

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

IMPLEMENTATION OF FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL POLICY: A CASE
STUDY IN SOME SELECTED SCHOOLS IN THE WESTERN NORTH REGION
OF GHANA



**A Thesis in the Department of Educational Leadership, Faculty of Education and
Communication Science, submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, University
of Education, Winneba, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of the
Master of Philosophy (Educational Leadership) degree**

AUGUST, 2021

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, FUACHIE EMMANUEL, declare that, this dissertation, with the exception of quotation and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE.....

DATE.....

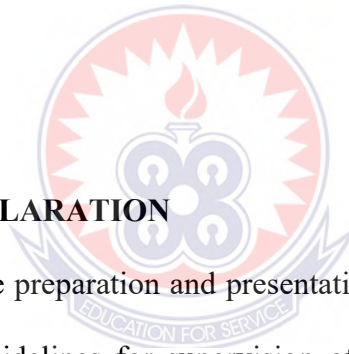
SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work were supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: REV. FR. DR FRANCIS K. SAM

SIGNATURE.....

DATE.....



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I wish to say a word of thanks to my supervisor Rev. Fr. Dr. Francis K. Sam. In fact I owe him a profound debt of gratitude. He is a supervisor yet a humble father, who always encourage, guide me to work hard and fast to achieve the ultimate.



DEDICATION

To my wife Portia Fuachie Donkor and children Akosua Gyenimah Fuachie, Akosua Fuachiewah Fuachie, Adwoa Sekyiwah Fuachie and Afful Fuachie Emmanuel Jnr.



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore the implementation of the free senior high school policy in some selected schools in the Western North region of Ghana. The objectives of the study were; to find out how headmasters implement free senior high policy; to determine the effectiveness of the implementation of the free senior high policy; to explore challenges associated with the implementation of the free senior high school policy; to find out strategies that could be adopted by headmasters of senior high schools to manage the challenges of the implementation of the free senior high school policy. The research adopted a qualitative approach underpinned by interpretive philosophical assumptions using the case study approach. The sample size for the study was five participants using census and purposive techniques. The data were collected using unstructured interview guide. The data were analysed manually using thematic analysis. The findings of the study revealed that headmasters adopted the top-down (fidelity), mutual adaptation, and enactment approaches in the implementation. It was found out that the heads were faced with challenges, such as infrastructural issues, supply of expired goods, and delay in disbursement of funds. It was also found out that headmasters are less burdened, It was recommended that government should decentralise the regulations to the district level so that at the district level, some appropriate measures could be taken to address any possible challenges that will threaten the successful implementation of the policy, Government should not relent in its effort to supply all the necessary items that the schools will need to ensure effective teaching and learning.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The present study is informed by the concerns of headmasters of their constraint by policy makers or the government to make certain decisions on their own concerning the implementation of the free senior high school policy. However, previous researchers have focused mainly on some other factors concerning policy implementation or better the implementation of the free senior high school policy, particularly in the Western North Region of Ghana.

Accordingly, this thesis is concerned with the implementation of the free senior high school policy in some selected schools in the Western North Region of Ghana. The study explores how headmasters implement the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region, the general effectiveness of the policy in the Western North Region of Ghana, the challenges they face in implementing the policy, the strategies they adopt in addressing these challenges of the policy in the Western North Region of Ghana.

The overriding importance of education to the development and growth of every nation cannot be downplayed, as various academic discourse and scholarly writings have revealed. In this regard, Nsiah (2006) claims that education melts illiteracy, ignorance, and unwarranted pride.

It stimulates innovation, invention and it is the only tool that can make one rise to global platforms. Following the significance of education to the developmental

needs of every country, Ghana introduced the Free and Compulsory Universal Education (FCUBE) policy to ensure that all children of school-going age attain formal education. It is on this same basis that Akyeampong (2009) observes that one policy strategy many countries have adopted to accelerate progress towards Education is Education for All (EFA), which encapsulates the Millennium Development Goals, which states that by 2015 children everywhere should be able to complete a full course of primary schooling, this in effect engineered the introduction of fee-free education.

According to him, from 2000 to 2006 alone, 14 developing countries formally abolished tuition fees for primary schools as a strategy to accelerate progress towards EFA (Akyeampong, 2009). Newman (2017) equally noted that over one-third of Sub-Saharan African countries introduced free primary education policies between 1994 and 2015. Notwithstanding, as Duflo, Dupas, and Kremer (2017) have noted as more and more children in developing countries enrol in primary school and gender gaps in primary enrolment shrink, policymakers' attention has shifted to secondary school education. Most people feel that secondary education has the potential to provide economic transformation and social impacts, particularly for girls (Duflo, Dupas & Kremer, 2017). In this sense, Duflo, Dupas, and Kremer emphasised that the first target under education for the UN's new "Sustainable Development Goals" is "by 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes".

In the light of this, Newman (2017) has pointed out that countries are now expanding education systems to include free secondary education (FSE) programmes. For example, countries like Gambia, Kenya, South Africa Uganda, and some others

have all expanded their educational system to include free secondary education, and now Ghana joins such countries in the implementation of free secondary education. The impact of free senior high school is enormous and varied. The impact of free senior high school policy increases educational attainment and by this extent, may also impact a range of other outcomes (Newman, 2017). Thus, according to Newman (2017), evidence from targeted programmes at the secondary school level is mixed with both Boys and Girls (Gajigo, 2012; Garlick 2013; Barrera-Osorio, 2007), and since the free secondary school seeks to increase educational attainment, it aids in delaying child birth. That is, early childbearing and marriage which has been associated with: higher morbidity and mortality has been reduced. Pregnancy-related deaths are the largest cause of mortality for 15-19-year-old females worldwide; accounts for 2/3 of deaths in Sub-Saharan Africa (Lancet, 2016); lower educational attainment and lower family income (Ferre, 2009; Schultz as cited in Newman, 2017).

Ghana, where this study is situated cannot be left out when it comes to the impact of free secondary school regarding the increase in students' enrolment, as there is statistical evidence to suggest that there has been vast stride in terms of students' enrolment at the SHS level since the inception of the free senior high school during the 2017/2018 academic year. For this reason, Partey (2017) notes that over the past four years (2013 – 2016) an average of 27.3% of students who were placed by the Computerised School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) did not enrol, which he attributes to the problem of access; and therefore admits that so far as senior high school education is concerned, Ghana is on the course in improving access with the introduction of the Free Senior High School policy. Duflo, Dupas, and Kremer (2017)

in corroboration with Partey (2017) have pointed out that free SHS education increases secondary school education, which according to them, impart significantly learning gains, enable healthier behaviours, and delays fertility and marriage, in particular for women.

Therefore, inferring from the exposition above on the impact of free senior high school, the introduction of free senior high school education is justifiable and prudent, which is a constitutional requirement; and therefore, the current government relies heavily on Article 25 1b of the 1992 Constitution, 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” on the implementation of the free senior high school policy.

Although free senior high school is a constitutional requirement, it has not been implemented all these years and this could be due to the financial constraint in the country. We still cannot admit that Ghana has the financial standing now to implement free senior high school without any constraints. That notwithstanding the implementation of the free senior high school programme by the current government has seen countless number of challenges, ranging from infrastructure, enrollment to congestion at the senior high school level.

Unequivocally, the free senior high school policy by the government has been packaged and handed over to the various heads of senior high schools to preside over its implementation, which, has commenced amidst challenges, and currently the

introduction of double track system due to congestion and increase in student's enrollment. According to Naz, Tatlah, and Abida (2015) without effective implementation, the decision of the curriculum planner cannot be carried out successfully since the people who plan the curriculum are not the same as those who carry it out, as there is a considerable room of distortion of the curriculum planner's intentions if the steps and actions appropriate to the plan are not taken. It is for this reason that Mampuru (2001) and Kobia (2009), state that curriculum implementation is the most difficult phase of curriculum development but the most critical since it is at this stage that curriculum is consumed by its target users, especially the learners.

Therefore, giving the difficult and critical nature of curriculum implementation, as Mampuru (2001) and Kobia (2009) have noted, the argument can be advanced that free SHS in Ghana, which is a new policy in Ghana's educational sector with diverse challenges and has come under various attacks by policy makers or better still stakeholders, particularly concerning quality education, will present a seemingly daunting task in its implementation as to bring about quality education (Cardno, 2003).

It is for this reason that researcher is motivated to explore the implementation of free senior high school policy in some selected schools in the Western North Region of Ghana by considering the effectiveness, challenges, and strategies heads of senior high schools adopt in controlling these challenges.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

A countless number of intellectual communication in various media platforms as well as my personal experience as a senior high school tutor was instrumental in sensitizing me to observe that implementers of the free senior high school policy, especially headmasters have some concerns with how they have been directed to implement the policy. That is, my interaction with some of the headmasters of the senior high schools in the Western North Region revealed that they are not so happy with the directives to the implementation of the free senior high policy in Ghana. This is because they have been constrained by authorities or policy makers from taking certain key decisions on their own to ensure that the implementation of the free senior high school becomes a success.

However, concern from headmasters are probably not given any special attention. The successful implementation of any programme in the school depends on the managerial capacity of heads of schools (Khamati & Nyongesa, 2013). The underlying assumption for curriculum integrity (faithfulness to the directives as planned by policy makers) is that the knowledge of the implementation of the policy is created by experts for heads to ensure that the policy is implemented in the way that experts have decided is the best. Therefore, it becomes crucial to decide how heads of senior high schools implement the policy (approaches they adopt in implementing the policy). That is, whether they follow rigorously the directives by the government of the policy makers or they sometimes take their own decisions in the implementation of the policy.

Moreover, Researcher's personal observation revealed that heads seem not to have adequate infrastructure to accommodate the huge number of students. There is then the need to investigate these issues to address the problem under consideration, as this problem could hinder academic excellence of the younger generation. This is because the research seek to explore how headmasters implement the free senior high school policy, the challenges they face, the strategies they use in addressing these challenges, and the overall effectiveness of the implementation of the policy by the government, if not, policy implementers could develop a lackadaisical attitude towards the implementation of the policy. This will consequently affect the success of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region, and Ghana at large in the sense that headmasters are supervisors of the final implementation of the policy. Therefore the success or failure of the policy depends to a very large extent on them.

Admittedly, some researchers have sought to investigate some issues with the implementation of free senior high school as a policy. For example, Asumadu (2019) has looked at the challenges associated with the implementation of the policy at Denkyembour District in Ghana. Essuman (2018) has also looked at the challenges of the free senior high by considering the past, realities, and feasible choices.

Mensah (2019) has equally considered the challenges of the implementation of the free senior high school policy at the Effutu Municipality. Notably, these studies focused mainly on the challenges that go with the implementation of free senior school policy. They, however, failed to address how the policy is implemented by headmasters and the effectiveness of the policy. What is more surprising about these studies is that the researchers failed to look at the strategies that could be adopted to address the

challenges of the implementation of the policy, mainly from the perspective of headmasters. The current study, therefore, tries to fill these knowledge gaps.

However, in an attempt to address these gaps, some researchers have focused on the effectiveness of the policy (Essuman, 2018; Viennet & Pont, 2017; Cema, 2013; Suggett, 2011; McLaughlin, 2006). It should be acknowledged that these studies focused mainly on the issues concerning the effectiveness of policy implementation.

Although these studies espoused some crucial issues related to the effectiveness of policy implementation, most of these studies did not pay particular attention to the implementation of free senior high school; and also, the challenges of the implementation of the policy. Also, there was no attempt by these researchers to determine how managers of a policy implement the policy in question and the strategies they adopted to deal with any emerging challenges from the policy implementation. Hence, studies concerning free senior high policy are incomprehensive. The present study sought to fill these gaps.

Moreover, it could be determined that there has not been any study conducted in the Western North Region of Ghana on the implementation of the free senior high school policy. Hence, to fill these knowledge gaps, the present study seeks to explore the implementation of the free senior school policy in some selected schools in the Western North Region of Ghana.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the implementation of free senior high school policy in some selected schools in the Western North Region of Ghana.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. to find out how headmasters implement the free senior high policy in the Western North Region of Ghana.
2. to determine the effectiveness of the implementation of free senior high policy in the Western North Region of Ghana.
3. explore challenges associated with the implementation of free senior high school policy in the Western North Region.
4. to find out strategies that could be adopted to manage the challenges of the implementation of free senior high school policy in the Western North Region.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions directed the conduct of the study.

1. How do headmasters implement free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana?
2. How effective is the implementation of free senior high policy in the Western North Region of Ghana?
3. What challenges are associated with the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region?
4. How can the challenges of the implementation of free senior high school policy in the Western North Region be managed

1.6 Significance of the Study

The current study will be very useful in varied ways, as it will sensitize policy makers on the issues relating to the implementation of the free senior high school policy, particularly in the Western North Region of Ghana. That is, the current study is instrumental in terms of its theoretical, practical, and pedagogical value.

This study has theoretical implications in that it will contribute to ideological perspectives on the implementation of free senior high school policy. That is, the present study will shed considerable light on how heads implement free senior high school policy. Knowledge of this will direct the affairs or the decisions of the free senior high school secretariat and guide policy makers in terms of a possible roll-out of a similar policy in the future. That is, the findings presented could help policy makers to craft a well-informed policy document to guide the implementation of the current policy or any future policy. It will inform policy makers to take pragmatic measures in addressing issues concerning the implementation of the free senior high school in the Western North Region of Ghana. When these issues are addressed, it would enhance the success of the free senior high school, particularly in the Western North Region of Ghana.

Moreover, future researchers also stand to gain immensely from the findings presented. This becomes crucial because previous studies on the issues relating to free senior high school implementation have mainly focused on some other factors, rather than on the way head teachers implement the policy and the strategies they use to address emerging challenges. Thus, the present study will help to fill the existing gap in the literature by revealing how head teachers implement free senior high school policy

and the strategies they adopt in addressing any emerging challenge of the implementation of free senior policy in Ghana and thus, serve as reference material for future researchers who may want to conduct a similar study.

Lastly, the present study would be of immense benefit in the context of Ghana, and in particular Western North Region, since the present study endeavours to address the challenges of the implementation of the free senior high school policy, it will inform policymakers to put measures in place to address these challenges to enhance teaching and learning. That is, when the challenges are addressed, not only would make the policy become successful, but more importantly, tutors would be required to put in their best for effective teaching and learning to take place. That is, headmasters will feel their grievances are addressed and then begin to put themselves in the policy and that ensures that teachers who are final implementers of the policy work assiduously to promote effective teaching and learning.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

The present study focused mainly on headmasters. This enabled the researcher, not only to find out the challenges associated with the implementation of the free senior high school policy but more crucially, to ascertain how the free senior high school is implemented and the strategies that could be adopted to address the challenges of the implementation of the free senior high school policy.

However, this study focused exclusively on heads of the various government-funded senior high schools, particularly in the Western North Region of Ghana.

There are many areas to consider as far as free senior high school policy in Ghana is concerned but the study concentrated on the implementation of free senior high school in the Western North Region of Ghana and more precisely on the headmasters.

The focus on the implementation of the free senior high school policy was to allow the researcher to determine how headmasters implement the free senior high school policy, the challenges they face in the implementation process, the strategies they use in addressing these challenges, and the effectiveness of the of policy implementation.

Also, in terms of the population, the study was delimited to heads of various senior high schools in the Western North Region of Ghana. The study focuses on heads because they supersede the implementation of the curriculum at the school level and therefore they are well-informed about almost all the issues, mainly the challenges associated with the implementation of the free senior high school policy.

1.8 Limitations of the study

The study focused solely on a qualitative approach by the use of the interview guide as an instrument for data collection. This approach did not allow the researcher to gather large data to cover the entire Western North Region. Therefore, the study is limited to small sample size and the purposeful sampling of headmasters who volunteered for the study. The study was limited to small sample size because of the five heads used and not more data the researcher could not gather. The large data which were not gathered may affect the validity of the finding.

Moreso, the researcher might have created biases in the way questions were posed during the interview and the interviewees answered the questions the same way. These were respondents' biases in revealing in-depth information. Also, these posed threat to the validity of the findings. The presence of the researcher during the interview might have influenced the responses provided because of his position as a teacher in senior high school.

Moreover, the interview guide constructed may not provide all the needed information the study required. The weakness might have affected the research findings. However, to limit the effect of these limitations, the researcher managed to monitor the interviewees' responses, and where the interviewees digressed from the subject of the interview, they were humbly reminded and directed to focus.

1.9 Definition of Terms

Computerised School Selection and Placement System – refers to the digital placement of junior high students into the various senior high schools in Ghana.

Curriculum implementation – refers to putting the planned curriculum in action; that is, it refers to actual teaching and learning in schools.

Policy Design: refers to the theoretical solution that policymakers design in reaction to issues on the policy agenda.

Tracking process: refers to the establishment of some form of central “delivery unit” to track progress on the progress of policy implementation.

Performance Monitoring: it refers to the tracking progress against key policy priorities through the analysis of a constant stream of departmental performance data

Problem-solving: it refers to the undertaking of field visits to identify obstacles to delivery and flagging up where additional resources may be needed to address specific problems

Progress Assessing: it is the supplying of heads of government with routine progress reports

Two-way communication processes: refers to the progress reports from implementation agencies to the policy-making centre; responses back from the centre to implementing agencies.

1.10 Organization of the Study

The present study was organized into five chapters, chapter one, which offers a general introduction, background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, and the limitation of the study. Also, chapter two focused on relevant theoretical and empirical literature to address the issues relating to the implementation of free senior high school policy. Chapter three describes methods and procedures adopted for the study. It comprises philosophy of the study, research design, research approach, population of the study, sample and sampling techniques, data collection instruments, trustworthiness, data collection procedure, data analysis, validating the findings. Chapter four, presented the results and discussions of data. Chapter five presented summary of the study, findings, conclusion, and recommendations made.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviewed the implementation of the free senior high school policy. The literature assesses theoretical review and empirical review as well as the conceptual framework of the implementation of free school policy from books, journals, dissertations, thesis, and other documents including print and electronic materials. Literature was reviewed on the following topics:

- a. Theoretical Review
- b. Policy Design
- c. Concept of implementation
- d. Policy Implementation
- e. Approaches to Policy Implementation
- f. Models of Implementation
- g. Determinants of policy implementation
- h. Conceptual Framework
- i. Empirical Review

2.2 Theoretical Review

In this section of the study, theories that support the topic in consideration are reviewed and the justification of the use such as theories is also considered. Once the study deals with the implementation of the free senior high school policy, which forms part of the curriculum implementation process, the theory of curriculum implementation is considered, detailing the pre-requisite for curriculum

implementation (for example, the teacher, the learner, and resources, etc.); and how these pre-requisites may be affected by the introduction of the free senior high school policy. Also, as part of the objective of the study, which is to find out how heads implement the free senior high school, consideration is given to approaches to curriculum implementation. Finally, the senior high school system in Ghana as well as issues regarding the introduction of the free senior high school policy in Ghana is given considerable attention in this review. Based on the issues of curriculum implementation as well as free senior high school policy, a conceptual framework is developed.

