

that have been transitioned on the SDGs. Ghana has undergone a number of educational transformations since independent. Most of these changes in the education sector was as a result of change in government (Adu-Gyemfi and Adinkrah, 2016). While Ghana prepares to overcome the challenges of attaining 100% primary universal education and ensuring quality education outcomes, this study evaluates the impacts of four main education policies and their contributions to the attainment of MDGs.

Free compulsory basic education

Enshrined in the global goals (Millennium Development Goals) is the Free Universal Primary Education (FUPE), which member countries are to attain within a maximum of 15 years (Ghana MDGs Report, 2015). Before the establishment of this goal, Ghana had in its national plans a Free Universal Basic Education (FUBE) that was established before independence in 1957. All put right, this first universal primary education was free but not compulsory and mostly free for deprived students in deprived communities (Akyeampong, 2009). The education Act of 1961 and the Accelerated Development Plan of 1951 within which the FUBE was established was faced with a number of challenges, rendering FUBE ineffective. The Economic Recovery Reform (ERR) in 1983 and the transition of government from military to democratically elected leadership led to the formation of a new constitution in 1992. The new constitution reinforced and relaunched FCUBE in 1996 by the then ruling government (NDC) to ensure all barriers prohibiting participation and implementation were removed (Akyeampong, 2009). With the introduction of Education Strategic Plan (2003-2015) in 2003, FCUBE was widely covered to ensure every child of school going age enroll in school. The specific goal of ESP focused on achieving 100% Universal Basic Completion rate, for all students, comprising of 6 years of Primary and 3 years of Junior Secondary education (MoE, 2006). "This resulted in significant increase in students enrolled from 2.72 million to 2.96 million over the period from 2001-2004. Primary enrolment growth for girl students was particularly positive with increases of 3.2% in 2003-04 and 9.3% over the period 2001-02 to 2003-04" - (Ampiah, Kwaah, Yiboe & Ababio, 2014).

School feeding programme

The first educational policy of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) was the Accelerated Development Plan (ADP) (Adu-Gyemfi and Adinkrah, 2016). Although this plan has among other goals, enshrined in it was the improvement in quality education through upgrading of various facets of the educational system, with particular focus on primary education. However, ADP and the education Act of 1961 did not mention of School Feeding Programme (SFP). The School Feeding Programme (SFP) started by the government in 2005 is similar to the ones carried out by a few Non-Governmental Organization (NGO's) in the country in the early 1950's (Abukari, Kuyini, and Abdulai, 2015). According to USAID-EQUIPS, the implementation of the programme by donor organizations was successful. During the period, enrollment improved by 33% with girl's enrollment recording the highest of 85% increment (Adu-Gyemfi and Adinkrah, 2015).

The school feeding programme was reintroduced in 2005. This time it was solely a governmental intervention supported by New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and other donor organizations (Abukari, Kuyini, and Abdulai, 2015). The programme is part of the several social interventions programmes introduced by government in line with Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy II, Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda GSGDA (2010 - 2013) among other national plans. The programme has similar goals of feeding schoolchildren and increasing enrollment as the earlier one in the 1950's. The policy apart from its primary objective of increasing enrollment also has a twin goal of creating jobs and empowering farmers locally. Government ensured that food supplied to the schools were locally grown and supplied to the schools. According to studies, SFP implemented in other parts of Africa including Nigeria, Uganda and Malawi has been successful. For example, in Nigeria, SFP has been reported to increase enrollment and attendance by 34% between 2001 to 2011 (Akanbi, 2011). In Ghana, impact and evaluation study conducted on SFP in the Sekyere Kumawu school and a non-beneficiary school shows that the completion rate of primary education was 30% higher than non-beneficiary schools (Manful, Yeboah, Owusu, Bempah, 2015). In the 2015 Ghana MDG report, "Gross enrolment reached 107 percent in 2013/2014 while net enrolment made slow progress from 88.5 percent in 2008/09 to 89.3 percent in 2013/14".

