

Teachers' Perception on the Free Senior High School Policy in Ghana: A Case Study in One of the Municipalities in Ghana

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Abstract:-The current study looked at the perception of in-service teachers enrolled in a Master of Education programme in one of the private universities in Ghana. The study employed survey research design and the population of 190 students, who had enrolled in the programme. The findings seemed to indicate that teachers within the municipal area studied; did not have adequate knowledge on the Free SHS policy before its implementation. Second, about 95% of the respondents agreed to strongly agreed that the rolling out of the Free SHS was a relevant intervention by the Ghana Government. Third, respondents were of the view that there were many challenges of the new educational policy and as a result impacted negatively on its sustenance. The implications for practice are discussed.

Keywords: *Free SHS policy, Knowledge, Relevance, Sustenance*

I. INTRODUCTION

Based on the letter and spirit of Chapter Six of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, with the title "The Directive Principles of State Policy," the nation is required to provide quality education for all her citizens within the school going age. In explicit terms, the Article 38 and Clause 2 of the Constitution indicates 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" (p. 34). The Basic Education, as mentioned in the Constitution, comprises public-owned Primary and Junior High Schools across the country. By age fifteen, the Ghanaian school-going child should be ready for the secondary or high school education.

At the senior high school level, the Constitution indicates at Article 38 Clause 3 that "The State shall, subject to the availability of resources, provide: (a) equal and balanced access to secondary and other appropriate pre-university education, equal access to university or equivalent education, with emphasis on science and technology" (p. 34). From the stand point of the 1992 Constitution, education is very important to every developing country. As a result, successive governments of the country have a responsibility to provide quality education for their people. In response to this constitutional mandate, there have been numerous educational reforms and policies as many as the number of governments that have ever governed the country. Examples are ERP 1,

ERP 2, Dzobo Committee 1981 Reforms, Anamoah Educational Reforms, etc.

Ghana is the only country in West Africa sub-region that has implemented a Free Senior High School education. Prior to the introduction of the Free SHS policy in 2017, the previous government of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) rolled out the Progressively Free Secondary Education Programme after a launch at Ekumfi Otum. In that year, the government provided funding for the first term of 2015/16 academic year to absorb the examination and other curricular fees for 320,488 day students in all public senior high schools (MoF, 2016). Based on the nature of the policy, the NDC government intended to gradually absorb the different fees paid by the senior high school students and eventually provide complete free senior high school education. As part of the programme, the government initiated the construction of 200 community day schools, of which 123 were actually awarded to contractors and were at different stages of completion.

The narrative on how to provide senior high school education for the students changed when the New Patriotic Party (NPP) won the general elections in December 2016. Since the idea of providing free senior high school education was at the core of their campaign message, in other words, a flagship policy, the government implemented the Free SHS policy in the 2017/2018 academic. The government, for the first time, paid all fees for the first year senior high school students, who numbered 361,771 as well as provided subsidy for the continuing students during the academic year (MoF, 2018). The numbers kept on escalating when the 2018/2019 enrollment brought in about 490,882 students indicating an increase of 36% over the previous number of students admitted (MoF, 2019). As a way of intervention to be able to absorb this number of students, the government was compelled to introduce the Double-Track intervention (MoF, 2019) for 400 senior high schools in Ghana. The creation of the Green and Gold tracks was a temporary measure to re-strategise on the most efficient ways the same senior high school infrastructure across the country could be used judiciously. With this new arrangement, students from the same level were expected to come to school at stipulated periods to finish their course loads at different times. At the beginning of the 2019/2020 academic year, it was estimated

that the number of students covered under the Free SHS policy was more likely to reach 1, 200, 000.

