



# The Multiple Streams Framework and the 1996 and 2007 Educational Reforms in Ghana

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## Authors' contributions

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors are collectively responsible for the outcome of the manuscript.*

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## ABSTRACT

The paper examines the formulation of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education policy and the Kuffour-led education reforms in the education system of Ghana in 1996 and 2007 respectively. The study is undertaken through the lens of the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) developed by John Kingdon in 1984 to underscore how different factors or streams collectively influence the adoption of certain policies. The paper argues that far more than mere pursuit of party manifesto promises, broad problem, policy and political occurrences conspired to call forth the reforms. By so doing, the paper puts the theoretical assumptions of MSF to test and finds that though developed within the context of the American democratic system to explain policymaking, the MSF finds utility in the Ghanaian context as well, making its postulations generalizable.

*Keywords: Education reform; problem stream; policy stream; politics stream; policy window; policy entrepreneur.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The current tripartite structure of Ghana's education system is the product of a long history of reforms. In the early years following Ghana's independence, the nation was praised as having one of the finest education systems in Western Africa [1]. This notwithstanding, successive governments have always felt dissatisfied with the education system they inherited. In what has now become a tradition, various governments are never shy of effecting reforms in the education system in the bid to make it responsive to the national needs [2,3]. Looking back into the nation's post-independence experience, various reforms in the education sector have been carried out in 1961, 1967, 1974 and 1987. All, except the 1961 reform, were supervised by military regimes. In spite of these several reforms, little is known about the very processes that preceded the policies that were formulated. Ohemeng [4] has observed that the policymaking environment during this period could be described as a 'closed circuit network' of politicians and senior bureaucrats, with assistance from expatriates. That is, often apprehensive of popular participation, military governments always kept the policymaking process tight-knit and away from public participation.

Having spent the preceding 11 years under military dictatorship, the country returned to constitutional rule and multiparty democracy in 1992 and thus began the Fourth Republic. Consequently, the dynamics of politicking changed drastically. The political space began to be loosened and in the process, Ghana broke ties with the 'culture of silence' that became synonymous with politics for the most part of the 1980s [5]. Thus far, the country has alternated power twice between the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). In both instances, the education policy of the nation has been a point of public discourse. In keeping with the standard tradition, both the NPP and the NDC have reformed the education policy of the country. Braimah, Mbowura and Alidu [6] have noted that education reform in the country is inextricably linked with a change in government. Focusing on the Fourth Republican dispensation, this paper examines the relevant documents and data and finds that as a consequence of the weakly developed institutional arrangements at the time of the reforms in 1996 and 2007, the entrepreneurship of Harry Sawyerr and John Kufour were crucial in

pushing through the respective reforms. It is further argued that as a consequence of the ambiguity that prevailed in the political system at the time of the reforms, the aforementioned individuals, by resort to their esteemed statuses took advantage of the happenings within the political system to push for a particular policy proposal out of the lot to address the problems that were perceived within the education system.

There are two discernible strands of thought in the literature on the education policy of Ghana that provides context for this study. One strand of thought focuses on a longitudinal study of education reforms in relation to a myriad of other variables within the context of national development of Ghana. These historiographical studies have examined the nation's education systems and cover the colonial as well as the post-independence era of the country's history [2,7-9]. Over the course of the post-independence period of Ghana's history, a new body of literature has emerged which provides the second strand of thought. This literature focuses on an evaluative account of the various education policies of the country. In the latter strand, the literature has primarily answered the 'why' question. Thus the literature has focused on examining the various policies of the country by focusing on the ineffectiveness and deficiencies of each existing policy that accounted for the adoption of a new policy to address the previous lapses. In this way, this literature has mainly focused on the implementation, evaluation and termination phases of the public policy cycle [10]. Accordingly, general economic decadence, the downside of Ghana's pursuit of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), a mass exodus of trained teachers to neighboring countries, especially Nigeria in the wake of the 1983 famine in the country, budgetary cuts in supply of teaching aids and textbooks and poor remuneration for teachers are often cited as some of the problems in the education system that have necessitated reforms in the country over the years [11-16,3,17-20].

While perceiving the existing literature as instructive, this paper identifies two main gaps which it seeks to fill. Firstly, the paper identifies that by focusing on answering the 'why' question, the literature has largely overlooked the 'how' question. In essence, the literature has failed to account for how the various education policies of the country were formulated (that is, the very processes that went into the formulation

process). As a result, the paper, by focusing on the Fourth Republican dispensation, seeks to account for how the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy and the Kufour-led 2007 Education policy were formulated. The paper specifically focuses on the problem identification, agenda setting, and policy adoption phases of the policy process. Secondly, the paper posits that the existing literature remains largely descriptive and theoretical issues are generally overlooked. In its second contribution, this paper seeks to apply a public policy theory to account for how the aforementioned policies were formulated. It is hoped that this paper will make a modest contribution to the literature by introducing a third strand of thought that focuses on the agenda setting, policy formulation and policy adoption phases of the policy process [21,10].

