



Available Online at ESci Journals

International Journal of Educational Studies

ISSN: 2312-458X (Online), 2312-4598 (Print)

<http://www.escijournals.net/IJES>

DEMOCRATIZING NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY-MAKING IN AFRICA: A FOCUS ON GHANA

Eric Fredua-Kwarteng

OISE/University of Toronto, Canada.

ABSTRACT

What are the benefits or costs of allowing marginalized women and ordinary Ghanaians to participate in the policy development activities of national education commission? This paper focuses on this issue by analyzing the narratives of two former members of the Ghana Education Reform Committee, along with a review of the international literature. While the narratives are in favour of maintaining the status-quo, the paper argues for widening participation to include women and ordinary Ghanaians. The paper suggests the social justice model as the most appropriate model to address the exclusion of women and ordinary Ghanaians from the education policy-making table. The conclusion makes strong democratic, moral and implementation arguments for the participation of that segment of the population in national education policy-making.

Keywords: Belief, education, essence, existence, logia, philia, sophia, reflection, science.

INTRODUCTION

Nature, Characteristics, Scope of National Education Commissions:

National education policy-making in former British colonies in Africa (i.e. the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia) follows a consistent model that favours the participation of tiny segments of the population who possess English language facility. In the British colonial model, national education policy-making process involves the appointment of national education commission or committee to review the national goals, outcomes, philosophy, and policies of education and make appropriate recommendations to the government. The National Education Review Commission is normally made up of representatives of various parts of the education system and people drawn from different sectors of society. Usually, the government of the country is not officially represented on Commission but the ministry of education provides all the necessary technical support and other resources required for the Commission to carry out its work. As well, the government determines the terms of references for the

The Commission, the deadline by which it has to submit its final report, and appoints its chair. The chair establishes the Commission's agenda based on its terms of reference, monitors its activities and periodically informs the government and media about the progress of its work. The review commission carries out a national consultative process using a variety of methods such as submission of papers containing ideas, suggestions and insights; petitions, town hall meetings; press conferences; traveling around the country to solicit citizen views; and focus group discussions. After gathering all the information it needs in accordance with its terms of reference and the established deadline, the review commission writes its final report. In the report, it formulates a comprehensive set of recommendations on future education goals, issues, challenges and policy solutions for submission to the government. Upon receiving the review commission's report, the government evaluates the recommendations and then issues a White Paper. The White Paper explains the government's position in relation to the recommendations and indicates which of the recommendations it will develop into policies, regulations, programs or plan and implement them. Finally, the government releases White Paper to the

* Corresponding Author:

Email: opiyo2002ke@yahoo.com

© 2015 ESci Journals Publishing. All rights reserved.

public domain (Evans *et al.*, 1996).

Five major distinctive characteristics are noted with educational commissions in Ghana, and for that matter, former British colonies in Africa. First, the language of communication (LOC) that Commissions use is the English language, which has been adopted as the official language and language of instruction in educational institutions in all the former British colonies in Africa. Accordingly, participation in Commission work either as a member or member of the public requires a facility in English language. Second, members of the Commission are not responsible for formulating strategies, methods or finding resources for implementing its policy recommendations (Itaaga, 1998). That responsibility lies with the government that appointed the Commission. Third, education commissions play only advisory role and their authority is limited by their terms of reference which are determined by governments that appoint them. They are either part of the bureaucracy or a branch of government.

A government that appoints a Commission is not obliged legally or morally to make any policies or regulations based on the recommendations of the Commissions. However, Commissions exercise immensely subtle influence in the initial development of education policy through distillation of ideas, issues, problems and directions they should take ((Muricho and Chang'ach, 2013; Vidovich, 2001). Allied to this is that members of Commissions are part of the educated elite, who are a distinctive group, based on its technical and professional credentials (Bariledum and Serebe, 2013). That way, education commissions have historically shaped the form and nature of education systems in former British colonies. Fourth, contrary to prevailing misconception, the scope of the work of Commissions goes beyond reviewing existing education policies, programs, regulations or legislation. Commissions examine implementation obstacles of existing education policies, identify current and future education development issues and propose solutions (Muricho and Chang'ach, 2013; Nudzor, 2014). Lastly, national education commissions are transitory. They are quickly dissolved as soon as they submit their final report to the government. This is because they are invariably appointed in response to public or international pressures to solve specific education problems or crisis in national education systems (Amutabi, 2003; Nudzor, 2014). The purpose of this paper is to argue for

participation of women and ordinary Ghanaians in national education commissions' policy development activities through social justice panel. The paper finds undemocratic, elitist, and top-down the current participatory model of national education committees. For example, whose voices are heard and whose are unheard in that model of national education policy-making in Ghana? To achieve the above purpose, the paper is outlined into seven seven sections. The first section describes the method used to gather data for the research. The second section describes a brief history of national education commissions in Ghana. The third section focuses on the theoretical perspective that undergirds the arguments in the paper. Joshee and Goldberg's (2005) theory of social justice in policy-making will be adopted as the theoretical perspective for the paper. The fourth section critiques the traditional mode of operation of an education commission to illustrate how it excludes the voice of women and ordinary Ghanaians. The fifth part of the paper presents and discusses the narratives of the two former members of education commission in Ghana. The sixth portion discusses and suggests social justice panel as a model to allow women and ordinary Ghanaians to participate in education policy-making activities of education commissions. The final segment concludes that education policy-making is highly a crucial development activity that requires participation of wider segments of the population to ensure its acceptance and implementation at the local and national level. It also advances moral imperative arguments of democracy and supports these arguments by reference to other Ghanaian studies that have found the traditional policy participatory strategies inadequate.