In terms of infrastructure at the senior high school level, the NPP government is continuing the projects on the community day schools started by the previous government as well as starting new ones with the view of putting up enough classrooms, dormitories, dining halls, teachers' bungalows, etc. so as to reduce the pressure on the available infrastructure and eventually cancel the double-track intervention for the first and second year students at the senior high school level. Again, for the first time, the Government of Ghana has provided past questions with answers from 1993 up to date in addition to the numerous textbooks that the students have to learn. In the very words as captured in the Budget Statement and Economic Policy of 2019, the ministry "...government supplied the following items: 68,851 sets of furniture; 472,730 P.E. Kits; 39,496 technical drawing instruments; 6,145,490 exercise books; 218,804 each of integrated science, social studies, mathematics and English language books; and 352,040 supplementary readers (p. 164). All these measures were undertaken to help senior high school students learn meaningfully.

Free Education Policies in Developed Economies

Providing accessible and quality education continues to be the hallmark of many developed economies around the world. As a result, huge sums of money are each year invested in education in respective countries. There are countries that the provision of quality education is the mandate of the federal government. In other jurisdictions, the various states within the country have the prerogative to provide education for the people. Finland continues to dominate in the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) due to her timely educational interventions (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016). As a nation, quality education is provided for all children right from the pre-school level to the age 16, where students receive a common curriculum (Sahlberg, 2015). Beyond age 16, the Government continues to provide funding for students in such a way that no one is denied of education as a result of economic reasons. Japan, from the Asian continent, introduced tuition-free senior high school education in the year 2010. With the study titled "The Incidence of the Tuition-Free High School Program in Japan," Hori and Shimizutani (2018) reported among other things that the rolling out of the programme led to increased enrollment at the senior high school level. Also,

Free Senior High School Policies in Africa

There are few countries that have introduced free secondary education in their respective countries in Africa. Among them are Seychelles, Mauritius, Uganda, Kenya and recently Ghana. The Ugandan Government introduced free senior secondary education in 2007. This was the first of its kind in Sub-Saharan Africa (Essuman, 2018). In spite of the free secondary education label given to the Ugandan programme, the Government of the day, formally, was

responsible for the payment of tuition (Essuman, 2018). In order for the Government to make sure the intervention reached the target population of those within the low-income belt, a pilot study took place to give policy implementers some leverage to identify whether the target population was able to access secondary education (Werner, 2011). Interestingly, the policy led to a sharp increase (about 300%) in students' enrollment from within the first three years of implementation (2007-2010) according to Jacob and Lehner (2011). In their study on household schooling costs and equity effects of Uganda's Universal Secondary Education policy, Omoeva and Gale (2016) reported among other things that there was an increase in students' enrollment without a corresponding increase in the quality of education as provided by the Universal Secondary Education (USE) by Uganda.

The country Kenya came out with interventions to help students move from the primary school level to the secondary level. The decision of the Kenyan Government was based on the problem of poor transition rate from primary school to the secondary school. In 2008, the Government identified that less than 17% of primary school leavers gained admission into the secondary school (Ohba, 2011). At the same time, bursaries by the bursary scheme was available to only boarding students. These and many similar reasons sparked the need to roll out a tuition-free secondary education. In their study "Government Funding on Access to Secondary Education in Kenya: Challenges and Prospects," Ndiku and Muhavi (2013) reported that the Kenyan Government implemented a tuition-free senior high school education policy in 2008. This programme was known as Subsidized Free Day Secondary Education (SFDSE) (Asena, Simiyu & Riechi, 2016). In addition, the Government made a commitment to support poor parents and families to provide funding for the non-tuition expenses of education. A critical look at the Kenya's free secondary education indicate that not all the cost on secondary education was borne by the Government. As a result, Ohba (2011), looking at the responses of the poor in Kenya reported that the tuition-free secondary education policy by the government had less impact on the poor households as compared to the affluent in society.

Funding Education in Ghana

The total expenditure on education as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has seen a steady decline year after year. According to the Ministry of Education (2018), the actual percentages of the GDP from the year 2015 to 2018 were 6.3%, 5.1%, 4.5%, and 4.2% respectively, in spite of the recommendation by UNESCO that countries should allot not less than 6% of their GDP in the education for all report. One would argue that the constituents of the overall funding of education are not solely by the Government of Ghana (GoG) and as such it might happen that other components like internally generated fund (IGF), donations and GETFund might not be raising enough to boost the percentage level on the GDP. Interestingly, the funding from the Ghana Government as a component has also seen a

fluctuating percentage. For example, the total Government's contribution from 2012 to 2013 saw a sharp decline from 27.2% to 20.7%. However, the figure rose marginally from 20.7% to 21.8% in 2014 and 22.2% in 2015. The year 2016 had an all-time low percentage of 16.7, 17.8 in 2017 and back to the all-time low 16.7%.

