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Assessing the Socio-Economic Implications of Free Senior High School (SHS) Policy on Tertiary Institutions in Ghana: A Case Study of the Western Region

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Abstract: Ghana's Free Senior High School (SHS) policy has been touted as one of the most significant educational reforms in recent years, fueling the nation's achievement of *Goal 4* of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While many studies have been conducted on the policy's impact on beneficiaries, little is known about its impact on tertiary institutions. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the socioeconomic effects of the Free SHS policy on tertiary institutions in Ghana's Western Region. We also provide suggestions on how to improve the policy's efficacy and lessen any obstacles to its incorporation into higher education. Methodologically, 103 employees of Takoradi Technical University and the University of Mines and Technology were sampled using a purposive sampling technique. According to the report, despite the lack of adequate facilities such as lecture halls, dorms, and residence halls on campus, the Free SHS policy has increased enrollment at the postsecondary level. This has resulted in a high student-to-lecturer ratio, increased utility bills, a high cost of living on campus, and a rise in the opening of businesses on campus. To address some of these socioeconomic impacts, respondents proposed that the government should improve infrastructure in the country's higher institutions, hire more lecturers, boost incentives for lecturers, and foster partnerships with private institutions to support infrastructure development.

Keywords: Free Senior High School Policy, Socio-Economic, Tertiary Institutions, Double-Track System, Education

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1. Introduction

The curriculum content standards are met when students are able to communicate clearly both in writing and spoken word; apply their knowledge and understanding to new and challenging situations; think critically and from multiple perspectives; value the customs and history of their family, community, and nation; accept responsibility; and engage in local and global society (Oteng et al, 2023) [1]. Education is the starting point for all human endeavours in the age of globalisation and technological progress (Mensah et al, 2024) [2]. According to Altbach and Salmi (2011) [3], higher education is the route to national development and individual empowerment; as a result, knowledge generations have supplanted capital asset ownership as the primary drivers of growth and wealth. Many new and creative teaching approaches have recently entered the educational scene,

adding to its richness (Amponsah et al, 2024) [4]. ICTs are now acknowledged as essential resources for providing high-quality education (Mensah et al, 2023) [5]. According to a World Bank (2008) study on accelerating economic growth in Africa, an efficient educational system is the key to success in the global economy. Since Ghana's independence in 1957, education has been a top priority for successive governments. Education policies are designed to assist students in reaching a certain goal at the conclusion of a given educational cycle (Mensah et al, 2023) [6]. As a result, different educational reforms have been implemented at various times, with the ideological basis being the ongoing quest for the optimal model that will meet the country's needs and the aspirations of its population (MacBeath, 2010) [7]. According to Oteng et al. (2023) [8], skilled educators who can impart relevant knowledge to students are essential to the provision of high-quality education.

Throughout human history, education has played a significant role in human existence (Kwegyiriba et al, 2021) [9]. In an attempt to ensure that Ghana is not lagging, education became a fundamental right, which is enshrined in the country's 'Holy Book' (the 1992 Constitution), which states that *"The Government shall, within two years after coming into force of this Constitution, draw up a policy for the implementation within the following 10 years for the provision of a free, compulsory universal basic education."* (Article 38, clause 2). Under the leadership of former President John Agyekum Kufuor, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) carried out a policy known as the Capitation Grant policy, which made basic education in government schools free for kids in order to comply with this constitutional duty. Building on this effort, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) administration introduced the "Progressively Free Senior High School Policy" in 2015 under the direction of former president John Dramani Mahama. This policy enabled the government to reduce school fees for some SHSs in Ghana. Additionally, processes by which qualified teachers apply child-centered teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools, as well as skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities, are all components of quality education. Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills, and attitudes and are connected to national goals for education and positive participation in society are also included. These processes include knowledge in areas such as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention, and peace (Mensah et al, 2020) [10].

