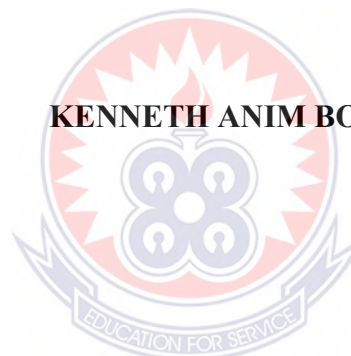


**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION WINNEBA**

**ACHIEVING EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY IN THE FREE SENIOR HIGH  
SCHOOL PROGRAMME; THE CASE OF TWIFO ATTI – MORKWA  
DISTRICT**



**KENNETH ANIM BOADI**

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION WINNEBA  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION**

**ACHIEVING EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY IN THE FREE SENIOR HIGH  
SCHOOL PROGRAMME; THE CASE OF TWIFO ATTI – MORKWA  
DISTRICT**

**KENNETH ANIM BOADI**



**A dissertation in the Department of Social Studies Education,  
Faculty of Social Sciences Education, submitted to the school of  
Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
Master of Philosophy  
(Social Studies with Education)  
in the University of Education, Winneba**

**JUNE, 2023**

## DECLARATION

### STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, **Kenneth Anim Boadi**, declare that this thesis with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have 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 was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: **Alfred Kuranchie (Ph.D.)**

SIGNATURE.....

DATE.....

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to God Almighty, my mother Mrs. Grace Annan and most especially my late father Mr. John Assan.

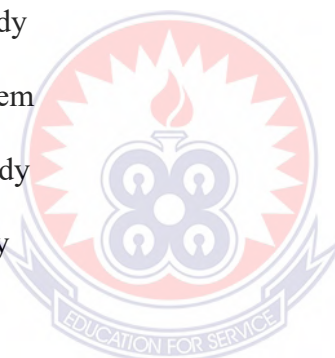


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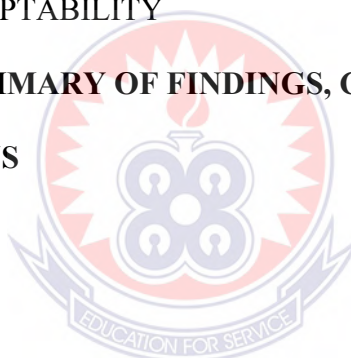
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AHES	Africa Higher Education Summit
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
CP	Capitation Grant
CSSPS System	Computerized School Selection Placement
DVA	District Assembly
EFA	Education for All
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Basic Education
FSHSP	Free Senior High School Programme
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GES	Ghana Education Service
GOG	Government of Ghana
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JHS	Junior High School
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NAGRAT	National Association of Graduate Teachers
NPP	New Patriotic Party
NRDC	Natural Resource Defence Council
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEN	Special Education Needs

SFP	School Feeding Programme
SHS	Senior High School
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and
Cultural	Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United State Agency for International
Development	
WASSCE	West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate
Examination	
WE	World Bank
WEP	World Food Programme
WFP	World Food Programme



## ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine how to achieve equity and accessibility in the free senior high school programme in Ghana using the Twifo-Atti Morkwa district as a case. The qualitative approach to research with an exploratory case study design was adopted. Twenty-five (25) participants were sampled using the principle of saturation with purposive sampling technique. The participants includes students, teachers and head-teachers of the selected senior high schools and the Director of Education of the district. A semi-structured interview guide was used as the main instrument for collecting data. Data was analysed thematically using the thematic analysis method. The study revealed that, there was no equity in the free senior high school programme in terms of resource distribution in the district. The research concluded that though the free senior high school program is free to students entering secondary institutions, students in the Twifo Atti Morkwa district are not able to access some category “A” schools because of poor grade. The study therefore recommended that the placement system should consider rural folks in the category ‘A’ schools since these students are vulnerable to many educational challenges.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Background to the Study

The process of education has been termed as a critical process necessary for the individual growth and societal development globally Sterling, (2014). Education is regarded as a necessary tool and a prerequisite in the quest to reduce and/or eliminate economic hardship and poverty, improving nutrition of children and the elderly, improving income, empowering the disadvantaged in society and improving the health conditions of people (Cheng, 2022). In estimating the importance of education, various researchers from different fields of study have come out with varying areas at which the importance of education can be examined. For instance, economists indicate that, education creates the conducive atmosphere for economic advancement (Artess et al, 2017; Zimmerman et al., 2015) and that society cannot progress steadily without due influence and recognition of the important roles played by education. On the part of human rights activities, educational attainment is regarded as a fundamental human right considering the fact that, education creates the congenial atmosphere for the development and advancement of the individual being (Bruns et al, 2003, cited in Keddie, 2020). According to Chege, (2015), education is fundamental for global and national development acting as both a means and an end to development. It also helps in the achievement of all other global goals ranging from economic prosperity in the form of poverty alleviation to improved human health (UNICEF, 2016). The importance of education has necessitated the international community to prioritize the right to education as contained in various treaties and constitutions signed by national governments and being applied to drive economic development and social transformation.

Globally, The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2012) as cited in Burnett and Felsman (2020), reveals that, averagely over 50 United Nations (UN) country-level consultations and national deliberations were initiated, of which one broadly focused on education at all levels (Burnett & Feldman, 2020). The establishment of numerous developmental goals, targets and their associated indicators for education affirmed the international community's commitment to educational development in the last two decades (UNICEF, 2016). Since 1990, varieties of education-related global goals and their identified targets and indicators have been initiated, namely, Education for All (EFA) goals mooted in 1990 at Jomtien Conference, which was later reaffirmed at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000 (Tagoe, 2011). The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) set out goals that are relevant to and have implications for secondary education particularly in ensuring that learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access and appropriate learning and life skills programmes. It was also aimed at eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

According to Kwegyiriba ,(2021), issues such as enrolment, quality imperatives, literacy, numeracy, gender disparities, investments and returns on expenditure of secondary education need to be closely examined. Provision of quality secondary education is relevant to the changing needs of young people and the society at large is a growing concern world- wide even for those countries with universal coverage. Following the World Education Forum (WEF) on Education for All (EFA), Jomtien (1990) and Dakar (2000), there has been heightening global interest, commitment and cooperation in

formulating and implementing educational reforms and policy strategies to uproot the blockages to equity in secondary education.

This has resulted in massive literature and policy dissemination of strategies that hinge on human rights principles (Verger, 2014; Keet, 2015) geared towards achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2, the EFA goals and the new Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on equitable accessible universal quality education. Notwithstanding the comprehensiveness of these strategies, they seem to be too general in their approach and prescriptions as they focus more on global, regional and national contexts than the rural-urban contexts within the individual countries. The adoption, operationalization and implementation of these strategies at the national levels also seem to suffer from the overgeneralization based on urban bureaucratic purview. What seems to be missing therefore, is the compilation and implementation of well-tailored strategies that are in tune with the peculiar geographical, economic, and socio-cultural contexts of each milieu within a country so as to maximise outcomes in secondary education policy implementation towards achieving the overall targets of SDG (4). As efforts to increase the participation rates of young people in post-primary education step up, there is the need to expand school facilities or introduce the shift system to match the demand for places in the institutions. Many African countries, unfortunately, are unable to meet the increasing demand for secondary education due to their inability to build on the successes of the universal primary education system some time ago. (Teferra, & Altbachl, 2004). For decades, the sub-sector of secondary education has been neglected in Africa both by the government and donor agencies. The apparent neglect of this sub-sector has resulted in limited access, especially for young women and rural communities, poor quality of curriculum and lack of qualified teachers and essential infrastructure (Heleta & Bagus, 2021). Historically, secondary education is

more accessible to urban areas than to rural communities in Africa (Nwabueze et al, 2016).

Additionally, there are some significant gender disparities in the distribution of secondary education in Africa. Socio-cultural, religious, and economic factors have contributed to this disparity that has placed young women at a serious disadvantage (World Bank, 2015). In African countries, more boys (28 percent) benefit from secondary education than girls (22 percent) do. (kless, 2020), yet secondary education plays a vital role in the political and socio-economic development of Africa. The crisis facing human resource development in Africa is clearly manifested in the secondary education sub-sector in the forms of limited access to secondary education and poor quality of the education provided. The World Bank (2005) cited in Edwards et al, (2023) report describes secondary education as the crucial link between primary schooling, tertiary education, and the labor market. The report notes further that the task confronting education policymakers in Africa is to transform secondary education institutions and current schooling practices to align them with the fast- growing demands of globalization and the technology-driven world. That is, the main focus of the education policy process in Africa is to address the twin challenges of increasing access to, and improving quality and relevance of secondary education for all young people in the region. In Uganda, (the first sub-Saharan African country to adopt a free secondary education policy), the policy results in an increase in student enrollment in the public secondary schools yearly (Huylebroeck, & Titeca, 2015). The major proponents and supporters of the 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 Odhiambo,, & Omoro,(2015) and Hameed and Umer, (2017) among many others.



In Ghana particularly, recognizing the importance of education and being a signatory to most International Declarations on education has instituted several policy interventions to create the congenial atmosphere for families and children who have attained the age of attending school from the basic to the tertiary levels of education. Also, among the list of interventions by government of Ghana are the Education Sector Review (ESR, October 2002), Government's White Paper on the Report (2004)", Education for All Policy (UNESCO, 2000) and Education Strategic Plan (ESP), the Capitation grant (CP), and Free School Uniform, Exercise Books and Computers distribution program 2010-2016 at all level across the country. The objectives of such policy interventions were to make education accessible and less costly for children of school going age especially among poor families in the country. 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). Article 25(1b) states; "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" (Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992). On the 12th day of September 2017, Ghana launched the Free Senior High School Education Policy.

The free secondary education is supposed to mean one thing as argued by Hameed and Umer, (2017 p. 22-35), "the era where students dropped out from school for financial reasons, or had their education cut short has become a thing of the past" , Adu-Gyamfi et al, (2020). Abdul-Rahaman et al. (2018 p. 26-33) have added that the policy "seeks to bridge the enrollment gap between the rich and the poor". It also aims at increasing

the enrollment 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 from other countries that have implemented same. For instance, free education in Sri Lanka aims at reducing educational costs and help students to study without facing burdens from educational related costs (Mashala, 2019). 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 into 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.gov.gh, 2017). These suggest a persistent increase in secondary school enrolment in the years ahead and this will enrollment at the university level. The work of Manuh et al., (2007), cited in Atuahen, (2014) revealed that “the expansion in access to secondary education without commensurable growth in staffing, infrastructure, related facilities, access to international databases and spending on students have raised major concerns over its quality.

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 (Blom et al, 2023). Morley et al. (2009) argue that higher education has always been rationed prior 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 would be consumers of same. The issues include fears about quality and standards, funding and capacity challenges among others.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The trend of global development has had significant impact on educational policies with the aim of improving quality in education, especially in regard to access and affordability of educational services. It is against the backdrop of salvaging the country's educational system, particularly the Senior High Schools, from its declining quality that the Ghana government in 2003 introduced a broad policy document entitled "Education Strategic Plan" (ESP). It outlines policies, target, and strategies of ameliorating the education sector. The implementation period for the document spanned from 2003 to 2015 (Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015). Despite broad agreement that education provides pathway to development, "universal enrolment and completion continue to remain elusive even in settings where concerted effort have been made to remove material and structural barriers- namely fees and other school related costs" (Williams et al., 2015). Adu-Gyamfi and Donkor (2016) identified financial constraint as the main cause accounting for low access to education in the second-cycle institutions. In his view, budgetary allocation for education sector is inadequate and about 90 percent of the proportion for secondary schools goes into wages and salaries and the rest for educational investment. The consequence of this is unimproved teaching infrastructure (class rooms, work-shops, libraries, laboratories, furniture) and materials (text-books and other teaching materials). Report by Africa Education watch, (2020)

reveals that these issues still remain major challenges affecting educational policy implementation in Ghana today.

The “problem is further exacerbated by inability of government to give enough motivation to teachers and to produce qualified personnel to support increased number of students necessitated by expansion of secondary schools across the country” (Sekyere, 2009 cited in Sarfo, 2020). It is the wish of most parents in Ghana that their wards obtain high school education. However, for some time now, getting admission into Senior High School (SHS) and other tertiary institutions in Ghana has become a serious problem. Annually, after the release of Junior High School (JHS) results, parents move from school to school in search of admission for their wards. Many of them go through a lot of frustration and immeasurable anger on annual basis due to this problem. Some parents are compelled to use “illegal means” to enable them secure admission. According to Osei-Mensah (2011), as at now, there are three classes of SHSs in Ghana. These are: the “Clarendon” schools, most of them established by the faith-based churches during the colonial days; the Ghana Education Trust Schools, established in the 1960s during Kwame Nkrumah’s regime; and Community Rural Schools most of them established after 1987. Most parents prefer that their wards gain admission to the well-endowed schools in the first category. In 2004, the government felt the need to alleviate the disparity in SHS admissions by introducing the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) for SHS. This system is based on the performance of students in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). A very good grade is required to gain admission into a SHS in Ghana because of the limited number of places available to the teeming JHS graduates that are turned out every year. However, because of the wide disparities in the status of SHS in terms of their performance and public image, admission to the schools have become very

competitive paving the way for some people to manipulate the processes. Some misgivings have been expressed about the system to the extent that people are calling for a review of the system.

For instance, some old students associations are calling for 10% allocation of placement because of their role in the development of their schools. Similarly, a former central regional minister was reported to have threatened that if a quota of school placement of SHS in Cape Coast was not given to the region, they will close down the schools because the natives of Cape Coast were not having access to the best schools in the region. The National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) has also called for investigations into the operations of the CSSPS to instill sanity and to ensure that children are selected and placed purely on merit (Daily Graphic, Monday, November 14, 2018 pg. 20). On their part, the Catholic Bishops Conference in a communiqué has called on government to abolish the CSSPS for there appears to be as much, if not more corruption, confusion, and inefficiency in this system as compared to the former system. On the other hand, the Ghana Education Service (GES) says it will not scrap the CSSPS because of the overwhelming support the system has received from the public (Daily Graphic, Monday, November 14, 2018 pg. 20 cited in Banson, 2022). All the concerns raised seem to centre on the selection and placement procedures. In an attempt to ensure a certain measure of equity, the government has directed that 30% of admissions of every SHS be reserved for candidates within a certain radius of the schools. This directive has brought in its wake several challenges and complications resulting in dissatisfaction among parents and pupils to the extent that a committee has been set up to investigate issues relating to the CSSPS. This state of affairs brings into sharp focus the issue of equity in access to secondary education in the developing world in general and Ghana in particular.

In addition, the free senior high school programme which was introduced by government in accordance with the 1992 constitution of Ghana to achieve accessible and equitable education, the 2017-18 academic year for all new entrants Senior High Schools nationwide to have cost-free access to senior high school education without any financial hindrance has had its fair share of the backlash on issues of accessibility and equity in terms of placement of students into various senior high schools, (Africa Education Watch, 2020, Cudjo, 2018 cited in Adarkwah, 2022). For instance, students who completed previously were not captured by the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) leading to a backlog of students awaiting admissions. More so, some female candidates were wrongly placed in male schools, and “candidates who selected boarding schools were also placed in day schools far away from their areas of residence” (Gyimah, 2021). Also, the placement system has been categorized into A-class schools to D-class schools where normally the schools from category A” are all found in the cities and other categories in the various towns across the country. The issue raised by many Ghanaians are that, some students in the remote areas normally do not have access to category A-schools and those who get them normally are not able to go because of the distance they have to travel and others too may wish to attend these highly endowed schools but do not get the opportunity because of poor grade owing to poor facilities and inadequate teachers of various subjects (Africa Education watch 2020). It is further argued that, some parents who find themselves in the cities and their wards do not even qualify to be enrolled in these A-class schools find ‘crook’ means of paying bribes to be enrolled denying the actual qualified students; these in effect do not ensure equity and accessibility in educational policy been implement (Africa Education Watch 2020).

As observed by Kless et al, (2014), “...inequity remains a persistent feature of Ghana’s education service delivery and its most critical challenge” to the attainment of the overall educational targets. Although attempts have been made to improve rural-urban equity in Ghana, it appears that public expenditure tend to exacerbate and perpetuate the inequity by allocating fewer resources to regions with the majority of rural districts and communities (Kless et al, 2014).

Proponents of the free senior high school programme will argue that in terms of feeding, clothing, shelter, utility among others are free to students in senior High Schools in Ghana, however, who gets what, where and how is not free. The challenges enumerated above justified the inequities and inadequacies in the free senior high school programme been implemented across the country over the last seven years and that if care is not taken, the policy may be good but implementation of it will not help to achieve its intended purpose or some group of people from some vulnerable geographical and economic areas like the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district might not fully benefit from the policy which will in turn increase inequity gap in the country.

Although relatively few studies are available on achieving equitable and accessible education in Ghana, they focused on other perspective. For instance, Asumadu, (2019) in her study focused on the general prospects and challenges of the Free Senior High School programme. Also, Chanimbe and Dankwah (2021) focused their study on enrolment issues in respect to the free senior high school whether it has really increased in relation to the existing infrastructure and number of teachers available in various schools. Research conducted by Cudjo (2018), the head of the Imani Ghana, directed their attention on implementation of the free senior high policy in Ghana and how sustainable the policy will be taken into consideration the challenges that have engulfed the implementation. Again, Abdul Rahman et al (2018) in their study on the free senior

high school policy focused on how the policy seeks to eliminate financial burden from the three poorest Northern regions of Ghana and those who studied about equity issues like the World Bank (2006) only focused on gender equity to the neglect of other sensitive equity accessibility issues such as rural-urban inequities in the secondary level of education. It can be gathered from the previous studies that the issues of equity and accessibility regarding the free senior high school policy has received little attention.

Besides, none of the previous studies was conducted in the Twifo-Atti Morkwa district where there are only two senior high schools but many junior high schools that the BECE candidates would wish to access senior high school outside the district. Therefore, this current study sought to filled the gaps by exploring how equitable is the policy in terms of placement of students into various senior high schools as a content gap using the qualitative approach as methodological gap, in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district as a context gap.

### **1.3 Purpose and of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to examine how to achieve equity and accessibility in the free senior high school programme in the Twifo-Atti Morkwa district in the central Region of Ghana.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The intentions of the study were to:

1. Determine how equitable the Free Senior High School programme is in terms of resources distribution, acceptability and accessibility in the district.
2. Explore the factors militating against students to access the Free Senior High School programme in the district.



3. Explore alternative means of achieving equity and accessibility in the free Senior High School programme among students in the district.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. How equitable is the free Senior High School programme in terms of resource distribution, acceptability and accessibility in the district?
2. Which factors could militate against students in accessing the free Senior High School programme in the district?
3. Which alternative means can be employed in the free senior high school programme to ensure equity and accessibility among students in the district?

### **1.6 Significance of the Research**

The research is significant in terms of research, policy and practice. For research purpose, the study sought to provide bases for the adoption of relevant policies in the education sector to ensure the achievement of equity and accessible education and using the free senior high school programme in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district as a benchmark since its inception in 2017. This is particularly important for rural Ghana since majority of them lagged behind the just ended MDGs, especially the deprived districts because little research has been done in this area. Moreover, the study would contribute to the already existing literature on educational policies and programmes both nationally and locally as it intends to adopt global educational conceptual frameworks in its analysis. Practically, the study provides adequate ideas or findings on policy formulation and implementation guidelines to national education policy makers and managers in the education sector to effectively incorporate context-specific strategies to ensure equitable and accessible education in the deprived and non-deprived districts of the country.

The study also provides clues for policy makers to designed appropriate and effective monitoring mechanisms to track the progress of the free senior high school program in the country in order to achieve its main and other related targets. Policy wise, the study sought to aid district level educational managers to integrate locally relevant strategies into national decentralized policies within the short and long term to improve equitable and accessible education in the country.

This study is justifiable and relevant because the subject social studies seeks to address global issues which is stipulated in the central themes of the subject to be achieved (theme 9), therefore equity and access to education have also been seen as a challenge and a global issue which is captured in the sustainable development goal four (SDG4) which is to be achieved by 2030 hence, the relevant of the study to development.

### **1.7 Limitations**

The study explores the achievement of equitable and accessible education in the free senior high school programme in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa District of the central region of Ghana. Using the district as local government unit will limit the overall generalization of the results of the study. It is only confined to the three objectives identified for the study. This study was limited to qualitative approach and due to that, data for the study was generated from only a limited number of twenty-five (25) participants hence the findings of the study cannot be generalized. Also, the instrument used in gathering the data could not cover wide range of issues for the participants to respond to. In view of that there could have been issues of interest or related to the free senior high school programme in the district. This limits the scope of the study and its outcomes. Further, the study only focused on the Atti-Morkwa district without considering other districts within the region for comparison. The researcher in the

research journey encountered some constraints such as financial issues since resources were not enough and that delayed the gathering of data for the study. The researcher also encountered issues of difficulty in convincing participants since many of them saw some questions to be sensitive and may be detrimental and threatens their job security.

