

One State, Two School Systems: the Instability of Ghana's School System since the Fourth Republic

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Abstract

This paper examines the fickle nature of Ghana's school system since colonialism. The school system has undergone several metamorphoses both in structure and content from the colonial epoch to post-independence. The management and reform of education in Ghana seem to have become synonymous with a change in political power. This paper argues that the management of Ghana's educational system after fifty-five (55) years of independence is still undergoing turbulent experimentation to fine-tune to an efficient and effective school system. This instability in the structure and content of Ghana's educational system looks more of a political jingle as well as military musical chairs rather than based on national consensus aimed at mitigating the many challenges facing the school system.

Keywords: Education management, education reform/review, politics, quality education

1. Introduction

Ghana's school system under the management of the colonial administration went through several changes both in structure and content. Notable education reforms and/or reviews undertaken by the colonial administration included those of Governor Rodger and Governor Frederick Gordon Guggisberg in 1908 and 1920 respectively. Since independence, successive governments have repeatedly reformed the existing school system with the main objective of making education a keystone for national development. The major educational reforms or reviews undertaken after Ghana's independence included those of 1961, 1967, 1974, 1987 and 2002. The education reform jigsaw that characterizes Ghana's school system has deprived Ghanaians of an acceptable and workable education system since independence. Accordingly, Ghana's quest for an 'ideal' education system has so far proved futile and has become like political experimentation for political parties since independence. A change of government is inextricably linked to a possibility of education reform. Political parties outside the realm of government have always seen everything wrong with economic policies of a ruling government including the school system. Hence, opposition political parties in Ghana have always reformed the school system when they capture the levers of government. The reviews or reforms are based usually on the individual political party ideological prism and captured in their parochial party manifestoes. This paper thematically focuses on the political influences and implementation challenges affecting Ghana's school system from 1987 to the current school system.

In this paper, the phrases education reform and education review are used interchangeable to mean any planned change in the duration, structure and content of an existing school system to achieve a targeted objective or aim. The term quality education is operationalized in this paper to mean a well-balanced development of the cognitive and psychomotor skills of the individual to fit and solve basic societal problems. It is in this attempt to inculcate these qualities in citizens that has remained elusive for the Ghanaian school system for the past fifty (50) years. In Ghana, what has always started as a review of the educational system has always turned out, in the long run, to be a reform or an overhaul of the entire educational duration, structure and content mostly motivated by political parties' ideologies and manifestoes.

This paper has five sections. The first section focuses on the theoretical debates; rationale for the unabated education reforms in Ghana between 1987 and 2002; political and ideological influences; challenges and implications for the instability in the educational front in Ghana and conclusions.

2. Methodology

Data for the paper are largely qualitative derived from systematic enquiry, analyzed and interpreted to make a

sense of educational reform in Ghana. The study made use of primary sources obtained from reports on education in Ghana. Data were also gleaned from monographs on education and educational reforms in Ghana in colonial and post-colonial periods. Thus, the paper is a product of processed and analyzed data from a variety of sources, the contents of which were carefully scrutinized, compared, evaluated and synthesized.

3. Theoretical Debates

Ghana is noted for reforming its educational system since independence. There is always the possibility of reforming its school system anytime there is a change of government whether through the ballot box or the barrel of gun. There is an avalanche of theories underpinning these phenomena of educational reform jigsaw. A theory is 'a set of systematic constructs (variables), definitions and propositions that presents a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining natural phenomena' (Kerlinger, 1979:64). According to Sarantakos, 'theories are a set of logically interrelated propositions, presented in a systematic way, which describe and explain social phenomena. They are logically constructed statements that summarize and organize knowledge in a particular area, and are open to testing, reformulation, modification and revision' (Sarantakos, 1993:10). Ghana's unstable school system is studied within the framework of economic globalization and ideologically-inspired political party manifestoes.