Apart from the overall expenditure of the Government of Ghana on education, there seems to be an issue when it comes to the funds allocated to the senior high school sub-component. For example, in the year 2013, the total GOG expenditure on senior high school was 18.6% of the annual budget (MOE, 2013). In addition, 11% of the GETfund came to the senior high schools whereas 40% was from the internally generated fund. The internally generated fund alone composed of 24.9% of the total annual budget on education at the senior high school level. With the introduction of the free senior high school policy, it is certain that about 25% of the total funding on education at this level will not be available. Meanwhile, Yamda (2005) indicated that a huge percentage of the African budget on education is mostly centered on the remuneration of employees. At a time that the total budget on education has been dwindling over the years, it is more likely the GoG would struggle in meeting the funding needs of the newly introduced free senior high school education policy. Nonetheless, Ghana is doing well in terms of the availability of funding for the senior high school in comparison with other countries in Africa. For example, a study by Ogundele and Oyelade (2018), which compared the amount of funding of the Nigerian and Ghanaian governments on education at the senior high school level. With focus on vocational and technical education, the researchers concluded that the Government of Ghana provided more funding than the Nigerian Government to support education at this level.

Sustenance of the Senior High School Policy

The first issue that has become a perennial problem to the newly introduced free senior high school policy is on student placement. With the use of the computerised placement system, all pupils from the junior high school level are supposed to be admitted into the various public senior high schools in the country. However, there are always challenges like not placing all students or placing some students as day students at places where accommodation would be problematic (Essuman, 2018). For example, in September 2019, many parents and guardians converged at the nation's independence square in days in view of getting their wards placed in a school (Myjoyonline, 2019). There are scores of parents who have complained bitterly about certain conditions under which their children learn.

As it has become the order of the day for political actors to always lambast the policies of parties on the other side, the leading opposition party in Ghana has never seen an eye to eye with the running political party on its flagship programme of the free senior high school policy. Recently, there was almost blows in parliament during the debate on the

budgetary allocation for education (Ghanaweb, 2019). Whereas the members of parliament from the minority side were of the view that the current Government did not do serious planning before rolling out the programme, the majority members thought otherwise. In a similar development, Mogtari (2019), an aide to the immediate former President, indicated that the programme has "cracks and potholes."

On the part of the teachers, the issues continue to surface. There is confusion in the system as some schools are following the old system where schools run on a termly basis whereas the ones on the Double Track system had to use the semester calendar. The re-opening and vacation dates of the Green and Gold tracks have been problematic as teachers find ways to adjust to the new arrangement. Apart from the workload on the teachers in the third year, who are not on the track system, there are a number of teachers who usually enroll in sandwich programmes during vacations. As a result of the new policy, some teachers have to end their further studies so as to be able to

Statement of the Problem

Almost three years into the implementation of the Free SHS policy, which has granted opportunity to all students in the public senior high schools in Ghana to have free education, there have been reports of issues confronting the newly introduced free senior high school in Ghana right from the admission of students into the senior high schools to the introduction of the double track system (DTS). As a result of the increased numbers, the students at the same level have to be regulated by allowing some of the students to begin their academic years on different dates on the academic calendar in order to create enough space for effective teaching and learning as well as be able to accommodate the unprecedented number of students transitioning from the junior high school level to the senior high school level.