### **1.8 Delimitation of the Study**

Geographically, this study focused on only Twifu Atti-Morkwa district of the central region of Ghana. The reason for choosing district as a geographical area for this study was that, the district is one of the vulnerable districts that have lower educational transition from junior high school to senior high school due to financial barriers that hinder the increase of students' completion rates of ordinary level of secondary education, (GSS, 2010). Theoretically, the study was based on the Equity theory, System theory and Human Right Approach to Education. Also, in terms of content, the study only focused on achieving equity and accessibility in Ghana's free senior high school programme. Data was collected within five months period due to distance to the study area and respondents unwillingness to react to some sensitive issues.

### **1.9 Operational Definitions**

**EQUITY:** in the context of this study is taken to be treating all students fairly in the placement system of the free senior high school programme without considering where they stay (UN, 1948 Article 26).

**ACCESSIBILITY:** in the context of this study is taken to mean all students having opportunity to attend their choices of senior high schools without any hindrance provided they qualify to be there.

## **FREE EDUCATION**

As used in this thesis, free education refers to a fee-free approach to schooling (Walton, 2019). Thus, Walton (2019:176) expresses this to mean "schooling where no formal user fee is payable for a student to attend school".

### **1.1.0 Organization of the Study**

The study was presented in five chapters. Chapter one presents the background to the study, statement of the research problem, purpose of the study, research objectives and questions, significance of the study, scope and limitations of the study. Chapter two reviewed relevant literature: both theoretical and empirical. This is to ensure familiarity with the concepts being discussed, existing body of knowledge, and to position this study based on its contribution to existing knowledge. Chapter three discussed the methodology which consists of “the procedures and methods used in gathering both primary and secondary data in order to achieve the” objectives set. The population, data collection tools and procedure, as well as the analysis of data based on which conclusions are drawn for this study. Chapter four presents the key findings from the data analysed with regard to the research questions of the study and discussions, it establishes the extent to which the theories proposed and empirical finding relate to practice. Whiles chapter five presented the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature on the subject matter of equity and accessibility in the free senior high school educational program. The review also discusses equity in education, factors that ensure inequity in education, accessibility in relation to education, factors that ensure accessibility in education, global efforts to ensure educational access, educational reforms in Ghana, the free senior high school policy, implementation of free senior high school policy in developed countries. Also, literature was reviewed on challenges of implementing free secondary education in Africa and a highlight on challenges of the free senior high school implantation in the context of Ghana. Theoretical framework that explains the relationship between the concepts in the study was also reviewed.

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

In view of the issues studied, three theories were found to be appropriate to underpin the study. They are equity theory, human rights approach to education theory and the distributive justice theory.

#### 2.2 Equity Theory

The study is underpinned by Adams' (1963) Equity Theory which 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 posits that if the 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 likely to be

distressed. Educational equity is defined on three levels: equality, justified inequality, and fair process (Ahiatrogah & Bervell, 2013). The Equity theory is also called Inequity Theory as it is the unequal difference that is often the area of interest. Current data indicate that despite expansion in access to learning opportunities in most countries, educational equity has proved highly elusive (Lingard et al, 2014). According to Tuli et al, (2023), the lack of predictive ability of equity theory contributed to its 'falling out of favour' only to be revived by interest in organizational justice and equity spurred in part by an extension of the original Equity Theory to include individual differences and the equity sensitivity construct. Darling-Hammond, (2015) noted that no society can realistically expect schools alone to abolish inequality. The assertion is that if students come to school in unequal circumstances, they will largely, though not entirely; leave schools with unequal skills and abilities, in both cognitive and non-cognitive domains. This does not in any way provide sufficient grounds for educators to throw up their hands in desperation because all is not yet lost. This theory in relation to the Free Senior High School Policy means that, students who are enrolled on the school placement system to different senior high schools come from different places under different conditions and that many factors account for either their poor or excellent performance in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and that placing some in category 'A' school and placing the average performed students in other lower categories becomes unfair and will not lead to the realization of the policy to acquire equal skills and knowledge for their future.

Also, placing students unequally on the policy will make some students enjoy good facilities, quality teaching, conducive teaching and learning environment and infrastructure than others since some senior high schools in Ghana are highly endowed than others. This system will adversely affect performance, the quality of education and

different outcomes the policy seeks to achieve since equals in academia are treated unequally.

### **2.3 The Human Rights Approach to Education**

This study was also underpinned by the human right approach to education. The human right approach to education has become one of the most fashionable policy paradigms dictating the pace of educational reforms and strategies globally in recent times. Its widely acceptability hinges on the fact that it is rooted on the principle of equity, inclusiveness, and fairness. It seeks to include everybody especially; the most marginalized who may be excluded from the educational process. The human rights approach recognizes education as the biggest tool of achieving all other rights as it frees the individual from ignorant, hopelessness and marginalization by empowering the person to realize his or her full potentials in life (Silva-Laya et al, 2020). The rights perspective to education argues that every person, no matter the race, socio-economic background, or origin has the rights to a decent education. It is premise on the view that education prepares the learner for responsible citizenry position and social, economic and political participation (Tomasevski, 2004; 2006 cited in Silva-Laya et al,2020). The rights approach to educational discourse was formalized following the UN General Assembly proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the year 1948. Article 26 of the declaration states among other things that: *“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free; at least in the elementary and fundamental stages...Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”...* (UN, 1948 Article 26). The rights approach to education was further reinforced by the 1959 Declaration of Rights of the Child which declared that every child is entitled to free compulsory elementary education base on equal opportunity. It also advocates for

a special provision for children with special needs without any discrimination. Another relevant impetus is the 2003 Economic Cooperation of West Africa States (ECOWAS) protocol on Education and Training which Ghana is also a signatory to. It seeks to eliminate all forms of discriminatory acts against females by ensuring equity and full access to education for all (ECOWAS, 2003). This approach in relation to this study denotes that secondary education which is the focus of the study must be accessible to all students regardless of their economic and geographical background and that the free senior high school programme must ensure non-discrimination of some vulnerable groups within some enclave in the country and treat others special. This is to say that, secondary education in this sense is a fundamental right of every eligible student moving from JHS to SHS and that they must enjoy equal right to placement, good educational facilities and environment to ensure the realization of the purpose for which the programme was introduced.

#### **2.4 Distributive Justice Theory**

This study is also underpinned by the distributive justice theory propounded by Rawl (1971) which seek to specify what is meant by a just distribution of goods among members of society. Distributive justice theory by Rawl (1971) is a concept central in political philosophy and ethics, focusing on the fair and equitable distribution of societal goods among its members. The theory grapples with questions about how resources, benefits, and burdens should be allocated to ensure a just and balanced society. Various theories of distributive justice propose different principles for resource allocation. Utilitarianism emphasizes maximizing overall happiness, while Rawlsian Justice introduces the "veil of ignorance" principle to ensure fairness and equal opportunities.

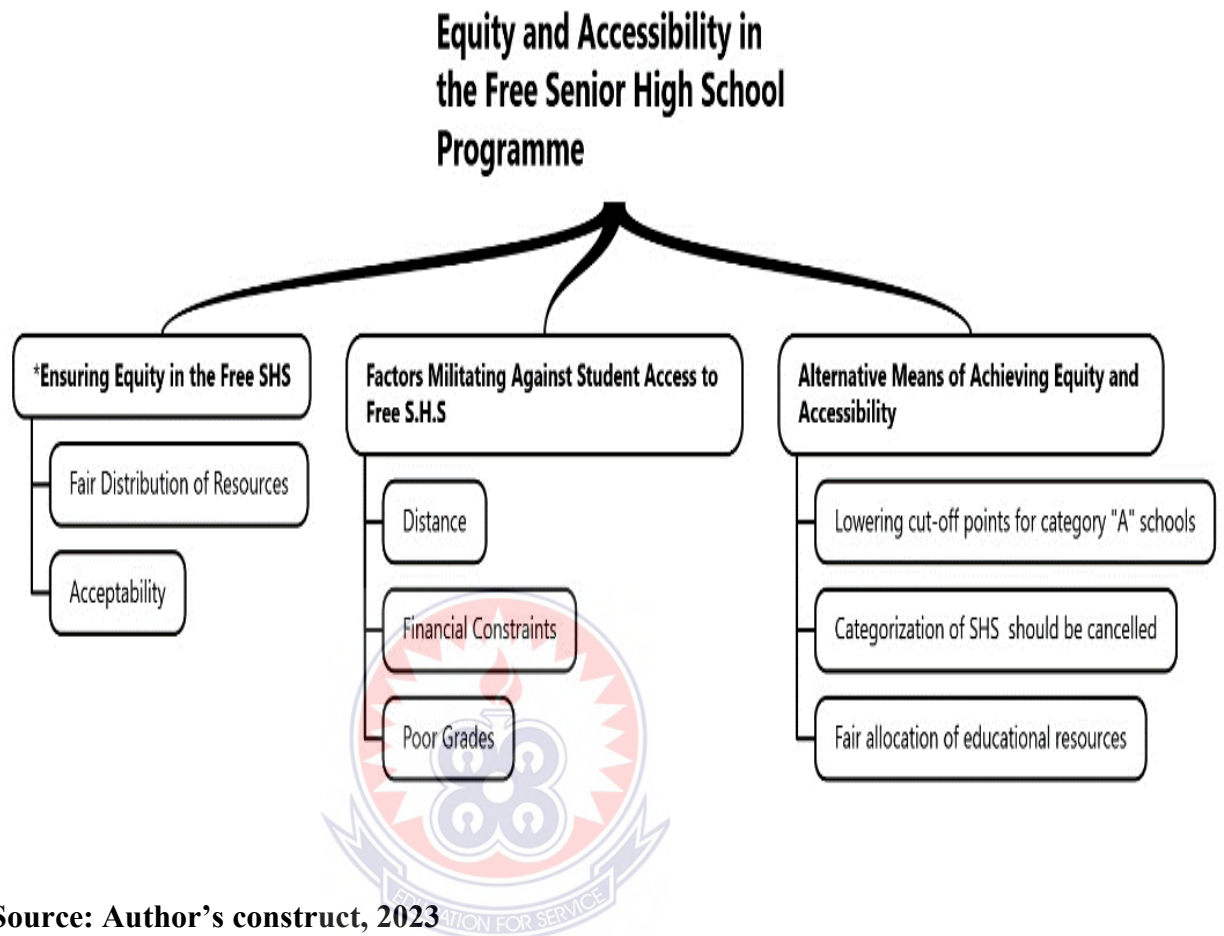


Libertarianism advocates for protecting individual property rights and free-market mechanisms, while egalitarianism prioritizes equal distribution to minimize socioeconomic disparities. The principles of distributive justice underpin discussions about social and economic policies, influencing debates on taxation, welfare programs, education, and other areas related to resource allocation within a society. Distributive justice theory is a concept that advocates for the fair distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges within society, to reduce inequalities and promote equal rights and access for all individuals, regardless of their background, race, gender, or socioeconomic status (Sabbagh & Schmitt, 2016). This theory is rooted in the belief that systemic injustices and discrimination exist and need to be addressed to create a more equitable and just society. Prominent proponents of social justice theory include John Rawls, who introduced the idea of the "veil of ignorance" in his book "A Theory of Justice," which suggests that people should design a just society without knowledge of their position within it. Additionally, scholars like Martha Nussbaum and Iris Marion Young have contributed to this theory by emphasizing capabilities and the importance of recognizing and rectifying various forms of oppression, respectively. Distributive justice theory plays a crucial role in shaping public policy and activism aimed at achieving greater fairness and equity in our communities and the world. The distributive justice theory addresses equity and accessibility in education by emphasizing the importance of ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background, have equal opportunities to access quality education and achieve their full potential. This theory recognizes that societal inequalities, such as economic disparities, discrimination, and systemic biases, can hinder access to education and perpetuate disadvantage.

To promote equity, distributive justice theory suggests implementing policies and practices that level the playing field. This might involve measures like equitable

funding for schools, affirmative action programs to address historical discrimination, and inclusive curriculum that reflects diverse perspectives. The theory also calls for removing barriers, both economic and social, that can limit access to education. The distributive Justice Theory provides a lens through which to understand and address equity and accessibility in secondary education in Ghana's Free Senior High School (FSHS). According to this theory, educational justice necessitates policies and practices that ensure fair distribution of resources and opportunities, particularly focusing on inclusivity and equal access regardless of socio-economic status. In the context of FSHS, the theory suggests the need for eliminating financial barriers, like school fees, to guarantee equal access for students from diverse economic backgrounds. Inclusivity policies should cater to the needs of various students, including those with disabilities or from marginalized communities, fostering a supportive learning environment. The theory also emphasizes the importance of targeted interventions to reduce regional disparities and affirmative action measures, such as scholarships, to address historical inequalities. Moreover, community engagement is highlighted to involve local perspectives in decision-making processes, ensuring that educational policies consider the unique needs of different regions and communities. By applying Social Justice Theory, Ghana's FSHS can work towards a more equitable and accessible secondary education system, striving to eliminate disparities and provide equal opportunities for all students.

## 2.5 Conceptual Framework



From the framework above, equity in the free senior high school programme could not be achieved if educational resources both physical and material like qualified teachers, library, science laboratories, classroom blocks and dormitories for accommodating students are not evenly distributed by government and the free senior high school secretariat among senior high school in the country. Also equity in the free senior high school programme could not be achieved if students placed to some schools are not accepted. Furthermore, factors that could militate against students to enjoy the free senior high school could include distance where students placed in schools that are far away from where they stay.

Also, some students could not be having access to some category ‘A’ senior high schools due to poor grade that might qualify them to access those schools and on top of all financial constraints as a key factor that could inhibit students from accessing the free senior high school because most parents might not be in a position to even provide items spelt out by schools to be bought to school by students which is a major issue. Finally, equity and accessibility could be achieved if cut off point for category ‘A’ are lowered to give opportunity to people who stay within some specific jurisdiction where they face challenges in producing good grades as a result of inadequate teachers. Also, equity in the free senior high school could be achieved if categorizing of senior high schools is cancelled to create an open and level playing ground for all students who qualify to be placed by the placement system so that mixed abilities can be placed in the various schools to help unearth individual potentials as the main purpose for which the programme was introduced. On top of it all, the standard of every senior high school should be raised by fairly and evenly distribute educational resources to all schools so that some schools will not become envious to students to have access to which is the major cause of some parents finding all other means even when their wards don’t qualify to attend some schools to promote fair placement.

## **2.6 Equity in Education**

According to the Natural Resources Defence Council cited in Taylor et al (2019), the term equity means fair in inclusion. An equitable society is one in which all can participate and prosper. The goals of equity must be to create conditions that allow all to reach their full potentials. In short equity creates a path from hope to change. Barrow and Grant (2019) explained equity in higher education to be generally linked to the

equal access, and equal outcomes narratives that are influenced by the removal of barriers which is usually enhanced by implementing targeted programs.

Equity in the context of global education governance is characterized by the ideal of providing everyone, regardless of their personal or social backgrounds or circumstances, a fair opportunity to access, acquire, and succeed in education (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). When coupled with the globally prevalent characteristic of education as a state-sponsored and state-governed service, it places education equity in one of the policy foci of education governance, at all level from local to national (Appels et al, 2022). Examples across the world and through the span of modern history have seen equity at the forefronts of policy debates (Gause, 2011; UNESCO, 2015a). Achieving and maintaining education equity, however, is a mounting challenge. Around the world, ensuring and inspiring equity has proved to be a daunting task for education governance, rich and poor countries alike (Krishna et al, 2020). In the context of globalization, the growing influences of inter- and supranational entities have seen education governance spreading beyond national boundaries (Arnove, 2012), and bringing with it the discussions of equity. Education equity infiltrates the discussions and populates the publications of international and intergovernmental organizations (Wiseman, 2021). It has become an omnipresent term in international aids and investments and the focus of cooperation and development projects Wiseman, 2021).

Global governance, which has evolved as a project to bring countries together to solve problems beyond their individual interests and capacities have put the education and equity discourse in the voice of several key global actors, most prominently among them is the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and

Development (OECD), and so on (Spring, 2019). Though varied in approaches and ideologies, it is frequently in the work of these organizations that education equity is paid much attention to, and it has become an important tenet of their discourses on education OECD, 2012, cited in Pont, (2017) ; World Bank, 2018 cited in Kless et al, 2019).

The early roots of global governance stem from postwar reconstruction initiatives, with the birth of the United Nations and organizations within its network, coupled with the rise in global tension and competition for a world order during the Cold War, as well as global investment and the flows of aids and resources between developed and developing countries that facilitated globalization towards the end of the twentieth century (Edwards et al., 2018). Borne of such a long and complex process, global governance, in the eyes of many scholars and critics, often reflects the ideological tenets of neoliberalism (Kapoor, 2011; Klees, 2021;). In the case of education, the debates and critiques have been whether global initiatives for education reform and development embrace a humanitarian perspective or geared in a neoliberal orientation (Klees, 2019; Klees et al., 2021; Samoff, 2012). While the equity finds itself at every level of education governance, it is at the global level that the various movements and interactions form a particular niche for education equity within the politics of global development aids (Karin Amos cited in Lorenz et al 2016; Mundy, 2016). Moreover, the increased attention paid to the field of international UNESCO comparative education within the past few decades, coupled with the growing global interests on international assessment programs as a source of information for national policy making, has heated up the conversations on equity and quality on a global scale (Bray, 2017; Sellar et al, 2014). Barrow and Grant's exposition is evident in Ghana's strife for equity in higher education. In the last decade, Ghana has with targeted programs like

affirmative action, (such as lowering the entry requirement for females into universities) made strides in getting some marginalized and underprivileged individuals, enrolled in higher education (Osei Tutu, 2021). In spite of this success chalked, several other intellectually competent students are denied admission by reason of institutional barriers – including insufficient academic and residential facilities (Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013).

Equity in higher education does not end with access; and so, the African Higher Education Summit (AHES, 2015) has emphasized the need to have holistic and responsive strategies to ensure equity. Development is inextricably linked to equity. For some, increased equity is part of the definition of development (Seers, 2007 cited in Schuelka and Engsig, 2022) and without progress to more, rather than less, even distribution of income, assets and opportunities development is compromised. Others take a more contingent view which holds that if inequalities grow so also do the risks that social conflict will become more likely, capabilities will be underutilized, and the “tragedy of the commons” will act to generate individually desirable outcomes for some, but collective disadvantages for most. Modernizing societies use educational access and attainment as a primary mechanism to sort and select subsequent generations into different social and economic roles. Whether the best explanations are human capital or screening theory, is an enduring topic of debate. Whatever the best explanations are, the result is that those with more education, and the qualifications that validate what has been learned, enjoy higher living standards, greater incomes and accumulate more assets. Who goes to school, and increasingly in many developing countries that go to *secondary* school, is a major determinant of future life chances and mobility out of poverty? Philosophically, selection of pupils into schools is based on the performance of the particular school, its aims and objectives, the course the school

has got to offer and the end product the institution wants to have at the end of the day. Siegel, (2012) opined that sometimes a lottery is the fairest way of selecting and distributing a good in a system where competition is at play. In line with this argument, some others have suggested that selection should be based on tossing a coin. On the other hand, Hooker (2013) thinks that it is not clear what fairness is required in these two scenarios. To him, therefore, selection of pupils into schools may not have one way in every school but will be based on the objectives and aims of the school.

Another school of thought has it that placement is determined solely on the basis of whether a score is above or below a certain cut off point that is used to determine passing or failing grades. For the majority of students at community colleges, the consequences of assessment are placement into development education where more than half of the students are assigned to remediation but never a move from bottom to the top ( Bailey et al 2015). According to Bailey (2015), placement of students into schools solely depends on the performance of the student. In effect, student performance standards are explicit definitions of what the student must do to demonstrate proficiency at a specific level on the content standards (National Centre for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Students Testing, 1999). Supporting this position, Young, (2018) opines that a performance standard decides a specific use of knowledge and skills; it is not a description of knowledge, but a description of some application. The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) set out goals that are relevant to and have implications for secondary education particularly in ensuring that learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access and appropriate learning and life skills programs. It was also aimed at eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in



basic education of good quality. According to Kwegyiriba, (2021), issues such as enrolment, quality imperatives, literacy, numeracy, gender disparities, investments and returns on expenditure of secondary education need to be closely examined. Provision of quality secondary education is relevant to the changing needs of young people and the society at large is a growing concern worldwide even for those countries with universal coverage. As efforts to increase the participation rates of young people in post-primary education step up, there is the need to expand school facilities or introduce the shift system to match the demand for places in the institutions.

