

MATHIAS OPOKU BANSON

**Achieving Quality and Equity in Ghana's Secondary
Education: Strategies, Opportunities, and Constraints**

Master's Thesis in International Education and Development
[SPRING, 2022]



OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University

Faculty of Education and International Studies
Department of International Studies and Interpreting

Candidate no. 502

ABSTRACT

The increasing completion rate of primary education has led to an increase in demand for secondary education (SE) worldwide. This phenomenon has been necessitated by the pressure of modern economies seeking young people with sophisticated skills, knowledge, and competence that cannot be developed only from primary education. Given the global need and emphasis on secondary education, massive investment has been made in many countries to make this level of education available and accessible to all individuals. However, despite the intense desire and the investment made, issues of availability and accessibility of secondary education are often hampered by inequities in the provision of this public good along spatial dimensions. The challenge facing developing countries in their attempt to expand secondary education is that they mostly sacrifice quality for quantity. This trade-off creates a situation where the products of beneficiaries of secondary education do not possess the requisite skills, knowledge, and competence for sustainable living.

This study aims to analyze educational strategies implemented in SE in Ghana and how those policies are geared towards improving access, bridging the equity gap, and improving quality. The research employed a combination of qualitative document analysis and semi-structured interviews to answer the study's research questions. The interviews were conducted via Zoom with three categories of participants, namely the heads of SHS, teachers, and parents. Seven interviews were conducted with participants from two schools.

The major findings from the study included the prevalence of class and social divisions in access to high-status SHS as high-status SHS in urban centers are not within reach of people from poor quintile, the prevalence of gender disparity, PWD in SHS faces discrimination and stereotypes, lack of continuity of policies, teaching to test instead of the acquisition of skills. CSSPS, FSHS, and SEIP were found in the study as a major strategies to improve quality and equity in SE. The study recommends that the use of the bottom-up approach in policy development, formulation, and implementation, adopting sustainable local financing alternatives to donor support in policy financing, and effective decentralization.

Keywords: *SDG, quality education, equity, secondary education*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I give all glory to God for His infinite grace throughout my study period at Oslo Metropolitan University. I am particularly indebted to my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Annika Wetlesen for her guidance, encouragement, and support which made this research work a success. I am also grateful to Prof. Tom Griffiths and Prof. Axel for their supports.

My heartfelt appreciation to Mr. Dwamena Ofori, Mr. Patrick Koufie and all my resourceful informants for their immense contributions to my data collection.

To Grace Mends Appiah, Mr. Okai Oduro, Enock Sablah and John Doku, I appreciate you for your constructive criticisms and constantly reviewing my work.

I bow down my head in appreciation to you all.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to the Almighty God, my late dad, Mr Eric Banson whose untimely death prevented him from seeing the beauty of this day, Mr. Agyemang Banson for his enormous support in making my study in Norway a reality and my family and friends, who have immensely supported me in diverse ways towards the success of this work.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACCELERATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN	ADP
BASIC EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION	BECE
COMPUTERIZED SCHOOL SELECTION PLACEMENT SYSTEM	CSSPS
CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER	CCT
CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	CPD
CORONAVIRUS	COVID 19
CRITICAL PEDAGOGY	CP
DISTRICT DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION	DEO
ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES	ECOWAS
ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROGRAM	ERP
EDUCATION FOR ALL	EFA
EDUCATION SECTOR PERFORMANCE REPORT	ESPR
EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN	ESP
ENGLISH AND MODERN LANGUAGES	L2
EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	ESD
FREE COMPULSORY UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION	FCUBE
FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL	FSHS
GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT	GDP
GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE	GES
GHANA EDUCATION TRUST	GET
GHANAIAAN NATIVE LANGUAGES	L1
GOVERNMENT OF GHANA	GoG
GENDER PARITY INDEX	GPI
HUMAN RIGHT BASED APPROACH TO EDUCATION	HRBA-E
INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY	I.C.T
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	I.T
INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND	IMF
INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATION	

OF EDUCATION	ISCED
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL	JHS
LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION	LSE
MANUAL SCHOOL SELECTION AND PLACEMENT SYSTEM	MSSP
MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS	MDGS
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION	MoE
NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATION PROGRESS	NAEP
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT	NACCA
NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS	NDC
NATIONAL INSPECTORATE BOARD	NIB
NATIONAL PRE-TERTIARY CURRICULUM	NAPTC
NATIONAL TEACHING COUNCIL	NTC
NEW PATRIOTIC PARTY	NPP
NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND	NCLB
NORWEGIAN CENTER FOR RESEARCH DATA	NSD
PARENTS AND TEACHERS ASSOCIATION	PTA
PERFORMANCE PARTNERSHIP PLANS	PPPS
PERSONS WITH DISABILITY	PWD
POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS	PHC
PRE- TERTIARY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT	PTPDM
PROVISIONAL NATIONAL DEFENCE COUNCIL	PNDC
RESEARCH QUESTION	RS
SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS	STEM
SECONDARY EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT	SEIP
SECONDARY EDUCATION	SE
SECONDARY SCHOOLS	SS
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL	S.H.S
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS	SEN
STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAM	SAP
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL	SDG
TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIAL	TLM

TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES	TLR
UNCONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER	UCT
UNESCO INSTITUTE FOR STATISTICS	UIS
UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN’S FUND	
UNICEF	
UNITED NATIONS	UN
UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION	UNESCO
UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION	USE
WEST AFRICAN EXAMINATION COUNCIL	WAEC
WEST AFRICAN SENIOR SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION	WASSCE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	V
DEDICATION	VI
ABBREVIATIONS	VII
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. PURPOSE AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY	1
1.2. DEFINITION OF RESEARCH PROBLEM	2
1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS	4
1.4. UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION	5
1.5. SECONDARY EDUCATION IN GHANA	6
1.5.1. GHANA’S SECONDARY EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK AND GOALS BEFORE 1992	7
1.5.2. SE POLICY FRAMEWORK IN GHANA AFTER 1992	9
1.5.3. CLASSIFICATION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION	12
1.6. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS	13
1.7. CHAPTER CONCLUSION	13
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY LITERATURE	14
2.1. UNIVERSAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY EDUCATION	14
2.2. SECONDARY EDUCATION: THE GLOBAL PICTURE	16
2.3. WHOLE SYSTEM REFORMS IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION ...	17
2.3.1. INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKING AND STANDARDIZATION IN EDUCATION	17
2.3.2. ADDRESSING EQUITY AND EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE	19
2.3.3. EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSESSMENT	20
2.4. STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE QUALITY EQUITABLE SECONDARY EDUCATION	21
2.4.1. RELEVANT AND FLEXIBLE CURRICULUM	21
2.4.2. IMPROVEMENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY TEACHING PRACTICE	21
2.5. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EQUITY AND EQUALITY IN EDUCATIONAL POLICIES	22

2.6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO SECONDARY EDUCATION	23
2.6.1. CASH TRANSFER	24
2.6.2. SCHOLARSHIPS AND FEE WAIVERS	25
2.6.3. SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM (SFP)	26
2.7. CHAPTER CONCLUSION	26
CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES	28
3.1. HUMAN RIGHT-BASED APPROACH TO EDUCATION (HRBA-E) THEORY	28
3.1.1. APPLICATION OF HRBA THEORY IN EDUCATION	29
3.1.1.1. EDUCATION AS A HUMAN RIGHT	29
3.1.1.1.1. PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING EDUCATION AS HUMAN RIGHT	30
3.1.1.2. HRBA-E FRAMEWORK	31
3.1.1.3. ENSURING STATE (DUTY BEARERS PERFORMS) THEIR RESPONSIBILITY	33
3.1.2. TENSIONS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HRBA-E	34
3.1.3. HRBA-E AND SDG4	35
3.2. CRITICAL PEDAGOGY	36
3.2.1. EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY	38
3.2.2. TEACHERS AS TRANSFORMATIVE INTELLECTUALS	38
3.2.3. CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN EDUCATION	40
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	41
4.1. RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY	41
4.2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND STRATEGY	42
4.3. RESEARCH SETTING	45
4.4. RESEARCH TARGET AND POPULATION	45
4.5. SAMPLING STRATEGY	46
4.6. DATA COLLECTION METHOD	47
4.7. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS	48
4.8. THEMATIC ANALYSIS	48

4.8.1. PROCEDURE FOR THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS	49
4.9. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY	50
4.9.1. RELIABILITY	50
4.9.2. VALIDITY	51
4.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION	52
CHAPTER 5: EDUCATIONAL POLICIES ON QUALITY EDUCATION	54
5.1. PERIODIC REFORMS	54
5.1.1 CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL REFORMS	55
5.1.2. RATIONALE FOR THE REFORM	56
5.1.3 GHANA'S EDUCATIONAL REFORMS FROM A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE	59
5.2. CHARACTERISTICS OF PREVIOUS AND NEW REFORMS	61
5.3. TEACHING AND LEARNING PHILOSOPHY IN THE CURRICULUM	63
5.3.1. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM AND LEARNER DEVELOPMENT THEORY	63
5.3.2. LEARNING-CENTERED PEDAGOGY	65
5.4. TEACHER AND TEACHING-RELATED STRATEGIES	66
5.4.1. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	67
5.4.2. AVAILABILITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES	69
5.4.3. LANGUAGE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING	71
5.4.4. CURRICULUM RELEVANCE	72
5.4.5. STRENGTHENING SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP	74
5.4.6 COMPATIBLE PHILOSOPHIES AND STRATEGIES IN ACHIEVING QUALITY EDUCATION	75
5.5. MODELS OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT	77
5.5.1. THE OBJECTIVE MODEL OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT	78
5.5.2. THE STANDARDS-BASED MODEL OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT	79
5.5.3. ESSENTIAL SKILL AND CROSS-CUTTING COMPETENCE IN STANDARDIZED BASED CURRICULUM IN GHANA	79

5.6. QUALITY EDUCATION THROUGH STANDARDS BASED APPROACH IN GHANA: THE NEW ERA?	81
5.7. CHAPTER CONCLUSION	83
CHAPTER 6: EQUITY IN SECONDARY EDUCATION IN GHANA	85
6.1. DIFFERENT EDUCATION FOR THE POOR? WHY ARE SOME SECONDARY SCHOOLS BETTER RESOURCED THAN OTHERS IN GHANA?	85
6.1.1. SOCIAL DIVISIONS, CLASS, AND DIFFERENTIATED RESOURCE ENDOWMENTS IN GHANAIAN SECONDARY EDUCATION	86
6.1.2. THE FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL (FSHS) POLICY	87
6.1.3. THE SECONDARY EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (SEIP)	89
6.2. PROVIDING EQUAL ACCESS TO SECONDARY EDUCATION: CLASS AND SPATIAL DYNAMICS	90
6.3. BEYOND THE ENROLMENT: IMPROVING FEMALE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION	92
6.4. ISSUES OF DISABILITY IN SECONDARY EDUCATION	95
6.5. PROMOTING EQUITABLE QUALITY SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR THE VULNERABLE: GENDER AND DISABILITY	97
6.6. CHAPTER CONCLUSION	98
CHAPTER 7: STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICIES	100
7.1. UNDERSTANDING QUALITY IN SECONDARY EDUCATION FROM STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVE	100
7.1.1. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF QUALITY EDUCATION ..	100
7.1.2. ESSENTIAL SKILLS, PHILOSOPHY, AND PEDAGOGY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING	103
7.2. DIVERGENT UNDERSTANDING OF QUALITY EDUCATION CONCEPT BY STAKEHOLDERS	105
7.3. TEACHER AND TEACHING RELATED STRATEGIES IN ACHIEVING QUALITY SECONDARY EDUCATION	108

7.3.1. TEACHER QUALIFICATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	108
7.3.2. CURRICULUM RELEVANCE AND STANDARD BASED CURRICULUM.....	110
7.3.3. INCREASED INSTRUCTIONAL (CONTACT) HOURS AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMME FOR DIFFERENTIATION	111
7.3.4. AVAILABILITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS	112
7.4. IMPACTS OF EFFECTIVE QUALITY EDUCATION STRATEGIES ON LEARNING OUTCOME	114
7.5. POLICIES TO ENSURE EQUITABLE SECONDARY EDUCATION IN GHANA	116
7.5.1. OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS IN ACHIEVING QUALITY AND EQUITY IN GHANA’S SECONDARY EDUCATION	119
7.5.1.1. OPPORTUNITIES	119
7.5.1.2. CONSTRAINTS	119
7.6. EXPERIENCES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES ON EQUITABLE QUALITY SECONDARY EDUCATION	124
7.7. TENSIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STANDARD-BASED STRATEGIES TOWARDS AN EQUITABLE QUALITY SECONDARY EDUCATION	127
7.8. CHAPTER CONCLUSION	130
CHAPTER 8: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	131
8.1. OPERATIONALIZING THE MEANING OF QUALITY IN EDUCATION	131
8.1.1. QUALITY IN EDUCATION STRATEGIES	131
8.2. EQUITY IN SECONDARY EDUCATION	132
8.2.1. EQUITY STRATEGIES	133
8.3. EXPERIENCES OF STAKEHOLDERS	133
8.4. OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS IN ACHIEVING QUALITY IN EDUCATION	133
8.4.1. OPPORTUNITIES	134
8.4.2. CONSTRAINTS	134
8.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	134

8.5. RECOMENDATIONS	135
8.5.1. RECOMMENDATIONS TO POLICY MAKERS	135
8.5.2. RECOMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	136
8.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS	136
REFERENCES	137
APPENDICES	149

List of Tables

Table 1 . shows gender parity index from 2015-2018	93
Table 2 .WASSCE core subjects pass rate in 2017	94

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The declaration of free compulsory primary education has resulted in more people completing basic schooling (Salberg, 2007). This has led to increasing demand for SE worldwide as modern economies also seek young people with sophisticated skills, knowledge, and competence that cannot be enhanced only from basic education to develop their economies (Salberg, 2007). It is because of this notion that most developing countries have emphasized SE by making huge investments in its accessibility and availability (Tomasevski, 2004). However, global and national policies regarding the accessibility and availability of SE education are often hampered by inequities in the provision of this public good along rural-urban dimensions (Ainscow, 2012). According to UNICEF (2000), most developing countries, in their quest to expand access to SE, sacrifices quality education for ‘quantity.’ This problem has created many SE graduates without the requisite skills, knowledge, and competence for sustainable living, which is contrary to Sustainable Development Goal number 4 on Quality education (SDG4), target 7. which seeks to *“ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development ”* (UNESCO, 2015 pp.17). Achieving relevance in education is considered important in 2030 global development development agenda.

This chapter describes the background of the study. It begins with the purpose and justification of the study, followed by a statement of the research problem, research questions and objectives, and the history of SE, and ends with the structure of this study.

1.1. PURPOSE AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to analyze educational strategies implemented in SE in Ghana and how those policies are geared towards improving access, bridging the equity gap, and improving quality. Since educational reforms were introduced in 2018, there has not been a study on policy documents such as the ESP 2018 and the curriculum framework 2018. Most studies focus on the subject-specific syllabus from the curriculum framework. The study is essential as the findings from document analysis on aforesaid documents would fill the research gap by providing an analytical review of policies within the reforms. And by conducting fieldwork in some Senior High Schools (SHS), the study will unravel some tensions and contradictions in the implementations of policies contained in the reforms. Also, there are existing research on spatial dimensions of equity in education. For example, Alimachie (2016), focused his study on basic education. By focusing on SE, findings from this study will be an essential addition to existing research. Based on the findings, this study makes practical recommendations for implementing policy solutions to close the rural-urban divide in SE and promote the SDG (4) agenda. Its recommendation will be helpful for policymakers to be more aware of the local context throughout policy design and implementation procedures. It may provide insights into how educational policy measures can be implemented more efficiently and responsively to the requirements of rural Ghana, in order to bridge the rural-urban divide in accessing equitable quality SE.

Specific objectives include the following:

1. Assess the government of Ghana's policy strategies in addressing inequities and quality in SE in the light of SDG4.
2. Assess how quality in education is understood and experienced and discuss this in the light of education for sustainable development and critical pedagogy.
3. Assess opportunities and constraints in achieving equity and quality in SE.

1.2. DEFINITION OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Following the widespread implementation of free primary education in low-income countries and the resulting increases in primary school enrolment rates, policymakers' focus has switched to SE in order to meet the 2030 global sustainable development goal (SDG) (Duflo, Dupas, and Kremer, 2021), especially SDG4 which aims at “ *Free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes*” (UNESCO 2015, p. 17). According to the Ministry of Education, Ghana is making strong commitments to SDG 4 on SE. These commitments are represented not only in Ghana's signing of all worldwide treaties on the child's right to education but also in the country's recent reforms and policy plans to achieve equitable quality and free SE (MoE, 2018).

According to Tamanja & Pajibo (2019), several reports have commended Ghana for providing free secondary education, which has improved access. Furthermore, quantitative data from the Ministry of Education suggests an increase in enrolment and completion since the country's introduction of the Free Senior High School (FSHS) policy (MoE, 2018). However, in spite of the country's efforts, several reports, including the World Bank and the IMF, reveal the overall gains in access to quality Secondary Education have not been encouraging, partly due to the persistence of socioeconomic inequities (UNESCO, 2015). UNESCO opined that inequity is a persistent feature of Ghana's education service delivery and its most serious challenge to meeting the SDGs' overall targets (UNESCO, 2015).

In the meantime, the provision of free education does not guarantee the quality of education as access to education is affected by both demand and supply side factors. The Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2018-2030 for Ghana highlights teacher absenteeism, time on task, attrition, and teacher deployment as major obstacles. It further indicates that problems with teacher deployment result in large regional disparities in student-teacher ratios and a weak correlation between the number of students and teachers within districts (MoE, 2018).

Resources are a major problem hindering secondary education, which is also inequitably distributed between rural-urban schools (ESPR, 2018). The relevance of

school curricula has been the subject of debate for a long time. According to ESP (2018), the relevance of the Ghanaian secondary education curriculum and its potency in equipping students with the relevant knowledge and skills for sustainable living is being challenged by the general populace in recent times. According to Armah (2017), Ghana's educational system is disconnected across academic disciplines and levels, with an overburdened curriculum. The SE curriculum is so vast and dense that the time allotted for it is insufficient. Armah (2017) argues that, there has been no deliberate effort to reconcile all of the many subject-oriented curricular frameworks that compel teachers to prepare students for examinations rather than equip them with the skills for lifelong learning and living (Armah, 2017).

The premise of quality secondary education in Ghana is essential; hence, it has been central to political campaigns, and manifestos, leading to frequent reforms in the structure and curriculum. Since the advent of democracy in 1992, secondary education has often experienced several reforms anytime governance changes hands (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2016). The rapid nature of changing curricula and reforms has effects on secondary education delivery and performance. For example, in 2013, when the National Democratic Congress (NDC) assumed office, they made reforms to revert SE from 4 years to 3 years. In the said year, two batches of students wrote the same examination; one batch read the school syllabus for three years, and the other read it for four years (Azabiah, 2017). Also, in 2017, the New Patriotic Party (NPP), after assuming office, made a reform to change the NDC's progressive FSHS policy to FSHS now. The lack of consistency and continuity in the SE policies in Ghana affects the progress and sustainability of gains with respect to equity and quality (Armah, 2017).

It is in the light of the aforesaid that the study seeks to highlight the problems that coupled SE, experiences of stakeholders, strategies, and opportunities in Ghana's quest of achieving quality and equity in its SE

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions that inform this study are focused on seeking stakeholders' understanding of quality education, which is the pinnacle of SDG 4, and examine whether strategies to provide quality education deal with inequities or exacerbate existing social inequities in accessing quality education in Ghana.

Specific research questions include the following:

1. How is quality in secondary education understood and operationalized in policy documents, and by stakeholders in selected secondary schools?
2. What policy strategies are being implemented by the government of Ghana (GoG) to achieve equity and quality in SE?
3. How are equity and quality in secondary education experienced by stakeholders in the secondary education sector?
4. What are the opportunities and constraints related to achieving quality and equity in Ghanaian SE?

1.4. UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

What is the purpose of education? Based on the work of Biesta (2009), three functions or purposes of education are outlined. The functions outlined by Biesta serve as a guide to understanding the motives and pursuit of education in a particular jurisdiction. In the context of Ghana, Biesta's three functions of education would help readers understand the purpose of the education policymakers are offering Ghanaians. Biesta (2009) outlines qualification, socialization, and subjectification (individuation) as the purposes of education.

The qualification function of education is concerned with providing learners with specific skills, knowledge, and understandings, as well as the forms and dispositions of judgment that allow learners to fit into a particular system. The qualification function is linked to economic arguments. Specifically, the role education plays in workforce preparation and, as a result, education's contribution to economic growth and development (Biesta, 2009)

The socialization function of education is concerned with the various ways learners become members of specific political, social, and cultural orders through education. Educational institutions actively pursue socialization, for example, in the transfer of specific values and norms, in the continuation of specific religious or cultural traditions, or for the purpose of occupational socialization (Biesta, 2009).

The subjectification function can be thought of as the opposite of the socialization function. Subjectification is not about assimilating people into an already existing order but rather about modes of being that imply independence from such orders, modes of being in which the person is not a specimen of a larger order. Subjectification purpose positions educators to teach critical thinking skills to students and develop well-rounded autonomous learners capable of making informed decisions for themselves, integrating well into any society, and embracing future uncertainties (Biesta, 2009).

1.5. SECONDARY EDUCATION IN GHANA

Secondary education began in Ghana in 1876 by Christian missionaries. Missionary SE dominated the Gold Coast (the former name of Ghana before 1957) and received nationwide support, although all the secondary schools established by the missionaries were centered in Cape Coast (former capital city of Ghana) in the central region of Ghana, until 1924, when the British Colonial Government established its first Secondary school, the Achimota College in Accra (Quist, 1999). According to Williams (1964) cited in Quist, (1999), gender, class, ethnic and geographical imbalance characterized the SE as only a limited elite accessed it in the pre-colonial era.

SE became a priority for the Ghanaian government after the country's independence in 1957 through the enactment of the Accelerated Development Plan (ADP) and the institution of the Ghana Education Trust (GET) (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2016). Through the ADP and the GET, massive infrastructural developments were made in the SE throughout the country with a nationalism ideology: new schools were built across the country and resourced with IT centers, laboratories for the physical sciences, and free

textbooks for all students. By 1958, SE was made free, which led to increased enrollment (Quist, 1999).

Ghana witnessed its first military intervention in its political administration on February 24, 1966. After the military intervention in the Ghanaian political administration in 1966, subsequent governments reduced budget allocation for SE due to cost reasons. By 1983, the Economic Recovery Program (ERP) and the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), initiatives from the World Bank and IMF as a policy strategy to reduce expenditure on the public sector, had led to the elimination of fee-free schooling in Ghana (Azabiah, 2017). Cash and carry systems were introduced in the major sectors of the country, including education. SE was significantly affected by this policy because it led to a reduced enrollment rate. High-ranked schools were not within reach of people from poor backgrounds due to the high cost of tuition (Quist, 1999).

1.5.1. GHANA'S SECONDARY EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK AND GOALS BEFORE 1992

Long before the advent of the 1992 constitution, the promise of free quality SE has been at the heart of every Ghanaian government since the country's political independence on March 6, 1957 (Quist, 2001). The policy framework of the Ghanaian SE can only be understood in the context of time as the policies governing SE evolved, especially when there is a political change of government.

Although SE during the colonial era did not guarantee unlimited access, its importance was acknowledged by both parents and governments (Quist, 1999). The missionaries used SE to pursue the triple purposes of education, evangelism, and enlightenment, while the colonial government used it to ensure colonial subjugation and an effective bureaucracy (Quist, 1999). In the colonial era, the policy that governed SE was education for adaptation (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2016). Education for adaptation meant training to meet the daily demands of local life, to address current obvious deficiencies, and to improve and develop positive aspects. Education for adaptation resulted in the transfer and implementation of educational models from

foreign countries into Ghanaian education (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2016). During the colonial era, two models of education were witnessed: the United Kingdom model, which was patterned after the English public school system of Eton and Winchester, and a combination of the English model with American and Japanese models (Quist, 1999). The goal of the adaptation model becomes a subject of contention between two schools of thought. The first thought was to be accomplished by providing universal primary education while also establishing an elite class capable of cooperating with the white colonial ruler; the second group highlighted that Africa's educational system must be shaped by the continent's backwardness and low living standards and that Africans should be taught to be manual laborers and craftsmen rather than sophisticated industrial and technical employees (Quist, 1999). By 1925, the *Phelps-Stokes* recommendation in British west and east Africa had adopted the second model of training manual laborers, craftsmen, and a few people for administrative work (Quist, 1999). The rise of nationalism and the constant backlash of Ghanaians against the model of SE during the colonial era led to a shift of focus and goal. Between 1951 and 1987, SE focused on national development through the creation of a human resource for development (Quist, 2001).

SE, from the colonial era until 1987, followed the British model structure of seven years. The period was divided into two: 5 years leading to the acquisition of an "O" (Ordinary) level certificate and two additional years of sixth form education leading to an "A" (advanced) level certificate. In 1987, the educational reforms based on the Dzobo committee recommendation led to the adoption of the junior and secondary school systems for three years each (3-3) (Quist, 1999).

There was no language strategy for education prior to the British becoming well-established as the Gold Coast's colonial powers, as the government and missionary organizations at the forefront of the country's education promotion followed a different language agenda (Owu-Awie, 2006). For example, depending on the area in which they worked, German Basel missionaries used Akan and other local languages, whereas Bremen missionaries used Ewe. The Wesleyan missionary used English. A consistent linguistic policy began to develop when British rule was established (Owu-

Awie, 2006). In 1920, based on the Phelps-Stokes committee recommendation, English became the recognized medium of instruction in SE, whereas local languages were only taught as a subject in SS and as a medium of instruction for primary education (Quarcoo, 2014). According to Owu-Ewie (2006), policy on the language of instruction has undergone many modifications and contentions in curricular reforms. The option between English or indigenous languages as the medium of teaching has gone through several changes, particularly in primary education. However, SE in Ghana has continued to use the English language as the medium of instruction since the Phelps-Stokes committee recommendation in 1920.

The Ghanaian government, after independence, inherited a SE characterized by gender, class, ethnicity, and regional inequity in terms of access, availability, and participation (Tamanja & Pajibo, 2019). With the country's quest to use SE to achieve national development through human empowerment and also bridge the inequity gap, the government introduced several scholarship schemes. Notable among these scholarships are the free SE for students from the three northern regions and those from the northern extraction. This scholarship was earmarked only for students who lived in any of the northern regions or had their descent from the north. The purpose of the scholarship was to provide education for these students because the regions were perceived as poor and there was a need to bridge the wealth gap between the north and the south. Furthermore, a cocoa board scholarship for students whose parents were into cocoa production, a hardship scholarship, and a merit scholarship for brilliant but poor students were introduced (Tamanja & Pajibo, 2019).

1.5.2. SE POLICY FRAMEWORK IN GHANA AFTER 1992

The promise of equal opportunities at all levels of education is a basic right under the 1992 constitution of Ghana. Article 25 (1.b) of the Ghanaian constitution states “*secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular, by the progressive introduction of free education*” (Republic of Ghana, 1996, p. 18). In spite of the constitution of Ghana's declaration of primary and SE as a basic right of the Ghanaian people, secondary

education was characterized by low enrollment. The economic hardship resulting from the 1983 IMF ERP and the SAP affected SE enrollment and quality service delivery. The cost of SE became the major constraint to enrollment (Armah & Mereku, 2018). There are significant disparities in access across income quintile: individuals from 20% of poor households, rural regions, and the poorest districts were less likely to have access to SHS. In comparison to those in the richest quintile, most children from the lowest quintile did not make it to the SHS (MoE, 2018).

Another constraint, aside from the cost factor, that hampered SE enrollment in Ghana was the admission requirements (MoE, 2018). For SE enrolment, candidates had to pass certain marks on the standardized basic education test (the Basic Education Certificate Examination). This requirement prevented a lot of candidates from accessing SE, especially those from rural and poor communities and the three northern regions (the Northern, Upper West, and Upper East regions) of Ghana, compared with urban and southern regions of Ghana such as Greater Accra and the Ashanti region (Armah & Mereku, 2018). MoE data suggests that in 2014, the pass percentages of the Upper East, Northern, and Upper West regions were 11%, 22%, and 11% of BECE candidates, respectively, received the qualifying aggregate for SHS. During the same time period, the pass rate in Greater Accra and Ashanti was over 80% (MoE, 2018).

Putting aside the cost constraint and admission requirements, urban quality SE is not within reach of students from the rural and northern regions. (ESPR, 2018) In Ghana, SHS is categorized into grades; thus, grades A, B, C, and D (MoE, 2018). The categorization of the SHS is based on infrastructural endowments and academic performance (Opoku-Asare et al., 2015). At the end of the BECE, the score of the candidate determines the placement of such a student into a category of SHS. This meritocratic system makes it difficult for children in deprived communities to get access to quality education in grade A and B schools (Opoku-Asare et al., 2015), which are characterized by highly qualified teachers, and resource centers such as libraries, laboratories, and other facilities that aid effective teaching and learning.

Data from Ghana Education Service indicates that over 25% of CSSPS's yearly placements do not enroll at SE (ESP, 2018). In fulfillment of Ghana's government commitment to ensuring that students' right to education is respected. In 2017, the Ghanaian government launched an ambitious secondary education initiative dubbed Free Senior High School (ESPR, 2018). The policy offers equal opportunity for all students by removing financial obstacles and broadening entrance requirements to accommodate all BECE applicants to SE (Tamanja & Pajibo, 2019). The FSHS policy merged SE with basic education, which makes the transition easy. A unique component of the policy is to ensure that thirty percent (30%) of spots in elite SHS institutions are allocated for students from public Junior High Schools (Armah & Mereku, 2018).

The education sector in Ghana has two main structures: the policy formulation body and the implementation agencies (MoE, 2018). The Ministry of Education is responsible for coordinating and formulating education policies, setting standards, evaluating policy implementation, and monitoring policy implementation. The implementing agencies of the Ministry of Education are responsible for the implementation of the ministry's policies in the sectors in which they operate (MoE, 2018).

Ghana Education Service is the sector under the Ministry of Education mandated in 1995 by parliamentary ACT 506, for the implementation of pre-tertiary (basic and secondary education) policies of the ministry (NAPTC, 2018). The GES is required under the Education Act of 2008 (Act 778) to decentralize management to the local level (regional and local). This aims to improve the management of the sector in order to ensure efficient service delivery (Armah, 2017). The GES operates in all 16 regions and 260 districts in Ghana. The Director General of GES is the administrative head of the sector at the national level, whereas regional directors and district directors oversee administration at the regional and district levels, respectively (MoE, 2018).

Other agencies operate with the GES. The Ghana Education Act, 2008 (Act 778) established three agencies, namely the National Council on Curriculum and

Assessment (NCCA), the National Inspectorate Board (NIB), and the National Teaching Council (NTC). These three independent bodies have oversight responsibility for the system of educational accountability in Ghana (MoE, 2018).

The headmasters of SHS, together with their deputies, are responsible for the administration of their respective schools. Teachers are next in line in the hierarchy of the educational structure after the headmaster and assistants. Parents are not excluded from school management. They are part of the stakeholders of SE in Ghana. The PTA mobilizes local support for school development and also actively participates in the running of the schools to ensure accountability (NAPTC, 2018).

1.5.3. CLASSIFICATION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

SE have been classified into two levels thus lower secondary, also known as ISCED 2, and upper secondary, also known as ISCED 3, according to UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) (UNESCO, 2011). Lower secondary is a continuation of basic primary education, which often employs subject-focused teaching. The entrance age for this level of education is typically between 10 and 13 years. Upper Secondary is the final stage of SE. Teaching at this level requires higher educational achievement and specialized knowledge content, with the entry age typically between 15 and 16 years (UNESCO, 2011). Provisions and policies for SE differ greatly from country to country; in Argentina, lower SE is combined with primary education to form 9 years of compulsory basic education followed by 2 to 6 years of non-compulsory post-basic education. In contrast, Uganda has a SE education that takes place in two different school buildings; 2 years of lower SE and 3 years of upper SE (Jacob & Lehner, 2011). Upper SE is not universally free and compulsory compared to lower SE, which is universally free and compulsory in most countries in the world (Sanchez-Tapia & Rafique, 2020). The organization of the upper SE is not the same globally (Sahlberg, 2007). Generally, there are three principal ways it is organized: (i) a divided school-based upper SE system that segregates upper SE into vocational and general schools; (ii) a unified upper SE school system that is confined within a single school and offers a variety of programs. (iii) a parallel school-based and work-based upper secondary school system, with work-based vocational and school-based general education options for upper SE.

