Importance of Theories to the Processes of Educational Policymaking and Planning: A Case Study on the Recent Educational Developments in Ghana

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Abstract

Although theories and processes of educational policymaking and planning are relevant in educational development, an assessment of them in Ghana revealed that they are boycotted; hence, the inability of educational developments to achieve their objectives. This article reports on a study that analysed the theories, and processes of educational policymaking and planning on the recent educational development in Ghana. From the findings, the article argues that the recognition of theories and approaches to policymaking and planning can help to bring sanity to the situation and overhaul Ghana's educational system. This can be achieved by allowing educational stakeholders to do due diligence on their work in order to achieve their educational objectives.

Keywords: Ghana education; theories; educational policymaking; educational planning; educational reform

Introduction

According to the United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), education is one of the fundamental human rights. It ensures technological development; imparts values and skills in an individual; creates awareness; and is the basis for directing the status of a nation. Therefore, it is not surprising that the United Nations (UN 2015a) Sustainable Development Agenda has education as the key to attaining all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN 2015b). Governments across the globe have resorted to educational developments and the progress achieved has been remarkable, including Ghana. They persistently compare international educational opportunities to enrich their educational policies; provide facilities that will enhance the efficacy of their institutions; meet the rising demand for technology; and enhance the holistic development of their citizens (OECD 2020).

Although educational development has increased in recent years, research on the topic has not incorporated theories, particularly with respect to educational policymaking and planning. A search in the education databases, such as ProQuest, Eric, Google Scholar, Web of Science, and so on, did not present any literature on how theories have guided educational policymaking and planning. Theories have a crucial role in educational development and educational institutions can transform their educational system when there is a bridge between the educational theory gap and educational practices. Theories help to predict phenomena and help educational policymakers to formulate effective frameworks to assess and evaluate major factors confronting the educational system (Edwards 2017). Therefore, educational theories can improve teaching outcomes; enhance classroom practices; and encourage management decisions that will yield an effective and coherent educational system.

The survival and sustainability of an educational institution depend on solid and coherent educational policies which will help it to attain its educational development goals and ensure lifelong learning (UNESCO 2021. Nations across the globe have resorted to the making of effective educational policies to sustain their educational reforms. The Ghana government has demonstrated its commitment to this reform through the numerous educational policies in the current educational system (Donkoh, Lee and Donkor 2020).

The radical changes and persistent increase in the complexity of the educational system have necessitated educational planning. Educational planning became the major priority of many nations when the international community predicted during the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar that countries would be thwarted if they did not have a comprehensive plan and resources to attain the Education for All Agenda (UNESCO 2016).

According to Etor (2018), educational planning is the advanced preparation of programmes, policies, strategies and procedures required to attain educational objectives. Educational planning provides strategies and policies for a country's

educational initiatives, and also helps in the integration of educational stakeholders to identify priority interventions, mobilise educational resources, and orient educational development.

Since gaining independence in 1957, Ghana has made a significant effort to develop its educational system. What is currently being witnessed is the result of some educational policy initiatives implemented by the past and present governments. Although educational development abounds in Ghana and has gained it the accolade of being the "rising star" in West Africa (MoE 2018), currently the educational developments are suffering a lot of setbacks and are on the verge of collapsing based on the country's aspirations and goals (Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh and Addo 2016). Various learning assessments over the past few years have indicated issues of poor learning outcomes. The Ministry of Education (MoE 2018, 55) reported on the education sector analysis that only "2% of the basic 2 pupils could read fluently at an appropriate grade level". There is also the issue of disparity in the educational system regarding location, resource distribution, and access to education. The educational reforms were initiated as a strategy for finding lasting solutions to the challenges of education in Ghana, but to date, their efficacy is yet to be seen. The theoretical literature has shown that the failure of the educational system is based on the policy agenda and planning (Nudzor 2014). Simultaneously, approaches to policymaking have an impact on the achievement of educational policy objectives. In addition, the extent to which quality planning is made to cater for challenges depends on the availability of planning professionals (Begue-Aguado 2021).

Given the most referenced policymaking for educational development, it is remarkable that no literature has dealt with how theories have guided educational policy and planning in educational development in Ghana. Thus, the paucity of literature will help the current study to stand out from the existing literature due to its new sources. The study hinges on the fact that educational developments in Ghana needed to follow the rule of theory and the approaches to policymaking and planning, hence, the numerous educational policy setbacks. The motive of the study, therefore, was to assess the extent to which the massive educational developments in Ghana conform to existing theories and approaches to educational policymaking and planning. As a result, the article presents additional information to augment the existing literature because previous studies (Alhassan 2020; Gunu 2019; Mohammed 2020) on educational policymaking in Ghana have omitted the roles which theories play in educational policymaking and planning. The study was guided by three research objectives, namely:

1. To assess how educational theories have influenced the recent educational developments in Ghana.
2. To investigate if the educational policymaking in Ghana followed the processes of policymaking namely, formulation, implementation and evaluation procedure.
3. To investigate whether educational planning in Ghana followed the approaches to educational planning.