Capitation grant

A grant can be defined as a relief support or a subsidy to cut down cost. Capitation on the other hand is a form of arrangement for the transfer of some resource (normally financial resource) intended to bring some relief on the beneficiary. Capitation grant as the name connotes is a relief grant normally transferred from government to the most poorest and deprived citizens intended to leverage economic imbalance to promote survivability. Capitation grant is not a new term on the African continent. It is almost inherent in most government policies in developing economies. It is one of the major social policy interventions adopted by most developing countries all over the world (Osei, Owusu, Asem, Afutu-Kotey, 2009). Capitation grant as a major education and poverty reduction policy in Ghana can be traced back to 2005 when Ghana launched its first capitation grant. The grant can be mirrored as a policy to complement the FCUBE intervention. It is a common argument that the FCUBE policy is good but not good enough to produce the fortune expected of the education sector (Osei, Owusu, Asem, Afutu-Kotey, 2009). This is mostly due to the indirect component cost of education. These indirect costs include Parents, Teacher Association dues, transportation cost, library levies, cost of textbooks and many others. These costs are born by household. Proponents against FCUBE states the policy can only be effective if all indirect cost associated with education are abolished. Evidence of this can be inferred from Akyeampong, (2009) which emphasized that based on welfare quintile gathered from GLSS 4 (1998/99 and GLSS 5 (2005/06) the FCUBE policy did not do enough to offset the opportunity cost of schooling. Our conclusion is that the primary school attendance deficit continues to be concentrated among children from the poorest households. Government committed to the tenet of attaining MDGs and promoting quality education in Ghana launched the capitation grant in 2005 (Osei, Owusu, Asem, Afutu-Kotey, 2009). The purpose of this grant as mentioned earlier is to eradicate all associated indirect costs with basic education.

Research methodology

To analyze the education policy with the most impact on the development of primary educational and its implications for attaining SDG4, the researcher distributed questionnaires to a sample size of 100 respondents made up of parents, teachers, students, GES, MoF, West African Examination Council (WAEC) officials and head of primary schools in the greater Accra region of Ghana. Both primary and secondary data was gathered to complete the study. Excel was the main statistical tool used for data gathering. Tables and figures were also used for data analysis.

Analysis and presentation of results

Demographic features of respondents

Questionnaires were administered to all respondents, given a response rate of 100% on most of the questions. Sixty-two percent (62%) of the respondents were males while 37 percent were female. The remaining 1% representing one worker did not indicate his/her gender. In terms of age, virtually all the respondents were adults and young adults between the ages 21 and 50 or older, indicating that they have long periods of working experience (see table 1 below)

Table 1. Summary of demographic features of respondents

Variable	n	%
GENDER		
Male	62	62
Female	37	37
DEPARTMENTS		
Administration	18	18
audit	4	4
Monitoring and compliance	12	12
Finance	10	10
Policy and planning	26	26
Management	10	10

customer	16	16
NUMBER OF YEARS WORKING WITH INSTITUTION		
1-5yrs	0	0
5-10yrs	31	31
10-15yrs	37	37
15-20yrs	12	12
20+	20	20

Data presentation

The data was presented with tables to show frequencies and percentages. Where necessary, graphs were used to present data and demonstrate relationship between variables. Analyses are done based on research questions.

Current education policies and impact on SDG4

Despite the unfinished business of MDGs, Ghana has transitioned on the SDGs. The SDGs have been designed to integrate, complete and add on to the MDGs. Ghana has been implementing SDGs programme for more than two years. However, there is no change in policies apart from the addition of free SHS for first year students. The researcher therefore seeks to investigate if the existing policies can help Ghana attain set targets in SDG4. Surprisingly, 86% of respondents (see figure 1) representing majority of respondent's agreed that the policies should be maintained. The remaining 14% of respondents however, think that government should bring a lot more interventions policies. Understandably, SDG4 is only 3 years into implementation. It is therefore obvious that majority of respondents may want to see how these policies farewell in the system.

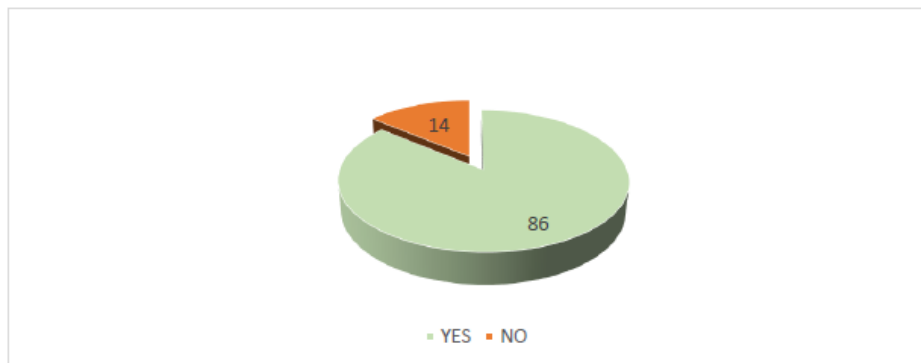


Figure 1. Current education policies and impact on SDG4

Most effective policy to attain SDG4

Concerning the pre-knowledge respondents have regarding the implementation of MDG2 and the outcome of MDGs 2015 Report on education, the study sort to find out the most effective policy to attain SDG4. The data revealed an overwhelming information splitting the respondents into the choice of different policies. However, more than 90% (exactly 90.70%) of respondents, representing 84 indicated that FCUBE is the best education policy, whiles the remaining 9.30% thought that other education policies were better option (Table 2).

