

The Challenge of Fee-Free Secondary Education and Educational Access in Ghana: A Reflection on the Past, Realities and Feasible Choices

Ato Essuman

Institute of Education and Entrepreneurship, Methodist University College Ghana,
P. O. Box DC940, Dansoman, Accra, Ghana

Abstract

In 2001, the Government of Ghana introduced subsidies at the Senior High School meant to reduce the burden on parents and guardians of wards in such schools. Since 2012, there has been an intensive debate on fee-free senior high school education in Ghana. While some see this as preposterous and unimaginable, others consider it as a poverty alleviation option and a panacea to providing the required cadre of youths with skills needed for the economic development of Ghana. This paper considers the feasibility of how such a policy may improve access to senior high school education in Ghana and be sustained. The paper examines some policies and practices on funding secondary education in Ghana. Findings suggest that a uniform fee-free policy approach will include a sizeable number of students who do not need to be supported by government in the secondary schooling. The study further finds out that demand for secondary education, particularly, regarding low income families may not always be dependent solely on fee free secondary education but on other cost variables, including opportunity costs and perceived economic returns from such education. The study concludes with some feasible choices on the need to adopt painstaking approaches to identify those who are needy and a fundamental objective for such policies to benefit the poor.

Keywords: Universalization of secondary education, policies and practices, pro-poor targeting, secondary education financing.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2001, the Government of Ghana introduced subsidies at the Senior High School meant to reduce the burden on parents and guardians of wards in such schools. Since 2012, there has been an intensive debate on fee-free senior high school education in Ghana. While some see this as preposterous and unimaginable, others consider it as a poverty alleviation option and a panacea to providing the required cadre of youths with skills needed for the economic development of Ghana. The debate on fee-free secondary education has been the main driving force of the manifestoes of leading political parties in Ghana. This paper seeks to wade into the debate of its feasibility or otherwise. The discussions that follow tease-out specific areas of opportunity, and offer choices that could impact on the sustainability of implementing such a policy.

Literature Review: The review of relevant literature will place the whole debate on the challenges of Fee-Free education and education access in Ghana in the right context and perspective. It will focus attention on other regions where fee-free education has been introduced. There will be analysis of what has informed the debate in countries where such policies have been implemented. Whether it has been politics or the need for human capacity development. From this, points of convergence and divergence from the Ghanaian situation will be critiqued and gaps in scholarship of relevant literature highlighted.

Education Financing in Ghana: This section will seek to raise the issues and examine the trajectory of the funding of secondary education in Ghana over the years. It raises the issues of trends, sources and patterns of education financing in Ghana. Additionally, an assessment of various interventions and major programmes will be done in order to look at the nuances that underpinned their introduction, the drivers of such policies and the effects it has had on the direction of education financing in Ghana and the lessons for future programmes.

Discussions: Evidence derived from other regions that have implemented such policies against the realities of education financing, the feasibilities, practicalities and challenges of Fee-Free Secondary education will be analyzed.

Conclusions will look at some feasible choices on the need to adopt painstaking approaches to identify those who are needy and a fundamental objective for such policies to benefit the poor. Although, the paper focuses on Ghana, there are obviously some implications and messages for countries in sub-Saharan Africa since many of them have shared similar aspirations as Ghana.

2. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this paper is to critique the policy of the fee-free senior high school education and discuss its feasibility or otherwise and to tease-out specific areas of opportunity, and offer choices that could impact on the sustainability of implementing such a policy. It is a reflective analysis rooted in both historical and contemporary

expressions of the evolution of education financing in Ghana over 5 decades by means of participant observation and documentary analysis. As a past ‘insider’ of education policy formulation and management, in the capacity as the Chief Director of the Ministry of Education, I located and reviewed extensively documents from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance and other governmental reports, including government White Papers on various Commissions on education. My work also involved the review of journal articles on education financing in general and as they related to Ghana in particular. Studies commissioned by the government of Ghana and development partners were also examined. In a number of cases discussions were held with some stakeholders to gain further insights on issues and their various perspectives.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Expanding access to secondary education has become an increasingly urgent issue, often as a result of the universalization of primary education. However, in many African countries including Ghana, governments are faced with limited capacity in secondary schools to accommodate all primary school leavers. The reason for this has been that much of public investments in the last three decades have been devoted to primary education, leaving the efforts of expanding secondary education to the private sector or local communities. This has resulted in the growth of nongovernmental secondary schools (Lewin & Sayed, 2005).

3.1 Advocacy for more investment in secondary education

Article 13(2b) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights aptly states that “Secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational secondary education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education.”

Lewin (2008) points out the neglect of secondary education in policy making. He further postulates that many a time, policy on secondary education has come from the residues of other policies. He enumerates some reasons why the financing of secondary education should be paramount in the policy planning of many countries especially those in sub Saharan Africa. He stated that free universalization of primary education has increased in several folds the number of children completing primary education. Thus, there is a need to invest and look at financing options for secondary school in order to increase access. Furthermore, secondary education is key to the achievement of some targets of the millennium development goals. Promoting gender equality and removing disparities in the school system cannot be achieved without expanding access to education at the secondary level.

