# POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY DECISIONS IN AFRICA: A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON POLICIES IN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT IN GHANA.

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**ABSTRACT:** *Since colonial times, governments in Ghana have inherited political power with different development plans, owned by the government and amended by the incoming one when its predecessor leaves power. Article 35(7) of the Directive Principle of State Policy in Ghana states that "[A]s far as practicable, a government shall continue and execute projects and programmes commenced by the previous Governments." This provision is supported by both the National Development Planning Commission Act and the National Development Planning Act to strengthen the role of the National Development Planning Commission which oversees the broader implementation of development strategies in the country. The analysis in this paper is influenced by interviews conducted with officials of the Ministry of Education in Ghana, the Ghana Education Service, selected heads and teachers of sampled secondary schools, as well as parents. A total of twenty (20) respondents were purposively sampled and interviewed. The analysis of the primary data was supported by other secondary sources including peer-reviewed journal articles, books and reports of educational development in Ghana. The results indicate the utter disregard for the provisions in both educational and employment policies and strategies in the country and its associated consequence on the purse of the public and general development of the state. The paper concludes that the apparent lack of consistency, over-politicization and the piecemeal attitude with which Ghanaian political leaders implement important national development policies may be mitigated by the adoption of development strategies that are national in character rather than government-specific and these strategies should be binding on all successive governments and geared towards an accelerated growth at all levels in the country.*

**KEYWORDS**: Political Leadership, Public Policy, Educational Policy, Employment Policy, Governance in Africa

## INTRODUCTION

One of the major challenges in formulating consistent policies in Africa in general is the absence of a national development strategy. Reviewing the political decisions in both the employment and educational sectors in Ghana over the past decade suggests a piecemeal and politicized attitude towards important national issues. Since the institution of the twenty-five year development plan under Governor Gordon Guggisberg in the then Gold Coast which saw massive infrastructural development in the colony, the next most ambitious development plan came from the country's first post-independence President. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's seven year accelerated development plan led to the achievement of steady economic growth and infrastructural development that improved standards of living in the country. Critiqued for relying largely on economic growth, the seven year development plan created the enabling environment for a powerful social policy orientation that later saw enhancement in social development. Beside these two comprehensive, albeit ambitious, long term development plans,

Ghana has grappled with *ad hoc* and piecemeal development policies that affects its long term development capabilities. Even though the incessant regime changes did not help matters, as leadership position turn to a game of musical chairs between military and civilian governments, the need for a long term development strategy has still eluded the country. Development policy under the Busia government was reductively spearheaded by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Rural Development and gained momentum under the government of Ignatius Kutu Acheampong, thanks largely to his populist domestication policies that manifest itself under Operation Feed Yourself (intended to ensure sufficiency in food production), the policy of commanding majority shares in foreign mining companies and his infamous "*yentua*" or debt repudiation policy. The Limann administration that followed lacked a unified comprehensive national development policy except its desire and commitment to providing incentives to agricultural farmers and agribusiness, reviving the mining sector and advocating local content in industrial production.

The PNDC government that followed adopted several conflicting development policies largely influenced by the World Bank and the IMF including the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) that incorporated Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Whiles SAP resulted in macroeconomic stability and improved trade, thanks largely to the strict external oversight of public expenditure, it created unbearable economic hardship in the country (Boafo-Arthur, 1999) leading to the introduction of the Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Cost of Adjustment (PAMSCAD). The National Democratic Congress (NDC) government which emanates from the PNDC launched the Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies (otherwise known as Vision 2020) to provide a framework for Ghana's development in the next 25 years and even the First Medium Term Development Plan introduced in 1997 was based on the policies contained in Vision 2020. The Vision 2020 prioritized human development, economic growth, rural and infrastructural development. The New Patriotic Party (NPP) government that followed, upon the assumption of the reins of government, sought debt relief through the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and then went ahead to introduce the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I) with a special focus on gainful employment, human resource and basic service development, and special programmes targeted mainly at the poor and vulnerable. As a sequel to GPRS I, GPRS II was introduced which cumulatively led to macro-economic stability and poverty reduction. The NDC government under Mills also introduced the Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies by launching the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA), as a medium-term national development policy framework, and also a successor to the GPRS II introduced under the NPP's administration. The GSGDA was aimed at enhancing macroeconomic stability, private sector competitiveness, agricultural modernization and prudent resource management, infrastructure, energy and human settlement development, employment and accountable governance.

The seeming dearth of coordinated and consistent national policy is the concern of this paper. Drawing from policies in both education and employment in Ghana, this paper seeks to interrogate the apparent inconsistency, over-politicization and the piecemeal attitude with which leadership in Africa approach important national development issues. In order to achieve this, the following questions were posed: to what extent has political leadership contributed to the quality of secondary education and employment in Ghana from 2004 to 2012? What other factors or elements inform the state of quality secondary education and employment in Ghana? How can political leadership in Ghana be leveraged to restore the apparent sunken image and impact of secondary education and employment in the country? In order to achieve the purpose

of this paper, a review of literature and policy documents related to education and youth employment was done in relation to the Ghanaian context. This was followed with consultation with regional and district level actors in the area of youth empowerment to assess their employment needs and challenges. The last phase of the research was field visits with the objective of mapping out potential employers, available opportunities and the possible strategic entry points for the youth in the employment sector. This was then followed by interviews conducted with a cross section of stakeholders including officials of the Ghana Education Service, the Ministry of Education, heads and teachers of selected tertiary institutions in the country.