Research Methodology-Data Collection and Analysis:

The research was designed as a qualitative study with an interest in meanings, perspectives and understandings gained from literature and human narratives. Two major sources were used to collect data. The first source was the semi-structured interview of two former members of the latest 29-member education commission that was inaugurated on January 17, 2002 and completed its work in October 2002. A professional colleague of mine in Ghana contacted two members of the Committee in July 18, 2006, who agreed to share their perspectives on the issue with me through telephone interview on August 2, 2005. Each of the individuals signed a consent form for anonymity and confidentiality, along with their rights to

withdraw from participation and to refuse to disclose any information deemed confidential. Each telephone interview lasted an average of one hour and was later transcribed and analyzed using themes running through it (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). The interview was based on the following major question: What benefits or costs would accrue with participation of ordinary and marginalized Ghanaians (including women) in policy-making activities of national education commissions?

Literature search was the other evidence gathering instrument used for the research. The descriptors "education policy-making in Ghana", "public policy-making in Africa", "education commissions or committees in Africa", and "public policy-making" were used interchangeably in Yahoo, Google and Alta Vista search engines for literature relating to the research of interest. This search netted a few scholarly works mostly reports, blogs, newspapers and articles from open web-based journals. Next, I used the University of Toronto library data bases to search for literature using the same descriptors I used for the internet search engines. This search yielded scant scholarly articles on education policy-making in Ghana or Africa but numerous articles on education policy-making, policy analysis and policy theories in the Western world. Nevertheless, I was open for both scholarly and non-scholarly works given the nature of the research issue. Most of the few articles I found on education commissions or committees did not critique the processes the national education commissions utilize to carry out their work, nor did they have any social justice slant.

A Brief Description of Ghana National Education Policy Commissions/Committees: Ghana is a small West African country which shares a common border with the Ivory Coast in the west, Burkina Faso in the north, Togoland in the east, and the Gulf of Guinea and Atlantic Ocean in the south. It has a land mass of about 238,535 km² and an estimated population of approximately 27million. Ghana is one of the world's largest producers of gold, diamond and cocoa. In 2005, Ghana had 12,200 primary schools, 5450 junior secondary schools, 510 senior secondary schools, 8 public-funded universities and a fast growing number of private universities. The Ghana Ministry of Education (MOE) is the main policy and regulation maker, while the Ghana Education Services is the policy, legislative and regulation implementation arm. The Ghana Education Services (GES) is also the designer and

evaluator of publicly-funded educational programs in the country.

Since attaining political independence from Britain on March 6 1956, national education policy development process in Ghana has consistently followed the British colonial model described above. Starting with the Educationists Committee in 1920, and subsequently Mills-Odoi Commission in 1966; Kwapong Review Committee in 1970; The Dzobo Commission in 1974; The Education Commission on Basic and secondary Education in 1987; The University Rationalization Committee in 1988; and the Education Reform Review Committee in 2002. The Educationists Committee in 1920 recommended the expansion of basic education in Ghana, which then had only Castle Schools and a few mission schools. It also recommended moral education consisting of character building, thrift, and temperance as part of the official curriculum.

The Mills-Odoi Commission in 1966 recommended, among others, that management of secondary schools should be centralized and private schools be subject to regular inspection just like public schools. Furthermore, the Dzobo Commission recommended 6 years of primary schooling, 3 years of junior secondary schooling, and three years of senior secondary schooling. These recommendations were partially implemented on an experimental basis during Busia's regime in 1969-1972. The 1987 Educational commission was concerned with examining the possibilities of implementing the junior and secondary school concepts in the Dzobo commission's report (Fobi *et al.* 1995). In fact, all these committees or commissions were formed to assist in reforming Ghana's education system by way of ideas, strategies and suggestions. It also shows the level of influence they had exerted on shaping the present education system in Ghana.

The Committee on Review of Education Reforms in Ghana, the latest commission to be appointed, was inaugurated on January 17, 2002 under the chair of Professor Jophus Anamuah-Mensah (Government of Ghana, n.d). This 30 member commission had its terms of reference consisting of examining the goals and philosophy for the present education system with a view to ensuring its relevance to the development of human resources for the country; determining strategies for the introduction of information technology in all schools and colleges; re-examining the basic school system; determining how best to mainstream pre-school

education into the formal education system; and considering strategies for the professional development of all educators (Ministry of Education, 2002).

