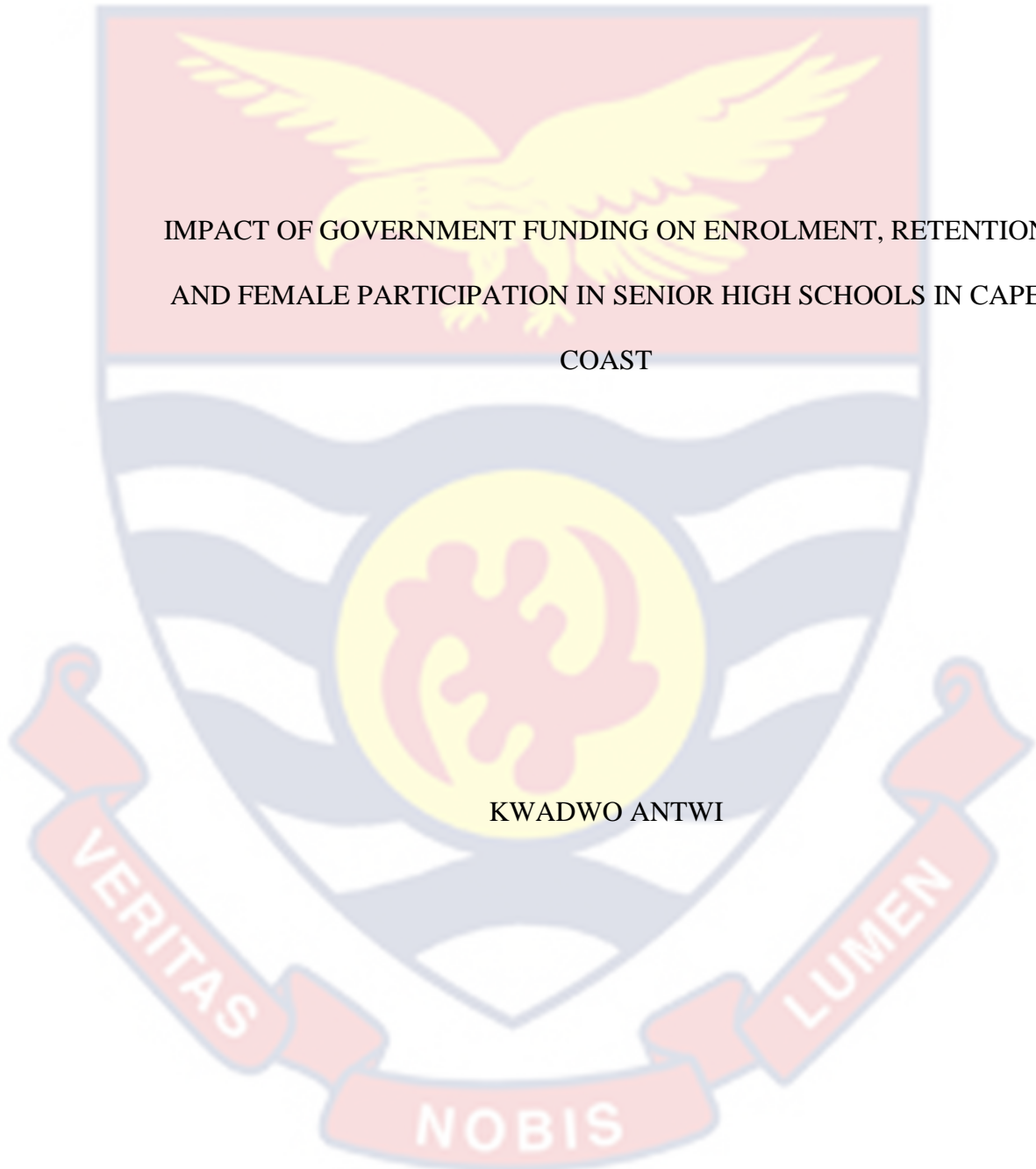
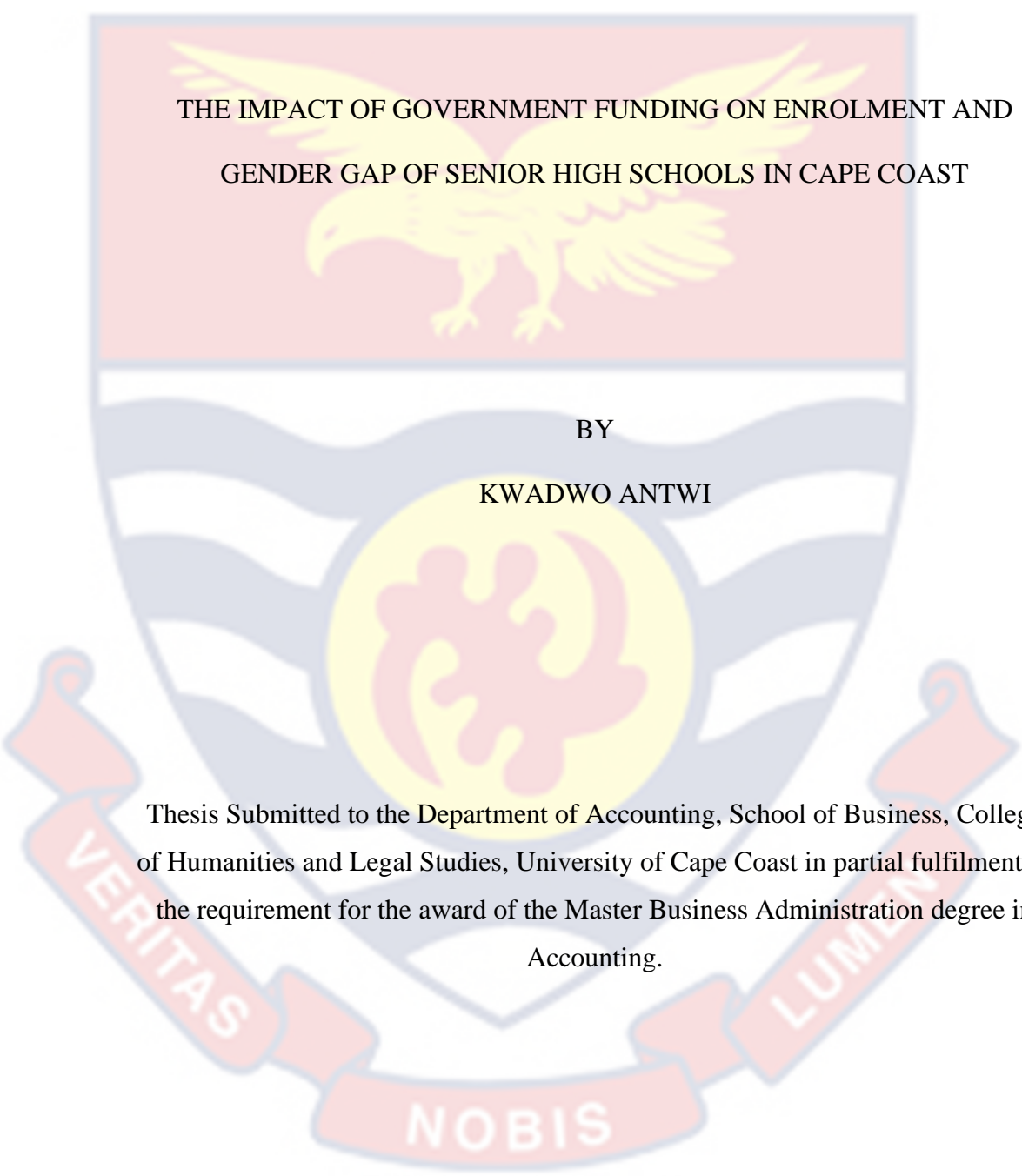


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THE IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING ON ENROLMENT AND
GENDER GAP OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN CAPE COAST

BY

KWADWO ANTWI

Thesis Submitted to the Department of Accounting, School of Business, College of Humanities and Legal Studies, University of Cape Coast in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Master Business Administration degree in Accounting.

OCTOBER 2021

DECLARATION

Candidate' Declaration

I hereby declare that the presentation of this thesis is our novel work to warrant the Master of Business Administration Degree in Accounting and that it has not been submitted by any other person or group of persons for the award of any other university degree, to the best of my knowledge.

Candidate's Signature: Date:

Name: Kwadwo Antwi

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation preparation and presentation were duly supervised in accordance with the University of Cape Coast's criteria for dissertation supervision.

Supervisor's Signature: Date:

Name: Dr Emmanuel Yaw Arhin.



ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of government funding on enrollment, retention, and female participation in selected High Schools in Cape Coast, focusing on trends from 2014 to 2019 for the enrolment analysis and 2018 to 2021 for the retention analysis. Utilizing a non-probabilistic and purposive sampling approach, the research employs a quantitative research method as well as an explanatory design to analyse secondary data from archives, school websites, Ministry of Education records, and headmasters/mistresses. The examination of enrollment trends reveals transformative effects following the initiation of the Free Senior High School (SHS) program in 2017. Notable schools experienced fluctuations, with significant increases in 2017 and 2018 and a decrease in 2019. Despite this dip, the cumulative enrollment for all schools demonstrated an overall positive impact, with the raw frequency in 2019 surpassing pre-Free SHS values. Moving to the impact on student retention, completion rates for selected schools in 2018 ranged from 69.07% to 96.61%, totalling 89.54%. Subsequent years showed improvements, with a marginal increase in 2019 and substantial gains for the first Free SHS student completed in 2020, reaching an overall completion rate of 92.07%. Exploring the impact on female SHS participation, an overall upward trend from 2014 to 2019 was evident, contributed to by Free SHS in 2017. However, fluctuations occurred, with increases in 2018 followed by a decrease in 2019, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions. Recommendations include sustaining and enhancing the positive impact of government funding on student enrollment, providing support and incentives for student retention, and addressing barriers to increasing female SHS participation. Continuous monitoring, community engagement, and further research covering other senior high schools are suggested for future endeavours.

KEY WORDS

Government Funding

Enrolment

Gender Gap

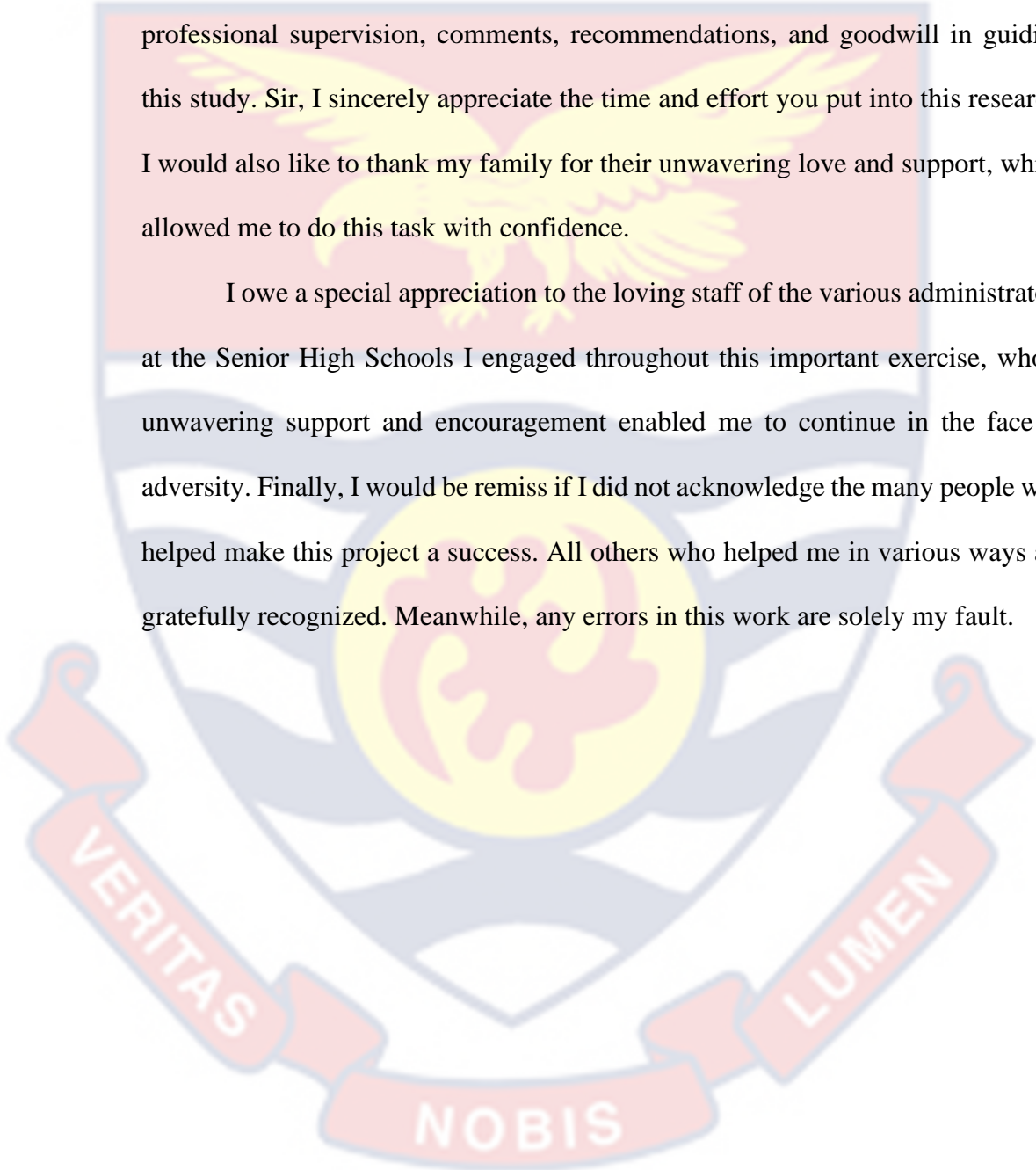
Senior High Schools



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DEDICATION

To my lovely wife, children and parents.



