3.1 billion in 2019 (Table 1). The mean increase during the Free SHS period (2017–19) was GHS 2.9 billion, which is 1.6 times higher than the average in the Progressively Free SHS period.

With respect to accessibility, government statistics indicate that enrolment in the Progressively Free SHS period increased from 273,152 in 2014 to 299,649 in 2015, and then to 432,780 in 2016. This represented a mean increase in enrolment of 335,194 for the three-year period. In the Free SHS period, enrolment rose from 472,730 in 2017, 500,000 in 2018 and then jumped to 600,000 in 2019. These increases in enrolment averaged 524,260 per year for the three-year period, which means the average increase in enrolment in the Free SHS period was 1.5 times higher than the same in the Progressively Free SHS period.

However, this is still lower compared to the JHS and primary levels, where enrolment stood at 95% at the primary level, 85% at the JHS level and 45% at the SHS level (BFT, 2019). This implies that poverty alone is not responsible for low SHS enrolment, but that other variables, such as lack of space, the opportunity cost of SHS and the expected return of secondary education, are also culpable. For example, in terms of lack of space, the increase in SHS enrolment had led to a corresponding increase of pupils in senior high schools, with the total number of SHS increasing from 863 in 2014/15 to 927 in 2016/17 (Ministry of Education, 2018). Despite this increase, the national student–to–classroom ratio (SCR) for public SHS stands at 46:1, with substantial regional differences. Table 2 depicts the SCR by region, and it is clear from the table that all regions except one have a SCR of over 40:1. The table also shows the number of classrooms needed in each region if the maximum ratio of 40:1 is applied to compute the classroom backlog.

In 2014, the SCR ratio was 39:1, which decreased to 37:1 in 2015 and declined further to 35:1 in 2016. However, following the introduction of the Free SHS Policy in 2017, the

Table 2. SCRs and classroom backlog in SHS by region (2016).

Region	Student to classroom ratio	Classroom backlog
Ashanti	49	877
Brong Ahafo	43	109
Central	43	155
Eastern	49	585
Greater Accra	47	272
Northern	55	478
Upper East	51	217
Upper West	45	77
Volta	36	
Western	44	123
Total	46	2894
% of total classrooms		16

Sources: Ministry of Education (2018)

SCR increased to 48:1 for that year. The SCR increased further to 50:1 in 2018 and climbed even further to 52:1 in 2019. This means that on average in 2019, 52 students were assigned to one classroom, which is far higher than the 35 students to a classroom before the Free SHS Policy in 2016 (Table 1). This shows a worsening of spacing for students following the introduction of the Free SHS Policy.

The government has made strenuous efforts to resolve infrastructure inadequacies at the SHS level. To date, the government has either completed or is in the process of completing 44 out of 124 planned new SHSs (Ministry of Education, 2018). This is not only far less than the target, but also a drop in the ocean when compared to for example, the 2894 classroom blocks that were needed in 2016 – that is, before the introduction of the Free SHS Policy. As a result of the lack of dormitories, some students are compelled to sleep in classrooms and are being exposed to the vagaries of the weather and unhygienic conditions (Cudjoe, 2018). A headmaster of a rural SHS corroborated Cudjoe's (2018) claim when he revealed that: 'Whereas the enrolment rate in this school has more than doubled, the infrastructure in terms of classrooms, dormitories, science laboratories and bungalows for staff have remained the same.' This inadequate infrastructure, he said, 'has forced some students especially those because of the tyranny of distance of the school from their homes, to sleep in classrooms'. This complaint was echoed in an urban senior high school by its senior housemaster. He lamented: 'Our infrastructure was already under extreme pressure even before the introduction of the Free SHS policy.' He also said: 'Our dining hall also served as an assembly hall, our day student numbers grew exponentially because of lack of dormitories, and our chemistry and physics laboratories have exceeded their carrying capacities.' A GES respondent admitted to the infrastructure challenges, but gave assurance that the 'government is working assiduously to resolve the challenges which inevitably come with such a massive SHS financing reform programme'.

Other variables the MOE and GES use to measure quality of education are the student–teacher ratio (STR) and textbook–student ratio (TSR). For example, the GES benchmark is that at the SHS level, the student–teacher ratio should be 25:1. This implies that every one of the 25 students should be managed by a teacher. However, the picture on the ground is different. As one participant from NAGRAT lamented: 'In the rural secondary school where I teach the total number of graduate teachers (those with

university degrees) is twelve which is far lower than the twenty five teachers required.' He added: 'The vacancies have been filled by unqualified diploma holders who are not up to the task.' A concerned teacher in another rural secondary school expressed similar sentiments. Speaking on condition of absolute anonymity, he queried that 'rural senior high schools like ours need a minimum of 30 trained teachers but as I speak to you now we have less than half the number.' Ironically, he criticised, 'government has stopped the automatic hiring of fresh graduate teachers for senior high schools and rather conditioned appointment on the availability of funds.' He continued: 'But since lack of funds is a perennial problem it means most teaching vacancies particularly in rural areas will remain unfilled for a long time to come.' Also speaking on condition of absolute anonymity, a headmistress of a rural senior high school said that, 'because of lack of teachers we often allow subject teachers to teach other subjects they did not specialize in.' As she elaborated: 'A Geography teacher may be asked to teach Economics because the school has no economics teachers.' This, she admitted, 'amounts to putting square pegs in round holes'. This primary evidence is corroborated by secondary information, because in 2014 the STR was 19:1, which increased to 20:1 in 2015 and was sustained in 2016. However, it rose to 26:1 in 2017, climbed to 32:1 in 2018 and then reached a peak of 43:1 in 2019, which is not only far above the GES norm, but also far above the national average of 35:1 (Table 1).

Textbook–student ratios have deteriorated substantially since 2011/12, and are much lower for science than they are for English or mathematics. Textbook–student ratios in 2011/12 were 0.74 for English, 0.75 for mathematics and 0.68 for science. In 2015/16, these values reached 0.51, 0.50 and 0.44, respectively (Ministry of Education, 2018) and are currently projected at an average of 0.33. Another problem is the lack of timeliness in the production and distribution of textbooks for all levels when a new curriculum is approved (Ministry of Education, 2018). In this connection, a teacher from an urban school revealed:

A new curriculum and textbooks were supposed to have been rolled out at the commencement of the Free SHS policy in September, 2017 but as I speak in 2019 neither the curriculum nor the textbooks have been supplied to schools.