The article is structured as follows. The first section sets the context by describing in detail the importance of theories, the processes of policymaking, and the approaches to planning. This is followed by a vivid description of how educational policymaking and planning are conducted in Ghana. Thereafter, the practical, theoretical limitations, and challenges of the recent educational developments in Ghana will be presented. Then, proposals for ensuring theory in educational policymaking, processes to policymaking, and approaches to educational planning are highlighted before the recommendations and conclusion are presented.

Research Methodology

The content analysis approach was the design for the study which was used to analyse Ghana's educational policies namely, the National Action Plan Education for All: Ghana 2003–2005 and the Education Sector Medium-Term Development Plan 2018–2021. This approach aimed to inductively assess how educational planning has been documented and the goals for educational planning. The analysis included interest groups such as policy think tanks, political parties, websites, press releases, and academics that contribute to educational policy debates in Ghana. The study relied on relevant documentation from 2003 to 2021 to provide critical perspectives on educational policymaking and planning (Nudzor 2014).

The Theory of Policymaking

The evidence from the literate and the preponderance of empirical studies on public administration advocate that a theory is a group of interrelated ideas that are scientifically tested and used to predict, describe and explain how society and its components are related (Biswas, Hasan and Bala 2018). In other words, a theory is a group of interrelated constructs (ideas), propositions, and definitions that offer an orderly view of phenomena by presenting relations among variables to explain and predict the phenomena (Kivunja 2018). Remarkable empirical research from other scholars on theories (e.g. Jacard and Jacob 2010; Kerlinger and Lee 2000) exemplifies the importance and values of, and arguments for, theories. For example, the need emerged for theories to direct policymaking in order to yield effective and efficient results that meet the needs of the citizens (Mohammed 2020). With regard to education, a study on the impact of theory on educational development is crucial so that educational practices follow the right principles and are not misled by political and ideological concerns. Due to the relationship between theory and educational development, no single theory can warrant success. Therefore, the study adopted Woodrow Wilson's (1887) politics-administration dichotomy theory and John Stacey Adams' (1963) equity theory.

The Politics-administration Dichotomy Theory

The politics-administration dichotomy theory propounded by Wilson (1887) states that politics and administration are inherently different and one should not interfere in the

other. Policymakers are administrators who are an instrument for the formulation of policies for the public interest. They need to offer neutral competence in the policy formulation process. According to Wilson, proper administration is behind the boundaries of politics, so excessive political interference in administrative affairs hinders the attainment of objectives. Therefore, Wilson reminds policymakers of their duties as administrators who need to ensure proper balancing of their duties and not suffer manipulations and compromises from politicians (Demir and Nyhan 2008).

The Equity Theory

Adams' (1963) equity theory has gained root in several countries. For instance, in 2006, the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee decided on several pertinent issues about enhancing a socialist harmonious society. The decision was set as a fundamental requirement of Chinese education to continue its development and to ensure educational equity. This decision was the first time the Chinese central government documented equity in its educational system. From then on, the idea of educational equity has extended its roots in other government documents and the importance of educational equity has been demonstrated in the Chinese educational reforms (Zhang 2016). Rhea (2014) opines that the idea of educational equity and educational equality conform with Aristotle's philosophy of equality belief (fairness for all) and same for all principle (diverse but appropriate). According to the OECD (2021), the fair distribution of educational resources will help to highlight the innate abilities of individuals, and avoid the possibility of losing outstanding artists, teachers, scientists, writers, and others. However, in the UNESCO Global Report, Ligami (2020) opines that countries' response to equity remains a challenge. This point has also been emphasised by Musau (2018) that although the majority of African children are currently attending school, more than ever before, there exist inequalities as a critical factor. A new report presented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicates inequality trends in Sub-Saharan Africa: unfair distribution of important facilities like schools. The World Bank (2004) states that equity in basic education comprises equality among people from different places, gender groups, linguistic backgrounds, and socioeconomic levels. Research in Asia and Africa has demonstrated that schools situated distant locations are major barriers to equitable basic education (Humphreys and Crawfurd 2014; Muralidharan and Prakas 2017).