Design of Policy

Policy design is a situation whereby authorities or policymakers take certain decisions in consultation with stakeholders concerning education to a particular new programme or certain changes to the existing policies, which are formulated with a consideration of the rationale, benefits, and implementation plan of the programme.

It is where government formulates policies in arriving at the needs and aspirations of the people to solve situational problems.

Viennet and Pont (2017) rather admit that policy design is the theoretical solution that policymakers design in reaction to issues on the policy agenda. Bell and Stevenson (2015) have noted that the kind of reaction in providing a policy solution, and how it is formulated to a very large extent, affect how it is implemented. Fullan (2015) also draws attention to the fact that some issues that were not considered during

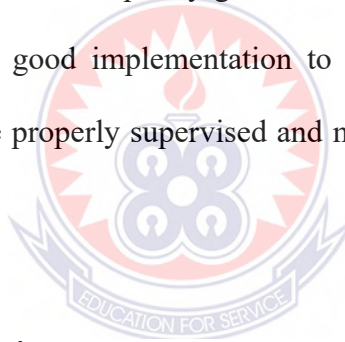
the planning or design stage may be realised during the implementation stage. This sometimes creates problems with the implementation of the policy.

According to Viennet and Pont (2017), there is the need or the perception of need that triggers or facilitates the formulation of every policy and justifies its legitimacy of implementation. Fullan (2015) also adds that there are several issues at any level of the education system that administrators must consider or prioritize. Also, the kind of policy chosen in respect of the consideration should look out for evidence and on a good knowledge emanating from the education sector, of the socio-economic, cultural, demographic, and political contexts, and the mechanisms of change in a policy system like the actors and their bargaining strategies (Haddad & Demsky as cited in Viennet & Pont, 2017). However, Viennet and Pont (2017) are of the view that policy does not have to always originate from the identification of need; and therefore, they argue that it can be politically motivated just to win political power from the electorates who voted for them.

Viennet and Pont (2017) have averred that goals determine specific challenges, scope and time horizon for the policies, and some constraints for the implementation (Honing as cited in Viennet & Pont, 2017). For instance, “as part of the policy large - scale public school reform aimed to enhance equity with two main goals: improving success rates at the end of secondary school and increasing access to higher education for students from a disadvantaged background. In any policy, if the goals are succinct and very orderly, it has a great impact on the enactment stage (Ingram & Schneider, 1990). Even so, different actors are likely to have varied forms of interpretations of the goals of the policy (Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002). Mclaughlin (as cited in Viennet

and Pont, 2017) argues that despite the desirable nature of the goal of the policy, different actors may have various interpretations.

Also, every education policy may have target groups of beneficiaries (Viennet & Pont, 2017). For example, when curriculum reforms seek to create change in content and pedagogical methods to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, the target groups become students and teachers. Honig (2006) is of the view that unexpected attitudes are generated when the target groups are not perceived at the planning stage as the beneficiaries of the change, which creates challenges to implementation. Viennet and Pont (2017) therefore suggest that for reform implementation to be successful, policy goals and targets must be clear and concrete. On the other hand, for good implementation to happen after the formulation of a policy, teachers must be properly supervised and motivated to achieve the set and the targeted goals.



Concept of implementation

Curriculum implementation, therefore, can be regarded as the process of enacting the planned curriculum. This means that curriculum implementation is the process of translating a written curriculum into classroom practices. Many educators and curriculum experts believe that the enacted curriculum should be identical to the planned curriculum. However, this is impossible because the planned curriculum is an abstract document and the enacted curriculum is a “flesh-and-blood” creation. A far more realistic and fruitful way of looking at the relationship between the ‘planned

curriculum’ and the ‘enacted (implemented) curriculum’ is to see it as analogous to the script of a play and an actual production of that play put on stage by living actors.

Implementing a curriculum requires the involvement of many different people who play fundamental roles in the implementation process. Without the coordinated involvement of these individuals, the implementation of any curriculum will be fruitless. Among the key players identified are: teachers, students, principals/headmasters and parents. In a centralized country like Ghana, where school curricula are developed at the national level (Curriculum Research & Development Division, CRDD) to be implemented in the classroom, the teacher undeniably becomes the final implementer of the curriculum. The role of the teacher in the implementation process is an undisputable fact. This is because, in the process, the teacher selects and mixes the various aspects of knowledge contained in the curriculum document. It is in the same process that the teacher-constructed syllabus and the teacher’s personality interact with the learner (University of Zimbabwe, 1995 as cited in The Commonwealth of Learning, 2000). For this reason, the teacher is regarded as the agent of the implementation process. This role played by the teacher requires him/her to be expert in both pedagogy and content. For this reason, Verspoor (2001, as cited in Chantal, Jules, Joke, 2013) identified under-qualified teachers as a factor militating against a successful implementation of any innovation.

In a study conducted by Verspoor (2001, as cited in Chantal, Jules, Joke, 2013), he mentioned lack of adequate resource materials like textbooks and classrooms, among other things as the generic causes of curriculum reform failure in developing countries. This is to say that no meaningful teaching and learning take

place without adequate resource materials. For the officially designed curriculum to be fully implemented as per plan, schools should be supplied with textbooks, teaching aids and stationery. In the same vein, physical facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, workshops, libraries and sports fields should be provided in order to create an environment in which implementation can take place. The availability and quality of resource materials and the availability of appropriate facilities have a great influence on curriculum implementation (University of Zimbabwe, 1995 as cited in The Commonwealth of Learning, 2000).

Sense of ownership is very paramount in the implementation of any instructional programme. This is the situation when teachers implement the intended curriculum as their own. To achieve this sense of ownership therefore, teachers need to accept the key components of the said curriculum or the changes in an innovation wholeheartedly (Rennie & Hackling, 2001, Sade & Coll, 2003 as cited in Finger & Houguet, n.d). This sense of ownership is very important because it is only after teachers recognise the curriculum as their own that they can commit themselves completely in implementing it. As Rennie (2001) and Sade and Coll (2003) as cited in Finger & Houguet (n.d) admit, a high level of teacher commitment is very fundamental to a successful implementation of any curriculum.

It is very expedient to note that teachers' sense of ownership and availability of teaching/learning resources alone cannot account for successful implementation without instructional supervision. Supervision is considered as one of the major factors that contribute to the effective delivery of quality education. Supervision is viewed as a co-operative venture in which supervisors and teachers engage in dialogue for the

purpose of improving instruction which logically should contribute to student improved learning and success (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002 as cited in Baffour-Awuah, 2011). Supervision of instruction in schools is mainly the duty of curriculum leaders which in Ghanaian senior high schools is subsumed under the leadership of assistant heads in charge of academic work and head of departments. These school leaders use instructional supervision to improve teaching and learning by providing practising teachers with on-going support and guidance after their initial teacher training programmes. Instruction has the potential of improving classroom practices, and contributing to student success through the professional growth and improvement of teachers.

Policy Implementation

Policy Implementation is when action is taken to address a public problem. At this stage, the design of a policy proposal is put into effect and the policy is implemented by the respective government departments and agencies, in conjunction with other organizations as required. From the explanation of the curriculum implementation, as shown in the foregoing discussion, policy implementation cannot be said to be different from curriculum implementation. For example, some educationists refer to the term as delivery (Barber, 2008), others also consider the term to be enactment (Bell and Stevenson, 2015) as in approaches to curriculum implementation, and still, others consider it as realization or educational change (Fullan, 2015; Donaldson, 2015). Here, policy implementation is situated within the

remit of education, and therefore, in the discussions that follow, consideration will be given to educational policy implementation.

Education policy implementation is a purposeful and multidirectional change process aiming to put a specific policy into practice and which may affect an education system on several levels. In line with the definitions given above on curriculum implementation (Lewy as cited in Kwarteng, 2009; Marsh & Willis, 2007; Adentwi, 2005; Fullan as cited in Kwarteng, 2009), It could be conceived of educational policy implementation as the putting into practice in the school system an action taken by the central government either to overhaul the entire educational system or to modify some specific aspects of the curriculum to make it more workable. Viennet and Pont (2017) have equally pointed out that education policy is the actions taken by the government in connection with practices of education and the measures taken by the government to address the production and delivery of education in a given system.

However, the explanation by Viennet and Pont (2017) is considered insufficient in a sense that for every educational policy to be workable, the school certain, which is spearheaded by the headmaster should be very paramount. This is because it is teachers and others in the school system who see to the delivery of the policy by the government. Inferring from this it could be considered that the definition by Rayou and Van Zanten (2015) is worthwhile in that they consider education policies as programmes that are developed by public authorities, triggered by ideas and values, directed to education actors, and implemented by professionals. It could also be acknowledged that private organisations, international and non-governmental institutions can instigate educational policies (Espinoza, 2009).

Therefore, inferring from Viennet and Pont (2017); Espinosa (2009), and Rayou and van Zanten (2015), an educational policy can be defined in a more comprehensive and detail as programmes and actions designed and planned by public officials, private organisations, international and non-governmental institutions in consultation with stakeholders and interest group; and these programmes could be informed by ideas and values, needs or necessity of the time, which are directed to actors in education for its implementation by school professionals. Further, education policies span across a wide spectrum like those who focus on access and equity (like the free senior high school policy in Ghana), the totality of quality and effective teaching and learning, school learning environments, long term preparation of students (future of students), funding, effective governance or evaluation, assessment mechanisms and language (Viennet & Pont, 2017). It is also worthy to mention that education policies can cover kindergarten through to the university level, but in this study, the focus is on free senior high school policy, which is at the senior high level. Policy tracking is the establishment of some form of central “delivery unit” to track progress on the progress of policy implementation. Gold (2017) sees the proliferation of such units as a global trend – they are now reckoned to exist in 25 countries – that aim to fulfil several functions. Performance monitoring: tracking progress against key policy priorities through the analysis of a constant stream of departmental performance data. Problem-solving: undertaking field visits to identify obstacles to delivery and flagging up where additional resources may be needed to address specific problems and progress assessing: supplying heads of government with routine progress reports.

Two-way communication processes: progress reports from implementation agencies to the policy-making centre; responses back from the centre to implementing agencies. Use or creation of intermediary bodies between the policy-making and policy implementing levels. Development of proportionate primary and secondary targets along with agreed timelines. Separation of monitoring, regulating, and inspecting roles from support mechanisms: use of policy support programs to better understand the stories behind the statistics. Realistic expectations of what constitutes “success”: policy objectives might never be fully delivered in the case of “wicked issues” Ensure the common ground developed with key stakeholders at the preparation stage is also applied to those putting policies into effect in managerial and professional roles: understanding bottom-up discretion and dilemmas. Recruitment and development of a cadre of experienced and trusted “implementation brokers” to offer support tailored to local contexts. Offer implementation support where it is needed or requested: ongoing assistance with problem-solving and capacity-building to developing sustainable implementation skills and knowledge.

While most such units have been located at the centre of government machinery, this does not necessarily have to be the case; others can be established in key ministries or simply created for specific priority programmes. It remains far from clear how effective these different bodies have been, and the barriers to compliance with their edicts are formidable. Weaver (2009), for example, identifies monitoring problems, where target compliance may be difficult or costly; resource problems, where targets lack the resources to comply even if they want to; autonomy problems, where targets do not have the power to make decisions that comply with the policy;

information problems, where targets lack information that would make compliance more likely; and attitudinal problems where there are hostility and mistrust of targets.

In a global review of the effectiveness of delivery units in one policy area – education services – several key lessons for effective practice are identified (Aid Effectiveness 2014). These include: focusing on a limited number of key priorities; being able to assume that budgets for each priority are adequate; developing good quality data and metrics to measure what matters; producing mutually agreed targets that are realistic and achievable; ensuring a clear understanding of delivery systems and active stakeholder engagement; and constructing an effective communications strategy.

More generally the Institute for Government's global review of delivery units (Gold 2017) identifies that although when well-constructed they can make a useful contribution to supporting implementation, weak units can simply lead to additional significant problems. Their report sets out six key recommendations for a successful practice: make sure there is strong, highly visible political backing; commit to a tightly defined remit; select a physical location close to a political sponsor; adopt the right hiring strategy, organizational structure, and leadership model; ensure cross-government ownership of the delivery unit's results agenda, and put routines in place to review the effectiveness and refresh operations.

The relevant theory of knowledge here is the positivist tradition with its assumption that social phenomena can be divorced from their context, and that objective knowledge about them can be achieved through empirical observation and qualitative expression. This constitutes a rational-linear model of decision-making in

which unambiguous objectives are established, action upon them flows in predictable and unidirectional ways through established implementation structures, and outcomes are monitored against them. However, as noted earlier, it is a growing realization that implementation is complex, contextual, and as much a bottom-up as a top-down imperative, which has led to an interest in an alternative or supplementary approach to policy implementation support.

Tracking performance delivery alone is unlikely to be sufficient to ensure effective implementation, especially where the policy is complex and long-term in nature. The question then arises as to whether some type of implementation support mechanism might be needed and, if so, what approach is appropriate. All such approaches would require close liaison with, and an understanding of, the position of the implementing agencies.

In a review of the components of service improvement for the Health Foundation, Allcock, C., F. Dorman, R. Taunt, and J. Dixon (2015) point out that those who work on the front line, whether managerially or professionally, know more about the challenges of delivery than national policy-makers. A crucial task for implementation support is, therefore, to tap into the perceptions and experiences of those whose behaviour will shape the implementation process. This support is not so much about explaining legal obligations or the requirements of statutory guidance – though this is important – than about promoting the art and craft of policy implementation. It involves assessing existing capacity to deliver, knowing what is being done well, what needs improving, and how best to build new capacity.

All of this is likely to require finding some way of bridging the understanding between national and local narratives via some intermediary body. One approach is the formation of what has been termed “implementation support centres” (Pew Charitable Trust 2017) – entities of various types that work alongside and often at the direction of government to support effective implementation. Franks and Bory (2015) develop a similar concept in their exploration of “intermediary organizations” which, they conclude, “appear to play a critical role not only in implementing model programmes but also in developing the necessary capacity for systems change” (54).

The skills and qualities of those who work in such intermediary agencies will be crucial in determining acceptance and receptivity, but the availability of those with these attributes may be limited. Roberts and King (1996) even go so far as to suggest that such actors appear to have a unique identity, indeed certain innate personality characteristics. These are said to include being: highly intuitive; critical analytical thinkers; instigators of constructive social action; well-integrated personalities; highly developed egos; a high level of leadership; and above-average creative potential. The skills required of these “implementation entrepreneurs” are likely to be both in short supply and in high demand elsewhere.

All of this suggests that how offers of implementation support are couched and perceived is vital in understanding their likely effectiveness. The danger is that such interventions try to straddle several strands of activity, some of which are in tension with each other or even simply contradictory. Three purposes have been identified: managing and regulating; problem-solving; and capacity building (Gold 2017).

Approaches of implementation

Researchers on curriculum have not only brought into prominence implementation as a distinct step in curriculum planning and development but also helped to define and shape much subsequent research on implementation. Among their greatest influences and contribution to the curriculum are approaches or models for curriculum implementation. The fidelity approach and the curriculum enactment are at the extreme opposite ends of the continuum. Mutual adaptation represents a mid-point on the continuum. The three approaches have different underlying assumptions but they all relate to curriculum knowledge, curriculum change, and the role of the teacher. The approaches are discussed below:

The fidelity perspective, as the label implies, is concerned with the measurement of the degree to which a particular instructional programme or course is faithfully implemented as planned (Fullan, 1991). It is also used in determining the factors that facilitate or inhibit the implementation process. Researchers of the fidelity approach or perspective view curriculum as something concrete, something that can be pointed to, something that can be evaluated to see if its goals have been accomplished (Zumwalt as cited in Jackson, 1992).

The teachers, who are the implementers of the curriculum, can implement it to the latter only under certain appropriate conditions. For instance, there must be clear and consensual goals, the teachers must have professional training. (Fullan, 1982) and the implementers must also attain the appropriate skills and knowledge in their subject areas (Gross, Giancquinta, & Bernstein, 1971). Furthermore, the documents that specify and interpret the content of the programme or course are the syllabus, the

textbooks, and the teacher's manual or guide, among others, must be readily available (Bishop, 1985). Snyder, Bolin, and Zumwalt (1992) reported that a clearly defined innovation makes those charged with implementing the course or programme know exactly what to do. Thus, the fidelity of the teacher to the curriculum implementation depends mostly on those conditions identified above.

In analysing the reality in the classroom, Berman (1980) found out that minor variation is tolerated, but caution that the emphasis should be on ensuring that practice conformed to the curriculum developers' intentions. When practice conforms to the developers' intentions then the degree of implementation can be measured. The measurement of the degree of implementation with the fidelity orientation becomes necessary when there are signs of disappointing results of innovative programmes. It also becomes necessary because the mere adoption of innovation does not guarantee full implementation (Hall & Loucks, 1976).

The advocates of this theory assume that curriculum experts primarily create curriculum knowledge outside the classroom for teachers to implement in the way the experts have decided is the best (Snyder et al. 1992). This assumption is practicable only in a centralized educational system, like that of Ghana. In such a system, the curriculum is centrally designed and distributed to teachers in the various institutions for implementation. This assumption does not, therefore, hold in a decentralized educational system like that of England where the teacher has every right to design his curriculum and implement it.

The second assumption states that curriculum change is a rationale, systematic and linear process (Fullan, 1991). The third underlying assumption of the fidelity

perspective relates to the role of the teacher. The role of the implementing teacher, the advocates assume, is one of a consumer who should follow the directions and implement the curriculum as experts have designed it (Snyder et al., 1992). The degree of success of the implementation of the curriculum is therefore attributed to the degree of faithfulness or fidelity of the teacher to the way the curriculum was intended to be implemented.

