

Review.

Educational Sector Reforms in Ghana: A Review

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This paper sought to examine and review the reforms in the education sector in Ghana. The motivation of the authors was the fact that the paper would provide information and policy recommendations on the real state of educational sector reforms in Ghana for stakeholders' consideration. Data were collected using a triangulation approach from three main sources including interview, observation and document analysis. The study identified various reforms that have taken place in both the pre-tertiary and tertiary educational levels in Ghana. The reforms, though often fashioned with good intentions, are often misunderstood, wrongly approached and accidentally implemented. On the basis of the number of reforms that the education sector has experienced over the years, the paper concluded that education in Ghana can be described as being under experimentation, without a very clear direction and focus. The country appears very indecisive regarding the education system to adopt for all levels. Selection criteria into senior high schools, choice of programmes of study, and even the duration of secondary education and others still remain fairly unresolved issues at the secondary level. In many cases, the reforms failed for political, social and economic considerations. Various governments and parties in power either ignored or reversed the policies of their opponents just for political considerations. The reforms have not yet addressed the disconnection between the requirements of businesses and industries and the skill types and levels of graduates produced by tertiary institutions. The paper thus saw this extrication between curricula and industry as the single most important cause of low labour productivity and high graduate unemployment in the country.

Key Words: Education Sector Reforms, Exploratory Research, Review.

Introduction

In recent years, reform of the public sector has been a major focus of policy makers (Lapsley and Wright, 2004), practitioners and academicians. Many countries have been trying to change public organisations, responding to the mounting pressure to reduce budgets and improve the quality of services provided (Arnaboldi *et al.*, 2004). There have been continuous, rapid, and fundamental changes in society, and the economy in terms of purpose as well as in terms of shape and delivery in many countries of the world since the past two decades (Watson *et al.*, 1997). Education as an important public service is not immune from these changes in the public sector being influenced by 'managerialism' and the prominence of 'economic rationalism' (Mok, 2000). According to Ilon, (1994), Kennedy (1993), McGinn (1994) and Watson (1995), many of these changes have resulted from global

economic pressures and often originating from the policies of multinational corporations and international agencies. These pressures and changes have indeed made governments throughout the world face with series of educational dilemmas (Watson *et al.*, 1997). Watson *et al.*, (1997) list some of these dilemmas of the governments in reforming their educational sectors as: how to exert greater government control while at the same time allowing for local autonomy at institutional level and allowing for the individual development of pupils within the school system, and how to spread the burden of finance for an ever expanding and changing system within increasing resource constraints. Other dilemmas according to the authors are: how to reform the curriculum and assessment procedures while at the same time raising academic standards; how to improve the management and efficiency of education through greater parental and community involvement in the decision-making process. Taylor (1997) argues that

education at present does not only focus on results, efficiency, and effectiveness but on decentralised management environments, flexibility to explore alternatives to public provision of services, establishment of productivity targets and a competitive environment between public sector organisations, and the strengthening of strategic capacities at the centre of organisation.

As emphasis is being given to concepts such as educational 'efficiency', 'effectiveness', accountability and 'curbing extravagance', output-based schemes are being adopted in the education sector, especially, the universities (Mok, 2000). For example, in Britain, since the late 1980s the educational system has experienced dramatic policy changes (Simkins, 2000). The British government has introduced a number of apparently very radical proposals for educational reform including examination restructuring, changing the balance of control between the central government, local government and the community, industrial involvement in the running of schools, new ways of financing schools and universities, the autonomous management of institutions, etc (Watson *et al.*, 1997). These issues were concluded in the 1988 Education Reform Act (Watson *et al.*, 1997) and later modified by legislation (Simkins, 2000). The implementation of Local Management of Schools' Scheme by decentralising budgets to schools, suggests the UK government's intention to encourage schools to look for industrial and commercial sponsorship (Cooper, 1988; Bridges and McLaughlin, 1994). Watford (1990) maintains that privatisation and marketisation of education have been started in the UK since the 1980s in the belief that these processes would make the public sector more effective, efficient, and accountable to the public as well as more responsive to the changing demands of the public.

