



A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE EFFECTS OF PRE-TERTIARY EDUCATION POLICY REFORMS ON EDUCATIONAL QUALITY IN GHANA: THE CASE OF THE FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL POLICY

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Abstract:

This review aims to critically explore the impact of various policy reforms on educational quality in Ghana, with a particular emphasis on the Free Senior High School policy. It seeks to evaluate how these reforms have shaped the quality of the programme, identify the key factors influencing educational resources and results, and highlight major future challenges and priorities for the initiative. A thorough review of the academic literature was conducted, with duplicate studies excluded. From the 115 papers assessed, 12 met the inclusion criteria and were selected for in-depth analysis. Covering the period from January 2007 to June 2025, the systematic review highlighted the significant impact of administrative reforms in improving access to learning materials and teacher-centered initiatives, which led to notable enhancements in teaching practices. Many participants reported an increase in student enrollment at both the Senior High School and University levels. Nevertheless, the implementation of the Free Senior High School (FSHS) policy has exerted substantial pressure on existing school infrastructure. Despite the implementation of the policy, there has been minimal improvement in the quality of education and student academic performance. Although numerous studies have explored the Free Senior High School (FSHS) initiative and education quality in Ghana, none have specifically examined the educational reforms linked to the FSHS policy or focused on how particular reforms contribute to improving education quality. The findings suggest that while the FSHS reforms have had some impact on senior high school education, significant challenges remain. Students consistently underperformed across all core subjects. As a result, several recommendations have been proposed to address these ongoing issues and enhance the effectiveness of the policy.

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1. Introduction

Education entails the transmission of knowledge, experiences, ideas, skills, traditions, and values among individuals and across generations. It is widely acknowledged as a fundamental pillar of societal advancement and human development. The United Nations (2017) emphasizes that education is essential for empowering people socially and economically, serving as a key tool in breaking the cycle of poverty and narrowing inequality. As such, it is integral to national development and represents one of the most valuable investments a nation can make in its people (Afful-Broni & Sekyi, 2014).

Additionally, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) emphasizes the importance of delivering "*inclusive and equitable quality education*" as a key driver of global development (United Nations, 2015). Providing educational opportunities from early childhood is considered crucial for breaking the cycle of poverty and advancing sustained social and economic development (World Bank, 2018). Education equips individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to participate meaningfully in society and the economy, thereby contributing to national progress and promoting social justice. Enhancing all aspects of quality of life, such as reducing poverty and improving health, largely depends on the standard of education provided from the basic to tertiary levels (Adu-Ababio and Osei, 2018). Formal education yields both immediate and long-term benefits and serves as a crucial means for a nation to effectively utilize its human and material resources for the well-being of its people. One of the most effective strategies to expand educational access is by eliminating financial obstacles that prevent students from attending quality secondary schools. Despite this, only 17 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (37%) currently offer some form of free secondary education (Kerr, 2020). The region also has the highest number of out-of-school children globally. According to UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report (2015), even in countries where tuition is not charged, households often bear the bulk of educational costs instead of the government. Since independence, Ghana's government has introduced various educational policies aimed at expanding access and ensuring quality education for all children of school-going age. Notable among these are the Accelerated Education Plan of 1957, the Functional Literacy Project initiated in 1992, the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) program launched in 1995, and the Free Senior High School (FSHS) policy introduced in 2017. Additionally, significant education reforms were carried out in 1974, 1987, and 2007 (Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh & Addo, 2016). The implementation of the FSHS policy during the 2017–2018 academic year sparked considerable public debate regarding its effectiveness and sustainability.

