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The Attitudes of Stakeholders Towards the Implementation of
the Free Senior High School Policy in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Since Ghana's independence in 1957, several educational finance mechanisms, such as free education and fee payment modules, have been attempted with varying degrees of success. There is ample evidence that the cost of education and school-related costs at the family level has shattered and continues to shatter the educational prospects of many young people, particularly those from lower socio-economic origins. It was for this reason that the free compulsory basic education program (FCUBE) was implemented in recent decades. After the identification of such financing challenges at the senior high school level, the free senior high school policy was implemented in 2017 to replace the then-existing progressively free senior high school education. This study looks at the perspectives of many stakeholders (parents, teachers, and students) on the policy in terms of motives, advantages, challenges, and ideas for improving policy implementation. The study employed the qualitative research design which helped obtain data from 40 stakeholders (students, parents, and teachers) in three senior high schools in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The thematic analysis was used to analyse the data and reported using consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ). The study found that the introduction of the free senior high school policy was intended to relieve the financial burden of parents, especially guardians from rural settlements, while increasing student enrolment, retention, and human development. So far, these aims have been accomplished and are being accomplished. However, several issues have saddled the policy's implementation. Key among them is: high enrolment rates culminated in teacher shortages, increased workload for existing teachers, classroom deficits, overcrowding in class, the double track system, high rate of indiscipline and inadequate teaching/learning materials. Furthermore, free feeding and lodging plagued schools with dissimilar glitches over dining and accommodation facilities. In view of the findings, the study recommends the expansion of infrastructure; adequate provision of learning materials; stakeholder support; the abolishment

of the double track system and improving the quality and quantity of meals provided to the students.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Across the globe, education has been acknowledged as important to both human and socio-economic development (Klyachko & Semionova, 2018; Sebola, 2022). In terms of the contribution of education to human capital, evidence suggests that education advances human capital and knowledge acquisition (Czapiewski & Janc, 2019). Concerning the socio-economic contribution, education helps to break the cycle of poverty and reduces inequality among people and societies (Sustainable Development Goal [SDG] Report, 2017).

In recognition of their importance, educational frameworks in global, regional, and national contexts continue to be implemented by educational stakeholders. For instance, in the case of the global context, SDG 4, which seeks to ensure quality education, was introduced in 2015 to date. Also, in Ghana, the free education policy, which is the focus of this study, was implemented in 2017 to ensure universal education coverage at the second-cycle level in Ghana. Since the implementation of the policy, it has received mixed reactions; however, not much work has been done on the stakeholders' perspectives on the implementation of the free senior high policy in Ghana. Consequently, to contribute to the development of educational policy in Ghana, the study aims to examine educational stakeholders' perspectives on the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana.

In the quest for sustainable development, the Government of Ghana has, over the years, continued to expand and ensure access to formal education among its citizens (Takyi et al., 2021). As a commitment to this goal, the Government of Ghana has been implementing several educational policies and/or programs such as the free compulsory basic education, progressive free senior high school policy, and the comprehensive free senior high school policy.

The free senior high school policy represents the current educational policy in Ghana, which was implemented in 2017. The free senior high school policy intends to increase enrolment, expanding the standard of education, thus ensuring its quality, and reducing the burden of parents from paying their ward's school fees (Abdul-Raman et al., 2018; Asumadu, 2019). The free senior high school policy exempts students from paying fees irrespective of their socio-economic background. In the year 2017 alone, the government spent GH¢1.2 billion (made up of GH¢188 million from the

government of Ghana and GH¢200 million from Ghana's oil revenue (Takyi et al., 2021). Aside from the absorption of the fees, the free senior high policy covers admission, library, science centre, information and communication technology, examination, and utility fees, boarding and meals cost, and provides core textbooks (Addo, 2019).

Although the policy was introduced not long ago, some successes have been highlighted in the available literature. For instance, in his/her study on whether the free senior high school policy reduces poverty in Ghana, Boateng (2019) revealed that the impact of the free senior high school policy was a 2.56% decrease in the poverty headcount rate for urban residents and 0.76% decrease in poverty headcount rate for rural folks. In the same study, it was further established that the total poverty rate was also reduced by 0.86%, from 23.4% to 23.2%. This was linked to the rise in consumption of secondary education because of the implementation of the free senior high school policy. This is because, under the free senior high school policy, both day and boarding students were offered free meals (Boateng, 2019). The evidence further suggests that the free senior high school policy is contributing to reducing the burden of vulnerable households in Ghana (Adu-Ababio, & Osei, 2018). Reinforcing the above assertion, Matey (2020) has argued that the free senior high school policy has relieved parents' and/or guardians' financial burdens. For this reason, a quantitative study by Addae et al. (2019) has highlighted those parents with poor socio-economic backgrounds, such as low income and education, are highly satisfied with the free senior high school policy in Ghana.

Despite acknowledging the positive effects of the implementation of the free senior high school policy, some scholars (Mohammed & Kuyini, 2021) the implementation of the free senior high school did not follow the stages of the policy formulation such as agenda-setting and formulation, stakeholder consultation among others. In line with the above findings, Matey (2020) has independently established that inadequate stakeholder consultation has resulted in challenges in the implementation of the free senior high school policy. These implementation challenges include inadequate funding (Mohammed & Kuyini, 2021; Asumadu, 2019), resulting in a delay in the release of funds for feeding and learning materials (Chanimbe, & Dankwah, 2021; Matey, 2020; Asumadu, 2019; Adarkwah, 2022). Given the above evidence, it is relevant, therefore, to consider stakeholders' perspectives on the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana.

1.2 Research problem

Evidence suggests that the cost of education and school-related costs at the family level has shattered and continues to shatter the educational prospects of many young people, particularly those from lower socio-economic origins. This reason led to the implementation of the free compulsory basic education program (FCUBE). After the identification of such financing challenges at the senior high school level, the free senior high school policy was implemented in 2017 to replace the then-existing progressively free senior high school education. However, since the implementation of the free senior high school policy, not much is known about the attitudes of stakeholders towards the implementations of the free senior high school policy in Ghana. In this study, the gap is to address stakeholders' attitudes towards the implementation of free senior high schools. By identifying stakeholders' attitudes towards the free senior high school policy, policy-makers may strengthen Ghana's free senior high school policy.

1.3 Purpose of the research

The general purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes of stakeholders (parents, teachers, and students) towards the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana.

1.5 Research Objectives

- To find out reasons that account for the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana.
- To explore the attitudes of stakeholders towards the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana.
- To understand the challenges stakeholders encounter during the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana.
- To explore the strategies stakeholders employ to address the challenges during the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana.

1.6 Research Questions

Following the general purpose of the study, the research questions driving the study are stated as follows:

1. What reasons account for the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana?
2. What attitudes do stakeholders have/hold towards the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana?

3. What challenges do stakeholders encounter during the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana?
4. What strategies do stakeholders employ to address the challenges during the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana?

1.7 Justification of the Study

In a nutshell, the purpose of this study is to examine the educational stakeholders' perspectives on the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana. The free education policy in Ghana, which is the focus of this study, was implemented in 2017 to ensure universal education coverage at the second-cycle level in Ghana. Since the implementation of the policy, it has received mixed reactions; however, not much work has been done on the stakeholders' perspectives on the implementation of the free senior high policy in Ghana. Consequently, to contribute to the development of educational policy in Ghana.

1.8 Scope and Limitations

The scope of the study comprises all aspects covered in the research. On the one hand, it defines the extent of content that was covered by the means of the research to come to more logical conclusions and give conclusive and satisfactory answers to the research questions. Conversely, the scope also covers the geographical setting within which the research was undertaken. The topical scope of the study comprised stakeholders' perspectives on success stories and challenges of the free senior high school policy and effective strategies that can facilitate the smooth implementation of the policy. The geographical scope of the study is the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

Regarding the limitations, the researcher encountered the following setback. Due to resource constraints, the study was not able to cover as many schools as possible and this might bring about an unfair representation of the schools in the municipality. This problem was with by using random sampling methods to give every school an equal chance of being selected. Another problem that was encountered was the language barrier and this was experienced during interviews with some stakeholders (parents and guardians).

1.9 Organization of Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one focuses on the introduction and background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions/objectives, the scope and limitations of the study, the definition of key terms and organization of the study. Chapter two focuses on the literature review, and research conducted by other authors related to the problem under investigation. Chapter three consists of the methodology of this research work such as the sample and sampling procedure, research design, study area, and instruments for the data collection. Chapter four consists of the results and discussions. Chapter five includes a summary of findings, recommendations, and conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of a review of the literature. In the first part, an introduction and a brief of the chapter are provided, alongside the conceptual review. The second section comprises the theoretical framework of the study. The other sections include the empirical framework (rationale and prospects of the implementation of the free senior high school policy, shortcomings/challenges of the implementation of the free senior high school policy and effective strategies that can facilitate smooth implementation of the free senior high school policy and literature review conclusion. The final section focuses on the conceptual framework of the study.

2.2 Ghana's education system

Evidence suggests that the Ghanaian education system operates on a "2-6-3-3-4" system along three progressive levels, including primary education, second cycle, and tertiary education system (Armah, 2017). Therefore, the primary education system is considered the minimum educational requirement for Ghanaian children. Ghana students spend 11 years in school to complete primary education. In Ghana, basic education is free for students. The West Africa Examination Council usually organizes a compulsory direct education certificate examination after 11 years. It is required that pupils obtain a pass mark before being placed in a second-cycle institution. As of now, Ghanaian second-cycle education is a three-year course. Second-cycle education for public secondary schools in Ghana is now accessible due to the free senior high school policy.

To gain entrance into tertiary institutions in Ghana, students must write the West African Senior Certificate Examination after completing the 3-year program in the second cycle. After passing the examinations, students can gain admission into tertiary institutions such as universities, training colleges, polytechnics, and nursing colleges to study the programs of their choice (Armah, 2017). In Ghana, most degree programs last four years, while diploma programs last between two and three years in tertiary institutions. At the tertiary level, fees are paid by parents and guardians, although the government subsidizes some fees.

Systems manage Ghana's education system. Each district has its education directorate; at the regional level has its regional education directorate; and at the national level, there is the Ghana Education Service. In Ghana, the District Education Directorate implements the government's pre-tertiary education policies on a district-by-district basis to ensure that all Ghanaian children of

school-going age receive an excellent quality formal education, regardless of tribe, gender, disability, religious affiliation, or political affiliation. Additionally, they monitor educational activities in their districts.'

Various elementary and secondary schools. As part of its mission to ensure all Ghanaian children of school-going age receive a quality formal education regardless of tribe, gender, disability, religious affiliation, or political affiliation, the Regional Education Directorate implements the government's approved pre-tertiary education policy at the regional level. Within their jurisdictions, they also provide oversight functions at the district level. Furthermore, the Ghana Education Service implements the government's approved pre-tertiary education policies nationally. It is the responsibility of the Ghana Education Service to ensure that all Ghanaian children of school-going age, regardless of tribal affiliation, gender, disability, religious affiliation, or political affiliation, receive a quality formal education and are provided with an inclusive and equitable education (Ghana Education Service, 2023). The Ministry of Education in Ghana also formulates educational policies for implementation by district, regional, and national academic departments (Ministry of Education, 2023). The Government of Ghana, through the Ministry of Education, is responsible for financing educational infrastructure and other educational activities in Ghana.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

In research, theories are indispensable because they guide the research course and are pivotal in conceptualizing the research problem (Adugna, 2006). The research is underlined by the Capital Theory of School Effectiveness and Improvement propounded by Hargreaves (2001) and the Functionalist Theory of Durkheim.

2.3.1 Functionalist Theory of Durkheim

Durkheim Functionalist Theory focuses on the value of education in society. Education, in general, socializes people into a broader society. Education, through conveying information to pupils, helps students learn essential values and principles required for meaningful cooperation in society, as well as contributes significantly to the evolution of societies. According to Miguel and Gugerty (2004), children acquire values such as adhering to timetables, completing deadlines, following orders, and respecting authority because they are primarily rewarded for doing so. Through the instillation of these values and concepts in youngsters or students, they develop and embody these values in their workplaces and across society. This contributes to the socio-economic growth of

nations. Education enables pupils to study or acquire various philosophies. For example, at school, students learn to be either individualistic or community (socially) oriented. Educational systems that favor individual efforts above collective efforts form students' brains to be more individualistic, whereas educational systems that focus on group or social values mould students' minds to be less individualistic (Morrison, 1997). According to Functionalists, education serves a dual function in sustaining and changing a society's culture. This is because better-educated individuals are more liberal, whilst less-educated people are more conservative. Hence, while the primary goal of education is to maintain and impart information and skills, education is also in the business of reshaping cultures, according to Parsuramen (1994).

