Review of Ghana's Educational Policies and Its Implication for Educational Leadership in Developing Countries

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to review Ghana's educational policies and its implication for educational leadership in developing countries using Wadi Haddad's Educational Policy-Planning and Applied Framework. The Framework includes analysis of the existing situation; the generation of policy options; evaluation of options; making the policy decision; planning of policy implantation, policy impact assessment; and subsequent policy cycles. The paper shares practical examples and experiences with respect to how Ghanaian leaders have planned, implemented and evaluated previous educational policies and how this has affected sustainable development. The analysis was based purely on policy documents and comments by various stakeholders in the field of education. From the analysis, it was established that whilst the policy has been able to address the issues of equity and accessibility, there were still concerns regarding quality. The paper recommends that policy makers must analyze and evaluate existing educational policies before formulating new ones. Secondly, educational leaders must take active part in policy development processes by conducting impact assessment and research on educational policies. Again, there should be opportunity for professional and academic programmes in educational policy and planning to be mounted in higher educational institutions especially in developing countries for educational leaders.

Keywords: Educational Planning, Educational Policy, Educational Leadership, Policy Analysis, Policy Sustainability, Policy Implementation.

Introduction

Education is regarded as a major force for building human capital thereby reducing poverty, inequality and promoting social mobility. Educational Policy refers to "an explicit or implicit single decision or group of decisions which may set out directives to guiding future decisions, initiate or retard action, or guide implementation of previous actions" (Haddad & Demsky, 1995, p. 7). Developing countries, mindful of these have been developing educational policies to improve their educational systems. The World Development Report 2017, indicates that reforms in education are successful when teachers and policy makers are involved in policy bargaining arena (World Bank, 2017). Ghana as a developing nation has developed several educational policies. The recent is the Free Senior High School Policy introduced in August, 2017 in Ghana (Opoku, 2018). According to SEND (a non-governmental organization, in its assessment of the 2018 Ghana's national budget), the implementation of the Free Senior High School has led to increased enrolment at the senior high school (SHS) level from 300,195 students in the

2016/2017 academic year to 396,951 students in the 2017/2018 academic year, representing an increase of 32.2%. They further observed that, this development has exposed the infrastructural deficit and logistical challenges which is affecting the smooth implementation of the policy and for that matter impeding sound academic work. Yet government's allocation to capital expenditure and goods and services were insignificant to address this situation. This development raises serious concerns about government's commitments to deal with infrastructural (schools, dormitories, etc.) and logistical (teaching and learning materials, monitoring and supervision, etc.) constraints that contribute directly to educational outcomes. The purpose of this paper was to review this policy using Wadi Haddad's Educational Policy-Planning and Applied Framework and make appropriate recommendation to guide educational leaders in policy initiation, planning, implementation and evaluation.

Educational Policy Analysis

According to Mingat, Tan and Sosale (2003), it is the responsibility of the policymakers in the field of education to develop a vision and strategy for educational development, and mobilizing support and cooperation for implementing the vision and strategy from a wide range of constituencies. The key parties include government ministries in other sectors and non-government providers of services who have influence over the amount of resources available to the sector; teachers and school administrators who do the work of delivering education services; students and their families who are the immediate beneficiaries of the services provided; and employers and the public at large who look to the education system to supply skilled labour and future adults to contribute to nation building and enrich the country's social and cultural life. Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997) defines educational policy analysis as the study of what governments do, why and with what effects, recognizing that institutions at all levels of the education system are effectively part of a public system, even if they are not formally in the public sector. Quah (2016) maintains that policy formulation is always relatively easy; it is the implementation that is complex and the Achilles' heel of any administrative reform (Caiden, 1976). As intimated by Haddad and Demsky (1995), Educational Policy set directives to guide future decisions, initiate or retard action, or guide implementation of previous actions. Thus, the overall essence of educational policy analysis is to explore policy gaps in order to proffer appropriate solutions.