Bergman and Stallmeister (2001); Lewin and Calloids (2001) identify some key reasons for the increase in investment and widening of secondary school access in Sub Saharan Africa. They point out that, in the 21st century where there is increased need for knowledge to meet the transformations in the technologically advanced world, opening access to secondary education for the masses of uneducated cannot be taken for granted. Also, in an era where the youth are at risk of picking social vices that could be detrimental to the progress of African nations, investing and opening access to secondary education will be key in fostering positive social and civic values among them. Additionally, the limitations of primary education to help students develop job oriented skills, and thus an increased private rate of return place a lot more responsibility on investing in secondary education. However, Bray (2002) stresses that a larger proportion of government expenditure to education as a percentage of GDP does not necessarily mean greater financial commitment of government to education. He postulates that the reason for the relatively higher proportion of public expenditure on education in Africa in recent years is often due to the fact that there is a relatively higher ratio of teachers’ salaries to national expenditure on education than in Asian countries.

3.2 Increased Access to secondary education should be driven by strong economic growth

Bergman and Stallmeister (2001) assert that African countries are faced with the problem of expanding access to secondary education in the light of weak economies and limited financial resources. They argue further that African countries are handicapped in the light of the scarce resources at their disposal in their attempt to expand access to secondary education, increase quality and equity at the same time without diverting resources at the primary school level. This problem is compounded by the very high unit cost of secondary education in Africa. They advocated for the increase in public funding of secondary education and also increasing efficiency internally in order to make secondary school financing more cost effective (Lewin and Calloids, 2001). In East Asia however secondary school expansion has been successful. The success story was hinged on the strong economic growth of these East Asian nations. Morris and Sweeting (1995) argue that significant change in the economy preceded secondary education expansion and that economic development induced such progress.

Consequently, the increased government revenues enabled those countries to financially allocate more budgets to the secondary education sector. Compared to most African countries scoring less than 3.0% or negative growth, Asian countries between 1965 and 1986 had a gross domestic product of more than 4% e.g. Singapore- 7.6%, South Korea- 6.7%, Hong Kong- 6.2% and Malaysia- 4.3% (World Bank 1988). The African

Development Bank has argued that the successful economic stories of the East Asian tigers in the 1970's and 80's could partly be attributed to the massive investments in secondary education (Bruno, 2014).

Bergman and Stallmeister (2001) pointed out the role the private sector could play in secondary school financing, citing Botswana and Lesotho as examples of where there have been targeted financing mechanisms in the form of grants and subsidies to some private schools. They further suggested other modes of increasing cost effectiveness by altering the structure of the education system, modes of delivery, improving internal efficiency among many others. Patrinos et al (2009), outlines six possible public private partnerships in education.

- i. Private sector philanthropy initiative
- ii. School management initiative: certain aspects of schools are managed by private hands whilst schools still remain publicly owned and funded.
- iii. Purchase of educational services from private schools: governments finance the education of students in private schools. This is normally done in areas where governments want to increase access to education.
- iv. School voucher system: a voucher system that allows parents to choose either the private or public school they prefer. Payments are either made directly to schools or to parents. The aim of voucher programmes could be to either improve quality or increase access.
- v. Provision of Infrastructure: private sector builds and operates infrastructure and the government goes into contract to use the facilities for the running of school.
- vi. Capacity Building: "There is a wide range of possible initiatives ranging from curriculum and pedagogical support; management and administrative training; textbook provision; teacher training; and the development of support networks, professional partnerships and linkages".

The World Bank (2005) described boarding schools as effigies of colonial times that were inappropriate for the kind of mass school in contemporary times considering the costs associated with them. Akyeampong (2005) points out that boarding fees alone constituted about 60% of total student cost of the Ghanaian secondary school student in 2002. For the 2010/2011 academic year whereas boarding students paid 329 cedis, day students paid 160 cedis. The cost of boarding secondary schools in Zambia was more than 4 times higher than that of day schools (Bennell et al, 2005). Unlike Anglophone countries where elective boarding systems are common, boarding systems are virtually unknown in francophone countries. In instances where students attend secondary school away from town, arrangements are made with other family members. Although cost of living with family members is borne privately, it is cheaper compared to costs associated with formal fees in boarding houses (World Bank 2007).

3.3 Targeting the vulnerable

Lewin (2008) argues that systems which adopt selective fee waivers are able to achieve the target of increasing enrolment compared to systems that adopt a completely fee-free secondary system. There is more equity in systems that adopt selective fee waivers in comparison to fee-free systems. In Nepal, children from the Dalit community, the Janajati ethnic groups and households living in abject poverty are exempted from paying fees at the secondary school level. Also, in Bangladesh financial barriers to secondary education have been removed for girls with the introduction of stipends. This has helped improve their numbers in schools at the secondary level and has resulted in more girls enrolling in secondary schools than boys (UNESCO 2012). Malawi in its quest to reduce dropout rates among teenage girls sought to also use the cash transfer system (UNESCO, 2102).

Lee (2002) further posits that other than subsidizing schools, direct transfers were more appropriate as they made sure support went to those who actually needed it. Raynor (2006) gave examples of how in the Bangladeshi's government quest in 1982 to increase female enrolment and retention in secondary school led to the introduction of monthly stipends, and other additional payments in terms of exams and book fees as they progressed. With the program being hugely successful, it was extended in 1994. The Poor Students Trust Fund (KWAPM) was also instituted in Malaysia to cater for the educational needs of students from families below the poverty line.