2.3.2 Capital Theory of School Effectiveness and Improvement

The Capital Theory of School Effectiveness and Improvement is also used in the research's theoretical underpinning. Hargreaves (2001) proposed the theory, which is based on four fundamental concepts: "moral and cognitive outcomes; leverage, which emphasizes the link between teacher input and education productivity; intellectual capital, which denotes the entirety of the school's experience and knowledge; and social capital, which implies systems of trust and partnership between the school and the wider society". The approach emphasizes "enhancement of the link between teacher input and educational achievement, or differences in students' moral and intellectual status as a result of the teacher's effort." According to Hargreaves, instead of instructors putting in extra work with no outcomes, efficient schools focus on tactics that have the most impact with the least amount of effort. Hargreaves defines effective and improving schools as those that harness their intellectual and social capitals to achieve specific academic excellence goals.

According to the idea, three primary criteria must exist to achieve the desired outcome of free senior high school education. To begin, information transfer leverage is key to achieving objectives. Second, the quality of imparted knowledge is related to the teacher's qualifications and the availability of resources. Ultimately, the structure and environment through which information is conveyed influence the quality of educational output. The program's aims are at the centre of Hargreaves' thinking. The anticipated goals would be realized with the help of the government and other stakeholders (social input aimed at lowering the financial cost of secondary education). According to Hargreaves (2001), there will be a stock of knowledgeable persons, resulting in the

creation of intelligent capital for the nation's socio-economic progress. As long as resources are available, a secondary objective such as improved academic achievement will be achieved. Finally, with proper resources and processes, teacher motivation would be strong, which would transfer into desirable results. According to model deductions, the efficiency and sustainability of the policy of free senior high school are contingent on sustainable funding options, student enrolment resulting from an increased desire to attain secondary education, the availability of educational infrastructure and motivated teachers, and continued community or stakeholder engagements.

The argument of this study is grounded on the capital theory of school effectiveness and improvement. The capital theory of school effectiveness and improvement was developed by Hargreaves (2001). The theory is premised on key concepts: 1) outcomes, both moral and cognitive; leverage, which accentuates the nexus between teacher input and education productivity 2) intellectual capital, which connotes the entirety of the school's experience and knowledge 3) social capital, which implies systems of trust and partnership between the school and the wider society. The theory posits that to achieve any education policy, such as the free senior high school education, three initial conditions must be present. In the first place, the transmission leverage of knowledge is critical to the attainment of results. Secondly, the excellence of transferred knowledge is concomitant to the teacher's qualification and resource availability. Lastly, the quality of educational output is moderated by the structure and environment by which knowledge is transmitted. The focus of Hargreaves' theory is the objectives accomplished by the program. Following the government and other stakeholders' support (social input intended to lessen the financial cost of secondary education), intended outcomes would be achieved.

As argued by Hargreaves, there will be a stock of learned personnel, therefore, the building of an intelligent capital for the socio-economic development of the nation. A supplementary outcome like enhanced academic performance will be attained so long as resources are available. Lastly, with the provision of adequate resources and structures (under the free senior high school policy), teacher motivation would be high and consequentially translate into desired results. The efficiency and sustainability of the policy of free Senior High School based on inferences from the theory could thrive on sustainable funding options, increased enrolment of students stemming from an increased desire to attain secondary education, availability of educational infrastructure, motivated teachers, and continued community or stakeholder engagements. As a result of these arguments,

the capital theory of school effectiveness and improvement is used as a theoretical framework to explore stakeholders' perspectives on the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana.

2.4 Empirical Framework

Empirical review details literature based on research conducted on a specific theme or issue. The core of this review is to comprehend the problem and help position the work at the centre of scholarly works. The empirical framework is organized under the following headings; prospects of the free senior high school policy challenges facing the implementing free secondary education policy and strategies to enhance effective implementation of free senior high school.

2.4.1 Prospects of the Free Senior High School Policy

According to Alloush (2010), the importance of education in providing a country's labour population with skills and competencies to assist socio-economic growth has prompted governments to cut educational prices or make it completely free. In Ghana, for example, the high expense of education has consistently hampered the advancement of some junior high school pupils into secondary schools (Deho & Agangiba, 2018). As a result, the free senior high school policy (Abdul-Raman et al, 2018) was implemented to remove financial obstacles to secondary education and encourage participation for kids from less affluent backgrounds. According to Ohba (2009), the implementation of free senior high school provides fairness in access to education since both the "haves" and the "have-nots" have equal access to the policy's packages.

Ngeno and Simatwa (2015) observed a significant increase in the transfer rate of junior high school kids into secondary schools following the implementation of Kenya's free senior high school program. According to Asumadu (2019), Ghana's free senior high school policy is meant to bridge the education gap between the affluent and the poor by ensuring equitable access to secondary education. The reduction in financial burden on parents, particularly poor parents, offered an incentive for them to enroll their children in secondary schools. Hence, since the implementation of the free senior high school program, enrolment in secondary schools has expanded significantly (Kwegyiriba, 2021). Asumadu (2019) identified increased enrolment as one of the benefits of the free senior high school program. According to Asumadu, the reduction in the financial strain on

parents in terms of paying for their children's school tuition has resulted in a significant increase in enrolment rates.

Mohammed and Kuyini (2021) evaluated Ghana's free senior high school policy in terms of its programmatic, procedural, and political characteristics. This study used a mixed-method design that included interviews and secondary data analysis. According to the findings of the study, there is an overemphasis on the program and political elements at the expense of the process dimension. Even in terms of the program dimension, the emphasis is on removing the cost barrier to improving access to SHS education, with little attention paid to other program elements such as other cost variables (opportunity cost, expected return on senior high school education), space and other infrastructure expansion, quality (curriculum reform, improved teacher-student ratio, learning outcomes), equity (urban-rural disparities, disparities in the number of teachers and facilities), and a lack of resources.

2.4.2 Challenges of Implementing Free Senior High School Policy

Numerous studies on the implementation of free secondary education have identified a variety of obstacles that impede the policy's seamless implementation. Vespoor (2008) observed that budget constraints drive governments, particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa, to postpone the distribution of school funding. The impact of the funding delay may be evident in the delayed procurement of teaching and learning resources by schools, among other things. In a research conducted by Asumadu (2019) on the issues confronting Ghana's free senior high school policy, she identified a delay in the receipt of money from the government as a key challenge impeding the program's successful implementation. Apart from the award payment delays, she observed that the funds were frequently insufficient in meeting the financial demands of the schools.

The immediate issue caused by the free secondary education policy is the increasing enrolment of pupils in comparison to the number of teachers and learning resources available (Kalunda and Otanga, 2015). In other cases, greater student enrolment did not result in increased employment of qualified instructors. As a result, the current instructors' workload increased, affecting the delivery of quality education or the transfer of knowledge (Kalunda and Otanga, 2015). According to Hargreaves' (2001) Capital Theory of School Performance and Improvement, the ability of the free senior high school to increase enrolment rates and hence literacy rates must be accompanied by enough material and human resources to match the increased enrolment rates.

According to Okumbe (1998), Kenya's free secondary education policy resulted in a scarcity of important teaching and learning resources such as textbooks, school equipment (mainly desks), and, in some cases, unskilled and half-trained instructors. According to Asumadu (2019), insufficient human resources and a lack of teaching and learning materials in secondary schools are impeding the seamless implementation of the free senior high school program in the Denkyemba District. Long-term education quality is not achieved because ancillary elements or resources required for seamless policy execution are not available. According to Asumadu (2019), educational improvements are always accompanied by infrastructure shortcomings. Furthermore, in an examination of free secondary education in Kenya, Aluko and Adan (2015) discovered that guardians and parents were hesitant to make payments or donations to the institutions. According to Morojele (2012), Lesotho's free education policy led to the "over-centralization" of resources and decision-making, resulting in a loss of local responsibility.

Chanimbe and Dankwah (2021) evaluated obstacles in policy implementation in schools by combining interviews, observation, and documentation analysis from six different schools. They discovered that high enrolment rates resulted in teacher shortages, increased workload for current instructors, classroom deficiencies, overcrowding in class, a high rate of indiscipline, and insufficient teaching/learning resources. Delays in funding also compounded schools' problems, undermining the policy's effectiveness in schools. Contrary to previous research, free feeding and lodging afflicted schools with various issues with food and housing services. From the commonplace to the sublime, the free funding model exacerbates current issues while spawning new ones distinguished by different variables along day/boarding, rural/urban, resourced/less-resourced, and north/south lines.

Matey (2020) investigates the impact of implementing the free senior high school policy on the economic and social lives of parents and pupils, respectively. A cross-sectional correlational descriptive design was adopted. Data were obtained from 336 beneficiary parents under the policy and students enrolled in three senior high schools in Ghana's North East and Upper East Regions. The analysis reveals that the implementation of the free senior high school policy reduced the financial strain on parents, particularly those from remote areas. Moreover, there was a lack of proper stakeholder consultation, which resulted in implementation issues. Another issue was the delay in the distribution of cash for food and learning supplies.

Tamanja and Pajibo (2019) investigated Ghana's Free Senior High School Policy and the accompanying double-track system. The documentary analysis research strategy is motivated by the notion that understanding can emerge most effectively from the inductive study of previously collected material. As a result, the researchers focused exclusively on Secondary School enrolment patterns from 2013 to 2018, as well as the structure of the dual track system. The researchers discovered that the primary obstacles of both the double track and Free SHS systems were resource limits and the way of choosing pupils for the tracks. The researchers conclude that, in terms of policy, providing free education for equitable access in Ghana is a difficult challenge with minimal evidence of sustainability.

2.4.3 Strategies to Enhance Effective Implementation of Free Senior High School

This section discusses strategies that will lead to the effective implementation of the free senior high school policy. The transmission of knowledge from instructors to students will occur as planned under the free senior high school policy when the central government releases funding or grants sufficient to satisfy the demands of the schools on time. The timely and adequate delivery of money will guarantee that teaching and learning resources such as laboratory equipment, computer peripherals, and libraries are readily available to assist in the transmission of information to students (Asumadu, 2019). To handle the growing number of pupils, the government must embark on a huge infrastructure provision initiative in senior high schools. This technique will ensure that pupils study in a comfortable and quiet environment free of tension and psychological concerns. Because class sizes would be reduced, this will help reduce congestion and improve content delivery. Applying this technique to the human resource component, the government must hire trained instructors to accommodate the expanding student population. As a result, the teacher-student ratio will be standard, facilitating effective teaching and learning.

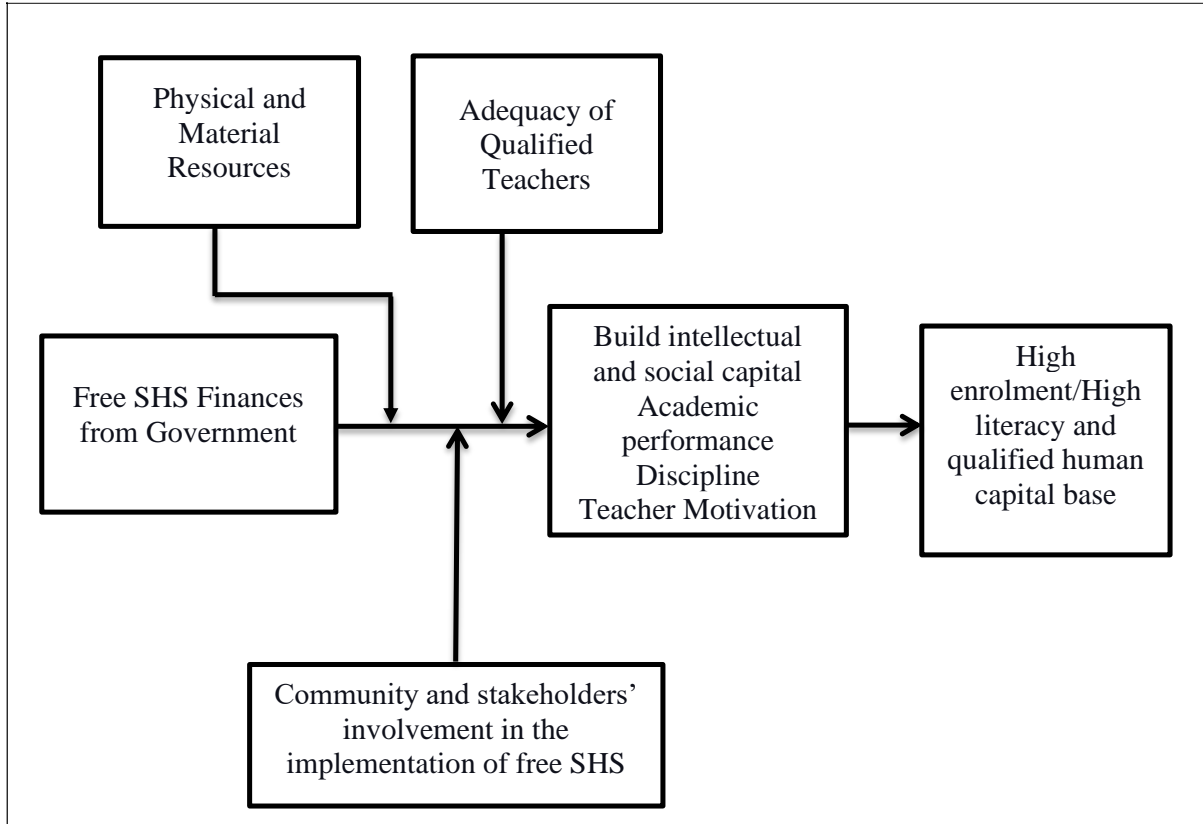
The significance of stakeholder participation in the smooth implementation of the free senior high school policy cannot be overstated. According to Aluko and Adan (2015), in the example of Kenya, where parents were hesitant to make any financial commitment if secondary education was free, it is clear that stakeholder participation is provided with the necessary consent. This will also help parents define their roles and duties. With the implementation of the free senior high school policy, the fundamental concept underlying community engagement in education at the local level is jeopardized. It is also critical for the government to involve communities and parents in the role

they will play in the policy's seamless implementation. Essuman (2008) claims that educational reforms should concentrate on avenues through which schools and communities can work synergistically to improve educational outcomes.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The introduction of a policy that exempts parents from incurring the direct educational costs of their children is known as a free senior high school policy. This strategy is often implemented to reduce the financial burden on parents to encourage enrolment (the movement of pupils from junior high to senior high schools(Rahaman 2018). According to Boatman and Long (2016) and Dynarski and Scott-Clayton (2013), the introduction of free senior high schools in South Africa has significantly increased enrolment rates since formerly "excluded poor families" may now send their children to school. Tuition, library fees, boarding fees, scientific laboratory fees, examination fees, utility fees, meals for both boarders and day students, Parents Teachers Association (PTA) fees, and textbooks are all covered by Ghana's free senior high school policy (Abdul Rahaman et al. 2018).