Haddad and Demskey Educational Policy Planning Process

Haddad and Demskey (1995) developed the Educational Policy-Planning Process Framework in 1995. The rationale for the framework was that the scope of educational planning has been broadened due to the need to pay attention to the growth and expansion of educational needs to ensure value for money and quality of the entire educational process for effectiveness and efficiency in the planning process. Also, the framework helps to ensure proper utilization of resources as planners and administrators become more aware of the importance of implementation strategies especially in respect the choice of financing methods due to limited resources for
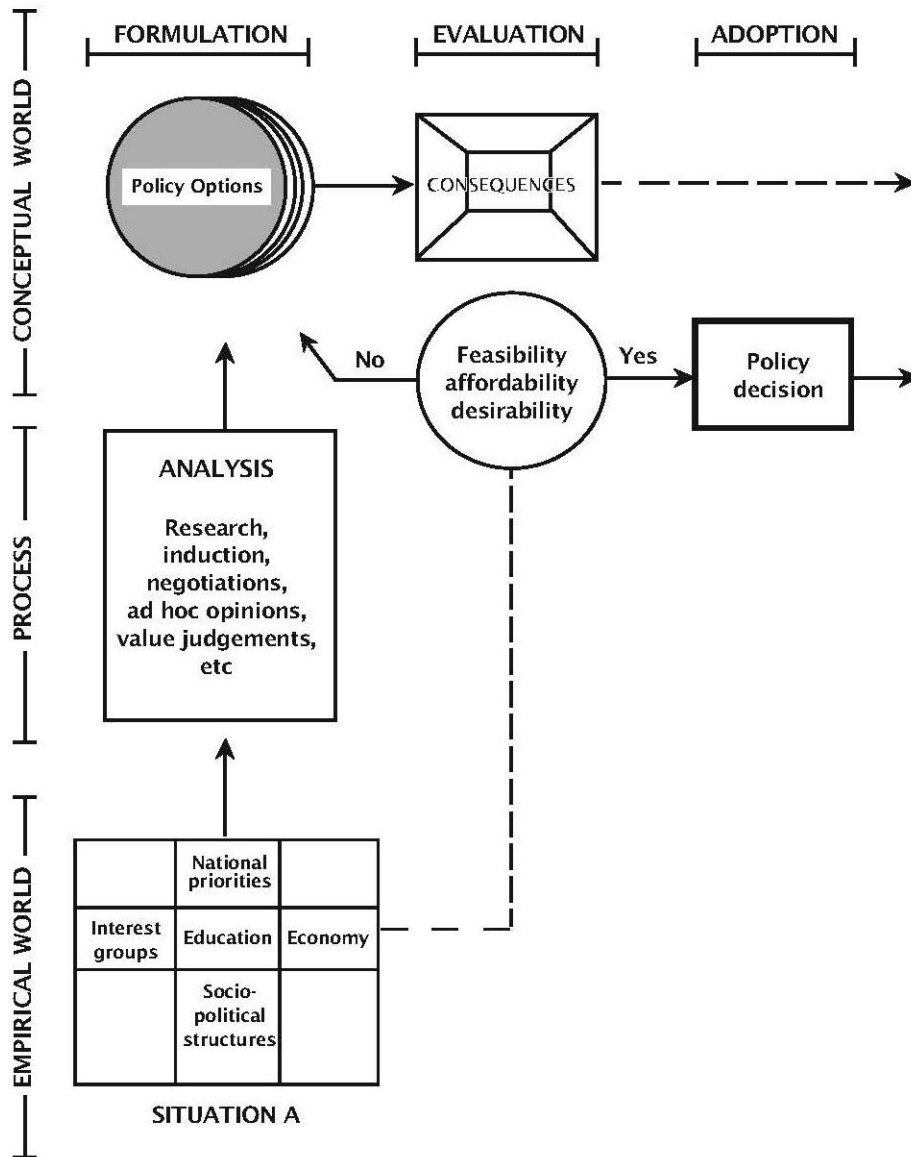
education.

Figure 1: Haddad and Demskey (1995) Conceptual Framework for Policy Analysis

Figures 1 and 2 show that for successful implementation of any policy, Haddad and Demskey's (1995) Conceptual Framework for Policy Analysis postulates that there is the need to do an analysis of the existing situation. This is because policy change is mostly a response to problem(s) identified. This may arise due to a political, economic or socio-

