Free Senior High School Programme Implementation in Ghana: An Assessment

Cosmos Kwame Dzikunu[1] and Seth Dade Ansah[2]

[1]Institute for Education Research and Innovation Studies University of Education Winneba

[2]Department of Educational Foundations, University of Education, Winneba

Corresponding author: Cosmos Dzikunu

Email address: cosmosdzikunu@gmail.com

Abstract

This study explored the benefits and the challenges in the implementation of the free senior high school programme in Ghana. The study adopted the multi-site exploratory case study using interviews and an observation checklist for the investigation. The sample was made up of 38 respondents selected through purposive sampling techniques across four SHSs in Greater Accra and Central Regions. The results indicate that the key benefit of the policy was the removal of cost barriers through the absorption of fees approved by the GES council. All recurrent fee items that relate to utilities, examination fees, library fees, practical fees, entertainment fees, science development and teacher motivation fees were absorbed by the Government. Another benefit of the free SHS was the feeding of Day students alongside boarding students in the schools. There were infrastructural challenges of the Free SHS programme that included; classroom blocks, dormitories, staff accommodation, libraries, science laboratories, computer laboratories Information and communication technology connectivity (ICT) and places of convenience. Teacher output, punctuality, effective supervision, time on task, and assessment of students were compromised. It was also revealed that the textbooks supplied were only core subjects which included English Language, Mathematics, Social Studies and Integrated Science and were delayed in supply. The study recommends that key stakeholders such as teacher unions, policy think tanks, civil society organizations, parents and other relevant stakeholders should be engaged by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in round table discussions to build national consensus, acceptance and public confidence in the policy. It is recommended that government should forge partnerships with parents, PTAs, old student associations, and religious bodies to raise funds to support infrastructure development for the SHS programme. An increase in the Government's share of the oil revenue should be allocated to the Free SHS programme.

Key words: *Free senior high school, Human capital theory, Benefits, challenges*

Introduction

In order to make a significant contribution to economic growth and development, high-quality education is required. It is this understanding that drives educational policies of countries across the world to structure their educational system to be congruent with national development needs. In Ghana, the introduction of the Capitation Grant Policy led to a substantial rise in basic school enrolment which in turn translated into high enrolment at the secondary school level (Ansu,

2007; Pajibo & Tamanja, 2018). At the secondary level, it is widely held that affordable secondary education will contribute to poverty reduction by increasing the level of knowledge, skills and attitudes of the youthful population. Lewin (2008) believes that secondary education in low-enrolment countries such as Ghana was characterized by costs that most parents could not afford. He, therefore, argued that there should be greater budgetary prioritization in the secondary education subsector.

Lewin (2008) mapped out the need for increased attention and financing of secondary education:

a. The output of the primary school system is set to double over the next 10 years as universal primary enrolment and completion is improved – and the attendant mass enrolment in secondary education will require new methods of funding that allow children from poorer households to enrol in school.
b. Meeting the education-related MDGs (and now SDGs) requires increasing secondary school enrolment. The MDGs require countries to achieve gender equity in primary and secondary schooling.
c. HIV/AIDS has decimated the active labour force and undermined prospects for economic growth in Sub-Saharan countries. The evidence suggests that the majority of those affected are within the age range of 16 to 35 – among whom are secondary school students.
d. Poverty reduction will stall unless increases in secondary school enrolments are accompanied by greater budgetary inputs.

Rationally, the four points outlined above occasion the need for policy commitment, financial resource availability and affordability. Specifically in Ghana, Addai-Mensah (2000) mirrors the focal points of the policy commitments as inadequate infrastructure and poor state/condition of many school plants, inadequate motivation for teachers, inadequate teaching/ learning materials and poor maintenance culture. And as it relates directly to the current Free SHS Policy, the financial resources needed to support universal enrolment patterns would have to be calculated based on cost per student, student-teacher ratio (to make estimates of the number of teachers needed) and the unit cost of feeding a student. This lends support to the proposition that in Ghana, public expenditures on secondary education as a proportion of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) have to be considered. This, in the view of Lewin (2008), necessitates the need for better data patterns of enrolment in public schools, analysis of secondary school teachers' workload and a tracer study of secondary school graduates to determine absorption rates into different kinds of employment and livelihoods.

As indicated earlier, in Ghana's quest to reduce poverty among citizens and improve its human capital capability, it has become necessary to tackle the problem by developing the human resource through education which is critical for every aspect of national development, this was highlighted by the Government of Ghana in 2017 that "it was the intent of the government to educate the population so as to drive the industrialization process" (Kwawukume, 2017). The government's "Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (GPRS, 2002)" regards poverty alleviation as a major step "in all development efforts in Ghana" (Republic of Ghana, 2003). The GPRS requires that the development of human resources will contribute to poverty reduction in Ghana through the provision of uninterrupted and sustainable quality education for all Ghanaians from preschool through age 17. It is pertinent to note that Ghana's middle-income status requires that more secondary-level graduates with the relevant skills that will be required for the job market be produced (Ministry of Finance, 2005).

Ghana's desire to provide free secondary education is enshrined in the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, which states that:

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, 1992).

