

Free Senior High School Policy in Ghana: Implementation and Outcomes against Policy Purposes

David Kyei-Nuamah¹, Andrews Larbi²

¹Department of Education, East China Normal University, Shanghai, China

²School of Material Science and Engineering, Zhengzhou University, Zhengzhou, Henan, China

ABSTRACT

The 'pro-poor' free senior high school (SHS) policy has become a major rights-based social-democratic initiative in Ghana. The policy attracts major criticisms and praises from academics and citizens. This paper broaches the policy's outcomes and implementation inputs to its purposes in real-time. The study uses secondary data from the official websites of Ghana's presidency, the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service-Education Management Information System (GES-EMIS), and the Ghana Living Standards (GLSS 7) Report. The study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with Ball's policy as 'text' and 'discourse' approaches and document analysis. The policy achieved a higher enrolment in location and gender; improvements in students' academic outcomes; a pupil-to-teacher ratio: of 20:1, and reduced household burden. Other challenges are delays in funding and distribution of policy inputs. The study suggests that funding mechanisms should be widened, deepen policy education for school leaders and parents to enhance policy progress.

KEYWORDS: Free SHS policy; Ghana education policies; household burden reduction; policy outcome

1. INTRODUCTION

The introduction of free schooling in Ghana has a long history since its independence in 1957 (Akyeampong 2009, Ghana Laws, Education Act (Edu. Act) 1961). Many shelved policies have been intended to liberate Ghanaian school-going children by giving them access to quality education and free parents from financial burdens (Edu. Act 1961). The realization of these policies has seen systematic turmoil in terms of coups, changes of governments, and various hitches from partisan politics. For example, the overthrow of Ghana's first president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, affected his vision for free schooling, which its implementation was piloted in the country (Akyeampong 2009). Another military overthrow by former President Jerry John Rawlings also halted and shelved other academic policies, education system reforms in the 1980s, and many other initiatives, which did not give room for continuing other relevant policies.

Stably from 1992, successive governments from the 4th republic have improved the demographical

How to cite this paper: David Kyei-Nuamah | Andrews Larbi "Free Senior High School Policy in Ghana: Implementation and Outcomes against Policy Purposes" Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-6 | Issue-6, October 2022, pp.1207-1222, URL: www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd52028.pdf



Copyright © 2022 by author (s) and International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development Journal. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)



impacts of free schooling. The introduction and implementation of the Free Compulsory Basic Education (fCUBE) have improved the living and basic education in Ghana as a result even though it continues to face challenges (Akyeampong 2009; Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2002, 2015). To this, basic education in Ghana has been free and compulsory for every Ghanaian child to fulfil constitutional requirements after the 1995s (Edu. Act 1961 2008; Akyeampong 2009). Also, in 2015, the government introduced a progressively free SHS policy in some regions (ESP 2020).

More significantly, to enhance pre-tertiary education, the government of Ghana decided to absorb all senior high school fees agreed upon between the Ghana Education Service Council and the Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS). Abdul-Rahman et al. (2018) refer to this policy as a 'pro-poor' initiative because it solved most of the household burden. This study adds new forms of academic discourse to its discussions. It uses the

current GES-EMIS data (2016-2020), GLSS 7, and other published interviews from policy actors in its analysis and discussions since the policy was rolled out. This comes after Abdul-Rahman et al. (2018), Adu-Ababio and Osei (2018), and Chanimbe and Dankwah (2021) studied the free SHS policy in some specific locations taking its secondary data from the GLSS 6.

After analysing the GES-EMIS National parameters from 2016 to 2020, the enrolment rate in location and gender was achieved. Pupil to teacher ratio was reduced to 20:1. The policy actors and proponents have disclosed that the policy has been sturdy and resilient to achieving purposes (My Joy Online, Joy News, Communications Bureau of the presidency). According to the documents analysed (see Table 1), this was achieved by the various interventions the policy sought to employ, even though funding sought to hinder policy progress in some areas.

Following the extensive discourses on the current free SHS (ESP 2030) policy's legitimization, appraisal, and scandals, this research seeks to add its technical-analytical voice to comparing policy outcomes to its purposes and implementation inputs to the pool of knowledge. In doing so, the study will present a fair playground for further analysis and contributions to its national and academic discourse. To the departure from the above purposes, this research sought to answer these questions: How are the free SHS policy purposes achieved during its implementation? Are the policy implementation inputs affecting policy outcomes? How are the policy outcomes reflecting livelihoods and economic demographics?

The paper is organized as follows. The next section reviews the literature, highlighting key policy enactment, implementation, and outcomes. Next is the methods section that presents the data used (see Table 1) and highlights the main tools used in the data analysis. A findings section follows where the documents used are subjected to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) using Ball's (1994) policy as text and discourse approach and document analysis. Finally, a discussion and conclusion section presents the key implications and suggestions for the policy in Ghana.

2. Review of Literature

The literature review in this section comprises a background to how policies are initiated and enacted following the guidelines of international bodies like the United Nations. Also, key issues on free schooling policy implementation and outcomes using the USA, the UK (forming the Global North), Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania (creating the Global South) and termed as low middle-income countries by UNDP and OECD

as reference nations. The study's review chose the USA and the UK from the Global North because, historically, they were among the countries which first introduced free schooling. For the UK, it was once the colonial master of Ghana, and some aspects of free education can be traced from their line of action. Interestingly, the countries from the Global South have similar contextual forms with the case nation's demographics. This is relevant to having a good ground to make strong cases for the study's discussion and conclusion.

Policy initiation and enactment

Many studies have documented the policy-making process's complexity (Gorinitzka et al. 2005; Reynolds and Saunders 1987; see also, Trowler 2002) and its implementation by government institutions and educational institutions (Ball 1994; Ball et al. 2011; Braun et al. 2011). Some of these studies have considered contextual indices in establishing policy negotiation, interpretation, and translation from 'the bottom-up.' Specifically, Trowler (2002) describes formal policy implementation as contextually contingent, taking diverse perspectives in different educational institutions. In addition, policies are embedded with plans, programs, and projects in a tetra-frame termed the PPPPs (Policies-Plans-Programs-Projects), which is in tandem with Ball's definition of 'policy.' In this way, stipulated policies consider their geographical context, especially when borrowed or transferred (Rappleye 2006), for smooth implementation.

On the initiation and enactment of policy, Ball (1994) sees policy as 'process' and 'outcomes,' not the policy of things; he then explains that policy is simply a document that contains sets of instructions that determines how things are supposed to run or perform. Adequately, most nations initiate various policies in response to global standards. These responses to the globally charged conventions must also follow locally made processes and guidelines to prove a local-contextual understanding of the specific policy in language and practices to achieve its outlined purposes. Accordingly, the UN serves as a guide through conventions for its member states to prepare global policies. The free SHS policy under study draws its tenets and aspects from the Sustainable Development Goal 4-quality education for 2030. Member states like Ghana did initiate 'processes' for 'outcomes' (Ball 1994) to meet these global targets.

Most importantly, education is accepted as a basic right of every child under the United Nations Conventions; 'the purpose of education is to enable the child to develop to his or her fullest possible

potential and to learn respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (Article 24).' At the same time, 'States parties shall ensure that primary education is compulsory and available to all children based on equal opportunity. States parties are encouraged to make secondary and vocational education available and accessible to every child (Article 28).' Now, the Right to Education is effectively backed by international laws and thus, must be strictly adhered to by UN member states.

Free schooling in the global north: implementation and outcomes

The implementation of the 1944 Act in England was geared toward a response to inclusive access and reducing household burden (Edu. Act 1944; Finch 1984). The Acts' overarching aim for secondary education after the war was to address the remaining inequalities in the system. The proportion of 'free places' at grammar schools in England and Wales increased from almost a third to nearly a half between 1913 and 1937. However, Finch (1984) expresses some daunting outcomes of these policies. When poorer children were offered free places, he states that parents often had to turn them down due to the extra costs for needed educational materials. As a result, poorer households still face challenges when education is labelled free because it is not, as the policy text admonishes. It is an outcome termed implementation error (Ball 1994; Akyeampong 2009). Again, this contributes to the citizens not supporting the policy and later hinders its progress and achievement despite political will (Akyeampong 2009; see Mehrotra 1998).