Table 2. Most effective policy to attain SDG4

	frequency	Percentage (%)
FCUBE	84	90.70
Sch. feeding	2	9.30

Capitation grant	0	0.00
Decentralization policy	0	0.00
total	86	100

Education policy and structural transformation

This section will help the researcher to know if the best education policy (FCUBE) also brings about structural change. Most respondents (53%) will not readily accept that the FCUBE brings about improvement in the management of primary education but 38 of the respondents (44%) were with the view that the policy brings about increase in the physical structure of primary education (table 3).

Table 3: Education policy and structural benefits

	frequency	Percentage (%)
Improvement in management	0	0
Increase in physical structure	38	44.19
Adjustment in syllabus	0	0
No structural benefits	46	53.49
No response (NR)	2	2.33
total	86	100

Economical and financial benefits of education policies (FCUBE)

For a policy to be classified as best for the survival of a system only makes that policy most beneficial to the system parts. Hence, the study again sort to investigate how economic policies (FCUBE) provide economic and financial benefits to primary education in the country. The results are displayed in figure 2 below.

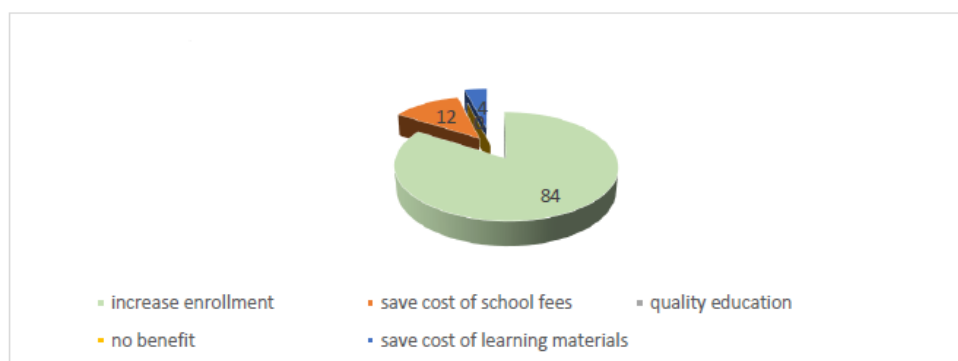


Figure 2. Economic and financial benefit of education policies (FCUBE)

Social and cultural benefits of Education policy (FCUBE)

On the social and cultural benefits of education policy, respondents were generally divided among the three main benefits as displayed in figure 3.

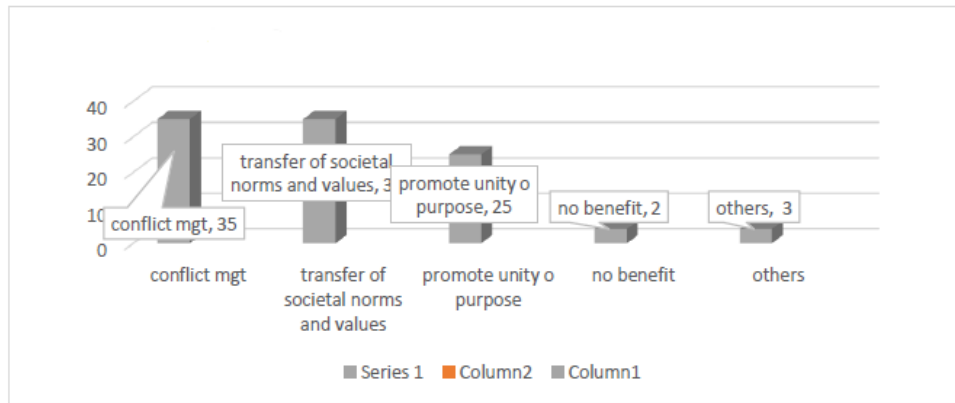


Figure 3. Social and cultural benefits of education policies

Challenges of education policies

The literature indicates that the most dominant and pressing challenge of implementing education policies in Africa is largely due to political interference (Scanlon and Moumouni 2012). According to (Summers, 2000), political influence has no single explanation and manifest into poor economic policies, corruption, civil wars, poor governance among other factors. However, the study revealed that more than 70% of respondents (exactly 72%) disagree that with political interference as the most challenge of implementing education policies in Ghana. Most respondents (72%) rather claimed that inadequate financial resources is the major setback in policy implementation in the education system of Ghana (figure 4).