Ghana's unabated reforms in education are attributed to the machinations of global economic forces. Economic globalization focuses on the ascendancy of the global marketplace in shaping education policies in low income countries. The vehicle of change in education policies worldwide is done through international organizations such as United Nations, United Nations, Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and other International Financial Institutions (IFIs). According to Levin (1998: 131), the need for change in education is largely cast in economic terms and particularly in relation to the preparation of a workforce and competition with other countries. The standpoint of Levin (1998) was evidenced in the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) that customarily include education reform as a quid pro quo for financial assistance for Sub – Saharan countries. Ghana, being a member and signatory to these global institutions or forces, is bound to be 'manipulated' or cajole to implement policies in education to be in line with global 'standards' in lieu of economic aid/foreign monetary assistance. A country's economic decline as well as its 'weak' workforce is customarily blamed on the school system. There is ample documentary evidence in government cycles (Education Act of 1961; New Structure and Content of Education 1974; Dzobo Report of 1975; Education Commission Report on Basic and Secondary Education 1987/88; University Rationalization Committee Report; Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) entrenched in Ghana's 1992 Constitution and implemented in 1996; Ghana Education Trust Fund – GETFUND Act 2000 (Act 581) and their like) to suggest that it is only through an effective education system that will lead to an efficient and ephemeral quality of responsiveness in all facets of economic development of a state. As aptly captured by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development,

Only a well-trained and highly adaptable labour force can provide the capacity to adjust to structural change and seize new employment opportunities created by technological progress. Achieving this will in many cases entail a re-examination, perhaps radical, of the economic treatment of human resources and education (OECD, 1993:9).

The desire of states to build strong and effective economic security and development globalization as offered is being touted as the reason for the unabated educational reforms. These reforms, to a larger extent, did not benefit most developing countries. Rather, the desire to gain rapid economic development through education has made these countries vulnerable to manipulations of all sorts of international financial institutions. This failure has necessitated the continuous search for an 'ideal' school system in many development countries including Ghana.

The second argument put forward by some scholars to explain Ghana's turbulent and unstable school system is driven by the ideologically-inspired policies of the two main political parties [National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP)] that have alternated power since 1993. These two political parties have attacked and are still attacking the public policies each of the parties made while in government or outside government. Accordingly, public policies including that of education are affected on ideological inspired basis 'to attack education and other public services' (Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Bracey, 1995). This is the case whenever there is a change in government to either of the political parties in Ghana. Different education reform programmes have been pursued culminating to the unstable school system whether in structure, content or duration. Fitz and Halpin (1991), having studied the development of the grant-maintained schools policy in Britain – a policy closely tied to the Conservatives' ideology of the 'free' market; cautioned:

...interpreting policy via a reading of correspondence between ideological preferences and concrete proposals is

a hazardous procedure, and one which may overlook the complexities, contingencies and competing interests which we believe are so much a part of the policy making-process (Fitz & Halpin, 1991: 135)

Education reforms after Ghana's independence unfortunately, are determined by ideological inspired policies by both civilian governments and military rulers. This vividly explains why after fifty-five years of Ghana's independence, an acceptable school system is yet to be determined.

4. Rationale for Education Reforms in Ghana

Civilian governments and military juntas in the early post-independence Ghana have always given reasons or justification for the reform of Ghana's school system. Notable examples of such reforms included 'The Accelerated Development Plans (ADP) for education of 1951 and 1961'. This Accelerated Development Plan education programme was undertaken by the Convention Peoples' Party (CPP) government headed by Kwame Nkrumah (the first president of Ghana). Nkrumah's government was toppled by the military and police junta in 1966, which formed the 'National Liberation Council' (NLC). Most policies by the CPP government were reformed including the school system (my focus). The military regime did not only attack the political and economic policies of Dr. Nkrumah, but also launched an unrepentant attacks on the educational policies of the CPP as being elitist in character, claiming that it did not focus on training the needed manpower of Ghana through science and technology. Therefore, the National Liberation Council (NLC) set up a committee headed by E.A. Kwapong in 1966 to reform the whole school system to reflect the development needs of Ghana. The committee submitted its report in 1967. The NLC regime did not only accept the committee's recommendations, but also implemented them hook line and sinker