Fast forward to 2010, the Coalition Government introduced the flagship education reforms. This reform was based on a similar concept in Sweden and charter schools in the United States and Canada. Ultimately, England introduced 'new free schools, which were solely funded by the state and independent of local authorities (Education Policy Institute (EPI)). The EPI reports from 2011 to 2016 inform that free schools solved the need for more schools due to the growing population. However, clustered areas with already many schools contributed to excesses and waste of resources, leading to an inefficient school system. The reports concluded that the program was less successful in establishing schools where quality schools were needed.

Furthermore, the 2019 EPI report captured a significant problem, noting that 'while a cluster of free schools has been founded in the most economically deprived areas in England, it may not always be the case that they are attended by a representative proportion of pupils who can be

identified as disadvantaged.' Here, is it certain that the targeted group may not attend free schools often? But are not taxes paid by every citizen? If so, shouldn't free schools be labelled as 'disadvantaged free schools' as citizens who do not fall in such a category will not be enrolled? A similar case is being debated in Ghana to establish either progressively free education or free education because not all citizens cannot afford tuition fees (Abdul-Rahman et al., 2018).

In the USA, landmark evidence of failed or unyielding policies from 1965 (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, No child left out Policy, and Every Child Succeed Acts which was legitimized by the famous 'A country at Risk') did not give any positive outcomes seeing policy development from the progressive movement (Mitchell 2018) in the United States to address equity, access, and quality education. Further, in the case of America, policymakers are said to associate failure of policy implementation with local educators (Mitchell 1983, 1986, 2018; Crowson et al. 2018; Kingdon 2003. 165) and inadequate accountability incentives.

The above researchers, especially Mitchell, see education policy implementation failure grounded in inadequate school-level infrastructure, limited resources, inadequate training, and poor conceptual understanding of policy designs. Again, Mitchell (1983; 1986; 2018) bares teeth on the heavy involvement of the elite (civic and economic) in policymaking out of the public domain. He further asserts that these elite policymakers have the influential staff resources and discursive power with relatively coherent ideologies, which gives them the upper hand over the public and even the legislature (see also Yun 2020).

West (1978), on tuition tax and credit proposals in analysing the 1978 Packwood Bill, stated that the promotion of stimulus packages for educational assistance and compulsory access to public schools in America set by the bill was labelled as 'monopolistic.' An example he gave was the perceptions of beneficiaries toward the policy. A parent sued for choosing to home-school asserted 'we are forced to receive this service whatever our opinion of the quality of the service may be. Not only is there an alternative available, but we are not allowed to refuse the State offers if we do not like it....(61)'. This assertion depicts parents' frustrations who do not see any good option for free and compulsory education that lacks the quality their children deserve. Some parents brought further questions: 'if they are trusted to provide food, shelter, and care for their wards, why not education?' (62).

According to this policy outcome, although there is the opportunity to free compulsory education, the quality, and public support problem undermines its progress.

Free schooling in the global south: implementation and impact

The focus on the exclusive formulation of policies in African countries such as Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania is seen right after their independence, thus, the 1960s. These policies were mainly towards access to primary and secondary schooling education. The re-introduction of the free Primary Education (FPE) policy in line with both Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) international agendas in sub-Saharan Africa has been on a high (Akyeampong 2009; Deininger in Oketch and Rolleston 2007; MOE South Africa). The focus here will be on three East African countries: Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, which OECD marks as achieving successful outcomes in the FPE policy implementations. In these countries' cases, the successful agenda-setting and implementation of FPE policies have led to new policies deepening access, equity, and quality in delivering secondary education. This can be identified with the introduction of various interventions leading to the expansion of access, equity, and quality education ever since they gained their independence from the British colonial rule in the early part of the 1960s (Galabawa 2001; Oketch and Rolleston 2007).

Conversely, the policy demographic outcomes are less than their population: those excluded after initial entry, those at risk of dropout, and a majority excluded from any form of secondary education. The three East African educational giants have similar traits and historical backgrounds (Galabawa 2001; Oketch and Rolleston 2007). For example, few of their population had access to education at all levels in the past. Hence, each faced similar educational and literacy problems during their political independence in the 1960s.

In Kenya's case, they declared a Universal Primary Education (UPE) campaign free of charge as a long-term objective in 1963. Followed by Tanzania in 1967 and then Uganda, although uncertain with the outcomes of her fellow neighbours' policy outcomes, which gave birth to the perception of the 'Uganda lukewarmism' (Oketch and Rolleston 2007) described in its desire to expand primary education. Going forward, experienced Uganda improved access from the time of independence in 1962 until the late 1970s, when internal political conflict and war caused a serious impact on its educational progress.

Referencing these nations above, there seem to be similar situational outcomes of semi-failure or semi-progress in their early stages of policy implementations as in FPE policies introduced in their countries. Countries like Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda draw their largely failed line to policy funding. These countries project to have the needed policy texts to implement but funding for good policy outcomes is the overarching problem. Also, interruptions of unstable governance caused by military takeovers and ethnic wars delay education progress in some parts of the country. As reported, some countries in the Global North like the USA and UK did not face policy funding problems but implementation and evaluation problems: their challenges were linked to school autonomy, lack of policy transparency, misunderstanding of teacher or student-centeredness theories, and clouded feasibility studies for policy implementation.

In Ghana's case, a recent publication by Abdul Rahman et al. (2018) argued that compulsory free senior high school is a perfect replacement for the progressively free secondary school in the three northern regions of Ghana. They further concluded that the policy had eliminated all educational expenses made by households. Although there is a substantial relief of household burden by the policy, as empirically supported by Adu-Ababio and Osei (2018), not all households felt it (GLSS 7). Adu-Ababio and Osei (2018), in their study, used 2013 data (GLSS 6) to calculate the amount that each student (border/day) benefits from the free SHS policy. This amount was GHC1,002.47 annually for residential students and GHC648.47 for non-resident students (13). Here, their statement that the policy is a relief to the household burden by decreasing overall poverty (11) could be challenged by current data. This is because inflations on products were not factored in. Therefore, others will see these benefits as insufficient to address household poverty or finance free education (see, Chanimbe and Dankwah 2021), as pivoted by Adu-Ababio and Osei (2018).

A most recent empirical study by Chanimbe and Dankwah (2021) found daunting results about the implementation and outcomes of the free secondary schooling policy. They reported a shortage in teachers due to high enrolments, inadequate infrastructure, increasing teacher workload, insufficient teaching and learning materials, overcrowding in classrooms, and delay in the supply of funds to schools. They further remarked that '... the explicated intricacies and deep-seated nuances in these results substantiate arguments that the diversity and categorization of schools determined the distinctiveness and uneven magnitude

of schools' challenges in implementing the policy (1). Although there is no fixed evaluation duration for a policy, the data used in this study was accumulated in 20 during 18: the first stages of policy implementation. Therefore, a definitive conclusion cannot be made even though what they reported was backed by data from the schools they engaged. These caveats are captured in Adu-Ababio and Osei (2018) as not the challenges that free SHS has brought. These challenges were already with the GES (14).

To this departure, this study uses real-time data from the Ministry of Education, triangulated (Bowen 2009) with other documents listed in Table 1 to try and make clear conclusions on the policy's outcomes.

3. Methods

The research employs a qualitative approach. The study used secondary data from published official documents and recorded interviews on the Free SHS policy by actors and stakeholders. In addition, to build a firm foundation for a critical policy analysis procedure, a systematic review (Bowen 2009) in selecting some official files or evidence for document analysis, the search used the key phrase: free SHS policy to guide the selection. After careful evaluation and rigorous reading of the collected official

documents, seven were highly found important for use.

To ethically support the document selection processes, the research acknowledged Macdonald's (2001) text eligibility process and Van Dijk's (2001) 'text-context theory.' Macdonald's eligibility criteria include four basic factors: authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning of the documents. The latter's 'text-context theory' points to the standard by which the research's topic and purposes under investigation inform the particular source of the document to be relevant in the selection procedure (Bowen 2009). In addition, it is important to consider the context within which the text was produced and the audience for which it is acknowledged.