The second approach to curriculum implementation is mutual adaptation. Mutual adaptation involves the modification of a course of study by both the developer and the implementers. It is defined as a process whereby adjustments in a curriculum are made by curriculum developers and those who use it in the school or the classroom context (Snyder et al., 1992).

Mutual adaptation represents a mid-point of the implementation strategies. Its scope is not, however, clear because it has no clear cut boundary with the fidelity perspective and it merges with the curriculum enactment phase. Researchers with mutual adaptation orientation are not interested in measuring the degree to which the innovation is implemented as planned, but they are interested in studying how the innovation is adapted to suit the situational context. Researchers with mutual adaptation view curriculum as something adopted and shaped by situational context. The advocates of mutual adaptation assumed that curriculum knowledge resides in the outside expert who develops the curriculum to be adapted by teachers to the situational context (Fullan, 1991 & Snyder, et al., 1992). It is also assumed that a true believer of adaptation considers the external source of knowledge that resides in practioner as a group or as individuals.

Concerning curriculum change, the advocates assume that change is a more impracticable and less linear process with a more active consumer at the end of the process (Snyder et al., 1992). According to Fullan and Pomfret (1977), those true believers of mutual adaptation view the role of the teacher as more central because the teacher needs to help create the curriculum to suit the classroom context. The assumption under the mutual adaptation in contrast with fidelity orientation is that the role of the teacher is to shape the curriculum to meet the demands of the local context.

The third and the last approach to curriculum implementation at the end of the continuum is curriculum enactment. Curriculum enactment means “the educational experiences jointly created by student and teacher” (Snyder et al., 1992). Researchers with curriculum enactment orientation are interested in describing how the curriculum is shaped as it is implemented. They are also interested in describing how the teacher and student, in specific settings, experience the curriculum. Teachers and students are therefore creators of the curriculum rather than primarily receivers of the curriculum knowledge (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977).

Since curriculum enactment does allow for varying degrees of implementation, it is irrelevant to the discussion of the measurement of the degree of curriculum implementation. Its interest lies in the meaning that both the teacher and student give to it. The underlying assumption of curriculum enactment also relates to curriculum knowledge, curriculum change, and the role of the teacher. The advocates of this approach assume that knowledge is an ongoing process and not a product or an event (Jackson, 1992)

The advocates assume that curriculum change is a personal developmental process for both the teacher and the student. On the role of the teacher, the researchers with this perspective assume that it is to grow even more competent in constructing positive educational experiences (Jackson, 1992). The teachers' role is viewed to be integral to the implementation process. It is both the teacher and the student who give form to the curriculum in the classroom or else there would be no curriculum (Snyder et al., 1992).

Therefore as this study is concerned, headmasters will be considered how they implement the free senior high school policy; whether or not they follow strictly the directive of the government without any attempt to enact or mutually adapt the processes of implementing the free senior high school policy. These issues, therefore, provide useful knowledge and insight as to how headmasters go about with the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana.

Models of implementation

The implementation model is a collection of components and the implementation subsystems that contain them. Components include both deliverable components, such as executables, and components from which the deliverables are produced, such as source code files. According to Viennet and Pont (2017), top-down implementation deals with the process of enacting what policymakers mandate to be done to attain the goals and indicated and with the measures taken or captured in the statutes of the policy. In this case, policy implementers and mandated by law to adhere

strictly to the dimension and direction of the statutes of the policy as planned and designed by policymakers. This theory resonates with the fidelity approach to curriculum implementation as discussed earlier in the study.

Also, the bottom-up approach is one of the theories of implementation, which is taken as a “process of interaction and negotiation, taking place over time, between those seeking to put policy into effect and those upon whom action depends” (Barrett & Fudge as cited in Viennet & Pont, 2017, p. 23). This theory of implementation is in line with mutual adaptation in approaches of curriculum implementation, and it allows the reaction of policy implementers to be taken into consideration while the will of policy is executed. In this case, those at the ground or policy implementers are allowed by the statutes of the policy to react to the policy directive in that whatever happens at the implementation state could be addressed by those who implement the policy without having to wait for policymakers or programme designers. Based on both bottom-up or top-down theory in policy implementation, Viennet and Pont (2017) admit that the implementation plan is necessary for effectiveness, but does not have to be on point from the beginning. It remains flexible to accommodate the lessons learned by the implementation team throughout the process.

Determinants of policy implementation

Regarding key determinants of policy implementation, Nilsen, (2015) has noted that the various determinants or a particular determinant conjure a certain kind of challenges, barriers, hinders, or impediments to the education policy implementation process. For instance, the learner, the teacher, the supervisor,

resources and facilities, stakeholders, school environment, culture, and ideology. These determinants have already been expounded in the foregoing discussions concerning pre-requisites of curriculum implementation, and the researcher further provide some crucial illustration of these determinants in the model or framework that seeks to guide this study. The researcher also justify how these determinants can impede or hinder policy implementation. Figure 1 presents a pictorial view of the determinants of policy implementation.

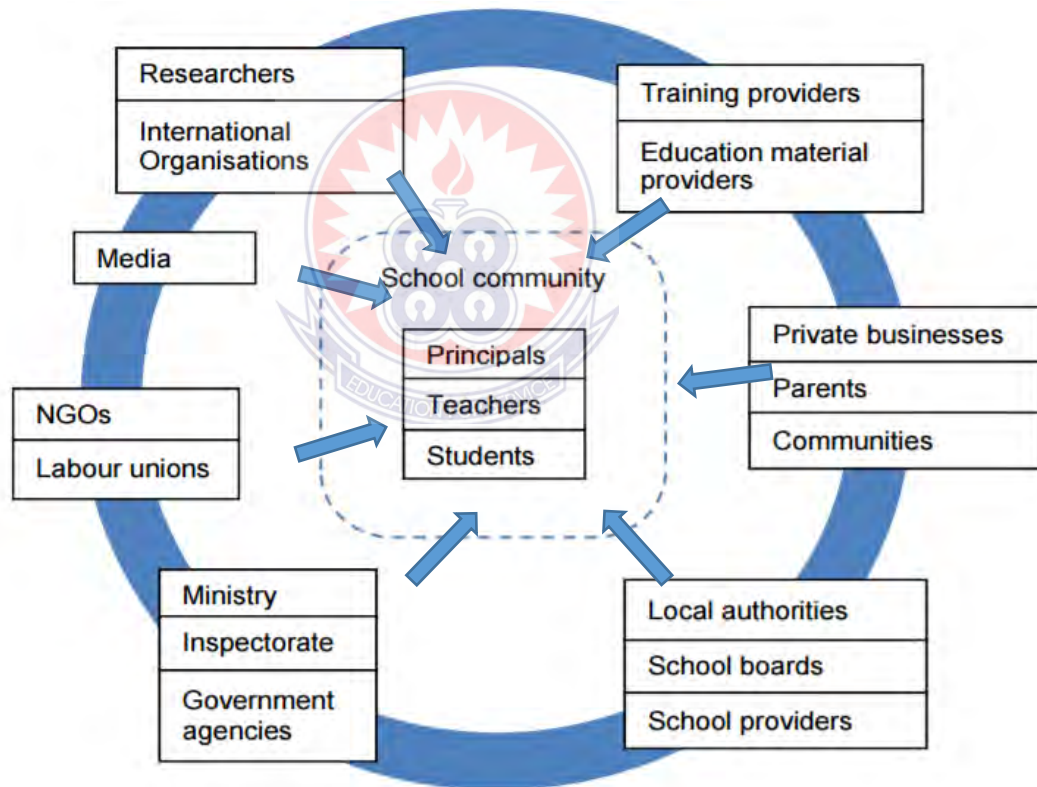


Figure 1: key determinants of education policy implementation (Burns & Koster as cited in Viennet & Pont, 2017, p. 31).

Figure 1, clearly shows the key determinants of policy implementation as put forward by Viennet and Pont (2017), however, what this model offers differently is the

fact that it refers to these as stakeholders of education. That notwithstanding, so far as this study is concerned, it shall be referred to as determinants of policy implementation, and therefore, apart from principals, teachers, students, school environment, resources and facilities, culture and ideology, all the others shall rather be grouped under stakeholder of policy implementation.

It was deduced that the approaches of policy implementation is influenced by models implementation. That is, if the theory of implementation is that of a top-down approach, the headmasters may decide to be either faithful (fidelity approach to curriculum implementation), or enact (curriculum enactment), some aspect of the policy directive to address a particular problem or better still may mutually adapt the directive of the policy as planned and designed by policymakers. This, therefore, is in tandem with approaches to curriculum implementation, which becomes the focus of this study. That notwithstanding, Barber as cited in (Viennet & Pont, 2017, p. 22) in his deliverology on policy implementation, points out some general implementation processes, which the researcher adopts for this study and captured in Figure 2.

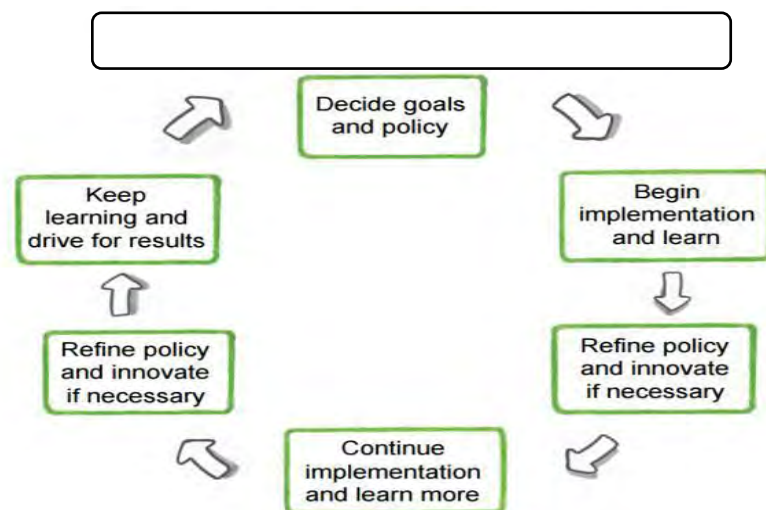


Figure 2: Deliverology: (Viennet & Pont (2017).

Since this study focuses on free senior high school policy implementation, which is rooted in the top-down approach to policy implementation, the study adopts this deliverology. For example, Viennet and Pont (2017) have shown a modern top-down approach to implementation to encompass Prime Ministers Delivery Unit (PMDU), as developed during the time of Blair's government in the United Kingdom. Viennet and Pont (2017) further offer that "Delivery" suggests the PMDU's top-down view on implementation, as according to Viennet and Pont (2017), the Unit's fundamental mission or concern was to make sure that the delivery of the Prime Minister's top public service priority outcomes is materialised by 2005.

The term "deliverology", which has become a methodology in the policy implementation process, structures the PMDU's approach to delivery, and it is based on pragmatic project management (Barber as cited in Viennet & Pont, 2017). The staff, in this case, make sure that clear goals of the policy implementation are set, and each of these goals is associated with a limited number of specific, measurable, and ambitious targets. The plan becomes a conduit for the implementation of the policy and necessary for the effectiveness of the implementation, challenges may show up during the implementation process, and therefore based on its flexible nature to lessons are taken into cognizance. There is then the issue of regular data collection, monitoring, and analysis, which later informs the implementation team to continue to implement the policy by refining the process of the policy implementation and keep on learning by aiming at attaining results (Viennet & Pont (2017). This information or better the model will guide me in terms of the kind of information I would need to include in the interview guide. It will inform the researcher as to the kind of follow-up

question to be asked during the interview process to how the heads of the government-funded senior high schools in the Western North Region implements the free senior high school policy in Ghana.

The Senior High School System in Ghana

The educational system in Ghana follows a 6-3-3-4 system. Senior high school education covers three years for students aged 15 to 17 years. There are 863 (562 public and private 301) senior high schools that cater to the needs of 837,204 students. There are 34,304 teachers in public senior high schools of which 86.7% are trained. The sub-program has an in-service training program for teachers to ensure that they have up-to-date knowledge of the curriculum and related teaching and learning materials (MOE, 2016). Subjects taught in the senior high schools are English, Integrated Science, Mathematics, and Social studies as core subjects, and students are required to select a group of elective subjects from seven elective groupings of subjects. It is this level of education that is currently being offered for free and had been previously progressively free before September 2017.

Goals of Free Senior High School Policy

There have been several efforts at making education accessible to all from the basic level to pre-tertiary by making education free in Ghana. Following this, Ghana introduced the Free and Compulsory Universal Education (FCUBE) policy to ensure that all children of school-going age attain formal education. It is on this same basis that Akyeampong (2009) observes that the one policy strategy many countries have

adopted to accelerate progress towards Education for All (EFA), which encapsulates the Millennium Development Goals, which states that by 2015 children everywhere should be able to complete a full course of primary schooling, has been the introduction of fee-free education. According to him, from 2000 to 2006 alone, 14 developing countries formally abolished tuition fees for primary schools as a strategy to accelerate progress towards EFA (UNESCO as cited in Akyeampong, 2009); Newman (2017) equally note that over one-third of Sub-Saharan African countries introduced free primary education policies between 1994 and 2015.

Notwithstanding, as Duflo, Dupas, and Kremer (2017) have noted as more and more children in developing countries enrol in primary school and gender gaps in primary enrolment shrink, policymakers' attention has shifted to secondary school. Most people feel that secondary education has the potential to provide economic transformation and social impacts, particularly for girls (Duflo, Dupas & Kremer, 2017). In this sense, Duflo, Dupas, and Kremer (2017) emphasise that the first target under education for the U. N's new "Sustainable Development Goals" is "by 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes". In the light of this, Newman (2017) has pointed out that countries are now expanding education systems to include free secondary education (FSE) programmes. For example, countries like Gambia, Kenya, South Africa Uganda, and some others have all expanded their educational system to include free secondary education, and now Ghana joins such countries in the implementation of free secondary education. The impact of free senior high school is enormous and varied.

The impact of free senior high school policy increases educational attainment and by extension, may also impact a range of other outcomes (Newman, 2017). Thus, according to Newman (2017), evidence from targeted programmes at the secondary school level is mixed (Gajigo 2012, Garlick 2013, Barrera-Osorio et al. 2007); and since the free secondary school seeks to increase educational attainment, it aids in delaying childbirth. That is, early childbearing has been associated with: higher morbidity and mortality; pregnancy-related deaths are the largest cause of mortality for 15-19-year-old females worldwide; accounts for 2/3 of deaths in Sub-Saharan Africa (Patton, R. Hoover, & Gothberg 2016); lower educational attainment; and lower family income (Ferre 2009 & Schultz as cited in Newman, 2017).

Quite clearly, the free senior high school system is encapsulated in the 1992 constitution of Ghana; and therefore its implementation is a constitutional right of the citizens of Ghana. With regards to the free senior high school policy in Ghana, article 25 of the 1992 constitution promulgates equal rights and opportunities for all and sundry in terms of education, as there is the focus on progressively free education at the secondary level. It is for this reason that the erstwhile Former President Mahama-led administration claimed that there was an attempt to make senior high school education free for all Ghanaian citizens through a gradual progressively free education as stipulated in the constitution. According to them, they provided scholarships to the majority of Ghanaians, which to them was a gradual process of ensuring free senior high school education in Ghana. This attempt by the erstwhile Former president Mahama-led administration throws light on the fact that since 1951, Ghana has tried different policies and approaches to ensure free compulsory universal education with

varying degrees of success. The New Patriotic Party (NPP), however, in their manifesto in the 2016 electioneering campaign, promised to redefine basic education to include senior high school, encompassing technical and vocational, and agricultural education by making it free for all Ghanaians.

In a bid to attain the goals of making senior high school education entirely free, including free boarding fees, feeding fees, tuition fees and a host of others, the government of Ghana in the 2017 budget statement declared their intention to use the petroleum revenue to finance the free senior high school policy. Starting from September, in the said year, the government of Ghana announced in the government's 2017 annual budget and economic policy statement that the funding of the free SHS policy will be sourced from the Annual Budget Funding Amount (ABFA) from the petroleum revenue. This has, however, gone without igniting public debate as to whether the petroleum proceeds could be used to sustain the free SHS policy. It is on this tangent that Adams et al. (2017) in their briefing criticize the government's resolve in using the petroleum proceeds and sounded a word of caution to the government. According to them: "Caution must be exercised in pursuing this option. International experience has shown that continuously altering the legislative framework for managing petroleum revenues leads to poor outcomes. This reinforces the need for a national dialogue on this decision, in keeping with broad consultations that brought about the GHF". Regardless of the many criticisms levelled against the government in the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana from opposition parties, opinion leaders, stakeholder and individuals, the government has

gone on with the implementation, and now we are in five years since the implementation of the policy.

The process of implementing the free senior high school policy in Ghana

The government of Ghana, in 2001, brought up subsidies at the senior high school to reduce the burden on parents and guardians of wards in school, and following from this, the debate about making senior high school education free has persisted (Essuman, 2018). From 2009 till the time the New Patriotic Party (NPP), came into office with the introduction of the free senior high school policy, the Mahama-led administration touted progressively free education, where scholarships were given to some few students.

The free senior high school policy as introduced in 2017 started with the form ones and now it has been transferred to all the levels of senior high school. The implementation procedure was that it removed all financial obligations at the senior high school level. For example, tuition fee, boarding fee, sports, library, examination, SRC, entertainment, bed user fee, PTA and computer usage fee. Other fees that the free senior high school policy has taken care of include science development, staff incentive and teacher motivation, development levy, speech and prize-giving, textbooks, supplementary literature, exercise books, notebooks, NHIS, house dues, school uniforms.

With the implementation of the free senior high school, no citizen of the country will be allowed to enjoy the programme twice, implying that after a student has written the WASCCE and passed out of the senior high school, such a student will

not be allowed to go to any public senior high school in Ghana to enjoy the free senior high school policy again. With the implementation of the free senior high school, it behoves a student to learn and pass out of senior high school successfully; otherwise, such a student would have to sit for the private examination or attend a private senior high school to progress to the tertiary schools should he or she fails his or her WASCCE examination. Also, in terms of access and eligibility of the process of implementation, all Ghanaian students who write and pass the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) qualify and is placed by Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) into a publicly funded second cycle institution qualify to enjoy the free senior high school policy. This, therefore, implies that all foreigners and those who attend private institutions are excluded from the policy.