(Sahlberg, 2007). *SE* operates with the notion that all children are the same and learn at the same pace with similar strengths and weaknesses (Alvarez, 2003a).

1.6. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The research has been divided into eight chapters. The first chapter provides context for the research. In chapter two, there is a review of educational policy literature. The third chapter examines the theoretical perspectives of the study's literature. The methodology for the study is laid out in Chapter 4. The document analysis is covered in chapters 5 and 6, and the qualitative interview analysis is covered in chapter 7. In chapter eight, the author draws conclusions and makes recommendations.

1.7. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Chapter one of the study provides background information on the study. From the background, it was stipulated that in spite of investment in *SE* in recent years, especially in developing countries, inequities continue to be an essential feature; as a result, quality education is substituted for quantity education. This study is important as it analyzes policies to bridge the inequity gap, especially between rural and urban secondary schools, and, in the process, unravels the tensions and contradictions in the implementation of such policies. The chapter also indicates secondary education frameworks, visions, and aims before and in these contemporary times.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY LITERATURE

This chapter of the thesis reviews the literature on equity and quality in secondary education (SE) from a global perspective. It starts with universal standards of quality in education described in global treaties, the global picture of SE, whole system reforms in contemporary education, and strategies to improve quality in SE, and ends with strategies to improve access to SE.

2.1. UNIVERSAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY EDUCATION

The concept of quality is perplexing and complex (Ankomah et al., 2005). In the field of education, there has not been a commonly agreed definition for the concept of quality education; however, many definitions exist, which proves the complexity of the discourse (UNICEF, 2000). According to UNICEF, quality has often been used synonymously with words like effective, efficiency, and equity. However, there is no one word to describe quality, but it may include the words it is mostly associated with. According to Amankona et al. (2005), the lack of agreement on a common definition for quality education is because education is bound by a culture that makes it explicitly value-laden. Every society has its own narrative of what an ideal quality education should be; to some societies, it fosters students' moral, cognitive, and social development; to others, education prepares students for the world of life; while others view quality education as the one that promotes social cohesion and nation building. Motala (2000), cited in UNESCO (2009), posits that stakeholders of different jurisdictions hold varying meanings to quality education, as the concept is embedded in a political, social, and economic context.

In spite of the complexity of defining quality education, UNICEF (2000) identifies five basic dimensions of quality education: quality learners, quality learning outcomes, a quality process, quality content, and a quality learning environment must all be based on the entire right of the child, all children, to survival, protection,

development, and participation. This dimension compares the quality of education provisions in one country to the dimensions used to assess the state of education in that country.

In the UNESCO (2009) perspective on quality education, the goal is to identify clearly and unequivocally the key aspects or qualities of education that can best ensure that goals are met. Quality education should foster learners' emotional creative ability and growth while promoting the goals of national reconciliation, citizenship, and security, as well as equality and the transmission of global and local cultural values to future generations (UNESCO, 2009). Quality education should enable children to reach their full emotional, cognitive, and creative possibilities. Improving educational quality would necessitate systems in which scientific development and modernization principles could be learned in ways that respected learners' sociocultural contexts (Pigozzi, 2009). As a result, a quality education system must be capable of providing all children and young people with a comprehensive education as well as appropriate preparation for working life, social life, and private life. This should be accomplished without making any discrimination based on the parent's income, political affiliation, color, gender, language, religion, other opinions, or national or social origin (Pigozzi, 2009). UNESCO's perspective on quality education is underpinned by its four learning principles: learning to know, learning to live together, and learning to develop skills (Delors, 1998).

Quality education, in the context of Common Wealth, refers to a system or product that has met a set of standards or principles. The standard approach to establishing quality criteria or principles implies that quality can always be improved. Thus, quality entails the maintenance and advancement of standards under the assumption that "standards" are objective and that quality is a continuous process of change. Quality in education is defined as the application of the principles of Effective, Empowering, Equity, Sustainable, Appropriate, and Well-being & Safety throughout the educational system (Secretariat, 2017). In this viewpoint, quality education is subject to change and evolution as a result of new information, changing contexts, and new understandings of the nature of educational challenges.

2.2. SECONDARY EDUCATION: THE GLOBAL PICTURE

Secondary education has been defined differently by different countries in the world for the past century, especially in this era where its expansion has become an indication of national development. SE has been in existence since the 15th century, with the initial mandate of preparing students for universities and the practicalities of life with *studia humanitatis* curriculum (Alvarez, 2003b). Subjects like moral philosophy, grammar, poetry, rhetoric, and history formed the core curriculum until the 19th century, which saw the inclusion of empirical sciences in the secondary school curriculum (Alvarez, 2003b).

During the mid-90s global policy initiatives on education, such as the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) programs, have focused on reforms geared at improving access to primary education (Jacob & Lehner, 2011). Most national education policies, especially those financed by donors, have prioritized basic and higher education as having a higher rate of return than SE (Sahlberg, 2007). SE has in recent years received global attention and recognition based on its importance to the socio-economic development of countries (Alvarez, 2003). Secondary education's importance has led to a multifaceted scope in its implementation and practice based on priorities, purposes, and financial constraints. Today, SE is seen in many countries as an intermediary between primary and tertiary education, a preparatory stage for the youth to enter the world of work (Jacob & Lehner, 2011), and a means of rebuilding unity and stability for countries coming from war or conflict (Sahlberg, 2007).

The increasing pace of global access to SE has been witnessed and documented in recent years (Sahlberg, 2007). Despite the introduction of fee-free lower secondary education, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) estimated in 2018 that 60.0 million adolescents representing 15.6% of LSE adolescents are out of school globally. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of out-of-school LSE adolescents. 26.8 million LSE adolescents represent 35.5% of children within their age category, followed by Southern Asia. In Southern Asia, an estimated 18.3 million adolescents from LSE were out of school, representing 17.2% of the LSE adolescent population.

Europe and Northern America have the lowest out-of-school LSE rates among adolescents, with an estimated 800,000, representing 1.8%. USE has the most out-of-school dropout school-going children in the world. Globally, an estimated 138 million USE youth are out of school. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest percentage of out-of-school adolescents (57%, representing an estimated 36 million youth), followed by Southern Asia at 48%, representing 66 million adolescents. Europe has the fewest out-of-school USE adolescents, with an estimated 3 million, representing 6.5% (UNESCO, 2018). Projecting to 2030, based on the current trend, 44% and 62% of LSE and USE adolescents, respectively, will not complete their secondary education in Sub-Saharan Africa (Sanchez-Tapia & Rafique, 2020).

2.3. WHOLE SYSTEM REFORMS IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

Countries all over the world have engaged in large-scale whole-system reforms over the last several decades (Malone, 2015). Despite the fact that each country has approached system-level educational change in its own diverse educational, historical, sociocultural, political, and economic context, a clear and inspiring regional vision for education, strong leadership, consistent resource investment, professional capital formation, institutional accountability, a focus on collective improvement, and stakeholder engagement have proven essential in achieving meaningful progress (Malone, 2015). This section provides three important and significant changes in recent educational reforms.

2.3.1. INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKING AND STANDARDIZATION IN EDUCATION

According to Foorman et al. (2007), the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001 marked the culmination of the movement for standards-based educational reform. The purpose of NCLB is to guarantee that every child has a fair, equal and significant opportunity to receive a high-quality education, succeed in state academic assessments, and challenge state academic achievement standards.(Shepherd, 2011). According to Wu et al. (2009) findings on the influence of education quality on economic growth, in countries with good education quality, economic growth is likely to be significantly faster, and there is strong evidence that this effect is causal.

In the US, according to Falk (2002), the widespread public perception that something was seriously amiss in their educational system led to the introduction of standards-based reforms. When it was warned that a sudden surge of mediocrity threatens the very future of a nation and its people in American schools and that; as a result, Americans had engaged in unilateral disarmament in the economic war for markets with other industrialized nations whose students outperformed them on international mathematics and literacy tests (Shepherd, 2011), to address this, the committee proposed for much more rigorous and measurable standards, as well as higher expectations for academic achievement on standardized tests, as well as more time devoted to "the New Basics" and improved educational practices and educational leadership. In response to these recommendations, many states strengthened high school graduation requirements, developed curriculum standards, and established teacher licensure tests (Shepherd, 2011). According to Wu et al. (2009), despite the emerging consensus on the link between national school quality and economic growth, policymakers face a challenge in improving learning outcomes. Student achievement is influenced by factors at both the student and school levels (Falk, 2002). The former includes student characteristics, family background, individual schooling, and work experience, whereas the latter includes teacher characteristics, teacher qualifications, and teacher qualifications (Falk, 2002).

International benchmarking of education systems has dramatically altered the global geography of education (Salberg, 2011). (Malone, 2015) indicates international benchmarking and standardized assessments, as well as a growing body of evidence about efficient teaching practices and system-level reform, are increasingly affecting how the field approaches educational change in the twenty-first century. Schleicher et al. (2009) indicate many nations participate in international tests such as PISA, among others, in order to put their national education goals into a broader perspective. Evidence from Germany, South Korea, and Brazil reveals that their standings on international tests served as the basis for measuring educational improvement and influencing the political process of reform (Schleicher et al., 2009).

However, Salberg (2011) indicated that the main drawback of the growing focus on international rankings is that it leads to education being governed by numbers rather than values. It supports education policies that aim to close achievement gaps and raise the bar. Malone (2015) argues that such policies emphasize establishing clear goals for student achievement, developing external standardized tests to assess students' and teachers' performance, rewarding and sanctioning achievement scores, and publicly ranking schools for the sake of accountability. This has undoubtedly increased competition, standardized solutions, and market-based models for achieving policy objectives. Simultaneously, educational research and the media report on the unintended consequences of pressure on teachers and children: curriculum narrowing, increased testing, teachers leaving their jobs, corruption, and student suicides as a result of higher performance expectations (Salberg, 2011).

2.3.2. ADDRESSING EQUITY AND EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE

Education systems around the world are grappling with the question of how to achieve equity (Ainscow, 2012). UNESCO (2010) encapsulates that inequity is most visible in the developing world, where it is estimated that nearly 70 million children lack access to basic primary education, while in wealthier countries, there are ongoing concerns about how children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds attend the lowest-performing schools and achieve the worst results. Datnow (2014) cited in (Malone, 2015), argues schools serving low-income students have the most textbook shortages, the fewest qualified teachers, the fewest college preparatory programs, and are far more likely to be overcrowded and rundown.

Equity issues both inside and outside of schools must be addressed using multifaceted strategies (Ainscow, 2012). School improvement processes, in particular, must be nested within locally-led efforts to make school systems more equitable (Malone, 2015). This means that schoolwork should be linked to local strategies addressing larger inequities, which can eventually connect to national policies aimed at creating a fairer society (Ainscow, 2012). It is a way of thinking about how to promote educational equity by analyzing contexts, developing strategies for specific circumstances, and collaborating with others to move knowledge around (Ainscow, 2012). Malone (2015) argues that mobilizing educators, policymakers, and

researchers in the field of educational change to think about equity issues and collaborate on solutions could yield positive results. As the number of students growing up in poverty continues to rise, and their educational outcomes have plenty of room for improvement, a clear focus on equity-driven educational change is required.

2.3.3. EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSESSMENT

The global accountability era has shifted the focus of education policy from inputs to outputs (Malone, 2015). National and international assessments are increasingly being used to evaluate education systems' overall success and student learning. For many countries, emerging accountability systems represent the first opportunity to examine the condition of their educational systems and the implications of existing organizations and structures on overall student outcomes in a transparent and comprehensive manner. However, the increased use of external assessments has highlighted the importance of using such data as a starting point for improvement strategies rather than relying solely on standardized measures in education policy and practice (Malone, 2015).

Earl (2015) contends that large-scale assessments are commonly used by educators as policymakers' levers, but they are disconnected from daily teaching and learning practices. Earl argues that improving student learning requires a focus on personal responsibility within the teaching profession as well as an investment in collaborative inquiry. Accountability and assessment systems are essential, but they are not the end goal; rather, they serve to inform the general public and aid in the design and improvement of systems. What makes a difference in students' lives is the commitment of the entire educational system to high-quality teaching and learning (Earl, 2015).

If educators prioritize student learning (rather than test scores) and adopt a professional accountability mindset based on providing high-quality teaching for all, they would be compelled to engage in collaborative inquiry and professional learning, as well as incorporate high-leverage approaches to teaching and learning into the fabric of the reforms as they are implemented locally (Earl, 2015).

2.4. STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE QUALITY EQUITABLE SECONDARY EDUCATION

Strategies earmarked to achieve quality education can be analyzed from a contextualized perspective. However, some strategies are generic across all strategies employed to achieve quality education. In this section, I review some of the strategies that are implemented globally to achieve quality education.

2.4.1. RELEVANT AND FLEXIBLE CURRICULUM

The development needs of every country are molded into its national curriculum, which intends to provide solutions to societal problems. In the quest to meet national and global development goals, curriculum planners often expand the existing curriculum to meet demand-based knowledge. Curriculum expansion may lead to an overloaded curriculum, which has become a problem in educational systems in contemporary times (Ezeonwumelu, 2020)

Overloaded curricula lead to fragmented ways of teaching and learning, which affect the quality of students' learning (OECD, 2020). In many instances, teachers, in their attempt to complete their syllabus, deviate from the intended curriculum objectives. An overloaded curriculum negatively affects the well-being of both teachers and students because in their attempt to make up for the workload extra hours are being spent which may have health implications(OECD, 2020)

Trends and demand for jobs in recent times have shifted toward favoring nonroutine analytic and interpersonal skills. OECD report on what students learn says that today's educational system is slow to catch up with the fast-growing pace of economic, societal, and environmental changes. 21st-century competence in areas such as meta-cognitive critical thinking, problem-solving and digital skills must be incorporated into the modern-day curriculum (OECD, 2020).

2.4.2. IMPROVEMENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY TEACHING PRACTICE

Research on quality education has established a positive correlation between quality teaching, teachers' professional education, and student learning outcomes

(Akyeampong, 2005). Educational systems are changing rapidly, and there is a need to equip students with new horizontal skills and higher levels of skills (Salberg, 2007). To position teaching and the teachers to achieve quality and equity in students and other educational outcomes, there is a need to achieve teacher professionalism and competence (Gomendio et al., 2017). To attain professionalism, teaching standards and qualification frameworks for teachers need to be raised to the standards of doctors (medicine), lawyers, and engineers (Gomendio et al., 2017). For instance, the Finnish educational reform strategy targeted the best students into teaching careers and training teachers to meet learning needs (Akyeampong, 2005).

According to the European Commission's report on teaching and education, teacher competence is needed to improve quality and equity in education. Four fundamental principles outline teacher competence (Caena, 2013). A teacher must: a) think like a teacher; be endowed with high cognitive skills and pedagogical thinking, b) know as a teacher; the teacher must have deep subject knowledge and apply modern technology to teaching, c) feel like a teacher; a teacher must exhibit positive attitudes; for example the teacher must have a high commitment to work, trustworthy and confident, d) act as a teacher; a teacher should integrate teaching and classroom management to conform with relevant teaching variables (Caena, 2013). Competent and qualified teachers should be deployed equitably, especially to rural and marginalized communities, like in the South Korean teacher deployment policy, where qualified teachers are deployed to marginalized communities (Akyeampong, 2005).

2.5. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EQUITY AND EQUALITY IN EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

Equity and equality are two different concepts regarding their interpretation in an educational setting, specifically inclusive education (Levin, 2003). According to the OECD (2012), equality means treating every person equally, without regard to their needs or requirements. This means that equality can be defined as treating all individuals equally, regardless of their needs or requirements. (Simon et al., 2007) argue that whatever the individual's need is, equality in education ignores such needs in order to promote the ideals of equal treatment. To put things into perspective,

teachers and students from various cultural, socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds come together with varying needs and requirements in an educational setting like the classroom. Given this, different types of support are required for students without special needs and for students with special needs and requirements. Equality in education is the view that irrespective of each student's differentiated needs and requirements, they all share the same overall objectives (Levin, 2003). If teachers support all students equally in the classroom, no student will be overlooked (Jean-Paul, 2019).

There is widespread agreement that the goal of public policy cannot and ought not to be equality in the sense that everyone is the same or achieves the same results, a state that appears both undesirable and impossible (Jean-Paul, 2019). Equity is the quality of treating people fairly in accordance with their needs and requirements (Levin, 2003). The OECD (2012) argues that equity does not imply that all people should receive the same amount of material. Instead, it emphasizes the need for things to be distributed in accordance with needs and requirements. From the perspective of equity in educational provisions, differences in outcomes should not be attributable to disparities in areas such as income, wealth, power, or possessions (Levin, 2003). Equity in education can be viewed through two dimensions based on the conceptual framework outlined in the OECD Report *No More Failure*, thus: fairness and inclusion (OECD, 2012; Simon et al., 2007). Ensuring all students attain at least a fundamental level of skills is known as ensuring equity and inclusion. Inclusive, equitable educational systems help students realize their full learning potential without unofficially or formally establishing barriers or lowering standards (Simon et al., 2007). The idea of equity as fairness implies that factors such as gender, ethnic origin, or family background are not barriers to academic success. (OECD, 2012). An equitable education system has the potential to reduce the effects of broader social and economic inequalities. In the context of learning, it enables individuals to fully benefit from education and training, regardless of their background (Jean-Paul, 2019).

2.6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ensuring the equitable provision of education has been central to a lot of global agendas for development, such as EFA, MDG, and SDG. Access to education is hampered by a number of factors, including financial constraints. In this section, literature on strategies to ensure equitable SE is reviewed.

2.6.1. CASH TRANSFER

Cash transfer is a social intervention program in developing countries aimed at improving education and other facets, especially among poor households (Baird et al., 2014). The conditional cash transfer (CCT) program provides cash payments at regular intervals to parents who exhibit specific behavior toward their children (Whetten et al., 2019). Conditional cash transfers can be aimed at improving many aspects of poor rural households so they can catch up with affluent urban households. When CCT is aimed at education, households are obliged to fulfill some conditions in order to receive payments. This may, among other things, include the enrolment of their school-aged children in school with attendance above a certain threshold. In most countries where CCT operates, it performs dual functions, decreasing the substitution effect and increasing the income effect. In the case of the income effect, the CCT increases the income available to households while reducing the opportunity cost of schooling in the substitution effect (Baird et al., 2014).

Studies in South America have shown the efficacy of CCT programs in SE among poor households and marginalized rural communities in terms of enrollment, attendance, and retention rates (UNESCO, 2015). Experiences of Equadorian *Bono de Desarrollo Humano*, Columbian *Familias en Accio*, and Mexican *Oportunidades* programs improved enrollment, attendance, and completion rates, especially among rural areas; for example, the Brazilian *Bolsa Escola* CCT program increased school enrolment in 10% in rural areas, in contrast, the *Bolsa Escola* impact among well to do and average households were negligible, with only 0.5% attendance, and an enrollment increase was recorded (Anlimachie, 2016).

Unconditional cash transfers (UCT) have been experienced in some countries in Africa, predominantly Zambia, Kenya, and Morocco. The UCT targets some households beyond those perceived as poor. The UCT does not attach behavioral

conditions or attitudinal changes to beneficiaries. UCT posits the notion that the main problem for people, especially the poor, is a lack of money but not knowledge; hence, if their income increases, they can make investments in their children's education (Baird et al., 2014).

According to UNESCO (2015), cash transfers have not ultimately increased the affordability of access to education in the countries where they are implemented. Inconsistent cash inflow and harsh conditionality have been identified as obstacles. The harsh conditions may tend to disqualify a lot of people as beneficiaries at the expense of the totally marginalized rural community. Also, CCT financed by donors has not been sustainable, especially when donors withdraw their support.

2.6.2. SCHOLARSHIPS AND FEE WAIVERS

The World Bank (2014) indices on welfare and global development depict that illiteracy and poverty coincide. It is from this viewpoint that the EFA program made primary education universally free. School fees, textbooks, feeding fees, and other hidden levies are a hindrance to secondary education access, enrollment, and attendance (Munda & Odebero, 2014). The first step in making SE affordable and accessible is by eliminating school fees and other hidden charges. Fees in education reflect the price in the education market; if people respond to fees in the same way that they do in a market, fees are more than likely a clear determinant of participation in the education market. (Grenzke, 2007).

Several studies in Africa, Asia, and South America where scholarships, fee waivers, and abolishing of school fees exist have recorded improvements in enrollment and attendance, thereby narrowing the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged, especially in rural and marginalized communities. For example, the Indonesian Jaring Pegeman Sosial, a scholarship program that was introduced in 1999, reached up to about 1.6 million marginalized upper-secondary and lower-secondary students, especially girls, single-parent households, and poor households. Evidence from JPS suggests that secondary school students who received the scholarship were 24% less likely to drop out (Zoe, 2018).

Scholarships and fee waivers have been shown to improve access to secondary education (Bank, 2005). According to a Malawian study, access to education is determined by two factors: demand and supply. Demand factors such as the elimination of school fees and the availability of scholarships have increased attendance. However, in areas where secondary education supply factors such as insufficiently qualified teachers, a lack of physical infrastructure, and a lack of textbooks resulted in more students dropping out, low attendance, and enrollment (AlSamarrai & Zaman, 2007).

2.6.3. SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM (SFP)

Providing nutrition for children and adolescents is essential for their physiological, mental, and physical well-being (Wang & Fawzi, 2020). In 2018, the World Food Program reached out to about 17 million children in approximately 61 countries. According to Wang and Fawzi (2020), 61 million children and adolescents in developing countries go to school hungry.

SFPs are social intervention policies that provide food to children and adolescents of school-going age. In recent times, SFP has become an essential policy not only for the educational attainments of the child but also for other facets such as health and general well-being (Anlimachie, 2016). The SFP is an essential policy for improving access and equity to education among the poor and marginalized. Several studies in Africa, Asia, and South America have shown a positive correlation between educational attainments and SFP. For example, in 2007, the Hinterland Community-Based School Feeding Program in Guyana positively affected attendance, participation, and enrolment; Food for Education in Bangladesh in 1998 resulted in a 44% increase in enrollment among girls (Zoe, 2018).

2.7. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Chapter two of the study reviewed the literature on educational policies in SE geared at ensuring quality and equity. The chapter reviewed how quality in education is operationalized at the global level, the global picture of SE, and the agenda for whole

system reform. Some strategies implemented globally to ensure quality and equity in SE are also reviewed.

|

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This chapter places into perspective the frameworks that informed the study. The study aims at analyzing educational strategies implemented in SE in Ghana and how those policies are geared towards improving access, bridging the equity gap, and improving quality as specified in SDG 4. Critical pedagogy theory (CP) and the Human Right-Based Approach to Education theory are the two theories used in the study. The study used critical pedagogy theory as emancipation or radical approach to explaining the need for quality and equity to be made available now and also challenging the traditional mode of banking education that perceives learners as passive listeners, which disconnects education and real-life issues, while the Human Right Based Approach to Education (HRBA-E) is used to explain equity and quality as a fundamental human right that needs to be provided by every nation to its citizens devoid of discrimination and marginalization on the basis of geography (rural-urban dimension), ethnicity, religion, and region. The chapter begins with HRBA-E, where it delves into the introduction and meaning of the HRBA-E theory. This is followed by the dimensions of the HBRA-E and ends with the relationship between the HBRA-E and SDG4. The HBRA-E is followed by the CP theory. The chapter discusses the introduction of CP and ends with the dimensions of CP.

3.1. HUMAN RIGHT-BASED APPROACH TO EDUCATION (HRBA-E) THEORY

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, approaches to development began to incorporate a more systematic and in-depth account of human rights frameworks, which became known as the human rights-based approach (HRBA-E) (Moriarty, 2017). This implied that human rights frameworks should be used to guide decision-making and action rather than being viewed as something abstract or only as a background narrative (Craissati et al., 2007). The HRBA-E emerged mainly as a result of global dialogue and reflection on the Declaration on the Right to Development (1986), as well as the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993), which stated unequivocally that all UN operations, including international cooperation, should be concerned with the promotion and safeguarding of human rights (Craissati et al., 2007). The HRBA-E was further accelerated by UN reforms aimed at incorporating human rights

frameworks into all UN decision-making processes (Moriarty, 2017). (Cornwall & Nyamu-Musembi, 2004); and (Unicef, 2007) argues that HRBA-E proposed a shift from thinking of development as a charity (need-based approach) with passive recipients receiving services to thinking of development as rights-holders claiming that duty-bearers meet their obligations. Prior to the emergence of an HRBA-E model, development was viewed as addressing needs without necessarily addressing systemic failures that had occurred.

The HRBA-E is, in principle, a conceptual model for the human development process that is normatively rooted in international human rights standards and functionally fixated on promoting and protecting human rights (UNICEF, 2007). The use of an HRBA-E clarifies the distinction between those who have a duty to ensure rights—the duty-bearers—and those who have the right to enjoy these rights—the rights-holders. The HRBA-E automatically raises concerns about duty-bearers' actions and accountability, giving rightsholders a stronger voice to demand change. This understanding of the significance of rightsholder participation was founded on Amartya Sen's influential work, which argued that achieving development is entirely dependent on people's free will (Craissati et al., 2007). According to UNICEF (2007), HRBA-E can be used in four areas of education. The dimensions are discussed below.

3.1.1. APPLICATION OF HRBA THEORY IN EDUCATION

Based on the extensive work of UNICEF (2007) on the HRBA-E theory, it can be applied in education in four ways. They are education as a human right, as a conceptual framework for education, as a means of ensuring the state (duty bearers) performs their obligation, and as a means of ensuring that right bearers (parents and guardians) are given the right to education.

3.1.1.1. EDUCATION AS A HUMAN RIGHT

Education has been formally recognized as a human right since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. This has been affirmed in numerous international human rights treaties, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) 1960 Convention Against

Discrimination in Education (UNICEF, 2007). These treaties establish a right to free, universal primary education for all children, as well as an obligation to develop SE and make it accessible to all children, provide equitable access to higher education, and provide basic education to those who have not completed primary school (Moriarty, 2017). Furthermore, they indicate that the aim of education is to promote personal development, strengthen respect for freedoms and human rights, enable individuals to effectively participate in a free society, and encourage friendship, tolerance, and understanding. Human rights in education include not only access to educational provisions, but also the moral obligation to eliminate discrimination at all levels of the educational system, establish minimum standards, and improve quality. Education is also required to exercise any other civil, political, economic, or social right (UNICEF, 2007).

3.1.1.1.1. PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING EDUCATION AS HUMAN RIGHT

In the work of UNICEF (2007), seven principles underpin education as a human right.

- **Universality and inalienability:** Human rights are universal and irrevocable, and everyone everywhere has the right to them. They cannot be voluntarily given up by an individual. They cannot be taken away by others. All human beings are born free and with equal dignity and rights.
- **Indivisibility:** Human rights cannot be divided. Civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights are all inherent in every person's dignity. As a result, they all have equal rights and cannot be ranked in a hierarchy.
- **Interdependence and interconnectedness:** The realization of one right frequently depends entirely or partially on the realization of others. For example, the realization of the right to health may be conditional on the realization of the right to life.

- Equality and non-discrimination: All people are equal as human beings and, as a result of their dignity and worth, are entitled to their rights without any form of discrimination. A rights-based approach necessitates a particular emphasis on addressing discrimination and inequality. To protect the rights and well-being of marginalized groups, safeguards must be included in development instruments.
- Inclusion and participation: Everyone and all peoples have the right to active, accessible, and meaningful participation in, contribution to, and enjoyment of the arts, civil, economic, social, cultural, and political development that enables the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- Empowerment: Empowerment is the process by which people's abilities are increased to demand and exercise their human rights.
- Accountability and compliance with the rule of law: A rights-based approach seeks to increase accountability in the development process by identifying 'rights holders' and corresponding 'duty bearers,' as well as strengthening those duty bearers' capacities to meet their obligations. Positive obligations to protect, promote, and fulfill human rights are included, as are negative obligations to refrain from violating rights.

3.1.1.2. HRBA-E FRAMEWORK

The HRBA-E conceptual framework emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive approach to education that reflects the universality and indivisibility of all human rights. The right to access education, the right to quality education, and the right to respect in the learning environment are three dimensions that conceptualize the HRBA-E framework (UNICEF, 2007).

THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO EDUCATION

The right to education consists of three components: the provision of education throughout all stages of childhood and beyond, in accordance with the Education for

All goals; the provision of good, accessible school places or learning opportunities; and equality of opportunity (Moriarty, 2017).

THE RIGHT TO QUALITY EDUCATION

Cognitive growth is a key goal of education, and the efficacy of education is determined by how well it achieves this goal. The right to education must nurture creative and emotional growth while also promoting peace, citizenship, and security goals, developing equality, and passing down global and local cultural values to future generations (Craissati et al., 2007). Every child should have the opportunity to learn the core academic curriculum and basic cognitive skills, as well as important life skills that will prepare them to make well-balanced decisions, face life challenges, develop a healthy lifestyle, good social relationships, and critical thinking skills (UNICEF, 2007).

RIGHT OF RESPECT IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The manner in which children are given the opportunity to learn is just as important as what they learn (Tomasevski, 2004). Traditional schooling models that silence children and view them as passive recipients are incompatible with a rights-based approach to learning. Children and young people should be respected for their agency, and they should be recognized as active contributors to their own learning rather than passive recipients of education (Freire, 2016). Respect should also be shown for children's changing and diverse abilities, as well as the recognition that children do not acquire skills and knowledge at fixed or predetermined ages (Moriarty, 2017). To create stimulating and participatory environments, teaching and learning must use a variety of interactive methodologies. Rather than simply transmitting knowledge, educators who create or improve learning opportunities should encourage participatory learning (UNICEF, 2007). Learning environments should be child-friendly and conducive to children's capacity development (UNICEF, 2007).

3.1.1.3. ENSURING STATE (DUTY BEARERS PERFORMS) THEIR RESPONSIBILITY

To meet the requirements established in international human rights treaties, governments must also remove any legal and administrative barriers, including financial barriers, as well as identify and eliminate discriminatory denials of access and obstacles to compulsory schooling fees, distance, and schedule (Unicef, 2007). Moriarty (2017) argues that Tomasevski's 4A framework in the right-based approach to education is the primary responsibility of duty-bearers. With this, governments must ensure that quality education is available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable (Tomasevski, 2004). The 4A scheme is ribbed in Tomasevski (2004) as follows:

- Availability denotes that education is free and government-funded and that adequate infrastructure and trained teachers are available to support education delivery.
- Accessibility means that the system is non-discriminatory and open to all, with positive steps taken to include the most marginalized.
- Acceptability - indicates that the educational content is relevant, non-discriminatory, culturally sensitive, appropriate, and of high quality; that the school is secure; and that teachers are qualified.
- Adaptability - means that education can change to meet societies changing needs to combat inequalities such as gender discrimination and that it can be tailored locally to specific contexts

RESPONSIBILITY OF RIGHT BEARERS

Human rights are more than just legal entitlements that can be realized through legislation and policy (Unicef, 2007). They are standards and principles that have a direct impact on the day-to-day relationships that people have in their communities. To create a sustainable and rights-based education for all children, parents, families, and all members of the community must understand and own the concept of education. Education is not a stand-alone activity (ibid.). The actions, attitudes, and behaviors of

all community members influence the realization or denial of educational rights. It is also necessary to recognize that every adult has both rights and responsibilities. Parents, for example, have responsibilities to ensure their children's educational access, but they also have a right to an education. Teachers have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, as well as adequate training and support, and they cannot fulfill their obligations to children unless these rights are respected (Moriarty, 2017).

3.1.2. TENSIONS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HRBA-E

There are bound to be tensions in the implementation of a rights-based approach to education based on universality and equity principles (Moriarty, 2017). Some of these are related to resource constraints, and some stem from a lack of understanding of the concept of rights or the potential strategies for resolving them. Common tensions include:

In areas with limited resources, the precondition to making education universally accessible may cause a reduction in per capita funding for each child, causing increased teacher-student ratios, congested classes, few or no materials and resources per class, and lower building standards, sacrificing quality for access (UNICEF, 2007). Access to education is the most important concern in these circumstances, and it is not unacceptable to discriminate against different groups of children and give preferential treatment to some based on resources. In addition, as a component of a larger body of human rights, the universal right to education must be reconciled with the freedom to have a different cultural, linguistic, or religious identity (UNICEF, 2007). Local and regional differences, particularly in terms of language and culture, must be taken into account in approaches to educational provisions that ensure universal education for all (ibid). The absence of action implies a failure to engage with all communities. Additionally, limited resources can force trade-offs, such as delaying the development of educational opportunities for children with disabilities or investing in primary education at the expense of restricting secondary education access (Moriarty, 2017). Realistically, no government can immediately guarantee that every child has the right to an education. In order to sustain a sincere commitment to and capacity for meaningful education, pressure to meet targets like the SDGs may result in strategies

that are designed to produce immediate results but fail to invest in long-term social change (Unicef, 2007).