In many countries of the world, a tendency of governments to introduce more market-type mechanisms can be observed, particularly for coordinating their national higher education sectors (Williams, 1995; Dill, 1997). Whether public education should be privatised, UK government has attempted to put education in the market place (Bridges and McLaughlin, 1994; Pring, 1987). Ball (1990) identifies five major elements in the educational marketplace in general: choice, diversity, funding, competition and organisational style. According to Ball, as parents are willing to spend a lot of money on their children's education, more choices should be offered to them in terms of quality educational services (for example the choice between public and private schools for best-quality education). Similarly, there should be diversity in

the market to promote choice, as any attempt to make the provision of schooling equal for all and the same for all, would confound the market. Hence governments should leave the control and determination of school provision to the market. Moreover, there must be multiple sources of funding of which most should be coming from consumers (the parents, their children and their future employers) to the producers (the schools, school administrators and teachers). Furthermore, there must be competition to bring about efficiency and effectiveness. When school funding is directly related to students' enrolment, the educational market will heighten competition among schools and the market will be used as a disciplinary mechanism, rewarding successful schools and eliminating the inefficient and poor ones. Finally, the organisational style must reflect the whole idea of school-based management. Schools should be given direct control of their own budgets and be made responsible for employing, hiring and firing teachers and other staff as well as the management of their own schools. Ball concludes that schools should become businesses, being run and managed like businesses with a primary focus on the profit and loss account.

While all the developed countries are concerned about how best to continue financing the ever growing educational industry, many developing countries have already begun experimenting with novel approaches, like community finance, fees, loans, 'bonding' and the like (Bray and Lillis, 1988; Watson, 1991). The point is that educational systems throughout the world are either in crisis or in ferment, and there is no common agreement about how best to deal with the issues confronting governments and professional educators (Watson, et al, 1997). In commenting on U.S education reform, Healey and DeStefano (1997 p. 1-2) quote the Education Week's series called "Scaling Up" to succinctly explain the situation:

Once reformers strove to change a handful of schools to demonstrate that education could look and feel different. Now they are increasingly worried about how to spread effective practices broadly and deeply. They want to bring about high levels of student learning in large numbers of schools, not just a few. But to achieve change in the numbers desired, reformers need a whole new set of strategies.

The above quotation clearly demonstrates the deep frustration education reformers have experienced in their education reform efforts.

Jongbloed (2003) argues that though governments have spent much in the development of their education sectors, and have indeed paid the greater share of educational costs and issued a large number of rules and regulations about degrees, funding, access, quality, institutional management, personnel matters and other areas, there is still a great deal of disappointment among the general public with respect to government policies in fields like higher education. Thus, the higher education system still does not seem to meet the expectations of many citizens, especially the students, their parents and private businesses. The situation in the higher educational institutions is a symptom of crisis (World Bank, 1994) for economic growth and social development are associated with the development of higher education (El-Khawas *et al.*, 1998). The World Bank (1994), therefore, suggests four key directions for reform in the higher education institutions. They are: encouraging greater differentiation of institutions; provision of incentives for public institutions to diversify sources of funding; redefining the role of government in higher education; and introducing policies explicitly designed to give priority to quality and equity objectives. There have been some exciting changes in higher education since the World Bank (1994) suggestions. For example, the use of technology has expanded access and produced new ways of teaching and learning but with some new challenges and concerns for quality control (El-Khawas *et al.*, 1998). Indeed, higher education systems are in a constant state of change all around the globe (Mok, 2000).

Purpose of the Study

Among the areas where change is currently taking place in Ghana and in other developing countries is the Education sector. Indeed the Education sector is one of the important public services in the developing world. Education facilitates access to knowledge and plays a key role in the improvement of the socio-economic wellbeing of a nation and is a major source of competitive advantage (Bloom, 2002). The Education sector is therefore of great economic importance to national economy (Groot, 1999), for the quality of human resources depends upon the quality of the people's education. This study aims at examining the nature and implications of educational reforms in Ghana to promote informed stakeholders' consideration and discourse. In fact, the choice of authors to consider the education sector is not only timely but significant and exemplary as

well, for education sector development is of public interest, and the underlying issues are of national importance in policy and in practical terms.