There is the need to avoid less inclusive policy measures of continued selective processes, early tracking/streaming at the end of primary education. Many African countries, unfortunately, are unable to meet the increasing demand for secondary education due to their inability to build on the successes of the universal primary education system some time ago (Unicef, 2016). For decades, the sub-sector of secondary education has been neglected in Africa both by the governments and donor agencies. The apparent neglect of this sub-sector has resulted in limited access, especially for young women and rural communities, poor quality of curriculum and lack of qualified teachers and essential infrastructure (Kwegyiriba, (2021). Historically, secondary education is more accessible to urban areas than to rural communities in Africa (Kungwane & Boaduo 2021). Additionally, there are some significant gender disparities in the distribution of secondary education in Africa. Socio-cultural, religious, and economic factors have contributed to this disparity that has placed young women at a serious disadvantage (Takyi-Amoako, 2018). In African countries, more boys (28 percent) benefit from secondary education than girls (22 percent) do. (The World Bank, 2010 cited in Zapp, 2017), yet secondary education plays a vital role in the political and socio-economic development of Africa. The crisis facing human

resource development in Africa is clearly manifested in the secondary education sub-sector in the forms of limited access to secondary education and poor quality of the education provided. The World Bank (2005 cited in Zapp, 2017) report describes secondary education as the crucial link between primary schooling, tertiary education, and the labour market. The report notes further that the task confronting education policymakers in Africa is to transform secondary education institutions and current schooling practices to align them with the fast-growing demands of globalization and the technology-driven world.

That is, the main focus of the education policy process in Africa is to address the twin challenges of increasing access to, and improving quality and relevance of secondary education for all young people in the region. This underscores the imperative to transform teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools in African countries. Roemer (2015) argued that justice requires levelling the playing field by rendering everyone opportunities equal in an appropriate sense; and letting individual choices and their effects dictate further outcomes. 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 makes it difficult to have equal access to SHS. Bosiako and Asare (2015) 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 the access to SHS. Many studies point to the fact that public school students receive higher grades in colleges than private school students. One hypothesis is that public school students do better in colleges because they are more rigorously selected for admission. (Goldhaber, & Özek, 2019).

## **2.7 Contextualization of Educational Strategies to ensure equity.**

Lewin (2013), in his study on diversity in convergence, developed a typology on the challenges to expanded access of secondary school education in Sub-Saharan Africa base on the 2005 UNESCO GMR on EFA . On the basis of context, he identified grouped, ranked Sub-Saharan Africa countries into five. He identified the context of group four countries to include mid-range GER enrolment at primary level, low enrolment at lower secondary and upper secondary levels. He identified high repetition and dropout rates as the causes for the gap in access. He attributed the high rate of attrition to the poor performance of students, unaffordability that hinder retention, a loss of interest and motivation due to lower value place on education among others.

These pitfalls have direct link to geographical, economic, and social-cultural terrain in those countries (Howard, 2019). These include the remoteness of most of the settlements, high incidence of poverty (mostly among the rural folks), high rate of literacy among others. The context of group four countries is different from those in group one in which countries like South Africa and Botswana were identified to have high enrolment at the primary and secondary levels. This context has a direct link to the relatively better socio-economic indicators and relatively urbanized nature of those countries. Lewin (2013), therefore, posited that given the differences in contexts, specific strategies based on context are needed to universalize access and achieve quality and equity in secondary education. For group four country like Ghana, he argued for strategies that seek to: balance progress on universalizing access and completion in education by increasing lower secondary participation; recognize the interactions between primary and secondary expansion, especially, in the supply of teachers; identify sustainable frameworks to provide financial resources and; adopt a

differentiated approach to reducing regional, rural-urban and gender disparities are very crucial.

Therefore, the universal rights-based-strategies for delivering equitable education to marginalized groups especially, the rural folks, must therefore embrace the understanding that difference exists between and within countries. This calls for differentiated and varying strategies in order to maximum outcomes. This therefore, requires policy framework assessment that identifies the contextual causes for the disparities, both at the local and national levels and properly target and reach out to the most marginalized with social safety net programmes (Lewin, 2013; cited in Ainscow, 2020).

Lewin (2013) posited further that, although convergence approaches of homogenizing the challenges to access to education and their solutions have some advantage in terms of cost, however, they are inadequate in offering sustainable solutions in addressing the gender, class and geographical disparities to access and quality. The differences require that policy makers take into consideration the issue of the reality of diversity of contexts (Lewin, 2013; Kubow & Fossum, 2007 cited in Ballantine et al, 2021) and adapt policies, programmes, curriculum strategies to the conditions of each milieu in accordance to the rights-based approach to education (Akyepong, 2005 cited in Takyi et al , 2021).

## **2.8 Global Initiative Targeting Educational Equity**

Within the realm of education, efforts towards global education governance are best manifested in several global initiatives and concerted efforts, the earliest notable among which was the *World Declaration of Education for All*, also known as the *Jomtien Declaration*, by 33 intergovernmental organizations, 125 non-governmental

organizations, institutes, and foundations, and the governments of 155 countries in 1990, which laid down a global path to ensure equity and quality in education as a universal human right for all children (UNESCO, 1990 cited in Street, 2017). With a discouraging number of children in developing countries out of school and their youths and adults illiterate, the focus for this first wave of global attention and action was universal access to basic education, envisioning that “every person—child, youth, and adult—shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs” (UNESCO, 1990, p. 4 cited in Street, 2017). Towards this goal, the main responsibilities were on the shoulders of governments and global actors to develop a supporting policy context, mobilize financial and human resources, and strengthen international solidarity through knowledge sharing and the distribution of global development aids.

The uniqueness of *Education for All* lies in the focus of basic education, which is “broader and more attuned to the realities of people's lives than earlier attempts to address these issues,” thus providing “an enlarged vision of national education” (Bunn & Bennett, 2020). Early implementation of the initiative was met with positive reactions, such as increased enrollment numbers and decreased dropout rates worldwide, but it also raised serious doubts and concerns regarding the effectiveness of the approach. Among these doubts was the failure to address the question of egalitarian access (Bunn & Bennett, pp. 6–8). After a first decade of limited action and lackluster results, the global commitment was renewed with the ratification of the *2000 Dakar Framework for Action*, spearheaded by major organizations in the global education governance project and laying out a clear framework for achieving the goals set out in the 1990 Declaration (UNESCO, 2000). The sense of urgency is intensified with the birth of other initiatives aimed at meeting the targets: universal primary education was

incorporated into the *United Nations Millennium Development Goals* as MDG 2 (Chataika, et al 2012), bringing attention onto a higher level. Within this context, the *Education for All—Fast Track Initiative* (EFA—FTI) was proposed and launched in 2002 to ensure reaching MDG 2 by 2015 (UNESCO, 2015a cited in Ross, 2015).

This initiative was later renamed as the *Global Partnership for Education* (GPE), carrying on its mission in *Education 2030*, and has by now become one of the most important actors in global educational governance. Realizing in 2015 that these global efforts were stopping short of realizing their goals, international organizations and national governments agreed at the conclusion of *Education for All* to carry on the work in another initiative, *Education 2030*, as ratified in the *Incheon Declaration* by representatives of 160 countries and key UN organizations (UNESCO et al., 2015 cited in Sayed & Ahmed, 2015).

*Education 2030* carries over the goal of universal primary education—the unaccomplished mission of *Education for All*—with a renewed focus on the quality of education provided in addition to access, focusing attention on (UNESCO et al., 2015 cited in Edwards et al 2017). The initiative, which is part of the larger *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs), is focused on the ten targets of SDG 4, namely free, equitable and quality primary education (4.1), quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education (4.2), affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education (4.3), relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for youth and adults (4.4), eliminating gender disparities and ensuring equal access to education and vocational training for the vulnerable (4.5). Also, the initiative targeted universal literacy and numeracy for all youth and a substantial proportion of adults (4.6), knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development for all learners (4.7), building and upgrading child-, disability-, and gender-sensitive facilities (4.A),

expanding higher education scholarships to developing countries (4.B), and increasing the supply of qualified teachers in developing countries (4.C) (United Nations, n.d.-a). Among these, except for target 4.5 that deals explicitly with equity issues related to gender and vulnerable learning populations, almost—if not—all other targets address equity concerns to some extents, expanding free or affordable educational opportunities to everyone. And as with *Education for All*, despite considerable global efforts and resources directed at these targets, progress has been slow and meager: “262 million children and youth aged 6 to 17 were still out of school in 2017, and more than half of children and adolescents are not meeting minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics” (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2019, p. 10 cited in Leong et al, 2019).

It is in this context that the global discourse on education governance continues to call for action towards equity (UNICEF, 2020; World Bank, 2018 cited in Oestreich, 2018). A temporal shift of focus runs across these initiatives. While earlier efforts were driven towards universal access and basic learning skills, especially in places where large numbers of children were out of school and youths and adults lacking basic literacy and numeracy skills, recent foci have been placed on achieving equitable learning outcomes (Ainscow, 2020). This shift is often reflected in global governance and comparative policy as paradoxes and policy dilemmas (Xiaomin & Auld, 2020).

## **2.9 Accessibility in Education**

Access to education includes on-scheduled enrolment and progression at an appropriate age, regular attendance, learning consistent with national achievement norms, a learning environment that is safe enough to allow learning to take place, and opportunities to learn that are equitably distributed (Lewin, 2015:29). Over the years, international bodies’ like the United Nations and its signatory member states have

increasingly exhibited an unwavering resolve to pursue equity-based goals and committed themselves to ensuring the upliftment of the marginalized from the doldrums of life. To give firmer legs to casting its effort in steel, the declaration of education as a basic human right was passed in 1948 to communicate a clear message to the comity of nations that, in addition to recognizing education as critically important in the lives of individuals all over the world, it also sees it as a key ingredient in the socio-economic development of nations.

The aftermath of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) saw the reopening and resignation of nation's spirit towards a fuller commitment to progress and development under the banner of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) carved around the objective of eradicating poverty, hunger, achieving universal basic education and promoting gender equality. A central plank of the MDGs constituted an emphasis on access to education as the springboard for all economies.

It is for the reason of equipping the available national human resource with the required skills for socioeconomic development (Afful-Broni & Sekyi, 2014) that countries enroll their citizens in school. Later, the eight (8) target Millennium Development Goals (2000–2015) established, following the United Nation's Millennium Summit in the year 2000 was succeeded by the Sustainable Development Goals (which is projected to span from 2015–2030) in September 2015. The integrated 17 Sustainable Development Goals and its 169 targets amongst other things envisage poverty, hunger, disease and want-free world, a world with universal literacy, a world with equitable and universal access to quality education at all levels. To give prominence to the noble goal of promoting equity in education, the United Nations assigned goal 4 of the MDGs, aimed at ensuring inclusiveness and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030 (Elfert, 2019). In the years gone by, government efforts



towards increasing universal access to education programmes and strategies meant to propel the achievement of this vision have been initiated (Okujagu, 2013) in Ghana. They include the capitation grant, free school uniforms, free exercise books, free pupil feeding when they attend school (Osei-Fosu, 2011) and free pupil school sandals. Access to education is also associated with preparation for lifelong learning. This is usually provided through education fundamental ‘knowledge and skills’ for use in further contexts of education (Akyeampong, 2011).

In this regard, it is important to note that, in a well-planned and succinct legal framework as enshrined in the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, article 25 of the Constitution provides for a right to education and stipulates that: a. Basic education shall be free, compulsory. Hordes of research conducted reiterates on the impact of increasing access to basic education on retention outcomes.

Other researches have also been done on the impact of public social policy initiatives on increasing enrolment but little is done on how increasing access and equity or otherwise could impact on the achievement of the united nations sustainable development Goal (4); “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” which is a central plank to the achievement of all other goals combined. This study was carried out on the premise that poverty militates against equity and access to education, and by extension constitutes a huge stumbling block on the way of humanity to achieving SDG 4 and its integrated goals. It is pivoted on the goal that education prepares the individual for social, economic and political participation which is necessary for social cohesion. It socialises the young that rights are naturally and sacredly inherent in the individual and that the rights to education is the individual greatest asset independent of any other person (Elfert, 2019;

UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007 cited in Korwatanasakul, 2015)). The provisions on the rights to equitable accessible quality education is enshrine in several international and regional treaties and declarations of which Ghana is a signatory to such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Dakar (2000) Framework of Action on EFA, the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education, the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, The MDGs /the Post-2015 (Agenda 2030) on the 17 new SDGs. The regional ones include the Lome Convention; the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the ECOWAS Protocol on Education and Training among others. These treaties and declarations rally global support and partnerships and enjoin national governments to implement right-based policies that seek to make at a least good quality universal BE more available, accessible, relevant and equitable to all (UNESCO, 2015a).

It concludes by looking at whether poverty has a deleterious impact on stifling equity and access with regards to basic education within the broader framework of SDG. It then makes recommendations targeted at helping to trim, shape and reshape policy direction regarding basic education access and equity factors. According to UNESCO, (2015), children out of school in sub-Saharan Africa between 2007–2012 peaked an estimated 30 million. This paints an ignoble harrowing picture about the sub-region relative to the future of its human resource base and its overall future as that leaves more than half of the total global children population excluded. Whether the fight to bridging the somewhat ever-widening gap with regards to access to education is anything feasible challenge to be overcome remains to be seen. By virtue of Ghana's membership to the United Nations, it behooves her as a signatory to the UN charters to

institute measures to lay the foundation and framework to support the achievement of the aims and goals that lie therein Agyei et al, (2019).

The UNESCO in 2005 observed that many children do not go to school, simply because there is no school nearby, there are not enough classrooms, or their parents cannot afford to pay school fees. UNESCO further observed that about 30% of children who do not have access to education live in rural areas compared to 18% in urban settings (UNESCO, 2015a). Access to education is not the only crisis, but poor quality is holding back learning even for those who make it to school.

A study conducted by Akyeampong, Rolleston, Ampiah, and Lewin (2012) concludes that access to education suffers from both the supply and demand sides of provision of education. The study observed that from the supply side of provision which concentrated on inputs, infrastructure is weak, buildings and classrooms are inadequate or unavailable, learning materials are in short supply, and teacher qualification is low. From the demand side, access problems arise in communities where the opportunity costs of school attendance are high and where school quality is low. The government of Ghana through the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service (GES) introduced social interventions to facilitate the attainment of two major dimensions of access to education: affordability and availability. The GES was tasked to make education both affordable and available to Ghanaians Ampiah et al, 2012). The main interventions included the school feeding programme and the capitation grant. The school feeding programme was an intervention designed to provide pupils with a balanced meal in a day and targets basic schools with enrolment problems and high levels of poverty. The capitation grant was introduced to end to the charging of school fees. capitation grant was the government's commitment to providing free compulsory universal basic education (FCUBE). Over the years in Ghana, the preeminent desire to

achieve social and economic progress through increasing access to education has increased government's commitment in ensuring so much to be done.

Apart from committing itself to the formulating the universal basic education policy in 1995, and set 2015 as the policy timeline for the achievement of the objectives, it also introduced certain cluster of specific policies like the capitation grant, free pupil school feeding programme, free pupil school uniform programme, free pupil school sandals programme and a pupil teaching policy module under the National Youth Employment programme meant to train and supply teachers to fill in gaps in the classrooms, whiles bridging the teacher–student ratio, and the same time increasing access ( Opoku et al, 2015). The capitation grant called for the abolition of tuition fee payment at the basic level (Akyeampong, 2015) whiles the school feeding programme-guaranteed pupil per head free lunch at school. The free school uniform and sandals helped provide pupils with clothing and footwear for school (Iddrisu, 2018).

### **2.1.0 Factors that Influences Access to Education**

#### **Health and Nutrition**

One importance piece of evidence from research in Ghana is that, malnutrition, stunted growth are correlated with delayed enrolment in school (Osei &Lambon-Quayefio, 2021). Health factors are important determinants of when and where a child goes to school. Differences exist in the health status of enrolled and non-enrolled children, with -out –school children often more vulnerable to health problems. Studies also indicates that health status has implications for attendance, retention and drop out, with hunger ,malaria, headache and poor eyesight noted as major causes of absenteeism and dropping out ( Ezeanana et al, 2018). Health issues have also been found to be gendered, with girls reporting more health-related problems than boys, painful menstruation, a lack of sanitary facilities and pregnancy has been found to lead both absenteeism and dropout

of adolescent girls (Kipchumba & Sulaiman, 2017). Similarly, gender-sensitive programs that focus on female adolescent health and specific strategies to reach out to most at risk have the potential to improve access and retention (Decker et al, 2015).

### **Disability and special educational needs**

It is estimated that around 5 percent of the population of Ghana have some sort of disability with sight problems noted as most prevalent (around 59 percent), then hearing/speaking. But, there is the possibility of under-recording of disability in rural areas which would make disability a sometimes less-visible factor in educational access (Lawerteh, 2021). There are indications that access to education for many with disabilities in Ghana is an urban phenomenon although this could also be a result of under-reporting in rural areas. For example, a study in Accra and some rural areas in Eastern region revealed that majority of students with disabilities had not had their disabilities detected or identified by professionals (Mantey, 2014).

In a survey which involved 66 teachers/head teachers (plus 16 parents), 87 percent of teachers and head teachers were not aware of any existing policy for special education needs (SEN), and therefore had no arrangements in place for implementation of such policy in their schools. Many teachers are often unwilling to have children with disabilities in their class, especially those with behavior problems (Mantey, 2014). Generally, there seem to be a lack of detailed analytical research into the scale of disability and SEN in Ghanaian schools and its relationships with educational access (Anthony, 2014).

### **Household influence**

Research in Northern Ghana has suggested that the likelihood of children's enrolment is based on a complex mix of factors which include the educational level of parents, particularly mothers, the ability to pay indirect/direct costs of schooling, and the types

of livelihoods households pursue. In some cases the likelihood of a child's enrolment 'was an outcome of the different ways in which households were organised, the manner in which household members' time was occupied and the types of assets they invested in, including human capital' (Hashim, 2005:17 cited in Momo, et al 2019). Other studies confirm the benefits of parental education to schooling access for children leading to the conclusion that parental education, particularly the mother's education has a big influence on children's attendance and achievement (Acheampong, 2018). Household decisions on who gets access and why often favours 'those who are most willing, able and determined' going to school, while other children stayed at home to ensure the availability of the necessary labour to secure livelihoods and assets' (Acheampong, 2018). 'Parents frequently aspire to educate their children. However, education is sometimes seen as one among a range of means of securing children's long-term welfare.

Consequently, the ability and desire to educate all their children can be tempered by a child's perceived interest and scholastic ability, by parents' assessment of education as a viable livelihood strategy, and by the need to secure and protect the household's immediate well-being, which might require a reduction in expenditure, such as those associated with educating a child, or a need for labour to ensure subsistence' (Hashim, 2005:17 cited in Momo et al 2019). Interestingly, in rural areas the enrolment rate for children residing without their parents is higher than that of the household heads' own children, an indication that some children are fostered in order to attend school. Conversely, in urban areas, children living without their parents seem to have lower enrolment rates than the household heads' own offspring. In the urban areas under-enrolment seems to affect girls more than boys, which might suggest that, girls are

fostered in urban areas to provide domestic support to households rather than to access education (Momo, et al 2019).

### **Gender and Educational Access**

Gendered schooling patterns are context-specific with research indicating differentiations across Ghana (Asante, 2022). Research suggests that while some general patterns might be found around gendered access, these might not be applicable across board, and therefore the need to look at this issue from location-specific contexts is important. Several studies have documented reasons why girls tend to have lower enrolment rates than boys, higher drop out and less transition to secondary (Wagachira, 2015). On the whole these reasons tend to be multifaceted and interrelated but with poverty as a common denominator (Dunne & Ananga, 2013). Factors influencing female enrolments have been identified as: beliefs and practices and the perception of the role of girls by families and communities; costs; the opportunity cost of sending girls to school and girls having to travel long distances to go to school (Ouma, 2013). Using qualitative interviews with fifteen families in Accra and Koforidua as well as observations, Yeboah (1997), cited in Akotia and Anum, 2015) found that there was some favouring of boys over girls, but also that gender only became an issue to families when they were obligated to make a decision about either a daughter's or a son's access to school.

### **Location and educational access**

Studies in Ghana have shown that access issues tend to be more pronounced in areas that are prone to a range of interlocking socio-economic factors (Yekpele, 2012). For example, high levels of illiteracy, low levels of human resource development, low levels of economic development, low levels of democratic participation, high levels of infant and child mortality and morbidity, and low levels of general family health, among

others (Dunne & Ananga, 2013). Most of these areas are more likely to be found in the northern Ghana. Acheampong, (2019) found that the issue of access in the North was not static but evolved with perceptions and expectations of childhood playing a role in how demand for education is constructed by households. Education was not implicated in 'normal' childhood in the same way, and the inability to attend school was not perceived as an opportunity denied. Transformations were occurring in the meaning of education as a result of the changes in the lived experiences of individuals in particular due to the manner in which the labour market has changed and the increasing importance of the 'modern' sector economy. However, education was not fully implicated in the construction of childhood but rather viewed as a new form of recruitment to work, representing the possibility of alternative livelihoods' (Hashim, 2005:18 cited in Acheampong, 2019).

### **Schooling costs**

Several studies conducted in the 1990s and early 2000 suggested that a major obstacle to educational access was economic. The high cost of schooling pushes children into the labour market to enable them to afford school or pulls them away from school as they cannot afford it (Kumi-Yeboah, 2015). With the recent introduction of the capitation grant scheme into basic education, theoretically the issue of costs as a barrier should be eliminated or reduced to its barest minimum. Future CREATE studies in Ghana will test this assumption and explore the complexities surrounding household decision-making, in relation to access.