3.1.3. HRBA-E AND SDG4

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development presents a vision of social and economic transformation based on universal human rights (Moriarty, 2017). The 2030 agenda and human rights instruments are intertwined in a mutually reinforcing manner: human rights provide a legally enforceable foundation as well as direction for the 2030 agenda's implementation (Moriarty, 2017). Given the importance of the right to education in the development of the Education 2030 framework, applying the same standards in its implementation makes moral and practical sense. The right-based approach in the implementation of SGD4 creates a synergy between legal rights and political commitments, accelerating progress toward progressive universalism. By emphasizing the rights to education and the responsibility of the duty-bearer (Do et al., 2020),

Equity and quality education are at the core of SDG 4 on education. This is shown in some of the specific targets of SDG 4:

- a. Target 4.1: ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes;
- b. Target 4.2: ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they will be ready for primary education;
- c. Target 4.5: eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access for the vulnerable, including people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations, to all levels of education and vocational training.
- d. Target 4.7: ensure that all learners have the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, the promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and the contribution of culture to sustainable development.

The Education 2030 agenda has refocused attention on educational quality, realizing that access alone is insufficient and that students must receive the knowledge, skills, and values that will prepare them for life in the twenty-first century (Moriarty, 2017). Children will not attain their full potential if they do not have access to a good education, and their nation will not be able to grow sustainably. Quality education is also a human right, according to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the recipe for quality education and learning includes many different inputs, including but not limited to: what children learn; the classroom experience, including right-based participatory pedagogy; and whether there are sufficient numbers of trained teachers. (Do et al., 2020; Moriarty, 2017). If children comprehend the language in which they are taught, if they have access to teaching and learning materials that encourage diversity, and if the school environment is secure and devoid of aggression or attack, the child will reach his or her full potential (Moriarty, 2017). The provision of these inputs is deemed part of the child's human rights, which all countries have pledged to uphold by appending their signatures to global treaties (UNICEF, 2007). The HRBA-E is concerned with all areas of education, including the curriculum, which might promote negative stereotypes and lead to discrimination and exclusion in subtle or less subtle ways (Do et al., 2020).

Children from the poorest households, disabled children, children living in war, females, and other minority groups are the most affected among the millions of children who are not in school (UNESCO, 2015). It is rarely due to a lack of technical knowledge but rather to prejudice and a lack of priority, resulting in a significant failure to respect these children's right to an education. By promoting non-discrimination as a guiding principle in needs assessment, policy creation, planning, and delivery, the HRBA-E can assist in uncovering the persistent impediments to equitable, high-quality education. HRBA-E achieving these will result in the achievement of SDG 4 (Moriarty, 2017).

3.2. CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Critical pedagogy was developed from critical theory, which has its roots in Hegel's work, Kant's critical philosophy, Karl Marx's communist manifesto, and Fabian's

socialism (Abraham, 2014). Although critical theory had its roots in the works of early scholars in the 1800s, it is mainly associated with the Frankfurt School in 1923. Critical theory is built on the ideology of understanding and interpreting society. Also, to a more significant extent, liberate the people from circumstances that enslave them. Critical pedagogy was developed from the idea of critical theory from the Frankfurt School, however, both the theory and practice of CP are attributed to Brazilian educationist Paulo Freire (Abraham, 2014).

CP was developed in 1970 in an effort to transform education and pedagogy as a fragment of the project of radical democracy geared toward developing democratic culture and an active citizenry (Freire, 2021). The vision and ideology of CP were championed, especially in the United States of America, by Henry Giroux, Stanley Aronowitz, and Peter McLaren (Peters, 2005). According to Henry Giroux, CP equips students with the knowledge and skills required for them to broaden their capacity to challenge beliefs, which enables and empowers the student to assume responsibility in the world they live in. In order to empower people and advance democratization, Douglas Kellner defined CP as the teaching of skills that will enable citizens and students to develop political sensibility to representations of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and other cultural differences. According to William Thelin, CP entails giving students permission to share responsibility for their education while posing issues based on their collective knowledge of the outside world. CP questions the status quo in terms of both content and methodology (Peters, 2005).

In education, CP opposes the traditional mode of banking education, where students are seen as tabular razors while teachers are deemed fountains of knowledge (Freire, 2021). CP rejects the notion of traditional education that positions students as passives who must only listen, memorize, recall, and repeat instruction from the class in the teaching and learning process. CP is aimed at achieving social justice, student empowerment, liberation, democracy, and critical thinking, which makes students co-constructors of knowledge (Thomson-Bunn, 2014).

3.2.1. EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY

CP is a strong advocate for democracy in the educational process. CP's viewpoint on democratic education was influenced by the pedagogical experiment of John Dewey between 1896-1904. Dewey's pedagogy was a response to the 1890 social and political reforms in the US to curb the crisis emerging from economic depression and social unrest (Foley et al., 2015). Dewey's pedagogy was centered on the creation of an educational system where there exists liberal democracy that teaches students to adapt to social functions by actively participating in political and social reforms. Educational democracy (democratic education) is the type of education that develops students into collaborative problem solvers and critical thinkers who are active in the development process of a nation. Although Dewey's pedagogy is rooted in CP, CP does not aim to train students to conform to the existing societal structure and is geared at positioning schools to contribute to the production of a curriculum and a new culture that address all aspects of modern society with a special emphasis in solving social problems (ibid.). CP envisions students taking active participation in the teaching and learning processes and also being involved in the decision-making process of matters that concern them in the educational process, which is in line with the UN Conventions on the right of the child (ibid).

3.2.2. TEACHERS AS TRANSFORMATIVE INTELLECTUALS

Teachers, according to critical pedagogy, act as transformational intellectuals. This means that teachers must fight for social change based on the values of democracy, liberty, and justice (Foley et al., 2015; Abraham, 2014). Furthermore, they must be consistent in their efforts by implementing educational practices that aim to mold their students into active citizens. These tactics are similar to those advocated by Harold Rugg, a key figure in the social reconstruction movement. Rugg claimed that instructors might accomplish significant outcomes by weaving together interconnected events, movements, circumstances, principles, and social, economic, and political norms, strengthening pupils' independent thinking (Foley et al., 2015). Critical pedagogy emphasizes the need for teachers to create highly particular classroom practices that foster democratic ideas and beliefs that promote democratic, critical teacher-student engagement and interaction free of egoistic individualism.

Students' moral commitment and social responsibility are among the principles and procedures that are instilled in them (Abraham, 2014). Students must be aware of the importance of making their own decisions and acting on those decisions while keeping situational limits in mind. Abraham (2014) argues that another significant difference CP envisions in the classroom is the chance for students to participate in a teaching apprenticeship through building a close working connection with teachers and classmates. Students are given the opportunity to learn that underlying any methodology are values, attitudes, and assumptions inspired by a specific philosophy of education through creating strong working relationships with instructors and peers (Foley et al., 2015). Furthermore, students should be free to study alone or in groups at their own speed in order to build an effective learning style, gain control over their work, and move beyond the fragmented pedagogies that are developed under the tyranny of a fixed time schedule, e.g., the traditional classroom's one-dimensionality gives way to the prospect of multi-dimensional learning with the use of peers and modified self-pacing (Freire, 2021). In critical pedagogy theory, teachers are seen as intentionally acting as human beings rather than objective carriers of knowledge (Freire, 2021). Foley et al. (2015) argues that teachers should have a dialectic connection with their pupils, in which information and meanings are continually disputed and debated. The learning process is two-way. Teachers must be conscious of not just their authority in the classroom but also how they negotiate that power. Teachers would have to construct forms of knowledge and social practices in the classroom that legitimize the experiences that children bring to school. This entails validating such experiences in order to provide students with relevant information, and an active voice in institutions that have a history of attempting to silence them by neglecting their cultural capital (Thomson-Bunn, 2014). This necessitates addressing the language styles, presentation styles, dispositions, reasoning styles, and cultural styles that lend meaning to student experiences. In other words, students' cultural capital must be linked to the curriculum that instructors create or mediate, to the issues that arise in class, and to the difficulties that arise in such contexts (Peters, 2005).

3.2.3. CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN EDUCATION

Culture includes, among other things, social and institutional behaviors, social meanings, educational capital, language, and forms of knowledge (Foley et al., 2015). On the cultural landscape, people understand who they are as agents in the world. Culture is a dialectical expression of power and conflict, rooted in struggles over material conditions as well as the form and substance of actual action. The selection and distribution of knowledge in schools are influenced by power and external pressures in the development and operation of the curriculum (ibid.). Other types of information that are important for students from less privileged socioeconomic groups are frequently devalued and marginalized by these collections of knowledge. Culture, according to CP, is both a location of contestation and an act of intervention. Schooling serves as an introduction to, preparation for, and legitimization of specific types of social activity in this setting. Paulo Freire's contribution to the integration of "culture" as an essential theoretical element in Critical Pedagogy theory was crucial.

Freire (2016) advocated for an education that would aid in solving the Brazilian people's concerns. These answers, on the other hand, were not designed to be forced on or discovered by the people; they were supposed to be discovered alongside them. He recommended an education that would allow individuals to think about themselves, their duties, and their position in the changing cultural atmosphere, but most importantly, to think about or understand their own power of reflection (Freire, 2016; 2021). CP is concerned with the role of language in order to get access to reality. The language of instruction was dubbed the thematic universe by Freire. Language broadens students' thoughts as well as their practice and conduct (Thomson-Bunn, 2014). The use of appropriate language is a critical precondition for overcoming the "banking model" of education, which assumes that the teacher has the knowledge and that the students are empty vessels that need to be filled. When students are forced to talk or be taught in the language with which they are most familiar, it piques their interest in learning and increases their comprehension, allowing them to connect learning to social competition (Foley et al., 2015)

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used in the study as informed by the theoretical framework and the literature toward the achievement of the stated objective. It explains the what, how,, and why regarding the research strategy and design; the sampling of sites and participants; data collection and tools, analysis,, and presentation of the results. It also explains quality assurance issues such as liability, validity,, and the ethics of the research.

4.1. RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

It is essential in educational research to situate the methodological approach within the larger context of science. The thoughts and notions perceived by worldviews influence social research (Bryman, 2012). A worldview, according to Guba, 1990 cited in Creswell (2014), involves a principal set of beliefs that regulate what we propose to do. Positivism, Interpretivism, and Pragmatism are manifested in world perspectives, which influence how social phenomena are perceived and how the nature and study of the social world should be conducted (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). It is worth noting that these broad ideologies are distinguished by their distinct philosophies, positions, and operational assumptions (Bryman, 2012).

While methodological thought is concerned with acceptable knowledge, ontological thought is concerned with the nature of social entities, taking into account the extent to which social problems can be classified as external or internal to social realities (Bryman, 2012). Finally, methodology refers to the structure used to conduct research within the context of a specific paradigm. The question of whether social reality should be considered objective, exclusive, and independent of any human influences has sparked debate among researchers. Bryman (2012); and Creswell (2014) propose an alternative approach of constructivism/interpretivism or a combination of different approaches, resulting in pragmatism. According to Bryman and Creswell, social problems are caused by society and are subject to human analysis and action.

The interpretivist-constructivist paradigm is used in this study as a result of the preceding discussion. Interpretivism is an ideology that holds that natural sciences are

fundamentally different from social sciences, people and their institutions, and so on (Bryman, 2012). According to interpretivists, researchers can only achieve authenticity when they engage with the real world (Crotty, 1998). As a result, the principles and processes for studying human behavior and social events must be in sync in order for them to be highly influenced by a variety of external factors.

This interpretivist paradigm has a constructionist ontological orientation. According to constructivists, social phenomena and their meanings are constantly accomplished by social actors (Bryman, 2012, p. 33). Human beings, according to Agyemang (2017), are the most unstable creation (thus, they have inconsistent behavior). As a result, knowledge and social interaction are ever-changing. In this regard, the primary goal of my research is to investigate how actors in Ghana's education sector understand and operationalize quality and equity in SE, as well as their experiences and perspectives on the subject. As a result, the absolute or definitive principles advocated by positivism in the natural sciences may not be applicable in this study (Bryman, 2012).

To study social phenomena constructively, a qualitative approach in which data is systematically interpreted will be adopted, involving a qualitative case study comprised of in-depth interviews, and document analysis with deductive reasoning in the relationship between theory and research. This will help the researcher gain insight into the social interaction of the sample units under study in this research work.

4.2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND STRATEGY

This thesis uses a qualitative research approach that focuses on attitudes toward understanding, interpretations, and experiences by persons of the social world, and how such inquiries came into existence (Sandalowski cited in Cohen, 2017). The qualitative method is most applicable to this thesis due to the fact that the understanding of equity and quality of education is diverse and has multiple interpretations, including all the people interviewed in this research. Also, to understand equity and quality in education, it is imperative to draw understandings and meanings in context, both specifically and holistically; this helps in describing

and explaining multiple interpretations of situations, their causes, and their distinctiveness. Furthermore, social reality and social phenomena sometimes have contradictory interpretations, hence research in social reality and education needs to be subjective, where verbal accounts of people must be prioritized over numerical values (Cohen, 2017). It is from this viewpoint that this research adopts a qualitative approach, where the researcher seeks an in-depth description and understanding of equity and quality education from a selected populace. This helps establish that understanding social reality should not be generalized but rather contextualized. This study employs a case study to explore, describe, and explain equity and quality in secondary education.

According to Cohen (2017), many researchers have argued that every research project in social science is a case. A case study may include action research, experiment, survey, participatory research, historical research, naturalistic research, etc. Yazan (2015 cited in Cohen 2017) avers that case study research is a contested terrain because it has multifaceted and diverse definitions, Denzin & Lincoln (2017) argued further that, there is not a straightforward undertaking in case study method, because there is no single understanding of case study in the social, behavioral sciences, as the ways in which it is being defined and employed vary across various fields and disciplines of study, including sociology, anthropology, educational research, policy analysis, political science, organizational research, history, psychology, etc.

Some common definitions of a case study include an in-depth examination of a real-life project, specific policy, program, institution, or system' from multiple perspectives in order to comprehend the phenomenon's complexities and uniqueness (Simons, 2009). According to Yin (2009), the boundary between the phenomenon and its context is blurred; thus, a case study is a study of a case in a context, and it is critical to set the case within its context (Cohen, 2017). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2017), a case study is an in-depth investigation of a single social phenomenon using a qualitative research method.. The study is often conducted in great detail and relies on the use of several data sources. Denzin & Lincoln (2017)

assert that a case study is a research method that is used to generate an in-depth and multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context. A case study is an approach to the complex social world that takes account of context, agency, and the temporary. Case study exist in the social sciences in the form of narratives, process tracing, and systematic comparison. All involve a turn to cases rather than variables. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017))

In spite of the complexities in the definition of a case study, there appears to be a common understanding among some researchers, such as Byrne & Callaghan (2011); Crowe et al. (2011); Simons (2009); and Yin (2009), as they appear to define a case study as a method that induces understanding of an ambiguous issue in a real-life context. This study agrees with the aforementioned scholars as it seeks understanding, the operationalization of quality and equity in secondary education in Ghana, and the experiences of stakeholders on quality in education. Quality is relative, and so is quality in education, so to operationalize quality education, it is imperative to study the complex term in a social context. The totality of Ghana as a country will be the case study, where the researcher will delve into how SDG 4 objectives are operationalized and understood in policy documents and in selected senior high schools.

In case study research, the researcher must construct his or her study with a *critical realist lens* as they deal with complex realities. In view of this, case study research must have a focus that distinguishes it from other research in the same field. Hence, the researcher undertaking case study research must establish *what their case is*. *This case is a case of what?* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). This case study is a case of the operationalisation of quality education and equity underpinned in SDG 4 in Ghana.

A case study is most applicable for this research because this study focuses on quality and equity in education; operationalization of SDG 4, hence the need for contextual understanding and explanation. SDG 4 does not provide a restrictive or definite approach in its implementation at local and national levels. Therefore, the implementation of SDGs differs from country to country. Therefore, to understand

whether or not a country is in line with global policy, there is a need to study the concept contextually.

4.3. RESEARCH SETTING

The study took place in the Republic of Ghana. The Republic of Ghana is a Sub-Saharan country that shares borders in relative terms with Cote d'Ivoire in the west, Togo in the east, Burkina Faso in the north, and the Gulf of Guinea in the south. In absolute terms, Ghana lies between latitudes 4 degrees north and 12 degrees south of the equator. She has a total land area of 238,533 square kilometers. Ghana has a tropical climate and is endowed with natural resources such as gold, diamonds, bauxite, manganese, petroleum, natural gas, etc.

Demographically, Ghana has a population of 30,792,608 based on the 2021 Population and Housing Census (PHC) (Statistical Service, 2021). According to the PHC, there are 400,000 more women than men. Overall, the male population constitutes 49.3% of the total population, while the female population stands at 50.3%. 56.1% of the Ghanaian population lives in urban centers (ibid). In the PHC, the age structure of Ghana was divided into three, thus persons between 0-14 years, 15-63 years, and 64+ years. Persons between 0-14 years of age constitute 37.13%, 15-63 are 59.73%, and 64 and older are 3.14 % (Statistical Service, 2021).

4.4. RESEARCH TARGET AND POPULATION

The target and population are the upper secondary education (Senior High Schools) in Ghana. Secondary education in Ghana consists of both lower and upper secondary schools. In Ghana, lower secondary schools are called Junior High Schools which is a continuation of primary education and end the nine years of free compulsory basic education. This study was conducted in SHS in Ghana and does not include JHS.

Based on the GES school register for 2020, there are a total of 1182 public and private upper secondary schools, which includes technical and vocational schools, out of which 722 are government owned Senior High/Technical and vocational schools.

This study pertained to only government or public upper secondary schools. Public secondary schools were chosen for this study because the government of Ghana manages and controls the day to day administration of the schools through the ministry of education.

4.5. SAMPLING STRATEGY

This study on achieving quality and equity in secondary education in Ghana used a purposive sampling technique to sample informants and stakeholders in secondary education in Ghana. The sampled stakeholders selected for the study were heads of senior high schools, teachers, and parents. In all, three different sets of interview guides were designed for heads of SHS, teachers, and parents. Seven qualitative interviews were conducted among these informants; four teachers, two parents, and one headmaster, on issues of quality and equity in secondary education in Ghana. Two schools were chosen for this study, one in an urban center and the other in a rural area.

Due to the covid-19 pandemic, it was difficult to recruit people through direct contact, so most of the informants were contacted by my research assistants in Ghana. Most of my informants are used to physical interviews, the online Zoom interview was a new challenge or experience that troubled the interviews to an extent. Some of the problems include; Internet connection problem. This interview was agreed to be conducted in video, but 80% of the interview turned out to be audio as my informants had technical glitches whenever they switched their zoom to video due to internet problems. Also, most of my informants refused to honor the interview in the last hours of the interview. Some of the reasons were due to their busy schedules, while other reasons remain unknown.

Purposive sampling was the most appropriate of the sampling strategies. According to Cohen et al, (2018), the name "purposive sampling" suggests that the sampling was done to achieve a specific purpose. In most qualitative research, the emphasis is placed on the uniqueness, idiographic character, and exclusive distinctiveness of the phenomenon, group, or individual in question. In this study, purposive sampling is used to sample informants on issues of quality and equity in SE. In this case, it is

imperative that persons with in depth knowledge about equity and quality in secondary education be selected. The purposive sampling technique was effective for this study as it did not aim at making generalizations but sought for in depth understanding, knowledge, and experiences of people from different backgrounds in terms of geography, social, and economics in secondary education. Informants' opinions represent themselves and nothing or no one else. In such cases, it is perhaps less appropriate to refer to a "sample" and more appropriate to refer to a group or individuals. It makes no difference how far they are representative of a larger population or group, because much qualitative research seeks to explore the specific group under study rather than generalize..

4.6. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

In this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews as the main research instrument for the collection of the primary data. In qualitative research, unlike quantitative research, the researcher is not interested in measuring data in terms of its quantity or frequency but rather its in-depth understanding, process, and meaning (Frances et al., 2009). There are three types of interviews: structured interviews, unstructured interviews and semi structures interviews

Structured interviews make use of an interview guide that contains explicit questions and does not allow veering off the topic (Frances et al., 2009). In structured interviews, the research is mostly interested in comparing responses. Unstructured interviewing is a type of interview that deviates from a specific questioning framework (Flick, 2018). During an unstructured interview, the researcher and the respondent engage in a conversation on a particular topic where the researcher asks broad, open ended questions; the direction and flow of the interview are based on the respondent's responses. An unstructured interview is based on the assumption that limited or too little knowledge exists on the topic, so there is no need to ask the respondent predetermined questions. According to Flick (2018), Semi-structured interview is defined as an interview conducted with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of

the described phenomena. A semi-structured interview uses open-ended questions. With this, the researcher is not restricted to the interview guide; it allows the researcher to freely probe into an answer by the respondent with the aim of gaining an in depth understanding and knowledge of the informant's world view (Flick, 2013).

The semi-structured interview method was very effective in this study because a relatively small number of participants were interviewed with the aim of getting in depth knowledge from them while at the same time having control of the data collection process (Flick, 2018). Also, the researcher wanted the respondents to feel free to express their knowledge on quality and equity issues in secondary education; hence, open ended questions were asked. The researcher also ensured that the questions were structured around various themes. Responses or answers from participants were further probed with follow up questions to ensure that both the researcher and the respondents had a clearer understanding.

4.7. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

In addition to the primary data, secondary sources regarding quality and equity in SE captured in national level educational review reports, policy documents, and national census reports were also relied upon. To this effect, we analyzed SDG4 implementation in policy documents, particularly in the National pre-tertiary education curriculum (NAPTC 2018-2030), Education Sector Performance Report (ESPR 2018-2030) and the Education Strategic Plan (2018-2030), these documents are labeled as appendix 2 . Document analysis as a qualitative method is relevant when a research interpretation requires the examination of data in order to gain understanding, elicit meaning, and develop empirical knowledge of which this research is interested; therefore, it is a perfect method for the research. Also, document analysis was the best method for this study because, policy documents were available and easily accessible, especially in this era of covid 19 pandemic where health and restriction have been tight.

4.8. THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis that classifies and presents themes relating to the research's data. It elucidates the research's data in detail and deals with diverse subjects through interpretation (Alhojailan, 2012). Thematic analysis deals with identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Thematic analysis is useful as it highlights the purposes of validation to establish a clearer view of the analysis. Also, a rich thematic description of the entire data helps to reveal the predominant and important theme. Furthermore, a thematic analysis in research that relies -only on- upon participants' clarifications helps in understanding the issues, which leads to an appreciation of the whole picture (Alhojailan, 2012). This study adopted Braun & Clarke's (2006) 6-step framework: which are 1) familiarizing yourself with the data; 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) Review themes; 5) define themes 6) writing up. The Braun & Clarke (2006) 6-step framework was used in this study because it is an influential framework in the social sciences and because it is comparatively easier and clearer.

4.8.1.PROCEDURE FOR THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

In Braun & Clarke's(2006) 6 step framework, it begins with the researcher getting familiar with the data at his disposal. At this stage in my study, and in any qualitative analysis, the first step is reading and re-reading the transcripts. This helped me become familiar with the data at my disposal. Notes were taken from the interview transcript and the secondary sources, which helped me to deduce or make early impressions.

In the second phase of the analysis was to generate initial codes according to Braun & Clarke's framework. Coding at this stage of my study was important because it helped reduce the large data set into a smaller, more manageable size. According to McGuire & Delahunt (2017), by generating initial codes, it helps the data to be more organized and systematic. The analysis of this study used deductive reasoning, and my interest at this stage was not to code every piece of data at my disposal but those that were relevant to my research question.

In the next term phase of the thematic analysis, I searched for themes for the codes. Maguire & Delahunt (2017) explained that the term "theme" refers to the act, process or pattern of capturing something that is of essence or interesting about the data or research question. During this stage, I examined all all the codes and grouped them; those with similar codes, that talks or addresses a particular researched question were placed in one category and assigned a theme to it. At the end of this, all the data belonged to a theme or a category. I employed an open coding with the assumption that the early stage coding can be modified

At the fourth stage of the thematic analysis, I reviewed themes. At this stage, I reviewed and modified the themes to determine if they were appropriate for the data at my disposal. Maguire & Delahunt (2017) revealed that it is imperative for the researcher to ask himself or herself these salient questions regarding the themes chosen, do the themes make sense? Is the data consistent with the themes? Is it possible that I am trying to cram too much into a theme? Are themes truly distinct, or do they overlap? Is it possible to have themes within themes (subthemes)? Are there any other themes in the data? During this stage, I aligned, modified, and redeveloped the themes to ensure that each was different from the other.

At the fifth phase of the analysis, I defined the themes developed in the fourth stage. During this stage, according to Braun & Clarkes (2006), it is important to identify the importance of each theme and what each theme stands for.

The sixth stage of the analysis is the writeup phase.

4.9. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

4.9.1. RELIABILITY

Reliability is concerned with the consistency, stability, and repeatability of the informant's account as well as the researcher's capacity to gather and record information properly (Flick, 2018). It can also be defined as the ability of a research method to yield consistently the same results over repeated texting periods. According to Shipman (2014), a study is regarded as reliable if it produces the same results when done by different researchers using the same method. In qualitative research, error is

the key factor that affects the reliability of the research. The error may occur on the part of the researcher, participant, or both. On the part of the participant, when the interview is conducted at an unfavorable time, such as when the participant is tired, hungry, or bored, it will affect the extent to which they give out information. To avoid participant error, the researcher made sure that participants selected their own available time for the interview. On occasions when participants were not comfortable talking based on their environment or were tired, the interview was rescheduled for a favorable time. On my part as the researcher, I familiarized myself with the informants to an extent for a couple of weeks before the interview. This was done with the intention that when the respondents felt that the researcher was a part of them and not a stranger, they would be willing to give out information. Because in qualitative research, emphasis is placed on in depth knowledge. In situations where the informants withholds information or gives inaccurate information can affect the findings of the research

4.9.2. VALIDITY

Validity in qualitative research is concerned with the truthfulness and accuracy of scientific findings. A study is valid when it demonstrates what actually exists and is able to measure what it is supposed to measure (Shipman, 2014). There are two main types of validity: internal and external validity.

According to Noble & Smith (2015), "internal validity" is the extent to which study findings are a genuine reflection or depiction of reality rather than the influence of extraneous factors. In qualitative research, some external factors can influence the interview (Brink, 1993). During the study, the researcher ensured that respondents gave their own accounts, understandings, and experiences on quality education out of their own free will, while making sure that institutions of power and other variables that would have affected respondents' views did not exist in this study. This was ensured by allowing the informants to choose their own location where they felt convenient and safe to share their thoughts. In research, when a respondent's environment is not safe and convenient for them, it is likely to affect the information they provide.

External validity concerns the degree to which findings are applicable within groups (Flick, 2013). This study aimed at understanding the operationalization and experiences of stakeholders in education on quality and equity in secondary education, this study was not for making generalizations like most quantitative research; however, it is externally valid given that respondents were chosen from different parts of Ghana yet share similar experiences. The results of the study will be compared with other studies from the same or similar context to strengthen external validity

4.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Every good research project should be guided by ethical principles. Ethical research is concerned with what researchers should and should not do while conducting research, and such values must be upheld throughout the research project until the end (Cohen et al 2018). Cohen et al. (2018) assert that ethical issues arise out of the nature of the research project, the context for the research, as well as its procedural processes such as methods of data collection, the nature of participants, and the types of data collected. The researcher is a student at Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway, and undertook the research in Ghana. In view of this, the research must conform to the European Union guidelines and the standard of research in Ghana.

Prior to the commencement of the study, a research proposal for this study was first sent to NSD for examination and approval in May 2021. This was to ensure that the study adopted standard ethical practices that protected the privacy and rights of informants in accordance with European Union guidelines for research. The study commenced in July 2021 after approval was given by NSD, which means ethical considerations employed in the study meet considerable standards.

In Ghana, official permission was sought from the DEO before entry into the schools selected for the study. In the schools, official permissions were sought from the head teachers before engaging the teachers. Also, participants were made to understand the purpose of the study by giving them an information consent form that contains a brief description of the research's aim, objectives, their rights, and the means by which the

research is protected. Participants were made to understand that they reserve the right to be part of this study by their own free will and reserve the right to opt out of the study at their own free will without any repercussions. All participants who responded consented to take part in the study and signed the information consent form. They were made to understand that the information they were given would be treated confidentially. The researcher ensured the confidentiality of the interviewees' information by assigning them codes. This was kept behind locks on my computers, and no one else had access to the information provided by informants during and after the interviewing period. Following the study, all the data collected was permanently deleted.

In this research, the identities of the schools and participants were kept anonymous at all phases of the study. Also, the research carefully considered the schedule of the selected schools and chose appropriate times that minimized any possible interference with their working hours.

CHAPTER 5: EDUCATIONAL POLICIES ON QUALITY EDUCATION

This chapter of the thesis is part 1 of the document analysis of the study. It analyzes and also discusses policies employed by policymakers in the provision of equitable quality secondary education in Ghana. Three documents were used in this chapter of the thesis: the National Pre-tertiary Curriculum Framework 2018 (NAPTC, 2018), the Education Strategic Plan 2018-2030 (ESP, 2018), and the Education Sector Performance Report (ESPR, 2018), which are labeled as appendix 2. The chapter specifically aims to provide answers to the first aspect of the study's research question (RS) *1) How is quality secondary education understood and operationalized in the policy documents, and by stakeholders' in selected Secondary Schools ?, and 2) What policy strategies are being implemented by the government of Ghana (GoG) to achieve quality in SE?*

In the quest to answer the research questions, the chapter indulges in critical analysis and discussion of reforms, models of curricular developments, teaching and learning philosophy, and strategies implemented in SE to achieve quality education. The analysis leading to answering RS 1, would mostly use Biesta (2009) functions of education in section 1.4 as the lens.

5.1. PERIODIC REFORMS

Periodic reforms of educational policies are critical elements in the Ghanaian educational system. Although the documents used for this study did not provide an explicit definition for the concept of quality education, the provision of quality education in all sectors of the Ghanaian educational system is considered a right of every citizen towards the realization of the full potential of learners to achieve national development. In the attempt to understand what quality education means in the policy documents, all three documents used in the study stress educational policy reviews and curriculum reforms in quest of overcoming problems and challenges faced by the educational sector over time. As indicated earlier in the introduction chapter, Ghana has constantly made reforms and reviews periodically in the education sector in its quest to provide quality education for its citizens, which began from a

move from the triple function of education, enlightenment, and evangelism under the missionaries to education for adaptation during the colonial times and education for national development became a priority of the Ghanaian education in a post-colonial era. However, it only prioritized the provision of access and expansion. This chapter will analyze current educational reforms introduced in 2018 to understand the new educational direction of the reforms.

5.1.1 CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

In contemporary times, in line with SDG 4 target 7 on education, the provision of quality education by ensuring the relevance of subjects and content of instruction taught in schools is of importance in Ghanaian education, which is reflected in their educational reforms. According to ESP (2018) Ghanaian education is poised towards

Delivery of ...quality education service at all levels that will equip learners in educational institutions with the skills, competencies, and awareness that would make them functional citizens who can contribute to the attainment of the national goal. (ESP, 2018, pp.14)

From the assertion above, the NAPTC mirrors the overall aim of education as empowering people through the acquisition of skills and competence to assume their full potential and develop themselves to contribute to national development. A separate document (the National Review Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2019) opines that the national goal of Ghana is to improve the quality of life of all citizens and build a prosperous nation, which entails creating opportunities for all Ghanaians, safeguarding the natural environment, and ensuring a resilient built environment while maintaining a stable, united, and safe country. The National Review Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2019, which by far complements reforms in NAPTC, also throws more light on the relevance of education being the national goal of Ghana with which to achieve a prosperous nation; providing varying opportunities for her citizens, enhancing her environment, and maintaining a degree of national unity and peace; a phenomenon which the page 6 of NAPTC 2018 explains, that education is marked as the catalyst through which Ghana's vision enshrined in education can be realized.