## METHODOLOGY

Two sets of data were used in the analysis and discussion in this paper. The first data consisted of interviews conducted with officials of the Ministry of Education in Ghana, the Ghana Education Service, selected heads and teachers of some Senior High Schools, as well as parents. The interviews took place between April 18 to April 30 in the Western and Northern Regions of the country. In the Western Region, the focus was on Sekondi-Takoradi in which three Senior High Schools were selected including the Fijai Senior High School (which is a mixed day and boarding facility); St. John's Boys Senior High School (day and boarding facility), and Archbishop Porter Girls Senior High School (APGSS). In the Northern Region, the main focus was on the Tamale Metropolis in which three Senior High Schools were also selected including the Ghana Senior High School (which is a mixed day and boarding facility); St. Charles Senior High School (Boys only), and Pag'Naa Senior High School (Girls only). A total of 60 respondents were purposively sampled and interviewed in this process using an interview guide based on the initial review of the literature.

## IMPACT OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP ON POLICIES AND DECISIONS IN EDUCATION

The 1987 educational reforms in Ghana which sought to reduce the number of years spent in school also introduced the learning of vocational and technical skills into the new Junior Secondary Schools. However, these reforms had their own setbacks including greater ill-equipped vocational and technical schools. Yet, the 1987 reforms ran till 2007 when the new sets of reforms were implemented by the Kufuor administration on August 2007. The administration came to power in the year 2000 having been in opposition since Ghana's Fourth Republic began in 1992. The leadership of the party just like its predecessors, had planned to review the educational system and this was made known to Ghanaians in the President's inaugural speech on January 2001. The Committee on Review of Education Reforms was subsequently established on 17th January 2002 comprising twenty-nine knowledgeable Ghanaians drawn from a cross-section of stakeholders in the education sector. The Committee was chaired by Prof Jophus Anamuah-Mensah, the then Vice Chancellor of the University of Education, Winneba.

The Terms of Reference for the Committee included examining the educational structure and content in Ghana, looking at the constrained access to the different levels of educational ladder in the country, the professional development, management and financing of education, and the

use of ICT in imparting knowledge among other things (Soali, 2013). In essence, the task was to review the entire educational system in the country with the aim of making it work better and become more responsive to the challenges of the Ghanaian society. The Committee on Review of Education Reforms made interesting findings and recommendations including the establishment of an educational structure that provides different options of access such as the direct enrolment to General Education, Technical and Vocational Schools besides the prevalent grammar senior high schools (SHS). It also recommended a new 4-year SHS that will offer General Education with electives in General, Business, Technical, Vocational and Agriculture options for entry into a tertiary institution or the job market, and placing greater emphasis on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as well as Science and Technology (Soali, 2013).

The increment in the duration of SHS by this committee was aimed at addressing concerns about quality of education at the secondary school level. The inherent advantage in the four year system was to enable teachers to have ample contact hours with students. However, the durational change was not accompanied by revisions of existing curricula as well as infrastructural distribution into the various senior high schools. This led to severe challenges in the infrastructural and instructional materials that could never be delayed nor postponed. The first batch of the four year students began in the 2007/2008 academic year and the new system run for only three years and then came another reform. Whiles the ruling NPP government carried on with its educational reforms, the opposition NDC heavily criticized these reforms and promised Ghanaians of a return to the old system of three-year SHS when they return to power. The new SHS structure of four years therefore had a limited time to run when the NPP lost power in 2008. In 2009, the NDC government, going by their campaign promise set up an Education Review Committee to look into the reforms implemented by the NPP administration. This new Committee recommended the reversal of the duration of SHS from four years to three years arguing that the inadequate infrastructural development at SHS across the country made the implementation of the four year system untenable.

The decision to reform the educational sector and by extension, increased the number of years in SHS from three to a four year school system seemed to have been poorly thought through for a number of reasons. First, the content or the syllabi which shape what students' learn is of critical importance to the quality of teaching and learning in the educational debate. Yet, in spite of the changes and the duration students were to spend in the SHS, no corresponding change in the syllabi of the two systems were ready except for start-up period for core and elective subjects and dropping and adding of certain topics. The first year of the four years school system was to be devoted to the study of core subjects such as English Language, Mathematics, Integrated Science, ICT and Social Studies. These areas were considered by the Committee to be the major subject weaknesses of most students. Students were to choose their elective subjects from the second year onwards. This was a departure from the three year program. Given these differences, the two streams were expected to have different syllabi. However, since the four year SHS syllabi were not ready when the programme began, teachers and students were compelled to use the syllabi for the three year program. On the other hand, when the four year programme was reverted to three years, students were still taught using the individual subject syllabus of the latter because the former was not read.