Figure 2.1: Framework showing the nexus between free senior high school policy and the production of quality human resource.



Source: Adapted from Hargreaves (2001) and Asumadu (2019)

According to the Capital Theory of School Effectiveness and Improvement, the success of implementing the free senior high school policy in Ghana would be contingent on the following factors: the availability of financial resources from the government; student enrolment, the availability of qualified and motivated teachers, the availability of physical facilities, and community engagement in the policy's implementation. As a result, the policy's success is dependent on these elements. According to Figure 2.1, the government's implementation of the free senior high school policy would result in an increase in student enrolment owing to the elimination of financial hurdles that hinder many students from pursuing secondary education. Without a proportional rise in the number of teachers, knowledge transfer to pupils will be

ineffective. In contrast, the availability of resources to hire more skilled and motivated instructors will considerably improve the attainment of the goals of the free senior high school program.

An imbalance in the availability of material and physical resources caused by the implementation of the free senior high school policy might frighten and strain students' absorption, affecting their academic achievement. As a result, the government and other stakeholders must make arrangements for materials and physical resources that will make students' lives more pleasant. In a nutshell, the factors that contribute to quality education following the implementation of the free senior high school policy include the extent to which a school builds intellectual and social capital to promote national development, academic performance, discipline among staff members and students, and teacher motivation.

2.6 Summary

Per the literature reviewed, it was observed that the prospects of the free senior high school policy include the elimination of financial barriers to secondary education and promoting inclusion for students' formless privileged homes, ensuring equity and increasing enrolment. The challenges, however, including delaying the release of grants to schools, inability to meet the financial demands of the schools, infrastructural deficiencies and shortage of essential teaching and learning materials like textbooks, school furniture primarily desks and ins some instances, untrained and half-trained teachers. Some of the strategies observed include the timely release of funds or grants adequate to meet the demands of the schools from the central government, adequate supply of teaching and learning materials such as laboratory equipment, computer accessories and libraries to support the transfer of knowledge to students as well as massive stakeholder involvement in policy implementation on the free senior high school policy.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology that was employed in carrying out the research. It details the study design and approach, population, study sample size and sampling technique, data collection instrument, analytical framework, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

Research design is a procedural plan that helps answer questions validly, objectively and accurately (Tannor, 2014; Bhattacharjee, 2012). The descriptive research design was employed as the study's design. The goal of descriptive research is to characterize a population, situation, or phenomenon correctly and thoroughly. It can answer the questions of what, where, when, and how, but not why. The specific type of descriptive research design employed is the qualitative descriptive research design. The qualitative descriptive design was chosen due to the need for a design that helps get a straightforward description of a phenomenon. It is an approach that is very useful when researchers want to know, regarding events, who were involved, what was involved, and what are how things take place. A descriptive design is a flexible, exploratory approach to qualitative research. The advantage of a qualitative descriptive approach is that data analysis is more likely to remain true to participants' accounts and contribute to ensuring the researchers' interpretations are transparent (Clancy, 2013; Sandelowski, 2000).

3.3 Research Approach

The study employed the qualitative research approach, a naturalistic inquiry technique that seeks an in-depth knowledge of social phenomena in their natural context. It focuses on the "why" of social phenomena rather than the "what," and it is based on firsthand experiences of humans as meaning-making agents in their daily lives. Employing the qualitative approach provides insight into the perceptions and opinions of participants on the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana. Although it is heavily criticized for its inability to provide a framework for generalization, the qualitative approach offers more for understanding the phenomenon (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020)

3.4 Types of Data

The study used only primary data. The primary data (first-hand data collected by research towards addressing an objective) were collected directly from students, teachers and parents in Kumasi. This data was obtained through structured interview guides. The primary data was collected on the reasons for the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana; the attitudes of stakeholders towards the implementation of the free senior high school policy; the challenges stakeholders encounter during the implementation of the free senior high school policy; and the strategies stakeholders employ to address the challenges during the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana.

3.5 Population

The population of a study serves as a source of obtaining empirical data for analyzing social phenomena or events such as the challenges and prospects of the implementation of the free senior high school policy. The study's population comprises parents, students, and teachers of senior high schools, selected from Kumasi in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The above population is selected because they constitute the major educational stakeholders in the study area. The choice of the population is influenced by the study which seeks to explore the attitude of stakeholders towards the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana. The selected schools were Kumasi Anglican Senior High School [Asem, in the Kumasi Metropolis], Kumasi Senior High School [Gyinyase, in the Asokwa Municipality], and Yaa Asantewaa Girls' Senior High School [Tanoso in the Atwima Mponua District] in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. These schools were selected to mimic the spectrum of senior high schools in the region and for that matter the country: single-sex schools and mixed schools. While the study's goal is not to categorize and compare the implementation across gendered dimensions, implicitly establishing gendered differences or effects in the implementation would add much to the work, while offering insights and lessons for future use.

3.6. Selection of Informants

3.6.1 Exclusion and inclusion criteria

Both inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied in the selection of the study's participants.

Concerning the inclusion criteria, consideration was given to:

- a) current and past students who have benefited from the free senior high school policy;
- b) parents whose wards are benefiting or have benefited from the free senior high school policy; c) teachers who have taught at the second cycle level for at least one year; and
- d) participants who willingly provided written or verbal informed consent to participate in the study.

With regards to the exclusion criteria, the following were applied:

- a) participants who did not provide their consent to participate in the study
- b) students who have not benefited from the senior high school policy before;
- c) teachers who teach at the basic level such as primary and junior high school level;
- d) teachers who have taught less than a year at the second cycle level; and
- e) parents whose children or wards have not benefited from the senior high school policy before.

Additionally, parents and teachers who were politically exposed, that is they held political positions either in the school or in the community, and children of politically exposed persons. The exclusion of politically exposed persons is premised on the politically entrenched and polarized context within which the free senior high school policy was implemented; with the two major parties, offering divergent pathways. Despite nearly a decade of the implementation of the policy, the divergent perspectives seem to be widening, hence politically exposed persons could have entrenched positions that might represent a larger interest rather than their personal, subjective opinion.

3.6.2 Sampling

A convenience sampling technique was employed to select participants to participate in the study. The convenience sampling technique is mostly used to select participants who are available and ready to participate in the study (Peterson & Merunka, 2014; Jager et. al., 2017' Price, 2013). Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling strategy in which units are chosen for inclusion in the sample because they are the most easily accessible to the researcher. This might be because of geographical closeness, availability at a specific time, or desire to engage in the research. Therefore, only participants available and willing to take part in the study were recruited to participate in this study. Despite its importance, convenience sampling might result in skewed results, since samples consist of a small set of easily available participants, making results less representative of the larger population. An inability to generalize survey results to the entire population. The potential for population under- or over-representation also exists. However, in this instance, it was the most appropriate sampling technique, since it provides cheap, efficient, and simple means to select the participants. While this sampling technique although criticized for its bias, Gravetter & Forzano (2015) proposed that larger samples reduce the incidence of bias. Based on the recommendation of Gravetter & Forzano (2015), a total of 40 participants were recruited (see Table 3.1 and 3.3 for details). The breakdown is as follows:

Table 3.1: Breakdown of the sample size distribution

Unit of Analysis	Number of Participants
Students	15
Parents	15
Teachers	10

Source: Author's Construct, June 2022

Background of the Informants/Participants:

The informants or participants in this study were drawn from three distinct groups: students, parents, and teachers. Each group provided valuable insights and perspectives. In total, there were 15 students, 15 parents, and 10 teachers involved in the study, making a combined total of 40 participants. The students, as the primary unit of analysis, were selected from various educational institutions. These students represented diverse backgrounds, ages, and academic levels, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the topic from different perspectives. Their involvement in the study allowed for a detailed examination of their experiences, opinions, and attitudes.

Similarly, the parents, consisting of 15 individuals, were selected to provide a unique viewpoint. They were chosen to represent a mix of demographics, including different cultural backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, and levels of involvement in their children's education. The parental perspective was essential in understanding the support systems and expectations influencing students' educational journeys.

Lastly, the teachers, comprising ten individuals, were selected based on their expertise and experience in the field of education. These educators brought a wealth of knowledge and insights into the study, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, strategies, and perspectives of those responsible for guiding students' learning.

These participants were selected based on the author's construct, a framework developed specifically for this study. By including a diverse range of informants, the study aimed to capture a holistic view of the topic, ensuring that the findings would be robust and applicable to a broader context.

Overall, the informants/participants in this study contributed invaluable insights that shed light on the topic. Their diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives enriched the research process, ultimately leading to a more nuanced understanding of the subject matter.

3.7 Interviews and Data Collection

Since the study applies a qualitative approach, an interview guide was the main data collection instrument. Interviewing is a powerful way of getting insights into the interviewee's perceptions (Alshenqeti, 2014). The interviews enabled the participants to express their opinions and feelings about their perceptions regarding the implementation of the free senior high school policy as well as narrate and construct their experiences in consonance with the merit ascribed to interviews by Saunders et al. (2009). The interview guide was designed mainly in an open-ended format and focused on the main research questions driving the study. The interview guide was structured into five parts.

Regarding the collection, I started by gathering data on the reasons that account for the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana. The second aspect was devoted to the attitudes of stakeholders towards the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana. The challenges stakeholders encounter during the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana were the focus of the third aspect. In the fourth part of the interview guide, the strategies stakeholders employ to address the challenges during the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana were the focus. The fifth and final aspect captured information on the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the participants. The interview was conducted in public places which are conducive to interviews and free from any third-party interferences.

The data collection process commenced when the heads of the selected schools were notified in writing about the study and its purpose. The students and teachers alike were briefed on the study and encouraged to participate. Participants who volunteered were asked to write their names and class with a designated teacher. The researcher, together with five research assistants who had experience in qualitative research visited the schools and met the potential participants. They were further briefed and those who consent to participate in the study were selected. With regard to the parents, a similar approach was employed. The interviews were conducted in both Twi (the local language of the study participants) and English, depending on the preference of the participant. Interviews will last for approximately one hour. The consent of the participants was sought to digitally record the interviews. Handwritten notes were also used to supplement the digital record interviews.

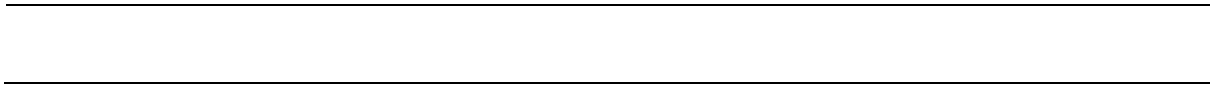
3.8 Data processing and analysis

The data from the interviews were analyzed qualitatively using the thematic approach. The thematic analytic approach was applied by following the specific objectives of the study. The thematic approach therefore aided in organizing and describing the data. This was preceded by data immersion after transcribing the audio-recorded interviews. The thematic approach provided the researcher with the opportunity to identify, analyze and report patterns within the data. In addition, direct quotations from the participants support the results. The consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) checklist, developed for detailed and thorough reporting of qualitative investigations were employed to report the findings (Tong, Sainsbury & Craig, 2007). The checklist excludes generic criteria that are relevant to all forms of research reports in favour of elements particular to reporting qualitative investigations. The checklist's criteria assist the researcher in reporting significant features of the research team, study procedures, study setting, findings, analysis, and interpretations (Tong, Sainsbury & Craig, 2007).