Under President Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo-Addo's leadership and vision to ensure fairness, highest standards, accessibility, and a transformational education for every Ghanaian kid, the NPP administration introduced "the free senior high school policy" in 2017, making senior high school (SHS) education free. The President said, *"I want every Ghanaian child to attend secondary school not just for what they learn in books but for the life experiences that they will gain. I want each of them to look in the mirror in the morning and know that they can achieve anything they dream of when they complete their studies."* Ghana News Agency (2018) [11]. SHS enrolment surged by 90,000 in its first year of introduction (Larvoe, 2018) [12]. The elimination of the financial barrier to education has resulted in an increase in the number of students attending school, allowing those who previously could not afford it to do so. Unfortunately, this change has resulted in severe classroom congestion and further strained an already inadequate infrastructure. To temporarily address the inadequate infrastructure in the senior high schools, the "Double Track System" was introduced. Under this strategy, the selected schools were divided into two batches.

While one batch of pupils and teaching staff attends school, the other batch will be on vacation, and vice versa. This aimed to ensure that schools were consistently open. The implementation of the free SHS policy has elicited various reactions, with proponents of the program emphasizing its potential to enhance human capital by enabling a greater number of students to access secondary education regardless of their financial circumstances (Kwegyiriba, 2021, Dwomoh et al., 2022 and Shamo, 2023) [13, 14, 15]. The majority of the criticisms opposing this policy have focused on how it will degrade the

quality of education in Ghana (Donkor, 2018) [16]. In all these developments, little concern has been given to the impacts the policy (i.e., free SHS) is having on tertiary education.

Public and private universities, quasi-public tertiary institutions, private colleges, polytechnics, education, nursing, and training colleges make up Ghana's tertiary institutions. All these institutions are faced with several challenges yet to be resolved. Braimah (2004) [17], writing on the challenges of 21st-century Ghanaian universities, claimed that the issue of universities upholding their standards and staying relevant is more urgent now as student populations continue to expand. Atuahene (2014) [18] conducted research on *Charting Higher Education Development in Ghana: Growth, Transformation, and Challenges* and found that higher education institutions in Ghana still face a number of obstacles, including a lack of funding to support their policies, low numbers of female and low-income student participation, trouble hiring and retaining young faculty, a lack of research capacity, a lack of ICT infrastructure to enhance curriculum delivery and instruction, and a lack of facilities to support science and technology education. For the tertiary level to be able to accommodate the increased student body, there must be a matching increase in financial and personnel resources.

The major challenges facing tertiary institutions in Ghana are insufficient finance, inadequate infrastructure, and limited books in the libraries (Braimah, 2004; Amponsah and Onuoha, 2013) [17, 19]. This study therefore aims to assess the socioeconomic effect of the Free SHS programme on tertiary institutions, as well as the strategies and interventions to control the enormous numbers while improving quality education. The research questions guiding the study are as follows:

- What effects does the Free SHS program have on Western Region tertiary enrollment?
- What are the policy's consequences on tertiary institutions in terms of socioeconomic factors?
- What policy recommendations exist to improve the policy's socio-economic effects on universities?

2. Literature Review

This section focuses on the theoretical underpinnings guiding the study and review of empirical literature. It also discusses the free SHS policy, tertiary education in Ghana, and the double-track system introduced to temporarily address the inadequate infrastructure in senior high schools.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework refers to a framework that is grounded on an established theory within an area of research, and it is associated with or reflects the study's hypothesis. (Mensah et al, 2020) [20]. The theoretical underpinning for this study was based on the rationalist model of public policy. The rationalist model, often known as the 'policy of maximum gain', posits that a policy can be implemented if the benefits derived from it are better than all other alternative policy options. This implies that governments must consider the consequences of all their proposed policies and implement the best for the greater good of their citizens. Partey (2018) [21] asserted that the disadvantages of an educational policy should be kept to a minimum because putting in place a bad educational policy might have an impact on next generations. As a result, the government needs to evaluate the Free SHS policy's overall effects on the nation's postsecondary institutions and education system. The results of the assessment will inform the government on whether the benefits will outweigh the cost by the greatest amount or if they will cause additional issues that will jeopardize the country's educational quality.