Unlike primary education where there is a lot of concerted effort at the international level, coupled with aid, secondary education receives less aid and attention both at the national and local level. Aid to secondary education in most developing nations could best be described as patchy (World Bank 1995 Priorities and Strategies for education). Govinda (2003) asserts that there is a tendency for most secondary schools to be cited in urban areas. This, he acknowledges, has an effect of marginalizing the already marginalized from education. He further states that in expanding access to secondary education there was a need to balance the quantity, quality and equity. He gave examples of how some of East Asian tigers expanded secondary education.

Thailand in 1991 did targeted expansion. Lower level education was made free for students in selected villages. In India, expansion focused on primarily four main groups. These included street children, ethnic minorities, rural settlers and child labourers. Each group had specific programmes that targeted their special needs. For rural settlers, the government started by building pace setter schools. The government encouraged the

setting up of residential schools for ethnic minorities and also introduced residential bridge courses for street children and child labourers. Opening new educational facilities closer to households in need was one key way of reducing indirect costs (Lee, 2002).

A youth survey has revealed that among young Africans who are unemployed due to their lack of the skills required by employers, most had already completed secondary education, raising questions about the relevance of the secondary education they had received (AEO 2014). Furthermore, as Jon Lauglo points out: “for skills training to ease transition to work a certain threshold of quality and level of skill is likely to be needed” (Lauglo 2005, p. 33). However, without classroom learning closely linked with work experience, the skills acquired are bound to be superficial and unattractive to employers.

In the following sections, I focus on the experiences of India, Uganda and Kenya in their approaches to the delivery of secondary education.

3.4 Towards Achieving Universal/Free Secondary Education by 2020

Lewin (2011) touts the credentials of India’s phenomenal transformation in terms of its social, economic and political spheres that has seen the old Asian giant rising to become a major player in global affairs among other countries of the south like Brazil, China etc. Notwithstanding these transformations, issues on education including access, financing and management remain problematic.

3.4.1 India - universalizing secondary education.

The Indian government in 2001 launched a programme to universalize access to elementary education. In 2007, the goal shifted to universalizing secondary education. Unlike elementary education, the Indian constitution does not guarantee commitment to making secondary and post-secondary education free. Prior to the implementation of the Universalization program in 2007, the highest advisory body on education in India set up a subcommittee in 2004 to prepare a blue print for the programme. At the end of the subcommittees work, they made three major recommendations.

- i. The Universal Secondary School program should be guided by certain principles. These included universal access, structural and curricular considerations, social justice and equity.
- ii. The program should be decentralized with each state developing its own plan.
- iii. The government needed to increase the education budget of secondary and elementary which stood at 5.1% of GDP to 6% in order to achieve the target of universalization of secondary education (CABE 2005).

These recommendations were thus captured in the policy document that was to guide the implementation of the programme.

The Prime Minister at the launch of the Universalization of Secondary education succinctly posited:

“We are setting out the goal of universalizing secondary education. This is clearly the next step after universalizing elementary education. While the goal is laudable much work needs to be done before we are in a position to launch the Scheme for Universalization of Access for Secondary Education. Its details need to be quickly spelt out and discussed with States so that we are fully ready to launch it from 2008-2009. *We must not underestimate the complexity of this task as the principles for universalizing elementary education cannot be easily transferred to secondary education* (emphasis mine). The physical, financial, pedagogical and human resource needs are quite different.”(Lewin, 2011 p 30).

World Bank (2009) affirm that at the heart of justification of increased public spending on secondary education is the importance of secondary education to economic growth and poverty alleviation. Current studies show a 40% gap in secondary school enrollment between students from rich households and poor households. In India, there is a 20% point gap among urban and rural dwellers in terms of secondary school enrollment (ibid). It states further that in order to achieve the target of making secondary education universal by 2020, it is necessary for policy to bridge the 20% gap among the urban and rural dwellers in terms of secondary education enrollment. Secondary education constitutes less than a third of public expenditure on education. About US\$7.2 billion per year is spent on secondary education with less than 10% of this amount going into investment. Although India’s current per student spending of 27% GDP per capita is higher than the 18% benchmark for fast growing economies, more funding is needed if the goal of the Universalization programme is to be met. In the particular case of India, the World Bank (2009) suggests 4 ways by which India could increase funding to secondary education. Firstly, there was the need to increase overall government spending on education and secondary education in particular. Secondly, unit costs of secondary education must be reduced. Thirdly, contributions from private sources should increase. Fourthly, external support should be sought.

In further advancing the agenda 2020, the Indian government launched a programme to enhance the goals of secondary education in April 2009. The programme was tagged Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan. The major target of the scheme was (i) Universal access of Secondary level education to all students in the age group 15-16 years by 2015 by providing a secondary school within 5 kilometers of any habitation and a higher secondary school within 7 kilometers of any habitation and (ii) Universal retention by 2010. Enrollment rate was

to increase within 5 years of the launch of the programme from 56% to 75%. The government was to pump close to \$12million into the programme. With more than a half of secondary school students being enrolled in private schools, the programme identified the need for closer public private partnership to achieve the goal of universalizing secondary education access by 2020. Under this scheme 6,000 model schools were to be built with over 2,500 of these schools to be built through Private Public Partnerships (PPP). Many more states are now adopting the private sector provision of infrastructure approach (Sankar 2011).