Besides the syllabi jigsaw, infrastructure is another component necessary for effective teaching and learning aimed at achieving educational quality. There were no corresponding increment in infrastructure given the change of duration of the school system to four years. Though some

efforts were made to provide some facilities, the construction were slowed for financial reasons. Majority of the infrastructural development started to accommodate students for the four years programme were never completed before the programme began, and students' enrolment had increased at the time that infrastructure was limited. This problem had increased the number of non-residential status of students with its attendant problem of indiscipline. The issue of accommodation did not end at the school level as there were reports of inadequate exam spaces to enable all students sat for the same paper at the same time to reduce the possibility of examination questions leaking. These reports were affirmed by the widely read daily newspaper in the country, the Daily Graphic of April, 20th 2013 which reported that students write in turns because of space constraints. The table below highlights some of the educational policies formulated and implemented by the various administrations in the country.

**Table 1: Various educational policies formulated by different administrations in Ghana**

| Administration/Party | President/Leader | Education Policy/Year |
|---|---|---|
| Convention Peoples' Party | Kwame Nkrumah | • Access to Education, 1961 |
| National Liberation Council | J.A. Ankrah/Afrifa | • Reviewed the Educational System, 1967. |
| National Redemption Council/Supreme Military Council. | Ignatius Kutu Acheampong | • Reformed the Educational System, 1974 |
| Provisional National Defence Council | Jerry John Rawlings | • Reformed the Educational System, 1987 |
| New Patriotic Party | John Agyekum Kufour | • Reformed the Educational System, 2002 <br> • 4 yrs SHS <br> • Change of name from SSS to SHS and from JSS to JHS <br> • Capitation Grant <br> • School Feeding Programme <br> • Free Uniforms |
| National Democratic Congress | John Evans Atta-Mills | • Reversed the Educational System in line with the 1987 reforms, 2010 <br> • Reverts SHS to 3yrs <br> • Free school uniforms cont'd <br> • Capitation Grant cont'd <br> • School Feeding program cont'd <br> • Free Laptops |

*Source: adapted from various sources in the literature*

# IMPACT OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP ON POLICIES AND DECISIONS IN EMPLOYMENT

Successive government intervention in Ghana in relation to youth unemployment can be categorized into two. The first is institutional or Ministry-wide interventions. Under this type

of intervention, successive governments' establishes Ministries and empower them to formulate policies aimed at reducing or curbing youth unemployment. For example, the Ministry of Youth and Sports by the Civil Service Law (Act 327) of 1993 exist to formulate, monitor and evaluate youth policies at both the national and international levels aimed at achieving national integration and international recognition which in turn will promote youth empowerment and self-reliance. As its sub-sector mission, the Ministry stands to implement its goals through the National Youth Council (NYC) which is a statutory body established by the Government of Ghana (GoG) in 1974 by NRCD 241 to coordinate and facilitate youth development and activities in the country. Similarly, the Ghana National Service Scheme (NSS) is another Ministerial sector employment policy. The NSS is located under the Ministry of Education. It was established in 1973 by Decree (NRCD 208) with the mandate to mobilize and deploy Ghanaian citizens of 18 years and above who have freshly graduated from universities and other analogues tertiary institutions to improve the life of ordinary citizens for a one year mandatory period. It has since become one of the reliable sources of job training and employment for fresh young graduates in the country. The mandate of the Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment is also in line with this intervention. As part of these grand objective to empower the youth with technical and vocational skills that will make them not only employable but preferably self-employed, The Ministry oversees the operation of four statutory bodies namely, the National Vocational Training Initiative (NVTI), the Management Development and Productivity Institute (MDPI), the Opportunities Industrialization Centre (OIC), and the Integrated Community Centre for Employable Skills.

However, the problem with these Ministry-wide interventions are that the youth in Ghana do not have a permanent Ministry to deal with. This has hindered the successful formulation and implementation of policies aimed at addressing their concerns. It has been shifting from one Ministry to another depending on the whims and caprices of the government in power. Governments in the country have resorted to formulating specific policies across their tenure of office to help sharpen the employable skills of the youth as well as provide them with jobs, if even that means transitional ones. Existing policy interventions include the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) which seeks to address the country's employment deficits from the perspective of decent and productive work for the youth. Whereas the MDGS assumed this perspective, the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy II (GPRS II) places employment at the centre of the policy's poverty reduction efforts through human resource development as one of the key strategies. Both interventions are consistent with the objective of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programme and also in line with the ILO's decent work agenda. Other interventions include the Skills Training and Employment Placement (STEP); the National Youth Fund (NYF); the Presidential Special Initiative (PSI); the Youth in Agriculture Programme (YIAP); the Northern Savannah Development Initiative (NSDI) as well as various microcredit schemes to support small scale enterprises all of which have yielded some relative success in the provision of job opportunities for the youth. The National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) is also another flagship government intervention as far as addressing youth unemployment is concerned. These multi-layered interventions have helped to some extent in reducing the rate of unemployment among the youth, albeit, at the minimal level.