2.2. Review of Empirical Literature

2.2.1. The Free SHS Policy

Ghana's government launched the Free SHS policy in September 2017 under President Nana Akufo-Addo's administration. Before the 2016 general elections, the policy was a prominent campaign message. The policy was adopted on the assumption that most Ghanaians earn low or moderate incomes. This implies that most households are finding it difficult to make ends meet. As a result, some children have had to drop out of school because their parents are unable to raise funds for school fees. As expected, both parents and students reacted positively to this policy with applause, joy, and relief.

2.2.2. Advantages of the Policy

Other benefits of the policy as identified by Nsiah (2018) [22] are below:

- **Improving the establishment of an entrepreneurial environment:** With this policy, beneficiaries have a better possibility of becoming their own bosses. Accessing education will prepare them with the necessary skills and refine their talents, making them more prepared to fit in the globalized world and fostering an entrepreneurial environment.
- **Improving standard of living:** Even inadvertent attendance in school can have a positive impact on people's lives. Learners become more reflective and less ignorant about the key aspects of life. The only way to enlighten society about better living practices is through education. According to Ghana's free education policy, students would receive training and development to help the country thrive.
- **Positively transforming the country's economy:** Free SHS education will instill competence in pupils, ensuring that they enter the job market well-prepared.

2.2.3. Double-Track System

The Double Track System was introduced by the government to temporarily address the inadequate infrastructure in senior high schools. The double-track system is a semester-based learning model commonly used at universities. This approach divides pupils into two (2) batches. While one (1) batch attends classes, the other batch will be on vacation, and vice versa. This approach permits each batch to attend classes on particular days in the semester, have a vacation, and then return for the second semester. The United States of America, Costa Rica, Australia, and Japan are among the countries where this method is most commonly used. (Anim-Appau, 2018) [23]. Partey (2018) [21] identified the following as some of the benefits of the double-track system: some secondary schools can admit more than 30% more students than their original capacity, increase the wages of teachers who decide to teach extra in all the tracks, recruit more teaching and non-teaching staff, and reduce the burden on the government to build more facilities. Concerning disadvantages, Partey (2018) [21] noted high administrative costs in the maintenance of facilities and disruption in classes if some maintenance requires more days to complete (e.g., 15 to 20 days).

2.2.4. Tertiary Education in Ghana

In order to control and guarantee high-quality postsecondary education in the nation, the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) and the National Accreditation Board (NAB) [24] were founded in 1993. Under the terms of the Education Regulatory Bodies Act, 2020, Act 1023, these two institutions combined to establish the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) in 2020. GTEC categorizes tertiary institutions in the country into the following: universities, polytechnics, university colleges, colleges, schools and institutes, academic and tutorial colleges. Over the years, the regulatory body

has encouraged the establishment and accreditation of private tertiary institutions to improve access to post-secondary education. Thus, the postsecondary education industry has seen substantial growth in recent years. Enrolment in universities, for example, has doubled, while polytechnics have reached a record level. Public or government-funded tertiary institutions in Ghana receive subventions from the government.

2.2.5. Impact of the Free SHS Policy on Tertiary Institutions in Ghana

The policy has both positive and negative consequences for Ghana's postsecondary education system. This section of the literature focuses on some of these implications.