3.4.2 Free Secondary Education in Uganda

Uganda started a universally free secondary school education in 2007, the first of its kind in the sub Saharan region. Although tagged as free, government paid only the tuition while students paid boarding and other scholastic fees. The universal secondary education was essentially aimed at increasing access into secondary schools and also to increase the quality of education. The free secondary education was also geared at sustaining the gains of the universal primary education. This was at a time when enrollment from the free universal primary education had resulted in a 136% increase from 1997 to 2006. There was a huge deficit in terms of transition rate to secondary schools as only 20% of primary children made it to secondary education by 1997 (Wener 2011). Universal Secondary Education was also part of Yoweri Museveni's re-election promises during the 2006 elections.

One cannot rule out political undertones in the coming to being of the policy. Thus, the roots of the universal secondary education could best be described as political. Beyond it being an electoral issue, international conventions like the EFA and the millennium development goals influenced the implementation of the policy. The programme was run on a pilot basis for a year before its full-scale implementation in 2007. It was launched at a time when only one fifth of Uganda's 25million populations had ever had access to secondary education. The majority of those who had access were of the richer class in society. Thus, the pilot programme targeted more of the low-income rural dwellers (Werner 2011; MoES, 2006). The Ugandan Ministry of Education & Sport (MOES) in anticipation of some challenges put in place some strategies that were aimed at reducing the unit cost of secondary education, creating more spaces for students and increasing efficiency. Among the strategies adopted were:

- a. Curriculum reduction and consolidation of subjects. By 2015, the A two track vocational/academic curriculum was adopted. This was changed to a four-year general secondary curriculum in 2015 that emphasized competencies for the work force and further education;
- b. Increased teacher-pupil ratios and minimum class sizes;
- c. Rationalization of teacher workloads and the number of subjects each teacher teaches;
- d. Introduction of double shifts and multi-grade classrooms;
- e. Decentralization of school management and curriculum planning to schools; and
- f. Redeployment of teachers to better meet demands (Jacob and Lehner 2011)

The implementation of the free Universal secondary education increased enrollment from 412,367 in 2007 to 1,194,000 in 2010 (Jacob and Lehner 2011).

3.4.3 Kenya's Free Secondary Education.

Ohba (2009) asserts that there had been several attempts to introduce free secondary education in Kenya since its independence. The politics of aspiration coupled with the increased numbers from basic school leavers limited the quality of delivery. Several factors needed to be reviewed for the successful implementation of the free senior secondary school. These included a change of syllabus to include the needs and aspirations of several other groups who were hitherto sidelined due to the issue of cost in accessing secondary education. The issue of increasing the number of teachers to cater for the increased numbers needed to be addressed. There was also the need to increase efficiency in the running of secondary education in order to reduce the unit cost. These were the key issues introduced with the aim of helping to reduce the unit cost of financing secondary education and to allow for the excess funds to cater for the increased numbers.

Unlike the free primary education that was necessitated by international conventions like the Jomtien Education for All (EFA) Declaration in 1990 and the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000. The free secondary school programme was a partial response to political promises made during the 2007 general elections.

"The main objective of providing free secondary education is to ensure that children from poor households acquire a quality education that enables them to access opportunities for self-advancement and become productive members of society". (Ministry of Education of Kenya, 2012).

Secondary education accounts for over 23% of the total education budget in Kenya. This compares favorably against Ghana where secondary education accounted for 14.4% of the total education budget between 2008 and 2011 (MOE, 2012). Secondary school education in Kenya is financed by two main sources. These include capitation from government and support from the private sector. The private sector consist of households who take care of boarding fee charges and others like faith based organizations, community based organizations and NGO's who mainly complement the work of government in the building of infrastructure (Ministry of Education of Kenya 2012). Oyugi (2010), stated that the introduction of free SHS in Kenya saw substantial

reduction in fees but did not completely abolish fees. Transition rate from primary to secondary school increased from 59.9% to 66% just a year after the introduction of the free secondary school policy. Although it led to increased access, one out of three households are still marginalized from secondary education. Fees are levied as a remedy to the delay in government subventions and subsidies, although these are not officially sanctioned by the Kenyan government.

The introduction of free SHS in Kenya came with its own challenges. These included large class sizes, the increased number of untrained teachers as a result of the need to recruit more teachers to cater for the increasing numbers and a growing government deficit. Furthermore, the government struggles to cater for the growing numbers of students at the secondary school level with huge deficits in terms of the number of schools. Hitherto, governments in Kenya never provided finances for the acquisition of learning materials at the secondary level, but with the introduction of 'affordable secondary schooling' from 2008, these expenditures are now financed by government (Otieno and Colclough 2009).

The introduction of the free secondary school resulted in student transition from primary to secondary school hitting an all-time high of 72% in 2010 from 56% in 2005. Secondary enrolment rate improved from 28.8 per cent in 2005, to 47.8 per cent in 2010. Enrolment has increased from 1.03 million students in 2006 to over 1.7 million pupils by 2010 (Radoli 2011; Ministry of Education of Kenya 2010). Ohba (2009) in his research on free secondary school education in Kenya concluded that the 40 percent of the richest children constituted close to 74% of children in secondary schools.