### **Child labour**

Depending on the nature of the work (and the type of educational opportunities available), child labour can: increase pressure to or cause drop outs from schooling (Acharya, 2016); or provide financial support for the child's schooling and/or that of



siblings, many children both work and attend school. In terms of age as a child grows older, the opportunity cost of their time often increases (Attanasio, Meghir, & Nix, 2020). This can be seen for example in the migration habits of children, often from economically poorer communities who provide employment and domestic support (increasing quite significantly after the age of 13). Pressures on children to work might be seasonal in some contexts with implications for attendance at school. In one study, rural children were over twice as likely as urban children to engage in child labor (Adonteng-Kusi, 2018). Girls were more likely than boys to be involved in child labour as were poor children. Finally involvement in child labour was found to be related to self-employment, family ownership of land and livestock, and the distances to the nearest primary and secondary school.

#### **Non-state provision of basic education and access**

Private schooling in Ghana is mainly an urban phenomenon and run mainly on for profit basis (Akomea et al, 2023). There has been some evidence which suggest that many ‘unrecognized’ private schools and schools managed by charitable organizations, operate in low income urban periphery areas. These schools are perceived to be providing better quality primary education (largely to poor households), than state providers (Bunnel, 2014). But their popularity could be attributed to the perception that they provide the mechanism for social mobility, and partly because of falling quality in public school education (Altbach, et al 2022). Private schooling might also be plugging gaps in supply, with poor quality private and religious schools growing in number to accommodate students who cannot find access to state schools.

### **2.1.1 Strategies to Ensure Access to Education**

Global efforts of increasing equity in access to education focus on strategies that seek to eliminate the obstacles to availability, accessibility and affordability to school (Keet, 2015). These strategies mostly aim at targeting and hooking vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minority, girls, the poor, people with disability, and people in risk areas and rural dwellers that are most likely to be excluded in the educational process (Allen, 2011; Muralidharan & Prakash, 2017). Social safety programmes such as the abolition of fees, cash transfer and school feeding programmes as well as others that focus on improving ECCD and girls' education have become very important in the South (Elfert, 2021).

#### **Abolition of fees**

Eliminating school fees and lowering other indirect cost associated with textbooks, school uniforms and other hidden fees is the first step of making basic education affordable hence accessible to the vulnerable in the society (Pingel, 2010).

Several studies in Africa and South America have revealed that school fees is the biggest barrier to accomplishing the EFA goals on access to equitable quality education (Arkorful et al, 2019). The argument that has been advanced in favor of abolition of school fees and other related indirect costs in developing countries is that the majority of the world's marginalized and poorest people are located in this part of the world, especially, in the rural areas. Therefore, abolition of fees is likely to give more opportunity to children from poor households to access education. This has the potential of injecting equity in access to quality education (Pingel, 2010). Studies in some 15 Sub-Saharan Africa countries including Malawi and Uganda where school fees have been abolished in one form or the other by the year 2000, have recorded sustain increase in enrolments and has narrowed that gap in access between advantaged and disadvantaged groups within a country (Langsten, 2017). In Uganda, abolition of school

fees in the primary and lower secondary levels almost doubled the enrolment rate. It has also led to the reduction of late entry to school and its twin problems of over-age enrolments and drop out, especially among girls and children in rural areas (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015). It has been argued, however, that abolition of tuition fee only does not necessary translate into elimination of cost to education.

There are other indirect costs aside school fees such as transportation, feeding, levies for school repairs, cultural and sporting activities, cost on text books and stationary, and school uniform, as well as other hidden fees charged on parents which are still major hindrances to access. Therefore, what is crucial is the total elimination of any form of cost borne by poor households when the child is going to or is in school. Also, it has been argued that the abolition of fees can cripple quality if it is not accompanied by the required expansion in facilities. A significant increase in enrolment causes: imbalance in the pupil-teacher ratio, overcrowding in class rooms and put stress on TLMs and other resources in schools ( Osei, Owusu & Afutu-Kotey, 2009).

In Malawi for example, the abolition of school fees increased the pupils to teacher ratio to 62:1, pupils to classroom to 199:1 and pupil to text book of 24:1. Similar in Ghana, the increasing enrolment has exacerbated the challenge of supply of quality teachers, especially to the rural areas. The infrastructure though expanded, is yet to meet the rising numbers (Little, 2010). Another associated problem of abolition of fees, especially, in developing countries is the problem of sustainable funding. This is evident in underfunding of education in most developing countries. This has led to deterioration in quality. For example, in Malawi public expenditure per-pupil fell approximately by 12 per year for primary school pupils (USAID, 2007). Keet, (2015), therefore argued that one of the best ways of strategizing for universal access and monitoring access to quality education in relation to affordability in light of the right-

based approach is to deal with the key issue of “correspondence between budgetary allocations for equitable accessible quality education and government obligation under international human rights treaties and declarations, as well as her national obligation toward the citizenry. Therefore, in order not to reduce free education to a mere rhetoric or symbolic gesture requires a real commitment on the part of the state in order to ensure that abolition of fees translate into access to good quality education for all. This he argued requires that budgetary allocations take into consideration the estimated cost of accessible quality education for each citizen.

### **Cash Transfer Programme**

Conditional cash transfer policy, where parents are given some amount of cash on condition of ensuring the regular attendance to school by their children has successfully been used, especially, in Latin America as a strategy to enhance access to school among marginalized and poor communities (Ferro et al, 2010).

It has been argued that cash transfers increases human capital investment in poor families thereby freeing them from the vicious cycle of poverty by breaking its channel of transmission from one generation by promoting child health, nutrition, and schooling (Evans & Mendez, 2021). For example, in Brazil cash transfer policy increased enrolment in school among children from the poorest households, mostly rural, by about 10%. This is in contrast with children from average and well-to-do households which enrolment was not significantly affected (Damon & Glewwe, 2021). It also increased attendance rate to school by 10% among rural children as against 0.5% for urban children. According to Evans and Mendez (2021), cash transfer programme as a strategy for access is becoming popular in Africa countries and latin America. About 21 countries including Kenya, Malawi, Ghana and Zambia have some form of cash transfer programmes. However, some of these programmes have taken distinctly

different dimensions which are mostly unconditional. Evidence from Morocco indicate that the impact of cash transfer programme has been remarkable on school attendance and somehow on the achievement levels in arithmetic and numeracy skills among children from poor rural families (Benhassine, Devoto, Duflo, Dupas, & Poulighen, 2015). It has been argued however that, cash transfer programmes do not always eliminate blockage to access in terms of affordability among excluded people, especially if the implementation process is not effective.

### **School Feeding Programme**

School feeding programme (SFP) have become one of the most popular social protection programmes for increasing access to basic education opportunities in developing countries in recent times (Awojobi, 2019). It has multiple objectives of increasing enrolment; improve child health and enhancing their competencies. According to Faaland and McLean, (2013), school feeding program has reached about 360 million children by 2013.

Several studies have revealed a positive correlation between SFPs on one hand and GER, school attendance, reduction in drop-outs and test- performance in numeracy and arithmetic skills at the primary level of education. Also, SFP has also been found to be very effective strategy in ejecting equity in access to quality education as it reduces disparities to access, acquisition of competencies and nutritional status among children of different gender, socio-economic, geographical settings (Allen & Gillespie, 2001). According to Nyankundi (2017), School feeding Program tends to induces greater participation in school among poor and marginalized group than those from well-to-do background and the less marginalized groups. For example, in Bangladesh, Food for Education (FFE) programme led to 44% increase in enrolment for girls as against 28% increase for boys. Evidence from reviews of SFPs in 32 Sub-Saharan Africa countries,

including Ghana showed that the impact tends to be greater among children from poor households mostly in deprived rural and urban slums where food is seen as incentive to attending school (Nyankudi, 2017).

### **Girls' Education**

One of the global challenges to universal access to and equity in basic education in low and middle income countries has been the issue of low enrolment and completion of girls, especially among indigenous population (Somani, 2017). Global commitment toward the EFA frameworks has contributed in narrowing the gender gap in education, however, the gap is still wide in the rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia. Available data from 28 countries show that, there are still fewer than nine girls in school for every ten boys. Also, data in Pakistan show that there is no discernible gender gap for the wealthiest urban households, however, only a third of girls from the poorest households, mostly in rural areas, are in school.

Among the Kurdish-speaking girls in Turkey, 43% from the poorest households have less than two years of education, with national average of 6%. This picture is similar to Nigeria where about 97% of poor Hausa-speaking girls in the north have fewer than two years of education (UNESCO, 2010). In Niger, about 70% of the poorest girls had never attended school as compared with 20% of the richest boys (Somani, 2017)). This inequity is fuel by history, religion, social cultural norms such as early marriage and prescribed gender roles which tend to tie the girl-child to house-keeping duties and alienate them from equally accessing BE. Achieving equity and just society requires a conscious effort in adopting discriminatory contextual policies that are favourable to girls in order to lift them from the bottom of educational ladder. Education is the most potent lever that can provide girls with adequate choices to advance in life (Daniels, 2015). Global efforts to increase access for girls in education have included strategies

that seek to extend incentives to parents to invest their education and increasing the availability of, and thereby access to schools for girls. These include the establishment of special schools for girls, and the recruitment and training of female teachers to serve as role models (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2013). However, the impact has been minimal. This is due to the fact that the challenges to girls' education are social-culturally and historically induced more than the issue of availability and affordability of schools. Strategies that seek to change attitudes that diminish the value of girls' education, along with practical policies that create incentives for their greater participation in education are very crucial (Daniels, 2015). According to Aikman and Unterhalter, (2013), in order for such strategies to thrive, the first hurdle is to eliminate the culturally and historically constructed inferior gender roles that society has prescribed for women in both private and public life.

In India a national programme that seeks to increase demand for schooling among rural and disadvantage girls complemented by strategies such as back-to - school- camps, free text books and bicycle for girls, and training and recruiting more female teachers have improved access and quality and equity in primary and lower secondary school education (Muralidharan & Prakash, 2013).

### **2.1.2 Progress towards ensuring access to secondary education in Ghana**

More recently, demand for secondary education has grown Akyeampong (2010). In the last 5 years alone, secondary enrolment has grown by as much as 60 percent, although the completion rate of 34 Percent in 2006 (Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah,2012) suggests dropout is still high. In 2006, secondary net enrolment stood at about 13 percent after stagnating at 10 percent for a decade. What this means is that, the proportion of secondary students not of the appropriate age for secondary is high. Therefore, despite the relatively high enrolments, the secondary education system has not been very

efficient in delivering high numbers of graduates for further education and the labour market. The recent Presidential Commission on Education Reforms in Ghana examined the reasons why most JSS students were unable to access senior secondary, and blamed this on a number of factors: inadequate facilities and infrastructure, parents unable to afford secondary fees, a lack of alternative tracks for students with different interests and abilities, an inability of students to meet the minimum requirements for further education and a lack of interest in further education.

Similarly, the diversification of secondary education meant to open up opportunities for the different aspirations and abilities of students, as well as improve streaming into different post-secondary education and training never fully materialized. One reason was that the quality of practical education students received depended on whether they attended a school in a rural or urban area.

Generally, there is better quality provision in traditional boarding schools located mostly in cities and towns than in community day secondary schools found mainly in rural or peri-urban areas. Also the traditional schools attracted more qualified teachers than the community schools. Teacher shortages in the technical/vocational subject areas effectively reduced quality of provision and undermined student interest (Adu-Gyamfi et al 2016). But, perhaps the most important influence on students' subject choice is the opportunity structure outside the school system. This has proved to be decisive for some students when it comes to selecting school subjects, and increasingly, many of these students are seeing liberal arts and science subjects as offering better opportunities than vocational and technical subjects (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2016). When in the mid-90s (Akyeampong, 2010) asked the adult population of residents in Madina, a suburb of Accra, which subjects they studied were most valuable to them the responses were revealing – about one- third said reading, mathematics, a quarter both of these, only 7



percent indicated vocational subjects. This says something about the importance attached to core skills in numeracy and literacy for economic survival, and seems to support the assertion that realism about labour market opportunities in Ghana have much to contribute to job aspirations among students (McGrath, 2012) Akyeampong, 2010). Over the years, the ideological sentiments associated with technical and vocational secondary education have made sure that it remains at the forefront of education policy. But what this does not take into account is the pragmatic implication of costs, and how that might affect equitable access to quality. Community secondary schools which were introduced under the 1987 education reforms to make secondary education more affordable and accessible to students in rural populations, lacked adequate infrastructure, teachers and equipment to support their practical focus.

The lesson is that, implementing a large scale diversified curriculum under resource constraints creates uneven access to quality and choice of secondary subjects (Akyeampong, 2010). Recent international evidence suggest that it is rather better to emphasize generic and problem-solving skills in secondary education as foundation for further training in post-secondary technical and apprenticeship institutions. This has also the potential of providing better access to secondary education ( Lauglo & MacLean, 2013). Generally, secondary education is faced with the challenge of providing equitable and meaningful access so that dropout reduces and learning achievements improve significantly. An additional challenge is the rising cost of secondary education to both government and parents and the potential that this has on constraining future growth (Akyeampong, 2010). International evidence suggests that the quality of secondary education, especially in maths and science, has a stronger impact on economic growth than years of schooling. Equitable access to secondary education for poor students, and especially girls is an additional factor enhancing

countries' economic growth performance (World Bank, 2013:9). But this also depends on an adequate supply of qualified teachers who can generate interest in science and mathematics through innovative teaching. Ghana's progress against these international benchmarks reveals that developments in secondary education still have a long way to go. Of all approximately 14,000 secondary teachers in public schools, about a fifth are not professionally qualified, and for science and mathematics subjects this is even less – 19 percent and 13 percent approximately (NPT/GHA PRACTICAL project, 2007 cited in Akyeampong, 2010). The general science stream in secondary schools currently stands between 13 to 15 percent of all students, although elective science and mathematics subjects can be selected in other more practical streams. Overall participation in physics has declined to 18 percent of examination candidates, in chemistry to 21 percent, and in elective mathematics to 28 percent.

Expansion in secondary education has predominantly taken place in the general arts subjects of which the relative size has grown relative to other subjects. Technical, vocational and agricultural streams have all declined, either because schools do not have the capacity to offer more specialist subjects or newly created schools only offer a very limited curriculum (NPT/GHA PRACTICAL project, 2007:13-14 cited in Akyeampong, 2010).

### **2.1.3 Educational Reform**

Education has been deemed to provide a strong foundation upon any country can experience economic, social and political development (Fagerlind & Saha, 2016). According to Camilleri and Camilleri (2016), education investment has significant effect on economic growth, can promote productivity, enhance social and national development as well reduce inequality in the society. As a result, education has been regarded as one of the primary indicators to indicate a country's growth of

development. Education today is globally considered as a basic human right. According to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26) “everyone has the right to education and that education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages.” Education has been defined as “the act of transferring knowledge in the form of experiences, ideas, skills, customs, and values, from one person to another or from one generation to generations” (Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh & Addo, 2016). Reform describes policy changes, or changes in organizational practices. Reforms therefore imply intended or enacted attempts to correct an identified problem. According to Viennet, (2017), educational reforms also known as educational policy refers to intention or decisions made to affect some or all aspect of schooling in society. This study conceptualizes Educational Reforms as “changes and policies initiated to better educational structure or systems in a country” (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2016:158).

#### **2.1.4 Secondary Education Reform in Developed Countries**

Today, countries across the globe’s main challenge are equipping their youth to become active citizens, secure employment in a fast-changing work environment, and be able to survive and adapt to change (Simoès, 2021). In an attempt to address this problem various countries in the developed world have adopted appropriate interventions that have sought to enhance the capacity and long-term development of their youth. A key area has been secondary education. The World Bank (2015) notes that “secondary education in developed countries has been a subsidiary of higher education and has influenced policy, choice of providers, curriculum decisions, teacher recruitment and training, evaluation, accreditation, and certification.” In the 20th century, countries such as United States and Russia introduced educational policies which led to secondary education models which aimed at the establishing massive systems that focused on open access and universal coverage. According to Goldin (2001 cited in

Bendiara et al, 2019), “massive expansion of secondary education in the U.S. took place 40 to 50 years before there was corresponding expansion in Europe”. The U.S model comprised of “public funding and provision, open and forgiving system (selective, with no early specialization or academic segregation); an academic yet practical curriculum; numerous small, fiscally independent school districts; and secular control of schools and school funds” (Simoes, 2021). In developed countries, the state mostly finance partly or wholly education at the secondary or compulsory level. In Britain, Moon and Mayes (2013) established that the government fully finance education up to secondary school level. Here, parents are only expected to ensure their children go to school. In Britain, Section 7 of the 1944 Act mandates the Education Authority and Central Government to ensure educational facilities are made available.

In Japan, the government fiscal policies make provisions for free education up to secondary school level. People of school going age “have no option other than attend school to acquire education that is fully funded by the government” (Shimada et al 2016). Similarly, in the United States (US), public education is supported by the Federal Government. The Constitution Welfare Clause, Article 1 Section 8 empowers the government “to levy taxes and collect revenues for the support of education, with Congress deciding the extent of such support” (Shimada, 2016).

### **2.1.5 Secondary Education Reform in Africa**

Secondary education has received much attention and reforms in most developing countries.” The need for secondary education is increasingly rising in almost all Sub-Saharan African countries (Glewwe, 2016). Josh and Verspoor (2012b:12) notes that “between 1999 and 2005 primary school intake Increased by almost 40%; adding that even though survival rates have remained stable so far, this still implies a very large increase in the number of primary school graduates that are seeking a place in secondary

school due to international trends (Word Bank, 2015). International trend is causing a change in African countries to a drift towards compulsory secondary level education. According to the Kan and Klasen, (2021) “international commitment to basic education for all and free universal primary education has necessitated the need for secondary education reforms in Africa and other developing countries. Ledoux and Mingat (2007) as cited in Verspoor (2012b) indicate that “with increasing completion rates the number of primary school leavers could even triple by 2020 in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.” This presents a major constraint for secondary education policy which has to be “developed not only to respond to inevitable rapid increase in demand for access but also to provide the quality of instruction necessary to ensure the supply of personnel with higher levels of education and training demanded by a growing and modernizing economy” (Verspoor, 2012b).

Kakuba, (2014) clearly establishes that the level or extent of financing needed to expand access to secondary level education indicates that it is difficult for enrolment be increased at present cost level per unit. However, in the midst of the limited public resources, African countries in responding to the increased demand for secondary education, the same resources were distributed across a large number of students (Verspoor, 2012a). In effect, essential resources like instructional materials tend to be mostly in short supply resulting into large class size, text books shortages, poor library and double or triple shift when using school facilities. In states where public education is primarily free, private contributions are also important. In Uganda, Zambia and Tanzania, Kakuba, (2014) notes that over half of total cost per student is financed by fees and contributions by parents. In Kenya, when government teachers are not assigned to fill teaching positions, the Board of Governors recruit additional teachers who are paid from the incomes from fees. In Zambia, the establishment of the 1996 Educational

Production Unit ensures that students who fail to get enrolment in the fee-paying afternoon sessions which are run by teachers gain enrolment in such sessions.

In Rwanda, “it is estimated that about 80% of the students are enrolled in private schools of which almost 40% receive no public subsidy and have to rely on fee income” (Verspoor, 2012a). In Benin, paid fee incomes from parents are used to pay the majority of secondary school teachers who are local contract teachers. In both public and private schools in the Democratic Republic of Congo, over 80% of the costs are borne by the parents (Kakuba, 2014). In Burkina Faso, in every newly established higher secondary school, two paid teachers are provided by the government whilst it is the responsibility of communities and other stakeholders to provide additional local contract teachers as and when necessary. In Chad “half of the teachers in junior secondary schools are community teachers mostly paid by parents” (World Bank, 2015) cited in Kless (2020).

#### **2.1.6 Challenges of Implementing Free Secondary Education in Africa**

The structural and social systems necessary for an effective free education policy/programme implementation have mostly proved elusive in Africa. For this reason, there still exists the primary challenge of addressing educational exclusion amidst the existence of the free education reform frameworks (Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015; Donohue & Bornman, 2014). Engelbrecht (2006 cited by Dohoue & Bornman, 2014) explains this phenomenon by linking the structural systems that undergird free education initiatives (the nature and scope of reforms) to the host social system. To Engelbrecht (2006 cited by Donohue & Bornman, 2014:2), educational exclusion, amidst the existence of free education frameworks, is "a reflection of the fragmentation and inequality that characterised society as a whole". This is because the nature and scope of these free educational agendas are unable to neutralise the already institutionalized discriminatory practices that have created extreme disparities in the

delivery of education (Donohue and Bornman, 2014). The relationship between discriminatory societal practices and educational inequities amidst free education reforms are duly substantiated by empirical studies.

Empirical studies establish that most free education reforms are even unable to confront educational injustices along discriminatory lines such as persons with disabilities (Donohue and Bornman, 2014; Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015), gender (Morojele, 2011), and low-income households (Nudzo, 2015 cited in Adusei, 2022; Mohammed & Kuyini, 2021). For instance, regarding educational inequities tied to persons with disabilities, Donohue and Bornman's (2014) discussed in their study that up to 70% of children of school-going age with disabilities are out of school in South Africa, regardless of over a decade attempt to push for universal education for all children. Moving away from problems of free education linked to social systems, it is also worth noting that challenges are more contextual (context-specific).