This conundrum has remained the case under Ghana's Fourth Republican Constitution. The school system in operation in Ghana today has its historical antecedent or roots dating back to the Dzobo Committee of 1973 and 'The New Structure and Content of Education (NSCE) of 1974. The rationale of the reform undertaken by the National Redemption Council (NRC) was to develop and inculcate basic skills in the cognitive and psychomotor of Ghanaian students to be competitive and also relevant not only in the job market, but also to help facilitate the socio-economic development of Ghana. The school system as espoused by the National Redemption Council (NRC) was aimed at reducing the over reliance of school-leavers on government for non-exiting white-collar jobs. In this perspective, the Ghana school reform programme was supposed to promote vocational and technical studies at pre-university education levels to unearth the skills or talents of students to ensure a well-balanced accelerated development of Ghana. The 1974 reform programme also saw a reduction in school years from 17 years to 13 years (from 6-4-5-2 – six years of primary education, four years middle school education, five years of secondary education and two years sixth form education before enrolling for another three years of education at the tertiary level). The new education reform programme was reduced to 6-3-2-2 – six years of primary education, three years of Junior secondary school education, a two year top-up at the senior secondary school and two years of sixth form education at the pre-university level) to facilitate training and reduce school expenditure. In both the old and the new system, students were under statutory obligation to undertake a one-year national service before proceeding to the university

A critical analysis of Dzobo education reform programme reveals that the new system faced some major challenges that militated against its aim and purposes. Prominent among the major challenges included a lack of or inadequate tools and workshops to promote technical and vocational programmes which was the core component of the reform; and secondly, majority of schools lacked specialist teachers to handle the technical and vocational courses. As a result, the reform failed to achieve its aim and objectives.

The reform of the school system in 1987 was necessitated by Ghana's economic downturn in the early 1980s. Accordingly, the regime of the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) had no alternative economic policy to salvage the Ghanaian economy than to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, which, as part of the economic package to salvage sinking economies, ordinarily demanded the reform of an existing education as a quid pro quo for borrowing from the fund. As aptly captured by Cobbe:

In 1982/83, government revenues were less than 6 per cent, recurrent spending on education, which had averaged about 3.4 per cent of GDP in the 1970s, was definitely 2 per cent of GDP and may have been as low as 1 per cent (Cobbe, 1991:104).

The 1987 education reform was a political as well as an economic imposition by the IMF/World Bank in an attempt to salvage the economic downturn of the Ghanaian economy. This external imposition to reform the school system was presented superficially, as a home-grown educational policy by the military government - the

Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) headed by Jerry John Rawlings. Under the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) in 1986, the reform programme was supposed “to ensure the achievement of the overall national educational goals of increasing access to Basic Education, improving the quality of education given, making it more relevant to socio-economic development and ensuring its cost-effectiveness and sustenance...” (Ghana Education Service document, 1986: 1).

The new Education Reform Programme based on the ERP document or its content of achieving the overall national educational goals had carved the following aims and objectives:

To expand and make access more equitable at all levels of education

To change the structure of the school system, reducing the length pre-university education from 17 to 12 years

To improve pedagogic efficiency and effectiveness

To make education more relevant by increasing the attention paid to problem-solving, environmental concerns, pre-vocational training, manual dexterity and general skills training

To contain and partially recover costs; and

To enhance sector management and budgeting procedures

The appraisal of the new Education Reform Programme vis-à-vis the objectives, clearly showed that the reform achieved moderate success in terms of expansion and access of Basic and Senior Secondary Schools education enrolments. As captured by the Ministry of Education:

...Gross primary school enrolment rate increased from 80.5 per cent in 1988/89 to 82.5 per cent in 1990/91. At the primary level, Primary 1 enrolment grew from 74.8 per cent in 1988/89 to 75 per cent in 1989/90 then 82.5 per cent in 1990/91 and 89.4 per cent in 1991/92... At the Junior Secondary School one level, 1987/88 enrolments were 21.7 per cent higher than comparable Middle Form One enrolments... the largest increases 83.9 per cent in the three educational disadvantage regions – the Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions (M.O.E.,1995:3)

The above increases in enrolments at all levels of education also posed some challenges to the effective implementation of the new Education Reform Programme. These challenges did not only affect the quality of teaching but also the success of the entire new Education Reform Programme. Some of the challenges that militated against the success of the new education reform included but were not limited to the following:

NO. OF PASSES	FREQUENCY	FREQUENCY %
9 PASSES	1, 656	3. 93
8 PASSES	1, 719	4. 08
7 PASSES	2, 036	4. 84
6 PASSES	2, 435	5. 78
5 PASSES	2, 120	7. 41
4 PASSES	3, 946	9. 38
3 PASSES	4, 667	11. 08
2 PASSES	5, 427	12. 89
1 PASS	8, 222	19. 53

Source: Ministry of Education

The first batch of the new Education Reform sat for the final Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) in 1993. A total of 42,105 candidates took the examination. Out of this figure, 1,354 candidates, representing 3.2 per cent, were qualified to take the University Entrance Examination (U.E.E.) to enter the public universities in Ghana. In all, 8,875 candidates, representing 21.08 per cent of the candidates, failed to obtain a pass in any subject. The results of the first batch of the SSSCE were released in April 1994.

The release of the poor results was greeted with anger, protests and criticisms of the New Education Reform from parents, students, Teacher Associations and Civil Society Organizations. These public outcries compelled the government to establish the Education Reform Review Committee in July 1994 to examine the flaws

inherent in the New Education Reform. Just at this point, political parties and some civil society organizations joined the fray not only to condemn the government for poor implementation, but also called for the abolition of the reform.

Second, many new community schools, one hundred and sixty in all (160), were built between January 1991 and December 1993 in rural Ghana, and thus, bringing the total number of government assisted Senior Secondary Schools to 452. All these constructions were to make education accessible and equitable to the ever-growing Ghanaian population. While these constructions were on-going, provisions were hardly made to get adequate trained and qualified technical and vocational teachers as well as textbooks to man these schools. Some schools were without teachers while those with teachers were inadequate or lacked specialist teachers to handle the technical and vocational programmes which constituted the core component of the new school system and a departure from the old school system.

Third, textbooks, teaching and learning materials, machinery for the vocational and technical education were either not available or inadequate. Indeed, most schools got their first year textbooks in the second year and the second year textbooks in year three. The effect was that the teachers and students never had access to third year textbooks before they sat for the final examination. The net effect was the poor results of which 8,875 representing 21.08 per cent could not pass in any subject

Finally, teachers were equally as confused as the students of the New Education Reform. Syllabi of the various programmes were not made available to teachers on time. Accordingly, they resorted to teaching using the old syllabi of the old school system in the whole of the first year of the implementation of the New Reform programme. Again, teachers were not given any form of training in the pedagogic and the nature of the New Education Reform Programme. All these contributed to the poor results of the first batch of the New Education Reform in Ghana.

4.1 Political and Ideological Influences

Following the backdrop of the above challenges and coupled with the public outcry and frustration by parents and students, education became embroiled in politics and a source of major political campaign messages of the various opposition political parties in the 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008 and the 2012 general elections all in a desperate attempt to identify with the electorates in order to garner votes to capture the levers of government and to implement 'an acceptable' school system. Accordingly, education became the epitome or central political technique based on individual political and ideological consideration since Ghana's fourth republic to canvass for votes. Political ideologies refer to political beliefs, a disposition or ideas geared for action. It is about preserving a policy or change a policy for better.

In 2000 general elections, the Ghanaian economy and education featured prominently in campaign messages of the various political parties. The first round of voting on December 7, 2000 provided no clear winner. The two major political parties, the NDC and the NPP went for a second round of voting which was won by the opposition political party (New Patriotic Party). There was the usual coterie by the media that a reform of the school system was inevitable with the change of political power. The New Patriotic Party government, having been in power for two years, and as expected, set up a committee to review the Ghanaian education system to reflect the developmental needs of the country in 2002. The NPP government introduced a new education system at the beginning of the school year in August 2007. This new education system did not only review the content, but also extended the duration of Senior High School (SHS) from three years to four years. Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) education was introduced at the Junior High School (JHS) and Senior High School levels and only externally examinable at the JHS level. Nursery and Kindergarten education were made compulsory at the Primary School level. Students of the JHS who could not progress to the SHS were to be given a one-year attachment in intensive apprenticeship to develop the psychomotor skill of such students to enter the job market. The curriculum was designed in such a way that the first year at the SHS was to be devoted to the study of 'core' subjects such as English language, Mathematics, Integrated Science, ICT and Social Studies. These subjects were identified as the bane of the poor performance of students in the previous school system. The first batch (SHS students) of the new education system was expected to complete their study in 2011.