As part of its strategy for data collection, the Committee conducted press briefings, reviewed existing education documents, received memoranda, visited selected educational institutions, undertook regional visits and formed special task forces. The Committee completed its work in October 2002, and in December 2003 the government issued a White Paper on the report of the Committee. The White Paper adopted the Committee's recommendations, among other things, a universal free, compulsory education consisting of 2 years of kindergarten, 6 years of primary education, and three years of junior high school. The government also accepted the Committee's recommendation to set up a national apprenticeship program.

Theoretical Perspective: The theoretical perspective undergirding this paper is Joshee and Goldberg's (2005) theory of social justice in policy-making. It advocates the participation of traditionally excluded groups in public policy development process. In sum, the principal purpose of Joshee and Goldberg's (2005) theory is to empower the marginalized segments of society through participation in public policy-making. Though the theory was originally propounded to create spaces for the participation of underrepresented groups in policy-making process field in Canada, it has a universal application in the policy development field with regards to participation in education policy formulation in Ghana and the rest of the African continent.

Four fundamental concepts underlying Joshee and Goldberg's (2005) theoretical perspective are pertinent to this research. The theory conceptualizes democracy as the process of communication where citizens, regardless of socio-economic background, ethnicity, race, gender, physical ability or educational attainment participate collectively in making decisions affecting their lives. Thus, it is against the principle of fairness and equity that people should be made to deal with the effects of policies on their lives without having any say in developing those policies. This principle suggests that democracy is more than representation, where some people are elected or appointed to represent others. The participatory principle focuses on inclusion and gives greater attention to the participation of those who historically have been excluded from the process of policy development and implementation.

The second concept of Joshee and Goldberg's theoretical perspective is that allowing people from all walks of life to participate in policy-making does not diminish social differences. Joshee and Goldberg (2005) emphasize that social differences must be acknowledged and efforts made to understand the other's perspectives with respect and humility. The third concept of Joshee and Goldberg's theoretical perspective is about removing oppressive structures and barriers that prevent the participation of marginalized people in policy development and implementation process.

The final component of Joshee and Goldberg's theory is social justice panel model that can be used to change the structure of exclusionism in policy participation. This is how Joshee and Goldberg (2005) describe the social justice panel,

The social panel would be selective drawing from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in decision-making...It would include activists, scholars, and government officials and would be established for an extended period of time. It would be national in scope and would allow for communication through writing, electronic mail, and face-to-face encounters. Participants would be invited into the panel on the basis of their knowledge, commitment, and engagement. The panel would be moderated by an individual who would act as a facilitator for the dialogue. The moderator would also initially be responsible for providing participants with background information on the policy process and the issue. (pp. 7-8).

Two approaches dominate the policy reform field in Africa: reform for efficiency and reform for empowerment (Swartzendruber and Njovens, 1993). The core of Joshee and Goldberg's (2005) policy participation theory supports the empowerment of the excluded segments of the population rather than policy reform for efficiency. It is also a bottom-up approach as opposed to top-down approach to policy-making, which focuses on national elites, experts and government officials (Mantilla, 1999). Policy reform for efficiency relates to the adoption of the tenets of instrumental rationality, which uses lifeless mathematical instruments such as cost-benefit analysis, linear programming, risk management and econometric models to improve policy analysis, development and implementation in Africa.

Critique of Education Commission Methods of Operation: Traditionally, education commissions in Ghana use methods of operation that form a barrier to

the participation of women and ordinary Ghanaians. As an illustration, the Ghana government's White Paper on the report of the Education Reform Review Committee (n.d) reports that, The committee received a large number of memoranda from the public, and invited many people to make presentations at its sittings. The readiness of the public to offer information and ideas to enhance the work of the committee indicates a high level of participation and interest of the public in the national task assigned to it. There are conceptual problems with certain words and phrases in the above quote. First, the term public is not a homogenous entity or mass without differentiation to ethnicity, gender, occupation, or economic class. Certainly, those who submitted "the large number of memoranda" to the Committee, and those who made "presentations" to the Committee in English (the official language of communication of Ghana) were members of the minority educated elite; and not the majority of the population consisting of market women, farmers, miners, farm workers, factory workers, construction workers, bus drivers, cleaners, and office clerks (Holland and Blackburn, 1998). These segments of the population have limited or no English proficiency skills and are unlikely to submit any memoranda, information or make presentations to the Committee.

Similarly, the Committee did not invite any persons from those population groups to make presentations in their indigenous languages. In fact, the use of English as the exclusive means of communication for the Committee's work suggests that a vast majority of the Ghanaian population were excluded from the process of participation in the Committee's work. Also Mantilla (1999) has stated that participation has two distinct meanings. One conjures the notion of participation as a joint endeavour and the other is participation for a specific purpose. Participation as stated in the White paper implies participation for the express purpose of supplying information. This is what women and ordinary Ghanaians would be capable of doing if the language of communication were the indigenous languages, the forum not intimidating and the participants treated with respect and dignity.

