

**NEGOTIATING TWO SPACES: EXAMINING HOW STRUCTURAL
POLICIES AND FAMILY POLITICS SHAPE THE EDUCATION OF
CHILDREN**



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I hereby certify that this thesis is the result of my own work except where otherwise indicated and due acknowledgement is given.

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ABSTRACTS

Despite efforts by both global education regimes and states to make education access equitable for all children, underlying patterns of inequity in access to education persist. The underlying patterns of inequity in access make education access and distribution gendered, school-based, classed, and geographic or region-based. Using Ghana's recent education policy, "the free Senior High School (SHS) policy" as an exemplar, the thesis explores the gender disparities in access to education that the national data fail to unmask in various parts of Ghana where such disparities persist, and in places where gender parity has been overachieved. Based upon one and half years of qualitative fieldwork in Ghana, which incorporated 328 interviews with policymakers, implementers, and diverse families, and over two years of desk research, this thesis addresses the question presently unresolved in the education access literature: how does the nexus of structural education policies and family politics shape upper secondary education of children in Ghana?

The findings reverberate several issues. First, policymaking is crucial in setting the tone of access to secondary education. The access policy foregrounds certain perspectives such as economics and forecloses other alternatives such as school-based disparities, gender disparity and other regional and district level contextual factors. Consequently, access becomes readily available for some people and foreclosed to others. Furthermore, the omissions in policy texts and the narrow conceptualization of concepts also create implementation constraints. These issues render policy inherently inequitable, enabling middle-income families to solidify their advantages while steering low-income families toward exclusion. At the meso level implementation phase, different approaches (rigid, adaptation, flexible) were employed by policy implementers both central and local in bringing the policy to life. However, the lack of engagement and coherence between disparate implementing units and implementers created implementation gaps. At the micro-household levels, education access policy, and implementation, were only the beginning of education access negotiation for children, especially girls. Children's access to secondary education was shaped by family type, family dynamics, and intersectional differences like resource dilution and gender. Family type was less important in egalitarian households but became significant when decision-making was polarized.

Access to education varies across multiple layers: what policy provides at the macro level, what implementation allows at the meso level, and what households and family dynamics permit at the micro level. The nested education access theory integrates the macro-meso-micro nexus, allowing for a nuanced exploration of education access as a continuous negotiation. This theory provides

deeper insights into educational inequities and helps address outlier (persistent barriers despite free education policies) situations in Global South contexts.

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The thesis process is not linear, I view it as a meandering path, a roller coaster process than one that moves in a regular pattern of progression. Whilst it requires understanding the bigger picture, there is so much to every phase, and focusing on a small piece at a time has enormous difficulties. This thesis represents a culmination of over a year and half fieldwork, the arduous work of touring ministries, institutions, regions, districts, communities, households, and families scattered all over Ghana, and two years of desk research that involves synthesizing and appraising existing relevant research. Despite the meandering path of this unique and exhilarating project, I traverse successfully because of a host of amazing people. First, is my amazing supervisor, Prof. Heather Hamill, who is the best supervisor anyone can hope and pray for. I am grateful for all the constructive feedback and the guidance she has provided me on my thesis journey. She has read every word of every chapter. The thesis journey is better because of her. Under her supervision, I have improved on the conceptualization and logical flow of ideas. When the going got tough, she was always there to help me and guide me. I will forever be grateful to her for the enormous help she provided when I had challenges getting institutional access in Ghana, and her support during the tumultuous COVID-19 times. I am also grateful to her for propping up my confidence whenever I needed it. I am particularly grateful for the meeting we had beforehand to discuss my confirmation of status interview. Her constructive feedback enabled me to reflect and think critically about my work. I am heartily thankful to her for everything.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate the thesis to my parents (Mr. Daniel Akuffo, and Ms. Georgina Birago Frempong), and the children of Ghana. I hope that one day, they will be able to access upper secondary education without the tosses of negotiating multiple education access scales.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronyms	Expansion or Explanation
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CHASS	Conference of Head of Assisted Secondary Schools
CREATE	Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSSPS	Computerized School Selection and Placement System
CUREC	Central University Research Ethics Committee
DACF	District Assemblies Common Fund
DFID	Department for International Development
DGEO/G&C/SHEP/CPC	District Girls Education Officer, Guidance and Counselling, School Health Education Program
DHIMS	District Information Management System
DOVSU	Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit
DRECs	Departmental Research Ethics Committees
EFA	Education for All
EMI	Effectively Maintained Inequality
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
ESMTD	Education Sector Medium Term Development Plan
ESPR	Education Sector Performance Review
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
FHH	Female Headed Households
GES	Ghana Education Service
GDI	Gender Disparity Index
GLSS	Ghana Living Standard Survey
GNAT	Ghana National Association of Teachers
GOG	Government of Ghana
GPI	Gender Parity Index
G-PASS	Girls - Participatory Approaches for Student Success

GNT	Grounded Normative Theory
GSGDA	Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda, National Medium-Term Development Policy Framework
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
GTM	Grounded Theory Methods
IGF	Internally Generated Funds
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JHS	Junior High School
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MHH	Male Headed Households
MMI	Maximally Maintained Inequality
MOE	Ministry of Education
MoEVT	Ministry of Education & Vocational Training
NAGRAT	National Association of Graduate Teachers
NESAR	National Education Sector Annual Review
NORSAAC	Northern Sector Action on Awareness Centre
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEIP	Secondary Education Improvement Project,
SHS	Senior High School
SPI	Sex Parity Index
SDI	Sex Disparity Index
SRC	Student Representative Council
SSA	Sub Sahara Africa
SSH IDREC	Social Sciences and Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee and departmental research ethics Departmental Research Ethics Committees
UIS	Institute for Statistics
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund or United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAEC	West Africa Examination Council
WASSCE	West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate Examination

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACTS	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
DEDICATION	vii
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	viii
LIST OF TABLES.....	xvii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xviii
CHAPTER I: UNDERSTANDING ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN GHANA: SETTING THE STAGE FOR AN EMPIRICAL AND THEORETICAL AGENDA	1
A. THE PUZZLE.....	1
B. EDUCATION ACCESS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH	3
C. EDUCATION ACCESS IN GHANA.....	4
1. Ghana’s Unique contextual background and the free SHS Policy.....	7
2. Justification for Ghana	11
3. Why Gender?	12
C. THE CONSTITUTION OF GHANAIAAN FAMILIES AND HOW THIS IS INTERACTING WITH THE STRUCTURAL EDUCATION INTERVENTION (THE FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL INTERVENTION)	14
D. SELECTED REGIONS IN GHANA: THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN DICHOTOMY	17
1. Northern Ghana.....	19
2. Southern Ghana.....	20
3. Comparing the Northern and Southern Ghana contexts.....	21
E SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	21
F. DEFINING AND CLARIFYING TERMINOLOGIES	23
G. CHAPTER OUTLINE	25
CHAPTER 2: ON EDUCATION ACCESS AND PROGRESSION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL: A NARRATIVE REVIEW AND A META-SYNTHESIS OF THE FIELD	28
A. INTRODUCTION	29
1. Macro: Normative and Institutional/State Policy Context.....	31
2. Macro Level Interventions.....	34
2i. Demand and Supply side Interventions	35
3. Micro-level Interventions.....	38