In Ghana, research conducted by Madin and Peprah (2014) found that access to basic education in Ghana persistently leaves a lot to be desired as children in ostracised communities are challenged with the physical access gap. Acheampong et al. (2012) buttress this point that Ghana's basic education has deceived the marginalised and poor with regard to access. For example, the Northern part of Ghana has a poverty level which is persistently more than half of its population (63.4% in 1992 and 50.4% in 2013) and is greater than those in Southern Ghana (41.2% in 1992 and 14.8% in 2013) (Cooke, Hague and McKay 2016; Ghana Statistical Service 2014; World Bank 2011). Likewise, the Ghana Statistical Service (2012) provides evidence to prove that 59.2% of children who are 12 years and above in the Northern part of Ghana have never set foot in a school

and females form the majority with 62.5%. Further, the school drop-out rate for children between the ages of 6 to 11 years is about 49.6% of their total enrolment in the rural community.

Processes of Educational Policymaking

The researchers believe that processes of educational policymaking have evolved in an attempt to solve contemporary policy challenges and make good policy decisions. Policy philosophers posit that public policy is best formulated when it goes through processes, and that policy decisions cannot be taken at one level because of their changing nature (Mohammed 2020). The policy cycle approach is most influential in the policymaking process and has been widely used in several frameworks and conceptually used by policymakers and policy implementers (OECD 2017). The approaches to policymaking commence with agenda-setting, policy formulation and decision-making, legitimisation, implementation, evaluation, and policy maintenance, succession, or termination (see Figure 1). This policy cycle was adopted for the study because it is the pioneering model that is used globally. It helps to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the processes of planning; gives attention to the increasing and high demand for proper educational developments, quality education, and proper use of resources; and helps policy administrators to value implementation strategies (Addo 2019).
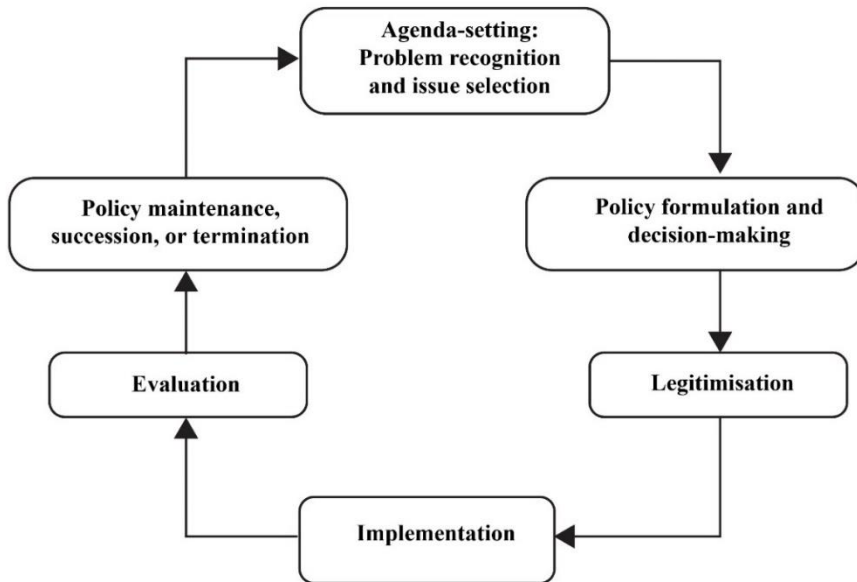
Figure 1: The Policy Cycle Theory
Source: OECD (2017)

Figure 1 indicates that for any policy to be successful, there needs to be agenda-setting where the problem to be addressed is identified by various stakeholders. The nature of the problem influences the solution required to solve the problem. At the policy formulation and decision-making stage, proposed actions are articulated, drafted, and debated for policy. The legitimisation stage provides legitimacy to the policy. The implementation stage requires the rollout of the policy by the government through public officials and the distribution of resources. The evaluation stage requires government and other stakeholders to monitor the policy for a progress report and desired results. The policy maintenance stage requires effort for the sustainability of the policy.

Ghana's Educational Policy Making: The Narrative

It is imperative to understand the idea behind educational policies that arose as a means to enhance quality education in Ghana. This cannot be done without taking into consideration the political environment existing in the policy. The policy cycle theory above does not describe the policymaking in Ghana. Ghana's process of policymaking from the colonial era and after independence appears to exemplify challenges and opportunities of following the policy cycle theory with regards to developments. The political culture in Ghana during the colonial era perceived the government's power as