Summing up, contemporary educational reforms in Ghana encompass a direct linkage between education and national development. This education would serve as a catalyst for the attainment of the vision and goals of Ghana. To this end, the provision of quality education at all levels and across varying social and economic quintile is a priority in recent educational reform. Having discussed contemporary reforms, the rationales that necessitated the need for reforms in the Ghanaian educational system are expanded below.

5.1.2. RATIONALE FOR THE REFORM

Three rationales could be identified in the study's documents that necessitated the need for reforms in the educational system in Ghana. The first rationale includes a quest to do away with outmoded educational practices (philosophy of teaching, teaching pedagogy, and assessment). Previous pedagogy, philosophy, and model of curriculum development (these are analyzed in a later section of the chapter) are considered less effective in contemporary education. The NAPTC (2018) document elucidates

(...) led to an over-emphasis on the products of learning—that is, knowing basic facts, principles, skills and procedures at the expense of the processes of learning which involve higher cognitive competences such as applying, thinking critically, creatively and practically; and the personal qualities and social skills necessary to become competent, engaging and contributing citizens (NAPTC, 2018 pp.16).

The quotes above demonstrate outmoded educational practices, which is the first rationale for reforms in the educational system in Ghana. The first quote describes the previous curriculum as being overly focused on learning outcomes that were centered on students' knowledge of basic facts to the neglect of higher competencies such as the application of knowledge, critical thinking, and creativity. The second rationale under outmoded educational practices that led to curriculum reforms is concerned with the content of subjects being taught in Ghanaian schools:

(...) In Ghana, the education system implemented a curriculum that is still elitist (or bookish) and narrowly focused on the subject content, with little emphasis on the cross-cutting essential learning that can develop the knowledge and skills required to promote sustainable development. (NAPTC, 2018, p. 17).

The relevance of subject content is also rooted in SDG 4 target 7 and ESD, which emphasize the acquisition of relevant skills and competence as an outcome of education. In the NAPTC (2018), previous reforms were bereft of essential cross-cutting skills, which, by inference, did not prepare learners to live sustainably amidst the uncertainties of this changing world.

The third rationale under outmoded educational practices described in the third quote postulates students were tested on discrete facts, whereas teachers were limited to the use of only prescribed textbooks as a result of teachers' lack of freedom to explore knowledge from other sources. The NAPTC described that:

(...) the assessment of student learning was based on testing learners on an accumulation of isolated facts and skills. This led to rigid prescriptions of textbooks that were aligned to the various subject syllabuses. This also limited the ingenuity of the teacher (NAPTC, 2018, p.18)

The second rationale that led to the reforms, according to the documents, is the need to adjust educational priorities to the fast-growing world in the midst of new ideas, information, and globalization. The NAPTC elucidated:

(...) the 21st Century world is changing at a fast pace, and this change is greatly influenced by rapid developments in technology, engineering, and other related fields. These changes come with both challenges and opportunities, to which Ghana is responding through various reforms, one of which is this curriculum reform. A number of issues confront Ghana's national development efforts in this globalized and technological world (NAPTC, 2018, p. 18).

Also,

(...) Furthermore, new technologies have shaped and continue to shape how we learn and work. New learning standards should reflect the realities of this new digital era, where learners are not just consumers of knowledge, but creators of knowledge. Consequently, this reform is aimed at raising the quality of education at the pre-tertiary level, which emphasizes science and mathematics as fundamental building blocks for accelerated national development in this age of technology (NAPTC, 2018, p. 19).

Based on the information above from the NAPTC (2018), the need to adjust to opportunities and constraints which emanate from rapid developments in technology and other fields is a cause for concern that demands a response; hence, curriculum

reforms to adapt Ghanaian education to trends of development. The pursuit of globalization is the third rationale for the reforms. The NAPTC elucidates:

Globalization has altered Ghana's relationship with other countries in the West African sub-region and around the world. Furthermore, Ghanaian culture, values, and national identity have all been influenced. As a result, there is a need to address these challenges by providing learning experiences that allow learners to appreciate Ghanaian culture and develop a passion for STEM-related subjects as dynamic development tools. It is also critical to ensure that Ghana's children have the same or better learning opportunities as children in other parts of the world and, as a result, become global citizens.. (NAPTC, 2018, p.18)

From the quote above, two rationales related to the pursuit of globalized agenda can be identified in the document. First and foremost, the pursuit of global citizenship means that learners have equal opportunities and are able to compete with their peers in other parts of the world. The second deals with the effects of cross-cultural interactions or modernism due to the advancement of technology.

The ESP posits:

In order to do this, it was necessary to assess the state of education within the current macroeconomic context, as well as take input from a wider range of stakeholders and take into account national and international priorities and aspirations. This made it necessary to align Ghana's education priorities with the shifting global development agenda, which is anchored in the SDGs. (ESP, 2018, p.13)

The quote above aligns Ghana's education priorities with the global development agenda, where education serves as a means of attaining development in all sectors, necessitating the need for reforms.

Summing up, through analysis and interpretation of the rationale for reforms, has found varying challenges associated with Ghanaian education as elaborated in the NAPTC, and ESP, which go a long way to stifle the realization of quality education, without which sustainable development cannot be achieved. These educational problems include outmoded educational practices, entrenched processes, and non-creative assessment, to mention but a few. As a result, it is relevant that consistent and creative ways of meeting the globalized standard of education an impetus to ensure useful education for personal and national development. The next section discusses the findings in 5.1 in relation to the study's literature and theoretical perspective.

5.1.3 GHANA'S EDUCATIONAL REFORMS FROM A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Based on the analysis, the study found the provision of quality in education to be operationalized as making periodic reforms to include what the reforms contained in education; for example, in Ghana, it included improving content and relevance of content, improvement in educational practices due to the availability of new ideas and information, and the study also found the pursuit of globalization as a means of operationalizing quality in education. Also, the study found an emphasis on quality products and quality outcomes from the learning process in Ghana. In this section, the findings are discussed.

The document analysis indicates that quality education includes policymakers constantly making reforms that include new information and ideas about modernized pedagogy and practices. This is consistent with Secretariat (2007) and UNICEF (2000) on the basis that quality in education implies the maintenance and improvement of standards with the assumption that "standards" are objective and quality is a continuous change, open to change and evolution based on information, changing contexts, and new understandings of the nature of education challenges. And that stakeholders in a society or state determine what quality in education means to them; critical pedagogy is rooted in emancipation from oppression and radical democracy is geared toward developing democratic culture and an active citizenry. Identification of problems that are coupled with the Ghanaian educational system by stakeholders themselves without an external overlord and making reforms to include new ideas is consistent with critical pedagogy.

The analysis found that quality education is rooted in the global agenda for development. This finding in the study is consistent with a large body of research, including Jacob & Lehner (2011); Sahlberg (2007); Foorman et al. (2007); Azariah (2017); and Sanchez-Tapia & Rafique (2020) on the influence of the global agenda on the focus of education. As part of most countries' efforts to keep their commitment to being signatories to global conferences and treaties in the name of making the world a better place, they often incorporate the global agenda for development into

their national policies. For example, EFA and MDG's implementation at the global level compelled most countries to introduce free compulsory primary education. In Ghana, the quest to meet global goals led to the introduction of free compulsory basic education (fCUBE) in 2005. A change in the dynamics of education from improving access in EFA to SDG 4 that emphasizes the relevance of the content of education compelled Ghana to align its education policies in 2018 reforms in order to fulfill its commitment to global concerns. However, research by Andreotti (2011), Moriarty (2020), and Griffiths (2021) shows Ghana's decision to align its educational priorities with the global agenda for development (SDGs) may not achieve the intended purposes. This is because the SDGs, especially Goal 4, is too complex and vague. For example, it emphasizes the importance of economic factors in achieving sustainable development, as well as the role of education in promoting economic growth. This function of human capital education appears to coexist with ideas of rights and citizenship for social justice, bringing the issue of intention and discourse to the forefront: whether the learner is conceived as a global economic citizen, a critical global citizen, or both. The polarity of the debate sometimes suggests irreconcilability. A target that is difficult for people to understand, particularly if the target is perceived as too complex, is likely to be sidelined by governments as a policy is translated down to the national level for implementation. Over-reliance on external forces in educational policies is not consistent with CP (refer to Section 3.2 for details of CP). A study by Azabiah (2017) indicates overly reliance on the global education agenda may lead to coercive policy transfer that may distort a long-term national plan. For example, in 1983, the introduction of IMF/ World Bank's structural adjustment program in Ghana led to the introduction of school fees, which negatively affected the enrolment and completion rate turnout in Ghanaian schools, especially in rural communities. CP aims at emancipating people from oppression; a collaborative effort where Ghana would scrutinize global policies thoroughly before incorporating them into their development plan is ideal in CP.

The study's finding about the quality process and outcome of students' learning process is consistent with Biesta (2009) subjectification function of education. Exhibiting an individuating effect at the end of their educational process is the emphasis on Ghanaian education and the subjectification function of education. In this case, learners would be equipped with traversal skills and competence and be able to compete as they become global citizens. From a CP perspective, education must be aimed at achieving social justice, student empowerment, liberation, democracy, and critical thinking, which makes students co-constructors of knowledge. The subjectification function identified as the purpose is consistent with critical pedagogy.

To conclude, the study's findings of periodic reforms, the pursuit of a globalized agenda, and Ghana's education's emphasis on products and outcomes of education are important in the study as they provide an answer to the study's research question: *How is quality in secondary education understood and operationalized in policy documents?* The next section of the study will analyze the similarities and differences that characterize previous and current educational reforms.

5.2. CHARACTERISTICS OF PREVIOUS AND NEW REFORMS

Three problems have been identified by the study's documents in retrospect to previous educational reforms. According to the (NAPTC), previous educational reforms are characterized by:

1. *The absence of clearly defined philosophies, goals, and aspirations to guide the educational system, though there was a subject-specific rationale.*
2. *The lack of performance standards to guide the teaching, learning, assessment, and grading of learners.*
3. *The lack of minimum national standards (i.e., the key/core knowledge, attitudes and skills that are considered for the national education entitlement of all learners for the end of each cycle). (NAPTC, 2018 pp.15)*

However, the new reform is a standard-based reform with clearly stated performance, and national standards of the learning process earmarked towards positioning learners to experience a harmonious growth of their physical, mental, and spiritual talents. By doing this, Ghana's educational system will serve as an example of the creation of well-balanced (intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically) individuals with the necessary knowledge, skills, values, and aptitudes for self-actualization and for the socioeconomic and political transformation of the nation. According to the documents, the new reforms and curriculum framework are characterized by:

- 1. an educational system that is flexible and encourages teachers to engage in innovative teaching to meet the unique needs of learners;*
- 2. Classrooms should be learner-centered, where learners are actively engaged in the learning process as a result of teachers adopting appropriate approaches to planning and classroom practice;*
- 3. Teaching and learning approaches and programs are appropriately differentiated to meet the needs of learners;*
- 4. Schools shift from an emphasis on summative assessment to the formative, a philosophy that espouses the need to employ multiple sources of evidence about learning, which will guide instructional decisions and support each learner's learning trajectory. (NAPTC, 2018; p. 19)*

Based on the characteristics of the previous and new reforms aforementioned, the main difference identified is the standardization approach employed in the new reforms. The new reform used a standard-based approach where national and performance standards were clearly stated to measure educational outcomes. In this, there is a defined teaching and learning pedagogy that serves as a guide to both the teacher and the learner in order to prevent the learning of discrete facts, whereas previous reforms did not use a standardized approach. This, as stated in the characteristics of previous reforms, is bereft of specific standards to guide teaching and learning. Characteristics depicted in the previous reforms are described as objective model curriculum, whereas the new reforms are described as standardized-

based curriculum reform. Details of these models of curriculum development will be analyzed later in this section.

To sum up, reforms in the educational sector in Ghana are an important element in the delivery of quality education in the Ghanaian educational system. The reforms are aimed at finding a suitable educational system and practices to harness the enormous potential of learners. The quest to do away with outmoded practices, adaptation to new educational practices due to the emergence of new ideas, and the pursuit of globalization are the rationales of current educational reforms. Non-standardization of the educational system is characterized by an unclear philosophy, no defined performance, and no national standards to guide teaching and learning, whereas new reforms are standardized based on clearly stated national and performance standards that guide teaching and learning. In the next section of this chapter, pedagogy and the philosophy of teaching and learning will be analyzed.

5.3. TEACHING AND LEARNING PHILOSOPHY IN THE CURRICULUM

A clearly stated philosophy and pedagogy of teaching and learning is a key emphasis of the reforms, aiming to correct previous reforms that were characterized by abstract philosophy and pedagogy to guide the learning process. Social constructivism and learner development are the philosophies used in the reforms, whereas the learning-centered approach is adopted as the pedagogy.

5.3.1. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM AND LEARNER DEVELOPMENT THEORY.

Two teaching philosophies, social constructivism, and learner development have been employed in the new curricular reforms aimed at ensuring better learning and the holistic development of the learner. The NAPTC (2018) posits:

two theories underpin the subject philosophies at the High School levels within the pre-tertiary education structure. These are learner development and social constructivism. As learners grow and transit from one-year group to the other and learn various subjects, they do so at their own pace. Learners interact with the social environment, which is an enabler for good learning and personal development. Therefore, each subject will ensure that learners are provided with a good social environment where

they can accelerate development in the subject learning. (NAPTC, 2018 pp. 66)

It can be seen from above that social constructivism and learner development are prescribed as the theory and philosophy of learning. However, an explicit definition of social constructivism and learner development philosophy was not provided in the document, but it can be seen from the quote above that the theory is grounded on the assumption that the totality of growth and development is dependent on the learner. The indication that *they do so at their own pace* portrays learners as an independent variable if they are afforded the right social environment. The claim above elucidates the social environment as an important condition that accelerates a learner's development. In this, a positive correlation is drawn between the learner's interaction with the social environment and development. Also, the learning philosophies employed in the curriculum reforms aim at equipping students to exhibit higher cognitive development and become co-constructors of knowledge together with their teachers. The NAPTC elucidates:

Learners are to engage in constructing knowledge and make meaning of the social environment provided to them so that they are able to reconstruct the past by describing, analyzing, and evaluating past events. Learners would be able to critically trace patterns of human behavior and communicate their views on how the past could influence the present from an informed position. (NAPTC,2018, pp.66)

The above assertion, as indicated by the NAPTC (2018), makes claims that empower students more than what they are known as in traditional education as recipients of knowledge. The claim above emphasizes the reconstruction of knowledge, describing, analyzing, and evaluating past occurrences as the aims of the philosophies. The quote has a strong connection with the rationales for the reforms in 5.1.2. above as realization of the philosophy can ensure the development of the learner to be able to compete with their colleagues as global citizens. I will turn to the next section to analyze the pedagogy of learning in the reforms.

5.3.2. LEARNING-CENTERED PEDAGOGY

NAPTC (2018) opines that the philosophy and pedagogy for teaching SE in Ghana are centered on the premise of 'knowledge creation and meaning-making, providing the teacher flexibility to employ an appropriate pedagogy based on the needs of their students and the objective of the day's lesson:

'Learning-centred pedagogy' is a relatively new term that acknowledges that both learner-centered and teacher-centered pedagogy can be effective, but teachers must consider the local context (including the predominant language understood by most learners), class size, the physical environment, availability of teaching and learning materials, etc. Teachers should be flexible and carefully adapt their pedagogical approaches to the school environment. (NAPTC,2018 pp.72)

Following the above disposition, it can be seen that the teacher uses a learning-centered approach in the delivery of learning on a daily basis. The curriculum gives the teacher the freedom to employ an efficient teaching approach for every lesson. The curriculum posits that the employment of both teacher-centered and learner-centered techniques must be carefully balanced in a learning-centered approach. The quote above also makes claims that the effectiveness of the pedagogy is dependent on considerations the teacher has to make regarding the classroom context and resources that may be within the whims of the teacher. The language of instruction is also pinpointed as something to be considered. The quote above indicates the teachers' freedom to use language that is understood by a majority of learners. This is a contradiction to the language policy in SE (details of this are analyzed in a later section).

Furthermore, another consideration teachers have to make in the use of learning-centered pedagogy is first understanding the needs of learners. The NAPTC posits:

(...) In understanding the diverse needs of different learners, and on adapting to the reality in the classroom and the surrounding context, differentiation should be a common practice during implementation of the curriculum (NAPTC, 2018 pp. 72).

Following the NAPTC indicates that teachers should be able to recognize differences in learners' abilities and development in order to guarantee that appropriate

differentiation and scaffolding are in place during the learning process. Also, in the use of learning-centered pedagogy, the NAPTC (2018) admonishes a shift from learning to testing to focusing on students learning needs and their development. It indicates:

all learners need to be the focus of all teaching processes, which demands a move away from constantly testing to find the best learner to using such test results to inform the selection of appropriate pedagogical approaches (creative approaches such as role play, inquiry, and investigation, storytelling, games and talk for learning) to subject teaching. Every teaching episode would be used to develop every learner and not only those who are already doing well. (NAPTC, 2018 pp.67)

It can be seen from the above quote that emphasis is placed on the inclusiveness of all learners in daily lessons by ensuring that all learners are involved and placed at the center of all teaching processes. A shift from constantly testing to finding the best learner and toward using test results.

To sum up, a learning-centered approach to learning is adopted as pedagogy, whereas learner development and social constructivism are adopted as philosophy and theory for teaching and learning. The aforementioned philosophy and pedagogy for teaching admonish a shift from learning to testing to learner development. Emphasis is placed on learner differentiation, and as a result, learning is designed to acknowledge diverse learning needs, with the teacher designing the lesson to meet the needs of the learners. Strategies employed to achieve this philosophy and pedagogy are discussed below.

5.4. TEACHER AND TEACHING-RELATED STRATEGIES

In quest of providing equitable quality education in the Ghanaian SE, the ESP (2018) and NAPTC (2018) outlined policies and practices to ensure the provision of quality education for learners. The policies are centered on improving processes, practices, and pedagogy in the provision of quality education. Continuous professional development of teachers, availability of teaching and learning resources, curriculum relevance, language, and strengthening school management and leadership are identified as strategies earmarked towards the attainment of quality education.

5.4.1. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

NAPTC (2018) asserts that teachers are the single most important factor that can ensure the achievement of learners in an educational system. So having good teachers is key to achieving educational goals. It continued to indicate that previous curricula were bereft of setting professional standards to codify what a good teacher should be, their aims and objectives in an educational process, and opportunities for teachers to develop their standards. In this regard, ensuring teacher professionalism, according to the NAPTC (2018), is done by setting up standards that regulate the teaching profession and ensuring their professional development; also, the NAPTC (2018) opines that the need to promote teachers' development is essential in achieving educational quality. The establishment of the National Teaching Council (NTC) through the Education Act 778 of Ghana has now set professional standards through licensing and registering teachers. The essence and benefit of these standards have been articulated in the framework as follows:

The Teaching Standards are therefore designed to codify what a 'good teacher looks like for Ghana, recognizing the urgent need to improve the quality of the school experience and learning outcomes for all learners and to raise the status of teachers in their communities and country. The Standards are aspirational in their vision, positively embracing the promises and challenges of the 21st Century for Ghana. They support Ghana in meeting Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all. However, in contributing toward this goal, the standards are also realistic, and relatively few to be achievable and user-friendly (NAPTC, 2018, p. 89).

Also,

Education systems, therefore, seek to provide teachers with opportunities for in-service professional development to maintain a high standard of teaching and retain a high-quality teacher workforce” (NAPTC, 2018, p. 90).

Furthermore,

Ghana has reformed and restructured its teacher education system in response to the demands of a new vision and mission for education to meet the demands of a knowledge society. What has been missing in this entire process is a set of professional standards for teachers that provide a strong definition of and a key reference point for the work of teachers towards achieving the learning and social outcomes. (NAPTC, 2018 p.89)

The quotes above affirm the need for teachers to improve their knowledge and gain additional knowledge in order to deliver effectively. Also, the teaching profession must have a laid down standard that makes it professional, and individuals who qualify to have those standards become professional teachers. These standards, as per the policies, must be held in high esteem, not lowered, because lowering the standards affects the quality of education and professionalism. NAPTC (2018) elucidates the problem of unqualified teachers as partly responsible for the poor academic performance of students. In an attempt to ensure quality, minimum standards for teaching and licensing of teachers in secondary schools are set. It posits

(...) The Education Act was enacted to deal with the problem of unqualified teachers practising in Ghanaian schools, and to ensure efficient adequately-trained career teachers. At the moment, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ghana Education Service (GES), in partnership with their international development partners, have developed policy briefs to guide the implementation of the functioning structure of the NTC? as part of the Ghana Education Decentralization. (NAPTC, 2018, p. 90).

This presents the view that having agreed-upon criteria for selecting teachers will help select the best and most knowledgeable ones since students' performance is tied to the performance of teachers. Thus, students perform well when teachers' performances are effective.

ESP (2018) indicates the deployment of teachers as a major challenge in the SE that affects students' performance as well as produces disparities in academic achievements between districts and regions:

Deployment of teachers is also a concern, with large regional disparities in pupil-teacher ratios and weak correlation between the number of students and teachers within a district, especially within the ...and SHS sub-sectors. There are various policy actions planned and ongoing in response to these issues, including the Pre-Tertiary Teacher Professional Development and Management (PTPDM) policy, to ensure the proper licensing and registration of teachers. (ESP, 2018, p.5)

Following the problem of teacher deployment in the SE, licensing and registration are seen as the main policies to ensure effective redistribution. However, it is unclear how licensing and registration can overcome the problem of deployment, as the problem of

deployment can arise from both supply and demand. Licensing and registration of teachers is can help only the supply side of the problem

Summing up the section, the study found the institution of teaching standards as a strategy that would improve learning outcomes and school experiences. Through the institution of teaching standards, the study found its composition to include in-service or continuous professional development, setting up professional standards, registration, and licensing of teachers. In the next section, strategies to ensure the availability of teaching and learning resources for facilitating learning are analyzed.

5.4.2. AVAILABILITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES

All three educational policies identified the relevance of teaching and learning materials as essential to achieving quality education. Accessible teaching materials for teachers and students go a long way toward achieving success. The Education Strategic Plan (2018-2030) elucidates that the availability of teaching and learning material is essential to achieving both access and improving learning outcomes. The policy document also indicated a need for relevant teaching and learning materials (TLMs) to achieve the theory of change in the policy. The Education Sector Performance Report (ESPR, 2018) identified the critical quality indicators for measuring the quality of education. These measures sought to measure the quality of resources that aid in teaching and learning to achieve learning outcomes. The measures include resources such as textbooks and furniture, among others. The National Pre-Tertiary Education Curriculum Framework (2018) identified the need for TLMs, thereby ensuring the need for relevant TLMs but not offensive or controversial ones. Availability and accessibility are the essential components leading to quality education is achieved through teaching and learning materials. The ability for students to access available TLMs will help them explore their surroundings and acquire additional learning experiences outside the classroom. Also, teachers will be able to familiarize themselves with current information and transfer that knowledge to their students:

Strategies included in the ESP will involve a strong focus on increasing equitable access, improving learning outcomes through relevant curricula

and improved teaching and resources, and strengthening school management and leadership... ToC is addressing the quality of education in SHS – ensuring improved teaching and learning, relevant TLMs (including use of ICT. (ESP 2018, p.31)

Also,

The key quality indicator measures seek to measure quality resources that support better teaching and learning for better learning outcomes. For example, teacher quality is increasing; textbook per student is improving, as well as other variables such as the student furniture situation of 1:1 (ESPR, 2018, p. 30).

Furthermore,

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) is responsible for ensuring that instructional materials strike a balance between the need to provide learners with challenging and engaging learning programs and the use of materials that do not offend students or the general public due to their obscene, highly offensive, or overly controversial nature.(NAPTC, 2018, p. 86).

From the quotes above, there are indications and commitments to ensuring that learning, teaching, and learning resources are made available for both teachers and students. Careful consideration is taken in the selection of teaching and learning resources. Two considerations can be found in the NAPTC when selecting teaching and learning resources; they should be challenging and engaging, and they must not be offensive to any community or controversial in nature. The latter consideration is rooted in the acceptability principle of educational content. The provision of TLR devoid of controversies and less offensive in nature helps to promote peace education

However, ESP (2018) identifies

(...) inadequacy of TLR as a major challenge in the delivery of quality SE. The ESP (2018-2030) reveals a large degree of regional variation in provision of textbooks, delay in producing textbooks when a new curriculum has been approved poor internet connection facilities in SHS, inadequacy of computers and inadequate integration of ICT in teaching and learning at SHS, introduction of free SHS as constraint to existing resources. (ESP,2018, p.36)

From the quote above, there is an admission of inadequacy of teacher-learner resources in schools which is a hindrance to the delivery of quality education. As indicated in 5.3 above, learner development is dependent on his or her interaction

with the resources available to them. Invariable inadequacy of TLM will affect learners' position as co-constructors of knowledge.

Summing up the strategies employed to ensure the availability of teaching and learning resources, the teacher found the availability of teaching and learning resources to be important to teaching and learning. The study found two considerations are made before teaching and learning resources are selected; the first is that the resource must be engaging and challenging; it must also be devoid of controversies, and not offensive to a larger population in aid of promoting peace education. The next section of the study analyzes the language policy adopted in the curriculum.

5.4.3. LANGUAGE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

NAPTC (2018) indicates the Ghanaian educational system mandates two language types in the teaching and learning processes. The languages are described as L1 and L2. L1 is used to describe Ghanaian native languages, while L2 connotes the English language, which is the official or formal language. Although there are over 100 languages spoken in Ghana, the NAPTC (2018) avers, "*...of the many languages spoken in Ghana, 11 are approved for teaching and learning purposes. These are: Fante, Akuapem Twi, Asante Twi, Nzema, Ga, Dangme, Ewe, Gonja, Kasem, Dagbani and Dagaare*"(NAPTC,2018 pp.80).

The aforementioned local languages which are considered as the L1 mandated for teaching, according to Owu-Awie (2006), are only considered subjects, not a medium of instruction in the SE. However, an "all-English language" (L2) policy is used as a medium of instruction in secondary schools, according to Owu-Awie (2006). On the other hand, NAPTC (2018) acknowledges 'all English' policy, to an extent, has the tendency to affect students' learning by limiting the freedom with which they can express themselves if their local dialect were to be the medium of instruction, but averred:

focused on subject-specific content and expected learners to be able to face the linguistic challenges of subject teaching – if not, they simply did not qualify for academic advancement. School is a discourse community

with its ways and means to use language as a medium or tool for making meaning. (NAPTC,2018, p.81)

Following the assertion on the medium of instruction, students are obliged to face the challenges emanating from the language barrier themselves. By implication, if students fail to overcome linguistic barriers in the teaching and learning process, they are unfit for advancement in the academic echelon. This shows that efforts in educational policies to ensure that the language of instruction in SE is not a constraint to student learning are minimal.

Summing up language policy in SE, the study found that "the English language is the medium of instruction, whereas learners' local dialects are considered only an elective subject." In relation to the all-English language policy and challenges that emanate from its usage, the study found that the onus lies on students to face linguistic challenges themselves or else they do not qualify for academic advancement. In the next section of the study, I will analyze curriculum relevance as a strategy to achieve quality education.

5.4.4. CURRICULUM RELEVANCE

As emphasized in the study on the rationale for educational reforms in Ghana, prioritizing what students learn (relevance of content, syllabus, and curriculum) is identified. Also, ESD and SDG 4 stresses the need for stakeholders to prioritize what students learn, learns the same as where they learn and how they learn (UNESCO, 2017). Ensuring curriculum relevance is important in educational documents for the study, as the emphasis is placed on knowledge and skills students are able to demonstrate at the end of their learning process. Three elements are identified in the study's documents regarding the relevance of curriculum, thus, ICT and STEM, setting of standards to measure the educational outcome, and continuous flow of investment to ensure STEM education. The NAPTC (2018):

A curriculum which has standards to be achieved across the educational system by identifying the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that learners should know and be able to demonstrate. It also specifies activities leading to the attainment of specified standards... In other words, academic

standards are statements that identify specific skills and levels of competency that learners must possess at particular points in the school system to move through the educational system. It is believed that by setting higher academic expectations in the standards, schools, teachers and learners become more responsible, and as a result, the higher the achievement that can be achieved (NAPTC, 2018 pp.29).

The relevance of the school curriculum described in the above quote is deemed to be achieved when standards are set. There is an indication that the standards would spell out specific knowledge, skills, and competence that learners should demonstrate at the end of their period of education. Indicating desirable skills and knowledge prevents the educational system from producing abstract and unwanted skills. The document again indicated that when higher standards are set, stakeholders become more responsible. From the quote, it excludes some important factors that are considered to be part of curriculum relevance, such as flexibility or reducing the workload and burden of students and teachers that might offer them the freedom to explore other co-curricular activities; rather, high standards and expectations are set. According to Ezeonwumelu (2020) and OECD (2020), there is evidence of an overloaded curriculum of mass education. Arguing in line with OECD (2020), an overloaded curriculum negatively affects both teachers and students. Also, the ESP (2018) indicated the relevance of curriculum in achieving quality education by improving the learning outcomes of learners. The ESP emphasized a curriculum with a STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics) focus integrated with ICT and identified ways of achieving quality as

A new integrated curriculum reform should see a greater focus on learning outcomes as teachers will be trained to deliver specific curriculum objectives. ICT-linked strategies will support the new curricula. They will include a stronger promotion of STEM (and increased provision of relevant science equipment) to achieve the 60/40 enrolment target for science/arts and humanities. This links to the increased focus on STEM at the basic level, as the increased uptake of STEM at SHS is contingent upon success. In addition, investment in strategies to improve quality will be a priority to ensure that increased funding to S.H.S by GoG translates into learning outcomes and does not exacerbate current inequities (ESP, 2018 pp. 32).

This assertion from the policy indicates the need for relevant content in the curriculum since the content of the curriculum affects the overall performance and capabilities of students. The content of the curriculum will determine the quality of students to be produced.

Summing up, the study found that setting standards that spell out desirable learning outcomes, skills, competence, and knowledge constitute curriculum relevance; and by setting higher standards, students and teachers become responsible. Also, the study found promotion and investment in STEM education improve the learning outcomes of learners. The next section of the study will analyze strategies to strengthen school management and leadership.

5.4.5. STRENGTHENING SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Quality of education cannot be achieved without the effort of school management and leadership. Strengthening school management and leadership are identified in the NAPTC (2018) Framework as an effective way of implementing the curriculum to achieve quality. Aside from the content of the curriculum being based on a standard-based curriculum, the effective implementation by the school management and leadership would help improve the quality component it sought to achieve. The role of the school management and leadership has been articulated to include their ability to provide a conducive environment for learning and encourage dialogue. This role played by leaders helps achieve quality and inculcates the critical pedagogy theory in the school system since it allows students to engage in dialogue with their instructors. The role leadership plays in achieving quality was described by the NAPTC as:

The primary role of the school leader, therefore, involves maintaining a clear focus on learning as an activity. This demands that the leader creates conducive and favorable conditions for learning – an enabling environment that: encourages dialogue about learning, promotes the development of a shared sense of leadership throughout the school, and enhances a shared sense of accountability. In effect, the school leaders in Ghana must be champions of leadership for learning and use this to create a learning culture with clearly accepted and understood objectives and high expectations for both teachers and learners (NAPTC, 2018, P.70).

The quote above stipulates the roles school management must play to achieve quality education. From the quote, it can be seen that the primary responsibility of school leaders is to create a conducive atmosphere for learning. Also, creating a conducive environment for learning entails the development of shared responsibility, encouraging dialogue, and accountability. Based on the responsibility outlined, all the elements are tools of democracy. This means school leaders have the responsibility of promoting democracy in schools while nurturing students to be future leaders. Furthermore, apart from the role of leadership in achieving quality education in the NAPTC, the ESP (2018-2030) also identified the training of leadership and management to help strengthen their capacity. This training capacity is part of the Secondary Education Improvement Project (SEIP) to help improve quality the ESP (2018) posits:

The SEIP has also introduced interventions to improve quality in SHS, such as leadership and management training and School Performance Partnership Plans (PPPs), which have subsequently been rolled out to over 80% of all public SHS in the country (ESP, 2018 pp. 31)

It can be seen that the relevance of school management and leadership in achieving quality cannot be underestimated. From the above quote, it emphasizes plans for training stakeholders on leadership and management. Giving more people training on leadership, especially teachers, would improve their dialogue with students.

Summing up, the study found that the primary responsibility of school leaders is to create an environment conducive to learning, which entails the creation of shared responsibility, the encouragement of dialogue, and accountability. Also, the study found that leadership training and seminars are conducted for teachers in order to improve their dialogue and interaction with students. In the next section of the study, philosophy and strategies employed to achieve quality education will be discussed.