The rest of the paper is divided into four parts and organized as follows. In the first section, methodological and theoretical issues are discussed. This section provides the conceptual framework which forms the basis of the various analyses undertaken throughout the paper. In the second section, the paper focuses on the agenda setting and policy formulation of the FCUBE under the presidency of Jerry John Rawlings and the NDC government which spanned from 1996 to 2005. Using the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) of John Kingdon as a theoretical guide, this section will construct the three identifiable streams and how the policy entrepreneur took advantage of the policy window that was created to push through the reform. In the third section, the paper will concentrate on the 2007 education reform policy under John Kufour's presidency and account for how the formulation process was undertaken. The last section which concludes the paper recaps the main ideas discussed in the paper and its implication for our understanding of public policymaking generally within Ghana's Fourth Republic.

## **2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

For the purposes of thorough examination, the various public policies of Ghana which span across all the various sectors of the country are taken as the population of the study. The rationale is that as a centralized unitary system of democracy, Ghana maintains a strong central government which oversees policymaking across the entire country. This makes the process of decision making fairly similar across all sectors of

the economy. In effect, this is a small 'n' qualitative study of public policymaking in Ghana. The population sample, however, is the education system of the country. Consequently, this paper is a case study of the two main education reforms carried within Ghana's Fourth Republican dispensation. A case study as a methodological approach in policy studies is an intensive study of a single case with the view to shedding light on a larger class of similar cases [22]. That is, in the bid to understand policymaking for the period under review, this paper concentrates and intensively examines the education sector of Ghana to ascertain how the two reforms were undertaken by the various governments that have ruled the country thus far.

To provide structure to the issues to be discussed, the paper adopts the diachronic case study method of social research [23,24]. A diachronic case study is a systematic examination of a single case within two time periods. Thus, within the Fourth Republic, Ghana has undertaken two different education reforms in 1996 and 2007 and these time periods form the focus of the research. This kind of investigation makes for a considerable degree of time to analyze the reform processes within the case so as to gather information about the problem identification, agenda setting and policy adoption of the respective policy reforms.

Overall, the research design is presented with a major challenge. This challenge remains what Meyer [24] has observed about case study research. She cautions that the single case study method has limited generalizability and risks information-processing bias. However, in offsetting this challenge, the paper utilizes process tracing to gather pieces of evidence from several sources to undertake the exercise [22]. That is, multiple pieces of evidence are drawn from the wider political system, journal articles, government documents, and the policymaking community to establish how the education reforms were undertaken. More so, as a result of the qualitative nature of the study and the reliance on publicly assessable documents as data for the research, ethical issues were not a problem for the study.

## **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The policy formulation process of the education reforms under this study cannot be explained by the conventional 'rational actor model' [25] or the usual influence of advocacy coalitions [26]. The

weak institutional framework and the ambiguous nature of the problems within the education system at the time of the reforms means that the analyses do not lend themselves to any of the theoretical models mentioned above. As a result, this paper utilizes the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) as put forth by John Kingdon [27] and further expounded by Nikolas Zahariadis [28] to explain the education reforms undertaken in 1996 and 2007. MSF accounts for policymaking under conditions of ambiguity when policymakers are operating under significant time constraints. The theory accounts for the processes that precede the policy implementation stage of the policy process. These activities span from agenda setting to its adoption [29,30].

MSF assumes that government is an 'organized anarchy' with a fluid participation which regularly sees participants dropping in and out of the governance process [28]. Like the garbage can model put forth by Cohen, March and Olsen [31] this organized anarchy regularly sees inputs and proposals jumbled up into the policymaking process with each struggling to make it to the institutional agenda. The institutional agenda denotes the issues being considered by government. However, Anderson [32] has stated that not all issues on the institutional agenda reach the status of public policy. He further observes that the decisional agenda are the salient issues that policymakers have committed themselves to addressing in the polity.

Within the Ghanaian political system, the President, who is the head of the government, is vested with executive powers by the national constitution to hire and fire officials to aid in the administration of the state [33]. Regular reshuffles of government appointees are undertaken by the president at critical times in the bid to assign the best of brains to help carry on the task of governance. This process regularly sees officials being reassigned to new ministries while others are shown the exit and new ones coming in to augment the existing team of public officials.

Another assumption of MSF is its postulation that order is temporal and that policymakers are always operating under significant time constraints. The theory assumes that policymakers are expected to 'strike while the iron is hot' [28]. Thus policymakers have no luxury of time to have a full view and appreciation of the problem at hand before devising a policy to

tackle it. Pressing problems regularly demand rapid responses lest citizens lose faith in the capacity of the government to deliver. Far from depicting a crisis scenario, the theory rather portrays governments as under constant pressure to respond to citizens demands.

The education reforms undertaken in the Fourth Republic harbored these characterizations. Firstly, the FCUBE policy of 1996 was backed by a constitutional provision which called for its adoption within two years after the coming into force of the national constitution. This meant that amidst the institutional pressure to streamline the governance process in the early days of the inception of the fourth republic, the FCUBE was carried out. Further, with the FCUBE outrunning its constitutional mandate in August 2005, pressure mounted on the government to come out with the new direction of education policy for the nation in the 2006 academic year which was beginning in September of the same year. These limited time frames meant that the governments were under significant constraints to come out with the policy outlining the new direction of education system for the country.