The NYEP is specifically designed to empower young people to contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic and sustainable development of Ghana. With placement in about seven different models, the programme aims to support the transition of the youth from the situation of unemployment to employment. It was launched in October 2006 as a source of additional

employment opportunities for young people in Ghana. It is made up of self-employed opportunities, wage earning jobs and voluntary service activities. The NYEP was designed to create conditions that will facilitate the economic empowerment of the Ghanaian youth. Nine to ten modules were introduced at the start of the programme including Information Communication Technology; Eco-Brigade, Paid Internship, Community Teaching Assistants, Trade and Vocation, Waste and Sanitation,  Agro-Business, Health Extension, Youth in Security Services (including Community Protection Unit; Youth in Fire Prevention, and Youth in Immigration), and Auxiliary Nursing. One of the reasons behind the programme was to discourage young people from rural migration to urban centers in search of non-existing employment. It therefore encouraged all Metropolitan, Municipal, Sub-Metros and District assemblies across the country to identify modules relative to the comparative advantage of the local area and implement them accordingly. For instance, in the three Northern regions in Ghana where over sixty per cent of the population are into agriculture, the agriculture business modules absorbed majority of the unemployed who were willing to go into that sector. In 2006, when the programme was first introduced, a total of 200,000 new jobs were created and about 13, 069 young people were employed in agriculture alone; 26, 760 in education, forestry and resource  mobilization; 10, 850 in the health sector; 4,550 in waste and sanitation management and 2,800 in paid internship (YEI, n.d.). As at June 2012, a total of 457, 779 young people benefited from the NYEP (ibid).

Notwithstanding this remarkable achievement, the programme is not without challenges. The challenges can be categorized into two: politics and structural. The first challenge has to do with the project end cycle. It is/was designed to be a two year skills training programme with the assumption that the beneficiaries could be absorbed by the institutions that train them or acquire entrepreneurial skills that could help them start up their own projects. However, majority of beneficiaries who exited the programme after two years, were/are left unemployed and majority of them have no startup capital to set up their own businesses. The second has to do with poor and ineffective governance leading to award of pseudo contracts to cronies and party members. This phenomenon invariably has affected the credibility of NYEP at a cataclysmic proportions. For instance, NYEP directors at the regional and district levels have not only diverted programme funds into their personal bank accounts but have also included "ghost names" into the payroll of the programme. This non-existent beneficiaries led to the siphoning of funds and subsequently stalled the activities of the programme. The central government is currently prosecuting some officials and companies of the programme who are alleged to have misappropriated and/or embezzled funds with the connivance of private firms – these private firms signed various contracts to deliver services to the NYEP, never delivered those services but mysteriously, were fully paid the total contract sums by officials of the NYEP.

However, the most serious challenge that threatens the existence of the programme is the level of politicization. The NYEP is a widely politicized programme. It was initiated under the direction of the President and has been entirely managed at the local level by District Chief Executives who are not only appointed by the President, but also represent the President of the republic.  As a result, the programme is used largely to recruit young people who are members of the political party in power or what has become known as "job for the boys" in Ghanaian parlance. This politicization has led to the change of name of the programme under the current NDC administration. During the first term of the NDC administration under President J.E.A. Mills, the NYEP still continued to deliver on its mandate with the same name. However, during its second term under President John Mahama, the government changed the name of the NYEP

to Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Agency (GYEEDA). The Mahama administration campaigned on "Better Ghana Agenda" started under President Mills and it had the same political pledges towards youth employment. Prominent among them were to establish a GHC 10 million Enterprise Development Fund to support young people to become successful entrepreneurs and create sustainable job opportunities. The Fund was also to establish Job and Enterprise Centres (JEC) in all regions to help unemployed youth (NDC Manifesto, 2012). Yet, within some few months into his administration, the Mahama-led NDC government changed the name of the NYEP to GYEEDA. Though this change was done partly to reflect the new direction in which the Mahama administration sought to run the programme, but that has not taken much initiative to change the structures that promotes corruption and poor implementation of the programme, neither has it addressed the widening gap between the living statndards of those employed and those that are not.

Indeed, the level of decaying corruption in the newly christened GYEEDA has left much to be desired. This necessitated the setting up of a five member Impact Assessment and Review Committee by the Minister of Youth and Sports to investigate allegations of maladministration and financial misappropriation under GYEEDA. The Committee notes, among other things, the "weaknesses in design related to how beneficiaries would be exited and the nature of employment to be provided" (p.12). It also raised doubts about the sustainability of the programme given the "enormous financial commitment needed to successfully undertake GYEEDA" (p. 12). The draft report of the Committee further observes the "lack of an appropriate governance framework" in GYEEDA partly due to the lack of legal basis that could have established board of directors to provide the needed governance and accountability oversight to the programme. Regarding financial misappropriation, procurement and contracting, the draft report notes:

> Several of the contracts between GYEEDA and service providers lack basic standard elements of contracts such as critical dates including commencement and termination dates. Tenure and clearly defined deliverables are missing from some of the contracts. There is lack of coherence in different parts of the MOUs such as the preamble statements and the operating parts. Some MOUs did not have adequate provisions to protect national resources let alone provide key performance indicators for measuring success. The use of MOUs when legally binding agreements should govern such relationships suggests a limited or absolute non-involvement of the Office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice in the execution of many of these contracts (GYEEDA Report, 2013:16).