This constitutional provision enjoins government to take steps to ensure that free secondary education is provided to all its youth as a basic requirement. The literature (Lewin, 2008; Ansu, 2007; World Bank, 2005) is on the point that systems of financing secondary education are diverse across countries. However, there are areas of convergence that attention should be drawn to:

(a) Development of a norm-based funding system (related to pupil, teacher and school characteristics). This is significant for improving equity and effectiveness in resource allocation.
(b) Review of non-salary costs and the protection of learning materials expenditures.
(c) Review of school management systems.
(d) Review of teacher deployment and utilization.
(e) Setting uniform tuition fees across board (Lewin, 2008).

Indeed, there is no denying the fact that in Ghana, a developing country, one should expect hiccups in the implementation of such a capital-intensive policy initiated in 2017. From the experiences of countries such as Kenya, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Sweden, Egypt and Nigeria that have implemented the Free SHS, the literature (Musalia, 2005; Wangari, 2009; Olsen, 2009) is rife with problems underlying its initial implementation. Some of the teething problems related to costing and funding, provision of material and human resources, timely release of the funds, stakeholders' involvement and sustaining the programmes by alternative means. Could these same problems find expression in the Ghanaian context? The following normative questions need answers; are parents completely relieved of their role in

funding their wards at SHS? What becomes of the PTAs? The gap in the extant literature dwells on the fact that in view of these massive investments and interventions aligned to the free SHS there has not been an assessment of its implementation especially as it regards its benefits and the challenges encountered.

Purpose of the study

This study, therefore, sought to examine the factors influencing the implementation of the Free SHS in Ghana. Specifically, the study sought to isolate two very important dimensions; the benefits and the challenges of the FSHS programme in Ghana

Research Questions

i.   What are the benefits of the FSHS programme in Ghana?
ii.   How is the implementation of the Free SHS hindered?
iii. In what ways can the Free SHS be effectively implemented in Ghana

Human Capital Theory

According to Babalola (2003), the rationality behind investment in human capital is based on three arguments:

1. The new generation must be given the appropriate parts of the knowledge which has already been accumulated by previous generations.
2. The new generation should be taught how existing knowledge should be used to develop new products, to introduce new processes and production methods and social services;
3. People must be encouraged to develop entirely new ideas, products, processes, and methods through creative approaches.

Fagerlind and Saha (1997) posit that human capital theory provides a basic justification for large public expenditure on education both in developing and developed nations. The theory is consistent with the ideologies of democracy and liberal progression found in most western societies which has also caught up with most developing countries such as Ghana. Its' appeal was based upon the presumed economic return of investment in education at both the macro and micro levels. Efforts to promote investment in human capital were seen to result in rapid economic growth for society. Theoretically, the human capital theory can be conceptually linked to the Free SHS concept in Ghana which seeks to invest in human beings / capital. Ideally, one stands to reason that with individuals, such investment was seen to provide returns in the form of individual economic success and achievement. Most economists agree that it is human resources (students benefitting from the free SHS) of nation, not its capital nor its material resources, which ultimately determine the character and pace of its economic and social development.

Human resources constitute the ultimate basis of the wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production, human beings are the active agencies who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic, and political organizations, and therefore carry forward national development. This understanding seems to buttress Ghana's Free SHS policy to build capacity of the youth through education and training for national development.

Methodology

An exploratory case study was adopted for the study (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This method helped to explore, explain or describe a phenomenon of interest (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The case study design has the advantage of exploring the complexity of a given phenomenon for the purpose of providing a better understanding of the issues under study (Creswell, 2007). The target population of the study included all SHSs, Directors of education, teacher unions, and parents in the Central and Greater Accra Regions of Ghana.

The sample for the study was made up of 38 respondents selected through purposive sampling techniques across four selected secondary schools in Greater Accra and Central Region. The purposive sampling was to ensure that investigators had access to information-rich participants by reason of their position within the context of SHS administration. Specifically, 4 Directors of Education, 4 headmasters and mistresses of SHS, 4 Senior Housemasters and mistresses, 4 Heads of Department 12 beneficiary Students. The study also interviewed 4 PTA representatives and 1 GNAT 1 NAGRAT representative in SHS and 4 parents of the free SHS programme. The researchers used a semi-structured interview guide, and direct observation (still pictures and checklist) of school facilities as data collection instruments. All participants were interviewed and in addition, the school heads were made to complete checklists.

The data was validated to ensure the quality of the information collected based on the Principle of Historical Continuity and Reflexivity. On historical continuity, the emphasis was on that 'action does not begin in a vacuum, and never ends hence the researchers need to pay much attention to the different contexts and traditions (Heikkinen, et al., 2007). Again, on the Principle

of Reflexivity, the participants consciously reflected on their pre-insight of the process there were critical objective views expressed in a systematic and coherent manner.

All the study instruments were pilot-tested at the T. I. Ahmadiyya SHS Gomoa Postin, in the Central region. This school was chosen because of its proximity to the place of work of the researchers UEW and also for the fact that it is a beneficiary school for the implementation of the FSHS programme. The school head, selected tutors, parents and students were served with the study instruments. Their responses helped to modify the instruments. It helped to improve the internal consistency of the study instruments.

The researchers sought permission from the GES. This was done to gain access to the schools and voluntary participation. To this end, a letter of access to the schools and district education directorates was issued by the Director-General of the Ghana Education Service. This

enabled the researchers to obtain cooperation from the schools and district education authorities during data collection. Besides the circular letter from the Ghana Education Service (GES) Headquarters to the schools, district education directorates and other participants of the study, an official letter of introduction and consent form from the researchers were also sent to the participants. This was done to explain the purpose of the study and solicit the participation of participants. Appointment dates were arranged with the school heads, district directors of education and other participants of the research. The instruments were sent ahead of the scheduled periods for the participants to have a better idea of the questions. Afterwards, researchers visited the schools, district education directorates and other participants for data collection. Interview, observation and filling of the checklist were successfully completed within a period of two weeks.