The NPP government, having been in power for eight years (2000 – 2008), lost the 2008 general elections after second round of voting to the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The NDC government, as expected, did not wait for the completion and/or evaluation of the first batch/products of the four year SHS programme, but went ahead to reverse the educational system to its former status of three years SHS which the party (NDC) introduced in 1987. This reversal drew lots of criticisms from civil society organizations, Ghana Private Schools

Association, prominent educationists, and teachers' associations such as Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) and the Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS). These criticisms became more intensified after the West Africa Examination Council released the results of the first batch of the four year SHS. The students did not only do well in the exam, but the quality of passes was seen to be better than previous years. Unperturbed by these barrages of criticisms, the NDC government went ahead to implement its Manifesto pledge by reversing the school system in 2010.

4.2 Education and Electoral Politics in 2012 Political Campaign

Education has always been part and parcel of Ghana's electoral politics and/or political campaigns since the fourth republic (1992; 1996; 2000; 2004; 2008). In 2012 Ghanaian general elections however, issues of Ghana school system and its management were the central political campaign of the major political parties. Education and its management was hotly debated by the political parties to the extent that issues of job creation, agriculture, health, housing, roads, infrastructure and the general prescription to the 'fragile' Ghanaian economy were somewhat relegated to the background. The main and the largest opposition political party (New Patriotic Party) premised their campaign on education based on the following assessment of the Ghanaian school system;

Our education system is in serious crisis. Out of a 100 of our children that starts kindergarten only 71 ends up in primary school, only 65 will go up to junior high school, out of that only 35 progress to senior high school and only 3 will end up in university ... many of our children and youth fall out because they cannot afford to go on ... Consequently many of our children and youth are not well prepared for the job market because they lack the requisite quality of education and skills. The current state of our education is simply not acceptable ... (NPP Manifesto, 2012:20).

The supposition above is the gloomy outlook professed on the Ghanaian school system by the NPP. Accordingly, the party campaigned on access to good quality education as opposed to the current limited access and progress on the education lather. In relation to have all Ghanaian children to be functional and well prepared for the job market, the NPP made a campaign promise or manifesto pledge to extend the current free basic education to free senior high school education to every Ghanaian child to improve functional literacy and skills for the job market. This idea is aptly captured in the party's Manifesto in the following words:

We are fully committed to making secondary education free to every Ghanaian child. By free SHS we mean free tuition, admission, textbook, library, science centre, computer, examination, utilities, boarding and meals ... the alternative of a largely uneducated and unskilled workforce is a situation Ghana cannot afford (NPP Manifesto, 2012:23).

The free secondary school education as espoused by the NPP caught up with many Ghanaians or voters who thought that was the way out to ameliorate their annual and/or termly ritual of having to struggle to pay fees associated with secondary education. The Convention Peoples' Party (CPP) also joined the fray of free secondary education. Other political parties such as Peoples' National Convention (PNC) and the Progressive Peoples' Party (PPP) latently supported the free education concept. The onus was now on the incumbent government and/or political party in power (the NDC) to either counteract or support the free education concept

The NDC's response was that it is committed to ensuring the fulfillment of constitutional obligation to provide Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE). The NDC government also added that the free education concept espoused by the major opposition political party (the NPP) is a right for the Ghanaian child as enshrined under Article 25 (i) (a) and Article 38 (2) and must not be seen as the brain child of any political party. The response of the incumbent government could not to a large extent assuage the masses of the Ghanaian populace to disregard the opposition claim of free education which is a matter of constitutional provision. In a televised political debate organized by the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) in October 2013, the president and also the presidential candidate of the NDC indicated that the NDC as a social democratic party, was not against free SHS education, but is committed to the progressive introduction of free secondary education under Article 25 (i) (b). As captured in the manifesto of the NDC,