Background of Educational Reforms in Ghana

During the past decades, various reforms including policies of education decentralisation have been advocated and carried out both in the developed and developing countries. This spate of educational reforms was caught by the African countries as well. McCain (1979) asserts that Africa is a continent where change keeps on occurring almost daily. Ghana, one of the earliest countries in Africa to have gained independence from the British colonial rule has since the mid-19th century made a number of attempts to reform its education system in order to solve the problem of unemployment/under-employment (Palmer, 2005, Acheampong and Furlong, 2000).

Pre-tertiary Educational Reforms in Ghana

In 1951, when Ghana, then Gold Coast became internally self-governing and led by Kwame Nkrumah, the pre-tertiary school system was composed of up to seventeen years of education: six years of primary, four years of middle school, five years of secondary school and two years of sixth-form (Palmer, 2005). In her desire to make education more relevant, an Accelerated Development Plan for Education was launched in 1951 which aimed at expanding education in all sub-sectors with a clear emphasis on the expansion of primary and middle schools (Foster, 1965). This was adopted to replace the colonial administration's ten year education plan (1946-1956) which had aimed to achieve universal primary education in about 20 to 25 years from 1946 (Gold Coast, 1948). The Development Plan which was politically motivated (Foster 1965) came into effect in January, 1952 abolishing primary school fees as Ghanaian led administration intended to provide universal and free primary education for all children (Gold Coast, 1952; Graham, 1971). In November, 1960, the then CPP government launched educational reform by implementing the Education Act 1960, Act 87, making primary schooling compulsory and free with effect from September, 1961. However, it was not completely free as the Act enjoined pupils to pay for the provision of essential books, stationery, and materials required for use in practical work.

By 1965, Ghana's educational system was one of the most advanced in Africa (Palmer, 2005) as enrolment stood as high as 75% for 6-14 years old (Ahadzie 2000) but without its attendant problems. The expansion of

primary and middle-school education culminated in a dilution of the teaching force which affected the quality of education (Foster, 1965). There was therefore, an emergency training of teachers which brought some sort of respite to the system. Similarly, as there was limited expansion in secondary education it brought untold pressure on the academics of the secondary system. Moreover, the mass educational expansion caused unemployment of school leavers which the government was unable to solve before it was overthrown in 1966.

In 1966, the NLC administration appointed the Kwapong Educational Review Committee which brought into the middle school system a two-year pre-vocational continuation classes (continuation schools) based on the industrial and farming needs of the country. This development which was hoped to prepare the middle school graduates for the world of work also failed woefully as the students in those schools were keen to enter into secondary schools. In the NLC regime, total expenditure in education declined with a marked drop both in the school aged children in schools and trained teachers well into the 1980s (Ahadzie, 2000).

The elected Busia government which began in 1969 could not bring any reform into the education system as its expansionary policies ran counter to the former IMF/World Bank agreement with the NLC (Boafo-Arthur, 1999) before it was toppled in 1972 by the National Redemption Council (NRC). The NRC administration in 1972 appointed the Dzobo Educational Reform Committee to carve a new structure and content for education in Ghana. The committee submitted their report titled the Report of the Education Advisory Committee on the Proposed New Structure and Content of Education for Ghana (GoG, 1972). The report highlighted that there was high rates of unemployment and under-employment among middle and secondary school graduates because of lack of proper attitude and skills necessary to equip them to work with their hands and to take up the type of practical work available in the workplace. The Committee therefore suggested the introduction of a Junior Comprehensive Secondary, which was to equip the students with skills to work with both their hands and minds (GoG, 1972).