Five themes were identified (see Table 3.2 for details). These are presented in the text below together with sub-themes and illustrated by quotations from data in italics. After each quotation follows the specific stakeholders' (parents, teachers, or students) background characteristics such as sex, age, level of education (for all), the number of children benefiting from the free senior high school policy for parents, and the number of years of experience for teachers (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.2: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Lingering doubts despite positive knowledge about the policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ <i>Ease financial burden</i>❖ <i>Make education affordable</i>❖ <i>To increase enrolment and retention</i>❖ <i>Promote educational equity</i>❖ <i>Human capital development</i>❖ <i>For political advantage</i>
Varied attitudes toward the free senior high school policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ <i>Excitement</i>❖ <i>Pessimism</i>
Recounting the blessings of the free senior high school policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ <i>Relief to parents</i>❖ <i>Non-payment of school fees</i>❖ <i>Free meals</i>❖ <i>Freed resources for alternate use</i>❖ <i>Enrolment surge</i>
Facing reality when attempting to implement free senior high school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ <i>Economic consequences</i>❖ <i>The ills of double track</i>❖ <i>Social consequences</i>❖ <i>Academic implications</i>❖ <i>Continuity concerns</i>



Straightening the crooked path of free senior high school implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>Financial support from parents</i> ❖ <i>Extra classes</i> ❖ <i>Giving off my best</i> ❖ <i>Disciplining children</i>
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Source: Field Data, 2022

3.9 Ethical considerations

All ethical standards required in the conduct of social science research were adhered to in this study. Both verbal and written informed consent was sought from the participants before data was collected. Verbal consent was sought from illiterate participants whereas written informed consent was sought from the literate participants. Also, the privacy and confidentiality of information provided by the participants were assured. In this case, the data collected from the participants were not shared with anyone. Further, the participants were assured that they were free to opt out of the survey any time they deem fit. Again, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants before data are collected. Finally, the responses of the participants were reported anonymously as required in almost every research. No personal details of the participants were either collected from the participants or were included in the interview guide.

3.10 Rigor/trustworthiness

Rigour or trustworthiness is important in qualitative research (Gunawan, 2015; Krefting, 1991; Amankwaa, 2016; Nowell et al., 2017). Following Lincoln and Guba (1986), four criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research were used. These are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Forero et al., 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The specific strategies that will be employed to achieve rigour include prolonged discussion with the participants, pre-test of the data collection instrument, relating the findings of the study to previous studies, and data saturation (Forero et al., 2018).

3.11 Reflexivity

In doing this research, I see myself as an insider-outsider researcher. Since I am a Ghanaian and this study was also conducted in Ghana, I see myself as an insider as far as this study is concerned. In the context of an outsider researcher, I exclude myself from being a stakeholder because I am not a parent, student at senior high school or a teacher as far as the implementation of the free senior high school policy is concerned. Also, I did not benefit from the free senior high school policy in Ghana. These highlighted issues therefore position me as an insider-outsider researcher. However, being an insider-outsider researcher did not influence my perspective as far as this study is concerned. More specifically, my insider-outsider perspective did not influence the outcome of this study as I was fair and transparent in recruiting the participants for the study, interviewing the participants, transcribing the data, interpreting the data, analysing the data, and reporting the findings. For instance, to the best of my knowledge, I reported exactly the data/information the participants provided to me. It is also important to comment that I had no prior relationships with the study participants. Further, in dealing with the issues of reflexivity, I constantly reflected on my own positionality as a male and a Ghanaian who had my basic education, secondary and tertiary education in Ghana to eliminate any sorts of biases that might occur during this study.

Chapter summary

This study employs qualitative descriptive design to investigate perspectives of stakeholders towards the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana. The main sources of data were obtained from students (n=15), teachers (n=15), and parents (n=10) through the use of interview guides. In recruiting the participants through the use of convenience sampling techniques, inclusion and exclusion criteria were followed which have been described in this chapter. Data were analysed using thematic analytical approach with the support of direct quotations from the responses of the participants. Ethical considerations, rigor and reflexivity were considered which have been described in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Education financing has been a major challenge in developing countries including Ghana. Since independence in 1957, several educational financing arrangements such as free education and fee payment modules have been implemented in Ghana, with mixed results. Evidence abounds that cost of education and education-related expenses at the household level has dashed and continues to dash the educational prospects of many young people, particularly those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds (Deininger, 2003; Declercq & Verboven, 2015). It was for this singular reason the free compulsory basic education policy (FCUBE) was introduced last decades. This has resulted in increased enrolment and retention at the basic level. Following the identification of such financing challenges at the senior high school level, the senior high school policy was introduced in 2017 to replace the progressively free senior high school education in existence at the time. This study investigates the perceptions of multiple stakeholders (parents, teachers, and students) on the policy, vis-à-vis the motivations, benefits, challenges, and strategies to improve the policy's functioning.

In this chapter, the results obtain following the analysis of the field data are discussed. As indicated in the data analysis section of the previous chapter, the thematic analytical framework was adopted. The results of the study are presented under the themes that emerged from the analysis.

4.3 Lingering doubts despite positive knowledge about the policy

This theme addresses the first objective which seeks to find the reasons that account for the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana. The following sub-themes ease the financial burden; increase enrolment and retention; make education affordable; promote educational equity; human capital development and political advantage were identified from the data analysis. The following paragraphs discuss this theme in much detail. Together, these sub-themes provide insights into the perceptions of the stakeholders involved in the study concerning the government's decision to implement the free senior high school policy in Ghana in 2017. While some demonstrated adept knowledge, there were doubts among others as to the real reasons behind the implementation of the policy.

4.3.1 Ease Financial Burden

The free senior high school policy was considered a government instrument by which the financial burden on parents and guardians of senior school students is to be eased. Seeing the financial burden imposed on parents as part of caring for their wards through senior high school education, the government came to their aid, by lessening this financial burden as it absorbed fees for senior high school students. This burden the participants however noted has resulted in non-enrolment by some students and non-completion by others whose parents were unable to shoulder the associated cost of senior school education. This is demonstrated in the following citations by a 40 year old male participant: Participant 22, male, 40 y old, bachelor's degree, a teacher with 15 years working experience

“To help students who couldn't attend senior high school because of financial difficulties. The free senior high school policy is a good opportunity for them.

“The free senior high school has come to help some of us the parents with difficulties in terms of our finances to help take care of our children's education without any difficulty(49 year old participant)

“I think the reason we all know is that the free senior high school policy is to help students and parents. By reducing their financial burdens in terms of paying school fees.”

[Participant 14, female, 49 y old, tertiary graduate, a parent with 2 beneficiaries under policy]

“I feel the free senior high school is to help parents pay for their children's education.”

[Participant 5, female, 43 y old, no formal education, a parent with 2 beneficiaries under the policy]

“It is a support for families who find it difficult to cater for their children's education.”

[Participant 29, female, 14 y old, a female student in form one]

Make Education Affordable

Linked to easing the financial burden on parents, educational affordability was another issue identified as the motive for implementing the policy. The participants agreed that taking away the school fees component of senior high school education makes it affordable for all manner of persons, including the less privileged. This point was at the back of ancillary costs incurred by parents and guardians on the back of the implementation of the free senior high school policy. These other costs, although necessary, are minimal in comparison to the component covered by the policy, hence the affordability argument put forward as a reason for which the policy was implemented. This is demonstrated in the following citations.

“To help the poor who cannot afford senior high school education to have that chance to also come to senior high school, and if possible, complete their education.”

[Participant 34, female, 14, y old, a male student in form one]

“To help the people who cannot afford senior high school education have a chance.”

[Participant 26, male, 17 y old, a male student in form two]

“The free senior high school policy is to help anyone who does not have money to continue his education have that chance because they won't have to pay anything.”

[Participant 2, 44 y old, senior high school graduate, a parent with 2 beneficiaries under the policy]

“The policy is to enable the poor who, ordinarily cannot afford senior high school education to also get that chance and receive education for their future.”

[Participant 16, 35 y old, bachelor's degree, a male teacher with 7 year's work experience]

To Increase Enrolment and Retention

The need to increase enrolment rates in senior high schools and retention rates of enrolled students featured prominently among the perception of the stakeholders regarding the

implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana. Having discussed the financial burden and affordability issues that surrounded the fee payment module of Ghana's senior high school education, the participants intimated that the ensuing consequence of that framework was lower enrolment and retention rates. As such, the free senior high school policy was birthed to present educational opportunities to students who ordinarily might not continue to the senior high school level or might not graduate due to financial issues.

“Well, I think it was implemented to help our educational system. Increase the number of students who go to senior high school after their junior high school. Sometimes after students graduate from junior high school, they do not continue because of admission and school fees and all that. So the free senior high school has eliminated all that to provide everyone, rich or poor the opportunity to school.”

[Participant 18, 43 y old, master's degree, a female teacher with nine year's work experience]

“Well, I believe the government brought the free senior high school policy to help parents whose children are in senior high school and also to increase the number of students coming to school. That is why the free senior high school was implemented”

[Participant 25, 51 y old, bachelor's degree, a male teacher with twenty-three years' experience]

“Most people were becoming uneducated. Always ending at the junior high school level. But the free senior high school is a good chance for everyone to go to school.”

[Participant 36, 16 y old, a male student in form two]

“People were dropping out because they had challenges paying school fees and their parents couldn't help, so the government decided to help by bringing the free senior high school.”

[Participant 3, 38 y, old, junior high school graduate, a parent with 3 beneficiaries under the policy]

The participants, therefore, held the notion that the free senior high school policy was intended to increase the enrolment rates in senior high schools by creating an avenue where people without any hope of affording such could do so at no direct cost to them. Again, retention of enrolled students was to be increased as the policy intended to lessen financial barriers to senior school completion, which hitherto was a significant contributor to school drop-out.

Promote Educational Equity

The participants intimated that the educational inequity that was associated with the old educational system in which fees were charged at the senior high school level led to the formulation of the later policy in which the state or government absorbed fees for education at public senior high schools. The inequity of the fee payment regime led to educational inaccessibility for children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, thus resulting in further deepening their inability to acquire the knowledge and qualifications necessary to position them to take charge of their lives and contribute to the socio-economic development of their communities and the country at large. These excerpts buttress the point of the participants on the equity dimension of the policy.

“The free senior high school was implemented to provide an opportunity for everyone to have an education.”

[Participant 6, 46 y old, tertiary graduate, a parent 1 beneficiary under the policy]

“Why it was implemented? Isn’t it because the president wanted to help every student to go far in his/her education? I believe that is why.”

[Participant 7, 47 y old, basic education, a parent with 1 beneficiary under the policy]

“From what we were told, the reason for the free senior high school is to make education free. Basic school is already free and so this is just a step further.”

[Participant 21, 30 y old, bachelor’s degree, a teacher with 3 year’s work experience]

“To make schooling free. Right? So that everyone can go to school.”

[Participant 32, 16 y old, a male student in form two]

“For equal opportunities. Rich or not rich, everyone deserves the chance to have an education which is why the government implemented the policy. So that everyone can go to school.”

[Participant 40, 20 y old, a male student in form two]

According to the participants, the policy is to create a level ground for the rich and the poor to have equal access to education as they prepare and work toward human development. With no cost of education vis-à-vis school fees and other fees charged at school, a somewhat equal ground is to be established where financial barriers that previously hinder the educational prospects of children from poor backgrounds are eliminated.

Human Capital Development

A fraction of the participants revealed that the free senior high school policy was conceived and implemented on the back of the government's resolve to promote the human capital development of the youth. This is by increasing literacy and numeracy and equipping the youth to transition into the world of work or progress with their education. The human capital dimension as a motive for the implementation of the policy is demonstrated in the following citations.

“To help the youth get educated. Most people were becoming uneducated. Always ending at junior high school. But the free senior high school is a good chance for everyone to go to school.”

[Participant 34, female, 14, y old, a male student in form one]

“Everybody likes free things. So the president brought the free senior high school policy so that people would use that as a chance to go to school.”

[Participant 34, 14 y old, a male student in form two]

For Political Advantage

A section of the participants notes that the free senior high school was a mere political tool adopted by the then opposition party, the New Patriotic Party to rescue power from the party in government at the time. These participants perceive the policy as having no clear developmental links, but an electioneering agenda to enable them to win power.

“It was a campaign promise and he delivered.”

[Participant 10, 60 y old, tertiary graduate, a male parent with 1 beneficiary under the policy]

“Hmm. I think the reason we all know is that the free senior high is to help students and parents. By reducing their financial burdens in terms of paying school fees. But in reality and looking at the struggles we face because of the policy, I believe it was implemented because it was a campaign promise and nothing else.”

[Participant 15, 49 y old, tertiary graduate, a female parent with 1 beneficiary under the policy]

“I think the whole idea for the free senior high school was political, for votes. And it was a good strategy for the New Patriotic Party to win. Parents want to be relieved of paying some fees. So they voted him for it.”

