

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
COMPUTERIZED SCHOOL SELECTION AND PLACEMENT SYSTEM
(CSSPS) IN THE GHANAIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM**



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**A thesis in the Department of Educational Administration and Management
Faculty of Educational Studies, submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment**

**of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
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MAY, 2021

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, Juliet Agyemang-Duah, declare that this thesis, except for quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature:

Date:

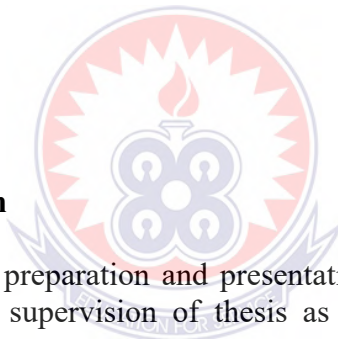
Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work were supervised under the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

DR. Patricia Mawusi Amos (**Supervisor**)

Signature:

Date:



DEDICATION

To my husband and my lovely children Junior, Nana, and Aseda.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

Basic Education Certificate Examination- BECE

Computerised School Selection and Placement System- CSSPS

Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education -FCUBE

Ghana Education Service-GES

Information and Communication Technologies -ICT

Information and Communication Technology for Accelerated Development -ICT4AD
policy

Senior High School-SHS

Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools - CHASS



ABSTRACT

The introduction of the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) was in line with the government's long-term objective of universal basic education, through the expansion and increasing of access to senior high and tertiary education. However, since the implementation of the CSSPS, not much studies have been done on the prospects and challenges of the CSSPS in Ghana. Based on this research gap, the purpose of the study was to examine the prospects and challenges of the CSSPS in Ghana. The population of the study included students, teachers, parents, Head Masters and Municipal Education Directors particularly within the Greater Kumasi. A sample size of 50 participants were selected through purposive sampling. A qualitative study was thus conducted on prospects and challenges of the CSSPS in the Greater Kumasi of Ghana involving multiple stakeholders such students, teachers, parents, Head Masters and Municipal Education Directors. Data were collected using interview guides and were analysed by employing thematic analytical framework. The study revealed that participants' perception for the implementation of the CSSPS were fast track placement of students, fair distribution of students, reduced tendencies for bribery and corruption, reduced pressure on parents (in terms of cost and time) and minimizing human errors. The study revealed that the prospects of the implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS were easy placement of qualified students, equal opportunities to all students and reduced cost of placement. The study found that the challenges of the implementation of the CSSPS were low probability of securing one's preferred schools, refusal to accept placement into some schools, under declaration of the carrying capacity in Schools, errors in placement of students, inadequate boarding infrastructure and rejection of some Students by the CSSPS. The study revealed that the strategies to address the challenges associated with the CSSPS were provision of infrastructure, avenue for reposting in rare cases, avenue to select a school as a day student and resit for students who could not get placement in any school. The identified prospects and challenges thus are imperative in informing stakeholders on actions and steps that must be taken to improve upon the efficiency of the CSSPS. Based on the findings, the study recommended for continuous Stakeholder Orientation on the CSSPS, improvement of the system to minimize errors, improved monitoring and supervision of CSSPS and expansion in infrastructure.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Until recent times, the admission of junior high school students into senior high schools in Ghana remained the sole duty of heads of senior high schools who met to hand-pick candidates qualified for their schools based on merit and other requirements well-defined by their communities (Ebow & Anokye, 2014). The selection and placement process of qualified candidates from junior high schools into second-cycle schools of their choice was manually performed. Each year, heads of senior high schools and technical institutions, in conjunction with the officials of the Ghana Education Service (GES), converge at some selected regional centres to undertake the selection exercises (Ebow & Anokye, 2014; Gyaase & Gyamfi, 2012). This old system of manually selecting and placing qualified candidates into second-cycle institutions, in which heads of various senior high schools meet to select cards of potential students for their schools based on certain predefined selection standards, was plagued with numerous challenges (Ebow & Anokye, 2014).

These challenges include the difficulties in attending to large numbers of qualified applicants emanating from an increasing number of registered candidates yearly. The manual admission process also restricted prospective junior high school students to choosing or selecting all their preferred or desired senior high schools from only one region of the country (Ebow & Anokye, 2014; Ajayi, 2013). As reported by Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS, 2008), the entire manual admission process was susceptible to pressure from parents/guardians and also prone to abuse/misuse of unrestricted (discretionary) powers by public servants responsible

for handling the admission process. The old system was also challenged with creating a lot of anxiety, confusion, and frustration, particularly for parents of qualified candidates, and was also predisposed to glitches due to movements of registration cards and delays in the placement of such candidates (Gyaase & Gyamfi, 2012). Loss of confidence in the old system by the public due to the incredibility of some heads of senior high schools in the selection process (Gyaase & Gyamfi, 2012; SISCO, 2007; GINKS, 2008) were also touted as challenges to the old manual admission process. This has caused people to look for other ways to let students into senior high schools.

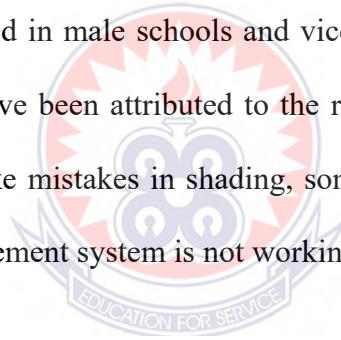
Technological advancements are known to create efficiency and reduce human interaction within service delivery (Ali & Equbal, 2017). Technology not only accelerates processes and procedures in service delivery but also increases accessibility and speed of service delivery. According to Gyaase and Gyamfi (2012), the global explosion in the utilisation of information and communication technologies (ICT) has provided an alternative to the government of Ghana as far as making their services and information available by electronic means to the citizenry, in an attempt to reduce the level of human interaction with its associated problems. The Computerised School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) was implemented in Ghana in 2005 to bring transparency, impartiality, and efficacy to the admission process into senior high schools in Ghana. Gyaase and Gyamfi (2012) stated that the introduction of the computerised school selection and placement system is in line with e-government, which seeks to automate service delivery with the intent of minimising human biases and the attendant complications in governmental service delivery (Patnaik, Pattnaik & Singh, 2020).

The new admission system is configured such that the computer spontaneously selects and places candidates based on their performance in the BECE and choices (school and programme) made. The outcomes of the selection and placement process are forwarded to all senior high schools, technical and vocational institutions in the country, and copies are made available to all junior high schools, regional and district offices of the Ghana Education Service (Ghana News Agency, 2010 cited in Ajayi, 2014; Ahiatrogah & Bervell, 2013; Gyaase & Gyamfi, 2012). The computerisation of the admission process was intended to provide convenience and efficiency (Ahiatrogah & Bervell, 2013; Kettani & Haddouti, 2003), although Pathak, Singh, Belwal, Naz, and Smith (2008) noted that for citizens to trust in e-governance, their experiences in finding the information and the service they require must be provided on a timely basis (Awotwi & Owusu, 2007).

The introduction of the CSSPS was in line with the government's long-term objective of universal basic education, through the expansion and increasing of access to senior high and tertiary education (Gyaase & Gyamfi, 2012). The system was also intended to reduce "class societies" as the system does not discriminate between the poor and the rich, as well as enhance national integration since the system allows applicants to select schools from more than one region. According to Ebow & Anokye (2014), the CSSPS was implemented to improve transparency since selection and placement are done on meritocracy, an occurrence that promotes fairness and equity by permitting and ensuring that those who performed well gain admission to their preferred schools, irrespective of whether the school is a first, second, or third option. Apart from the objectivity and transparency, the CSSPS was supposed to inject into the admission process, the system was also introduced to ensure schools do not admit more students than their carrying capacities for each programme, as was happening under the

manual admission regime (Ebow & Anokye, 2014; Gyaase & Gyamfi, 2012; SISCO, 2007).

Nevertheless, after fifteen years of the implementation of the computerised school selection and placement system, the policy has not been without its problems and criticisms. According to Aboagye (2011), there have been a series of allegations of corruption in the media notwithstanding the various assurances from the Ministry of Education. Among the challenges and criticisms facing the implementation of the computerised school selection and placement system, the following have been highlighted: Students who are placed in schools far away find it difficult to cope with the distance due to the distributive nature of the system. There are instances where female students are placed in male schools and vice versa (Ebow & Anokye, 2014). While these problems have been attributed to the registration process in the schools where most students make mistakes in shading, some people think the computerised school selection and placement system is not working as intended (GINKS, 2008).



1.2 Statement of the Problem

Following the re-election of former President John Agyekum Kuffour in September 2005, his government established and put into place the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) in September 2005. This was done in recognition of the importance of reducing long-standing disparities in admittance to senior high school level education (Babah et al., 2020; Ajayi & Telli, 2013; Ajayi, 2009). After passing the Basic Education Certificate Examination, the new system is solely dependent on the performance of the pupils. Due to restrictions on the capacity of the infrastructure and the number of spaces available for the steadily increasing number of junior high school graduates each year, this system requires good marks in

order to be admitted to a senior high. However, due to existential inequalities and severe discrepancies in terms of performance and public perception, senior high school entrance has turned into a hotbed for personal manipulation at the expense of others, raising concerns about educational equality and equity.

The manual school selection system was considered as being connected with delay in a comparative systematic analysis of CSSPS undertaken in several selected countries, including the USA, Zimbabwe, Taiwan, Yugoslavia, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago by Babah et al. (2020). They added that, in comparison to the manual approach, the implementation of the CSSPS has helped to eliminate the problem of delay in the school selection system and also ensure fairness and equity. Senior high school heads from different senior high schools in Ghana used to gather to choose cards of prospective students for their schools based on predetermined selection criteria. This method of manually selecting and placing junior high school students into senior high schools was used in Ghana in the past. This was afflicted by a number of issues (Ebow & Anokye, 2014). Ghana's CSSPS was subsequently introduced as a result of this. Although the system has undergone a significant amount of reform since it was first put into place in 2005, there are still perceived and reported claims of systemic issues, despite the fact that policymakers recognise the need for improvement and are committed to implementing constructive changes (Babah, 2014). This justifies the requirement to comprehend the root causes of these problems and suggest solutions (Gyaase & Gyamfi, 2012). In the academic and research scene, the topic hasn't gotten the necessary or suitable attention.

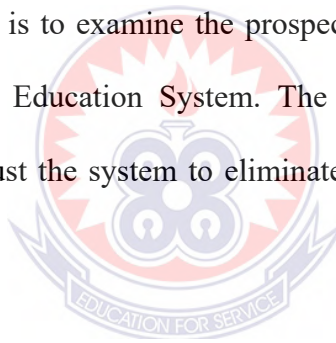
Ankomah (2013) conducted a study in which he found that the computerised school selection and placement method is very practical because it has facilitated BECE applicants' registration. Once more, Ankomah (2013) found that parents' time spent looking for schools for their children has been lessened by the computerised school selection and placement system. In essence, Ankomah (2013) concluded that if more effective measures are put in place to solve the issues that have dogged the scheme from its start, parents and guardians' confidence in the computerised school selection and placement system is likely to grow. Another study conducted by Gyaase & Gyamfi (2012) found that some stakeholders had a favourable opinion of the computerised school selection and placement system, particularly the improved accessibility and simplicity of enrolling pupils in senior high schools. However, the attendees bemoaned the widespread misconceptions about corruption, fairness, and transparency. (Gyaase & Gyamfi, 2012) Those who are putting the computerised school selection and placement system into place and making parents, students, and teachers aware of it will need to have a strong political will in order to gain the trust of important stakeholders.

Some parents in Ghana believe it was quite difficult in the past for their children to get accepted. They show that the procedure was laborious and frequently riddled with mistakes. Due to this, the CSSPS was established to address the issue and guarantee that students were promptly posted in accordance with the data they provided throughout the registration and school selection stages. Additionally, some parents believe that the CSSPS guarantees justice, something that the former admissions system failed to do. This shows how helpful the CSSPS is to the Ghanaian educational system. Despite this, little has been done to address the potential and

difficulties of CSSPS in Ghana. This study aimed to explore the potential and difficulties of CSSPS in the Ghanaian education system from the viewpoint of stakeholders in light of these issues. The heads of both senior high school and junior high school, staff members at education offices, parents, and students who have used the computerised school selection and placement system, as well as the system's implementers, are among the stakeholders for this study. In light of this, the goal of this study is to look at the opportunities and problems that Senior High School CSSPS in Ghana faces.

1.3 Rationale and Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the prospects and challenges of Senior High CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. The findings are intended to inform educational actors to adjust the system to eliminate these challenges to reap the full benefits of the policy.



1.4 Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the perceptions of stakeholders (heads of both senior high school and junior high school, parents, students and workers at education offices) on the underlying factors for the introduction of the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System.
2. Explore the prospects of the implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System.

3. Examine the challenges encountered in the implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System.
4. Explore the various interventions and strategies instituted by stakeholders to address the challenges associated with the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the specific research objectives, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. How do stakeholders (heads of both senior high school and junior high school, parents, students and workers at education offices) perceive the introduction of the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System?
2. What are the prospects of the implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System?
3. What challenges are encountered in the implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System?
4. What interventions and strategies have been instituted by stakeholders to address the challenges associated with the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System.

1.6 Significance of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the prospects and challenges of Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System using the case of the Ashanti

Region. The study findings will provide adequate reference material for actors in Ghana's educational landscape to make modifications to the policy to augment the past successes. This policy contribution of the study would be realised through the implementation of the study's recommendations. The study is also expected to make contributions to development frameworks such as the sustainable development goals where the emphasis is on providing education for all. The study is also meant to give educational stakeholders in the Ashanti Region information and direction about the computerised school selection and placement system, since no study is known to have looked into the subject in that region.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

The geographical scope of the study was the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The contextual scope of the study covered the prospects and challenges of Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. The study was limited to heads of both senior high school and junior high schools, parents, students, and workers at education offices.

1.8 Definition of Terms

The key terms that are defined in this study are prospects, challenges, stakeholders, digitisation and computer school section placement system

Challenges- In this study, challenges are operationalised as hindrances or obstacles that exist or may arise to impede or slow down the implementation or introduction of the Computerised School Selection and Placement System in Ghana.

Computerized School Selection and Placement System- In this study, CSSPS is conceptualised as a system employed by the Ghana Education Service to place qualified Basic Education Certificate Candidates into Senior High Schools.

Digitization- This refers to a process whereby software applications such as computer or any other digital technology is used to place students in school without resorting to any manual process.

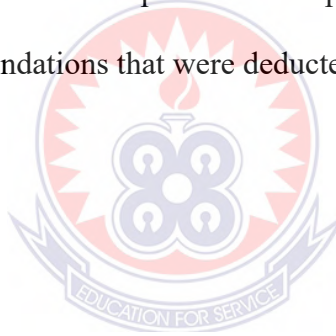
Stakeholders: Stakeholders are defined as individuals or institutions who are responsible for the implementation of the CSSPS in Ghana. It is further defined as individuals who are affected by the implementation of the CSSPS in Ghana. For the purpose of this study, these individuals include students, head teachers, teachers and officials at the Ghana Education Service.

Prospects: In this study, prospects are conceptualised as opportunities that exist or may arise to ensure the smooth implementation of the CSSPS in Ghana. In other words, they are seen as facilitators, motivators or enablers.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The study was organized into six chapters. Chapter one comprised background to the study, statement of the research problem, purpose of the study, research objectives and questions, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, definition of terms and the organization of the study. Chapter two comprised the review of literature on prospects and challenges of Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. Specifically, the appraisal of literature covered conceptual review (where key concepts will be defined and conceptualized in this study), empirical review (perceptions of stakeholders of on the underlying factors for the introduction of the

CSSPS, the prospects of the implementation of the policy, the challenges encountered in the implementation of the policy, the interventions and strategies instituted by stakeholders to address the challenges associated with the Senior High School Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) in the Ghanaian Education System) and theoretical review. The second chapter also provided a conceptual framework for the study. Chapter three contained the methodology that was employed in investigating the research questions which comprised the research design through to data collection and analysis. The fourth chapter presented the results on prospects and challenges of Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. Chapter five was devoted to the discussions of the findings in relation to existing literature. Chapter Six comprised the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations that were deduced from the study.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provided dominant perspectives on the context of the Ghanaian educational system, policies, and digitisation systems by drawing key points from the Ghanaian CSSPS. The chapter follows with an empirical review of the factors that influenced the implementation of the CSSPS, prospects of its implementation, associated challenges, and interventions and strategies instituted by key stakeholders to overcome the challenges associated with CSSPS in Ghana. Finally, the summary and conclusion of the chapter are provided.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

One of these theories underpinning this study is Roemer's theory of equal educational opportunity. Roemer (1995; 1998) argued that justice requires levelling the playing field by rendering everyone's opportunities equal in an appropriate sense and letting individual choices and their effects dictate further outcomes. Roemer (1998) further developed and formalised the idea of equal opportunity in the quest for well-being. According to him, success in life should not depend on one's birth circumstances. Rather, it should centre exclusively on people's autonomous choices, efforts, and personal skills. Gender, race, or social background, which are beyond the individual's control, cause a set of morally unacceptable inequalities. Roemer (2009) further intimated the possibility of extending the equality-of-opportunity idea to intergenerational and global equality. In the first case, the need for equality assumes that individual welfare should not be affected by the date on which the individual is

born (Reeves, 2017). Roemer specifically assumes that the outcome observed (u) is determined by a set of circumstances (c) affecting a certain group of people or "type" t ; the effort (e) which comprises the actions people take and for which they are responsible; and the set of policies (p) used to equalise opportunities, so that it is possible to write $u(c, e, p)$. In Ghana, getting equal access to secondary school is a problem since the number of pupils out of JHS triples the intake of the SHS. This problem makes it difficult to have equal access to SHS. Asare (2010) suggests that to break the jinx and to improve equal access to SHS, the government should provide more "day" SHS in major towns at the district level to enhance access to SHS.

The study of Adams' (1963, 1965) equity theory serves as one of the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study. The theory states that the presence of inequity will motivate a person to achieve equity or reduce inequity, and the strength of motivation to do so will vary directly with the amount of inequity. The equity theory states that people are motivated if they are treated equitably and receive what they consider fair for their efforts and costs based on the Social Exchange theory. The Equity theory posits that if a person perceives that there is inequality, where either their output/input ratio is less than or greater than what they perceive as the output/input ratio of the other person in the relationship, then the person is distressed. Educational equity is defined on three levels: equality, justified inequality; and a fair process (Boocock & Predow, 1979). The equity theory is also called inequity theory, as it is the unequal difference that is the area of interest. Current data indicate that despite the expansion in communities' access to learning opportunities in most countries, educational equity has proved highly elusive (OECD, 2001a). According to Allen and White (2002), the lack of predictive ability of equity theory contributed to its 'falling out of favour' only to be revived by an interest in organisational justice and

equity spurred in part by an extension of the original equity theory to include individual differences and the equity sensitivity construct (Rothstein, 2004; Ahiatrogah & Bervell, 2013). The two classifications of equity are distributive equity and procedural equity. Distributive equity can be defined as the fairness with which people feel they are rewarded in accordance with their contribution to organisational accomplishment. Procedural equity, on the other hand, is concerned with the perceptions people have about the fairness with which procedures in such areas as performance appraisal, etc. are being operated (Amstrong, 2006).

A Brief History of Ghana's Education System

The Mercantile Era

As was the case in many colonies during the early colonial period, the main goal of education was to "make civilization go hand-in-hand with evangelisation." This statement gives a clear description of how education in Ghana was implemented.

Initially, it was the Danish, Dutch, and English merchants who set up schools in their forts (Christianborg Castle, Accra – Danish, Elmina Castle – Portuguese, then Dutch, and Cape Coast Castle – British) to educate their mulatto children by native women. Unmistakably linked to the implementation of formal education in Ghana were the Christian missionaries, who realised that in order to spread the word of God, they needed well-educated local assistants.

In 1828, John Von Richelieu, one of Denmark's governors in Ghana, approached the Basel Mission Society in Switzerland. They played an important role in establishing

an education network in Ghana. Representatives of this organisation were able to convince the Chiefs of Ghana in 1832 to send their children to the Government School at Osu. As a result, formal education gains acceptance. They also focused on the middle of Ghana, away from the coast where Europeans had a lot of influence.

Besides reading, writing, and arithmetic, workshops were organised for students to acquire practical skills. Carpentry, masonry, blacksmithing, shoemaking, and sewing for girls were taught, as well as practical agriculture and medical and health education.

One of the greatest achievements of the Basel Mission Society was the transcription of local languages (Twi, Ewe, and Ga languages) to facilitate education and the spread of the Gospel. By 1894, 62 years after their arrival in Ghana, they had established a training college, 3 grammar schools, seven boarding schools for boys and girls, and 98-day schools.

Continuing and complementing the work done by the Basel Mission Society were those she initially educated and those called to the cause of spreading the Gospel. Despite numerous pioneers succumbing to death due to the tropical diseases they encountered.

Colonial Era

In 1874, the British government had full colonial authority over the Gold Coast colony. Already great progress had been made in the education sector. Various mission schools were now scattered over the interior of Ghana.

By 1881, there were 139 schools. However, the education systems used vary widely. This prompted the government to draw up its first plans in 1882 to guide the development of education. An Inspector of Schools was instated from 1887 until 1890. Then the office of the Director of Education was created.

In 1918, the first real targets for the development of education were set by Sir Hugh Clifford:

- Primary education for every African boy and girl
- A Training College for teachers in every province
- Better salaries for teachers
- A Royal College

Ultimately, the proposed targets and recommendations from several committees, such as "the Phelps-Stokes Fund" from America and the "1922 Committee", led to the opening of the Prince of Wales College in 1927. Later, it became Achimota College. It offered general secondary education as well as post-secondary technical education and teacher training for both sexes. The former college is now a prestigious (secondary) school, and the University of Ghana has its origins in Achimota College.

Great strides were made on the education front from 1922 to 1938. Several industrial schools were established, focusing on technical and agricultural education. To bring the neglected Northern territories up to speed, a separate Department of Education was established. At the Prince of Wales College, scholarships were awarded to students to continue their studies at British universities.

By 1933, an important emphasis was placed on the training of teachers by the government. Also, several local languages were approved as examinable subjects for the Cambridge University School Certificate. Many different topics, such as domestic science, child welfare, bookkeeping, and typewriting, find their way into the secondary education system.