In 1974, the educational reform based on the 1972 Dzobo Educational Reform Committee introduced the Junior Secondary School concept on an experimental basis. This programme could not survive because of the economic constraints that faced the country during the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1978, General Frederick Akuffo's administration reintroduced the structural adjustment policies supported by the donors. This set the clock of progress in education back again as there

was a cut back in public expenditure including education (Palmer, 2005). The high score of 75% of school enrolment for 6-14 years olds and the 90.8% of trained teachers in schools in 1965 dropped to 69.9% and 72% respectively in 1979 (Ahadzie, 2000).

Ghana's experience in the late 1970s and early 1980s dealt with the entire economy and thus the educational sector severely. According to Nti (1997) Ghana's GNP per capita fell by 23% between 1975 and 1983. Severe economic hardships and harsh revolutionary zeal of the military regime in 1981 caused many trained and highly qualified teachers in both primary and secondary schools to leave the country to other countries, particularly Nigeria, (SAPRI, Ghana 2001). Essentially, the current education and training structure in Ghana was shaped by the 1986/87 Education reforms (Palmer, 2005). In fact instituting reforms in education in Ghana is a question of re-conceptualising educational issues which calls for an examination of questions of process, content, objective, practice, and a crucial interrogation of the structures established for educational delivery (Dei, 2005). For Dei, education that responds to the concerns, aspirations and interests of a diverse body politic, and which draws on the accumulated knowledge, creativity and resourcefulness of local people is the most promising alternative approach to educational change. The free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (fCUBE) which was based on the Dzobo committee report in 1973 was implemented by the Government in 1987 to effect new structure and content in education.

One of the main focuses of the reform was to change the pre-tertiary education system from 17 to 12 years, with six years of primary school, three years of junior secondary school (JSS), and three years of senior secondary school (SSS). This reform altered the old education and training structure from the 6-4-5-2-3/4 to the 6-3-3-3/4 structure. The government intended the reforms to prepare the products from the J.SS for further education, skill training, and to pursue self-determined paths to enable them play a functional role in the society as informed, participatory citizens, and economic producers to improve the quality of their lives (Ministry of Education, 1996). The final replacement of the old structure with the new structure completed during the 1995/96 academic year when the last group of students under the old system graduated (World Bank, 1996). The attendance of primary and junior secondary schools, which is also called basic education, is obligatory and supposedly free. However, in practice, basic education is not truly free. The 1987 educational reforms also spelt out the post-basic education which consists of Senior Secondary School (SSS), Technical and Vocational

Education and Training (TVET), both formal and informal, and Tertiary level education. The tertiary level education principally comprises the universities and polytechnics. The polytechnics which were for the past regarded as second cycle or post basic institution were upgraded to the status of tertiary institution by the Polytechnic Law 1992, PNDCL 321 as part of the education reforms.

President Kuffour, in January, 2002 inaugurated a Committee of Review of Educational Reforms in Ghana. The report was reviewed by government and a White Paper was produced as 'The White Paper on Educational Reforms (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2004). The proposed Educational Reform became operational in September, 2007 (the 2007-8 academic year) (Acheampong, 2008). The new educational reforms laid emphasis on the post-basic education and training as crucial to poverty reduction. The senior secondary education was extended from 3 to 4 years to address concerns about quality, and there is also new determination to restructure pre-tertiary education provision in order to focus on preparing all secondary students either for entry into tertiary institutions or for the job market through apprenticeship training in the private sector (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, 2007).

Tertiary Educational Reforms in Ghana

Tertiary Education can be described as the education offered after secondary level at a university, Polytechnic, specialised institutions, open university and any other institution offering training leading to the award of diploma and degree qualifications (The Republic of Ghana, 2002; Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2004).