As well, the White Paper also reports, The Committee adopted a variety of strategies towards the conduct of its work. These included press briefings, review of existing documents, receipt of memoranda, visits to selected institutions and organizations, regional

visits and the formation of special task force.

Who are the authors of the documents the Committee reviewed? Which institutions and organizations were visited and where were they located? The Committee visited the ten regions, and certainly these were regional capitals, not the districts in the regions. Why? The Committee's press briefings were published in the national dailies and broadcast on the national television in English. Obviously, these participatory strategies such as press briefings, special task forces that were established and certain people invited to make presentations did not create any opportunities for ordinary and marginalized folks to participate in the process. Thus, only the members of the minority educated elite had access to those English newspapers and television programming.

Lamenting on this sad situation of exclusion, Bodomo (2003), asks "How could we harness indigenous knowledge, how could we generate local initiatives and mass participation in the development discourse if the elite in Africa continues to use languages that are not the languages of the indigenous people?". As a matter of fact, the use of English language as the only official language in Ghana has condemned an enormous portion of the population to "social ostracism", so to speak, disqualifying them from participating in education public policy-making in Ghana.

Justifications for Exclusion- Interview Narratives:

Over the years, several theoretical prepositions have been put forward for excluding a wider public participation in general public policy-making. As applies to national education policy-making in Ghana, one respondent stated that "all over the world education policies and regulations are made by experts, not ordinary folks". He questioned how ordinary people could make any useful contributions to education policy development for the country when they do not possess any expertise or have not achieved higher education credentials. The other respondent also stated, "apparently the issues involved in making education policies would be overwhelming and over the intellectual capacity of those ordinary folks. It is unthinkable that market women who can hardly read a small portion of English text with comprehension or write their names could participate in education commission's activities either as presenters or submitters of information." What is implicit in these assertions is that since the presenters or submitters of

information or petitions to national education commissions are made up of people with varying degrees of post-secondary education attainments they would make useful contributions compared to ordinary folks. It also implies that in terms of cost-benefit analysis, preference should be given to the participation of the elite class as opposed to the marginalized, non-educated class.

Nevertheless, Green (1994) contends that a policy question or issue does not belong to the domain of theoretical or technical expertise. On the contrary, it is a moral and practical question.

The implication of Green's (1994) thesis is that experts or professionals do not necessarily make better policy decisions than their non-expert counterparts could do. As an illustration, one of the terms of reference of the Education Reform Review Committee was to examine the philosophy of education for Ghanaian schools. This is a value-laden issue which ordinary Ghanaian folks could participate to develop. Perhaps their presentations to the Education Reform Review committee would take the form of stories, metaphors, proverbs or wise sayings.

The respondents also contended that mass participation of ordinary folks in public decision-making on education will not lead to effective or quality policy decisions. This perspective implies that public decision-making is a technical issue exclusively for the technocrats, not a practical democratic issue whose solution requires moral choice making. The respondents strongly shared this perspective, because they believed that some level of technical knowledge about education is needed for effective participation in Commission work. Nonetheless, the Commissions merely make recommendations based on discussions and reflections of what they have heard or what have been submitted to them. This is normally philosophical rather than technical. So the Ghanaian professionals and elites who dominate the policy landscape could not make more effective recommendations relative to those of non-elite.

Further, the respondents drew a line of demarcation between rational decision-making and democratic decision-making. They distinguished democracy from public education policy-making. According to them while democracy involves mass participation in making broad organic future choices for a society, rational public education policy-making belongs to those who have been specifically elected or appointed to formulate and execute it. Nonetheless, the respondents had a narrow

view of democracy as merely representation rather than a communication process in which citizens participate to discuss issues affecting their lives and those of future generations. This conception of democracy also conforms to the traditional, pre-colonial mode of democracy in which sub-chiefs were representatives of the people in "Ahenfie" forums without direct participation of the people in the forums.

As well, an entrenched belief of the respondents was that greater citizen engagement in public education policy-making process would imply redefining the roles of education commission members. In light of this idea, one may ask this question: what would be the roles and functions of the individual members of education commissions if ordinary and marginalized Ghanaians were also engaged? As one of the respondents honestly admitted, "It would not change the roles and functions of the members in any practical way; except that it would generate extensive amount of data which the members may not have the capacity or training to deal with."

Nevertheless, as Walters *et al.* (2000) indicate the purpose of public involvement and the stage of the policy development that requires public involvement should be clearly spelt out. For example, if the stage of the policy development is generating alternatives, the public participation may involve helping policy developers to search for alternatives and educate the public about the issue. Therefore, involving women and ordinary Ghanaians in education policy-making does not mean that Commission members would become redundant or their roles would be usurped by those folks. Indeed the participation of women and ordinary Ghanaians in Commission policy activities does not change the social status of these people, nor does it mean social differences would be eliminated. This substantiates my contention that Ghanaian women and ordinary folks could have a role to play in developing national education policies in Ghana.