The Second World War affected the progress of education in such a way that all the European inspectors, teachers, etc., were mobilised for war. Consequently, the first African Director of Education was appointed, Mr. V.A. Tetty.

Before Mr. Tetty, Ghana had known other native education pioneers.

One of Ghana's greatest scholars ever was Dr. James Kwegyir Aggrey. In 1898, he went to study in the United States on a scholarship. He obtained a string of degrees, including a B.A., an MBA, and a Ph.D. On his return to the Gold Coast, he was appointed Vice-Principal of the Prince of Wales College.

Dr. Aggrey campaigned with great commitment for women's education. He thought that educating a man was like educating a person, but educating a woman had a much bigger impact on the family and society as a whole.

By the 1950's, there were approximately 3000 primary and secondary schools in Ghana, and 6.6% of the 4.2 million population was in school. The British laid a solid foundation for the formal education system in Ghana, but only a small group had

access to it. The Nkrumah government in 1952 saw education as a major instrument for national development and introduced the policy of education for all.

Post-Independent Era

The 1961 Act, (Act 87) initiated by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah was aimed at achieving Free Universal Primary Education. The Act made Education compulsory and free.

Section 2 (1): “Every child who has attained the school-going age (six-years) as determined by the Minister shall attend a course of instruction as laid down by the Minister in a school recognised for the purpose by the Minister”

Section 20 (2): “No fee, other than the payment for the provision of essential books or stationary or materials required by pupils for use in practical work, shall be charged in respect of tuition at a public primary, middle or special school.”

The Ghanaian education system at this point (the end of the 1960’s) consisted of six-years of primary education, followed by four-years of secondary education. At the end of the four years, suitable students went on to do a two-year sixth form course that could lead to a three-year university course. Students who were not suitable to continue, completed two years of pre-vocational classes.

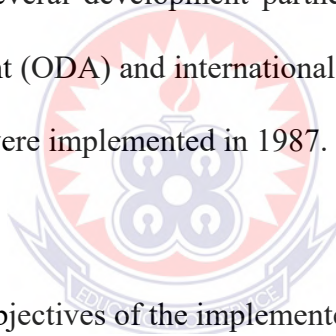
The system was soon regarded as too long and too academic. Thus, 1974 saw a reform of the system, establishing the Junior Secondary School on an experimental basis. The Junior Secondary School introduced practical subjects and activities

allowing students to acquire occupational skills, which, after an apprenticeship, lead to the qualification for self-employment.

Due to a wide range of factors such as economic decline, bureaucracy, and sheer lack of interest, the JSS-system never went beyond the experimental phase. By 1983, the education system was in a state of crisis. It faced drastic reductions in government financing, lack of educational materials, deterioration of school structures, low enrolment levels, and high dropout rates.

The Reforms of the 1980's

With the assistance of several development partners (World Bank, Department for International Development (ODA) and international grants), the education system was reviewed and proposals were implemented in 1987.



A brief summary of the objectives of the implemented actions:

- Increase access to basic education
- Shorten the pre-university education structure from 17 years to 12 years.
- Make education cost-effective
- Improve quality of education by making it more effective to socio-economic conditions

The junior secondary school structure was put in place on a nation-wide basis. Now, 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary school are a standard 9 years of free and compulsory basic education. The reforms saw further changes from

hours spent at school to educational resources such as the infrastructure of class blocks and libraries, school supplies and technical skills equipment.

Although the reforms helped to solve some of the problems, the results achieved by students at the primary school level were low. The government then embarked on the BESIP/FCUBE (Basic Education Sector Improvement) or more popularly, the Free Compulsory, Universal, Basic Education Program) program, which was aimed at providing every child of school-going age with a good basic education.

Some of the objectives of the FCUBE program were:

- Improving the quality of learning and teaching
- Improving access to basic education facilities

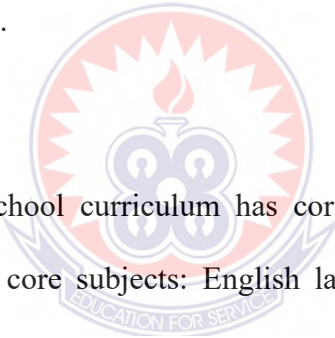
The Tertiary Education sector also underwent reforms. By 1979 Ghana had 3 Universities with a number of research institutions and professional associations. The main objectives of the reforms were to improve quality, efficiency, access, equity, relevance and sustainability.

Current status of the Education system in Ghana

The present structure of education, which starts at the age of 6 years, is a 6-3-3-4 structure, representing, 6 years of primary education, 3 years of junior secondary school, 3 years of senior secondary school and a 4-year university course. Naturally, students who successfully pass the Senior Secondary School Certificate examination can also follow courses at a polytechnic, a Teachers' Training College or other tertiary institutions.

As mentioned earlier, the first 9 years form the basis of basic education and are free and compulsory. Basic education is designed to expose children to a wide variety of ideas and skills and to instil attitudes that will help them cope creatively with their environment and stimulate them to be an asset to their country.

The curriculum used in schools is work-oriented. The primary school level curriculum consists of English, Ghanaian language and culture, mathematics, environmental studies, integrated science, religion and moral education, and physical activities such as music, dance and physical education. The Junior Secondary School level makes a distinction between Agricultural and General Science and incorporates subjects such as Pre-Vocational Skills and Pre-Technical Skills. Also, Social Studies and French as a third language are added.

The logo of the University of Education, Winneba, is a circular emblem. It features a central lamp with a flame, set against a background of a sunburst. Below the lamp, the motto 'EDUCATION FOR SERVICE' is written in a banner. The entire emblem is surrounded by a decorative border.

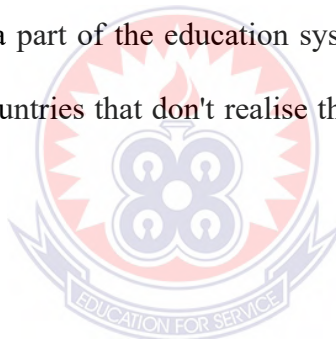
The Senior Secondary School curriculum has core subjects and elective subjects. Every student takes four core subjects: English language, Mathematics, Integrated Science (incl. Science, Agriculture, and Environmental Studies), and Social Studies (economics, geography, history, and government). Students also choose 3 elective subjects from 5 available programmes: Agriculture Programme, General Programme (Arts or Science option), Business Programme, Vocational Programme, and Technical Programme.

Basic and senior secondary schools run a 40-week school year and students are tested using an internal continuous assessment (30% of the final score) and an external examination conducted by the West African Examinations Council (70% of the final score).

The Future

Ghana aims to reach "middle-income country status" by the year 2020. For this purpose, she has developed a road map known as Vision 2020. The basic objectives of the Vision 2020 document are to "reduce poverty, increase employment opportunities and average incomes, and to reduce inequities in order to improve the general welfare and the material well-being of all Ghanaians".

The Vision 2020 document contains an education policy with the objectives to "Ensure all citizens, regardless of gender or social status, are functionally literate and productive at the minimum." It also says that in order to reach Vision 2020, science and technology must be a part of the education system. This is because we live in a technological age, and countries that don't realise this will never be able to get out of poverty.



The education policy mainly extends to four major groups of the education system:

- a. Basic Education (FCUBE – Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education)
- b. Secondary Education
- c. Teachers Education
- d. Tertiary Education

The Vision 2020 education policy has objectives for each sector within the education system. Besides the objectives for each sector all sectors must embrace an increase in scientifically and technological education as well as making education more accessible to girls in order to obtain a gender balance.

The objectives for the Basic Education level (FCUBE) are:

1. Improving the quality of learning and teaching
2. Improving access to basic education facilities
3. Encouraging private sector participation in the provision of education facilities
4. Improving management efficiency

2.3 Ghanaian Education System

The current educational system in Ghana is characterised by the six-three-three-four format, which is representative of six educational years at the primary level, three years at the junior high level, another three at the senior high level and four years at the university level. Again, the structure permits successful candidates of the West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) or the previous Senior Secondary Certificate Examination to continue their studies at various training colleges, polytechnics or tertiary institutions across the country (Ghana Embassy, 2015). It is worth noting that the educational system in Ghana has over the years been at the mercy of successive governments and, therefore, it will not be surprising if a change in government occasions structural and systemic changes in the education sector of the country. A typical back and forth was witnessed in 2000 under the former President John Agyekum Kuffour. After his government realised the need to extend the senior high education years to four years from the previous three, the successive government under the late former President John Evans Atta Mills in 2008 changed the number of years back to three years of secondary education. These continuous alterations are, however, aimed at achieving a perfect structural and systemic fit for the educational sector of Ghana. These changes, according to some educational commentators, are as a result of the constant desire for a befitting model

that will address the specific expectations and pressing needs of the people of Ghana (Macbeth, 2010; Akyeampong 2010, George 1976, Hayford 2007).

Currently, Ghana operates the two-six-three-three-four structure along the three levels of the sector: the basic level, the second cycle, and the tertiary or third cycle, categorised under the binary structure where universities stand on one end and polytechnics or technical universities on the other. Subject to the result outcomes from the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), qualified pupils within the 16–18-year age bracket have the opportunity to be enrolled in the three-year senior high education level leading to the tertiary level or parallel technical or vocational education where successful students can advance through the technical universities/polytechnics or enter the job market. This transition from junior high school in Ghana is aided by the Computer School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS), implemented in September 2005. According to an Act of Parliament and dictated by the National Accreditation Board, all educational levels beyond the secondary level are categorised under the tertiary umbrella, which spans between three and four years (Acheampong, 2010). The Ghana education system also ensures that education for pupils between 6 and 15 years remains mandatory throughout the country, while entry into various tertiary institutions is determined strictly by admission merited by performance and infrastructural availability. The mandated languages of instruction have been limited to indigenous languages specific to the administrative region for the early years at the primary level and English for the primary level to the tertiary level.

Also, the educational structure at the basic level has been categorised under three main levels: beginning for 4-year olds with a 2-year of pre-school, a 6-year of primary level schooling, and a 3-year of junior high education, ending at 15 years, translating into 11 years of basic education; lower primary education; and upper primary education in the country. After pre-school, lower primary education begins for 6–9 year olds, while the upper primary level begins for 9–12-year-old pupils (Akyeampong et al. 2007, Acheampong, 2010; Avoke 2001; GES 2004; MoE 2011a, UNESCO & IBE 2010/2011).

Ghana's educational sector, especially the basic, junior high, and senior high schools, had witnessed or seen several conspicuous reforms which were aimed at growing education, especially during the post-colonial period up to the turn of the new millennium. Some of these reforms included the 1960 Fee-free Compulsory Primary and Middle School Education, the Education Act of 1961, and the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), among others (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2016). Adu-Gyamfi et al. (2016) argued, among other things, that the various reforms that characterised Ghana's education system in terms of implementation can generally be categorised into two major kinds: "reforms that cut across the length and breadth of the country and radical reforms where the government might want to play "some politics" with reform."

In problematizing this discourse, it is essential to establish the fact that some exclusive studies have been done on senior high school education and free SHS in particular. Again, some studies have been done on quality university education and the role of lecturers, among others. There are also studies that focus on the nature of

the relationship between academia and government, among others. Some of these studies include the works of Green (1971), Friesen and Boberg (1990), Barrett et al. (2006), Morley et al. (2009), Asiyai (2013; 2015), Hameed (2017) and Abdul-Rahaman et al. (2018) that draw our attention to pertinent issues concerning education, the role of teachers and free education, among others. Other studies covering senior high school education in Ghana, such as Bibby and Peil (1974), Lloyd and Gage-Brandon (1992), Acheampong (2010), and Hameed (2017), have addressed the question of enrolment, performance, and how these impact on students, households, and the country at large.

The above notwithstanding, the existing literature has not fully addressed the issue of free SHS and quality university education; specifically, the role lecturers play in ensuring the delivery of quality education. It has become imperative to raise relevant questions today for the development of a new synthesis that is practical enough to allow for the necessary action to push forward the quality of discourse, which is a major concern among stakeholders. This will enable us to build the kind of system that will produce cutting-edged graduates in the present and foreseeable future.

In striving to achieve this, there is the need to shy away from being Utopian. University lecturers must shy away from perceived chasms and abracadabra moments. This paper highlights the thoughts and intellectual positions penned by accomplished scholars. This paper, among other things, intends to serve the purpose of refreshing the memories of intellectuals and policy makers concerning how academics have individually or collectively, as citizens, pondered over free secondary education,

quality education, and the role of the university teacher within the melting pot of quality discourse. Again, the study anticipates that policy makers and stakeholders shall be able to ask themselves some relevant questions which shall support the quality discourse concerning the need to resolve challenges arising from increasing student population, limited number of lecturers and limited infrastructure among others.

Education Policies in Ghana

In recent decades, various reforms and educational policies have been advocated and conducted in developed and developing countries. Mingat et al. (2003) intimated that the onus lies on policymakers in educational frontiers to advance a vision and policy for the progress of the educational sector, including galvanising relevant support and collaboration for the implementation of the outlined vision and strategy from a multi-field, multi-sectorial perspective. The major drivers of such policy interventions are the government, implementing ministry and other relevant ministries in government and non-governmental partners who provide essential services in terms of resources to be deployed, including teaching unions and school administrators, who provide core educational services; student bodies and families, who constitute the primary recipients of the service provisions; employers and the public relying on the sector for labour supply; and future change makers who will contribute to economic progress and development, thereby enriching the socio-cultural and economic life of the nation. However, as stated by Quah (2016), policy formulation constitutes the easiest part of the process; it is the stage of implementation that ends up being winding and cumbersome, the Achilles' heel of any policy reform. As opined by Haddad and Demsky (1995), educational policies set directives to guide future decisions, start or

hinder action, or monitor implementation of previous actions. Thus, the overall essence of educational policy analysis is to explore policy gaps to propose appropriate solutions.

It has been reported that the spate of increasing educational reforms and policy introductions globally has attracted the attention of African countries as well (McCain, 1979; Palmer, 2005, Acheampong and Furlong, 2000).

According to Acheampong and Furlong, (2000), the most important legislation, policy documents and reports in the field of education in Ghana are

- i. Education Act, 1961
 - ii. Dzobo Report, 1973
 - iii. New Structure and Content of Education, 1974
 - iv. Education Commission Report on Basic and Secondary Education. 1987/88
 - v. Education Reform Programme, 1987/88
 - vi. University Renationalisation Committee Report, 1988
 - vii. Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) Programme, 1996
(originating from the Constitution of 1992)
 - viii. Ghana Education Trust Fund – GET Fund Act 2000
 - ix. Educational Reforms – 2007
- (Acheampong & Furlong, 2000; Acheampong, 2010).

Ghana's educational sector has witnessed numerous phases of educational policy reforms from pre-independent eras till today. According to Opoku (2018), the most current policy implementation is the Free Senior High School Policy, which was

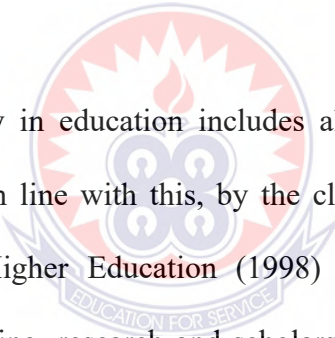
begun in August 2017 by the President Akufo Addo government in Ghana. SEND (a non-governmental organisation in Ghana) reports that the implementation of the Free Senior High School has resulted in an improved enrolment at the senior high school (SHS) level from 300,195 students in the 2016/2017 academic year to 396,951 students in the 2017/2018 academic year, representing an increase of 32.2%. Opoku (2018), however, intimated that the introduction and implementation of the Free Senior High School policy has also unravelled major infrastructural deficiencies in the Ghanaian educational sector.

The Concept of Quality in Education in Ghana

Scholars of different orientations and persuasions have not come to a consensus on the definition of quality. In the latter part of the twentieth century, DuBrin (1997) defined quality as "a desirable attribute of a product or service that distinguishes it for the person seeking the attribute." Writing in the new millennium too, Schindler et al. (2015) conceptualised the term under four main themes. These are described as purposeful, exceptional, transformative, and accountable. For the purpose of the current discourse, borrowing from Schindler et al. (2015), the definition of quality would be used to denote the transformative process whereby services (teaching) impact positive change on students through their affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains.

The concept of quality in education varies and is dependent on the context in which one uses it (UNESCO, 2014; Schindler et al. 2015). In the Lithuanian context, for instance, quality education is a means to achieve expected formal educational goals that can meet the personal needs of the individual and the larger society (UNESCO, 2014). Asiyai's (2013) study also argues that quality education is primarily aimed at

equipping the recipients (students) with relevant skills, knowledge, ideas, values, and attitudes needed to enable the students to make well-informed decisions and live a self-sustaining life. Schuller et al. (2004) have reported, among other things, that on the international scene, higher education and university education in particular are consistently placed at the centre to serve as a fulcrum for the facilitation of the skills, knowledge and expertise that are essential to economic and social development. According to an earlier study by Majasan (1998), quality education is "expected to address critical issues such as labour dignity, quality leadership and committed citizenship, industrial harmony, political stability, religious tolerance, self-reliance, and security."



It is reported that quality in education includes all the functions and activities in schools (Asiyai, 2013). In line with this, by the close of the twentieth century, the World Conference on Higher Education (1998) enumerated such functions and activities to include teaching, research and scholarship, community service, staffing, students' roles, infrastructure and educational facilities, equipment, and the academic environment (World Conference of Higher Education, 1998). The Ministerial Round Table on Quality Education, which was held by UNESCO in 2003, said that a good education should give everyone the tools they need to be fully involved in their own communities and to act as global citizens (UNESCO, 2003, in Asiyai, 2013).

Indicators of Quality Education

The literature shows inconsistencies and variations in the concept of quality and the indicators of the same in education. Significantly, there are no fixed indicators used to

assess the quality of education worldwide. This notwithstanding, we can glean some golden nuggets from the literature on the subject matter. A study by Schindler and her contemporaries has put forward the argument that quality in education can be assessed with a cornucopia of indicators. They identified a learner-centred approach, the competency of lecturers, clarity of outcomes, development of critical thinking and student engagement with content as major indicators of quality education (Schindler et al., 2015). Similarly, Ololube et al. (2013) have also suggested some factors that influence the quality of education. These include; "the performance of teachers; the nature of the course; the devices put in place by the institution to enhance the quality of teachers' performance, the existence of appropriate accommodation, furniture, and equipment for teaching; as well as good library and learning facilities" (Ololube et al., 2013). According to Chimombo (2005), quality in education transcends the mere idea of a better teaching environment, more qualified teachers, and the adequate provision of textbooks. Essentially, quality education should proffer solutions to the puzzling questions of society. The impact of universities on society is thus felt through the quality of teaching and research; the production of knowledge; contributions to national and global policies; the production of goods; inventions; and other things that serve as solutions to societal problems (Sall et al., 2003; Manuh et al., 2007). Significantly, there has been a private interest in higher education as people now challenge the mode of quality education delivery. This is based on the fact that private entities demand quality and skilled graduates to manage their work. (Mwiria et al., 2007) In Kenya, employers are worried that college graduates won't be able to handle the responsibilities they are given in a flexible and thorough way.

The Concept of Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Ghana

In the quest to achieve quality in our universities, we cannot overlook the issue of quality assurance. Quality assurance is believed to be “an umbrella concept for a host of activities that are designed to improve the quality of inputs, process and outputs of higher education process” (Okebukola, 2010 in Asiyai, 2013). Asiyai (2013) is of the view that one of the important keys of quality assurance is the development of minimum standards that would allow for the development of stronger operating policies and procedures which are well documented and adhered to. These minimum standards include; qualification of teachers, the quality of teaching in institutions, expected educational achievement of students and the development of a more rigorous management process for education (Asiyai, 2013).

The above elucidation from the literature notwithstanding, it is still essential to look at what constitutes quality and quality university education in the context of upward mobility of the increasing number of senior high school graduates who will be enrolling into the university level from year to year due to the free education policy. To emphasize, this will serve a purpose of enlightening stakeholders concerning the role of the university teacher in ensuring quality university education with the implementation of the free SHS policy in Ghana.

Relationship Between Motivation and Quality Education Delivery

The term "motivation" refers to the elements that lead people to act in particular ways. Getting other people to move in the direction one wants them to go in order to achieve a result is the goal of motivating them. Goal-directed behaviour can be used to characterise motivation. According to Armstrong (2017), Hoy and Miskel (2018), and Tracy (2020) as referenced in Ofoegbu (2021), people are motivated when they

anticipate that a course of action would likely result in the achievement of a goal and a valued reward - one that satisfies their needs. According to Dörnyei (2021), motivation is what determines why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to continue the activity, and how hard they are going to pursue it.

The definition of excellent education is context-dependent and open to several interpretations (Barrett et al., 2016). According to Barrett et al. (2016), it may be necessary to use alternative metrics to evaluate the quality of education in low-income nations. According to research on the value of excellent education, a variety of characteristics, including cognitive achievement, teacher credentials and motivation, pupil-teacher ratio, school effectiveness, years spent in school, instructional time, and education spending, affect education quality (Barrett et al., 2016). Additionally, Barrett et al. (2016) suggest that great education should have the following five elements: effectiveness, efficiency, equity, relevance, and sustainability. Instead of a few significant factors, numerous smaller, interconnected elements affect the quality of the teaching (Nortvedt, Gustafsson & Lehre, 2016).

Teachers are a crucial component of education. In addition, they serve as the pivot around which the educational process revolves. The whims and caprices of the educational system are largely the fault of the teachers (Perry, 2019). They determine the quality of instructional delivery and also have an impact on quality education when it comes to the implementation of the curriculum and educational policies, thus they have the potential to positively or negatively affect the teaching-learning outcomes. When addressing concerns like quality assurance, quality delivery

(teaching), quality context, and quality learning outcomes, they should be taken into account (Scherer & Gustafsson, 2019).