3.1	Micro-level intra-household and family dynamics in other global south context: South Asia and China.....	41
B.	OTHER APPROACHES	43
1.	Maximally Maintained Inequality and Effectively Maintained Inequality.....	43
2.	Gender, Culture and Access	43
3.	Exclusion, Dropping out, Retention and transition under Zones of Exclusion.....	44
C.	LIMITATIONS AND UNRESOLVED ISSUES IN THE SYNTHESIS OF THE FIELDS.....	45
D.	CONCLUSION	48
CHAPTER3: ON RESEARCHING UNEQUAL ACCESS TO SECONDARY EDUCATION IN GHANA, ETHICS, GROUNDED THEORY METHODS, INNOVATIONS, AND DRAWBACKS		49
A.	INTRODUCTION	49
B.	EXPLORING RESEARCH METHODS IN EDUCATION ACCESS STUDIES: THE QUANTITATIVE-QUALITATIVE ANTINOMY	50
1.	Philosophical grounding: Ontology and epistemology as precursor to the methods....	52
C.	STUDY SITES	52
1.	On negotiating multiple gatekeepers: The long route to access	54
1i.	Institutional access and gatekeeping.....	54
1ii.	Community access and gatekeeping.....	56
D.	NEGOTIATING ACCESS TO AND BECOMING IMMERSED IN THE ‘RESEARCH’	57
1.	Am I an insider or an outsider?	57
2.	Gatekeepers.....	58
2i.	In the trenches, collaborating with Gatekeepers at the Community Level	58
E.	METHODS.....	61
1.	Techniques for data generation and collection	61
1i.	Participant Observation	61
1ii.	In-depth, semi-structured, and informal conversational Interviews	62
1iii.	Autobiographical narrative	68
2.	Sampling Strategies and Representativeness	68
F.	SOURCES OF DATA: DATA GENERATION VERSUS DATA COLLECTION IN THE CONTEXT OF POSITIONING DATA FOR ANALYSES	70
1.	Consent Process	73
2.	Research population, Data generation and Collection in Ghana	74
3.	Cross language research and translation	77
G.	DATA ANALYSES AND PRESENTATION	78

1. Introduction	78
2. Procedure for conducting the Grounded Theory research, Coding, and data Analysis 80	
2i. Selective coding.....	89
2ii. Advanced Coding and Presenting the Theory	89
3. Presenting the theory.....	90
3i. The use of Memoing	90
H. CATEGORY OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AND ANONYMIZING.....	92
1. To use or not to use visuals	94
2. Ethics around Interviewing Children and Young People	95
I. CHALLENGES, METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS, AND IMPLICATION FOR UNDERSTANDING EDUCATION ACCESS.....	96
J. CONCLUSION	97
CHAPTER 4: SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR ALL? EXAMINING HOW GHANA'S SECONDARY EDUCATION POLICY WORKS THE EQUITY GAPS IN ACCESS TO SECONDARY EDUCATION	99
A. INTRODUCTION	99
1. Contextualizing Education access policy in Ghana and Sub Sahara Africa	101
2. Ghana's Free Senior High School Policy Provisions	103
B. STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTER	104
C. FINDINGS:	105
1. Access Policies Driving Access and Non-Access: The Policy and The Issues.....	105
1i. Driving Access: Removing Costs, Improving Infrastructure, Increasing Proximity, and Removing Academic Cut-Off Points	105
2. Driving Non-Access: Going beyond the Obvious Meanings, Differential Policy Effects on Subgroups, Omissions in Policy Texts, Narrow Conceptualization of Concepts and Marginalization of Deeper Concerns.....	107
3. Foregrounding Certain Perspectives and Foreclosing Others	110
3i. Foregrounding Certain Perspectives and Foreclosing Others: Economic Concerns.....	110
3ii. Foregrounding certain perspectives and foreclosing others: school-based disparities 111	
3iii. Foregrounding Certain Perspectives and Foreclosing Others: (Non)access Experiences	111
3iv. Foregrounding certain Perspectives: Inbuilt Assumptions, Policymakers from Government Institutions versus those Outside Government Institutions	113
3v. Foregrounding Certain Perspectives and Foreclosing others: Gender (Dis)Parity Index and policy implication explained.	116
3vi. Practical Implications of Employing the Gender Parity Index	118

3vii.	Refocusing on Disparity and putting ‘gender’ back into the GPI and GDI....	119
3viii.	Putting ‘Gender’ back into GPI	119
3ix.	Re-Gendering GPI: Putting the Gender back in the Parity and Disparity	
Discussion		120
4.	Access is not, it becomes: The Contextual Meaning of Policy-Driven Access	121
5.	Public Access Policy, Making In-Roads into Private Spheres (Households) to Improve Access Outcomes for Minority Groups	123
6.	Consultative Process and Meso-Level Implementation	125
6i.	Widespread Consultation.....	125
6ii	Non-Extensive Consultation	125
6iii.	Meso-Level Implementation	126
D.	DISCUSSION.....	126
E.	CONCLUSION	128
CHAPTER FIVE: BRINGING EDUCATION ACCESS POLICY TO LIFE: WHAT HAVE POLICY IMPLEMENTERS GOT TO DO WITH IT?		130
A.	INTRODUCTION	130
1.	Implementation traditions and approaches	131
2.	On Implementation: The Ghana Contexts	133
B.	FINDINGS.....	135
1.	Approaches to Implementation, Local Level Implementers.....	135
1i.	Rigid Implementation.....	136
1ii.	Adoption and Adaption to school context	139
1iii.	Adoption and Adaption to individual context.....	141
1iv.	Flexible implementation.....	143
1v.	Contextualizing implementation and conflicting access and transition outcomes	143
2.	The Role of Central Implementers in Mediating Non (Access).....	144
2i.	On Data: do the numbers add up? Regional, Districts Statistician, Education Management Information System (EMIS) and Planning Officers	146
2ii.	On implementation: Gender Desk Officers, and Girls Education Unit.....	148
2iii.	Regional Free SHS Coordinators	150
3.	Interrogating the relationships between and among Local and Central Implementers	152
3i.	Exploring the relationship matrix between local and central implementers ..	154
3ii.	Implementation Gaps	156
C.	DISCUSSION.....	159
D.	CONCLUSION	161
CHAPTER SIX: NEGOTIATING ACCESS AFTER ACCESS: INSIGHTS INTO THE MICRO-LEVEL DYNAMICS OF (UN)MEANINGFUL SECONDARY SCHOOL TRANSITIONS IN GHANA		165

A.	INTRODUCTION	165
1.	Structure of the chapter	166
2.	Sociological research traditions on family	167
3.	The Ghanaian Family Context	168
B.	FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS	169
1.	DECISION MAKING AROUND CHILDRENS' ACCESS TO EDUCATION.....	169
1i.	Micro-Level Insights into the 'Resource' Pathways for Men and Women in Ghana and how that affect Micro-Level Household Education Decisions	171
1ii.	Different Kinds of Men Take Decisions Depending on The Type of Family... ..	173
1iii.	When parents take education access decisions from a place of ignorance	173
1iv.	Free SHS, Decision-making, geography, and a tale of two Ghana's.....	174
2.	Family Structures and Negotiation Behaviors Within Different Types of Families and Households	176
2i.	Speaking from the Margins: Women and Men Negotiating Access with Silence	179
3.	Unique Cases: When Community Factors Influence Negotiations	181
3i.	De-gendering education, re-inclusion of women in education access decision-making	181
3ii.	Gendering education access: problematic exclusion of boys and re-inclusion of girls	183
3iii.	Crises-led transitions; Access transition outcomes overachieved but are girls going to school under the right conditions?	184
4.	Children Negotiating Access.....	187
4i.	Education Access still privileges Boys when Children negotiate Secondary Education Access	189
5.	When a Family is struggling Financially, Boys go to School	190
6.	When gendered norms of what is considered good behavior for children determine who goes to SHS, boys' transition to SHS	191
7.	Negotiations that resulted in Successful and Unsuccessful Transitions.....	192
7i.	Negotiations that resulted in successful transitions	193
7ii.	Negotiations that resulted in unsuccessful Transitions	194
8.	Waning of Nuclear and Extended Family Support	195
9.	Between Aspirations and Realities: Coping Strategies, Alternatives to Senior High School Education, Is Apprenticeship Training the Answer?.....	196
C.	DISCUSSIONS	198
D.	CONCLUSION	201
CHAPTER SEVEN: LOCATING EDUCATION ACCESS IN KINSHIP DISCOURSES		205
A.	INTRODUCTION	205
1.	Kinship.....	206