This means that they differ in nature across all contexts (within and among countries) (Essuman, 2010; Chanimbe & Dankwah, 2021). The extant literature establishes that the challenges of free education have been different among countries due to the difference in contextual situations. For example, Sakaue (2018) projects how Uganda has struggled to control the proliferation of informal user charges among public schools after pioneering a fee abolishing policy in SSA to achieve universal primary education. His quantitative study identifies a significant exponential increase in informal user charges' frequency and size (from 40% in 2005/2006 to 80% in 2011/2012). However, it is interesting to note that while Uganda regards the mushrooming of informal user charges as a policy challenge, Kenya conversely views the payment of informal fees as a prerequisite for a successful operationalisation of its Free Secondary Education (FSE). For instance, studies such as Adan and Orodho (2015) and Kilonzo (2007 cited in

Koech, 2021) found the unwillingness of some parents to pay informal fees quite problematic since fee payment under the FSE is a shared responsibility. However, although it is an empirical fact that implementation challenges vary across contexts, there as well exist common recurring challenges across all contexts.

Chanimbe (2019), in his study, situates this particular phenomenon by addressing that the issue of insufficiency (that is, lack of financial, human and material resources) is one common challenge that mostly plagues free education reforms within the African context. As already mentioned, free education reforms instigate abrupt surges in school enrolments (Brenyah, 2018; Chanimbe & Dankwah, 2021). Nonetheless, such surges bring about the issue of insufficiency that affects school management and learning (Chanimbe, 2019). African countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Kenya, etc., have all struggled with the common problem of insufficiency (Chanimbe, 2019; Kalunda & Otanga, 2015).

For instance, studies such as Kalunda and Otanga (2015) and Huylebroeck and Titeca (2015) corroborate the issue of insufficiency in Kenya and Uganda, respectively. Both studies reveal how increased student enrolment under their free secondary education programmes has culminated in insufficiency problems such as heavy teaching workload on teachers, insufficient teachers to meet the rising number of students and absence of adequate instructional materials (Kalunda & Otanga, 2015; Huylebroeck & Titeca, 2015). Moreover, various studies have shown that a number of challenges confront the provision of free secondary education affecting quality of education. In Kenya, Aluko and Adan (2015) identified that the provision of free education at the secondary level led to many parents being reluctant to make any other payments to schools. Kalunda and Otanga (2015) found that the free secondary education in Kenya resulted in increased enrolment of students which created problems such as heavy teaching



workload on teachers, inadequate number of teachers to meet rising number of students and lack of adequate instructional materials.

Morojole (2012 cited in Godda, 2018) also identified in Lesotho that the implementation of free education led to “increased centralization which has subsequently resulted in the loss of local accountability in the development of schools.”

The central government thus controls both funding and administrative decisions and programs of schools. Okumbe (2001 cited in Mutinda, 2015) also found that the implementation of free secondary education in Kenya resulted in school principals encountering a number of administrative challenges such as “inadequate and badly constructed school buildings, shortage of books and equipment; lack of proper school furniture particularly desks; poor or sometimes non-existent maintenance and repairs; untrained and half trained teachers who seldom stay long; over-crowded classrooms; poor communications and few supporting services especially health services.”

### **2.1.7 The Ghana’s Free Senior High School Policy (FSHSP)**

Prior to 2012 and 2016 election campaign, education remained central to the manifesto of the New Patriotic Party. The party declared “Education to be a major priority and commits itself to a bold, creative, visionary and all-embracing programme for the transformation of education in Ghana (Banson, 2022).” According to the NPP “if elected to form the next Government from 2017 to 2021, it would implement a policy of free education for all Ghanaian children up to Senior High School, and raise the quality of education at the primary and senior high school levels.” Thus, the NPP will “redefine basic education to include Senior High School (SHS), covering vocational, agricultural and technical schools, and make it available for free on a universal basis to all Ghanaians.” Linguistically, the use of the auxiliary ‘shall’, the present action words ‘free, and accessible’ in the statement above, indicates governments' commitment in all

their power and resource to make secondary schooling ‘free’ in all forms to every ‘eligible candidate’ Banson,(2022). This gesture is what Gewirtz (2002, 140 cited in Bosu et al 2011) refer to as ‘distributive justice’. Thus, a symmetry for all citizens to education. In this case, the government has shown its responsibility in making education accessible, enshrining it into law, and a right for the citizens. Again, the free SHS policy document quotes the 1992 constitution’s Article 25 1b to emphasize commitment and government mandate as the constitution puts it, to ensure that basic and secondary schooling in all forms is made free and accessible. On the other hand, discourses published on Ghana’s presidency website capture President Nana Akufo-Addo at the launch of the Free SHS policy on 12th September 2017, stating that: ‘...I know that knowledge and talent are not for the rich and privileged alone, and that free education widens the gates of opportunities to every child, especially those whose talents are arrested because of poverty.’ (3News.org. gh cited in Africa Education Watch Report, 2020).

‘It must have been a daunting prospect at the time paying for the education of so many children, for such an extended period out of limited public resources, transferring a potential workforce away from immediate productivity for an investment like schooling. But the experiment paid off.’ From the above statements, the use of the personal pronoun ‘I’ followed by the verb ‘know’ portray an emphatic awareness without a doubt that the key policy actor knows the importance of education to his citizens, as SDG no. 4 declares. Also, he is aware of their predicaments with his intentions and commitment to address them. As the discourse unfolds, he details the policy’s intentions and provisions. The president does that by further using the personal pronouns ‘I, we’ before a past tense ‘has chosen’ and a present verb ‘lift’ and ‘have,’ indicating an emphasis on the policy intentions, commitment, and implementation to

the people so far as their education is concerned. ‘The cost of providing free secondary school education will be cheaper than the cost of the alternative of an uneducated and unskilled workforce that can retard our development. Leadership is about choices – I have chosen to invest in our youth and country’s future.’ ‘...we lift the financial burden off our parents and the heart-rending anxiety that accompanies the beginning of every school term. We have a sacred duty to our children and the generations beyond in ensuring that, irrespective of their circumstances, their right to an education is preserved.’

After being successful in the 2016 elections the FSHSP which is the flagship education programme of the New Patriot Party (NPP) government, has finally been implemented and it has resulted in public debate with respect to its benefits and sustainability (Cudjoe, 2018). Under the FSHSP, government will be required to foot all bills - including feeding fees, tuition fees and all other charges - with regard to first-year students admitted in the 2017/2018 academic year. This means that the “burden of paying fees will be removed from parents; especially those who cannot afford to pay their wards' school fees.

” In effect, “the disposal income of parents will increase to enable them to save funds for the next three years that their children will be in Senior High School.” Those funds could be saved by parents and use it to finance their children’s fees at the tertiary level. Adopting critical discourse analysis (CDA) on the Free SHS policy documents for policy purposes and intentions indicated that the policy could be viewed or referred to as ‘rights-based’ and ‘compulsory’ (Edu. Act 2020). This also refers to a ‘social-obligative’ intervention for a country’s citizenry. The assuring commitment the text indicates proves the policy’s intention to allow all SHS-going children free education without biases. This is in tandem with what Trowler refers to as ‘progressivism.’ He

further explains that it bridges the gap between educational elites and the poor. This rights-based and compulsory ‘social- obligated’ intervention is enshrined first in Ghana’s 1992 constitution.

This same enshrinement has been made clearer in the Pre-tertiary Education Act 2020, Act 1049, Article 2, subsection 3 as: Secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, particularly by the progressive introduction of free education. (1992 Constitution Article 25 1b). So far, comparing the 2016/17 and 2017/18 national school year Figures indicates that the gross admission ratio stood at 50.9% in 2016/17 while 2017/18 was 61.6%. To this report, the admission of first-year students during the introduction of free SHS increased by 10.7%, which is high compared to the previous year. Additionally, the country's total number of public schools increased by 10% compared to the 2016/17 academic year. Boarding and hostel facilities also decreased by 2% after the first year of the policy’s implementation. Some E-block day school facilities were closed during the policy implementation due to their location for their conversion to boarding schools (Dr. Yaw Aduwum; then Deputy Minister of Education on Good Evening Ghana, Metro Tv).

For other facilities, for example, permanent classrooms, access to water and electricity, and textbooks recorded significant increases. Total teachers in public schools stood at 40,341 in 2017/8 against 30,170 in 2016/17. This shows that many teachers were hired to cover the number of students admitted in 2017/18. These are the findings from the year of implementation to 3 years of the first beneficiaries of the policy graduate. In 2019/20 the gross enrolment ratio stood at 63.2% enrolling 423,936 SHS 1 students. The total number of public SHS and TVET schools was 721 in 3 years after policy implementation. The total number of public teachers in 2020 was 52,57, representing

92.3%. The student to teacher ratio is therefore, 21:1 (1,103,303/52,573). This represents a fair distribution of teachers. Again, for a fair share to be achieved, the government introduced the double-track achieved. These saw students being divided into green and gold to access the inadequate facilities (Winthrop 2020 on Ghana's leapfrog experiment). Reporting on social facilities like toilets, urinals, drinking water, and electricity, access to drinking water was the lowest, thus 80%. For pedagogical tools, sitting places per student were 0.8, and writing places stood at 0.7. This indicates that all pedagogical tools that the policy needs have been provided in excess. The 2019/20 report also states that all public boarding and hostel facilities under SHS and TVET did not have any challenge of being unable to take the number of students enrolled. Finally, the West African Examination Certificate (WASSCE) results for pass rate for core subjects (English, Mathematics, Integrated Science, and Social Studies) in the 2017/18 academic year were 53%, 42.2%, 43.2%, and 52.3%, respectively. Against this record, 2021 WASSCE results released by the GES records, 54.08%, 54.11%, 65.70%, and 66.03% for the core subjects, respectively Banson (2022).

Over this period, there has been a significant increase in the outcomes of the free SHS policy except for a slight increase in only the English language. Although GLSS 7 was published in 2019, it was administered from October 2016 to October 2017. This could not support the current outcomes of the free SHS policy. Therefore, it is used as a baseline reference for the analysis. Also, to support the educational outcomes presented by the 2016/2017 school year. is because apart from the current statistics from MOE and GES-EMIS, GLSS 7 is the official statistics service of Ghana and, therefore, an ethical basis for concluding the outcomes of the policy under study Banson (2022). Analyzing the free SHS policy inputs from the ESP 2030, it promised a high enrolment ratio in location, gender, and welfare quintiles, school-based in-service training, feeding

day students (lunch only), infrastructure, and provision of textbooks. Overall, there are increases in these areas, especially the transition from JHS to SHS gap by 13%. Also, access to textbooks has been increased to 0.3 in 2019/20. Enrolment by gender saw females being higher than males according to the 2019/20 national parameters. Explicitly, the free SHS policy was purposed to close the gap on equity and access, particularly addressing the cost of schooling, which is a key factor in the low attendance rate (31). The numbers presented in the 2019/20 national parameters show an increase in access. On equity, the free SHS policy allocated 30% of enrolment seats in all elite SHS for public JHS students to transit smoothly without any forms of inequalities (Gewirtz 2003,140; Lynch and Lodge 2002,7) as previously encountered (ESP 2030). As part of the free SHS policy's stipulated achievements, it factored to bridge the transition and completion rates in secondary schooling by scrapping all fees and providing needful amenities as interventions. As a result, the transition rate in 2019/20 stood at 91.8% against 68% in 2016/17 Cudjoe, (2018). Also, the completion rate in 2016/17 was 48% compared to 64.1% in 2019/20.

This shows an increase within the three years of the policy's implementation. On infrastructure, the policy sought to partner with the Secondary Education Improvement Project (SEIP) to build in all 124 new schools, of which, as of 2017/18, 44 were completed. This outcome was due to the higher enrolment ratios the policy envisaged. It was also due to the pupil-to-teacher percentage, which rose to 48:1 in 2016/17(ESP 2030, GESEMIS). As of 2019/20, the pupil-to-teacher ratio stood at 20:1. Also, the 2019/20 national parameter shows 56 completed schools under SHS and TVET. Normally this should not be the case. In spite of these statistics given above, Chanimbe and Dankwah (2021) used the 2018 results and data from some schools to conclude that the policy has failed and brought more problems to the GES and the government in

general which needs to be critically looked at because if care is not taken, the sustainability of programme will be difficult especially when the opposition political parties keep creating loopholes as the root of economic hardship in Ghana since 2017.

### **2.1.8 Challenges of the FSHSP in the Case of Ghana**

Prior and even at the early phase of the FSHSP's implementation, there were several cautions on the potential challenges the policy was bound to face, given its approach. Unfortunately, the discourse on its successful implementation and approach was mainly dominated by several queries rather than answers on ways to avoid a rerun of differed free education challenges in Ghana (Cudjoe, 2018; Mohammed & Kuyini, 2021; Chanimbe & Prah, 2020). Cudjoe (2018), particularly, cautioned that as much as IMANI as a think tank is not against the implementation of the policy, policy actors ought to engage in more realistic dialogues to confront the present capacity of the policy. According to Cudjoe (2018), this will foster sustainable growth in enrolments and deal with its ability to improve secondary education head-on.

Being cognizant of the expected pitfalls that could potentially plague the FSHSP, the scholarly space has witnessed several empirical studies that have investigated the realities of the policy implementation, with particular interests in the challenges of the policy. Such studies include Addo (2019), Asumadu (2019) and Matey (2020). However, one interesting observation from these studies is that most empirically established challenges are seemingly recurring, with few interesting variations. So, in implication, the generalities of the evidence from extant studies either confirm each other or add to the existing literature. On the whole, the empirically documented challenges of the FSHSP encompass poor learning and living conditions, increased workload due to insufficient teachers, funding lapses, infrastructural deficits, quality education issues, payment

of illegal fees, and both student and teacher indiscipline (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2018; Addo, 2019; Chanimbe & Dankwah, 2021) and Kuyini (2021) attribute the challenges of the policy to the implementation approach as operationalized by the policy actors. Mohammed and Kuyini (2021) argue that policy actors emphasised the political dimension of the policy (to shore up voter support) to the detriment of the right choices that ought to be made at the adoption, formulation and implementation stage of the policy. To them, the problem was ill-defined, policy actors failed to consider other viable alternatives and solutions, as well as poor execution of some attentive stages (Mohammed & Kuyini, 2021). In perspective, given the problems of the FSHSP, there is the need to question the extent to which the problems are bound to threaten the quality of education offered under the programme. The issues associated with the challenges of the FSHSP seem very clear in the literature. However, what remains unclear is the potential threat of the programme to quality education delivery. Without the effort to empirically substantiate the quality concerns of the policy both in theory and in practice, the policy goals (especially with regards to quality education) will be mere mirages rather than realities.

Cudjoe (2018) notably did not shy away from advancing this claim that without a meaningful improvement in quality of education, expansion of secondary education would only waste resources without achieving the projected benefits (Cudjoe, 2018). The documented challenges give the impression that the policy left the "formulation table" with some salient issues unaddressed — What has been done wrong? In their evaluation of the policy, Mohammed & Kuyini (2021) were quick to label the programme's initial roll out a failure despite the programme itself being positively welcomed by the general populace.



### 2.1.9 Empirical Review

Many researches have been done relating to the implementation of free senior high school policy in various countries and its impacts on education with regards to equity and access. Ye, et al, (2018) investigated the spatial patterns of secondary schools thus regular versus key in Guangzhou, China and disparities in school accessibility among different social groups at the neighbourhood level. The study results demonstrate strong spatial disparities in secondary school accessibility in Guangzhou and further underscore significant associations between the access to secondary schools, especially key schools, and neighbourhood characteristics. This study helps to document salient spatial inequity in China's current education system and suggests that efforts should be made to reduce the country's spatial inequity in secondary education. Ameral, (2022) conducted a research on ensuring equity and access in higher education after second world war based on policies and practice from the global perspective and found out that, although some progress has been made in terms of increased participation, inequalities seem to persist, much of which happens in terms of inequity is related to higher education and that the positional character of higher education makes fairness difficult to attain.

Roohi, Masood and Mushtaq (2021) conducted a study in Pakistan which aimed at analyzing equity levels in secondary school education and concluded that, there is a strong relationship between secondary school system design, in-out-school practices and secondary school resources. They advocated for consistent provision of secondary school resources that enhances teaching and learning which essence ensure equity and access to secondary education since enrolment keeps increasing on daily basis. Salloum, et al, (2017) conducted a study to advance knowledge about the validity of measuring social capital as an organizational construct, the equity of social capital

distribution in schools, and the relationship between school social capital and academic achievement. The study found that variance in social capital was significantly related to school membership and that confirmatory factor analysis supported the construction of a school social capital measure. They found that, variance in social capital was significantly related to school membership and that confirmatory factor analysis supported the construction of a school social capital measure. The study therefore recommended that Interventions designed to develop social capital in schools should be guided by efforts to strengthen access to school-based resources in poor and low achieving schools.

Other empirical studies have been conducted in Africa on ensuring equity and access in secondary education in various countries such as Amoeva and Gale, (2016) conducted a research on household schooling effect of Ugandas universal secondary education policy and found out that the policy has boosted general enrolment and ignoring the quality of learning, though it has contributed equitable educational delivery, however, there is still the need for greater attention to the equity effects of universal education policies.

Also, Muftahu, (2020) conducted a study on gender equity in access to higher education in northern Nigeria and found out that the social upbringing, cultural orientation, and socio-economic significantly affect and national policies and efforts to achieve gender equity and access to secondary education in Nigeria. The study recommended strongly strategies to encourage female participation including compulsory female education in Nigeria at the secondary level to improve their access to university education. Brudevold-Newman, (2021) carried out a research on the policy of implementing free secondary education in selected twelve countries around the world and found out that the removal of user fees has improved equitable access to education-specifically the

ability to reach the poor, girls, orphans, and other disadvantaged groups. Completion rates grew quickly among the poor in Cambodia, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia, and Timor-Leste and girls' enrolment rates grew more rapidly in Uganda, Kenya, and Timor-Leste. In addition, Morgan et al, (2014) conducted a survey on abolishing school fees in Africa and concluded that for rural families who are already struggling to feed and clothe the household, extra expenses for education make it prohibitive for them to support their children going to school. Implemented as a policy to increase revenue for the governments of developing nations, the research goes saying how the policy of instituting school fees negatively affected completion numbers at all levels. Other empirical studies establish that most free education reforms are even unable to confront educational injustices along discriminatory lines such as persons with disabilities (Donohue and Bornman, 2014; Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015), gender (Morojele, 2011), and low-income households (Nudz, 2015 cited in Adusei, 2022; Mohammed & Kuyini, 2021).

For instance, regarding educational inequities tied to persons with disabilities, Donohue and Bornman's , (2014) discussed in their study that up to 70% of children of school-going age with disabilities are out of school in South Africa, regardless of over a decade attempt to push for universal education for all children. Moving away from problems of free education linked to social systems, it is also worth noting that challenges are more contextual (context-specific). This means that they differ in nature across all contexts (within and among countries) (Essuman, 2010; Chanimbe & Dankwah, 2021). The extant literature establishes that the challenges of free education have been different among countries due to the difference in contextual situations. For example, Sakaue (2018) projects how Uganda has struggled to control the proliferation of informal user charges among public schools after pioneering a fee abolishing policy in

SSA to achieve universal primary education. His quantitative study identifies a significant exponential increase in informal user charges' frequency and size (from 40% in 2005/2006 to 80% in 2011/2012). However, it is interesting to note that while Uganda regards the mushrooming of informal user charges as a policy challenge, Kenya conversely views the payment of informal fees as a prerequisite for a successful operationalisation of its Free Secondary Education (FSE).

For instance, studies such as Adan and Orodho (2015) and Kilonzo (2007 cited in Koech, 2021) found the unwillingness of some parents to pay informal fees quite problematic since fee payment under the FSE is a shared responsibility. Nguyen and King, (2022) also conducted a research on school fees abolition initiatives. One of the key purposes of initiatives is to promote “bold actions” whereby school fee abolition becomes a catalyst for other basic reforms to reach the objective of equity in both access and quality learning opportunities. This suggests that school fees abolition initiatives give more importance to the quality improvement component of the actions needed to reach this objective.

To achieve universal completion of secondary education and acquisition of the knowledge and skills specified in national curricula will require concerted action to improve quality. In turn, this will require a comprehensive package of reforms as well as additional financing for non -salary inputs at the school level. Maurer (2010), in his research on the abolition of school fees, he concluded that while school fees have been implemented as a policy to increase revenue for the governments of developing nations, instituting a school fee policy negatively affected not enrolment but also completion numbers at all levels. Fees at the secondary education level contribute to the strain on household incomes and a greater chance that young children are not allowed the opportunity to go to school. Maurer’s research has covered the change in school fee

policy in Africa over the past decade and has focused on the fact that enrolment rates have increased at the secondary level since fees were waived in some countries. The abolishment of the school fees actually had a statistically significant effect on enrolment and completion numbers. The 2004 Education for All (EFA) working paper called User Fees in secondary Education (Moussa & Omoeva, 2020) identified user fees as a pervasive obstacle to primary school enrollment and completion for millions of children worldwide. In particular, the publication examined country specific experiences from Uganda and Malawi. The report cautioned that the elimination of school fees can overwhelm countries' educational systems, and it emphasized that the successful elimination of fees requires considerable planning. The study found that fee abolition alone cannot achieve universal basic and secondary education, and educational reform, issues, and opportunities vary according to country specific circumstances. The research argued that other education related household expenses and indirect costs can be greater obstacles than fees and must be addressed in any policy effort to increase access to education.