[Participant 23, 43 y old, master's degree, a female teacher with 17 year's work experience]

4.4 Varied Attitudes toward the Free Senior High School Policy

The theme of varied attitudes toward the free senior high school policy brings to bear the way the various stakeholders react to its implementation, as a means to addressing the second research objective (which seeks to explore/examine the attitudes of stakeholders towards the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana). This somehow has links to their overall perception of the motivation(s) for the formulation and implementation of the free senior high school policy on the one hand, and the fallouts of the policy vis-à-vis the implementation so far on the other hand. Excitement and pessimism were the two sub-themes discovered under the theme.

Excitement

The majority of the participants demonstrate a positive attitude towards the implementation of the policy. This was contingent on the government's decision to absolve fees for senior high school education. With senior high education posing no direct cost to parents in terms of fees, an optimistic outlook develops among parents, teachers, and students alike as they believe the right atmosphere has been created for educational growth and development. Additionally, the excitement is associated with a free mind and free opportunity it gives students from poor backgrounds them to concentrate on their studies without having to worry about how their fees will be paid.

"I am excited about the free senior high school policy. I do not pay anything for my child to go to school. It is better."

[Participant 1, 53 y old, no formal education, a female parent with 1 beneficiary under the policy]

"I am very excited. I am a fan of the free senior high school being implemented by the government of the New Patriotic Party. This shows that the government thinks about everyone even students."

[Participant 3, 38 y, old, junior high school graduate, a parent with 3 beneficiaries under the policy]

"I'm glad such a policy has been brought to the board by the president. It's one with good intentions though full of misfortunes and challenges."

[Participant 25, 51 y old, bachelor's degree, a male teacher with twenty-three years' experience]

"Yes, I am excited and grateful for the free senior high school policy. I am here with my elder sister, and if not for the free senior high school policy, the fees would have been too much."

[Participant 29, female, 14 y old, a female student in form one]

The excitement has created a high expectation in minds of these stakeholders as enrolment, retention, and academic performance of students include key areas in which better scores are expected. With fewer financial barriers on the way of children and their parents, a stable mind is available for even the poorest child to learn with comfort, not having to worry about where to get money and pay his or her school fees or feeding fees.

"I have good expectations for the policy. I hope it meets the expectations of Ghanaians."

[Participant 23, 43 y old, master's degree, a female teacher with 17 year's work experience]

"I expect the policy to increase school enrolment without causing any difficulties to schools and staff."

[Participant 26, male, 17 y old, a male student in form two]

"It is a good thing by the government, and I hope it continues so that my brothers will benefit also."

[Participant 30, 15 y old, a female form one student]

The optimistic stand of the participants makes them develop these expectations and hope these are met, not currently but also for a very long time. Their views concerning the merits of the policy make the participants advocate for its sustainability as an expectation since they want future generations to also participate and benefit from it.

Pessimism

Despite the widespread optimism and excitement towards the policy, some held a pessimistic view. These individuals perceive the policy as a piece of mere electioneering machinery, with no real commitment from the government. To them, Ghanaians love free things and government-then, and the opposition party capitalized on this inclination towards free things and won their votes. These quotes from the participants fully illustrate the pessimistic attitude of these participants toward the policy.

“I do not think it’s an effective project. It’s just a waste of resources. We can pay for senior high school fees. The money could have been used for other things. Like putting up infrastructure.”

[Participant 6, 46 y old, tertiary graduate, a parent 1 beneficiary under the policy]

“mmh. How much are school fees at the senior high school that we cannot pay? We could have paid even if it wasn’t free. We didn’t ask for it. Universities are more expensive. He should change those too if he is committed to promoting educational equity as he makes us believe.”

[Participant 12, 64 y old, basic school graduate, a parent with 1 beneficiary under the policy]

“Was the policy even necessary? That’s the question we should be asking ourselves now. Fees in senior high are not too expensive that students cannot afford. Have you thought of that? I am not happy about this whole free senior high thing. It’s rather creating a tight system. All that money could have been used elsewhere.”

[Participant 16, 35 y old, bachelor’s degree, a male teacher with 7 year’s work experience]

“The policy was not a priority. It was just a good point for him to win the election. And we voted for him and now he has done it.”

[Participant 25, 53 y old, bachelor’s degree, a male teacher with twenty-three years’ experience]

“I am not very excited. I am not in favour of the free senior high policy. It wasn’t a solution after all.”

[Participant 27, 16 y old, a male student in form two]

The free senior high school policy itself is not necessary. I believe everybody can try to pay their senior high fees. It is not so expensive. So why the free senior high school? They should have used that money to build more schools and do more renovations. Rather they spend all the money on this free senior high, meanwhile, we are struggling in the poor conditions at our schools.

[Participant 36, 16 y old, a male student in form two]

With a pessimistic attitude toward the policy, these participants had little to zero expectations of the policy.

“I do not have any expectations from the policy. It is free but students have limited time in school as compared to the days when the policy did not exist”

[Participant 27, 16 y old, a male student in form two]

“I do not know. I don't have any expectations.”

[Participant 33, 14 y old, a male student in form one]

“I do not have much expectation for the free senior high. It is not necessary.”

[Participant 36, 16 y old, a male student in form two]

4.5 Recounting the Blessings of the Free Senior High School Policy

Several benefits have been enumerated by the participants as ensuing positive fallouts from the implementation of the free senior high school policy. These benefits include relief to parents, payment of school fees by the government, provision of free meals, freedom to study on the part of students, and increased enrolment and retention rates among others. In the next few paragraphs, these sub-themes are discussed and expanded to depict the positives brought by the policy.

Non-Payment of School Fees

The free senior high school policy has led to non-payment of school fees by parents and guardians. As the name suggests, the free senior high school policy is to provide educational opportunities to all, by eliminating school fees-associated costs. It has therefore eliminated the payment of fees by parents, thereby, bringing a huge benefit to parents and guardians who previously, struggles to afford such fees. Additionally, the participants note that some students cater to themselves, as they have no one to look after them. Thus, the non-payment of fees as part of the policy is a huge win and motivating factor for their decision to engage, which in the absence of the policy will have been difficult or impossible.

“I have two children in senior high now. One is in senior high 1, and the other is in senior high 2. I don't pay anything for any of them. I only buy books and sometimes give them stipends. The family does not have to struggle to pay any fees.”

[Participant 3, male, 49 y old, senior high school graduate, a parent with 2 beneficiaries under the policy]

“My daughter is in school now at Techiman High School. I do not pay school fees and feeding fees. It’s helping me in terms of finances. I can save money to take care of other things.”

[Participant 4, 38 y old, junior high school graduate, a parent with 3 beneficiaries under the policy]

“The free senior high school policy allowed me to attend this school. The fees used to be very expensive, and students who are even posted here do not come because of the fees. But now, everyone who wants to come can come.”

[Participant 31, 18 y old, a female student in form two]

“I know the free senior high school policy was implemented by Nana Addo’s government in 2017, right? And because of this, students are not supposed to pay any fees including students who are boarders. Their dining and boarding fees are all covered by the free senior high. Which is good. It has allowed students to have a senior high school education without paying a penny.”

[Participant 17, 48 y old, bachelor’s degree, a male teacher with 12 year’s work experience]

Relief to Parents

The free senior high has brought relief to parents and guardians as they no longer struggle the pay the fees of their wards. Governments’ decision to absorb school-related costs of senior high school education has lessened the burden on parents and guardians alike, relieving them of the “hustle and bustle” of meeting the educational needs of the children. This relief has made it possible for children, which hitherto, will not have access to senior high school education to be part of the process, as some level of equity has been achieved. By relieving parents of school fees payment, they can focus on providing for their non-school fees-related needs such as textbooks among others. This is illustrated in the following quotations.

“mmh oh for the benefits, I told you, I do not pay anything. For my first child, I used to pay a lot of money for his fees. I was always in debt. I’m a farmer so when I have not cultivated anything yet and the fees come, I have to go and borrow. Do you understand?”

[Participant 1, 53 y old, no formal education, a female parent with 1 beneficiary under the policy]

“I am not the only one benefiting. Everybody in the country is happy about it. Parents do not struggle to pay school fees. Students can go to school and they won’t be sacked because of the school fees.”

[Participant 10, 60 y old, tertiary graduate, a male parent with 1 beneficiary under the policy]

“It covers both academic and administrative fees of students, which is very good. This is good because it reduces the financial burden on students and parents.”

[Participant 16, 35 y old, bachelor’s degree, a male teacher with 7 year’s work experience]

“Oh, it has reduced the burden on my parents. My senior brother is at the university and it’s not easy paying his fees. If not for the free senior high, my parents would have to pay for mine too. It would have been very difficult.”

[Participant 34, 14 y old, a male student in form two]

Free Meals

Another item identified under the benefits of the policy is the free meals provided to boarding students. Under the policy, not only tuition fees were absorbed by the government, but rather, a combination of tuition fees and boarding fees (including feeding fees). This makes it a comprehensive package, in which students staying in the boarding house bore no cost to their parents or guardians. As such, the feeding cost was taken care of under the policy, providing an additional cushion for parents and guardians.

“I do not pay any school or hostel or feeding fees. I can save money. Those are the only benefits I get.”

[Participant 4, 38 y old, junior high school graduate, a parent with 3 beneficiaries under the policy]

“You know the benefits. You are a student. Senior high school education is now free, even including feeding. I am also a benefit of that.”

[Participant 15, 49 y old, tertiary graduate, a female parent with 1 beneficiary under the policy]

“Because of the free senior high school policy, senior high school is now free and anyone can attend school. Also we the boarders do not pay anything, even for feeding.”

[Participant 37, 16 y old, a male student in form one]

“I have access to free breakfast, lunch, and dinner, thanks to the free senior high school policy”

[Participant 28, 16 y old, a female student from one]

Freed Resources for Alternate Use

As an indirect benefit of the policy, some of the participants recounted how the intervention has relieved parents of stress and freed financial resources for alternative use. Monies that otherwise will have been used to pay for school fees for their wards in now invested in other productive avenues. This indirect benefit has contributed to improved welfare in some instances, while also providing resources to cater to other children at other institutions, for instance, the universities. These excerpts provide additional evidence to that effect.

“My daughter is in school now at Techiman High School. I do not pay school fees and feeding fees. It’s helping me in terms of finances. I can save money to take care of other things.”

[Participant 4, 38 y old, junior high school graduate, a parent with 3 beneficiaries under the policy]

“I am very excited about it. It is helping my husband and me a lot in terms of finances. I can save money to take care of the family.”

[Participant 11, 56 y old, no formal education, a female parent with 2 beneficiaries under the policy]

“Oh, it has reduced the burden on my parents. My senior brother is at the university and it’s not easy paying his fees. If not for the free senior high school, my parents would have to pay for mine too. It would have been very difficult.”

[Participant 34, 14 y old, a male student in form two]

Enrolment Surge

One of the objectives the free senior high school policy seeks to achieve is to increase enrolment and retention rates in schools. With financial barriers limiting the potential of many qualified students from enrolling and fully completing their studies, the advent of the policy was to provide these students with the opportunity to engage and complete their studies. This

motive was reported as reality among a section of the study's participants. To these participants, the introduction of the policy increased enrolment to a large extent.

"It has increased student enrolment I believe and it is normal. Free things always bring numbers."

[Participant 19, 34 y old, bachelor's degree, a male teacher with 6 year's work experience]

"It is a good policy you know. People who couldn't have an education now have the opportunity to attend. That's why enrolment has increased."

[Participant 21, 30 y old, bachelor's degree a female teacher with 3 year's work experience]

"It is increasing student enrolment and is likely to change a lot in our youth."

[Participant 23, 43 y old, master's degree, a female teacher with 17 year's work experience]

"We have seen an increase in attendance not just in my school but in other schools as well. I think it's good timing."

[Participant 17, 48 y old, bachelor's degree, a male teacher with 12 year's work experience]

4.6 Facing Reality when Attempting to Implement Free Senior High School

This theme helps address the third research objective which seeks to understand/find the challenges stakeholders encounter during the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana.

Economic Consequences

The excess demands over the supply of teaching and learning resources, including teachers and feeding arrangements constitute the economic consequences of the policy. The economic issues identified with the implementation of the free senior high school policy were threefold. The first has to do with the inadequacy of infrastructure to match the increased enrolment that occasioned the policy's introduction. From the interviews, it was identified that no concrete

efforts were made to increase available infrastructure to compensate for the increased enrolment that was expected to result from the policy. As such, there were and there still exist issues with infrastructural adequacy in most schools.

“The major challenge about the free senior high policy is that schools do not have an infrastructure for a large number of students coming in. The government must build more schools and even employ more teachers (laughs)...*mmh we are struggling my brother.*”

[Participant 17, 48 y old, bachelor’s degree, a male teacher with 12 year’s work experience]

Without infrastructure, both students and teachers are both sufferings. Classes are not conducive to teaching our students. The classrooms are choked and some of the classes do not even have fans. But they are only concerned in bringing students in, not their welfare.”

[Participant 19, 34 y old, bachelor’s degree, a male teacher with 6 year’s work experience]

“Our classrooms and dining halls are very crowded. We struggle a lot, especially in the hot seasons. There is no comfort in the classrooms.”