B.	NEGOTIATION OF KINSHIP IS ALSO NEGOTIATION OF ACCESS.....	208
1.	Fulfillment of kinship responsibility	209
2.	Non-fulfilment of kinship responsibilities weakens kinship bonds	210
3.	Reclassifying kinship boundaries through (non)fulfillment of kinship responsibilities 212	
4.	Negotiated Kinship or Kin-Relationships.....	213
4i.	Opposition of Adjacent Generations.....	214
4ii.	Merging of Alternate Generations	215
4iii.	Social equivalence of siblings versus social equivalence of non-siblings.....	216
C.	DISCUSSION: IN CONVERSATION WITH THE GHOST OF RADCLIFFE- BROWN	218
D.	CONCLUSION.....	222
	CHAPTER 8: THEORIZING ACCESS: LINKAGES BETWEEN THE MACRO- MESO-MICRO ACCESS SPACES.....	227
A.	INTRODUCTION	227
B.	PROCESS OF THEORY BUILDING.....	229
1.	A set of empirical observations.....	229
2.	Changing forms of access from macro-level policy space to meso-level implementation space.....	231
3.	Changing form of access from implementation un(enable) to micro-level household access forms (substantive access)	233
C.	THE NESTED THEORY APPROACH.....	236
1.	What is the nested theory?.....	236
2.	Levels of theorization	236
2i.	The first-order theoretical analysis.....	237
2ii.	The second order theoretical analyses	237
3.	Understanding the Nested Theory Approach	239
3i	Construction.....	239
3ii	Implementation	240
3iii	Embedding	240
3iv	Integration.....	240
4.	Exploring the nested theory of access and its contributions	243
4i.	Application of the nested theory of education access	245
4ii.	Critique of the nested theory of education access	245
4iii.	On testing the theory	247
D.	DISCUSSION.....	247
E.	CONCLUSION.....	248

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUDING THE MACRO-MESO-MICRO ACCESS DEBATE: SUMMARIES, THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND SUPPOSITIONS.....	250
A. OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH	250
1. Summary	251
B. KEY FINDINGS.....	254
C. EMPIRICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO LITERATURE	255
D. POLICY IMPLICATIONS	257
E. LIMITATIONS.....	259
F. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	261
G. FINAL WORD	262
REFERENCES	263
APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF NEW TERMS AND THEIR MEANINGS.....	313
APPENDIX B: SAMPLE SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE.....	316

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1:	Gender disparities in BECE pass rates by subjects and region, 2016/17
Table 2:	Implemented access intervention, family type, nature of family politics and access transition outcomes
Table 3:	Chapter Outline
Table 4:	2016 Financial Performance (Actual Expenditure)
Table 5:	How I established the contextual positioning of the extant data
Table 6:	Characteristics of policymakers
Table 7:	Approved fees by the Ghana Education Service (GES) 2017/2018 academic year
Table 8:	Performance Indicators Targeted and Actuals
Table 9:	Gender Parity Index Table (the yellow columns do not directly feed into the formula)
Table 10:	Process Mapping of How Children Go to Secondary School in Ghana
Table 11:	Relationship matrix between local and central implementers
Table 12:	Observed Pattern of The Summary of The Types of Family, The Number of People Involved and The Interplay of Interests
Table 13:	A summary of differences in the use of silences during negotiation
Table 14:	A summary of implemented access policy, family type, nature of family politics and access transition outcomes
Table 15:	Macro-level access
Table 16:	Macro-level non-access
Table 17:	Implementation (non)access

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1: Progression rate for primary to SHS
- Figure 2: Proportion of students achieving above average grades in core BECE subjects by region, 2014
- Figure 3: Net Enrollment from KG to SHS
- Figure 4: Trends in Sponsor of Actual Education Expenditure
- Figure 5: The map of Ghana showing the regions
- Figure 6: School and country level institutional gatekeepers and access route
- Figure 7: Community and district assembly level access pathways and gatekeepers
- Figure 8: Household-level gatekeepers
- Figure 9: A picture of the researcher taking part in the economic activity (weaving) of the participants.
- Figure 10: A picture of a chop box and a bag for a SHS student
- Figure 11: A picture of a trunk containing the provisions of a year one SHS Student
- Figure 12: A picture of items on the school's prospectus
- Figure 13: Home as an interview venue
- Figure 14: Farm as an interview venue
- Figure 15: Spectrum of data sourced.
- Figure 16: Characteristics of the sample of policy implementers
- Figure 17: The grounded theory analysis process
- Figure 18: The grounded theory analysis process
- Figure 19: The grounded theory analysis process
- Figure 20: Implementation gaps
- Figure 21: On practical or substantive access
- Figure 22: Nexus of access: The mutually constitutive access spaces and relations of access

CHAPTER I: UNDERSTANDING ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN GHANA: SETTING THE STAGE FOR AN EMPIRICAL AND THEORETICAL AGENDA

A. THE PUZZLE

How does the nexus of structural education policy and family politics engender education access of children? Why does education remain an elusive goal to some children despite free education policies? My aim in this thesis is to answer these rarely chartered central questions as they pertain to upper secondary education in Ghana and the gender ramifications thereof.

In exploring the nexus of different education access scales including policy (macro or structural), implementation (meso) and individual factors or family level factors, the thesis uses Ghana's recent education policy, the free Senior High School (SHS) policy as an exemplar to address the following specific research questions:

- How does Ghana's upper secondary education policy work the equity gaps in access to education?
- How do policy implementers bring education policy to life?
- How does micro-family and individual realities circumscribe access to education beyond the structural and institutional policy contexts?
- How does the negotiation of kin relations constitute negotiation of education access?

Inequitable distribution of education is evidenced in underlying patterns of unequal access in diverse countries. This problem is acute in various Global South countries and illustrated in gender-based, school-based, geographical, regional-based, and class-based disparity in access to education.

To enable equitable education distribution for children, education has featured in global goals as a development imperative, first in the millennium development goals (MDGs) and the recent sustainable development goals (SDGs). Various countries have responded to the call to prioritize education for their citizens. Notably in Sub-Saharan Africa, education access is often conceptualized in policy as free. The puzzle is why does the free aspiration of the policy produce inequitable distribution of education for children with diverse backgrounds.

Whilst the uptake of research on explaining inequitable distribution of education disproportionately focus on exploring policy and implementation structures that delineate education, the kind of access

available to children and how other factors circumscribe it is rarely explored. Policy and implementation efforts, however, are not the only determinants of education. In several Global South countries especially Sub Sahara Africa, households, and kin relations are important in engendering education opportunities. Whether and how families engender education has remained relatively uncharted.

Earlier studies have framed inquiry on education distribution with macro and micro theories. The macro has given primacy to structural, normative, and institutional factors such as policy and government interventions in explaining inequitable access. The micro, however, explains education as a function of individual factors. This theorization is evidenced in the employment of macro and micro theories such as those steeped in structural versus agency, and rational choice theories which frame several research explicitly or implicitly. The literature gap that emerges from the employment of these theories is the inability to link the two often employed theories in explaining inequitable education distribution.