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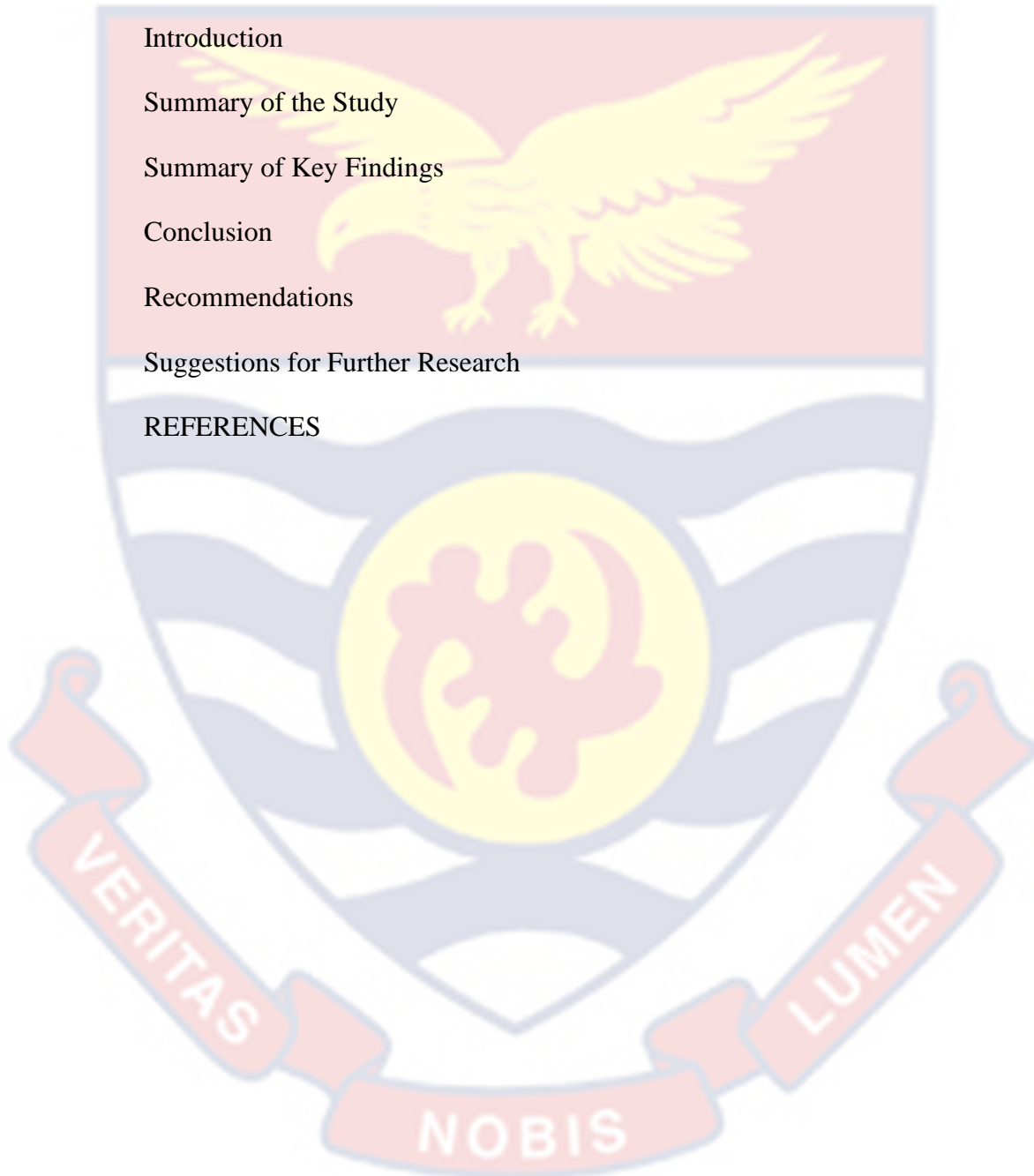
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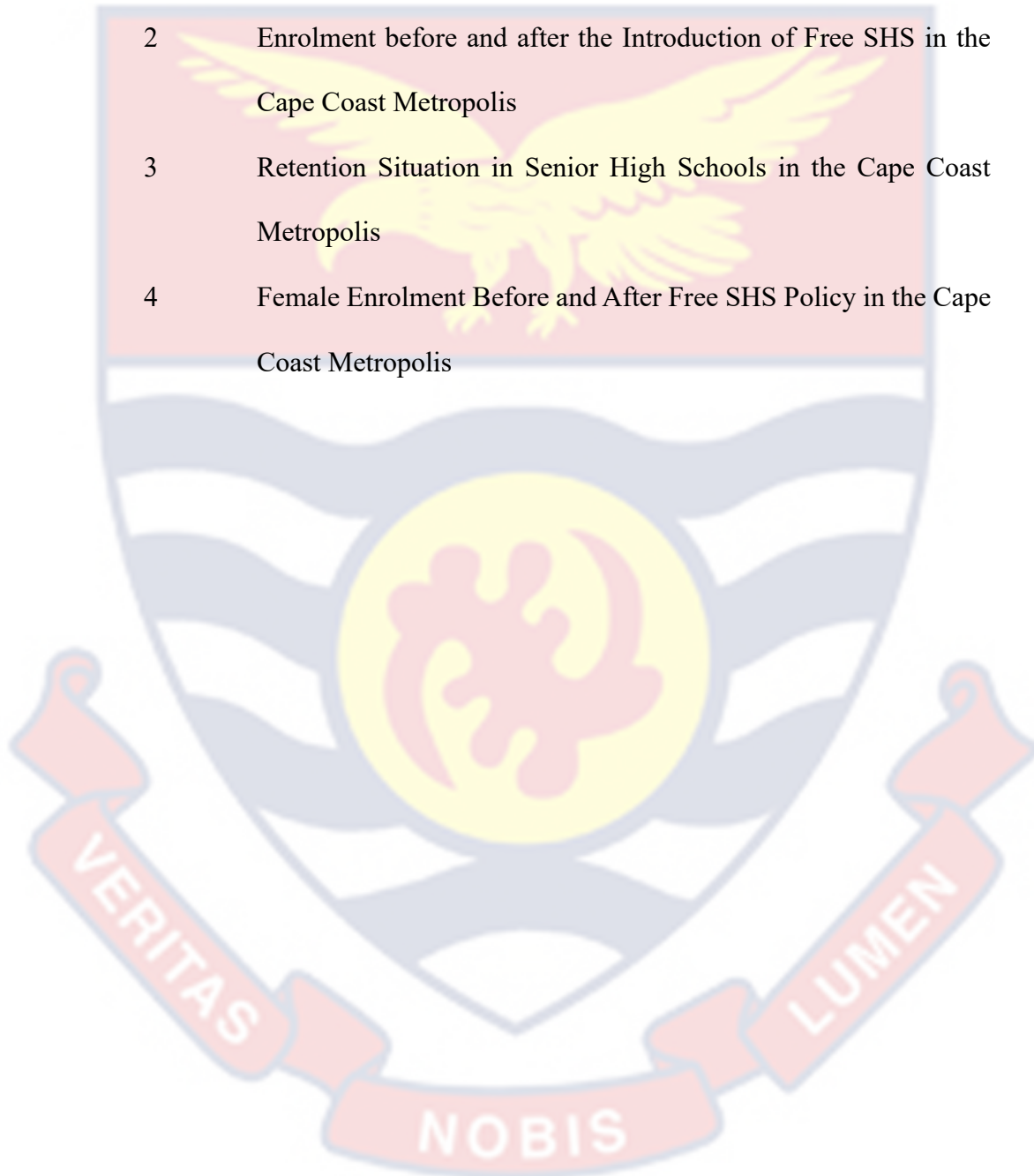
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Education is recognized as one of the key factors in social and economic empowerment and is also crucial in breaking the cycle of poverty and ultimately helping to reduce inequality among people (United Nations, 2017). Therefore, education is seen as a sine qua non for any country's development and is one of the essential investments any country can make in its people (Afful-Broni & Sekyi, 2014). Education funding increases the number of enrolment and reduces the number of students dropping out (World Bank, 2016) as well as boosting female participation (Gajigo, 2019). When the free senior high school (SHS) policy took off in September 2017, many Ghanaians were optimistic about the policy on account of its manifest advantages to the nation's developmental trajectory. This study therefore looks at its impact on student enrolment, retention and female participation.

Background of the Study

Various definitions for the term "education" have been proposed. Education, according to Acheampong (2015), is the act of passing on skills, knowledge, practices, and values from one generation to the next. Education is universally regarded as a core human right since it is the remedy for social and economic growth. In 1984, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26) enjoins every person of sound mind and body to be granted a free right to education at the primary and secondary levels, as appropriate. Reforms are defined as enacted attempts to fix an aberration in an organizational structure, (Scott & Gong, 2021).

According to Ayeni (2020), educational reforms or policies are decisions made by policymakers aimed at introducing changes to the educational system that affect policy output. According to Barrera-Osorio, Linden and Urquiola (2007), our educational system is always changing, particularly in terms of learning requirements, funding, and cost carrying.

Secondary Education in its many forms, including technical and vocational education, should be made universally available and accessible to everyone by every suitable means, and in particular, through the progressive introduction of free education, according to Ghana's 1992 Constitution. Free secondary education for students from the north and those of northern extraction, Cocoa Board scholarships, merit scholarships for secondary schools, hardship scholarships, senior high school subsidies, and progressively free secondary education are examples of past government efforts to increase access and equity in secondary education.

To meet the need of Article 25(1) (b) of the 1992 Constitution, the Government of Ghana began implementing the progressive Free Senior High School (SHS) policy. The first step was to absorb the costs of day students at public high schools. Exam, entertainment, library, Students Representative Council (SRC), sports, cultural, science and mathematics quiz, Information Communication Technology (ICT), and co-curricular costs for 320,488 day-students in public SHSs were all covered by the sponsorship. By the 2015/16 school year, this had grown to include 120,000 boarding students. Emara and Hegazy (2019) Enrollment increased from 393,995 in 2007/08 to 787,861 in 2015/16 as a result of these efforts. Despite the growth in enrolment, a large number of eligible and placed candidates

were unable to enrol in secondary schools. In 2013, 25.7 % of qualified applicants were put in SHSs, however, they were unable to enrol. In 2014, this grew to 29.3 % but then dropped to 26.5 % in 2016. Applicants' inability to enrol after placement is mostly related to issues of access and equity, which may be partially attributable to parents' inability to cover the placement's costs.

The government decided in September 2017 to switch from a "progressively free" strategy to a holistic approach that included all children who qualified and were put in secondary schools across the country. The "Free Senior High School" is the name given to this effort, which aims to provide universal access to secondary education. Education is widely regarded as a fundamental human right that is essential for individual development and societal advancement. "Education has been determined to be a viable tool for change in a positive direction. No country can develop unless it promotes education among its citizens (Emara & Hegazy, 2019). Countries should "Ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all," according to Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015). As a result, education is recognized as a key to self-realization and country progress (UNESCO, 2016).

Because of this, any government policy or program aimed at improving the accessibility and quality of education, particularly at the primary level, is highly recommended. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were established in the year 2000 as a way for all countries under the United Nations (UN) to address the difficulties brought by globalization. Education was given special priority in the MDGs' creation as objective number two, which aimed to achieve universal

primary education by 2015. (Burnett & Felsman, 2012). As a result, education is one of the most important parts of achieving sustainable development and a critical means of changing human attitudes and behaviours.

In January 2005, 168 countries adopted the Hyogo framework for action, which recognized the critical role of education and encouraged governments and civil society to create knowledge and creativity through education to develop a safe and fortified culture at all levels of the nation (Friedman, Kremer, Miguel & Thomton, 2016). As a result, governments have invested substantial financial and human resources in upgrading education in their respective countries (UNESCO, 2016). Parents have long considered their children's education to be critical, and many see it as the only good legacy they can leave them. According to Article 38 of Ghana's 1992 Constitution, successive governments must provide Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), and the same should apply to secondary, technical, and higher education, depending on resources. Several policies and programs, including the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy 2002–2004 (GPRSI), Education Sector Policy Review Report (ESPRR, August 2002), Education Sector Review (ESR, October 2002), and the Government's White Paper on the ESPRR, show the government's commitment to achieving these educational goals.

Despite these policies and programs articulating the vision for tackling education difficulties and setting the direction and methods for Ghana's educational system, little progress has been made in terms of enrolment, attendance, and retention rates, particularly in rural areas. High primary school dropout rates, as

well as low enrolment, attendance, and retention, are common in developing countries and deprived areas of wealthy countries. To date, efforts to attain universal education have met with limited success (Muusi, 2015).

They go on to say that repeat and dropout rates are still major concerns that need to be addressed if SDG 4 is to be met, the School Feeding Program (SFP) was created as a homegrown strategy to increase momentum and concentrate on achieving Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE). This was necessary because, unlike many developing countries, Ghana has a wide range of socioeconomic and political issues, including severe poverty, high illiteracy, bad infrastructure, and ignorance, to name a few. Primary education, which serves as the basis for all other levels of education, has experienced numerous obstacles over the years, including a high rate of school drop-out, low enrollment, poor attendance and retention in schools, and, as a result, poor educational quality (Amponteng, Opoku, Agyei-Okyere, Afriyie & Tawiah, 2019). The School Feeding Program is a focused social program that offers safety nets for children, particularly the most vulnerable, to improve their educational and health status. The initiative also intends to improve student enrollment, attendance, and retention rates, as well as reduce absenteeism, while simultaneously enhancing home food security (Maobe, Bogonko & Ondigi, 2019).

According to Boliver (2011), a global increase in food and petroleum prices in 2008 prompted the World Bank's Global Food Crisis Response Program to release funds and pilot the Crisis Response Window Program, which provided quick support to existing School Feeding Programs and essentially linked access to

food with education for poor and vulnerable children living in highly populated areas. He went on to say that the SF, which has a global turnover of over US\$ 100 billion, benefits hundreds of millions of schoolchildren.

School feeding is thus a clear and important social initiative in most countries, including low-, middle-, and high-income countries. Ghana has the good fortune of being one of the recipients. The Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) was formed in 2005 as a result of efforts by the Government of Ghana (GoG) to promote quality education, improve domestic food production, and reduce poverty with support from the Dutch government. The initiative began in ten (10) pilot schools, one from each of the country's regions. The experimental phase was completed in 2006, with 64,775 students benefiting. The first phase of national implementation began in 2006 and lasted four years (2006-2010). The overall number of beneficiaries at the start of the program was 413,498 in the first phase. The number of students covered increased to 441,189 in 2008, and 580,025 at the end of 2009. The program had reached 697,416 students after the 2009/2010 academic year, indicating a significant rise in recipients over time (GSFP, 2011 Annual Operating Plan). According to Osei, Owusu, Asem, and Afutu-Kotey (2009), after the first quarter of 2011, the program had fed 713,590 students, and by the end of 2012, it had fed about 1,739,357 children across Ghana's 216 districts.

The SFP was relaunched in 2011 in the Kasena Nankana West District (KNWD), with twenty-seven (27) schools participating. According to Osei, Owusu, Asem and Afutu-Kotey (2009), low-income nations are increasing the School Feeding Program to help them fulfil the Millennium Development Goals since the

program attracts more students, particularly females, to the schools. Gender balance in education is critical for inclusive and long-term development (Barrera-Osorio, Linden & Urquiola, 2007). Though many studies have shown the impact of government interventions on school enrollments and their effect on the growth of education in developing countries, Lucas and Mbiti (2012) insist on the need to examine gender disparities in the education system. They further argue that a major cause of dropout among high school pupils especially, among females is teenage pregnancy but not a high cost of living as suggested by other studies.