Teachers are the key stakeholders when it comes to implementing the programmes that governments roll out in different countries. For this reason, their knowledge in the new Free Senior High School the Government of Ghana is implementing is pivotal. There are sections of the teaching population that feel that the Government of Ghana did not do enough consultation and education before rolling out the Free Senior High School (SHS) policy. In addition, anecdotal records seem to indicate that majority of the teachers in the study area are a little confused with the policy, and thus, might not be better prepared to support the learners to learn meaningfully as indicated in the policy document. Again, a quick search on Google Scholar and the ERIC databases indicated that there has not been much empirical study on the Free SHS policy rolled out by the Government of Ghana. Again, similar works could not be found in other African countries. Hence, the need for this study to spark the conversation. The perception of these in-service teachers on the just implemented Free SHS policy is needed to help the

Ghana Education Service to come out with interventions to empower teachers to be effective and efficient as they jointly help realise the dreams of the Ghana Government.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the current study was to use descriptive survey research design to identify the perception of in-service teachers in one of the municipalities on the Free Senior High School policy introduced by the Government of Ghana in 2017. The study focused on the knowledge on the programme; the relevance of the programme; and sustenance of the programme that has been created by its implementation.

Research Questions

1. What is the perception of teachers on their *knowledge on the Free SHS Policy*?
2. What is the perception of teachers on the *relevance of the Free SHS policy*?
3. What is the perception of teachers on the *sustenance of the Free SHS policy*?
4. Is there any correlation among *knowledge on the Free SHS policy, relevance of Free SHS policy, and sustenance of the Free SHS policy*?

Significance of the Study

This study is meant to have first-hand information on how teachers think about the Free Senior High policy of the Government of Ghana. Knowledge of this nature will help the Ghana Education Service to identify the various legitimate concerns that the teachers have in connection with the implementation of the policy. With their concerns in mind, the Ghana Education Service personnel can come out with developmentally appropriate interventions for teachers in order to better support their students to learn meaningfully in the midst of the numerous challenges facing the policy.

Also, since the introduction of the Free Senior High School education is new and one of the few in Africa, research to investigate into the constraints of the policy will bring out findings that other countries in Africa, that want to roll out a similar policy can learn from the ups and downs of the policy and use that as opportunity to take the necessary precautions so as not to plunge themselves into the same challenges that confront Ghanaians in the implementation process.

Finally, it is envisioned that the general public, especially parents, as one of the major stakeholders of education, will have the opportunity to be informed on the issues that teachers are encountering in their attempts to help the students to learn meaningfully. With such knowledge, parents will bear with teachers and at the same time, look for other suitable ways to team up with the teachers and the Ghana Government to come out with possible ways of curbing the issues confronting the Policy.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to identify the perception of in-service teachers on the Free Senior High Policy in Ghana. The researcher employed a survey research design. Survey research designs are “procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics” (Creswell, 2012, p. 376). According to Creswell, a survey design is appropriate for studies of this nature.

Population and Sampling

The current study took place in the municipalities of the Bono East Region. Since the study concerned all senior high school teachers within the Municipality, it was appropriate to be mindful of the total number of senior high school teachers and use it to decide on the sample size. Anecdotal records from the Municipal Directorate indicated the number of teachers around 1000. With this number, twenty percent of the teachers were randomly sampled and invited through the WhatsApp platforms for their various schools. Out of the 200 teachers invited to be part of the study, all 200 actually responded to the survey. These teachers had also enrolled in a Master of Education (M.Ed.) programme in one of the private universities in the country. The teachers were at the various stages of completion of the programme in Educational Leadership and as such, were, therefore, deemed capable to have the requisite knowledge to be part of this study.

Instrument

After reading extensively on the nature of governments educational policies in Africa, the implementation challenges, the concerns of the citizenry, and tried interventions over the years, the researcher used a questionnaire as the main source and was made up of thirty-four (34) items. The first five items sought data on the programme, gender, age, age, number of children, marital status, political affiliation and beneficiary status. The next twenty-seven items were broken down into three sections on *knowledge on free shs policy* (9), the *relevance of free shs policy* (9), and *sustenance of free shs policy* (9). To check the reliability of the questions, factor analysis was carried out. After the analysis, one item (*know9*) from the *knowledge on Free SHS Policy* and two items (*sus8, and sus9*) from the *sustenance of Free SHS Policy*. The Cronbach Alpha for the three constructs were 0.73, 0.91, and 0.72 for *knowledge on Free SHS Policy*, the *relevance of Free SHS Policy*, and *sustenance of Free SHS Policy* respectively. The results indicate that the items on the questionnaire were consistent in measuring the three constructs.