The thesis examines the nexus of different education access scales including policy (macro or structural), implementation (meso) and individual factors or family level factors. By addressing the central and specific research questions and examining how different scales of access intertwine to shape upper secondary education, this thesis acknowledges and accounts for the tensions, ruptures, and inconsistencies in how children in Ghana navigate multiple layers of access to secure secondary education.

The thesis articulates an understanding of how policy is created. It also notes how policy prescribes both unfettered access (intended) and proscribe education access (unintended) for diverse children. To understand how policy, often very conceptual, is brought to life, the thesis examines various levels of implementation and the approaches to implementation.

The thesis further explores how family and individual realities circumscribe the kind of opportunities made available to children. It takes a unique approach to researching access by employing grounded theory methods (GTM). The goal is to create a new, contextually relevant theory that effectively frames educational research in the Global South.

The subsequent section in chapter one proceeds as follows: First, it explores education access situation in the Global South and the current education situation in Ghana. This is followed by an overview of the ‘free SHS policy’ the policy under consideration. Next, it examines Ghana's distinctive context and underscores the importance of considering how gender influences educational opportunities.

The subsequent section examines the constitution of Ghanaian families and how they are interacting with the structural education intervention (the free Senior High School Intervention) to shape educational outcomes, followed by an exploration of the rationale for selecting Ghana and the composition of families in the study sites

Next, the chapter defines and clarifies the key terminologies that are employed throughout the thesis. The conclusion reiterates why the background information provided is necessary to set the stage for an empirical and theoretical exploration.

B. EDUCATION ACCESS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Inequitable education opportunities remain a concern across the globe. Governments are usually handicapped in equalizing opportunities that create equal access pathways to education for diverse people. Whilst several countries have resolved the inequalities at the basic school levels with entirely cost-free education, upper secondary school education remains inequitable due to different cost conditions. In the Global South contexts, East Asia and Latin America records high enrollment rates at the basic school levels as compared to secondary school levels due to different financing scheme which requires parents to share cost with governments (UNESCO, 2016; World Bank, 2005).

The situation mirrors that of Sub-Saharan Africa, where many countries offer free universal basic education at the primary level but provide only partially free education at the secondary level, with costs shared between parents and the government (Lockhead, 1991). The cost sharing scheme has been marred by challenges such as delay in the release of government funds to schools. This has made equitable distribution of secondary education in several countries for example Kenya, Uganda, and Ghana impossible (Chabari 2010; Fwya 2014; Moranga, 2013). In Ghana for example, half of the population who completed basic education could not progress to secondary school under the cost-sharing scheme (Business and Financial Times [BFT], 2019; Ministry of Education, 2017; Nsia, 2018).

Mindful of the number cry in secondary schools, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania were among the few countries to implement free education, albeit with varying outcomes (Asankha & Takashi, 2007; Brudevold-Newman, 2017; Godda, 2011; Jacob & Lehner, 2011; Otieno & Colclough, 2009; Radoli, 2011; Werner, 2011). Whilst enrollment in secondary school increased because of the free policies,

only a fraction of students could enroll in secondary school because of indirect fees spent daily in nominal cost remain.

Secondary education would continue to be inequitable without an entirely free secondary education scheme. This is particularly true in the Global South context. Out of 264 million out of secondary school children in sixty-five countries associated with the Global Partnership for Education, developing countries account for 85% of the population (Chanimbe & Dankwah, 2021, p. 1).

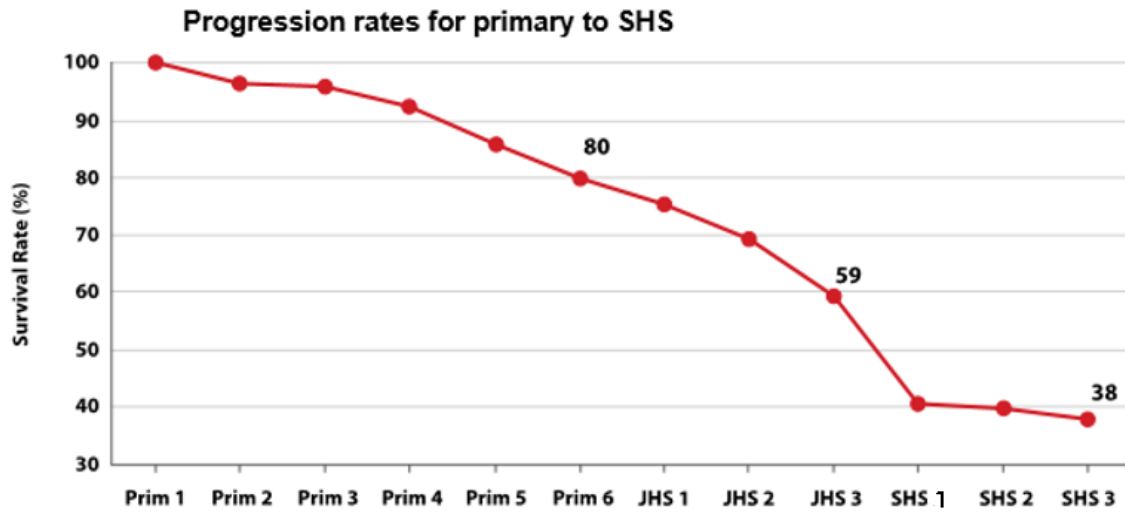
The challenge of equalizing secondary education opportunities has invited interventions from both the international community and local actors (governments and NGO's). It was, thus, unsurprising that the General Assembly of the United Nations emphasized free and universal secondary education in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as a development imperative. Member countries are encouraged in target 4.1 to provide free, universal, equitable education to include secondary education. Target 4.5 also enjoins members to consider equity gauge along gender, socio-economic status, and location (UNESCO, 2016; UNESCO-UIS, 2018). This was timely considering upper secondary school remains inaccessible to 141 million children across the globe (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Ghana is one of the few countries with prior cost-sharing upper secondary education financing model to have rolled-out an entirely free upper secondary education in response to the SDG 4.

C. EDUCATION ACCESS IN GHANA

The notion that education is a fundamental human right has become widespread. Like other developing nations, Ghana prioritizes the education of its people and has introduced a series of programmatic interventions to support this goal. The country has achieved strides in terms of enrollment, retention, and Gender Parity Index (GPI) at all sub-levels of basic education because of these interventions.

Access at the SHS level has also been improved, and the Ministry of Education (MOE) sector analyses (2018) reports 50% gross enrollment rate in 2016/17 up from 37% in 2011/12. The transition between Junior High School (JHS) and SHS is exceptionally low. Out of 100% of students who are enrolled in primary school, only 41% transitioned to SHS 1. Within this low transition rate, boys and girls are transitioning at almost the same rate nationally.

Figure 1: Progression rate for primary to SHS



Source: LeClercq et al., 2017a from Ministry of Education Sector Analyses, 2018.

According to the Ministry of Education sector analyses (2018), gender parity has nearly been reached at the SHS level in 2016/17, at 0.96. Gendered schooling patterns are, however, context-specific at the secondary school level, with research indicating differentiations across Ghana. The national averages, however, usually mask regional variations just like all education reports. For instance, Blampied et al. (2018)'s summary of SDG stock-take on education in Ghana, found that almost a fifth (18%) of children aged 13-15 years in Northern region have not received any education, compared with just 4% nationally.