The way teachers approach their jobs has an impact on their motivation. Therefore, elements operating inside the educational system that, if not made available to teachers, could hinder performance, lead to stress, dissatisfaction, and frustration, all of which would affect classroom effectiveness and student quality output, could be referred to as teacher motivation (Muijs, Kyriakides, van der Werf, Creemers et al., 2020). This suggests that elements that originate, channel, maintain, and influence teachers' behaviour in favour of high managerial and academic achievement standards in schools are included in the definition of teacher motivation (Ofoegbu, 2004). The general climate and norms of the school, the size of the classes, the facilities and resources available to the school, the general expectations for student potential, and the school's leadership and decision-making structure, according to Perry (2019), all have an impact on teacher motivation. One of the factors thought to have a detrimental effect on teacher motivation is restricted autonomy.

In his study, Myrberg (2019) looked at the relationship between teacher motivation and quality education delivery and discovered that there was no discernible difference between urban and periurban instructors in the metropolis in terms of motivation. The majority of the teachers enlisted because they were passionate about teaching. However, the motivation was insufficient. The study advised that in order for teachers to grow their professional knowledge and abilities, their living and working conditions should be improved as well as their access to career opportunities.

In their study, Marsh, Hau, and Wen (2019) examined how teachers' motivation affected how well teaching and learning were conducted in public primary schools in Tanzania's Ilala District. The study found that teachers play an important role in ensuring that students achieve good test scores, and that factors like low pay, unfavourable working circumstances, and lack of appreciation from educational officers and school heads all contribute to low teacher morale. Teachers should be offered incentives to attract their attention and subsequently increase performance in order to improve teaching and learning.

In a study conducted in the Kwale District by Makoti (2018), it was found that there was a substantial correlation between the terms and circumstances of pre-school teachers' employment under various sponsors and the degree of their motivation. The study also found a substantial association between professional growth, low pay, job insecurity, and training and pre-school teacher motivation. According to the study, in order to improve pre-school teachers' terms and working conditions and increase their productivity, the government should put them under the control of a regulatory organisation like the Teachers Service Commission (TSC). The new study will aim to determine how teacher motivation will affect the quality of early childhood education as opposed to the previous study, which tried to establish the relationship between terms and conditions of service and teacher motivation.

The Thika Sub County study by Ndani and Kimani (2018) examined the variables affecting early childhood development instructors' motivation. The study found that more than half of pre-school teachers were less motivated than average. It was suggested that the Ministry of Education and the local area should work together to

improve the conditions for teaching and learning, as well as the pay and benefits for ECE teachers.

A study by ChimaniKire, Mutandwa, Gadzirayi, Muzondo, and Mutandwa (2017) in Zimbabwe looked at instructors' motivation as a factor in inclusive education in early childhood facilities. Findings showed that inadequate pay, a lack of professional development, and subpar working circumstances contributed to instructors' lack of job satisfaction and neutral attitudes, which prevented them from putting their abilities to use in ECD centres to promote inclusive education. Stakeholders in education should work hard to fix things that make teachers less motivated so that they can do a better job with inclusive education.

The Concept of Free Senior High School Education in Ghana

With the adoption of the 1992 constitution of Ghana, the country envisaged making secondary and higher education available and accessible to all Ghanaians by every appropriate means, especially through the introduction of progressive free education (Government of Ghana, 1992). With the adoption of the 1992 constitution of Ghana, the country envisaged making secondary and higher education available and accessible to all Ghanaians by every appropriate means, especially through the introduction of progressive free education (Government of Ghana, 1992). "Secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular, by the progressive introduction of free education" (Government of Ghana,

1992). On the 12th day of September 2017, Ghana launched the Free Senior High School Education Policy. What does this policy entail?

If free secondary education is supposed to mean one thing, as argued by Hameed (2017), then it means "the era where students dropped out of school for financial reasons or had their education cut short has become a thing of the past" (Hameed, 2017). Abdul-Rahaman et al. (2018) have added that the policy "seeks to bridge the enrolment gap between the rich and the poor." It also aims at increasing the enrolment of students and improving quality through academic performance (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2018). The rationale behind free education in Ghana is not different from what we see in other countries that have implemented the same. For example, in Sri Lanka, free education aims to reduce educational costs and assist students in studying without being burdened by educational-related costs (Asankha & Takashi, 2011). In Uganda (the first sub-Saharan African country to adopt a free secondary education policy), the policy results in an increase in student enrolment in the public secondary schools yearly (Chapman et al., 2009; Asankha & Takashi, 2011).

The major proponents and supporters of free education, and for that matter, free senior high school education, have argued, generally, that the policy has necessitated an increase in enrolment (access to secondary education), as evidenced in the works of Chimombo (2005), Chapman, Burton and Werner (2009), Asankha and Takashi (2011), Asankha (2011), and Hameed (2017), among many others.

In the Education Sector Analysis for 2018, the Ministry of Education (MoE) reported that "secondary education is a dynamic space in Ghanaian education, with many changes ongoing, not least the roll-out of the free SHS policy, with the aim of dramatically increasing access to SHS by removing cost as a potential barrier" (MoE,

2018). Significantly, the informed media in Ghana reported that approximately 400,000 students were enrolled in S.H.S. in 2017 while approximately 500,000 students were enrolled in 2018 (Myjoyonline.com, 04/09/2017). Also, the Minister of Education reported that the percentage of students' enrolment in 2017 was 83.9%, indicating an improvement of 75% from 2016 (MoE, 2017). This suggests a persistent increase in secondary school enrolment in the years ahead, and this will drive enrolment at the university level. Studies like that of Chimombo (2005), Chapman et al. (2009), Asankha and Takashi (2011), Asankha (2011), Ngeno and Simatwa (2015), as well as Asumadu (2019) have addressed the issue of increasing access to education at all levels. But is access everything?

The work of Manuh et al. (2007) revealed that "the expansion in access to university education without commensurable growth in staffing, infrastructure, related facilities, access to international databases, and spending on students has raised major concerns over its quality." The major proponents of free education based their case, among other things, on the advantages of having a well-educated society. The question is, which literate society? Is it a fully baked literate society or a half-baked one? Ten years ago, Morley et al. (2009) raised the need for questions to be posed concerning how higher education relates to policy discourses of poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Morley et al., 2009). Even so, it is helpful to argue that some questions also need to be asked about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The proponents of free SHS must continuously refresh their memories concerning the fact that, in the policy field of higher education, the concepts of access and widening participation saturate the discussions on diversity, equity, and disadvantage, which sometimes become a form of critique of public universities (Morley et al., 2009).

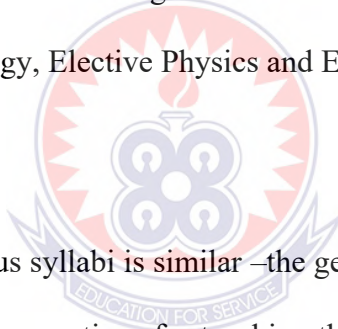
Prior to the Free Senior High School Education (FSHSE), higher education was rationed, according to the Free Senior High School Education (FSHSE). The new criteria which subsisted and continue to subsist in the rationing process include attention to diversity and social inclusion. However, the literature on higher education acknowledges the fact that some tensions have existed between the providers of higher education and those who would be consumers of the same. The issues include fears about quality and standards, funding and capacity challenges, among others.

Teaching Syllabi of the Senior High School Curriculum

A syllabus is an organising document in the area of instruction (Chandler, 1985). It is a vehicle by which organisation and structure of intended learnings are communicated from teacher to teacher and teacher to learner (Eash, 1991). Each of the syllabi of the seven programmes of the senior high school is an official document designed by National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA), formerly by the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD), under the auspices of the Ghana Education Service (GES) of the Ministry of Education (MoE). After the design of the syllabus, it is handed over to the classroom teacher for implementation.

The seven programmes are Agricultural, Business, Technical Drawing, General Science, General Arts, Home Economics and Visual Arts programmes. The Agriculture programme comprises five major areas with detailed syllabus of each. These are the General Agriculture, Crop Husbandry and Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Forestry. The Business programme comprises Business Management, Cost Accounting, Typewriting, Clerical Office Duties and Financial

Accounting. The time allocation is the same for all the courses. The Technical programme is composed of seven subjects – Applied Electricity, Auto Mechanics, Building Construction, Electronics, Metal Works, Technical Drawing and Wood Work. The General Arts programme comprises a lot of subjects. These include Christian Religious Studies, French, Geography, Ghanaian Languages, Government, History, Islamic Religious Studies, Literature in English, Economics and West African Traditional Religion. The Visual Arts programme comprises nine subjects. They include Basketry, Ceramics, General Knowledge in Art, Graphic Design, Jewellery, Leather Work, Picture making, Sculpture and Textiles. The subjects that make up the Home Economics programme are Clothing and Textile, Food and Nutrition and Management in Living. The General Science programme comprises Chemistry, Elective Biology, Elective Physics and Elective Maths.



The structure of the various syllabi is similar –the general aims, scope of content to be covered, time allocation, suggestions for teaching the syllabi, practical skills, detailed content and materials or equipment needed for teaching and learning. Each of the syllabi has both theory and practical component, has 6 periods of 40 minutes per week and out of the six periods, three are devoted to practical work and three to theory. Thirdly, each has two strands – providing terminal education for students or serving as a prerequisite for further studies. This strand is summarised using a sample from General Agriculture:

The content of this syllabus has been designed in a way that will offer knowledge and skills to students for whom senior high school education is a terminal experience.

Knowledge and practises acquired in this subject will enable such students to work on their own, or seek employment in agricultural establishments. The curriculum also gives students who want to get more education and training in agriculture after SHS the knowledge and skills they need to get started (GES, 2010).

The Core Subjects

The core subjects make each programme complete, and there are five of them: English Language, Mathematics, Integrated Science, Social Studies, and Information and Communications Technology (ICT). The core subjects also have the same organisational pattern and structure. The major difference can be found in the area of the profile dimensions. For example, in ICT, knowledge and understanding are worth 10%, application of knowledge is worth 30%, and practical skills are worth 40%; in Mathematics, knowledge and understanding are worth 30%, and application of knowledge is worth 70%. The English language has knowledge and understanding and the application of knowledge of 40% and 60%, respectively. The remaining two also vary. For instance, Integrated Science, for instance, has 20% for knowledge and understanding, 40% for application and 40% for practical and experiential skills, but those of Social Studies are 35% for knowledge and understanding, 40% for the application of knowledge and 25% for attitudes and values.

The Relevance of the SHS Curriculum

The senior high school is a terminating point for the majority of students and it turns out such school leavers without marketable skills to go into employment (Dzobo, 1987; Danso, 2018). Unemployment rate in Ghana is becoming alarming (Amankrah, 2014). It is a major concern because it makes one ponder on whether the curriculum

contains the skills that make the learners of the curriculum critical thinkers, problem solvers, good communicators, good collaborators, information and technology literate, flexible and adaptable, innovative and creative, globally competent and financially literate (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009; Chu, Reynolds, Tavares, Notari & Lee, 2017). These concerns call for the question of the relevance of the senior high school curriculum. A curriculum that is relevant should relate to the contextual reality of the world of work. In other words, if a student goes through a curriculum and then decides to work instead of going to college, they should be able to use the skills they have learned so far to make their own jobs or find work.

There are three strands succinctly stated in the senior high school curriculum. The first is that the curriculum contains enough knowledge and skills for students to terminate their education at the end of senior high school and gain employment. The second strand makes sure that students can work for themselves, and the third strand lets them go to college.

The reality is that few graduating senior high students are able to further their education, while the majority, approximately 90%, are employed (Amankrah, 2014). It is worthy of note that there have been several educational reforms and reviews in Ghana with the purpose of providing skills necessary for decent employment in industries, self-employment and the pursuit of further studies (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2002). Research shows that only about 10% of schoolchildren passing through junior high school (JHS) to senior high school (SHS) gain admission to universities.

In an attempt to identify the underlining reasons for gaining self-employment, contextual reality studies have been carried out on political influence (Otunga & Nyandusi, 2013), cultural effects (Balarin & Benavides, 2010), and socio-economic influence (Cornbleth, 1988). Some researchers have studied the skills requirements of students and the design of the curriculum (Anderson & Gantz, 2013). Most of these studies looked at causes of unemployment without looking at the curriculum as a possible major cause (Ekwueme, Uchegbu, & Nkemdirim, 2009).

Again, it explored the relationship between the skills in the senior high school curriculum and the skills that employers demand of employees. So, the goal of this study was to find out what skills are in the curriculum, how important those skills are, and what skills employers want from their workers.

Skills in the Curriculum in Relation to Contextual Realities

A lot of scholarly work on contextual realities has been carried out. One of the major studies on contextual realities is contextual (1988) realities: An analysis of recent trends in Black South African education.

The Science Education Project began in 1975 with the aim of improving science education. In view of this, practical work in the form of laboratory exercises was introduced into the science lessons in black schools (MacDonald & Rogan, 1985). The project was funded by the Anglo-American Corporation. The interest of the corporation lay in the production of better quality manpower with the aim of reducing political tensions within the political arena (Jansen, 1988).

The findings showed that although practical work was prescribed in the syllabus, in general, the closest pupils got to experimental work was reading about it in textbooks

(Jansen, 1988; MacDonald & Rogan, 1985). The project was therefore a complete failure.

Similar findings were revealed from the Molteno Project. It was revealed that contextual realities were not considered to any higher degree. The results showed that contextual realities were only taken into account when they were used as a guide for making programmes that were technically sound (Jansen, 1988).

The Fort Hare Project was also a failure because there was a fundamental mismatch between the theoretical preparation of student teachers and the contextual realities of the school environment (Jansen, 1988; Millar, 1984). It was, therefore, advised that the relevance of acquired cognitive skills must be examined in relation to contextual realities. Again, any educational or curricular change in South Africa that has meaning to participants and engages and empowers students in the critical transformation of contextual realities will have to embody at least the following elements: a redefinition of educational goals; a reconstitution of educational relationships, a reinterpretation of African history; a reconstruction of curriculum content; and a reformulation of educational objectives as posited by philosophers such as Jansen (1988).

Skills Employers Demand of Employees

High school reform and work: facing labour market realities is one of the research projects on the skills that employers require of employees. The study was carried out in almost two decades. In this study, Barton reported on seven organisations: National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) (2001), Educational Quality of the Workforce National Employer Survey (1995), Department of Education Survey of 101

Executives (1988), The Committee for Economic Development Survey of Employers' Needs (1984), Conference Board Survey of Executives (1984), Centre for Social Organization of Schools, The Johns Hopkins University (1984), and Survey on San Francisco Employers (1983).

The survey of the National Association of Manufacturers (2001) revealed that employers want well-rounded high school graduates who can read, write, calculate, solve problems, work in teams and have strong employability skills. Again, they want graduates familiar with the world of work and with varied career and post-secondary education options. They cited examples of reasons for rejecting applicants. The most frequently cited examples include inadequate employability skills, attendance, timeliness, and work ethics (69%), followed by insufficient work experience (34%) and failure to pass a drug screening test (27%). The others, in the order of their ranks, were inadequate math skills, poor references from previous employers, oral communication, problem-solving, and technical and computer skills.

Educational Quality of the Workforce The National Employer survey also revealed attitudes and communication skills as the top priorities. These were followed by prior experience and recommendation information. According to the report, factors directly related to schooling appeared at the lowest level of the list, though with younger workers, education-related skills may play a significant role.

The Department of Education Survey of 101 The executive survey also showed that the ability to read and write, together with computation, communication, and problem-solving skills, was the most required of applicants. The report recommended to business leaders that schools should emphasise the importance of good habits such

as self-discipline, reliability, perseverance, accepting responsibility and respect for the rights of others.

Among the most appealing skills in 500 large companies as well as 6,000 small companies surveyed by the Committee for Economic Development Survey of Employer Needs were striving to work well, learning how to learn, prioritising, and communicating. Both respondents said that it was hard to find young applicants with the most desirable traits.

In the survey of the Conference Board survey of executives, the findings showed that employers were concerned with the observed inability of high school graduates to function effectively as communicators. The primary problem for the employers was their attitude toward work and the workplace. The following, in an order of preference, were considered very laudable: strong personal impression in an interview, strong recommendation from a manager in a firm who knows the candidate personally; strong letters of character reference; strong scores on a written test; and strong school grades.

The findings from the survey of personnel officers, conducted by the Centre for Social Organisation of Schools at The Johns Hopkins University, showed that academic factors ranked among the lowest on the list. What employers wanted were the same as those from the Conference Board Survey of Executives: a strong personal impression in the interview; a strong recommendation from a manager in a firm who knows the candidate personally; strong letters from previous employers, strong letters of character reference; and strong scores on a written test.

The last of the surveys, San Francisco Employers, revealed that employers looked up for applicants that seemed serious about work and eager to get the job; those who

seemed bright and alert; courteous and personable; those who seemed to have the ability to learn quickly; those who had a neat appearance and appropriate dress, good reading ability; and good ability with numbers; and the least they looked up for was a record of achievement in school.

The seven organisations revealed a lot of skills that employers require of employees. There is, however, a lot of commonality in what employers require of applicants. Those three important and common skills that ran through the various surveys were attitudes, first impressions, and recommendations.

Even though there were some lapses in the survey, the primary focus of the study of identifying a set of employability skills employers require of employees was achieved. These types of skills. " Rosenbaum's (2005) research is the most important because they are rarely taught in high schools or colleges. This resulted in the school being listed among the lowest skills required of employees. Research conducted by Carnevale and Hanson (2015) also showed that students who do their best in high school also do their best on the job, but the match between the academic content in high school and the subsequent knowledge required on the job is not significant.

2.5 Digitisation of Ghanaian Education System

The internet and evolving technologies have operated as a channel through which knowledge is transferred to the learner (Talebian et al., 2014; Kwapong, 2009). Digital and emerging technologies have not only transformed the way we live, receive information, deliver services and products, but have also impacted the way learning occurs (Soomro et al., 2018). In the country's attempt to inject a paradigm shift in the

education sector, Ghana was one of the few countries on the continent of Africa to reform its ICT sector and institute the required legal and regulatory framework to upkeep the growth of the sector (Frempong & Atubra, 2001). The government of Ghana introduced its Information and Communication Technology for Accelerated Development (ICT4AD) Policy in late 2003. According to the basic premise of the policy, Ghana's development process can be accelerated through the development, deployment, and exploitation of ICTs within the economy and society. The overall aim of ICT4AD was to engineer an ICT-led socio-economic development process with the potential to transform Ghana into a middle-income, information-rich, knowledge-based and technology-driven economy and society (Ghana Government, 2003). Notably, the ICT in education policy for Ghana had a long gestation period. An attempt at policy development for the sector predates the national ICT policy. A committee set up by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports outlined an ICT in education policy framework and produced a document that remained untouched for a long time.

The objectives of the policy were to:

- a. Ensure that students have ICT literacy skills before coming out at each level of education.
 - b. Provide guidelines for integrating ICT tools at all levels of education.
 - c. Provide means of standardising ICT resources for all schools.
 - d. Facilitate training of teachers and students in ICT.
 - e. Determine the type and level of ICT needed by schools for teaching and administrative purposes.
 - f. Promote ICT as a learning tool in the school curriculum at all levels
- (Government of Ghana, Ministerial ICT Policy statements, 2005).

Though the primary objective of some of these policies is aimed at transforming Ghana from an agro-dependent economy into a technologically-savvy one, these interventions paved the way for distributing ICT tools at all levels of education and, particularly, in distance education to enhance teaching and learning. Following these policies, many institutions in the country have initiated programmes that employ emerging technologies to widen access to higher education, which has become a general and perennial problem in Ghana. Learners are believed to be more technology savvy and adaptable to changing technology (Awadhiya et al. 2014; Miglani & Awadhiya 2017; Agyei & Voogt, 2015; Esterhuysen & Scholtz, 2015). However, the constant issues relating to the cost of internet data packages, in addition to connectivity concerns, further engender untoward implementation challenges (ITU, 2017), to which Ghana is not immune.

2.6 Computerized School Selection Placement System

In 2003, the government of Ghana under the leadership of former President John Agyekum Kuffour appreciated the requisite urgency for educational fairness for students in transition from Junior High schools to various public and private second cycle institutions across Ghana. Thus, the CSSPS for SHS was implemented in September 2005 two years after its introduction by the government through the Ministry of Education and collaboration with the Ghana Education Service and other educational stakeholders within and outside Ghana (CSSPS, 2005). According to Babah et al. (2020), the countless difficulties and daunting complications bedevilled the manual system of placement for qualified students of secondary education, a system in which the fate second cycle destination of Junior high school students in transition were determined by head teachers of various second cycle institutions at

annually organised meetings. Among the problems that fuelled the introduction and execution of the Computerized School Selection and Placement System were associated with the incidence of bribery and corruption, wrong shading of sex codes, code numbers and names, loss of registration cards, undue delays in the selection and placement of qualified applicants, pressure on parents to secure schools for their children, long waiting time, and frustrations that accompanied the process (Babah et al., 2020; CSSPS Report, 2006; South 2007; Blay, 2009).

The initial procedures to registration involve the filling of specially designed registration cards and scannable forms that are later processed by computer software associated with the CSSPS. Under the system, selection and placement were pure merit based on the performance of candidates who participated in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). Under the CSSPS software's algorithm, placement is based on a ranking system based on accumulated test scores and chosen programme priorities. If the student obtains the required score, the assignment is conducted immediately and a space becomes available. After the first round of placement, if a student is unable to obtain placement.

After the introduction of the CSSPS software, its implementation has seen the coordinated efforts of the government through the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ghana Education Service, with assistance from relevant educational stakeholders and international funding donors, including the active involvement of non-governmental organisations. The main goal of the computerised school selection and placement system is to make transitioning into the various

second-cycle institutions seamless, less stressful, and free of human manipulation while creating a fair ground for all qualified junior high school students to easily access secondary education in Ghana. Accordingly, further objectives of the CSSPS software's introduction and subsequent implementation in 2005 were to increase equal access, transparency, cost effectiveness, fairness, and participation in secondary education and ultimately fast-track the selection and placement process for junior high school students in transition to the second cycle institutions across Ghana (Ajayi, 2009).

The CSSPS software is designed to employ key subjects for students' selected programmes of study in the event of a tie between specified cut-off points for the related programmes selected by the student, putting a premium on high scoring marks in relevant subjects that qualified students seek to enrol in upon their successful placement. Finally, once their assigned second-cycle schools are communicated to them, students are easily prompted by their successful placement in chosen schools and alerted of reporting dates (Ajayi, 2009; Kwapong, 2009; Acheampong, 2010). The various heads of the second cycle institutions are expected to notify the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service of remaining vacancies for reassignment (Babah et al., 2020).