Based on this revelation, it could be deduced that the theory of implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana is that of a top-down approach system. This implies that the policy makers does not allow policy implementers to alter the policy directive and so policy implementers are supposed to adhere to the directive and decisions as planned and designed by policy makers.

Moreso, in the year 2019, the challenges with the implementation of the free senior high school, particularly infrastructural deficit have compelled the government to resort to a double-track system. A year group students have been sub divided into two, which is Green track and the Gold track. When the green track students are in school the gold track students will be in the house and vice versa. According to the government, this new process of implementation (double track system) is temporary,

and that when there is an expansion of infrastructure to accommodate the increasing number of students at the senior high school, the double-track system will become a thing of the past.

Justification of Free Senior High School Policy in Ghana

The Free senior high school programme is a long-held campaign promise by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) that seeks to increase enrolment in schools by removing the burden of all major mandatory fees from parents and guardians and making it a responsibility of the government. The NPP, while in opposition, trumpeted the policy and mentioned it in its 2008, 2012, and 2016 campaign manifestos saying they would implement the policy when given the nod to rule this country. Even though some critics said it would not be feasible given the economic circumstance of the country and the infrastructural material available.

They said the policy could be rolled out progressively while others indicated that it could be feasible in 20 years. Ghanaians, however, gave the Party the benefit of the doubt and voted for them in the 2016 general elections, to implement its much-talked-about policies including the free senior high school policy.

In order to fulfil his promise, President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo-led government officially rolled out the policy on Tuesday, September 12, 2017, at the West Africa Senior High School in Adenta Municipality of the Greater Accra Region. So far, the government has projected to spend Gh¢ 480 million on more than 400,000 Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) candidates who qualified for admissions in the 2017/2018 Academic Year.

In terms of its sustainability, President Akufo-Addo said, it would be funded with the country's oil and gas proceeds and other natural resources through the annual budget funding. The President expressed the belief that investing in the human resource of the nation was the best investment for the future that would propel the development of the nation. He said some Asian countries like South Korea and Japan had pursued similar education models, which yielded great dividends. This has attributed several critics by stakeholders to the effect that the time of the implementation of the policy was wrong in that the oil revenue alone could not help sustain the policy.

Benefits of Free SHS

The Free Senior High School /Technical and Vocational Education Training (SHS/TVET) Policy initiative is intended to relieve the huge financial burden on parents and guardians to ensure that students who qualified for second cycle education would have quality, equity, and accessible education.

It also marks the end of the era when financial constraints were a barrier to the aspirations of children who wanted to access second-cycle education. President Nana Akufo-Addo at Okuapeman senior high school earlier this year, spelt out fees that would be absorbed by the Government under the free senior high school policy. The President said apart from the tuition fees, which are already free, other fees would be scrapped including admission fees, library fees, science centre fees, and computer laboratory fees. The Government is also giving free textbooks, free boarding fees and

meals, and absorbing the examination fees, utility levies. The day students, he said, will get a free hot meal a day.

The policy would also cover agricultural, vocational and technical institutions at the high school level, while the government continues with the construction of new public senior high schools. The government had declared plans to upgrade 42 existing senior high schools across the country into model schools to enhance teaching and learning. The Free senior high school policy is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs-4) Target One, which stipulates that; “By 2030, all boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes”. It also states that by 2030, all girls and boys will have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education, so that they are ready for primary education. Dr. Matthew Opoku-Prempeh, the Minister of Education, during the launch, said the Government has already paid 20 per cent of the fees of the beneficiaries to their respective senior high schools.

He said: “No matter how poor a child’s family is, he or she will never be shackled by the manacles of school fees as he or she lived out his or her dream. “The days of poor students being left on the streets because of poverty are over, the days of parents at their wit ends scramble to find admission fees are over, the days of young students being driven from the classroom to go home for their school fees are over,” he emphasised. The Education Minister noted that the implementation of the historic policy would be etched in the letters of gold as one of the greatest legacies of President Nana Akufo-Addo’s government. Professor Kwasi Opoku-Amankwa, the Director-

General of the Ghana Education Service, said such a major policy intervention given to Ghanaians was arguably the most significant policy initiative aside the National Health Insurance initiative. He called for effective leadership to ensure the success and sustainability of the policy. Ghanaians of all political divides have also hailed the policy as a laudable one and called for its sustainability to alleviate poverty in the country.

According to analysts, education can help the society eradicate poverty in Africa, which, after thinking about it the researcher finds it to be workable and relevant. This is because education helps melt ignorance, illiteracy and unnecessary pride. Instead, of all those, it helps simulate inventions, innovation and as such helps people to rise to global map. Free education will help the people improve their living standards. Education helps the people upon their eyes and therefore brings a positive impact onto them. People start thinking positively as they get more enlightened on how to live a better life. Free education will help the economy of the country by transforming it positively. Education for all means that everyone will have Basic expertise and that they will be knowledgeable fully equipped. Such knowledge and expertise will then be used to help solve some of the problems facing the economy in the country.

One cannot ignore the impact that free education will have effect on the industrialization of the country. Innovation and invention is what education aims to achieve and as such, people will be more likely to create software and systems that brings more efficiency in the industrial process. Ghana needs to be on the forefront in industrialization but that will not be if People do not have access to basic education. It

enables more children to get access to secondary education first started in the United States of America. If not for the implementation of the double-track system, the majority of candidates who sat for the 2020 edition of the WASSCE for School Candidates and students currently in school would be at home. The cut-off point which was aggregate 25 and has been cancelled amid the double-track system. Over 100,000 candidates in 2015 and 2016 were not able to attend SHS because of financial problems even though they passed BECE but for Free SHS and double-track every child is in school. The double-track system has reduced the huge number of students in classrooms. There is effective teaching and monitoring in schools classified as ‘Category A’ or top schools in the country.

2.3 Conceptual framework

Based on the various issues reviewed concerning both models of implementation and free senior high school policy, it could be developed that a conceptual framework dubbed model of policy development and free SHS policy to guide the conduct of the study. This framework is termed Trio Policy Implementation and Quadripartite Free School Implementation Policy because it considers four basic concepts of the implementation of free senior high school policy, namely the how, effectiveness, challenges, and strategies, which are also linked with three concepts of policy implementation, viz determinants, issues and influences, and approaches. While the Trio Policy Implementation is referred to as PIA, the Quadripartite Free School Policy is also referred to as HECS. This is presented in figure 1.0

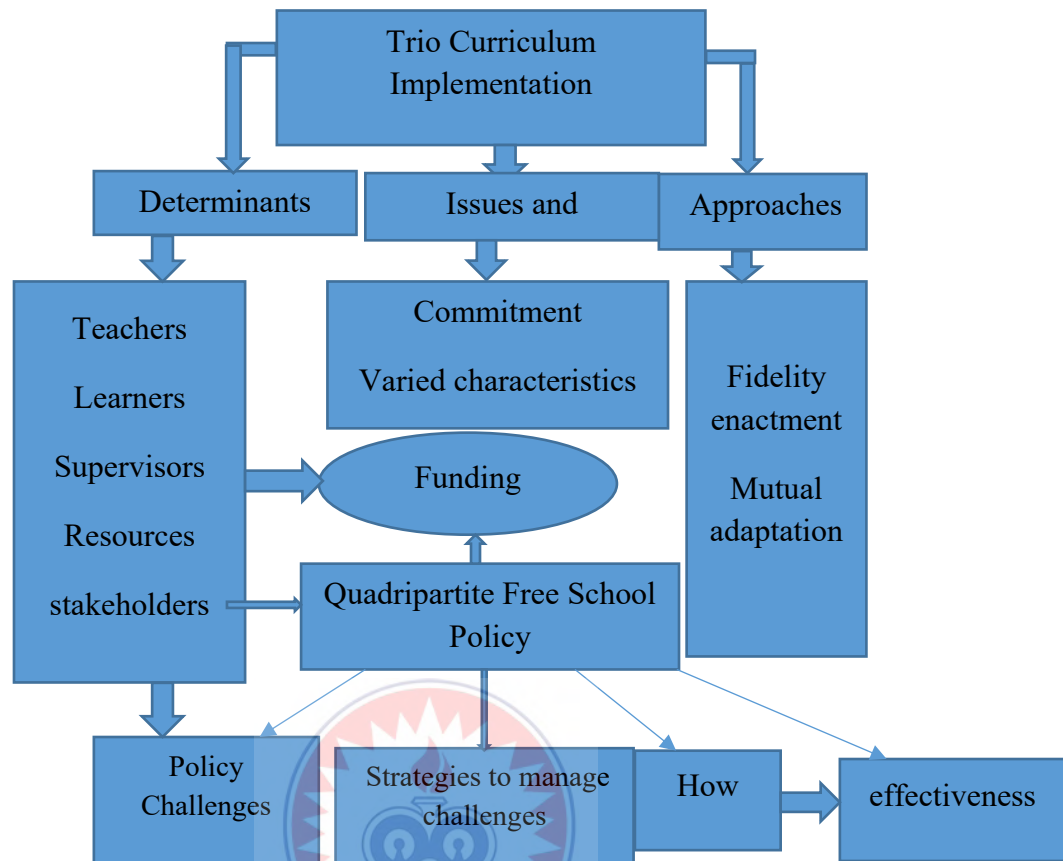


Figure 3: Trio policy implementation and quadripartite free school implementation policy (researcher's construct, 2021)

The heart of policy implementation is funding. This, therefore, means that the process of the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana, where all forms of payments are completely removed, automatically puts a huge financial burden on the government. This is because apart from funding free senior high school policy, there are other financial obligations that the government is expected to fulfil. With the process of implementation, the government expects all heads of public senior high schools to comply and that any defect will be met with sanctions. The question therefore is will all the heads in the various government-funded senior high schools in Ghana be faithful (explains how or approaches heads to use in implementing the

policy); and based on the approach the heads use, how effective will the implementation of the policy be, given the reported challenges of the policy. Further, what strategies will the heads adopt in managing these challenges once they are expected to run their schools regardless of the teething challenges? This, therefore, brings about the model of free school implementation, which the researcher calls Quadripartite Free School Implementation, with concepts like how, effectiveness, challenges and strategies (HECS). Also, in every curriculum implementation, there are pre-requisites, determinants, influences and issues, and approaches to implementation. These concepts are referred to as Trio Curriculum Implementation. In the discussions that follow, the researcher tries to provide a detailed and comprehensive overview of the various items on the model.

First, regarding the process of implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana, where all forms of payments are discouraged, which the central government expects all heads to comply with, it put the heads in a very tight situation in terms of their faithfulness to the implementation process given the challenges that they sometimes face. Hence, it triggers the approaches in curriculum implementation. That is, whether they will faithfully implement the curriculum (the free senior high school policy) as planned (Fullan, 1991) or they will resort to adjustments in the planned curriculum (free senior high school policy) with the government and those who use it in the school or the classroom context (Snyder et al., 1992); or better still they will enact the planned curriculum (free senior high school) by jointly creating the educational experiences with the teacher and the student (Snyder et al., 1992). In this case, the researcher will be looking at how (the first concept in the QFSP) heads of

government-funded senior high schools implement the free senior high school policy, and this has been captured as research question one. This also explains why approaches (a concept in TCI) to policy implementation is linked with how the free senior high school policy is implemented.

Also, how the implementation is done: be it fidelity, mutual adaptation or enactment regardless of the reported challenges will determine how effective (the second concept in QFSP) the implementation of the free senior high school will be. For this particular connection between the approach of implementation and the effectiveness of the implementation, in the framework, the researcher has tried to create a link between how the implementation of the policy is done and the effectiveness of the implementation of the policy, where the approach to implementation leads to or tells the effectiveness of the implementation of the free school policy. This can be linked to the pre-requisites of curriculum implementation in that the effectiveness and usefulness of the requirements also determine the effectiveness of the implementation. So, while this has a connection with the how in (QFSP), it has a link with pre-requisites in (TCI). This has therefore been taken as objective two in this study, as the researcher intend to ascertain the effectiveness of the implementation of the free senior high school in the Western North Region of Ghana.

Moreover, since the implementation of curriculum, particular the free senior high school, pre-requisites (in TCI) of the curriculum implementation will suffer if funds are not forthcoming or delay. Wolfson, (1997) has advanced the argument that the teacher plays a very vital role in the implementation of the curriculum. I also reason in this line in that the teacher, as common knowledge, is the final implementer

of the curriculum and hence, the success or failure of the curriculum to a very large extent depends on the teacher. Because of this, if the teacher is not well-taken care of, it is likely to affect their attitudes towards the implementation. Hence, once the free senior high school in Ghana has removed all forms of payments from the senior high school system, including classes and teachers' motivation, the government should endeavour to provide these incentives to the teachers in a great measure. If the government fails to do this, the teachers may have a negative attitude towards the implementation of the free senior high school and this may pose a challenge (the C in HECS of QFSIP) to the implementation of the free senior high school.

Furthermore, learners, supervisors, resources, interest groups or stakeholders and the school environment serve as requirements (in TCI) in the implementation of curriculum, and in particular any free school policy. In this case, if learners who are consumers of the curriculum are not provided with enough and qualified trained teachers and adequate resources, the implementation of the free senior high school policy will be challenged. Headmasters should also be well-resourced to be able to provide proper instructional supervision so that teachers can be encouraged to teach and teach well. Interest groups should also be encouraged to provide support when necessary in the implementation of curriculum; however, the free senior high school policy discourages any form of payment from parents' and other interest groups. With this kind of implementation process, the researcher anticipates that the various requirements in the implementation of the curriculum may suffer if funding is not readily available; and this will automatically bring about several challenges (C in HECS of QFSP) to the implementation of the free senior high school policy. This

explains why in the framework, the pre-requisites to curriculum implementation is directly linked with funding and funding in the realization of the various requirements of curriculum implementation is projected to bring about some form of challenges, which is captured as the third objective in this study.

Finally, once schools are expected to run amidst the challenges with the implementation of the free senior high school, the heads of the various government-funded school are expected to adopt certain strategies (S in HECS of QFSP) to manage these challenges. From the model or framework, there is a certain form of connection between issues and influences (I in PIA of TCI) and the strategies heads adopt to help manage the challenges associated with the implementation of the free senior high school policy. This is so because apart from some internal arrangements between the heads and their staff, issues and influences of curriculum like commitment and will of teachers (Spillane, 1999) to support the implementation of the new curriculum. Also, following from the position of Fullan (1982) that characteristics of the change, characteristics of the school district, characteristics of the school and characteristics external to the local system to a very large extent influence implementation of a new curriculum. The researcher considers these factors, as given by Fullan very useful in determining the kind of strategies heads will use to manage the challenges with the implementation of the free senior high school policy in a sense that if the characteristics of the policy (change) are flexible, the heads will be able to use some possible ways to source funds in managing the challenges since the challenges depend greatly on funding.

Also, if the school is attended by students whose parents are well-to-do, it will determine the strategy the head will use to manage the challenges. Again, if there are affluent people who are more concerned about the success of the school in the community or district in which the school is situated, it will undeniably influence the thinking of the heads and therefore affect the kind of strategy that will be used to control the challenges. It is for these justifications that there is a direct link between the influences of curriculum implementation and the strategies heads use in managing the challenges associated with the implementation of the policy. This is a crucial point and it is taken as the fourth and final objective of the study.

Summarily, in every curriculum development, headmasters are on top of the pre-requisites of curriculum implementation and therefore the role of the head (Sushila, 2004) in school administration and the performance of the school administration cannot be overemphasized. It is based on this that researcher has put headmasters on top of the requirements of curriculum implementation concerning the model or the framework. That is, they oversee the day-to-day activities of the implementation process. The skills, approach and strategies they use in managing any challenge in the implementation process are very crucial to ensuring the effectiveness of the implementation process. Thus, the degree of faithfulness or otherwise (approach), reaction to the issues and influences of curriculum implementation and the capacity as supervisor or overseer of the requirement of curriculum implementation are very paramount in ensuring the success or failure of the curriculum. However, is it not oblivious of the fact that institutional support, mainly from staff and student body as well as external support are also very crucial in determining the success of the

implementation process. This, therefore, tells the usefulness of the connection between the Trio Curriculum Implementation and the Quadripartite Free School Policy. This is so because it could be considered that free school policy cannot be discussed without recourse to theories of curriculum implementation since how the free school policy is implemented, the effectiveness of its implementation, the challenges and the strategies used in managing the challenges (HECS) are all dependent on concepts like pre-requisites, issues and influences and approaches to curriculum implementation (PIA).

2.4 Empirical Review

In this part of the study, related studies conducted by other researchers are reviewed to get support for the present study. Concerning the challenges associated with the implementation of the free senior high school policy, Rotich and Kipkoech (2012) report on the challenges with the implementation of free senior high school policy in Kenya. The study focuses on the role of the school principal in the implementation of free senior high schools in Kenya. The study focuses on a population of 37 secondary schools in the Keiyo District, with 25 secondary schools as sample size through the stratified random sampling technique. Adopting the self-administered questionnaires, interview schedule and document analysis, the study reports that late disbursement of funds by the government, inadequate funds to cater for the entire programme, misconception by parents that free senior high school policy catered for all the fees and fluctuation of market prices of commodities are the challenges confronting the implementation of the free senior high school in Kenya. Rotich and Kipkoech (2012) because of the findings recommended that the

government should release the funds of the free senior high school policy at the beginning of the year.

Again, regarding the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana, Asumadu (2019) has delved into the challenges and prospects of the policy by focusing on senior high schools in Denkyemba District. The study adopts the qualitative research approach to obtain information from officials and students with practical experience, knowledge and understanding of the policy through the purposeful sampling technique. It uses the interview guide in the collection of data from the respondents. Findings of the study reveal that inadequate infrastructure, teachers and learning materials are the main challenges impeding the implementation of the policy. Also, the researcher reports that delays in the disbursements of funds to schools for development and the lack of adequate teaching facilities add to the challenges confronting the smooth running of the free senior high school policy. Against this backdrop, the researcher recommends that the government should collaborate with some stakeholders to provide adequate and timely disbursements of funds, materials and teachers to ensure the success of the policy.