Furthermore, to what extent are the Commission members' values and norms congruent with those of the mass public? The respondents were of the position that Commission members are selected in such a way that they represent all shades of views, concerns and aspirations on education in Ghana. This narrative suggests that Commission members are so altruistic that their recommendations to government are similar or approximate to those of the majority of the population. However, as part of the elite group, Commission

members have their own values and ethos cultivated through their long association with the Westernized education they received. For this reason, it is fair to say that they will formulate arguments and recommendations that essentially promote their own values and interests rather than those of the majority of women and ordinary Ghanaians who live in rural communities. The history of education commissions in Ghana provides demonstrative evidence that the education specific issues of women (including girls) or rural communities are yet to receive any national attention at the policy-making table.

Additionally, the respondents argued that allowing women and ordinary Ghanaians to participate in education commission activities would be time-consuming, financially expensive and complicated. The respondents admitted that the commission members may lack training in effective public engagement, especially if the presentations of participating segments of the public are non-traditional such as narrating personal stories or experiences, using proverbs and metaphors to convey meanings, and other wise sayings. They agreed that, "this is where excessive time of the Commission would be consumed." They related that such participation would cost too much in terms of time and logistics to complete the Commission work. This is the narrative of one of them: "The amount of logistics required such as translation into English, or the services of interpreters, you name them, would be too much for the Commission limited budget. I mean the financial costs would be out of the roof!"

Consequently, the issue is how the national education committees construct the target audiences of education policies (Schneider and Ingram, 1997). If ordinary Ghanaian folks such as market women, house wives, construction workers, miners, subsistence farmers, fishers, farm and factory workers are constructed as "illiterates" or without intellectual capacity to reason, for example. That implies they are intellectually immature to engage in any stages of education policy development process without incurring astronomical financial and emotional costs to the government; hence, their exclusion from the education policy-making process may be justified.

The financial cost of allowing Ghanaian women and ordinary folks to participate in national education policy formulation is minimal compared to the ultimate costs the government would have to bear in an event of policy

failure. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) policy Brief (2001) indicates that: "Strengthening relations with citizens is a sound investment in better policy-making and a core element of good governance. It allows governments to tap into new sources of policy-relevant ideas, information and resources when making decisions". While I am not universalizing the benefits of direct public engagement in education policy-making, the participation of women and ordinary folks in education policy process would minimize, if not eliminate the social distance that characterizes the relationship between policy-makers and ordinary Ghanaians. This impaired relationship invariably results in the formulation of wrong policies in relation to policy problems confronting majority of the population (Amukowa, 1997).

How does one find out if Ghanaian women and ordinary people want to participate in national education policy process? Both respondents agreed that surveys, opinion polls, and policy research will help to unravel whether marginalized Ghanaians want to participate in public education policy development and the forms they want that participation to take. But the respondents believed that a vast majority of the people would pass it over to the educated folks because the latter possess fluent English oral and written communication skills. On the contrary, this view does not support the case of community participation in making trade policy in Ghana (Christian Aid, 2003). In fact, women and ordinary Ghanaian folks will participate in education policy making if opportunities are created for their participation. In this trade policy-making, subsistence farmers, community elders, farmer workers, and women petty merchants in a rural town in Ghana participated in a town hall meeting to generate ideas for policy research on trade. The turnout was overwhelming as Ghanaians from all walks of life were eager to express their views on the issue of both external and internal trade.

There is a growing literature on African policy environment which has been characterized as gender blind or neutral. Writing on policy development in Africa, Meena (2001) argues that policy-makers in Africa have consistently failed to appreciate the fact that women have different needs and play different roles relative to those of men. She further contends that the subordinate position of women in Africa constrains them from participating in policy-making and this has resulted in the concrete needs of women being ignored by policy-

makers. The participation of ordinary Ghanaian women in education policy formulation would assist specifically to address gender issues such as girls' access to education, inclusive curriculum and assessment, sexual harassment of girls in educational institutions, and appointment of women to educational leadership positions. Moreover, researchers have found that the most effective way to boost secondary enrolment for girls in Africa is to reduce the direct, indirect and opportunity costs of parents of the education of their daughters (Herz and Sperling, 2004). In fact, when women have access to the education policy table they would be able speak about their own concerns, needs and interests.

Policy Participatory Models for Marginalized women and Ordinary Ghanaians: Bourdieu (1997) and Parker (2003) contend that certain segments of the population are systematically excluded from policy-making because they do not possess the "cultural capital" needed to find a seat at the metaphorical policy-making table. To develop the democratic capacity of women and ordinary citizens and bring transparency to governance in Ghana, artificially created "cultural capital" (particularly English language facility both written and oral) should not be allowed to disenfranchise segments of the population from participating in national education policy making. This is what Joshee & Goldberg (2005) would refer to as an oppressive structure.