The field data were categorised into themes in accordance with the research questions. Interview responses were audiotaped, and transcribed verbatim. The data analysis pathway enabled the researchers to generate the themes and sub-themes for the study. The participants' voices were used to support arguments. This supports Creswell (2003) that for relevant meaning to emerge, one needs to look at each case and draw meaning from it, as well as look at a categorical aggregation from a collection of instances. From the iterated process of reading and rereading the transcribed narratives from interviews, the researchers immersed themselves in the data. During the process, the researchers were guided by the following questions: what issues were emerging in words and phrases in the data that were pointing to how the participants were reflecting? How were they organizing and sharing their thoughts? How were the participants describing actions being observed? How were the participants interpreting what they knew about the FSHS? How were they being critical about issues related to the FSHS? Those aspects that had no relation with the focus of the study were discarded.

With the cross-case analysis referent themes from the within-case analysis were used to identify similarities and differences in categories (Powell & Renner, 2003). The justification for using a cross-case analysis, according to Eisenhardt (1989) was to make one go beyond the initial impressions from the within-case. This therefore influenced the researchers' thoughts when they were examining themes or categories across the cases. In sum, the analysis helped the researchers reorganize the data in a logical and coherent manner to make more understanding and to also answer the research questions.

Results

The following themes came up from the iterated analysis of the data which was also informed by the research questions; benefit of FSHS, challenges of FSHS and sustainability.

1. Benefit of FSHS
Resource requirement for smooth running of secondary education is huge. It runs along a broad spectrum of resources depending on factors such as boarding/lodging status, grade/category and location. Stationery, utility, feeding, clothing, sports, ICT, examination, science practical, entertainment, Mathematics and Science quiz and tuition fees. Thus, before

implementation of the Free SHS, government was either paying for these facilities or subsidizing them. This is reported by some quotations from participants:

Through the Northern scholarship scheme- Feeding, students' fees. WASSCE registration was taken care of by the Scholarship Secretariat (DDE5).

Formerly, we used to rely on fees paid by students to run the school, which was helpful but now the government has absorbed all costs so we always have to wait for the government to release money for us to run the school (DDE4).

I know that the government is providing free textbook, uniform, free meal (day students take one meal) the boarders take 3 meals (DDE6).

With government implementation of the FSHS, the entire burden of funding SHS remains government's responsibility. Government funds most of the resources through Government of Ghana (GoG) fund, Scholarship Secretariat, and Northern Scholarship Scheme. In line with the FSHS policy, some resources are supposed to be supplied by the central government. Among them are TLM, stationery and uniform. Some others are supposed to be supplied by the Buffer Stock System. For all other remaining supplies such as vegetables which are termed to be perishable, central government disburses funds to the schools to purchase as and when their need arises. This is in agreement with Khammati and Nyongesa (2013) when they noted that many nations were putting a lot of investment in the provision of free education. There was enough funding to the extent that special cheque book scheme was put in place to allow school heads to operate their own general account with responsibility for stationery, materials, textbooks, library books, repairs of furniture and equipment, purchase of small apparatus, cleaning materials and medical facilities.

Besides resource allocation from central government, heads of schools were of the opinion that PTAs also provided resources towards implementation of the FSHS. The associations still make provision for facilities for the schools. Some participants stated that:

PTA levies based on the agreement are used for extra classes and PTA projects ". Despite the government's position of payment of money from parents, PTA sees a strong need to supplement the government's provision of resources top schools (HM8).

We receive the Free SHS grant from the central govt, PTA levies based on agreement e.g. extra classes, PTA projects, support from old students, IGFs (DDE3).

It can be inferred from the data that although the government has taken full responsibility for the funding of the schools and placed restrictions on direct PTA involvement, however, parents

continue to make contributions towards the running of SHS. Although PTA contributions have largely been reduced, in some schools where there is conscientious agreement plus approval from the government, PTAs levy members towards the allocation of resources such as dormitories, classroom blocks and teacher bungalows. There is huge funding expected from the government as Prempeh (2017) noted that the New Patriotic Party led government making secondary education free by absorbing fees such as Examination, entertainment, library, SRC dues, sports, culture, co-curricular activities, ICT, National Science and Maths Quiz, science development, development levy and utilities. Funding for this absorption from the government was either delayed or inadequate, so the need for non-governmental bodies to contribute towards FSHS.

Another source of funding, according to the data, is old students' associations. The associations have been contributing to the resource allocation of schools. Participants gave accounts of old student's involvement:

> *Old students usually look out for the needs of their alma mater; which do not seem to be coming from central government (DDE1).*

> *The government of Ghana, CMB- Ghana COCOBOD scholarship, Scholarship Secretariat, NGOs, and faith-based institutions resource the schools (HM9).*

> *My mind cannot go far. This school is a government-assisted school. We were relying on students' fees, government subsidies, parents and internally generated funds (IGF) e.g. the use of the school facilities (HM5).*

The data imply that faith-based organisations (religious bodies), PTAs, Old students' associations, etc have made contributions towards the development of SHS. They have been putting up buildings, renovating existing buildings, providing computers, instituting awards for teachers and students, and providing health care facilities. This finding is in line with World Bank (2005) that about 13 per cent of secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa is estimated to be privately provided. It also concurs with Mingat (2004) when he posited that 29 per cent of upper-secondary education is privately financed, based on a sample of 17 low-income countries.