- **Massive increase in student population with very limited facilities:** Statistics from different tertiary institutions in the country showed a massive rise in the student population. However, the necessary facilities to ensure their training is successful and efficient are limited. There is a strong relationship between the facilities used to train a pupil and the result of that training. Some major challenges confronting Ghana's tertiary institutions are inadequate facilities such as lecture rooms, laboratories, and sufficient library resources (Amponsah and Onuoha, 2013) [19]. These challenges according to Ameyah (2009) [25] are the reasons why some qualified students are rejected or not admitted. While this issue has been on the rise for some time, the implementation of the Free SHS policy (which involves more students) exacerbates the situation.
- **High Student-to-Lecture Ratio:** Altbach and Salmi (2011) [3] stressed in their book, *The Road to Academic Excellence: The Making of World-Class Research Universities*, that students are the central focus of the university; hence, those admitted must be the most qualified and brilliant. This, they noted, will improve teaching quality because the student-to-lecturer ratio will be small. The student-to-teaching staff ratio was reported as 36:1 in the NAB's 2015 report on "Tertiary Education Statistics." Since the free SHS policy was put into place, this percentage has grown over time. According to Hornsby and Osman (2014) [26], congestion in lecture halls in tertiary institutions can affect student learning and educational quality, posing a barrier to socioeconomic development. Gibbs and Jenkins (2013) [27] also stated that having many students in lecture rooms can lead to a decline in educational quality.
- **Rise in Graduate Unemployment:** Historically, unemployment has been linked to a lack of adequate education. This assumption was valid for a while because there were few post-secondary educational institutions and an educated population. However, in the 21st century, unemployment has taken on a new form, with well-educated people being the victims. Jonah (2011) [28] said that the Trade Union Congress claimed that between 250,000 and 300,000 graduates are generated yearly by the universities for the labor market, but the Ghana National Labour Commission's assessment indicated that graduate unemployment has increased to 700,000 (Donkor, 2014) [29]. As per the data provided by the Institute of Statistics, Social and Economic Research at the University of Ghana, a mere 10% of graduates secure employment within a year after graduating. A number of obstacles, such as a lack of funds to launch a business as an entrepreneur, graduates' pessimistic views toward job opportunities, a lack of skills required for open positions, and the industry's incapacity to hire the large number of graduates, could make it take up to ten years for many graduates to find employment, according to the statistics (GNA, 2017) [30]. The nation's graduate unemployment rate is rising quickly, as these figures demonstrate. To guarantee that the policy's beneficiaries find

employment after graduating from higher education institutions, the government must expand job prospects and foster an entrepreneurial atmosphere through the implementation of the Free SHS policy. According to Biney (2015) [31], this is critical to reducing the spread of social evils such as prostitution, robbery, drug addiction, cultism, pocket-picking, and suicide attempts, which are potential consequences of high graduate unemployment.

- **Increase in Corruption Cases:** According to Seniwoliba and Boahene (2015) [32] and the Institute of Economic Affairs Corruption Survey Report (2016) [33], corruption has permeated the tertiary education system in several ways, including management, admissions processes, and procurement. As a consequence of the Free SHS policy, more people are anticipated to apply for higher education, which means that there is definitely a bigger chance that some may attempt to pay their way through. Thus, through "connections" and "political protocols," applicants without the necessary qualifications will be admitted.

3. Methodology

The approach employed by the study's researchers is described in this section. This covered the target population, the sample and the process of sampling, as well as the study design. The data collection methods, data analysis methods, and data gathering tools are all further described in this section.

3.1. Study Design

The researchers used a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data. This strategy was used because it provided a more in-depth analysis of the study topics. Creswell and Clark (2010) [34] suggest that the simultaneous application of quantitative and qualitative methodologies results in a greater understanding of research challenges compared to the use of a single method.

3.2. Study Population

The Western Region is part of the 16 regions of Ghana, and there are three (3) groups of tertiary institutions within the region: universities, nursing colleges, and a college of education. Out of the three (3) groups of tertiary institutions in the region, the universities were targeted in this study because they are public schools benefiting from government funding, and most students in Ghana, to be precise, in the Western Region, like to be enrolled in the public universities. The study population consisted mainly of the staff of the University of Mines and Technology (UMaT), Tarkwa, and Takoradi Technical University (TTU). The selected universities are the oldest and largest of all the tertiary institutions in the Western Region of Ghana; in addition, they record the highest number of applicants each year in the region.