Many models can be used for participatory policy-making (Joshee and Goldberg 2005; Goldman and Torres, 2002; Curtain 2003; Averill 2000; Johnson and Mutchler, 1999). Four of these models will be discussed briefly in this paper. This will be followed by the social justice model that is considered most suitable for the purpose of the paper. One of these models is citizen panel used more often at the local level than at the national level. Citizen panels are put together by government officials, and they consist of a statistically representative sample of citizens whose views are sought over a period of time (Joshee and Goldberg 2005; Curtain 2003). According to Joshee and Goldberg (2005), the primary function of the panel is to offer advice to government officials who are not obliged to act on any advice offered to them.

Joshee and Goldberg, (2005) also relate that the traditional power structure that privileges certain voices remain intact in citizen panels. Since the purpose of the paper is to allow Ghanaian women and ordinary folks to

participate in national education policy-making, this model does not achieve that purpose. The second model is the citizen jury, which uses representative sample, but it could be regional or national. The government puts together citizen juries with the purpose to deliberate contested issues or problems and advice public officials accordingly (Joshee and Goldberg, 2005). However, unlike the citizen panels, the membership of citizen juries is small and less permanent. And they receive presentations from experts and cross-question the experts (Curtain 2004). However, citizen juries suffer from the same defects as the citizen panels. The third model is citizen forum that has been used extensively in Britain to resolve many social problems (Curtain, 2004). The forum is structured and involves local dialogues on critical national policy issues (Goldman and Torres, 2002). Forum members, according to Curtain (2003), work in groups of 10, each with a trained facilitator, and the results are shared with national and local leaders. Again, the national leaders are not obliged to accept the decisions of the forum members. Thus, the model suffers from the same defects as the other two models already discussed, and it is unsuitable for the purpose of the paper.

The fourth model is deliberative polling used more often in the US and Canada. In deliberative polling, a representative sample is polled on specific issues and those polled are invited together to discuss those issues. Materials with balanced views on the issues are sent out to participants before the meeting. With the help of a trained facilitator, the participants prepare a set of questions during focus group meeting and the questions are used in dialogue with experts on the issue and political leaders. After two days, the participants are asked the initial baseline questions again in a survey. The changes in opinion are taken as indicative of the opinion of the public if they were involved in the deliberations. This model is not suitable for the purpose of this paper because it demands a high-level literacy which most Ghanaian women and ordinary folks do not possess.

The last model is the social justice model proposed by Joshee and Goldberg (2005). I find this model most suitable for allowing women and ordinary Ghanaians to participate in national education policy formation in Ghana. The model draws heavily on the strengths of the other models discussed earlier and features of deliberative dialogue proposed by Johnson and Mutchler

(1999). It would be local rather than national, and it would be a face-to-face dialogue of between 20-30 participants moderated by a trained facilitator. The facilitator would be fluent in the language spoken in the area where the dialogue will take place. Presentations by the participants would be oral rather than written. A representative sample of interested, committed and affected Ghanaian women and ordinary folks would be selected from the 201 districts in Ghana to participate in the definition of education policy problems, the evaluation of policy options, and development of criteria for selecting sound education policies. Sufficient time would be allocated to the panel on deliberating the issues and the members opinions, perspectives and suggestions must be treated with respect and dignity.

The issues involved and the basic rules of engagement in the social justice panel would be explained to and agreed by the participants. The government should sponsor the social justice panels and it should craft series of radio advertisements in the four major Ghanaian languages to cultivate the interest of women and ordinary folks in policy development. The National Commission on Democracy in Ghana, along with other community and national activists, scholars, and policy-makers should be consulted in developing other basic rules for the operation of the social justice panel. But it should be stressed that the social justice panel is one of the strategies for participation and inclusion of marginalized groups and communities in national education policy making. The use of strategies such as press briefings, special task forces, visitation to educational institutions, town hall meetings, soliciting submissions (through electronic and post) and presentations should be continued as well.

Further Discussion and Conclusion: The development of national education policies in Ghana without the active participation of women and ordinary folks has been a consistent pattern throughout the history of education commissions. Yet the research participants unanimously agreed that this is not a major problem of the policy development process in Ghana. As a matter of fact, they did not acknowledge that education policy failures had anything to do with a lack of understanding of the human conditions of the vast majority of ordinary folks; the absence of their voices in policies affecting their lives; and poor identification of their needs and aspirations. Nonetheless, education policy impacts every individual, group and community in Ghana and this is

why it is the collective business of the entire nation rather than the sole responsibility of elected or appointed representatives of the people. Thus it is a high-conflict issue (Curtain, 2003) that requires the legitimation participation of ordinary folks many of whom are unilingual speakers of Ghanaian languages, marginalized and live in rural communities in Ghana.