The documents retrieved were from the Ministry of Education, Ghana Statistics Board, the New Patriotic Party, and The Presidency's official website. The dates to which these documents were published and covers were considered. This sets the authenticity of the documents. As a result, all the documents after selection were checked to have the ministry's seal or the Coat of Arms of the Republic of Ghana certification. Table 1 shows that these documents are stipulated to give an answer-search to the research's policy intentions, implementations, and outcomes.

Table 1: Documents selected for analysis

Official Documents Selected	Data Analysed
New Patriotic Party Manifesto 2008, 2012, and 2016.	Policy Intentions
Pre-Tertiary Education Act 2020.	The Law and agenda-setting, policy intentions, and policy implementation.
Free SHS Policy Document	Policy intentions, policy implementation, policy funding, and demographics.
Education Strategic Plan 2018-2030	Policy funding, Policy Implementation, demographics, interventions, and proposed outcomes.
SHS Report 2015/16 to 2019/20. Ghana Education Service: Ministry of Education.	Policy Outcomes
Ghana Living Standards Report 7 (GLSS 7). Ghana Statistical Services 2019.	Policy Outcomes: demographics, social impact, and economic impact.
President's official published speech (Ghana's Presidency)	Policy intentions, intervention, and outcomes

First, Ball's (1994) policy as 'text' and policy as 'discourse' (Nuzor P. 2013) and critical discourse analysis by Fairclough 1992 was used as analytical tools for the policy purpose and intentions. Here, the provisions enshrined in the Free SHS policy documentation and the Pre-Tertiary Education Act 2020 are analysed for policy intentions. These documents using the same conceptions were triangulated by analysing semi-structured, open-ended published interviews with the policy actors and citizens. These provisions in the documents are conceived and articulated by the education officials who mediate policy at the meso-level of the Ghanaian educational system.

The policy's implicit/explicit intentions and assumptions were revealed using critical discourse analysis, adopting a 'discoursed-based view' of language. This is because the knowledge, power, and social relations are construed through written and spoken communications analysis.

Furthermore, document analysis (Merriam 1988; Yin 1994; Bowen 2009) was also used to assess policy intentions, policy implementation process, and policy outcomes. Using this analytical tool, the data reviewed formed preliminary codes. These initial codes formed the basis for creating themes further to discuss. These themes were again examined and interpreted in line with the data retrieved to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin and Strauss 2008; Rapley 2007; see also Bowen, 2009) of the policy as a whole for fair representation of the research's discussions and conclusions.

4. Results

Analysing policy (documents) as text and as discourse

Adopting critical discourse analysis (CDA) on the Free SHS policy documents for policy purposes and intentions indicated that the policy could be viewed or referred to as 'rights-based' and 'compulsory' (Edu. Act 2020). This also refers to a 'social-obligative' intervention for a country's citizenry. The assuring commitment the text indicates proves the policy's intention to allow all SHS-going children free education without biases. This is in tandem with what Trowler (1998, 62) refers to as 'progressivism.' He further explains that it bridges the gap between educational elites and the poor.

These rights-based and compulsory 'social-obligative' intervention is enshrined first in Ghana's 1992 constitution. This same enshrinement has been made clearer in the Pre-tertiary Education Act 2020, Act 1049, Article 2, subsection 3 as:

Secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, particularly by the progressive introduction of free education. (1992 Constitution Article 25 1b)

Free secondary education

3. Secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational education, shall be free and accessible to all eligible candidates. (Edu. Act 2020)

Linguistically, the use of the auxiliary 'shall', the present action words 'free, and accessible' in the statement above, indicates governments' commitment in all their power and resource to make secondary schooling 'free' in all forms to every 'eligible candidate'. This gesture is what Gewirtz (2002, 140) and Lynch and Lodge (2002, 7) refer to as 'distributive justice'. Thus, a symmetry for all citizens to education. In this case, the government has shown its responsibility in making education accessible, enshrining it into law, and a right for the citizens. Again, the free SHS policy document quotes the 1992 constitution's Article 25 1b to emphasize commitment and government mandate as the constitution puts it, to ensure that basic and secondary schooling in all forms is made free and accessible.

On the other hand, discourses published on Ghana's presidency website capture President Nana Akufo-Addo at the launch of the Free SHS policy on 12th September 2017, stating that:

'...I know that knowledge and talent are not for the rich and privileged alone, and that free education widens the gates of opportunities to every child, especially those whose talents are arrested because of poverty.'

'It must have been a daunting prospect at the time paying for the education of so many children, for such an extended period out of limited public resources, transferring a potential workforce away from immediate productivity for an investment like schooling. But the experiment paid off.'

From the above statements, the use of the personal pronoun 'I' followed by the verb 'know' portray an emphatic awareness without a doubt that the key policy actor knows the importance of education to his citizens, as SDG no. 4 declares. Also, he is aware of their predicaments with his intentions and commitment to address them.

As the discourse unfolds, he details the policy's intentions and provisions. The president does that by further using the personal pronouns 'I, we' before a past tense 'has chosen' and a present verb 'lift' and 'have,' indicating an emphasis on the policy intentions, commitment, and implementation to the people so far as their education is concerned.

'The cost of providing free secondary school education will be cheaper than the cost of the alternative of an uneducated and unskilled workforce that can retard our development. Leadership is about choices – I have chosen to invest in our youth and country's future.'

'...we lift the financial burden off our parents and the heart-rending anxiety that accompanies the beginning of every school term. We have a sacred duty to our children and the generations beyond in ensuring that, irrespective of their circumstances, their right to an education is preserved.'

Using Document Analysis

The following preliminary codes were revealed: subjecting the officially published interviews by policy actors, free education policy document, and ESP (2030, 30-42) to document analysis. After further readings and in-depth coding, a comprehensive connotation is presented in the second column of Table 2.

Table 2 Preliminary codes and understanding formed

Preliminary Codes (phrase/word)	Understanding formed
Appropriate means, priority, preferred, totally unacceptable, relevant	Ideas for implementation
Every Ghanaian child, eligible, irrespective, students provided hope, rapid progress, economic development, capacity, transform, quality	Access and Equity to social policy beneficiaries
Determination, achieve, ensure, decided, must, shall, deliver, mandates, pursue	Policy outcomes to beneficiaries and the entire nation
Consultation, follow suit, face challenges, in all humility, be ready	Level of policy implementation responsibility to actors
Provision, programs, interventions, physical infrastructure, allowance, fees	Forming alliances and community for policy adaptation and realization
	Policy needs and interventions

Following Table 2, it was found that the policy actors were firm on their articulations, resonating with a clear intention, policy eligibility, and road map. These were supported by the repetition of ‘determination, priority, appropriate means, relevant, preferred, ensure, pursue, deliver’ in their speeches and the official policy documents. For access and equity, it was made clear by the main policy actor that ‘every Ghanaian child who is placed into a public second cycle institution by computerized school selection system during the school placement process is eligible for free SHS education.’

Subsequently, these codes: ‘consultation, follow suit, face challenges, be ready’ depicted how the implementers had and will create alliances, a community of stakeholders and experts to solicit ideas before and during policy implementation. In addition, the codes which revealed the policy need and intentions were categorically represented by these words ‘provision, programs, interventions, physical infrastructure, allowances, and free fee’. These words were repeated in many of the documents analysed, setting a clear policy agenda on the specific needs or interventions for policy inputs.

More so, the foreshadowed policy outcomes revealed through the implementors were braced with these codes ‘provided hope, rapid progress, economic development, capacity, transform, quality’. Expounding meaning from these codes, pertinent issues were raised from other stakeholders to if these outcomes can be achieved. For example, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) (opposition party) initiated and implemented the free-progressive SHS policy in the northern part of Ghana (Abdul-Rahman et al. 2018) was emphatic on labelling the policy as unachievable and a scoring platform for amassing votes for the NPP.

To achieve a systematic assessment of policy outcomes, the following official statistics from the Ministry of Education, Ghana, compare the 2016/17 academic year to the 2019/2020 academic year. These years represent the periods before and after the implementation of the policy.