Further, a study has been conducted by Essuman (2018) on the challenges of free senior high education by reflecting on the past, realities and feasibility. Focusing on document analysis, the study reports discrimination as to who should become a day student or boarding student to be the main challenge of the implementation of the free senior high school. According to him, the criteria to decide who should become a boarding student will be problematic in the implementation of the free senior high policy in Ghana. He also mentions the overcrowding in the various senior high schools

in the country owing to inadequate infrastructure in the schools and admits that it is a daunting task for the government in expanding the infrastructure to address the challenge of overcrowded classrooms. There is an overwhelming increase, as Essuman (2018) mentions, in the classrooms due to a rapid increase in enrolment of students in the senior high schools. He, therefore, suggests that, in practical terms, there should be the need for the promotion of day school and fewer boarding houses and also there is the need to train more teachers to match up for the student-teachers ratio.

Clearly, from the foregoing discussions on the challenges with the implementation of the free senior high school in Ghana, several researchers have provided some empirical evidence to elaborate on the phenomenon. It can also be seen that the topic has been researched across quite a several regions and districts in Ghana. However, it appears that the researchers have not considered the methods and strategies heads of the various senior high schools in Ghana adopt in managing the challenges associated with the implementation of the free senior high policy in Ghana. Also, it can be seen from the studies reviewed above that while researchers consider it worthwhile to provide empirical evidence of the challenges associated with the implementation of the free senior high school policy in different parts of the country, the Western North Region has not been given the attention. It is for this reason that the present study seeks to find out the strategies, effectiveness and challenges with the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana.

Viennet and Pont (2017) have investigated frameworks establishing conditions for policy implementation and point out that the frameworks tend to define or establish

the conditions, termed “successful” or “effective” implementation. They further admit that these conditions consider the general context of implementation on one hand such as the commitment of implementers, active political support for the policy being implemented, policy coherence and stability of socio-economic factors over time. Also, researchers accept the impact of a well-designed policy on its implementation. For example, Maznanian and Sabatier in the framework of implementation, considered successful implementation as that one that the goals are well-grounded in the policy statutes.

Regardless of the wrangling associated with successful policy implementation as to whether the policy remains faithful to policy makers’ initial intent and specific directives McLaughlin (2006) has noted that successful implementation should consider beneficial outcomes. It has also been admitted that successful implementation should be a consideration of an improvement on problems, increased knowledge and support (Ingram & Schneider, 1990). Further consideration of successful implementation has been focused on the role of street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky (2010). For example, to ensure successful or effective implementation, the policy should be designed such that the policy statutes to achieve the policy goals are maximized given the local context (Suggett, 2011; Ingram & Schneider, 1990). Other researchers like Cema (2013) in his study has noted that using a very strict top-down approach mostly does not help in ensuring successful implementation of policy. Some other researchers (Haddad & Demsky, 1995; Barber, 2008) have argued that if the implementation plan or directive is not flexible, it endangers effective implementation of the policy.

This recommendation of making the policy more flexible seems to resonate with my position on policy implementation so far as this study is concerned. I share this view because no new policy is without challenges or obstacles and so if policy makers do not give policy implementers a modicum of freedom to operate and only expect policy implementers to enact the policy hook line and sinker it becomes difficult for them to operate if the policy does not go as planned. This is, therefore, likely to impede the successful implementation of the policy since policy implementers are not allowed to alter the policy directive even if there are challenges. If that is the case, how effective will the implementation be if heads are not allowed to do anything regardless of the challenges?

A critical examination of the studies reviewed in the foregoing discussions reveals that researchers have concentrated on the challenges associated with the free senior high school implementation and some other related issues. For example, Rotich and Kipkoech (2012) look at challenges with the implementation of free senior high schools in Kenya. Also, Asumadu (2019) and Essuman (2018) all consider the challenges with the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana. However, none of these studies focuses on the Western North Region of Ghana. Moreover, scrutiny of the studies reviewed earlier shows that attention has not been given to the effectiveness of the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana, how it is being implemented by heads of the government-funded senior high schools and the strategies heads use in managing the challenges of the implementation of the policy, particularly at the Western North Region of Ghana. This, therefore, makes it imperative for the conduct of this study to fill these research gaps. In that

case, particular attention will be paid to the various theoretical reviews as pointed out in this study to get support for the analysis of the study.

Justification of the present study

A careful examination of the foregoing studies suggests that previous researchers (Asumadu, 2019; Essuman, 2018; Cema, 2013) have focused their attention mainly on the challenges of the implementation of the free senior high school policy and the effectiveness of implementation. Even (Viennet and Pont, 2017; Suggett, 2011; Lipsky, 2010) who focus on policy implementation do not pay particular attention to the free senior high school policy in Ghana. Apart from that, those studies that have focused on the challenges of the implementation of free senior high school policy in Ghana, have not considered the Western North Region. Meanwhile, the Western North Region of Ghana is inhabited mostly by farmers, who are not so much inclined with education and so, there is the need to consider the implementation of the policy in that region. Moreover, it also becomes very evident from the review above that studies have not considered how headmasters implement free senior high school policy in Ghana and the strategies they adopt in implementing the policy. This becomes crucial because heads are considered final authorities to ensure the success of the policy. It is based on these relevant evidence in previous studies on free senior high school policy or policy implementation that the researcher derive the impetus to conduct the present study.

2.5 Summary

It has been shown in the preceding discussion that there are three key issues to implementation of a policy: approaches to policy implementation (fidelity, mutual adaptation and enactment), issues, and determinants. Because of this, three key theories of the curriculum implementation process, which is referred to in this study as Trio curriculum implementation (TCI) is developed. Also, based on these three key theories of policy implementation, which resonate with some useful concepts of policy implementation, four basic theories together with the concepts of curriculum implementation are developed, which are termed as Quadripartite Free School Policy. These two theories (TCI and QFSP) reveal the four research questions set for this study, namely how the implementation is done, challenges confronting the implementation, strategies that could be adopted to address these challenges and the effectiveness of the policy. Moreover, the empirical literature has shown that researchers have focused solely on challenges with the implementation of the free senior high school policy in some parts of Ghana. It appears, therefore, that no study has been conducted to investigate the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana, which then justifies the conduct of the current study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the implementation of the free senior high school policy in some selected schools in the Western North Region of Ghana. This chapter describes the methodology that was adopted for the study. It comprises the research design, population, sample and sampling technique. It also describes the instrument for data collection and the procedure for the administration of the instrument. How data gathered from the respondents were analysed and ethical issues are also described.

3.1 Philosophy of the Study

Every research work or researcher is influenced by some philosophical views, and there are multiple philosophical positions as identified by Leavy (2017). Leavy (2017) points out that various researchers adopt different ways of grouping and naming paradigms or philosophical positions. That notwithstanding, in the discussions that follow, attention was drawn to the interpretivist position.

Proponents of the interpretivist approach say that people are actively engaged in constructing and reconstructing meanings through daily interactions and that researchers value people's subjective interpretation and understanding of their experiences and circumstances (Leavy, 2017). This philosophical position rejected the objective and verifiable position popularised by the positivist and offered a more subjective experience to the construction of knowledge. Regarding the interpretive worldview, Leavy (2017, p. 13) has explained that "people are usually engaged in constructing and reconstructing meanings through daily interactions, and this is

regarded as the social construction of reality”. For (Leavy, 2017) meaning, activities, situations, events, gestures and others apportioned to our construction of knowledge of the world through our interaction and interpretation of the situations of the world around us. In this case, researchers take cognizance of subjective interpretation and understanding of the experiences and circumstances of people.

The interpretivist philosophical position rests on some assumptions and principles, which are: people are deliberate and creative in their actions and they intentionally act and make meanings in their activities; people actively construct their social world; situations are fluid and changing, and that events and behaviour evolve and are richly affected by context; events and individuals are unique and largely non-generalizable without the intervention of or manipulation by the researcher; fidelity to the phenomena being studied is fundamental; people interpret events, contexts and situations and act on the bases of those events; many events are not reducible to simplistic interpretation, and hence thick description etc. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2015, p. 20-21).

That is, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2015), the main focus of the interpretivist perspective is to understand the subjective world of human experience and to ensure that the integrity of the phenomenon is under consideration. Interpretivists try to understand the viewpoint of the observer rather than the actor directly involved. An attempt is made to understand the participant from within. This paradigm helps provide detailed and rich information from the perspective of the participants.

Even though the interpretivist perspective allows for detailed and thick information, several criticisms have been levelled against it. For example, Argyle as cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2015) narrated that if in the positivist tradition, where there is carefully controlled of interviews is considered inaccurate, then there is a high risk of inaccuracy in the interpretivist tradition, where interviews are less controlled. Also, Bernstein as cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2015) has also questioned the subjective reports in the interpretivist point of view. According to him, findings from subjective inquiry in the interpretivist paradigm may be incomplete and misleading, as participants are likely to act on their feelings and give more verbose information that may be unnecessary and leave out very crucial information. The present study is rooted in this tradition because the researcher attempts to consider the subjective opinions of headmasters about how they implement the free senior high school policy, the challenges they face, the strategies they use, and the effectiveness of the policy.

3.2 Research Design

The study considered the case study design in that it was suitable and appropriate for the research, which will help provide an in-depth exploration, description, and explanation of implementation of free senior high school policy in some selected schools in the Western North Region of Ghana. That is, the study sought to provide detailed information and description of a case at hand: challenges, effectiveness, and strategies of the implementation of the free senior high school policy, which is a contemporary issue. Thus, the case study allows an in-depth

exploration from multiple perspectives of complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system and the real-life context, which seeks to provide detailed information or account of one or more cases with contemporary events (Simons, 2009; Auberbach & Silverstein, 2003; Yin, 2009; Johansson, 2006, p. 6).

Therefore, it was apt to use the case study, particularly a single case study because one region, Western North was considered for the study (Yin, 2003; Baxter & Jack, 2008). This was to enable the researcher to analyse within a particular region. That is, the research considered five senior high schools in the Western North Region to ascertain how headmasters in this region implement the free senior high school policy, the challenges they face, the strategies they use and their consideration of the effectiveness of the policy.

To do this, the single case became the appropriate design. Further, case study design could also be a synchronic study in which data are collected at one point in time or it could be longitudinal (Yin, 2003). Therefore, to determine the nature of the implementation of free senior high school policy in some selected schools in the Western North Region of Ghana at a particular point in time, the synchronic approach to case study design was adopted.

Thus, this study adopted the single case study in that the study sought to provide a comprehensive description of implementation of free senior high school policy in some selected schools in the Western North Region of Ghana. This phenomenon happens to be a contemporary event. Through detailed and rich information garnered from interviewing the heads with Face-to-Face interview

approach being employed, there was a thorough analysis of the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the region. The problems identified were put into themes with in-depth descriptions and explanations. There was therefore no attempt to identify the frequency or quantity, or pervasive nature of the challenges.

3.3 Research approach

The qualitative research approach was used for the study. The choice of this research approach was due to its appropriateness and suitability to this study. The researcher adopted this research approach owing to the aim of this research, which aimed at providing comprehensive and in-depth information about the challenges with the implementation of the free senior high school policy directed at providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of students' writing problems. Analysis of data focused on pre-set themes' in respect of data collection. Without any attention to frequency, quantity, amount or intensity, or the pervasive nature concerning the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region (Reinard, 2008)

The focus of this research was to sort and to explore the implementation of the free senior high school policy in some selected schools in the Western North Region of Ghana taken into consideration challenges, effectiveness, strategies heads adopt. This was to enable the researcher to provide a comprehensive analysis on the implementation of the free senior high school policy as they naturally occur. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), a qualitative approach emphasizes the qualities of entities, processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined; and Reinard (2008) corroborated Denzin and Lincoln by stating that the qualitative

method of analysis helps an investigator to study the naturally occurring phenomenon in all their complexities. Therefore, since the focus of this research was not to collect a large number of data from respondents to quantify results and examined them experimentally, this approach became appropriate. This was done to allow heads of senior high schools in the Western North Region to provide very detailed and rich information by asking them questions relating to the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana.

Snape and Spencer (2003) and Ogah (2013) seeking to provide a basis for the use of the qualitative approach in research assert that when the data are very detailed with rich and extensive information; analysis which is open to emergent concepts and ideas and which may be detailed description and classification, identify patterns of association or develop typologies and explanation as was the focus of this study, the qualitative approach becomes the suitable approach.

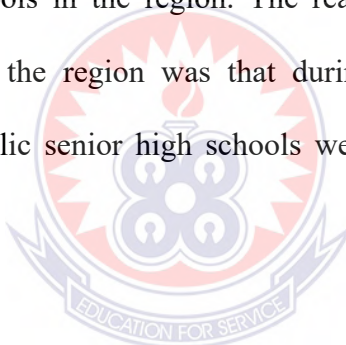
The strength of this research approach lies in the fact that it is capable of seeking rich and detailed information from the respondents. Qualitative research is not concerned with numerical representativity, but with the deepening of understanding a given problem.

In qualitative research, the researcher is both the subject and the object of his research. The objective of the qualitative methodology is to produce in-depth and illustrative information in order to understand the various dimensions of the problem under analysis. Its weakness lies in its inability to generate objective and verifiable information, difficult to demonstrate the scientific rigor of the data collection exercise, completion of research is often dependent on a single individual and

analytical methods are poorly specified and vary from researcher to researcher. This approach has different types in conducting research (Snape & Spencer, 2003; Ogah, 2013).

3.4 Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all the heads in the various public senior high schools in the Western North Region of Ghana. In all, there were five senior high schools in the Western North Region at the time the study was being conducted. The number of public senior high schools at the time the study was being conducted stood at five (Regional Education Records, 2019). The study included all the heads in these public senior high schools in the region. The reason for including only the public senior high schools in the region was that during the time the study was being conducted only the public senior high schools were benefiting from the free senior high school policy.



Justification for selecting the Heads instead of including teachers and other stakeholders

It is on records that headmasters play a very pivotal role when it comes to the implementation educational policy. Heads were selected since they have in-depth knowledge about the implementation of the free senior high school policy base on number of workshops and in-service training organised by the Government. Another reason for including only heads also emanate from the fact that all supervisory roles rest on their necks therefore any lackadaisical attitude put up by the heads will eventually affect the implementation of the policy. On the other hand strict measures

being put to use by heads will yield positive result for the implementation of the free senior high school policy. Moreover Kothari (2004) has indicated that the purposive method is best when the study participants are small and can easily be accessed. Since the research is purely qualitative, involving teacher and other stakeholders may increase the population which in effect may affect the findings.

Interview or face to face interview.

This is the scenario one will face each other most often: here the researcher sits down with a solo interviewer and ask series of questions designed to help figure out possible answer. The researcher travelled to the selected schools and sat comfortably with head of the institution with the unstructured interview guide helping to explore how free senior high school policy is implemented. Confidentiality and credibility is assured by the researcher.

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

An unstructured interview guide was considered most appropriate for the study. The unstructured interview guide was developed purposely to ascertain in-depth information from headmasters on the challenges with the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region.

The unstructured interview was considered appropriate because the study sought to explore the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region, and so there was the need to allow the participants to come out with the information rather than go with a pre-determined piece of information (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). This will enable the participants to come up with a piece of very detailed and comprehensive information about the implementation of

the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. The interview was based on answering the already stated research questions.

This type of interview is non-coordinated, and it is an adaptable strategy. It is easier going than the structured and semi-structured interview guide. There is no compelling reason to take after a definite interview guide. Each interview is distinctive. Interviewees are urged to talk transparently, honestly and give however much detail as could reasonably be expected.

It is flexible and allows the researcher to investigate underlying motives (David & Sutton, 2004). Due to this, the interview process followed the researcher questions devised for this study without following any particular structure or guide, unlike the structured and semi-structured interview guide. This was informed by the exploratory nature of the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2015).

However, the unstructured interview guide is likely to produce inaccurate results (Bernstein as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2015). That is, allowing the participants the free opportunity could lead to incomplete and misleading results, as participants are likely to act on their feelings and give more verbose information that may be unnecessary and leave out very crucial information expected of them.

3.6 Sample and Sampling Technique

The study adopted the census technique in the selection of the participants for the study. This sampling procedure was adopted because Kothari (2004) has indicated that census method is best when the study participants are small and can easily be accessed. Therefore, since the public senior high schools in the Western North Region

of Ghana were five and were easily accessible, the researcher selected all the five schools and the heads within the Western North Region.

Pretesting of the Instrument

Unstructured interview guide schedules were developed and pretested in two schools in the Western Region to authenticate reliability and to ascertain whether the concepts used would be well understood by respondents. It was also meant to test the research instrument and to make necessary amendments. Feedback on clarity of wording and instructions were checked. The importance of this exercise was to help the researcher to amend the unstructured interview guide that needs to be clarified to get the right information. Two schools were chosen for the pre-test exercise because they have similar features as that of the schools in the western north Region.

Two headmasters in two different schools were involved in the pre-testing. Their responses were taken into consideration in restructuring the interviews for the actual data collection for the study. Pre-testing was done to avoid any possible influence on trial respondents before the actual survey. Time spent to complete the unstructured interview with one headmaster is ranged from 20 to 30 minutes in a school.

Trustworthiness

In any systematic enquiry into the human condition, it is important to establish the truth value of the study. The study must be judged against certain criteria to ensure that the findings are a true reflection of the participants or reality (De Vos, 2002). Through criteria such as validity and reliability, the accurateness and completeness of

a study can be ascertained. To ensure that the data for the study is trustworthy, the researcher relied on a tape recording of the interview. To ensure validation, the recorded interviews were played to participants for them to authenticate the responses. In this study, the researcher interacted with the heads over not less than two weeks to develop an acquaintance with them. This was done through regular visits to the participating schools. This enabled the researcher to develop further rapport with them. In this way, the researcher was able to build trust between each participant and the researcher himself. This trust made it possible for the participants to readily open up for discussions of all sensitive issues that were covered by the interview for the study by respecting their rights and privacy and being friendly.

Dependability

To give credence to the credibility of this study, the researcher ensured dependability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that there could be no credibility without dependability in qualitative research. They suggest that dependability can be established through the establishment of appropriate enquiry decisions, review of interviewer bias to resist early closure, the establishment of categorical schemes and exploration of all areas, resistance to practical pressures and findings of both positive and negative data triangulations.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research instrument, the interview schedule was designed to reflect on the research objectives and questions. Therefore, the researcher validated the study by first consulting colleagues in a peer-to-peer process. After the peer-to-peer review, the data were given to the supervisors to

validate the study. That is, the colleagues and the supervisors ensured the procedures used were in line with the guidelines for the ethical conduct of the study.