brutal, imposed, unaccountable, and absolute (Mohammed 2020). Policy choices were ordered to provide imperial interest, so, there was no identification of society's problem and agenda-setting. Similarly, policy formulation was also not available because the indigenes voices were not heard. Ghana's first president, Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah (1909–1972), was the pioneer of Ghana's development, but his governance led to an autocratic one-party state in 1964. He mimicked policy decisions and decreed laws without the involvement of the people, or the parliament. After he was overthrown, his successors formulated and implemented policies with the hand full of bureaucrats, politicians, and technical assistance obtained from bilateral and military donors who denied the general public of issues that transpired in their meetings (Ohemeng 2005). Till present, policymaking in Ghana suffers bargaining, acceptance of several different interests, negotiations, and political backing. Currently, policymaking in Ghana is ad-hoc, thus, based on the flagbearer's campaign manifesto (Addo 2019). When the flagbearer wins an election, policies are implemented based on the campaign messages used to solicit votes. For instance, the 2016 New Patriotic Party's (NPP) manifesto stated that Senior Secondary School shall be made free on a universal basis for all Ghanaians (Danquah 2016, 31). This brought about the free Senior Secondary School in Ghana in 2017 when the NPP government won the 2016 election.

Approaches to Educational Planning

UNESCO (2015) posits that educational planning is a national policy document under the custody of the government and offers a long-term vision for a countries educational system, with an outlined possible strategy to achieve the goals and challenges. Educational planning is based on a comprehensive evaluation of the present situation and factors that militated the attainment of previous educational objectives. Educational planning requires frequent consultation with educational stakeholders (ministries, civil society, and teacher's union) and local members responsible for the implementation of the plan to define and provide dimensions of targets, strategies, activities, and policies. For example, the targets will require regular revisions after they are examined against the resources available. Different strategies need to be discovered when new programmes emerge. Implementation challenges will require in-depth thinking of activities and targets. In addition, there should be a consideration for politicians agreeing on the plan, availability of financial resources, the effectiveness of educational administrators, and anticipation of challenges that are likely to be encountered. The plan should involve implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (UNESCO 2015).

Ghana's Educational Planning

In Ghana, the education strategic plan is the roadmap that leads its educational system to the attainment of international educational objectives (MoE 2019). The plan was formed using the Decentralization Act, the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), the Education for All Goals, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (UN 2000), the 2002 Education Reform Report, the 2008 Education Act (Act 778), government commitments and recent reviews, reports, and studies on the education

sector (MoE 2019). All these documents are involved to lead Ghana to the attainment of the SDGs (UN 2015) and how to operationalise in order to achieve the medium-term development plans of raising the standards of all educational levels and not leaving any child behind. Other contributing factors to the development of the plan included new updates from international frameworks and modules; changes in economic and political contexts; and the need to follow UNESCO's (2021) educational planning guideline. The Ministry of Education (MoE 2019) formulated a lens for prioritisation on which the proposed interventions and policies would be assessed to certify the attainment of the set goals. This lens raises questions on accountability, equity and learning outcome. Another theme embedded in this plan focuses on how the educational system can be efficient and the agitation to develop reform policies to aid high-quality academic success. It also gives descriptions of the tasks needed to be performed by actors who will be expected to give an account of their achievement. Finally, the plan gives reference to previous drawbacks and suggests some measures to be adopted, such as remedial strategies, progressive reports, and anticipating some obstacles that can mar the attainment of objectives.

Educational Developments in Ghana

Nudzor (2017) indicates that active educational reform in Ghana from 1987 till 2000 included Ghana's involvement in an international and multilateral deal with the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All; the 1995 Beijing Declaration on Women's Rights; the 2000 Lomé Convention; and the 2000 World Education Forum. This agreement and commitment necessitated the formulation of numerous educational reforms of which the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy is part. The FCUBE policy was introduced in 1995 and promised universal education by 2005. The objectives of the reforms are to improve the learning and development of the future workforce. There have been several policies and laws developed over a decade that support the FCUBE.

Review of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Policy

The FCUBE policy was formulated to provide Ghanaian children with quality education provided with available resources that would enhance effective and efficient training for the social and economic needs of the nation (Ekundayo 2018). This was to fulfil the mandate of the *Fourth Republican Constitution of Ghana* (GoG 1992) (hereafter the 1992 Constitution) that postulates: "The Government shall draw up the programme for implementation within the following ten years for the provision of Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education". The FCUBE policy was also in line with the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, which states that all and sundry should have equal opportunity to education. The FCUBE policy had a legal backing of which parents who refused to send their children to school would be threatened with a fine. The policy was also supported by the Quality Improvement in Primary School (QUIPS) programme which started in 1997. It was sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and helped in the

training of effective and efficient teachers, school managers, planners, and produced a conducive environment for learning. In addition, in 2004, capitation grant scheme was introduced to eradicate the payment of school fees. Furthermore, in 2005, the school feeding programme was launched to provide free lunch to all school children. All these supporting programmes have yielded an enrolment drive. At present, 80% of children attend 9 years free compulsory basic education in Ghana, and as a result illiteracy rate has been low compared with other Sub-Saharan African countries (Ekundayo 2018).