5.4.6 COMPATIBLE PHILOSOPHIES AND STRATEGIES IN ACHIEVING QUALITY EDUCATION

Based on the analyses of strategies to achieve quality secondary education and the philosophy of teaching, the study found learning-centered pedagogy and social

constructivism as philosophies. This section discusses the strategies and philosophies identified in the study.

The study's finding on social constructivism and learner development, which emphasize the creation of knowledge in learning between teachers in partnership with other students, and the use of appropriate learner differentiation, is consistent with Akpan et al. (2020); and Thomson-Bunn (2014). Students are not passive listeners in education but rather active participants in the production of knowledge. Education must ensure that it develops students' capabilities and makes them critical thinkers who can make informed decisions for themselves. Language is central in the use of social construction; all English language policy is considered by several studies, including Freire (2016); Baker (2001); and Owu-Ewie (2006), to have a negative impact on the application of social constructivism in making a meaningful impact on learning. According to those studies, high academic and cognitive achievements are attained when students learn in their local dialect. The use of the English language as a medium of instruction disconnects learning from students' cultural settings, as language is a necessary determinant of cultural heritage. All English language policy is inconsistent with the 'thematic universe' described in CP, which stresses the use of local dialect in constant communication with their teacher.

The study's finding that the standardized practice of teacher professional development, licensing, and registration is necessary for achieving quality in education is consistent with studies including OECD (2005); OECD (2019); Schleicher et al. (2009); Caena (2013); Gomendio et al. (2017); and Shepherd (2011). The knowledge, skills, and practices that teachers acquire through professional learning help them become effective teachers, support their peers, contribute to the profession's overall improvement and develop the trust, status, and self-efficacy necessary to do their jobs with a high level of professionalism, for example, in Caena, (2013); and Gomendio et al. (2017), teacher professionalism and high qualification lead to high student performance. It is essential for teachers to continue their professional development in order to update, expand, and deepen their knowledge, as well as to keep up with new research, technologies, practices, and student needs. Other studies, including

Kumedro (2019); Bervins (2018); Mireku, Asare, Oduro & Anamuah-Mensah (2012), have found that licensing and registration of teachers improves their professionalism and helps with efficient deployment and supply. However, a study by Demirkasımoğlu (2010) elucidates that the license of teachers and professionalism are utilized as an ideological tool to control teachers by limiting the freedom they enjoy.

Improving curriculum relevance is central to the global development agenda, especially SDG 4. The study's finding about improving curriculum relevance to ensure students have the required skills necessary for their personal and national development is consistent with UNESCO (2015). However, studies by Ezeonwumelu, (2020); and OECD (2020) reveal the incidence of the overloaded curriculum in standard-based curriculum reforms in an effort to ensure that students have the required skills for development. Overloaded curricula increase the workload of students and teachers, which has social and health consequences as school is reduced to only academic work. In ensuring curriculum relevance, reforms must endeavor to reduce the workload of the curriculum by making it flexible while also reducing duplicate content running through different subjects.

5.5. MODELS OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

NAPTC (2018) indicates two models of curriculum have been implemented in the Ghanaian educational system. Before the introduction of the 2018 curriculum framework, the NAPTC (2018) opined that the national curriculum in Ghana had been based on an objective model of curriculum development, which is seen as partly responsible for poor learning outcomes of students as the model is characterized by students learning discrete facts. View of this, and for the Ghanaian educational system to ensure relevant learning outcomes, has led to the introduction of a standardized based curriculum that can help improve learning outcomes and ensure that learning can be measured by national standards, which can help policymakers for the purposes of accountability, appraisal, and reinforcement.

5.5.1. THE OBJECTIVE MODEL OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The NAPTC (2018) identifies the objective model as a major obstacle to students' learning outcomes:

The Ghanaian Pre-tertiary Education Curriculum, which is based in large part on the objective model of curriculum development that was popular in many developed nations in the latter half of the 20th Century, is officially defined by the subject syllabuses. The use of the objective model of the curriculum resulted in an overemphasis on the learning's outcomes, or the knowledge of fundamental facts, principles, skills, and procedures, at the expense of the learning's processes, which involve higher cognitive competencies like applying, thinking critically, creatively, and practically, as well as the character traits and social abilities required to become competent, engaging, and contributing citizens.. (NAPTC,2018, p.16)

in furtherance, objective model curriculum:

(...) is designed on the behavioral perspective of learning, with cognitive learning theories and the constructivist approach to knowledge acquisition being neglected. Student learning was assessed by putting them through a series of discrete facts and skills tests which limited the teacher's creativity. (NAPTC, 2018, pp.18)

The first quote makes claims that the Objective Model Curriculum is an outmoded curriculum practice because it was used in the 20th Century and also serves as an obstacle to students learning. Indication of the objective model curriculum overly emphasizing students knowing basic facts at the expense of higher cognitive competence shows the extent to which the Objective Model curriculum is irrelevant as a 21st-century curriculum model. This is because 5.1.2 found that 21st-century education focuses on higher cognitive development and essential cross-cutting competence. Also, the second quote elucidates the neglect of the constructivist approach to learning while emphasizing on behavioral learning perspective. According to Skinner, behavioral learning theory focuses on learning as a change in external behavior achieved through extensive repetition of desired actions: rewarding good habits and discouraging bad habits. This approach to learning in the classroom resulted in a lot of repetition and praise for correct answers outcomes and immediate error correction

5.5.2. THE STANDARDS-BASED MODEL OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Standardization of curriculum is a major element of ‘quality’ according to NAPTC (2018). It elucidates that:

The emphasis of this reform is the introduction of a standards-based curriculum. Through the standardization, national targets, standards and outcome are set for educational outcomes and academic achievements, these national standards, in turn, can provide opportunities for directing learning and instruction. Furthermore, it allows for the appropriate management of assessment since learning outcomes can be measured against comparable standards. (NAPTC, 2018, pp. 19)

In furtherance:

(...) it is out of this that led to the implementation of a standards-based curriculum which is the focus of this framework. The curriculum's goal is to promote knowledge production, application, and usage in our schools by establishing national standards that can then be used to guide learning and teaching. Additionally, because learning outcomes can be tested against comparable standards, it provides for proper assessment management. Teachers may use standardization to create curriculum, teaching, and assessments that are suitable, relevant, and vital to learn. This flexibility will allow instructors to clearly communicate learning requirements to all students and will improve teachers' capacity to address all students' various needs, prior experiences, interests, and personal qualities within the framework of inclusion, (NAPTC, 2018, p. 18).

Based on the assertions outlined in the NAPTC (2018), it depicts a standard-based curriculum as an antidote to overcoming all problems Ghanaian education has faced as it has the potency to promote knowledge production, application, and usage, creates flexibility and a friendly atmosphere in the learning environment. In the same vein, a standard-based curriculum based on the assertion in the NAPTC clearly defines teaching and learning requirements which would periodically be tested and measured against national standards to ensure teaching and learning produces desirable learning outcomes. The next section will analyze essential skills and cross-cutting competence in the curriculum.

5.5.3. ESSENTIAL SKILL AND CROSS-CUTTING COMPETENCE IN STANDARDIZED BASED CURRICULUM IN GHANA

Attainment of essential skills and traversal competence are key components of the NAPTC (2018). The framework describes the attainment of essential skills and

competencies as "*national education entitlement for all citizens*" (NAPTC,2014 pp. 24). The position of the NAPTC regarding the attainment of essential skills and key competence confirms the importance of such skills and competence as an element of quality education. The NAPTC (2018) outlines a) climate change and green economy, b) energy use and conservation, c) reproductive health and sanitation, and d) learning how to learn as four cross-cutting competencies that have to be taught at all levels in the educational system. Also, critical thinking and problem solving; creativity and innovation, communication and collaboration, cultural identity and global citizenship; personal development and leadership; and digital literacy are six essential soft skills that educational systems must endeavor to provide to students. NAPTC (2018) describes essential skills and cross-cutting competence as:

(...) higher order intellectual, personal and social skills necessary for the learners to succeed in education, as members of society, and as individuals with the capacity to contribute to their communities and continue learning throughout their lives. The cross-cutting issues, therefore, relate to how the cross-cutting essential learnings are integrated and interconnected in the various subjects (NAPTC, 2018, p. 26).

In view of the disposition of the NAPTC above; acquisition of social skills and personal skills are important and considered *prima facie* towards the survival of the learner as a member of the community who is charged with the responsibility of both personal growth and also ensuring the growth of his or her community. The mentioning of "*... contribute to their communities and continue learning throughout their lives*" explains learning as a lifelong activity and the acquisition of essential and cross-cutting skills will make learners relevant throughout their life.

To sum up, the objective model curriculum is deemed as an approach that neglects the higher cognitive competence of learners as it emphasizes students learning basic facts. A standardized based curriculum is the adopted approach in the reforms aimed at setting standards to regulate teaching and learning. From this section, quality education is operationalized as regulating the learning process of schools by determining what students learn, how they learn, and where they learn. The next section of the study discusses the findings models of curriculum development and essential skills in section 5.5.

5.6. QUALITY EDUCATION THROUGH STANDARDS BASED APPROACH IN GHANA: THE NEW ERA?

This section discusses models of curriculum development and essential skills in section 5.5. from the section, and the study found the standardized-based curriculum approach accepted as a model over the objective model curriculum that was used for an extended period because the objective model neglects higher cognitive competence of learners. The study also found that the standardized-based approach would regulate teaching and learning by setting standards of desirable educational outcomes; however, procedures to achieve standard-based education seem vague as documents did not specify an exact implementation procedure. Also, the study found essential cross-cutting skills and traversal competence as an outcome of a standardized based approach. In this section, the findings will be discussed from theoretical and literature perspectives.

The study's finding that standardization of curricula in schools is an essential element in attaining quality education is consistent with other studies, including those by Falk (2002); and Malone (2013). Setting standards in education and testing is imperative in modern education. Students should not just pass through an educational system; at least they should possess a kind of desirable knowledge, skills, and competence that helps in measurement, evaluation and accountability. Setting those standards helps policymakers get a hold of progress and loopholes in the educational system, which will inform their actions and decisions. Information from standardized results will project districts or regions that are performing well and those that are under performing, as well as the investments needed to bridge the gap between well-performing and under performing areas. For example, including standards in the US helped improve the learning outcomes of students (OECD, 2005). However, the emphasis on results as achievements that schools, learners, and students achieve is a qualification function of education. Over-emphasis on results through standardization contradicts the learner development theory and social constructivism discussed in 5.1.3. Giving learners particular knowledge and skills is crucial for their careers. However, it limits the freedom of the learner to acquire other traversal skills other

than those prescribed by the school system, which makes learners adaptable to the changing dynamics of the world. In view of this, the qualification function is not consistent with critical pedagogy, as the latter emphasizes equipping learners to be relevant in all facets of human endeavor and to be able to make informed decisions on every subject that concerns them. Also, the qualification function is inconsistent with the adaptability of education in Tomasevski (2004). The world is dynamic, as are the opportunities and constraints it presents; hence, education should be adaptive to the changing world by equipping learners with relevant skills for both the present and the future. Learning the specific skills indicated will limit the ingenuity of the learner. Also, several studies, including MDK (2012) and Owens (2004), posit that the standardized-based approach's aim of regulating every facet of teaching and learning limits the freedom and autonomy of teachers and students to explore knowledge. Also, standard-based reforms are too often perceived and, in too many places, defined primarily as ensuring that learners perform better on more rigorous and thorough standardized paper-and-pencil assessments, which, in many cases, has contributed to the reduction of education to test preparation and the erroneous pursuit of a one-size-fits-all approach to learning. Along the way, it has encouraged the adoption of policies that have been proven in recent decades to be deleterious to student learning: mandatory, standardized, lockstep curricula; tracking by ability; retention and promotion choices based on a single test result. Such standards-based programs are aggravating inequities between learners from diverse backgrounds and placing limits on instructors that hinder good teaching in the name of ambitious-sounding reforms.

Also, studies conducted by Shepherd et al. (2009) on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) between 1992-2002 using a standardized-based approach and testing in the US reveal evidence of test score inflation. As students and teachers become accustomed to the NAEP test format and content, teaching is structured based on the content and format of the test, neglecting some essential aspects of learning that are not tested. Also, Shepherd et al. (2009) and the Center for Education Policy (2006) study revealed tested subjects received significantly more instructional time than non-tested subjects, displacing art, music, and physical education while also reducing time for science and social studies, particularly for disadvantaged and

minority students who are assigned to higher doses of reading and mathematics. Citizens and policymakers are generally aware of the problem, which is that teachers face strong incentives to emphasize content that is tested, which can become so strong in some cases that they teach the test. Consistent with Shepherd (2009), a standardized based approach in Ghana may lead to teaching to the test, overly focusing on tested subjects, neglect of essential and transversal skills that are important to SDG 4 on education, and an incentive for teachers of tested subjects to neglect other teachers and cheat on exams to avoid the disgrace of being at the bottom of the ranking.

Ambiguity in the implementation of a standardized approach found in the study is consistent with studies by Owens & Valenski (2011); and Shepherd (2009). Although there is apparent agreement on the intuitively appealing concept of standards, there is considerable ambiguity about its operational meaning: precisely what the standards should be, how they should be set and by whom, and how they should be applied to ensure rigorous and high-quality education for students are the central questions that confront policymakers and educators. For example, content standards (descriptions of what students should know and be able to do) are frequently confused with performance standards (which are more akin to test scores), and very different theories of action are used to explain how standards-based reforms are expected to work.

5.7. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study found that making periodic reforms in the educational system is crucial to attaining quality education. These reforms are informed by changing ideas and information on educational practices, the quest to do away with outmoded educational practices, and the pursuit of globalization. Also, the study found social constructivism and learner development as a philosophy of teaching with a learning-centered approach to the pedagogy of learning. Within the philosophy and pedagogy of education, identifying learner differentiation and prioritizing the needs of learners is the emphasis of education, which was identified as a subjectification function of education. Furthermore, strategies found in the study to achieve quality education include continuous professional development, a language approach, curriculum

relevance, and strengthening school management and leadership. Moreover, the study also found the standardized-based approach to be a model of curriculum reform, while rejecting the objective model because of its emphasis on behavioral, and educational theories and neglecting the constructivist approach to learning.

The analysis in this chapter contributed to answering the research question in the following ways. First and foremost, the analyses in this chapter demonstrated the policy document's understanding of quality secondary education and ways through which quality education could be obtained. The identification of periodic reforms (section 5.1) to incorporate new educational ideas, practices, and information contributed to finding the answer to the study's research question 1, as Amankona posits that quality education is relative; hence, stakeholders in different jurisdictions have different ways of understanding and operationalizing it. Secondly, analysis in the chapter (5.4) revealed strategies employed in achieving quality secondary education. This contributed to answering research question 2 while also indicating tensions and contradictions in the strategies. Lastly, the identification of tensions contributed to knowing potentials and constraints in achieving quality education. Finally, the analysis of the study's documents showed contrasting ideas, which makes it vague to ascertain the purpose of education that the reforms seek to achieve and the ways in which new reforms will be different from the old.

CHAPTER 6: EQUITY IN SECONDARY EDUCATION IN GHANA

This chapter is the second part of the document analysis in the study. The chapter analyzes strategies implemented in Ghana and how they are geared towards improving access to secondary education (SE) for all persons, irrespective of socioeconomic background, gender, and disability. This chapter discusses the second research question: *What policy strategies are being implemented by the government of Ghana (GoG) to achieve equity in SE?* And it also contributes towards achieving research questions 3 and 4. As indicated in section 4.7 of the study, the documents used in the analysis are the National Pre-Tertiary Curriculum Framework (2018-2030), Education Sector Performance Report (2018), and the Education Strategic Plan (2018-2030) labeled Appendix 2. Based on the coding of the policy documents, it was identified that the policies, in their attempt to provide equity, either target the general populace or specific people within the populace.

In this chapter, strategies that are being implemented to achieve equitable SE are analyzed to understand the perspectives of the policies and how those interventions affect gender or girl child in SE, poor income earners, less privileged SS, and learners with disabilities. In the analysis of equitable strategies, the concept of fairness and inclusion reviewed in section 2.5 as the conceptual framework would be employed. The chapter begins with an analysis of why some secondary schools are better resourced than others and ends with promoting equitable quality SE for the vulnerable.

6.1. DIFFERENT EDUCATION FOR THE POOR? WHY ARE SOME SECONDARY SCHOOLS BETTER RESOURCED THAN OTHERS IN GHANA?

As indicated in (the background chapter) section 1.5. of this study, Quist (1999) opined on the existence of class and social division in SE in Ghana. A situation where some schools are better resourced than others favors the rich people living in urban centers in Ghana over the working class and rural center dwellers in Ghana.

UNESCO (2015) warns about the prevalence of inequities in SE in Ghana, especially regarding resources. In this section of the study, I analyze and discuss the prevalence of differentiated SE provision based on resource distribution and social divisions; and policies indicated in the study's documents and measures to mitigate those challenges.

6.1.1. SOCIAL DIVISIONS, CLASS, AND DIFFERENTIATED RESOURCE ENDOWMENTS IN GHANAIAN SECONDARY EDUCATION

Differentiated educational provision, especially in resource endowment and class system, is indicated as an unintended feature of SE in Ghana and a dent in the country's commitment towards ensuring the right to education by both the national constitution and attainment of a global goal such as SDG 4 target 1. This incidence of social division in Ghanaian SE is indicated by the study's documents as a reproduction of societal inequities. The policy documents for the study elaborated on the problems of disproportionate resource distribution and the class system as:

(...) many parents send their children to higher social status (or well endowed) SHSs, which have better career prospects. That is, the selection of SHSs has reinforced social divisions in society; working-class children are much less likely than middle-class children to go to the high social status (or well-endowed) SHSs because of the high fees and additional costs imposed by such schools. (NAPTC,2018, p. 16)

The quote above expresses parents' desire to ensure their wards attend secondary schools that are of higher social status, with the perspective that such schools offer better opportunities. This perspective indicates the prevalence of social status and division in Ghanaian society and SE. The quote also describes the mode of SE selection as reproducing social divisions in Ghanaian society. From the quote, it can be identified that some SHS (Senior High Schools) are not within reach of parents from poor social and economic quintiles because of the cost or high financial burdens of such schools. The next quote from the NAPTC describes the other dimension of educational inequities in the form of rural-urban dimensions. The NAPTC elucidated:

(...) school experiences of rural communities appear to be substantially distinct and unequal to their counterparts in urban communities. However, all learners, irrespective of their background and ability, are expected to write national examinations which are undifferentiated - e.g., the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). (NAPTC,2018 , p. 4)

The above quote describes rural-urban inequities in education provisions, where rural communities are identified as deprived compared to those in urban centers. The quote also explains the absence of differentiated national examinations (WASSCE and BECE) in spite of unequal educational provisions. The existence of unequal provision of resources between rural and urban schools encourages a success disproportion rate between social backgrounds, which is against the right of children to equal education both under international conventions and the constitution of Ghana. The NAPTC elucidated:

The socio-economic development across the country is uneven. Consequently, it is necessary to ensure an equitable distribution of resources based on the unique needs of learners and schools. Ghana's learners are from diverse backgrounds, which requires the provision of equal opportunities to all, and that all strive to care for each other both personally and professionally. (NAPTC,2018, p. 21)

The quote above reiterates earlier assertions highlighted by the document on the existence of differentiated socio-economic development in Ghana. It also emphasizes the need to ensure equitable distribution of resources in order to bridge the development gap through education. Free Senior High School (FSHS) and Secondary Education Improvement Project (SEIP) are two policies that have been implemented directly to bridge the gap between social division in SE in Ghana, which shall be analyzed in the next section, as measures to curb inequities in SE in Ghana.

6.1.2. THE FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL (FSHS) POLICY

The FSHS policy is the central policy implemented by the government of Ghana in its commitment to aligning Ghanaian education towards SDG 4. According to ESPR (2018), the FSHS, among its core principles, aims to provide equitable access to quality SE through the elimination of financial and physical barriers. The ESPR (2018) elucidated:

This objective of the free SHS program aligns with the global agenda for ensuring at least every child around the world is supported to have access to free quality education to the senior high level. In light of this, the government, under the current Education Strategic Plan, seeks to ensure that no qualified student is denied access by removing all financial and physical barriers to senior secondary education in Ghana. (ESPR,2018, p. 25)

The Ministry working with relevant stakeholders, has expanded access by an expansion of physical infrastructure (ESPR,2018 p. 26)

The quote indicates FSHS aligns with SDG 4 target 2, which obliges policymakers to make secondary education accessible and free for all persons. From the quote, FSHS's strategy for bridging the gap in the social division and differentiating SE from the rural-urban dimension is the removal of financial and physical barriers to accessing SE. In section 6.1.1, the document indicated financial constraint as the main reason ensuring the inability of working-class parents to afford a high-status secondary school. The removal of financial barriers in the FSHS policy will ensure that working-class parents can afford a high-status secondary school. The removal of physical barriers will ensure infrastructural development to accommodate a surge in enrolment in higher-status secondary schools. However, the policy did not make any concrete plans to ensure that low-status rural schools have been elevated to the status of high-status urban schools. Also, it does not ensure the abrogation of the class and status systems in SE. In addition to the removal of financial and physical barriers to bridging the equity gap in accessing SE, the FSHS institutes quotas for students from rural and public JHS in high-status SHS. The ESPR (2018) elucidates:

Under the package of ensuring equity in access, the Ministry, in consultation with relevant agencies, agreed on a formula to allocate 30% of places in “elite schools” to students from Public Junior High Schools. The implementation of the policy also encouraged access for those from low-income backgrounds and deprived districts to access secondary education. This has given equal opportunities to students from poor backgrounds to compete with their counterparts from affluent backgrounds. (ESPR,2018, p. 27)

From the quote, the institution of a 30% quota in elite schools is the strategy implemented by the FSHS policy, which is to ensure that students from poor backgrounds access and compete with students from affluent backgrounds in elite schools. From the quote, it can be seen that the FSHS policy is focused on the dimension of providing opportunities for some students in affluent schools. However, it can be identified that the FSHS policy does not focus on positioning or empowering secondary schools in rural areas to be equally competitive as those in urban areas in order to discourage the idea of moving from one area to the other in search for quality education. Also, the 30% quota will ensure that brilliant students from poor backgrounds will have the opportunity to access elite schools, the average neglected

students. In this case, the FSHS policy on equity in access does not focus on an all-inclusive approach. Hitherto, its impact on the elimination of class and social division in education has been minimal, and the effect cannot help in eradicating such social divisions from society. In the next section, I will analyze SEIP as a policy strategy to ensure improvement in rural and less endowed secondary schools.

6.1.3. THE SECONDARY EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (SEIP)

The SEIP is a World Bank project in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. The SEIP's main objective is to increase access to secondary education in underserved districts and improve quality in low-performing SHS (ESPR, 2018). The SEIP focuses on ensuring access in deprived schools by providing infrastructure and quality in low-performing schools by training teachers to improve their knowledge and providing and installing ICT tools (I-Box) as learning resources, construction of new schools, and in-service training for teachers. This strategy ensures that the rights of students to access educational resources, equal opportunity, and schools' rights to resources in terms of infrastructure and providing a conducive environment are not infringed upon.

The Project Development Objective is to increase access to senior secondary education in underserved districts and improve quality in low-performing SHSs in Ghana. (.(ESPR,2018, pp. 28)

From the quote, two strategies are identified as objectives of the SEIP. The first is to increase access to SE in undeserving areas, and the second is to improve quality in low-performing secondary schools. The direction of the SEIP is more geared towards empowering less endowed secondary schools. Targeting people from poor backgrounds in the SEIP will help to bridge the gap between elite and less endowed schools, reducing the reproduction of societal inequality that was seen in 6.1.1 as a problem of SE. However, the modalities for selecting those less privileged schools were not clearly stipulated. Also, it did not state all less endowed schools would be captured in the SEIP. In this case, less is done to ensure that all rural schools are on the same footing as elite schools. In this case, elite schools will still have better opportunities at the expense of less endowed schools.

To sum up section 6.1, the analysis of the study found divisions in SHS in Ghana, as SHS is classified as either high-social status schools in urban centers or less endowed schools, mostly in rural areas. The analysis also identified divisions in SHS as a reproduction of societal inequalities, as high-status SHS appears to be beyond the reach of children of working-class parents. In spite of imbalances in quality SE, especially between poor rural areas and rich urban centers, students are made to write undifferentiated exit examinations. The study found FSHS and SEIP as two primary policy strategies to promote equity in SE, with FSHS ensuring the removal of financial and physical barriers to access and also allocating a 30% quota for children from public and rural communities. In contrast, the SEIP targets improvement in less endowed schools to be able to reach the standards of high-status schools in urban centers. I will then turn to the next section, where I discuss these findings from both theoretical and literature perspectives.

6.2. PROVIDING EQUAL ACCESS TO SECONDARY EDUCATION: CLASS AND SPATIAL DYNAMICS

Based on the analysis of section 6.1, the study found the prevalence of class and social division along spatial dimensions (rural-urban) in SE in Ghana. The study also found FSHS and SEIP as two strategic policies implemented in the SE sub-section of Ghana's education system to alleviate financial and physical barriers and the class system by improving rural schools to the standard of urban schools. This section of the study discusses the findings identified in Section 6.1 from the perspective of HRBA-E theory and literature.

The study found the prevalence of class and social division in SE, along with status and spatial dimensions, as features of SE in Ghana. This finding is not consistent with HRBA-E on the principle of indivisibility. Human rights in education include not only access to educational opportunities but also the moral obligation to eliminate discrimination at all levels of education. Rights cannot be divided; hence, all rights, civil and social, among others, are inherent in every person's dignity and, therefore, cannot be ranked in a hierarchy. Existence of social divisions in SE means right to

education is ranked. Also, the finding is consistent with several studies in Ghana, including Quist (1999); Quist (2001); Weis (1983); Ansong et al. (2015); Opoku Asare et al. (2015); Alimachie (2016); and Haggins (2009), that children whose parents belong to the poor quintile of society are less likely to enroll in high-status SHS. Children from affluent backgrounds have higher chances of accessing high-status SHS. The dynamics of this social inequity between rich and poor in access to SE further exist in the spatial dynamics of rural-urban and regional dimensions, as children from rural communities and the northern sector of Ghana are less likely to be enrolled in high-status SHS. The prevalence of class and social division in SHS in Ghana found in this study contradicts the purposes of education. Education should be an avenue to foster unity, diversity, and national development. And as a public good, its opportunities must be provided equally, without discrimination.

The government of Ghana's strategy in FSHS and SEIP was found in the study to bridge the gap between class (poor-rich) and spatial dynamics (rural-urban and north-south) on access to quality SE. Equity-driven policies in education are found in HRBA-E as obligations by governments to ensure citizens enjoy their human rights, and to meet the requirements of international human rights treaties. Governments are obliged to remove all legal and administrative barriers, including financial barriers, as well as identify and eliminate discriminatory denials of access and obstacles to compulsory schooling, which include fees, distance, and schedule. FSHS' elimination of financial and physical barriers to SE is consistent with HRBA-E and SDG 4 target 1. SE financing is considered one of the major hindrances to education. The elimination of financial barriers for all persons would ensure that working-class parents are able to afford high-status SE. A 30% quota allotted for public JHS students will ensure that less privileged children are enrolled in high-status SHS. Furthermore, SEIP's infrastructure development in less endowed schools will ensure rural schools are given an uplift to the standard of high-status SHS, all geared towards achieving SDG 4 target 1.

Also, the FSHS strategy is consistent with a large body of research, including Ansong et al. (2015), Tamanja & Pajibo (2019), Alimachie (2016), and Duflo et al. (2021) on the impact of fee waivers and scholarships in bridging the gap of inequity to access in

quality SE. In areas where scholarships, and exist, high completion rates and enrollment rates are recorded. For example, scholarships in the form of CCT in South American countries such as Brazil and Columbia saw an increase in enrollment and completion rates. The elimination of fees in FSHS will ensure teeming youth have the opportunity to develop their potential for personal and national development. However, no evidence exists in the literature or this study on the total elimination of inequities to access by SEIP and FSHS policies. The elimination of fees in FSHS benefits the entire population, whereas a 30% quota for public JHS does not entirely eliminate social inequity. Also, the SEIP has not yet captured all less endowed SHS, so it cannot be considered as raising all less endowed schools to the standard of high-standard SHS. In order to ensure that high enrollment translates to a high completion rate, an equity-driven policy like the FSHS should adopt strategic targeting of persons and areas whose problems go beyond just fee elimination by introducing CCT in the FSHS policy to improve aspects that students fall short of.

6.3. BEYOND THE ENROLMENT: IMPROVING FEMALE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

Attainment of gender parity and equity is documented both at local and international levels as a menace in education. While efforts intensified and led to the realization of gender parity at the primary level in Ghana, such cannot be said about SE. The ESPR (20188) indicates:

Whilst basic education gender parity at the national level has been achieved, this is not the case for secondary education. The GPI at secondary level for the academic period was 0.92 which is a decrease from 0.96 from the previous year. However, national level data...mask regional inequities in gender parity .(ESPR,2018 pp.29)

The above quote indicates the attainment of gender parity in basic education at the national level, with an indication that gender parity in SE has not been achieved. It also indicates the existence of regional inequities in gender parity. The quote did not indicate the nature of gender disparity, whether it is enrolment, completion, or performance disparity in gender, but data from the ESPR reveals the quote is proportionate to enrolment disparity. ESPR data shows gender parity is worse in

completion rate and performance rate in the SE exit examination. The tables below shows gender parity index from 2015-2018 in Ghana

Table 1. shows gender parity index from 2015-2018

	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018
Female transition rate JHS-SHS	69%	68.1	79.7
Male transition rate	66	65.1	76.9
Female completion rate	44	46.9	49.5
Male completion rate	48	49.8	49.5

source:<https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2020-16-Ghana%20-%20ESP-IR.pdf>

Table 1 shows the transition of gender from Junior High School (JHS) to Senior High School (SHS) and their rates of completion between 2015/16 academic year to 2017/18. From the table, the female transition between 2015/16 academic year witnessed approximately a 1 % decline in the 2016/17 academic year(68.1%),) but a significant increase to 79.7% was recorded in the 2017/18 academic year. Compared with the male transition rate, a decline of about 1% was recorded from an initial 66% in 2015/16 to 65.1% in the 2016/2017 academic year. However, 2017/18 had a significant improvement in the transition rate, which reached 76.9%. The trajectory of transition in male and female enrolment in these three academic years is similar as 2016/17 witnessed a decline in enrolment but a significant improvement in the

transition rate in 2017/18. The rate of completion in SHS between 2015/16 and 2018 for both males and females was generally low, but females were proportionally low compared with their male counterparts, with 44%, 46.9%, and 49.5% between 2015/16, 2016/17, and 2017/18 respectively, compared with males with a marginal increment of 48%, 49.8%, and 49.5% respectively in the three years. The ESPR (2018) and ESP (2018) indicate that the elimination of fees in SE in 2017 has improved enrolment. As indicated in Table 1, a sharp increase in transition from JHS in 2016/17 and 2017/2018 means the impact of FSHS on enrolment in SHS was tremendous. However, the completion rate for females still lags in 2017/18, which means the elimination of fees is not the only factor responsible for low completion in SE. A combination of factors may be deemed responsible.

Table 2. WASSCE core subjects pass rate in 2017

	Core mathematics	Integrated Science	Social Studies	English language
male	45.8%	46.6%	54.7%	53.2%
female	38.4%	39.5%	49.7	54.3%

source: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2020-16-Ghana%20-%20ESP-IR.pdf>

Table 2 shows the performance of male and female students in the SE exit examination (WASCE) in 2017. From the table, the performance of females in all subjects except the English language was below 50% (average) and trailed their male counterparts in all subjects except the English language. From the table, it can be deduced that the impact of FSHS is minimal on the achievement of females compared with their male counterparts. This means generic strategies such as FSHS, which focuses on fee elimination, not a precondition for success, hence improvement in females

Summing up, the analysis found that gender disparity in SE has not been achieved at the national and regional levels. The study also found high transition for females from JHS to SHS did not translate into a high completion rate and high performance in WASSCE as females lag behind their male counterparts in those areas. The next section analyzes the challenges of disability education.