2.7 Factors Underlying the Introduction of CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System

According to Babah et al. (2020) and Ajayi and Telli (2013), apart from the mandatory cut-off aggregate of 30 for entry qualification into senior high school

education under the manual system of selection and placement, most of the Grade A secondary level institutions instituted their own qualification standards for prospective SHS students, which ranked between "six and nine ones." These institutional standards make such schools inaccessible to most students, creating varied levels of anxiety among parents and their wards. As well, the situation created unequal access to well-endowed high-end schools at the expense of those located in rural settings. Aside from these developments, Babah et al (2020) reported that the processes that dominated the manual placement system under the Common Entrance BECE were complicated and cumbersome, defined by numerous accessibility challenges. Some of these challenges included favouritism or the prevalent 'Whom You Know' syndrome, bribery and corruption, which translated into enrolment and quality imbalances.

Also, the Education Review Report (2002) highlighted that some of the notable high-end schools reported over-enrolment while those in rural settings recorded under-enrolments in terms of student numbers. The report further indicated that in 2002, close to seventy-five (75) schools had less than a hundred (100) students in terms of enrolment, while the top performing senior high schools only admitted the best performers in that academic year, to the disadvantage of less endowed schools in the country. In view of the countless complications that laced the previous system of school selection and placement, the government, through the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ghana Education Service, in 2003, considered the computerisation of the process to permit qualified students entry into the senior high level. This consideration gained momentum and thus led to the implementation of the computerised school selection and placement system in September 2005.

Regarding the challenges associated with the manual system of placement, existing studies have shed light on the numerous challenges that thwarted the previous system.

Among the problems that fuelled the introduction and execution of the Computerized School Selection and Placement System were associated with the incidence of bribery and corruption, wrong shading of sex codes, code numbers and names, loss of registration cards, undue delays in the selection and placement of qualified applicants, pressure on parents to secure schools for their children, long waiting time, and frustrations that accompanied the process (Babah et al., 2020; CSSPS Report, 2006; South, 2007; Blay, 2009).

Also, according to some writers, many countries in Africa, including Ghana, have not been able to build upon the successes chalked up in terms of universal primary education to meet the teeming numbers of students in demand for secondary education each academic year (Acheampong, 2010; Kwapong, 2009; Ajayi, 2009). For years, there have been constant concerns over the neglected funding of the secondary education sector by major supporting stakeholders, including donor agencies and the government in particular. The apparent abandonment of this educational sub-sector has resulted in a growing incidence of unequal access for many qualified students, particularly students in resource-poor rural communities across Ghana, where challenges related to quality infrastructure and qualified teaching staff remain daunting (Acheampong 2010, Kwapong, 2009), compared to cohorts in urban settings in many African countries where massive educational support and infrastructure exist in abundance (B). Bregman and Bryner (2003) indicated that major factors, including but not limited to religion, socio-cultural, economic, and gender disparities, have furthered the pre-existing disparities in education across the African continent, especially for young girls. With secondary level education being recognised as the middle ground between the primary and tertiary levels as well as the breeding ground for future human resource banks for the labour market (World Bank,

2005), the relevance and exigent need for fairness when it comes to the selection and placement of students cannot be overemphasized. These factors, therefore, increased the need for a system that created a fair ground for all qualified students and positioned the nation as a pacesetter in educational equity and equality.

2.8 Prospects of the Implementation of CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System

In September 2005, the government of Ghana launched the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) with help from the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service. The goal was to make the transition from Junior High to Senior High School more efficient and open. Before the CSSPS system was created and put into place, the transition process for qualified students was mostly done by hand, with head teachers deciding where many students in the country would go to high school after the exam results were released and the news spread through the media. Additionally, it became a common occurrence that students constantly misplaced their registration cards. Parents said that the system was unfair because they thought that kids were picked based on who they knew and not on how good they were. Year after year, the accusations and frustrations associated with the manual system of school selection and placement become inescapable in major news reports.

As such, the CSSPS was a game changer, removing all of the obstacles that hampered manual selection and placement for students across the country. Unlike the manual selection and placement system, the Computerized School Selection and Placement System allowed students to choose schools in different regions without human interference. This was possible because the system used the acknowledged acceptance algorithm for placement (Ajayi, 2009; Ajayi, Telli, and Telli, 2013; Gale and Shapley,

1962). Under the CSSPS software's algorithm, placement is based on a ranking system that adds up test scores and programme priorities. If the student gets the required score, the space is given to them as soon as one opens up. A second round of placement begins after the first round of placement, if a student is unable to obtain placement.

According to Ajayi (2009), full compliance by some second-cycle institutions has been a great concern as many institutional heads have been found to be underreporting available vacancies for placement. By doing this, the heads of institutions are giving available spaces to students they like through a "back door." In an effort to solve this problem, the CSSPS secretariat gives more students than the normal number of available spaces to institutions in the second cycle. This cuts down on underreporting so that most qualified students who are moving on to second cycle institutions in Ghana can get a spot (Ajayi, 2009). The CSSPS secretariat has also made a "deprivation score" that ranges from 0 to 9 and is used to evaluate second cycle schools in an effort to fix the social and economic inequalities caused by the system (Ajayi, 2009; Acheampong, 2010). These deprivation scores are used to scale up and make up for the test scores of students who went to Junior High schools with less resources. This is especially true for students in rural areas, where getting access to high-quality educational resources is becoming more and more difficult. What remains paramount to the secretariat is the desire to ensure systemic efficiencies in the use of CSSPS while encouraging access for all qualified students, thereby creating favourable equal educational opportunities for all in Ghana (Babah et al., 2020; Ajayi, 2009; Ajayi & Telli, 2013). A study by Bonney (2009) opined that CSSPS software is such that selection and placement present a great chance for preventing underhand

manipulations of the process. Thus, selection and placement are guaranteed under the system on merit, unlike the previous manual system (CSSPS, 2005).

Also, qualified students for placement have the prerogative to select four compulsory schools for placement from multiple regions in Ghana as they so desire under the CSSPS, previously unavailable under the manual system. The CSSPS software is made to use key subjects for the programmes that students have chosen to study if there is a tie between the specified cut-off points for the related programmes that the student has chosen. This puts a lot of weight on high scores in relevant subjects that qualified students want to take when they are placed. Lastly, students are easily reminded of the dates they need to be at their second cycle schools (Ajayi, 2009; Kwapong, 2009; Acheampong, 2010) once they hear that they have been placed in the schools they wanted. (Babah et al., 2020) says that the heads of the second cycle institutions should tell the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service about any open positions that need to be filled.

2.9 Challenges Associated with CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System

Some reservations have been voiced against the CSSPS to the point where stakeholders are professing a total review of the computerised school selection and placement system in Ghana. As an example, old students of some notable groups have been particularly vociferous, demanding approximately 10% placement allocation due to their continued support for their respective schools in terms of financial and infrastructural support given to schools (Daily Graphic, 2011; Acheampong, 2010, Ajayi & Telli, 2013). Also, some members of the national parliament, including the

Central Regional Minister, have in the recent past raised red flags against the CSSPS system. Concerns are raised against the backdrop of students in certain localities in the region losing access to senior high schools in the regional capital as a result of CSSPS implementation, leading to school closures as natives are unable to access the best schools the region has to offer. These developments led to calls by some core stakeholders, like the National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT), to demand a full-circle enquiry into the CSSPS system to instigate sanity and fairness in the selection and placement process for students. To them, selection and placement should be based on merit and no other specially couched criteria that serve the whims of well-connected individuals in society (Daily Graphic, 2011). Again, a communiqué released after one of the Catholic Bishops Conferences demanded that the government discontinue the use of the CSSPS system for the selection and placement of junior high school students said the system and its execution are bridled with confusion, corruption, and systemic inefficiencies, causing accessibility gaps for qualified students in the country. However, these allegations have been vehemently contested by the Ghana Education Service (GES), citing the positives associated with the system as enough grounds for continued use. They do, however, appreciate systemic flaws and technological glitches in the system, calling for calm and support as they institute interventions to overcome the challenges (Aboagye, 2011).

Also, there have been criticisms levelled against the system' inability to differentiate between male and female students. Isare (2010) and Aboagye (2011) put forward that there has been a growing incidence of female students being allocated to male senior high schools and male students, the other way around. These, to them, are system challenges that need urgent attention to overcome and address growing concerns raised by stakeholders. Apart from this systemic anomaly, issues related to the high

cost of school fees and long distances have been cited by parents whose wards are allocated to private senior high schools and those located a long distance from their communal places of abode. This results in untoward frustration and financial difficulties for parents and their wards alike.

Again, a recent study by Babah et al. (2020) reported that parents have been advocating the discontinuation of the CSSPS system for some time. This advocacy is premised on two main concerns that they have endured for years: human factors and systemic errors (Babah et al., 2020). The challenges associated with missing card replacements, name misappropriation, and accessibility concerns for rural students admitted into resource-endowed schools add to the grievances of parents and their wards. As indicated by Ajayi and Telli (2013) and Babah et al. (2020), an overwhelming problem that hinders the smooth operation of the system can be blamed on the human factor; behavioural challenges. This challenge is, however, on behalf of parents and students who end up refusing placement in less endowed senior high schools. The CSSPS secretariat reports this problem to be a perennial concern as every academic year brings its own cohorts of disgruntled applicants. However, as a challenge that emanates from outside the system, the CSSPS cannot be held accountable as it seeks to carry out allocations on performance-based terms.

Isare (2010) asserted that some challenges are due to oversubscriptions of some selected schools by applicants. With limited facilities and carrying capacities, these over-subscribed schools cannot admit all students who apply to such schools, a continued occurrence in 52 schools. Isare (2010) reported that while Wesley Girls' High School declared only 300 vacancies, the CSSPS system revealed that 12,400 qualified students selected the school as their first choice. Issues related to poor performance of students lead to most students falling below the established selection

and placement criteria by the CSSPS system. For instance, in 2010, only 172,359 (representing 49.12%) out of 350,888 candidates who took the BECE passed. Again, in 2011, there were 177,000 open positions, but only 176,128 students met the requirements for placement and selection.

2.10 Interventions and Strategies Instituted by Stakeholders to Address the Challenges Associated with CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System

With the overarching desire to institute a measure of equality and address emergent concerns raised by stakeholders, the government directed for the reservation of 30% admissions for qualified candidates from Junior High schools located with a specified radius of some senior high schools in the country (Babah et al, 2020; Ajayi & Telli, 2013; Ajayi, 2009). This move was seen as a bold step by government in an attempt to introduce a level playing field and ensure equity in students' school placement chances, while also proactively responding to the growing concerns over communities' access to schools within their own localities. Also, in its efforts to prevent and outmanoeuvre the presence of intermediaries and corrupt individuals, the CSSPS Secretariat has taken it upon themselves to print and send copies of results directly to admitting senior high schools and, respectively, admitted students with the aim of crashing down the budding concerns of corruption and anxiety that have bedevilled the success of the CSSPS system for years (Acheampong, 2010). As a system purposively introduced to minimise the challenges that were associated with the previous manual system of placement, the CSSPS, therefore, aimed at breathing equality and equity for all qualified students, irrespective of location and familial background. This agenda is achieved through the CSSPS system that relies on the raw scores of qualified pupils in four core subjects and two elective subjects as opposed to

the manual system which relies heavily on a system of grades awarded within predefined mark ranges (Agyei-Twum, 2006; Babah et al., 2020). Furthermore, following the challenges identified, improvements in the CSSPS system put together a detailed database for all candidates who successfully go through the system, providing a bank of relevant data paramount for adequate assessment and policy scrutiny in the sector. Agyei-Twum (2006) notes that this robust data from the system constitutes the foundation for measuring and monitoring the academic output and performance of students based on their originating communities, districts, or regions in general to beef up the inventory keeping and to influence future educational policy reforms and practical interventions in the sector (Agyei-Twum, 2006).

According to Ajayi and Telli (2013), Ghana's CSSPS has experienced much restructuring since the system's implementation in 2005. These interventions over the years bring to the fore policy makers' appreciation of the relevance of constant improvements and the need to inject paradigm shifts in the educational sector that address the needs of the sector stakeholders. As associated with the unpredictable limitation on students' number of school choices to three under the previous system (Ajayi & Telli, 2013), the CSSPS increased the number of school choices to four in 2007 and six in the following year. These are mitigating strategies that the CSSPS secretariat constantly evaluates to ensure the best outcomes are made available for students. Also, as a mitigating intervention, there were reforms in 2009 to address stakeholder concerns associated with the system. For instance, the interventions introduced the categorisation of public secondary schools into four main streams based on facility availability. This issue saw the introduction of Categories A, B, and C for students, with associated selection and programme choice limits (Ajayi & Telli, 2013).

Finally, the most recent intervention into the CSSPS system was sanctioned in 2011 under the late former President, John Evan A. Mills. The process involved the directive by the President to institute a 70% mainstream and 30% catchment area allocation. Under the president's catchment area allocation directive, 30% of admissions were reserved for applicants located within a 10-mile radius of admitting schools, permitting students within such catchment localities to opt for the catchment area or otherwise. However, notably, regardless of the allocation criterion opted for, assignments were conducted purely on merit, based on the accumulated score from the BECE (Ajayi & Telli, 2013), helping alleviate the concerns of parents and local leaders in specific educational milieus.

2.11 Conclusion and Summary

This chapter gives a background on the educational sector of Ghana. It makes a case for the changes the sector has experienced in recent decades, and as well, sheds light on the notable policy reforms the sector has countersigned in varied attempts to improve access for all. The relevance of digitisation in education is highlighted, considering the full swing of global acceptance of digitally-oriented pedagogies. A background to the CSSPS is provided; factors that influenced its introduction and implementation, prospects of its implementation; overarching challenges and strategies that have been adopted by stakeholders over the years to deal with prevailing challenges associated with the smooth operation of the CSSPS.

As a system to improve access and level the playing field for qualified students in terms of school selection into the SHS, the current picture still reflects the incidence of inequity associated with the process to the detriment of students located in

resource-disadvantaged locations. Adam's Equity Theory is used in the study to look at the chances and problems of putting the CSSPS into place.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter sets out the methods to be used to address the research questions indicated in Chapter One. It highlights the rationale and assumptions of qualitative research; the researcher's role; research design; site and sample selection; data collection techniques; managing and recording of data; data verification and trustworthiness; data analysis procedure; and conclusion.

3.1 Rationale and Assumptions of Qualitative Research

I seek my research orientation as a qualitative researcher. As a qualitative researcher, I employ interpretive approach which falls under qualitative research to explore social phenomena. With the use of interpretivist approach, I am able to obtain social knowledge through qualitative analysis. Here, I am able to concentrate on subjective issues to get the experiences of the participants (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In interpretivist research, words are important in explaining social phenomena and providing stories to understand processes, things and events. On the other hand, it provides room for opinions and voices of research participants to be heard (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The interpretive approach employed helped to examine the prospects and challenges of CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System.

This study employed a qualitative research approach to examine the prospects and challenges of Senior High CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. According to Ellen (1984), qualitative research is a process of producing its own meanings, phenomenon and experiences. The qualitative research design is used because of the objective of thesis which sought to offer in-depth understanding of prospects and

challenges of CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. The qualitative approach is useful for this study because it helped me to capture diverse standpoints in the prospects and challenges of CSSPS which could not be obtained by quantitative research. Even though, the qualitative research approach will prove to be useful in producing rich data, it will raise a question of "objectivity" of the data.

3.2 Research Design

The research design for this study is phenomenological. Phenomenology describes the experiences of participants on an important research issue (Williams, 2021; Song, 2017; Creswell et al., 2007; Qutoshi, 2018). In the opinion of Creswell et al. (2007), phenomenologists describe what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon. In a way, phenomenology research design works much more from the participants' specific statements and experience much more from the participants' specific statements and experiences rather than abstracting from their statements to construct a model from the researcher's interpretations as in grounded theory (Creswell et al., 2007). In the process, they reflect on essential themes-what constitutes the nature and lived experience (Creswell et al., 2007; Williams, 2021; Song, 2017). Because of the use of the phenomenological nature of this study, the reporting of my findings focused on a detailed description of the phenomena before reaching at the interpretations of the description or the interpretation of the study participants (Qutoshi, 2018). Qutoshi (2018) clearly indicated that providing summary of the findings, discussion on the findings and recommendations or possible future implications are fundamental in phenomenological research. The use of the phenomenological research design further enabled me to report my findings through the use of direct quotations of the research participants and interpreting the results

through descriptions rather than explanation. Again, in using phenomenological research design, I was able to reflect critically and become more thoughtful and attentive in understanding social practices such as the prospects and challenges of the CSSPS. Engaging multiple actors or stakeholders to seek their lived experiences is one of the hallmarks of phenomenological studies (Qutoshi, 2018). Since this study sought the views of multiple stakeholders such as students, teachers, parents, Head Masters and Municipal Education Directors, there was the need to employ phenomenology as the research design.

Again, since this study focused on the perceptions of stakeholders on the underlying factors for the introduction of CSSPS, prospects of the implementation of CSSPS, challenges encountered in the implementation of the SHS CSSPS and various interventions and strategies instituted by stakeholders to address the challenges associated with the SHS CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System, it was appropriate to employ phenomenology as a research design underpinning the study. Phenomenology is therefore the appropriate research design to answering the research questions because this study sought to examine the experiences of the participants on the prospects and challenges of CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System.

3.3 Researcher's Role

The researcher's role in qualitative research is to attempt to access the thoughts and feelings of study participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). This role is very important in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). The researcher collects data and analyses it. My specific role was to develop the data collection instrument, undertake field work, do coding, analysis of the qualitative data, interpretations, and discussions of the results.

In view of this, there is the possibility of bias, which could impact on the outcome of the study. However, this study adopted measures such as trustworthiness to check the consistency of the findings.

3.4 Population

According to Creswell (2016), the whole group of people who are eligible to participate in a study is referred to as the study population. The population of the study included students, teachers, parents, Head Masters and Municipal Education Directors particularly within the Greater Kumasi metropolis.

3.5 Sites

The study was conducted in the Greater Kumasi region of Ghana. The sites for the study were Kumasi Senior High School, St. Louis Senior High School, and Kumasi Anglican Senior High School with their respective District Education Offices. Kumasi High Senior High School falls within the jurisdiction of Asokwa Municipal Assembly, St. Louis Senior Hall School falls under the jurisdiction of Oforikrom Senior High School, and Kumasi Anglican Senior High School falls within the jurisdiction of Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly. Based on this, the Asokwa Municipal Assembly Education Directorate, Oforikrom Education Directorate, and Kumasi Metropolitan Education Offices were recruited.

3.5.1 sample Size

A sample, as per Gustafsson (2017), is a subset of the broader group that has been meticulously selected to represent the population's common and significant traits. The

selection of a sample size of 50 was as a result of the fact that this study was qualitative and for that matter did not require a large sample size. As alluded to by Creswell (2016), the point is that the researcher was interested in gaining better understanding on the prospects and challenges of CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. As such, the findings cannot be generalized.

Table 1: Sample size and distribution

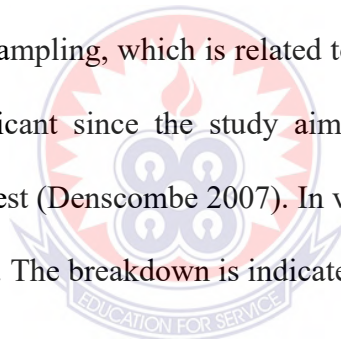
S/N	Participant	Sample size
1	Headmasters	3
2	Teachers	9
3	Municipal Director of Education	3
4	Students	20
5	Parents	15
	TOTAL	50

2.5.2 Sampling Technique

In line with the interpretive approach, the objectives of the research guided the selection of interviewees. For this study, interviewees were selected for the same purpose in relation to the research questions. Therefore, a purposive sampling technique was used to select the study participants. Purposive sampling, also known as judgment, selective, or subjective sampling, is a sampling approach in which the researcher chooses segments of the population to participate in the study based on his or her judgement of their competence and qualification (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). Purposive sampling as used in this study was based on respondents' rank, role,

and level of perceived insight and experience. Purposive sampling, as per Gustafsson (2017), allows a study to focus on specific individuals who are thought to have the strongest data for the research, making the research more representational and the conclusions more generalizable. According to Choy (2014), purposeful sampling enhances the contextual value of a research project because respondents are often experts who are asked to provide appropriate information for the study.

Purposive sampling was used because it aims to get access to participants who have knowledge about the topic under inquiry (Kyale 1996). In this case, the topic under investigation is the prospects and challenges of CSSPS in the Ghanaian education system. With purposive sampling, which is related to qualitative research, the number of interviews is insignificant since the study aims to get expert knowledge on a particular subject of interest (Denscombe 2007). In view of this, the sample size of the study was 50 participants. The breakdown is indicated below:



3.6 Data Collection Instrument

According to Gustafsson (2017), data refers to facts and figures from which conclusions can be drawn. Data can also be defined as facts presented to the researcher from the study environment (Creswell, 2014). Data for this study were gathered from primary sources. Primary data refers to data gathered by the researcher personally for a specific purpose (Mertens & McLaughlin 2004). Creswell (2016) asserts that the advantage of utilising primary data is that it is data collected for the specific purposes of the study. Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) assert that data collection requires interaction with respondents, which can be accomplished through personal interviews and direct administration of questionnaires to a group.

In this study, primary data was sourced using interview guides. The interview guide was divided into five sections based on the specific objectives of the study. This allowed for greater clarity and organization in order to promote understanding of the requirements of questions to the participants. The first section included socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The second section included the perceptions of stakeholders on the underlying factors for CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. The third section included prospects of the implementation of CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. The fourth section focused on challenges encountered in the implementation of CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. The last section comprised the various interventions and strategies instituted by stakeholders to address the challenges associated with the CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. Open-ended question guides were used for the interviews. They were developed in English. The interviews ended with a “clean-up” question that allowed the interviews to raise questions that have not been covered.