According to Thompson and Casely-Hayford (2008), though reforms in the tertiary sector are as old as those in the pre-tertiary sector, they have not attracted the same attention as the latter. Accordingly, the international focus on basic education and the resulting effect of donor preferences within the policy discourse on education in Ghana has downplayed the reforms in the tertiary sector. The authors share opinion with Girdwood (1999) that between 1986 and 1988, the same time that the JSS reforms were launched, a University Rationalisation Committee proposed series of reforms to deal with a prolonged period of under-funding and decline in the tertiary sector.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the tertiary education sector like all other sectors of the Ghanaian economy was in a deplorable condition ready for any form of

reforms. There was low financing provisioning, poor physical infrastructure, poor relationship of the sector to government, low staff morale, low staff retention and recruitment, and regular interruptions in academic work caused by political and economic disagreement between the government and the universities and within sections of a university, all culminating into reducing Ghana's enviable educational system into a state of near collapse (Britwum *et al.*, 2001). Regrettably, the government's educational budget in 1985, declined to one third of its size in 1976; the proportion of GDP for education fell from 6.4% in 1976 to 1.0 in 1983 and rose slightly to 1.7% in 1985; and education's share of national budget fell from 38% in 1976 to 27% in 1984 (Britwum *et al.*, 2001). Britwum *et al.*, (2001) note that the conditions in the tertiary institutions coupled with reforms at the basic and secondary levels of education precipitated reforms in the tertiary sector.

Tertiary reforms began in 1986 under the First Education Sector Adjustment Credit (EDSAC). The PNDC government in 1987 set up the University Rationalisation Committee (URC) with the responsibility to come up with the policy framework for reforming tertiary education in Ghana. The committee submitted its report in 1988 with about 166 recommendations (for details see Britwum *et al.*, 2001, pp. 49-50). The Second Education Sector Adjustment Credit of 1990 supported the process hence in 1991 the reforms were formalised. The contents of the reforms include the following:

- a. The reduction of tertiary education workers' population to 30% of students' population.
- b. Cost sharing, where the direct beneficiaries of education (students and their parents) contribute 10% of the cost of financing tertiary education.
- c. Control of intake and enrolment by government and institutions, etc.

The University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and University of Cape Coast were the three main public universities in Ghana before 1992. In 1992, the University College of Education, Winneba was established by the Ghana government as part of the educational reforms (University College of Education, Winneba, 2002; Manuh *et al.*, 2006). The University College of Education was established to produce professional teachers for basic, secondary and teacher training colleges (Republic of Ghana, 2002; University College of Education, Winneba, 2002; Manuh *et al.*, 2006).

In 1992, the University for Development Studies was also established following the reforms in the tertiary education system in 1991 (Acheampong, 2008;

University of Development Studies, 2002; The Republic of Ghana, 2002). The university was set up as a multi-campus institution with its headquarters in Tamale (Republic of Ghana, 2002). Although it was envisaged to have campuses in the four administrative regions of the northern section of Ghana comprising Brong Ahafo Region, Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions, not all the campuses are yet operational (University of Development Studies, 2002). Currently, the University of Mines and Technology, University of Health and Allied Sciences and the University of Energy and Natural Resources have been added to the list of public universities in Ghana summing up to nine in all.

As part of the reforms in the tertiary system in 1991, Ghana's polytechnics which were in the past considered as second cycle institutions were upgraded to the status of tertiary institutions in 1993 by the Polytechnic Law 1992 PNDCL 321 (Ghana Government Gazette, 1993). Currently, the Polytechnic Act (745) of 2007 has mandated the polytechnics to be autonomous and to run various degrees. With the upgrading, the polytechnics were mandated to provide tertiary career-focused education and skills training to the highest level possible for the development of the industrial and technological base of the economy. The polytechnics now award Higher National Diploma (HND) and various technical degree programmes with an urgent call on government to convert them to technology universities to make them more relevant.

The Current Structure of the Ghanaian Educational Sector

Currently, the education structure is made up of 2 years kindergarten, 6 years primary, and 3 years Junior High school, 4 year senior high school, leading to post secondary and tertiary education. There is also parallel technical/vocational education leading to polytechnics and the world of work; and apprenticeship leading to the world of work, and 3-4 years tertiary education (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2004; Acheampong *et al.*, 2007).