He asked: 'How does the government expect us to teach the new content without the requisite textbooks and equipment?' A District Education Officer (DEO) disagreed with the teacher's assessment, insisting: 'The textbooks and the curricular were in print and the government supplied provisional reference materials to schools and as I speak a phased distribution of the textbooks has commenced.' The DEO's submission no doubt suggests that the implementation of the Free SHS Policy commenced well ahead of the supply of the requisite textbooks and curricular. It is clear from these responses that there is an urgent need to roll out the new curricular, supply the requisite textbooks and train and recruit more teachers. And as enrolments progressively increase, there is also the need to provide more classroom space. In relation to the acquisition of knowledge and skills relevant to personal and national development, the over-emphasis on creating access to the neglect of the content and outcomes has meant that there are yet to be any changes to the curriculum. It has also meant there are yet to be changes to the teaching and learning approaches that will help crystallise the goal of increasing knowledge and skills as proposed by the Free SHS Policy. Moreover, there is scant attention to

skills development, teacher reorientation and training in new pedagogical approaches (Essuman, 2018).

Efficiency

Efficiency refers to the amount of effort required to produce a given level of effectiveness. That effort is measured in terms of monetary costs (Dunn, 2012). The Free SHS Policy is inefficient for a variety of reasons. First, the policy does not distinguish between parents and guardians who can pay for their wards' SHS education and those who cannot. This point was also mentioned by interviewees. In this respect, one GES interviewee stated that that lack of distinction 'has led to a situation where a sizeable number of students whose parents can pay for their SHS education are included in the uniform fee-free policy'. A respondent from the APSHSEP agreed, saying:

> The inclusion of students whose parents can pay for their SHS education does not allow government the fiscal space to run the fee-free policy in a sustainable manner … . The support to wealthy households could have been used to expand infrastructure to accommodate the mass of students seeking senior high school education.

Second, the lack of space has led to the introduction of a double-track system made up of green and yellow batches. The 'green' students come to school for half the term and then vacate, making room for the 'yellow' students who come for the other half. As one NAGRAT respondent queried:

The double track system has not only reduced the contact hours by half but it has also compelled parents and guardians to pay for private classes or tuition for their wards while they are at home for half of the term.

A PTA respondent said: 'The private tuition is expensive because parents pay between GHS 500 and GHS 600 per subject.' A GNAT respondent concurred, revealing that 'these costs are aside the amount of money students spend on transport commuting to and from home and the private tuition venues.'

Third, the Free SHS Policy is also inefficient in the sense that some students who were offered SHS places were unable to enrol. The Ministry of Education disclosed that approximately 25% of students who are placed into SHS using the Computerised School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) do not enrol in SHS (Ministry of Education, 2018). This is a waste because resources have been deployed to create the learning spaces, and yet enrolment barriers imply that class sizes are below the threshold for the optimisation of teaching and learning outcomes.

Fourth, the disbursements of capitation grants for the Free SHS places are not timeous (Ministry of Education, 2018) and this distorts school managements' planning for the timely delivery of education services. For example, one headmaster of an SHS stated that

[b]ecause of the delay in the disbursement of the capitation grant we delay the commencement of the school term for an average of two weeks. … Meanwhile, teachers, who have no hand in the delayed start of the term legitimately, draw their salaries.

This, he concluded, 'is inefficient management of scarce resources because the lost man hours of teaching are hardly ever recouped'.

Finally, another problem that is working against the efficient implementation of the Free SHS Policy is the lack of partnership between government and private SHS education providers. Such a partnership can enable the state to leverage the facilities that are available in private institutions to ease the infrastructure challenges in the public SHSs. Currently, there are about 300 private schools spread across the 16 regions of Ghana with the capacity to absorb about 181,000 students (Cudjoe, 2018). Although the proprietors of these private SHSs have expressed their willingness to accept half of what the government spends on the students in the public schools (Cudjoe, 2018), the government is yet to accept this offer. A partnership between the state and the private SHS education providers will enhance efficiency.

Adequacy

Adequacy denotes the extent to which a given level of effectiveness satisfies the needs, values or opportunities that gave rise to a problem (Dunn, 2012). The evidence indicates that the Free SHS Policy is inadequate, as SHS education is still inaccessible to many. As 87% of the respondents explained, poor students who are the main target of the Free SHS Policy formed the bulk of students who were unable to secure places following the introduction of the policy. They explained that lack of space was a key factor in denying access. This situation compelled the government to introduce the 'yellow and green' double-track system. But as a headmaster of one senior high school explained:

> It is not simply by putting students into batches or tracks that will deal with the mass of students looking for places … the other issue is the ill-placement menace where children as young as 14 years and 15 years are posted outside their home districts or regions of abode to day schools in faraway regions where they have to look for private accommodation in the communities … this exposes them to all sorts of risks and dangers including going wayward, sexual assault, kidnapping and human trafficking.

On this issue, one of the headmasters said: 'I have seen on many occasions when parents and guardians whose wards were placed outside their home districts and regions simply declined the offer of admission.' He added: 'The children of such parents end up not attaining secondary education.' This, he said, 'defeats the very purpose for which the Free SHS policy was introduced'. That purpose, he added, 'is to make SHS education accessible to all'. While GES admits that this is a challenge, a District Director of the GES said: 'Such challenges are not as widespread as others might want us to believe … the government is making strenuous efforts to ensure that the placement process is made more robust to forestall such challenges.' However, a parent who was not convinced said: 'Government intervention, if it comes at all will be too late for some of us because our wards have already missed out.'

Another aspect of adequacy is the associated cost of education which limits participation. The Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 2014 found that, among the poorest quintile of 15–18 year-olds who entered kindergarten, only four of every 100 transitioned to SHS (GHS, and ICF International, 2015). Generally, 'transition rates are low, and inequities persist' (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 49). Those located at the bottom quintile, the most deprived districts, and/or from rural areas, are about five to six times less likely to access SHS (World Bank, 2017). The primary data support these statistics

and buttress the fact that limited transition to secondary education for low-income families may not always hinge exclusively on it being entirely free. The pursuit of Free SHS education is an opportunity cost for students from the poorest households. It may depend on other cost variables like the perceived economic return on such education. In this regard, one parent said:

> [B]ecause I am a weak and an infirm old lady without an income, I could not afford to give her pocket money for school, purchase her school uniform and sanitary products … . My granddaughter is the breadwinner of the family because our livelihood is depended on the token she raises daily through head pottering and dish-washing in local restaurants and wayside food joints … allowing her to pursue SHS education will mean our family will literally starve to death without financial support.