Number of Schools						School Organisation				Classrooms				
Type of Edu	Total No. of Schs	Schools by Locality				Grand Total	Type	Public		Private		Public	Private	
		Urban Total	%*	Rural Total	%*			Total	%*	Total	%*			
Public	620	341	55%	279	45%	620	Boys Only	23	4%	2	1%	Permanent	17,647	3,208
Private	307	180	59%	127	41%	307	Girls Only	38	6%	10	3%	Temporary Struct	1,338	242
Total	927	521	56%	406	44%	927	Co-Educational	558	90%	292	96%	Major Repairs ¹	2,312	199
							Total	619	100%	304	99%	% Major Repairs	13%	6%

Water Source		Public		Private		Electricity Source		Public		Private		Social Facilities		
Source	Total	%*	Total	%*	Source	Total	%*	Total	%*	Total	%*	Total	%*	
Pipeborne	279	45%	139	45%	Nat. Grid	600	97%	288	94%	Generator	1	0%	0	0%
Borehole	301	49%	121	39%	Other	0	0%	0	0%	Total	601	97%	288	94%
Well	5	1%	15	5%										
Other	9	1%	10	3%										
Total	594	96%	285	93%										

Boarding/Hostel Facilities				Pedagogical Tools				Rates and Ratio					
Type	Public		Private		Total No.	Per Student	Total No.	Per Student	Total	Male	Female		
	Total	%*	Total	%*									
Day only	66	11%	58	20%	Sitting Places	867,544	1.1	92,177	1.4	Popn(15-17yrs)	1,758,476	884,440	874,036
Day with Hostel	64	11%	114	39%	Writing Places	877,674	1.1	96,201	1.4	Total Enrolment	880,770	451,713	429,057
Mainly Boarding	30	8%	15	5%	Textbooks:					Enrol(15-17yrs)	466,803	230,471	236,332
Boarding/Day & Hostel	74	12%	25	9%	English	412,604	0.5	26,838	0.4	Popn(15yrs)	596,966	300,872	296,094
Boarding & Day	354	58%	82	28%	Mathematics	406,556	0.5	23,637	0.4	SHSI Enrolment	303,856	154,227	149,629
Total	608	98%	294	96%	Integrated Science	359,360	0.4	21,737	0.3	Enrol(15yrs)	92,031	44,688	47,343
					Social Studies	336,106	0.4	20,407	0.3	Gross Enrolment Ratio	50.1%	51.1%	49.1%
										Gross Admission Ratio	50.9%	51.3%	50.5%
										Net Enrolment Rate	26.5%	26.1%	27.0%
										Net Admission Rate	15.4%	14.9%	16.0%
										Completion Rate	48.0%	49.6%	46.4%

WASSCE Core Subjects Pass Rates - 2016 ²												
	Maths			English			Int. Science			Social Studies		
	Total	Pass	% Pass	Total	Pass	% Pass	Total	Pass	% Pass	Total	Pass	% Pass
Total	271,846	90,089	33.1%	271,899	140,671	51.7%	271,848	131,697	48.4%	271,899	148,476	54.6%
Boys	140,147	52,267	37.3%	140,147	72,004	51.4%	140,147	72,598	51.8%	140,177	80,253	57.3%
Girls	131,699	37,802	28.7%	131,699	68,667	52.1%	131,699	59,099	44.9%	131,722	68,223	51.8%

Figure 1 SHS national parameters-2016/17 school year
Source: Ghana Education Service, MOE-EMIS

Number of Schools						School Organisation				Classrooms			
Type of Edu	Total No. of Schs	Schools by Locality				Grand Total	Type	Public		Private		Public	Private
		Urban Total	%*	Rural Total	%*			SHS	TVET	SHS	SHS		
Public	SHS 630	334	53%	296	47%	630	Boys Only	24	4%	0	0%	3	1%
	TVET 47	28	60%	19	40%	47	Girls Only	38	6%	1	2%	7	2%
Private	SHS 286	172	60%	114	40%	286	Co-Educational	568	90%	46	98%	276	97%
Total	963	534	55%	429	45%	963	Total	630	100%	47	100%	286	100%

Water Source		Public		Private		Electricity Source		Public		Private		Social Facilities		
Source	Total	%*	Total	%*	Source	Total	%*	Total	%*	Total	%*	Total	%*	
Pipeborne	312	50%	24	51%	Nat. Grid	607	96%	46	98%	270	94%	Toilets	573	91%
Borehole	302	48%	23	49%	Generator	2	0%	0	0%	1	0%	Urinal	545	87%
Well	3	0%	0	0%	Other	15	2%	0	0%	10	3%	Drinking Water	630	100%
Other	10	2%	0	0%	Total	624	99%	46	98%	281	98%	Electricity	630	100%
Total	627	100%	47	100%										

Boarding/Hostel Facilities				Pedagogical Tools				Rates and Ratio					
Type	Public		Private		Total No.	Per Student	Total No.	Per Student	Total	Male	Female		
	Total	%*	Total	%*									
Day only	77	12%	4	9%	Furniture:								
Day with Hostel	46	7%	10	21%	Sitting Places	952,812	1.0	84,502	1.3	Popn(15-17yrs)	1,811,345	914,053	897,292
Mainly Boarding	63	10%	4	9%	Writing Places	661,244	0.7	76,361	1.1	Total Enrolment	1,013,005	530,950	482,055
Boarding/Day & Hostel	56	9%	5	11%	Textbooks:					Enrol(15-17yrs)	536,969	269,722	267,247
Boarding & Day	388	62%	24	51%	English	684,249	0.7	26,434	0.4	Popn(15yrs)	614,709	310,802	303,907
Total	630	100%	47	100%	Mathematics	741,963	0.8	24,077	0.4	SHSI Enrolment	378,499	198,325	180,174
					Integrated Science	682,681	0.7	23,188	0.3	Enrol(15yrs)	117,316	57,418	59,898
					Social Studies	719,427	0.8	22,729	0.3	Gross Enrolment Ratio	55.9%	58.1%	53.7%
										Gross Admission Ratio	61.6%	63.8%	59.3%
										Net Enrolment Rate	29.6%	29.5%	29.8%
										Net Admission Rate	19.1%	18.5%	19.7%
										Completion Rate	52.5%	54.7%	50.3%

WASSCE Core Subjects Pass Rates - 2017 ²												
	Maths			English			Int. Science			Social Studies		
	Total	Pass	% Pass	Total	Pass	% Pass	Total	Pass	% Pass	Total	Pass	% Pass
Total	283,182	119,419	42.2%	282,521	151,786	53.7%	282,552	121,935	43.2%	286,564	148,779	52.3%
Boys	144,364	66,069	45.8%	144,184	76,643	53.2%	144,184	67,228	46.6%	148,191	79,958	54.7%
Girls	138,818	53,360	38.4%	138,388	75,143	54.3%	138,388	54,707	39.5%	140,373	69,821	49.7%

Figure 2 SHS/ GES (TVET) national parameters 2017/2018 school year
Source: Ghana Education Service, MOE-EMIS

Comparing the 2016/17 and 2017/18 national school year Figures indicates that the gross admission ratio stood at 50.9% in 2016/17 while 2017/18 was 61.6%. To this report, the admission of first-year students during the

introduction of free SHS increased by 10.7%, which is high compared to the previous year. Additionally, the country's total number of public schools increased by 10% compared to the 2016/17 academic year. Boarding and hostel facilities also decreased by 2% after the first year of the policy's implementation. Some E-block day school facilities were closed during the policy implementation due to their location for their conversion to boarding schools (Dr. Yaw Adutwum; then Deputy Minister of Education on Good Evening Ghana, Metro Tv). For other facilities, for example, permanent classrooms, access to water and electricity, and textbooks recorded significant increases. Total teachers in public schools stood at 40,341 in 2017/8 against 30,170 in 2016/17. This shows that many teachers were hired to cover the number of students admitted in 2017/18.

These are the findings from the year of implementation to 3 years of the first beneficiaries of the policy graduate. In 2019/20 the gross enrolment ratio stood at 63.2% enrolling 423,936 SHS 1 students. The total number of public SHS and TVET schools was 721 in 3 years after policy implementation. The total number of public teachers in 2020 was 52,57, representing 92.3%. The student to teacher ratio is therefore, 21:1 (1,103,303/52,573). This represents a fair distribution of teachers. Again, for a fair share to be achieved, the government introduced the double-track achieved. These saw students being divided into green and gold to access the inadequate facilities (See Winthrop 2020 on Ghana's leapfrog experiment).