Girls' education does contribute to increased economic growth, improved women's wages and jobs, saving the lives of children and mothers, smaller and more sustainable families, healthier and better-educated children, lower rates of HIV/AIDS and malaria, child marriage, and family harm from natural disasters and climate change (Lucas & Mbiti, 2012). Furthermore, education for women is critical in the fight against poverty (Vanderpuye, Obosu & Nishimuko, 2020). The eradication of gender inequalities is now a development priority in both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's 2063 Agenda, owing to its significance. In 2018, the gender parity index for elementary, secondary, and higher school enrollment was established at 0.95, 0.88, and 0.75, respectively (World Bank, 2020). Governments all around the world now see education as the most important investment in enhancing economic growth, equity, and development, as well as societal reform.

Human capital plays an important part in the economic progress and prosperity of countries all over the world (Roche, 2013). Human capital may be

cultivated and grown by providing people with the necessary skills and information to ensure that these countries' labour markets prosper. Education is critical for Africa's development because it helps to prepare the human resources needed to occupy high-level scientific, technical, professional, and managerial positions in both public and private sectors. Individuals and society in Ghana benefit immensely from investing in senior high education. It promotes economic growth and development to fulfil a constitutional provision in the Republic of Ghana's 1992 constitution, which stipulates that secondary and higher education will be offered to all in a progressively free manner (Amponteng et al, 2019).

This is in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, which include a variety of objectives. It ensures that all children, regardless of gender, have access to a basic, high-quality education. This ensures gender balance in education and equal access to all educational levels, as well as providing relevant and effective learning feedback. By 2030, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute of Statistics expects to provide vocational training to people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and young children in risk circumstances. To ensure Ghana's long-term economic prosperity, previous and current governments have enacted policies such as government partial funding (progressive free senior high education policy) implemented in 2015, and the recently implemented free education policy (full funding) implemented in 2017. Since Ghana's independence from British colonial authority, successive administrations have prioritized education, resulting in

ongoing modifications in an attempt to offer the country a better-fit model that meets the citizens' expectations (Maobe, Bogonko & Ondigi, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Before the implementation of the Free Senior High School (SHS) policy in Ghana, prestigious schools set high admission standards, favouring exceptionally talented students and neglecting the less brilliant and those from rural areas (Babah et al., 2020). Some parents had to travel great distances to secure placement for their children, while financial challenges hindered access to secondary education for others. The government addressed these disparities by introducing the Free SHS policy in 2017, aiming for equity and universal access to secondary education (Armah, 2021). Subsequent budgetary increases, reaching GHc 14.7 billion in 2020, demonstrate sustained commitment (Armah, 2021).

The National Democratic Congress (NDC) government introduced the Progressive Free Senior High School Education Policy in 2015 to enhance educational accessibility and quality (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2020). In the inaugural term of 2015/2016, GHS 12,178,544.00 (\$4,050,000) was allocated for various educational facets, benefiting 320,488 students (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2020). Subsequently, the government transitioned to a fully funded education policy in 2017, costing approximately GH¢400 million (\$100 million), emphasizing free education and daily lunches for qualifying day students, aiming to ease parental burdens and spur economic growth (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2020).

Aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Ghana endeavours to improve living standards, focusing on accessible basic

education. Initiatives like the School Feeding Program, launched in 2005, exhibit a positive impact on enrollment, attendance, and retention, but challenges persist in impoverished areas (Osei et al., 2009). Despite efforts to improve education quality, rural and impoverished regions face obstacles like low enrollment and high dropout rates (Osei et al., 2009).

While studies, such as Vitenu-Sackey and Bathuure's (2020), shed light on the positive effects of government spending on education in specific areas, issues regarding program inefficiencies and ineffectiveness persist (Muusi, 2015). Concerns about the initiative's viability were raised due to poor implementation, and despite intentions to boost enrollment, practical challenges like high student-teacher ratios hinder progress (Duflo et al., 2021). The pressure on facilities in recipient schools and issues like malnutrition indicate the need for holistic improvements in Ghana's education policies (Ayeni, 2020; Tuholske et al., 2020).

Participants conveyed that the majority of program objectives were not achieved. Importantly, no prior research has delved into the effects of government funding on enrollment, attendance, or retention in beneficiary schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Babah, Frimpong, Mensah, and Sakyi-Darko's (2020) study highlighted enrollment imbalances from 1998-2009, underscoring the necessity to evaluate the impact of the Free SHS policy on enrollment, retention, and gender balance in Ghana's secondary education. This study specifically addresses the gap by examining the implications of the Free SHS policy on educational enrollment, retention, and the increased participation of girls in secondary education, with a focus on the Cape Coast Metropolis.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the implications of the Free SHS policy on educational enrolment, retention, and the increased participation of girls in secondary education in the Cape Coast Metropolis

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the impact of government funding on total enrolment among the high schools in Cape Coast
2. Determine the impact of government funding on student retention among the high schools in Cape Coast.
3. Examine the impact of government funding on female SHS participation in Cape Coast.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of government funding on students' enrolment among high schools in Cape Coast?
2. What is the impact of government funding on student retention among high school students in the Cape Coast Metropolis?
3. To what extent does government funding affect female SHS participation in Cape Coast?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of the ramifications of the Free Senior High School (SHS) policy in the Cape Coast Metropolis. By examining the policy's impact on educational enrollment, retention, and the

heightened involvement of girls in secondary education, the research addresses crucial gaps in existing knowledge. Understanding the implications of the Free SHS policy in this specific context is vital for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders.

The findings can inform future educational policies, contributing to the enhancement of enrollment, retention rates, and gender balance in secondary education. Additionally, this study's localized focus on the Cape Coast Metropolis provides insights into how the policy operates in a distinct geographical and social setting, offering a nuanced perspective for more effective and targeted interventions in the broader landscape of Ghana's education system.

Delimitation of the Study

The study focused on the implications of the Free SHS policy on educational enrolment, retention, and the increased participation of girls in secondary education in the Cape Coast Metropolis. This study was restricted to high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis from 2014 to 2019 for the enrolment analysis and from 2014 to 2021 for the retention analysis. This allows the researcher to investigate in detail and look at the practicality of the study.

Limitation of the Study

One of the challenges faced by the study was the difficulty of accessing some schools for data collection, especially those located far from the central business districts of the Cape Coast Metropolitan Area. This problem was more evident when trying to reach schools and educational directorates that were outside the urban areas. Moreover, the study's scope was limited to the Cape Coast Metropolis, which may affect the generalization of the findings to other contexts.

Another limitation of the study was the use of explanatory research, which could not provide detailed insights into the phenomena under investigation.

Organization of the Study

The entire study was organized into five (5) chapters which aided the researcher in achieving his objectives. The first chapter, Chapter One, presented the introduction to the study. It highlighted the background of the study, the problem statement, the research objectives as well as the research questions, the significance of the study, delimitations and limitations and how the entire study was organized. The second chapter, Chapter Two, covers the literature review of the study. All theoretical and conceptual concepts on the subject matter of the study as well as the empirical literature from other researchers are discussed in this chapter. The conceptual framework used for the study was also specified in Chapter Two. Chapter Three presented the research methods used for the study. The research philosophy, approach and design were spelt out in this chapter. The population was specified as well as the sampling techniques employed. The data collection instruments used for the study were also specified in this study. Chapter Four presented the results and discussion. The final chapter, Chapter Five presented a summary of the study, key findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research in the same or similar area of study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The significance of better education standards is brought to bear by international organizations' actions and their complex environmental, social, and economic repercussions. This phenomenon has the potential to have a significant impact on a country's economic outcomes. Over time, both in academia and in practice, research in the subject field has increased and acquired significance. This chapter covered the theoretical review of the investigation, as well as a review of related literature and the development of a conceptual framework for the study. Incremental policy paradigm and equity theory were all considered. Although some are not in the high school education sector, empirical studies from many regions of the world have been checked in the field of government spending in education.

Theoretical Review

In this section, the researcher discusses some of the relevant theories from the works of literature which underpin this study

Human capital theory

At the individual and national levels, Becker (1993) suggests that the social and economic returns on high school education encourage people to enrol and countries to invest. The central proposition of the human capital theory, with regard to education, is that people with a higher level of education are more productive due to their increase in knowledge and skills. Becker (1993) argues that, in the US, the growth in high-school education mostly due to compulsory school laws is more

directly related to anticipated private and social real rates of returns and that people without at least a high school education are obsolete to national economies (Becker, 1993).

Although access to education is only one of the facets of schooling (Stromquist, 2012), it is nevertheless a prerequisite, since other aspects such as quality, relevance, and schooling experience depend on enrolment. Empirical studies suggest that human capital formation through the increase in government expenditure on education is a key variable in achieving SDGs (Babasanya, Oseni & Awode, 2018).

While studying the determinants that sustain human capital, including institutional quality and infrastructure development in 33 African countries, Shuaibu and Oladayo (2016) demonstrated that investment in education is a key variable. The slow growth of developing countries is often attributed to low expenditure in education and Africa has consistently recorded weak education indicators compared to other regions (Schultz, 1999; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021).

Despite a lack of access to education stifling human capital formation and long-term productivity improvements; in almost all countries in Ghana, access to education has been stifled by the existence of fees particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable children, thus leading to a stagnating or even declining enrolment rate (World Bank, 2009). Therefore, since the mid-1990s the attention of governments has shifted to championing the abolition of fees in primary education, and in some countries lower secondary education, which has led to an increase in

enrolment rates (Little & Lewin, 2011). The importance of education to human capital formation justifies government policies to invest in education such as through absorption of the direct cost of schooling.

Education is considered an investment with an effect on future earnings. More schooling is assumed to attract more wages. The more the government increases funding for the education sector, the more students get enrolled and stay in school, and the more students get enrolled and stay in school to graduation, the higher the skills they acquire. The theory of human capital was used to determine the enrolment and retention rate of learners.

Equity theory

According to Adams' Equity Theory, a fair balance must be struck between an employee's inputs (hard effort, skill level, acceptance, excitement, and so on) and outputs (good work, skill level, acceptance, enthusiasm, and so on) (salary, benefits, intangibles such as recognition, and so on) (Ayeni, 2020). Finding this fair balance, according to the notion, ensures a solid and productive relationship with the employee, with the result being pleased, motivated employees. Relating this theory to the educational needs of pupils. Rahji (2005) suggests that two key aspects influence educational equity. The first is fairness, which means that personal circumstances should not interfere with one's ability to succeed academically. The second critical aspect is inclusion, which refers to a broad norm that applies to all students in a certain educational system. These two aspects are intertwined and dependent on one another for the success of an educational system. In

acknowledgement of the importance of educational equity, this is one of the aims of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4.

The growing importance of education equality is founded on the idea that a person's level of education is directly related to their future quality of life. As a result, an educational system that promotes educational parity is a strong basis for a just and healthy society (Roche, 2013). Inequity in education, on the other hand, is difficult to avoid and can be classified as inequity based on socioeconomic status, race, gender, or disability (Stoet & Geary, 2018). The researchers further argue that the historical background of the region, people, and structure also plays a role in educational equity. Fairness is something that students, especially children, are completely preoccupied with. In equity theory, inputs are anything an individual believes he or she is contributing to the organization's success. Experience, performance, education, time, and so on could all be factors. Many of the examples given thus far may not be appropriate for youngsters because inputs for students could include proper behaviour, assignment completion, staying on task, and so on. Outputs can include compensation, working conditions, employment status, achievement, and so on.

Outcomes are essentially what a person believes they will receive from the organization in exchange for their input. Children's outcomes can include things like special privileges, good grades, accolades, and so on (Mortrude, 2017). People evaluate the inputs to the outcomes over time to see if they are balanced and fair, according to equity theory. People are satisfied if they are, but if they are not, there may be issues. By comparing our intake-to-output ratio to someone else's, we can

determine what is appropriate. These individuals are referred to as referent others. When children return to the classroom, they assess what is fair not by some external norm, but by how they are treated in comparison to how others are treated. If one student does not have to do homework while another does, the student who has to finish the task can simply complain that the situation is unfair in comparison to the student who did not receive the assignment. If they both had to do homework, they'd have to come up with a different reason than comparing themselves to one another.

Conceptual Review

The key concepts underpinning this study have been discussed in this section.

Ghana's education system

The academic year in Ghana is divided into three terms, beginning in September and finishing in July. The 6-3-3 system includes six years of primary school, three years of junior high school, and three years of secondary education. Secondary schools in Ghana are divided into two categories: academic and technical/vocational. Both academic and technical/vocational students are enrolled in a specific program within their institutions, such as General Science in the academic track or welding in the technical/vocational track. According to Braun and Naami (2021), almost all academic track schools have boarding alternatives, allowing students to attend from all across the country. During the pre-tertiary years of education, students take two national standardized tests. Students take the Basic Education Certificate Examination at the end of JHS3. Students take the West

African Senior School Certificate Examination at the end of SHS 3. Passing these tests is required to acquire the equivalent of a diploma, and exam scores influence whether and what type of additional education individuals can pursue.

Primary, junior high and senior high schools are currently tuition-free, although tertiary institutions still charge fees. The approved academic year fees at a government secondary school for the 2016-2017 school year were GHC551.50 (USD\$143) for day students and GHC1494.50 (USD\$387) for boarding students. Duflo, Dupas and Kremer (2021) explain that parent-teacher association dues, teacher motivation fees, infrastructure improvement levies, and test registration fees were all informally collected at several government schools. Private schools are, however, free to set their fee schedule (Vanderpuye, Obosu & Nishimuko, 2020).

Millennium development goals (MDGs) and the Ghanaian education system

The MDGs are a set of eight goals that were set to address the world's most pressing development issues. The MDGs are based on the activities and goals outlined in the Millennium Declaration, which was accepted by 189 countries and signed by 147 heads of state and government in September 2000 at the United Nations Millennium Summit. The objectives vary from decreasing extreme poverty to providing universal primary education to all children. Goal two aims to achieve Universal Primary Education, ensuring that all children, boys and girls, will be able to complete a full course of primary education while goal 3 is all about promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. That will be the eradication of gender disparities in primary and secondary education, ideally by 2015, and at all levels of

education by 2015. Compliance with MDGs 2 and 3 is critical, as governments have taken significant steps to change policies and empower women.

Ghana, as a member of the international community, has employed various measures to demonstrate her commitment to Universal Primary Education by guaranteeing that all children of primary school age enrol and complete school by 2015. The government has demonstrated its commitment through policy directives and interventions such as the Education Strategy Plan (ESP) for 2003-2015, the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS), and the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) strategies used to operationalize policies such as capitation grant (school fees abolition) and nutrition and school feeding programs for Ghana to achieve Universal Access to education. The number of girls attending school has increased significantly. The Girls' Education Unit, for example, was established in 1997 as part of the GES' Basic Education Division (BED) to coordinate the implementation of initiatives relating to girl-child education.