Another parent expressed similar concerns, saying:

> As a single parent who is not in good health and without a job, my son had to drop out of school twice to do menial work harvesting firewood for sale and working on people's farms to raise some money for the upkeep of our family. She asked, 'If my son furthers his education at the SHS level who will feed our family?'

The quotations included here indicate that for such poor parents, child non-work (e.g. educational participation) is a luxury good, and therefore parents cannot afford to let their children stay out of productive activity. These findings suggest that there are other cost variables or family financial constraints that impact on the full utilisation of the opportunity offered by Free SHS, and thereby curtail the achievement of adequacy. This situation necessitates the provision of other welfare support (as cash or in-kind support) to poor families in order to fully realise the adequacy goal of a Free SHS Policy.

Equity

Equity is closely related to legal and social rationality and refers to the distribution of effects and efforts among different groups in society (Dunn, 2012). One PTA respondent in Accra said: 'The very fact that some schools are boarding while others are day means students are not operating on a level playing field.' He digressed: 'This is because those in boarding facilities are free from the stress of commuting between school and home, learn together and share ideas, and have teachers approximate to assist them if they have difficulty in understanding what is taught.' But day students, he explained, 'have no such opportunities and yet they are ultimately going to sit the same examination'. As a NAGRAT respondent pinpointed:

> The gap between urban and rural schools in terms of infrastructure development is wide … . While some rural schools do not have laboratories to run science courses like biology, chemistry and physics, most urban schools are well served with these facilities … . As a consequence, students in rural schools have limited opportunities in terms of choice of subjects that match their capabilities and interests.

Furthermore, a GNAT interviewee said: 'Better qualified teachers are concentrated in the urban schools, while the rural schools lack teachers or make do with teachers with average skills and competencies.' Not surprisingly, a teacher said: 'The performance of students in most urban schools in the West African Senior Secondary Certificate

Examination (WASSCE) is always better than their counterparts in the rural areas.' For example, there were wide variations in the 2016 WASSCE results for the achievement of grades of A1 to C6 across and within regions. The three northern regions performed substantially worse in all four core subjects compared to other regions, particularly Greater Accra and Brong Ahafo (Ministry of Education, 2018). There are also regular and wide gender disparities against girls in mathematics, science and social studies in all regions, and in English in the three northern regions (Northern, Upper West and Upper East). According to the Ministry of Education (2018), considerably fewer females (20%) qualify for tertiary education compared to males (26%). In addition, according to the World Bank (2017), the WASSCE results also indicate that a small number of SHSs supply over 90% of those who are admitted to higher education, while the rest of the SHSs produce between 60% and 90% of the examination failures.

Moreover, in terms of equity in the distribution of inputs, textbook–student ratios vary substantially across regions. They are generally highest for the Central and Western regions and much lower for the three northern regions. For instance, there were 0.75 English textbooks per student in the Western region in 2016/17, compared to just 0.23 for the Upper West region (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 50).

Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to the extent to which a policy satisfies the needs, preferences or values of particular groups (Dunn, 2012). The interview data suggest that the Free SHS Policy is not responsive because the students who need fee-free senior high school education the most are actually not the ones benefiting. According to an APSHSEP interviewee, 'students from rich households' are the ones benefiting because

they perform better than their counterparts in the rural areas in the BECE, and that exam qualifies students into senior high schools. [There are] … disparities in the development of school infrastructure and facilities and supply of teachers and auxiliary staff between urban and rural areas.

A District Director of Education also added that:

> 'The irresponsiveness of the policy is compounded by many other factors … . [Students who] … secure places outside their home districts and decline the offer are largely from poor households … . They decline the offers either due to the tyranny of distance or unavailability of lodging facilities or unavailability of courses to gear towards their preferred career paths.' In this sense the policy is not responding to the needs of the poor.

But speaking in a different forum, the Education Minister argued that in 2016, before the start of the Free SHS Policy, 111,336 JHS students who, although got placement in SHSs, did not enrol due to lack of funds. But this number, he argued, was significantly trimmed down to 62,453 following the introduction of the Free SHS. He concluded that the Free SHS Policy is responsive (Prempeh, 2018).

Appropriateness

Appropriateness means the value or worth of a programme's objectives and the tenability of assumptions underlying these objectives (Dunn, 2012). The objectives of the Free SHS

Policy are to: make senior high-school education accessible and universal; develop human capital; nurture the youth into responsible adults; and tailor education to Ghana's development needs. These objectives are appropriate because the harmful effect of an uneducated mass of young people is that it imposes costs on children, their parents and society at large. The consequences of a mass of uneducated citizens are an illiterate and marginally productive workforce, reduced adult wages, poor health and a passive and ignorant citizenry (Satz, 2003). An intervention to enrol all eligible students into SHS education is therefore an appropriate policy. However, as one respondent from NAGRAT warned: 'The sustainability of the policy will hang in the balance without reliable sources of funding – the current dependence of the policy on oil revenue funding is unsustainable.' In the event of the oil running dry, a GNAT interviewee prophesied: 'The policy cannot continue unless alternative sources of funding are explored, which are extremely limited.' In this connection, a teacher said: 'Since every cedi spent on the policy is a cedi that is not available for some other policy or programme, the spectre of a future lack of funds to sustain the policy is worrying.' This is because the costs that had already been incurred on the policy in the past would have amounted largely to sunk-costs .'[1]

Policy success or failure as a process issue

Apart from programme evaluation of the Free SHS Policy, analysis was also conducted in relation to policy success or failure as a process issue, that is, how the policy fared at each of the five stages of the policy process: agenda setting; policy formulation; policy adoption; implementation; and evaluation.

Agenda setting stage

In terms of the agenda setting stage, the data suggest that there was no definition of the problem prior to the campaign pledge and the subsequent launch of the policy. One IMANI Ghana participant said: 'The promises and challenges of instituting a Free SHS Policy are wide ranging and needed broader consultations to determine whether Ghana really had a problem of out of pocket payment for senior high school education.' Furthermore, a GNAT respondent stated: 'The President by announcing the Free SHS policy on his campaign trails in 2008, 2012 and 2016 suggested that he had a solution to a problem that was yet to be defined upon winning the elections and assuming office.' He added: 'The Free SHS process was akin to a situation where a solution was already in hand and was looking for a problem to apply to.' In terms of process, a NAGRAT informant said: 'The Free SHS process was turned upside down where instead of starting from problem definition and working through (the stages), we had a solution that was now looking for a problem to solve.'