2. *Challenges of the Free Senior High School Policy*

The Free senior high school policy like any other new policy has challenges which include; inadequate infrastructure, large class size, furniture, poor library facilities, textbooks, delay in the release of funds, delay in the supply of textbooks and inadequate teaching staff in some subjects.

2.1 Infrastructure

2.1.1 Classroom and Dormitory

Even though, the challenges are many the main challenge had to do with infrastructural challenges which range from classroom blocks, dormitories, staff accommodation, libraries, science laboratories, computer laboratories, and Information and communication technology connectivity (ICT) to lavatories. The problem has become aggravated with the introduction of the free SHS policy. This is supported by some verbatim quotations from participants:

Lack of accommodation and classrooms, as I speak now, our teachers have two semi-detached quarters and then a headmaster's bungalow that is without lights, the Assistant headmaster, is staying here, and the senior housemistress and her assistant are staying on

campus. Nobody takes care of the students; sometimes you see them in town almost all the time. Availability of Teaching /Learning Materials is another challenge, but if they are put in place, I think it will be okay (HM3).
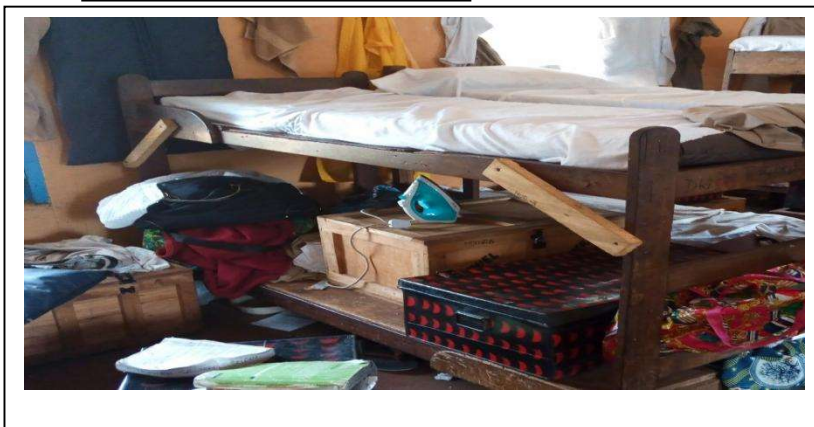
Typical Dormitory

Figure 1. A crowded student dormitory

Dormitories are overcrowded, with a limited number of beds to accommodate students coupled with limited space in the dormitories. A lot of students sleep on the floor on mattresses (SHM5).

We lack so many facilities as a school. Our structures are not enough and therefore we want the government to come to build practical workshops for us. Science lab as I speak to you now they don't have Science Lab they are using the lab as a classroom (STD11).

*In the ICT lab, it was when we were in Form One that they bought us new computers but the masters are not there. Sometimes you have to find your own way to read and pass the ICT. I remember in Form One I attended ICT three times. You go in you are told the ICT teacher is assigned another work. Some of us don't feel like we are doing ICT. Home Economics students, for instance, come outside to do their practicals. They don't have a place for practicals (*STD15).

The general picture we get from the data shows that infrastructural challenges were very critical in some schools to the extent that some students were made to share a bed and others slept on the floor because of limited dormitory space. This present finding is in agreement with the board of governors of Adisadel College to reduce students' intake by 50% starting from the 2017/2018 academic year due to "inadequate accommodation facilities" in the school, in order to "maintain the school's standard of quality education it has been noted for over the years" (Quarshie, 2017). This has health implications for students and student indiscipline. In a similar way, students have to share limited teaching and learning materials.

Since the inception of the Free SHS policy, the allocation of resources has not been better than before. Participants made comparisons and observed inadequacies in resources. The following were their comments:

Before, it was better because parents now have a mindset that it is free. Some parents even though elective textbooks would be free. Even if there was a need to make some sacrifices, because they think it is free, they leave everything to the government (DDE9).

> *Sometimes the suppliers also delay their supply. I will say the old system was better (HM8).*

> *Even though it is not sufficient so even if you look at the old and new, I don't see the difference (DDE10).*

It is implied from the data that participants did not realize any improvement in resource allocation. They were of the view that supplies from the government were not only insufficient but also delay. On the part of parents, participants think parents are adamant to provide for their wards. This situation has rendered the resource allocation for the free SHS poorer than the regime before it.

In this study participants acknowledged the critical place of infrastructure such as classrooms and dormitories for students and the need for all stakeholders to support the implementation of the free SHS policy through building infrastructure, renovating obsolete classrooms, libraries and teachers' residential bungalows. Indeed, school physical facilities and others play a significant role and facilitate an enabling environment that supports teaching and learning in school. A new body of academic inquiry is growing with a focus on the physical environment in which learning takes place in the educational process. For instance, studies in the Capistrano Unified School District (CUSD) in Orange County, Califonia found that students in classrooms with natural lighting, large windows or well-designed skylight performed 19-26 per cent better than their peers in classrooms without these facilities (Hale 2002). The impact of the physical environment on educators and students is not ignored in current research. It has been determined that the surroundings in which people function can greatly impact moods, satisfaction and self-worth.