Certainly, such is the state of the newly christened GYEEDA from the previous NYEP that when the Committee finished its work, the report had to be leaked to the general public who then demanded accountability from the government. On October 15, 2013 whiles addressing Muslims celebrating the Eid-Adhar festival in Accra, the President observed that the Criminal Investigation Department has picked up officials named in the GYEEDA report as being liable for financial appropriation. Perhaps, the pressure from both citizens and civil society organizations, including the media, is yielding some dividends.

**Table 2: Category of Respondents**

| Category of Respondents | Number of People Interviewed |
|---|---|
| Head teachers | 6 |
| Teachers | 12 |
| Parents | 6 |
| Students | 30 |
| GES Officials | 6 |
| Total | 60 |

*Source: Field Report (2013)*

The second set of data came mainly from the review of policy documents, peer-reviewed journal articles, books and reports on employment and educational development in Ghana.  The study adopted a purely qualitative research design and data was analyzed using thematic coding. The following themes guided the data collection and subsequent analysis: knowledge of educational policies; quality of teaching and learning (including content) as a result of the policy change; infrastructure and resources; students' performance following policy change. The results of this study are presented in the next section.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Knowledge of Educational Policies and Strategies

Educational policies are made by governments and in some cases policies emanate from the recommendation of government appointed committees specifically tasked to address a contemporary challenge within the sector. Under the governments of the two dominant political parties in the country (the NDC and the NPP) this practice has remained. As a result of this, and given the significant role of policy in the forward march of education in the country, questions on policies were posed to the heads of the selected schools and also to the officials of the Ghana Education Service (GES).  Officials of the GES were conversant with a number of government policies including the Education Act, 2012; the Girl-child Education Policy as well as the STME clinics. They were able to explain the rationale behind all the policies that they mentioned. For instance, they explained that the rationale behind the Education Act is to promote education at all levels by looking at gender parity, enrolment at all levels and enhancement of technical and vocational education. On the part of the Girl-child Education Policy, the aim was to encourage girls and guide them to achieve the best of results in education. Officials also demonstrated awareness of other policies including the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) introduced by the NPP administration in 2005. {i.e., to reduce corruption and enhance admissions to the country's senior high schools}. However, they were not able to mention the specific policy that led to the creation of the 4 year SHS system and its subsequent change to three years.

The level of policy awareness demonstrated by GES officials were not at par with heads and teachers at the selected SHS. Teachers were very illusive with their knowledge on the policies and so gave vague responses like "...the policy that brought increment in access... the policy that led to the changes in the SHS duration..." Thus, even though some of the teachers and heads of school were aware of a policy change (specifically the change of duration in SHS from 3 to 4 years and back to 3 years again) they were not aware of the specific policy that

necessitated those changes. At least, it is evident that there was no clear policy guiding this critical change.  It was more or less a political decision taken by governments. The issue is how this change impacted on the quality of teaching and learning including content, infrastructure and resources, and performance or output of students.

## Quality of Teaching and Learning

This section of the interview guide sought to examine the quality of teaching from the perspective of teachers, heads and GES officials after the change of the SHS duration. Some of the teachers stated that there exist opportunities for teachers to upgrade their talent including study leave opportunities; in-house service training; career development programs; subject-based training; competency-based training, and sandwich programs. However, all these training were not in respect to the change of the duration of the SHS. This perspective of the teachers was corroborated by some head teachers. For instance, out of the six head-teachers interviewed, 65% of them confirmed that some training and in-service programs were carried out for teachers. This is further affirmed by about 68% of teachers who indicated that some training was conducted for them to enhance their instructional capacity to deliver. Only 32% of the teachers interviewed said there was no training programme for them.  On the impact of these training programs for the teachers, the GES officials indicated that the effect has been positive since students have been getting good grades at the WASSCE beyond the school expectations. However, they were quick to indicate that clear evidence will be at the school level. All six heads of school confirmed that since the four years program was introduced performance of students have improved significantly.

From the teachers' point of view, the programs seem to have improved their knowledge and instructional skills. For instance, of the 12 teachers interviewed, 9 stated that there was training for them and the training helped them to teach better. However, 3 of these 9 teachers also added that the gains from the programs were not directly related to their teaching, but they were able to handle the issues because of their general training as teachers in skills and methods, the remaining 3 teachers said there was no training program for them. What this suggests is that, it is difficult to measure the actual impact of these training programs on teaching. One teacher felt that teaching has become slightly complicated as a result of the enhancement of ICT that required ICT skills. Another stated that the training was for agriculturalists and as an integrated science teacher he did not benefit from it.  These views suggest that although some level of learning and knowledge sharing took place, the eventual impact appeared to be minimal. Possibilities are that the programs may not have been designed to impact teaching and learning or if they were so designed then implementation and subsequent application did not achieve the expected impact.