The MOE (2016) reports also show that enrollment and transition rates have increased, yet not everyone is able to transition to the SHS and the gap increases as they climb the academic ladder. In instances where the country recorded increased transitions from JHS to SHS and an increasing gender parity in that respect, the completion rate for males was higher than that of the females.

Scholarships on education, gender and spatial variation in Ghana also recognized that an underlying pattern of geographic inequity persist on regional bases. The northern regions (Northern Region, Upper East and Upper West) are the most marginalized. Disparities in GPI and learning outcomes follows such regional poverty trend with the poorest regions challenged by poor education outcomes (Blampied et al. 2018; Darvas & Balwarz, 2014; Duplo et al., 2017, LeClercq et al., 2017a, World Bank, 2017b; World Bank; 2018; and Varley et al., 2014).

Table 1: Gender disparities in BECE pass rates by subjects and region, 2016/17

Gender disparities in BECE pass rates by subject and region, 2016/17								
	Absolute gap				GPI			
	English	Maths	Science	Social studies	English	Maths	Science	Social studies
Ashanti	0.1	-2.9	-2.4	42.2	1.00	0.97	0.97	2.06
Brong Ahafo	-0.5	-2.3	-2.2	-2.5	0.99	0.97	0.97	0.97
Central	2.1	-4.0	-3.1	-2.3	1.03	0.95	0.96	0.97
Eastern	3.6	-3.5	-2.1	-0.8	1.05	0.95	0.97	0.99
Greater Accra	1.3	-2.4	-1.1	-0.6	1.01	0.97	0.99	0.99
Northern	-3.9	-6.1	-7.9	-7.3	0.94	0.91	0.88	0.89
Upper East	-2.6	-9.8	-12.7	-9.7	0.95	0.83	0.78	0.84
Upper West	-10.9	-17.7	-19.4	-17.9	0.80	0.71	0.70	0.71
Volta	1.8	-7.6	-4.3	-3.9	1.03	0.88	0.93	0.94
Western	0.2	-3.5	-3.0	-3.0	1.00	0.96	0.97	0.97

Note: Regions with GPI values below 0.97 are in red; regions with GPI values above 1.03 are in green.

Source: Ministry of Education Ghana sector analyses, 2018.

According to the Ministry of education, Ghana, an average of 27.3% of students who were placed by the computerized placement system (CSSPS) to transition to SHS did not transition in 2013-2016 (MOE, 2017). The MOE (2017) also notes that if the trend in figures (100,000 BECE graduates who did not take their placement over last four years) continue, the country risk having about one million young men and women who would have terminated their education at the JHS level (MOE, 2017). This shows that even though Ghana has fared well in terms of transitions, the number of students who are unable to transition is still high. The huge gap in enrolments between primary, JHS and SHS is like other countries with cost sharing upper secondary school policy. The government has placed their inability to transition to SHS as a function of poverty and gender inequality.

Recognizing the growing demand for secondary education, the Ghanaian government introduced the Free SHS program in September 2017 to enable all qualified students to access SHS education unimpeded (Mohammed, 2020). At the launch of this policy, the president of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwah Akufo-Addo said: “Today, we throw open the doors of opportunity and hope to our young people. From this day on, we lift the financial burden off our parents, and the heart-rending anxiety that accompanies the beginning of every school term. We have a sacred duty to our children and the

generations beyond in ensuring that, irrespective of their circumstances, their right to an education is preserved” (Adomonline, 2017 September, (Full text of President’s speech at launch of free SHS).

It is expected that with the introduction of the free SHS intervention, transition rates will increase astronomically, and the gender parity rate improved both nationally and per regions not only in terms of transitions but also in terms of retention and completion. The intervention seeks to equalize educational opportunities, particularly for girls often affected by barriers to transitioning, ensuring they can access senior high school.

This intervention is in line with the new global education goal the sustainable development goal (SDG4) to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education, and to promote life-long learning opportunities for all. Policymakers are expected to translate these goals into policies and practice at the country, regional and global levels (UNESCO, 2016). Under SDG 4, every child is to be provided with twelve years of free education. Ghana has taken steps in this regard with the introduction of the free SHS program. The free SHS scheme provides three years of education to the existing nine years of free education Ghana already provides. Whilst policy intervention is crucial for enabling access, not everybody gets the opportunity to go to school and complete. This problem is acute for girls because of other determinants of education which are rarely captured by the data of the international education community.

This research examines how this program translates into meaningful access for children who qualify to transition to SHS via the interaction between this structural intervention and the micro-level household politicking that takes place within families in the northern regions, and southern regions of Ghana.

1. Ghana’s Unique contextual background and the free SHS Policy

In Ghana’s education system, the first 9 years are formerly known as basic education. This includes 6 years of primary school (classes 1-6) and 3 years of Junior secondary school (7-9). The transition from primary to JHS is automatic since they form part of the free compulsory basic education (FCUBE), and it is catered for in Ghana’s 1992 constitution (Republic of Ghana, 2020).

At the end of JHS, students are made to sit for the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) that are centrally graded by West Africa Examination Council (WAEC). Through a computerized

selection system, students transition to the SHS of their choosing provided they qualify. The duration of the senior secondary school, known now as SHS, is 3 years (10-12) and students are made to write the West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) hereafter. Ghana's education, just like most SSA countries is tuition free at the pre-tertiary level and this is provided for constitutionally (Akyeampong, 2009; Essuman, 2018; Salifu et al., 2018; Takyi et al., 2019).

The education system of most West African countries follows similar pattern of school. In Ghana, Junior High School (JHS) is organized as an extension of primary school. Senior Secondary (SHS) is not integrated in this system. Therefore, whilst transition can move automatically from primary to JHS or lower secondary school because it is included in compulsory education, transition into senior secondary (SHS) is restricted and selective because of cost-sharing (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2018; Addae et al., 2019; Adu-Ababio & Osei, 2018).

SHS education is tuition free, however, there existed several charges such as registration fee, boarding fees, computer fee, examination fee, and academic facility user fee among others under the previous SHS education policy (the Progressively Free Senior High School Education (PFSHSE) because of cost-sharing (Mohammed and Kuyini, 2021). These costs made it very expensive for poor students to participate. In an overview of students' socio-economic status and how it affects their participation, these studies (Bock and Cammish, 1997; Casely-Hayford, 2000; Logan and Beoku-Betts, 1996; Morley et al., 2009; World Bank, 2011) note positive correlation at all levels of education. Apart from these, there are also school-based disparities in the type of SHS one can go to. There are huge gaps between those who attend 'first class or elite SHS and those who attends a second class or average SHS. It is also important to consider those who do not accept their placement and consequently do not access SHS education. The free SHS program is, thus, the new policy initiative that is been employed to ensure that those who qualify to transition to SHS, do so unimpeded.

This intervention is meant to remove all cost barriers to secondary education and to address equity issues associated with upper secondary education. In Ghana specific context, addressing equity in educational access means addressing four concerns: gender-based disparity, socio-economic status, spatial disparity, and program or school-based disparity (Atuahene and Owusu-Ansah, 2013). The free SHS is a structural intervention like most education policies implemented in the past (for e.g., Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), Girls - Participatory Approaches for Student Success (G-PASS). This means that the intervention is centrally planned at the institutional and

normative context nationally, and planners, administrators, and the Ghana Education Service (GES) are expected to implement this at the regional, district and local levels. Ghana's free SHS is to provide:

free tuition, no library fee, no boarding fee, no science laboratory fee, no examination fee, no utility fee, free meals for both boarders and day-students, no Parents Teachers Association (PTA) fee, and free textbooks for all at the senior high level (Abdul-Rahaman, et al., 2018: 26).