3.7 Data Collection Techniques

Data for this study included primary data and secondary information on prospects and challenges of CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System and other parts of the world to support findings of the study. The study largely used primary data which comes from field data through semi-structured in-depth interviews. It focused on perceptions of stakeholders on the underlying factors for the introduction of CSSPS, prospects of the implementation of CSSPS, challenges encountered in the implementation of CSSPS and various interventions and strategies instituted by stakeholders to address the challenges associated with CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System in the Greater Kumasi. Secondary information was sourced from online journals,

unpublished theses, and books on CSSPS. Policy documents and reports were sourced to complement the primary data collected. These documents were utilized to confirm findings obtained from the analysis of primary data.

Through qualitative interviews, empirical data was collected for the study. The research participants involved different set of people to obtain nuanced understanding of challenges and prospects of CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. Semi-structured in-depth interviews will be employed for the research.

3.7.1 Interviews

An interview is a focused conversation between at least two persons (Mohajan 2018; Maxwell 2012). Therefore, an interview is a one-to-one conversation between the researcher and a respondent (Hesse-Biber 2015). An interview aims to get a deeper comprehension of the feelings, motivations and beliefs of a respondent (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015). On the whole, there are three kinds of interviews: standardised, semi-structured and unstructured (Berg, 2012). Standardised interviews are ordered, standardised, open-ended questions, while semi-structured interviews (Drobot, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln 2011) are more flexible regarding the arrangement of the questions and standardisation; thus, the researcher could rephrase questions or interrogate a subject more in-depth. The third type is unstructured interviews; they are not standardised or arranged in any format to enable the interviewer to control the discussion in any direction and cover all that is seen as relevant (Choy 2014).

The study made extensive use of primary data gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews on the ground. It centred on how stakeholders saw the underlying

causes for the introduction of CSSPS, the likelihood that CSSPS would be implemented, the difficulties that might arise during that process, and various interventions and strategies put in place by stakeholders to deal with those difficulties in the Greater Kumasi region's Ghanaian educational system.

3.6.2 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in order to check whether the interview guide questions are appropriate for the study. The interview guide was tested on 2 headmasters, 5 teachers, 5 students and 1 municipal director of education. This allowed the researcher to assess the degree of understanding and perceptions, allowing the questionnaire to be improved in terms of wording, formatting, and brevity. The feedback from the pilot study allowed for effective modification of the questionnaire to make it easier to understand for all demographics and categories of respondents. Where interview guide questions are not clear to respondents, modifications were made. The interviews were conducted at the homes (free from any third party interferences) of the participants and lasted about 90-120 minutes. The interviews were conducted at a place which is free from interferences from any third party to ensure successful interviews.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

Social research is faced with ethical issues. In line with this, ethical issues were addressed throughout the research, hence before data collection commenced. Five key issues relating to confidentiality, data ownerships, data sharing, protection of human subjects and data storage and records keeping are considered (Lin, 2009). In the first place, the data provided by the participants was treated as confidentiality. Identifiable

information such as names, places of births, among others will be excluded from the data collection instrument to ensure confidentiality of the information. Second, in relation to data storage and record keeping, the data will be stored in many forms such as computer files with password protected. Data again be transformed into a retrievable form as soon as possible to prevent loss or damage. Third, participants were made aware that no potential hazardous risks to their persons, reputations or jobs was envisaged. . Fourthly, in relation to data ownership and the researcher owned the data. This is because, the researcher provided funding for the study and as such have the right to own the data. Lastly, informed consent both written and verbal consent was used in every stage of the research. The purpose of the research and data collection procedure were explained to study participants. They were assured concerning the anonymity of the information the study participants gave. Study participants had the freedom to opt out of the study at any time they deem it fit.

3.8 Methods for Verification/Trustworthiness

Thatcher (2010) posits that credibility in a study can be exhibited by providing enough detail so that readers can appreciate its validity and reliability. Based on the above clarifications, and in line with Zohrabi's (2013) suggestion, some key elements have been integrated into the design of the current study to enhance its credibility and validity. These included the choice of suitable procedures to answer the research questions; the choice of suitable data collection instruments to gather the data needed and the usage of the relevant sample (Ganesh 2009).

The current research also demonstrated internal validity by ensuring that the data collected could answer the research questions accurately. External validity was ensured by guaranteeing the outcomes of this study could be generalised to more extensive situations, and content validity was certified by ensuring the data instruments used reasonably covers the items that it intends to cover. These ensured accurate sampling of domains to guarantee their representativeness (Bajpai & Bajpai, 2014).

In addition, the researcher, from the beginning established appreciable contact with all the respondents to guarantee access to first-hand information and original sources. To ensure accuracy and precision in the interview transcripts and give more credibility to the information provided, a peer validation exercise was undertaken. Finally, the whole study was carried out in accordance with good practice and adherence to all relevant research ethics recommended by the literature. To fully appreciate whether the questions on the questionnaire reliably measure the appropriate variables, SPSS volume 23 was used to run reliability tests for the questionnaire items.

3.9 Data Analysis Procedures

Thematic analysis technique was used to identify recurring themes or categories within data and display similarities as well (Green 2007). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis approach is a flexible analytical approach for identifying, presenting, organizing, analysing and reporting patterns and differences within data. Taking into consideration the Creswell (2014) criteria for data analysis. These include organising and preparing data for analysis, reading or looking at all the data, starting coding of all the data, using the coding process to generate description

of the setting as well as categories or themes for analysis, advancing how the description and themes was represented in the qualitative narrative, and interpretation of findings or results.

Firstly, the data were organised and prepared for analysis by transcribing interviews, typing all the field notes and arranging the data into different types based on the objective of the study. Secondly, I read and looked at all the data and reflect on its general meaning and also consider the general ideas of the participants and the tones of ideas from the field notes. Thirdly, coding of all the data by reading all the transcriptions critically and jot down some ideas as they come to mind in the process of reading the transcriptions and listing all topics and group together similar topics and form these topics into columns and probably grouped as main, unique and remaining topics. Fourthly, I applied the coding process to generate descriptions of the participants as well as categories or themes for analysis purpose. I analysed the themes for individual case and across different cases. In stage five, normative views of the study participants were presented in a form of quotes and excerpts. Lastly, I interpreted the results and related it to literature and draw possible policy implications. All categories of respondents were taken through semi-structured interviews. These interviews were recorded and transcribed at a later data for analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the research design that informed the methods of sampling, the approach used to gather data and the framework of data analysis were succinctly presented. This chapter focuses on presentation, analyses and discussion of the data collected from the field survey with various stakeholders (headmasters or mistresses, teachers, municipal or district directors of education, students and parents) through interviews on the prospects and challenges of Senior High CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. The purpose of the research was to look at the perceptions of stakeholders of the underlying factors for the introduction of the CSSPS, its prospects, the challenges and the interventions and strategies instituted by stakeholders to address the challenges associated with the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. In view of this, the chapter has been subdivided into six main sections.

The introduction of the chapter is devoted to section one. The second section deals with the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (the various stakeholders). The third aspect contains evidence on the perceived motivations for the introduction of the Senior High School CSSPS, from the viewpoint of the various stakeholders. The prospects of the implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System constitute the focus of the fourth aspect of this chapter. The challenges encountered in the implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System constitute the fifth section of the chapter. The last section profiles or chronicles the various interventions and strategies

instituted by the various stakeholders to address the challenges associated with the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System.

4.2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The study elicited information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The essence of socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents in a study is to offer knowledge or understanding about the people and the context under study. In this regard, data on demographic characteristics including gender, age, and level of education as well as the type of respondents were analysed. In the subsequent sessions, the results on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented.

4.2.1 Gender of the Respondents

From Figure 1, 31 of the respondents were males, while 19 of the respondents were females. This implies that the majority of the respondents were males, and the minority of them are females. This showed the relative dominance of males in the education sector and the equity distribution of participants in relation to population dynamics that the study was able to achieve. Despite men's relative dominance in the organization, the study was able to sample a sufficient number of females to gain a balanced view of both genders.

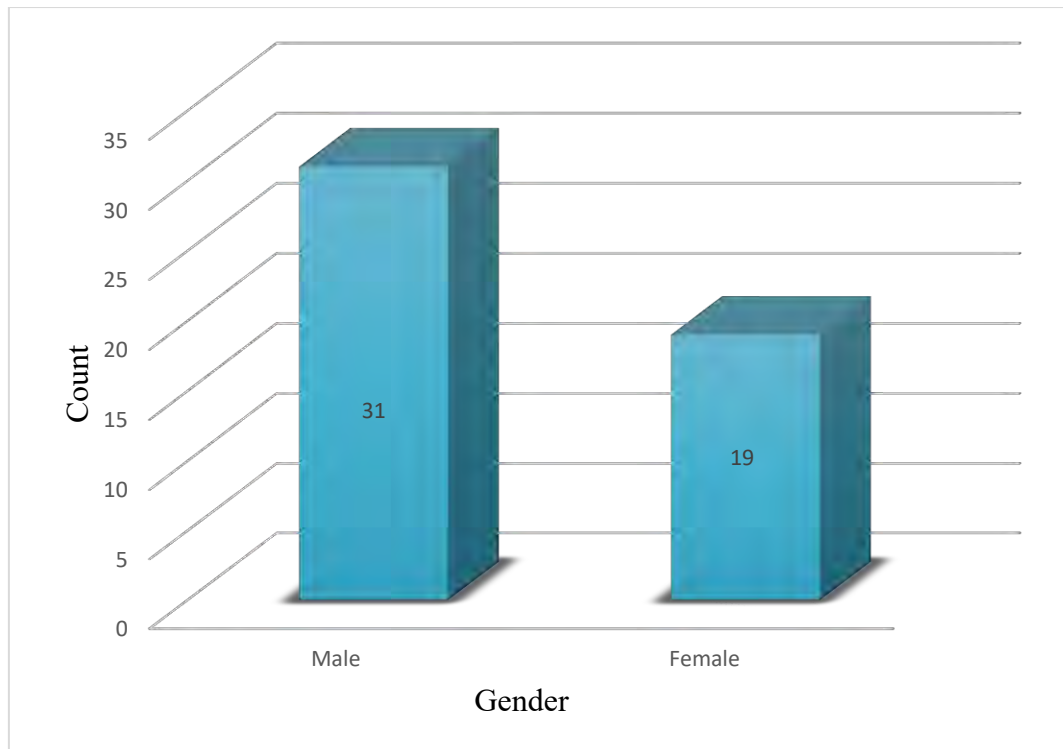


Figure 1: Gender of the Respondents

Source: Field Survey, 2021

4.2.2 Age of the Respondents

The age of the respondents as shown in Figure 2 depicts that up to 20 of the respondents (comprising all the students) are below 20 years of age, 15 of them are between 31-40 years of age, 12 are between 41-50 years of age and 3 are between 21-30 years. This result indicates that the survey was successful in attracting people of all ages. This expands the study's viewpoints and outcomes through the enhancement of diversity.

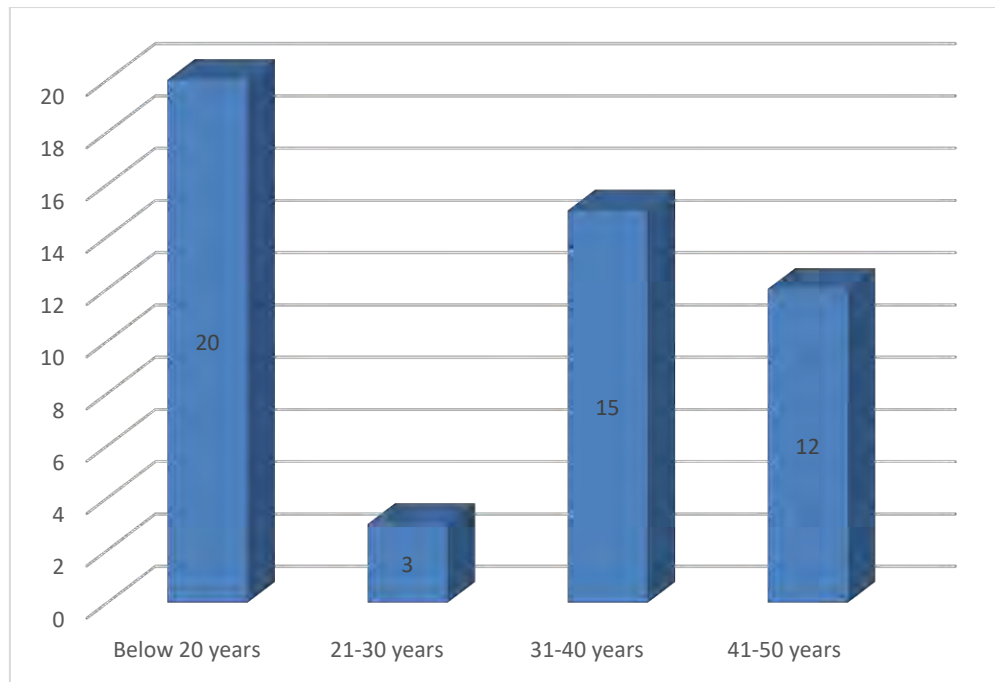


Figure 2: Age of the Respondents

Source: Field Survey, 2021

4.2.3 Level of Education

From Figure 3, up to 25 of the respondents (comprising of the 20 students who were in forms two and three and five parents) have attained senior school qualification or equivalent or are in the process of attaining such qualification (in the case of the 20 students). In addition, 20 of the respondents have attained tertiary education (which comprises both first degree and second degree) in diverse fields. While 3 of the respondents (parents) had basic education, 2 of the respondents (parents) have no formal education. The findings showed that the sampled participants were relatively highly educated and this trait was seen to have the effect of aiding the respondents achieve more credible and reliable responses to the study.

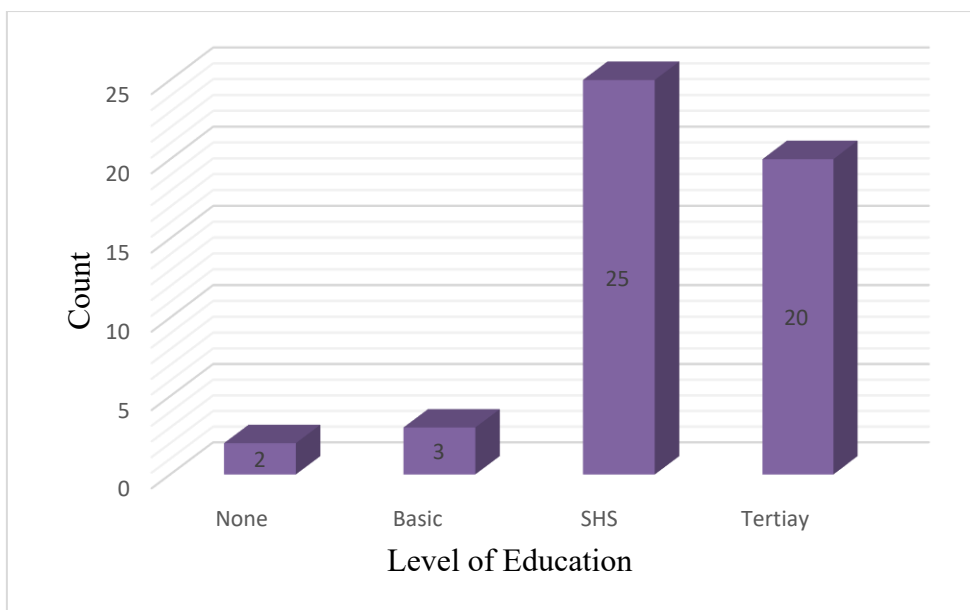


Figure 3: Level of Education

Source: Field Survey, 2021

4.2.4 Type of Respondents

From Figure 4, students (20), parents (15), teachers (9), municipal directors of education (3) in addition to headmasters or mistresses (3) were the distributed respondents among the various stakeholders.

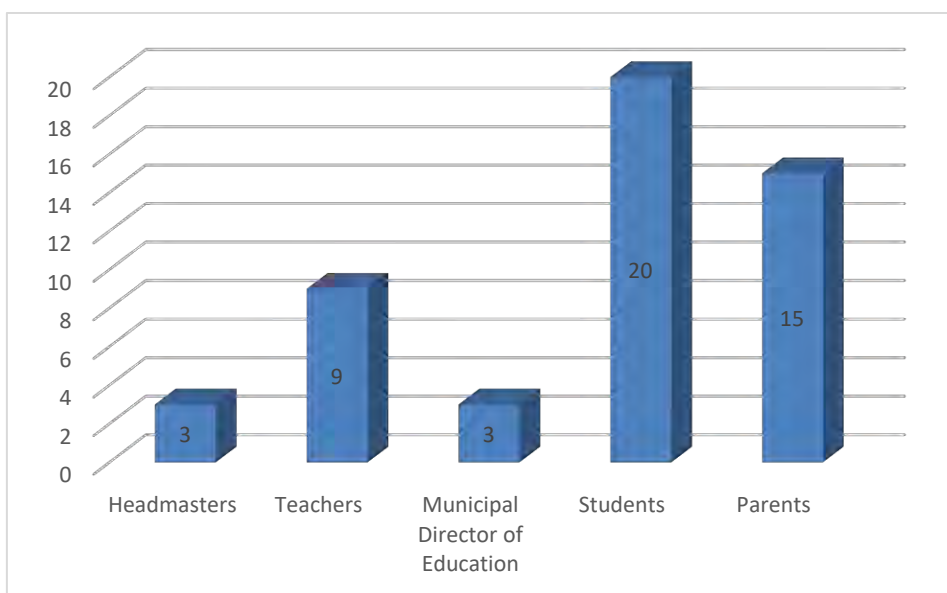


Figure 4: Type of Respondents

Source: Field Survey, 2021

4.3 Stakeholder Perceptions on the Motivations for Introducing the CSSPS

To fully realise this objective, series of questions were asked to better access the respondents' knowledge of the intervention and to determine veracity the reasons they attribute to motivations underlying the introduction of the CSSPS. The section is thus subdivided into three parts, owing to the themes identified through the thematic analysis. The first part of this section will focus on the knowledge of stakeholders and the frequency of orientation for the stakeholders. Part two will comprise the functions of the stakeholders. The perceived motivations for implementing the CSSPS would be the focus of the third section of this subdivision. Refer to Table 4.1 on the sub-themes identified on the awareness of stakeholders implementing the policy.

Table 4.1: Sub-themes identified on awareness of stakeholders implementing CSSPS

Main theme	Sub-theme
Awareness of stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of Stakeholders and Periodic Orientation of Stakeholders • Functions of the stakeholders involved in the implementation of the CSSPS

Source: Field Survey, 2021

4.3.1 Knowledge of Stakeholders and Periodic Orientation of Stakeholders

As a warm-up question, the participants were asked whether they are knowledgeable or aware of stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the CSSPS. The evidence from the results shows that while at large, most of the respondents were aware of the stakeholders involved in the implementation of the intervention, there were few respondents who had no knowledge of the stakeholders involved. Here are

excerpts from the respondents to the effect that they are aware of stakeholders involved in the implementation of the CSSPS.

“Yes! I am fully aware of the stakeholders involved in the implementation of the CSSPS. At the local level, we have the district or municipal education officers, heads of senior schools, teachers, students and parents among some others.” [Interviewee 12; a 49 years old female teacher]

“Well! There are a lot of stakeholders within the educational value chain, but the most important ones as far as the implementation of CSSPS are concerned has to do with students and their parents, school administrators, teachers and educational officers at the district.” [Interviewee 3; a 43 years old male administrative officer at the municipal education office]

“As a parent, I believe I constitute a stakeholder in the implementation of the CSSPS. Because I have to utilise the services under the scheme, and my decision could affect the scheme, likewise the scheme could affect my decisions. Additionally, school authorities also constitute stakeholders” [Interviewee 11; a 49 years old female parent with a ward in SHS]

While these viewpoints narrow the indication that the respondents were knowledgeable of stakeholders involved in the implementation of the CSSPS at the local level, there were some of the respondents (largely comprised of the students and some parents) who have no knowledge of the stakeholders involved in the implementation of the CSSPS.

“Funny enough, I am not aware of the people involved in the implementation of this educational intervention. All I know is that there is something called CSSPS and that, it enables us to select the preferred schools of our wards before they write their BECE (keeping in mind their interest and capabilities). But I do not know the stakeholders are.” [Interviewee 17; a 50 years old male parent with two wards in SHS]

“I don't know the people or stakeholders involved in the implementation of the CSSPS. I am not sure that is really important, is it? (quizzing the interviewer in the process). But what I know is that it is expected to help expedite the procedure of enrolling in SHS.” [Interviewee 13; a 17 years old male student in form two]

For the respondents who demonstrated knowledge of the stakeholders involved in the implementation of the CSSPS, they were further queried on the existence of orientation programmes for stakeholders and the frequency of such orientations. From the results, it was discovered that these orientation programmes were undertaken once a year. Preferably, the orientation was undertaken during the period when pupils in the junior high schools are about to write their BECE. The underlying reason professed by the respondents for this situation is that the utilization of the CSSPS is done once every year, thus the need to adequately get the stakeholders prepared for the period in which the CSSPS will be used. Prior to writing BECE is thus the most appropriate time to undertake such an orientation programme.

“When often engage all stakeholders (particularly parents, heads of schools and teachers alike) to guide them to select schools for students based on their interest and their capabilities. The goal is to reduce the tendencies where students select schools and programmes that do not match their interest, competencies and future aspirations.” [Interviewee 3; a 43 years old male administrative officer at the municipal education office]

“To ensure we help our wards select programmes that fit their potentials, it is vital to get to familiarise ourselves with how the placement is done. This is what the orientation for stakeholders is expected to do. During PTA meetings, parents are educated on career paths and courses that are linked to various career paths, the entry requirements for various categories of schools among other important details. All these help in deciding the schools our wards should go to. Additionally, it helps the students to adequately prepare for exams since poor performance could hinder your prospects of getting your preferred school and performance.” [Interviewee 11; a 49 years old female parent with a ward in SHS]

The evidence on the knowledge of the stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the policy shows two distinct groups of people. On the one side, a group of the respondents who are knowledgeable of the stakeholders, and a group of the respondents who have no knowledge of the stakeholders responsible for the

implementation of the CSSPS. This lack of knowledge on the part of some of the respondents could be a result of limited awareness creation on the part of the implementing authorities or the unwillingness of some students and parents to know much about the intervention. Additionally, for the respondents who were knowledgeable of the stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the policy, they alluded that yearly training and orientation programmes are undertaken to enable the stakeholders to familiarise themselves with the process and help achieve desirable outcomes (as envisioned in the goals and objectives of the CSSPS).