The framework as well postulates independent yet interrelated processes by which problems, ideas (potential solutions), and politics are individually conceived as streams which flow independently through government, combining only occasionally with choice opportunities to advance issues onto the policy agenda [29]. These processes are metaphorically described as 'streams' which flow through the policy system. The problem stream has within it all the undesired conditions that citizens want to have rectified by the government. It spans through several sectors and areas of public interest and they are the very conditions for which the citizens voted for the government to have them resolved. It may stem from residual problems that policy feedback makes known or focusing events within the wider political system which draw cognizance from the citizenry.

The policy stream is yet another independent process that flows through the political system. Analogous with 'primeval soup' within which several ingredients are constituted, the policy stream consists of all the proposals made in policy communities for tackling the issues that make up the problem stream [28]. Through such mechanisms as hearings, papers, and even conversations, bureaucrats, academics and researchers of think tanks who take an interest in

the problem make their ideas known to policymakers. The hope is that the latter will embrace these ideas and run with them in the adoption stage of the policymaking process. However, not all policy proposals make it to the institutional agenda. Seldom do proposals survive the struggle process unaltered. Most policy proposals get combined with other ideas into new proposals, with others losing out altogether. Considerations of technical feasibility and resource economy are measured in choosing one proposal over another.

Lastly, there is the politics stream. This stream comprises of the public mood, the activities of pressure groups and even election results and administrative or legislative turnover [29]. These have considerable impact on how issues come to be defined as problems, and the sort of solutions that are applied in tackling the issues. The idea is that in a multi-party democracy as pertains in Ghana, the political party that occupies government determines the policy direction of the state. Therefore it is expected that a change in government will correspond with a change in the policy direction and focus of a state owing to the differences in how problems are conceived and where government turns to in search for solutions.

Central to MSF are policy window and policy entrepreneurs. In the pursuit of national policies, timing is very crucial. The government is constantly bombarded with several problems that the citizens believe must be addressed through public policy. Given that resources are always not enough to address the grievances of the people, the government continually prioritizes the needs of the state and addresses the ones deemed to be of immediate importance first. In another breadth, the government is also keeping an eye on its continuous stay in office. What this means is that it requires unique opportunities for the government to pursue a given policy. In the parlance of this theory, such opportune times are referred to as policy windows. Zahariadis [28] accounts for how windows in the political system open. He posits, “[w]indows are opened by compelling problems or by events in the problem stream (25: 35).”

MSF regards policy entrepreneurs as individuals with vested interest in seeing a problem resolved. More than mere advocates of a given policy, they are rather power brokers, coalition enablers and manipulators of problematic preferences and unclear technology [28]. Such

people are always looking for policy windows so as to marshal all the resources at their disposal to couple the streams and push for the adoption of a particular policy by policymakers. By their close monitoring of events in the political system, policy entrepreneurs are the first to detect when a window opens and moves in to take advantage to couple the streams and push for the adoption of a policy. Just like epistemic communities, policy entrepreneurs are highly knowledgeable in certain policy areas and they are able to push for the adoption of such policies when they believe the timing is right.

The MSF was formulated within the United States’ political system to explain the domestic policy process. Since its formulation, the theory has found wide application in North America and Europe to analyze various sub-national, national and international issues. Zahariades [28] finds over 30 successful applications of the theory across Europe and North America. However, a survey of the literature finds only a handful of policy issues in Africa that have been analyzed using the theory. Valery Ridde [34] and Ampofo [35] utilized the theory to explain national health policy making in Burkina Faso and Ghana respectively. Offin [36] has as well applied MSF to account for women empowerment in Ghana. Similarly, Ainuson [37] has utilized the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) to explain water policy making in Ghana. However, this limited application of theory in Africa leaves much to be desired, especially considering the fact that there are numerous policy issues across the continent that demand theoretical expositions.

The limited application of the theory across Africa is, however, fairly understandable. MSF was developed to account for policymaking in democratic settings. Africa’s political history has been one inundated by military and/or autocratic governments. Until the third wave of democracy [38] in the 1980s, military dictatorships pervaded the political landscape. Given the restrictions and the secrecy that policymaking was shrouded under such regimes, the application of MSF to explain policy making was hampered. However, with the current focus on democratic consolidation across the continent, and in Ghana in particular, the situation is ripe for the theory to be applied to explain policymaking. Moreover, the macro-level systemic focus of the theory makes the national education reform policies of Ghana a viable policy to be examined using the theory.

Further, the paper draws attention to the ways in which conceptualization of both the policy problem and policy solution were developed, articulated, presented, and debated in the political arena. The policies were mainly products of policy recommendations from policy communities who devised policy solutions to tackle the problems that bedeviled the education system of the country. Consequently, powerful individuals especially policy entrepreneurs took advantage of the ambiguity created within the system to push for certain policies. To this extent, the MSF is best suited to explain the emergence of the FCUBE and the 2007 education reforms.