The Capitation Grant

The Ghana government posited that most children were not able to attain basic education because of the financial constraints on parents in respect to school fees. The Ghana government, with the help of the World Bank, provided a capitation grant in 2004 as an initiative to support the FCUBE policy. It allocated financial resources to schools based on the enrolment rate (Osei-Owusu, Ampofo and Ampomah 2020). It helped to remove the financial constraints parents faced in enrolling their children in school and also compensated institutions for any financial loss incurred by the FCUBE policy (Ekundayo 2018). After the inception of the capitation grant, the years 2005/06 had a drastic improvement in school enrolment at about 10% that brought nationwide primary enrolment to 92.4% with the net enrolment shooting up from 62% to 69%. This enrolment drive was experienced in all the regions of Ghana. Currently, the government of Ghana has allocated 40% of the national budget for the capitation grant, and out of this 65% is allocated to basic education. The public schools use the grant in the management of schools, such as purchasing teaching and learning materials, sports equipment, cultural materials, and transportation for official tasks, and so on (Ekundayo 2018).

The School Feeding Programme

In 2005, the school feeding programme was launched following the African Union-New Partnership for Africa's Development (AU-NEPAD). The school feeding programme was initiated to achieve the eight MDGs (UN 2000) with the belief that a hungry child cannot assimilate what is taught so needs to be fed before learning can take place; to help improve school attendance rate; to improve the health of children; to relieve parents the burden of feeding their children; and to increase local food production by patronising local farm produce (Kwofie 2021). However, the ultimate concern about this programme was to achieve the attainment of MDG 2, that is, universal primary education, promoting women empowerment, and gender equity. Currently, this programme has improved school enrolment especially in low-income districts, gender equity, reduced school drop-out rate, hunger reduction, and helped achieved completion of basic school.

The Free Senior High School Policy

The free Senior High School (SHS) policy was initiated in 2017 by the incumbent president Nana Akufo-Addo (1994) in fulfilment of his promise made in the manifesto

(Owusu 2021). The aim is to improve equity, access, and equality to satisfy the SDGs (UN 2015). According to Abugre (2021), there was an intake of 353 053 students in 2017, but the number shot up to 794 899 in the 2018/19 academic year. This implies that SHS enrolment has increased in fulfilment of the provisions of Article 25(1)(b) of the 1992 Constitution which posits 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.

The Common Core Programme

This is a new syllabus prepared by the National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NaCCA) in 2019 for Junior High Schools (JHSs) and SHSs to motivate teachers to teach and learners to receive a quality education. The curriculum was designed to rectify the current anomalies in the Ghanaian educational system regarding learning and assessment and also to provide high school learners with the learning skills they require as youths of the country for job acquisition. The common core programme was developed to help eliminate the unemployment rate among the Ghanaian youth who are secondary or tertiary graduates (Ghana Bulletin 2020). The programme entails nine subjects (Mathematics, English, Science, Religious and Moral Education, Physical and Health Education, Career Technology, Social Studies, Computing, Creative Arts and Design) which will collectively help develop the critical thinking and problem-solving skills of learners which will enable them to be innovative in solving the ever-increasing problems in our daily lives. As part of this programme is a placement examination for JHS candidates who will be continuing education at SHS level. Before the SHS students reach SHS 2 they are made to undertake a common core examination to direct them in choosing courses that are related to High School Diploma Programme or Career-related programme. From SHS 2–3 the students decide to pursue either career-related programme or academic one or both (Fesu 2021).

Woes of Policy-Making on the Educational Developments in Ghana

The Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Policy

Nkrumah (2018) from the rationalist perspective of the policy process, a well-formulated policy with financial assistance and proper implementation mechanisms would yield good performance. From this ideology, obtaining free compulsory basic education dwells on a logical integration between the policy formulation, implementation strategies, and availability of funds by the government to sustain universal access.

The FCUBE policy has been perceived by successive governments as a remedy to the high illiteracy rate and providing equal educational opportunity for all (GoG 1992). It has been in existence for more than 20 years yet its efficacy continues to elude Ghanaians and remains a mirage (Nudzor 2014). The conflicting link between its motive

and effect underscores numerous international bodies that strategies to salvage its setbacks do not conform to the existing problems. Yet, all this time, free education for school children has been access driven. The tensions surrounding the FCUBE policy mirror how policy processes have been breached by the government and politicians to present their own agenda.

Unfortunately, recent studies have stressed the bottlenecks surrounding the FCUBE policy because Ghana's politicians have side-lined the policymaking processes and resorted to satisfying their selfish interests to the detriment of quality education. Many international organisations have also testified that the FCUBE policy has missed its target and failed in achieving free basic education (Gaddah, Munro and Quartey 2015). A study conducted by Nudzor (2013) on the politics implementation paradox about the FCUBE policy found out that it did not follow the policy implementation process. In addition to his findings, the political elite did not consider the cost that would come with the FCUBE policy. These are signals that point to political interference being the biggest problem in providing quality educational policy in Ghana.