[Participant 28, 16 y old, a female student in form one]

Classes and boarding houses have become very crowded. I do not if it’s because of the free senior high school or if it is just because the population in Ghana is increasing. But I’m sure it’s the free senior high school. Many people could come to school because of the free senior high school.”

[Participant 33, 14 y old, a male student in form one]

The second issue under the economic consequences is the inadequacy of teaching staff. Most of the participants, particularly the teachers and students lament the limited number of teaching staff available to support the implementation of the policy. Merely absorbing the fees of students, without commensurate employment of qualified teachers to teach and impact the students is tantamount to less progress, according to the participants. In that vein, the high student-teacher ratios in the schools pose a challenge to effective teaching and learning and the potential to get the best out of teacher-student engagements. This is particularly distressing as the same teachers have to teach both gold and green tracks – which are developed to cater to the increased enrolment following the implementation of the free senior high school policy.

“The students are now many and we have just a few teachers. We can’t keep all of them under control. Now too they are saying we shouldn’t lash them. Something has to be done about increasing the number of teachers if the free senior high school will work.”

[Participant 18, 43 y old, master’s degree, a female teacher with nine year’s work experience]

“Teachers to teach all the students are just a few, and how can they teach all of them?”

[Participant 20, 51 y old, master’s degree, a female teacher with 20 year’s experience]

“The teachers are not that many and we have to handle all these students.”

[Participant 22, 40 y old, bachelor’s degree, a male teacher with 15 year’s work experience]

“Teachers are also very few in the school.”

[Participant 34, 14 y old, a male student in form two]

“Schools do not have adequate teachers to teach students. For example, my school has only two English teachers for the whole school. Won’t they get tired?”

[Participant 28, 16 y old, a female student in form one]

The inadequacy of teachers thus impacts learning activities negatively, and the morale of teachers. The excessive demands placed on them could affect their ability to give off their best for the education of the students. This is particularly true as some teachers have to teach in the gold and green tracks, the child of the free senior high school policy to ensure some students sit at home while others are in school, so no one is denied access to education. Increased work burden could lead to diminishing returns among the teachers.

The third and final dimension of the economic consequence of the policy relates to the poor quality of food served to the students and its inadequacy. This feature is prominently among the challenges facing the policy’s implementation. The students, teachers, and parents alike described how inadequate the food served to the students is vis-à-vis their nutritional requirements.

“My child told me the food they eat is very poor.”

[Participant 6, 46 y old, tertiary graduate, a parent 1 beneficiary under the policy]

“I heard on the radio that the food they eat isn’t good and the money from the government always delays. What is the need of doing it if you know you cannot do it?”

[Participant 12, 64 y old, basic school graduate, a parent with 1 beneficiary under the policy]

“Even the food the students eat is low in quality. You should ask them. And all we have to ask ourselves is, is this free SHS thing possible?”

[Participant 20, 51 y old, master’s degree, a female teacher with 20 year’s experience]

“The food they serve at dining too is too small and something must be done about it.”

[Participant 31, 18 y old, a female student in form two]

The Ills of Double Track

Almost all the participants were against the double-track system. They believe it does not afford the students the full benefits of learning as they spend significantly longer periods in school, exposing them to several social issues and at the same time increasing parents’ expenditure on home tuition and extra classes. The argument is that students are often out of touch with lessons, as they spend long periods at home, thereby affecting their academic fortunes.

“Yes, my concern is the double track. It does not help the children. They will even forget what they were taught when they come home. They only come home to play.”

[Participant 5, female, 43 y old, no formal education, a parent with 2 beneficiaries under the policy]

“The double track is a big issue that has to be worked on. Students have a hard time studying when they are home. Why do we send them home? We need to correct that. We do not have the right number of teachers to meet the workload and double-track something. Students do not have enough time to be in school. Which is not so good.”

[Participant 23, 43 y old, master’s degree, a female teacher with 17 year’s work experience]

“Oh, I think the double track system worries a lot. We do not complete the syllabus because of the track system.”

[Participant 34, 14 y old, a male student in form two]

Some parents, speaking about the challenges facing the implementation of the policy went further to blame the double track system for increased teenage pregnancy among senior high school students in the country. The extensively longer periods spent at home during vacations according to these parents make them prone to engaging in practices that are unhealthy for

their sexual and reproductive well-being, with teenage pregnancy the consequence in some instances. Here are excerpts from some parents on the issue.

“The only thing I fear is the double track something they do nowadays. My neighbour’s daughter who is in senior high school is pregnant because of that. When they come home, they do not do anything. Then they should just stay in school and we’ll pay. We prefer that. When my daughter comes home for a vacation, I make her stay in the room throughout. I won’t make her go to any classes and bring me a pregnancy. I don’t want it”

[Participant 2, 44 y old, senior high school graduate, a parent with 2 beneficiaries under the policy]

“They don’t stay at school. My child is always home. She’s a boarder. I fear she can get pregnant like her other colleagues. It will even affect her studies. Don’t you think? It’s risky. The teachers must make them stay in school. But they say it’s the double track or whatever.”

[Participant 7, 47 y old, basic education, a parent with 1 beneficiary under the policy]

Additionally, parents indicate that they had to pay for extra class fees for their wards as they spend exceedingly too much time in the house as a result of the double-track policy. This has somehow increased their expenditure as the cost of extra classes’ fees and transportation fees to venues of these classes could have out paid the cost of senior high school fees.

“I pay extra class fees because of the double track system they do in the schools. You have to take your child to extra classes and pay them to teach your child. Is it not the same as not having free senior high school? Because we still pay fees not to the schools, but to classes teachers. It’s not fair.”

[Participant 5, female, 43 y old, no formal education, a parent with 2 beneficiaries under the policy]

Social Consequences

Owing to the large amount of time spent at home during vacations as a result of the double track system and the limited number of teachers in schools to ensure discipline and instil good behaviour in the students, the teachers and parents alike lament the moral degeneration among

the students. Indiscipline is on the rise and most students had resorted to bad practices such as smoking and gambling. These quotes from the participants sum up their frustration at the moral decadence among the students.

“But my problem is that they come home too much. Anytime they do come, they cause lots of trouble at home. They do betting on their phones and use all the money I give them to bet. I don’t know where they learned that behaviour from. At school, they don’t have phones but when they come home, then they do all these sorts of things.”

[Participant 3, male, 49 y old, senior high school graduate, a parent with 2 beneficiaries under the policy]

“Nowadays the students are becoming bad boys and girls because they are made to come home. The schools must make them stay even if they are not doing anything. It’s better than when they are home here. Betting is all they do. How are they going to become good students to get employed after school?”

[Participant 11, 56 y old, no formal education, a female parent with 2 beneficiaries under the policy]

“I have a particular issue with indiscipline that is worrying a lot. The students are now many and we have just a few teachers. We can’t keep all of them under control. Now too they are saying we shouldn’t lash them.”

[Participant 18, 43 y old, master’s degree, a female teacher with nine years of work experience]

Academic Implications

All the aforementioned challenges identified have somehow contributed to poor academic output among some of the students as indicated by the participants. Infrastructure inadequacy, inadequate teachers, and moral degeneration, in addition to the double track system which limits the contact hour between students and teachers, has produced poor academic performance among some students. This the participants argue could be an exercise in futility if the desired academic output or performance is not achieved.

“I am more concerned about her academics particularly. She is always home. She goes to school and three months after she comes home and says it’s time for the other track to report.

She doesn't study at all here at home. I know it's better at school. It wasn't like that before the free senior high school."

[Participant 4, 38 y old, junior high school graduate, a parent with 3 beneficiaries under the policy]

"There are rumours that free SHS graduates do not pass their exams. I mean their WAEC exams. And they do not even do well in universities. All thanks to the double-track system. They do not have any good time to study before their exams. Something must be done."

[Participant 16, 35 y old, bachelor's degree, a male teacher with 7 year's work experience]

"Our main struggle is the double track system. We do not stay long enough to cover all our syllabus. I hope the government changes it to the single-track system again."

[Participant 19, 34 y old, bachelor's degree, a male teacher with 6 year's work experience]

Continuity Concerns

The final challenge with the policy implementation is fears over its continuity. With the belief that the free senior high school policy is a mere political tool that the government, then an opposition party used to capture power, how sustainable will it be after a change of government? The lack of clear directives on this makes some people doubt the sustainability of the intervention.

"It is a good thing by the government, and I hope it continues so that my brothers will benefit also."

[Participant 30, 15 y old, a female form one student]

"I hope it is maintained even after the elections so that it continues."

[Participant 35, 18 y old, a female student in form two]

4.7 Straightening the Crooked Path of Free Senior High School Implementation

This theme discusses the strategies stakeholders employ to address the challenges during the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana. Four basic strategies were identified from the study. These are financial support from parents, extra classes for students,

giving off their best as teachers, and disciplining children. These strategies are looked at in detail in the subsequent paragraphs.

Financial Support from Parents

Parents and guardians indicated that they provide financial support to their wards as a strategy to supplement the feeding provided to them by the school. In the wake of the widespread concerns about the quality and quantity of the food served to the students in school, it has become pertinent for parents to augment such efforts by providing feeding fees for their wards. After all, the free senior high school policy is to lend a helping hand to parents in their caring role, but not to bring an end to the roles they play in the lives of their children.

“My child complains that the food they give to them is not so good. So sometimes I still send him money to buy food and not to eat from what the school serves them at dining. This is costly, but I try my best. If the government wants to help us, all these things must be looked at. We can’t say free education is not good.”

[Participant 1, 53 y old, no formal education, a female parent with 1 beneficiary under the policy]

“I still send my child money for upkeep.”

[Participant 6, 46 y old, tertiary graduate, a parent 1 beneficiary under the policy]

Extra Classes

The reduction in contact hours due to the implementation of the double track system has made parents resort to extra classes as an avenue for their wards to cover the syllabus and make up for the lost time. While this is an additional cost to parents, those who could afford it perceive it as a reasonable course to fully prepare their children to complete their programs.

“I pay extra class fees because of the double track system they do in the schools. You have to take your child to extra classes and pay them to teach your child. Is it not the same as not having free senior high school? Because we still pay fees not to the schools, but to classes teachers.”

[Participant 5, female, 43 y old, no formal education, a parent with 2 beneficiaries under the policy]

“I told her father so he decided we made her attend some of these extra classes available. We are going to make her attend some extra classes and I think that would help.”

[Participant 4, 38 y old, junior high school graduate, a parent with 3 beneficiaries under the policy]

“I always advise my students to take vacation classes. They are likely not to complete their syllabus before any exam.”

[Participant 19, 34 y old, bachelor’s degree, a male teacher with 6 year’s work experience]

“I try to attend extra classes anytime we are on vacation. This helps me cover some of my syllabi. It is expensive though.”

[Participant 26, male, 17 y old, a male student in form two]

Giving off my Best

The teachers indicated that they give out their best output to ensure they adequately prepare the students for their examinations, despite the myriad of problems they encounter. As such, they are not perturbed by the gravity of issues surrounding the policy, they always exhibit professionalism and deliver quality during the challenges.

“I just do what I can do to help my students. I try to teach them everything I should teach them. That’s all. I still put in more effort to help my students. I try and I hope it pays off.”

[Participant 16, 35 y old, bachelor’s degree, a male teacher with 7 year’s work experience]

“We will do what we can do to help the students, but the government must help us help them.”

[Participant 17, 48 y old, bachelor’s degree, a male teacher with 12 year’s work experience]

“I cannot do anything about that. Like you said the new normal. It is what they have now. They are the beneficiaries and they have to make use of it regardless.”

[Participant 25, 53 y old, bachelor’s degree, a male teacher with twenty-three years’ experience]

Disciplining Children

Parents and teachers alike reveal that the large-scale moral decadence that has accompanied the implementation of the free senior high school policy is a threat to the future of the youths. They clamp on such deviant behaviours through disciplinary actions and words of

admonishment. While they acknowledge that this is adequate, it can go a long way to help shape the behaviour, conduct, and attitude of the students.

“I try to educate them as much as I discipline them. I cannot do all but mmh I’m trying.”

[Participant 18, 43 y old, master’s degree, a female teacher with nine year’s work experience]

“I discipline my child. I won’t even buy him a phone to do betting and I make him have an extra-classes teacher who always comes to teach him here.”

[Participant 11, 56 y old, no formal education, a female parent with 2 beneficiaries under the policy]

Chapter summary

The chapter provided evidence on the reasons for the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana. These reasons have been identified to include ease the financial burden; increase enrolment and retention; make education affordable; promote educational equity; human capital development and political advantage were identified from the data analysis. Regarding the attitudes towards the free senior high school policy, the major issues that were found consist of excitement and pessimism. Apart from the above, several benefits were identified to include relief to parents, payment of school fees by the government, provision of free meals, freedom to study on the part of students, and increased enrolment and retention rates among others. Notwithstanding the benefits, the challenges facing the implementation of the free senior high school policy include economic consequences, the ills of double track, social consequences, academic implications, and continuity concerns. In addressing these challenges, several strategies to improve the free senior high school policy are financial support from parents, extra classes for students, giving off their best as teachers, and disciplining children.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.0. Introduction

Research paper's discussion chapter is crucial. The author presented his findings in this chapter, showed how the data was analysed, made inferences, and discussed the implications of the

findings. The chapter follows a structured approach, addresses the key components, and creates a compelling and informative discussion that adds to the field of knowledge.