6.4. ISSUES OF DISABILITY IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ensuring that all persons achieve the same level of education irrespective of gender, socio-economic background, and disability is important and is among the seven pillars of the Ghanaian education system (ESPR, 2018), as well as documented in SDG 4 target 5. Irrespective of efforts by the Ghanaian education system to ensure persons with disabilities (PWD) reach their full potential, ESP (2018) and ESPR (2018) indicate problems of stigmatization and discrimination against PWD, lack of knowledge by teachers on disabilities, and inadequate infrastructure as challenges of disability education, especially in SE. ESP (2018) elucidates:

Lack of facilities in basic and secondary schools disproportionately affects children with disabilities, with almost no regular basic schools having hand-rails and only 8% equipped with ramps. Anecdotal evidence suggests a large degree of stigma/discrimination concerning children with disabilities. The lack of infrastructure in aid of disability education is based on inadequate financing. Lack of teacher knowledge on disability education is another major problem that impedes disability education. (ESP, 2018 pp.49)

From the above quote, and as already indicated in the introduction of this section, three problems— stigmatization, lack of infrastructure, and inadequate knowledge—impede disability education. These problems have negative implications for the learning outcomes of PWD. As indicated in Chapter 5, learner development and social constructivism are identified as a philosophy of teaching that is grounded on the principle of learner differentiation and the learning needs of students. Lack of knowledge by teachers on PWD and inadequate infrastructure would serve as hindrances to teachers' role of prioritizing learning needs. Discrimination against PWD indicates a lack of understanding and appreciation of diversity in the Ghanaian educational system. ESP outlines strategies to mitigate the challenges of disability

education; these challenges include incorporating PWD into mainstream education, comprehensive disability education for teachers, and an increase in teaching aids. The ESP (2018) opined:

(...) inclusive and special education focuses on increasing access to education for children with disabilities, through increasing links between special education institutions and mainstream schools; providing appropriate infrastructure; improving detection and support for children with disabilities in regular schools; and creating awareness and building the capacity of service providers to support inclusive education. In order to improve the quality of education for children with disabilities, initial teacher education should promote inclusion, and new and experienced teachers should be trained to effectively teach learners with special educational needs (SEN). Provision of specialised TLMs, including assistive devices, will enable children with disabilities to access learning opportunities and will lead to improved learning outcomes.s.(ESP, 2018 pp.48)

Learners with mild and moderate disability have been mainstreamed in the Regular schools and as of 2017/18 18,310 children with special educational needs (ESPR,2018 pp.38)

From the quote, the ESP (2018) expressed the educational system's commitment to improving access for PWD by outlining strategies to mitigate the challenges these special children face in SE. Most of the strategies identified in the quote are specific to addressing the challenges of PWD. Provision of specialized infrastructure, early detection through intensification of initial teacher education, and mainstreaming students with mild disabilities, among others, can be identified as strategies. Including children with mild disabilities in mainstream education is essential to eradicating stigma and improving diversity. Providing intensive education on disability for initial teacher education and in-service training for teachers on disability will prove teachers' knowledge and understanding of PWD in their routine classroom encounters, which is important for understanding their needs and early detection of disability in the classroom.

Summing up the section, the analysis found inadequate knowledge of teachers, a lack of infrastructure, inadequate learning resources, and stigmatization as problems derailing disability education. To mitigate the aforementioned challenges and ensure PWD acquire relevant knowledge to fulfill their potential, the government of Ghana outlined intensive disability education for teachers, mainstreaming children with mild

disabilities into regular schools. The next section of the chapter discusses the findings from 6.3, and 6.4 above.

6.5. PROMOTING EQUITABLE QUALITY SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR THE VULNERABLE: GENDER AND DISABILITY

Based on the analysis of Sections 6.3 and 6.4, the study found that gender parity in SE has not been achieved; also, the high transition rate in 2017/18 for females from JHS to SHS did not translate into a higher completion and pass rate in the WASSCE. Studies also found discrimination/stigmatization, inadequate knowledge of teachers, and inadequate infrastructure as challenges facing disability education. In mitigating challenges of gender and disability, the study found FSHS to be a strategic policy mitigating challenges of gender while mainstreaming children with mild disabilities, intensive teacher education, and infrastructure development. In this section of the chapter, I will discuss the findings identified in 6.3 and 6.4 from the perspective of HRBA-E theory and literature.

One of the significant findings of the study on gender showed a disparity in SE. This finding is consistent with a large body of research and literature on gender education in Africa and Ghana; this includes studies by Ansong et al. (2015); Senadza (2011); Alimachi (2016); and Mantey (2017), all in Ghana, and a similar study in Kenya by Mutegi et al. (2017). Girls trail their male counterparts in SE in terms of completion rate and achievements in school. Financial constraints are not the only problem that can influence gender disparity in SE; a combination of factors, including socio-cultural factors, can hinder female education, leading to gender disparity; hence, equity-driven policies must not only tackle the financial aspect of problems hindering female education but also socio-cultural factors.

The study also found the FSHS policy to be a strategy to ensure gender parity in SE in Ghana. This finding is consistent with several studies in Ghana, including Tamanja & Pajibo (2019), Mantey (2014) and Duflo et al. (2021); and some studies such as Padmanabhanunni & Fennie (2017), Al-Samarrai & Zaman (2007) and Williams et al. (2014) in African countries such as Uganda, Kenya, and Morocco in on the The

impact of scholarships, fee waivers, and cash transfer policies in mitigate challenges of gender education indicate that scholarship programs improve gender parity on enrolment, and transition. However, this study cannot provide evidence that FSHS improves performance and completion rates for female students compared with their male counterparts. The study agrees with Padmanabhanunni & Fennie (2017); and (Al-Samarrai & Zaman 2007) that the cost of education is not the only barrier derailing female education, hence eliminating fees in SE is a fragment of the entire cost of education. The finding may be interpreted as meaning that the abolition of fees in the case of FSHS in Ghana has increased enrolment, but the abolition of fees alone does not constitute the entire cost of education. Hitherto, the hidden cost of education, such as books and transportation costs, and socio-cultural factors can serve as constraints to achievement, performance, and completion for female students.

Ensuring PWD has equal opportunities in education as children without disabilities is rooted in SDG 4.5. The study's finding of the prevailing issues of discrimination/stigmatization, inadequate knowledge of teachers, and inadequate infrastructure as challenges facing disability education is consistent with studies in Ghana, including Mantey (2020); and Croft (2013). Children with disabilities frequently face discrimination from their peers, teachers, and non-teaching staff at school and receive less attention and opportunities compared with their colleagues without disabilities. The government of Ghana's strategies to overcome challenges of disability such as mainstreaming and infrastructural facilities to aid disability education are not detailed programs like SEIP and FSHS policy hence details of the mitigation program such as procedures and financing are unclear this challenges the status quo and feasibility of the program. The lack of a clear-cut strategy on disability education challenges the country's quest to achieve SDG 4 target 5 and, HRBA-E's principle of universality and alienability in education. All people are born equal and must enjoy equal rights without any form of discrimination. The government of Ghana must intensify its approach to address the challenges of disability in education in the same way as their colleagues without disabilities.

6.6. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study found the prevalence of class and social division in the provision of SE and the reproduction of societal inequities through education. Also, the study found that gender parity in SE has not been achieved, as females trail their male counterparts in areas such as completion rate and academic achievements. Moreover, the study found the prevalence of stereotyping and discrimination against PWD in SE. In addition, a lack of infrastructure and limited teacher knowledge were found to derail disability education.

In mitigating challenges of social division, class, and gender disparity, the study identified FSHS and SEIP as the main strategies. While FSHS removed the financial barrier to accessibility, the SEIP ensured less privileged schools, such as less endowed schools, were given an uplift in terms of teacher professional development and infrastructural development in order for them to be as competitive as urban schools. In spite of the achievements of SEIP and FSHS, they are limited in this regard, a) the SEIP has not adopted all less endowed schools, which makes them less universal; b) the FSHS only succeeds in removing the financial barrier for all persons, but offers a lower (30%) access rate to elite schools for less privileged learners, which makes the policy more equality driven. The study found policies for improving disability in SE to be less comprehensive, and hence the procedure for implementation is vague, making the strategy less feasible. The analysis and discussions in this chapter are important as they help in the study by answering research question 2.

CHAPTER 7: STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

This chapter will analyze the perspectives and experiences of stakeholders towards the attainment of quality and equity in Ghanaian SE. The analysis and discussion in this chapter are to understand reality as opposed to what ought to be in document analysis in Chapters 5 and 6. Stakeholders' perspectives on educational policies are based on interviews with seven informants in the SE sub-sector in Ghanaian education (see appendix 1). The chapter begins with the understanding of quality in education from stakeholders' perspectives and ends with tensions and opportunities in achieving a standard-based approach in Ghanaian SE.

7.1. UNDERSTANDING QUALITY IN SECONDARY EDUCATION FROM STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVE

In the interviews, I asked the informants about their understanding of quality in education. Generally, informants' understanding of quality in education differs, which has been categorized into three main operationalizations. The three operational definitions are based on systems, input, and output-sided arguments, with the majority of stakeholders in favor of the output-sided arguments. The input-sided argument is underpinned by some determinants of education, e.g., resource availability in schools as the basis of quality education. This input-sided argument reflects Biesta (2009) qualification function of education, while the output-sided argument underpins quality in education based on the relevant learning outcomes of students at the end of their educational process, reflecting Biesta (2009) subjectification function of education.

7.1.1. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF QUALITY EDUCATION

One informant operationalized quality in education on the input-sided argument. He operationalized quality in education this way:

(...) let's contextualize it,... teaching-learning material availability has a role to play when [we] talk about quality education; contact hours, a conducive environment, the soundness of the mind of the students, learning resources availability for the students, and parents' contribution (Teacher 1,)

The informant points out the importance of physical structures and other determinants that provide emotional comfort to students. In the informant's perspective on quality education, the emphasis is on the existence of physical infrastructures, the availability of learning resources, and the learning environment as it plays a role in the mental and emotional state of the learner. The provision of learning resources and a conducive environment are factors that can be seen as input factors in education. With this, the informants' perspective on quality education is limited only to the provision of physical and emotional support. Although the informant mentioned adequate contact hours between teachers and students, some inputs, such as the relevance of the curriculum (importance of learning content), are lacking. One informant viewed quality in education differently, using quality in the school system as the basis for her argument.

The informant expressed:

(...)when we talk about quality education, my understanding is being able to develop maybe a policy or a school system that is able to tap all the skills of a student or be able to develop the capabilities of students; yes, your ability on developing a school system where you'll be able to develop the capabilities of all students, yes, so if you can develop the capabilities of all students, then I can say that you are you have constituted what we call the quality of education. So without the ability to develop the abilities of students, then the education is porous; it's not quality (Parent 2)

From the informant's perspective, quality in education is centered on a good policy or school system, which are developed by stakeholders in education or policymakers. Based on this, the informant's understanding of quality education is centered on good policies by stakeholders in developing an effective school system; in this sense, quality in education is achieved when students reach the fullness of their potential. However, in the informants' perspective on quality education, it is bereft of standards to measure the development of students' capabilities. Other informants' explained quality in education differently from those stated above. He expressed that:

I would consider the results. So, quality education would achieve a set of desired targets and objectives that equips students with specific skill sets and also does not train so much or does not make students worse off basically (Teacher 3)

The quote above defines quality in education based on results of learners at the end of their learning period. From the informant's understanding, meeting sets of targets based on students' ability to demonstrate desired skills is a condition that depicts that quality in education is met.

The next quote by a headmaster operationalizes quality in SE, similar to Teacher 3, as both definitions are focused on the outcome or end product of the learner. However, Headmaster 1 added the problem-solving ability of education to indicate its relevance.

The headmaster expressed:

Quality education... we are looking at it that the end products, the essence of education is to equip one with the necessary knowledge and skills and ability to solve problems and to become very useful in the society. Okay, so quality education must help one to become very effective in solving problems in society and becoming very profitable to the society... If somebody has received quality education then the person is in a position to have gained the enough knowledge and skills to help solve the problems in a society and then to help him or her also to become very useful to society **(Headmaster 1)**

From the quote, the informant points out that the end product of education is used to determine education's quality, thus draws a connection between education outcome and such outcome on solving problems that societies are troubled with. Therefore quality in education is said to be achieved when products from an education system prove their effectiveness in solving societal issues. The next quote is similar to Headmaster 1 by also operationalizing quality in education with learning outcomes, but in parent 1, she limited her understanding of quality education to only quality outcomes in test results.

A parent expressed:

Well, I believe quality education has to do with the outcome of test results; and also having access to whatever subjects or whatever course the person is doing in terms of books, in terms of infrastructure, terms of the teaching and learning materials, and also the person doing the teaching whether the person knows what they are teaching. Okay, so that's quality education for me (Parent 1).

The quote emphasizes both the outcome of the learning process and some determinants of education, such as infrastructure, in determining the quality of education. The use of both determinants and outcomes draws a strong linkage

between educational inputs (determinants) and outcomes. However, informants used only test results to represent the outcome of learning, and neglected skills and knowledge learners acquire after their learning process in her operationalization of quality education.

To sum up, the understanding of the quality of education among informants differed. Three dimensions can be identified from the informants' definition of quality in education. Some operationalized it based on the outcome of the learning process, and others also did so using some determinants such as infrastructure and resource availability, while others used the effectiveness of the school system. In the section, philosophy and pedagogy used in teaching will be analyzed.

7.1.2. ESSENTIAL SKILLS, PHILOSOPHY, AND PEDAGOGY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

From the study's findings in chapter 5, a learning-centered approach is adopted as the pedagogy for teaching with learner development and social constructivism as the philosophy of teaching and learning in the policy documents. Based on the pedagogy and philosophy aforementioned, emphasis on education is placed on learner differentiation and the learning needs of the learner rather than learning to test. In the interviews, I asked the informants about their approach to teaching and learning with respect to the philosophy and pedagogy they use in teaching. The teachers operationalized the philosophy and pedagogy indicated in the documents differently with most of them contradicting the aims of the teaching philosophy and learning pedagogy. A teacher expressed:

We as teachers are required to teach students so that they can pass their final exams; the exit exams, that will qualify them to be enrolled in tertiary institutions any other thing is auxiliary. For me as a social studies teacher, I am supposed to first and foremost make sure that my students pass my subjects. But if there is any other thing in terms of preparing them for life, then it will come from my own volition. And that will mean that we'll have to sacrifice some aspects of my contact hours to expose them to realities of life. (Teacher 1)

The quote above indicates the teacher's understanding and his role in the implementation of teaching philosophy (social constructivism and learner development theory) in the classroom. From the quote, the teacher expressed his

primary objectives of teaching students to pass their exams. The teacher's use of the phrase 'any other thing is auxiliary postulates other aspects of teaching, like co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, as not important. Teachers' operationalization of teaching philosophy contradicts the theories of learning in the study's documents that express a move away from teaching to testing to acquisition of relevant skills. Another informant blamed his inability to use recommended philosophy and pedagogy from the curriculum in teaching to increase enrollment, which has created large classroom sizes.

Another teacher elucidated:

(...) we didn't know about double track in our education system, but it was because the number of enrolment increased astronomically. Currently, we have over 1.2 million Ghanaian students in secondary [education]... So definitely it will affect the quality in terms of the teacher student ratio. But if I used to have 30 students in a class or averagely 40-45 in a class and the enrollment has increased, I have taught a class in excess of 100 before. So, the teachers ability to adequately address the learning needs of each and individual students will surely suffer a little bit (teacher 2)

From the quote, an increase in enrolment caused by government policies has affected teacher to student-ratio with some classes having a high number of students. Teachers' inability to address the learning needs of students is emphasized in the quote, and it is attributed to teachers having large classroom sizes. Teacher 3, from the next quote, averred the problem of limited contact hours as a hindrance to teachers' ability to adequately employ philosophy and pedagogy in the classroom.

(...) So you have to pile up or compress a lot of things into the little contact hours that you have. So you wouldn't have the privilege of spending much time to break down things or concepts to students...you have to consider the time. And because we are having a class where definitely we don't have all the students to be equal in terms of IQ and attitude. So as soon as you have a few or some students picking up, you have to forgo or leave the others and sort of move on hoping that those who didn't grasp the content might go to those who got the concepts. (teacher 3)

Inadequacy of contact hours is seen as a hindrance to effective teaching. From the quote, selective teaching, where the teacher focuses on a few students rather than all students, is indicated as a coping mechanism by the teacher. Teachers' inability to adequately address learning needs is shown, which contradicts the learning philosophy in the curriculum. However, another coping mechanism of peer-to-peer

learning is encouraged by the teacher in the process. In spite of most informants operationalizing philosophy differently from the curriculum, one informant employed learning-centered pedagogy, which is a prescribed pedagogy in the curriculum. The informant expressed:

Okay, for me my subject, there are some aspects of my subject that I usually use a teacher-centered approach, but at times, too, I use a learner-centered approach so that students can explore other areas and bring out their best (teacher 2)

A combination of teaching and learning centered is a recommended pedagogy by the curriculum. From the quote, the teacher adequately employs both pedagogy in his effort to ensure effective learning.

Summing up, the analysis found that teachers misconstrue their primary purpose in their interaction with students as teaching to test and passing their examinations. Also, the analysis found an increase in enrolment resulted in an increase in the teacher-student ratio, which negatively affected teachers' ability to address the learning needs of their students adequately. Furthermore, inadequate contact hours are also found in the analysis, which prevents the teacher from focusing on teaching to benefit learner differentiation. The next section will discuss the findings in section 7.1 in the literature and the perspective of CP

7.2. DIVERGENT UNDERSTANDING OF QUALITY EDUCATION CONCEPT BY STAKEHOLDERS

Based on the analysis from section 7.1, the study found the informants to have a different understanding of quality in education. This can be categorized into three dimensions of quality determinants of education, such as resource availability, a conducive learning environment, etc.; the second is based on the learning outcomes of students, and the third, is an effective school system. The analysis also found misconceptions in teachers' understanding of their primary purpose in the classroom. Also, an increase in enrolment has been found to have increased the teacher-student ratio, and the ability of teachers to apply the teaching to focus on learner differentiation is limited in this regard. Lastly, limited contact hours are found in the

analysis, which negatively affects teachers' ability to apply the teaching to impact the learning needs of students. In this section, the findings from informants will be discussed and juxtaposed with documents on the operationalization of quality in education in chapter 5, and literature and CP theory will be applied.

In comparison with findings from informants and policy documents on the operationalization of quality in education, although informants had a different meaning in their understanding of quality in education, each of the definitions conforms to a broader scope of definition found in the study's document (in chapter 5, variations in meaning were found). However, the operationalization of quality in education by informants does not conform to the single purpose of education in Biesta (2009). Both the qualification function of education and the subjectification function of education were found in stakeholders' understanding of quality in education. Also, because of variations in informants' understanding of quality in education, not all definitions were consistent with SDG 4 target 7. Only the second dimension of the purpose that operationalized quality in education to focus on equipping students with relevant learning outcomes in knowledge, skills, and competence conforms to SDG 4 target 7. Differences in the understanding of quality in education found from informants confirm Amankona et al. (2005) that "quality" is relative. Hence, the relativity of the concept of quality in education implies different understandings by different people; thus far, stakeholders from different jurisdictions operationalize quality in education differently.

Differences in the application of teaching and learning philosophies were found between informants and policy documents. The shift from "teaching to testing" is discouraged under social constructivism and learner development theory, but teaching to testing is found in the informant operationalization of the teaching theory. The "teaching to the test" approach found in informant analysis is consistent with a study in USA by Popham (2001) that found that an overloaded curriculum and limited instructional hours prevent teachers from adequately employing practical teaching approaches in the classroom. Parents and governments hold educational institutions accountable for the performance of students' examination outcomes. Teaching the test strategy is identified as a strategy by teachers to focus on teaching aspects and topics

that constitute testing to the neglect of other parts of the teaching syllabus that are less tested. The teaching-to-testing approach in learning is found in Biesta (2009) qualification function of education. This finding is inconsistent with CP's learner empowerment, which aims at equipping learners with the skills and knowledge needed to broaden their capabilities, including the ability to question assumptions and myths, which helps and empowers students to take responsibility for the world in which they live.

Teaching to ignore learner differences was found in the informants' operationalization of teaching philosophies. Policy documents requiring the operationalization of teaching philosophy to focus on appropriate learner differentiation and scaffolding in every teaching situation are not implemented daily in the classroom. Large classroom sizes, overloaded curricula, and limited contact hours were found to be constraints to the operationalization of learner differentiation by teachers. Large classroom size and an overloaded curriculum are seen in Eduwem & Ezeonwumelu (2020); OECD (2020); and Safuna (2009) as problems for effective student learning in contemporary times, as they limit teachers' ability to employ a practical teaching approach to the benefit of every student. Fragmented teaching is used as a coping mechanism where the teacher focuses on a few brilliant students. Students are considered active participants in the learning process by CP. Teachers' inability to address the learning needs of learners to work effectively in the construction of knowledge is not consistent with CP's democratic education and teachers' role as transformative intellectuals who are mandated to facilitate students' learning in knowledge production.

To conclude, discussions of the study's findings on the operationalization of quality in education indicate that quality in education is relative to understanding and implementation by different stakeholders. These findings and discussion were essential and relevant in that they helped answer research question 1.

7.3. TEACHER AND TEACHING RELATED STRATEGIES IN ACHIEVING QUALITY SECONDARY EDUCATION

Teacher-related factors represent all factors that affect the professional and career growth of the teacher, either personally or professionally, to improve and deliver at the highest level. Teaching-related factors refer to all factors that have an impact on classroom delivery. During the interviews, I asked the informants about teachers and teaching strategies that are being implemented to achieve quality in SE. Informants revealed teacher professional development, a standardized base curriculum, an academic intervention program, and teaching and learning resources as strategies implemented to achieve quality in SE.

7.3.1. TEACHER QUALIFICATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The research participants identified teachers' qualifications and professional development as a strategy that helps improve the quality of teaching and learning. One of the teachers explained:

So per GES, and that is Ghana Education Service rules, you cannot teach at a secondary school without a first degree in education or related background. Before you can teach at any secondary school in Ghana, you must have had your bachelor's degree in a subject area teachable (Teacher 1).

Another teacher expressed:

So the level of education is a major factor. And I think that is why it has been taught in the new education reform whereby all teacher training colleges are now offering degree programmesteachers are required to get a degree. So it's the level of education; I believe it's a factor (*informant 6*).

From the above quotes, attainment of a bachelor's degree in a related subject is indicated as a necessary requirement to be a teacher in Ghanaian SE. Although the study's documents did not show a degree qualification as the requirement to teach in SE, informants tout it as a teaching requirement. Another teacher pointed to mandatory national service, licensing, and accredited registration as other requirements that precede the teacher's degree qualification.

So, I did economics education in the university; upon completion, I did a one-year mandatory national service in the secondary school, then afterwards, I wrote the teacher licensure examination, then upon passing and receiving my provisional

license, I think that is also receiving a registered number. So, with a registered number from the national teaching council, I think I have been confirmed as a professional teacher (**teacher 4**).

In quote 1, teachers who have licensed status are regarded as professionals, whereas nonprofessionals do not have licensed status. Teacher licensing and registration is a crucial point that can be identified in the first quote. Based on the assertion of the informant, teachers, after their initial training or qualification, must additionally write and pass a licensing examination. Success in the examination will then qualify the teacher to be registered. In order to improve the professionalism of teachers, an informant indicated that teachers are classified into professional and non-professional so as to provide opportunities to non-professional teachers to enhance their teaching careers and ensure their performance. The informant expressed:

There are specific syllabi or curricula one must go through as a teacher. You have to know a school system, the culture of the school and other stops and when you have successfully passed the exams on those and the curriculum is okay; then you now qualify as a professional teacher. And when one has not written such exams and gone through that training and written exams and passed, he cannot be classified as a professional teacher. You may have a degree in whatever subject, but [if] you have not been trained as a teacher in that particular subject [you cannot be considered a professional teacher]. So, when you are trained as a teacher in that area, your field of study [you] become a professional teacher (**Headmaster 1**).

The quote indicates the importance of teacher professionalism by also highlighting the classification of teachers. From the informant's perspective, professional teachers, in addition to their qualifications, must also learn the syllabus and teaching curriculum. In the light of the informants assertion, a teacher can attain a professional status when they receive special training that pertains to the field of teaching usually from their colleges of education. Following up on the assertion by the informant regarding teacher professionalism, I wanted to know whether opportunities exist to improve teacher professionalism especially for those without initial teacher education training.

One informant observed:

Yeah, yeah, I mean, there are opportunities, but they are minimal. For example, the Ghana Education Service has released its document or policy document... a teacher can apply and go and study... So, we have study leave with and then leave without

pay. So, you go on study leave; they have paid leave and study leave without pay (Teacher 2).

Another informant expressed:

(...) So, whether you are a professional or unprofessional, you must go through all these continuous professional development training to continue working effectively as a teacher, whether professional or non-professional. **(Headmaster 1)**

From the above quotes, the first indicates that an opportunity for CPD exists in the form of "leave." According to the quote, teachers have the opportunity to leave with salary or without a salary. In my effort to understand those who qualify for leave with pay and without pay, I read from the Ministry of Education (MoE) online portal, and it explained that such opportunities exist based on the subject the teacher teaches and the number of years spent in the teaching service. In addition to quote 1, the second quote confirmed the availability by indicating that such an opportunity exists for both professional and non-professional teachers.

Summing up qualification and professional development as a strategy to improve quality education; the analysis found first-degree certificate qualification as the minimum qualification for teaching in SE. The analysis did not find differences in first-degree qualification indicated by informants. Also, the analysis found licensing and registration of teachers as a strategy to improve teacher professionalism. Lastly, the analysis found teacher development programs available to improve the professional development of teachers

7.3.2. CURRICULUM RELEVANCE AND STANDARD BASED CURRICULUM

Ensuring relevance in the curriculum is one of the strategies identified by informants as a measure to achieve quality in SE. In the interviews, I asked informants about the relevance of the teaching curriculum. An informant observed::

Okay. Ideally, you know the curriculum. That is good, but to some extent, it makes the student learn by rote. And now that they are thinking of a new curriculum, which would make them focus on practical skills that students will have at the end of the education depending on the program or the type of program you are doing **(Headmaster 1).**

Another informant observed:

So, my understanding is that, over the years, we've had a curriculum that didn't really measure anything... wasn't standardized,.. At the end of the curriculum, when doing assessment, you didn't even know exactly what you were measuring okay. So, it was just people going through the system, building their cognitive capacity; their ability to recall. And so, that was a challenge. (Teacher 1)

From the first quote, the informant described the old curriculum as encouraging rote learning. This observation was also outlined in the documents used in the study. From the informant's perspective on curriculum, he pointed out a distinctive difference between the new curriculum and the old. Thus, there is a focus on practical skills in the new curriculum. In the second quote, difficulty in measurement was observed by the informant as a feature of the old curriculum. The informant points out that a standard curriculum is a strategy to ensure effective learning.

Another informant expressed

But recently, the reforms that is ongoing... even though in my perspective, it is still premised on cognitive capacity, it is able to at the end of the day help in assessment you'll be able to measure a particular standard. (Teacher 1)

In solving the problem of measurement that is characterized in the old curriculum, the introduction of standards in measurement in the new curriculum is emphasized by the informant as solving the problem of measurement.

Summing up improving the relevance of the curriculum through a standards-based approach, the analysis found enthusiasm from informants as they perceive standards-based curriculum will solve challenges emanating from the old curriculum. From the analysis, the informants' old curriculum is responsible for poor learning outcomes by encouraging "rote learning" among students and difficulty in measurement as a result of vague assessment procedures in the old curriculum. Focus on practical skills and clear measurement processes were found in the analysis as an important feature of the new curriculum

7.3.3. INCREASED INSTRUCTIONAL (CONTACT) HOURS AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMME FOR DIFFERENTIATION

During the interviews, I asked the informants if their contact hours were enough to ensure effective teaching. Teacher 1 expressed that a change in the educational system from the "term" system to the "semester" system has increased contact hours with

students marginally, which has helped improve delivery. Informants again expressed that the increase in contact hours would unleash discussant aspect of teaching and also arouse students' curiosity. However, a contradiction to this increment can be found in 7.1.2, as other informants indicated that limited instructional contact undermines the effectiveness of teaching. This raises the question of "significance" in the increased contact hours necessary for effective teaching. Observing two contradictory statements by two teachers, a teacher clarified that core subjects have a marginal increase in contact hours than elective subjects. In my efforts to ascertain if there exists a makeup measure to mitigate limited contact hours, the informant indicated the existence of a government intervention program to help poor-performing students.

An informant expressed:

(...)so the government brought an intervention strategy, where those who are 'weak', teachers can also intervene after the normal class session; you pinpoint those who are weak and have a different intervention or remedial classes for them so that you can close the gap between those who are brilliant and them. So that's the strategy the government brought on board, and that's what we have been doing (**informant 6**)

Ensuring learner differentiation through the provision of intervention programs for nonperforming students is expressed by informants in the quote. Attending to the learning needs of students was found in chapter 5 as the emphasis on learning pedagogy and teaching philosophy. Identification of students through an intervention program is a pragmatic way of addressing learning needs.

Summing up, the analysis found intervention programs as strategies to make up for limited contact hours. The analysis also found that intervention program exist as strategy to help address the learning needs of learners that could not be achieved during regular classes.

7.3.4. AVAILABILITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS

For teaching and learning materials, participants indicated the government's strategy of giving students books for all the core subjects, which has improved access and quality of education. On the part of teachers, participants indicated that similar interventions by the government had been made to aid in their teaching. The

government has assisted in acquiring laptops for teachers to help them deliver. An informant expressed:

The government has supplied the necessary books for all these core subjects, which are available at the bookstore. However, although students can request the book and use it in the school when leaving, they will have to return the book to the bookstore... And then recently, the government, through the efforts of the teacher unions, have procured laptop computers for teachers to aid in teaching and learning (Teacher 1).

The quote above indicates the availability of teacher and learner materials, including textbooks for core subjects and laptops for teachers. The availability of core books will help improve students' performance in that area. Whereas laptops will enhance digital literacy in teachers, as indicated in the document analysis in chapter 5. From the quote, exclusions were made to the provision of textbooks for elective subjects. In my interview with a parent who also doubles as a French teacher, she expressed:

I am a teacher as well, I teach French, the books are not there! The French books are not there. So we go our way to prepare small notes, small, small things that our students are supposed to know and we them prepare for them, and we ask them to buy now ... but they will come in and tell you that you that, Madame, I don't have the money to buy books (parent 1)

From the quote, absence of elective subject books is expressed as a challenge to teaching. In my effort to understand why core textbooks are only provided at the expense of elective textbooks, the informant explained that the provision of core textbooks is part of FSHS policy. In this, she clarified that the policy only prioritizes core subjects at the expense of electives. The FSHS is touted to eliminate financial barriers to SE, the cost of elective textbooks can constitute a hidden cost to SE. In the provision of core textbooks, informants expressed delays in provision as a challenge to teaching.

A teacher observed:

(...) but the issue with the resource being provided by the government is also that sometimes, we have to go through like almost half a quarter of the semester before the resources, even sometimes a whole year, academic year would pass before the government's resources will arrive. So the delay in the delivery of the resources is a challenge (Teacher 3)

In spite of the government's commitment to the provision of TLM, delays in its provision are indicated in the quote by the informant.

Summing up, the analysis found that teaching and learning materials such as core textbooks, and exercise books are made available at no cost to students. Laptop computers are also provided for teachers to improve digital literacy in SE. In the provision of TLM, the analysis found that the textbooks provided by the government to aid effective teaching exclude elective subjects. The cost burden on parents in the acquisition of electives was found to be a hidden cost that impedes effective learning.

7.4. IMPACTS OF EFFECTIVE QUALITY EDUCATION STRATEGIES ON LEARNING OUTCOME

Based on the analysis of teaching and learning strategies in 7.3, the study found a first-degree certificate as a minimum teaching qualification in SE, teacher licensing and registration, and continuous professional development (CPD) programs as ways to improve teacher professionalism. The study also found a standard-based approach to improving curriculum relevance. Furthermore, the analysis found that an intervention program exists to improve the academic performance of needy students, however, poor planning and financial constraints affect teachers' commitment to the intervention program. The analysis also found the provision of TLM, such as textbooks for core subjects for students and laptops for teachers, among others; however, the provision of textbooks for elective subjects was neglected. The cost of textbooks on elective subjects and other miscellaneous items were identified as a hidden cost that has an effect on learning.

In a comparison of informants' perspectives and the study's document on strategies to improve quality in SE, some similarities and contradictions were found. For teacher qualification, the policy documents did not indicate a minimum qualification for teaching. Hence, a first-degree qualification shown in the informants' analysis cannot be a basis to disprove or confirm minimum qualification criteria for teaching. Similarities were found both in the document analysis and the informant analysis of teacher licensing and registration; both analyses found it to be a strategy to improve teacher professionalism. For CPD, both informants and documents indicated its availability; the difference, however, is the modalities. Leave without salary, as reported by informants, was considered a disincentive to their professional

development. TLMs were found in both analyses, but delays in TLMs and hidden costs, such as the cost of textbooks on elective subjects, are a challenge to the attainment of quality education.