Reporting on social facilities like toilets, urinals, drinking water, and electricity, access to drinking water was the lowest, thus 80%. For pedagogical tools, sitting places per student were 0.8, and writing places stood at 0.7. This indicates that all pedagogical tools that the policy needs have been provided in excess. The 2019/20 report also states that all public boarding and hostel facilities under SHS and TVET did not have any challenge of being unable to take the number of students enrolled.

Number of Schools							School Organisation						Classrooms				
Type of Edu	Total No. of Schs	Schools by Locality					Type	Public		Private		Classrooms					
		Urban Total	Urban %	Rural Total	Rural %	Grand Total		Total SHS	%	Total TVET	%	Total SHS	%	Public SHS	Private SHS		
Public SHS	674	388	58%	279	42%	667	Boys Only	20	3%	0	0%	4	2%	Permanent	21,168	1,063	3,152
Public TVET	47	30	64%	17	36%	47	Girls Only	37	5%	0	0%	5	2%	Temporary Street	2,229	308	167
Private SHS	247	179	73%	66	27%	245	Co-Educational	617	92%	47	100%	238	96%	Major Repairs	2,811	126	127
Total	968	597	62%	362	38%	959	Total	674	100%	47	100%	247	100%	% Major Repairs	13%	12%	4%

Water							Electricity						Social Facilities					
Source	Public		Private		Total	%	Source	Public		Private		Type	Public		Private			
	Total SHS	%	Total TVET	%				Total SHS	%	Total SHS	%		Total TVET	%	Total SHS	%	Total TVET	%
Pipeborne	314	47%	25	53%	89	36%	Nat. Grid	561	83%	45	96%	208	84%	Toilets	667	99%	47	100%
Borehole	314	47%	22	47%	68	28%	Generator	3	0%	0	0%	1	0%	Urinal	582	86%	39	83%
Well	4	1%	0	0%	8	3%	Other	0	0%	0	0%	4	2%	Drinking Water	539	80%	40	85%
Other	13	2%	0	0%	6	2%	Total	664	84%	45	96%	213	86%	Electricity	674	100%	47	100%
Total	645	96%	47	100%	171	65%												

Boarding/Hostel Facilities						Pedagogical Tools						Rates and Ratio			
Type	Public		Private		Total	%	Furniture	Public		Private		Total	Male	Female	
	Total SHS	%	Total TVET	%				Total No.	Per Student	Total No.	Per Student				
Day only	100	15%	6	13%	41	17%	Sitting Places	893,717	0.8	81,268	1.1	Popn(15-17)yrx	1,977,831	1,005,125	972,706
Day with Hostel	51	8%	10	21%	96	39%	Writing Places	830,278	0.7	78,578	1.0	Total Enrolment	1,249,449	647,147	602,302
Mainly Boarding	25	4%	2	4%	14	6%	Textbooks					Enrol(15-17)yrx	651,825	328,013	323,812
Boarding/Day & Hostel	55	8%	4	9%	20	8%	English	987,026	0.8	25,209	0.3	Popn(15)yrx	759,784	389,030	370,754
Boarding & Day	440	65%	75	53%	75	30%	Mathematics	993,813	0.8	24,381	0.3	SHS1 Enrolment	423,936	216,981	206,955
Total	673	100%	47	100%	246	100%	Integrated Science	962,004	0.8	22,878	0.3	Enrol(15)yrx	96,726	47,291	49,435
							Social Studies	963,092	0.8	23,097	0.3	Gross Enrolment Ratio	63.2%	64.4%	61.9%
												Gross Admission Ratio	55.8%	55.8%	55.8%
												Net Enrolment Rate	33.0%	32.6%	33.3%
												New Admission Rate	12.7%	12.2%	13.3%
												Completion Rate	64.1%	65.3%	62.9%
												Transition Rate	91.8%	89.8%	93.8%
												GPI	0.96		

WASSCE Core Subjects Pass Rates - 2019 ²												
	Maths			English			Int. Science			Social Studies		
	Total	Pass	% Pass	Total	Pass	% Pass	Total	Pass	% Pass	Total	Pass	% Pass
Total	343,260	221,195	64.4%	343,313	166,934	48.6%	343,260	212,563	61.9%	343,313	257,541	75.0%
Boys	169,350	114,421	67.6%	169,350	81,051	47.8%	169,350	108,015	63.8%	169,393	128,278	75.7%
Girls	173,910	106,774	61.4%	173,910	85,883	49.4%	173,910	104,548	60.1%	173,920	129,263	74.3%

Figure 3 SHS/GES national parameters 2019/2020 school year
Source: Ghana Education Service, MOE-EMIS

Finally, the West African Examination Certificate (WASSCE) results for pass rate for core subjects (English, Mathematics, Integrated Science, and Social Studies) in the 2017/18 academic year were 53%, 42.2%, 43.2%, and 52.3%, respectively. Against this record, 2021 WASSCE results released by the GES records, 54.08%, 54.11%, 65.70%, and 66.03% for the core subjects, respectively. Over this period, there has been a significant increase in the outcomes of the free SHS policy except for a slight increase in only the English language. Although GLSS 7 was published in 2019, it was administered from October 2016 to October 2017. This could not support the current outcomes of the free SHS policy. Therefore, it is used as a baseline reference for the analysis. Also, to support the educational outcomes presented by the 2016/2017 school year (see, Figure 1). This

is because apart from the current statistics from MOE and GES-EMIS, GLSS 7 is the official statistics service of Ghana and, therefore, an ethical basis for concluding the outcomes of the policy under study.

Table 3 Average amount (GH¢) spent on a person attending school/college in the last 12 months by locality

School item	Total (GH¢)	Accra (AMA)	Urban Coastal	Urban Forest	Urban Savannah	Rural Coastal	Rural Forest	Rural Savannah
Total	1,048.46	2,522.58	1,930.58	1,302.58	657.14	691.14	745.75	271.83
School and registration fees	418.50	1,177.47	1,023.23	454.48	335.64	234.30	170.30	96.04
Contribution to P.T.A	12.55	11.36	13.80	13.43	13.70	11.08	14.17	8.58
Uniform and sports clothes	33.00	51.14	47.74	39.52	29.59	28.21	28.74	21.28
Books and school supplies	87.70	188.08	154.59	106.72	53.18	84.34	62.81	26.77
Transportation to and from school	50.10	144.39	98.55	66.05	17.93	34.80	31.44	6.19
Food, board, and lodging	307.91	699.88	434.87	390.68	137.54	227.07	309.17	77.13
Expenses on extra classes	39.69	128.14	66.42	48.83	16.97	29.74	28.50	7.73
In-kind expenses	8.65	20.14	12.84	10.14	5.38	11.08	5.56	4.27
Other (cannot breakdown)	90.36	101.98	84.84	172.73	47.11	30.52	95.07	23.84

Source: GLSS 7

Table 4. Average amount (GH¢) spent on a person attending school/college in the last 12 months by the level of education and locality

Level of Education	Ghana	Accra	Other Urban	Rural Coastal	Rural Forest	Rural Savannah
Kindergarten	573.87	1,423.46	771.70	530.64	426.50	122.47
Primary	676.14	1,867.39	963.60	473.32	476.05	121.02
JSS/JHS	931.04	2,006.04	1,226.65	586.60	684.70	264.41
SSS/SHS	2,214.94	4,468.65	2,275.06	1,720.55	2,087.81	1,037.71
Voc/Tech/Commercial	2,154.89	4,016.85	1,541.18	1,269.98	3,275.34	2,271.74

Source: GLSS 7

The first important observation from Tables 3 and 4 is that a huge sum of money is paid by parents for their wards to be enrolled in education. The annual cost of education is stated in Table 3 as GH¢1,048.46 on average and GH¢2,214.94 in Table 4 for SHS students. Comparing these amounts spent by parents on SHS schooling, the government's support for schools under the free SHS policy is low, as Adu-Ababio and Osei (2018) accumulated. Referencing the expenses enumerated under the school item in Table 3 affirms President Akufo-Addo's financial burden of secondary schooling on parents. The household surveys in Ghana (GLSS 7) also confirm the high tuition fees in SHS. This follows the parents' answers to why their children are not in school. Although the cost of SHS in Accra is the highest, other rural forest and Savannah are relatively high compared to the poverty quintile provided by GLSS 7.