Formulation stage

An APSHSEP respondent said: 'If consultation had been built into the process it would have generated feasible alternatives from which the best solution would have been chosen.' He said further: 'I would have suggested a pilot scheme to test the viability and sustainability of the policy.' An IMANI interviewee suggested that 'a targeted

approach rather than a blanket style would have made the policy sustainable.' He added: 'By targeting, "I mean introducing quotas and scholarships to disadvantaged students to eliminate the cost barrier and enhance access".' He elaborated further that, 'the targeted approach "will exclude the financially capable parents and guardians who can pay for their wards' education.' He also revealed that 'research has indicated that a disproportionately large number of students who get enrolled in high ranking high schools and tertiary institutions come from fee-paying schools.' Another IMANI Ghana respondent argued that:

> A targeted approach would have been appropriate because economic growth is responsive to progressive taxation, . . . if the state is intent on assuming responsibility for the free provision of every major welfare service then it is inevitable that it will hike taxes.

For his part, an informant from NAGRAT suggested that 'a public private partnership (PPP) arrangement would have been the most cost-effective way of making education at the basic level free in Ghana.' However, the government's view seems to conflict with the respondents' suggestions. This is because the governing NPP stated in its 2012 manifesto that 'we are fully committed to making secondary education free for every Ghanaian child' (New Patriotic Party [NPP], 2012, p. 23). This evidence shows that the Free SHS process jumped the policy formulation stage because no alternatives were allowed to be canvassed through consultations.

Implementation stage

The Free SHS process has a clearly identified implementation stage. The Ghana Education Service (GES) is the implementing and monitoring agency that is overseeing the provision of infrastructure, the deployment of resources including personnel to the provider institutions and the supervision of performance of the policy. The management of the senior high schools is responsible for the direct implementation of the policy. However, how prepared were schools? What facilities existed and to what extent is financing sustainable? According to Cudjoe (2018), the main source of financing for the Free SHS Policy is oil revenue, which is unsustainable. This is supplemented by the government of Ghana (through taxes, fees and levies) with these sources providing a total of GHS 1.34 billion in the 2018 education budget towards implementing the policy (Cudjoe, 2018). But a GES respondent disagreed, arguing that 'new oil fields are being discovered with some of the oil wells holding commercial volumes that will last for the next four to five decades.' He added: 'By that time the oil revenue would have funded the senior high school education of a critical mass of our young people.' He concluded: 'The more young people who attain free senior high school education the more that would eventually qualify into our tertiary education institutions and this would increase our human capital.' However, an APSHSEP respondent was not convinced, when he contended that 'the oil contracts are designed such that a disproportionately large part of the income from oil (87% to 90%) goes to the oil companies while a negligible 10% to 13% accrues to the State of Ghana.' This implies, he continued, 'extraction of oil can go on in Ghana for the next millennium nevertheless the revenue Ghana will derive from it will be miniscule' and this will make 'funding the Free SHS policy from oil revenue quite formidable'.

Policy failure as a political issue

Policies can fail less through programme or process-related issues, but more through political reasons. As many scholars note, policy outcomes have political consequences affecting the ability of parties and individuals to obtain or retain their positions in government and elsewhere in the political system. And, as social constructivists have noted, designations of policy success and failure are semantic or 'discursive' tools themselves used in public debate and policy-making processes in order to seek political, partisan and often electoral advantage (Hood, 2002).

By introducing the Free SHS Policy, which is the most ambitious education financing policy in the history of Ghana since Dr Nkrumah's free education at all levels of the educational system in the 1960s, there is overwhelming public support for it. The policy not only enabled the president to clinch victory in the 2016 elections, but also increased the legitimacy of his government. As one parent praised: 'I will continue to vote for the NPP for relieving me of the burden of paying school fees.' Another parent expressed a similar sentiment when he stated that 'but for the fee-free secondary education my ward would have been in the house as I cannot afford the fees.' Despite these endorsements of the president by many poor parents, others have expressed disquiet about the need for implementing a blanket fee-free education policy when some Ghanaians can afford the cost of their ward's secondary education.' The fee-free policy, queried an IMANI respondent, 'does not allow government the fiscal space to focus on other critical sectors of the economy'.

Implications

The evaluation of the Free SHS Policy occurred in three dimensions – programme, process and political – in line with McConnell (2010a) and Bovens et al. (2006). The evidence showed that there was over-concentration on the programme and political dimensions to the neglect of the process dimension. Even for the programme dimension there was a disproportionately huge stress on removing the cost barrier to enable access, but little emphasis on content and outcomes expected from the policy. Undoubtedly, however, an equal stress on all these dimensions is more likely to yield the desired results than any one or two of them.

For the political dimension, decision makers were more concerned with expanding access in order to shore up voter support and enhance regime legitimacy. The process dimension was not emphasised because doing so would have delayed or stalled the introduction of the Free SHS Policy. For example, in terms of agenda setting, the policy was poorly defined as there was controversy over what constituted free SHS education. The question that surrounded the notion of free SHS was: What would be free and what would not be free? Tuition remains free for secondary education in Ghana. The other half of the repertoire of fees includes sports, library, examination, student representative council, bed user, PTA and computer usage fees. Others embrace science development, staff incentives and teacher motivation, development levies, textbooks, exercise and notebooks, National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and house dues (Essuman, 2018). As a result, several questions are raised for consideration: how will the government handle these myriad fee elements on the bills of students at the SHS level, which are

dissimilar depending on the school? Will the state absorb all these varieties of cost or will it abolish them? If every cost will be absorbed, including school uniforms, how is this sustainable? Is there benefit in excluding rich households from the Free SHS?

In terms of the policy process, the way the Free SHS process proceeded and got to the implementation stage bore little resemblance to the policy cycle: the pioneer policy process theory. The stages were jumped, and the whole process was turned on its head, starting with a solution and looking for a problem to solve. A key issue recognised in this respect is that the President's exclusive focus on poverty as the reason for students not enrolling in secondary education is a position which seems to buttress '' Cook's (1997) point that the primary goal of the politician is to be re-elected, not to adhere to recommendations based on scientific and technological evidence (Sanderson, 2002, p. 5). Thus, the President skipped some stages of the policy process by merging all three of the streams.