#### **4. The Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education: 1996 – 2005**

##### **4.1 Context**

Over the course of Ghana's post-independence history, various reforms undertaken within the education years have, among others, focused on the number of years spent in the various stream as well as a revision of the curriculum particularly for the middle/secondary school stream. Following the overthrow of the K.A. Busia government in January of 1972 by Colonel Acheampong, the Dzobo Education Review Committee was set up to review the education system and make recommendation for reforms. Gyedu [2] submits that the report of the committee, which commenced with the 1974/5 academic year, began on an experimental basis and gained nationwide implementation the following year. Under this reform, pre-tertiary school system comprised seventeen years of education – six years of primary education; four years of middle school; five years of secondary education and two years of sixth form [17].

In 1987, following the abrupt end of the Third Republic, the New Structure and Content of Education became the new working policy of the nation's education system under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) regime. Under this policy, Ghana adopted the 6-3-3-4 system which meant six years of primary education after which three years each of junior and senior secondary education followed before four years of tertiary education. All through this period, the education system was largely financed by the national government. However, Ghana's education system began to experience foreign interventions following the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in the 1980s. The general economic decadence

wrought by the economic and political mismanagement of the country during the period had considerable adverse impacts on the education system of the country. In a related development, the inception of the Fourth Republic was a watershed in the nation's political history. Sweeping changes occurred in the political system which had direct impact on the education sector. The 'culture of silence' that came to characterize politicking was broken. It is against this backdrop that the three streams of MSF for the FCUBE are constructed.

#### **5. Formulation of the FCUBE Policy: The Problem Stream**

In the run up to the Fourth Republic, several problems were perceived in the education system. Zahariadis [28] maintains that there are three mechanisms through which issues come to be framed as problems. These mechanisms are policy feedback, focusing events and indicators. Regarding policy feedback, Ghana's adoption of the SAP of the Bretton Woods institutions in the 1980s had debilitating consequences for the education system of the country. As part of the implementation process, the government was required to, among other prescriptions, cut back on public spending and other forms of social interventions including subsidies. The portion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) spent on education fell from over six percent in 1976 to just over one percent. Consequently, most schools had no textbooks, no chalk, and, more often than not, few teachers. In senior secondary schools, mismanagement and inadequate budgets forced boarding schools to close many weeks of the school year [39]. The National Education Forum (1999) sums up the effect of the SAP on the education sector of the country:

The percentage of GDP allocated to education dropped from 6.4 percent to 1.7 percent. The real levels of financing fell by about two-thirds. Government resources were no longer available to construct, complete or maintain educational facilities. Scarcity of foreign exchange affected the country's ability to purchase textbooks and other teaching and learning materials. At the basic education level, the ratio of trained teachers to untrained teachers fell significantly and low motivation and morale led to ineffective supervision [40:9].

Thus, the school system was left dejected, as basic resources and materials required for its running were not forth-coming from the

government. Harry Sawyerr, Ghana's Minister of Education in 1993 puts it better: "by 1985, the education system was destitute at every level" [39:3].

Further, other focusing events pointed to the fact that all was not well with the education system in the run up to the adoption of the FCUBE. In the 1993 academic year, 42,105 candidates sat for the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE). When the West African Examination Council (WAEC) released the results of the examination, the weakness in the implementation of the 1987 education reforms became apparent [17]. In a rather disappointing performance, only 1,354 candidates representing 3.2 percent passed and hence were qualified to subsequently sit for the University Entrance Examination. Given the fact that 21.08 percent of the candidates who sat for the examination failed, anger, uproar and criticisms were elicited from the stakeholders of the education system. Parents bemoaned the fact that the education system amounted to wasted years [6]. The general discontentment that greeted the release of the SSSCE results compelled the government to set up a committee to look into the education system and make recommendations for reform.

Lastly, in the area of indicators, Braimah, Mbowura and Alidu [6] argue that although frantic efforts were made by the government to construct schools in catchment areas, this action was not paralleled with the provision of trained teachers. While over 100 community schools were built across the country bringing the total government assisted secondary schools to 452 in the 1993 academic year, qualified vocational and technical instructors to tutor the students in these new schools were non-existent. At every level of the education system, teachers left Ghana for other neighboring countries and even overseas where they could earn better salaries. In their stead, untrained teachers took over teaching responsibilities in the classroom [41]. Moreover, teaching and learning materials for the schools were in short supply. Braimah, Mbowura and Alidu [6] charge that textbooks for the final year course required for the candidates to prepare for the SSSCE were never supplied, depriving the candidates of the knowledge required for the examination. In sum, the policy feedback of the SAP, coupled with the focusing events of the 1993 SSSCE performance of candidates and the indicators of a shortage of trained teachers and textbooks for studies provided the impetus for Ghanaians to demand a drastic overhaul of the education system.

## 5.1 Policy Stream

The policy stream is one of the independent processes that also go on in the run up to the adoption of a policy. Ideas and proposals generated by policy experts, academics and within government circles in this stream rise and fall over the years. However, considerations of technical feasibility, resource economy and value acceptance determine the fate of whether proposed solutions ultimately make it to the institutional agenda. Within the education system in the run up to the adoption of the FCUBE, government was largely the main actor, championing the development of possible solutions to the problem.