Targeted interventions are required to offset girls' opportunity costs of schooling and cultural norms regarding the education of girls, which often inhibit their enrollment rates. Within free education policy, targeted efforts to ensure schooling for HIV/AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children should be part of any effort to improve access to schooling. Wikliams et al (2015), in their research on free education in Rwanda, revealed that the government introduced Free Secondary Education in 2003 with some pilot schools. Through the initiative the government hoped to achieve Education for All by 2015 in line with the Millennium Development Goals. The Rwandan government aims to develop a literate population which is key to the overall development of the nation. Specifically, this programme was initiated in order to promote pupil transition

from primary to secondary schools, and retention and completion in secondary schools without discrimination. Through the programme, the government intends to remove major obstacles that have stood in the way of children who need to join and complete secondary education. In her research on the effectiveness of Free Secondary Education, Nikuze, (2021) states that the programme promotes joint responsibilities between parents, the government and sponsors of schools. Its implication is central to the national goal of poverty reduction, therefore calling for the spirit of partnership between the government, parents and other stakeholders.

As the state meets the costs of items designated under this programme, parents or guardians are still required to meet the cost of items like examinations and boarding. The Rwandan government continues to supplement efforts by parents in managing low-cost boarding schools and the school-feeding programme. Public secondary schools are expected to enrol pupils who have qualified after primary examinations without discrimination. Schools are expected to be all inclusive and cater for all, even those with special needs like the disabled, slow learners and the visually challenged.

All in all, to enable education for all people, the programme involves provision of government subsidy on tuition fees, teaching and learning materials for all secondary school students in public schools. Unlike Free Primary Education, it currently does not include funding for infrastructural development projects.

In Ghana's case, a recent publication by Abdul Rahman et al. (2018) argued that compulsory free senior high school is a perfect replacement for the progressively free secondary school in the three northern regions of Ghana. They further concluded that the policy had eliminated all educational expenses made by households. Although there is a substantial relief of household burden by the policy, as empirically supported by Adu-Ababio and Osei (2018), not all households felt it. Adu- Ababio and Osei (2018),

in their study, used 2013 data to calculate the amount that each student (border/day) benefits from the free SHS policy. This amount was GHC1,002.47 annually for residential students and GHC648.47 for non-resident students. Here, their statement that the policy is a relief to the household burden by decreasing overall poverty could be challenged by current data. This is because inflations on products were not factored in. Therefore, others will see these benefits as insufficient to address household poverty or finance free education (Chanimbe & Dankwah 2021), as pivoted by Adu-Ababio and Osei (2018).

A most recent empirical study by Chanimbe and Dankwah (2021) found daunting results about the implementation and outcomes of the free secondary schooling policy. They reported a shortage in teachers due to high enrolments, inadequate infrastructure, increasing teacher workload, insufficient teaching and learning materials, overcrowding in classrooms, and delay in the supply of funds to schools. They further remarked that ‘the explicated intricacies and deep-seated nuances in these results substantiate arguments that the diversity and categorization of schools determined the distinctiveness and uneven magnitude of schools’ challenges in implementing the policy. Asumadu (2019) in her study to examine the prospects and challenges of the Ghana’s free SHS programme in the Denkyembaour district indicated that since the inception of the programme there have been positive signs of prospects in terms of increased enrolment of students, equitable access to education, reduction of a financial burden on parents, and recruitment of new teachers. In relation to the increased enrolment, the study discovered that the enrolments of students moving from junior high school to senior high schools in the district have appreciated since the introduction of the policy due to the non-payment of tuition and boarding fees by parents. In addition, “equitable access to senior high education” has been greatly enhanced since

tuition and boarding fees are all borne by the government; students from both well- to-do and poor families all have equal “access to senior high education.” The study further found that the policy had taken away a huge financial burden from parents since parents now do not pay any amount for their wards at the senior high school level. Another prospect of the policy has to do with the recruitment of new teachers. The expectation increased enrolment of students necessitates the recruitment of more teachers to enhance effective teaching and learning. Thus, indirectly the policy has created jobs for unemployed qualified trained teachers. The study however found several challenges in the implementation of the free SHS policy in the district. The study found that a key challenge was inadequate infrastructure in the senior high schools in the district. The increasing enrolment of students into senior high has not been met with necessary infrastructure and other facilities causing overcrowding and congestion. Another challenge is the inadequate supply of teaching and learning materials which was affecting effective teaching and learning activities in the district. The study found inadequate teachers as another challenge of the free SHS policy. It was evident that the increased enrolment in senior schools has brought a heavy workload on teachers.

Subsequently, inadequacy and delay in the payment of grants by the government were also highlighted as affecting the effective management of the senior high schools in the district. Delays in the release of funds affected the timely implementation of programme of the schools. The study revealed effective measures of implementing the free SHS policy in the district. These include, but not limited to, the provision of infrastructure, recruitment of teachers, and provision of teaching and learning materials. Others are the need for more consultation with stakeholders to enhance the effective implementation of the policy. The de-politicization of education was also found to enhance effective and quality education delivery by senior high schools. Finally, there



is the need for the government to allow parents who are able and willing to bear some portion of the funding like food and clothing to do so in order to cut down government expenses.

### **2.1.9 Summary and Gap in the Literature**

From the literature reviewed on the study, it can be summarized that most of the studies done by other researchers focused on prospects and of implementing free secondary education in various countries. Also, literature on this topic conscientized on challenges of implementing free secondary education. Other studies focused on free secondary education and how it will enhance enrollment and completion rate in various countries. However, other studies that deal with equity and access issues in free secondary school education focused on gender equity issues without considering other equity and access challenges like rural-urban inequities educational resource distribution and access. This therefore gives this study a gap of how equity and accessibility can be achieved in placement of students into secondary schools, how resources can be equitably distributed, various factors that hamper students from accessing senior high school and alternative means of achieving equity and accessibility in secondary education using the Ghana's free senior high school policy as a case in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district as a specific context.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methods used in gathering the data for the research. It specifically deals with the philosophical assumption of the research, research approach, research design, study area, target population, sampling technique, sample size, data collection method, analysis of data and ethical considerations.

#### 3.1 Research paradigm

All research is based on some underlying philosophical assumptions about what constitutes 'valid' research and which research method(s) is/are appropriate for the development of knowledge in a given study” (Bryman & Harley, 2022). Epistemologically, the study adopted interpretivism as a research philosophical world view/ paradigm. According to Bryman and Harley, (2022), the qualitative approach rests on interpretivism as the philosophical assumption which regards reality as a complex social construction of meanings, values, and lived experience. The qualitative method became needful for an enquiry into understanding human or social phenomenon. According to Cropley (2019), the task of qualitative research is to gain insights into constructions of reality. Thus, to tease out the nature of the world as it is experienced, structured and interpreted by people in the course of their everyday lives. Also, the interpretists epistemological paradigm was adopted in this research because it gave the researcher the chance for participants to explore behaviors, feelings, thoughts, actions and experiences on the free senior high school programme because

both beneficiaries and implementers of the programme experiences the practical aspect of the whole process around it.

### **3.2 Research Approach**

This study adopted the qualitative approach. In the words of Kaldi,(2017), research approach refers to the various steps to be adopted in solving a research problem such as, the manner in which the problem is expressed. According to Cropley (2019), the task of qualitative research is to gain insights into constructions of reality. Thus, to tease out the nature of the world as it is experienced, structured and interpreted by people in the course of their everyday lives. Nassaji, (2020) clarify that qualitative research is a form of research that involves description to the data obtained and believes that, the qualitative research approach is mostly concerned with quality of information. Qualitative methods attempt to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations for actions and establish how people interpret their experiences and the world around them (Lindgren et al 2020). Qualitative approach aims at a complete, detailed description of what is observed (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It seeks to describe and analyze the behavior of groups from the point of view of those being studied.

In this study, qualitative approach will be used to enable the researcher to get direct explanations and views of informants. Despite all the strengths of the qualitative approach, critics believe that, a major limitation of the approach is that, it generates results that cannot be generalized beyond the cases investigated. The study adopted qualitative approach because it gives the respondents the opportunity to express their views on the issue with or without any limitations. Qualitative research approach reduces the tendency of possible bias by the researcher and gives in-depth information.

Also, the qualitative research approach was adopted because it best explores behaviors, feelings, thoughts, actions and experiences. The motivation for the choice of the approach was the quest to get comprehensive understanding of the study through the in- depth knowledge of the respondents with regards to the social and cultural contexts within which they live on achieving equity and accessibility in Ghana’s “Free Senior High School (FSHS) policy” in Twifo-Atti Morkwa District.

### **3.3 Research Design**

Research design, according to Rahi, (2017), simply means “the plan and structure of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions” Research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure (Creswell, 2007). It is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Kothari et al, 2017). It is the “glue” that hold all elements in research together. This study utilized the qualitative research method; it adopted the exploratory case study design with the phenomenological interpretative paradigm to explore means of achieving equity and accessibility in the free senior high school policy in the study area. Baskarada, (2014), defined exploratory case study as an in-depth, detailed study of an individual or a small group of individuals resulting in a narrative description of behaviour or experience. The exploratory case study method is proposed as a means to engender rigor in reviews of such literatures. It is argued that it is appropriate to apply the concept of rigor to reviews of multivocal literatures and to use the exploratory case study method as a tool for thinking about procedures that could enhance rigor in such reviews (Swedberg, 2020). Similarly, Yin (2017) emphasized that case study focuses

on individual or small group. This enables the researcher to conduct a comprehensive analysis from a comparison of cases.

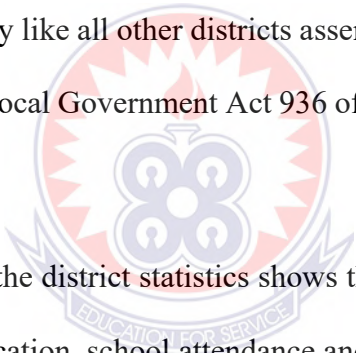
Yin,(2017), argued that exploratory case study research is not used to determine cause and effect, nor is it used to discover generalizable truths or make predictions. Rather, the emphasis in case study research is placed on exploration and description of a phenomenon. The case study design which mostly requires in-depth interview was chosen for the study because it provides an in-depth of understanding which cannot be achieved from a structured questionnaire.

### **3.4 Profile of the Study Area**

The research was done in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa District of the central region. The researcher chose this area because it one of the districts benefiting from the Free Senior High School policy introduced in Ghana in 2017 and one of the underprivileged districts in the central region. Twifo Atti-Morkwa district is one of the twenty administrative districts in the Central Region of Ghana. It was formerly known as the Twifo-Hemang Lower Denkyira district with the capital at Twifo Praso. It was carved from the Denkyira district council in 1988 by LI 1377 with the name Twifo Hemang Lower Denkyira district. Again, in 2012, government split the Twifo Hemang Lower Denkyira district into two districts namely the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district and Hemang Lower Denkyira district under the local government Act 462 of 1992 by LI 2023. The district is bounded to the north by the upper Denkyira East Municipal, to the south by the Hemang Lower Denkyira district, to the west by the Mpohor Wassa East district and to the East by the Assin North Municipal and Assin south district. The district is situated between latitude 5 30' degrees North and 5 55' degrees North and longitudes 01 49 degrees west and 01 50' degrees west. The district is a densely forested area. The extensive forest has given rise to a long-scale timber extraction and illegal chainsaw

operation in the district. Apart from lumbering, the other major economic activities include crop\livestock farming and small-scale mining.

The slash and burn method of farming has degraded vegetation so much. The combination of these activities, among others has caused some of the environmental degradation. The extraction of timber has immensely depleted some economic trees, deteriorated some roads and caused some sort of destruction to cash crops and food crops. Farming practices have also affected the environment adversely by reducing the forest from primary to secondary state. Small scale mining activities have equally caused extensive destruction to the vegetation and degraded large tracts of land. In effect, these have affected the ecosystem negatively. The functions of the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district Assembly like all other districts assemblies are basically derived from statute, as mandated by Local Government Act 936 of 2016 and Legislative instrument 2023.



In the area of education, the district statistics shows that from population aged 3 years and older by level of education, school attendance and sex indicate that, Out of the 24, 488 persons enumerated as currently in school, 47.5 percent are in the primary, 18.2 percent are in the JSS/JHS while 6.0 percent are at the Senior High School level. The results further show that among persons currently attending school, the proportions of males and females in the primary school is the same (47.5% each), the proportions of males in JHS/JSS (19.0%), SSS/SHS (6.6%) and Tertiary (1.3%) were higher than females in JHS/JSS (17.4%), SSS/SHS (5.3%) and Tertiary (0.6%). With regards to those who attended school in the past (20, 747), the distribution were as follows: Middle school (26.3%), Primary (17.8%), JSS/JHS (38.3%), SSS/SHS (8.5%) and Tertiary (3.0%). Also, the results show that a higher proportion of the females (42.8%) than that of the males (34.3%) ended their education at the JHS/JSS levels while higher

proportion of the males (4.5%) than the females (1.4%) have completed Tertiary education (GSS, 2010).

### **3.5 Population**

According to Kombo and Tromp. (2016), population is a group of individuals, objectives or items from which samples are taken for measurement. Population refers to an entire group of persons or elements that have at least one thing in common (Kombo & Tromp, 2016). More formally, population is the theoretically specified aggregation of study elements (Carminati, 2018). Simply put, population means the total group of people out of which a researcher has interest in with regard to a study. The population for the study consisted of students in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district. However, the research targeted all senior high school students in the district, heads and teachers of senior high schools as well as the Director of Education in the district. This is because, they were in the position to provide firsthand information for this study since the study focuses on achieving equity and accessibility in the Free senior high school programme in the district.

### **3.6 Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

According to Ahmad (2013), sample is a selection of a small subset of a population of a study. Since the entire population of the study can hardly be interviewed, the researcher resorted to interview a section of the population. Farrokhi and Mahmoudi (2012) avers that, the concept of sample arises from the inability of the researcher to test all the individuals in a given population. As a matter of fact, the researcher selected twenty-five (25) participants for the study using the saturation principle. According to Boddy,(2016), saturation principle is defined as when responses from participants sampled for a study no longer produce any new idea or outcome. Out of the 25

participants sampled, two (2) were heads of the selected SHS, thus, Twifo-Praso SHS and Twifo Morkwa Community Day SHS, eighteen (18) SHS students nine (9) each from the selected schools, four (4) SHS teachers two (2) from each school selected and the district education director were selected for the study. The heads of SHS and teachers were selected because they are the main implementor of the free SHS programme. Moreover, SHS students were selected because they are the main beneficiaries of the programme. In this study, Purposive sampling technique was employed. Purposive sampling technique refers to the process of selecting special people who are suitable to participate in a study on the basis of the respondents' knowledge on the issue under investigation whereas random sampling denotes a techniques of sampling where everyone within the target population stands the chance to be selected for a study. Cohan, Manion and Morrison (2017) describe purposive sampling technique where researchers deliberately choose subjects to be included in a study on the basis of their judgment of a typicality or possession of a particular characteristics needed. Tulin, (2019) advises researchers that in adopting this sampling method, it is appropriate to select a sample on the basis of knowledge of the population, its elements and the purpose of the study. The purposive sampling was employed because, according to Boateng (2016), purposive sampling is conducted to sample respondents who have ideas, knowledge and expertise and experience about the phenomenon under study. Based on this explanation the researcher sampled only SHS students who are indigenes of the district for the study. Also, the schools selected were all beneficiaries of the free senior high school programme in the district. Again, heads and teachers of SHS were purposefully selected because they are the main implementers of the programme on grounds and stand in a position to give more insight



into issues while the director was as a result of his position in educational matters in the district.

### **3.7 Data Collection Instrument**

The main instrument for the study was interview guide. Hesse-Biber (2013) noted “Interview guides can be helpful to researchers who are conducting semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviews” (p. 29).

Similarly, Mason-Bish (2019), opined that qualitative interviews offer a means of collecting in-depth information about a topic and limits the number of questions posed by the researcher. The study adopted semi-structured interviews due to the following advantages it offers; structured semi-interviews offer an opportunity for a one and one discussion between the researcher and the participants. Moreover, it provided room for formal and focused research as well as an interview process, as questions will be prepared in accordance with the objectives of the study (Creswell 2016:21). Again, semi-structured interview method was adopted since it will allow participants to express themselves and also elaborates more on the various issues relating to the policy implementation. The consideration for the adoption of the interview method for this research work was informed by the nature of the study as it will seek to delve deeper into the subject of the free SHS program in Twifo Atti-Morkwa District. That notwithstanding, the interview was chosen due to information gathered from the literature review and the objectives of the study. For the purpose of the semi-structured interview, an interview guide was written based on the study objectives.

### **3.8 Data Collection Procedure**

Data was collected through in-depth interviews by the researcher. In carving to get the required data from the field, the researcher firstly gave a brief introduction about what the study entails and by so doing sought the consent of the respondents. The researcher

formed a group of not more than five for the focus group discussion and solicited for the views of group members by asking relevant questions with the help of an interview guide and recorded their responses when permitted. The interviews were conducted through a face-to-face encounter with the interviewees. The researcher took ten(10) days throughout the data collection process. The first day was scheduled with the headmaster of Twifo Praso SHS which took about (45-50).

The next four days was used for interviews teachers and students from the same school where interview with a teacher on the second day took about an hour, third day interview with students took two hours because of the school's schedule on how they go for breaks and dinning. The other two days with students took two hours on each day. Day six took the researcher to Twifo Morkwa where an hour interview was conducted with the headmaster of the community day school. The researcher proceeded to grant interviews with students who were indigenes from the district introduced by one indigenous teacher in the school which took about three and half hours. The researcher on the seventh day moved to Akwaikrom to interview the head teacher in the JHS selected which lasted for fifty (50 minutes) and continued the interview with some JHS3 students who were registered and have chosen their choice of senior high schools for BECE for about two hours. The researcher rested on the eighth day due to fatigue of travelling around and continued on the ninth day with interview with the head of Twifo praso D\A JHS which lasted for about (45minutes) . The process continued with some selected form 3 students which took about (1hour\15 minutes). On the tenth and final day, the researcher interviewed the educational director which was strategic because of busy schedule to be the last participant which about (30minutes). Deakin and Wakefield (2014) asserted that even though interview is not an easy option, yet have long been used in research as a way of obtaining detailed information about a topic

or subject. In conducting the interviews, the researcher asked relevant questions and recorded the responses of the interviewees but in some circumstances, the researcher gave the interview guide items to the respondents to fill under his supervision. It is necessary to indicate that, response from the interviewees probed further questions which were asked by the researcher.

### **3.9 Data Management and Analysis**

Data management “includes all aspects of data planning, handling, analysis, documentation, and storage, and take place during all stages of a study. The objective is to create a reliable database containing high-quality data” (Bennett et al., 2001). The data management includes the process involved in post data collection activities which includes validating and checking of data manipulation, and data documentation. Taking this study into consideration, the data gathered during the study was well planned to avoid any damages, the data was gathered and saved in files and on a tape recorder. The recorded data was later transcribed, coded and organized into themes for analysis. The analysed data was further stored in files and also in the researcher's mail to avoid misplacement. The emerging information was grouped and categorized into themes and discussed based on the study objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2014).

#### **3.1.0 Ethical Considerations**

Ethics refers to questions of right or wrong. A researcher must ask if it is right or wrong to conduct a certain study or ask certain questions in the course of his investigation into an issue. Ethical matters are very important in conducting research. This research was undertaken in line with qualitative research ethics outlined by De Costa, (2014). He argued that ethical consideration is an important component of writing qualitative research since individual respondents will like to expand exactly what causes or effect

a phenomenon has. Based on this argument by Creswell (2016), Care was taken to seek the consent and approval of all participants before involving them in the study. For this reason, letters were served to the various institutions and Participants introducing myself and the purpose for which this research was conducted and it's benefits and the contributions to remedy educational situations in the various schools and institutions and the nation at large. The researcher also avoided the inclusion of the names of the participant in the write up to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of their views. This helped to avoid unnecessary fear and harm among participants. As a result, the researcher built trust among the participants on the field.

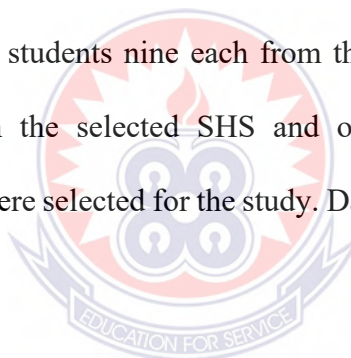


## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presented the results obtained from the review of related literature as well as the interviews conducted in the study area in order to answer the research questions posed in the study. The purpose of this study was to ascertain how to achieve equity and accessibility in the Free Senior High programme in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district of the central region. The data obtained was analyzed thematically based on the research questions set from the objectives of the study. Qualitative analysis made use of twenty-five (25) participants out of which two (2) SHS headmaster one each from the selected SHS, eighteen (18) SHS students nine each from the selected schools, four (4) SHS teachers two each from the selected SHS and one (1) person from the district educational directorate were selected for the study. Data were analyzed and categorized into various themes.