In essence, the introduction of the Free SHS Policy seemed largely to largely follow the Multiple Streams Model (Kingdon, 2010). The three streams of the model (the problem stream, the politics stream and the policy stream) were used in the SHS Policy. Elements in the problem stream comprised in this case the low uptake of senior high school offers due to the inability to pay school fees. The politics stream embraced the national political environment or public opinion (which in this case was for a change of government and policy). Finally, the policy stream consisted of ideas and solutions, which were developed by experts and policy specialists, and awaited implementation (which in this case was the fee-free senior high school education). Policy change occurred when a 'window' of opportunity opened (which in this case was the 2016 election to renew or disapprove of the mandate of an incumbent government) and a policy entrepreneur (who was the president) merged the three streams by applying an idea from the policy stream (the Free SHS idea) to an issue in the problem stream (the low uptake of senior high schooling) at a time when the problem/solution coupling was acceptable within the political stream.

This evidence has revealed certain truths about and new dimensions for the modification of the Multiple Streams Model. First, it has confirmed that the three streams identified by Kingdon are feasible in practice. Although instead of being separate as implied by the model, the streams were combined. The political campaign message (politics stream) included the problem (the cost barrier) and the policy (the Free SHS idea). The problem and policy streams did not have to wait for the president to win power before coupling them with the political stream. This evidence is borne out by the fact that the President in the 2012 and 2016 election campaign (the politics stream) propagated the Free SHS message (the policy stream) (NPP, 2012, 2016). For example, the NPP in its 2016 Manifesto stated that it 'will redefine basic education to include Senior High School (SHS) … and make it available for free on a universal basis to all Ghanaians' (NPP, 2016, p. 31), even though the 2012 Manifesto had already promised: 'We are fully committed to making secondary education free for every Ghanaian child' (NPP, 2012, p. 23). Second, it has validated that a policy entrepreneur is needed to merge the three streams – a role the president assumed because he dismissed the Progressively Free SHS Policy of his predecessor as unable to provide basic education free in its entirety.

Third, the evidence affirmed that an entrepreneur has to merge the streams when a window of opportunity opens. That entrepreneur in this case was the president and the window of opportunity was election campaign time. He merged the streams when he was a flag bearer for the opposition NPP in 2012 and 2016. Then, candidate Akuffo-Addo

inserted the Free SHS idea into the party's manifestos (NPP, 2012, 2016). He also propagated the Free SHS message on all his political campaign platforms in 2012 and 2016 (Mohammed, 2020). In terms of the new dimensions, the evidence showed that the Multiple Streams Model is applicable to the other stages of the policy process. This is because the president blocked alternative proposals to his Free SHS Policy idea by not taking it to parliament (Cudjoe, 2018). As Cudjoe's (2018) analysis suggests, such a major shift in SHS education financing policy needed to have been deliberated upon in Parliament, but the President deliberately dodged the House to ensure that the policy sailed through to the implementation stage. This evidence speaks to the power relations in governance in Ghana's new democratic dispensation, that is, executive dominance. Executive dominance is the capacity of the executive to control or skip or preclude parliament in deliberations on important national issues before their implementation. This means the executive holding a dominant position vis-à-vis the legislature (Tsebelis & Players, 2002).

This narrative of how the Free SHS Policy was initiated and launched by President Akufo-Addo is reminiscent of the approach to presidential agenda setting observed by Light (1991), who demonstrated that in choosing salient domestic issues on which to push for intervention, presidents are incentivised by three key factors:

(1) Electoral benefits, which are particularly crucial during a president's first term. Indeed, President Akufo-Addo introduced the Free SHS Policy in his first term that is, 2017. At such a critical juncture, certain matters are regarded as very important to sustain voter support and subsequent electoral victory;
(2) An expectation that issues which are emphasised on the a campaign trail would be acted upon. President Akufo-Addo certainly acted upon his 2016 campaign pledge to introduce the Free SHS Policy, and because history surrounds the office of the president, the introduction of the Free SHS in Ghana appeared to have set President Akuffo-Addo apart from other presidents. His predecessors in the fourth republic did not make SHS education free in its entirety. Only Dr Nkrumah, the first president, pioneered free education at all levels of the education system in Ghana in the 1960s (Oduro, 2019).
(3) Presidents assume office with ideological inclinations, personal promises and obligations that may dispose them to act on some matters, but such issues may be opposed by the legislature and objected to by bureaucrats. Nevertheless, the prominence of some matters makes intervention compelling. This seems to motivate presidents to embark on such policies despite the imminent challenges. For example, President AkuffoAddo passed the Freedom of Information Bill into law. The Bill had been languishing in parliament for over a decade (Raviv, 2016). The law allows the public access to government information. There was lack of progress on the bill during three previous governments (Kuffour, 2001–2008; Atta Mills, 2009–2011; and Mahama, 2012–2016) (Shaban, 2019).

The introduction of the Free SHS Policy has undoubtedly shored up regime support and legitimacy. Nevertheless, it has increased demand for secondary education and has put pressure on existing resources (teachers, classrooms, textbooks, dormitories and so on). Consequently, quality and learning outcomes are being negatively affected. These challenges,

as were predicted by many critical stakeholders before the implementation of the policy, have raised questions surrounding political settlement in respect to SHS education financing in Ghana. These critical voices will grow louder and louder as the December 2020 election draws closer. The election, which has the potential to occasion regime change and transition, will present 'windows of opportunity' to institute design and fiscal reforms to the Free SHS Policy. These transitions will probably entail a transformation of the basis of the political settlement, permitting cross-class political alliance building. Organised popular sectors like the Association of Private Senior High School Education Providers (APSHSEP) (whose businesses have been negatively affected by the policy) and GNAT (whose members have been overstretched by the high SCRs and STRs and low textbooks–student ratios) by the Free SHS Policy, will thus be able to exact democratic/policy changes in exchange for their political support. The organisational expression of a political settlement is crucial to outcomes (di John & Putzel, 2009). In the upcoming election campaign the extent to which the NPP and the NDC will pitch their messages and the evaluation of voters of the performance of the NPP government especially with respect to its success or otherwise in implementing the Free SHS Policy will partly determine whether voters will retain the NPP in power and sustain the policy, or vote the NDC into power and reform the policy. This scenario is clearly exemplified in other jurisdictions as well. For example, the development of a strong fiscal capacity in South Africa was straightforwardly linked to the nature of the political settlement, which was predicated on a racist cross-class alliance, which depended on a strong state to maintain white privilege. Upper-class whites were willing to pay taxes to the state and a racially defined project allowed lower-income whites to demand progressive taxation by drawing on the shared identity of a cross-class white project (Lieberman, 2003). The implication of this is that political settlement is not a static phenomenon. Rather it is a dynamic process whose durability is contingent on the outcome of voters and other stakeholders' evaluation of the government's capacity and performance. However, this shifting nature of political settlement is hardly, if at all, acknowledged in the extant literature.