All of the foregoing has resulted in tremendous educational development, particularly in recent years. Enrollment in primary schools, for example, has increased dramatically. The Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) in primary schools climbed by over 10%, bringing the total enrolment from 62 % to 69 %. Every region had an increase in enrollment, with the Northern Region (which had the lowest rates) seeing the highest increase. In the 2005/2006 academic year, for example, overall enrolment in primary schools climbed by 16.7%. (UNICEF Ghana, 2006). In addition, progress has been made in achieving tremendous improvement in girl child education. Following years of stagnation, the Gender Parity Index (GPI),

which is a measure of females' involvement in formal education, improved slightly in the 2005/2006 academic year. Enrolment of girls increased somewhat higher than that of boys, 18 % versus 15.3 %, with the GPI in most Ghanaian regions reporting considerable disparities in the proportion of boys and girls in school. The situation in the Cape Coast Metropolis is no different. Despite significant progress in the GPI, there has been insufficient progress in the MDGs 2 and 3 to achieve gender parity in the metropolis.

Government interventions in senior high education

Ghana is one of the most successful situations in Sub-Saharan Africa when it comes to higher education equity, according to a 2017 World Bank book (Sharing Higher Education's Promise). "Ghana is one of the only nations in the area where students from the lowest quintiles of the income distribution account for a significant portion of high school enrollment." Philosophically, admission to a school is dependent on the school's performance, its goals and objectives, the course the school offers, and the end product the institution intends to produce at the end of the day (Amponteng et al., 2019). Unfortunately, many African countries are unable to meet the rising demand for secondary education as a result of their failure to build on the success of the universal primary education system implemented some time ago.

Governments and donor agencies have both ignored the secondary education sub-sector in Africa for decades (Emara & Hegazy, 2019). The seeming neglect of this sector has led to limited access, particularly for young women and rural populations, as well as poor curriculum quality, a scarcity of competent

teachers, and inadequate infrastructure (Emara & Hegazy, 2019). The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) established goals that are important to secondary education and have consequences for it, notably in terms of ensuring that all young people and adults' learning needs are addressed through equal access to adequate learning and life skills programs. It also sought to eliminate gender gaps in primary and secondary education by 2005 and to achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring that girls have full and equal access to high-quality basic education. Enrolment, quality imperatives, literacy, numeracy, gender inequities, investments, and returns on secondary education expenditure, according to Barrera-Osorio, Linden and Urquiola (2007), must all be carefully reviewed. Even in nations with universal coverage, providing quality secondary education that is relevant to the changing needs of young people and society as a whole is becoming a major challenge.

As efforts to enhance young people's participation rates in post-secondary education intensify, school facilities must be expanded or a shift system implemented to meet the demand for seats in institutions (Amponteng et al., 2019). There is a need to avoid less inclusive policy measures, such as prolonged selection processes and early tracking/streaming at the end of elementary school. Since independence, certain steps have been taken to improve the level of education in the country, according to history.

Basic education's critical role in building human resources for both personal fulfilment and social growth has been recognized around the world (Braun & Naami, 2021). In September 2005, Ghana launched a Computerized School

Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) to improve transparency and competency in the school transition process (Braun & Naami, 2021). It has led to the implementation of free SHS to make education more accessible to all and to assure transparency and competency with CSSPS. In September 2017, the Ghanaian government launched the Free Senior High School (Free SHS) education program. The policy's primary themes of access, equity, and equality align with the United Nations' revised Sustainable Development Goals, which mandate that member countries include such ideals in their educational systems to guarantee that children have enough learning opportunities (Ayeni, 2020). We mean free tuition, admission costs, textbooks, library fees, science centre fees, ICT expenses, examination fees, and payment of utilities fees, boarding, and meals when we say "free SHS." "Secondary education in its many forms, including technical and vocational education, shall be made universally available and accessible to everyone by every suitable means, in particular through the progressive implementation of free education," according to Article 25 1b of the 1992 Constitution.

"By 2030, all boys and girls complete free, egalitarian, and high-quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes," says Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For starters, others argue that the policy should have been limited to individuals who are unable to pay, a concept known as means testing in the social protection literature. Some parents believe that they should be able to pay fees to receive better educational facilities (Vitenu-Sackey & Bathuure, 2020).

To be sustainable in the long run, Free SHS must be offered to all. Second, there have been some reservations about using a double-track calendar, a system that has allowed the government to enrol many more students by maximizing the use of existing facilities. According to available data, this innovation doubled enrolment in double-track schools in the first year of implementation, allowing approximately two hundred thousand kids to enter the secondary school system (Boliver, 2011). While both the traditional agricultural calendar and double track have been experimentally demonstrated to benefit pupils, the double track looks to be more difficult for children from underprivileged families, who are the ones who stand to benefit the most from the Free SHS program. Kwegyiriba (2021) found that critics allege that the system has reduced students' contact hours, citing the number of days that some kids spend in school and comparing it to other tracks and earlier systems. The study further indicated that the government plans to spend GHC1.97 billion on the policy this year alone, a major increase from the GHC400 million spent in the first year of implementation. A calculation of the numbers reveals that each student spends GHC2,312 every year.

Gender disparity in senior high education

The Education for All (EFA) conference in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 marked the start of the journey toward those aims. It raised global attention to the importance of achieving Universal Primary Education and addressing the educational gender gap. The Education for All (EFA) Dakar, 2000 target number five (5) aims for the "removal of gender gaps in primary and secondary education by 2005, as well as gender equality in basic education." Goal 3 of the Millennium

Development Goals (MDGs) is to "advance gender equality and empower women," with Target 4 being to "remove gender disparities in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2015, and at all levels of education not later than 2015."

As the study will explore some of these roadblocks in detail, there are several that are extremely evident on the road to attaining gender equality, parity, and ultimately equality in education. Children who do not have access to secondary education have little opportunity to improve their lives, and the world's progress may be imperilled. Former US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said in September at the Clinton Global Initiative that "lack of secondary education holds back the hopes of so many girls and their families." It jeopardizes global prosperity and stability Cohen (2014). Clinton announced a big collaboration with the MasterCard Foundation, Intel, and Microsoft, as well as more than 30 other organizations. This organization has committed to spending more than \$600 million over the next five years to help 14 million girls "attend and complete elementary and secondary education." It's a wise decision. Increased enrollment in secondary schools gives benefits to all levels of society, in addition to the obvious benefits that education may provide (Gajigo, 2019).

Requiring girls to continue their education, for example, minimizes child marriage. By the age of 15, one out of every seven girls in the developing world are married, and nearly half are mothers by the age of 18. Secondary school girls, on the other hand, are far less likely to marry and have children before reaching maturity (Lucas & Mbiti, 2012). Teenage females may be more concerned about the potential of education limiting women's exposure to pregnancy. Girls who

attend school have reduced chances of becoming pregnant than those who do not. In this scenario, extending mandatory education could result in an "incarceration effect" for adolescent girls. According to research on Norway's education reform, each additional year of schooling lowered the likelihood of teenage pregnancy by 8%. As a result, the number of years spent in school can influence the timing of childbearing.

Because becoming a mother at a young age might have a negative impact on one's career growth, reducing adolescent pregnancy is a key policy goal (Khiem, Linh & Dung, 2020). Secondary education for girls reduces family sizes and increases the health and survival chances of their children when they do become moms. According to one study, mothers in underdeveloped nations with one out of every five girls receiving a secondary education had an average of more than five children. There were only three children on average half of the girls attended secondary school, and child and newborn mortality was substantially lower (Braun & Naami, 2021). According to Education for All Global Monitoring, if all women in Sub-Saharan Africa completed primary education, maternal deaths would be cut in half, saving approximately 189,000 lives, and if these women in Sub-Saharan Africa had education, child deaths would be cut in half, saving approximately 3 million lives. Young people, on the other hand, constitute the fastest-growing portion of the population in emerging countries. They may become an unprecedented burden at the age of their civilization if they remain uneducated. However, if they are given secondary education, they will be able to change their lives (Barrera-Osorio, Linden & Urquiola, 2007).

Secondary schooling closer to home would have the added benefit of lowering the danger of sexual abuse and violence for females. For a variety of reasons, girls have higher dropout rates than boys: household responsibilities; child labour; higher opportunity cost to the family; long distances from girls' homes to schools; early marriage and/or pregnancy; the threat of sexual harassment and violence in school; a lack of girl-friendly facilities, which is especially problematic during menstruation; gender discriminatory teaching and learning methods; and parents and the community (Iddrisu, 2016). Critical thinkers and reflective individuals make judgments and solve problems in their cultures. Competent citizens have a set of abilities that help them make decisions and solve problems.

Concerned citizens research their social environment, recognize relevant issues, and act as members of a social community (Osei, Owusu, Asem & Afutu-Kotey, 2009). Secondary education does not have to be expensive. Poor countries may expand educational possibilities quickly and at a considerably lower cost than is often assumed by the World Bank (World Bank, 2021).

Gender participation in senior high education

"If a girl's primary job in society is to be a wife and mother, it may be argued that the sooner she is allowed to attain recognition in the community in this capacity, the better" African Center for Women (1997). Female involvement in school is significantly impacted by the practice of betrothal and early marriage, particularly among Muslim groups in the Northern Ghana Ministry of Education (1995). Friedman, Kremer, Miguel and Thomson (2016) Found that the majority of parents withdraw their daughters from school for marriage purposes between the

ages of 15 and 20 years in their research of the causes of low levels of education among Muslim girls in the Nanumba District. According to Herleni, Azwardi and Sukanto (2019), there is always a conflict of roles when it comes to initiation, and the practice is frequently perceived as draining financial resources that could have been used for schooling. According to Prah (2002), there are significant gender discrepancies in Ghanaian education.

Women's education is frequently geared around educating women on how to be better spouses and mothers rather than equipping them with the skills and training they need to compete with men in a fast-changing industry. The achievement of women and girls is hampered by this socio-cultural barrier, which limits their full potential. People in the Kusanaba circuit of Bawku in Ghana's Upper East Region, according to Emara and Hegazy (2019), regard their daughters as "saving accounts" for their parents due to the high significance they place on early marriage.

As a result, there has been a decrease in female educational engagement in the area. Many families, particularly poor ones, place a high value on bride riches. Such households push their daughters to marry young to boost family income, but this also means that daughters' net benefits are lost. Cultural norms that cause females to be considered as important primary tools for procreation, according to Stoet and Geary (2018), play a role in how society sees girls' education in general. This is instilled in the minds of girls, leading them to aspire to what society expects of them to fulfil societal expectations. This frequently leads to early marriage, which frequently results in the loss of education, who investigates the institution of

"Fiasidi-vestal" virginity and its consequences on the education of "Fiasidi" girls in Afife, Volta Region of Ghana, concludes that the denial of access to formal education is one of the most important challenges facing the girls who are virgins of gods. This denial is mostly celebrated through the severe implementation of the "fabois" institution, regulations, and formal schooling for girls. They are concerned that if the girls are exposed to Western civilization and religion, they will lose their "fiasidi" status.

This denial is mostly celebrated through the severe implementation of the "fabois" institution, regulations, and formal schooling for girls. They are concerned that if the girls are exposed to Western civilization and religion, they will lose their "fiasidi" status. According to Akoto-Baako, Heeralal and Kissi-Abrokwah (2021), the sex difference in education is because women's primary function is to ensure lineage continuity. Husbands are expected to provide for their wives. Girls without a formal education can make a living by selling snacks to workers or working in retail. Girls also serve as a source of social security benefits for their elderly parents, as well as the possibility of a girl's pregnancy.

Access to high school education

When every kid receives the resources needed to learn the fundamental work skills of reading, writing, and elementary arithmetic, this is referred to as equity in education. It gauges educational achievement in society based on the outcomes rather than the resources invested, and it accelerates economic growth. Every country's economic growth is slowed by educational disparity (Ampong et al., 2019). The Ministry of Education's overall purpose is to provide high-quality

education to all Ghanaians, especially the poor, for they to gain appropriate skills that will enable them to be functionally productive (Emara & Hegazy, 2019). The study explains that education is the only definite approach to combat poverty in the country. For years, equity of access in education has referred to all kids' ability to obtain an education from skilled teachers in buildings that are safe and conducive to learning in a district with adequate resources that are fairly distributed among pupils. There are auditory learners, visual learners, kinesthetic learners, and tactile learners, according to (Kwegyiriba, 2021)

They seemed to acknowledge that, given the various ways of digesting information, the activities they engage in will undoubtedly differ. Regardless, education at all levels should be accessible, equitable, and of high quality. The growth of private second-cycle institutions, as well as the creation of satellite campuses of most private secondary schools in Ghana's urban areas, has resulted in a battle for pupils at the expense of quality (Kwegyiriba, 2021). Access to education refers to a person's ability to participate in education regardless of where they live, their gender, or their socioeconomic situation UNESCO (2016).

Access is defined by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics by examining input indicators such as the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), the percentage of new Grade 1 intake with preschool (ECCE) intake, the Net Intake Rate (NIR), the Gross percentage of Girls Enrolment, and public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP, among others (Sustainable Development Goal). While Ghana offers nearly universal elementary and lower secondary education, the gross enrollment rate in higher secondary education was below 45 % in 2014, with significant gender and

regional gaps in access. Students from the poorest districts, especially those from rural areas, were five to six times less likely to attend secondary school. Increased demand for secondary education has resulted from higher completion rates in basic education, but supply has not kept up (World Bank, 2020). Ghana's budget for 2021 aims to re-establish economic development following the devastation caused by a global epidemic that wreaked havoc on economies all over the world, including Ghana's. It also aimed to bring together the various policy victories in the field of education, particularly the free senior high school policy.

In the education sector, the government's policy intentions appear to align with the goals outlined in the Ministry of Education's 2018-30 Education Strategic Plan (ESP), which acts as a technical document in the Ministry of Education (2018). The Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2018–2030 lays out Ghana's vision and goals for the education sector up to 2030, as well as comprehensive methods for achieving these goals. The document contains evidence-based priorities and strategies developed following extensive consultations, ensuring that the majority of Ghana's education stakeholders agree on the importance of providing the country with equitable access to education. According to Ghana's Ministry of Education in 2018, the ESP provides a clear roadmap for delivery, in which all actors can identify where their responsibilities and contributions in connection to accountability and attainment of the vision are.

The ESP's goals are to expand access and equity, improve quality, raise relevance, increase efficiency and effectiveness, and assure long-term viability. These, in turn, are related to the overarching national goals set by the United

Nations in 2015 to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals UNDP (2015). When the free senior high school (SHS) policy was implemented in September 2017, many Ghanaians were enthusiastic about the policy's benefits to the country's development trajectory.