The tertiary education structure consists of the following: a university education of generally four years duration; (the duration is more than four years for professional programmes such as Medicine, Law and Architecture); a polytechnic education of three to four years duration; and a course of study at a professional institute of four years duration (including a minimum of one year attachment). The structure is depicted in figure 1 below.

The education sector is managed in the following ways. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for the formulation of educational policies in Ghana (Republic of Ghana, 2002). The Ministry ensures that the national policies on education harmonise with the overall national development policies and goals. In addition, MOE ensures that the implementation of policies is in accord with the aims and objectives of education (Republic of Ghana, 2002). A minister of State of Cabinet Status heads the Ministry. The MOE is followed by the Ghana Education Service (GES) on the management structure which is the main agency for implementing approved pre-tertiary education policies and programmes under the GES Council, in accordance with the GES Act 1995 (ACT 506). Among the functions of GES include providing and overseeing basic education, senior secondary education, technical education and special education; registering, supervising and inspecting private pre-tertiary educational institutions; and submitting to the Minister recommendations for educational policies and programmes (Republic of Ghana, 2002).

In addition, all tertiary institutions have governing councils as contained in their respective Acts (Republic of Ghana, 2002). Councils are made up of lay and professional people. Also all tertiary institutions have internal administrative structures among which are the departmental, faculty, Academic Boards and Committee system. There is also the Advisory body called the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE). The NCTE serves as a buffer between Government and the tertiary institutions. It advises the Minister of Education on matters related to tertiary education and articulates and promotes a central vision and direction for the development of tertiary education in Ghana (NCTE, 454 ACT, 1993; Republic of Ghana, 2002). The National Accreditation Board has oversight responsibility to ensure that tertiary institutions and programmes are well regulated and supervised.

| YEARS | AGE | | TERTIARY EDUCATION | TERTIARY University/polytechnic/technical university/professional institutes/college of Education/ Teacher Education |
|-------|---------|---|-----------------------------|--|
| 4 | 18 –19 | <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> Government's Commitment ↓ 11 years Compulsory Kindergarten and Basic ↑ </div> | SECOND CYCLE | SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL Specialisation in Grammar Technical/Agricultural/Vocational/ Apprenticeship Programme |
| 3 | 17 –18 | | | |
| 2 | 16 –17 | | | |
| 1 | 15 - 16 | | | |
| 3 | 14 –15 | | EDUCATION | JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL General Curriculum for Entry Into Grammar, Technical, Vocational, Agricultural courses |
| 2 | 13 -14 | | | |
| 1 | 12 –13 | | | |
| 6 | 11 –12 | | FIRST CYCLE EDUCATION | PRIMARY Basic Literacy, Numeracy, Science and Social Studies |
| 5 | 10 –11 | | | |
| 4 | 9 – 10 | | | |
| 3 | 8 – 9 | | | |
| 2 | 7 – 9 | | | |
| 1 | 6 – 7 | | | |
| 2 | 5 – 6 | | | KINDERGARTEN |
| 1 | 4 – 5 | | | |

Apprenticeship/ skills Training

Figure 1: New Structure of Education (Source: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2004)

Evaluating the Reforms in the Education Sector

On the basis of the number of reforms that the education sector of Ghana has experienced over the period, a preliminary evaluation is that, education in Ghana can be described as being under experimentation, especially the pre-tertiary, without a very clear direction and focus. The country appears very indecisive regarding the education system to adopt for the pre-tertiary level. In terms of tertiary level of education however, the nation has not experienced the back and forth movement, but the country has not fared well in terms of development of programmes very relevant to the industry or the world of work. There appears to be a disconnect between the requirements of industry and the skill types and levels of graduates produced by tertiary institutions.