Conclusion

This paper evaluated Ghana's Free SHS Policy for its programme, process and political dimensions. The findings indicate that Ghana's approach to Free SHS policy making was reminiscent of the Multiple Streams Model. But unlike the original postulation of the model, the streams were interdependent rather than independent. The new dimensions of reality for adjusting the Multiple Streams Model, which this study has discovered, are that Multiple Streams are applicable to other stages of the policy process; an unsuccessful attempt at merging the three streams represents a learning curve and a launch pad for a fresh attempt with a propensity for success; and the lull in the duration between an initial attempt at merging the streams and subsequent attempts is a function of the type of window of opportunity that opens up.

The study results show that there is over emphasis on the programme and political dimensions to the neglect of the process dimension. Even in relation to the programme dimension, the accent is put on removing the cost barrier to enhance access to SHS education, while scant attention is paid to other programme elements like other cost variables (opportunity cost, expected return on SHS education), space and other infrastructure expansion, quality (curriculum reform, improved teacher–student ratio,

learning outcomes), equity (urban–rural disparity, disparities in the number of teachers and facilities), and knowledge and skills acquisition relevant to personal and national development.

With respect to the programme implementation as relating to policy dimensions, the Free SHS Policy has met the appropriateness criterion because its goals of creating universal access to SHS education, developing human capital and nurturing the youth into responsible adults, are the rights ones to pursue. They are the right ones because the harmful effect of an uneducated mass of young people is that it imposes costs on children, their parents and society at large.

The evidence about meeting the efficiency dimension is more nuanced, as some aspects are achieved and others require more refining at the political and pragmatic levels. The inefficiencies of implementation include the inefficient use of school resources due to some students' inability to enrol; not means-testing for parents who can pay for their children's education; lack of timeliness in the disbursement of funds; and inadequate infrastructure and trained teachers in public schools co-existing with idle facilities and trained teachers in private schools. In particular, the inclusion of students whose parents/guardians can pay for their education is a huge allocative inefficiency in secondary education financing, and constitutes a case that deserves the conclusion, or, at least, an assertion that a premium is not placed on the judicious use of the country's scarce resources. In policy analysis terms, a change in policy is an allocative improvement as long as those who benefit from the change (winners) gain more than the losers. This is not the case with Ghana's Free SHS Policy because the rich who usually get the school places also get to keep their money, whereas the poor who are in the majority and who are supposed to benefit greatly from the policy, miss out on the school places. The study also evidences skewed distribution of educational resources including qualified teachers, which disadvantages rural students and has led to noticeable rural–urban disparities in academic performance in favour of urban students who also are being disproportionately admitted into higher education (World Bank, 2017).

In terms of adequacy, confusion still surrounds the removal of the cost barrier to access in terms of what will be free and what will not be free. Tuition remains free in all secondary schools, but the other fees such as parent and teacher association (PTA) fees, textbooks and stationery costs, house dues and so on are still payable by parents. These fees, in addition to other cost variables for the poorest families, constitute access barriers and the realisation of the adequacy goals of the Free SHS Policy. Taken together they undercut the fundamental aim of eliminating the cost barrier to universal access.

From the standpoint of the political dimension of the SHS Policy, the emphasis was on implementing a universal fee-free SHS education quickly, with little regard to need, or other viable alternatives, and somewhat heedless of sustainability in terms of financing. The political goal was to shore up voter support by fulfilling campaign promises, which it has largely achieved. Pertaining to the process dimension, the problem was ill defined, and the formulation and adoption stages were foreclosed to other viable solutions. Moreover, many stages of the policy process were neglected and work on the attentive stages was poorly executed, which might diminish prospects of sustainability. For example, parliament was precluded from deliberation on the policy and so the rough edges of the policy could not be smoothed. Thus, the policy lacks strong legal foundations without bipartisan support, and successive governments can abolish it.

The recommendations for dealing with the implementation challenges of the Free SHS Policy are several. First, in terms of the overemphasis on access and seemingly scant attention on other aspects (e.g. teacher training and outcomes), we recommend an equitable focus on all these variables, with a much greater promise of graduating students who will be well equipped to pursue tertiary education or enter the labour market. We also recommend reforming the curriculum and its mode of delivery to achieve more meaningful outcomes.

Second, in view of the cost challenges facing the implementation of the policy, a targeted rather than a universal approach to free education would have been most appropriate. It would have also ensured better management of resources and improve quality. In order to facilitate the determination of who qualifies for fee exemption, we recommend adopting, expanding and updating 'The Vulnerability Map' that is currently being used for cash transfer to the vulnerable under the Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty Programme (LEAP) to target/support poor households who might also be stressed by other cost variables. Undoubtedly, targeting is unavoidable if Ghana is desirous of subsidising the poor without increasing the burden of taxation to the 70% of labour income observable in Scandinavian countries.

Third, partnership with the private sector in designing and implementing a fee-free SHS education would have been less fiscally burdensome for government. Uganda and Mauritius provide examples of alternative public private partnerships (PPPs) that are pragmatic for Ghana to emulate. Uganda's PPP arrangement is such that owners of private secondary schools permit eligible students to study and this has improved test scores in low-cost private schools by 0.2 to 0.3 standard deviations. In Mauritius the state provides adequate funding for education and subsidises a substantial proportion of expenditure in privately owned institutions.

Finally, the Double Track System (DTS) which arose as a result of a lack of classrooms and other infrastructure to accommodate the huge numbers of students has led to reduced contact hours and imposed additional costs on students in the form of private tuition fees and transport costs. We recommend that the DTS abandon this through leveraging idle infrastructure and teachers in private schools in the short term. In the long term, public school infrastructure should be expanded, and teachers trained to improve student–classroom ratios and teacher–student ratios. If these recommendations are implemented successfully, it is highly likely that the political settlement framework that begot the Free SHS Policy would be sustained.

Note

1. Sunk costs are costs that are incurred on a policy where the policy cannot be completed for benefits to flow from it and those costs cannot be recouped (Anderson, 2006).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

ORCID

Ahmed Bawa Kuyini http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1083-8862

References

Action Aid. (2019). Financing education in Ghana: How progressive taxation can increase government spending on public basic schools and reverse education privatization. Retrieved from www.ghana.actionaid.org

AEO (African Economic Outlook). (2014). Youth in African labour markets. Too many bad jobs in poor countries, too few jobs in middle income countries. Retrieved from http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/in-depth/youth_employment/youth-in-african-labour-markets/

Akyeampong, K. (2005). Cost and finance of secondary education in Ghana: A situational analysis. *Commissioned report for the Financing of Secondary Education in Africa research project (FINSEC) based at the Centre for International Education, University of Sussex, for the Secondary Education Initiative in Africa programme of the World Bank*.