Although the FCUBE policy was an agenda of the 1992 Constitution, research has found that there are several communities in Ghana that still do not have access to education. There are instances where pupils have to walk several miles and some even have to cross water bodies to reach school. This situation becomes worse during adverse weather conditions (Kweitsu 2014). Some schools are held under trees while others are in dilapidated structures which become death traps and scare parents from sending their children to school. Also, because the policies implemented aim at enrolment rate, most schools in the countryside have overpopulated classes that classrooms cannot accommodate. The limited infrastructure causes some schools to currently operate shift systems.

Furthermore, there has been a record number of strikes by the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), and the National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) in the educational sector in recent times to agitate for better remuneration and conditions of service. The repercussion is disruption of the academic calendar which puts learners in despair. More so, circuit supervisors who are assigned duties by the districts to supervise schools need to walk long distances to perform their supervisory roles. When the circuit supervisors are unable to visit schools, some teachers use instructional hours for rent-seeking activities (Brenyah 2018). Again, government delays in the supply of logistics affect lesson delivery and the result is the poor performances of pupils in schools. Teachers have been warned not to demand money, yet, the government's inability to provide funds and sometimes delays in the release of capitation grants have caused public schools to charge Parents Teacher Association (PTA) levies to obtain funds to cater for school expenses. This was not the initial plan of the FCUBE policy but the policy initiative did not succeed.

Free Senior High School in Ghana

The NPP party, upon winning the 2016 election in Ghana, was compelled to implement the free SHS policy as a promise they made in their manifesto (Agyemang and Andoh 2017). The Free SHS policy was implemented without following the policy formation process. This has exposed the weaknesses and ill preparation of its implementation. Ideally, a pilot study needed to have been done to examine the viability and how sustainable the policy will be before implementation. The Ghana National Development Planning Commission commented that active evaluation of public policies and projects is lacking making it difficult to evaluate policies. Policies that have been evaluated are those that are donor funders with strict evaluation conditions attached to them (Mingle, Adams and Adjei 2016). Several debates have ensued on the free SHS policy in Ghana – while some people think the policy is a great asset for Ghana, others think is a hindrance to attaining quality education (Mawunyo 2019).

Although the policy has brought some relief to vulnerable parents the challenges surrounding its implementation outweigh the benefits that come with it. The implementation has resulted in several setbacks such as limited infrastructure and limited resources for its sustenance causing several people to contemplate if the free SHS is quality. Another major challenge is the lack of finances that hinder the policy and the government has currently solicited financial assistance from individual citizens to revive the free SHS policy (Kudzordzi 2017). These challenges signal the procedure used in implementing the policy. The free SHS without preparation does not have enough classrooms to accommodate the students hence the double track system where some sessions of students need to attend school while the remaining students stay home, overcrowding in the classroom, and high teacher burnout which hinder quality teaching. The government promised free uniforms and textbooks but currently, parents are the providers of these materials which has made most of them not see the free education policy as was stated (Owusu 2021).

The Common Core Programme

As knowledge keeps increasing and technology has become a footloose industry, the Akufo-Addo-led government of Ghana has a newly developed a new curriculum which is part of a comprehensive school reform agenda for the development of the citizens to direct the wheels of industries, technology and innovation; and lead businesses to enhance improvement in the workforce (Armah 2021). However, the newly developed curriculum neglects the participation of the teachers who are supposed to be the implementers of it. But policymaking requires that beneficiaries of the policies are to be involved in the policy planning process to ensure their commitment. In addition, the curriculum did not have any pilot study. There have not been books or teaching and learning materials prepared from the curriculum before implementation. This has caused several teachers to express their ill-feeling about the implementation of the curriculum (Amofa 2019).