To achieve this, the Government of Ghana released \$100million, equivalent of GHC 400million to cater for the first batch of beneficiaries of the intervention in the 2017/2018 academic year (MOE, 2017).

Ghana's free SHS policy is unique in many ways. Firstly, the intervention covers other cost components such as textbooks, feeding, boarding, and Parents Teachers Association (PTA) dues rarely covered by other countries that have implemented similar intervention for senior secondary education. The roll-out did not follow the example of best practice in the Gambia where the roll-out of their fee elimination program was done in batches and gradual across regions, catering for variations in different regions (Blimpo et al., 2015). The intervention is not based on incentive planning and the provision of selective assistance to those who need it most, but a macro-educational target which covers all students without reference specifically to the poor who these interventions are meant to help.

Even though the free SHS intervention is unique as compared to other fee-free policies on the scores highlighted in the preceding paragraph, it is meant to be a promising intervention because of the extent to which other cost components are covered, and how wide the coverage is. All children progressing from JHS to SHS are expected to access SHS completely free.

There exist, however, several fundamental structural and implementation problems that directly impact its effectiveness in terms of high attendance and completion of schooling. Evaluations of fee-free education interventions in other countries with similar education system¹ or intervention like Ghana such as South Africa, Malawi, Gambia, and Kenya suggest that they usually fail to translate into meaningful access for the poor if interventions are not targeted (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2018; Morley

¹ Ghana's education system consists of three levels (Education Act, 2008):

- Basic education, or first-cycle education, consisting of two years of kindergarten, six years of primary, and three years of JHS.
- Second cycle education, consisting of three years of SHS; TVET; or business, agriculture, or apprenticeship work; and
- Tertiary education, consisting of Colleges of Education (COEs), polytechnics, universities, and other degree- and diploma-awarding institutions

et al., 2010; UNESCO-UIS, 2009). Targeting implies providing selective assistance to those who need it the most instead of subsidizing for all students without reference to the economic and other social backgrounds. How will this intervention drive access for the poor as compared to the rich?

Given that education access and participation in Ghana is stratified by four concerns notably gender-based disparity, socio-economic status, spatial disparity, and program-based disparity (Atuahene and Owusu-Ansah, 2013), one would expect that these concerns would be basis for targeting. These concerns were not catered for with this structural education policy or intervention. In terms of regions, Ashanti, Eastern, and Greater Accra are the wealthiest part of the country located in the southern and the middle belts. There was no noteworthy content for the Northern Regions with pronounced access issues. Similarly promising practices show that efforts to enhance children's access and retention in secondary school need to be sensitive to how factors have different impacts on girls' participation as opposed to boys' participation, but the policy does not emphasize that.

Without exclusive content for regional variations, socio-economic disparities, and other varied factors that impact implementation and participation at the regional and local levels, how will this translate into meaningful opportunities for the different regions in Ghana? How will this impact those with pronounced access issues as compared to those who had traditionally had access to education? How will this solve gender issues in regions with pronounced access issues, given that one of the key policy premises was to encourage girls to go to school.

The above lingering questions need resolving given that previous education interventions such as FCUBE which was based on similar fee-free mantra have not translated into meaningful access for all children, hence the poor progression rate from primary to SHS. How are families taking advantage of the new intervention to educate their children. There is no additional target support for those who will not accept their placement despite the free SHS policy. It is important to address these concerns through an empirically driven analysis of how this new education initiative translates into meaningful education access for those progressing from the JHS to SHS.

Furthermore, there exist uncertainties around the program. Its sustainability is in doubt because a change in government often means a complete overhaul of previous education policy and the implementation of a new one. For example, before 2016, the government of Ghana launched the progressively free SHS education initiative and committed an amount of GH¢ 12,178,544.00 (\$2,744,334) towards its implementation (MOE, 2015). When a new government was sworn into office,

they implemented the new free SHS policy which was launched in September 2017 (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2018). There is uncertainty about ownership of the program, which is the degree of involvement in or participation of different stakeholders because there was no broad stakeholder consultation before the launch. The few studies which have covered financial sustainability provide powerful insights. For instance, Cudjoe (2018), and Oduro, (2019) raised concerns about the financial sustainability of the Free SHS long term. They noted that it is expensive and capricious due to the heavy reliance on oil and donor support.

Ghana offers a unique opportunity to study how the Free SHS Program interacts with family dynamics to affect access to senior high school. This study will examine both southern and northern regions to address spatial, economic, and gender disparities impacting educational access.

2. Justification for Ghana

Ghana presents a particularly interesting case because it has a reputation for drafting incredibly good education policies on paper. Education policies and the financing mode, however, change with every change in government (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2016; Aziabah, 2018; Boakye, 2019; Ofei, 2018; Wiafe, 2021). Despite the routine change in policies, the dropout rates are high, and the rate increases with each step up the educational ladder.

Additionally, Ghana is an ideal country for this study because it is implementing the free SHS policy for the first time. Ghana has introduced the free SHS scheme with other cost components covered. The adoption of the completely free education financing model makes Ghana one of the few countries to do this following the 2015 promise by United Nations member countries to provide free upper secondary education by 2030 (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2018; Addae et al., 2019; Adu-Ababio & Osei, 2018; Asumadu, 2019; Prempeh, 2018). This set Ghana apart from other countries with prior cost-sharing secondary education financing scheme for example Tanzania and Kenya (Kiprop et al., 2015; Lewin, 2008).

Other countries such as Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia have implemented free education policies, but they have all covered basic education, which is primary and JHS (Riddell, 2003). Kenya implemented the Free Secondary School policy in 2008 however, research has shown that whilst this increased enrollment from the JHS to the secondary school, the abolition of the fees did not necessarily enable poor people to gain access (Ohba, 2009; 2011). Gambia also had a free secondary school

scheme, but it covered girls' education. Ghana is the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to be implementing this program at the SHS level with all the cost components indicated above covered. Ghana is also known to have implemented other structural educational programs (FCUBE, G-PASS) yet this has not culminated into meaningful education outcomes for all children.

3. Why Gender?

The assumption underlining the free SHS intervention provided by government is that people are not able to transition because of poverty and gender inequality (free SHS policy and strategy document, 2018). The Ministry of Education's Sector Performance Review, however, suggests that transition is exceptionally low from JHS to SHS. It is also true that within this low transition rate, the national average suggests that girls and boys are transitioning at almost equal rates but there is gender disparity in transitions when you compare regional and district averages. Researching gendered access for children in regions and districts that have achieved gender parity and regions that are yet to achieve gender parity will help broaden our understanding of how boys, and girls are transitioning and the different interacting micro-level factors or politics that produce successful, and unsuccessful education outcomes for diverse children.

Additionally, exploring gender is relevant because the GPI which has often been employed as gender equality indicator rarely underscores the social construction or processes undergirding inequitable education for boys and girls (Monkman & Hoffman, 2013, p. 2). It explores gender only in quantitative terms. This narrows the scope and complexity of the social processes and issues structuring the education outcomes of boys and girls. For example, within the low progression rate, almost equal number of girls and boys are in school, however, their access is impacted by different social contexts, structural inequalities, and discrimination practices. Gender concerns are thus complicated (Holmarsdóttir et al., 2011). For example, do boys and girls negotiate socio-cultural and opportunity cost of education differently (Carmish, 1993; Coldclough, 1993; Page & Jha, 2009)? The issues thus go beyond numbers and require an engagement with cultural, ideological, social, and economic elements to account for gender (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2005; Heward & Bunwaree, 1999; Kinyanjue, 1994; Page & Jha, 2009). Consequently, the impetus for framing inquiries on education policies and implementations around gender must move beyond equalizing enrollment figures to emphasizing deeper concerns that produce inequalities in education (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2005; Gordon, 1994; Sutton, 1998).