Information obtained from the literature review were helpful in the development of questions that elicited responses to the research questions that were formulated to direct the study. This ensured the appropriateness of the questions that the participants were asked. Besides, the interview format helped to develop categories and themes in the findings.

To deal with the issue of bias in the study, the researcher sought clarification for answers that are not clearly stated during the interview. In this way, issues of unclear data were resolved. Care was taken about the duration of the interview to avoid early closure and at the same time to prevent the provision of unreliable data following boredom on the part of respondents as a result of the prolonged interview session. “People are very careful about how they release information that is sensitive. It takes time to build trust and confidence and to negotiate access to quality information” (Adzahlie & Mensah, 2007).

The credibility, trustworthiness, meaningfulness and insight generated from this have more to do with the information richness of the one selected and the interview and analytical capabilities than with sample size (Passon, 2002).

Credibility

This was done by discussing the results with the supervisors as well as ensuring member checking with the respondents. Results from the interview data were

sent to the respondents to confirm what has been transcribed as actual results reflecting their views.

Dependability

This was done by ensuring that the right processes leading to the data collection to the analysis of the results were duly followed. This was to enable replication of the findings.

Confirmability

This was carried out by ensuring that the results represented the true intent of the respondents. Other researchers were made to review the transcribed data, generated themes and conclusions made to determine if the results are in line or there were contradictions.

3.7 Data Collection

An introductory letter was collected from the Head of the Educational Leadership Department. The letter was sent to the office of the heads of the various senior high schools within the Western North Region. After establishing the necessary contact with the heads of the participating schools, the researcher pleaded for one week for the administration of the unstructured interview guide to be done. This duration was prayed for to give them enough time to prepare for the interview. The researcher therefore, went to the heads personally and booked an appointment with them and based on their schedules, different dates were set for the interview to be done; and within one week three days, the entire interview process was completed for transcription and analysis and subsequent discussion to be done.

In all, all the five heads were interviewed. This was to enable the researcher to have ample time with the interviewees to generate detailed data shrouded with rich information about the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region. In two weeks the researcher was able to interview the headmasters.

3.8 Data Analysis

The research data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis. Data gathered from the interview were transcribed. After transcribing the data following Creswell's (2007) processes on qualitative data analysis, the researcher initially prepared and arranged the data according to the various data collected from the five schools within the Western North Region.

Further, adopting the emerging themes, the researcher did not limit the analysis to any pre-defined codes, however, attention was given to new and emerging categories identified in the data. That is, the researcher categorized, grouped and classified by content analysis to arrive at a general knowledge of the research questions or the situation at hand (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Thus, the researcher organized the data, immerse himself very well in the data, gathered categories themes, offered interpretation, searched alternate interpretation, and wrote up the report and presented the data analyzed appropriately (Marshall & Rossman (2011).

Ethical Consideration

In research such as this, which seeks to ascertain the views of heads who oversee the implementation of a high-class policy like the free senior high school, given considerable attention to moral issues and respect for participants becomes pertinent. Hence, in this research, several ethical issues were taken into consideration. The research addressed some ethical concerns which include informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality.

Informed consent allows prospective participants to accept or decline to engage in the research. It describes the need for participants to understand the aims, objectives and potential harm that such involvement may have on them (Seidman, 2006). In this study, the purpose of the study was carefully reviewed with the participants before they were involved in the study and that I made sure that the participants were in their right frame of mind and able to give responses to the questions before the collection of data was done.

I also ensure that anonymity as regards the respondents were taken into consideration in the present study. Anonymity is a vital issue in research ethics because it allows the participants to have their identity concealed (Oliver, 2010) In this study, the names of the participants were concealed to do away with any identification of the participants. Codes were also adopted where necessary to ensure the anonymity of information and harm. In order not to unnecessarily invade the privacy of participants, I made a prior visit to the schools before the data collection commenced. This was to explain the purpose of the study to the respondents and how to not invade their privacy as participants. Neither names nor any identifiable information from

respondents was taken as a way of ensuring the ethical principle of anonymity. This was to prevent possible victimization of respondents where certain responses may be viewed as unpalatable to other stakeholders.

Efforts were made to maintain the confidentiality of the responses of the participants as a way of addressing ethical concerns. Participants were told that their responses would be kept confidential and that no one known to them would have access to the information provided and none of the respondents' names was recorded in the study. Most essentially on the ethical issues, pieces of information that were cited from earlier studies on the implementation of curriculum and on free senior high school to support the review of related literature were duly acknowledged through both citations and referencing to avoid academic dishonesty also known as plagiarism.

Validating the Findings

Validating does not carry the same connotation in qualitative research. Validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research and it is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants, or readers of an account (Creswell, 2008). He further explains that terms that abound in qualitative literature speak to this idea such as trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility. This according to him will enhance the researcher's ability to assess the accuracy of findings as well as convince readers of that accuracy. The researcher utilized the following strategies.

Firstly, respondent validation was carried out. Kusi, (2012) explains that the credibility of the research can be ensured by giving the findings to some of the

participants to evaluate them to check the extent to which the findings represent their views expressed during, it is a useful way of dealing with bias in the study. The research used respondent validation to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings.

According to Marvasti (2004), research participants can be allowed to review the findings by asking them questions such as: ‘what do you think about the findings?’ ‘Do you agree or disagree with my conclusions?’ (p. 114).

Marvasti believes that research participants may consider research findings if the finding does not reflect their experiences or feelings. The researcher did this by taking final reports of specific descriptions or themes back to the participants and determining whether these participants felt that they were accurate.

Again, the researcher adopted the procedure of peer examination to avoid personal interest in his presentation and analysis of the data. This was done by giving the finding to peers to critically peruse it to ensure that there was no bias in the report.

3.9 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher has given a detailed explanation of the research design. He has explained the research process, choices of methods and the direction of the study. The discussion of the approaches to data collection and analysis were also looked at. In addition to that, the discussion of the researcher’s claims about the credibility of the data collected in the research design was looked at. In the next chapter, the responses of the research participants to the interview and questionnaire will be presented.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the implementation of the free senior high school policy in some selected schools in the Western North Region of Ghana. The qualitative approach was used for the study by adopting a single case study design, and dwelling on the purposive sampling procedure, five headmasters were interviewed in the Western North Region of Ghana. Inductive qualitative analysis was adopted for the study.

Furthermore thematic content analysis approach was employed since it helps to weed out biases and deal with various themes of the interview during transcription.

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana, by focusing on the research questions. The analysis followed the order in which they (research questions) were ordered in chapter one.

4.2 Analysis of Data

The thrust of this study was to explore the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. In the pursuit of this purpose, four research questions guided the study. In this section of the work, responses from respondents under each research question is analysed and discussed. The research questions are recapitulated for easy reference.

Research question one: How do headmasters implement the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana?

It was important to answer this research question because it has been identify that headmasters seem to have certain grievances with the directive to the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana. However, the underlying assumption for curriculum integrity (faithfulness to the directives as planned by policymakers) is that the knowledge of the implementation of the policy is created by experts for heads to ensure that the policy is implemented in the way the experts have decided is the best.

Therefore, there was the need to find out how headmasters implement the free senior high school policy to determine their degree of faithfulness or otherwise. That is, to determine whether they follow rigorously the directives given by policymakers in the implementation of the free senior high school policy in their various schools. This discussion was done by focusing on the Trio Curriculum Implementation (TCI) developed in chapter 2. This will offer the researcher the opportunity to determine whether the headmasters use the felicity approach, mutual adaptation or enactment (Snyder et al., 1992; Fullan, 1991; Jackson, 1992).

In interviews, the various headmasters pointed out that they followed strictly the directive given by policymakers or the government in the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. They also indicated that they sometimes make some modifications, where necessary, as one said, *‘where we are supposed to go strictly by what the government says, we have to’*.

Their modifications were, however, not without the consent of the student and their parents under consideration; and sometimes the government or policymakers. This clearly shows that, in the Trio Curriculum Implementation (TCI) developed in chapter 2, the headmasters adopt the fidelity, mutual adaption, and the enactment approaches in the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. As the researcher focused on the emerging themes, four themes emerged from the interview with the headmasters, namely admissions, modifications, charges and academic activities.

Admissions

The findings make it clear that the various headmasters in the Western North Region of Ghana do not make any change to the admissions that have been done at the national level. They are so faithful to accept all the students who have been shortlisted to be admitted to their school. The extracts below buttress this finding.

Extract 1

...For instance, admissions to schools, we do what the government has asked. GES for instance has given us that these are students who have been sent into your school. So if the person is placed there with an aggregate 50 or 75, you have to accept the person. So far as the person's name is in the school list and then on the portal, then you have to admit the person. So you can't say that this person's aggregate is too big or not; you have to take them **H1**

Extract 2

*GES provides the instructions then we also break it down. As a manager of the school, you don't say it is favourable or not. You only have to be conversant with the broader government objectives. The broader government objective for this free SHS is that the JHS is not going to be a terminal point and that the exams that are conducted are not for placement into schools and the courses. So the terminal point where you will be asking whether the person comes with aggregate 50 or whatever should be at the senior high school but just as when somebody is being sent from class 6 to junior high school, you don't ask for the person's aggregate and those things. That is what the government is also doing. And so for them, they are saying that for JHS, is not a terminal point. The terminal point for the free SHS is direct from the JHS and so very soon, they will stop using the certificate after BECE. They will stop. So I don't even think that now they keep them. **H2***

It is evident from both extract 1 and 2 that headmasters in the Western North Region of Ghana adopt the fidelity approach in implementing the free senior high school policy in terms of admissions of students to their schools. Also, a critical assessment of the above extracts shows that their faithfulness in terms of admissions is contingent on accepting the student that has been shortlisted to be admitted to the school regardless of their aggregate. This finding is revealing in that it shows that until

the inception of the free senior high school policy, headmasters were denying most students the opportunity to have secondary education just of their aggregate.

This could make some of the parents of these students frustrated and decide to pay monies for the admission of their wards. The free senior high school policy according to interview has come to eliminate this ordeal from the system and that gradually, the JHS certificate will not become a viable document for entry into the senior high school level, as one noted,

“the terminal point for free SHS is direct from the JHS and so very soon, they will stop using the certificate after BECE”.

This probably justifies their support for the admission process and their resolve to be faithful to the implementation process in terms of the admission process, as can be seen in the words of one of the headmasters interviewed:

“you must go by the policy guidelines. So the policy of minister of education, you shouldn't go against it. So all the policies coming from the minister, you have to abide by them”.

Modification

The headmasters' use of strong modality like “must” and “have to” shows their unflinching support to ensure that the guidelines for the admission process are followed conscientiously.

Although from the foregoing discussions, it becomes evident that conscientious efforts are made by the headmasters to ensure that the guidelines given by

policymakers or the government in terms of the admission process are faithfully followed, the headmasters overtly and subtly conveyed that they sometimes make modifications (either by mutual adaptation or enactment). Several comments reveal that the headmasters modify the admission process, either by mutual adaptation or enactment. Examples include the following extracts:

Extract 3

Modifications come at your end, especially like my area, you check what will worry, and then you inform the ministry to know what is worrying you **H4**

Extract 4

So when you think that you need more people, that is, the number given to you is less and you want more, then, you can just put in a request and if they agree, they give you some students and if they don't, then you go on with the already given one. So that is what we do **H3**

Extract 5

For instance, when the students are brought to the school; the choice of courses. Of course as the manager of the school, you need to just look at some of the students. Sometimes, when they were selecting the courses, they were following friends and those things. So some of them, you look at the courses that they have selected and you think that this area is better for them. Then when you call them and speak with them and you see that the student is interested in that area and you call the parents and the parents accept, why

not. You move them, maybe, from one course to another. Either from, maybe general arts to practical research subjects like home economics. There is a way of doing that kind of arrangement **H1**

These excerpts reflect how some headmasters implement the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana, for example, extract 3 and 4 show that headmasters focus on mutual adaption in the implementation of the free senior high school policy. That is, they do the modification by engaging the developers or the policymakers (Snyder et al, 1992, p. 23) in terms of the admission procedures. In extract 4, the interviewee made it clear that the modification happens when they are not satisfied with the number of students shortlisted for admission into their school. Conversely, extract 5 reveals that at a certain point in time, headmasters do modifications by adopting the enactment approach (refer to chapter 2 of this thesis) in the implementation of free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana.

Charges

Further, a critical analysis of the interview revealed ‘charges’ as one of the thematic areas. It emerged as a common theme evident across multiple data sources that headmasters in the Western North Region of Ghana followed dutifully follow the orders of The Ministry of Educations, not to charge any unapproved fees in the process of implementing the free senior high school policy. That is, classes fees, PTA dues, admissions, fees charged on books, teachers’ motivations are no more born by the

parents, and therefore they do not charge any fees. Comments are included in the extracts that follow.

Extract 6

No, you don't take any money from them. Everything is provided by the government. So you do not collect any money from them for any reason. Even some of them come and take their kids away from the fact that they don't have money to give them as pocket money. They want the kids to stop schooling. So, if you charge them they don't even have money to pay. H3

Extract 7

Modifications come at your end, especially in my area, you check what will worry, then you inform the ministry to know what is worrying you. So you must follow what they tell. So we don't collect any money from anyone, everything is free. H4

Extract 8

That one it used to be paid by the students but this time around, extra classes as we used to call it, the fee is born by the government. So we don't charge any fees; not at all. With the new system, the students themselves go to the shop to buy. You cannot bring it to the school and tell the students to buy it. H2

In line with the extracts above, it can be noted that headmasters in the Western North Region of Ghana adopt the fidelity approach in terms of charging unapproved fees in implementing the free senior high school policy. This is so because per the

directives of the policy no headmaster is supposed to charge any unapproved fees, which is faithfully followed by the headmasters, as they pointed out in the interview. I suppose that the headmasters, although are adhering to this directive as a way of their support to ensure the success of the policy, there is a shred of evidence to suggest that any attempt to charge any unapproved fees will be met with strong sanctions by the government. For example, the headmaster for Adisadel College was interdicted for charging unapproved fees. Therefore, there could be cultural or environmental conditions acting on their absolute faithlessness in terms of charging unapproved fees. That is, those in the Western North Region may be disadvantaged and therefore, will not even conceive of paying any fee since per the directive of the policy, they are not supposed to pay anything. This is even evident in the responses given by the interviewee, as in:

Extract 9

“...they don’t have money to give them as pocket money. They want the kids to stop schooling. So, if you charge them they don’t even have the money to pay”.

This probably explains why they have adopted the fidelity approach concerning charging unapproved fees in implementing the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana.

Academic Activities

Also, one of the thematic areas that emerged from the analysis of the interview was academic activities. That is, in the interviews, it was noted that, in terms of academic work, the various headmasters at the Western North Region of Ghana adopt

fidelity in the implementation of the free senior high school policy. The extracts below illustrate this point further.

Extract 10

*...GES provides the instructions then we also break it down. As a manager of the school, you don't say it is favourable or not. You only have to be conversant with the broader government objectives. The broader government objective for this free SHS is that the JHS is not going to be a terminal point and that the exams that are conducted are not for placement into schools and the courses. So all that you need to do is to let them go through the system. So at the end of the three years, those who excel well and would like to go to the universities will go. Those who will turn to the vocational and training schools and other schools will also have to go that way. **H2***

Extract 11

*We don't fail anyone. You just allow them to go through the system and those who will pass can continue their education. And those who don't pass the exams may also decide what to do after senior high school or technical or vocational school. So everyone is made to go through the system freely. **H5***

From extracts 10 and 11, it becomes clear that students are not repeated for poor academic performance. They are all made to go through the senior high school system by promoting them from one level to another level regardless of their academic performance. This shows that in the implementation of the free senior high school, the headmasters follow the directive of the policymakers or the government since per my

appreciation of the findings, any failure of a student will mean extra cost to the government. This is so because everything is provided by the government. This also means that they are following the position of Ayot and Briggs (1992) that learners must be allowed a smooth transition from one level to another, especially at the basic level and the senior high school level to enable them to continue with their lives. According to them, this is to give them some basic knowledge to do something worthwhile in life without any delay. Their point, therefore, highlights the importance of formal education, especially moving up to the senior high level.

Consequently, findings from this research question suggest that headmasters in the Western North Region of Ghana adopt the fidelity, mutual adaptation and enactment approaches in implementing the free senior high school policy. That is, the heads follow strictly the guidelines of the government to not charge any unapproved fees since everything is provided by the government. Also, all students are made to go through the system without repeating any of them. In terms of admissions, they follow the directives of the government by accepting any student that is posted to their school; but where the students are more or less, they seek the consent of the policymakers (mutual adaptation); and where they need to change the course of a student, they decide with both the student and the parent (enactment). This finding buttresses the point made by Sushila (2004) that headmasters are administrators of a school and therefore the performance of the school depends on how they see the implementation of a policy.

Research question two: How effective is the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region?

Following the earlier discussion, it emerged that headmasters in the Western North Region mostly do not take decisions without the expressed consent of policymakers as well as parents. Regarding how headmasters in the Western North Region implement the free senior high school policy, they encounter several challenges; and based on these challenges they adopt some strategies to ensure successful implementation of the free senior high school policy. Therefore, research question two was developed to ascertain the effectiveness of the implementation of the policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. From the interview data, it was gathered that the implementation is very effective in that they (headmasters) are now less burdened, students and teachers must be punctual in school, and that the government is relentless. These justifications for the effectiveness of the policy are provided in the ensuing discussion.

Headmasters are less burdened

From the interview, the participants revealed that earlier they were burdened with the collection of school fees and now that the students are not paying anything, they no longer have the headache of having to go round collecting school fees. The following extracts illustrate this point further.