The introduction of the Free Senior High School (SHS) policy in 2017 aimed to remove financial barriers and address educational disparities. As a result, there was a 14% increase in completion rates for girls in areas with high levels of program participation, closely matching the overall student rise of 14.9% (Sackey *et al.*, 2023;

Stenzel *et al.*, 2024). Duflo *et al.* (2024) also found that providing secondary school scholarships to young women led to postponed marriage and childbirth, along with a 17% reduction in unintended pregnancies—highlighting the wider social benefits of girls' education. Additionally, the policy improved academic performance by boosting student retention and attendance, as fewer families faced financial barriers to schooling (Sackey *et al.*, 2023). It also fostered social inclusion by enabling students from disadvantaged backgrounds to acquire essential skills, enhance their economic opportunities, and improve their chances of upward mobility (Stenzel *et al.*, 2024).

Recent reports indicate that the government allocated approximately GH¢5.3 billion to the Free SHS policy between the 2017/18 and 2021/22 academic years, averaging around GH¢1.06 billion annually (Africa Education Watch, 2024). Using an exchange rate of 1 Ghanaian Cedi to 0.08639 Canadian Dollars, this equates to about CAD 457 million over the five years, or roughly CAD 91 million per year (Wise, 2024). While the initial increase in transition rates is a promising sign, it may primarily reflect a short-term effect following the policy's introduction. The sustained rise in enrolment and the associated financial pressures raise concerns about the policy's long-term sustainability without significant reforms or additional funding from external partners (International Growth Centre, 2024).

Although access to basic and Senior High School (SHS) education has improved, significant challenges remain in ensuring quality and equity across all educational levels, from basic to tertiary. According to a 2016 World Bank report, the sector continues to face persistent issues such as inconsistent learning outcomes, a shortage of well-trained teachers, and unequal access to education. The report also highlighted stark differences in student performance between northern and southern regions, as well as between urban and rural schools, and examined how post-independence Pre-tertiary Education Policy reforms have influenced the quality of Free SHS education in Ghana.

2. Purpose of the Review

The study, titled "Comparative Analysis of the Impact of Pre-Tertiary Education Policy Reforms on Quality Education in Ghana: A Case for Free Senior High School," investigates how policy reforms at the pre-tertiary level have influenced the quality of education in Ghana. Its primary objective is to consolidate existing knowledge on the topic. This in-depth systematic review draws on scholarly literature to answer the research questions through a clear, structured, and transparent methodology. The formulation of these research questions followed key steps outlined in the systematic literature review process.

- 1) What existing studies have explored the impact of pre-tertiary education policy reforms, particularly the Free Senior High School initiative, on the quality of education in Ghana?

- 2) What major conclusions have been drawn from studies examining how pre-tertiary education policy reforms, especially the Free Senior High School program, have influenced the quality of education in Ghana?

In line with the research questions above, the objectives of the study are as follows:

- 1) To outline the process and highlight essential ethical considerations relevant to the preparation, documentation, and presentation of a Systematic Literature Review report, while incorporating current resources, supporting standards, and addressing existing data gaps.
- 2) To analyse research on how pre-tertiary education policy reforms have affected the quality of education in Ghana, with a particular emphasis on the Free Senior High School initiative. This analysis follows the recommended reporting guidelines for systematic reviews and is guided by the identified research questions.

3. Methodology

A Systematic Literature Review is a structured and rigorous method used to collect and critically assess numerous studies, research articles, or papers. Its primary aim is to provide a comprehensive overview of the most current and relevant literature related to a specific research question (De La Cruz *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, it serves to compile and synthesize findings that meet established criteria to effectively address a particular research problem (Piper, 2013).

A Systematic Literature Review entails formulating a clear research question and applying structured, methodical procedures to identify, select, and critically assess relevant studies. It also involves collecting and analyzing data from these sources to support the review. The objective is to systematically compile, evaluate, and classify the evidence according to defined standards, ultimately offering meaningful insights to address a specific research issue.

According to Li *et al.* (2020), performance-based Systematic Literature Reviews are commonly employed in educational research to examine trends and assess impacts within a particular domain. Building on this approach, the present study utilizes a modified PRISMA framework to structure its methodology for reviewing, collecting, and presenting comprehensive findings from existing literature, aiming to depict the current state of the field. The PRISMA model enhances the study by increasing the rigor and quality of the analysis (Khan & Qureshi, 2020) and ensures that the review process remains aligned with the study's specific research goals. The following example outlines how sources were included or excluded at each stage of the review process.