A programme for the free compulsory universal basic education (FCUBE) is being implemented. The NDC government recognizes that a programme for the progressive introduction of Free Secondary Education will require an implementation strategy involving concurrent action on:

Expansion of infrastructure and other logistics to enable access to all;

Expanding and improving the human resource base by increasing the number of Teacher Training Institutions to improve quality of teaching and learning

(NDC Manifesto, 2012:14)

The NDC's educational policy or campaign message in the 2012 general election to Ghanaians was the gradual implementation of expanding access, quality teacher training and infrastructural development by 2016 before progressively embarking on free SHS education. The NPP on the contrary, was promising the free SHS two years after the assumption of office in 2014. The NPP indicated the total cost of funding the free SHS to be 1% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). According to the NPP, the funds could be raised for such a venture by reducing or eliminating corruption and waste in the system.

Critical analysis of the educational policy thrust of the two major political parties (the NDC and NPP) reveals that both parties in principle advocated free secondary education. The point of departure has been the method, time and space in the implementation of the free SHS. While the NPP advocated implementation of the free SHS in two years when they capture the levers of government; the NDC advocated the gradualist approach in implementing the free SHS policy in four years i.e. by 2016. In pursuance of this aim, the NDC in its manifesto for the 2012 elections outlined the following steps they intend to pursue in creating access to the ever-growing demand of SHS education: construct two hundred (200) new Community Day Senior High Schools across the country with emphasis on districts where there are no such schools; provide capitation grant to all students in the new Community Day Senior High Schools to be built by government; increase the subsidies currently paid to existing secondary schools with a view to reducing the burden on parents; aggressively expand infrastructure including classrooms, dormitories, laboratories, and teachers accommodation in existing secondary schools to enable them absorb the increasing number of qualified candidates; continue the rehabilitation of Science Resource Centres; and provide facilities for students with disability to pursue their academic programmes effectively (NDC Manifesto, 2012:17).

The NDC won the 2012 general elections and are expected to redeem the campaign promises on education it made to the Ghanaian populace. The NDC party (now in government) has started feeling the 'heat' to fulfill its campaign promises especially on education. Two years into the administration of the government, a cross section of Ghanaians including some 'core' members of the ruling party have started doubting the credibility of the government to construct the two hundred (200) Community Day Senior High Schools and the ten (10) Teacher Training Institutions it promised. This is borne out of the fact that no meaningful constructions of the promised schools have started two years into the administration of the government. The government remains hopeful and assuring its critics that the two hundred Community Day Senior High Schools and the ten Teacher Training Institutions are still the priority of government and would be provided by 2016.

4.3 Challenges and Implications

The education reform jigsaw that characterizes Ghana school system poses several challenges in the quest to settle on an effective, efficient and acceptable school system capable of ameliorating the developmental challenges facing Ghana after fifty five years of independence. This paper identified some major challenges that have affected the Ghanaian school system in the fourth republic as a result of reforming and counter reforming or reviewing of the school system.

First and foremost the new education reform introduced by the NPP government in 2007 was hurriedly implemented without considering the political and economic consequences. Extending the duration of the SHS from three to four years demanded an expansion of infrastructure such as classroom blocks, library facilities, laboratories, dining halls, dormitories, teachers and their like to take care of the extra one year extension. There was no such plan on sight or budget to increase these facilities and personnel to cater for the excess numbers. This phenomenon put lots of pressure on the NDC government (which won the 2008 general elections) to provide the over-500 public Senior High Schools all facilities needed especially classroom blocks and teachers. This had huge financial implication that could neither be delayed nor postponed. In the quest to surmount this infrastructure challenges, the NDC government went on borrowing spree domestically and externally to fix the dislocations of the education reform introduced by its predecessor in August 2007. Another implication was that the NDC government was left with no financial acumen to undertake other meaningful developmental projects in the health, agriculture, roads and housing sectors; at least for almost two years after assumption of power.