2.1.2 Staff and Student Accommodation

Staff accommodation is a serious issue in some schools. This affects almost every school activity because the teachers are the heartbeat of every school activity. Most teachers stay in town and therefore commute every day to school which may cause lateness to school and affect contact hours. The few staff that are accommodated on campus are unable to supervise students' activities. As evidenced in the words of a Senior House Master:

> *Supervision in the dormitory is done by housemasters/housemistresses. In this school accommodation is a big challenge because most of the teachers live in town and therefore, they are unable to do their work as expected of housemasters/mistresses (SHM3).*

Too much pressure on toilet facilities. Some students have to wait until others have finished taking their turn (STD13).

They have no toilet. The occupants of the houses around have complained severally but what could they do (DDE5).

The data reveal that some schools have no decent places of convenience. This could have health implications for the students. It is in the light of this reasoning that a Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Coast, and the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) have called on the

government to take its time in the implementation by first consulting key stakeholders and also take steps to put in place the necessary infrastructure and facilities that are needed for smooth academic work so as to ensure that quality education at the SHS level will not be compromised (Jafaru, 2018, Baruti, 2017, Donkor, 2017 & Quarshie, 2017).

There is congestion in the dining hall. The dining hall's capacity can only contain about 1200 students. It was put up by the PTA, the kitchen by the PTA, and the grinding mill was purchased and put up by the PTA. So, you see that the capacity if you look at the space in the dining hall it cannot accommodate these teaming numbers. So sometimes we are saved by the fact that we have to transport the food down there to go and give to students who have their classes down there. If not, the situation is alarming. In the evening if all of them will have to come and eat and you come to see the situation is bad. We need a befitting dining hall (SHM6).

A Dining Hall

Figure 2. An open dining hall

The dining hall we use currently was put up by our parents from the funds of the PTA. It was put up in the past for our seniors and their number was not large as compared to this our batch hence they were able to use it well, but since this free policy thing came, the dining hall has become so congested that sometimes some of the students find it difficult therefore they stand outside. Or we all enter but you find 18 or 14 students on a bench which is not very good (STD7).

*.. Dormitories are fully packed especially the girls' side. We have beds for first years but no space to fix the beds. Dormitories are choked, and students are forced to sleep in pairs. Lack of renovation resulting in leakage in roofing when it rains (*SHM9).

The evidence shows that congestion is a serious challenge in some schools which indirectly affects students' health and discipline. Situations like this can result in outbreaks of diseases as a result of the congestion in the dining hall and students' unrest. Classroom congestion affects the quality of instruction. This is because it becomes very difficult for the teacher to move around to monitor the progress of the lesson. Available literature shows that this challenge is not new because it is one of the challenges that the Government of Kenya faced in its implementation of Free Secondary Education in Kenya. In Kenya, the MOE noted that one of the immediate challenges

faced by the programme was classrooms to accommodate the extra students enrolled as a result of the FSE (Oyaro, 2008). This apparently, was a result of failure to plan to accommodate the expected increment.

2.1.3 Library facilities

Poor library facilities in some schools were a disincentive to teaching and learning. Students go to the library only to read their notes because there are no current and relevant textbooks for the students to read. Most of the books found in the library were archaic and meant for the old

system ('O' and 'A' Levels) and not for the present crop of students. Furniture for students to sit on in the library is another challenge. The observation can be supported by the following quotations:

If you enter the library it is very sad. There are only three shelves and the books that are there are old books that are not relevant to this crop of students (DDE8).

A temporary library that can only accommodate 40 students. STD4

*Our library is a sub-standard one that must be upgraded to make it more useful for the programmes we do here (*STD8).

The evidence above sums up the state of affairs in some of the libraries in the free SHS in the country. This situation calls for immediate attention. This could have been avoided if measures were taken to assess the needs of the schools first, before rolling out the policy. Change in some parents' attitudes is a big challenge to school administration. It is noted that some parents are no longer cooperating with the schools of their wards since the introduction of the free SHS. The reason is that the government says everything is free and so no parent should pay anything to the schools that their wards are attending. This pronouncement has been a disincentive to the schools. The following quotations support this claim:

We lack so many facilities as a school but our parents have been told not to pay any money again to the schools. Our structures are not enough and therefore we want the government to come and build practical workshops for us. Science lab as I speak to you now they don't have Science Lab they are using the lab as a classroom (STD6).

*Services such as extra security, catering services, and additional accommodation were being catered for by PTA (*PTA8)

The collection of levies and dues has been banned (PTA3).

Before the introduction of the free SHS, PTAs were very supportive of the school's administration. However, after the introduction of the policy, most parents are unwilling to contribute to the PTA fund or pay any levy. As a result, school headmasters are handicapped and desperate because they can no longer turn to the PTA for support. Available evidence shows the

contributions PTAs have made to the various schools where the study was carried out including school buses, buildings, furniture, and corn mills among others. In Nigeria, at the junior secondary level, education is totally free, while at the senior secondary level parents are required to buy

textbooks and uniforms for their wards (Khammati, & Nyongesa, 2013). It is further observed that in Nigeria and in Kenya part of the cost is borne by parents while governments also take the greater part.