The legitimation role of women and ordinary Ghanaians in national education policy-making process is needed more urgently than any juncture in the history of the country. This is the period in which Ghanaians have enjoyed relative stable change of governments through the ballot box and unprecedented growing roots of democracy. Widening participation in the education policy development process to include marginalized women and ordinary Ghanaians is a means of strengthening and deepening those democratic roots. That is, it fertilizes democracy. That way, ordinary and marginalized Ghanaians are more likely to identify with and own the policies than when the policies are imposed on them from without (Bromell, 2012; Caddy 2001; Curtain 2003; Nyagga, 2014).

Further, in writing about education policy formation in Africa, Evans (1994) asks the following critical but poignant question: "How the process could be improved to better enhance its openness and access; to ensure that diverse groups' needs are effectively heard; to generate credibility and legitimacy; and to build support and consensus for proposed education policies?"(p.6).The answer to that question lies in the social justice panel that, would allow Ghanaian women and ordinary folks to participate in such policy decision-making instead of having policies imposed on them. As Amartya (1999) rightly points out, development requires the democratic participation of people in deciding matters that affect their lives and in which they are interested. By this means, Amartya continues, citizens can harness the resulting freedoms to make positive transformation of their lives, families and communities.

Apart from the moral imperative arguments of democracy, education policy implementation at the local district level would be enhanced when ordinary folks become co-producers of those policies. Co-production and ownership of education policies are twin prongs to fertilize democracy and reduce citizen cynicism toward government (Agostino *et al.* 2006; Callahan, 2002; Somach, 2002). Implementation of policies that would be further developed based on the recommendations of

the national education commissions is critically important. However policy implementation, contrary to the beliefs of the respondents, is a social process and not a technical issue belonging exclusively to elected or appointed officials. This does not in any way to suggest a trivialization of the application of sound technical expertise in national education policy-making as a public issue (Bromell, 2012).

Lastly, some Ghanaian researchers acknowledge that the current trend in the country signifies an evolution toward participatory policy-making ((Kpessa & Atugaba, 2013; Kpessa, 2011; Mohammed, 2013). Nevertheless, mere participation in public-making is grossly insufficient. Marginalized groups have to be assured that their ideas, opinions and concerns would be valued and incorporated into both the education policy analysis and policy texts. Until these caveats are seriously considered public education policy-making will continue to be steeped in elite domination and control.

The narratives of the research respondents aimed at maintaining the traditional structures and approaches of education commissions that are elite-dominated and controlled. In fact, public education policy-making as a social rather technical process becomes increasingly crystal clear when we step out of the realm of policy rationality or instrumentality. At that moment, we would see how power relations, domination and elitism play out in the policy development activities of the national education commissions in Ghana.

REFERENCES

- Agostino, M.J.D., Schwester, R.W. and Holzer, M. 2006. Enhancing the prospect for deliberative democracy: The American speaks model. *The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal*, 10 (2), 1-14
- Amartya, S. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. Anchor Books, New York.
- Amutabi, M.N. 2003. The 8-4-8 system of education. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 23(2), 127-144.
- Amukowa, A. 1997. The public policy process in Africa. Accessed March 28, 2014 from <http://unpanl.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/cafra>
- Antwi, M.K. 1992. *Education, society, and development in Ghana*. Unimax Publication, Accra, Ghana.
- Averill, N. 2001. *Doing democracy: How deliberative polling works*. Canadian Government Executive.
- Issue 1
- Bariledum, K and Serebe, V. 2013. Political elites and the challenges of national development: The Nigeria experience. *European Scientific Journal*, 9 (31), 161-172.
- Bodomo, A. 2003. On Language and Development. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 5(2):31-51
- Bourdieu, P. 1997. The forms of Capital. In A. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown, and A. Wells (Eds), *Education, Culture, Economy, Society* (pp.46-59). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bromell, D. 2012. Doing the right thing: Ethical dilemma in public policy making. *Centre for Theology and Public Issues*, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.
- Caddy, J. 2000. Why citizens are central to good governance. *Observer* No. 229, pp.51- 60.
- Callahan, K. 2002. The utilization and effectiveness of citizen advisory committees in the budget process of Local Governments. *Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting & Financial Management*, 14(2).
- Christian, A. 2003. Talking about trade: communities making trade policy in Ghana. Accessed March 6, 2005 from <http://www.trabajopopular.org.ar/material/taling.pdf>
- Curtain, R. 2003a. What Role for Citizens in developing and implementing Public Policy? Part 1 *Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration*. Can also be accessed from http://www.appm.org/pdf/Curtain_citizenengagementpart.
- Curtain, R. 2003b. How citizens can take part in developing and implementing public policy: Part 2 *Australia Public Policy Research Network*. Accessed March 11, 2005 from <http://www.apprn.org>
- Curtain, R. 2004. Overcoming the democratic deficit: Engaging citizens in making of public policy in Australia. *Australia Public Policy Research Network* Accessed February 11, 2005 from <http://www.apprn.org>
- Evans, D. 1994. *Education policy Formation in Africa: A Comparative Study of Five Countries*. ARTS Publication Technical paper No.12. USAID, office of Sustainable Development, Washington, DC.
- Evans, D.R, Sack, R. and Shaw, C,P. 1996. Overview and analysis of the case studies – lessons for education policy formulation. In *Association for the Development of African Education* 1995.