3.3. Sample Size and Sampling Method

The researchers employed a sample size of 103 respondents. Purposive sampling was the method of sampling used for the study. A purposive sample, according to Crossman (2017) [35], is a non-probability sample selected in line with the objectives of the research and the characteristics of the population. This sample was chosen because the study only involved teaching staff, department administrators, and managers of campus facilities. Due to their direct involvement in student activities and consequent ability to provide in-depth information on the socioeconomic effects of the Free SHS policy at their institution, the respondents were chosen. Yamane's (1969) [36] formula, a widely recognized statistical approach for determining sample size, was used for determining sample size. This formula was chosen for its precision and ease of use, providing a balance between

statistical accuracy and practical feasibility. This approach enhances the study's robustness, allowing for the extraction of meaningful and generalizable insights regarding the socioeconomic impacts that the Free SHS policy is having on tertiary institutions.

3.4. Study Instrument

Both primary and secondary data were gathered by the researchers. Face-to-face interviews and questionnaires distributed via Google Forms were used to gather the primary data. There were both closed-ended and open-ended questions on the surveys. Open-ended surveys enabled respondents to reply freely without adhering to any preset framework, whereas closed-ended questions restricted respondents' responses to the possibilities offered.

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

The questions were followed by an introductory statement guaranteeing the validity and privacy of the information respondents would provide. The respondents were also given explanations regarding the instructions and the different items on the questionnaire.

3.6. Data Analysis Procedure

The completed questionnaires from the respondents were closely examined for errors in coding and omissions. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics like mean, percentages, and standard deviation were employed. The research findings were made clearer using Microsoft Excel and SPSS. The results section contains the presentation of the findings.

4. Results

This section analyses the data collected from the study area.

A total of 103 respondents were purposively selected; 61.2% of respondents were from the University of Mines and Technology, while 38.8% were from Takoradi Technical University. The gender distribution of the respondents showed that the males were almost the same as their female counterparts. The males numbered 52, representing 50.5%, while the females numbered 51, representing 49.5%.

Information on the respondents' department of work was very essential for the study because it showed perspectives from which the respondents viewed how the Free SHS policy impacts tertiary institutions in the Western Region. From [Figure 1](#) below, the majority of the respondents were lecturers (55.3%), and closely followed by administrators at the departmental level (35%) and facility managers (9.7%).