On the impact of the change on students, it was learnt that students were not adequately prepared for the change and what will follow from it. Two GES officials confirmed this too. Out of the six schools selected, more than half confirmed that their schools were more proactive and took upon themselves to carry out some basic orientation for students to psyche them up for the new system. One GES official admitted that urban based schools were better in terms of preparing students than rural based schools. It has been argued that since the provision of quality education is partly dependent on the motivation of teachers, it should be an important factor if significant improvements are to be seen in the quality of education at the secondary school level especially with the increase in the number of years spent by students at this level. The issue of teachers' motivation was also reiterated by all the teachers interviewed.

The content or syllabi also came up strongly on the discussion concerning quality teaching and learning. In terms of content, respondents were unanimous that in spite of the changes in the number of years from three to four, there was not much difference between the syllabi of the two systems except for start-up period for core and elective subjects and dropping and adding of certain topics. According to one teacher from Fijai, the syllabus for the 4 year core subjects were offered in the first year and continued through the rest of the years whilst electives started in the second year. This was confirmed by all other respondents interviewed. This was a departure from the three year program.

Respondents also acknowledged that given the changes, the two streams were expected to have different syllabi. However, since the syllabi were not ready when the four year programme begun, teachers and students were compelled to use the syllabi for the three year programme to start teaching till the time that the syllabi for the 4 year was ready. On the other hand, when the four year programme was reverted to three years, their syllabi were not ready hence teachers admitted they used the syllabi for the four year program to teach. Out of the 12 teachers interviewed, 68% of them said the three and four year syllabi did not differ from each other in any significant ways. Only 32% acknowledged that there were some additions and subtractions in the topics. However, it is important to acknowledge that one factor for teacher motivation is the availability of other supporting resources like adequate infrastructure, commitment by students and support by parents and guardians.

## Infrastructure and other resources

Infrastructure is key for improved performance for both teachers and students. It is also necessary for an enhanced quality of teaching and learning. The assumption will have been that given the changes in the duration of the SHS system, there will have been a corresponding adequate infrastructure to accommodate all students and the ensuing challenges. However, almost all the respondents indicated that infrastructure was inadequate. GES officials noted that there were inadequate infrastructure but quickly added that provisions were made later to address that challenge. Heads of school selected and the teachers alike admitted the lack of infrastructure to implement the four year SHS system. Heads of selected schools affirmed that some provisions were made to complement existing facilities, although construction had been very slow. They further acknowledged the support that they received from parents and guardians in completing projects that had started or creating temporary structures to accommodate wards in order to reduce pressure on school administration. Four out of the six head teachers interviewed admitted that the rate of enrolment increased since the introduction of the four year programme without corresponding increment in infrastructure. This problem led to an increased number of day students with its own problems of student indiscipline. Another dimension to the infrastructure challenge was exam space for all the students admitted. There were speculations of inadequate exam space to ensure all students writing the same paper were accommodated to reduce possibility of question leakage. These speculations were somehow affirmed when the Daily Graphic (April, 2013) reported that students write in turns because of space constraints.

## Students' Perspectives and Concerns for the Two Systems

This section in the interview guide was designed to assess students' perspectives and also their preference for the two different systems. The matrix below is used for easy comparison and reference and captures students' perspectives for the three and four years SHS system.

**Table 3: Students' perspectives and concerns for the two educational systems**

| Three-Year SHS System | Four-Year SHS System |
|---|---|
| • Inadequate time leading to students being rushed through topics | • Teachers reluctant to teach due to the perception of more time |
| • Inability to complete syllabi<br>• Teacher to student ratio very high<br>• Classes held under trees<br>• Pressure on infrastructure and facilities | • Difficulty for parents to pay fees due to number of years<br>• Inadequate facilities<br>• Congestion in classrooms and washrooms |
| • Congestion in classrooms, laboratories and dormitories<br>• Most students had to seek accommodation outside school | • Over concentration on elective courses due to the structure of four years program<br>• Attention was mainly on third years |

*Source: Field data (2013)*

Students, as indicated in the above table, were quick to mention the challenges that they encountered as a result of the change of the three year system to four years and the vice-versa. However, it is intriguing to know that majority of the students in their third year interviewed admitted that there was nothing positive with the three year programme as it brought unnecessary hardship and pressure on all stakeholders. Yet, students in both the three year and four year systems identified similar challenges to both systems. Students from all six schools admitted that there was pressure on the existing infrastructure, including classrooms, laboratories, science equipment and dormitories often leading to congestion. For instance, Chemistry students of Fijai SHS admitted that there were 67 of them using a laboratory at a time with limited equipment. Students interviewed at the other five SHS shared similar sentiments. Peculiar challenges faced by students in the third year include classes being held under trees and inadequate boarding facilities for students.