On cost sharing policy in tertiary education Fredricksson *et al.*, (1998) find out that Ghana had some difficulties in its implementation. The authors identified that discussions on the policy which aimed at making parents and students pay the cost of accommodation was still not conclusive. The problem centred on how the cost sharing was to be organised. The authors concluded by describing the reform in the education sector as a mixed one-successful in the sense of an increase of enrolment at all the levels of education particularly, the enrolment of girls, and failure because it failed to improve the quality of education received by students. They therefore made the following recommendations: that the views of parents, teachers, and other stakeholders should be considered in order to shape and review the education policy; that the financing of education should be discussed in a form of national debate; that the tuition costs at all levels should be borne by the central government in addition to the provision and maintenance of equipment and facilities at secondary and tertiary levels; and finally students' loans should be increased between 30% and 50% and not forgetting the consideration of scholarships to students.

According to Agyemang (1992), there has been a structural, curricular, management and administrative changes in the first level of education under SAP, and the net effect of the changes has been the reduction of the length of education from 20/21 years to 15/16 which implies a cost reduction. However, the SAP having caused a serious squeeze in the financing of the education sector had affected the expansion of access, especially at the third level and has had adverse effects both on research and research capacity building. The author recommends that the success of educational reforms and the ability to develop human resources in these Anglophone countries depend on the ability to find alternative sources of funding from the first to the third levels of education. He also suggests that community

participation which promises to be a favourable alternative source at the basic level and in the non-formal sector should be stretched to cover the second and third levels of education. He further maintains that the universities and colleges should diversify their curricula and research activities to make them more relevant and community based, if they want to win the confidence, sympathy, support of the community and make education and research more development-oriented and cost-effective.

Kwapong *et al.*, (1994) in a Review of Distance Education Needs in Ghana as a contribution to the Reform of the Tertiary Education System, find that the financial resources and logistics/facilities to support the project were woefully inadequate coupled with lack of commitment on the part of government and the universities. The authors made several recommendations, some for the government and others for universities including government to ensure the establishment of a National Council for Distance Education, adequate provision of financial resources, suitable buildings and other physical facilities to accommodate each distance education centre; provision of computers, science equipment, and other educational resources in regional and district capitals to serve as learning resource centres for post-secondary education. The authors also suggested the formation of inter-university committees on programme discipline areas of common interest and provision of adequate financial, physical and human resources.

The education sector reforms in Ghana can also be evaluated under political, social, and economic considerations. There are early warning signals that the Ghanaian educational reform, if not checked, will turn political in terms of direction and focus, and granting of scholarships for further studies, both within the country and abroad. The experience is that various governments have attempted implementing the educational policy of their respective parties when they are in power. The implication is that there is no national policy on education. The government or party in power decides the nature and direction of education in the country. This practice is counter effective. In most cases, the award of government scholarship is influenced by the political alignment of the scholar. The implication is that, there is no clear criteria and level playing field for selection. Potential scholars who are either politically inactive or who declare their support for an opposition party are denied scholarships.

Socially, ethnicity seems to be gaining currency and taking the better part in today's Ghanaian education system and adversely affecting some reforms. This is real in the computerized postings of students to government secondary schools. In the best and modern

secondary schools one could see more of one or two tribes outnumbering the other tribes. Though a student will perform better than his/her counterpart, he/she will not find his/her name in their first choice of schools because of their ethnic background arguably. However, those who did not perform well are posted to the best and 1st class schools because of their ethnic orientation. This is also evident in the tertiary institutions including polytechnics and universities. Where a particular Dean of a faculty or Head of a department is from a particular tribe or other social orientation including religion, privileges are granted to his/her associates. This situation promotes ethnicity which will in diverse ways affect our development and destroy the spirit of unity of the Ghanaian populace.

Economically, it currently appears that education is being 'double-commercialized' and those who can afford it are able to further their courses regardless of academic performance. There is now an introduction of fee paying in the public universities, based weakly on so called subject combination. Public universities often claim lack of academic facilities as the challenge to their inability to admit a certain number of students based on their own predetermined cut off points. Ironically however, students, who by virtue of their sound financial background and are ready to pay full fee are given admissions. This means that the university does not have facilities for those students with the required passes but who are unfortunately financially disadvantaged. The same university however does have facilities for students who want to be "fee paying". The implication of this emerging trend is that, the provision in the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana regarding education is being compromised. The public universities which are supposed to make education equally and fairly accessible to all qualified candidates have rather compounded the situation with their gradual and well calculated move toward pure commercialization. They are gradually becoming private in practice. For private universities with their fees fairly higher than the public ones, it is only the rich that can pay for their children for admission into such institutions. This recent trend of the Ghanaian education system is widening the gap between the rich and the poor in terms of redistribution of income. The future effect will be the rich becoming 'richer' and the poor becoming 'poorer'.