The research sought to address the following objectives:

- To determine how equitable, the Free Senior High School program is in terms of resources distribution, acceptability and accessibility in the TAMMD.
- To explore the factors militating against people to access the Free Senior High School program in the TAMMD.
- To explore alternative means of accessing the free Senior High School program among the students in the TAMMD.
- The following pseudonyms were used in the study which represent each participants responses to a particular question:
- Heads of senior high schools - SHSH1, SHSH2

- Teachers of senior high schools - SHST1, SHST2, SHST3, SHST4
- Senior high school students - SHSS1, SHSS2, SHSS3, SHSS4, SHSS5, SHSS6, SHSS7, SHSS8, SHSS9 and SHSS10, SHSS11, SHSS12, SHSS13, SHSS14, SHSS15, SHSS16, SHSS17, SHSS18.
- Director of education - DDE.

#### 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of participants

Although demographic data of respondents was not part of the objectives of the study, it however became paramount that such data be obtained. This is because the demographic data helped the researcher to understand the characteristic of the informants in particular and the target population in general. At the commencement of the interview, participants in the study area were asked to provide their basic demographic information such as gender, age interval and status.

**Table 1: Gender distribution of participants**

<b>Gender of participants</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>
<b>Males</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Females</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>

Source: field work, 2023

Table (1) shows that, out of the twenty-five (25) participants selected for the study, nine(9) were females and sixteen (16) were males. This was because, schools were mixed-schools and it was important to select from both gender which made the distribution gender unbiased.

**Table 2: Status distribution of participants**

Status of participants	Frequency (f)
Head of SHS	2
Teachers of SHS	4
Students of SHS	18
District director of education	1
Total	25

**Source: Field data, 2023**

Table (2) indicates that, two (2) SHS headmasters, four (4) teachers of SHS were selected for the study. Also, one (1) officer from the education directorate who happened to be the district educational director, eighteen (18) SHS students were selected, eight(8) JHS, in all making twenty-five participants from the district.

**Table 3: Average age of participants**

Age of participants	Frequency (f)
15-20years	10
21-25years	7
26-30years	1
31 and above years	7
Total	25

**Source: Field data (2022)**

Table (3) above indicates that ten (10) of the participants were between the ages of fifteen to twenty (15-20) years. Seven (7) of the participants were between the ages of twenty-one to twenty five (21-25) years. One (1) of the participant was between the ages of twenty-six to thirty (26-30) years and seven (7) of the participants were between the ages of thirty-one and above years (31 and above years).

**4.5 Research question 1:** “How equitable is the free senior high school program in terms of resource distribution, acceptability and accessibility”

**4.5.1 Resource distribution:** This section provides responses by head of selected SHS on the question; **does your school have enough infrastructure including dormitories and classroom blocks to accommodate huge number of students placed in your school?**

This issue of inadequate facilities and infrastructure in general was prevalent in the selected schools in the district as participants who happen to be heads of SHS selected for this study in their responses to this question unanimously agreed that resources allocation have not been balanced at all as far as developing some facilities are concern.

Major issues that were raised were inadequate dormitories to accommodate students, inadequate classroom blocks for teaching and learning, inadequate learning materials like textbooks, basically infrastructure development since the inception of the free senior high school was a problem to them.

Some participants shared their view on this question:

*“I think since the free SHS was introduced in 2017, our major challenges have been low infrastructural development. What I mean is that the old classroom blocks, dormitories, dining hall, library and others that were existing are still the same unimproved which is causing a lot problems to us here. I hope you could see for yourself how trunks and chop boxes are packed outside the dormitories to create space for students to sleep; this is worrying and needs to be seriously improved. Even the double tracking couldn't solve the*



*issues because of how inadequate the facilities are; the headmaster vehemently complained” (source: Filed interview, 2022, SHSH1)*

Another participant gave a similar view:

*“Our major issue here basically is inadequate facilities especially dormitories and dining hall space for students to enjoy. I sometimes feel so bad and find it pathetic how students choke-up in the dormitories and dining halls as if excuse my language ‘prisoners’ which something must be done. Some students sometimes had to sleep outside of the dormitories to enjoy fresh air since the rooms produce a lot of heat due to the choke number per room. Others go for preps and they prefer sleeping there because the classroom at that time looks airy for them which is also not good for their security so we sometimes go round to beg them to move to their overcrowded dormitories which is sad” (SHSH2, Source: field interview, 2022)*

These challenges enumerated above are in consonance with Abdulai and Hickey (2016) that in the context of Ghana’s educational sector, the allocation of resources over a fifteen years span were informed by the incentives of the competitive clientele political settlement. Quist (2003) cited in Adu-Gyamfi and Donkor (2016) also identified financial constraint as the main cause accounting for low quality and access to education in the second-cycle institutions.

In his view, budgetary allocation for education sector is inadequate and about 90 percent of the proportion for secondary schools goes into wages and salaries and the rest for educational investment which still in our educational sector today (African Educational watch, 2020). The consequence of this is unimproved teaching infrastructure (class rooms, work-shops, libraries, laboratories, furniture) and materials (text-books and other teaching materials). These accounts and responses by participants in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district means that general infrastructural development in

schools selected are very low as compared those in the other school as consequences of it are adversely affecting student's performance, health and general wellbeing. This is in cognisance with Kless et al, (2014), "...inequity remains a persistent feature of Ghana's education service delivery and its most critical challenge'' to the attainment of the overall educational targets. Although attempts have been made to improve rural-urban equity in Ghana, it appears that public expenditure tend to exacerbate and perpetuate the inequity by allocating fewer resources to regions with the majority of rural districts and communities (Kless et al , 2014). A most recent empirical study by Chanimbe and Dankwah (2021) found daunting results about the implementation and outcomes of the free secondary schooling policy. They reported a shortage in teachers due to high enrolments, inadequate infrastructure, increasing teacher workload, insufficient teaching and learning materials, overcrowding in classrooms, and delay in the supply of funds to schools. With this it can be deduced that equity in terms of resource distribution in Ghana must consider the challenges been faced by a specific district or communities in particular to ensure that various resources are appropriately and fairly disbursed to raise the standard of education in both urban and rural areas.

**Is your school having enough teachers who cater for all subjects?**

Issues about teachers inadequacy was very prevalent in the senior high schools selected for this study in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district as participants of this question who happens to be head-teachers responded agreed on the fact that teachers are not enough in the schools that cater for all subjects. Issues such as, high cost of living in the district, and poor incentives for teachers are demotivating factors accounting for the problem.

A participant shared his take on this question;

*“Our major challenge here is inadequate teachers in this school because most teachers who are transferred here upon looking at the living condition seek for early exit since they are not conversant with the situation here. Having access to network for a common call making is a big issue not to talk about access to the internet, how do you expect a modern teacher leaving in the city to cope in this terrible environment like this? He lamented. As I speak to you, some teachers teach two subjects especially at the science department so that we can cover all subjects but those in the renowned senior high schools are having more with surplus, however I don’t have a say in which teacher is transferred to which school” (SHSH2, Source: field interview, 2022)*

The above assertion is in consonance with a most recent empirical study by Chanimbe and Dankwah (2021) found daunting results about the implementation and outcomes of the free secondary schooling policy. They reported a shortage in teachers due to high enrolments, inadequate infrastructure, increasing teacher workload, insufficient teaching and learning materials, overcrowding in classrooms, and delay in the supply of funds to schools.

As observed by Kless et al (2014) “inequity remains a persistent feature of Ghana’s education service delivery and its most critical challenge” to the attainment of the overall educational targets.

Although attempts have been made to improve rural-urban equity in Ghana, it appears that public expenditure tend to exacerbate and perpetuate the inequity by allocating fewer resources to regions with the majority of rural districts and communities (Kless et al, 2014). These responses from the participants of this question indicate that most of teachers that cater for various subjects since the inception of the free senior high school programme in 2017 have been inadequate as compared to other schools in other districts. This challenge has the potential to mar the effective teaching and learning of subjects that fall short of teachers and a possible low passing rate by students in the

school during the West Africa Senior Secondary School Examination.’ schools? It must therefore be emphasized that different factors give rise to different results and that if these issues are not resolved, students from vulnerable senior high schools of which the Twifu Atti-Morkwa district cannot be side-stepped may not be able to achieve the quality of education for which the programme was designed and might not be able to further their education to the highest level due to poor performance after their final exams.

**4.6 SECTION B: ACCESSIBILITY:** This section provides responses from head of Senior High Schools on the question; do students from different places in the country over-subscribe to your school?

The question as to whether the selected SHS for this study are over-subscribed was not prevalent in the Twifo Atti- Morkwa district, Twifo-Praso SHS and Twifo Morkwah community Day school to be precise as participants of this issue said no to the question. The two headmasters representing 100% agreed on the fact that their schools are not among the buoyant and envious schools in the region not to talk about the whole country at large so most students don’t subscribe to the school, however, the school is always filled because of how considerate they are in terms of the cut-off point for admission as most students who come there are mostly from the remote areas around that enclave with only few students from the cities across the country. A participant had this to say on this:

*“ I think this school has being performing in the final exams since I came here three years ago and we have done our best to improve upon infrastructural development here, however, I agree that this school is not one of the envious senior high schools in the country but we the school in collaboration with the education directorate have agreed to consider as many as students within the district even if they don’t meet the demands because there are many village*

*schools who normally don't do too well in the BECE. Also, some students are placed in this school but they don't normally come so we try to help those around after placement to replace those who reject to come here for various reasons" (SHSH1 source: Field interview, 2022)*

Another participant had this to share on the same question:

*"Our school is very young and I don't expect people to over-subscribe to this place, am very sure if the number now increases by ten percent, we cannot have classrooms to harbor them because our school is very small. Besides there are no dormitories here at all to accommodate students so those who come are mostly students around this area. we don't have any name and pedigree as compared to other schools in the region but we are also here to help those who cannot make it to those renowned schools" (SHSH2, Source, Field interview, 2022).*

As revealed by EFA (2010), Since CSSPS replaced the manual system of selection and placement into SHSs, about seven years ago; it has been beset with many challenges. In 2010, out of the total of 350,888 candidates who wrote the BECE, only 172,359 (49.12%) passed from 10,016 public and private JHSs, in 2011, out of the 177,000 vacancies declared by heads of SHS and technical institutions, only 176,128 candidates met the criteria for selection and placement. However, some 52 senior high schools were over-subscribed by candidates.

For instance, while 300 vacancies were declared at Wesley Girls' High School in Cape Coast, 12,400 qualified candidates had selected the school as their first choice (EFA, 2010). Thus, the well-endowed SHSs are every year over-subscribed. It appears the doors to the well-endowed SHSs are virtually closed to pupils from certain social and economic background (Azabiah, 2017). Furthermore, it is not known whether gender, type of SHS, governing authority, and programme of study have any influence on access to SHS in Ghana (Akyeampong et al, 2016). This denotes that, the schools within

the district are not over-subscribed as compared to other schools within the region and the country at large though they do well in the final examination which may be attributed to lack of fame or inadequate infrastructure to catch the eyes of many students across the country. The fact here is that, some schools in the country are really performing well academically but they don't catch the attention of students and many parents because of the name other schools that are mostly in the cities have made for themselves already. This issue is also due to the fact that most of these envious senior high schools have developed and are far advanced in infrastructure development and that most teachers even wish to be posted there to have access to that environment to enrich their curriculum vitae as people who have taught in some prestigious schools in the country.

**Does your school accept any student at all regardless of their grade?**

Participants who were interviewed who happened to be headmasters of SHS selected for the study on this question were emphatic to respond yes representing a 100% agreement to the question in the Twifo Atti- Morkwa district. Reasons such as low facilities, low fame, moderate educational standard achieved and many other reasons why they consider any grade at all because they believe the school hasn't gotten to the level of others to deny certain results in the school and that it will take these students to perform wonders in the final WASSCE exams to make name for themselves before they can consider revising their cut-off point.

A participant had this to say about this issue;

*“our school does not deny anyone access because of poor grade though we have our cut-off point for placement of which the school placement system uses in placing students to this school however, others who normally don't meet the demands within the districts are considered irrespective of their*

*grade because some of these vulnerable students even come here to perform better and uplift their intellectual level here and most WASSCE results here have proven". He further said that, " we believe that some junior high schools don't have even enough teachers to take them through all subjects the reason for their non-performance in their final exams but we have spoken to our teachers to deal with these situations in the classroom to help bring up their potentials when they are considered". (SHSH, Source: Field interview, 2022).*

The issue raised by many Ghanaians are that, some students in the remote areas normally don't have access to category A-schools and those who get them normally are not able to go because of the distance they have to travel and others too may wish to attend these highly endowed schools but do not get the opportunity because of poor grade owing to poor facilities and inadequate teachers of various subjects (Africa Educational watch 2020). Also, the responses from the participants who is the headmaster of the SHS selected is in consonance with Asumadu (2019) in her study to examine the prospects and challenges of the Ghana's free SHS programme in the Denkyembaour district indicated that since the inception of the programme there have been positive signs of prospects in terms of increased enrolment of students, equitable access to education, reduction of a financial burden on parents, and recruitment of new teachers.

In relation to the increased enrolment, the study discovered that the enrolments of students moving from junior high school to senior high schools in the district have appreciated since the introduction of the policy due to the non-payment of tuition and boarding fees by parents. In addition, "equitable access to senior high education" has been greatly enhanced since tuition and boarding fees are all borne by the government students from both well to do families and poor families all have equal "access to senior high education." The study further found that the policy has taken away a huge financial

burden on parents since parents now do not pay any amount for their wards at the senior high school level. It can be deduced therefore that, in as much as the school placement system has its own criteria to place students, the school has taken upon itself to consider other factors to consume other grades that may not meet the standard of the school as evidences have shown how significant those vulnerable students have been in the school such as performing better than those who brought good grades to the school.

**Does your school accommodate any student regardless of the student's place of origin?**

The researcher had straight yes responses from participants of this who happened to be headmasters of SHS selected for the study in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district as all two (2) representing 100% of the participants agreed on the fact that the school does not discriminate against any student based on the origin or the root of any student and also testify to the fact that they even consider the remotest students into the school to the extent of considering those who are sometimes not placed there.

A participant gave an insight into this question:

*“I think when we are talking about schools that accept anyone our school is number one because we virtually accept everyone who is placed in the school to the extent of considering others who even don't deserve to come here. “We don't discriminate against anyone by rejecting any student but gladly accept students from all spheres of life, education must be accessible to everyone who wishes to pursue and we here can't be a stumbling block to student's academic pursuit and future prospects in life” though it's against the placement rule to accept additional students outside those who are placed into the school, we try to accept few ones around this enclave because of a record a student who came to cry on us to be accepted with her parents because of performance in the BECE which after deliberation accepted her and eventually had seven A1 in the WASCE. This has given us some hope that no one should be discriminated*



*irrespective of the origin and sometimes the grade the person brings” (SHSH1, Source: Field interview, 2022)*

On the contrary to the above, historically, secondary education is more accessible to urban areas than to rural communities in Africa (kunguani &Boaduo, 2021). Additionally, there are some significant gender disparities in the distribution of secondary education in Africa. Socio-cultural, religious, and economic factors have contributed to this disparity that has placed young women at a serious disadvantage (momo et al, 2019). The issue raised by many Ghanaians are that, some students in the remote areas normally don't have access to category A-schools and those who get them normally are not able to go because of the distance they have to travel and others too may wish to attend these highly endowed schools but do not get the opportunity because of poor grade owing to poor facilities and inadequate teachers of various subjects (Africa Educational watch 2020). It is further argued that, some of the students who find themselves in the cities and don't even qualify to be enrolled in these A-class schools find crook means of paying bribes to be enrolled denying the actual qualified students; These responses from participants selected for the study in the district shows that there is absolutely no chance for anyone to deny any student access to senior high school education as far as their facility is concern and that all schools must endeavor to stop discriminating against some students from some part of the country because is no fault of theirs to find themselves there.

This is in consonance with Roemer (2015) which argued that justice requires levelling the playing field by rendering everyone opportunities equal in an appropriate sense; and letting individual choices and their effects dictate further outcomes. Lewin (2015), therefore, posited that given the differences in contexts, specific strategies base on context are needed to universalize access and achieve quality and equity in secondary

education. For group four country like Ghana he argued for strategies that seek to: balance progress on universalizing access and completion in education by increasing lower secondary participation; recognize the interactions between primary and secondary expansion, especially, in the supply of teachers; identify sustainable frameworks to provide financial resources and; adopt a differentiated approach to reducing regional, rural-urban and gender disparities are very crucial (Mantey, 2014).

**4.7. SECTION C: ACCEPTABILITY:** This section provides details of responses from Senior High School students on the question; **did you consider this school as your first choice in the selection of schools?**

This question became a two sided affair in the initial discussions with participants of this research question who happen to be senior high school students. However, majority of the participants were on the view that they considered many factors and decided on which school to attend. Factors such as good facilities, academic performance, category of school and other many factors were considered. However, participants of this question in the Twifo Atti- Morkwa district had divergent view on this issue but a dominantly thirteen (13) representing 72% out of the total of eighteen students agreed that they did not choose the school as their first choice but was part of their choice of schools. Responses such as no i didn't choose here as my first choice but was part of my choices were became the central theme in this question.

Some participants responded to the question as these;

*“For me I didn't choose here as my first choice in the selection of schools but it was part because our teachers asked us to add it compulsorily. I didn't like to be here but now I have no choice to cope. I wanted to go to a single sex school preferably Wesley Girls SHS in Cape coast but unfortunately I was placed here”. (SHSS1, Source: Field interview, 2022).*

Another participant responded as;

*“I had no plans of coming to this school so I didn’t choose as my first choice. I had plans of going to Prempeh -college in Kumasi but I was placed here just maybe because of my grade” (SHSS2, Source: Field interview, 2022).*

However, two of these participants were on a contrary view that they chose their current school as their first choices because they like to be there. A participant shares her view:

*“I really like to be here so I chose this school as my first choice. This school is closer to my town and I know they perform in the final exams because my elder brother was here” (SHSS3, Source: Field interview, 2022).*

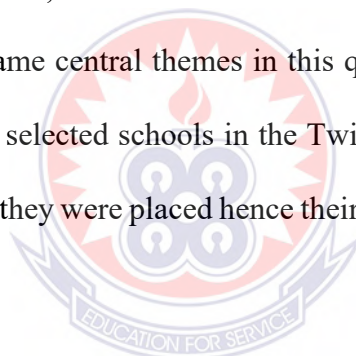
Philosophically, selection of pupils into schools is based on the performance of the particular school, its aims and objectives, the course the school has got to offer and the end product the institution wants to have at the end of the day. Siegel (2012) opined that sometimes a lottery is the fairest way of selecting and distributing a good in a system where competition is at play. These views from participants in the district shows that majority of the students who responded to this issue did not choose the school as their first option in their consideration but ended up been placed there, however , few of them agreed they chose their current school as their first option in their selection of senior high schools.

In synch with the above responses by respondents it is argued that generally, there is better quality provision in traditional boarding schools located mostly in cities and towns than in community day secondary schools found mainly in rural or peri-urban areas. Also the traditional schools attracted more qualified teachers than the community schools. Teacher shortages in the technical/vocational subject areas effectively reduced quality of provision and undermined student interest (Osei Tutu, 2021). But, perhaps the most important influence on students’ subject choice is the opportunity structure

outside the school system. This has proved to be decisive for some students when it comes to selecting school subjects, and increasingly, many of these students are seeing liberal arts and science subjects as offering better opportunities than vocational and technical subjects (Takyi, 2021; Larwetey 2021).

### **Do you really appreciate the school you were placed?**

Participants of this question did not hesitate at all to give their views. Fourteen representing 77% of the participants gave straight answers with similar reasons such as; is not the kind of school I was expecting, the school has no name in the country when mentioning great schools, the school has no millage in the society, it has not produced great personalities, the school doesn't have good facilities as compared to other schools which became central themes in this question. The fact is that majority the participants from the selected schools in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district really do not appreciate the school they were placed hence their selection of other schools as their first options.



Some participants expressed their thoughts as these;

*“truth be told, I really don't like this school and am not happy to be here but I had no choice to than to come since my parents tried to convince me I can make it everywhere in academics.*

*I really felt bad when I checked on the first day I have been placed here so I couldn't even tell my friends of it because that wasn't my expectations; I have tried to put myself together since I have no choice than to be here”.*

(SHSS10, Source: field interview, 2022.)