Ampratwum, E., & Armah-attoh, D. (2010). *Tracking capitation grant in public primary schools in Ghana*. Accra: Ghana Center for Democratic Development, CDD-Ghana.

Anderson, S., & Heywood, P. M. (2009). The politics of perception: Use and abuse of Transparency International's approach to measuring corruption. *Political Studies*, *57*(4), 746–767.

Asankha, P., & Takashi, Y. (2007). Impacts of universal secondary education policy on secondary school enrollments in Uganda. *Journal of Accounting, Finance and Economics*, *1*, 16–30.

Ayee, J. (2000). Decentralization and governance in Ghana. *Regional Development Dialogue, 29*(2), 34–52.

Bennell, P., Bulwani, G., & Musikanga, M. (2005). Costs and financing of secondary education in Zambia: A situational analysis. *Commissioned report for the Financing of Secondary Education in Africa research project (FINSEC) based at the Centre for International Education, University of Sussex, for the Secondary Education Initiative in Africa programme of the World Bank*.

BFT (Business and Financial Times). (2019). Free SHS enters third year: Student population to hit over one million. Retrieved from https://thebftonline.com/2019/business/education/free-shs-enters-third-year-student-population-to-hit-over-1m/

Boscarino, J. E. (2009). Surfing for problems: Advocacy group strategy in U.S. forestry policy. *Policy Studies Journal*, *37*(3), 415–434.

Bovens, M., Hart, P. T., & Kuipers, S. (2006). The politics of policy evaluation. In M. Moran, M. Rein, & R. E. Goodin (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of public policy* (pp. 319–335). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bovens, M., Hart, P. T., & Peters, B. G. (eds.). (2001). *Success and failure in public governance: A comparative analysis*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Brandstrom, A. & Kuipers, S. (2003). From 'Normal Incidents' to Political Crises: Understanding the Selective Politicization of Policy Failures. *Government and Opposition*, *38*(3), 279–305.

Bregman, J., & Stallmeister, S. (2002). Secondary education in Africa (SEIA): A regional study of the Africa region of the World Bank. In *Secondary education in Africa: Strategies for renewal* (pp. 4–26). Washington, DC: World Bank.

Brudevold-Newman, A. (2017). *Essays on education in developing countries. PhD dissertation*. University of Maryland, College Park. Retrieved from 2file:///Users/lucymatthiesson/Documents/BrudevoldNewman_umd_0117E_1 7968.pdf

Cameron, D. (2012). Combating poverty at its roots. *Wall Street Journal*, November 1.

Churchman, B. (1967). Wicked problems. *Management Science*, *14*(4), B141–2.

Cooke, E., Hague, S., & McKay, A. (2016). *Ghana poverty and inequality report: Using the 6th Ghana living standards survey*. Accra: UNICEF.

Cudjoe, F. (2018). Speaking notes on free senior high school education in Ghana: Prospects, challenges and recommendations. Retrieved from https://imaniafrica.org/2018/11/26/speaking-