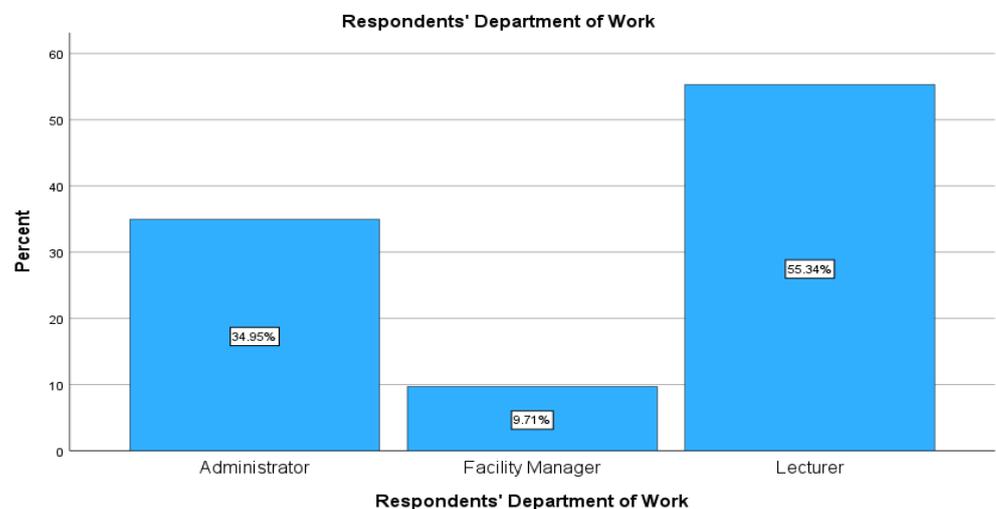


Figure 1. Respondents Department of Work

The study also sought to determine the length of service the respondents have had with their institution. This information helped measure the intensity of the respondents' knowledge of tertiary education, which guaranteed accurate and objective answers to the research questions. From Table 1 below, the majority of the respondents, 63.1%, appeared to have worked with their respective universities for a period of more than 5 years, followed by 20.40% who have worked between 4 to 5 years. 11.7% accounted for those who have worked between 3 and 4 years, while 2.9% worked for less than 1 year, and 1.9% accounted for those who have worked between 1 to 2 years. These results indicated that most of the respondents have been with their institutions for a considerable period of time.

4.1. Impacts of Free SHS on Tertiary Enrolment

The first research question was to assess the impact of the policy on university enrolment in the Western Region. Respondents were asked if they had seen an increase in the enrolment rate since the policy was introduced. 99% of respondents, as summarised in Table 1, said yes to the question. Respondents were also asked about their perception of the increment in tertiary enrolment, where 93.2% perceived it as a positive impact on access to tertiary education, 4.9% perceived it as a negative impact on tertiary education, and 1.9% said it had no significant impact (Table 1). 64.1% of respondents thought that students who have completed their secondary education under the Free SHS policy are academically prepared for tertiary education, while 35.9% thought such students were not prepared. On the academic performance of students who entered tertiary institutions under the Free SHS policy, 52.4% were of the view that it was good, 29.1% viewed it as fair, 13.6% indicated that it was very good, and 4.9% said it was poor. The analysis above showed that the policy has led to an increase in access and enrolment in these tertiary institutions.

Table 1. Impact of Free SHS Policy on Tertiary Enrolment

	Questions	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Have you seen a rise in the number of students pursuing postsecondary education?		
	Yes	102	99
	No	1	1
2.	How do you perceive the increase in tertiary enrolment?		
	Positive impact on access to tertiary education	96	93.2
	Negative impact on access to tertiary education	5	4.9
	No significant impact	2	1.9
3.	Students who completed secondary education under the Free SHS policy are academically prepared for tertiary education		
	Yes	66	64.1
	No	37	35.9
4.	Has the academic performance of students who entered tertiary institutions under the Free SHS policy been?		
	Very good	14	13.6
	Good	54	52.4
	Fair	30	29.1
	Poor	5	4.9

Source: Field Survey, 2024

4.2. Socio-economic impacts of the Free SHS policy on tertiary institutions

To answer the second research question, respondents were given nine (9) sets of factors on the socio-economic impacts of the Free SHS policy on tertiary institutions. On a five-point Likert scale, where highly agree was represented by 5, agree by 4, neutral by 3, disagree by 2, and strongly disagree by 1, they were specifically asked to identify their degree of agreement. Table 2 summarises the findings based on mean scores and standard deviation.

Table 2. The socio-economic impacts of the Free SHS policy on Tertiary Institutions

Items	N	Max. Score	Min. Score	Mean	Std. Dev.
Massive increase in student population with very limited academic facilities	103	5	1	4.76	0.84
Massive increase in student population with very limited residential facilities on campus	103	5	1	4.81	0.76
Massive increase in student population with very limited private hostels	103	5	1	4.74	0.77
High student to student-to-lecturer ratio	103	5	1	4.82	0.74
Massive increase in utility bills of tertiary institutions	103	5	1	4.82	0.62
Increase in cost of living on campus	103	5	1	4.17	0.95
Spring in businesses on campus	103	5	1	4.64	0.88
Rise in corruption through 'connections' and 'political protocols', to gain admission	103	5	1	2.25	0.99
Sufficient funding and resources available to support the growing number of students in tertiary institutions	103	5	1	1.33	0.99
Total Averages Scores				4.0	0.8

*NB: *mean score <3.5 shows disagree/negative response & >3.5 shows agree/positive response*