Another participant also shared her view on this;

*“I have been downhearted since I was placed here because I dreamt of going to one of the best senior high schools in the country but only to be disappointed at last. However, there was nothing I could do to change the*

*situation so I needed to come. I vowed that whether good or bad I will try hard to achieve what I would have achieved in my dream school so that I don't get disappointed the second time by not passing well though I know it is going to be difficult. (SHSS8, Source: Field interview, 2022)*

However, a participant had a contrary view and had this to say;

*"I like and appreciate to be here because per where am coming from, no one has ever been placed to any category 'A' senior high school so I least expected to be there. I was ever ready to be here am really grateful because it is closer to my village and that my parents can come and visit me frequently" (SHSS6, Source: Field interview, 2022)*

Generally, there is better quality provision in traditional boarding schools located mostly in cities and towns than in community day secondary schools found mainly in rural or peri-urban areas. Also the traditional schools attracted more qualified teachers than the community schools (Akyeampong, 2015). Teacher shortages in the technical/vocational subject areas effectively reduced quality of provision and undermined student interest (Akyeampong et al, 2016). But, perhaps the most important influence on students' subject choice is the opportunity structure outside the school system. This has proved to be decisive for some students when it comes to selecting school subjects, and increasingly, many of these students are seeing liberal arts and science subjects as offering better opportunities than vocational and technical subjects (Bailey, 2015).

From the above responses, it can be said that most students who were placed in the selected SHS, most respondents are not appreciative of the placement system as most of them were not happy to be there but only by circumstances but only one person appreciated the school. The assertion of this participants were in consonance with many others that, many students select some senior high schools based on specific factors which they deemed important to facilitate their learning process which includes good

environment, infrastructure, pedigree of the senior high in terms of fame, academic performance, types of subjects they run and that to ensure equity in these, resources allocation must be fairly distributed.

**If you get the chance, will you consider leaving your current school to another school?**

Participants of this question who happened to be SHS students were straight forward to share their positions in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district. Fourteen (14) students representing 77% out of the total of eighteen participants were in sync with the question. There was a key theme which run through all the respondents view which include; yes i will like to go to another school, yes I will be grateful if am to be given that second chance, yes is not my preferred place to be, yes there are better school elsewhere than here, no, I have no intentions of leaving, no is a good place to be, and many other reasons. These responses denote that most respondents from the selected senior high school in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district were not happy to be placed in the selected school, however, four (4) representing 23% of the total participants were appreciative though not their preferred choices but just because is free.

These were the views of some participants:

*“I will not hesitate to leave this school to another school if am given the opportunity to do so because this is not where I have for this long time yearning to be and certainly not, am not happy and would like to leave immediately am rendered the chance. The whole environment is boring to me since I have no school mate here, am not able to tell my friends where am schooling because this school is of low class, well this is what life has offered me and I can't blame anyone” (SHSS2, Source: Field interview, 2022)*

Another participant lamented as this;

*“Placement system has taken my happiness in education by placing me here in this school, I wish I can turn things around hmmm its pathetic because i least expected to be here however I will do my best not to fail my final year exams at least to redeem myself and as a consolation for not attending my dream school” (SHSS5, Source: Field interview, 2022)*

Roemer (2015) argued that justice requires levelling the playing field by rendering everyone opportunities equal in an appropriate sense; and letting individual choices and their effects dictate further outcomes. According to Asumadu (2019), several concerns have been raised concerning the free senior high school programme with regard to several major challenges faced by the policy. Some of these include the lack of adequate facilities to accommodate students has led to overcrowding thereby pushing some students and parents to either relocate or stay at home in all hampering effective teaching and learning. These responses from majority of the participants indicate a clear situation of people who are not happy to be in a specific area who have been forced to manage the situation. These sentiments shared were basically as a results of the kind of facilities and environment they are enjoying because most participants point out to the fact that there are a lot of challenges confronting the school of which accommodation was the major one, some teachers not attending classes regularly and many other issues.

In support of this, Kalunda & Otanga, (2015) also found that the implementation of free secondary education in Kenya resulted in school principals encountering a number of administrative challenges such as “inadequate and badly constructed school buildings, shortage of books and equipment; lack of proper school furniture particularly desks; poor or sometimes non-existent maintenance and repairs; untrained and half trained

teachers who seldom stay long; over-crowded classrooms; poor communications and few supporting services especially health services.”

**Research Question 2: PARTICIPANTS VIEW ON RESEARCH OBJECTIVE TWO:  
THE FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST OR COULD PREVENT STUDENTS TO  
ACCESS THE FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMME**

This section provides details of responses by SHS students on the question; **in your view, what are the major factors that prevent or could prevent students to get the kind of schools they want to attend?**

With regards to this question, twenty (20) participants out of the total of twenty-five representing 80% agreed on the fact that, some major factors that may limit or could have the potential to hinder them from enjoying the program are financial problems, transportation issues, distance issues, poor grades to meet the demands of some renowned schools and issues of teachers choosing choices of schools for their students. These issues were prevalent in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district so much that the researcher became alarmed and probed the respondents further.

Some participants shared their opinions on this issue;

*“Those of us around this area are facing many challenges which do not help us to access the free senior high school programme. The major one is financial issue where sometimes a student will be placed in a city far from here and the parents are unable to get money just to take him there or even buy the requisite stuffs in the prospectus. Sometimes, people see their schools of placement to be too far from our area and prefer to school around here because of distance which is a problem and finally, mostly, our teachers are the ones who select the schools for us or they tell us to choose*



*some schools because if we select some big school we will end up staying home because our grade are normally not good enough to go there” (SHSS3, Source: Field interview, 2022).*

Other participants responded to this question as this:

*“Accessing the free senior high school program could be a problem in our area basically because of the kind of grade we get in the BECE, we normally don’t have enough teachers who teach us all the subjects for us to pass well which is a major issue. Besides if i for example am placed in a far place my parents wouldn’t be able to finance me so will not go because transport fare alone can cater for me here for some two to three weeks if am to attend school around this area” (SHSS4, Source: Field interview, 2022).*

Despite broad agreement that education provides pathway to development, “universal enrolment and completion continue to remain elusive even in settings where concerted effort have been made to remove material and structural barriers- namely fees and other school related costs” (Williams et al., 2015). “Quist (2003) cited in Adu-Gyamfi and Donkor (2016)) identified financial constraint as the main cause accounting for low quality and access to education in the second-cycle institutions. Research in Ghana has also suggested that the likelihood of children’s enrolment is based on a complex mix of factors which include the educational level of parents, particularly mothers, the ability to pay indirect/direct costs of schooling, and the types of livelihoods households pursue. Several studies have documented reasons why girls tend to have lower enrolment rates than boys, higher drop out and less transition to secondary.

On the whole these reasons tend to be multifaceted and interrelated but with poverty as a common denominator (AED, 2002). Studies in Ghana have shown that access issues tend to be more pronounced in areas that are prone to a range of interlocking socio-

economic factors (Asante, 2022). For example, high levels of illiteracy, low levels of human resource development, low levels of economic development, low levels of democratic participation, high levels of infant and child mortality and morbidity, and low levels of general family health, among others (Takyi, 2021). Most of these areas are more likely to be found in the northern Ghana. Several studies conducted in the 1990s and early 2000 suggested that a major obstacle to educational access was economic. The high cost of schooling pushes children into the labour market to enable them to afford school or pulls them away from school as they cannot afford it (Zapp, 2017). The enlisted factors which may one way or the other hamper people from accessing education cannot be overlooked as some general problems characterized by some people for their inability to access education.

In relation to the factors that could hinder students from accessing the free senior high school in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district, the issue were quiet worrying per the responses from the selected respondents. Most of the respondents of this question agreed on various factors that could militate against the people to access the free senior high school programme. From the above assertions by participants, it can be said that, there are some major factors that can really militate people at the Twifo Atti- Morkwa district to access the free senior high school of which bad grade, financial constraint and issue of distance were the major concerns. It also implies that issues such as the type of courses or subjects studied in a particular school and whether the school is a mixed or single sex were not issues of concern them.

This denotes that the people around the area enjoy little of the free senior high school program with numerous challenges inhibiting them to fully enjoy the programme.this assertion is in consonance with Asumadu, (2019) who found that though the the

programme is free to all students, financial constraint and distance to where students are placed do not permit some people to have access to the free senior high school programme.

**Research Question 3: RESPONDENTS VIEW ON RESEARCH QUESTION THREE; WHICH ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF ACHIEVING EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY IN THE FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM?**

This section entails responses provided by head of SHS and teachers of SHS, students of SHS and JHS and the district Education director on the question, **in your opinion, which other means can the free senior high school programme be implemented to achieve equity and accessibility?**

The question on the alternative means of achieving equity and accessibility in the free senior high school generated divergent ideas in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district however, twenty-two (22) representing 88% of the respondents of this question agreed on some key issues which run through their responses such as; all the students selected from SHS schools agreed that the cut-off point for category 'A' senior high schools must be lowered, categorization of schools should be cancelled, placement of students to various schools should be done in a way that those in the region will dominate in the category 'A' school in every region, the placement system should consider rural-urban differences in the placement of students. Again students from the rural areas that do a bit better in the BECE exams must be given the chance to go to the category 'A' schools, and government ensure there fair distribution and allocation of resources and infrastructural development to raise the standard of some vulnerable schools and many other concerns were raised.

Some participants responded as these:

*“I think to ensure equity and accessibility in the free senior high school program, those well-endowed schools that are considered category ‘A’ must lower their cut-off point to allow other students to get the opportunity to go there. Also one major thing is that , the government must fairly distribute resources especially teachers and learning facilities like laboratories and dormitories for all schools to raise the standard of every school to be able to attract other brilliant students so that placement distribution will be even”.* (SHST1, Source: **Field interview, 2022**).

Global efforts of increasing equity and access to education focus on strategies that seek to eliminate the obstacles to availability, accessibility and affordability to school (Keet, 2015). These strategies mostly aim at targeting and hooking vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minority, girls, the poor, people with disability, and people in risk areas and rural dwellers that are most likely to be excluded in the educational process (young, 2018; Keet, 2015). Social safety programmes such as the abolition of fees, cash transfer and school feeding programmes as well as others that focus on improving ECCD and girls’ education have become very important in the South (UNESCO, 2010; 2015).

The recent Presidential Commission on Education Reforms in Ghana examined the reasons why most JSS students were unable to access senior secondary, and blamed this on a number of factors: inadequate facilities and infrastructure, parents unable to afford secondary fees, a lack of alternative tracks for students with different interests and abilities, an inability of students to meet the minimum requirements for further education and a lack of interest in further education (Akyeampong, 2015). This is in direct consonance with the assertion and agitations made by participants on the alternative means to achieve equity and accessibility in the Free SHS programme in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district.

Though greater percentage of fees and other incentives have been absorbed by government to ease the pressure on parents, most people still find it difficult to take

their wards to senior high schools with some reasons like far distance that students are placed, people losing interest because they couldn't meet the grade requirement of their choice of schools they selected and many other factors.

Another participant had his take on this;

*“I think the placement system should consider rural dwellers since they have a lot of issues as compared to urban folks. Sometimes teachers to teach them various subjects is a major problem since most teachers don't want to go to these places to teach and those who even go there do not last. Also, I think that equity and accessibility in the free senior high school can be achieved if Categorization of the various senior high schools is cancelled to give a level playground to all students to be mixed up in terms of abilities, am sure this will help others who get not too good grades in the BECE to mingle with the excellent ones in the various school to also help push them up in academics as the minister recommended in his latest interview” (DED, Source: Field interview, 2022)*

This is in consonance with Roemer (2015) which argued that justice requires levelling the playing field by rendering everyone opportunities equal in an appropriate sense; and letting individual choices and their effects dictate further outcomes. The responses and views from the participants from the district were underlined by some factors to ensure equity and accessibility such as cancellation of the category system of senior high schools, evenly allocation of infrastructural development of all senior high schools to uplift their standards, mixing of various student abilities so that those with lower abilities will learn from the others.

Also, respondents agreed that those schools they termed category 'A' must lower their cut-off point demand to create room for some average students to also enjoy their outfits and finally, the placement system must take into consideration the challenges faced by the rural folks and consider them in the placement of students since different factors produce different results.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This study sought to investigate how equitable and accessible the free senior high school programme is in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district of the central region of Ghana. The research sought to examine how equitable is the programme in terms of resource distribution, acceptability and accessibility. The research also sought to examine the factors militating against students to access the free senior high school; finally, the study examined the alternative means of achieving equity and accessibility in the free senior high school programme. The study adopted qualitative research approach with the exploratory case study design. The study used interview guide as the instrument with semi-structured interview. The study used a total of twenty-five (25) as participants with purposive sampling technique. Data was analyzed thematically based on the interview guide calved from the objectives of the study.

#### Key Findings

In the quest to answer the research questions in chapter one which guided the study which were to examine how equitable the free senior high school is in terms of resource distribution, acceptability and accessibility, factors that militate against students to access the free senior high school in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district and the alternative means of ensuring equity and accessibility in the free senior high school programme, the following findings were revealed.

- Resources like classroom blocks, library, textbooks, science laboratory equipment, teachers and other incentives to enhance teaching and learning were either inadequate or non-existent in the district.
- The data revealed that students are able to access senior high schools easily since the inception of the free SHS programme since schools in at the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district accept every student placed in their schools and even consider others who could not meet their standard.
- The data revealed that students from the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district are very vulnerable to poor grades in the BECE and do not permit many of them to access category 'A' senior high schools across the country due to factors such as inadequate teachers to cater for all subjects, poor infrastructure, low motivation of teachers and the issue of teachers choosing senior high schools for students.
- The data revealed that factors such as transportation issues, financial constraints, distance issues, were some factors that could militate students from the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district to access the free senior high school.
- Data revealed that equity and accessibility can only be achieved in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district if categorization of senior high schools is cancelled, cut-off point for the category 'A' schools are lowered, the placement system should place any student to any school regardless of the grade provided the student fall within placement range.

## **Conclusion**

This study concludes that the free senior high school introduced to break major financial barriers to access senior high school freely is still illusive in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district due to the enormous challenges faced by rural and vulnerable districts of which the district is no exemption. This study therefore concludes that;

- Inadequate infrastructural development such as dormitories, classroom blocks to accommodate more students, science laboratories for experiments, inadequate teachers, inadequate teaching and learning materials, poor remuneration are major challenges characterized by the free senior high school programme in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district.
- Students in the rural districts like the Twifo Atti-Morkwa district are vulnerable to poor grade which make it difficult to have access to some category 'A' senior high schools within the country.
- Factors such as transportation issues, distance issues, financial constraints are major factors that could hinder students from accessing the free senior high school programme.
- Equity and accessibility in the free senior high school can be achieved if cut-off points for category "A" schools are lowered to allow vulnerables students have access to those schools and de- categorization of senior high schools to create a level playing ground for all students who fall within placement range

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made to achieve equity and accessibility in the free senior high school program:

- The government should endeavor to fairly allocate the needed educational resources such as infrastructure development, quality teachers and all necessary remuneration needed to all senior high schools in the country to improve their standard so that the programme will be able to achieve its intended purpose.
- The Ghana Education Service and its unit that work on placement system should consider rural folks since these people are vulnerable to many educational challenges and that some grades from some areas of the country should be



deemed excellent results to be given opportunity to those students to also be placed in the category 'A' senior high schools.

- The government should try to improve upon the standard of every senior high school in the country to ensure that every school that any student will be placed is up to standard and get what takes to develop and fully unearth the various potentials individual students possess.
- The education service should consider de-categorizing senior high schools and make all of them standard so that any student who qualifies to be placed by the placement system enjoys fair placement since all schools have the same standard without necessarily making some schools enviable to the detriment of the other schools.
- Finally, the education service should take upon themselves through their district, municipal and metropolitan educational directorates to move to various schools, parents and all stakeholders of education to explain the placement requirements as to which grades are better and those not deserving to be placed as a form of sensitizing the general public on good grade scores to avoid confusion as it became a public ridicule as some parents didn't know what a good grade is.

### **Suggestion for Further Studies**

Based on the nature of this study, I would like to suggest that:

Future researchers should widen the scope of the study by using quantitative or mixed method to cover wide range of people so that high level generalization can be drawn.

Also, future researcher should consider comparing different districts to really test equity levels from different context.

Finally I would like to suggest to future researcher to look at the nexus between educational resource and quality educational outcomes.



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## APPENDICES

**\UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION WINNEBA  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION**

Dear participant,

The researcher is a final year Master of Philosophy student at the Department of Social Studies Education of the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), who is undertaking a research on the topic “ACHIEVING EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY IN THE FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM”. THE CASE OF TWIFO ATTIMORKWA DISTRICT.. The data being sought is purely for academic purposes, hence, any information you will give will be treated confidentially. Your candid answers would be a valuable contribution to this research. Please, provide the appropriate response as frankly as possible and where options are given **tick** (✓) that which is applicable. Thank you in advance for your participation.

### **APENDIX A (INTERVIEW GUIDE)**

Indicate the appropriate response by ticking [✓] where necessary.

1. Gender (a)Male [ ] Female [ ]
2. Age (a) 15-20yrs [ ] (b) 21-25yrs [ ]
3. 26-30yrs [ ] (d)
4. 31and above [ ]



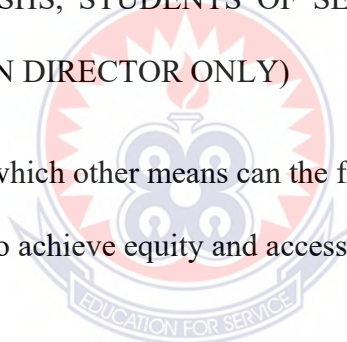
14. If you get the chance, will you consider leaving your current school to another school? If yes why and if no, why?

**SECTION D: THE FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST STUDENTS TO ACCESS THE FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM IN TAMD (STUDENTS OF JHS ONLY)**

15. In your view, what are the major factors that prevent students to get the kind of schools they want to attend?

**SECTION E: ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF ACHIEVING EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY IN THE FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM (HEAD AND TEACHERS OF SHS, STUDENTS OF SELECTED SHS AND JHS AND DISTRICT EDUCATION DIRECTOR ONLY)**

16. In your opinion, which other means can the free senior high school programme be implemented to achieve equity and accessibility?



UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION WINNEBA  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
ASSESSMENT /POST VIVA CORRECTIONS FORM  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

RESPONSE MEMO

Candidate Name: Kenneth Anim Boadi

Index Number: 202141118

Thesis/Dissertation title: Achieving Equity and Accessibility in the Free Senior High School Programme; The Case of Twifo Atti-Morkwa District.

Subject: Corrections/Response to comments/suggestions

No	Section/chapter	Comments /suggestion	Response to comment
1	1	Give a clear operational definition of equity	A clear operational definition has been given in the context of this study. (page 15)
2	1-3	Incorporate more modern literature into the study	Modern literature have been used to replace the old literature used.(page 1-144)
3	3	Provide a scientific justification for choice of sample size	The choice of the sample size in the study has been provided (page 82-83)
4	2	Work extensively on the empirical review	Empirical review has been worked on extensively (page 68-76)
5	1	Revise the research questions to reflect the use of the qualitative method	Research questions have been restated to reflect a qualitative method (page 13)
6	1-3	Ensure that all in-text citations are referenced and the vice-versa	All in-text citations have been referenced in the out-text references (page 1-144)
7		Restate the dedication into just a sentence or two	Dedication of the study has been restated (page iv)
8	1	Delete Bishop Catholic conference from the problem statement	Bishop Catholic conference has been deleted (page 9)

9	3	Work on the methodology	All issues about methodology have been rectified (page 77-87)
10	5	Rework the recommendation and conclusion	Recommendation and conclusion have been reworked (115-117)
11	1	Demonstrate the social studies aspect of the study	The aspect of social studies in the study has been justified (page 14)
12	1-5	Correct the grammatical, syntactical and typographical errors in the entire work	All grammatical, syntactical and typographical errors have been corrected using grammar premium software
	Abstract	Recast abstract to cover the purpose, research approach and design, population, sampling and sampling technique, data instruments and analysis	Done
	Chapter two	Empirical review should be done after the literature review	Empirical review have been done after the literature review.
	Chapter four	Data analysis should be done based on the research questions	The themes from the data have been analyzed based on the research questions.
	Chapter five	Conclusion should be linked to the research questions and recommendations tailored to the conclusions of the study	The conclusion of the study have been recast based on the research questions and recommendations are done based on the conclusions.
	Chapter one	Candidate should indicate in the introduction that education is also human right issue	The aspect of education as a human right issue has been indicated in the introduction of the study.
	Chapter two	The system theory is not very appropriate for the study, candidate should have used the distributive justice theory to back the study	The distributive justice theory has been used to replace the system theory in the study.
	Chapter two	Candidate should provide a conceptual framework for the study	A conceptual framework has been provided.
	Chapter two	Candidate should explain the relevance of the theories to the study	Explanation on the relevance of the theories to the study have been highlighted.
	References	Many of the references are not complete	All incomplete references in the study have been addressed.

17	1-5	Correct the grammatical, syntactical and typographical errors in the entire work	All grammatical, syntactical and typographical errors have been corrected using grammar premium software
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CANDIDATE

Name: Kenneth Anim Boadi.....

Signature:  Date: 29-01-2024

SUPERVISOR

Name: DR. ABRAHAM KURUJICHA

Signature:  Date: 29/01/2024

EXAMINER

Name: Dr. Anthony Gordon

Signature:  Date: 29-01-2024