Of equal importance, the literacy gap in rural Savannah is low under the 15+ age group (represents SHS going age). The daunting part is the percentage recorded for females. This concludes the neglect of girl-child education at the SHS level in the rural Savannahs in exchange for work or marriage because families cannot afford secondary schooling.

Table 5 Literacy rates by age-group, sex, and locality (read and write in English)

Types of localities								
Urban Rural								
Age-group/sex	Accra (AMA)	Other Urban	All	Rural Coastal	Rural Forest	Rural Savannah	All	Ghana
11+								
Total	56.1	56.0	56.0	48.6	45.9	20.1	37.7	47.4
Male	64.7	62.2	62.5	57.8	54.7	25.4	45.4	54.2
Female	48.5	50.7	50.4	40.6	37.5	15.0	30.6	41.2
15+								
Total	56.6	54.8	55.0	46.4	43.6	19.2	36.0	46.2
Male	66.3	62.2	62.7	57.1	54.3	25.5	45.3	54.5
Female	48.2	48.5	48.4	37.5	33.4	13.5	27.5	38.9
15-24								
Total	58.2	62.2	61.8	64.4	58.6	33.0	50.5	56.4
Male	62.9	63.1	63.1	68.2	60.1	35.1	52.4	57.7
Female	53.8	61.4	60.6	60.2	56.9	30.6	48.3	55.0

Source: GLSS 7

On the overall percentage, 46% under the 15+ age group in Table 5 suggests that across the various levels of education, cost incurred among other bottlenecks at the senior high or secondary level remain daunting. The ESP, 2030, further posits the same issues supported by national parameters in the 2016/17 school year. The number of SHS school-going children not getting access to education is noticed throughout all the localities. The problem here can also be the quality of education or the gaps created by basic schooling, as posited by Akyeampong (2009).

The attendance gap between the levels of education in Figure 5 sends a signal of almost a half drop-out or an abrupt end to Junior high school attendants accessing high school education. This is due to the high tuition fees (GLSS 7). The basic education level has high enrolment percentages because it is compulsorily free.

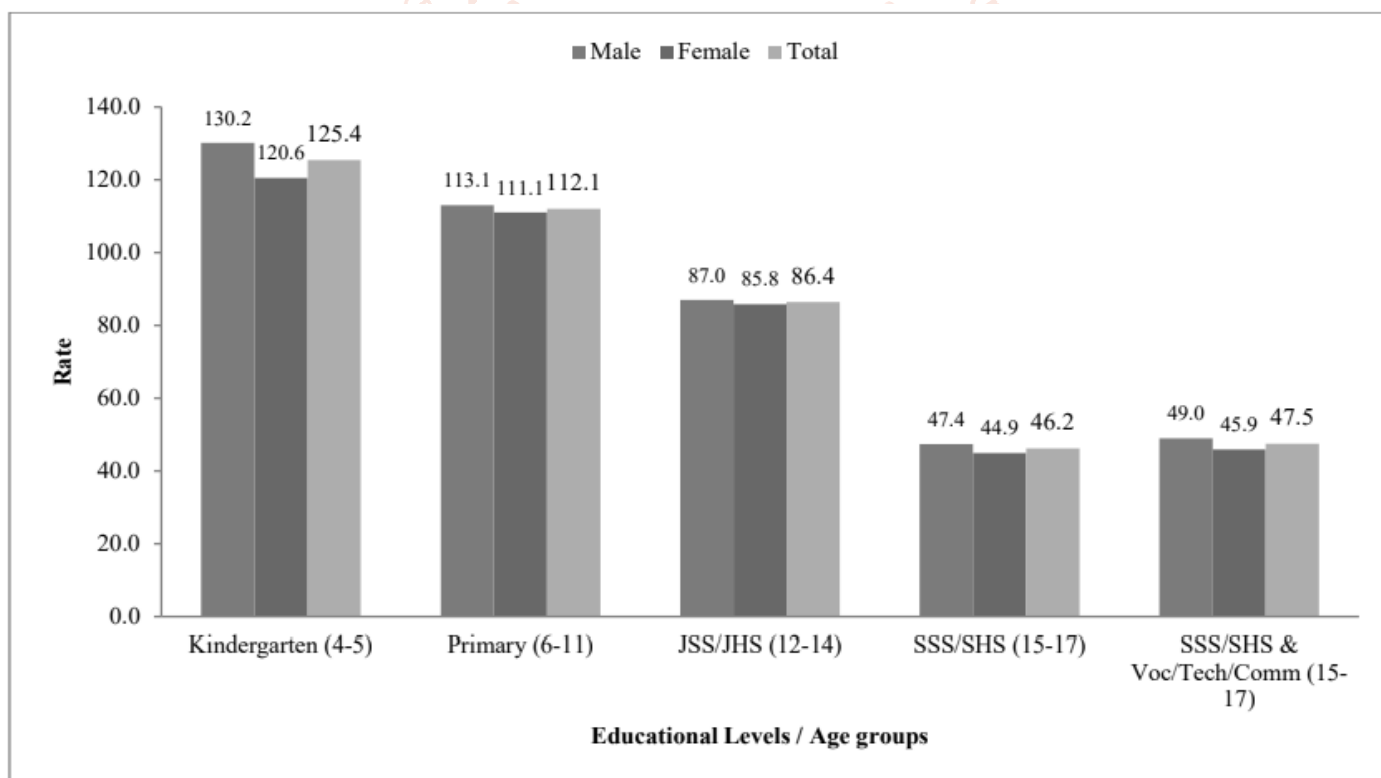


Figure 5. gross school attendance rate for population four years and older by age-group

Source: GLSS 7

Again, females' access to SHS is low compared to males. The transition problem here may not be teenage pregnancy or other social constraints but the

high opportunity cost of secondary schooling. This gap is affirmed by the 2016/17 national school year profile as first-year enrolment for girls stood at 49%

and increased to 50.4% in the 2019/20 school year. Here, the increase may not reflect more in the percentages but a difference of 52, 927 in numbers. ESP (2030,30) further points out that in 2016/17, success gender parity of 0.96 was nearly achieved.

The Education Strategic Plan (2018-2030,30-42)

Analysing the free SHS policy inputs from the ESP 2030, it promised a high enrolment ratio in location, gender, and welfare quintiles, school-based in-service training, feeding day students (lunch only), infrastructure, and provision of textbooks. Overall, there are increases in these areas, especially the transition from JHS to SHS gap (by 13%, see Figures 1 and 3). Also, access to textbooks has been increased to 0.3 in 2019/20. Enrolment by gender saw females being higher than males according to the 2019/20 national parameters (see, Figure 3).

Explicitly, the free SHS policy was purposed to close the gap on equity and access, particularly addressing the cost of schooling, which is a key factor in the low attendance rate (31). The numbers presented in the 2019/20 national parameters show an increase in access. On equity, the free SHS policy allocated 30% of enrolment seats in all elite SHS for public JHS students to transit smoothly without any forms of inequalities (Gewirtz 2003,140; Lynch and Lodge 2002,7) as previously encountered (ESP 2030).

As part of the free SHS policy's stipulated achievements, it factored to bridge the transition and completion rates in secondary schooling by scrapping all fees and providing needful amenities as interventions. As a result, the transition rate in 2019/20 stood at 91.8% against 68% in 2016/17. Also, the completion rate in 2016/17 was 48% compared to 64.1% in 2019/20. This shows an increase within the three years of the policy's implementation.

On infrastructure, the policy sought to partner with the Secondary Education Improvement Project (SEIP) to build in all 124 new schools, of which, as of 2017/18, 44 were completed. This outcome was due to the higher enrolment ratios the policy envisaged. It was also due to the pupil-to-teacher percentage, which rose to 48:1 in 2016/17(ESP 2030, GES-EMIS). As of 2019/20, the pupil-to-teacher ratio stood at 20:1. Also, the 2019/20 national parameter shows 56 completed schools under SHS and TVET. Normally this should not be the case.