Under the auspices of the Ministry of Education (MoE), the bureaucrats together with government appointees and foreign donor agencies regularly met to fashion out possible solutions to the menace in the education system. The government instituted an education reform committee in 1993. With partnership from international donors such as the United States Agency for International Development, Canadian International Development Agency, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development and UNICEF, the MoE undertook extensive consultations with stakeholders of the education sector between May 1993 and July 1994 [3]. In recounting the role of the donor community in the preparation of the strategy paper, the Minister of Education, Harry Sawyerr intimated:

During the preparation of the paper, UNICEF staff in Ghana took the lead in providing technical and financial assistance to the ministry. Teams of specialists and practitioners, including representatives of other funding agencies, were invited to prepare thematic papers on key sector issues. Funding agency representatives met every month at UNICEF; the head of UNICEF's Human Resource Development Program chaired the meetings. Participants included officials from the ministries of education and finance, UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, the World Bank, the British Council and Britain's Overseas Development Agency (ODA), the European Union, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and other bilateral agencies, including the Swiss, German, Canadian, Dutch, and French [39]

The consultative process that commenced in May 1993 ended with a four-day workshop from 19 to 22 July, 1994. The MoE, under the leadership of the Minister, prepared a strategy paper, "*Towards Learning for All: Ghana Basic Education Reforms for the year 2000*," which sought to be the roadmap to rectify the anomaly in the education system [15], [39]. At the workshop, a formal proposal was presented to the government to be considered for adoption as the new education policy of the country. There were five broad recommendations contained in the proposal. They were infrastructural development, management reforms, curriculum change, community participation and improvement of quality personnel to support basic education at all levels (Government of Ghana, 1994).

## 5.2 Political Stream

Flowing independently of the two aforementioned streams is the political stream. This stream is composed of such things as public mood, pressure group campaigns, and election results among others [27]. As powerful as the stream is, political developments have considerable power in shaping how problems are defined and the sort of solutions devised to meet the problems head on.

On December 31, 1981, Jerry Rawlings led a military coup that toppled the democratically elected Limann government. A moratorium was placed on all forms of political party activities in the country. A 'culture of silence' characterized the general political atmosphere of the state [42]. However, succumbing to domestic and international pressures, the government outlined measures to return the country to democracy. Consequently, presidential elections were organized and run in November 1992. The PNDC military government metamorphosed into the National Democratic Congress and with Jerry Rawlings as its standard-bearer competed and won an overwhelming victory in the national polls in 1992. Being the leader of the country 11 years prior, the government was fully aware of the problems bedeviling the education sector of the country at the inception of the republic.

The public mood at the time of the reform was one of dissatisfaction with the state of the education system. Several factors accounted for the discontentment of the citizenry. At the turn of the 1990s, the country was beginning to bear the brunt of the economic crunch wrought by the

SAP. The cut in government expenditure in the education system was greeted with disdain. Teachers and pupils alike could not lay hands on basic materials for teaching and learning. More so, the general shortage of qualified teachers to tutor pupils, the disappointing performance of students, and the newfound freedom under the democratic system conspired to ensure that the stakeholders within the education system and the wider populace clamored for a change in the education system [3].

## 5.3 The Policy Window Opens

Kingdon [27] describes the opportune times when it becomes ripe for specific policies to be adopted as policy windows. Once the opportunity presents itself, policy entrepreneurs must act quickly to push their pet solutions for adoption lest the chance passes by. President Jerry Rawlings' government, in initiating the reforms appointed a commission to look into the education system and make recommendations for reforms. The commission was tasked among others to engage in political education, advice the government on how to develop a participatory democracy, and monitor the government's performance in fostering a democratic environment [43]. The commission consulted widely. Between July and November of 1990, the committee held 10 regional seminars on the democratic structure for central government. Several well-meaning Ghanaians contributed to the deliberations of the commission. In March 1991, the commission issued a report. The commission's report particularly noted that education standards had fallen in the country and that many people were also excluded [15]. The commission's report among others recommended for the adoption of a new constitution.

In response, the president accepted the recommendations as a working document. In April of 1991, the president constituted a committee of constitutional experts to formulate specific constitutional proposals. Along with the ongoing constitutional process was the move to organize national elections. Presidential elections were organized in November 1992. On December 29, 1992, parliamentary polls were also held. With the parliament duly constituted, the new constitution was ratified in April 1993 as the principal governing document of the country [43]. The adoption of the constitution opened the window of opportunity to reform the education system. Article 38(2) of the constitution



stipulates, "The Government shall, within two years after Parliament first meets after the coming into force of this Constitution, draw up a program for implementation within the following 10 years, for the provision of free, compulsory and universal basic education [33]." Thus the need for a reform was given a constitutional backing. Zahariadis [28] maintains that policy windows are of short duration. Sharp [44], however, disagrees with this observation and argues to the contrary. In keeping with Sharp's position, the window that was created by the national constitution was long enough for the government to undertake the requisite reforms in the education sector.