When the call to pay attention to the education of girls is made, it is couched in terms that appeal to the advantages that accrue to the state, family, and the individual. The arguments often fall under broad categories such as poverty reduction, sustainable development, health and fertility, and the enhancement of women's traditional roles (Hobcraft, 1993; Jejeebhoy, 1992; Temin & Levine, 2009), and the return on the economy of countries (Chaaban & Cunningham, 2011; Levine et al., 2008; Lloyd & Young, 2009; Temin & Levine, 2009). Second, empowerment arguments, for example enhancing self-esteem, body autonomy, and decision-making capabilities (Jejeebhoy, 1995). Sometimes the justice argument is also invoked to make the case that girl's education is important because it is fair that both boys and girls go to school (Monkman & Hoffman, 2013, pp 9-14; Unterhalter, 2007).

Important gender questions such as whether the mere enrollment numbers suggest changes in social structures that sustain inequitable access to education are rarely addressed. Does changes in GPI constitute deeper attitudinal changes in biases against girls and boys? Whilst these questions remain rarely chartered, increasing in GPI or enrollment numbers in and of itself do not necessarily imply changes in discriminatory practices. Unterhalter (2012), notes that these numbers often mask persistent inequalities. It does not suggest meaningful education. Meaningful education implies no school interruptions and the achievement of important access and learning outcomes.

I question the embedded assumption that when GPI has been achieved, there are no additional grounds for emphasizing gender. GPI is only a superficial accountability measure that do not interrogate gender at all. If gender refers to the social construct that is related to, but not bounded or constrained by, biological sex (Anyidoho, 2021, p. 3), then achieving GPI which in actual terms means sexual parity index (SPI) is insufficient to gatekeep any research from exploring gender. Especially any scheme whose preamble suggests gender equity as one of the equity aspirations, but which does not provide any exclusive content for tackling gender related issues in its conceptualization and implementation structures must be explored.

There is enough reason to explore the contentions, ruptures and complexities that structure gendered access to upper secondary education, and the simple framing as GPI achieved, is woefully inadequate to make a convincing case against such gender analyses. Besides the new education policy, does not have a special content for addressing gender issues unlike other programs such as the G-PASS (Girl participatory approach to student success) that complemented the FCUBE in governments bid to ensure gender parity at the basic school levels in Ghana.

Additionally, gender can be used as an important starting point for exploring other inequality axis. This is because gender looms large and structures opportunities to rights, access to resources, and

human freedoms. Furthermore, gender subjectivities play a role in all social relations and negotiations, and education is not an exception.

C. THE CONSTITUTION OF GHANAIAN FAMILIES AND HOW THIS IS INTERACTING WITH THE STRUCTURAL EDUCATION INTERVENTION (THE FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL INTERVENTION)

Ghanaian families have traditionally been organized around kinship, lineage, and descent systems. The predominant descent groups are the patrilineal and matrilineal descent groups. Within this broad category, three major families are recognized in Ghana. The extended families, nuclear family units and polygynous family. The extended family is a residential group consisting of members of patrilineal and matrilineal relations² (Kpoor, 2014). An extended family is made up of a married couple, their offspring, married sons and daughters with children and other kin (Nukunya, 2003). The Ghana Statistical Service reports that, 11.9% of households in Ghana are extended (GSS, 2012).

There are variations in nuclear family formation in Ghana. First, two parent's family and their children. This family type constitutes 24.5% of total households in Ghana (either two parents as heads of the family if it is a more egalitarian family or one person (male or female) as the head of the family (2010 Ghana Population and Housing Census). The second type is the nuclear polygynous families. This type of family is formed when a man marries more than one wife but each of the wives have separate households rather than live in different segment of a single compound (Abu, 1983). The third type of nuclear family is the single or lone parent family. Polygamous families also consist of a man and his wives and children.

The socialization of children happens differently depending on the type of family formation. In the extended family type, other kins are involved in the education decision making of children in the family or household. The different families would interact with the Free SHS access implemented intervention differently. Lloyd and Blanc (1996) have for instance argued that extended family's networks in Sub Sahara have provided access to several children than would have been possible if the issue of access was left entirely in the hands of their biological parents.

² For a detailed explanation of patrilineal and matrilineal descent system, see Nukunya (2003) on Tradition and Social Change.

The literature on feminization of poverty also points to how family formation based on which gender is head of the family could be interacting with implemented education intervention. On that account they distinguish between male headed households (MHH) and female headed households (FHH). Pearce (1978) pioneered the concept of the feminization of poverty, arguing that limited occupational opportunities and welfare systems that promote low-wage work for women contribute to the higher poverty rates among female-headed households. Since this study, other stream of scholarly works on feminization of poverty has run with the hypothesis that female headed households are the poorest among different population groups.

Whilst these assumptions hold true for most countries, especially in the Global South, the literature on feminization of poverty is also replete with studies that have challenged these assumptions. Other explanations such as living arrangements (Cynthia, 1992), support from extended family members (Andres & Heeji, 2008), gender dynamics (Chant, 2007), the stage at which female heads households in the life course compared to males (Andres & Heeji, 2008), diversity of women headed households (Ann-Varley, 1996) and heterogeneity in female-headed households (Buvinic & Gupta, 1997) have been made to bring attention to variations and complexity in the feminization of poverty discourse (Chant, 1997, 2003; Data & McIlwaine, 2000; Fuwa, 2000; Varley, 1996).

In a study of African countries (Kenya, Tanzania, Cameroon, Niger, Malawi, Namibia, and Tanzania), it became evident that women rather than men provided better meaningful educational access for both boys and girls when they are head of the household (World Bank, 2008). Lloyd & Gage-Brandon, (1994) also reported that teenage children, especially boys, are significantly more likely to have ever enrolled in school if their mother is reported head of the household in which they reside. Girls often more than boys drop out if they have younger siblings. Nonetheless, girls benefit more than boys from living in a female-headed household when it comes to grade completion.

In the Ghana specific context, the poverty incidence among male headed households (MHHs) is higher than female headed households (FHHs) (Twerefour et al., 2014). This is quite different from the “feminization of poverty” hypothesis. Earlier studies suggested that this is not a recent phenomenon. Ewusi (1976), and Kyereme & Thhorbecke, (1987) came to similar conclusion that MHHs were poorer than FHHs when they analyzed income data from the 1974/75 household Budget survey in Ghana. According to the 2007 Ghana Statistical Service data, poverty incidence among MHH and FHH were 55% and 43% in 1991/92, 41% and 35% in 1998/99 and 31% and 19% in 2005/06 respectively (GSS, 2007).

Codjoe (2010) found that in Ghana, female-headed households in agro-ecological zones own more land and produce more maize than male-headed households, leading to higher wealth among these female-headed households. Coulombe & Wodon (2007) has also analyzed the Ghana Living Standard survey 3 and concluded quite convincingly that FHH have higher consumption rate as compared to MHH. Awumbila (2006) notes that female-headed households in Ghana had higher consumption rates compared to their male-headed counterparts when exploring the gender dimensions of poverty. These set of studies suggest that the feminization of poverty hypothesis does not necessarily hold true in the case of Ghana.