Another challenge facing the school system is the constant and the unabated reviews or reforms motivated by political considerations rather than based on national consensus. The reversal of the August 2007 education reform that extended the duration of the SHS from three to four years and the subsequent re-reversal by the NDC government from four to three years was a manifesto campaign promise. The reversal of the four to three years SHS by the NDC government brought some crisis to the education sector. The last batch of the four years under the Education Reform introduced in August 2007 and the first batch of then three year batch wrote the West

Africa Senior School Certificate (WASSCE) at the same period in 2013. A total of 409,753 candidates took part in the exam (Daily Graphic, 2013:22). By this number, there was bound to be admission crisis in Ghana's seven public universities. The public universities could not even admit a quarter of these students. In a desperate attempt to help absorb these multitudes of students, the government released GHC 7 million to public tertiary institutions to expand infrastructure in order to increase student intake (Daily Graphic, 2013:22). It has also lifted the admission quota it imposed on Teacher Training Colleges across the country. The objective was to allow those institutions to also increase student intake. The quota system was meant to curtail the huge budget allocation as allowances to teacher trainees. Hence, allowing these colleges to increase student intake has a huge financial implication. The government has therefore abolished allowances to teacher trainees in Ghana effective August 1, 2013. This decision by government has received condemnation from students, Teacher Associations, parents and other stakeholders in education.

However, no meaningful infrastructure could have taken place within four months to the start of the academic year. The public tertiary institutions did marginally increased student intake. But that could not provide access to many of the qualified applicants. Currently, some of the public universities are finding it difficult to manage the numbers at lecture halls, while many more qualified are roaming on the streets without access to their preferred tertiary institution. Already, three public universities, namely, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, the University of Mines and Technology, in Tarkwa (UMAT) and the University of Cape Coast have publicly indicated their unwillingness to offer admissions to about 150,000 candidates who are billed to write the 2014 West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). The three universities indicated that by the time the 2014 WASSCE candidates start their examination, the admission process would have been closed.

A critical analysis of the situation stems from the two batches of four and three year SHS. The public universities could not admit half of the over four hundred thousand students who applied to pursue various programmes in the public universities. Many candidates as well as parents prefer to attend public universities for economic reasons. Parents are unable to pay the exorbitant tuition fees, library fee and accommodation. This explains why in spite of the many private universities available in Ghana, many parents and students still wants their wards enrolled in the state sponsored universities. Accordingly, those who could not gain admission and are at home alone can feed the various public universities without to wait for fresh applicants from the SHS's across the country.. The implication is that Ghana may have to continue to deny qualified applicants admission into these public institutions for the next four to five years before the situation could be normalized. Ghana's school system will continue to suffer from hasty school reforms until the politicians refrain from the unnecessary interferences and counter-interferences in the management of Ghana's school system.

3.4 Lessons

Reforming Ghana's educational system is a colonial legacy. Every Governor came with new Education reforms to correct some identifiable problems inherent in the sector. The major Education reforms undertaken in the Gold Coast included that of Governor Roger and Sir Gordon Guggisberg. These trends continue to plague Ghana's education sector after independence. Every government (whether civilian or the military dictators) in one way or another introduced reforms in the educational sector. Ghana's school system will continue to be unstable until political parties and politicians reach a consensus to review the school system at an agreed period of time. The unabated education reviews/reforms that have become synonymous with alternation of political power are major contributory factors explaining the turbulent nature of Ghana's school system. It is unclear if the major opposition political party (the NPP) whose tenure in government introduced the 2007 reforms will also reverse the SHS education from three years to four years when they capture the levers of government in future general election.

5. Conclusion

The school system has undergone several metamorphoses both in structure and content from the colonial epoch to post-independence. Ghana's unabated reforms in education are attributed to the machinations of global economic forces though internal reasons driven by political scores are not discounted. The 1987 education reform which was a political as well as an economic imposition by the IMF/World Bank in an attempt to salvage the economic downturn of the Ghanaian economy faced a number of challenges which impeded its success. The nightmarish politicization of education in Ghana by political parties since 2000 has affected the effective execution of educational reforms as political ideologies and promises influenced the educational policies of political parties that won elections. Thus, the management of Ghana's educational system after fifty-five (55)

years of independence is still undergoing turbulent experimentation to fine-tune to an efficient and effective school system.

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