The Equity Theory and Educational Development

The issue of equity in education has been the most controversial and widely discussed topic among policymakers, administrators, teachers, and educational researchers. These educational stakeholders have devoted thousands of pages to reviewing and analysing the effect of equity on educational outcomes. Equity in education implies that the same educational opportunities must be available to equally talented individuals with the same willingness to make an effort to acquire the necessary skills and qualifications. With the equity theory in education, all resources are to be distributed fairly to benefit all and sundry. Although universality motivated the implementation of the basic education policy in Ghana, the result is not showing universal access-for-all. This has raised a series of questions regarding the tensions existing between access and universality in the FCUBE policy. Although free basic education abounds in Ghana, some people have still not benefited from it. UNESCO (2019) has indicated that between 2014 and 2016 Ghana's number of out-of-school children was on the rise. The 2021 statistics on the number of out-of-school children indicated a high rate of 35 432 to 265 188 from 2019 to 2020 (Sasu 2021) (see Figure 2).
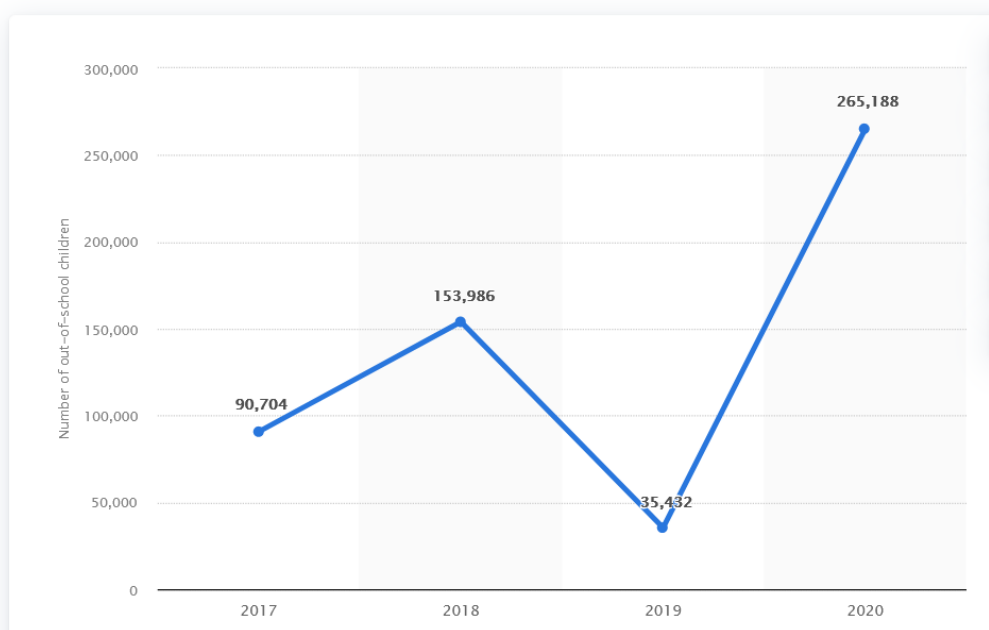

Figure 2: Number of out-of-school children in Ghana
Source: Sasu (2021)

Unfortunately, the situation is more severe for children in the rural areas as they do not have the required human resources; they lack library facilities; their general facilities are deplorable; they have to walk several miles o school; they lack books, furniture and

computers; and some schools are still held in mud houses which are also not maintained and pose a threat to the inhabitants (see Figure 3) (Owusu 2021).

Figure 3: School built from mud
Source: Cleary (2021)

Lartey (2021) reported on Citi News about the inequity associated with trained teacher distribution which is to the detriment of deprived districts. The problem has been identified as not being due to lack of teachers but rather teachers produced from the teacher training colleges are not distributed equitably. There is usually an overpopulated teachers in the urban areas where there is a lack of teachers in the rural and peri-urban areas.

Complementary Education

This project was meant to offer education in five regions and 44 districts in the Northern sector of Ghana because they are geographically at a disadvantage (see Figure 4). It aims at improving the numeracy and literacy skills of the learners to usher them into the basic school system. In 2018 this programme obtained international support from the United Kingdom and the United States of America government who donated £27.9 million to aid the Ghana government to provide 200 000 out-of-school children with education with an emphasis on girls and to help children attain universal basic education (University of Cambridge 2019).

Although the FCUBE policy has been in existence for over a decade, all the initiatives to help attain education for all have still not profited some children in the Northern region of Ghana. The major focus has rather been shifted to children in the capital cities whose parents can afford school fees and other educational resources rather than the rural areas where children do not have financially sound parents.

Figure 4: Complementary basic education in Ghana
Source: University of Cambridge (2019)

The School Feeding Programme

The ultimate goal of the Ghana school feeding programme was to offer children in deprived areas adequate nutrition from local farm produce. It was believed that providing meals in schools will motivate children to attend school and not to sneak out from school in search of food.

Although the population target for the programme was for children from deprived areas, the target failed to reach vulnerable communities. In 2010, the programme was assessed by the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare discovered that only 21% of the programme benefited the neediest communities and 79% went to the wealthier regions in Ghana (Global Delivery Initiative 2020). This mode of sharing does not conform to the equity theory. Under normal circumstances, the people for whom the programme was made should have the greatest share of the programme before consideration can be made for those in wealthier communities.