3.1 Searching Strategies.

An extensive search strategy was developed to identify relevant literature for the systematic review titled "Impact of Pre-Tertiary Education Policy Reforms on Quality Education in Ghana: Case of Free Senior High School Education." This search drew from

various academic databases such as Google Scholar, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Elsevier, Scopus, Springer Link, and Taylor & Francis, along with other online platforms. Articles were carefully assessed, with English publications, totalling 165, remaining 115 out of 280 academic sources. Further screening refined the selection, culminating in 12 studies being included in the final review.

This study set out to examine the impact of pre-tertiary education policy reforms on the quality of education, with a particular emphasis on the Free Senior High School (Free SHS) initiative. It evaluated current educational practices and policies, as well as academic literature related to Free SHS, broader education reforms, and their effects on educational quality. The literature review focused on key themes and analyzed around 280 academic sources across fields such as education, social sciences, humanities, and the arts. Only works published between 2007 and 2025 were included, excluding earlier studies. With a global perspective, the review incorporated research from multiple countries. Of the initial 280 sources, 165 were excluded, narrowing the selection to 115 relevant studies, from which 12 were chosen for detailed analysis.

3.2 Extraction of Data

The findings, exclusively reported in English, were shared through conference proceedings, journal articles, and review papers published between 2007 and 2024. An initial screening identified 115 papers, which were evaluated based on the objectives of the study. However, only 12 articles and publications were chosen for in-depth analysis. Throughout the review process, key terms related to the topic, "Impact of Pre-Tertiary Education Policy Reforms on Quality Education in Ghana: Case of Free Senior High School Education," were considered.

The implementation of free Senior High School education enhances the academic performance and educational competence of progressing students, contributing to improved quality education. Leveraging the Pre-Tertiary Education Policy Reforms and the Free Senior High School Policy to enhance the quality of education at the Senior High School level often highlights the connection between the Free Education Policy and its impact on raising awareness among educational stakeholders about their academic performance (Burgess & Green, 2018; Keryova, 2020). The Free Senior High School Policy has enhanced students' skills and proficiency. Utilizing Free Senior High Schools to improve the quality of education for students in Ghana (Diliyanti *et al.*, 2020), The scientific analysis demonstrates that the Free Senior High School Policy has led to an increase in enrollment, indicating its impact on the quality of education in Ghana. The authors then summarized the findings into a table to aid the review process. The papers that met the criteria were subsequently excluded, and 12 papers were identified for a thorough examination. Below is a summary of the findings and a discussion of the results, along with an overview of the studies that were reviewed.

4. Discussion of the Results

From the 115 studies initially reviewed, twelve were selected for detailed analysis. Of these, six concentrated specifically on the Free Senior High School policy, three explored broader reforms within the pre-tertiary education sector, and the remaining three investigated the effects of free pre-tertiary education policies on educational quality. Collectively, these sources provide the basis for a comparative study examining the impact of pre-tertiary education policy reforms, especially the Free SHS initiative, on the quality of education in Ghana.

Many publications and article reviews delve into the historical development of the Free Senior High School (FSHS) policy. Numerous of these studies seek to address existing gaps in knowledge by examining the challenges linked to the policy's implementation. For instance, works like *The Impact of Free Senior High School Education Policy on the Quality of Education in Ghana*, the assessment of the policy's effects at Kintampo Senior High School (KINSS), and *The Impact of the Free Senior High School Education Policy and Double-Track System on Quality Education Outcomes* investigate how the FSHS initiative has affected the quality of education.