However, there was the need for a strong policy entrepreneur to step into the scene and steer the process. Under the new government, Dr. Mary Grant was appointed the Minister of Education. However, after a year in the ministry, a ministerial reshuffle saw her replaced with Mr. Harry Sawyerr. Mr. Sawyerr was a phenomenal figure in the ruling government. An astute politician, he was hugely placed in government circles. His involvement in African politics dated back to 1963 when he was appointed as the first African to act as Chief Federal Lands Officer for Nigeria. He was once a Member of Parliament in the Third Republic. He served as the Minister of Transport and Communication between 1979 and 1981. The government, sensing the enormity of the task of reforming the education system appointed him as the Minister to spearhead it. That he was of immense help in the formulation of the FCUBE is undisputed [15]. Alsop et al. [45] observe that he regularly engaged with the international donors and amply demonstrated capacity to push his case always. He led the preparation of the strategy paper that eventually became the adopted policy document for the reform and coordinated the funding agency participation in the various policy dialogue and implementation. Under his able leadership, the ministry developed its own priorities and strategies for national development in the education system. Notably, Harry Sawyerr championed the formulation process such that eventually it resulted in the shift in authority from the funding agencies to the ministry. In all, during his term as the Minister of Education, he committed his time and the Ministry's resources to getting the FCUBE adopted as the working policy and the new reform. In January 1995, the Parliament received a draft of the FCUBE. The proposed policy sought to among others provide effective teaching and learning in primary and

junior secondary school and as well expands access and participation of all children of school going age.

Thematically, the policy had four key areas: teaching and learning; management and quality assurance; access, participation and infrastructure, and cost and financing. Though the policy had a 10-year life span, it was to be implemented in two phases of five years each. It was proposed that various relevant units within the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service were set up and charged with the implementation of the policy from the center whiles through decentralization, District Education Oversight Committees were set up in each of the 110 districts of the country. Following ratification of the policy by the Parliament and Executive arms of government, the FCUBE was adopted in June 1996 with the Minister, Harry Sawyerr's inauguration of the Implementation Overview Committee.

## **6. The Kufour-Led Reforms: 2007 to 2010.**

The year 2000 was equally historic in the political annals of Ghana. In this politically tense year, the elections that were held in December saw the ruling NDC voted out of power. The NPP won the election and assumed power as the new ruling government. With the new government fully in power, the education sector became a focus of political discourse. The government, desirous of effecting reforms, pointed to several lapses in the existing system so as to elicit consensus from the citizenry for a change. It is within this context that the three streams are constructed.

### **6.1 Problem Stream**

The turn of the twenty-first century heralded a regime change in Ghana's political governance. Elections were held in December 2000. Though keenly contested, the NPP with John Kufour as the standard-bearer won both the presidential and parliamentary elections. According to Braimah, Mbowura and Alidu [6], there was the usual coterie by the media that a reform of the school system was inevitable with the change of political power. As was predicted, upon assumption of office, the Kufour government made known its intentions of reforming the education system it inherited. With the target date for the FCUBE to terminate its constitutional mandate approaching, plans began in earnest in 2002 to reform the education system.

In the area of policy feedback, the government perceived the FCUBE policy as a carry-over of the 1987 education reform that was supervised by the military government of the time [3]. It was charged that the implementation of the FCUBE had brought to the fore teething problems in the objective, content, administration, and management of education with the effect that the education system had failed to meet the national expectation in terms of its coverage, quality, equitableness and economic utility [45].

Meanwhile, other focusing events and indicators within the education sector pointed to the challenges that were bedeviling the system. A survey of the various study documents issued by the government between 2003 and 2007 recounted major challenges with the education system:

- (1) While, on the average, the government provided 91 percent of education financing, most of this was absorbed by teachers' salaries, leaving very little funds for non-salary expenditure (Government of Ghana [46])
- (2) The fluctuating percentages of General Enrolment Ratios (GERs) of 38.7 percent at pre-school, 82.3 percent at primary, 63.3 percent at the junior secondary stage and 17 percent at the senior secondary stage were also identified. Further, the document noted particularly that technical and vocational education was poorly developed since more resources are rather channeled towards the grammar system. Lastly, limited opportunity for transfer among streams was as well identified [47].
- (3) The deteriorating performance of students in the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) was also observed. In the table below (Fig. 2), the annual performance of the Senior Secondary School (SSS) candidates between 2001 and 2005 is compared. The table portrays a deteriorating performance of candidates in the SSSCE with the average percentage pass hovering between forty percent and sixty percent [48].