- Formulating education policy: Lessons and experiences from sub-Saharan Africa (pp.1-36). Paris, France: Author
- Fobi, D.K., Koomson, A. K. and Godwyll, E.K. 1995. The case of Ghana. In Association for the Development of African Education. Formulating Educational Policy: Lessons and Experiences/rom sub-Saharan Africa. Tours: Association for the Development of African Education, 63 – 84.
- Ghana Statistical Service 2013. Population and housing census report: Women and men. Government of Ghana, Accra, Ghana.
- Goldman, J. and Torres, L. 2002. Models of citizen engagement matrix. Accessed March 20, 2005 from http://www.deliberative-democracy.net/randp/meeting/del-chart_overview.pdf
- Government of Ghana. 2005. White paper on the report of the education reform review committee. Accessed January 16, 2005, from <http://www.ghana.gov.gh/>
- Green, A. 1994. Postmodernism and state education. *Journal of Education Policy*, 9 (1), 67-83.
- Herz, B. and Sperling, B.G. 2004, What works in girls' education: evidence and policies from the developing world. London: Council on Foreign Relations, Inc.
- Holland, J. and Blackburn, J. 1998. Whose voice? Participatory Research and Policy Change. London. UK: Intermediate Technology Publications
- Itaaga, N. 1998. Educational planning in East Africa: The role of imported planning technology. Unpublished master's thesis. Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary.
- Johnson, K. and Mutchler, S. 1999. Deliberating about education: A new policy tool? *Insight on Education Policy Practice and Research* No. 10. Accessed March 20, 2005 from <http://www.sedl.org/policy/insight/dec99>
- Joshee, R. and Goldberg, M. 2005. Participatory Policy analysis and social justice. Toronto, Ontario: OISE/UT Discussion Paper.
- Kpessa, M.W. and Atugaba, R.A. 2013. Grounding with the people: Participating policy-making in the context of constitutional review in Ghana. *Journal of Politics and Law*, 6 (1), 99-110
- Kpessa, M.W. 2011. The politics of public policy in Ghana: From closed circuit bureaucrats to citizenry engagement. *Journal of Developing Societies*, 27(1), 29-56.
- Mantilla, M. 1999. Teacher's perceptions of their participation in policy choices: The bottom-up approach of the Nueva Escuela Unitaria (NEU) in Guatemala. Accessed January 15, 2005 from www.ieg.org/pdf/teacher_particip.pdf
- Meena, R. 2005. Women and sustainable development: Voices from Africa. Accessed January 10, 2005 from <http://www.UnSystem.org/ngls/documents/publication/en/voices.africa/number5/vfa5.07>
- Ministry of Education. 2002. Report of the President's Committee on Review of Education Reforms in Ghana (Anamuah-Mensah Report), Ministry of Education, Accra.
- Mohammed, A.K. 2013. Civic engagement in public policy-making: Fad or reality? *Politics and Policy*, 41(1), 117-152
- Muricho, W.P. and Chang'ach J.K. 2013. Education reforms in Kenya for innovation. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(9), 123-145.
- Nudzor, H.P., 2014. An Analytical Review of Education Policy-Making and Implementation Processes within the Context of "Decentralized System of Administration" in Ghana. *SAGE Open* April-June 2014: 1-11 DOI: 10.1177/2158244014530885
- Nyagga, M. 2014. A data revolution for public policy: Using data for evidence-based policy making and implementation. Nairobi, Kenya: Open Institute
- OECD Public Management Policy Brief 2001. Engaging citizens in policy-making: information, consultation and public participation. PUMA Policy Briefs No. 10, pp.1-6. Accessed from <http://www.oecd.org/puma/citizens/pubs/citizense.pdf>
- Parker, W. 2003. Teaching democracy: Unity and diversity in public life. New York: Teacher College Press.
- Schneider, A. and Ingram, H. 1997. Policy design for democracy. Lawrenceville: University of Kansas Press.
- Somech A. 2002. Explicating the complexity of participative management: An investigation of multiple dimensions. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 11(1): 341-371.
- Swartzendruber, J.F. and Njovens, B.B. 1993. African NGO participation in national Resource policy. World Resource Institute, Center for International

Development and Environment. Washington, DC. Accessed Feb. 24, 2007, from <http://www.Afrsd.org/publications>.

Vidovich, L. 2001. A conceptual framework for analysis of education policy and practice. Proposed paper for presentation at Australian Association for

Research in Education. Fremantle, Australia. December 2

Walters, L.C., Aydelotte, J., Miller, J. 2000. Putting more public in policy analysis. *Public Administration Review*, 60 (4), 349-359.