5. Discussions and Conclusions

First, to the actors of the free SHS policy, it is viewed as 'utilitarian' (Hill 2001; Chitty 2003), which means an opportunity for personal fulfilment to both policy initiators and the beneficiaries so far as education is

concerned. According to the results, the pro-poor policy (Abdul Rahman et al. 2018) employed processes, planned policy inputs, and interventions to situate its outcomes. The policy's first process initiated an Education Act to constitutionally make it a 'right' to gain the legislative will to prevent it from being shelved when there is a change in government (Edu. Act 2020). The citizens supported this initiative here the understanding of policy success can be envisaged in Mehrotra (1988), Little (2008), and Appleton et al. (1996) studies.

Moreover, the policy was not seen as a 'policy of things' but 'process and outcomes'(Ball 1994). Again, the policy is not seen as 'monopolistic' or employed only elites in its implementation process as the 1978 Packwood Bill (West 1978) faced. This policy involved stakeholders like SEIP and CHASS in enhancing diverse contributions and better nation representation (ESP 2030; Presidency Communication Bureau 2017). On the other hand, the policy did not prevent parents from accessing private education even though it was a 'right-based' policy. In this notion, the 1978 Packwood Bill outcome where parents had no options if they identified a public school of less quality and had no choice is prevented.

To this background, many interventions were initiated to solve the expansion of access, equity, and quality, not to reflect the states of other failed policies (Galabawa 2001; Oketch and Rolleston 2007). For example, the policy initiated the double-track system, which changed schooling terms to semesters to accommodate all the newly admitted students (Brookings 2020; MOE-EMIS; GES). Free meals for day students, absorption of WASSCE fees, free textbooks, free past questions, in-service teacher training, and infrastructure expansion as stated by the deputy director-general of quality and access, Dr. Tandoh (Joy News 2021).

Although Chanimbe and Dankwah (2021) used the 2018 results and data from some schools to conclude that the policy has failed and brought more problems to the GES, the current data did not show that. Nonetheless, the study is not saying the policy is not facing problems. Still, for instance, inadequate teachers, infrastructure, and timely funding can be supported in some areas of the region, as Chanimbe and Dankwah (2021) stated. Again, they noted that the government should not make it free but cost-shared, as in Uganda and Kenya. This was because of how the funding delay was reported in their study. This study should consider a wider funding mechanism as the government expands the tax net to

support the locally raised oil fund that funds the policy.

Again, this policy did not eliminate poverty, as Abdul Rahman et al. (2018) posits. As the national demographics show increased enrolment in location and gender, this policy also less burdened households. Even though the policy advocated and ensured its 'free' state, many reported scandals of schools charging fees. As stated by some headteachers, these fees were charged to fund the day-to-day administration and some utility bills. Chanimbe and Dankwah (2021) can also be widely supported in their interviews with the school heads. In this case, the study sides with Mitchel (1983, 1986, 2018), who states that poor conceptual understanding of policy designs and inadequate training could affect policy implementations and outcomes. For example, parents send their wards to some public schools. They are told that free SHS is not applicable in those schools because they have not received the necessary implementation accompaniments.

The policy, as the national parameters reflected, indicates it has in an appreciating way reflected in people's livelihood. The populace made good use of this policy in Ghana. Both rich and poor made sure their children benefited from this initiative (see enrolment ratios in 2017/18 and 2019/20 national parameters). Studies like Abdul Rahman et al. (2018) and, Adu-Ababio and Osei (2018) also affirm the reflection on people's livelihoods. In this case, the outcomes of the UK's 'new free SHS' policy failed in some rich localities (EPI 2016) because it was not needed. This did not reflect in Ghana's policy. The populace made good use of the opportunity because it did attend to their needs, as the main policy actor expressed during its inauguration (Presidency Communication Bureau 2017).

The study, therefore, recommends that the funding mechanisms should be widened locally to support the policy in real-time, policy inputs must be delivered to schools on time to avoid schools initiating charges, and the free SHS policy should strengthen its publicity level on initiatives to increase awareness of inputs and interventions to the citizens. This will go a long way to avoid cheating parents by their wards and even school authorities for fees. The free books, and funds for free meals should be delivered on time for students' access and use. Finally, the government should double up on the remaining infrastructure development and be firm on the state of the double-track system if it is abolished or still in progress.

Acknowledgment

Special thanks to You Yun and Isaac Sarfo for their advice on earlier drafts of this paper.

Disclosure statement

The authors reported no potential conflict of interest.

Funding

The study had no funding support.

Notes

1. Secondary schooling and SHS are used interchangeably because the data address it, but they mean the same in this context.
2. The current data subjected to the study's conclusions was Figure 3. This is because it was the current and official data published by the GES-EMIS.
3. The US dollar rate against the Ghana cedis used in this study is GH¢4.5205=\$1 as of December 2017 when the GLSS 7 was conducted.

References

- [1] Abdul-Rahman N., A., Abdul R., B., Ming, W., Abdul-Rahim, A., S., & Abdul-Rahim S. (2018). The free senior high policy: an appropriate replacement to the progressive free senior high policy. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*. ISSN: 2202-9478. Retrieved from www.ijels.aiac.org
- [2] Adu-Ababio, K., & Osei, R., D. (2018). Effects of an education reform on household poverty and inequality: a microsimulation analysis on the free senior high school policy in Ghana. *The United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER)* doi: 10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2018/589-3
- [3] Akyeampong, K., J., Djangmah, A., Oduro, A., Seidu, & F., Hunt. (2007). Access to basic education in Ghana: the evidence and the issues. *Country Analytic Report*.
- [4] Akyeampong, K. (2009). Revisiting free compulsory universal basic education (FCUBE) in Ghana. *Comparative Education* 45(2):175-195. doi: 10.1080/03050060902920534
- [5] Appleton, S., Hoddinott, J., & Mackinnon, J. (1996). Education and health in sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of International Development*, 8(3), 307-339. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-1328\(199605\)8:3%3C307::AID-JID394%3E3.0.CO;2-D](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1328(199605)8:3%3C307::AID-JID394%3E3.0.CO;2-D)
- [6] Asumadu, E. (2019). Challenges and prospects of the Ghana free senior high school (SHS) policy: The case of SHS in Denkyembour district. Ph.D. diss., University of Ghana.

- [7] Ball, S. J., Maguire, M., Braun, A., & Hoskins, K. (2011). Policy actors: Doing policy work in schools. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education*, 32(4), 625-639. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2011.601565>
- [8] Ball, S. (1994). "What Is Policy? texts, trajectories and toolboxes. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 13 (2), 10-17. doi:10.1080/0159630930130203
- [9] Bobbie, M., Emily, H., & Jon, A. (2019). Free schools in England. Education Policy Institute.
- [10] Bowen, A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal* vol. 9 (2) 27-40. Doi:10.3316/QRJ0902027.
- [11] Braun, A., Ball, S. J., Maguire, M., & Hoskins, K. (2011). Taking context seriously: Towards explaining policy enactments in the secondary school. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education*, 32(4), 585-596. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2011.601555>
- [12] Chanimbe, T., & Dankwah, K. O. (2021). The 'new' Free Senior High School policy in Ghana: Emergent issues and challenges of implementation in schools. *Interchange*, 52(4), 599-630. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10780-021-09440-6>
- [13] Chitty, C. 2003. *Education policy in Britain*. Basingtoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [14] Cohen, L., M., Lawrence, and M., Keith. (eds.) (2018). *Research Methods in Education*. Routledge. 8th ed. ISBN: 9781138209886.
- [15] Crowson, R. L., Grissom, J. A., & Knepp, C. E. (2017). Education politics and equity: An altered landscape in efforts to expand educational opportunity. In *Shaping Education Policy* (pp. 44-64). Routledge.
- [16] David, B. (1978). *Education in setting national priorities: 1979 Budget*. in Joseph, A. Pechman (ed). Copyright 1978 by the Brookings Institution.
- [17] Department for Education. (2019). PM pledges thousands more good school places. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-pledges-thousands-more-good-school-places> on October 20, 2022.
- [18] Duflo, E., Dupas, P., & Kremer, M. (2019). The impact of free secondary education: experimental evidence from Ghana." *The American Economic Association* 1-105. Retrieved from https://web.stanford.edu/~pdupas/DDK_Ghana_Scholarships.pdf on September 9, 2021.
- [19] Double-track system. Ghana Web. Retrieved from <https://www.ghanaweb.com> October 11, 2021.
- [20] Education Coalition Proposes Secretariat for Free SHS. My Joy Online. September 13. Retrieved from <https://www.myjoyonline.com> on October 1, 2021.
- [21] Evans, C., Rees, G., Taylor, C., & Wright, C. (2019). 'Widening Access' to higher education: the reproduction of university hierarchies through policy enactment. *Journal of Education Policy*, 34(1), 101-116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2017.1390165>
- [22] Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- [23] Finch, J. (1984). *Education as social policy*. Addison-Wesley Longman Limited.
- [24] Free SHS: All Students have Received Text Books for Core Subjects- GES. My Joy Online. May 28, 2021. Accessed at <https://www.myjoyonline.com/free-shs-all-students-have-received-text-books-for-core-subjects-ges/>
- [25] Galabawa, J. C. (2001). Developments and issues regarding universal primary education (UPE) in Tanzania. *Reaching Out, Reaching All*, 49. Retrieved on April 2021 from http://biennale.adeanet.org/2001/papers/en_arusha_galabawa.pdf
- [26] Gewirtz, S. (2003). *The managerial school: post-welfarism and social justice in education*. Routledge.
- [27] Ghana Gazette. (2020). Pre-tertiary education act 2020, Act 1046. The Government of Ghana.
- [28] Ghana Gazette. (1961). Education Act 1961. The Government of Ghana.
- [29] Ghana Gazette. (2008). Education Act 2008. The Government of Ghana
- [30] Ghana Statistical Service. (2019). Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) 7. Accra: GSS. Retrieved from <http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/nada/index.php/citations/6> on July 16, 2021.
- [31] Han, J., Kamber, M., & Pei, J. (2011). *Data Mining: Concepts and Techniques Third*