4. REFLECTIONS ON PAST POLICIES

Ghana operates on a 6 - 3 - 3 - 4 educational system: Primary School – 6 years, Junior Secondary/High School – 3 years, Senior High School – 3 years, University Bachelor's degree – 4 years. The Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education, popularly known as FCUBE, was introduced in 1996. The FCUBE aimed to achieve universal primary education by 2005. The introduction of the FCUBE was largely under the influence of the donor partners. This was after the World Education Conference in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 recommended the increased focus on primary education. The programme was also in partial fulfillment of 1992 Fourth Republican Constitutional mandate which stated in Chapter 6, section 38 sub-section 2 that: *The Government shall, within two years after Parliament first meets after the coming into force of this Constitution, draw up a programme for implementation within the following ten years, for the provision of Free, Compulsory and Universal Basic Education for all Ghanaian children of school-going age* (The Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992:35). The FCUBE had four main objectives. These were to:

- i. improve the Quality of Teaching and Learning;
- ii. improve Management Efficiency and Sustainability;
- iii. increase Access and Participation; and
- iv. to decentralize the Management of the Education Sector (MOE, 1996, p 15).

It was to be funded by the government of Ghana and through a multi-donor support programme. This intervention led to a rise in enrolment of primary school going age. By the 1999 the number had increased to 57% and later to 65% in 2004 (UNESCO 2006).

The expected coordinated donor support for the FCUBE programme did not come to fruition as major donors like the US, UK among others channelled their support to the sector through individual country programmes. Thus, there were similar projects being financed by three of the major players in the FCUBE programme. The lack of coordination among the financiers of the FCUBE led to a restructuring of the design and funding structure of the programme during a mid-term review. The running of three major similar programmes by donors resulted in the increase in transactional costs borne by the government of Ghana. Additionally, the districts could not manage and sustain the programmes as they lacked the needed capacity to contain three huge programmes running concurrently (Ayamdoo et al 2008). Although the FCUBE programme managed to reduce fees substantially at the primary level, some fees were still being collected. Akyeamong (2009) stressed "*the biggest challenge Ghana faces in its attempt to achieve education for all by 2015 was how to significantly increase and sustain attendance from the poorest households. Lessons from FCUBE suggest that as enrolment expands effort should be made to improve and maintain quality to ensure demand*" He asserts further that, until there is a focus on the poor households, monies will be continuously wasted on rich homes that do not need such help (ibid.). The programme also faced acute shortages of teachers especially in the rural areas. This further deepened the teacher/pupil ratios and academic performance as well as regional disparity. Poor supervision also affected negatively the impact of the FCUBE programme (World Bank, 1999; MOESS 2008).

The Capitation Grant Scheme was introduced in 2004-2005 on a pilot scheme to enhance the FCUBE programme. The grant scheme was expected to make education at the basic level fee-free. It was to eliminate all fees and levies at the basic level. It was up scaled to the national level in the 2005/2006 academic year. The pilot scheme led to 14.5% increases in enrolment in the 53 pilot districts. The net enrollment was further increased from 59.1% in 2004/5 to 81.1% in 2006/7 (MOE 2007). Despite the success chalked in the increased enrolment,

there were challenges of managing large class sizes, delays in funds transfers to schools, inadequate textbooks and teaching and learning materials, cumbersome bureaucratic procedures and inadequate capacity for accounting by heads of schools (Ampratwum and Armah-Attoh, 2010). Other interventions like the school feeding programme, free exercise books and textbooks and school uniforms further enhanced access to education in Ghana but had similar problems like earlier interventions. Lack of coordination, inadequate funding and bureaucratic bottlenecks characterised these programmes.

4.1 SOURCES/TRENDS OF EDUCATION FINANCING IN GHANA

Table 1: Expenditure on Education (2011 – 2018)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Budget 2018
Educ. Exp. as % of GDP	6.5	7.6	6.1	6.2	6.3	5.1	4.5	4.2
Educ. Exp. as % of GOG Expenditure	25.8	27.2	20.7	21.8	22.2	16.7	17.8	16.7

Source: Ministry of Education, 2018

UNESCO and the AU recommend that 6% of GDP should be allocated to the education sector. Evidence from the table shows that from 2011 to 2015 Ghana met the target, until 2016 when it started declining. It is instructive to note that the provision for 2018 is the lowest so far, a period when more allocation is rather needed.

Resource Allocation

Table 2 (a): Trends in Expenditure by level of Education

Sources	2008		2009		2010		2011	
	Amt. (GH¢)	%	Amt. (GH¢)	%	Amt. (GH¢)	%	Amt. (GH¢)	%
Pre-school	65,901,027	3.8	60,272,779	3.1	72,036,051	2.8	103,391,337	2.9
Primary	613,661,054	35	594,950,694	30.5	715,160,506	27.9	1,234,146,460	34.6
JHS	292,419,320	16.8	297,665,072	15.3	370,235,825	14.4	411,648,553	11.5
SHS	171,058,251	9.8	337,369,027	17.3	400,030,646	15.6	526,809,606	14.8
TVET	18,311,207	1.1	35,038,819	1.8	38,436,313	1.5	126,982,366	3.6
SPED	10,662,566	0.6	7,493,238	0.4	17,214,633	0.7	19,149,996	0.5
NFED	6,327,284	0.4	3,715,031	0.2	13,357,023	0.5	15,154,167	0.4
Teacher Education	55,274,368	3.2	50,377,753	2.6	62,056,093	2.4	-	-
Tertiary	378,615,134	21.7	401,191,936	20.6	511,806,744	20	639,230,889	17.9
Mgt. &Subvtd	130,011,299	7.5	160,837,566	8.2	362,459,208	14.1	487,809,862	13.7
HIV-AIDS	1,330,209	0.1	856,499	0	1,570,316	0.1	1,387,335	0.04
Total	1,743,571,719	100	1,949,768,414	100	2,564,363,357	100	3,565,710,570	100