The same is the case in the basic and secondary education in Ghana. The rich in the society are found gaining admission for their children in good and better schools and the poor getting 'poor and bad' schools for their children. In fact this trend must be rectified by

giving equal opportunities to both the children of the rich and the poor in terms of quality education.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The education sector in Ghana has witnessed a lot of reforms. There have been various reforms in the basic level, secondary level as well as the tertiary level all with the purpose of improving education in Ghana. The reforms, though often fashioned with good intentions, are often misunderstood, wrongly approached and accidentally implemented. On the basis of the number of reforms that the education sector of Ghana has experienced over the years, the paper concludes that, education in Ghana can be described as being under experimentation, especially the pre-tertiary, without a very clear direction and focus. The country appears very indecisive regarding the education system to adopt for the pre-tertiary level and indeed for all levels. Selection criteria into senior high schools, choice of programmes of study, and even the duration of secondary education and others still remain fairly unresolved issues at the secondary level. At the tertiary level, educational reforms have not done much. While it may be argued that the reforms have brought about widening of access to tertiary education through the emergence of numerous private university colleges, the development has only witnessed replication of business programmes in nearly all universities and colleges. It is the number of institutions running various business and mainly academic programmes that has increased but not the relevance and quality of the programmes. The implication is that, the expectations and requirements of businesses and industries remain hugely unattended to. Industries and businesses continue to find products of universities and colleges disappointingly unprepared for the job markets; mainly because there is a complete disconnection between curricula and industry requirements. This apparent disconnection between the requirements of industry and the skill types and levels of graduates produced by tertiary institutions remain the single most important cause of low labour productivity and high graduate unemployment in the country.

On the basis of the nature of the reforms in the education sector of the country and the consequences on these reforms, this paper suggests a number of policy recommendations for stakeholders' consideration.

- a. There should be a national educational policy framework that will not only be non-partisan but that purports to provide the required man power for national development. The policy framework should have constitutional backing against whims and caprices of political parties and

- b. partisan governments. In effect, the same education agenda will be pursued regardless of who is or what party or government is in power.
- c. Academic and industry collaboration to review academic curricula. The essence of the existence of universities and colleges is mainly to produce the requisite manpower to resource businesses and industries. Effectively, academia is failure where its products are not employable in the world of work. This unfortunate situation that has engulfed Ghana can be reverted when both the academic community and industry players and business people sit and discuss the issue. Universities and Polytechnics must know what is currently required to be successful on the job to be able to design the programmes. It is time for lecturers to learn on the jobs that relate to their courses.
- d. Expanding academic facilities and increasing educational access using national polytechnics. The proposed conversion of polytechnics to technical universities is long overdue. The influx of private university colleges in the country in the last one to two decades is only a consequence of the lack of foresight on the part of governments and education administrators and policy makers. While so much of the tax-payers' money has been spent to resource our polytechnics, very little has been done to make them more relevant. Indeed, the United Kingdom proactively converted their polytechnics into universities to address the short fall in skilled workers. Unfortunately, Ghana's educational reform has not taken clue, rendering well resourced national asset fundamentally irrelevant. Fortunately, it is always better late than never; we can no longer wait to make our polytechnics more relevant to the needs and expectations of the people of Ghana.
- e. Public universities must promote fair and equal access to quality education. Admitting certain students at the expense of equally qualified applicants works against the provision on education in the national constitution and does not promote equality and equity. The practice calls for some monitoring and control to ensure that there is sanity in the admission process and procedure.

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