2.2 Teacher Workload

Large enrolment of students usually brings with it an increase in teachers' workload which affects the quality of teaching and assessment of students. Teachers are unable to give a sufficient number of exercises and also do proper assessments of students' learning. This observation is supported by participants as follows:

*Currently, we were told that the government has increased teachers' motivation. It used to be GHC 30 per year and last year it was reduced to GHC 20 and this year we learnt that the government has increased it to GHC 70 as to the modalities currently we don't know. That is one aspect of the motivation. Secondly, teaching and learning materials are lacking, so we hope the government will provide teaching and learning materials for us that will help us. There are other schools that don't have the science equipment or the vocational programmes tools that they need in order to work. And if you are a teacher you are teaching without such teaching and learning materials it is a hindrance that affects your teaching. Sometimes you sit to assess yourself and you know that you are performing below average, and you are not happy so that is why sometimes some teachers move to well-endowed schools (*HM6)

*I handle six classes of 60 students per class. I have difficulty managing the class since I have to combine my work as a Senior House Master and a Tutor. Laborious! At times I leave campus after six pm. Too much workload (*HOD 14).

And the categorization of the schools, ie category A, B, C and D. Normally all the best students are sent to the best schools and you bring the aggregate 30s to 36 to come and do Science, not that the teachers are not working. It is important to know that it is not everybody that is supposed to go to secondary school (HOD 4).

However, other participants were of different views as expressed in the following words:

*We are doing our best, the situation is not alarming as people anticipated it. It is just the usual problem we have in school but we are coping with it (*SHM7).

*Well, because of the double track system we are now relieved of the burden of large class sizes. It is better than before, so we are better able to manage the class and work load (*HOD11)

In fact, we are doing our best, because of the double track system our workload has been reduced. Last year and the previous year it was too much for some of us. You have over sixty students in one class that is two classes put together (HOD4).

The data indicate that teachers' workload has increased. A situation like this has implications for quality teaching, especially, when it comes to an assessment of students. Most teachers may not have the time to give the required number of exercises they are expected to give to students. The workload becomes worst when a teacher has very weak students in his class, because he has

to teach and do remedial classes to ensure that they understand whatever is taught. The challenge of teacher student ratio, which already was an existing problem because of freezing of teacher employment as far back as 1998 made the Kenya experience serious (Oyaro, 2008). However, in Ghana, a section of the participants were of the opinion that the introduction of the "double track system" has brought some relief to teachers because class sizes have reduced considerably.

Another challenge that featured in the students' interview was inadequate furniture for students to sit on in the classroom. The available furniture is usually shared by the seniors and so the first-year students have no option than to pair with their colleagues. In some schools, students were seen sitting on plastic chairs which were bought by parents. The seriousness of the challenge can be appreciated in the participants' own words:

Enrolment has increased but we have inadequate classrooms and inadequate furniture, No classroom for practical activities in Home Economics, Poor and inadequate science equipment, and inferior seats in the science laboratory (SHM1).

There is no adequate furniture and classrooms. We only have 3 rooms for the 2018/2019 batch. We need temporary sheds or pavilions for the September intake (HM3).

*Lack of furniture for students. Some parents have a poor attitude towards the education of their children (*PTA1).

The above evidence sums up the challenge that students face in schools. Students will find it difficult to concentrate in class when they are not comfortably seated in the first place. When students pair a seat in class they easily become tired because they are not properly seated. This situation affects quality teaching and learning in a classroom. The present finding is in agreement with (Khammati, & Nyongesa, 2013) when they made the observation that the increment in enrolment without its corresponding increase in infrastructure in secondary schools has led to over-stretching the available facilities and teaching staff.

2.3 Delay in the supply of foodstuff by the contractors to schools.

Some individuals were contracted to supply foodstuff to schools and some have not lived up to expectations as the data indicate in the quotations below:

> *Foodstuffs are not brought in time and this also has an adverse effect on teaching and learning* (STD8).

> *Government supplies do not usually come on time so schools have to rely on fees paid by fee-paying students to run the school until such time that government releases funds for the purchase of perishable. Sometimes the suppliers also delay their supply. I will say the old system was better* (HM9).

The data show that people who have been contracted to supply foodstuff to schools are sometimes delayed and that affected the schools. It is possible the suppliers had to pre-finance their supply and this creates difficulties for the schools. This situation makes some of the participants prefer the old system where students pay fees to the free SHS. The reason is that the

new system has the tendency to create problems because in an attempt to economise, is most likely the quantity and quality of food will be affected which may trigger riots among students.

Another area of delay that came up for mention was the supply of textbooks to schools. As part of the package for the free SHS policy, the government promised to provide free textbooks for students. As a result, parents no longer buy textbooks for their wards. However, the supplies of textbooks delay and affect teaching and learning. This claim is supported by the following quotations from participants:

> *We also have challenges with textbooks, especially in our elective areas. The government only provided textbooks for the core areas leaving the elective subjects (*STD7).

Textbooks for elective subjects are not supplied (PTA5).

The available data revealed that textbooks promised by the government are delayed and students have to wait till they are brought. This means that teachers will not be able to treat some of the important topics in these textbooks in the academic year. Besides, it was also revealed that the textbooks supplied were only core subjects which include; English Language, Mathematics, Social Studies and Integrated Science. Meanwhile, according to Kwawukume (2017), students were promised free textbooks, and free boarding among others. With this in mind, students came to school with the mindset that government will supply free textbooks including elective subjects so they came to school empty-handed.