## 6.2 Policy Stream

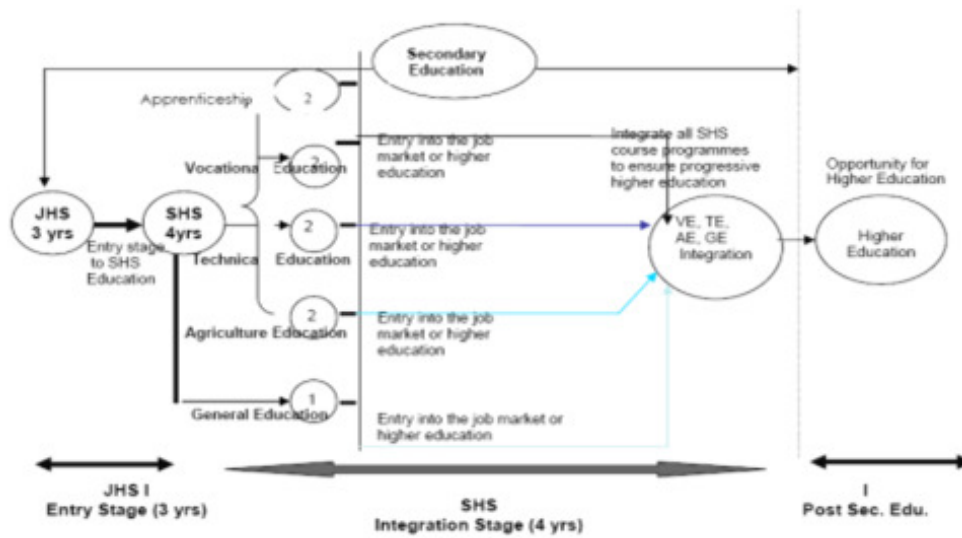
The policy stream in MSF consists of the proposals developed in policy communities as probable solutions to the issues in the problem

stream. The MoE, the ministry directly responsible for the education sector of the country, commenced a study to ascertain the state of the education sector. After broad consultation with professional education planners, the policy document, *Education Strategy Plan (ESP)* framed within the broader Millennium Development Goals (MDG) was issued. The ministry hoped that upon its adoption by the president, the ESP would be the roadmap for effecting changes in the education system.

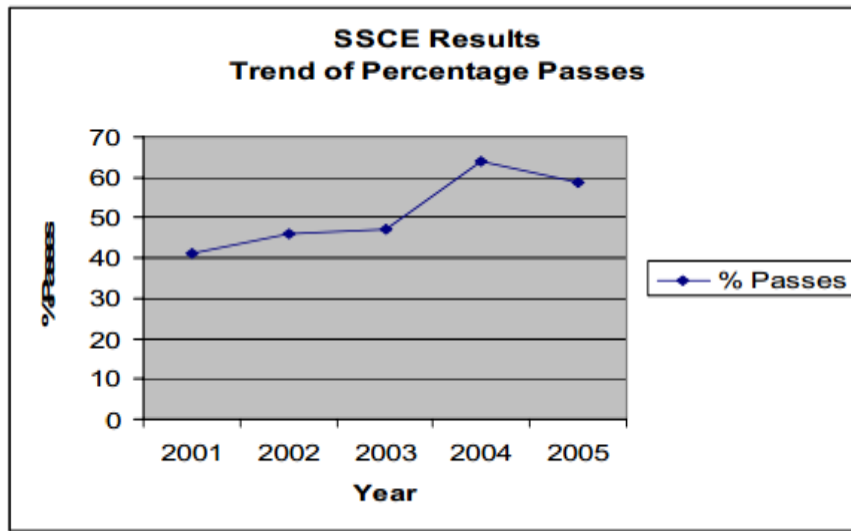
Along with the ministry's exercise was the work of a presidential committee to study and make recommendations for reform directly to the president. This 30-member committee, under the chairmanship of Professor Anamuah-Mensah, consisted of policy relevant actors within the education system of the country. Professor Angelina Little [15] observes that as part of its modus operandi, the committee "undertook widespread consultations through visits to institutions, districts, regions, phone-in radio programs, press briefings and submissions of memoranda." In 2002, the commission submitted its report titled *Meeting the Challenges of the Twenty First Century*, to the office of the president. Among other recommendations, the report recommended a new structure of basic education: two years of kindergarten, six years of primary and three years of junior secondary school. More importantly, the three-year senior secondary school system was to be made up of three parallel streams. These were to be comprised of the regular senior secondary school stream, with the two additional streams to be technical and vocational institutes.

After carefully studying the paper, the government issued a White Paper [49] outlining the proposed new education reform and structure. The diagram (Fig. 1) below shows the proposed new structure and other reforms contained in the White Paper issued by the government.

The White Paper took particular notice of the rather smaller percentage of students who were able to advance from the junior secondary to the senior secondary school as was indicated in the Anamuah-Mensah committee report. Consequently, the paper proposed additional reforms which are captured by the diagram above.



**Fig. 1. Analytical Structure of secondary education under the new education reform**  
 (Source: Government of Ghana White Paper on Education Reform, [50])



**Fig. 2. The table indicating the percentage passes of candidates for SSCE between 2001 and 2005**

*Adapted from the Preliminary Education Sector Performance Report, 2007*

The proposed years to be spent in the senior secondary school were increased from three to four years. Moreover, in addition to the three streams proposed by the Anamuah-Mensah report, the White Paper introduced two additional streams which were apprenticeship and agricultural education streams. Lastly, the paper also proposed a change in the name of the two existing secondary school systems into Junior High School (JHS) and Senior High School (SHS).

### 6.3 Political Stream

Within the political stream, several events shaped the political organization of the country in general and the education system in particular. Kingdon [27] observes that events in government like administrative changes bring with them marked changes in policy agendas. The change in political power from NDC to NPP in both the presidential and parliamentary elections in December 2000 resulted in a new direction in the

governance of the country. Hitherto, the long standing charge of the NPP while in opposition was that there was lack of transparency in the policies and programs enacted by the existing government.