The study's finding on maintaining a higher minimum teacher qualification and supporting teachers' CPD is consistent with a lot of educational research, including , OECD (2019), and Mireku, Asare, Oduro & Anamuah-Mensah (2012). Higher teachers' qualifications and teachers' CPD are found to have improved teachers' knowledge of the subject matter, their ability to adapt to new teaching techniques, and their self-confidence in their professional endeavors. Support for teachers CPD is consistent with CP's teachers' status' as trans-formative intellectuals. This is because in order for teachers to relate to and adequately address the learning needs of students, they need to possess a higher level of professionalism and competence. This means that a lack of teacher CPD can limit the professional development of the teacher. In the SE, the Ministry must ensure teachers have equal opportunities for professional development, irrespective of the subject they teach. Providing core teachers with better conditions for CPD is an indication of placing a higher value on some subjects to the detriment of others. Attainment of SDG4 target 7 would require all teachers to receive the necessary training needed to be at the top of their profession in order to adequately prepare learners to meet uncertainties in the future. This requires policymakers to provide equal opportunities to all teachers, irrespective of the subject they teach.

The availability of learning materials for effective classroom interaction is found in CP's social justice in education. This is because the availability of teaching and learning materials is a means to ensure that learners have the necessary equipment to affect their position as active participants in knowledge production, which positions them to challenge the status quo of knowledge in education. The provision of teaching and resource materials found in the study is also consistent with the availability of the Tomasevsk (2004) 4A framework in education. Teaching and learning resources are important factors contributing to students' learning; the lack of them affects learning negatively. The government's non-provision of elective subject textbooks is consistent with Falk (2002) that nontested subjects in a standard-based approach to education

receive less attention. In order to ensure that students reach their full potential toward achieving SDG 4 target 7, all subjects in SE education must receive equal attention from the government.

The study's finding on licensing and registering teachers to improve teacher professionalism is supported by some research in Ghana, including Amoah, Britwum & Adu-Gyamfi (2020); and Brewer (2021). Also, the finding is supported by research in Malaysia by Sallah (2014), who found that teacher licensing enhances teaching reputation, motivates teachers to practice their profession, and attracts people to pursue the teaching profession. However, in a study by Chung (2021), the tedious and heinous process of acquiring a teacher's license served as a demotivating factor for people taking up the teaching profession, which led to a reduction in teacher supply. It is recommended that licensing should be part of teacher education, not a separate process from teacher education, to reduce the bureaucratic and tedious process of acquiring teacher licensing.

To conclude, the discussion of informants' perspectives on quality-driven strategies in SE helped find similarities and differences in documents and their implementation in schools. The discussion contributed to the study's answer to research question 2.

7.5. POLICIES TO ENSURE EQUITABLE SECONDARY EDUCATION IN GHANA

Equity policies, as identified in chapter six of this study, are the policies implemented by the government or other institutions within the educational sector that have helped reduce inequities in accessing SE. In order to understand if the policies indicated in the aforementioned chapter are implemented and to ascertain reality against what ought to be. Some stakeholders in the SE sub-sector were interviewed. From the interviews, participants identified Free Senior High School (FSHS), the Computerized School Selection Placement System (CSSPS), scholarships, and the Secondary Education Improvement Project (SEIP) as the policies that have helped improve the equity gap.

The purpose of the FSHS policy was emphasized in section 6.1.2. In my efforts to inquire about the reality of the FSHS policy from my informants, I asked participants

about the impact of the FSHS policy in ensuring equitable SE. As indicated by a participant, the FSHS policy is a government policy to help increase enrolment in SHS. The policy helps to cater for burdens that would have been borne by parents of wards, such as books, feeding fees, and tuition fees, among others.

An informant expressed:

And in that policy (Free SHS), the government has committed to paying for the fees, the total fees of every student, including boarding fees, they are provided with free uniforms, they are provided free meals three times a day that is for the boarders and once in a day for the day students then they are provided with this core textbook that I was mentioning, and even mathematical sets and calculators are also made available... the focus of the policy, per the way I understand it is to allow as many Ghanaian children as possible to access education at no cost **(Teacher 1)**

The quotes indicate impacts or role of the FSHS policy in Ghanaian SE. From the quote components of the policy are indicated and can be classified under absorption of fees (including boarding fees, feeding fees, and tuition fees), provision of uniforms, and other teaching and learning materials such as calculators, and mathematical sets. From the quote informant summarized his understanding of **FSHS policy** as offering as many Ghanaian children as possible to access education at no cost.. this is found in the global agenda for education, especially SDG 4 target 1. Analyzing the perspective of informants about the FSHS policy, the elimination of the entire cost of SE toward relevant learning outcomes achieves two goals of affordability and accessibility. Another equity-driven policy is the Computerized School Selection and Placement System

In my interview with informants, they mentioned the Computerized School Selection Placement System (CSSPS) as another equity intervention policy to help increase accessibility to secondary education. From the analysis of equity-driven policies in Chapter 6, although the documents mentioned the CSSPS, they did not share details of the policy or how it is geared towards achieving equitable SE. In my quest to understand the area of equity on which the CSSPS is focused, I went to the Ministry of Education's online portal to read about the CSSPS. It indicated that the CSSPS is an algorithm that is used for the placement of students in their preferred SHS. The CSSPS replaced the Manual School Selection and Placement System (MSSPS), where the placement of students into SE was in the hands of the headmasters of SHS. Key

characteristics identified in the MSSPS were discrimination, nepotism, and the incidence of corruption (Baaba, 2020). As a result, the MSSPS high-status schools were not within the reach of persons from the poorest wealth quintile. MSSPS was among the reasons for the existence of social divisions accentuated in section 6.1.1.

Informant observed that:

(...) before the introduction of this free SHS policy, there was a policy we call the computerised school selection placement system that enabled students to be placed in secondary schools of their choice. So it eliminated the aspect of inaccessibility
(Headmaster 1)

From the quote, the elimination of inaccessibility to SE is expressed as the main purpose of the CSSPS. From the quote, inaccessibility is not expressed as the absence of schools but as the prevalence of obstacles that prevent students from accessing already existing schools.

The Secondary Education Improvement Project (SEIP) was identified as one of the equity improvement strategies. The SEIP was found to be a World Bank-funded project that ensures that less endowed SHS are provided with the required infrastructure in order for such schools to be as competitive as urban SHS..

An informant expressed that:

The whole thing is about the performance of a school. Schools performing poorly are in less-endowed areas, like rural areas. The World Bank sponsored them (SEIP). It is a World Bank project; the World Bank releases funds to help; If you need a classroom to help students perform, they will provide it. It is a unique intervention, a special workshop you have to attend a whole lot. whatever project a particular school needs to improve on performance, attendance, or retention of students in school, that is what that same program seeks to achieve.... one aspect of SEIP is to help this gender equality, so they even have a special package for ladies they've introduced scholarship, they were even biased towards the boys. They give more percentage to ladies to encourage girls to continue their education to sustain the education; motivate them to learn and encourage them. So they give them scholarships. Later it turned to a bursary, with more ratios to girls (Headmaster 1).

From the quote, the major things highlighted by the informant about the SEIP include the purpose of the program, the means of funding, and the components of the project. It can be seen from the quote that its primary aim is to ensure that less endowed schools are provided with all the necessary help in terms of workshops for teachers,

and infrastructure, among others, to improve performance in less endowed schools. Another component of the policy is to address gender issues by providing scholarships to motivate and sustain academic performance among genders, especially in female education. The World Bank was identified in the quote as a sponsor of the SEIP program by the informant.

To sum up, FSHS policy, CSSPS, and the SEIP were found in the analysis as equity-driven policies by informants. No contradictions were found in the analysis by the informants regarding the strategies. The aforementioned policies were found in the analysis to eliminate inaccessibility, provide affordability, and ensure that rural schools are provided with opportunities to compete with urban schools. In the next section of the study, I will discuss opportunities and constraints in achieving equity and quality in SE.

7.5.1. OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS IN ACHIEVING QUALITY AND EQUITY IN GHANA'S SECONDARY EDUCATION

From the analysis of strategies geared towards the attainment of quality and equity in SE, some opportunities were found that position Ghanaian education towards the attainment of both national and global development agendas, such as SDG 4. On the other hand, some constraints were found to hinder Ghana's efforts towards achieving quality and equity in SE.

7.5.1.1. OPPORTUNITIES

From the interviews, opportunities that arise from achieving equity and quality education emanate from the implementation of equity and quality-driven policies in SE, identified in section 7.5 and 7.3, respectively. The ability to increase student enrolment, bridge the gender gap between boys and girls in secondary education, improve rural-urban disparities, and provide quality education helps students acquire skills, competencies, and abilities and can, in the long run, improve their conditions in the future in terms of employment to reduce poverty as well as reduce social divisions in the society. Some constraints found in the study are analyzed in the next section.

7.5.1.2. CONSTRAINTS

In the course of the interview, informants indicated constraints that challenge the status quo of policies that are implemented to achieve quality and equity in SE. The constraints expressed by informants either affect quality, equity, or both.

A Participant observed that quality is sacrificed for quantity in education :

(...) there is a sacrifice for quality with quantity; the focus of the policy (FSHS), per the way I understand, is to allow as many Ghanaian children as possible to access education at no cost. So you can't run quality and quantity simultaneously. No matter how robust the system is, you experience challenges in the initial stage that could affect the quality. (Teacher 1)

From the quote, FSHS is indicated by informants as having resulted in quantifying education rather than ensuring quality. Analyzing from the informants' perspective of the policy, the policy's primary aim is to ensure access to a teeming population and that at the initial stage, quality in education is sacrificed for quantification

Another informant expressed.

(...) thus the free senior high school education has been able to get a lot of people to access senior high school education, but quality cannot be assured (teacher 4)

The quote above explains the primary purpose of the FSHS policy as the elimination of barriers to access. The last expression by the informant *quality cannot be assured* shows that providing access to students was a priority not only to the government but the general populace due to increasing demand for SE. One of the significant constraints identified by participants is the delay in teaching and learning materials distribution.

An informant expressed

But the issue with the resource being provided by the government is that sometimes, we have to go through almost half a quarter of the semester before the resources, even sometimes a whole year, an academic year would pass before the government's resources will arrive. So the delay in the delivery of the resources is a challenge; aside from that, we have a library which is not so resourced but is better as compared to others, but it's not the best with few resources to supplement what is being given by the government (teacher 3)

Delays in provision of resources from the government is indicated in this quote. The extent of the delay is also indicated in the quote ranging from halfway through a semester to or entire academic year. Delays in the provision of teaching resources are indicated by the informants as having a negative effect on both teaching and learning. Another dimension seen from the quote is where the informant made a comparison between the inadequacy of learning materials in the school's library with other schools. The comparison revealed the existing variations in resource endowments among schools. A reduction in instructional hours was observed by a participant. core subject teachers saw the change in the reform as an advantage to improve quality, elective teachers see it as a constraint because the electives subjects have two years duration compared to the previous three years. An informant observed:

(...) the coming of the standard core program, which would mean that I would have two years to finish a syllabus I was using three years to complete, I would have to depend on doing selective teaching that is focused more on certain critical aspects of the curriculum, parts that I believe are very critical. And also, I would focus on the WAEC syllabus, and since we are preparing students for the West African Examination Council's exams, we would have to look lightly at some of the topics in the GES syllabus and focus more on the WAEC syllabus since that is a major standard of measuring the performance of students and teachers (teacher 3)

From the quote, it can be understood that the introduction of the common core program saw a reduction of instructional years for the elective subjects from three years to two years without changes in the teaching syllabus. Selective teaching is indicated by the informant as a coping mechanism for ensuring that students pass their exit examination. Another important statement made by the informant was that he attributed the success of students in their final exit exams as the standard for assessing the performance of both teachers and students. From the analysis, the purpose of the reform was not indicated, but whatever the case, the result of the reform favors core subjects over elective subjects. Other participants opined that the condition of service is a challenge for their teaching profession.

An informant expressed:

(...) the conditions of service not being so favorable are also influencing the quality of teachers. The teacher might have the knowledge and resources to do well. But

because of that apathy towards the occupation, it's weighed down on the quality that the teacher can bring on board in terms of his teaching (parent 2)

The quote above expresses the impact of teachers' conditions of service on their overall performance. From the quote, informants express that the poor condition of teachers affects their output. Informants' expression of the poor conditions of teachers can be understood from the perspective that a positive correlation exists between teaching performance and their conditions of service. An informant observed that the double track has led to students staying home on vacation for longer. Too much time spent at home was indicated as a constraint in achieving quality education.

An informant expressed:

(...) when we vacate, students can stay home like three months, four months, five months. So when it happens like that, whatever I mean you taught in the student will fade out when the student stays in the house for four to five months without any serious academic work going on in their various houses. So I mean, we tend to lose whatever you've taught the students (teacher 4)

From the quote, the impact of the double-track intervention program is elucidated by the informant. Long vacations are indicated in the quote as a feature of the double-track program. A long vacation period of (3-5) months is seen in the quote to cause redundancy in students. Another constraint is unequal resource distribution. This is expressed as a constraint to equity by informants.

Unequal distribution of resources such as infrastructure between rural and urban centers affects the quality and equity of education. The ESP (2018) has identified regional disparities in the distribution of textbooks as a critical component affecting the delivery of quality education.

A Participant indicated that;

So, the government only focuses on building good infrastructure for schools in the urban centre, then neglect those in the rural centre. Moreover, social amenities like electricity are not readily available in rural areas. So, when teachers and professional teachers are posted to such areas, they decline because you don't have such a community (parent 1)

In the quote, differentiated resource distribution between spatial dimensions is mentioned by the informant. The absence of social amenities is another feature

expressed by the informant that affects teacher retention in rural areas. In Chapter 5, the problem of teacher deployment was identified as one of the challenges that derail the attainment of quality education. A connection can be drawn between this quote and the findings from the chapter. It can be seen that poor social amenities affect teacher deployment and retention. Differentiated resources were found by another informant as a challenge to equity

(...) where in a bigger school the school is fenced, the school has all these infrastructures, which we lack in our school, more prominent schools have. So when it comes to the labs, they have the labs, the classrooms even in abundance. So almost everything you need to help you learn and study in big schools, especially in town, has it. Those in rural areas and less endowed areas lack most of these. Meanwhile, they should write the same exams, get the same grades, and go to the same university. How possible? So that's why the quality has to be compromised (Headmaster 1).

From the quote, differentiated resources between rural and urban schools are again indicated as having an effect on performance. Based on variations in resource provision between rural and urban schools, the informant's statement that "*meanwhile, they should write the same exams*" is an indication that other schools have been offered an advantage over others. This condition is considered social injustice in right based approach to education.

The sustainability of policies aimed at achieving quality and equity is indicated as being constrained. Participants identified the lack of political will to sustain existing equity and quality policies as a constraint. Lack of continuity of policies anytime there is a change of government is a permanent feature in Ghanaian politics. Azabiah (2017) argues that the sustainability of a government-driven policy has the chance to suffer continuity. An informant indicated, "*A lot of people are scared that when there should be a change of government, this policy might suffer a little bit in terms of finance*" (teacher).

To sum up constraints in achieving quality and equity in SE, the analysis found that quality in education is sacrificed for quantity due to high rates of enrolment over limited resources. Also, delays in the provision of resources, as well as an unequal

distribution of educational resources were found across spatial dimensions. Furthermore, the analysis also found a reduction in instructional hours for elective subjects due to the introduction of the common core program. Moreover, poor remuneration and poor working conditions were found to affect the performance of teachers. Also, the analysis found long vacation periods due to double track intervention and problems with the sustainability of policies such as FSHS should there be a change of government.

7.6. EXPERIENCES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES ON EQUITABLE QUALITY SECONDARY EDUCATION

In this section of the analysis and discussion, informants shared their experiences on policies to achieve quality and equity in SE. There was a mixed reaction among informants about their experiences with the policies that are being implemented. While some informants expressed their relief over some policies, especially FSHS, others, however, expressed their frustration at being sidelined in policy formulation and implementation. An informant observed:

(...) education financing is a big problem for parents . Education is expensive in our part of the world. So we were having students that were brilliant, but they had to stay at home because their parents could not afford to send them to secondary school. So this policy (FSHS), we could say is a lifesaver to a lot of parents. It's a savior. Now we have students that we are teaching in our schools are from all walks of lives and different quintile. (Teacher 3)

From the quote above, the informant expressed a sense of fulfillment and happiness as students with poor backgrounds were offered the opportunity to access SE without fees. The informant's use of 'life savior' explains the importance of the FSHS policy to families, especially those from the poor quintile. The informant's use of students from "all walks of life" depicts diversity as a feature of the program, which is a condition necessary for peacebuilding in democratic states.

However, other informants expressed their frustrations as follows:

(...) There have been so many intimidation against the headmaster's for making the input or trying to do something which is contrary to directives of policies... may not be so much contrary but in their circumstances,.. what they did was needful but because it didn't favor the policy directly they were taken as people who were against the policy so several headmasters' have been dismissed from the service They don't take input from stakeholders. Headmasters and teachers are key stakeholder to education, but most at times they just design their own policy and push it down on you to implement them... You have to carry it out. And it's not helping. That is what is happening meanwhile on paper they know that we are indispensable stakeholder to educational policy yet they will not take our input. Most time we make suggestions but we are not taken seriously. (Headmaster1)

Another informant expressed:

the government is not doing anything to involve parents in decision making. So I think that any implementation or any decision that the government wants to do I think they should involve we the parents so that we can have broader and extensive conversation about decisions pertaining to our children education (parent 2)

Quote above reveals the approach adopted in the educational sector in Ghana in policy formulation and implementation. Also, it indicates the level of acceptability of opposing reviews in policy formulation by stakeholders and the effects of such opinions in ensuring democratic education. The informants' use of *"they just design their own policy and push it down"* depicts a top-down approach in policy formulation. Malone (2013) posits that a top-down approach to policy formulation is evident in most standardized approaches to education. The quote also reveals the distress of "headmasters" when they offer a divergent opinion to policies, as some are interdicted for such. This reduces the level of freedom and independence enjoyed by such important stakeholders. The assertion from the informant about their exclusion made me inquire from other informants on the mode) of stakeholder consultation in policy formulation. The informant posited:

So the teacher will be there. And then a pronouncement will be made about a new policy, and the teacher would have to seek its implementation in the classroom. And so, at best, what governments or policymakers over the years have done, will be to engage the union leaders of these teachers who are not practical in the classroom. Some of them are not in the classroom. So they are not able to appreciate how the teacher will perceive the introduction of that policy, and the contribution thereof of the teacher to shape the policy to each implementation in the

classroom. So often, we experience a situation of rejection and opposition by teachers to any policy directive that is issued in education. For instance, there are curriculum reforms ongoing as well. Teachers were not directly involved in the curriculum reforms. They were only made to attend training about a week or two pieces of training to be abreast with the policy direction of the curriculum and how it should be broken down in terms of implementation in the classroom (teacher 3)

From the quote, informant confirmed their exclusion from most policies as already indicated by previous informants. However, from the informants' perspective, indirect consultation of stakeholders through their leaders is the approach used in policy formulation. In spite of indirect consultation of stakeholders in policy formulation, the An informant indicated that such opinions from their leaders cannot constitute the voice of the stakeholders they represent, as most of them have no experience in teaching and are therefore not privy to the real challenges education faces. To this end, a clue from the educational system in Ghana is that there is a higher level of bureaucracy between those at the top and bottom. Apart from exclusion from policy formulation, another informant averred some demotivating aspects of his experience as a stakeholder:

I'm getting to my fourth year and is supposed to be very lively and motivating but due to one or two challenges Ghana education service is going through holding such position has now become a very challenging position to hold very very difficult position... the experience I've gotten in the work and the motivation is not enough. I'm not talking of motivation in terms of monetary only but for example we are now on vacation but we don't know when we are reopening. This is one of the demotivating aspect i am talking about. currently the education system is facing so many challenges and holding such a position put you in a very hot seat. All the time you are very very hot thinking through how to manage the little resources. What the government promise to bring is not forthcoming so you have to find ways and means to make the system going. Is very difficult position. Now a days been a headmaster is not easy (Headmaster1).

The quote above indicates the experience of the informant over his four years as headmaster of a secondary school. From the quote, the informant described his overall experience as "demotivating." three factors could be seen from the informant's experience that sum up his experience. Informants, in addition to monetary constraints, revealed improper planning as re-opening dates for schools are often not known and not planned ahead. This reveals a disconnection in communication between the top and bottom.

Summing up the analysis of stakeholders' experiences of quality education, the study found stakeholders' expressing their joy and satisfaction in the implementation of the FSHS policy. The study also found informants expressing their frustration about being sidelined in policy decisions. Furthermore, the study found informed indirect consultation of stakeholders' through their union leaders. The next section of the study will analyze opportunities and constraints in achieving quality education

7.7.TENSIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STANDARD-BASED STRATEGIES TOWARDS AN EQUITABLE QUALITY SECONDARY EDUCATION

According to the analysis of Section 7.5, FSHS, SEIP, and the CSSPS, they eliminate inaccessibility, provide availability, and ensure that rural schools have opportunities to compete with urban schools. Because of high rates of enrollment relative to limited resources, some constraints, such as education quality, are sacrificed for quantity. Delays in the provision of resources, as well as the unequal distribution of educational resources across spatial dimensions, were also discovered. Furthermore, the analysis revealed a reduction in instructional hours for elective subjects as a result of the implementation of the common core program. Furthermore, poor remuneration and working conditions were found to have an impact on teacher performance. Also, the analysis found long vacation periods due to double track intervention and problems of sustainability of policies such as FSHS should there be a change of government

The study also found informants expressing their frustration at being sidelined in policies, and some were interdicted for contradicting policy directives.

The finding from this chapter of an increase in enrolment due to the elimination of fees through FSHS is consistent with findings from document analysis in Section 6.1.1. The FSHS increased the accessibility and availability of SE. The removal of inaccessibility and availability is consistent with Tomasevski (2004) in HRBA-E for education. Duty bearers (the government) have the responsibility of making education available to its citizens without discrimination in gender and space, which is an

inalienable right of the child. The problems of accessibility and availability are considered barriers to education in the right based approach to education; hence, the removal of such barriers is a condition for the attainment of the global agenda for development, such as SDG 4 target 1.

The analysis found in this the existence of disparities in the distribution of educational resources on the spatial dimension. This was also found in document analysis as a problem in the attainment of quality education. Duflo et al (2020) and Alimachie (2016) confirmed the findings in their study. This problem was identified by Alimachie (2016) believes this trend will be curbed when the government adopts a decentralization strategy in the production and distribution of educational resources rather than a centralized approach to resource provision. The adoption of decentralization will ensure that the distribution of educational resources will be decentralized to the district level, which will ensure that all schools are captured.

The analysis found poor service conditions to affect the overall performance of teachers. This finding is consistent with lots of research in sub-Saharan Africa, including Evans & Yuan (2018); Afolabi (2013); UNESCO (2021); and UNESCO (2011). Literature on employee working conditions indicates that working conditions have effects on performance. A remuneration and incentive package is deemed necessary to attract and retain the best teachers in the teaching profession. In order to retain quality teachers in the teaching profession, there is a need for the government of Ghana to improve the living conditions of teachers to the same level as their peers in other professions like medicine. Among the reasons for teacher licensing is to improve their professionalism; if teaching becomes a profession, then conditions of service need to benefit the profession. The government of Ghana also needs to improve the living conditions of teachers in rural areas in order to improve the supply and deployment of teachers in these areas.

The study found a lack of direct participation and involvement of teachers, parents, and headmasters in policy development. This finding was confirmed in a study by Malone (2015); and Foley et al. (2015). Front-line stakeholders such as teachers, and parents are rarely involved in the educational change process by reformers, who usually do so through auxiliary teacher advisory groups, student board members, or

symbolic school events that bring families and community members together. These groups, however, may not represent the interests of the group they represent. Lack of front-line stakeholders' direct involvement has an impact not only on the contextual adaptation of external policies but also stifles innovation within schools and communities. The lack of direct stakeholder involvement is not consistent with the HRBA-E principle of inclusion and participation. This is because all people have the right to active, free, and meaningful participation in, contribution to, and enjoyment of their economic and social responsibilities to the organizations in which they find themselves. The formulation and development of educational policies by governments need to adopt a bottom-up approach to ensure those right bearers, such as parents, students, communities, and teachers, have a say in policies that concern them because governments owe them accountability in the exercise of their human rights. This should not only be after the implementation of policies but also before and during policy development; this makes education closer to the people.

The study's finding of a lack of adequate measures to ensure the sustainability of strategies including FSHS and SEIP is a constraint on the policies' continuity. Inadequate resources and pressure to meet global goals are found in HRBA-E as tensions that impede the sustainability of equity-driven policies. While a lack of resources (financial) can result in trade-offs where key elements of equity-driven will be neglected, a lack of proper planning due to pressure to meet SDGs can lead to poor implementation, eventually leading to the collapse of such policies. Several studies in African countries such as Kenya, Malawi, and Zambia where similar programs were implemented revealed that poor targeting, a lack of consistent financial inflows, a lack of locally sustainable initiatives due to donor over-dependence, as well as inadequate community participation, have been major bottlenecks for the long-term impact. Studies by Adu-Gyamfi (2016) and Azabiah (2017) in Ghana affirmed political influence on educational policies by indicating that SE has been subjected to political twists whenever power changes hands. The lack of continuity of the legacies of the previous government is found in those studies as a feature of politics in Ghana. There is a need for proper and entrenched legislation for equity-driven policies to ensure that SE is protected anytime the government changes hands.

7.8. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the chapter provided the perspective of stakeholders in SE and their understanding and experiences of quality and equitable policies. This is essential to enable the study to examine if policies are implemented the same way as indicated in policy documents, and to identify potentials and constraints in such policies. The chapter achieved its aim and contribution to the study by identifying that stakeholders have a varied understanding of quality in education, which helped in answering research question 1. Also, the chapter identified some quality and equitable policies and highlighted contradictions and tensions between policy documents and their operationalization in some selected schools. This supported the study by helping to answer research questions. 2. Based on the informants' experiences they shared, the study was able to find mixed reactions towards equity and quality-driven policies, which contributed to the study by helping to answer the research question. 3. The last contribution of the chapter to the study was its ability to help in accessing policy implementation to identify constraints and opportunities in achieving quality education.

CHAPTER 8: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sought to examine the understanding of quality in education by stakeholders and policy documents and analyze educational strategies implemented in SE in Ghana and how those policies are geared towards improving access, bridging the equity gap, and improving quality. This concluding chapter will summarize the key research findings in relation to the research objectives and research questions, as well as their value and contribution. It will examine the study's limitations and make recommendations for future research. In this chapter, I will sum up the findings in chapters 5, 6, and 7 and explain how they help answer the study's research questions.

8.1. OPERATIONALIZING THE MEANING OF QUALITY IN EDUCATION

In the study's quest to understand quality in education, that stems from the study's research question 1, "*How is quality in secondary education understood and operationalized in policy documents; and by stakeholders in selected secondary schools?*" The study analyzed three policy documents (NAPTC 2018-2030, ESP 2018-2030, and ESPR 2018) and conducted seven qualitative interviews among some stakeholders (parents, teachers, and a headmaster) in the SE sub-sector of the Ghanaian education system. The result of this study found that the understanding of quality education by informants conforms to a broader perspective of the study's policy documents that includes making periodic reforms and reviews of educational policies to incorporate new ideas, information, and practices. Based on this, three definitions were obtained: Firstly, quality education was defined to entail ensuring the provision of necessary determinants of education are met such as conducive environment, resources among others. Others define quality education based on the end result; the ability of students to acquire knowledge, skills, and competence for sustainable living. Lastly, ensure that an effective school system exists to harness learners' potential. From the operationalization of quality in SE two purposes of education in qualification and subjectification purposes were indicated.

8.1.1. QUALITY IN EDUCATION STRATEGIES

The study's themes emerged from coding the in-depth interview and document analysis, which found quality strategies to be teacher-related and teaching-related factors. These strategies included improving teachers' qualifications and professional development, standardizing the curriculum to improve its relevance, improving contact hours, providing free teaching and learning materials, and strengthening management and leadership. The strategies aforementioned helped answer the study's first aspect of the second research question: "*what policy strategies are being implemented by the government of Ghana (GoG) to achieve equity and quality in SE?*"

Using both document analysis and in-depth interviews analysis was important as it helped to unearth realities vis a vis what ought to be with this the study was able to find that elective subjects are not given the same preference as core subjects as elective subject books are not provided, but core subject textbooks are. Also, core subject teachers are more likely to be granted leave for CPD than elective subject teachers.

8.2. EQUITY IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

In the study's quest to answer the second aspect of research question 2, "*What policy strategies are being implemented by the government of Ghana (GoG) to achieve quality and equity in SE?*" It first sought to understand the dimensions and problem of equity in SE. By better understanding the problems and dimensions of equity in SE, the study will be in a better position to examine policies or strategies that are being implemented to achieve equity in SE. Based on analysis of the study's documents and in-depth interviews with informants from two schools, one located in the urban center and another in the rural center, the study found the existence of class and social division in the provision of quality SHS, a situation in which schools are classified into high status and less endowed schools. Access to SE quality SHS was found to be based on class, and social division along spatial distribution (rural-urban) and wealth quintile (poor-rich). Also, the study found problems in the attainment of gender parity in SE and problem of discrimination and stereotyping in disability education

8.2.1. EQUITY STRATEGIES

From the study, the equity strategies found were the Free SHS policy, Computerised School Selection Placement System (CSSPS), and the Secondary Education Improvement Project (SEIP). The CSSPS was found as an equity-driven policy by placing students into SHS without their students' parents having to go to schools directly to seek admission for their wards. The FSHS policy on the other hand was found to remove financial constraints whereas SEIP was found to provide infrastructure for less endowed SE. FSHS and SEIP were also identified to ensure gender parity. Mainstreaming children with mild disability into regular schooling and enhancing teacher knowledge on disability education was found as the strategy for disability education, however, the strategies were found to be less comprehensive in their operationalization.

8.3. EXPERIENCES OF STAKEHOLDERS

The study found mixed informants on their experiences of quality and equity-driven policies. The study found that the elimination of fees and other incentives, such as free uniforms, exercise books, and core subject textbooks, had eased the burden on parents, especially in deprived areas and among the poorest quintiles of Ghanaian society. However, they found a poor condition of service among teachers and the exclusion of frontline stakeholders such as teachers and parents from policy consultation. Also, frequent interdiction of heads of school was found in the study, which limits the stakeholders' freedom of expression and opinion. These findings were relevant to the study by unearthing some of the experiences stakeholders go through daily, which helped to answer research question 3. *How are equity and quality in secondary education experienced by stakeholders in the secondary education sector?*

8.4. OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS IN ACHIEVING QUALITY IN EDUCATION

8.4.1. OPPORTUNITIES

The study found increased enrolment and access to SE by all gender due to elimination of fees in SE. Providing learning opportunities towards the attainment of skills, knowledge, and competence to a lot of people who would not have been in school will help in the attainment of SDG 4 target 1 and eventually eradicate poverty. This finding is useful and helps the study answer the first aspect of the research question. 4. *What are the opportunities and constraints related to achieving quality and equity in Ghanaian SE?*

8.4.2. CONSTRAINTS

From the study, equity measures such as the policy on FSHS was found to increase enrolment substantially. Inadequate infrastructure and resources to meet the demand of SE are deemed to have compromised the teachers' ability to address the learning needs of students. The sustainability of equity-driven policies such as FSHS is a concern, as the lack of legislation backing the policy poses a threat to its sustainability. Also, a widening student-teacher ratio, lack of political will, unequal distribution of resources, the condition of service of teachers, limited contact hours due to education reform, and delay in distributing teaching and learning materials were other factors found to serve as constraints in achieving quality and equity in education. The aforementioned constraints identified in the study were important as it helped to provide an answer to the second aspect of the study's research question "*What are the opportunities and constraints related to achieving quality and equity in Ghanaian SE?*"

8.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was initially planned to use a fieldwork approach so as to help me witness directly most of the information that was shared by the informants. However, the emergence of Covid 19 could not warrant feasibility of the field work as most of the schools were close down and restrictions on travel served a major constraint. This situation compelled the interviews to be done online on zoom. The study was affected in these ways. Firstly, lack of apathy from my informants affected the study in a way. Key stakeholders like directors of education were not within my reach and those that

accepted to partake in the study withdrew at a later stage. Secondly, the sampling size of informants serves as a limitation of the study. This is because findings from informants do not represent the total opinion of all stakeholder's in the SE in Ghana

8.5. RECOMENDATIONS

8.5.1. RECOMMENDATIONS TO POLICY MAKERS

The following recommendations are offered to policymakers to ensure the provision of equitable quality SE:

A. Policymakers should adopt a bottom-up approach in policy formulation and implementation to ensure that parents, community and teachers are given an opportunity to direct their opinion in the policy development stage to improve innovation and local participation in SE.