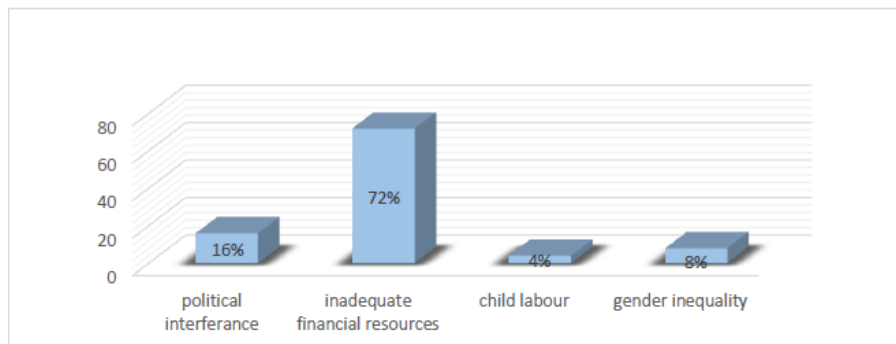


Figure 4. Challenges to implementing education policies in Ghana

Solutions to effective implementation of education policies in Ghana

Over the years, Ghana has adopted a number of system checks and measures to curb the challenges of implementing education policies. A number of them include the establishment of the public account committee to oversee all related government revenue and expenditure. The decentralization of education units both at the MoE and at GES, and currently the establishment of the special prosecution office. However, the challenges of implementing education policies still persist. In response to seeking the best solutions to the effective implementation of education policies, respondents were asked for their opinion on the best possible way to minimize the challenges of implementing education policies (FCUBE) in Ghana. Moreover, 70% of respondents believes that the best way to solve inadequate financial resource problem is through the economic empowerment and job opportunities for the citizenry (figure 5). This is agreement with the MDG1 of eradicating poverty through job creation, implemented in line with MDG2: Attain universal primary education for all. In other words, developed countries with better economies and jobs opportunities for its citizens are more likely to provide quality education to the citizens than under developed countries with huge poverty gap. This also means that when the labour-force is gainfully employed, government can raise enough revenue to undertake more policies. The people can also afford to support with the purchase of learning materials, food among others for their children who are in school.

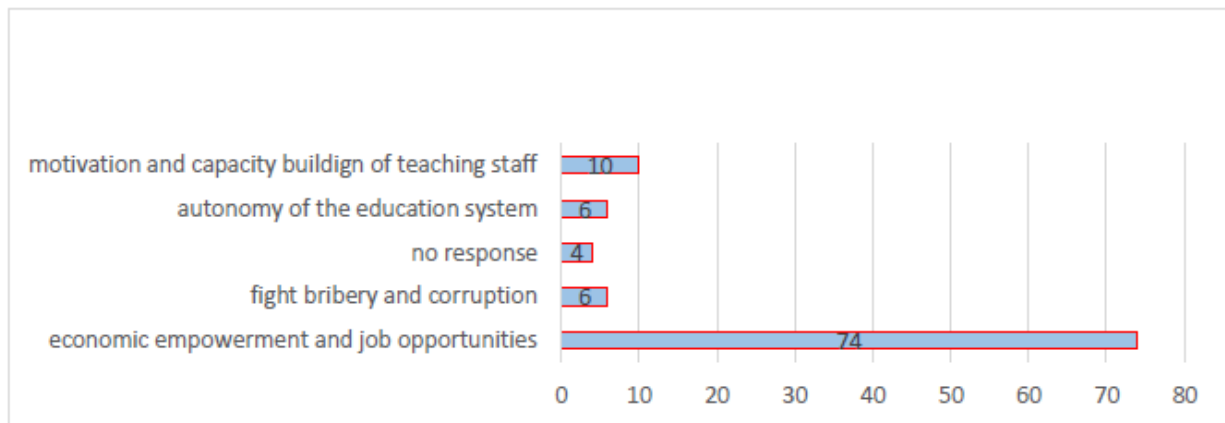


Figure 5. Solutions to effective implementation of education policies in Ghana

Conclusion

From the field data gathered and the perspective of the respondent's, it is clear that although about 10% (exactly 9.30%) of respondents did not agree that FCUBE is the best education policy with the most impact, a whopping 90.70% were certain that FCUBE policy produces the most outcome. Similarly, the most effective way to minimize the impact of the challenges of education policies (FCUBE) on primary education is to provide financial relief through economic empowerment and job opportunities for the citizenry (figure 4.6).

Nevertheless, FCUBE could increase quantity demand for education but for quality improvement, policy implantation should also focus on motivating and building the capacity of teachers (Figure 5).

Future research

Research findings on education policy are not limited. Since the numbers of students keep on increasing year on year, the enrollment of new students will become a problem. There is therefore the need to adapt complementary policies that ensures the growth and increase in physical structure of schools such as libraries, school buildings among others. Furthermore, limitation over choice of sample representation of variables needs to be overcome. This will also assist in determining if there are significant statistical differences in policy impacts from different schools between different districts, across the ten regions of Ghana. A key question to ask might be; is the impact of education policy in greater Accra is the same as in other regions of Ghana with similar background?

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