Procedure

The participants at one point or the other had enrolled in Educational Research course as part of their

Master of Education (M.Ed.) in of the private universities in Ghana. Since there were small class sizes, the total number of participants was made of different batches. The data collection exercise took one year. During the first day of the meeting, the researcher would introduce the purpose of the study to the teachers as well as some ethical considerations that were adhered to during the process. In order to make sure all teachers enrolled in the course get the right education on the study, an announcement was made for the next two weeks in addition to a demonstration of how the questions could be accessed and answered.

On the fourth week, the link to the survey was placed on the group’s WhatsApp platform with descriptive instruction for the teachers to respond to the items with the collaboration of the course representatives. On average, teachers used about five minutes to answer all the questions. Teachers who did not have smartphones were encouraged to use their friends’ phones to answer the survey. In order to check multiple entries, the students were supposed to include their index number.

Demographics

The study sought to collect demographic data on gender, age, and marital status of the respondents. After using the SPSS to run the descriptive statistics for these five variables, there were 161 men (82.6%) and 34 women, representing 17.4%. The finding on gender seems to indicate that the total enrolment of males was four times more than their female counterparts. At this point, it will be hasty to make a conclusion that more males enroll in graduate programmes than their females since the data on the sex ratio of teachers in the municipality is not covered in the present study. In terms of the age of the respondents, teachers within the age bracket of 34 and above were almost three times (74.8%) the size of those who were less than 34 years. Teachers from 24-28 were only 6.0% of the total enrolment. By implication, it looks like teachers grow older in the school before they begin to consider enrolling at the graduate school. Marital status was another important demographic data

collected. One hundred and sixty-five (84.6%) of the respondents were married whereas 30 (15.4%) were not married.

Table 1. Gender, age and marital status of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentages
Male	161	82.6
Female	34	17.4
Total	195	100
Age		
24-28	13	6.0
29-33	39	18.9
34 and above	154	74.8
Total		
Marital Status		
Married	165	84.6
Not married	30	15.4
Total	195	100

(Field data, 2018)

Research Question 1: What is the perception of teachers on their knowledge on the Free SHS Policy?

To check whether teachers, within the municipality, had adequate knowledge on the Free SHS Policy before its implementation, respondents were tasked to rate a number of statements, based on their knowledge on the policy with a Likert scale. As indicated in Table 3, only one of the items (*know1*) had slightly more than three ratings, which is equivalent to agree to the statement. The overall mean of the construct was 2.57 (*SD* 1.45). The item with the lowest rating (*know7*) had a mean of 1.85 (*SD* 1.31). The response showed that the Government did not address serious educational challenges before the implementation of the policy. Overall, the findings seem to indicate that teachers within this municipality did not have adequate knowledge on the Free SHS Policy before its introduction in the country.

Table 2: Knowledge on Free SHS Variable

	Measuring Items (5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree)	Mean	SD
Knowledge on Free SHS	1. I knew the Free SHS programme was to take-off this year	3.52	1.59
	2. I knew how students were to be enrolled in the various schools	2.76	1.54
	3. I had enough education on the Free SHS programme before its implementation	2.48	1.45
	4. I was aware of my roles and expectations as a teacher	2.99	1.55
	5. The time of implementing the programme was adequate	2.60	1.58
	6. The schools were prepared adequately to admit the students	2.07	1.31
	7. The Government addressed issues most of the issues before Free SHS implementation	1.85	1.31
	8. Government provided enough education on Free SHS programme	2.31	1.28

(Field data, 2018)

Research Question 2: What is the perception of teachers on the relevance of the Free SHS Policy?