5.1 Doubts despite Positive Knowledge about the Policy

The results demonstrate that the free senior high school policy was implemented to reduce the financial burden of parents and guardians. The intent is to provide cushioning for parents against the financial strain posed by educating their wards through senior high school. This confirms the argument advanced by Abdul-Raman et al. (2018) that the free senior high school policy was implemented to remove the financial constraints impeding access to second-cycle education in the country. In that regard, the government embarked on the free senior high school initiative to pay for all students' expenses, including day and boarding students. The goal of the policy is to lower the financial burden on parents who must pay school fees for their children's education. In essence, through the free senior high school policy, parents could save those monies for alternative uses that may positively impact the welfare of their families.

Again, the need to create an equal educational opportunity for all was established as one of the objectives for which the policy was designed and implemented. According to this study's objectives, equality is defined as ensuring that all pupils have equal access to the same educational opportunities (Atchison, 2019). The best education systems are those that balance equity and excellence. Equity in education refers to the idea that no one's ability to fully realize their educational potential should be hindered by their personal or societal circumstances, such as their gender, ethnicity, or family history. The equity dimension of the policy's objective implies that no child is to be left behind in the course of promoting educational opportunities. "By 2030, all boys and girls complete free equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes," reads Goal 4's Target 1 in the SDGs. The attainment of this goal is only possible if education is accessible to all. However, unless students and schools are homogeneous—that unless they have the same resources—this does not eradicate disadvantages. Efforts must be made to promote and provide other learning and teaching materials to ensure the equity goal is achieved.

Considering school fees are a significant barrier to enrolment, particularly for the poor and vulnerable households, governments have been reducing the cost of education. Ghana's free senior high school policy is centred on lowering illiteracy by boosting access to education and enhancing the pace at which students move from basic to secondary education (Abdul-Raman

et al., 2018). The study's finding is consistent with that of Abdul-Raman et al. (2018). As a result, there is a direct association between the elimination of fees and student enrolment. According to research by Boatman and Long (2016) and Dynarski and Scott-Clayton (2013), South Africa's free senior high school program has significantly increased enrolment rates since formerly "excluded poor families" may now send their children to school. The goal of Ghana's free senior high school policy is to lower the financial burden on parents who must pay school fees for their children's education, increase enrolment, and raise educational standards to guarantee their quality (Abdul-Raman et al, 2018).

According to Asumadu (2019), Ghana's free senior high school policy aims to bridge the achievement gap between the wealthy and the poor by granting equal access to secondary education. Parents, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, were encouraged to enrol their children in secondary schools of the reduction in their financial load. As a result, since the free senior high school policy was implemented, more students are enrolled in secondary schools. The elimination of this financial burden implies that persons who might not engage under the pay-and-go system now have the opportunity to do so. It is for that reason that Partey (2017) found that the free senior high school policy resulted in a 33.2% rise in enrolment rates as students who would not have otherwise been able to attend senior high schools owing to financial restrictions were now able to do so.

5.2 Blessings from the Policy

In terms of the benefits obtained from the policy, non-payment of school fees, free meals, increase in enrolment, and freeing up resources for alternate use were the dominant gains identified. As the name suggests, the free senior high school policy was set out to absorb fees associated with senior high school education in Ghanaian public schools. Thus, the benefits of the policy do not differ from the theoretical conceptualization within the policy document. This is because the free senior high school policy in Ghana was to cover the cost of textbooks for all senior high students as well as tuition, library fees, boarding fees, scientific lab fees, examination fees, utility fees, and meals for boarders (Abdul Rahaman et al. 2018), which it is currently doing. The fact that the promises made under the policy to provide tuition, library fees, boarding fees, scientific lab fees, examination fees, utility fees, and meals for boarders (Abdul Rahaman et al. 2018) are being met gives credence to the motive of government to contribute to the education and welfare of the young people. This is not in any way to suggest that the policy is not facing challenges, but the knowledge and fact that what was intended is being done to a large extent justifies the basis for which the policy was implemented.

5.3 Challenges Facing the Implementation of the School

Despite the touted benefits of the policy, several barriers were identified as hindrances to the effective implementation of the policy. One such problem is the resource constraint that makes it difficult to fully provide sufficient cover for food in terms of quality and quantity. Verspoor (2008) stated that governments, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, postpone the disbursement of subsidies to schools due to budget limitations. The impact of the funding delay may be evident, among other things, in the delayed school purchases of instructional materials. According to research conducted by Asumadu (2019) on the issues facing Ghana's free senior high school policy, the government's slow transfer of funds is a significant issue impeding the program's effective implementation. In addition to the delays in grant payments, she discovered that the funding was frequently insufficient to cover the costs of the schools. Owing to the numerous benefits of the policy touted by the participants, it is imperative to address these issues for a greater impact to be made.

Another challenge identified with the policy is that increased enrolment in schools is not matched with commensurate infrastructural expansion. Therefore, there is a significant infrastructure deficit in schools, creating uncondusive teaching and learning environment. Crowded classrooms with poor ventilation have made teaching and learning very unpleasant as noted by the students and teachers. This problem was identified in other jurisdictions where free education was implemented. In Mombasa County, Kenya, Kalunda and Otanga (2015) discovered that the provision of free primary education in public primary schools created an immediate problem where there was an imbalance between the increased enrolment of students vis-à-vis the available infrastructure such as classroom blocks and learning materials (Kalunda & Otanga, 2015). This resulted in students learning under inhumane conditions that ultimately do not inure their benefits. In that regard, there is a need for the government and other stakeholders to map out strategies to augment existing infrastructure in schools to make students study in conducive and serene environments.

Again, the study reports that there was limited to zero increase in the number of teachers expected to help implement the academic component of the free senior high school policy. In several instances, the increased enrolment of the students did not engender corresponding employment of qualified teachers. This confirms the findings of Kalunda and Otanga (2015), who noted that free education at the primary level has thus led to an increasing workload on the existing teachers and invariably affected the delivery of quality education or the transfer of knowledge as few teachers were employed to support the intervention. The increasing student-

teacher ratio demands that efforts be made to reduce this gap to acceptable standards to make teaching and learning in schools more effective.

According to a study by Okumbe (1998), Kenya's policy of free secondary education resulted in a scarcity of necessary teaching and learning resources such as textbooks, school equipment, notably desks, and in certain cases, unskilled or insufficiently qualified instructors. Insufficient human resources and a lack of available teaching and learning tools in secondary schools, according to Asumadu (2019), are impeding the effective implementation of the free senior high school program in the Denkyemba District. Since the policy's seamless execution requires additional elements or resources, the target level of education is ultimately not achieved. Asumadu (2019) further comments on the challenges and prospects of Ghana's free senior high school policy in the Denkyemba district and contends that infrastructure problems are always a result of educational changes. There is an urgent need to address these challenges to strengthen the policy's ability to deliver beyond the current output.

To expand secondary education, it is necessary to provide financial access as well as make the necessary infrastructure accessible to support the growing population (Goldin & Katz, 1999). Despite this, Ghana's educational infrastructure is few, and many of the few that are present are in deplorable states, making it impossible for it to support the rising enrolment numbers (Takyi et al., 2019). The double-track system implemented by the government to accommodate the increased enrolment that occasioned the policy was identified as a major challenge to the policy. According to the report, Ghana's government launched the double track in September 2018 as a temporary mechanism or strategy to expand enrolment without making equivalent expenditures in infrastructure (Takyi et al., 2019). The free senior high school policy continues to be inextricably tied to rising enrolment levels since it lowers or removes the financial obstacles that prevent economically disadvantaged pupils from enrolling in secondary school.

Be that as it may, several issues ranging from limited contact hours to moral degeneration and teenage pregnancies have been associated with the policy. While some of the arguments might seem far-fetched, there are genuine concerns in them (Takyi et al., 2019). Comparing it to the literature, there is ample proof that there are two opposing theories on how a double-track system affects students' educational results. The first school of thinking contends that double tracking boosts enrolment and improves academic results, whereas the opposing school of thought questions whether double tracking improves academic results. However, there is still disagreement over how double tracking affects cost savings and educational results. Most

policy-makers and researchers concentrate their efforts on cost savings by not building new educational infrastructure, ignoring other cost components like social costs, utility costs, the cost of hiring new teachers, and maintenance costs, all of which will go up as a result of the implementation of the double track.

In Ghana, the quality of basic education has an impact on secondary educational results, and a student's capacity to get a quality basic education is determined by their guardians' financial levels. This has an impact on educational outcomes when combined with other elements like increased contact hours, which cause exhaustion and boredom (Takyi et al., 2019). The increase in contact hours combined with other responsibilities for instructors, such as planning social and academic events, marking scripts, and evaluation, will impose an excessive amount of strain on educators, which may have a detrimental impact on student learning. Additionally, the increase in school hours will probably have an impact on students' participation in extracurricular activities including leadership seminars, games, debates, theatre, and athletics (Skinner, 2014). An effective and efficient monitoring and evaluation system is required to determine whether implementing the double-track system in Ghana would be feasible and sustainable given the ongoing dispute over it in the conventional literature (Takyi et al., 2019).

5.4 The Way Forward

The participants reported that parents augment the government's efforts by providing feeding fees and arranging extra classes for their wards. This is to help them navigate the inadequate and poor quality of foods served in their wards and the inability to complete their syllabus due to the double-track system. This is in stark contrast to the situation discovered by Aluko and Adan (2015) when they investigated the constraints of implementing free secondary education in Mandera West Sub-County, of Kenya. The authors found that following the implementation of free secondary education in Kenya, guardians and parents were unwilling to make payments or contributions to the schools. Since many parents believe that the government covers the cost of education, they are reluctant to contribute financially to the schools.

The elimination of financial hurdles that prohibit many students from accessing secondary education has resulted in an increase in student enrolment as a result of the government's establishment of the free senior high school program. The intended effect of the information transmitted to the pupils will not be achieved without a comparable increase in the number of teachers. However, the aims of the free senior high school policy will be substantially improved if there are resources available to hire more skilled and enthusiastic instructors. Though the

current regime has teacher deficits, the findings show that amid this inadequacy and increased work burden, the teacher is giving off their best to ensure that the students are fully impacted. Given the morale and commitment of the teachers despite the adversities they face, increasing the number of teachers alongside their motivation will create a more positive atmosphere for teaching and learning, with the desired output of quality education more achievable.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on the summary of findings, conclusion, and recommendations. These comprise three key sections: summary of findings; conclusion; and recommendations for action. The findings and recommendations were intended to help augment the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Ashanti Region and Ghana as a whole.

6.2 Summary of findings

This portion of the research is organized concerning the study objectives. It is divided into four segments. The first aspect captured information on the reasons that account for the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana. The second aspect was devoted to the attitudes of stakeholders towards the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana. The challenges stakeholders encounter during the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana were the focus of the third aspect. In the fourth part of the interview guide, the strategies stakeholders employ to address the challenges during the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana were the focus.

6.2.1 Rationale behind the free senior high school policy

Providing free secondary education to all Ghanaian students is intended to increase enrolment rates and ensure equal access to education, which addresses research question 1 of what factors account for its implementation. All three categories of the participants (parents, teachers and students) agreed that the free senior high school policy was implemented to increase student enrolment rate, promote equitable access to education, reduce the financial burden on parents/guardians and improve the literacy rate. Other ancillary rationales for the implementation of the policy include the recruitment of new teachers and the recruitment of new non-teaching staff. The reason for the introduction of the policy by the government is to lessen the cost of education which often constitute a substantial impediment to enrolment, predominantly among the poor and vulnerable households. Thus, the elimination of fees according to the participants will make it easier for the less privileged children to enrol and

receive post-basic education. This argument is hinged on the transformative and developmental prospects of education. That said, there were some of the participants who perceived the free senior high school intervention as a mere political strategy for the opposition party, now the ruling party to win votes; as free things sell for electioneering purposes.

6.2.2 Attitudes towards the implementation of the free senior high school policy

This chapter addresses research question 2, which focuses on understanding the attitudes of various stakeholders towards the implementation of this policy. By examining these attitudes, we can gain valuable insights into the effectiveness and impact of the free senior high school policy.

Optimistic and pessimistic perspectives were the two main attitudes the participants had towards the implementation of the free senior high school policy. The majority of the participants demonstrate a positive attitude towards the implementation of the policy. This was contingent on the government's decision to absolve fees for senior high school education. With senior high education posing no direct cost to parents in terms of fees, an optimistic outlook develops among parents, teachers, and students alike as they believe the right atmosphere has been created for educational growth and development. Additionally, the excitement is associated with a free mind and free opportunity it gives students from poor backgrounds the opportunity to concentrate on their studies without having to worry about how their fees will be paid. Despite the widespread optimism and excitement towards the policy, some held a pessimistic view. These individuals perceive the policy as a piece of mere electioneering machinery, with no real commitment from the government. To the pessimists, the government - then, an opposition party capitalized on Ghanaians' inclination towards free things and won their votes. The aftermaths and the challenges confronting the implementation of the policy and the lackadaisical attitude towards resolving these challenges were cited as reasons for their labelling of the intervention as a mere politicking scheme.