A quasi-experimental study assessing education policies in Ghana, alongside analyses of both past and present reforms in the country and a related investigation into the effects of educational reforms from 2009 to 2018 on teacher motivation and student performance in Southern Thailand, identified many pressing challenges. These include a lack of standardized human and material resources, weak management and oversight, insufficient funding, and challenging working conditions for education personnel, all of which contribute to diminished productivity. While the Free Senior High School (SHS) policy has resulted in higher university enrolment rates, there is a pressing need to recruit well-qualified academic staff to meet the growing demand. Despite this progress, the research indicates that the policy has not led to improvements in overall education quality or student performance. In fact, students in double-track schools consistently scored lower in all core subjects compared to those in single-track schools.

Table 1: Summary of the Study that was reviewed.

Author	Title	Research Objective	Findings	Limitations
Alicia G. Stenze, Victor Osei Kwadwo, Rose C. Vicent.	Free secondary education policy and education attainment	This paper examines the impact of Ghana's Universal Free Senior High School (Free SHS) policy on educational attainment, with a specific focus on completion rates.	The data shows that in districts with high levels of participation, the completion rate for schoolgirls increased by 14 percentage points. Overall, the reform is	Conventional beliefs about educating girls often act as barriers to their enrolment in school, ultimately limiting their academic progress across all levels. Duties like doing

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			believed to have boosted completion rates for both boys and girls by 14.9 percentage points.	housework or helping with family businesses further decrease the likelihood of girls being able to attend school.
Abdalla Abdul-Rahim Dickson Adom Joe Adu-Agyem	The Impact of Free Senior High School Education Policy on the Quality of Education in Ghana	To evaluate the effects of the Free Senior High School Policy (FSHS) in the Kintampo Senior High School (KINSS)	Based on an evaluation of the implementation process, available facilities, teaching, and non-teaching staff, and the outcomes of the FSHS policy, the researchers concluded that the quality of education at KINSS has not been compromised by the policy.	. The strain placed on the school's facilities due to the implementation of the FSHS policy is significant and cannot be overlooked.
Okrah Abrampa Kwadwo & Ameko Stephen Kwame	Students' Perception of Free Senior High School Policy and Electoral Choices in the 2024 Election in Ghana	What role does the perception of the FSHS policy play in shaping students' support for political candidates?	The perception of the FSHS policy influences students' political leanings, strengthening support for the ruling party among some, while others remain doubtful about the policy's ability to tackle underlying systemic challenges.	Worries about the policy's long-term viability were common, as students pointed to overcrowded classrooms, a drop in educational quality, and unfair distribution of resources, challenges like those faced in other countries that have implemented free education programs.
Duah Dwomoh, Anthony Godi, John Tetteh, Charles Amoatey, Richard Otoo,	The Impact of the Free Senior High School Education Policy and Double-	This study assessed the impact of the FSHS policy and the double-track system on quality	The results indicated that the policy has not led to improvements in education	However, the present study may be subject to bias due to the relatively small

Leticia Tornyevah & Chad Hazlett	Track System on Quality Education Outcomes: A Quasi-Experimental Policy Evaluation Study in Ghana	education outcomes and explored the challenges associated with the implementation of the policies	quality or overall academic performance. Students from double-track schools scored lower in all core subjects compared to those from non-double-track schools.	sample size compared to the total number of public senior high schools, as noted by Dwomoh <i>et al.</i> (2022). Additionally, inadequate record-keeping at the senior high schools led to missing data and relevant information during the study period.
Theera Haruthaithanasan	Effects of educational reforms in the 2nd decade (2009-2018) on teacher motivation and student achievement among schools in Southern Thailand.	To study the levels of implementing the four school reforms, as well as the levels of teacher motivation and student achievement, among schools in southern Thailand,	The findings revealed that the administrative reform had a strong positive impact on both the improvement of learning resources and teacher-related reforms, which in turn significantly contributed to the enhancement of instructional practices.	Because of the stark differences between Thai and Western cultures, individuals in traditional Thai schools might find it difficult to adopt the reforms and feel oppressed by the cultural dominance, as they were pressured to adopt foreign, Western-style values and practices.
Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, Wilhemina Joselyn Donkoh & Anim Adinkrah Addo	Educational Reforms in Ghana: Past and Present	This paper focuses on the various educational reforms initiated by governments to effect change or provide quality education to Ghanaians, centring on Senior High School Education.	Ghana's experience highlights that investments in quality have resulted in improvements. While politicians should play a role in overseeing education reforms, experts or individuals with specialized knowledge should have a	