cultural need of the country. The next stage is to consider generation of policy options. In most instances it is ad-hoc i.e. political statement arising from campaign manifesto. There is the need to do evaluation of policy option to ensure desirability of the plan in respect of its impact on various interest groups and its compatibility to national ideology, economic growth and national plans. It must also be feasible and sustainable as it helps to attain the long-term national vision. Also, the policy decision must be based on previous experience having the interest and support of variety of conflicting interests.
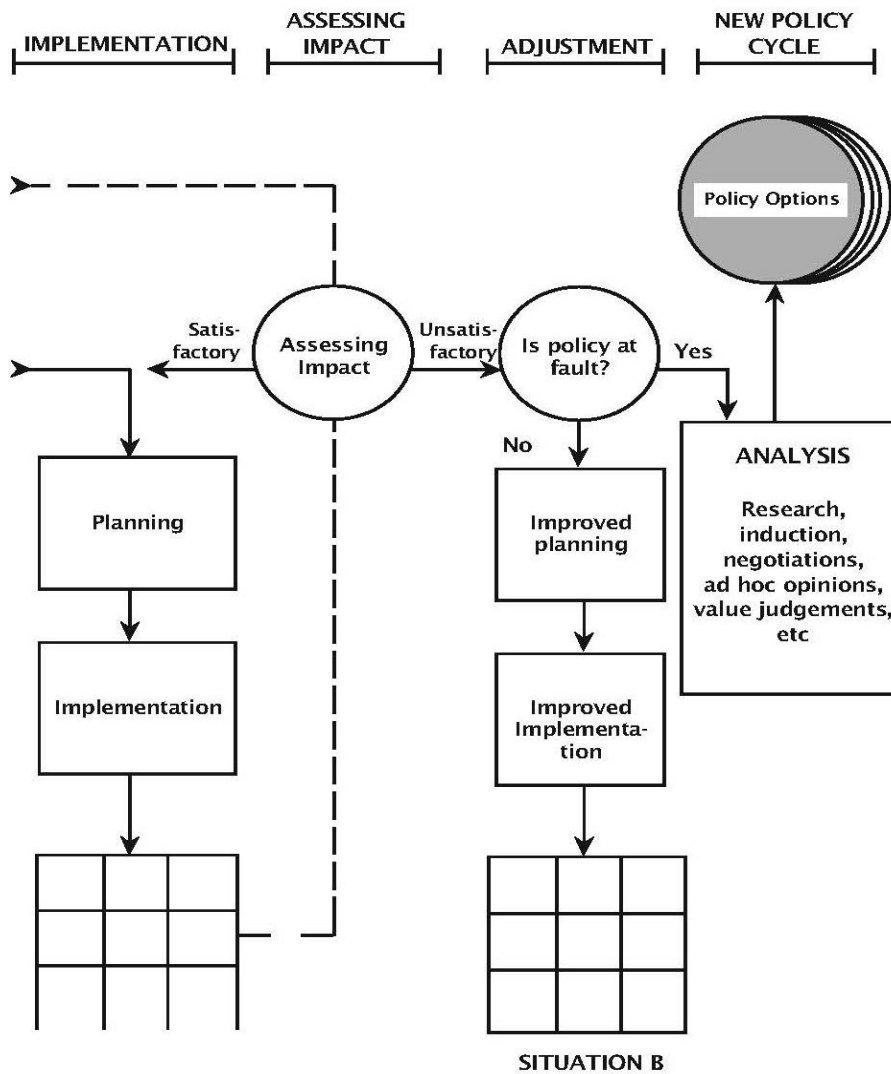

Figure 2: Haddad and Demskey (1995) Conceptual Framework for Policy Analysis Continued

The framework further indicates that for effective policy implementation, there should be schedule for people, availability of physical objects and funds, technical knowledge of key officers must be appropriate and there should be effective administrative system. Again, there should be systems in place to conduct policy impact assessment which must assess the human capital inadequacies, funding mechanism (which can affect implementation), and policy impact on stakeholders. Lastly, there is the need to be aware that subsequent policy cycle begins once the current one expires. Once implementation is "completed," the new policy cycle begins.

Review of Ghana's Free SHS Policy

The 1992 Ghanaian Constitution states that "secondary education in its different forms which include technical and vocational education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular, by the progressive introduction of free education". This constitutional mandate made the Government of Ghana to come out with this policy in addition to international conventions like the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal 4, Target 1 of the SDGs also states that "by 2030, all boys and girls complete free equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes". The Free Senior High School Policy was thus launched in August, 2017. By free SHS, Government of Ghana plans to absorb tuition, admission, library, science centre, ICT, examination and utility fees, boarding and meals cost and provide core textbooks.

The broad objectives of the policy were to remove cost barriers through the absorption of fees approved by the Ghana Education Service Council, expand physical school infrastructure and facilities to accommodate the expected increases in enrolment, improve quality through the provision of core textbooks and supplementary readers, teachers rationalization and deployment; improve equity through implementation of 30% of places in elite schools for students from public junior secondary schools, and prioritise and programme support and reform of Technical , Vocational, Educational Training (TVET) institutions at the senior high school level and facilitate skills acquisition.

Review of Ghana's Free SHS Policy Using the Framework Analysis of the Existing Situation:

Before the implementation of the Free SHS policy, an average of 27.3% of eligible students were not enrolled. Table 1 shows the enrolment trends for basic education certificate examination (BECE) candidates who were eligible for enrolment to Senior High Schools. The analysis of the situation by the government prompted the intervention to curb this situation.