B. There should be effective decentralization of areas such as resource distribution. Resources such as textbooks, uniforms, and others must be produced locally (districts), this will reduce preferences in distribution and reduce bureaucracy in accessing these materials

C. Governments must provide legislative backing for equity-driven policies and reforms in education to ensure that they are not easily altered and subjected to political gimmicks.

D. Government of Ghana should adopt local alternative cash inflow to reduce over-dependence of foreign donors for funding equity-driven policies.

E. Government should adopt a community-based approach in SE to reduce the cost incurred in funding equity-based programs like FSHS. Research shows much of SHS funds are apportioned to the feeding students' boarders. Community-based schooling will reduce budget allocation for boarding students, and the funds can be channeled to improving other facets of SE provision.

F. Governments should improve teachers living conditions by providing adequate incentives and motivation to retain teachers, especially in rural communities.

8.5.2. RECOMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study used a qualitative approach with few sample size on primary data collection (interviews). Qualitative approach seeks in-depth understanding of social reality hence given it cannot be used for purposes of generation or represents larger population. I recommend future researchers to employ a quantitative approach to study quality and equity in Ghanaian Secondary Education to make generalization of issues of quality and equity in secondary education. Also, the study used both secondary sources (document analysis) and interviews. Future research along this topic can explore only primary source (only interviews) and employ a field work approach.

8.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that educational reforms and strategies employed by the government of Ghana are efficient towards the realization of SDG 4, quality, and equity in SE. However, gaps exist between intended policy objectives and implementation process, which will require efficient quality assurance measures and monitoring in the execution of policies, also policy implementors in SE such as teachers to be directly involved in policy developments and also more public sensitization and education should be frequent in order to create community-government partnership.

REFERENCES

- Abraham, G. Y. (2014). Critical pedagogy: Origin, vision, action & consequences. *KAPET*, 10(1), 90-98.
- Adbul-Rahim, A., Adom, D., & Adu-Agyem, J. (2022). The Impact of Free Senior High School Education Policy on the Quality of Education in Ghana. *ASEAN Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 10, 1-20.
- Adu-Gyamfi, S., Donkoh, W. J., & Addo, A. A. (2016). Educational reforms in Ghana: Past and present. *Journal of Education and Human Development*, 5(3), 158-172.
- Afolabi, O. A. (2013). Roles of personality types, emotional intelligence and gender differences on prosocial behavior. *Psychological thought*, 6(1).
- Ainscow, M. (2012). Moving knowledge around: Strategies for fostering equity within educational systems. *Journal of educational change*, 13(3), 289-310.
- Ajayi, K. (2009). Strategic behaviour and revealed preferences; lessons from choice and student's placement in Ghana. Berkely: University of California.
- Akinbola, R. A. (2015). Enhancing the quality of education in Nigeria through a human rights-based approach. Ibadan, Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan.
- Akpan, V., Igwe, U., Mpamah, I., & Okor, C. (2020). Social constructivism: implications on teaching and learning. *Br J Educ*, 8(8), 49-56.
- Akyeampong, K. (2005). EFA monitoring report commissioned study. Whole School Development: Ghana. Retrieved from: portal. In: unesco. org.
- Alhojailan, M. I. (2012). Thematic analysis: A critical review of its process and evaluation. *West East Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1), 39-47.
- Al-Samarrai, S., & Zaman, H. (2007). Abolishing School Fees in Malawi: The Impact on Education Access and Equity. *Education Economics*, 15(3), 359-375. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09645290701273632>
- Alvarez, B. (2003a). Beyond Basic Education—secondary Education in the Developing World. *BEYOND BASIC EDUCATION*, 1.
- Alvarez, B. (2003b). Critical policy issues in the development of secondary education. *BEYOND BASIC EDUCATION*, 13.
- Ankomah, Y. A. (2014). relevance of the computerised schools selection and placement

- Ankomah, Y. A. (2014). RELEVANCE OF THE COMPUTERISED SCHOOLS SELECTION AND PLACEMENT SYSTEM (CSSPS) IN GHANAIAN SCHOOLS. *AFRICAN JOURNAL OF PEDAGOGY*, 1.
- Ankomah, Y. A., Koomson, J. A., Bosu, R. S., & Oduro, G. K. (2005). A Review on the concept of Quality in Education: Perspectives from Ghana. Bristol: EdQual RPC.
- Anlimachie, M. A. (2016). Achieving Equity in Basic Education in Ghana; Contexts and Strategies
- Ansong, D., Ansong, E. K., Ampomah, A. O., & Afranie, S. (2015). A spatio-temporal analysis of academic performance at the Basic Education Certificate Examination in Ghana. *Applied Geography*, 65, 1-12
- McKinsey & Company. 2007. "How the World's Best-performing School Systems came out on Top". Available: http://www.mckinsey.com/App_Media/Reports
- Antoninis, M., Delprato, M., & Benavot, A. (2016). Inequality in education: the challenge of measurement. In (pp. 63-67).
- Armah, P. H. (2017). Overview And Challenges of Ghana's Education System: How to Fix to It. Reforming Ghana's Educational System Retreat organized by The Institute of Economics Affairs under the Youth Capacity Building Initiative.
- Armah, P., & Mereku, D. (2018). Expanding secondary school access for disadvantaged children in Ghana: implications for curriculum and assessment reforms. Unpublished manuscript.
- Asare, E. O., Mereku, D. K., Anamuah-Mensah, J., & Oduro, G. K. T. (2012). In-service teacher education study in Sub-Saharan Africa: The case of Ghana. *Teacher Education Division, GES*.
- Attanasio, O., Fitzsimons, E., Gomez, A., Gutierrez, M. I., Meghir, C., & Mesnard, A. (2010). Children's schooling and work in the presence of a conditional cash transfer program in rural Colombia. *Economic development and cultural change*, 58(2), 181-210.
- Attanasio, O., Fitzsimons, E., Gomez, A., Gutierrez, M. I., Meghir, C., & Mesnard, A. (2010). Children's schooling and work in the presence of a conditional cash transfer program in rural Colombia. *Economic development and cultural change*, 58(2), 181-210.
- Awour, C. B., Okere, M. I., & Odero-Wanga, D. (2018). Factors Affecting Quality of

- Education after the Introduction of Subsidized Secondary Education Policy in Rongai Sub-County, Kenya. Unpublished M. Ed thesis. Institute of Education & Research.
- Awour, C. B., Okere, M. I., & Odero-Wanga, D. (2018). Factors Affecting Quality of Education after the Introduction of Subsidized Secondary Education Policy in Rongai Sub-County, Kenya. Unpublished M. Ed thesis. Institute of Education & Research..
- Aziabah, M. A. (2017). The politics of educational reform in Ghana. Educational policy change and the persistence of academic bias in Ghana's secondary education system.
- Babah, P. A. (2020). Computerized School Selection and Placement System in Ghana: Challenges and The Way Forward. *European Journal of Educational Sciences*, 7(2), 70-80.
- Baird, S., Ferreira, F. H., Özler, B., & Woolcock, M. (2014). Conditional, unconditional and everything in between: a systematic review of the effects of cash transfer programmes on schooling outcomes. *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, 6(1), 1-43.
- Baird, S., Ferreira, F. H., Özler, B., & Woolcock, M. (2014). Conditional, unconditional and everything in between: a systematic review of the effects of cash transfer programmes on schooling outcomes. *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, 6(1), 1-43.
- Baker, F. B. (2001). The basics of item response theory. ERIC.
- Bank, W. (2005). Expanding opportunities and building competencies for young people: A new agenda for secondary education. The World Bank.
- Barrera-Pedemonte, F. (2016). Classification framework
- Benavot, A., Bella, N., Joshi, P., & McWilliam, A. (2016). From Gender Parity to Gender Equality: Situating Gender in the Monitoring of International Education Targets. *Bildung und Erziehung*, 69. <https://doi.org/10.7788/bue-2016-0305>
- Benavot, A., Bella, N., Joshi, P., & McWilliam, A. (2016). From Gender Parity to Gender Equality: Situating Gender in the Monitoring of International Education Targets. *Bildung und Erziehung*, 69. <https://doi.org/10.7788/bue-2016-0305>
- Bidabadi, N. S., Isfahani, A. N., Rouhollahi, A., & Khalili, R. (2016). Effective teaching methods in higher education: requirements and barriers. *Journal of advances in medical education & professionalism*, 4(4), 170.
- Bidabadi, N. S., Isfahani, A. N., Rouhollahi, A., & Khalili, R. (2016). Effective teaching

- methods in higher education: requirements and barriers. *Journal of advances in medical education & professionalism*, 4(4), 170.
- Biesta, G. (2009). Good Education in an Age of Measurement: On the Need to Reconnect with the Question of Purpose in Education. *Educational Assessment Evaluation and Accountability*, 21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-008-9064-9>
- Brink, H. I. (1993). Validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Curationis*, 16(2), 35-38.
- Caena, F. (2013). Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes. European Commission. Education and Training.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. . (2017). *Research Methods in Education* (8 ed.). Routledge. . <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315456539>
- Cornwall, A., & Nyamu-Musembi, C. (2004). Putting the ‘rights-based approach’ to development into perspective. *Third world quarterly*, 25(8), 1415-1437.
- Craissati, D., Banerjee, U. D., King, L., Lansdown, G., & Smith, A. (2007). A human rights based approach to education for all. UNICEF.
- Croft, A. (2013). Promoting access to education for disabled children in low-income countries: Do we need to know how many disabled children there are? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 33(3), 233-243. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2012.08.005>
- Danaei, S. M., Zarshenas, L., Oshagh, M., & Khoda, S. M. O. (2011). Which method of teaching would be better; cooperative or lecture?. *Iranian journal of medical education*, 11(1).
- Delors, J. (1998). *Learning: The treasure within*. Unesco.
- Demirkasımoğlu, N. (2010). Defining “Teacher Professionalism” from different perspectives. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 9, 2047-2051.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2017). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). sage.
- Do, D.-N.-M., Hoang, L.-K., Le, C.-M., & Tran, T. (2020). A Human Rights-Based Approach in Implementing Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) for Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam. *Sustainability*, 12(10), 4179. <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/10/4179>
- Döbrich, P., Klemm, K., Knauss, G., & Lange, H. (2003). Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers. Supplement to the country background report for the

- Federal Republic of Germany.
- Duflo, E., Dupas, P., & Kremer, M. (2015). Education, HIV, and early fertility: Experimental evidence from Kenya. *American Economic Review*, 105(9), 2757-97.
- DZHW (2021). Social and economic conditions of students life in Europe. EUROSTUDENT VII 2018-2021.
- Earl, L. (2015). *Accountability as a Collective Professional Responsibility*.
- European Commission/EACA/Eurydice (2019). The European Higher Education Area in 2019: Bologna Process Implementation Report. Luxemborg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Evans, D. K., & Yuan, F. (2018). The working conditions of teachers in low-and middle-income countries. *World Bank*.
- Ezeonwumelu, V. (2020). Overloaded Curriculum, Excessive Daily Academic Activities and Students' Learning Effectiveness. *Journal of Education Society and Behavioural Science*, 33, 70-75. <https://doi.org/10.9734/JESBS/2020/v33i830252>
- Falk, B. (2002). Standards-based reforms: Problems and possibilities. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 83(8), 612-620.
- Flick, U. (2013). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis*. Sage.
- Foley, J. A., Morris, D., Gounari, P., & Agostinone-Wilson, F. (2015). Critical education, critical pedagogies, marxist education in the United States. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies (JCEPS)*, 13(3). for trained and qualified
- Foorman, B. R., Kalinowski, S. J., & Sexton, W. L. (2007). Standards-Based Educational Reform Is One Important Step Toward Reducing the Achievement Gap. In A. Gamoran (Ed.), *Standards-Based Reform and the Poverty Gap* (pp. 17-42). Brookings Institution Press.
<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.oslomet.no/stable/10.7864/j.ctt1261wh.4>
- Frances, R., Coughlan, M., & Cronin, P. (2009). Interviewing in qualitative research. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, 16, 309-314.
<https://doi.org/10.12968/ijtr.2009.16.6.42433>
- Freire, P. (2016). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York; Bloomsbury.
- Freire, P. (2021). *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Gajigo, O. (2016). Closing the education gender gap: estimating the impact of girls'

- scholarship program in The Gambia. *Education Economics*, 24(2), 167-188.
- Gajigo, O. (2016). Closing the education gender gap: estimating the impact of girls' scholarship program in The Gambia. *Education Economics*, 24(2), 167-188.s.
- Ghana, R. O. (1996). *1992 constitution of the republic of Ghana*.
<https://doi.org/constituteproject.org>
- Gomendio, M., Co-operation, O. f. E., & Staff, D. (2017). Empowering and enabling teachers to improve equity and outcomes for all. OECD Publishing Paris.
- Government of Ghana. (2006). Persons with disability act, act 715. Accra, West Africa: Government of Ghana.
- Grenzke, E. (2007). Is the Price Right? A Study of the Impact of School Fees in Rural Bangladesh. *JOURNAL OF PUBLIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS-PRINCETON-*, 18, 29.
- Griffiths, T. G. (2021). Education to transform the world: Limits and possibilities in and against the SDGs and ESD. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 30(1-2), 73-92
- Hoppers, C. A. O. (2000). The Centre-periphery in Knowledge Production in the Twenty-first Century [Article]. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education*, 30(3), 283-291. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713657471>
- Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) (2010). Guidance notes on teaching and learning. <https://inee.org/eie-glossary/rights-based-approach-education>.
- Jacob, J., & Lehner, S. (2011). EQUIP2 State-of-the-Art Knowledge in Education: Secondary Education. Guide to Education Project Design Based on a Comprehensive Literature and Project Review. USAID.
- Jean-Paul, H. (2019). Equity Vs Equality: Facilitating Equity in the Classroom.
- Kennedy, M., & Power, M. J. (2010). The smokescreen of meritocracy": elite education in Ireland and the reproduction of class privilege.
- King, E. (2013). Introduction. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/DOI:10.1017/CBO978113960021>
- Kwegyiriba, A. (2021). Free Senior High School Policy: Implications to Education Access Equity in Ghana. *British Journal of Education*, 9(8), 68-81. 7.
- Levin, B. (2003). Approaches to equity in policy for lifelong learning. *Education and Training Policy Division, OECD. Paris: OECD*.

- Locatelli, R. (2018). Education as a public and common good: Reframing the governance of education in a changing context. UNESCO, 1-17.
- Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *All Ireland Journal of Higher Education*, 9(3).
- Malone, H. J. (2013). From the periphery to the center: Broadening the educational change discourse. *Leading educational change: Global issues, challenges, and lessons on whole-system reform*, 25-32.
- Malone, H. J. (2015). *Leading educational change: Global issues, challenges, and lessons on whole-system reform*. Teachers College Press.
- Mantey, E. E. (2014). Accessibility to inclusive education for children with disabilities: a case of two selected areas in Ghana.
- Mantey, E. E. (2017). Discrimination against children with disabilities in mainstream schools in Southern Ghana: Challenges and perspectives from stakeholders. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 54, 18-25.
- Marisennayya, S. (2020). Factors Affecting Female Academic Performance
- McKinsey & Company. 2007. "How the World's Best-performing School Systems came out on Top". Available: http://www.mckinsey.com/App_Media/Reports
- Mensah, D. K. D. (2019). Teachers' perspective on implementing the double-track senior high school system in Ghana. *International Journal of Emerging Trends in Social Sciences*, 5(2), 47-56.
- Moriarty, K. (2017). Achieving SDG4 through a human rights-based approach to education.
- Munda, S. W., & Odebero, S. (2014). The influence of education costs on students' academic performance in Kenya: An empirical study of Bungoma County Secondary Schools. *Asian journal of educational research*, 2(1), 1-11.
- Mutegi, R. G., Muriithi, M. K., & Wanjala, G. (2017). Education policies in Kenya: Does free secondary education promote equity in public secondary schools?.
- Nkosha D.C and Mwanza. P (2009). Quality of Basic Education Provided by Rural Community and regular schools in the Northern Province of Zambia, CICE Hiroshina University, *journal of international cooperation in Education*, Vol.12 No 1, pp. 19-22.
- Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2015). Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence-based nursing*, 18(2), 34-35.

- Nowroozi, H. M., Mohsenizadeh, S. M., Jafari, S. H., & Ebrahimzadeh, S. (2011). The effect of teaching using a blend of collaborative and mastery of learning models, on learning vital signs: An experiment on nursing and operation room students of Mashhad University of Medical Sciences.
- OECD. (2012). Equity and quality in education: Supporting disadvantaged students and schools. In: OECD Paris.
- OECD. (2020). Curriculum Redesign (A series of thematic report on OECD Education 2030 project. Overview Brochure, Issue.
- Opong Frimpong, S. (2021). The role of teaching and learning materials and interaction as a tool for quality early childhood education in Agona East District of the Central Region of Ghana. *African Educational Research Journal*, 9(1): 168-178.
- Owen, R. G. (2004). Organizational behavior in education: Adaptive leadership and school reform.
- Owu-Ewie, C. (2006). The language policy of education in Ghana: A critical look at the English-only language policy of education. Selected proceedings of the 35th annual conference on African linguistics,
- Padmanabhanunni, A., & Fennie, T. (2017). The menstruation experience: Attitude dimensions among South African students. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 27(1), 54-60.
- Papadakis, S., Kalogiannakis, M., and Zaranis, N. (2018). The effectiveness of computer and tablet-assisted intervention in early childhood students' understanding of numbers. An empirical study was conducted in Greece. *Education and Information Technologies*, 23(5): 1849–1871.
- Peters, M. (2005). Critical pedagogy and the futures of critical theory. *Critical theory and critical pedagogy today*.
- Pigozzi, M. J. (2009). Quality Education: A UNESCO Perspective. In *International Perspectives on the Goals of Universal Basic and Secondary Education* (pp. 249-259). Routledge.
- Popham, W. J. (2001). *The truth about testing: An educator's call to action*. ASCD.
- Quarcoo, M. (2014). Language policy and language of education in Ghana: a reality or an illusion? *Wisconsin Journal*, 49-59.
- Quist, H. O. (1999). Secondary education in Ghana at the dawn of the twenty-first century: Profile, problems, prospects. *Prospects*, 29(3), 424-442.

- Quist, H. O. (2001). Cultural issues in secondary education development in West Africa: Away from colonial survivals, towards neocolonial influences?. *Comparative education*, 37(3), 297-314.
- Sahlberg, P. (2007). Secondary education in OECD countries. Common challenges, differing solutions. Torino: European Training Foundation.
- Salberg, P. (2011). Finnish lessons. *Teachers College. Columbia University, NY*.
- Sallah, M. (2014). Participatory action research with ‘minority communities’ and the complexities of emancipatory tensions: intersectionality and cultural affinity. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 9(4), 402-411.
- Sanchez-Tapia, I., & Rafique, A. (2020). Secondary Education Guidance: Multiple and Flexible Pathways. UNICEF.
- Schleicher, A., Zimmer, K., Evans, J., & Clements, N. (2009). PISA 2009 Assessment Framework: Key Competencies in Reading, Mathematics and Science. *OECD Publishing (NJI)*.
- Secretariat, C. (2017). Universal Standards for Quality in Education To enable the delivery of Sustainable Development Goals 2030. The Commonwealth, 16.
- Senadza, B. (2011). Does non-farm income improve or worsen income inequality? Evidence from rural Ghana. *African Review of Economics and Finance*, 2(2), 104-121.
- Shepard, L., Hannaway, J., & Baker, E. (2009). Standards, Assessments, and Accountability. Education Policy White Paper. National Academy of Education (NJI).
- Shepherd, D.L. (2011) “Constraints to school effectiveness: What prevents poor schools from delivering results?” Stellenbosch Economics Working Paper
- Shipman, M. D. (2014). The limitations of social research. Routledge.
- Sida (2015). Human Rights-Based Approach to Education and Skills Development. <https://cdn.sida.se/app/uploads/2021/05/06085943/human-rights-based-approach-education.pdf> accessed on 22nd June 2022.
- Simon, F., Małgorzata, K., & Beatriz, P. (2007). *Education and training policy no more failures ten steps to equity in education: Ten steps to equity in education*. OECD Publishing.
- Skinner, B. F. (1919). The behavior of organisms: An experimental analysis. BF Skinner Foundation
- Statistical Service, G. (2021). *2020 population & housing census: National analytical report*. Ghana Statistics Service.

- Su, S.-W. (2012). The Various Concepts of Curriculum and the Factors Involved in Curricula-making. *Journal of language teaching & research*, 3(1).
- system (cssps) in Ghanaian schools. *african journal of pedagogy*, 1.
- Tamanja, E., & Pajibo, E. (2019). Ghana's free senior high school policy: evidence and insight from data. *EDULEARN19 Proceedings*, 1, 7837-7846. <https://doi.org/10.21125/edulearn.2019.1906>
- Taylor, S. (2011). "Uncovering indicators of effective school management in South Africa using the National School Effectiveness Study". Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers No. 10/11.
- teachers. UNESCO. TCG6/REF/6. tcg.uis.unesco.org
- Thomson-Bunn, H. (2014). Are They Empowered Yet?: Opening up Definitions of Critical Pedagogy. *Composition Forum*,
- Tomaševski, K. (2006). *Human rights obligations in education: the 4-A scheme*. Wolf Legal Publishers.
- Tomasevski, K., (2004). *Manual on rights-based education: Global human rights requirements made simple*, UNESCO Bangkok, Bangkok.
- Tudzi, E. P., Bugri, J. T., & Danso, A. K. (2017). Students with disabilities in Ghana: Accessibility of the university built environment. *Nordic Journal of Human Rights*, 35(3), 275–294.
- Uddin, M. S. (2019). Critical Pedagogy and its Implication in the Classroom. *Journal of Underrepresented & Minority Progress*, 3(2), 109-119.
- UNESCO (2015b) *Education for All 2015 National Review Report*. Ghana. Retrieved from: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002314/231429e.pdf>
- UNESCO, U. (2011). *Out-of-school children: new data reveal persistent challenges*. Retrieved June, 30, 2011.
- UNESCO, U. (2015). *Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action Towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All*. In: Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- UNESCO, U. (2018). *Quick guide to education indicators for SDG 4*. In: Montreal, Canada: UNESCO UIS. Retrieved from <http://uis.unesco.org/sites>
- UNESCO. (2010). *Education for all global monitoring report 2010: Reaching the marginalized*. Unesco Paris.

- UNESCO. (2015). Education for all 2000–2015: Achievements and challenges. In: UNESCO Paris.
- UNESCO. (2017). Reducing global poverty through universal primary and secondary education.
- UNESCO. (2019). Teacher policy development guide. UNESCO Paris, France. .
- UNICEF, I. (2000). Defining quality in education. A paper presented by UNICEF at the meeting of The International Working Group on Education Florence, Italy June,
- UNICEF. (2000). Defining Quality in Education. A paper presented by UNICEF at the meeting of The International Working Group on Education Florence, Italy, June 2000.
- UNICEF. (2007). A human rights-based approach to education for all: A framework for the realization of children's right to education and rights within education..
- United Nations Children's Fund/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (2007). A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All (UNICEF/UNESCO, 2007).
- United Nations Children's Fund/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (2007). A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All (UNICEF/UNESCO, 2007).
- United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development.https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E
- Van der Berg, S., Taylor, S., Gustafsson, M., Spaul, N., & Armstrong, P. (2011). Improving education quality in South Africa. Report for the National Planning Commission, 2, 1-23.
- Wang, D., & Fawzi, W. W. (2020). Impacts of school feeding on educational and health outcomes of school-age children and adolescents in low- and middle-income countries: protocol for a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Systematic Reviews*, 9(1), 55. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-020-01317-6>
- Weis, L. (1983). Inequality in Ghanaian secondary schools: Educational expansion, recruitment, and internal stratification. *International Review of Education*, 29(1), 21-36.
- Whetten, J., Fontenla, M., & Villa, K. (2019). Opportunities for higher education: the ten-year effects of conditional cash transfers on upper-secondary and tertiary enrollments.

Oxford Development Studies, 47(2), 222-237.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13600818.2018.1539472>

- Williams, T. P., Abbott, P., & Mupenzi, A. (2015). 'Education at our school is not free': the hidden costs of fee-free schooling in Rwanda. *Compare: A journal of comparative and international Education*, 45(6), 931-952.
- Wu, K. B., Goldschmidt, P., Boscardin, C. K., & Sankar, D. (2009). International benchmarking and determinants of mathematics achievement in two Indian states. *Education Economics*, 17(3), 395-411. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09645290903142627>
- Yavuz, S., and Güzel, Ü. (2020). Evaluation of teachers' perception of practical communication skills according to gender. *African Educational Research Journal*, 8(1): 134-138.
- Zarshenas, L., Danaei, S. M., Oshagh, M., & Salehi, P. (2010). Problem Based Learning: An Experience of a New Educational Method in Dentistry. *Iranian Journal of Medical Education*, 10(2)..
- Zoe, J. (2018). Strategies and approaches to ensure equitable access to quality education in economic crisis. K4D Helpdesk Report 512. (Institute of Development Studies. Brighton, UK)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF INFORMANTS

Assistant Headmaster- Headmaster 1
Female parent - Parent 1
Male parent- Parent 2
Social studies teacher- Teacher 1
Geography teacher- teacher 2
Economics teacher- teacher 3
Economics teacher- teacher 4

APPENDIX 2: DOCUMENTS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Education Strategic Plan 2018-2030

<https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2019-05-education-strategic-plan-2018-2030.pdf>

2. Education Sector Performance Report 2018

<https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2020-16-Ghana%20-%20ESP-IR.pdf>

3. National Pre-Tertiary Curriculum Framework

<https://nacca.gov.gh/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/National-Pre-tertiary-Education-Curriculum-Framework-final.pdf>

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview guide

On Quality

Parents

1. What is your understanding of quality education?

- How do you understand quality in classroom teaching and learning, subject content and assessment?

- What kind of teaching motivates your child?

2. Do you think your ward(s) is/are taught by qualified teachers?

- Would you say that contributes to the quality of the education they're receiving?

3. Are you satisfied with the contact hours your child spends in school and in classroom?

-Why/why not?

4. Do you think your Ward's school has adequate teaching and learning resources to provide quality education?

- What kind of teaching and learning activities, what kind of resources?

-What are your reasons?

5. Are you satisfied with the quality of subject contents being taught to your wards?

- Please give some examples from selected subjects

6. What contributions do you make towards your ward attaining quality education? Are there structures for parents involvement and students' participation?

- Assistance with home work?

Teachers

1. How do you understand quality of education?

2. How do you operationalize the curriculum? Alone or discuss with colleagues?
3. Any changes after the recent educational reforms?
4. How do you plan your teaching in specific subjects? Give examples
5. What kind of teaching/learning activities? Mostly teacher monologue or active learning? What kind of textbooks, learning resources?
6. Is differentiated teaching according to learners' different needs and interests a focus at your school? In what ways?
7. Is formative assessment a focus at your school? How?
8. What are the assessments for measuring learning outcomes? Summative assessment.
9. How adequate are teaching and learning resources for effective teaching and learning especially among physically challenged and cross-gender learners?
Examples
10. Are the contents of education relevant and responsive to gender issues and needs? Examples
11. Is Education for sustainable development and citizenship education implemented at your school? How?

Heads of School

1. How do you understand the quality of education?
2. What are the required teaching and learning resources needed for effective education?
3. What in-service trainings are available for teachers upgrading?
4. How effective do teachers utilize contact hours?

5. Is Education for sustainable development and citizenship education implemented at your school? How?

Directors of Education

1. How is SDG4 implemented in the Ghanaian education system?
2. How do you understand quality of education?
3. How do you work to work to improve this?
4. How can children of varying socio-economic backgrounds be provided with equal quality education? Equity?
5. What measures have been put in place to improve the quality of teaching and learning?
6. What teaching and learning activities are relevant in our education system to cater for gender and unique learner needs?
7. Is Education for sustainable development and citizenship education implemented at your school? How?

On Equity

Parents

1. How often are parents involved in educational decisions and policies? Quality?
2. What support does the school provide for incoming students who are physically challenged?
3. What social interventions are given to learners from less privileged backgrounds?

Teachers

1. What forms of academic achievement gaps can be found within the varying learners in the school?
2. How do you compensate for this?
3. What classroom interventions exist to support learners with disabilities to be at par with other learners?
4. How are learners from different social backgrounds integrated in classroom management?
5. What strategies does the teacher use to provide a culturally responsive curriculum?

Heads of School

1. What structures are in place to support students from unique backgrounds?
2. Are there policies to regulate gender discrimination issues?
3. What supportive interventions are available to encourage physically challenged students?

Directors of Education

1. What policy formulations exist to protect the right of every Ghanaian to education without discrimination?
2. Are there interventions to support vulnerable groups in society to quality and higher education?
3. What measurable goals are in place to ensure unique and fair treatments of the girl child?
4. What support systems are there to encourage higher learning among girls?

APPENDIX 4: INFORMATION CONSENT FORM

Are you interested in taking part in the research project

Achieving Quality and Equity in Ghana's Secondary : Strategies, potentials, and constraints?

Purpose of the project

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to understand opportunities and constraints related to achieving quality and equity in Ghana's secondary education (SE). The case study focuses on how equity and quality are understood and operationalized in policy documents as well as in selected secondary schools. The study also explores the experiences with equity and quality by stakeholders in the secondary education sector. In particular, the study will analyze how global policies such as Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) are implemented in Ghana's secondary schools.

The research project is a master's thesis in partial fulfillment of my MA International Education and Development at the Oslo Metropolitan University. In this letter, we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Specific objectives include the following:

1. Assess the government of Ghana's policy strategies in addressing inequities and quality in SE in the light of SDG4.
2. Assess how quality in education is understood and operationalised and discuss this in the light of Education for sustainable development and critical pedagogy.

3. Assess opportunities and constraints related to achieving equity and quality in SE.

Specific research questions include the following:

1. What policy strategies are being implemented by the government of Ghana (GoG) to achieve equity and quality in SE ?
2. How is quality in secondary education understood and operationalised in the policy documents?
3. How is quality in secondary education understood and operationalised in selected secondary schools?
4. How is equity and quality in secondary education experienced by stakeholders in the secondary education sector?

Who is responsible for the research project?

Oslo Metropolitan University, Faculty of Education and International Development in Norway is the institution responsible for the project.



Why are you being asked to participate?

The data material for the thesis will consist of policy documents and interviews with stakeholders in secondary education in Ghana. You are invited to participate in the study as a Director of Education, head of school, teacher, parent or a guardian or because you are directly or indirectly involved in the development, implementation and enforcement of the equity and quality of education in Ghana.

The purpose of the interviews is to get insight into how the research participants understand equity and quality of secondary education and their experiences with this. The study seeks to understand opportunities and constraints to achieving equity and quality in urban as well as rural areas.

What does participation involve for you?

If agree to participate in this project, we will have a scheduled video interview on Zoom and the conversation will be recorded electronically on a smart phone using the Diktafon App. This implies that the recording is protected and encrypted so that no unauthorized persons can access the data and full confidentiality is ensured.

The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and includes questions about your experiences and perspectives on equity and quality in Ghana's secondary education.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

Only the supervisor for this project, Associate prof. Annika Wetlesen and the student, Mathias Opoku Banson, will have access to your personal data.

We will replace your name and contact details with a code. The list of names, contact details and respective, will be stored at Oslo Metropolitan University One drive, locked and encrypted. All research participants will be anonymised the thesis.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end in May 2022. After the end of the project, all personal data collected will be deleted. Data collected will be used only for this research not any other further study.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with Oslo Metropolitan University, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, please contact:

- Oslo Metropolitan University via
 - Associate prof. Annika Wetlesen, by email: anwe@oslomet.no or by telephone: +47 92245292:
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: personvermtjenester@nsd.no or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Associate Prof. Annika Wetlesen

Mathias Opoku Banson

(Project leader and Supervisor)

(Student)

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project *Achieving Quality and Equity in Ghana's Secondary Education: Context, Reorientation and Strategies* and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- a. to participate in an online interview
- b. for information about me/myself to be published in a way that I can be recognised (used for only this academic research)

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx.. May 2022.

(Signed by participant, date)