The researcher wanted to find out whether the teachers, within the municipality, see the Free SHS Policy as

relevant. As indicated in Table 3, the average rating for the responses was higher than point four (4) on the Likert scale. With an overall mean rating of 4.29 (*SD* 1.08), the teachers were convinced that the introduction of the Free Senior High School Policy was a relevant programme. As indicated by the standard deviation, the teachers had similar perception on the

variable. Again, the item that received the highest rating was *rel7* (The Free SHS will reduce the number of children who might have been in the street). With a mean rating of 4.49 (*SD* 0.93), the teachers almost strongly agreed that the policy could potentially reduce the number of boys and girls in the streets.

Table 3:Relevance of Free SHS Variable

	<i>Measuring Items (5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree)</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Relevance of Free SHS	1. I am aware of the Free SHS programme by Government.	4.18	1.22
	2. This Free SHS programme is a good one.	4.29	1.12
	3. The Free SHS programme will change the lives of many students.	4.31	1.04
	4. The Free SHS Programme has reduced the burdens of parents.	4.48	1.03
	5. The Government has to be commended for introducing the programme.	4.30	1.06
	6. The country will benefit from the introduction of the Free SHS programme.	4.11	1.18
	7. The Free SHS will reduce the number of children who might have been in the street.	4.49	0.93
	8. The students will personally benefit from the Free SHS Programme	4.38	0.92
	9. Free SHS programme will eventually improve the human resource of Ghanaians	4.09	1.20

(Field data, 2018)

Research Question 3: What is the perception of teachers on the sustenance of the Free SHS Policy?

The last construct was on the sustenance of the Free SHS Policy by the Government of Ghana. In many countries in Africa, the issue of providing adequate funding for education has been problematic (Okrah & Adabor, 2010). For this reason, the researcher wanted to know the perception of these teachers on the sustenance of the new policy. After running the simple frequencies, and as indicated in Table 4, the overall mean was 3.3 (*SD* 1.07). The finding implied that only few of these teachers had the view that the Free SHS Policy can be sustained due to some challenges that the policy was experiencing since its implementation. The item that had the highest rating was *sus6* (Government should know the

challenges of schools before placements) with 4.34 (*SD* 1.02). The idea of allowing data to inform decisions of governments across Africa seems to have been re-echoed here. In many situations, important policies are rolled out without adequate research to identify the potential issues that might act against such laudable interventions. Also, items *sus2*, *sus3*, and *sus4* received the lowest ratings of 2.72 (*SD* 1.53), 2.38 (*SD* 1.53), and 2.83 (*SD* 1.43) respectively. Based on the nature of the items, the respondents seemed not to agree to the three negative statements (*There are other important things to do than Free SHS; We do not have the expert minds to manage the programme; and The Free SHS programme is more likely to fail after sometime*). In other words, the respondents believed the implementation of the policy was right; had the required expert minds; and would be sustained.

Table 4:Sustenance of Free SHS Variable

	<i>Measuring Items (5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree)</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Sustenance of Free SHS	1. There is not enough money to fund the SHS programme.	3.16	1.54
	2. There are other important things to do than Free SHS.	2.73	1.53
	3. We do not have the expert minds to manage the programme.	2.38	1.48
	4. The Free SHS programme is more likely to fail after sometime.	2.83	1.43
	5. Based on the infrastructural level, the SHS students will face problems.	3.76	1.32
	6. Government should know the challenges of schools before placements.	4.34	1.02
	7. Government could encourage well to do parents to pay something to support the programme.	3.99	1.33

(Field data, 2018)

Research Question 4: Is there any correlation among knowledge on the Free SHS Policy, relevance of Free SHS Policy, and sustenance of the Free SHS Policy?

The last research question sought to identify the relationship among the three constructs under review. After running the Pearson moment product correlation test, there were significant among the three variables. First, there was positive significant correlation between *knowledge on the Free SHS policy* and *relevance of the Free SHS policy* at ($r = .230, p = .001$). This finding implied that the more knowledge teachers had on the Free SHS policy, they more they saw it as relevant. Second, there was a negative significant correlation

between *knowledge on the Free SHS policy* and *sustenance of the Free SHS policy* at ($r = -.268, p = .000$). This result seemed to indicate that the less knowledge respondents had on the Free SHS policy, the more likely they would doubt the ability of the Government of Ghana to sustain the programme. The final relationship was between *relevance of the Free SHS policy* and *sustenance of the Free SHS policy*. The correlation was $r = -.313, p = .000$ indicating a negative significant correlation between the two constructs. By this result, the more relevant the respondents thought of the Free SHS policy, the less they thought it could be sustained.