The Common Core Programme (Curriculum)

Although the new curriculum was made to correct challenges in the previous curriculum and to help the citizen's development to succeed in the future workforce, some of the amendment does not favour children in vulnerable communities. Example is teachers need to use computers for research and teaching Information and Communication Technology (ICT) subjects but the vulnerable schools do not have access to computer equipment, network, and lights to make this possible. So the implementation of ICT in the new curriculum favours school children in the urban areas (Aboagye and Yawson 2020).

Sorting Out the Bad Nuts

The ultimate issue is educational developments in Ghana not complying with theories. The refusal to comply with policymaking rules; the neglect of the beneficiaries to the policies; the policies emerging from the manifesto of the ruling government; and the policy gaining approval at parliament instead of leaving the policymakers to perform their job, are all areas of concern. The policymaking processes seem to be suffering some omissions making it easy for decision making. These negativities surrounding educational policymaking in Ghana have caused difficulty in the monitoring and supervision of educational developments in the country. These processes go contrary to the politics-administration dichotomy theory.

Another shortfall emerging from policy formation in Ghana is the neglect of policy planners' jobs because on record there are individuals who have been designated to do educational planning yet their planning does not materialise or those plans are manipulated. Also, research findings have shown that educational planning should be made as a continuation of previous reforms, making corrections from setbacks, new changes, fulfilling initial promises, and problems at stake. However, this idea is neglected because the incumbent government has its' selfish interest at heart. The processes of policy planning suffer deviation from the educational planning procedures principles.

Though there is no disputing the fact that Ghana's educational system has outperformed other Sub-Saharan African countries, the educational policy approach in Ghana needs the most reliable and rigorous approach because a dynamic world requires changes for transformation. Ghana can emulate the policy approaches of high-performing countries, such as, Singapore, Canada, China, Finland, Australia, and England. These countries, according to the Asian Society, have major drivers for their educational improvement which has gained them the accolade of highly ranked performing institutions across the globe. This achievement is due to their educational policy formation and implementation which follows the official channel with the elimination of compromises and negotiations. A notable example is the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) which is formed by their territorial and provincial ministers who are the custodian of their education and create a forum to discuss educational issues and

initiatives that are of the collective interest of the federal government, territories, provinces, and their national educational organisation. The CMEC serves as the mouthpiece for education in Canada with a supporting hand from the territories and provinces towards the achievement of a common educational objective. This channel of educational decision-making is free from manipulations and eliminates the tendency of some people to work in their selfish interests. In this regard, educational reforms made are monitored and evaluated to discover areas that need an amendment for future development.

Recommendations and Conclusion

From the study, it can be concluded that there are clearly outlined principles to follow to plan for educational development but this process is just on record and not practical to implement. Also, the education policies in Ghana do not follow policy formulation processes which results in the educational reforms in Ghana not achieving their objectives. Rather, the policymaking is based on the incumbent president's manifesto which denies policymakers the opportunity to perform their jobs. This causes the policymaking process to go contrary to the politics-administration dichotomy theory. Under normal circumstances, the educational philosophers and policymakers are those with the mandate to formulate policies and who can determine which measures need to be put in place to attain the policy objectives. Also, the attainment of public policy objectives requires the use of policymaking procedures, such as policy formation, implementation, and evaluation to ensure a follow-up on the policy to correct anomalies for improvement. However, because all these are lacking in Ghana's educational policymaking, all the educational reforms are unable to yield the expected outcome. The government needs to use the appropriate procedures in formulating policies to eliminate bottlenecks to the policy objectives.

In addition, educational distribution in Ghana does not follow the equity theory. Ideally, children in vulnerable communities in the rural areas need to be considered first in the provision of educational resources than those urban areas. This is because the parents of children in the rural areas cannot afford to provide educational resources to their children. The government, therefore, needs to concentrate on schools in vulnerable communities to ensure equity in the distribution of educational resources and opportunities. The national educational policymakers have the obligation to recognise the crucial role that talented teachers play vital role in ensuring instructional excellence in students than any other factor. Children from low-income families need not be denied being taught by quality teachers. Therefore, there should be incentives and compensations available for teachers who accept postings to rural and deprived areas as a motivation to ensure the equal distribution of high-quality teachers without discrimination. Also, all the educational stakeholders in Ghana can ensure the equitable distribution of teachers during placements, recruitment, hiring, and working conditions for teachers. In addition, the number of years required to obtain promotion for teachers can be reduced for those who accept teaching in rural and deprived areas. More so, study

leave with pay can be made available for teachers who accept postings to rural and deprived areas. Furthermore, teacher training colleges can be situated at rural areas and natives of that community admitted to motivate them to accept posting in their own communities when they complete their teacher training education. The researchers recommend that educational development should conform to theories and approaches to educational policymaking and planning to help meet the needs of learners; attain educational quality; and help in the accomplishment of educational development objectives.

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