- Edition [M]. *The Morgan Kaufmann Series in Data Management Systems*, 5(4), 83-124.
- [32] Hill, Dave. (2001). *Global capital, neo-liberalism, and privatization: the growth of educational inequality*. London: Kogan Page.
- [33] Hope, P., N. (2013). Exploring the policy implementation paradox: using the free compulsory universal basic education (fCUBE) policy in Ghana as an exemplar. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 26(8): 933-952, doi:10.1080/09518398.2012.705043
- [34] Rappleye, J. (2006). Theorizing educational transfer: Toward a conceptual map of the context of cross-national attraction. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 1(3), 223-240. <https://doi.org/10.2304%2Frcie.2006.1.3.223>
- [35] Jon A., & Johnes, R. (2017). Free schools in England. Education Policy Institute. November 2017.
- [36] Kenya education commission report (1964). The Republic of Kenya. Nairobi, Kenya Government Printers.
- [37] Kingdon, J. W. (2003). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies*. 2nd ed. New York. NY: Longman.
- [38] McWilliam, H.O., & Kwamena-Poh, P., M. (1975). *The development of education in Ghana: An outline*. London: Longman.
- [39] Mehrotra, S. (1998). Education for all: policy lessons from high-achieving countries. *International Review of Education*, 44(5), 461-484. DOI <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1003433029696>
- [40] Mensah, D. (2019). Teachers' perspective on implementation of the double-track senior high school system in Ghana. *International Journal of Emerging Trends In Social Sciences*, 5(2):47-56. doi: 10.20448/2001.52.47.56
- [41] Merriam, S., B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. 2nd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- [42] Ministry of Education and Sports. (1999). The Ugandan experience of universal primary education (UPE). Kampala, Uganda Author
- [43] Ministry of Education. (2012). Education strategic plan 2010 to 2020. Accra: Ministry of Education. Retrieved from [https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/gove](https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/government-ghana-education-strategic-plan-2010-2020-volume-1-policies-strategies-delivery)
- rnment-ghana-education-strategic-plan-2010-2020-volume-1-policies-strategies-delivery pp.1-15
- [44] Ministry of Education. (2018). Education strategic plan 2018-2030. Accra: Ministry of Education 30-46.
- [45] Ministry of Education. (2016). Republic of Ghana ministry of education sector national GES SHS/ TVET parameters. Accra: Ministry of Education.
- [46] Ministry of Education. (2017). Republic of Ghana ministry of education sector national GES SHS/ TVET parameters. Accra: Ministry of Education.
- [47] Ministry of Education. (2018). Republic of Ghana ministry of education sector national GES SHS/ TVET parameters." Accra: Ministry of Education.
- [48] Ministry of Education. (2019). Republic of Ghana ministry of education sector national GES SHS/ TVET parameters. Accra: Ministry of Education.
- [49] Ministry of Education. (2020). Republic of Ghana ministry of education sector national GES SHS/ TVET parameters. Accra: Ministry of Education.
- [50] Mitchell, D., E. (1986). Metaphors of management: Or, how far from outcomes can you get?. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 63(3), 29-45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01619568609538523>
- [51] Mitchell, D., E. (2018). *Progressivism and the evolution of education policy, shaping education policy: power and process*. Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN. Taylor and Francis.
- [52] Mitchell, D., E., & Spady, W. G. (1983). Authority, power, and the legitimation of social control. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 19(1), 5-33. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0013161X83019001002>
- [53] National Development Plan 1964–1969; 1970–1974; 1974–1978; 1979–1983; 1984–1988; 1989–1993; 1997–2001; 2002–2008. Nairobi: Kenya Government Printers.
- [54] Oketch, Moses O., and Caine M. Rolleston. 2007. *Policies on free primary and secondary education in East Africa: A review of the literature*. Create Pathways to Access. Research

- Monograph No. 10. ISBN: ISBN-0-9018-8122-8
- [55] Our nutrition Department Monitors Food Quality – School Feeding PRO. Citi 97.3 FM. October 17, Retrieved from <https://www.citinews.com>
- [56] Phillips, D. & Ochs, K. (2003). Processes of policy borrowing in education: some explanatory and analytical devices. *Comparative Education* 39(4): 451-461. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0305006032000162020>
- [57] President Akufo-Addo launches free SHS Policy. “Communications Bureau. September 11, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.presidency.gov.gh> on September 20, 2021.
- [58] President Akufo-Addo’s inaugural speech at the launch of free SHS. Communications Bureau September 11, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.presidency.gov.gh> on September 8, 2021.
- [59] Rebecca, Winthrop. 2020. Ghana’s leapfrog Experiment: free senior secondary school for all youth. *Education Plus Development, Brookings*.
- [60] Sitorus, Ilyas Suharto, and Eka Daryanto. (2019). Policy analysis of the free education program implementation (Case study in Medan 1 Public School). In *4th Annual International Seminar on Transformative Education and Educational Leadership (AISTEEL 2019)*: 420-424. Atlantis Press.
- [61] The Free SHS Secretariat. Free SHS policy. Government of Ghana. Retrieved from <https://moe.gov.gh/free-shs-policy/>
- [62] The Second Reading of the Education Bill 1944. The House of Commons Debates. January 19, 1944.
- [63] Trowler, P., R. (1998). *Education policy: A policy sociology approach*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Routledge.
- [64] Trowler, P., R. (2002). *Higher education policy and institutional change: intentions and outcomes in turbulent environments*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- [65] UNESCO. (2007). *Education for all by 2015: will we make it?*. Global Monitoring Report. Paris: UNESCO
- [66] United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) *Education within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. (2020). Retrieved on April 22, 2021, from <https://sdg4education2030.org/the-goal>
- [67] United Nations. (2009). Conventions on the rights of the child. Article 24; and 28.” UNICEF. Fiftieth Session, Geneva, January 12-30, 2009.
- [68] West, E., G. (1978). Tuition tax credit proposals: An economic analysis of 1978 Packwood/ Moynihan Bill. *Policy Review* (3):61-75. Copyright 1978 by the Heritage Foundation.
- [69] Yin, R., K.(1994). *Case study research: design and methods*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- [70] Yun, You. (2020). The ‘new Orientalism’: education policy borrowing and representations of East Asia. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 50:(5): 742-763, doi:10.1080/03057925.2018.1559038