Equity in high school education

In practice, gender equity relates to both male and female issues, although in the developing world, the majority of gender bias is directed towards women. Gender discrimination in education has long been a concern in many countries, particularly in developing countries, where cultural and societal stigma continues to stifle women's growth and prosperity. According to the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), one-tenth of girls in primary school are 'unhappy,' and this number rises to one-fifth by the time they reach secondary school, according to a poll titled "Gender Discrimination in Violation of Rights of Women and Girls." In comparison to boys, girls gave reasons such as harassment, restoration of freedom, and an inherent lack of opportunity. Education, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is a "basic human right that is necessary for the practice of all other human rights." It advocates for individual liberty.

Katarina Tomasevki, a UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, created the "4A" concept. The '4A' concept considers accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability to be vital to the educational institution. Despite this, secondary education is prohibited for girls in many developing countries. The world's disparities in secondary education are depicted in the figure to the right.

When it comes to gender bias, countries like Sudan, Somalia, Thailand, and Afghanistan have the highest levels of inequality. Gender disparities in education aren't solely a problem in developing countries. Friedman, Kremer, Miguel and Thomson (2016) discussed how education systems, particularly public school systems, tend to create gender segregation. Boys and girls are frequently taught using separate ways, which instils in children the belief that they are unique and deserving of special care. Boys and girls, on the other hand, learn differently and should be taught differently, according to studies. Boys learn better when they are constantly moving, whereas girls learn best when they are seated in solitude. As a result, segregating the genders promotes gender parity in school, because both boys and girls have optimized their learning abilities. Before the introduction of free SHS, according to Boliver (2011), heads of very good and endowed schools set high personal cut-off grade points and admission standards capriciously and independently to attract only the exceptionally good and talented students to the detriment of the less brilliant and rural setting students. Some parents have to drive long distances just to get their children into a school.

In other cases, some wards are placed in secondary schools but are unable to attend due to financial difficulties in paying school fees. This, in turn, restricts the average Ghanaian child's ability to attend secondary school and contribute to the nation's human capital development. In light of all of these barriers to secondary education, Ghana's government introduced a free SHS policy in 2017 to ensure that everyone has access to secondary school. The policy's goal was to provide access to second-cycle education to each Ghanaian residing wherever in Ghana, regardless

of their family's socioeconomic situation. The dedication to education was backed up by funding to match its lofty goals and ensure that its plans were carried out effectively.

The government, for example, spent GH¢10.5 billion on education in 2017, more than a billion more than the GH¢9.08 billion spent in 2016 (Ayeni, 2020). Spending increased again in 2018, with GH¢12.7 billion, GH¢13.3 billion in 2019, and GH¢14.7 billion in 2020. The 2021 budget has committed to a further rise in education sector spending, intending to spend GH¢15.6 billion on education this fiscal year to argue the second cycle Education sector Ayeni (2020), to further support the free SHS on equity and access to all Ghanaians residing in Ghana. According to Amponteng, Opoku, Agyei-Okyere, Afriyie and Tawiah (2019), the BECE report from 1998 to 2009 had a number of concerns with enrolment imbalances and the quality of pupils admitted. While a few well-endowed schools were overcrowded, community-based schools were unable to recruit pupils, according to the report.

According to the Education Review Report, as of 2002, over seventy-five (75) Senior Secondary Schools had an enrolment of less than one hundred (100) pupils, and the well-endowed institutions were able to admit only the best applicants, expanding the gap between them and the less endowed schools. Is it true that the free SHS policy ensured secondary education equity?

Empirical Review

Studies have been conducted in different parts of the world on issues of government spending in relation to enrolment among pupils in different levels of

education. The empirical review in this section will look at studies conducted around the objectives set for this study and how it will drive the subsequent chapters of the study.

Impact of government funding on enrolment

Vitenu-Sackey and Bathuure (2020) conducted a study to find the effect of government expenditure on secondary education on secondary school enrollment and economic growth in Ghana in a time series study from 1971 to 2018. The study discovered that government education spending has a favorable long-term and short-term impact on economic growth and secondary school enrolment, but has no influence on secondary school enrollment in the short run. Furthermore, government spending on secondary education has a negligible impact on both long and short-term economic growth and secondary school enrolment but has a negative impact on short-term economic growth. Furthermore, the study discovered a bidirectional causality relationship between secondary school enrolment and the pupil-teacher ratio. To conduct its statistical analysis, the study used time series techniques. To determine the long run, short run, and direction of causality among the variables, fully modified ordinary least square, Wald test, and Granger causality tests were used. Unlike the current study, the researchers failed to look at the impact of the dramatic government spending on the gender difference between male and female pupils in senior high education in Ghana.

Another study undertaken by Khiem, Linh and Dung (2020) used a quasi-experimental difference-in-differences (DID) approach with propensity score matching (PSM) to assess the effects of the 2010 policy reform on school enrolment

rates at the primary, secondary, and high school levels. This study looked at the three levels of schooling in Vietnam independently. The strategy was found to increase enrolment rates at both the primary and secondary levels (both of which are compulsory in Vietnam), but high school enrolment rates stayed unchanged. Within ethnic minority groups and regional border areas, one of the most significant discrepancies was discovered. At secondary and high school levels, minorities preferred to enrol more than ethnic majority counterparts, but there was a large disparity between groups, with children from rural regions remaining less likely to enrol overall than children from urban areas. The study further established that the reason for this could be that tuition fees and subsidies only cover a small portion of the entire cost of schooling, or it could be part of a wider, invisible opportunity cost calculation that older children face when they come from low-income families and have the opportunity to work. Though the study shares a similar background with the current study, it differs from the current study in terms of procedures that were used to draw the study's conclusion.

Kenya's government scrapped secondary school fees in 2008, following the 2007 presidential election. Ohba (2011) did a study to explore the influence of fees on the transition to secondary schooling in the context of this substantial policy change by tracking 109 primary school leavers in rural Kenya after fees were abolished in 2007. The research used survey data and many interviews to discover that eliminating school fees had just a minor impact on children from low-income families. The study concludes that, while secondary education is in high demand in general, whether or not primary school leavers from low-income families enrol in

fee-free secondary education is largely determined by other direct and opportunity costs, as well as their perceived economic returns from such education. Despite the material distinction in terms of methods employed to conduct this study, this study failed to look at the impact of the policy on gender disparity in school enrolment.

To analyze whether free school meal programs affect children's enrolment at ECD centres in rural areas using descriptive comparative analysis and a randomized control trial in Rwanda's Maraba Sector, Ayeni (2020) undertook a study. The researcher collected data from 127 volunteers representing the Sector's 6 Cells, 65 of whom were in the experimental group and 62 in the control group. The study discovered notable popularity (98%) among the beneficiaries, indicating a substantial impact, but abysmal popularity (below the approved standard of 60%) among the control group. Over 90% of beneficiaries agreed that free school food has a favourable impact on enrolment, while the same proportion in the control group felt that free school meal has a positive impact on children's enrollment in ECD facilities. Unlike the current study, this study used a qualitative research method to generate the findings.

Kwegyiriba (2021) examined the effects of Ghana's free senior high school policy on educational access and equity in secondary school. For this investigation, the document analysis method was used. The data revealed that the free SHS program has significantly increased secondary school enrollment. According to the researcher, it is the obligation of parents, teachers, school administrators, policy analysts, and other relevant stakeholders to contribute alternative solutions constructively and helpfully to the policy conversation. Though this study shares

many similarities with the current study, the study failed to look at the impact of the free SHS policy on gender disparity and participation. These substantial differences make the current study unique in its focus.

To see how subsidized Free Day Secondary Education funding affects student enrolment in Gucha South schools in Kenya, Maobe, Bogonko and Ondigi (2019) used data collected from public day secondary schools in Gucha South Sub-County. Using a descriptive survey research approach, the study included 323 participants, including 35 principals, 280 teachers, one Sub-County Director of Education, and seven Zonal Quality and Standards Officers (ZQASOs) from the Sub-County. A random sample of thirty per cent (30%) of the study population was chosen, yielding 11 principals, 84 teachers, two ZQASOS, and one Sub-County Director of Education (SCDE), for a total of 98 respondents. The data was collected from the sampled respondents using structured questionnaires and interview schedules. The meanings and implications provided by respondents were used to analyze qualitative data acquired from interviews and open-ended questionnaires. Descriptive statistics in the form of frequency counts, means, and percentages were used to analyze quantitative data. The impact of FDSE financing on academic attainment was measured using the KCSE grading system, with a lower to higher level indicating a positive influence. According to the report, student enrollment increased from 117 per school in 2008 to 212 in 2012. From a mean score of 3.25 in 2008 to 4.50 in 2012, KCSE achievement has improved with time. According to the study, the FDSE policy is a worthwhile endeavour since it extended access to education, increased student enrollment, and improved learners' academic

achievement by a positive deviation of the mean in the KCSE from lower to upper grades.

Impact of government spending on student retention

The study by Ngasura, Nyakundi and Koros (2023) examined the influence of government subsidies on students' retention in public secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The authors use the human capital theory by Schultz to analyze the data collected from 192 principals, 2384 teachers and 6 QASO officers of 192 public secondary schools in the county. The study employs a descriptive survey research design and uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyze the data. The study finds that government subsidy has a positive and significant influence on retention, as well as on enrollment. The study also reveals that timely disbursement of government subsidies is crucial for improving retention and enrollment rates. The study recommends that the government should ensure that basic education is free and accessible to all students by providing adequate funding, eliminating extra levies, and improving infrastructure and facilities.

The study by Muchalwa Ogenga and Buhere (2016) delves into the impact of the subsidized secondary education policy on student retention in public day secondary schools within Kakamega East Sub County, Kenya. Enacted in 2008 to tackle the prevalent issue of low retention rates in secondary schools, the policy aimed to address the challenges faced in the education system. Employing a survey design, the study gathered data from school principals and a district education officer (DEO) through the use of questionnaires and interviews. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed through paired sample t-tests and thematic

analysis, respectively. The findings revealed a significant difference in student retention rates before and after the implementation of the policy. Consequently, the study concluded that the policy had a positive impact on retention rates in public day secondary schools.

The study by Njoroge, Momanyi and Mwaniki (2020) investigated the impact of the government tuition fee policy on students' retention in secondary schools in Naivasha sub-county, Kenya. The policy was introduced in 2008 to reduce the cost of secondary education and increase access and equity. The article uses a descriptive survey design and collects data from 230 teachers, and 3000 students using questionnaires and interviews. The article analyzes the data using descriptive and inferential statistics and presents the findings in tables and charts. The article finds that the government tuition fee policy has improved students' retention in secondary schools by reducing the dropout rate, increasing the transition rate, and enhancing the quality of education.

In Omolo's (2018) study, the focus was on investigating the impact of educational funding on student retention and dropout rates in public secondary schools within the Seme sub-county, Kenya. Employing a descriptive survey design, the author gathered data from 33 principals, 1 district education officer, 1 constituency development fund secretary, and 1 district education bursary board secretary. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized for data analysis. The key findings of the study reveal that all public secondary schools in the Seme sub-county received various educational funds, including the Free Day Secondary Education Fund, Constituency Development Fund, and District Education Board

Bursary. The presence of these government educational funding sources contributed to a high retention rate and a low dropout rate among students. Furthermore, the research identified a robust positive correlation between public education funding and student retention rate ($r=0.845$; $p = .040$), as well as a strong negative relationship between public education funding and dropout rate ($r = -0.618$; $p = .011$) among students.

The article by Wanjala and Hussein (2017) delves into the repercussions of instituting a subsidized fee program on students' ability to access quality education in public secondary schools within Wajir County, Kenya. Employing a descriptive survey research design, the authors gathered data from 94 participants, consisting of 20 principals, 20 Board of Management (BoM) chairpersons, and 54 secondary school teachers. The data underwent analysis using descriptive and inferential statistics for quantitative data, while thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data. Key discoveries outlined in the article include the initiation of the subsidized fees program by the Kenyan government in 2008 to alleviate the financial burden of secondary education in public schools. Despite its implementation, enrollment rates remained low due to insufficient and delayed disbursement of funds to support the program. The research revealed that the subsidized fees program had a limited impact on enhancing access to quality education in public secondary schools in Wajir County.

Impact of government spending on female participation

To investigate gender disparities in education, Gajigo (2019) looked into the impact of a school fee abolition initiative for female secondary students in the

Gambia. Two nationally representative household surveys (1998 and 2002/2003) were utilized to measure the program's impact. By 2002/2003, the initiative had helped around half of the country's districts. It was discovered that the initiative raised female secondary school students' enrollment by five per cent (5%). Female primary school students had equally significant effects. The initiative had no discernible effect on male student attendance at any level. Unlike the current study which focused basically on document analysis using quantitative methods, Gajigo (2019) relies heavily on a qualitative approach.

Lucas and Mbiti (2012) examined the influence of Kenya's 2003 Free Primary Education (FPE) program on gender disparities in primary school graduation rates and achievement on the primary school exit examination. The researchers discovered that the program increased both boys' and girls' primary school graduation rates, but had a greater impact on boys, widening the gender gap in graduation. In addition, the initiative caused the achievement gap in government schools to expand. FPE enhanced educational access overall but did not address gender gaps, implying that additional programs aimed exclusively at girls may be required to close these gaps. Though this study focused highly on primary education, the findings are informative enough to aid the current study.

Mturi (2003) studied the trend of the gender gap in enrolment in schools and higher learning institutions using data from Lesotho's 1996 population census and yearly reports from the Ministry of Education from 1990 to 2009. The research looks at a variety of education variables, as well as school enrollment and dropout rates. The analysis demonstrated that Lesotho had a gender imbalance in favour of

women. Both the cohort analysis and the dropout rate analysis revealed that there was a gender imbalance in education. Furthermore, the data revealed that the gender disparity in primary, secondary, and high schools has lately begun to reduce, but is expanding at the postsecondary level. The study suggested that the government should undertake an intervention policy to reverse the situation. To better understand the impact of government spending on the gender gap, the current study uses document analysis to investigate the situation in Cape Coast, Ghana.

Another study to examine the impact of capitation grant on education outcomes in Ghana by Osei, Owusu, Asem and Afutu-Kotey (2009), revealed that capitation grant has not had any significant effect on key education outcomes such as enrolment. Using data from districts across the country from 2005 to 2007, the study concludes that capitation grants have had no substantial impact on major educational outcomes. The paper closes by stating that, while the findings do not match a priori assumptions, they could be because Ghana's capitation grant only began in 2005, making it too early to evaluate its impacts at that time. Even though the study was limited to junior high education with a prior focus on the capitation, it shares similarities with the current study in terms of methods employed.