Source: MOE, 2012

Basic education receives the highest in the education expenditure (35%), followed by tertiary (18%) and secondary education (15%). Commitment to technical and vocational education has been mere rhetoric from government to government. This reflects in resources allocated to the division over the years. With the exception of 2011 when technical and vocational education received an allocation of 3.6% of total education expenditure, in all the prior year's allocation had been less than 2% falling to its lowest in 2008 – 1.1% of total spending in education. Governments over the years have sought to give priority to TVET. With the introduction of the Free SHS policy, clearly there one should expect enhanced competing interests among the various sub-sectors of education, vis-à-vis, primary, tertiary and TVET with secondary education. Perhaps, table 2 (b), stresses the above point better.

Table 2(b): Education Expenditure by level and source (capital and recurrent), 2013

Level	GoG		ABFA ¹		GETFund		IGF		Donor	
	Exp.	%	Exp. (GHS)	%	Exp. (GHS)	%	Exp. (GHS)	%	Exp. (GHS)	%
Pre-sch.	346,123,252	7.7	-	-	3,697,072	2	-	-	13,679,113	5
Prim.	1,219,960,251	27.1	-	-	32,605,514	17	-	-	136,226,810	51
JHS	898,694,253	20	-	-	5,802,317	3	-	-	60,620,578	23
SHS	838,904,968	18.6	-	-	22,369,462	11	286,427,504	40	4,363,061	2
TVET	66,306,361	1.5	-	-	751,629	0	21,559,059	3	14,422,382	5
SPED	23,447,592	0.5	-	-	3,952,507	2	-	-	664,286	0
NFED	31,172,245	0.7	-	-	187,130	0	-	-	8,592,631	3
Tertiary	595,471,839	13.2	9,113,628	100	99,594,475	51	395,593,954	55	6,509,433	2
Mgt. & Agencies	483,696,828	10.7	-	-	27,689,307	14	14,685,124	2	23,793,750	9
Total	4,503,777,590	100	9,113,628	100	196,649,413	100	718,265,642	100	268,872,043	100

Source: MOE, 2013

From the sources of financing, 40% of Internally Generated Funds² (IGF) expenditure was on SHS, while 18.6% of the GoG was spent on SHS. Only 2.0% of donor fund was also spent on SHS. According to the MOE (2014), GhC724,423,897 of the GhC838,904,968 education expenditure covered employees' compensations that constitute 86.0% of the expenditure at that level. This revelation resonates with Yamda's (2005) assertion that even though many African states appear to be spending more on education, a sizable portion of this is used to pay salaries. Clearly, this has implications on quality. Thus, the reason for the relatively higher proportion of public expenditure on education in Africa in recent years as a percentage of GDP does not necessarily mean greater financial commitment of government to education. The examples of Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia, are cited as countries that teacher's salaries took up the largest chunk of recurrent education expenditure (Yamda, 2005).

Furthermore, Table 2(b) reveals that 24.9% of the SHS budget is covered by IGF. This indicates that finances of the school activities have largely been sourced from their IGF. This implies that much of the cost of SHS is charged to parents. Ultimately, this has the potential of eliminating those with limited financial resources (poor households) from participating in secondary education. The free SHS policy is expected to address the situation of the vulnerable, but the problem is with dwindling fund allocation and other competing interest, the hope of adequate funding of the sector may be far-fetched.

5. DISCUSSION

Admittedly, an introduction of a fee-free senior secondary school education in Ghana is laudable. However, in the light of evidence gathered from other regions that have initiated similar programmes, coupled with reflections from the past policy implementations and outcomes, the idea requires careful consideration. The definition of what is meant by free remains a thorny area that has to be addressed. Will free mean taking care of all direct and indirect cost? What will be free and what will not be free? What will constitute the free education will be a real challenge. There is a danger in parents defining free in absurd and unrealistic terms. Tuition remains free in all secondary schools in Ghana. What constitutes the other half of the school fees include sports, library, examination, SRC, entertainment, bed user fee, PTA and computer usage. Others include; science development, staff incentive and teacher motivation, development levy, speech and prize-giving, textbooks, and supplementary literature. The rest are: exercise books, 3 note books, NHIS, house dues. How will government deal with these assorted items on the bills of students at the secondary level which are different depending on the school? Will government take care of all these other costs or will it scrap them? The position at this stage is that everything will be taken care of, including school uniforms.

As noted earlier, Akyeampong (2005) points out that, boarding fees alone constituted about 60% of total student cost of the Ghanaian secondary school student in 2002. For the 2010/ 2011 academic year, boarding students paid 329 cedis, compared to day students who paid 160 cedis. With the high cost involved in boarding schools and a research showing that more than 65% of students in secondary school are in the boarding houses, this raises real challenges in the financing of a free SHS programme, i.e. What criteria would be used for who will be a day student and who becomes a border? What about if the majority want to become borders because of the 'free'? Feeding and other fees that were hitherto taken care off by parents are therefore transferred at the secondary level to the government. Although this transfer of responsibility might be helpful to a lot of poor families, it may be unnecessary for some rich parents. There will be some form of discrimination against day students if governments decide to absorb the fees of boarding students as some are in day schools due to limited spaces available. This would further increase the pressure on more students wanting to go to the boarding houses.