Students at APGSS mentioned the reluctance of teachers to teach due to the perception of more time under the four years system whiles in Fijai SHS there was over concentration on the elective subjects due to the structure of the four year programme which allowed for the study of core subjects in form 1 and concentration on the electives in the subsequent years. As a result, most of the topics in the core courses could not be completed. Students at Ghana senior high school also reiterated this concern. Majority of students interviewed (23 out of 30) preferred the four year system because it afforded them more time to study. They were however quick to state that their preference for the four year system was not to suggest that everything about it is good, but given the two systems they will opt for the four years. For example, students from APGSS stated that although they prefer the four year system because it helped them improve their performance due to adequate study hours, they will prefer the three years system because of inadequate facilities to ensure the smooth running of the four year system.

**Teachers, Heads, GES Officials and Parents' Preferences for the Two Systems**

Four out of the six heads of SHS interviewed expressed their preference for the four year system. Because it gave enough time for both students and teachers which led to improved students' performance. However, some of the heads presented a balance sheet of both systems without admitting their preferred system. For example, the head of APGSS expressed a litany of challenges associated with both systems and observe that the success of either three or four

year system depends on the availability of infrastructure, facilities as well as attitudes of both teachers and students. Two of the six GES officials interviewed reiterated the position of the head of APGSS. On the other hand, six out of the twelve teachers interviewed (representing 50%) preferred the four year system; three out of the twelve did not have preference but stated that the success of each system depends on the available infrastructure, whiles three out of twelve preferred the three year system. The findings of the teaching staff confirm the position taken by the National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) and the Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS) during a national debate on stakeholders' preference for the two different systems. Parents on the other hand complained about the cost of the four year duration of SHS. They were split or divided in their preference. Whiles three opted for the three years because of the less cost, the other three preferred the four years in spite of the additional extra year cost involved.

The findings from educational policies are quite different from that of the employment sector. The Ghanaian economy has witnessed significant growth since 2000 and has received an increased boost by the recent oil discovery. Yet, unemployment situation in the country remain a major development challenge. The rates are quite high especially among the youth. In part, this unfortunate situation has been attributed to weaknesses in the employment environment including gaps in information on the labour market. Similarly, the lack of structural transformation of the Ghanaian economy has constrained the development of new and better employment opportunities and a fuller utilization of the youth as labour force. Ghana's total labour force is 10.5 million (2009 est.) of which 56 per cent are into agriculture, 15 per cent in industry and 29 per cent in the services sector (GSS, 2013). However, unemployment rate currently is at 11.2 per cent with the youth being the most vulnerable. Per the 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC) Ghana's population in all the ten administrative regions and the 170 districts stood at 24,658,823. Of this figure, there were 12,633,978 females and 12,024,845 males (GSS, 2013). Females constituted 51.2 percent of the population and males 48.8 percent; making the sex ratio 95 males per 100 females. Compared to the 2000 PHC in which the country's population stood at 18,912,079, Ghana's population is growing by 30.4% and the significant increase in this composite growth is the most active group that are working or looking for work. Table 2 illustrates this group.

**Table 4: Age demography of the 2010 PHC**

| Age Group | Total | Male | Female |
|-----------|-------|------|--------|
| 0 - 14 | 9,450,398 | 4,798,944 | 4,651,454 |
| 15 - 64 | 14,040,893 | 6,727,948 | 7,312,945 |
| 65+ | 1,167,532 | 497,953 | 669,597 |
| **Total** | 24,658,832 | 12,024,845 | 12,633,996 |

*Source: GSS, 2010*

Amankrah (n.d.) notes that the share of the growth in this active population mirrors the share of unemployment. Greater Accra (16.3%) and Ashanti (19.4%) regions have the greater share of the population mainly due to migration from other parts of the country, especially from Northern Ghana in search of better job opportunities. Even among those people who are employed in all the ten administrative regions, the private and/or informal sector absorbs majority of them. Jobs in this sector are not sustainable compared to the public, private formal and the NGO sector. The Ashanti region has the highest number of people employed in the private informal sector, followed by the Greater Accra region. This is not surprising given that

these regions have the highest number of population density according to the 2010 PHC, thus attracting young entrepreneurs to these places. The Upper West and Upper East regions have the lowest number of employed people in the private informal sector and this also corresponds to the population density in those areas. The Western, Central, Eastern and Volta regions fall midway between these two extremes. These regions are both agricultural and industrial based as compared to the two Upper regions but not up to the level of the Greater Accra and Ashanti regions in terms of industry. The private formal is followed by the Public Sector that employs the next greater chunk of the Ghanaian population. It also follows the same trend like the private informal sector regarding the region that has the most employees. The Greater Accra and the Ashanti regions dominate and the two Upper regions lagging behind. The middle regions have assumed similar positions. Even moving away from this general categorization to the specific status of employed persons or the type of jobs they do, the figures are the same in terms of the regional distribution.