At the elementary level, the study conducted by Rahji (2005) looked at rural household children's school enrollment and gender disparity. Data was collected using a multi-stage sampling technique. The data set was analyzed using the Probit model. According to the findings, there were more boys than girls enrolled. Male and female children are affected differentially by the factors addressed. For boys, the education of their fathers is a key factor. It has no bearing on females. The

education of the mother is a positive predictor in both circumstances, although it is not significant. The probit model observed a 12.56 % gender gap in favour of males. The majority of the disparity stems from household perceptions about male and female youngsters. As a result, there is a bias for boys over girls when it comes to schooling. Incentives for more girls to enrol were suggested based on the outcomes of the study. Differential fees, free tuition, and increasing public subsidies are among them. Similar to the current study, the research was conducted in a developing economy which shares many similarities with the current study, therefore, the current relies on the recommendations provided to look into the impact of government spending on the gender disparities in High School education in the Ghanaian context.

When Herleni, Azwardi and Sukanto (2019) investigated the size of education inequality in the Province of South Sumatra, as well as the factors that drive it and how it relates to economic growth, it was revealed that government expenditure in education had no substantial effect on gender equality in education. To achieve the objective of this study, secondary data was gathered from BPS Statistics Indonesia, the Directorate General of Finance, and the release of prior research findings that were relevant to the investigation. Education Gini index analysis, panel data regression analysis, and Granger Causality Analysis were the data analysis methods employed. Unlike the current study, this study looked at education in a broader context. This makes the findings questionable since many other factors could influence the procedures employed in the study. The current

study particularly focuses on High School Education to get a detailed impression of the situation.

Emara and Hegazy (2019) examined the impact of government spending on closing the gender gap in education in developing economies. The study evaluated the factors responsible for possibly lowering the gender gap in education at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels using Panel Least Square with Regional Dummies (LSDV) for a sample of developing nations from 1990 to 2014. The study focused on the response of the gender gap in education to economic growth, information communication technology (ICT), openness, and public spending on education, female population, and regional dummies to estimate their impact on closing the gender gap in education, and provided predictions on these countries' ability to close the gap by 2030 if they rely solely on government spending on education and no other factors. The findings revealed that closing the educational gap remains a difficult target for many developing nations. Increased government spending alone will not be enough to close the gender gap in education in off-track countries; other policies, such as increasing economic growth and expanding the use of telephones, cell phones, and the internet, will be required to accelerate the closing of the gender gap in education.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 1 has the conceptual depiction of the entire study, the relationship that exists among the variables used for the study and its resultant impact on the other.

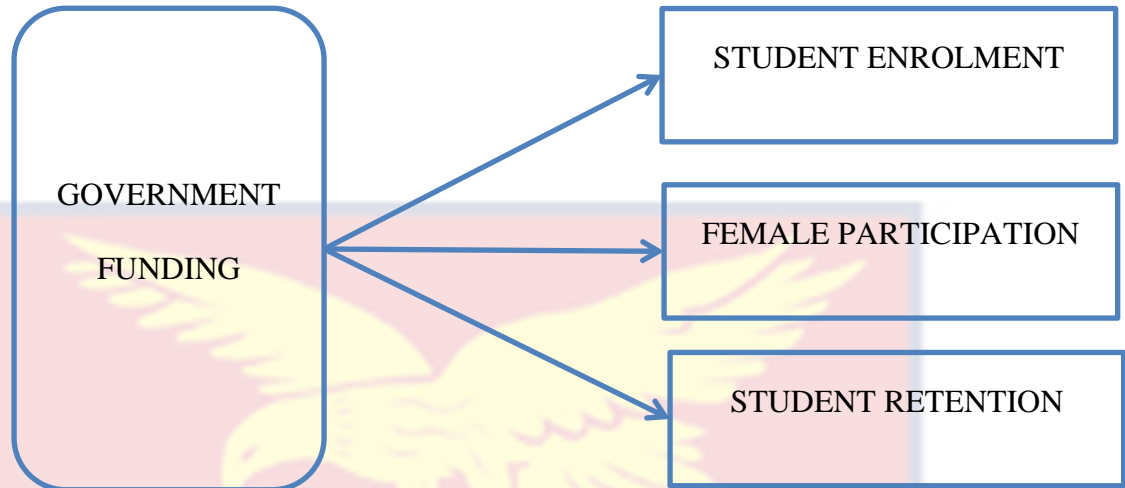


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Source: Author's Construct (2022)

The conceptual framework above depicts the ideology behind the study. There is perceived to be some impact government funding has on the student enrolment, female participation and student retention of Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast. The government funding variable represents the independent variable whereas student enrolment, female participation and student retention are the dependent variables. The relationships that exist between these variables will be investigated.

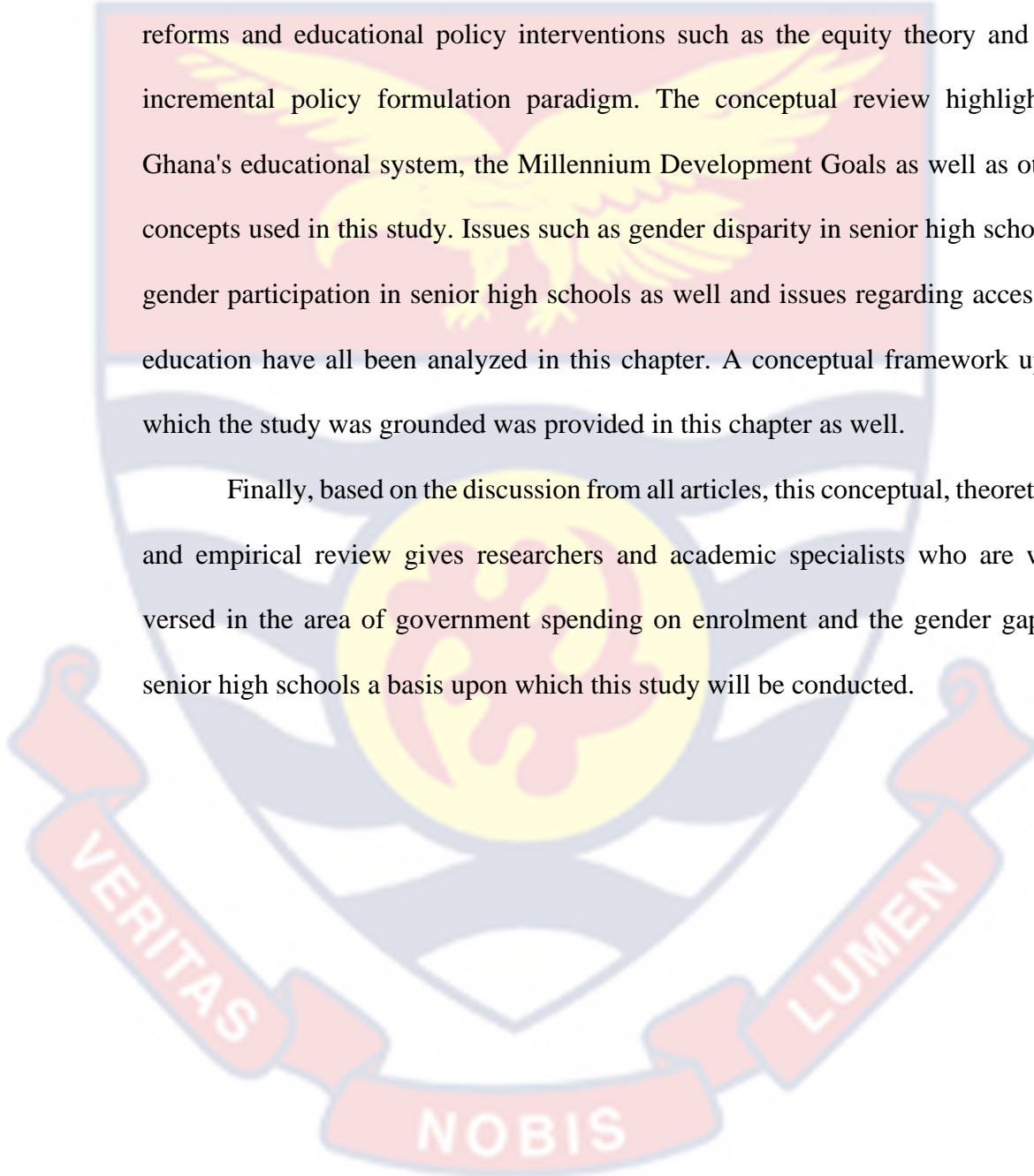
Chapter Summary

This chapter presented an evaluation of volumes of research into the impact of government funding on enrolment and the gender gap of senior high schools in the Cape Coast metropolis. Definitions of government funding, gender gap, senior high schools, free education and theories on how key variables have been measured and evaluated. The role government funding and other government policies play in

bridging the gender disparity of senior high schools in the Cape Coast metropolis have been assessed.

The chapter highlighted major theories in the area of educational policy reforms and educational policy interventions such as the equity theory and the incremental policy formulation paradigm. The conceptual review highlighted Ghana's educational system, the Millennium Development Goals as well as other concepts used in this study. Issues such as gender disparity in senior high schools, gender participation in senior high schools as well and issues regarding access to education have all been analyzed in this chapter. A conceptual framework upon which the study was grounded was provided in this chapter as well.

Finally, based on the discussion from all articles, this conceptual, theoretical and empirical review gives researchers and academic specialists who are well versed in the area of government spending on enrolment and the gender gap in senior high schools a basis upon which this study will be conducted.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

The approach utilized to conduct the study was described in this chapter. The study strategy, research philosophy, research design, demographic and profile, sampling methodologies, data sources and collection, model specification, and data processing and analysis methods are all part of it. A quick summary concludes the chapter.

Research Philosophy

Research philosophy, according to Bilto, Swies, Sukkari and Swies (2020), is the theory of scientific research and the scientific approach that is most appropriate to the research activity's aim, meaning and direction. Positivist research only views objective statements as valid and scientific. The positivist paradigm seeks unbiased findings through a value-free approach and ensures that the researcher is independent of the respondent (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). Moreover, the positivist paradigm is also associated with the quantitative research approach in the works of literature (Smith, 1983). Quantitative research has a large focus on numbers. The positivist paradigm also follows a deductive approach.

Interpretivist research on the other hand only views the subject thoughts and ideas as valid. The interpretivist paradigm follows an inductive approach, which looks at an issue and through investigation by various research methods, aims to generate a theory for the research. Interpretivist research is also associated with a qualitative research approach in the works of literature. Qualitative research seeks

to find out what people do, know, think and feel, and aims to understand a particular phenomenon in detail.

The philosophy underpinning this study at the epistemology level is the positivist paradigm since the study has more focus on numbers and uses the quantitative approach.

Research Approach

The methods used to perform a research study are divided into three categories: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodologies Afridi (2011). The study used the quantitative research approach which is aimed at achieving a maximum level of the objective of the study, replicability and generalizing the results of the study as well (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative approach refers to the collection of quantitative data, which are put to strict quantitative analysis formally and rigidly (Yogesh, 2006). Conversely, Anlo (2012) differentiated between qualitative and quantitative research by arguing that qualitative research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things, while quantitative research refers to the measures and counts of things.

Research Design

Vitenu-Sackey and Bathuure (2020) described a study design as the general technique utilized to carry out a research project to collect proof for the answers to research questions. The study design establishes the process for gathering and analyzing the data, as well as how it will answer the research questions Havighurst (1973) Designing research might be explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive

(Akoto-Baako, Heeralal & Kissi-Abrokwah, 2021) Explanatory design was adopted in this study. Explanatory research is defined as research that aims to explain rather than just describe the subject under investigation Frempong and Stadelmann (2017). To answer the aims of examining the impact of government funding on high school enrolment and gender discrepancies among Cape Coast High Schools, an explanatory research methodology was adopted.

Population

The population for a study refers to all the observable units within a well-defined category that share several common characteristics such as appearance, and conduct among some other factors. The population for a study more properly relates to the set of individuals the findings of the research can be applied to. Most of them are the very first senior high schools that were established in the country because the Central region was the first to have contact with the Europeans in the early 1400s. There are a total of ten (10) senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis, ranging from all-male, all-female, day and boarding, all-day and all-boarding schools.

All these schools have the common task of imparting knowledge through various structures aimed at running programs such as General Arts, Business Studies, General Science, Home Economics and Visual Arts. The Cape Coast Metropolis was selected due to the Gap in the research in the metropolis as well as the convenience to the researcher.

Sampling Procedures

Sampling is the process of picking a number of units from a study's population (Oketeh & Somerset, 2010). Probability sampling or non-probability sampling are the two types of sampling methods. The non-probability sampling strategy, specifically the purposive sampling technique was employed for this investigation. The convenience sampling techniques also assisted the researcher in selecting the exact sample for the study. Purposive or judgmental sampling allows you to use your best judgment to choose the best instances to answer your research questions and meet your objectives (Murphy, Scott-Clayton & Wynes, 2018). Schools were selected based on their location in the metropolis, whether it is a single-sex school or a mixed school, and the grade of the school. Schools such as Mfantsipim School, and St. Augustine's College are the male-sex schools sampled. They are also located in different socio-economic segments in the metropolis. University Practice Senior High School and Oguaa Senior High School were the mixed-sex schools sampled for the study. These are also schools which are located in a separate socio-economic segment of the metropolis as well and as a result of the ease of access to data and the convenience of the researcher to these schools. The only female-sex school sampled was Holy Child School. This is selected because of its location in the metropolis and how convenient it will be for the researcher to get access to data. In total, five (5) schools were sampled and used as study units for this study. This forms a justifiable fifty per cent (50%) of the total number of senior high schools in the metropolis.

Data Collection Procedures

With regards to this study, secondary data was gathered from archives, and available records issued by the Ghanaian Ministry of Education as well as the data provided by the various headmasters on enrolment and retention trends for the years under consideration. After getting access to the documents, the data needed about the enrolment and retention rates were extracted. Through document analysis of the records of the various schools, this study acquired data quantitatively.

Data Processing and Analysis

Editing, coding, classification, tabulation, and graphical depiction of data are all part of research analysis, according to Amponteng, Opoku, Agyei-Okyere, Afriyie and Tawiah (2019). According to Khiem, Linh and Dung (2020) evaluating data frequently requires reducing the amount of data gathered to a reasonable size, producing descriptions, identifying trends, and making inferences using statistical tools. Microsoft Office Excel 2013 was used to process the data by finding the frequency, percentage and change in percentages because multiple linear regressions using the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) technique were discovered to require a larger amount of data than the total number of components in the model (Ramesh, 2015).

Chapter Summary

The entire study was conducted using two explanatory designs was adopted. This approach assisted the researcher greatly in coming out with the findings to provide adequate answers in establishing facts. The population, sampling techniques as well and data collection procedures are all spelt out under this section.