An official government document posited that both the education system and its management needed fundamental changes and that the government has accordingly decided not only to tinker with marginal adjustment to it but to carry out a radical reform [3]. That is, in line with John Kingdon's postulation that electoral results have considerable power to shape the political stream, the election of 2000 had a profound impact on the education policy. In his first term of office spanning 2000 to 2004, President John Kufour spearheaded a move to overhaul the education system once the FCUBE outlived its constitutional mandate. However, it took the re-election of President Kufour for a second term from 2005 to 2008 to allow him push for the reforms he was clamoring for.

#### **6.4 Policy Window Opens**

"Sometimes, the window opens quite predictably [27: 165]". The foregoing observation by John Kingdon succinctly captures the sort of window that opened in the political system in 2007. The governing constitution which was promulgated in 1992 provided for the country to, within two years of its ratification, draw up and implement a program of action for a free, compulsory universal basic education to last for the next 10 years. Accordingly, the FCUBE was rolled out in 1996 and was slated to run until 2005. Although upon the assumption of office in 2000, the government was desirous of effecting changes within the education system, this constitutional constraint prevented it from taking any action to that effect. However, the re-election of President Kufour and NPP to a second term in office in the 2004 polls presented the opportunity for the government to implement the reforms in the education system for which plans started advancing in 2002. Finally, the window opened with the end of the academic year of 2005/2006.

However, Kingdon [27] remarks that windows stay open for a short period of time and close when not taken advantage of. The window that was opened with the end of the 2005/2006 academic year was not taken advantage of.

Professor Angela Little explains the reasons behind the government's inability to capitalize on the window the first time it opened:

There was a lot of disagreement at cabinet and it took some time before the government issued the white paper on it. It was unfortunate that the white paper was issued sometime in 2004 which was just at the end of the first term of the government then it (finally) took off one year before the end of the second term of the same government. One reason for the delay was the frequent change of ministers [15:28]

As a result of the drawback the reform process suffered, the window closed with the commencement of the 2006/2007 academic year. Consequently, the government had to wait for another year when as is expected another window would be opened at the end of the academic year.

The president, John Kufour, was the policy entrepreneur in the passage of the education reforms. As the chief executive officer vested with constitutional powers to administer the country, he spearheaded the move to carry out the reforms. In 2002, he set up a presidential committee to study the state of the education system of the country and to report directly to him the findings. More so, he regularly reshuffled his education ministers to ensure that he always had the person who shared in his resolution to overhaul the education system at the helm of affairs at the ministry. Little [16] recounts that five different ministers were appointed to the Ministry of Education all in the bid to find a fitting official to help carry through the reforms. As a chair of cabinet meetings, President Kufour vociferously defended and pushed through his proposal in the face of apparent opposition to his move.

The effort finally paid off when in a news conference held on September 6, 2007, the Minister of Education, Professor Dominic Fobih, announced the take-off of the new education reform with the commencement of the 2007/2008 academic year [51]. In his speech at the twelfth congregation of the University of Education, Ghana, the president reiterated the message on the commencement of the new education reform with the start of the new academic year which was beginning the following day [50].

## 7. OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper has been to examine the formulation of Ghana's FCUBE and the Kufour-led reforms in the education system in 1996 and 2007 respectively. Using the MSF developed by John Kingdon, the paper has argued that the entrepreneurship of Mr. Harry Sawyerr and President John Kufour in coupling of the problem, policy and politics streams during the policy windows were instrumental in getting the education systems reformed at the respective times. Resorting to process tracing, this diachronic study of the education reforms drew several pieces of evidence from government documents and other relevant materials to account for the policies.

It has been argued that in the heat of the early days upon the country's entry into constitutionalism, the formulation of the FCUBE in 1996 was less of a product of veto players in the political system and less so of the pressure from advocacy coalitions. The analyses have hence been undertaken within the MSF originally espoused by John Kingdon. In its review of the policy making process, this paper has shed light on the importance of social policy to national development. Interestingly, the paper observes that various governments of the country take cognizance of the fact that a strong education policy is germane to the country's development and hence have variously sought to strategically position the education system in order to fulfill the much needed role of building the capacity of the citizenry especially the young and energetic who constitute the chunk of the labor force. More so, it could be discerned from the foregoing analyses that the failure of the various education policies is largely due to the fact that the policy making process has been largely inspired by the ideological suasions of the respective political parties of the country. Being at the whims of these political parties, the policy direction in the educational sector has variously been the game on the chessboard of party politics thus accounting for the regular reform however unnecessary it may be.

Following the constitutional mandate that occasioned the FCUBE policy, it is recommended that the country undertakes a national exercise that aims at producing a national education policy which would be entrenched in the constitution of the country for a number of years. This will prevent the various political parties from reforming the education

system at will thus providing a sense of continuity in the policy direction. Overall, the study has demonstrated that, theories of the policy process largely applied to studying public policies in advanced industrialized economies could help explain the adoption of public policies in Ghana and other similarly situated countries.

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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