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			significant influence in shaping policy decisions.	
Amina Jangu Alhassan	Evaluation of Ghana's 2007 Educational Policy: Effects on Education in the Upper West Region	The study is to evaluate Ghana's 2007 educational policy with specific reference to the provisions made for the FCUBE in the Wa Municipality.	. Most members think there has been an increase in enrolment figures as parents are willing to send their children to school. They attributed the increase in enrolment to the introduction of the capitation grant and the school feeding program.	Therefore, we conclude that while a well-structured plan should account for the number of years, success in secondary school exams and education overall depends on various factors. These include classroom size, the student-teacher ratio, teacher absenteeism, and funding, among others. The main limitation of the current study is that it is confined to basic schools within the Wa Municipality.
Samuel Adu-Gyamfi Eugenia Anderson	History education in Ghana: a pragmatic tradition of change and continuity	The current article seeks to fill the gap by considering the contemporary issues affecting history education in Ghana.	Overall, the paper emphasizes the political factors that have influenced the evolution of Ghana's history curriculum, particularly British colonial influence, the decolonization process, independence, and the postcolonial era, both before, during, and following the emergence of the	There has been limited focus on how textbooks have portrayed cultural, ethnic, and Indigenous histories along with their associated differences and how these portrayals have influenced or complicated historical narratives in Ghana's postcolonial context.

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			Nkrumah and Danquah-Busia traditions.	
George Asante, David Arhin, Nicholas Essien, Samuel Bentil, Georgina Asibey	Implementation of the Standard-Based Curriculum: An Overview of Pre-Tertiary Curriculum in Ghana (1951-2019)	To review the implementation processes of the various curricula of Ghana since 1951, review the growth and developments in Ghana's education under the various curricula reforms, and assess the challenges met by the various curricula.	The findings indicate that teachers believe the Standard-Based Curriculum will foster collaboration among students, help them develop lifelong skills, equip them for the workforce, support inclusive education, advance gender equality, and uphold Ghanaian culture and values.	The Standards-Based Curriculum faces a shortage of teaching and learning materials and presents challenges in collaboration and classroom management due to inadequate teacher training for its implementation.
Dr. Joe Adu-Agyem, Dr. Patrick Osei-Poku	Quality Education in Ghana: The Way Forward	The paper is to examine the Ghanaian educational system with the view to bringing out some of the numerous challenges and constraints that hinder its quality and standard so that appropriate recommendations can be made to arrest some of the problems	The findings highlight a lack of adequate standardized human and material resources, ineffective management and supervision, insufficient funding, and unfavourable working conditions for education system employees, all contributing to low productivity.	The research highlights several challenges, including insufficient teaching and learning resources, inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of dedicated and well-motivated teachers due to low salaries and poor working conditions, a lack of qualified educators needed to ensure quality education, and a high student-to-teacher ratio, particularly in urban and suburban areas, among other issues.