The youth in Ghana based on the classification made in table 5 below, will require different employment needs; from formal education and training in skills to entrepreneurship development to be able to rise above the problem of unemployment. Those youth within the educated-skilled category may still require some level of training in entrepreneurship and business planning to be able to become self-employed. Yet, those in the category of educated-unskilled youth and also within the skilled-uneducated youth all need empowerment through training in skills and/or formal educational support to be able to move to the next rank of the employment ladder. The seemingly critical category (uneducated-unskilled youth) will also require multiple training needs in formal education, skills acquisition and perhaps, business planning and management to be able to rise to the level of the educated-skilled youth.

**Table 5: Matrix of Employment Needs of Youth and their Categorization**

| Youth Category | Employment Expectation | Specific Opportunities |
|---|---|---|
| Educated-skilled youth | White-colour jobs | Entrepreneurship, business planning, leadership skills |
| Educated-unskilled youth | White-colour jobs | Entrepreneurship, business planning and skills training in ICT, leadership skills |
| Skilled-uneducated youth | Self-employed in their talent area | Skills training in ICT, agro-processing; water, sanitation and environment, alternative energy skills; organic manure processing |
| Unskilled-uneducated youth | Self-employed in any area to make a living | Agriculture/farming, Formal educational training, skills development, training in ICT; agro-processing, water, health and sanitation |

*Source: ODA-YEfL Report (2011).*

**CONCLUSION**

Since independence, the Ghanaian policy sector has witnessed numerous reforms by various regimes beginning with the first president Dr Kwame Nkrumah. Many years down the line our education and employment systems continue to see reforms. This is because of the dynamic

nature of society which makes it imperative for governments to modify the system to address the needs of society. However, the piecemeal and inconsistent approach these reforms assume, is the major cause for concern. Most of these reforms have always been on expansion of education to cover as many Ghanaians as possible. The overconcentration on access over the years has some level of impact on the quality of the education provided. The study revealed that political decisions towards the education sector within the period under study had an impact on teaching, learning, the content and the distribution of resources and infrastructure in senior high schools. The study further showed that the changes in the structure of education were not informed by any established policy but rather they were influenced by mere parochial, partisan political decisions. Considering the impact that these decisions had on teaching within the time frame, it was concluded that though teachers received some form of training on the new system of education the impact was minimal. Interestingly, though heads and GES officials felt that students were not adequately oriented, the students had a contrary view. The impression obtained here is that the orientation did not reflect what the heads would have preferred.

Since colonial times, governments have inherited power with different development plan, owned by the government and changed when it leaves power. What then is the way forward for developing countries in general and Ghana specifically? The type and nature of political leadership have the tendency to mitigate some of these policy challenges. Political leadership can be exercised in different ways. According to Grint, (2000:420) leadership is exercised by 'sharing the way' rather than showing the way. Also, Yukl (2006) defines leadership as the process of influencing others to understand and agree to what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives. Peter Northouse (2007) defines leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. The definitions above laid emphasis on leadership as an exercise of influence. Yukl (2006) and Northouse (2007) for example reiterate that leadership occurs in the context of a 'group', with the purpose of a 'goal attainment' in which these goals are shared by their leaders and 'followers'. The premium placed on leadership whether in its reference to business or politics has generated numerous definitions and conceptual explanations. On political leadership, it is noted that throughout human history, the question of political leaders and the quality of leadership have been a matter of critical importance (Political African Leadership and its Legacy, 2007). Many analysts of politics in Africa tend to suggest that the fundamental issue of governance in Africa is leadership (Brautigam and Knack, 2004). Adei (2003) considers national leadership as the process of influencing followers through vision, goals and strategies. It also involves the mobilization of resources and the empowerment of the people towards a predetermined future. To achieve such a task, leaders must apply attributes that go with their position, including values, ethics, character, knowledge and skills (Allah-Mensah, 2009).

Besides leadership, the Ghanaian Constitution make provision for the establishment of a National Development Planning Commission that is responsible to the President and includes the Finance Minister, Governor of the Ghanaian Central Bank and the Government Statistician among others, to advice the President on development strategy and planning. This constitutional provision is backed by two other legislations (the National Development Planning Commission Act and the National Development Planning (Systems) Act to strengthen the role of the NDPC. These two legislations are co-joined to the Local Government Act that empowers District Assemblies to take charge of the overall development of their districts. The way forward out of this quagmire, is contained in the report of the work of the Constitutional

Review Commission and include the following: that any development plan or strategy should be national in character rather than government-specific; should be geared towards to accelerate growth and poverty reduction at all levels in the country and above all, the plan should be binding on all successive governments. The last point is significant given the instances in which new governments completely abandon the programmes and policies of the past government's that it succeeds. Article 35(7) of the Directive Principle of State Policy in Ghana states that "[A]s far as practicable, a government shall continue and execute projects and programmes commenced by the previous Governments." Yet, the complete disregard for this provision is often dangerous for the development of the country and also the finances of the state.

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