Extract 12

It is very helpful. You know previously, when the students are writing their examination, you have to sack them and sometimes when you sack them, the

politician will come on you that you are making them unpopular and those things. Now that we have a system where they don't pay school fees, what is my worry? At the end of the day, I will not have students going home with a chunk of money; auditors will not come after me, asking me why the students didn't pay school fees meanwhile the student didn't have money. I will not also have the unpleasant duty of sacking students to go home for school fees and those things. So far, that is it, it's good. H1

Extract 13

Yes, this one what I can say is that it is very effective as compared to the first one because headmasters don't have to be chasing students around for non-payment of school fees. Managing the schools now, I can say it is a lot easier than it used to be or effective than it used to be. Headmasters will not have any problem with the community or the parents around as in chasing their wards for school fees and they coming to beg and all that. H2

Extract 14

You know previously when the students are writing their exams, you have to sack them and sometimes when you sack them, the politician will come to you that you are making them unpopular and those things. Now that we have a system where they don't pay school fees, what is my worry? H3

Extract 12 and 13 show that headmasters in the Western North Region consider the implementation of the free senior high school policy to be very effective in the sense

that they (headmasters) are no more concerned about the collection of school fees. Also, in extract 14, it becomes more succinct that the headmasters are now free from the intimidation of politicians. This implies that they (headmasters) now have a free mind, and can turn their attention to something important that can help in effective teaching and learning. This point is illustrated further in extract 15.

Extract 15

So what we do is: for instance, as the headmaster, I go round the classes myself intermittently to check if teachers are in class. So because it is a deliberate policy, the teachers are also on guard because they know they can be victimized if they don't do the right thing. H4

It can be noted in extract 15 that with the implementation of free senior high school, headmasters in the Western North Region are no more worried about the collection of school fees and can now focus their attention specifically on effective teaching and learning as well as supervision. That is, the headmasters' inclination of checking from time to time to ensure that teachers are in class, will put the teachers on their toes to be punctual in class.

Students and teachers must be punctual in school

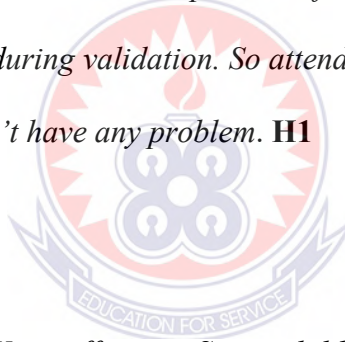
In the interview, it became evident that not only headmasters are free from external worries in focusing mainly on academic work but more importantly both teachers and students are challenged to be punctual in school. Let us consider the following extracts.

Extract 16

And so what it means is that students don't have to lose their contact hours because they have been driven home to go for money. H3

Extract 17

So because it is a deliberate policy, the teachers are also on guard because they know they can be victimized if they don't do the right thing. So, attendance these days is not a problem because before the free SHS even came, there was this system where the heads were mandated to validate a teacher. So what it means is that a teacher can be punished for absenting himself withholding the person's salary during validation. So attendance and punctuality as far as I am concerned, I don't have any problem. H1



Extract 18

Very effective. Very effective. Some children were owing school fees; they could not pay. We resume school and they are still owing. But this round, students will complete the school and no payment. During exams, we drive students to go for their school fees. But this time, students will write the exams and not be sacked. All my students, especially the day students are taking one meal. So they will not go out to buy food. So if you want to go out, I will not accept. This allows them to stay in school and learn. 100% of Students are no more paying school fees and so when school reopens, they have no right to stay

home. They expected to come to school and learn. So students are very regular and punctual. H4

From extract 16, 17 and 18, it becomes clear that the effectiveness of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region depends to a very large extent on the strict adherence to the obligation of not charging any unapproved fees. This had then put the obligation on both teachers and students to be punctual in school. This is because students are no longer driven home for their school fees and so they have no business absenting themselves from school if all other things being equal. Hence, once students are present in school and are not asked to go home for school fees, which may destabilize academic work, teachers will also be mandated to be in school and provide an instructional guide to the students.

Also, the implementation of the free senior high school is effective in the Western North Region in the sense that students have the opportunity now to write their exams without being asked to go home for their school fees and other fees. Again, they are mandated to come to school early. After all, they can no longer stay home for any justifiable reason based on schools because now, their school fees are taken care of by the government. Day students are as well obligated to be in school without having to go out on the grounds of going to pay for food since they are provided with food in the school.

The relentless effort by the government

In interview data, it became noticeable that the implementation of the free senior high school in the Western North Region of Ghana is effective because the government is relentless in ensuring the success of the policy. This shows the commitment on the part of policymakers in ensuring the success of the free senior high school policy. The following extracts explain this point further.

Extract 19

Since the government has not relented on its efforts to provide whatever they have said they will bring, then it is not a problem. So long as every year, students' monies are brought, admission fees are paid and everything is brought, it means it is on course now. H1

From extract 19, it can be noted the government is very committed to ensuring the success of the free senior high school policy. For this reason, the government is determined in supplying all the things that the schools need to make sure that the policy becomes a success. The finding presented here confirms an earlier study by Viennet and Pont (2017) when they concluded that what makes a policy success is the commitment of implementers, active political support for the policy being implemented, policy coherence, and stability of socioeconomic factors over time. However, McLaughlin (2006) determined that successful implementation is contingent on beneficial outcomes.

Free SHS Policy is ineffective

Even though almost all the headmasters interviewed in the Western North Region of Ghana affirmed that the implementation of the free senior high school policy is very effective, one of the participants disagreed. According to him, the old system (before the inception of free senior high school policy) is better than the new system (emergence of free senior high school policy) in the Western North Region. When asked about the effectiveness of the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region, this is what one of the participants had to say:

Extract 20

No the old system is better. In terms of logistics, the old system is better because the numbers are becoming too large. In terms of academic performance, the previous one is better because now every student is allowed to come. If a student does not pass the BECE well, still he is allowed to come. And because of that, the academic performance is not good. H5

A consideration of extract 20 shows that the ineffectiveness of the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region is based on the increase in enrollment of the students. This is based on infrastructure challenges, which is noted to have impeded the smooth and successful implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana.

Research question three: What challenges are associated with the implementation of free senior high school policy in the Western North Region?

The objective of this research question was to ascertain the challenges of the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana, following the approach the headmasters adopt in the implementation of the free senior high school policy. In line with the directives given by the government in terms of the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana, where all headmasters are constraint from charging any unapproved fees, it becomes crucial to ascertain the difficulties that will emerge. Analysis of the interview revealed that the main challenge of the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region concerned infrastructure, food supply. There were some other problems like distortion in academic work. In the discussions that follow, I focus on these thematic areas respectively.

Infrastructural challenges

One major challenge of the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region that emerged from the analysis of the interview was the issue of infrastructure. These infrastructural challenges, according to them, it is obvious brought about by the double-track system. The following comments further illustrate this point.

Extract 21

Yea, in terms of infrastructure, we are faced with a lot of problems. The students are now many but our desks are not enough for them. They are mostly clustered in the classroom due to inadequate desks. We do not also have enough rooms for the students in terms of the boarding system. Some are compelled to sleep on the floor. But with the introduction of the double-track system, these problems have been minimised. H2.

Extract 22

...some of the things we want to get, we are not getting it. I, for instance, want a boarding house but I am not getting it. I don't have a vehicle. I don't also have accommodation. H4

Quite clearly, extracts 21 and 22 show that the challenges with infrastructure in the implementation of the free senior high school deal with a boarding facility, desk, head teachers' vehicle and accommodation. Even though the introduction of the double-track system has minimised these challenges, these challenges still pose a threat to the smooth running of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. This challenge emanates from inadequate funds to cater for all the needs of the schools. This is because if the funds are available, these challenges are addressed. This finding is commensurate with the findings of Rotich and Kipkoech (2012) when they reported that inadequate funds to cater for the entire needs of heads. Also, Asumadu (2019) equally reported that the lacked of adequate teaching facilities adds to the challenges confronting the smooth running of the free senior high school

policy. A similar finding was noted by Essuman (2018) when he identified that the overcrowding in the various senior high schools in the country is as a result of inadequate infrastructure in the schools. According to him, there is an overwhelming increase in the classrooms due to the rapid increase in enrolment of students in senior high schools.

While I can that the issue of overcrowding in the boarding houses and classrooms are generic, I cannot say the same thing for lack of accommodation for headmasters as well as lack of headmasters' vehicle. This clearly shows sometimes, schools in remote areas are deprived of certain crucial facilities, as is the case in Headmaster 4 in extract 22.

Delay in the supply of food items.

The interview data indicated that all the headmasters revealed that delay in the supply of food items is one of the main challenges confronting the implementation of free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. When asked about the challenges of the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region, this is what they had to say:

Extract 23

They do it in such a way that sometimes it may look like blackmail. For instance, you have short of maize and then you have asked them to bring you maize and then that day you are left with nothing. No maize so if they bring that maize that day, then you start using it. The only alternative is that you have to go to the market to buy it. You don't also have the money to buy]. [...when you call them a week to the day you called them, they will

intentionally delay. We are looking for a car; we are looking for this and that.

H1

Extract 24

So some suppliers delay. Sometimes, you have to reach out to the free SHS coordinator, the buffer stock coordinator before you get them. So some delay but others deliver on time. H2

Extract 25

The food supply. Although they give us enough food, the timing is not good. Sometimes, they reopen before they bring them. Sometimes, some of the delay and once it delays, it becomes very difficult to feed the students. But as for bringing them, they always bring them but sometimes they delay. H3

Disbursement of funds

The interview data indicated that all the headmasters revealed that delay in the disbursement of funds to be one of the main challenges confronting the implementation of free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. When asked about the challenges of the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region, this is what they reported:

Extract 26

Some of the monies that are supposed to come to the school delays. In my area, my money has been locked up and I don't know how I will get it. And some teachers will want to worry you and can't worry them. H4

These excerpts show the challenges they confront in the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region, which make the headmasters frustrated. This is very revealing because it depicts the grievances and the concerns that some of the headmasters in the Western North Region have with the implementation of free senior high school policy. In extract 23, the interviewee reveals that the delay in bringing the food items is a strategy of blackmail used by the suppliers so that whatever they (the suppliers) bring, the headmasters would have no option than to accept. This puts the headmasters in a very tight corner, as according to them, the government does not give them the money to pay the suppliers such that in case they delay, they can go ahead and purchase the food items themselves. However, they are not given such an opportunity and this makes them frustrated as they are supposed to feed the students.

Another revealing finding from the foregoing extracts is that there is a delay in the disbursement of funds, especially monies that are supposed to be given to the teachers as motivation and extra classes' fees. This is challenging because teachers worry the headmasters when the disbursement of the monies delays. As one of the respondent's comments:

“and some teachers will want to worry you and can't worry them” shows that some disagreement ensues between teachers and headmasters. This is a serious challenge

because it could make the teachers bitter, which in turn may make them develop a lackadaisical attitude towards teaching. As a direct consequence, teaching and learning are likely to suffer.

The issue of disbursement of funds and delay in supply of food items was conspicuously missing in the findings of Essuman (2018), but Asumadu (2019) reported as part of the challenges of the implementation of the free senior high school that there is always delay in the disbursements of funds to the school. The difference in these findings of Essuman and Asumadu and what is presented here could be due to the geographical locations used by these two researchers.

Supply of poor quality or expired food items

A prominent finding revealed supply of poor quality or expired food items is one of the main challenges confronting the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. According to the participants those who supply the food items to the school in the Western North Region of Ghana, intentionally supply them with inferior food items. When asked about the challenges of the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region, this is what the participants had to say:

Extract 27

Then also, those people who have been asked to bring the food items, some of them will just bring inferior ones. You know a typical Ghanaian. Things that have been avoided, then they go and pick them. I think they go to the factory

and then look for the rejected ones or the cheaper ones. Then, of course, they go and demand prices for ... as if the rice they brought was perfume rice. Because they have asked them to bring to this school hundred bags of rice, but the rice, you know when you go to the market you have varieties and their prices. H1

Extract 28

So some bags of rice can be 70 cedis. So that is it. So when they come and bring you inferior rice, you cannot tell them the rice is inferior because they will tell you they have brought you rice. Is it not to the number of bags that they said they should bring? But those days that I was buying, when you come to me and tell me I am bringing you hundred bags of rice, then I will ask you which type of rice you are bringing. So if you say you are bringing in Sultana, straight away, I know the market price of Sultana but this one, the rice that they even bring, is not branded. It is all in the name of Ghana rice and the chaff and those things are many. H4

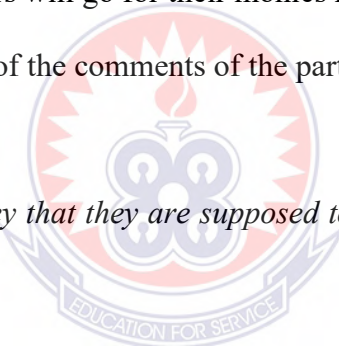
Extract 29

But if these people who are supplying the food items will be truthful to themselves and then also to the government that pays, at least they would have supply good items. Sometimes those who bring the milk, they will bring you the milk, then on top maybe if they bring you hundred carton of milk, then the first five cartons, you see the expiring date maybe one year or six months you know that this one is better. But some of them have already expired or some of them

are left with maybe 2weeks, 3weeks to expire then they bring them to you like that. But for them, they will go for their money alright. They will take the money that they are supposed to take but it comes here, that when the dishonesty comes in. H1

It is clear from the above extracts that the food suppliers are dishonest and that they try to manipulate the system to make money. This challenge, for them, emanates from the fact that they (headmasters) are not allowed to own the money, which will give them the power to demand quality goods before giving the money. But without this arrangement, the suppliers will go for their monies regardless of the kind of goods they have supplied, as in one of the comments of the participants:

“They will take the money that they are supposed to take but it comes here, that when the dishonesty comes in”



What is more striking from this finding is that the headmasters are forced to feed the students with these expired food items, and this could be very detrimental to the health of the students. This is evident in one of the comments by the participants.

Extract 30

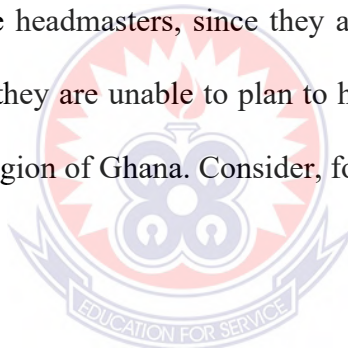
No maize so if they bring that maize that day, then you start using it. The only alternative is that you have to go to the market to buy it. You don't also have the money to buy. So when they bring you the maize or the rice and the rice is

inferior, would you ask them to carry it away? When they take it away, you are supposed to buy a new one because as for the students, they can't wait. H1

As can be noted from extract 30, since they (headmasters) are not given the money to purchase the food items, they are made to accept any food item that they are supplied with. For them, they do so because the suppliers intentionally delay the supply so that no attempt can be made by any headmaster to report to any authority since the students will be impatient with them (headmasters).

Inability to plan ahead

According to the headmasters, since they are not given the money to buy the food items themselves, they are unable to plan to help facilitate teaching and learning in the Western North Region of Ghana. Consider, for example, extract 31.



Extract 31

And then two you know you don't have money to start. So as and when the government brings you the money, then straight away you have to. So for instance, they have asked us to receive the form twos coming but if the money is not brought, you wouldn't have that opportunity to plan, buy certain things and those things so that the period that you have so many of those things, those items will be in abundant. H3

Still, from the perspective of the headmasters, their inability to plan is contingent on the fact that they are not given the money for the implementation of the free senior high school policy. This puts them in a disadvantageous position to be able

to take pragmatic measures to help the smooth running of free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. This could be the strict adherence to the protocols of the implementation of the free senior high school policy that the policymakers expect from the implementers. In line with this revelation, Cema (2013) has established that using a very strict top-down approach mostly does not help in ensuring the successful implementation of a policy.

Also, Barber, (2008) has noted that if the implementation plan or directive is not flexible, it endangers effective implementation of the policy. However, whether the headmasters in the Western North Region consider these challenges as militating against the smooth and successful implementation of the free senior high policy will be determined by research question four, which deals with the effectiveness of the implementation of the free senior high school.

Disobedience of SHS students towards their parents

Even though data from the interview revealed that the implementation of the free senior high school policy does not have any negative influence on quality education in the Western North Region, as in:

“You see when some people feel that the free SHS is going to affect the delivery of teachers, I just laugh”,

there were still some concerns about the behaviour of students. For instance, this is what one of the participants had to say:

Extract 32

And then the students also, you know sometimes when a student is coming to school and then the parents sit them down and talk to them, sometimes when they come, they know how to walk. But sometimes, when the students feel they will not go to their parents for school fees, they feel they are not under any obligation to the school. That is one thing with the parent aspect, where parents will be able to say that if you do this, I won't pay your school fees. It puts that fear in them to gain devotion from them. But if somebody pays your school fees, it is up to you as a human being to just humble yourself and then learn and go. H1

In extract 32, the participant makes it clear that parents take full control of their wards when they are the ones providing for their educational needs, for example, pay their school fees and the like. But for the introduction of the free senior high school policy, where parents are no more the ones paying their children's school fees, to some extent, lose control of their children. This, therefore, makes some of the students disobey their parents. This may affect academic work because, in an instance, when students are refusing to take their academic work seriously. This becomes clear in one of the comments made by the participants included in the study.

Extract 33

Yes, there is some kind of laxity among the students. That one I must admit. It's like they always want to be forced to learn because the parents are not paying. When school reopens, they just pick their bags and go. It's like there is no

pressure on them to study hard as compared to the past, where (especially those who were paying their fees) were very serious in class. These days it's like because they take everything for free: they are fed, school uniform provided, everything. Everything is provided for them. So, the only problem I have with the students is laxity.

Extract 33 explains the challenge concerning students' behaviour towards academic work, as there is clear negligence on their part. This, according to the headmasters, comes at the backdrop of the fact that they are not made to pay anything.

Lack of cooperation on the part of parents and students.

It also played out in the analysis of the interview data that the lack of cooperation of parents and students in the provision of certain essentials is one of the challenges confronting the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. Extract 33 explains this challenge further.

Extract 34

...and take their kids away from that they don't have money to give them as pocket money. They want the kids to stop schooling. H4

Extract 35

The core textbooks are supplied but the elective textbooks are not supplied and the students are not ready to buy. And because of the free SHS, no one can force anything on the students to buy. So they have used that opportunity not to buy even if they are given the money. With the new system, the students

themselves go to the shop to buy. You cannot bring it to the school and tell the students to buy it. That is the only challenge they have. H3

In extract 35, it can be seen that parents in the Western North Region are not ready to cooperate to help the smooth running of the free senior high school policy by providing at least their little support to the students. It is either they genuinely do not have or there is laxity on their part to provide certain essentials needs to their wards. Also, extract 35 shows that students are not ready to cooperate in that when they are even given money to purchase the things (elective textbooks) that are not supplied by the government, they do not do so. This, therefore, is likely to affect their academic work since they need such books to facilitate teaching and learning.