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the collated results summarized in Table 2, it can be observed that most of the respondents acknowledged that indeed, the Free SHS policy has socio-economic impacts on tertiary institutions in the Western Region. This was assessed based on a total mean score of 4.0 (from the maximum of 5.0). Most of the socio-economic factors on which respondents were assessed recorded a mean score above the average of 3.5. This means that most participants believed that the Free SHS has led to a rise in enrolment at the tertiary level with inadequate academic infrastructure (4.76), residential accommodation on campus (4.81), and private hostels. Most of the participants also believed Free SHS has led to a high student-to-lecturer ratio (4.82), a massive increase in the utility bills of tertiary institutions (4.82), an increase in the cost of living on campus (4.17), and a rise in businesses on campus (4.64). The respondents were, however, of the opinion that the Free SHS policy has not led to an increase in corrupt activities through 'connections' and 'political protocols', to be admitted (scoring below the average of 3.5). Respondents

also disagreed that sufficient funding and resources are available to support the growing number of students in tertiary institutions (1.33). With a total average score of standard deviation of 0.8 and a mean of 4.0, it shows that most of the respondents were of the view that the Free SHS policy has socio-economic effects on tertiary institutions, therefore, there is a need to improve on the positives of the policy to increase its effects on tertiary institutions.

5. Discussion

The first research question was to assess the effects of university enrolment in the Western Region. According to the results, more people are now able to enter postsecondary education as a result of the Free SHS policy, which has raised enrollment at the postsecondary level. As observed from the result, students who completed SHS are academically prepared for tertiary education, and the performance of such students at the tertiary level is partly good.

The second research question examines the socio-economic impacts of the policy on universities in the Western Region of Ghana. The results obtained show that the government and stakeholders of tertiary institutions must improve infrastructure (lecture theatres, accommodation on campus, and hostels) and workers (lecturers, administrators, and other categories of staff), as an increase in the student-to-lecturer ratio may reduce the quality of teaching and thus pose a challenge to development (Hornsby and Osman, 2014) [26]. As the Free SHS policy increases the number of graduates each year, the government must promote opportunities for employment creation. Without this, graduate unemployment may rise, leading to the spread of societal ills, low productivity, and family dissolution, among other potential consequences of high graduate unemployment (Biney, 2015) [31]. Another socioeconomic effect is the increase in the utility bills of tertiary institutions and the high cost of living on campus. In response to the growing number of students attending tertiary schools, it was noted that the policy had also caused business enterprises to blossom on campus.

As noted from the rationalism theory underlying this study, policymakers should only adopt policies that would result in advantages for the country that outweigh costs by the largest margin. Therefore, for the Free SHS policy not to overburden the management of tertiary institutions, the study suggests that the government and tertiary institutions must partner with or solicit support from private organizations. Other recommendations are the scaling up of infrastructure, the employment of more lecturers and a good incentive for them, and the introduction of innovative projects to increase the internally generated funds in the various public tertiary institutions.

6. Conclusion

Individuals do not run the government. It is based on goal-oriented policies aimed at promoting sustainability and public growth. As a result, a policy should only be implemented if the benefits derived from it are better than all other alternative policy options. This implies that governments must consider the consequences of all their proposed policies and implement the best for the greater good of their citizens. From the study, it was observed that even though the policy has led to an increase in access to tertiary education, it has also become a burden on tertiary institutions to expand infrastructure and human resources with little support from the government.

7. Policy Recommendation

The researchers were also keen to identify, from respondents, some of the strategies they think the government and stakeholders in tertiary institutions should take to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the Free SHS policy.

The majority of the participants proposed that the government should improve infrastructure in the country's higher institutions, hire more lecturers, and boost incentives for lecturers. They also suggested that tertiary institutions should have partnerships with private institutions to support infrastructure development.

One of the respondents indicated that “the government should allow public tertiary institutions to charge realistic school fees.” Another respondent was also of the view that “tertiary institutions should be innovative and introduce more projects to increase its internally generated funds so that the revenue could be used to expand infrastructure facilities and pay utility bills instead of relying on the government”.

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