4.3.2 Functions of the Stakeholders

The functions of the stakeholders as derived from the thematic analysis were in three broad groups. The pre-registration phase, the registration school selection phase and the third phase that has to do with the deployment and placement of students. A detailed discussion of these phases is presented in the following sections.

4.3.2.1 Pre-Registration Functions

The pre-registration functions have to do with the things the stakeholders have to do in order to get the students prepared for BECE (the basic and fundamental requirement) for using the CSSPSS. By this, all the stakeholders work together to help students prepare for BECE registration. On the part of parents, the responsibilities span caring for and providing the needed learning materials and emotional support for their wards to be in the appropriate and required standard to register for BECE.

“We as parents are required to meet the needs of our wards, so they are adequately prepared to register and write the BECE.”
[Interviewee 11; a 49 years old female parent with a ward in SHS]

“The school expects that every parent will provide their wards with the required learning materials and support to help them fully

prepare for BECE, the prerequisite for suing the CSSSPS. Without which registration of students and utilization of the CSSPS is null and void” [Interviewee 11; a 48 years old headmaster in an SHS]

On the part of headmasters and mistresses, teachers and officers from the municipal education office, the pre-registration function include ensuring that a conducive teaching and learning environment is created to enable academic work to progress; in a manner that is beneficial to the students. By adequately preparing them to successfully pass their examinations. Here are excerpts to buttress this point.

“All the stakeholders in exception of students and their parents are expected to create a conducive learning environment for students. Through this, the students are adequately made ready to write and pass their BECE and enrol in the SHS through the CSSPS policy.” [Interviewee 7; a 40 years old male administrative officer at the municipal education office]

4.3.2.2 Registration and School Section Functions

The function performed by the stakeholders at this stage relates to ensuring that students get registered and select schools that interest them as well as programmes that match their career aspirations and lies within their competencies. Parents and teachers help students to select schools and programmes, while in addition, parents pay the registration fees of their wards. On the part of school administrators and municipal education officers, they provide the needed logistics and establish procedures for the registration of qualified students to partake in the BECE. Students are however expected to prove e to duly register with appropriate information into the system for correct placement.

“During the registration stage, we as parents are required to pay registration fees, guide our wards to select schools and programmes they like and that which corresponds to their competence, taking cognizance of the cut-off points of those schools.” [Interviewee 14; a 50 years old male parent with a ward in SHS]

“We help students to select schools and programmes that match their potentials. At times, we do this in conjunction with their parents or purely without the involvement of their parents.” [Interviewee 12; a 49 years old female teacher]

4.3.2.3 Deployment and Placement of Students

The deployment and placement of students are handled by the officials from the education office and school heads. As such parents and teachers are not involved in the process. Based on the performance of students, the GES provide necessary advice to ensure merit-based placement and sorting of students. This is done by juxtaposing the performance of the student against the information provided.

“The performance of the student in BECE is matched against the information of the student in the system for correct placement. The information on the choice of school and programme thus help to decide where to place the student, matching that against the entry requirements and actual performance of the student.” [Interviewee 7; a 40 years old male administrative officer at the municipal education office]

In all, the various stakeholders responsible for the effective implementation of the CSSPS performs a wide range of functions to ensure better output as far as the CSSPS policy of student placement in SHS is concerned. From the students (who are expected to learn and adequately prepare themselves and provide accurate information for registration) to parents (who are expected to support their wards in the choice of school and programme), through to teachers, school heads and education officials at the municipal level (who are to provide conducive teaching and learning environment and register and place qualified student in their corresponding school); the various stakeholders perform a variety of functions to help ensure the policy runs smoothly.

4.3.3 Perceived Motivations for Implementing the CSSPS

The results on the motivations for the introduction of the CSSPS in the educational system of Ghana reveals five distinct but interrelated themes. These motivations largely seeks to improve the process of admitting students into senior high schools without much stress and challenge to parents, students and school heads. Fast track placement of students, fair distribution of students, reducing tendencies for bribery and corruption, minimal human errors, and reduced pressure on parents (in terms of cost and time) were the themes identified from the analysis. In Table 4.2, a summary of the sub-themes under the perceived motivations for implementing the CSSPS in the educational system of Ghana (from the perspective of the respondents) is presented.

Table 4.2: Sub-themes on the Perceived Motivations for Implementing the CSSPS

Main theme	Sub-themes
Perceived Motivations for Implementing the CSSPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast Track Placement of Students • Fair Distribution of Students • Reduced Tendencies for Bribery and Corruption • Reduced Pressure on Parents (in Terms of Cost and Time) • Minimizing Human Errors

Source: Field Survey, 2021

4.3.3.1 Fast Track Placement of Students

The introduction of the CSSPS according to the respondents is premised on the delay in the admission of students into SHS prior to the CSSPS policy. With this, parents

had to undergo a lot of hustle and difficulty to get their wards admitted into SHS. To avert the situation, the CSPSS was promulgated to serve as an efficient and better way of admitting students into SHS in Ghana. Some of the respondents in their narrative indicated that the CSSPS was thus introduced to ensure a fast and reliable process of enrolling students. By this, the participants noted that the system enables BECE candidates to provide information on their preferred schools and their preferred programmes. This data thus serves as a guide for the secretariat to make informed decisions as to where a student should be posted taking into consideration their actual performance in the BECE. Such an approach according to the respondents reduces pressure on the admission committee and also ensures that postings are done in a timely manner, as against the manual approach with its attendant challenges. To these participants, reducing the time spent on admitting students into school serve a variety of purposes. One, it reduces pressure on parents; two, it provides ample time for parents and guardians to adequately prepare for their wards to go to school; and third, it provides an opportunity for students to commence school together, (unlike the situation prior to the CSSPS where some students are admitted during the middle or the end of the term, owing to the difficulty in getting admission).

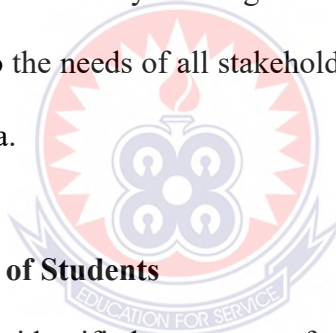
“The CSSPS was introduced to deal with a serious issue confronting senior high school education in Ghana. This issue has to do with the enrolment of qualified students. You see (referring to the interviewee), the pre-CSSPS system was inefficient, bridled with delays in admitting students and other issues that go to affect the quality of education. The CSSPS was thus brought in to increase the pace of admitting students.” [Interviewee 11; a 48 years old headmaster in an SHS]

“Getting your ward admitted into your preferred SHS in the past was very challenging. The process was slow and full of errors, many a time. Sometimes by the time a student gets admitted, his or her colleagues have gone far in studies. This creates a challenge for the student. The CSSPS was therefore introduced to deal with the delay and ensure that students are posted quickly based on the information they provide during registration and school selection stage.”

[Interviewee 19; a 47 years old male parent with three wards in SHS]

“I learnt that the CSPSS was introduced to speed up the procedures of admitting students into SHS. Before, I was told that the process tedious and cumbersome, so this one was introduced to improve upon the previous one.” [Interviewee 25; an 18 years old male student in form three]

Therefore, the need to ensure quick and timely admission of students into SHSs was one of the motivating factors underlying the introduction of the CSSPS policy from the perspective of the stakeholders. This is because the previous system was bedevilled with numerous challenges that created inefficiency and inconvenience for both students and parents alike. The CSSPS thus aimed to avert the delays in the posting and admission of students by creating a harmonious admission procedure that is quick and responsive to the needs of all stakeholders within the level of senior high school education in Ghana.



4.3.3.2 Fair Distribution of Students

Another motivating factor identified as a reason for the introduction of the CSSPS is the need to ensure a fair distribution of students. The admission procedure before the introduction of the CSSPS according to the respondents created a system where there was an unfair distribution of students across different categories of schools. The introduction of the CSSPS was to curb such a situation. The fair distribution of students which the CSSPS policy was to promote was two folds. Firstly, it is to ensure geographical distribution and secondly, it is to ensure fair distribution in terms of competence of the students. In terms of geographical fairness, the CSSPS has created an avenue where it is easier for students to get admission into SHSs outside their immediate environment, provided one meets the core criteria (the basic entry requirement). This according to the respondents' help students explore the culture and

heritage of places outside their immediate environment, thus helping to ensure much tolerance to the cultural multiplicity or diversity in the country. The second equity issue the respondents mentioned has to do with gaining access or admission into certain top schools. Prior to the introduction of the CSSPS, many of the respondents affirmed that some top schools are a no go area for certain students (especially those from the less privileged schools). However, with CSSPS, such a barrier has been largely removed or eroded, thereby making access to secondary education more equitable and accessible. Here is some evidence to support this view of the respondents.

“There was much inequity in the admission of students into SHS in periods preceding the CSSPS policy. There were instances where people were discriminated against on the basis of the junior high school they completed, their location and other remote and insignificant factors. This was mainly a result of human interference in the admission process. The CSSPS however, has helped eliminate such barriers and has provided equitable access to SHS education than before. Today, it is easier for a student in the most remote part of Ghana to gain access to the best SHSs in the country, provided he or she meets the entry requirement. This is the fair distribution of the students that the CSSPS has brought.” [Interviewee 7; a 50 years old female administrative officer at the municipal education office]

“Previously, you see students going to schools only within their vicinity. But today, the trend has changed. You see good students from rural areas now enrolled in the big and good schools in the country. This was nearly impossible or very difficult some two decades ago. The equity the new system has brought was envisioned by the pioneers of the idea, and it is very good than the previous one.” [Interviewee 28; a 48 years old male parent with a ward in SHS three]

“I remember my school days. As a young boy in the village, I always wanted to school in the city. After BECE, I did quite well. My father was proud and tried everything possible for me to gain admission to one of the best SHSs in the central region. After several weeks of failing to secure admission for me in those schools, I was forced to go to a nearby SHS in my community. I was hurt and demoralised due to how things turned out. I am not sure I have gotten over that bitterness. But now, I see children from my hometown in the big schools, all thanks to the CSSPS. So I will say the system has brought a merit-based admission process into force, different from what used to exist.” [Interviewee 26; a 30 years old male teacher in an SHS]

The evidence from the study shows that the need to ensure equity in providing similar educational opportunities to students from both rural and urban areas and those from well endowed and less endowed basic schools motivated the implementation of the CSSPS. By this equal opportunities are presented to students, regardless of the basic school they have completed or the place of residence. But instead, the admission procedure as it is now is based on a match of the programme of interest selected by the student and vacancy in the selected school as against the performance of the student in the BECE. This thereby eliminates the human biases that served as hindrances to achieving equity in the admission of students.

4.3.3.3 Reduced Tendencies for Bribery and Corruption

In every human endeavour, inefficiencies often breed bribery and corruption, as people see an avenue to manipulate the system in their favour. The same has been observed with the process of admission into SHSs prior to the introduction of the CSSPS. During the interaction with the respondents, many of them indicated that in an attempt to overcome the hurdle of finding schools for their wards prior to CSSPS, some parents either offer to pay a bribe to school authorities or are approached by school authorities to pay an amount of money for their wards to be enrolled in the school. In no time, this has become an avenue for school authorities to make quick money from frustrated parents who only desire that their wards be educated and contribute to the socio-economic development of the country. The only way to avert the situation was to introduce a more efficient system with less human interference to curb the bribery and corruption that has occasioned the inefficiency of the old manual admission and placement system.

“It has also to some degree, has wiped out the rot of bribery in the admission process. The limited human engagement with the place

system has created a situation where the tendency to influence the selection and placement system by way of bribing officials or engaging in acts of corruption has been minimised, if not entirely eliminated. This has instilled some level of sanity, fairness and ease into the admission of students into senior high schools in Ghana.” [Interviewee 7; a 40 years old male administrative officer at the municipal education office]

“Many school admission committees turned the admission process into a season on bumper harvest where they make illegal money from frustrated parents in a bid to enrolling their wards in school. The introduction of the CSSPS has reduced such occurrences and has brought much transparency and accountability into the placement procedure.” [Interviewee 14; a 50 years old male parent with a ward in SHS]

With bribery and corruption festering at places where inefficiencies exist, the CSSPS was developed and implemented with the objective of eliminating the inefficiencies of the old system that has brought about bribery and corruption within the admission process. Therefore, the system of placing qualified students in their respective schools was developed with the purpose of enhancing efficiency and eliminating waste, manipulations and the tendencies of exploitation that characterised the old system.

4.3.3.4 Reduced Pressure on Parents (in Terms of Cost and Time)

The participants further indicated that the CSSPS was implemented to reduce the excessive pressure put on parents and guardians in their quest to get their wards admitted into SHS. The old system was inefficient and requires that parents visit the school to obtain admission for their wards. This requires time to travel to the school and money to fund such a journey which has a likelihood of being unsuccessful. This situation creates additional barriers to parents and works together to burden parents and guardians. The new system (CSSPS) was implemented to enable students to select the schools they desire, while remotely their performance is matched against their choice to place them in the corresponding school. By remotely placing students

in the schools of their choice, there is less burden on parents and guardians in terms of spending time and money to visit one school the other, in search of admission for their wards. Here are what some of the respondents have to say.

“Most of us parents and guardians do not have enough time to be moving about in search of schools for our wards. Additionally, that comes at a cost that is different from the cost of enrolling in the school. The CSSPS was implemented to save us from this struggle, by providing a system for remote placement of students, based on the information they provide and their performance in the BECE.”
[Interviewee 19; a 47 years old male parent with three wards in SHS]

“The challenge of parents and guardians roaming in search of a school for their wards, with its concomitant cost and time requirements was one of the underlying reasons for the introduction of the CSSPS policy. Remotely, the placement is done without any involvement. Imagine travelling from Accra to the north to get admission for your ward. Now everything is simple and fast.”
[Interviewee 3; a 43 years old male administrative officer at the municipal education office]

Lessening the burden on parents and guardians by way of removing the tendency they searching for a school for their wards and its associated cost and time requirements birthed the CSSPS policy.

4.3.3.5 Minimizing Human Errors

The last theme derived from the data analysis relates to minimizing human errors in the admission process. Almost all the respondents agreed that CSSPS is an improved version of the admission process that reduces inefficiency and speeds up the admission process. Additionally, the participants noted that the CSSPS in addition to the aforementioned merits was introduced to undo the human errors associated with the manual admission process. Some of the respondents gave various scenarios of human errors that the CSSPS has reduced or eliminated (in some cases). Some notable examples of the human errors the CSSPS has reduced relate to placing the required

number of students that matches the carrying capacity of the school in each institution, errors in programme choice and actual programme given to the student among others.

“Previously, there were instances where some schools admitted students that exceeds the carrying capacity of the school. This often happens when school authorities take money from parents in a bid to offering their wards admission. In the quest to cover their wrongdoing, they often end up exceeding their carrying capacity. The CSSPS has eliminated this challenge. In the current dispensation, in rare cases or instances where such a situation occurs, the system quickly notifies the operators and the issue is rectified.”
[Interviewee 7; a 40 years old male administrative officer at the municipal education office]

“In time past, some schools will have huge numbers that often exceeds the potentials of the school, while some schools are without students. Now the system ensures equity which was non-existent in the previous system. By this, the human error of admitting students into only some schools, while some schools cry for students is non-existent. That is how useful the CSSPS is to the admission process”
[Interviewee 11; a 48 years old headmaster in an SHS]

The respondents demonstrated through the interviews that the quest to deal with the human errors in the previous admission process birthed the CSSPS policy. They further intimated that the policy was to help speed up the admission process with fewer errors and achieve higher and better efficiency.

4.4 Prospects of the Implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS

The second objective of the study sought to explore the prospects of the implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. To achieve this objective, the respondents were asked two questions. First, are there any prospects associated with the introduction of the CSSPS, if yes, what are they? Second, how do these prospects of the CSSPS implementation manifest? Engagement with the data obtained from the field revealed three broad groups of prospects of the

implementation of the CSSPS. These prospects include; easy placement of qualified students, equal opportunities to all students, and reduced cost of placement. The subsequent sections provide a detailed description of these three themes as they relate to the prospects of the implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System.

Table 4.3: Sub-themes on the Prospects of the Implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS

Main theme	Sub-themes
Prospects of the Implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy Placement of Qualified Students • Equal Opportunities to all Students ✓ Geographical Equity or Distribution ✓ Absence of Discrimination based on the Endowment of the JHS Completed • Reduced Cost of Placement

Source: Field Survey, 2021

4.4.1 Easy Placement of Qualified Students

All the respondents interviewed alluded to the view that the CSSPS has provided an efficient and improved process in the placement of qualified students in SHSs. By this, issues with loss of or misplacement of their registration cards and associated challenges are overcome. On the part of school administrators, the accusations of bias and unfair treatment are curtailed while the process is smooth and less challenging to

any party. The convenience brought as a result of the CSSPS has to a large extent expedite the enrolment process on the one hand and has lessened the burden on the various stakeholders. The following are quotations from the respondents that demonstrate the easy placement of students that the CSSPS has brought.

“The CSSPS has made gaining admission into SHSs easy. We have heard of stories where people have to roam from school to school in search of admission. This is tedious and time-consuming. The worst of it is that there is limited certainty over gaining admission into your preferred school. The implementation of the CSSPS has made the process simple and easy for us. When I registered, I selected the schools I wanted. Luckily for me, I was placed in my second choice school. Without any difficulty and a prior visit to the school, here I am in form three.” [Interviewee 35; an 18 years old female student in form three]

“The current system of placing qualified students in SHSs is easy and efficient, in comparison to the manual admission process that was used in the past. First, it has lessened the burden on school heads who were vigorously involved in the selection process under the previous system. Secondly, it has saved school heads from undue pressure to manipulate the process to favour some acquaintances. This, therefore, implies that the CSSPS has value-driven importance to all stakeholders within the education value chain.” [Interviewee 11; a 48 years old headmaster in an SHS]

The excerpts from the respondents’ point to the fact that the new placement system has brought efficiency to the way in which students are admitted into SHSs in the country by expediting the admission process and reducing the tendencies of error and manipulation.

4.4.2 Equal Opportunities to all Students

Equal opportunities for all students was one of the themes identified under the prospects of the CSSPS. Here, issues that create barriers and challenges to providing equal access to senior high school education were reported by the respondents as addressed by the new placement system. The equal opportunities were in two folds.

The first relates to geographical equity and the second relates to the absence of discrimination based on the endowment of the JHS the student completed. The two categories of opportunities provided by the CSSPS are described in the next sections.

4.4.2.1 Geographical Equity or Distribution

The geographical equity or distribution of the students as reported by the respondents relates to the higher likelihood of students in rural and remote areas getting admission into big schools in urban areas. The previous system of admission has been heavily criticised for fuelling a “whom you know” system in which students from rural and remote areas with good grades have difficulty in getting admission into their preferred schools in the urban centres as a result of not knowing anyone in higher authority. This geographical equity is brought about by the algorithm that is used in the placement of the students. With this, the emphasis is not so much on the proximity of the student to the school, but a combination of the performance of the student selected schools and programme of interest. In this vein, students from remote areas with good grades are placed in schools in urban areas, provided such schools match the interest of the student. By so doing, equal educational opportunities are presented to all students to better develop them for the socio-economic development of the country.

“While I was having difficulty finding a school in the city, some of my colleagues from the city with poorer grades somehow found their way into some of the schools that denied me admission. But with the CSSPS, an equal playing ground has been established. As such, every student can dream and work towards their dream of entering the most prestigious senior high schools in the country. This dreamland has defeated the inequity that shrouded the previous admission process.” [Interviewee 26; a 30 years old male teacher in an SHS]

“For us parents, the CSSPS is a safe haven for us. When I remember how challenging it was for us to gain admission into second cycle institutions during our school days, I will say, the CSSPS has created a situation where students from every part of the country could be

placed in every school. Such a situation motivates students in remote areas to also do well and gain admission into good schools in the city. This additionally, increases tolerance to diverse cultures and goes a long way to promote harmonious coexistence within the society.” [Interviewee 14; a 50 years old male parent with a ward in SHS]

4.4.2.2 Absence of Discrimination based on the Endowment of the JHS Completed

Some of the respondents (mainly teachers and some parents) revealed that there were instances where students were discriminated against during the admission process, as a result of the JHS the student completed. Owing to the manual selection in the past, there was much human interference in the process. According to the respondents, such interferences manifests when the school authorities wish to charge unapproved fees for admission or favour their acquaintances. In such a scenario, the focus of the admission committee shifts from the performance of the student (which is the basic requirement for gaining admission) to insignificant issues such as the school the student completed. In such instances, students that completed much-endowed schools are favoured at the expense of students who complete less endowed school. This occurrence thus breeds inequity. The respondents further ascertained that the CSSPS has helped eliminate this discriminatory admission process by creating an avenue for students to gain admission into their preferred schools of interest, provided they meet the basic entry requirements.

“Before the CSSPS, there were rumours of schools heads favouring the admission of students from big and well-endowed JHSs in the country. Following the introduction of the CSSPS, such allegations have died out. As a result, I will say the CSSPS has created a level grounds for all students.” [Interviewee 26; a 30 years old male teacher in an SHS]

In all, the respondents agreed that the CSSPS bridged the hitherto, inequity that hindered access to equal educational opportunities in senior high schools in the country. Its strength, therefore, lies in the opportunity it has availed to students in either rural or remote areas, in addition to students in less endowed schools to gain admission into the top senior high schools in the country.

4.4.3 Reduced Cost of Placement

Reduced placement cost was the last prospect the respondents mentioned during the interviews. Nearly all the respondents agreed that there was a higher cost associated with the manual placement which involves the movement of parents from school to school in search of admission for their wards. The introduction of the computerised system of placement has eliminated the need to visit schools, prior to gaining admission. This remote and computerised placement has therefore reduced the cost parents incur in securing admission for their wards. Additionally, the time spent travelling to the school to gain admission is also put into judicious use. Here are what some of the respondents said.