¹ ABFA= Annual Budget Funding Amount. This is part of the inflows from the oil revenue used to support the annual budget of the Government.

² IGF – These are funds generated by the schools themselves through economic activities of hiring of facilities.

Pragmatically, encouraging more day school and less of boarding houses should be the right way to go. An attempt to implement the free SHS programme could have either adopted the building of more community day schools with all the relevant facilities or the Indian Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan programme where secondary schools are to be built within every 7 kilometers of any locality. In a sense, there will be the need for school mapping to identify areas that new schools may be located.

The introduction of various interventions in Ghana's educational system, from FCUBE, capitation grant etc., has always led to a significant increase in enrollment. This increase has come with its own challenges. This phenomenon is not peculiar to the Ghanaian situation as the case studies have revealed. Thus, adequate measures should be put in place before such a programmes are rolled out. The expansion of existing infrastructure to address the challenge of overcrowded classrooms is normally associated with the introduction of such interventions. Where will the money come from? Will governments find money to do that or will it partner the private sector? The quantum leap in enrollment further aggravates the teacher to student ratios. The need for training of more teachers cannot be overemphasized. This is critical to avoid the Kenyan example where increased numbers led to the recruitment of more untrained teacher. This has the tendency of affecting the quality of the already falling education standards. With the majority of investment in education going into the personal emolument (PE) of workers, the need to recruit more teachers would further push up the PE budgets to the detriment of real investment in education. The general expectation has been that with the production of oil, the country will see significant changes in the education budget. Figures from table 1 point to the fact that the education budget has increased from 2011 to 2018. This notwithstanding, a lot still goes into personal emoluments other than actual investment.

5.1 MATTERS FOR POLICY CONSIDERATION

Debates about making secondary education free often focus on issues about access and not enough about the content and the outcomes expected. Matters about skill development, teacher re-orientation and training and development as well as new pedagogical approaches are less stressed. Clearly, a fair attention to all these is likely to produce the students ready to transition either to the tertiary level or the world of work. The policy of making secondary education free and available to all is a lofty one, but such a goal would be useless and needlessly expensive if all it does is to create opportunities to give young people access without the skills that will make them great assets for nation's development. Reforming what would be taught, and how they are taught are more important, otherwise the problems are likely to be compounded.

The policy on community participation in education appears to be threatened by the policy implications of the free SHS. A key aspiration of decentralised education service delivery is that this would allow local communities to support education and improve the quality of provision. However if schools and their local communities are to share in this responsibility, then the decentralisation policy should place as much emphasis on what schools, teachers and parents should and can do for communities to strengthen the partnership (Essuman and Akyeampong, 2011).

The free Senior High School seem to exclude parents and communities from making financial contribution in relation to their ward's schooling. There are strict rules and regulations on this and heads of schools that flout the directives are sanctioned. The need for policy synchronization cannot be overemphasized in this context. The policy on the free SHS would benefit from deeper reflection on the local factors which can shape outcomes. As indicated in a study on community school relations, Essuman (2008), points out that policies should envisage opportunities where schools and their local communities work together to improve educational outcomes.

From the discussions above on the feasibilities, prospects and challenges of implementing the free secondary education in Ghana, it would have been desirable if a gradualist approach or a phased implementation of the Fee-Free policy had been adopted. That may have led to better management of the policy and of resources and improve quality and to gaining the most from such a policy. Clearly, in a country where we are still grappling with the problem of inadequate resources, policies like the free SHS should have started by targeting the poor. Although this seems an arduous task in a country where a lot of income is earned in the informal sector thereby making it difficult to assess family's income level, the challenge of rolling out a holistic fee free SHS seem to be more daunting than targeting the poor. The reality however is that in some circumstances, who benefits from interventions such as free SHS is a deeply political question that signals the nature of power relations within a society or country (Domelen, 2007). In developing country contexts in particular, an issue to be considered is whether governments have the political will and sometimes, the capacity to follow through with pro-poor resource allocation even when a clear poverty map exists as sometimes priorities and perceptions of vulnerability may be quite different from what government or outsiders perceive.

REFERENCES

AEO (African Economic Outlook). (2014). Youth in African labour markets. Too many bad jobs in poor countries, too few jobs in middle income countries. Accessed 26 February 2014 from