Table 5. Relationship among the three Variables

Constructs	(r)	p-value
Knowledge/Relevance	.230	.001
Knowledge/Sustenance	-.268	.000
Relevance/Sustenance	-.313	.000

III. DISCUSSION

The current study sought to identify the perception of teachers in one of the municipalities in Ghana on three main areas as knowledge on the Free SHS policy, the relevance of the Free SHS policy, and the sustenance of the Free SHS policy. With 195 respondents, the study seemed to indicate that majority of the teachers did not have enough education on the introduction of the Free SHS policy. This finding is possibly due to how some major policies, programmes and projects, in many countries, start from the party level during campaigns and end up being implemented when the party wins political power. Once the people have been assured during the political rallies, it becomes a test of integrity on the ruling government to fulfil the promises no matter what it takes to implement such policies.

The second research question looked at the relevance of the Free SHS policy. Based on the findings, it came to light that the respondents unanimously either agreed or strongly agreed that the policy was relevant. At least, for the first time, all students who wanted to further their education to the senior high school level were not denied as a result of their poor socio-economic backgrounds. The respondents seemed to agree that the provision of quality education has become a key in leveraging the gap between the rich and the poor. For this reason, all should be encouraged to have the needed education in order to be able to lead a meaningful lives.

The sustenance of the Free SHS policy was another area that the researcher had findings. The respondents could not agree or strongly agree that the country could sustain the policy. This is was due to the overall mean of 3.3. The main reason for such a stand was due to the numerous challenges facing the new policy coupled with the financial issues the nation has to grapple with; in meeting the demands of the other sectors of the economy. Yamda (2005), after studying the trend of government finances to the educational sector indicated a downward trend. Bregman and Stallmeister (2002) believed that African countries are already challenged with scarce resources with weak economic fundamentals and as such might not be able to provide quality senior high school education to the people. Therefore, if government does not invest adequate funding in education, then, there will be issue with the sustenance of the new policy.

The final research question centred on the relationship among the three constructs. As indicated by the Pearson correlation, knowledge on government policies creates the opportunity for the people to see the relevance of

such policies. The second aspect of becoming well informed about policies is the tendency of people to focus more on issues surrounding the policies. Such mindset, sometimes, make them doubt as to whether the policies would be successful or not. Finally, knowing the relevance of certain policies can make people to be paranoid and for that matter would focus on the issues confronting the policies rather than the gains to be made over time.

IV. CONCLUSION

The current study looked at the perception of in-service teachers enrolled in a master of education programme in one of the private universities in Ghana. The study seemed to indicate that these in-service teachers did not have adequate knowledge on the Free SHS Policy, a flagship programme by the ruling New Patriotic Party in Ghana. Teachers are at the forefront of the implementation of all educational policies. For this reason, adequate knowledge should be provided to teachers ahead of time before such policies of governments are rolled out. When teachers get the fundamentals of the policy wrong, it is more likely such policies would hit on rocks.

Implications for Practice

Based on the findings and discussions above, the following are suggested:

1. Since teachers are the major implementers of educational policies at the classroom level, a need exists for them to be educated adequately on new educational reforms and policies so as to yield the intended results.
2. The idea of inviting students to meetings on things about them has always remain an afterthought. This is not different from the introduction of the Free SHS policy. Therefore, efforts should be made to always sensitize students and prepare them for educational policies and programmes that have direct impact on academic lives.
3. The findings indicated that majority of the respondents saw the Free SHS policy as relevant. Since it is a relevant policy, there is the need for minor and major stakeholders to work together to identify other alternative ways of providing funding for the policy in order to be able to sustain it.

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