“Getting admission for one’s ward was a herculean task in the past. The money involved and the time required to get everything sorted is so much. The CSSPS has saved us all from such stress and financial burden.” [Interviewee 40; a 47 years old female parent with a ward in SHS]

“To skip the long process, some of the parents used to pay bribes to school administrators to get their wards enrolled. Unfortunately for some, their wards are not admitted and the monies paid are not refunded. This creates a financial burden for the parents. The CSSPS has relieved parents and guardian from paying money to unscrupulous individuals in the quest to get admission for their wards.” [Interviewee 3; a 43 years old male administrative officer at the municipal education office]

The CSSPS has therefore reduced the cost incurred by parents and guardians in getting their wards placed and admitted into SHSs. This reduction is evident in the less travel to schools to get admission and the unofficial payments (bribes) that are made to school authorities to get admission.

4.5 Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of the CSSPS

Having ascertained the motivations underlying the implementation of the CSSPS and the prospects, this section of the analysis presents the results as it pertains to the challenges encountered in the implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS. The thematic analysis identified six clusters of challenges confronting the implementation of the CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. They include a low chance of securing preferred choice, refusal to accept placement into some schools, under declaration of carrying capacities in schools, errors in posting and inadequate boarding infrastructure, in addition to the rejection of a significant proportion of candidates. These challenges are discussed in detail in the succeeding paragraphs. Refer to Table 4.4.

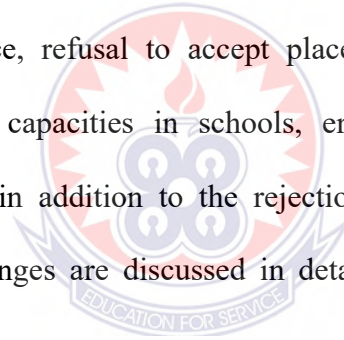


Table 4.4: Sub-themes on the Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of the CSSPS

Main theme	Sub-themes
Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of the CSSPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low Chance of Securing Preferred Schools • Refusal to Accept Placement into some Schools • Under Declaration of Carrying Capacities in Schools • Errors in Posting • Inadequate Boarding Infrastructure • Rejection of some Students by the CSSPS

Source: Field Survey, 2021

4.5.1 Low Chance of Securing Preferred Schools

One of the major challenges the various respondents (stakeholders) lamented has to do with the low chance of securing preferred schools. The evidence from the results points to the fact that some students exaggerate their performance and select schools that are beyond their performance index. When reality dawns, they often miss out on their preferred schools. In such instances, they are forced to go for reposting to other schools or are randomly placed in schools they do not choose.

“Many a time, you students selecting the big schools in the cities and you wonder if they understand what they are doing. Sometimes, you look at the schools the student selects and you can predict that he or she will not be admitted into any of the schools. This because their performance will not meet the entry requirements of the schools they select. Unfortunately, some students or parents will not agree with you to modify it for them. Placement comes and they are found wanting.”
[Interviewee 12; a 49 years old female teacher in an SHS]

“Everyone wants the best of schools for their wards. But the student must merit the best of schools. Some parents insist on their wards to select schools that are outside the league of their wards. How can a student who barely pass terminal examinations select the best schools in the country? What sort of miracle could change the fortunes of the student during BECE? When such situations exist the students find their preferred schools quashed and are rather thrown randomly to a school they did not select.” [Interviewee 29; a 41 years old male teacher in an SHS]

“There are some of our colleagues who selected some schools but in the end, they were sent to schools they did not select. While some performed very well and merited the schools they selected, some did not do well the be in those schools.”[Interviewee 13; a 17 years old male student in form two]

The mismatch between the competence of the student and the requirements of the schools selected by students is the cause of the low chance of securing one’s preferred choice. This could be attributed to inadequate education of parents and students on how to select the schools and programmes they desire. Also, the issue could be mere neglect of the knowledge they have about the placement process and rather focusing on the prestige and inner gratification that comes with gaining admission into the top SHSs in the country. Nonetheless, such a situation could also be a purely technical issue since some students meet the minimum entry requirements but are placed in schools they did not select. Such technicalities could be as a result of inadequate space or vacancies in their preferred choice, thereby necessitating placement in schools outside their preference.

4.5.2 Refusal to Accept Placement into some Schools

Linked to the low chance of securing their preferred schools and programmes is the refusal to accept placement into some schools. Some of the respondents intimated that some students and parents refuse to accept placement into schools they did not select. Here the respondents disaggregated the issues into two. The first has to do with

parents and students refuse placement to schools they did not select although the students' performance did not meet the requirements of the schools selected. In this instance, the respondents largely agreed that this is not a serious issue and can be dealt with if parents and students are well informed about the maximum entry requirements of each category of school.

“There are some students and parents who refuse placement into schools they did not select even though the students' performance in the BECE disqualifies him or her from placement into the schools they prefer. This situation, although constitute a challenge is minimal and can be avoided if parents, guardians and students are appropriately advised to select schools based on the competencies of students. Therefore, in my view, it does not affect the policy to a large extent.”
[Interviewee 11; a 49 years old female parent with a ward in SHS]

The second scenario which the respondents noted as severe and negative undermines the efficiency of the CSSPS relates to denying a student who fully meets the requirements of the schools he or she selects, but they are later placed in different schools. Out of frustration, the students and parents often refuse to accept such postings and seek reposting to their preferred schools. Such a situation sometimes breeds inefficiency and corruption.

“Frustrations with not getting placement for their wards in their preferred schools, some parents reject or refuse to accept placement in other schools. instead, they force officials to place them in their preferred school using a backdoor approach.” [Interviewee 7; a 40 years old male administrative officer at the municipal education office]

Refusal of placement and the subsequent request of posting through the backdoor approach creates challenges for the system since successful students tend to connect their friends with similar problems and the chain continues. In no time, officials

responsible for posting are overwhelmed with requests for reposting. Such a situation could breed corruption and defeat the purpose of the CSSPS.

4.5.3 Under Declaration of the Carrying Capacity in Schools

In an attempt to admit some students through the backdoor, some heads of certain institutions do not provide an accurate number of students the school can admit. They often provide a number that is lower than the carrying capacity, with the view of admitting students through the backdoor approach to fill the difference. Such acts could entrench nepotism, bribery and corruption lead to inefficiency. Additionally, it creates inequity and fairness which are the core values the CSSPS seeks to uphold in the admission of students into senior high schools. By under-declaring the actual number of students the school can accommodate, school administrators are limiting or blocking the prospects of some students to gain admission into their preferred schools. In such instance, some students will end up gaining admission into schools they did not select, as a result of the unethical decision of some school heads. This in effect perpetuates the old problem of inefficiency and lack of transparency.

“Some of the heads of senior high schools do not provide the accurate vacant positions in the school. They reduce the carrying capacity of the school, with the view of using the backdoor approach to admit students to match the difference. Such a self-serving act denies some students the opportunity to be placed in their preferred school.” [Interviewee 7; a 40 years old male administrative officer at the municipal education office]

“In my previous school where I used to teach, the headmaster used to reserve a quota of the schools capacity for admission through the backdoor. These students sometimes do not fully meet the requirements but are admitted at the expense of some qualified students who are rejected.” [Interviewee 36; a 46 years old male teacher in an SHS]

“My son did not get his preferred school. I went to see the headmaster. He offered to admit him, provided a make an unofficial payment. I left because the amount he was demanding was huge. I

had to go to the secretariat for reposting. Luckily he got one of his preferred school.” [Interviewee 11; a 47 years old female parent with a ward in SHS]

The respondents revealed that in a bid to serve their selfish interest, some heads of senior high schools often reserve slots for admission and provide inaccurate numbers to the secretariat. By doing so, they sell those slots to students through the backdoor to earn money. Additionally, some of them use it as an avenue to admit their families and friends who sometimes do not possess the requisite qualifications to merit admission into such schools. The persistence of this act undermines the quest for transparency, equity and fairness in the admission of students into senior high schools.

4.5.4 Errors in Placement of Students

Although the CSSPS was introduced to reduce the errors in the manual admission process, the CSSPS is also occasioned with its own unique challenges. Paramount among the errors made in the CSSPS is the placement of male students in female schools and the placement of female students in male schools. The respondents noted that this situation is common and requires redress.

“It is frequent for male students to be placed in female or girl’s school, while a female student is also placed in a male or boy’s school at times.” [Interviewee 25; an 18 years old male student in form three]

“It is not uncommon for a student of the opposite gender to be placed in a school of the other gender. Such errors are rampant and require swift measures to correct them in future.” [Interviewee 21; an 17 years old male student in form two]

“The mixup of genders in single-sex schools is common during the placement process. However, it will be entirely wrong to blame the secretariat for such mistakes, since some students select the wrong gender. And in such a situation the system will place you in the wrong school.” [Interviewee 7; a 40 years old male administrative officer at the municipal education office]

Whereas such an error could emanate from mistakes made by students at the point of registration, there is a likelihood that such mistakes are made during the data transfer stage. Irrespective of the stage at which the error occurs, it affects the prompt and easy admission of students. While this error could be interpreted as a simple issue that can be easily rectified or corrected, the pressure on the big schools makes it difficult for students to get their preferred choice after such error are detected. As such, the student could lose their opportunity of securing admission to their preferred school. This is then occasioned with placement in schools they did not select and its attendant challenges.

4.4.5 Inadequate Boarding Infrastructure

The CSSPS has created a system whereby most students pursue secondary education outside the immediate environments. Moving out of one's place of residence implies that most of the students will prefer to be in the boarding house to be under proper care and protection. Unfortunately, most schools do not have commensurate boarding facilities to match the carrying capacity of the school. Therefore, a significant proportion of the students are expected to find their own accommodation. Acknowledging these SHS students are adolescents and required guidance and direction, renting in an unknown place (usually far from home), and without proper supervision becomes a breeding grounds for moral decadence and the formation of delinquent behaviours. Situations like this increase the refusal of parents to accept placement to schools they did not select. This, therefore, compounds the problems for the secretariat (which is inundated with countless request for reposting).

“Often at Conference of Heads of Assistant Secondary Schools meetings [CHASS], some heads lament about inadequate boarding facilities and how that hinders the prospects of admitting students from far distances. Many of such heads recount several instances in

which students are placed in their schools but do not report; owing to the desire to be placed in a boarding facility, rather than being a day student.” [Interviewee 11; a 48 years old headmaster in an SHS]

I was placed in a school in the western region. When I went, I was told the boarding facility is full. I left and went for reposting. Now here I am. I liked the school but I cannot be a day student in a far land. [Interviewee 22; an 17 years old female student in form two]

The evidence from the results shows that inadequacy of boarding facilities hinders the prospect of the CSSPS to provide an opportunity for students to receive secondary education from any institution of their choice and from any region, provided they meet the entry requirement. The unwillingness of students to accept posting to schools as day students, therefore, undermine that prospect of the policy. It behoves on the various actors to put in place measures to reduce the infrastructural deficit in the schools.

4.5.6 Rejection of some Students by the CSSPS

The last theme identified under the challenges confronting the implementation of the CSSPS is the rejection of a significant proportion of the students by the CSSPS. The respondents lamented that quite a significant proportion of the student do not get placement in any school, owing to their underperformance in the BECE. As a result, they are unable to progress to SHSs and develop their human capital and contribute effectively to nation-building. Here are some quotations from the respondents.

“I completed JHS with a lot of guys. But most of them were not placed in any school. They ended up on the street doing all kinds of things for living.” [Interviewee 21; an 17 years old male student in form two]

“Some of the students do not get placement in any school. This often emanates from underperformance. When it happens, progressing on the academic ladder becomes challenging.” [Interviewee 7; a 40 years old male administrative officer at the municipal education office]

Not every student get placement in SHSs. There some who are unable to get any school, owing to their performance in the BECE. This challenge with the CSSPS creates barriers to the human capital development of the students who are unable to get placement into any school to continue their education. Some of the respondents lamented that alternative measures be established to help them develop their capabilities and place themselves in a position to meaningfully contribute to the development of the country.

4.6 Strategies to address the Challenges Associated with the CSSPS

The fourth and final objective of the study sought to explore the various interventions and strategies instituted by stakeholders to address the challenges associated with the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. The thematic analysis revealed four main strategies by which the stakeholders are addressing the challenges enumerated and discussed under section 4.5. Provision of infrastructure; an avenue for reposting in rare cases; an avenue to select schools as a day student and resit for students who could not get placement in any school were the themes identified.

Table 4.5: Sub-themes on the Strategies to address the Challenges Associated with the CSSPS

Main theme	Sub-themes
Strategies to address the Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of Infrastructure
Associated with the CSSPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avenue for Reposting in Rare Cases • Avenue to Select a School as a Day Student • Resit for Students who could not get Placement in any School

Source: Field Survey, 2021

4.6.1 Provision of Infrastructure

It was evident from the results that some of the respondents agreed that there are several infrastructural projects in the schools to help cater for the increasing demands and help accommodate students. Inadequate boarding facilities have been reported as a challenge confronting the CSSPS in that, some students are not accepting posting to schools as day students. To avert this situation and reduce the tendencies of people seeking reposting, there are several infrastructural projects in schools. Following their completion, students posted to far distances can be accommodated in the boarding facilities and thereby reduce pressure on the secretariat for reposting.

“The different stakeholders are working together to expand infrastructure in the various schools. I am optimistic that when they are completed we will witness lower incidence of reposting and refusal to accept posting to some schools as a result of infrastructural deficits.” [Interviewee 3; a 43 years old male administrative officer at the municipal education office]

“Together, infrastructure in schools are seeing facelift. When they are done, the carrying capacity will increase and the possibility of

students refusing posting to schools with limited boarding facilities will be minimised.” [Interviewee 11; a 48 years old headmaster in an SHS]

The expansion of infrastructure in the schools is seen as a strategy to increase the intake capacity of the schools and reduce the likelihood of admission refusal on the basis of inadequate infrastructure (especially boarding facilities). This feat will help improve the CSSPS and deliver quality education to SHS students.

4.6.2 Avenue for Reposting in Rare Cases

Having identified some challenges with the placement system (errors with regards to placing male students in female schools and vice versa, in addition to the refusal of some students and parents to accept posting to schools they did not select), the secretariat in conjunction with other stakeholders have instituted an avenue for reposting or replacement of students with some predefined issues. Under this reposting regime, only students with challenges that match some predefined case definitions are reposted. This is to increase efficiency and reduce the possibility of abuse of the reposting avenue.

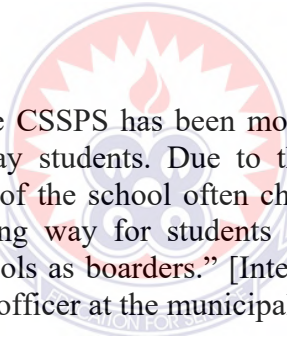
“At the secretariat, there is a reposting avenue for rare cases. This measure is there to deal with genuine concerns. For instance, if a male student is placed in a female school, the student must come for reposting such anomaly to be rectified. Additionally, students posted to schools where there are no vacancies are provided with reposting avenue. However, cases or situations that are not genuine and insignificant are turned down. This is done to ensure that no qualified student is denied the opportunity to receive secondary education, why blocking the avenue for frivolous reposting.” [Interviewee 3; a 43 years old male administrative officer at the municipal education office]

The reposting avenue instituted by the stakeholders is to aid in smoothing the rough edges that unavoidable in the placement process. By so doing, all issues are addressed

to the satisfaction of stakeholders, especially to the satisfaction of students, parents and guardians.

4.6.3 Avenue to Select a School as a Day Student

To tackle the issue of inadequate boarding facilities, students are also provided with the choice of selecting schools as a day student. By so doing, there will be less pressure on boarding facilities, for students from far distances to get placement in such schools as boarders. The choice to select schools as day students according to the respondents is most favourable for students who live within the vicinity of the school. As such, they can transport themselves to school on daily basis, while making way for students from far distances to be placed in such schools as borders. Here is a quotation to that effect.



“In recent times, the CSSPS has been modified to enable student’s select schools as day students. Due to that, most students living within the environs of the school often choose such schools as day students, thus making way for students from far distances to be placed in those schools as boarders.” [Interviewee 3; a 43 years old male administrative officer at the municipal education office]

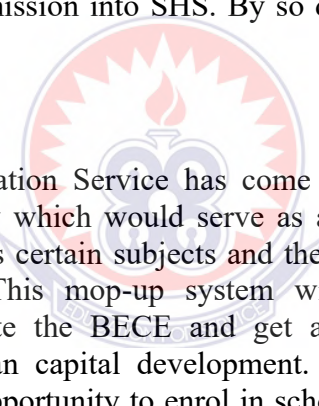
“Schools that were previously day schools have been structured to accommodate day students. By so doing, the carrying capacity is expanded while boarding facilities are reserved for students who select boarding facility.” [Interviewee 7; a 40 years old male administrative officer at the municipal education office]

“Some students like the idea of being day students. The option of selecting schools as day students have helped increase the intake.” [Interviewee 35; an 18 years old female student in form three]

Creating an avenue for students to select schools as day students, therefore, holds the prospect of increasing intake in schools without necessarily increasing the construction of dormitories. By so doing, most students could be placed in schools they select and reduce the challenges that occasion the placement of students in schools they did not select.

4.6.4 Resit for Students who could not get Placement in any School

The final theme identified in the data as relating to the strategies instituted to address the challenges related to devising a re-sit for students who could not get placement in any school. Under the challenges confronting the implementation of the CSSPS, it was discovered that a significant proportion of the candidates (students) do not get placement into any school. This stems from poor performance. Without placement in any school, the process of honing their skills and equipping them for the labour market is hampered. To avert this undesirable situation, the Ghana Education Service has developed a BECE re-sit examination policy to serve as an opportunity for those students who could not pass certain subjects or all subjects to spruce up their performance and gain admission into SHS. By so doing, no student is left behind in the education chain.



“The Ghana Education Service has come up with a BECE re-sit examination policy which would serve as an opportunity for those who could not pass certain subjects and therefore were not selected for any school. This mop-up system will help underachieving students to re-write the BECE and get admission into SHSs to continue the human capital development. This strategy will give students another opportunity to enrol in school especially those who did not make it in the year, to better their grades and continue their education.” [Interviewee 3; a 43 years old male administrative officer at the municipal education office]

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Providing this avenue for students who underperformed during the BECE and as a result, could not get admission to SHSs will help prepare them to get placement in subsequent periods and proceed with their education. To that extent, the CSSPS will not leave anyone out. But rather, create an efficient system for qualified students to be placed in schools of their choice.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the results from the field survey were presented. In this chapter, the results were discussed in light of the evidence in the literature. The discussion linked the findings to literature and theories to establish associations where they exist and deviations as well. The discussion of the results centres on four areas namely; the underlying factors for the introduction of the CSSPS; the prospects of the CSSPS; the challenges encountered in the implementation of the CSSPS; and the strategies instituted by stakeholders to address the challenges associated with the CSSPS.

5.2 Reasons for the Implementation of the CSSPS

The CSSPS was introduced for a number of reasons. Primarily, it was introduced to correct the inefficiencies and weaknesses associated with the manual admission process. The discovery that the CSSPS was implemented to fast track the placement of students into SHSs confirms the findings of earlier research where Ebow and Anokye (2014) reported that CSSPS was intended to provide a speedy and effective means of posting students. This implies that the old system of manually selecting and placing qualified candidates into second cycle institutions as in the past was bedevilled with numerous challenges of which delays in the processing of admissions was part. Similar findings were reported by some other researchers (Babah et al., 2020; Gyaase & Gyamfi, 2012; Blay, 2009) who intimated that the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian education system was birthed as a remedy to the delays in the processing of admissions and the loss of confidence in the old system by

the public due to the incredibility of some heads of senior high schools on the selection process.

Additionally, the evidence from the study which shows that the need to ensure equity in providing similar educational opportunities to students from both rural and urban areas and those from well-endowed and less endowed basic schools motivated the implementation of the CSSPS lends credence to past research. The computerisation of the admission process was intended to provide convenience, efficiency and equity (Ahiatrogah & Bervell, 2013; Kettani & Haddouti, 2003). This argument is further extended by Gyaase and Gyamfi (2012) who noted that the introduction of the CSSPS fine-tunes with the objective of universal basic education, through the expansion and increasing of access to senior high. The system was therefore intended to reduce “class societies” as the system does not discriminate between the poor and the as well as enhance national integration since the system allows applicants to select schools from more than one region.

The study found that the CSSPS was introduced to enhance efficiency and eliminate waste, manipulations and the tendencies of exploitation that characterised the old system. Past evidence portrays that the CSSPS was implemented to improve transparency since selection and placement are done on meritocracy, a basis that promotes fairness and equity by permitting ensuring that who performed well gain admission to their preferred schools irrespective of whether the school is a first, second or third option (Ebow & Anokye, 2014). This reduces tendencies for bribery and corruption, by instilling sanity into the system. Furthermore, evidence abounds that the CSSPS was implemented to reduce the pressure on parents to secure schools for their children, the long waiting time, and the frustrations that accompanied the process (Babah et al., 2020). The findings of the study confirm such viewpoints as the

respondents affirmed that the CSSPS has reduced the susceptibility of parents to pressures in their quest to get their wards admitted into SHSs. The implications are that the respondents perceived the new system to be developed as a panacea to the array of challenges that masked the efficiency of the old system which thereby created problems for all stakeholders.

5.3 Prospects of the Implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS

The implementation of the CSSPS has brought a lot of benefits. Evidence from the field survey reveals that the CSSPS, since its implementation, has delivered an efficient and improved process in the placement of qualified students into SHSs in Ghana. By this, issues with loss of or misplacement of their registration cards and associated challenges are non-existent, while the process is smooth and less challenging to any party. This discovery confirms that of Ankomah (2013) when he established that the computerized school selection and placement system is very convenient as it has made registration of BECE candidates easier. The convenience brought as a result of the CSSPS has to a large extent expedite the enrolment process on the one hand and has lessened the burden on the various stakeholders. This implies that e-governance systems hold to the prospects to ease the burden of undertaking vital activities.

The CSSPS has created equal opportunities for students to gain admission to schools not only within their immediate environments but schools in distant locations. Additionally, the system has afforded students from less endowed junior high schools to gain admission into SHSs of their preference, provided they meet the entry requirements. Earlier researches on CSSPS for instances those conducted by Ahiatrogah and Bervell (2013) and Kettani and Haddouti (2003) have revealed that

the policy was implemented with the view of providing equal access to secondary education in Ghana. By adopting a computerised placement system, equal educational opportunities are presented to all students to better develop them for the socio-economic development of the country. Since there is less or no interference, which often breeds inequity.