Much attention was placed on the double-track schools

It became known that the introduction of the double-track system has made it quite challenging the implementing the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. Let us consider extract 36.

Extract 36

The only thing I have observed is that there is too much attention on the double-track schools to the neglect of the single-track schools, especially new and emerging ones. The attention is not there. The attention is on the double-track school. Like when they are supplying materials, the double-track schools have the upper hand as against the single schools. H2

In extract 36, it is seen that the attention placed on the double-track schools over the single tract school, becomes evident in the supply of items to the schools. This puts heads in a disadvantaged position, as they may not get most of the things, they will be looking for, or even if they will get, it will delay but those in the double schools may get most of the things they need.

Thus, this research question sought to ascertain the challenges confronting the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. Findings from analysis of interview data suggest that several challenges confront the implementation of the free senior high school in the Western North Region. These concern principally infrastructure, delay in the supply of food items and disbursement of funds, supply of inferior or expired food items. There were also some challenges such as head teachers' inability to plan due to delay in disbursement of funds, disobedience of students towards their parents, lack of cooperation on the part of parents and students, and much attention placed on the double-track schools to the neglect of the single schools.

Research question four: How do you manage the challenges with the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region?

The purpose of this research question was to find out the strategies that could be adopted by headmasters in the Western North Region of Ghana to address the challenges confronting the implementation of the free senior high school policy. Therefore, focusing on emerging themes from the interview data, several themes emerged from the analysis. That is, the headmasters reported that to address the

challenges of the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region point out that they report any defect to the policymakers, borrowing from their neighbouring schools, reaching out to opinion leaders or the well-to-do people in the society, and punishing students who go contrary to the rules of the school. These strategies are presented in the ensuing discussions.

Reporting any defect to the policymakers

From my interview with the headmasters, it was noticed that as part of the strategies to address the challenges of the implementation of free senior high school policy in the Western North Region, the heads reach out to the policymakers, as in the words of one of the respondents:

“For the quality, if you are supplied with inferior goods, you have to report”.

However, comprehensive views of the respondents are given in the extracts below.

Extract 37

There are free SHS coordinators who come around. The free SHS coordinators are different from the buffer stock. Buffer stock takes the money for the food but the free SHS coordinator is to coordinate all the schools and whatever is happening in the free SHS schools. And so they come around; they take some of these suggestions. H1

Extract 38

As I said, we have a hierarchy and so you complain to the free SHS coordinator. Every region has a coordinator. So you complain to the

coordinator. The coordinator will in turn reach the buffer stock coordinator and then the supplier who is supposed to do that. Then he is called upon to deliver. And the buffer stock coordinator does not also take it kindly at all when the supplier delays. So, the moment the complaints get to him, he quickly reaches out to whichever supplier that has to deliver and not time, you see that the thing has been delivered. H2

Extract 39

You have to call out the ministry. You know you can't collect any money from the students. it is not allowed. When you are caught, they will call you to the ministry. Government is the government so you pass through the DCEs or hopefully the Assemblyman to reach the minister and the MP to get to the top.

//H5

Very strikingly, in extracts 37 and 38, the respondents reveal the strategy they use in addressing the challenge of the delay in the supply of the food items and the disbursement of funds to the SHS coordinators. However, while in extract 37, the respondent only mentions the free SHS coordinators as the ones that he reports to, in extract 38, the respondents reveal the structural processes that the reports have go through. Even in extract 39, a different authority is mentioned and continues to reveal the processes that the reports have to go through. Also, in extract 39, the respondent continues to justify why such a strategy is adopted, as in:

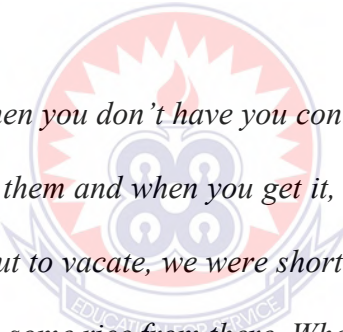
“You know you can't collect any money from the students. It is not allowed. When you are caught, they will call you to the ministry”.

This excerpt shows that the heads adopt this strategy to succumb to the powers of policymakers.

Borrowing from neighbouring schools

Moreover, it emerged from analysis of the interview data that to address the challenges, especially the delay in the food supply that confront the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana, the headmasters borrow some of the food items they don't have from the neighbouring schools. This is noticeable in the comment of one of the respondents included in the study, as evident in extract 40.

Extract 40



For the delay, when you don't have you contact neighbouring schools and then you borrow from them and when you get it, then we send it back. For example, when we are about to vacate, we were short of rice. So we went to Akontombra to go and borrow some rice from there. When we reopen and we get our supply of rice, we will go and replace them. That is what we usually do. We depend on each other for items that we do not have; and for those that we don't have, we borrow from them. Later we replace them. H3

[It is a big challenge. You know you cannot spend any money outside your budget. The monies that have been given to the school. What we do is that sometimes, we get materials from neighbouring schools so that we can even fall on them. When they have, we fall on them so when we get, we give it back to them.] H5

Extract 40 provides a typical example of the strategy that headmasters adopt to address the challenges of the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. It was also made known that the items that are borrowed are later sent back when they are supplied with their food items.

Apart from the fact that the headmasters resort to borrowing food items from a nearby school to ensure the smooth running of the free senior high school policy, they also try to seek support from opinion leaders and prominent members of the well-to-do in the community where the school is situated. This is evident in extract 41.

Extract 41

Sometimes you have to consult the school authorities, the board chairman, the PTA chairman they will also go to the opinion leaders in that town where the school is to get what you want. Government cannot provide everything. Sometimes you have to go to those who are well-to-do in the town. H5

Even though in extract 41, we are not told by the respondents the specific things that push them to resort these people (opinion leaders and prominent) in the society, it becomes very useful because it tells us the pragmatic steps taking by the heads in the Western North Region to help address the challenges confronting the implementation of free senior high school in the area.

Punishing deviant students

It emerged from the earlier analysis of the interview data that students disobey their parents because these students feel they will not take any money from their parents, and so tend to be deviant. This was recorded as one of the challenges of the

implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. When the headmasters were asked about what they do to address this challenge, they pointed out that they adopt punishment as a strategy to deal with the behaviour of students. This is evident in extract 42.

Extract 42

When a child misbehaves, the teacher can punish them; that is enough but as soon as the situation comes to me as a headmaster, then it means that it is serious. Then, I have to call the parents. So when the students know that their parents are coming and the parents come and we tell them this is what your child has done. If he does it again, he will be asked to go home. Even allowing the parents to know what the student has done is a big deterrent to some of them who are ready to learn. We bring in the parents. It is up to the parents to decide. Some of the parents will say oh let's give them this. When we think that what you have done is the worse and it will influence others to do the same, then we suspend you. The school code of ethics still runs. H1

From extract 42, it can be noted that the headmasters in the Western North Region negotiate with the parents to discipline the students. However, as realised in extract 42, the headmaster's first point of call is to rely on the teachers to take action when any student goes wrong, and that is when the case is reported to them that the parents are brought in. This strategy consolidates the approach they adopt in implementing the policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. That is, they do not take decisions that concern students without consulting the policymakers (mutual adaptation approach), parents of the student involved (enactment approach).

Moreover, as a strategy to curb deviant behaviour of students the code of ethics of senior high school are religiously followed, and this goes to buttress their faithfulness in implementing the policy, as discussed in research question one. For example, one of the participants had this to say:

Extract 43

What is missing is that no code of ethics has it that when a student does this, cane the person. It is not there. So all those areas when you use them to sanction the students, you have to also make sure that you bring in the district, especially the municipal directors. So we still punish them: suspension, deboardinization, and all those things are still there. So we use them carefully.

H1

Extract 43 tells us that since whipping the child has become a human right issue and therefore could be criminalised, headmasters rather resort to suspension or de-boardinization to serve as a deterrent would be behaviours. I must admit that the findings presented here are conspicuously missing from earlier studies and this is because previous researchers (Rotich and Kipkoech, 2012; Essuman, 2018; Asumadu, 2019) have focused mainly on the challenges and benefits of the implementation of the free senior high school policy to the neglect of the strategies that could be adopted to address the challenges.

Consequently, from the foregoing discussion, it becomes clear are very strategic to ensure successful implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. That is, it was revealed from the analysis of the

interview data that headmasters in the Western North Region report any defect to the policymakers, borrow items they do not have (when it delays) from neighbouring schools, punish deviant or disobedient students. It has also been shown from the earlier discussions that headmasters in the Western North Region adopt these with the express consent of stakeholders to ensure successful implementation of the free senior high school policy.

4.3 Summary

Consequently, the study has shown that the implementation of the free senior high school policy in some selected schools in the Western North Region of Ghana is very effective. This is so because participants of the study indicated that since the inception of free senior high school policy, headmasters are no more burdened with the task of collecting school fees, and therefore, they can use their time to supervise academic activities. Again, with free senior high school, students and teachers are obligated to take academic work seriously, which has helped improve teaching and learning; and lastly, the government has not relented in supporting the implementation of free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. However, it was noted by one of the participants that the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region is not effective as compared to the old system when free senior high school policy had not been introduced. While some aspects of these findings confirmed earlier findings of some researchers, some aspects of the findings presented were conspicuously missing from earlier studies.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents an overview of the entire work. It comprises a summary of the study, which is followed by key findings; and conclusions are drawn for consideration. Again, relying on the key findings of the study, recommendations together with suggested topics for further studies are presented.

5.1 Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the implementation of free senior high school policy in some selected schools in the Western North Region of Ghana. The study determined how the free senior high school policy is implemented, the challenges of the implementation, the strategies that could be adopted to address these challenges, and finally the effectiveness of the implementation of the policy. To realise the purpose of the study, four research questions were raised.

The study adopted the qualitative approach by utilising the case study design. The population of the study comprised all the five headmasters in the five public schools in the Western North Region of Ghana. The unstructured interview guide was used as an instrument to generate information from the headmasters in the Western North Region. Analysis of data followed the thematic analysis, especially emerging themes.

5.2 Key Findings

After the analysis and discussion of the interview data generated from the headmasters in the Western North Region, the following findings have emerged.

1. On how heads implement free senior high school policy, findings showed that headmasters adopted the fidelity (Top-down), mutual adaptation and enactment approaches in implementing the free senior high school policy.

That is, in terms of admission, the heads followed strictly the guidelines of the government that forbid them to charge any unapproved fees since everything was provided by the government. Also, the headmasters ensured that all students were made to go through the system without repeating any of them. In terms of admissions, they followed the directives of the government by accepting any student posted to the school; but where the students were more or less, they sought the consent of the policymakers and where they needed to change the course of a student, they consult both the students and the parents.

2. Additionally, on effectiveness, the policy is noted to be effective as pointed out by the headmasters, it should be expected that senior high school students in the region will perform very well in their final examinations, and proceed to the tertiary. Findings from the study indicated that since students are no longer sacked to their various homes for their school fees and fulfil other financial obligations, the implementation of the free senior high school is very effective. However, the study further showed that free senior high school policy in the Western North Region is effective as compared to the old system (i.e., when free senior high

school policy had not been introduced) following the number of scholars this system is producing into the various communities.

3. On challenges, the study revealed that lack of infrastructure, delay in the supply of food items, disbursement of funds, and supply of inferior or expired food items, inability to plan ahead were noted from the study. Particularly, it was noted that those who were mandated to supply the food items, intentionally supplied sub-standard goods. Lacked of cooperation on the part of parents and students, and headmasters' inability to plan due to delay in disbursement of funds posed challenges. Moreso, infrastructures are not able to accommodate the number of students sent to the school.
4. Lastly, on strategies, it was indicated that headmasters were very strategic in ensuring successful implementation of the free senior high school policy. Findings revealed that headmasters reported any defect to policymakers and also borrowed items from neighbouring schools. It was also shown that headmasters device a way of punishing deviant students who disobey both parents and teacher instructions and offer advice.

5.3 Conclusions

The following conclusions are drawn out of the key findings that emanated from the study.

First of all, on how heads implement free senior high school policy, it was concluded that there should be reinforcement of the approaches being used in the implementation since it yielded positive result to ensure the success and sustainability of the policy. Findings of the study revealed that headmasters adhere strictly to the

directives put forward by the government and they mostly do not take decisions without the consent of policymakers. This could have dire consequences on the implementation of the policy as time goes on. This means that if all the policy guidelines laid down by the government become favourable to ensuring the success of the implementation of the policy, then the way the headmasters implement the policy will help ensure the success and possible sustainability of the policy which in effect makes it effective for future use.

Secondly, the policy is noted to be effective, therefore it was concluded that government should not relent in its effort in supplying the needed logistics so that the senior high school students in the region perform well and proceed to the tertiary level.

More so, conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that for the policy to be sustained for some time with varied benefits, government should supply both human and material resources to make it a success. Also, it can be concluded that since the policy is noted to be effective, as pointed out by the headmasters, it should be expected that the senior high school students in the region will perform very well in their final examinations, and proceed to the tertiary.

Thirdly, on the challenges it was concluded that when policymakers delay in supplying the food items on time, students could become agitated and cause commotion in the school. Given the fact that numerous challenges are confronting the implementation of the policy, especially with the delay in disbursement of funds, food items, and inferior food items or expired food items, there is the propensity to be chaos in the senior high schools. This is because headmasters do not take decision without

the consent of policymakers and some stakeholders, therefore if the supply of these items delay, the students could become agitated and cause commotion in the schools. Also, if monies that are supposed to be given to the schools' do not come, the headmasters could develop a lackadaisical attitude towards the policy implementation. When this happens students are likely to fail their final examinations and their dreams are likely to be shattered, which may cause some of them to become vagabonds in society.

Finally, on the issue of strategies, it was concluded that if headmasters concerns are not addressed and given the freedom to operate, they may become fed up with these challenges and decide not to take any action.

Also findings showed that headmasters follow rigorously the directives by the government, the conclusion that can be drawn is that they are very ardent and determined to ensure that the free senior high school policy becomes a success.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the keys findings and the conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Regulations should be decentralised to the district level so that at the district level, some appropriate measures could be taken to address any possible challenge that will threaten the successful implementation of the policy. It was therefore recommended that policymakers should endeavour to supply the needed items to support the implementation of free senior high school policy in Ghana to ensure that the implementation of the free senior high school policy becomes a success. Some of the regulations should be decentralised to the district level so that district

directors of education will help to steer the affairs of the educational system at the local level.

2. Government should not relent in its effort to supply all the necessary items that the schools will need to ensure effective teaching and learning while incorporating some of the measures in the old policy into the free senior high school policy. Also, the various teacher unions should rally behind the headmasters by encouraging them to continue to take pragmatic measures or strategies to ensure the smooth running of the free senior high school policy. Also, the findings of the study indicated that although the implementation of the policy is effective, but the challenges of delay in supply of food items is making it ineffective as compared to the old policy.
3. Government should organise open forums, public education on the implementation of the free senior high school policy. This will prepare their minds positively to support the implementation of the free senior high school policy programme.

Furthermore, it was recommended that the government of Ghana should reconsider its position of making senior high education entirely free so that those who are well-to-do will be motivated to provide support in ensuring the success of the policy, particularly. Better still government should decide to cater for other aspects of the funding and allow parents to take care of the feeding fees so that the government will get money to take care of infrastructural problems. It was further recommended that attention should not be focused solely on the double-track school, but also, the single-track schools should be considered by responding

promptly to the needs of the single-track schools as well. Again, the Parents Teachers' Association should be rekindled, and they should be encouraged to provide support to their wards by providing their children with some basic needs.

4. Finally, it was recommended that government should try as much as possible to commend and appreciate the efforts put in place by the headmasters in ensuring successful implementation of the policy. This becomes crucial because it will motivate them to do more to ensure that the policy becomes a success irrespective of the challenges that they will be confronted with.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

The following areas are suggested for further studies to help enrich literature in this area:

1. The focus is on the Western North Region, future researchers can focus on a comparative study by considering the implementation of the policy in one region with grade 'A' schools and the Western North Western Region.
2. This present study considered the views of headmasters, future researchers may involve parents or teachers in the implementation of the free senior high school policy in Ghana.
3. Also, future studies can be conducted to determine the perception of either teachers or headmasters on the sustainability of the free senior high school policy in Ghana.
4. Future researchers could consider the perception of parents on the implementation of free senior high school policy in Ghana.

5. The present study focused solely on the qualitative approach, another study could focus on the quantitative approach by looking at the implementation of free senior high school policy in a different region.



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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide

This study seeks to explore the implementation of the free senior high school policy in the Western North Region of Ghana. It, thus, seeks to explore how headmasters implement the policy, the effectiveness of the policy, challenges with the implementation and strategies adopt in managing the challenges of the implementation of the policy. I would be pleased if you kindly respond to the following questions genuinely as possible. The information generated here is purely for academic purposes and therefore, your confidentiality is rest assured. Thank you for your time.

1. How heads implement free senior high school policy.
 - a. How do you admit students into your school?
 - b. Do you follow strictly instructions from the government or you modify some of the instructions?
 - c. Do you charge students to pay for textbook, extra classes' or exercise books?
 - d. When students with Low grades are brought to your school by CSSPS, what do you do?
 - e. When there is a delay in the supply of food stuffs, how do you manage the situation?
2. Effectiveness of the implementation of the free senior high policy?
 - a. Is the free senior high school policy helpful at all?
 - b. How do you assess the future of the free senior high school policy?

- c. Is government putting in much effort as well as implementation of the policy is concerned?
 - d. Compare and contrast the effectiveness of both new and old policy.
 3. Challenges of the implementation of the free senior high school policy.
 - a. What challenges confront you in an attempt to implement the policy
 - b. Do you face infrastructural challenges as well?
 - c. How often do you receive food items in your school?
 - d. Do you have the power to plan ahead to meet your instructional expectations?
 4. Strategies to manage the challenges.
 - a. How do you address the problem of delay in the supply of food stuffs?
 - b. When you are not able to borrow from neighbouring schools, what do you do?
 - c. How fast do policymakers respond to your problems?
 - d. How do you manage deviant students in your school?