This gives a broad idea about how the researcher gathered evidence to achieve the research objectives.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presented data on the situation that existed in Senior High Schools in relation to their enrolment in total, female students' enrolment, and retention rates of these schools before and post the implementation of the free senior high school policy. Results were presented in tables and percentages and ratios were used to analyze the findings. The first section presented the data on the total number of students registered, placed and enrolled for the years 2015 to 2019. The second section presented the data and its interpretation on the enrolment situation among the five Senior High Schools before and after the introduction of the Free SHS policy with the third section discussing the retention rates among these schools in the metropolis before and after the introduction of the Free SHS policy. The next session presented data and its interpretation of the female enrolment situation before and after the introduction of the Free SHS policy

Number of Students Registered, Placed and Enrolled

Table 1, has data about the total number of students who were registered to partake in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), the total number of students who were placed in Senior High Schools after the successful completion of the examination, the number of students who were able to enrol into these second cycle schools from the total number placed, the percentage of students who registered for the BECE but could not be placed, as well as the proportion of

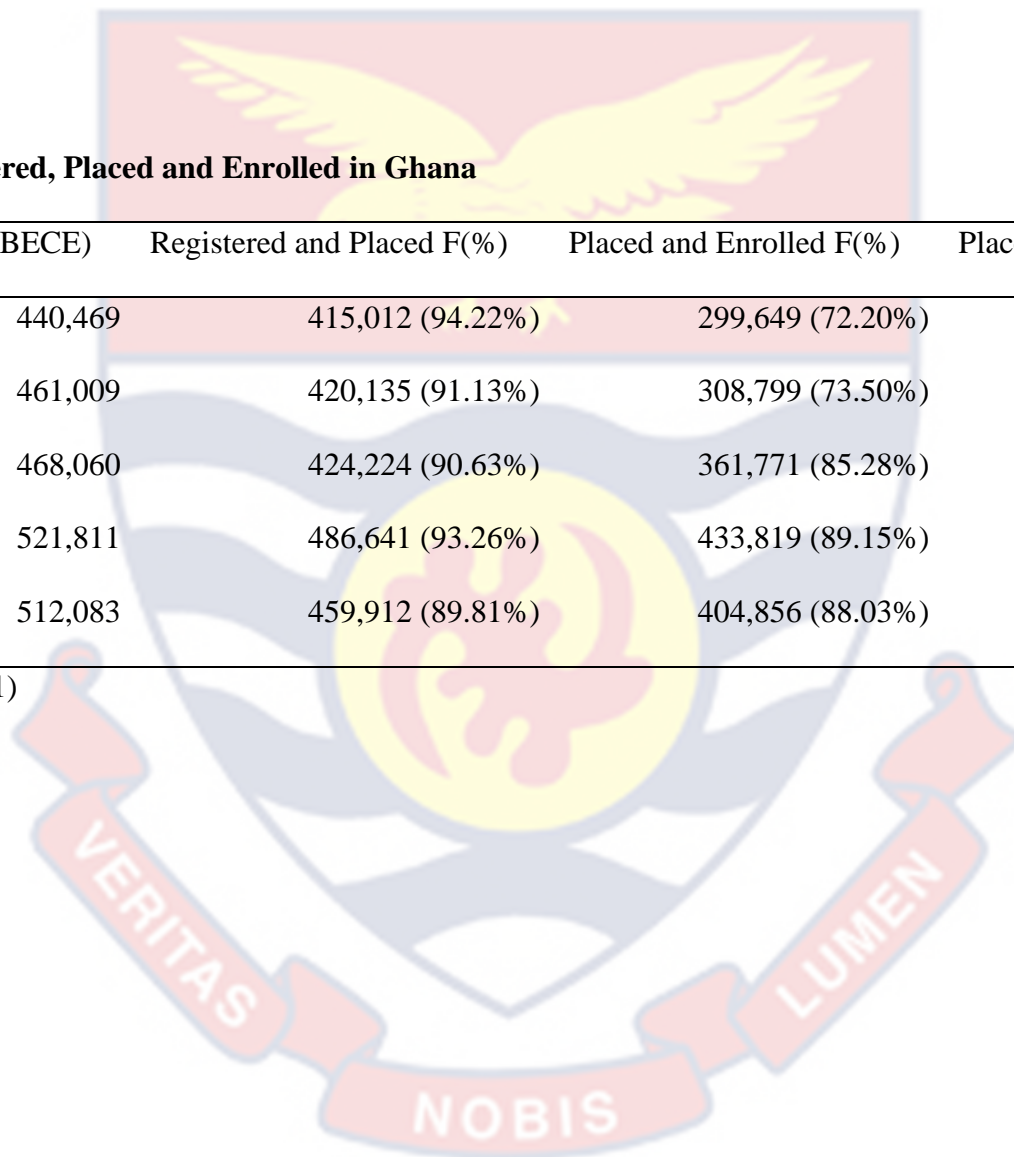
students placed but could not enrol into SHSs for the years 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019.



Table 1: Students Registered, Placed and Enrolled in Ghana

Year	Total Registered (BECE)	Registered and Placed F(%)	Placed and Enrolled F(%)	Placed but not Enrolled F(%)
2015	440,469	415,012 (94.22%)	299,649 (72.20%)	115,363 (27.80%)
2016	461,009	420,135 (91.13%)	308,799 (73.50%)	111,336 (26.50%)
2017	468,060	424,224 (90.63%)	361,771 (85.28%)	62,453 (14.70%)
2018	521,811	486,641 (93.26%)	433,819 (89.15%)	52,822 (10.90%)
2019	512,083	459,912 (89.81%)	404,856 (88.03%)	55,056 (11.90%)

Source: Field Survey (2021)



From the data in Table 1, it can be seen that the data from 2015 to 2019 reflects the profound impact of government funding, specifically the implementation of Free Senior High School (SHS) in 2017, on the enrollment landscape in Ghana. Notably, the total enrollment in senior high schools experienced a steady increase during this period. In 2015, 299,649 students (72.20% of the placed candidates) were enrolled, and this figure continued to rise, reaching its zenith in 2018 with 433,819 students (89.15%) out of 486,641 placed individuals successfully entering senior high education. Although there was a marginal decline in 2019, with 404,856 students (88.03%) enrolling, the overall trend underscores sustained positive effects on accessibility to senior high education.

The introduction of Free SHS in 2017 marked a significant turning point, notably increasing the percentage of students placed and subsequently enrolled. In that year, out of 424,224 placed students, 361,771 (85.28%) successfully enrolled, showcasing a substantial improvement from preceding years. This positive trend persisted into 2018, where 433,819 students (89.15%) were enrolled out of 486,641 placed candidates. Although the enrollment rate slightly decreased in 2019 to 404,856 students (88.03%), it remained higher than the pre-Free SHS years, emphasizing the continued success of the initiative in facilitating placement and enrollment.

A striking observation is a notable reduction in the percentage of students placed but not enrolled after the initiation of Free SHS. In 2017, only 14.70% (62,453 students) of those placed did not enrol, showcasing a significant decrease

from the previous years. This positive trend persisted in 2018, with only 10.90% (52,822 students) placed but not enrolled, indicating the effectiveness of the Free SHS program in minimizing the gap between placement and actual enrollment.

The consistent improvement in placement efficiency is evident in the increasing percentage of registered students being placed. In 2015, 94.22% of registered students were placed, and this trend continued with 91.13% in 2016, 90.63% in 2017, 93.26% in 2018, and 89.81% in 2019. These high placement rates underscore the success of the government's efforts in efficiently placing a significant majority of students in senior high schools.

Objective 1: Impact of Government Funding on Students' Enrolment among High Schools in Cape Coast

Table 2, has data about the total number of students that were enrolled on Mfantipim School, Holy Child School, University Practice SHS, St. Augustine's College and Oguaa SHS for the years before and after the introduction of the Free Senior High School policy in the year 2017. It has data about the number of students enrolled as well as the %age change that occurred over the years.

Table 2: Enrolment before and after the Introduction of Free SHS in the Cape Coast Metropolis

	BEFORE FSHS				AFTER FSHS	
	2014	2015 F(% Δ)	2016 F(% Δ)	2017 F(% Δ)	2018 F(% Δ)	2019 F(% Δ)
MFANTSIPIM SCHOOL	1083	1063 (-2%)	625 (-70%)	737 (15%)	1406 (48%)	1096 (-28%)
HOLY CHILD SHS	370	465 (20%)	409 (-14%)	448 (9%)	742 (40%)	546 (-36%)
UNIVERSITY PRACTICE SHS	405	527 (23%)	623 (15%)	800 (22%)	847 (6%)	1001 (15%)
ST. AUGUSTINE'S COLLEGE	655	494 (-33%)	660 (25%)	637 (-4%)	657 (3%)	660 (0.46%)
OGUAA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL	350	386 (9%)	403 (4%)	580 (31%)	640 (9%)	696 (8%)
TOTAL	2863	2935 (3.4%)	2720 (-8%)	3202 (15%)	4292 (25%)	3999 (-7%)

Source: Field Survey (2021)

Table 2 gives data on the enrolment in these specific senior high schools within the metropolis prior and after to the implementation of the Free SHS Policy by the current government. The enrollment trends in several secondary schools in Cape Coast from 2014 to 2019 provide valuable insights into the impact of government funding through the Free Senior High School (SHS) program, initiated in 2017. Mfantsipim School, a prominent institution, experienced fluctuations in enrollment during this period. A significant drop of 2% in 2015 was followed by a remarkable 15% increase in 2017 and a substantial 48% surge in 2018. However, the positive trajectory took a turn in 2019, with a notable 28% decrease.

Holy Child SHS exhibited varied enrollment figures over the years. A 20% increase in 2015 was followed by a 14% decrease in 2016. The introduction of Free SHS in 2017 contributed to a 9% rise, and the positive momentum continued with a significant 40% increase in 2018. However, the trend reversed in 2019, with a noteworthy 36% decrease. University Practice SHS demonstrated consistent growth in enrollment from 2014 to 2019. The implementation of Free SHS in 2017 resulted in a 22% increase, and this positive trend persisted with a 6% rise in 2018 and a further 15% increase in 2019.

St. Augustine's College experienced fluctuations in enrollment, marked by a significant 33% decrease in 2015. The introduction of Free SHS in 2017 led to a 25% increase, and subsequent years showed more modest changes, with a 3% increase in 2018 and a marginal 0.46% increase in 2019. Oguaa Senior High School witnessed consistent growth in enrollment from 2014 to 2019. The introduction of

Free SHS in 2017 resulted in a substantial 31% increase, and this positive trend continued with a 9% rise in 2018 and an additional 8% increase in 2019.

The cumulative enrollment for all the schools in Cape Coast demonstrated a 3.4% increase in 2015, an 8% decrease in 2016, a significant 15% increase in 2017 following the initiation of Free SHS, a remarkable 25% increase in 2018, and a 7% decrease in 2019. The overall enrollment trends in Cape Coast schools reflect the transformative influence of the Free Senior High School program, particularly evident in increased enrollment figures in the years following its initiation. While there was a slight dip in 2019, the raw frequency (3999) is more than the values ever recorded before the introduction of free SHS. Thus, the collective data underscores the positive impact of government funding on access to secondary education in Cape Coast.

The positive impact of government spending on student enrolment is consistent with the findings of Vitenu-Sackey and Bathuure (2020), Ohba (2011), Maraba Sector, Ayeni (2020), Kwegyiriba (2021) and Maobe, Bogonko and Ondigi (2019). These studies, conducted in Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda, suggest that the cost of education is one of the main barriers for students to access senior high schools in Africa. Therefore, reducing the financial burden on parents and students through government funding can increase the enrolment rate of students who are offered places. However, this study differs from the study of Khiem, Linh and Dung (2020), who found that government funding did not affect the high school enrolment rate in Vietnam. This discrepancy may be due to the different contexts

and factors that influence the enrolment rate in senior high schools in Vietnam and Ghana.

Objective 2: Impact of Government Funding on Student Retention among High Schools in Cape Coast

Table 3 has data about the total number of West African Secondary School Examination candidates that were presented in the year 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021. This seeks to measure the rate of enrolled students' retention before and after the introduction of free SHS by the various schools; Mfantshipim School, Holy Child SHS, University Practice SHS, St. Augustine's College and Oguaa SHS.

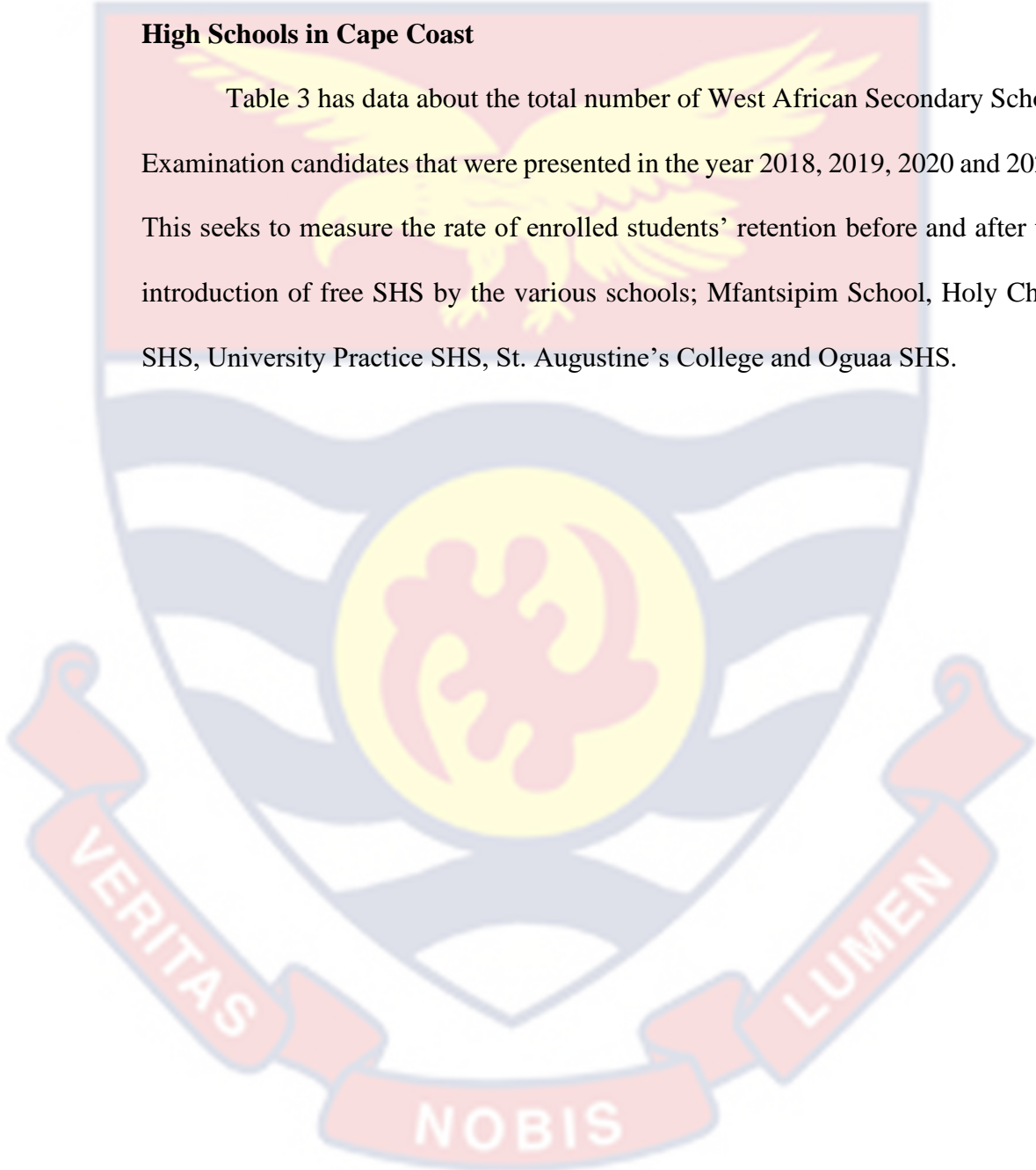


Table 3: Retention Situation in Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis

	BEFORE FSHS				AFTER FSHS			
	2015 - Enrolment year	2018 - Completion year F(%)	2016 - Enrolment year	2019 - Completion year F(%)	2017 - Enrolment year	2020 - Completion year F(%)	2018 - Enrolment year	2021 - Completion year F(%)
MFANTSIPIIM	1063	1027 (96.61%)	625	604 (96.64%)	737	729 (98.91%)	1406	1393 (99.08%)
HOLY CHILD SHS	465	446 (95.91%)	409	398 (97.31%)	448	440 (98.21%)	742	739 (99.60%)
UP SHS	527	364 (69.07%)	623	465 (74.64%)	800	624 (78.00%)	847	825 (97.40%)
ST. AUGUSTINES	494	475 (96.15%)	660	629 (95.30%)	637	630 (98.90%)	657	642 (97.72%)
OGUAA SHS	386	316 (81.87%)	403	327 (81.14%)	580	525 (90.52%)	640	557 (87.03%)
TOTAL	2935	2628 (89.54%)	2720	2423 (89.08%)	3202	2948 (92.07%)	4292	4156 (96.83%)

Source: Field Survey (2021)

Table 3 has data about the school retention ability of Senior High Schools before and after the implementation of the FSHS policy. In 2018, the completion rates across the selected schools were reflected in the following percentages: Mfantsipim (96.61%), Holy Child SHS (95.91%), University Practice SHS (69.07%), St. Augustine's (96.15%), and Oguaa SHS (81.87%). The total completion rate for all schools in 2018 was 89.54%.

The subsequent year, 2019, saw an increase in completion rates for most schools. Notably, Mfantsipim recorded a slight improvement to 96.64%, Holy Child SHS to 97.31%, University Practice SHS to 74.64%, St. Augustine's to 95.30%, and Oguaa SHS to 81.14%. The overall completion rate for all schools in 2019 was 89.08%, indicating a marginal increase.

The first cohort of Free SHS students completed their high school education in 2020, and the impact on student retention became more evident. Mfantsipim recorded a substantial increase to 98.91%, Holy Child SHS to 98.21%, University Practice SHS to 78.00%, St. Augustine's to 98.90%, and Oguaa SHS to 90.52%. The overall completion rate for all schools in 2020 rose notably to 92.07%, marking a significant improvement from the previous years.

In 2021, the trend of increased student retention continued. Mfantsipim reached a completion rate of 99.08%, Holy Child SHS at 99.60%, University Practice SHS at 97.40%, St. Augustine's at 97.72%, and Oguaa SHS at 87.03%. The overall completion rate for all schools in 2021 further increased to 96.83%, underscoring the positive impact of government funding on student retention.

This result is in agreement with the studies of Ngasura, Nyakundi and Koros (2023), Muchalwa Ogenga and Buhere (2016), Njoroge, Momanyi and Mwaniki (2020) and Omolo (2018) who found that government spending has a positive impact on students retention. The data highlights the positive correlation between the implementation of Free SHS and an improvement in student retention rates. The increasing completion rates across the years suggest that the government funding initiative has played a crucial role in supporting students through their high school education, thereby enhancing overall retention. Continuous monitoring and assessment of these rates will be essential to ensure the sustained success of the Free SHS program in promoting access to and successful completion of secondary education for students in Ghana. However, Wanjala and Hussein (2017) found out that despite the implementation of the government funding policy, enrollment and retention rates remained low due to insufficient and delayed disbursement of funds to support the program.

Objective 3: Impact of Government Funding on Female SHS Participation in Cape Coast

Table 4 has data about the total number of female students who were enrolled into each Senior High School for the years 2014 to 2019. These are periods before and after the implementation of the Free Senior High School policy.

Table 4: Female Enrolment Before and After Free SHS Policy in the Cape Coast Metropolis

	2014	BEFORE FSHS			AFTER FSHS	
		2015 F(% Δ)	2016 F(% Δ)	2017 F(% Δ)	2018 F(% Δ)	2019 F(% Δ)
HOLY CHILD	370	465 (20.4%)	409 (-13.7%)	448 (8.7%)	742 (39.6%)	546 (-35.9%)
UP SHS	190	236 (19.5%)	382 (38.2%)	452 (15.5%)	460 (1.7%)	480 (4.2%)
OGUAA SHS.	166	215 (22.8%)	184 (-16.8%)	211 (12.8%)	390 (45.9%)	311 (-25.4%)
TOTAL	726	916 (20.7%)	975 (6.1%)	1151 (15.3%)	1592 (27.7%)	1337 (-19.1%)

Source: Field Survey (2021)

Table 4, it can be seen the total number of female students that were enrolled in Holy Child SHS, University Practice SHS, and Oguaa SHS. In 2014, the total female enrollment across the specified schools stood at 726. Over the next five years, there was a consistent upward trend, reflecting an overall increase of 84.3% by 2019. Notably, Holy Child, University Practice SHS, and Oguaa SHS experienced varying degrees of growth in female enrollment during this period.

Holy Child recorded a 20.4% increase in female enrollment in 2015, followed by a decline of 13.7% in 2016. However, with the introduction of Free SHS in 2017, there was an 8.7% increase in female enrollment, reaching 448. The subsequent years saw a significant surge, with a 39.6% increase in 2018 and a notable 35.9% decrease in 2019, bringing the total female enrollment for Holy Child to 546. The fluctuations in female enrollment at Holy Child suggest the influence of both external factors and the implementation of Free SHS on enrollment dynamics.

University Practice SHS experienced consistent growth in female enrollment, with a 19.5% increase in 2015 and a substantial 38.2% rise in 2016. The trend continued with a 15.5% increase in 2017, followed by a more modest 1.7% rise in 2018 and a further 4.2% increase in 2019. This sustained growth in female enrollment at University Practice SHS indicates a positive impact of the Free SHS program on enhancing access to education for female students.

Oguaa SHS exhibited fluctuations in female enrollment during the years under consideration. The school experienced a significant 22.8% increase in 2015, followed by a decline of 16.8% in 2016. With the implementation of Free SHS in

2017, there was a notable 12.8% increase in female enrollment, reaching 211. The subsequent years saw a remarkable 45.9% increase in 2018 and a considerable 25.4% decrease in 2019, bringing the total female enrollment for Oguaa SHS to 311. The varying trends at Oguaa SHS suggest the need for a nuanced understanding of factors influencing female enrollment dynamics.

The overall female enrollment across the selected schools in Cape Coast increased by 15.3% in 2017 and continued to rise, reaching a peak of 27.7% in 2018. However, there was a subsequent decrease of 19.1% in 2019, bringing the total female enrollment to 1337. These figures indicate that while the Free SHS program initially contributed to a notable increase in female enrollment, there were fluctuations in subsequent years, suggesting the need for continuous evaluation and targeted measures to ensure sustained positive impacts on female education in Cape Coast.

This research aligns partially with Gajigo's study from 2019, which observed that government funding contributed to an increase in the enrollment of female secondary school students, as evidenced by the results in both 2017 and 2018. Additionally, this study is partially consistent with Lucas and Mbiti's 2012 research, which concluded that government initiatives did not effectively address gender gaps. This implies that supplementary programs specifically designed for girls may be necessary to effectively close these gender disparities.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented data on the total enrolment in schools, female students' enrolment, and retention rates of these schools before and post the

implementation of the free senior high school policy and other government funding interventions. The data obtained were analyzed using tables and percentages for easy interpretation. Overall the results showed that government spending has a positive impact on student enrolment, student retention and female participation in senior high school education.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The concluding chapter of this study tackles the overview of this study. It starts with the purpose of this study, the research questions used which guided the study and the research methods that the researcher employed to arrive at the conclusions. The results and findings of the study are discussed according to the research questions. Conclusions are drawn from the findings which will tackle issues such as logical inferences that can be drawn from the research as well as new insights the study has revealed.

Recommendations will be given to the various stakeholders of the issues discussed in the study and the general public which are based on key findings of the study drawn logically from the facts of the study. The chapter and the study by extension will end with suggestions for further research work which seeks to tackle issues relating to student enrolment into second-cycle institutions, the retention rates of second-cycle institutions as well as the general impact of government funding policies in sectors such as the educational sectors.

Summary of the Study

The right to education can only be put into practice if it is translated into a minimal set of attitudes, knowledge, and skills for all people, regardless of their background. Despite the emphasis on the girl-child in the 1987 educational reforms and legislation introduced in the 1992 constitution on the girl-child's right to education, girl-child participation in education is still quite low.

The focus of this study is to come out with findings about the impact of government funding on enrolment, retention and female participation among High Schools in Cape Coast, with a focus on some selected senior high schools within the Cape Coast Metropolis. The results obtained from these selected schools are assessed with relationships drawn from the extent to which affect the increasing numbers in enrolment and retention in schools and the quality of educational output in the entire metropolis and the country by extension. Explanatory research was used in this study. Also, a non-probabilistic sampling technique and a purposive sampling method were used to select the specific schools that were used to carry out this study.

This study used a quantitative research method. Secondary data was gathered from archives, historical profiles from their websites, and available records issued by the Ghanaian Ministry of Education as well as data from headmasters/mistresses on enrolment and retention trends for the years under consideration. Data obtained from the various data sources were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages which were then scaled on an interval scale. This form of data collection gave the researcher more flexibility and an easy way of analyzing the data and making appropriate inferences from them.

Summary of Key Findings

The examination of enrollment trends in Cape Coast secondary schools from 2014 to 2019, as part of the first objective assessing the impact of government funding on students' enrollment, reveals insights into the transformative influence

of the Free Senior High School (SHS) program initiated in 2017. Notable institutions like Mfantshipim, Holy Child SHS, University Practice SHS, St. Augustine's College, and Oguaa Senior High School experienced fluctuations in enrollment. While there were remarkable increases in 2017 and 2018, a significant decrease was observed in 2019. Despite this dip, the cumulative enrollment for all schools demonstrated an overall positive impact of government funding on access to secondary education in Cape Coast, with the raw frequency of 3,999 in 2019 surpassing pre-Free SHS values.

Moving to the second objective, examining the impact of government funding on student retention, the completion rates for selected schools in 2018 ranged from 69.07% to 96.61%, collectively totalling 89.54%. Subsequent years witnessed improvements, with 2019 showing a marginal increase. The first cohort of Free SHS students completing in 2020 exhibited substantial gains, with overall completion rates reaching 92.07%.

Shifting to the third objective, which explores the impact of government funding on female SHS participation, the data on female enrollment in Holy Child SHS, University Practice SHS, and Oguaa SHS reveals an overall upward trend from 2014 to 2019. The implementation of Free SHS in 2017 contributed to increased female enrollment. However, fluctuations were observed, with significant increases in 2018 followed by a decrease in 2019.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the examination of enrollment trends, student retention rates, and female participation in Cape Coast secondary schools has provided valuable

insights into the impact of government funding through the Free Senior High School (SHS) program. The findings suggest a transformative influence on access to secondary education, especially evident in the notable increases in enrollment following the initiation of the program in 2017.

However, unexpected findings and anomalies were identified, particularly the significant decrease in enrollment observed in 2019. This deviation from the positive trajectory observed in previous years warrants further investigation. Possible explanations may include external factors such as economic fluctuations, societal perceptions of the program, or specific regional challenges that affected enrollment dynamics. Addressing these anomalies is crucial for ensuring the sustained success and effectiveness of the Free SHS program.

The impact on student retention rates presents a positive narrative, with consistent improvements noted over the years. The completion rates for the first cohort of Free SHS students in 2020 exhibited substantial gains, indicating the program's effectiveness in supporting students through their high school education. The positive trend in student retention rates underscores the potential long-term benefits of government funding in ensuring the successful completion of secondary education.

In terms of female SHS participation, the study revealed both positive and fluctuating trends. While the introduction of Free SHS in 2017 contributed to increased female enrollment, the subsequent fluctuations in 2018 and 2019 suggest a need for targeted interventions. The unexpected decrease in 2019, following significant increases, prompts further exploration into the underlying factors

influencing female enrollment dynamics. This finding emphasizes the importance of nuanced and context-specific strategies to address gender disparities effectively.

Recommendations

Given the research results and facts established, the researcher would like to make the following recommendations for policy consideration and future decision-making.

In relation to the first objective, to sustain and enhance the positive impact of government funding on student enrollment, the Ministry of Education should continue to implement the Free Senior High School (SHS) program and ensure adequate funding for all schools, especially those in rural and remote areas. The ministry should also monitor and evaluate the enrollment trends and identify any gaps or challenges that may affect access to secondary education. Targeted interventions should then be developed to ensure more stable and sustainable enrolment patterns.

In relation to the second objective, to improve student retention and completion rates, the Ministry of Education should provide more support and incentives for students who are at risk of dropping out or failing to complete their SHS program. This may include providing academic guidance, mentoring, counselling or other forms of financial assistance. The ministry should also strengthen the quality of teaching and learning in all schools and ensure that teachers are well-trained, motivated, and supported. Furthermore, enhanced community engagement through outreach programs can inform parents and guardians about the benefits of the Free SHS program, dispelling misconceptions,

and building community support for increased enrollment and positive perceptions of government-funded education.

In relation to the third objective, to increase female SHS participation, the Ministry of Education should address the barriers and challenges that may prevent girls from enrolling or staying in secondary education. This may include raising awareness about the benefits of SHS education for girls' empowerment, health, and future opportunities; providing safe and conducive learning environments for girls; ensuring gender-sensitive curricula and pedagogy; promoting positive role models and peer networks among girls; and engaging with parents, communities, religious leaders, media, and other stakeholders to support girls' education.

Suggestions for Further Research

Subsequent research can be conducted to cover other senior high schools across Ghana. Also, a quantitative and/or qualitative research methodology can be applied to investigate and find out how students and staff perceive the impact of government spending on the services students receive and the conditions of service as staff of these institutions.

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