The study likewise discovered that CSSPS has reduced the cost incurred by parents and guardians in getting their wards placed or admitted into SHSs. This reduction in cost is evident in the less travel they embark on to schools to get admission and the unofficial payments (bribes) that are made to school authorities to get admission for their wards. Ankomah (2013) noted that the computerized school selection and placement system has reduced parents' burden of selecting and placing their children into senior high school. In effect, Ankomah (2013) suggested that the confidence of parents and guardians in the computerized school selection and placement system is likely to increase if more effective measures are put in place to address the challenges that characterize the scheme since its inception.

5.4 Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of the CSSPS

The study found that there is a low chance of securing preferred schools and this constitute one of the challenges of the scheme. This challenge is birthed by the mismatch between the competence of the student and the requirements of the schools selected by students are the cause of the low chance of securing one's preferred choice. Consequently, most students and parents refuse posting to schools that are less endowed or schools they did not select. Ajayi and Telli, (2013) and Babah et al. (2020) earlier reported that an overwhelming problem that hinders the smooth operation of the system is the refusal of some parents and students to accept

placement in less endowed Senior High Schools. The CSSPS secretariat reports this problem to be a perennial concern as every academic year brings its own cohorts of disgruntled applicants. However, as a challenge that emanates from outside the system, the CSSPS cannot be held accountable as it seeks to carry out allocations on performance-based terms. There is the need to constantly educate students and parents on the algorithm employed in posting students on a merit-based. Such knowledge could help these parents and students appreciate and accept postings to such school (since schools obtained are based on one's performance).

It was discovered that some school heads, in a bid to serve their selfish interest, reserve slots for admission and provide inaccurate numbers to the secretariat. By doing so, they sell those slots to students through the backdoor to earn money. Additionally, some of them use it as an avenue to admit their families and friends who sometimes do not possess the requisite qualifications to merit admission into such schools. Evidence abounds that school heads (particularly the well-endowed schools) face immense pressure from old students of some notable groups vociferously demands approximately 10% to 30% placement allocation due to their continued support for their respective schools in terms of financial and infrastructural support (Daily Graphic, 2011; Acheampong, 2010, Ajayi & Telli, 2013). These situation forces heads to under-declare the vacancies in the school. There is the need to engage these groups to come to an amicable resolution on the quota that should be due to them.

Errors in the placement of students was another challenge reported by the respondents. These errors mainly manifest in the placement of male students in female schools and the placement of female students in male schools. The Ghana Education Service and the CSSPS secretariat in the past has admitted that systemic

flaws and technological glitches exist in the system, calling for calm and support as they institute interventions to overcome the challenges (Aboagye, 2011). This challenge largely relates to the systems' inability to differentiate between male and female students. Isare, (2010) and Aboagye, (2011) discovered a growing incidence of female students being placed in male senior high schools and male students also placed in female senior high schools. These are system challenges that need urgent attention to overcome and address growing concerns raised by stakeholders.

Isare, (2010) asserted that a challenge confronting the scheme is to oversubscriptions of some selected schools by applicants. With limited facilities and carrying capacities, these over-subscribed schools cannot admit all students who apply to such schools. This results in the displacement of some students. The evidence from the results demonstrates that the inadequacy of boarding facilities hinders the prospect of the CSSPS to provide an opportunity for students to receive secondary education from any institution of their choice and from any region. This challenge is further strengthened by the unwillingness of students to accept posting to schools as day students. It behoves on the various actors to put in place measures to reduce the infrastructural deficit in the schools.

5.5 Strategies to address the Challenges Associated with the CSSPS

It was also discovered that an avenue exists for students to select schools as day students. This therefore holds the prospect of increasing intake in schools without necessarily increasing the construction of new dormitories. By so doing, most students could be placed in schools they select and reduce the challenges that occasion the placement of students in schools they did not select. Following the challenges identified, improvements in the CSSPS system put together a detailed

database for all candidates who successfully go through the system, providing a bank of relevant data paramount for adequate assessment and policy scrutiny in the sector. Ajayi and Telli (2013) noted that this robust data from the system constitute the foundation for measuring and monitoring the academic output and performance of students based on their originating communities, districts or regions in general to beef up the inventory keeping to influence future educational policy reforms and practical interventions in the sector. Consequent to this, students are given the opportunity to select schools as day students.

Associated with the unpredictable limitation on students' number of school choices to three under the previous system (Ajayi and Telli, 2013), the CSSPS after its introduction increased the number of school selection to four in 2007 and six in the following year. These are mitigating strategies the CSSPS secretariat constantly evaluate to ensure the best outcomes are made available for students. Also, as a mitigating intervention, there were reforms in 2009 to address stakeholder concerns associated with the system. For instance, the interventions introduced the categorisation of public secondary schools into four main streams based on facility availability. This issue saw the introduction of Category A, B and C for students with associated selection and programme choice limits (Ajayi & Telli, 2013). Based on this, the selection of schools is now easier and closer to reality (taking into consideration the competence of the student and the category of the school). These interventions and strategies are helping position the CSSPS in a place where the originators of the idea envisaged it to be and provide an efficient means of placing qualified students in SHSs.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on the summary of findings, conclusion and policy recommendations. This chapter comprises three key sections: the summary of findings; conclusion and policy recommendations in addition to areas for further research to improve the implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System.

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6.2 Summary of Key Findings

This aspect of the research is organized with regard to the study objectives. It is divided into five paragraphs. The first paragraph presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (the various stakeholders). The second part contains evidence on the motivations for the implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS. The prospects of the implementation of the CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System constitute the focus of the third section. The challenges encountered in the implementation of the CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System constitute the fourth section. The last section chronicles the various strategies instituted by the stakeholders to address the challenges associated with the implementation of the CSSPS.

6.2.1 Background Information of the Respondents

The study obtained information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The background information of the respondents offered knowledge or

understanding about the people and the context under study. From the results, it was found that most of the respondents were males, aged above 30 years, have formal education to SHS level (or its equivalent) or tertiary education, with students and parents (guardians) dominating the group of stakeholders that participated in the study.

6.2.2 Perceptions about Motivation for Implementing the CSSPS

The perceived motivations for the introduction of the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System is categorized into five distinct but interrelated themes.

6.2.2.1 Fast Track Placement of Students

The respondents largely concurred that the need to ensure quick and timely admission of students into SHSs was one of the motivating factors underlying the introduction of the CSSPS policy from the perspective of the stakeholders. The system was thus envisaged to help speed up the admission process. This is because the previous system was bedevilled with numerous challenges (paramount among them are the delay in the admission of students into SHS and the hustle and difficulty parents had to endure to get their wards admitted into SHS) that created inefficiency and inconvenience for both students and parents alike.

6.2.2.2 Fair Distribution of Students

The need to ensure a fair distribution of students was another motivating factor identified as a reason for the introduction of the CSSPS. According to the respondent, the admission procedure before the introduction of the CSSPS created a system where

there was an unfair distribution of students across different categories of schools. The CSSPS has created an easier avenue for students to get admission into SHSs outside their immediate environment, provided one meets the core criteria (the basic entry requirement). The CSSPS has provided an avenue for students from less endowed schools to get admission into some top schools which were challenging in the system prior to the implementation of the policy. The evidence from the study shows that the need to ensure equity in providing similar educational opportunities to students from both rural and urban areas and those from well endowed and less endowed basic schools motivated the implementation of the CSSPS.

6.2.2.3 Reduced Tendencies for Bribery and Corruption

During the interaction with the respondents, many of them indicated that in an attempt to overcome the hurdle of finding schools for their wards prior to CSSPS, some parents either offer to pay a bribe to school authorities or are approached by school authorities to pay an amount of money for their wards to be enrolled in the school. To avert the situation, the CSSPS was introduced as a more efficient system with less human interference to curb the bribery and corruption that has occasioned the inefficiency of the old system. The CSSPS was thus introduced to enhance efficiency and eliminate waste, manipulations and the tendencies of exploitation that characterised the old system.

6.2.2.4 Reduced Pressure on Parents (in Terms of Cost and Time)

The respondents affirmed that the CSSPS was implemented to reduce the excessive pressure put on parents and guardians in their quest to get their wards admitted into SHS. The new system (CSSPS) was introduced to enable students to select the

schools they desire, while remotely their performance is matched against their choice to place them in the corresponding school. By remotely placing students in the schools of their choice, there is less burden on parents and guardians in terms of spending time and money to visit one school the other, in search of admission for their wards.

6.2.2.5 Minimizing Human Errors

The study discovered that the CSSPS was introduced as an improved version of the admission process to reduce inefficiencies and speed up the admission process. Additionally, the CSSPS was intended to help eliminate the human errors associated with the manual admission process. Some of the respondents gave various scenarios of human errors that the CSSPS has reduced or eliminated (in some cases). Some notable examples of the human errors the CSSPS have reduced relate to placing the required number of students that matches the carrying capacity of the school in each institution, and errors in programme choice and actual programme are given to the student among others.

6.2.3 Prospects of the Implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS

Three broad groups of prospects of the implementation of the CSSPS were identified from the results on the prospects of the implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System.

6.2.3.1 Easy Placement of Qualified Students

Evidence from the field survey reveals that the CSSPS, since its implementation, has delivered an efficient and improved process in the placement of qualified students into

SHSs in Ghana. By this, issues with loss of or misplacement of their registration cards and associated challenges are non-existent. On the part of school administrators, the accusations of bias and unfair treatment are reduced while the process is smooth and less challenging to any party. The convenience brought as a result of the CSSPS has to a large extent expedite the enrolment process on the one hand and has lessened the burden on the various stakeholders.

6.2.3.2 Equal Opportunities to all Students

The respondents also alluded to the fact that the CSSPS has created equal opportunities for students to gain admission to schools not only within their immediate environments but schools in distant locations. Additionally, the system has afforded students from less endowed junior high schools to gain admission into SHSs of their preference, provided they meet the entry requirements. By so doing, equal educational opportunities are presented to all students to better develop them for the socio-economic development of the country. The strength of the CSSPS lies in the opportunity it has provided to students in either rural or remote areas, and those in less endowed schools to gain admission into the top senior high schools within the country.

6.2.3.3 Reduced Cost of Placement

The respondents indicated that CSSPS has reduced the cost incurred by parents and guardians in getting their wards placed or admitted into SHSs. This cost reduction is evident in the less travel they embark on to schools to get admission and the unofficial payments (bribes) that are made to school authorities to get admission for their wards.

6.2.4 Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of the CSSPS

The thematic analysis identified six clusters of challenges confronting the implementation of the CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. The challenges are presented in the subsequent sections.

6.2.4.1 Low Probability of Securing one's Preferred Schools

The various respondents (stakeholders) lamented that the low chance of securing preferred schools constitute one of the challenges of the scheme. The evidence from the results points to the fact that some students exaggerate their performance and select schools that are beyond their performance index. In the end, they often miss out on their preferred schools. The selection of schools based on the assumption of making good grades creates challenges where perceptions and projections differ from actual performance. The mismatch between the competence of the student and the requirements of the schools selected by students is the cause of the low chance of securing one preferred choice. However, there was some respondent who lamented that students do not get their preferred choice, despite obtaining good grades. This hinders the smooth placement of students and to some extent, it disrupts the efficiency that was envisaged in the introduction of the CSSPS.

6.2.4.2 Refusal to Accept Placement into some Schools

It was discovered that in the event that students do not get admission to their preferred schools they refuse posting or placement to other schools. This creates challenges for the secretariat as they inundate the secretariat with intention of seeking a placement to different schools. Refusal of placement and the subsequent request of posting through

the backdoor approach creates challenges for the system, since successful students tend to connect their friends with similar problems and the chain continues.

6.2.4.3 Under Declaration of the Carrying Capacity in Schools

Another challenge identified with the CSSPS is the under declaration of the carrying capacity of schools. It was discovered that some school heads, in a bid to serve their selfish interest, reserve slots for admission and provide inaccurate numbers to the secretariat. By doing so, they sell those slots to students through the backdoor to earn money. Additionally, some of them use it as an avenue to admit their families and friends who sometimes do not possess the requisite qualifications to merit admission into such schools. The persistence of this act undermines the quest for transparency, equity and fairness in the admission of students into senior high schools.

6.2.4.4 Errors in Placement of Students

Errors in the placement of students was another challenge reported by the respondents. Paramount among these errors made in the CSSPS is the placement of male students in female schools and the placement of female students in male schools. The respondents noted that this situation is common and requires redress. The severity of this particular error lies in the time required to rectify it. The pressure on the big schools makes it difficult for students to get their preferred choice after such errors in their posting or placement are detected and rectified. As such, the student could lose their opportunity of securing admission into their preferred school. This is then occasioned with placement into schools they did not select and its attendant challenges.

6.2.4.5 Inadequate Boarding Infrastructure

The evidence from the results demonstrates that the inadequacy of boarding facilities hinders the prospect of the CSSPS to provide an opportunity for students to receive secondary education from any institution of their choice and from any region, provided they meet the entry requirement. The unwillingness of students to accept posting to schools as day students, therefore, undermine that prospect of the policy. It behoves on the various actors to put in place measures to reduce the infrastructural deficit in the schools.

6.2.4.6 Rejection of some Students by the CSSPS

The last challenge identified with the implementation of the CSSPS is the rejection of a significant proportion of the students by the CSSPS. The results show that quite a significant proportion of the student do not get placement into any school, owing to their underperformance in the BECE. As a result, they are unable to progress to SHSs and develop their human capital and contribute effectively to nation-building.

6.2.5 Strategies to address the Challenges Associated with the CSSPS

Under this sub-heading, the focus is to present the summary of results as it relates to the various interventions and strategies instituted by stakeholders to address the challenges associated with the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. In all, four main strategies (the provision of infrastructure; an avenue for reposting in rare cases; an avenue to select schools as a day student and resit for students who could not get placement in any school) were identified as measures instituted to address the challenges discussed under section 6.2.4.

6.2.5.1 Provision of Infrastructure

The study identified the construction of several infrastructural and school facilities to meet the needs of the school. The expansion of infrastructure in the schools is seen as a strategy to increase the intake capacity of the schools and reduce the likelihood of admission refusal based on inadequate infrastructure (especially boarding facilities). This feat will help improve the CSSPS and deliver quality education to SHS students.

6.2.5.2 Avenue for Reposting in Rare Cases

The respondents indicated that reposting avenues are available at the secretariat to rectify genuine problems. The reposting avenue instituted by the stakeholders is to aid in smoothing the rough edges that unavoidable in the placement process. By so doing, all issues are addressed to the satisfaction of stakeholders, especially to the satisfaction of students, parents and guardians.

6.2.5.3 Avenue to Select a School as a Day Student

It was also discovered that an avenue exists for students to select schools as day students. This therefore holds the prospect of increasing intake in schools without necessarily increasing the construction of new dormitories. By so doing, most students could be placed in schools they select and reduce the challenges that occasion the placement of students in schools they did not select.

6.2.5.4 Resit for Students who could not get Placement in any School

It was discovered that a significant proportion of the candidates (students) do not get placement into any school. This emanates from poor performance. Without placement in any school, the process of honing their skills and equipping them for the labour

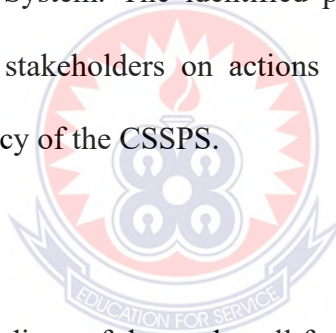
market is hampered. The study uncovered that the Ghana Education Service has developed a BECE re-sit examination policy to provide an opportunity for students who could not pass certain subjects or all subjects to spruce up their performance and gain admission into SHS. By so doing, no student is left behind in the education chain.

6.3 Conclusion

The introduction of the CSSPS was in line with the government's long-term objective of universal basic education, through the expansion and increasing of access to senior high and tertiary education. The system was also intended to reduce "class societies" as the system does not discriminate between the poor and the as well as enhance national integration since the system allows applicants to select schools from more than one region. The CSSPS was implemented to improve transparency since selection and placement are done on meritocracy, an occurrence that promotes fairness and equity by permitting ensuring that those who performed well gain admission to their preferred schools irrespective of whether the school is a first, second or third option. Nevertheless, after fifteen years into the implementation of the computerised school selection and placement system, the policy has not been without its problems and criticisms. This study examines the prospects and challenges of Senior High CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System.

The findings of the study demonstrate that the CSSPS was implemented to expedite the admission process and ensure equity and fairness, in addition to reducing tendencies for corruption and inefficiency. Findings thus lend credence to the Equity Theory which served as one of the theoretical framework underpinning this study. The findings support the argument that the presence of inequity will motivate a person

to achieve equity or reduce inequity, and the strength of motivation to do so will vary directly with the amount of inequity. By this, the inefficiency with the previous admission system birthed the CSSPS to deal with the inefficiency issues. In conclusion, this study has provided the perception of key stakeholders of the CSSPS system. There is a considerable positive perception among the stakeholders with regard to cost savings and burdens of search on parents as well as reduction of the burden on heads of institutions in the selection process of students. This points to a strong perception of accessibility and students are likely to be placed in a second cycle school without the toil of the parents as it used to be. Additionally, the study has filled the knowledge gap on the prospects and challenges of Senior High CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System. The identified prospects and challenges thus are imperative in informing stakeholders on actions and steps that must be taken to improve upon the efficiency of the CSSPS.



6.4 Recommendations

The above-highlighted findings of the study call for policy recommendations in order to improve the implementation of the Senior High School CSSPS in the Ghanaian Education System.

6.4.1 Continuous Stakeholder Orientation on the CSSPS

Having discovered that there were instances where students could not get placement in any school as a result of the mismatch between the schools selected and the performance of the students, the study recommends that there should be continuous education and orientation of parents and students alike. Such educational and orientation programmes should focus on helping both parties make realistic choices in

the selection of schools. This will help reduce the tendencies of students not getting their preferred choices and refusing placement to other schools. This education should be championed by the Ghana education service and supported by the Ministry of Education and other relevant stakeholders.

6.4.2 Continuous Improvement of the System to Minimize Errors

Additionally, the study recommends that the technique and technology used in placing the students be rigorously improved to minimize errors associated with the postings. Additionally, the information provided by students should be checked and verified to reduce the likelihood of errors that affects the posting process.

6.4.3 Monitoring and Supervision

It was discovered that some school heads under-declare the carrying capacity of their schools, and use the backdoor approach to admit students. The Ghana Education Service and its partner stakeholders should strengthen its monitoring and supervision team or departments to better equip them to verify the figures provided by school heads. This will help bring out the accurate figures and the commensurate number of students will be posted to the schools to fill such vacancies. In the end, incidences of manipulations, exploitations and wrongdoings in the posting process will be minimized.

6.4.4 Expansion in Infrastructure

The study further recommends that the stakeholders work together to expand infrastructure in schools to increase the carrying capacities of schools. By so doing,

the likelihood of students gaining admission into their preferred schools will be improved and the tendencies of reposting will be reduced.

6.5 Areas for Further Research

This study has provided much insight into the perception of some key stakeholders (parents, students, teachers, heads of senior high schools and officials at the municipal education office). The results of the study chronicle the prospects of the scheme which was largely to ease the pressure on the admission procedure and enhance efficiency. The results of the study help inform policy on ways to augment the implementation of the policy to achieve its objectives. Nonetheless, some research gaps have been identified and requires research to expand the frontiers of research in those areas. In the first place, this is a qualitative study and for that matters were not able to document the factors influencing the perception and knowledge different stakeholders (teachers, students, parents among others) on the CSSPS. Such future studies could consider social, demographic, economic and health factors associated with stakeholders' perceptions concerning the CSSPS. This may be useful in informing policy decision concerning the CSSPS in Ghana.

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APPENDICES

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARTICIPANTS

INTRODUCTION AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant,

I am Master of Philosophy student at the Department of Educational Administration and Management, University of Education, Winneba.

I am conducting a study on “**Digitizing Education In Ghana: Prospects And Challenges Of Senior High School Computerized School Selection And Placement System (Cssps) In The Ghanaian Education System**”. Your institution/place has been chosen as the study area. I wish that you take full participation in the study through interviews. The information you will provide will help to design and implement policies to ensure the smooth implementation of the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) in Ghana. This will take about 30minutes of your time.

However, participants in this study is completely voluntary and you reserve the right to decide not to respond to certain questions or withdraw at any time in the course of the survey with no queries whatsoever.

Notice that the information you will share will only be used for academic purpose and will be treated as strictly confidential as practicable. Results will be reported in a way that no one will know your identity. If you have any questions and queries concerning this research, please do not hesitate to contact me on **0244666564**.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

JULIET AGYEMANG DUAH

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION WINNEBA

Signature/Thumb print of Participant



PERSONAL DATA

1. Gender:
2. Age:
3. Category of Participant:
4. Position:
5. Educational level:

UNDERLYING FACTORS OF THE CSSPS

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Are you aware of the stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the **CSSPS**
- 2) How frequent do they organize Education for parent, student and teachers when they are selecting schools
- 3) What are the functions of the stakeholders of the **CSSPS**?
- 4) Have they been effective or efficient in discharging their duties?
- 5) Are you aware of the factors that lead to the introduction of the **CSSPS**, if yes what are they?
- 6) Are there any benefit associated with the implementation of the **CSSPS**, if yes what are they?
- 7) What factors influence these stakeholders in discharging their duties.

PROSPECTS OF CSSPS

1. Are there any prospects associated with the CSSPS implementation, if yes what are they?
2. How do these prospects of the CSSPS implementation manifest.

CHALLENGES OF CSSPS

1. Are you aware with the challenges of the implementation of **CSSPS**? If yes what are they?
2. How does these challenges affect the implementation of **CSSPS**?
3. To what extend do you encounter challenges with the implementation of **CSSPS**.

STRATEGIES OF CSSPS IMPLEMENTATION

1. Are there any intervention or strategies put in place to ensure the smooth implementation of **CSSPS**? If yes what are they?
2. To what extent are these strategies helping to address the challenges faced with implementation of **CSSPS**?