notes-on-free-senior-high-school-education-in-ghana-prospects-challenges-and-recommendations/
DFID – UK Department for International Development. (2010). *Building peaceful states and societies* (DFID practice paper). London: DFID
di John, J., & Putzel, J. (2009). Political settlements: Issues paper. University of Birmingham: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre.
Dunn, W. N. (2012). *Public policy analysis: An introduction*. New Jersey: Pearson.
Essuman, A. (2018). The challenges of fee-free secondary education and educational access in Ghana: A reflection on the past, realities and feasible choices. *Journal of Education and Practice*, *9*(18), 21–31.
Fawcett, P., & Marsh, D. (2012). Policy transfer and policy success: The case of the gateway review process (200–10). *Government and Opposition*, *47*(2), 235–253.
Fritz, V., Levy, B., & Ort, R. (eds.). (2014). *Problem-driven political economy analysis: The World Bank's experience*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
GHS, and ICF International. (2015). *Ghana demographic and health survey 2014*. Rockville, MD: Author.
Godda, H. (2011). Free secondary education and the changing roles of the heads of public schools in Tanzania: Are they ready for new responsibilities? *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, *6*(5). doi:10.4236/jss.2018.65001
Govinda. (2003). *Progress of secondary education in Asia: Challenges, responses, and lessons*. New Delhi: National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration.
Hood, C. (2002). The risk game and the blame game. *Government and Opposition, 37*(1), 15–54.
Hossain, N., Hassan, M., Rahman, A., & Ali, K. (2017). *The problem with teachers: The political settlement and education quality reforms in Bangladesh* (ESID Working Paper No. 86). Manchester: Centre for Effective States and Inclusive Development
Howlett, M. (2009). Policy analytical capacity and evidence-based policy-making: Lessons from Canada. *Canadian Public Administration*, *52*(2), 153–175.
Jacob, J., & Lehner, S. (2011). *Secondary education: A guide to education project design based on comprehensive literature and project review*. Washington, DC: USAID.
Jones, B. D. (1994). *Re-conceiving decision-making in democratic politics: Attention, choice and public policy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
Khan, M. (1995). State failure in weak states: A critique of new institutional economics. In J. Harris (Ed.), *The new institutional economics and third world development* (pp. 71–86). London: Routledge.
Khan, M. (2010). *Political settlements and the governance of growth-enhancing institutions* (Draft paper, research paper series on growth-enhancing governance). London: SOAS, University of London.
Kingdon, J. W. (1984). *Agendas, alternatives and public policies*. New York, NY: Longman.
Kingdon, J. (2010). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Longman.
Kuyini, A.B. (2013). Ghana's Education Reform 2007: A realistic proposition or a crisis of vision? *International Review of Education*, *59*(2), 157–176.
Lauglo, J., & Maclean, R. (Eds.). (2005). *Vocatioanalisation of secondary education revisited. UNEVOC technical and vocational education and training series*. Dordrecht: Springer.
Laws, E. (2012). *Political settlements, elite pacts, and governments of national unity* (Background Paper 10). Birmingham: Developmental Leadership Program.
Levy, B., & Walton, M. (2013). *Institutions, incentives and service provision: Bringing politics back* (ESID Working Paper No. 18). Manchester: ESID.
Lewin, K. (2011). *Expanding access to secondary education: Can India catch up?* Sussex: Centre for International Education, Education Department, University of Sussex.
Lewin, K., & Calloids, F. (2001). *Financing secondary education in developing countries, strategies for sustainable growth*. Paris: IIEP-UNESCO.
Liamputtong, P., & Ezzy, D. (2005). *Qualitative research methods* (2nd ed.). Melbourne, Oxford: University Press.
Lieberman, E. (2003). *Race and regionalism in the politics of taxation in Brazil and South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Light, P. (1991). *The president's Agenda* (Revised ed.). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
Lindblom, C. F. (1959). The science of muddling through'. *Public Administration Review*, *19*(2), 79–88.
Marsh, D., & McConnell, A. (2010). Towards a framework for establishing policy success. *Public Administration*, *88*(2), 564–583.
McConnell, A. (2010a). Policy success, policy failure and grey areas in-between. *Journal of Public Policy*, *30*(3), 345–362.
McConnell, A. (2010b). *Understanding policy success: Rethinking public policy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Meier, K. J., & Bohte, J. (2003). Not with a bang, but a whimper: Explaining organizational failure. *Administration & Society*, *35*(1), 104–121.
Ministry of Education. (2006). *Ghana education service: Education management information system. Schools Annual Census*, 1–15. Accra: MoE.
Ministry of Education. (2007). *Education sector performance report 2008*. Accra: MoES.
Ministry of Education. (2015). *Ministry of Education sector performance* report. Accra: MoE.
Ministry of Education. (2016). *Ministry of Education sector performance report*. Accra: MoE.
Ministry of Education. (2017). *Republic of Ghana ministry of education sector performance report*. Accra: MoE.
Ministry of Education. (2018). *Republic of Ghana ministry of education sector performance report*. Accra: MoE.
Ministry of Education & Vocational Training (MoEVT). (2014). *2014 Educational and Training Policy*. Arusha: Government Printers.
Mohammed, A. K. (2014). Tourism development policy versus practice in Ghana: The case of Lake Bosomtwe basin. *European Scientific Journal*, *10*(7), 308–334.
Mohammed, A. K. (2020). Does the policy cycle reflect the policy making approach in Ghana? *Journal of Public Affairs*. doi:10.1002/pa.2078
Nazneen, S., & Masud, R. (2017). *The politics of negotiating gender equity in Bangladesh* (ESID Working Paper No. 76). Manchester: ESID.
Ness, E. (2010). The politics of determining merit aid eligibility criteria: An analysis of the policy process. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *81*(1), 33–60.
Ness, E. C., & Mistretta, M. A. (2009). Policy adoption in North Carolina and Tennessee: A comparative case study of lottery beneficiaries. *The Review of Higher Education*, *32*(4), 489–514.
New Patriotic Party (NPP). (2012). *Manifestos*. Accra: New Patriotic Party.
New Patriotic Party (NPP). (2016). *Manifestos*. Accra: New Patriotic Party.
Nicklin, G. (2019). Dynamic narrative: A new framework for policy success. *International Review of Public Policy*, 1(2), 173–193.
Nowlin, M. (2011). Theories of the policy process: State of the research and emerging trends. *Policy Studies Journal*, *39*(S1), 41–60.
Nsia, D. (2018). Free education in Ghana: Advantages and disadvantages. Retrieved from https://yen.com.gh/108674-free-education-ghana-advantages-disadvantag
Oduro, G. (2019, November 13). *Free SHS–Emerging challenges*. A paper presented at a public policy dialogue on the theme in search of relevant formal education in contemporary Ghana. Commonwealth Hall, University of Ghana. Wednesday.
Otieno, W., & Colclough, C. (2009). *Financing education in Kenya: Expenditures, outcomes and the role of international aid* (RECOUP Working Paper 25). Cambridge: University of Cambridge.
Prempeh, M. (2018). *Implementation of free SHS programme and the double track system*.
Pritchett, L., Sen, K., & Werker, E. (eds.). (2018). *Deals and development: The political dynamics of growth episodes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Radoli, M. (2011), The link: Enhancing governance for all. Retrieved from http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_22494-1522-30.pdf
Raviv, S. (2016). *Ghana's new domestic spying bill*. Retrieved from https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=raviv+(2016)%2C+ghana

Robinson, S. E., & Eller, W. S. (2010). Participation in policy streams: Testing the separation of problems and solutions in subnational policy systems. *Policy Studies Journal*, *38*(2), 199–216.
Rocha Menocal, A. (2015). *Inclusive political settlements: Evidence, gaps, and challenges of institutional transformation*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Developmental Leadership Program.
Sabaatier, P. (2007). *Theories of the policy process* (2nd ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
Sanderson, I. (2002). Evaluation, policy learning and evidence-based policy making. *Public Administration*, *80*(1), 1–22.
Satz, D. (2003). Child labor: A normative perspective. *The World Bank Economic Review*, *17*(2), 287–309.
Shaban, A. (2019). Ghana president assents to right to information bill. Retrieved from https://www.africanews.com/2019/05/22/ghana-president-assents-to-right-to-information-bill//
Tsebelis, G., & Players, V. (2002). *How political institutions work*. New York, NY: Russell Sage/ Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
UNESCO. (2006). *Global Education Digest 2006*: *Comparing education statistics across the world*. Retrieved from http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/global-education-digest-2006-comparing-education-statistics-across-the-world-en_0.pdf
Werner, J. (2011). *Teacher support for universal secondary education in Uganda*. PhD dissertation, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.
World Bank. (2005). *Expanding opportunities and building competencies for young people: A New Agenda for secondary education*. Washington: Author.
World Bank. (2011a). *The World Bank annual report*. Retrieved from worldbank.org/curated/en/445681468030627288/pdf/539910ESW0Gray00502301100BOX358360B.pdf
World Bank. (2011b). *World development report 2011*: *Conflict, security and development*. Washington, DC: Author.
World Bank. (2014). *The world bank annual report*. Washington, DC: Author.
World Bank. (2015). Poverty reeducation in Ghana: Progress and challenges. Retrieved from http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ghana/publication/poverty-reduction-ghana-progress-challenges
World Bank. (2017). International development association project paper on a proposed additional financing credit and restructuring in the amount of SDR 28.9 million (US$40 million equivalent) to the republic of Ghana for the secondary education improvement project. Author.
World Bank. (2010). *Education in Ghana: Improving equity, efficiency and accountability of education service delivery*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
Zahariadis, N. (2007). The multiple streams framework: Structure, limitations, prospects. In P. A. Sabatier (Ed.), *Theories of the policy process* (pp. 65–92). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.