Abdulai Kuyini Mohammed & Ahmed Bawa Kuyini	An Evaluation of the Free Senior High School Policy in Ghana	Objectives of removing the cost barrier to education are being met based on secondary and primary data. In terms of the cost barrier, the government (as per policy) has absorbed the one- time item cost for first-year students.	The objectives are being achieved through both primary and secondary data sources. Regarding financial barriers, the government, in line with its policy, has covered the one- time expenses for first-year students.	The policy faces significant challenges, including insufficient funding and limited physical space. These issues have implications when analysed through the lens of the Multiple Streams Model, particularly in assessing the policy's success or failure.
Samuel Adu- Gyamfi, Charles Ofosu Marfo, Ali Yakubu Nyaaba, Kwasi Amakye- Boateng, Mohammed Abass, Henry Tettey Yartey	Free Senior High School (SHS) and Quality University Education in Ghana: The Role of the University Teacher	How we have individually or collectively, as citizens and academics, pondered over free secondary education, quality education, and the role of the university teacher within the melting pot of the quality discourse in Ghana.	The free Senior High School education leads to higher university enrolment; there is an urgent need to swiftly recruit top-tier academic staff to meet the growing demand.	The steady rise in student enrolment over the years has undeniably placed significant strain on facilities like libraries, lecture halls, laboratories, and student housing.

5. Findings

The findings present a range of perspectives on the impact of educational reforms on the quality of pre-tertiary education in Ghana. Many studies focus on the Free Senior High School (Free SHS) policy, examining it within the national framework and in relation to global education benchmarks. These analyses seek to determine the impact of reforms, especially the Free SHS initiative, on educational standards. They also investigate government-driven strategies to enhance senior high school education and shed light on the obstacles faced during the implementation process.

Numerous publications and article reviews examine the historical development of Free Senior High School (SHS) education in Ghana. Some of these works seek to fill knowledge gaps by analysing the challenges confronting history education and the broader impact of educational reforms. Noteworthy examples include Educational Reforms in Ghana: Past and Present and Effects of Educational Reforms in the 2nd

Decade (2009–2018) on Teacher Motivation and Student Achievement in Schools in Southern Thailand. However, a comprehensive synthesis of literature that captures the full scope of how post-independence pre-tertiary education policy reforms have affected the quality of Free SHS education in Ghana is still lacking. Key findings from existing studies reveal that the results indicate that the administrative reform positively influenced the availability of learning resources and changes related to teachers, leading to notable improvements in teaching practices. Many participants believe that student enrolment has risen, as more parents are now inclined to send their children to school. Data also shows that in areas with strong reform involvement, the completion rate for female students rose by 14 percentage points. Overall, the reform is estimated to have boosted completion rates for both boys and girls by 14.9 percentage points.

The rise in enrolment has largely been linked to the introduction of the capitation grant and the school feeding program, both of which are now components of the Free Senior High School initiative. This policy has significantly contributed to increased university enrolment. To meet the growing demand, there is a pressing need to hire well-qualified academic personnel. Ghana's experience demonstrates that enhancing education quality through targeted investments leads to tangible progress. While political leaders should guide education reforms, the involvement of experts and professionals with specialized knowledge is essential in shaping effective policy. Many stakeholders agree that the surge in enrolment stems from parents' increased willingness to enrol their children in school, driven primarily by the capitation grant and school feeding initiatives.

The findings suggest that teachers view the Standards-Based Curriculum as a tool that can enhance student collaboration, develop lifelong skills, prepare learners for future employment, promote inclusive education, support gender equality, and preserve Ghanaian cultural values. Nevertheless, the results also show that the curriculum has not translated into overall improvements in education quality or academic outcomes. Students attending double-track schools performed lower across all core subjects compared to their peers in non-double-track schools.

6. Limitations

The systematic literature review encompasses a broad range of studies; however, a significant research gap remains regarding the impact of educational reforms on education quality. No existing studies have examined how pre-tertiary education policy reforms affect the quality of Free Senior High School education in Ghana at the regional, municipal, or district levels. While much of the literature reviewed focuses on the influence of the Free SHS policy on educational standards, only a few studies address specific geographic areas. Even then, these studies rarely link earlier educational reforms to their outcomes on education quality or explore how such reforms have shaped the Free SHS system.