Table 1: *The Enrolment Trends for Basic Education Certificate Examination into SHS*

Year	Total Registered (BECE	Number Placed	No. Enrolled	No. Placed but not Enrolled	% Placed but not Enrolled
2013	391,032	352,202	261,598	90,604	25.7
2014	422,946	386,412	273,152	113,260	29.3
2015	440,469	415,012	299,649	115,363	27.8
2016	461,009	420,135	308,799	111,336	26.5
2017	468,060	424,224	361,771	62,453	14.7

Source: Ministry of Education

Generation of Policy Options

The policy was a major campaign statement in the 2016 general elections in Ghana. It, therefore, lacked broad national consultation and consensus. Other major stakeholders could not make inputs into it as their views were not solicited. For example, Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC), a Non-Governmental Organization in Ghana has raised concerns about what it believes is a hasty implementation process of the double-track system for senior high schools (SHSs). The Executive Director, for instance, remarked in a radio interview: "The speed with which government is trying to introduce the two-track SHS system i.e. two months from now, without any meaningful broad stakeholder consultations in consonance with the principles of good governance is worrying". ISODEC also said the hurried implementation of the double-track semester programme is bad for sustainability of the policy.

Evaluation of Policy Option

The desirability of the policy is very good. Most parents loved the policy as their wards are going to be educated free however, the absence of any blue print on funding and legislative instrument to back the policy raises concern among some stakeholders about the sustainability. For example, SEND Ghana, another NGO in Ghana has indicated that "Government has been advised to establish a strong financial sustainability plan that would enable it to progress with the implementation of the Free Senior High School (SHS) and the other social intervention programmes.

Making the Policy Decision:

Any new policy must be based on previous experience. One expected that previous educational policies implemented in Ghana including Accelerated Development Plan of Education 1951, Education Act of 1961, 1987 Education Reforms, and Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) (2002) which was characterized by deficiencies such

as insufficient textbooks, inadequate infrastructure and teachers among others would have provided useful lessons for future policy planning and implementation. (Opare, Palmas & Barfi, 2017). After less than one year of implementation of the Free SHS policy, however, there have been recurring of the problems that have often plagued the educational policies in the country including insufficient textbooks (elective), inadequate infrastructure and funding challenges. In a communique after their Congress, The National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) called on the Ghana government to quickly address the challenges that the Free Senior High School programme faces. In a resolution that was passed at the Union's 51st Annual Delegates Congress, the Union commended the initiative, but warned that if the challenges were not fixed quickly, the policy would fail. They stressed, "we are increasingly getting worried as we hear of widespread infrastructural and funding challenges which are impacting negatively on teaching and learning in our high schools" (Sarpong, 2017).

Planning Policy Implementation

The SHS Secretariat was set up to co-ordinate the implementation. The administrative system was good and had professionals to supervise the implementation away from the ministry.

Policy Impact Assessment

The access impact assessment shows that, access to secondary education has increased as a result of the policy. The 2016/2017 academic year's enrolment of 300, 195 increased to 396, 951 in the 2017/2018 academic year (32.2%). Again, 30% enrolment of students from "less-endowed" basic schools to "elite" senior high schools is seen as ensuring equity between the rural-poor and urban-rich communities. In addition, Government has spent Ghc 484 Million equivalent of about £80 Million (as at May 2018) to ensure effective implementation. However, delays in payment of grants to schools is raising serious quality issues. The Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS) has bemoaned the delays in the release of free senior high school (SHS) grants to schools across the country. A letter to the National Secretariat of free SHS through its Coordinator signed by the National President of the CHASS, Victor Yanney dated May 28, 2018 disclosed that the third term grant for 2017/2018 academic year is creating serious financial challenges for Senior High Schools (SHS) in the country. Again, poor and inadequate teachers and infrastructure was affecting quality. Evidently, the policy had helped improve the educational accessibility and equity in Ghana. It is, however, worrisome that the issue of quality has not been appropriately addressed. The whole sale implementation of the policy means that all students who complete junior high school irrespective of their placement on the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) have the opportunity to enter senior high school.

Subsequent Policy Cycle

Government, through the Ghana Education Service (GES), is setting-up a Measurement and Evaluation Unit to monitor the progress in the improvement of the Free SHS policy

and future ones.

Recommendations for Educational Leadership

Educational leaders especially in developing countries must assist policy makers to analyze existing policies. This can be done by submitting position papers on educational polices. Again, they must take active part in policy development processes. They must help to create awareness about new educational policies and lead discussions during the policy initiation, planning, implementation and evaluation stages. This will help to provide positive feedback for policy improvement. The role of educational leaders and experts in conducting needs and impact assessments as well as educational research on educational policies is very imperative. As indicated in the framework, this will assist in conceptualization for policy options to be analyzed. Also, governments in developing countries in particular must create opportunity and provide the needed support for professional and academic programmes to be mounted in higher educational institutions for educational planning. Scholarships should be made available for current and future education policy makers to be trained in education planning process. Lastly, educational leaders must serve as consultants to government agencies in initiating, implementing and review of educational policies. Lastly, Educational Policies must be well initiated and planned based on empirical data. The planning and implementation stages must follow the prescribed process or model to ensure sustainability.

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