Among the challenges the schools face is inadequate and untrained teaching staff in some subjects. The study found that there was inadequate teaching staff in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Visual Arts, and Christian Religious Studies (CRS) among other subjects. This was highlighted by the participants' responses. Some of their concerns are as follows:

In the ICT lab, it was when we were in Form One that they bought us new computers but the masters are not there. Sometimes you have to find your own way to read and pass the ICT exams. I remember in Form One I attended ICT three times. You go in and you are told the ICT teacher is assigned another work. Some of us don't feel like we are doing ICT (STD8).

*No teachers for some technical subjects, Visual Arts, CRS. Under placement of students for Business and Agric programs (*HM13).

*...you have teachers that are teaching areas that they haven't done in the university. These are teachers without pedagogical skills who went to the university to do other courses that are not related to teaching yet GES continues to post them when you talk you put yourselves in trouble so you keep quiet and do your work. Others have done primary education and they are teaching in secondary schools. Others have done Integrated Development Studies, a "Jack of all Trades" without specialization. They are teaching at the SHS and you cannot talk, they say they can teach History, they can teach Maths, they can teach English, they can teach everything and they are teaching, if you want to talk you will be the first person to go even though you are specialized (*HOD7).

The data show that there was a lack of teachers in ICT, Christian Religious Studies, Visual Arts among others. Teacher shortage was a big challenge for most of the schools, especially deprived schools. Some of the teachers posted were not trained and sometimes they are not specialists in the subject area they teach which affects the quality of teaching and learning.

2.4 Delay in the Release of Funds

Delays on the part of the government in releasing funds to schools also came up for discussion. Funds to run the schools usually delay and this gives headmasters headaches because when schools re-open students must be fed and other administrative activities that require funds cannot wait. This challenge was critical to the heads and some of their observations are as follows:

> *The money does not get here on time, sometimes they bring the money in the middle of the term and we have to rely on the farm money* (HM12).

> *Funds are not released on time for the running of the school and this adversely affects teaching and learning* (STD15).

> *Besides, feeding is another area of challenge, when it takes so long a time for the money to be released the quality of the food is compromised, and as you know students' food is always the cause of almost all students' riots on campus (*HM10).

Generally, participants were not happy with the way funds were released for the free SHS to be run. The delay in the release brings apparently with it untold hardship for the schools. As highlighted in the data, the free SHS students usually depend on the fee-paying students until the government releases funds for the purchase of perishables. As indicated when funds delay schools have no choice but to economise the little resources at their disposal to ensure the running of the schools. In times like these, headmasters become desperate and have to resort to all means to run the schools. This was similar to the Kenyan experience where the disbursement of funds to schools was delayed as late as the third month of the term. This was found to have a negative effect on learning as the schools' needs in terms of learning materials are lacking in the schools (Khammati, & Nyongesa, 2013). However, it was noted that delay in the case of Ghana was not all the time as observed by one of the participants in the words;

"we have occasional delays, but not always especially for the perishables" (**HM5).**

3.0 Alternative Ways of Sustaining the Free SHS Programme

In most policy literature (Owolabi, 2005) policy thinkers and analysts often seek alternative policy paths as safeguards regarding the risks and externalities of an on-going policy. Evidence from the data supports this assertion.

Government should revisit the Northern Scholarship Scheme, learn from it and establish a National Endowment Fund to support the Free SHS. Government should revive the School Farm Concept and revive agriculture (HM1).

Admission should be offered to students who are academically good. Students with an aggregate 6-20 should be considered. Beyond this cut-off point, students should be made to pay fees (PTA1).

Government should have made boarding fees pay because it is not fair to make other boarders and other day students. In that case, those who afford the boarding fees will come to boarding while those who cannot afford them will become day students. This system would also reduce the burden on the government (HM11).

A reflection on the data presented above reveals that the participants thought of existing situations regarding the policy area (Ghana). For example, the mention of the Northern Scholarship Programme, the examination timetable, the performances of students and the overall disposition of some parents regarding the inclusion of private schools are existing realities. Arguably, the choice of existing policy is functionally related to time, space, and resources (Owolabi, 2005) hence, alternative or additional approaches path may be needed in response to these existing situations. Specifically, the government should at the moment consider the existing situation in the education sector, how the sector is organized and even the geography of the educational landscape. There is also the need to direct a searchlight on the political and economic contexts and the dynamics of change in Ghana. For instance, the state should create a stakeholder forum to thoroughly discuss the future direction of the FSHS programme.

Conclusion

The study revealed that the government funds most of the resources through the Government of Ghana (GoG) Fund. This suggests that the central government bears the responsibility of educational resource allocation in the country. Apart from the central government other bodies like PTAs, Old Students Associations, faith-based organisations and Non-governmental Organisations also provide resources for the smooth running of the Free Senior High Schools in Ghana. In light of this finding, it is advisable that the central government takes steps to encourage partnership in educational provision in the country.

The study also found that the level of involvement of key stakeholders such as Professional Teacher Unions, Directors of Education, Headmasters, Civil Society Organisations, donor agencies, development partners and industry was low from the planning stage to the

implementation stage. This has the tendency to encourage apathy and a 'do it and let's see attitude' which is not worthy of national development.

The FSHS Programme is faced with a number of challenges in its implementation such as large class size, inadequate furniture, poor library facilities, delays in the release of funds, delays in the supply of textbooks, inadequate teaching staff in some subjects and infrastructural challenges. All these challenges need funding in order to overcome them and ensure the smooth and efficient running of the free SHS Programme. The study further found that the FSHS Programme would be sustainable if the central government continues to provide funding, motivate teachers, forge partnerships with other stakeholders and build capacities of implementing agencies to ensure its effective implementation. Until the central government shows strong political commitment and a sustainable source of funding in this respect the programme may suffer from quality and subsequently be abandoned.