The current research gap extends across various domains, including education, regional and geographical contexts, as well as national and municipal levels. There is a lack of studies investigating the effects of pre-tertiary education policy reforms on the quality of education, especially on the Free Senior High School (Free SHS) initiative. While some related topics have been explored in works such as *An Evaluation of the Free Senior High School Policy in Ghana*, *Free Senior High School (SHS) and Quality University Education in Ghana: The Role of the University Teacher*, and *The Impact of the Free Senior High School Education Policy and Double-Track System on Quality Education Outcomes*, none directly address this specific area.

The current research gap covers multiple dimensions, including education, regional and geographic contexts, as well as national and municipal levels. Notably, there is an absence of research specifically analysing how pre-tertiary education policy reforms have impacted the quality of education, with a particular focus on the Free Senior High School (Free SHS) initiative. While studies such as *An Evaluation of the Free Senior High School Policy in Ghana*, *Free Senior High School (SHS) and Quality University Education in Ghana: The Role of the University Teacher*, and *The Impact of the Free Senior High School Education Policy and Double-Track System on Quality Education Outcomes* have addressed related issues, they do not directly examine this particular area.

While studies such as *A Quasi-Experimental Policy Evaluation Study in Ghana* and *The Impact of Free Senior High School Education Policy on the Quality of Education in Ghana* offer valuable insights, they do not directly examine how past and current educational reforms have shaped the Free Senior High School (Free SHS) policy. Moreover, these works often fail to address the influence of different educational reforms on the quality of Free SHS education. Many of the existing studies are primarily conceptual rather than empirical, some are grounded in various theoretical frameworks, while others explore similar contexts but are guided by different educational philosophies.

7. Conclusion

This review examined scholarly articles and papers that explored the impact of the Free Senior High School (SHS) policy reforms on the quality of education in Ghana. A tailored framework guided the process, covering data collection, study quality assessment, inclusion criteria, and search strategies. Of the 115 documents identified, 12 met the initial criteria and were ultimately selected for in-depth analysis. The review focused exclusively on English-language sources, including previous literature reviews and conference proceedings. Key findings centred on how pre-tertiary education reforms have affected the quality of Free SHS education, with discussions on policy shifts, the implementation of Free SHS programs, and the wider implications of these reforms. The review also provided summaries of relevant literature that supported the methodological outcomes and addressed the study's objectives, limitations, and future research

directions. A recurring theme across the studies was the significant role institutional factors play in shaping the quality of Free SHS education.

8. Recommendations

Widespread concerns were raised about the long-term sustainability of the policy, with students pointing to problems such as overcrowded classrooms, a decline in educational quality, and unequal distribution of resources. These challenges, which are like those faced in other countries implementing free education programs, need to be addressed by key stakeholders in the pre-tertiary education sector.

The government should establish a dependable funding mechanism for schools, such as an endowment fund, which has demonstrated long-term sustainability in developed countries like Germany, various Asian nations, the US, and the UK.

The school funding should be disbursed promptly, and there should be ongoing evaluations of the Free Senior High School program to uphold and enhance the quality of education at the senior high level.

There should be an expansion or building of more schools to address the issues of the continuous increase in student enrolment over the years, which undoubtedly puts considerable pressure on facilities such as libraries, lecture halls, laboratories, and student accommodation.

The challenge of having insufficient committed and motivated teachers, largely due to low salaries and poor working conditions, along with a shortage of qualified educators and a high student-to-teacher ratio, particularly in urban and suburban areas, should be tackled by investing in teacher training and retraining. This can be achieved through the provision of scholarships, opportunities for refresher courses, and the organization of workshops and seminars aimed at enhancing teaching capacity and addressing teacher motivation issues.

Conflict of Interest Statement

I, Yahaya Mohammed, an affiliate of Kumasi Technical University, e-mail yahayaladan. As co-author of A Systematic Review of the Effect of Pre-Tertiary Education Policy Reforms on Educational Quality in Ghana: Case of Free Senior High School Policy, it is our own creation and was conceived and written by us, and was not submitted for the evaluation and publication of any other journal article. I agree with the publications of Articles in the European Journal of Education Studies.

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