- http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/in-depth/youth_employment/youth-in-african-labour-markets/.
- Akyeampong, Kwame (2009) *Revisiting free compulsory universal basic education (FCUBE) in Ghana*. Comparative Education, 45 (2). pp. 175-195. ISSN 0305-0068
- Akyeampong, K. (2008). Cost and financing Secondary education in Ghana: A Situational Analysis. In K. Lewin, *Strategies for Sustainable Financing of Secondary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Sussex : Center International Education, University of Sussex.
- Ampratwum, E., & Armah-attoh, D. (2010). *Tracking Capitation Grant In Public Primary Schools In Ghana*. . Accra : Ghana Center for Democratic Development, CDD-Ghana.
- Ayamdo, C., Casely-Hayford, L., Palmer, R., & Thompson, M. N. (2006). *Aid and Donor Partnerships'in the Ghana Education Sector: A critical Review of the Literature and Progress*. . Accra: Research Consortium on Education Outcomes and Poverty (RECOUP).
- Bennell, P., Bulwani, G., & Musikanga, M. (2005). Cost and Financing of Secondary Education in Zambia: A Situational Analysis. In K. Lewin, *Seeking Secondary Schooling in sub-Saharan Africa: Strategies for Sustainable Financing*. Washington D. C. : World Bank.
- Bray, M. (2002). *The Costs and Financing of Education:Trends and Policy Implications*. Manila and Pokfulam: Asian Development Bank and Comparative Education Research Centre.
- Bregman, J., & Stallmeister, S. (2002). Secondary Education in Africa (SEIA): A Regional Study of the Africa Region of the World Bank. In *Secondary Education in Africa:Strategies for Renewal* (pp. 4-26). Washington D C: World Bank.
- Bruno, S. (2014) *Development, Legitimacy, and the Role of the State: The Asian Tigers from Independence to Industrialization*. E-International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.
- Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE, 2005), *Committee on Universalization of Secondary Education – Report*. Ministry of Education, India.
- Domelen, J. (2017), *Reaching the Poor and Vulnerable: Targeting Strategies for Social Funds and other Community-Driven Programs*, Social Protection Discussion Paper No. 0711. World Bank.
- Essuman, A., & Akyeampong, K. (2011). Decentralisation policy and practice in Ghana: the promise and reality of community participation in education in rural communities. *Journal of Education Policy* , 513-527.
- Essuman, A. 2008. Education decentralisation: A review of policy, practice and outcomes, International Professional Doctorate, *Critical Analytical Review*, Sussex School of Education, Brighton: University of Sussex.
- Govinda. (2003). *Progress of Secondary Education in Asia: Challenges, Responses, and Lessons*. New Dehli: National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration.
- Jacob, J., & Lehner, S. (2011). *A Guide to Education Project Design Based on a Comprehensive Literature and Project Review*. USAID.
- Keith, L. (2008). *Strategies for Sustainable Financing of Secondary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Washington, D.C.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank.
- Lauglo, J., & Maclean, R. (Eds.). (2005). *Vocationalisation of secondary education revisited*. UNEVOC Technical and vocational education and training series. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Lee, W. (2002). : *Equity and Access to Education: Themes, Tensions, and Policies*. Manila: Asian Development Bank.
- Lewin, K. (1998). Education in emerging Asia: Patterns, policies, and futures into the 21st century. *Lewin, Keith M (1998) Education in emerging Asia: Patterns, policies, and futures into the 21st century*. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 81-118.
- Lewin, K. (2011). *Expanding access to secondary education: Can India catch up?* Sussex: Centre for International Education, Education Department, University of Sussex.
- Lewin, K., & Calloids, F. (2001). *Financing secondary education in developing countries, Strategies for sustainable growth*. Paris. IIEP-UNESCO.
- Lewin, K. M., & Sayed, Y. (2005). *Non-government Secondary Schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa.Exploring the Evidence in South Africa and Malawi*. . London: DFID.
- Lewin, K., & Calloids, F. (2001). *Financing Secondary Education in Developing Countries: Strategies for Sustainable Growth*. Paris: IIEP/UNESCO.
- Ministry of Education Science and Sports (MoESS) (2008) *Education Sector Performance Report 2008*, Accra: MoESS
- Morris, P., & Sweeting, A. (1995). *Education and development in East Asia*. New York: Garland Pub.
- Ohba, A. (2009). *The immediate assessment of the introduction of free secondary education in Kenya: Emerging issues*. Sussex: Centre for International Education University of Sussex.
- Oyugi, L. (2010). . *Public*. Nairobi : IPAR.
- Patrinos, H. A., Felipe, B.-O., & Guáqueta, J. (2009). *The Role and Impact of Public–Private Partnerships in Education*. Washington: World Bank.

- Raynor, J. (2006). The Girls' Stipend Program in Bangladesh. *Journal of Education for International Development*.
- Sankar, U. (2011) "Sustainable development of agriculture," *The India Economic Review*. Madras School of Economics,.,www.theindianeconomyreview.org/article.aspx.
- UNESCO. (2012). *Education For All Global Monitoring Report*. Paris.
- Werner, J. (2011). *Teacher Support for Universal Secondary Education in Uganda*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota.
- World Bank. (2005). *World Bank (2005) Expanding Opportunities and Building Competencies for Young People: A New Agenda for Secondary Education*. Washington DC: World Bank. Washington DC: World Bank.
- World Bank. (1988). *World development report*. Washington D. C: World Bank.
- World Bank. 1995. *Priorities and Strategies for Education*. A World Bank Review. Washington D.C.: The World Bank.
- Wycliffe O. and Colclough, C. (2009). *Financing Education in Kenya: Expenditure, Outcomes and the Role of International Aid*. Cambridge : Research Consortium on Educational Outcomes and Poverty.
- Yamda, S. (2005). *Educational Finance and Poverty Reduction: The Cases of Kenya, Tanzania, and Ethiopia*. Tokyo: GRIPS Development Forum.