6.2.3 Shortcomings/challenges hindering the smooth implementation of the policy

There are several challenges and shortcomings that can impede the effective implementation of policies. Among them are lack of communication, resistance to change, insufficient resources, lack of monitoring and evaluation, and external factors. In accordance with research question 3, overcoming these challenges is necessary to ensure the successful implementation of policies.

The study established from the perspective of the parents, students and teachers that inadequate infrastructure, inadequate teaching and learning materials, and inadequate human resources (teaching and non-teaching staff), were the major barriers facing the implementation of the free senior high school policy. Poor quality foods offered to students on the free senior high school policy was another hindrance the participants reported as a challenge facing the implementation of the policy. Additionally, the double track system was also described as a negative consequence of the policy, reducing the contact hours between teachers and students, increasing expenditure on extra classes, and in some instances, it has led to teenage pregnancies and other social vices among the students. Overall, the participants described how the double track system under the free senior high school policy is negatively affecting the academic fortunes of the students.

6.2.4 Strategies to facilitate smooth implementation of the policy

Several strategies can be employed to ensure the successful implementation of a policy that addresses research question 4. To achieve desired outcomes, these strategies aim to streamline the process, minimize obstacles, and maximize chances of success.

Adequate provision of learning materials, adequate supply of teachers, and financial support from parents were the strategies the participants suggested to improve the implementation of the policy. The inadequacy of teaching and learning materials and inadequate teachers featured prominently among the challenges confronting the implementation of the free senior high school policy, hence, as a strategy towards enhancing the status of the policy, the participants suggested that these issues be resolved. Again, the participants advocated that the quality and quantity of food provided to the students be improved. While that point was made, they also encouraged parents to provide financial support for their ward's welfare. This will augment the states' efforts of providing for the students. Again, they advocated that parents enrol their wards in extra classes, especially when they are on vacation, to help them complete their syllabus. Finally, there was a recommendation for the students to be disciplined, to control the general moral decadence that has eaten into the "moral fabric" of free senior high school students in the country.

6.3 Conclusion

All over the world education is seen as an important tool that equips the recipient of the education to meaningfully contribute to the socio-economic development of society. The empowerment potential of education can best be explained by the numerous efforts that have been made to make the endeavour accessible and affordable over the years. In 2017, the

government of Ghana replaced the Progressively Free Senior High School Policy with a complete Free Senior High School Policy which intends to absolve parents and guardians from direct financial commitment to the education of their children in all public second-cycle institutions. Literature on the implementation of policies shows that examining the prospects and challenges of implemented policies offers significant inputs and insights on how to smoothen the hindrances that often occasion policy implementation. Unfortunately, limited knowledge exists of the perceptions of key stakeholders (students and teachers) on the prospects and challenges confronting the implementation of the free senior high school policy, especially in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

This research lacuna informed the need to explore the perspectives of some key stakeholders (parents, students and teachers) on the success stories and challenges associated with the implementation of the Free Senior High School Policy in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The essence of this research is seen in the light of its importance in helping solidify the policy (free senior high school) to make the country attain the SDGs- 4; quality education. The qualitative descriptive study design was used to examine the phenomenon. A sample of 40 participants, comprising 15 students, 15 parents and 10 teachers was used, while an interview guide was used to gather relevant data. The thematic analysis technique was used to analyse the data.

By way of findings, the participants indicated that the policy was promulgated to absolve parents from direct financial commitment and increase access to education. In simple terms, the free senior high school policy was introduced to make education more accessible, owing to the importance of education. Largely, education socializes people into the larger society. By transmitting knowledge to students, education helps students acquire core values and ideals needed for meaningful coexistence in society as well as contribute substantially to the development of societies. This helps in the socio-economic development of nations. In this regard, efforts must be made to make education more accessible and affordable, especially for vulnerable populations.

The resource and infrastructure constraints that hinder the smooth implementation of the free senior high school policy also lend credence to the Capital Theory of School Effectiveness and Improvement. The theory underscores augmenting the connection between teacher input and educational outcome, or variations in students' moral and intellectual state consequential of the teacher's effort – which leads to a better outcome". In this vein, the efficiency and sustainability of the policy of free senior high school according to the findings of the study and deductions

from the Capital Theory of School Effectiveness and Improvement are that; sustainable funding options must be established, and infrastructure must be expanded. This is to meet the increased enrolment of students that stems from an increased desire to attain secondary education. This must also be supported by the availability of educational infrastructure and motivated teachers and continued community or stakeholder engagements. In all, the study has implications for policy and practice. Also, it has brought to light important success stories and lessons that will help solidify the policy (free senior high school) to make the country attain the SDGs 4. In all the study brought to bear stakeholders' knowledge and perceptions about the free senior high school policy, which has provided useful insights as to how the policy can be positioned to bring out the best, as intended in principle.

6.4 Recommendations

To effectively solidify the gains of the Free Senior High School Policy and fully address the challenges it has brought, the following recommendations are proposed.

6.4.1 Expansion of infrastructure

It was discovered in the study that infrastructure was incommensurate with the enrolment rates in the schools. In other words, the student population exceeded the carrying capacity of the existing infrastructure. Such an occurrence does not auger well for effective teaching and learning, since the atmosphere will not be the most conducive for academic activities. To avert this situation, the study recommends that attention or priority should be accorded to providing additional infrastructure like classrooms, dormitories and libraries among others. This will help reduce the infrastructural deficit that has occasioned the roll-out of the free senior high school policy, as a consequence of an increment in the enrolment rates. This will scale down the pressure on existing infrastructure in the schools.

6.4.2 Adequate provision of learning materials

Inadequacy of teaching and learning materials was a major challenge for the students and teachers identified with the policy. -The full benefits of the free senior high school policy will be realised only if the students assimilate knowledge, following a knowledge transfer from teachers. Aiding in knowledge transfer is learning materials and resources. Their inadequacy will hamper the goals of providing free and quality education for all. It is in line with this that study recommends that provision be made to ensure that materials and resources that are required to support academic works are available.

6.4.3 Adequate provision of teachers

A school without teachers is incomplete. Again, a school without sufficient and competent teachers is equally incomplete and will be unable to transform the academic fortunes of the students. Augmenting the capacity of the teaching staff to meet the demands of the increased student enrolment that has come along with the introduction of the free senior high school policy is of much importance. The significance of teachers in the provision of quality education cannot be overemphasised. In this vein, Ghana Education and its associated agencies must endeavour to recruit additional teachers to fill up void positions in the schools. This will help strengthen the teaching staffs to deliver on their mandate - of transferring knowledge to the students.

6.4.4 Stakeholder support

The importance of stakeholder engagement cannot be overemphasized in the smooth implementation of the free senior high school policy. In the example of Kenya, parents were unwilling to make any financial commitment so long as secondary education is free; although they were in a position to make such commitments (Aluko and Adan, 2015). In such instances, stakeholder engagement is key, in helping thrust the differences. This helps carve out roles and responsibilities for parents as well. The fundamental principle underlying community participation in education at the local level is threatened by the introduction of the free senior high school policy. This breeds some form of acrimony between the locals and the government. It is therefore paramount for the government to engage communities and parents on the role they will play in the smooth operationalization of the policy.

6.4.5 Abolishing of the double track system

The double track system was vehemently opposed and described as counter-productive to achieving the educational aims of the free senior high school policy in Ghana by the participants. They recommend that the policy be revised and reverted to the old system. With inadequate infrastructure being the reason for the implementation of the double-track system, the study recommends that measures be put in place to construct additional classrooms to host the excess supply. While working on that, interim measures can be put in place to help students leverage to reduce the wastefulness that some of the participants ascribed to the double track system.

6.4.6 Improving the quality and quantity of meals

Healthy minds live in healthy bodies. Without adequate and appropriate nutritional requirements, the students will lack the necessary nutrients for their growth and functioning. Some of the respondents lamented that the educational sector in Ghana has become a playing ground for politicians. They make changes to the sector at any given period without recourse to the effects of the impacts of these changes. To put an end to this, it is recommended that measures be taken to institutionalise the free senior high school policy to prevent any future government from cancelling the policy. By institutionalising or main streaming the intervention, successive governments will be duty-bound to sustain and augment it, rather than cancelling it as an initiative that is not coming from their political divide.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

Socio-demographic characteristics

Sex

Age

Level of student

Ethnicity

Marital status

Questions

1. In your opinion why was the free SHS implemented?
2. How excited are you about the implementation of the free SHS policy?
3. What are your expectations from the policy?
4. What are some of the benefits you have amassed from the implementation of the policy?
5. What are some of the challenges posed by the policy to students?
6. What are some of the challenges the policy has brought to the school's staff and the secondary educational system at large?
7. How do you intend to relay your grievances concerning the policy should you encounter any?
8. How are you coping with the challenges you face?
9. Do you think the policy has to be revised? Why?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Socio-demographic characteristics

Sex

Age

Ethnicity

Educational attainment

Number of children benefiting from Free SHS

Marital status

Questions

1. In your opinion why was the free SHS implemented?
2. How excited are you about the implementation of the free SHS policy?
3. What are some of the benefits you have amassed from the implementation of the policy?
4. What are some of the challenges you and your ward face from the free SHS policy?
 - Economic challenges
 - Social lifestyle of students
 - Academic well-being of students
5. How do you intend to relay your grievances concerning the policy should you encounter any?
6. How are you coping with the challenges you face?
7. Do you think the policy has to be revised? Why?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

Socio-demographic characteristics

Sex

Age

Ethnicity

Marital status

Educational qualification

Number of years as a teacher

Questions

1. In your opinion why was the free SHS implemented?
2. Can you share on the free SHS policy, in terms of the benefits and the changes it has brought to your school?
3. Do you believe the policy was implemented at the right time? Are you happy about the implementation of the free SHS policy?
4. What are some of the challenges you as a teacher face in the implementation of the policy?
5. How have these challenges affected teaching and learning in your school?
6. How do you intend to relay your grievances concerning the policy?
7. How are you adapting to the new normal?
8. How do you intend to help students adapt to the changes?

Table 3.3: Background Characteristics of the Study Participants

Participant ID	Sex	Age	Education	Marital status	Experience	Wards benefiting
Participant 1	Male	53	No formal education	Married	Not applicable	1
Participant 2	Female	44	Senior high school graduate	Separated	Not applicable	1
Participant 3	Male	49	Senior high school graduate	Married	Not applicable	2
Participant 4	Female	38	Junior high school graduate	Married	Not applicable	3
Participant 5	Female	43	No formal education	Divorced	Not applicable	1
Participant 6	Male	46	Tertiary graduate	Married	Not applicable	1
Participant 7	Male	47	Basic education	Married	Not applicable	1
Participant 8	Male	49	Basic education	Married	Not applicable	1
Participant 9	Female	38	Tertiary graduate	Married	Not applicable	1
Participant 10	Male	60	Tertiary graduate	Married	Not applicable	1
Participant 11	Female	56	No formal education	Separated	Not applicable	2
Participant 12	Female	64	Basic education	Married	Not applicable	1
Participant 13	Female	51	Junior high school graduate	Married	Not applicable	1
Participant 14	Male	45	Junior high school graduate	Married	Not applicable	1

Participant 15	Female	49	Tertiary graduate	Married	Not applicable	2
Participant 16	Male	35	Bachelor's degree	Single	7 years	Not applicable
Participant 17	Male	48	Bachelor's degree	Married	12 years	Not applicable
Participant 18	Female	43	Master's degree	Married	9 years	Not applicable
Participant 19	Male	34	Bachelor's degree	Married	6 years	Not applicable
Participant 20	Female	51	Master's degree	Married	20 years	Not applicable
Participant 21	Female	30	Bachelor's degree	Single	3 years	Not applicable
Participant 22	Male	40	Bachelor's degree	Married	15 years	Not applicable
Participant 23	Female	43	Master's degree	Married	17 years	Not applicable
Participant 24	Female	39	Bachelor's degree	Married	9 years	Not applicable
Participant 25	Male	51	Bachelor's degree	Married	23 years	Not applicable
Participant 26	Male	17	Form two student	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable
Participant 27	Male	16	Form two student	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable
Participant 28	Female	16	Form one student	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable
Participant 29	Female	14	Form one student	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable

Participant 30	Female	15	Form one student	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable
Participant 31	Female	18	Form two student	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable
Participant 32	Male	16	Form two student	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable
Participant 33	Male	14	Form one student	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable
Participant 34	Male	14	Form two student	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable
Participant 35	Female	18	Form two student	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable
Participant 36	Male	16	Form two student	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable
Participant 37	Male	16	Form one student	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable
Participant 38	Male	17	Form two student	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable
Participant 39	Male	14	Form one student	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable
Participant 40	Male	20	Form two student	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable

Source: Field Survey, 2022