Policy implications and recommendations

It can scarcely be doubted that secondary education constitutes a significant segment of Ghana's drive towards national development. Rationally, and by implication of the data gathered, there must be coordinated efforts in leadership (both political and managerial) to sustain the policy. This implies strong political will, coupled with managerial efficiency and effectiveness, and strong competent technocrats. Thus, the ill-handling of the FSHS policy will not only affect its beneficiaries but could also affect the human capital development of the nation as a whole.

Another implication inferred from the data is resource constraints. The data suggest that state funding of FSHS alone is not feasible in the face of competing interests of other equally important sectors. Hence, the state trying to go it alone will be problematic as it draws resources from other essential investments required for the structural transformation of the nation. The question is: What resources are available for this policy? What are the sources of these resources? These questions have serious implications for the sustainable implementation of the Free SHS.

A third policy implication gleaned from the data is stakeholders' engagement. This suggests that key stakeholders such as teacher unions, policy think tanks, civil society organizations, parents and other relevant stakeholders should be engaged in round table discussions and fora to build national consensus. This will lead to public acceptance and confidence in the policy. On the contrary, failure to involve these stakeholders could create apathy and indifference to policy implementation.

A fourth policy issue is research and development. The policy, over a period of time, must be researched into to improve upon its implementation taking into consideration teacher recruitment, deployment and motivation. The need for research to inform teacher deployment and retention; teaching and learning materials, school infrastructure and facilities through needs assessment.

Results from the study show that the government is constrained in terms of resources such as classrooms, dining hall space, dormitories etc. Hence, the government should raise an education development levy solely through the oil revenue to support infrastructure development at the SHS level.

The data indicate that enrolment has increased in the schools leading to increased teacher workload and pressure on time-on-task. The Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service and the National Teaching Council should collaborate in the recruitment, deployment, retention and professional development of teachers.

References

Addai- Mensaah, I. (2000). E*ducation in Ghana: A tool for social mobility or social stratification*" J.B. Danquah Memorial Lecture, Ghana Academy of Art and Science, April, Accra. GAAC

Ansu, Y. (2007). *Opening speech, third regional conference on secondary education and training,* Accra

Babalola, H. (2003). *Economic growth and human development*. Nsukka: University Press.

Baruti, J. (2017). *UCC VC responds to education minister's personal attack*. www.yen.com.gh/90243-ucc-vc-responds-education-ministers-personal-attack

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five traditions.* Thousand oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Donkor, J. (2017). Defer free senior high school- says think tank. *The Ghanaian times*, pp. 16-17, No. 17974, ISSN: 0855-1503.

Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of management review*, *14*(4), 532-550.

Government of Kenya, (2007). Kenya vision 2030. Government printer, Nairobi

Fagerlind, C. E., & Saha, K. E. (1997). *Public expenditure and human development in Nigeria*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc

Jafaru, M. Y. (2018). Spio-Garbrah adds voice to debate on free SHS, *Daily graphic,* 20785, p.19.

Khammati, M. J. & Nyongesa, W. J. (2013). Factors influencing the implementation of free secondary education in Mumias District, Kenya. *Journal of Social Science for Policy Implementations, 1*(1), 32-47.

Kwawukume, V. (2017). Free SHS truely free. *Daily Graphic*, p.3, Monday, March 27, 2017, No. 20337.

Lewin, K.M. (2008). *Strategies for sustainable financing of secondary education in sub- sahara Africa*. Washington D.C.: World Bank

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research* (3ʳᵈ ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Mingat, A. (2004). Questions de soutenabilité financiére concernant le development de l'enseignement secondaire dans les pays d'Afrique subsaharienne. *Secondary Education in Africa (SEIA) background paper*, World Bank, Washington, DC.

NPP 2016 Manifesto

Ministry of Finance (2005). *Secondary education improvement project*. www.mofep.gov.gh/?q=news/2014-07-31/secondary-education-improvement-project.

Musalia, F. G. (2005). *Challenges facing head teachers in implementing free primary education in Suba east division, Migori district, Nyanza province of Kenya*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi.

Owolabi, J. (2005) *Policy making and educational policy analysis* Kampala: Makere University Press.

Powell, E. T., & Renner, M. (2003). Analyzing qualitative data. *Wisconsin, WI: Program Development and Evaluation*.

Prempeh, M. O. (2017). *Implementation of free senior high school education*. Retrieved from http://moe.gov.gh/edge/content/uploads

Quarshie, M. (2017). *Adisadel College to reduce intake of new students by 50 percent*. www.yen.com.gh/90243-ucc-vc-responds-education-ministers-personal-attack

Republic of Ghana (2003). *Development of senior secondary education project (Education III): Appraisal report*. Department of Social Development Centre – West Region.

Republic of Ghana (1992). *The 1992 constitution of Ghana.*

Republic of Ghana (2003). *Development of senior secondary education project (Education III): Appraisal report*. Department of Social Development Centre – West Region.

Oyaro, K. (2008*). Education-Kenya: Students pour in, teachers drain away.* Inter Press Service News Agency.

Wangari, E. (2009). *A study of the linkage of critical success factors and knowledge management systems at Olivado Kenya (EPZ) ltd*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi.

World Bank (2005). *Global monitoring report*. Washington, DC: World Bank.