A study by Twerefour et al. (2014) analyzed the factors influencing poverty in male-headed and female-headed households in Ghana. Their findings support previous research indicating that male-headed households are poorer than female-headed households in this context. They, however, argue that poverty incidence gap is explained by differences in socioeconomic characteristics such as education level of head, migration level of household, employment status of head, location of household and other characteristics. What is interesting with this analysis is the finding that ecological zone can also explain the incidence of poverty. MHH are concentrated in the savannah zone (Northern, upper east and upper west regions) which is patrilineal. This is also the zone that has ranked the lowest in terms of poverty. In contrast, the coastal forest zone is predominantly matrilineal descent societies. They are also the zones with the economically endowed regions. Apart from this variation espoused by previous scholarships, my starting point is that there are other variations, and my expectation is that this will impact how families take advantage of the current free SHS education intervention.

Overall, the literature on Ghanaian families speaks broadly to the functions of the family in raising children. The feminization of poverty studies on Ghana also speaks broadly to poverty and consumption. It argues that female headed households are better off economically as compared to male headed household. Other social outcomes such as health, education, nutrition for children in female headed households are comparatively better as compared to the male headed household.

Scholarships on this topic however does not explain how education access decisions are made and the access outcomes of such decisions, how family dynamics interact with such decisions, the kind of power dynamics that influence such decisions, especially in Ghana. It will be too far-fetched to assume that based on the family type or formation (extended, polygamous, nuclear [two headed parents, lone parent, male or female headed], certain education decisions would be taken, and specific access

outcomes will be achieved. How education transition decisions and access outcomes are reached given the family type, the power dynamics around education decision making and how that translate into meaningful education transition outcome is an empirical question that this project seeks to unravel.

Table 2: Implemented Access Intervention, Family Type, Nature of Family Politics and Access Transition Outcomes

<i>Implemented access intervention, family type, nature of family politics and access transition outcomes</i>			
Implemented Education Intervention (Free SHS Policy)	Family type	Nature of Family Politics	Potential Access transition Outcomes
Conducive	Family type (Extended, nuclear family (two parents' family or households, lone parents' family (male headed household or female headed household)	Conducive	Meaningful
Not conducive		Not conducive	Unmeaningful
Conducive		Not conducive	Meaningful but with interruptions
Not conducive		Conducive	Meaningful but with interruptions

Source: Author's creation

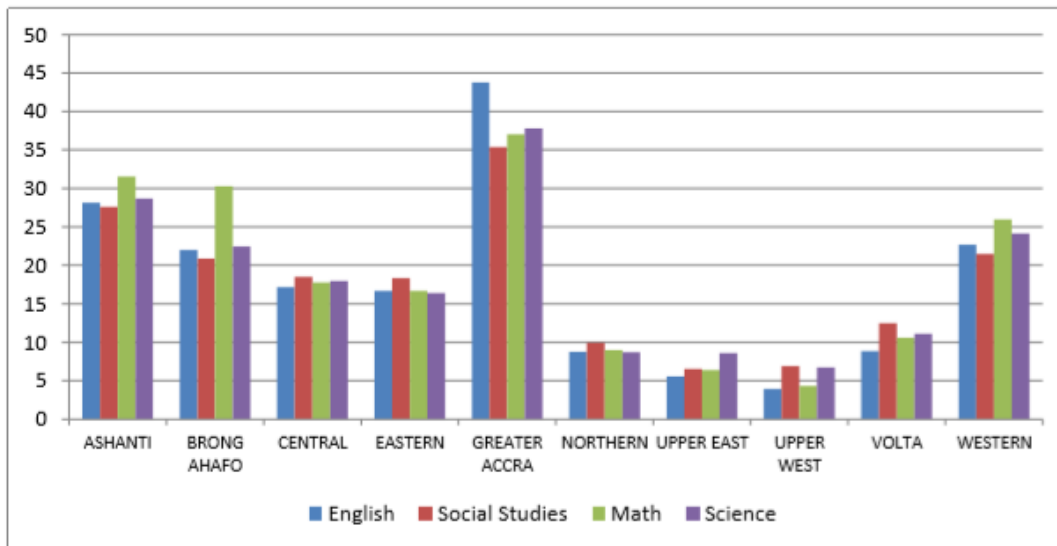
I suppose that the conduciveness or non-conduciveness of the intervention (free SHS) depend on the family type (extended, nuclear family [two parents' family or households, lone parent family (male headed household or female headed household), the nature of family politics around education access decisions making. This will translate into potential access transition outcomes whether it is meaningful access or unmeaningful access. The family types coupled with the differential contexts of regions can also impact the access outcomes of children.

D. SELECTED REGIONS IN GHANA: THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN DICHOTOMY

The research will be conducted in some selected districts in the Northern and Southern Ghana. According to the Education Sector Performance Review -ESPR (2015), the Northern Regions (Upper East, Upper West and Northern Region) perform most poorly across all subjects in Basic Education Certificate Education (BECE) scores. This review suggests that the performance of the Northern Regions was poor for all core subjects as compared to other regions.

Figure 2: The number of students achieving above average grades in core BECE subjects by region, 2014

Proportion of students achieving above average grades in core BECE subjects by region, 2014



Source: Education Sector Performance Review (ESPR), 2015

The performance of the Greater Accra, Ashanti and western region is better as compared to others, the transition rate from JHS 3 to SHS 1, however suggests a different pattern. It is highest for Eastern Region and lowest for Greater Accra Region (ESPR, 2016, p, 45). This transition rate cannot be used as the basis for the selection of the sites. This is because a large proportion of students do not attend SHS in their regions, and especially those from the Greater Accra Region mostly attend SHS in the Eastern Region (ESPR, 2016).

This research will be conducted in the northern regions of Ghana and southern Ghana. What makes the northern Ghana ideal as one of the selected study sites is that they have the regions with the highest incidence of poverty (GSS, 2015). This is corroborated by the Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report (2016). This report indicates that even though there has been a reduction in the poverty levels following the attainment of middle-income status, poverty remains prevalent in many areas especially in the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions. The underlying assumption for the introduction of the Free SHS by government was that a lot more people, especially girls, are unable to transition to SHS because of poverty.

Secondly, these sites are purposively selected because access issues tend to be more pronounced in the Northern Regions as compared to those in the Southern Regions (ESPR, 2016). Secondly, contexts are dissimilar in how families in the northern and southern Ghana are configured, residential patterns and patterns of inheritance. Most societies within the northern regions of Ghana are patrilineal societies whilst those in southern Ghana are predominantly matrilineal societies.

1. Northern Ghana

Three regions comprising the Upper East, Upper West and Northern Region, make up Northern Ghana. New administrative regions, namely Northeast and Savanna Regions have been created out of Upper East and Northern region respectively. For this study, I would not make that distinction because the administrative regions of the Ghana Education Service are yet to change despite the creation of the new regions. The Northern regions practice patrilineal descent system predominantly as a form of social organization. Examples of such societies are the Talensi and Kokumba. Their residential pattern is such that married couples live in their husband's fathers' provided house. Such households can comprise of the husband's father, the husband, the husband's siblings and their wives and children. Property can be distributed in three ways first property is transferred to sons to the total exclusion of daughters. Also, property can be transferred to children but with the larger share going to male children. Property can also be shared among the wives who have children with the deceased husband and the children. Among the Tallensi of northern Ghana specifically, transfer of property is from the deceased father to sons only (Nukunya, 2003). Some northern societies, such as the Lodagaba, also practice double unilineal descent system but their residential pattern is like the patrilineal societies. The Gonja, Dagomba and Mamprusi of northern Ghana also practice a bilateral system.

Gender undergirds power relations in families and marriages. Adongo et al. (1997) posit that male dominance in gender relations is ensured by marriage customs and related institutions of lineage, polygyny, and the family. Women are regarded as property of the corporate patrilineage (Lloyd & Gage-Brandon, 1993). The domestic power relationships, control over, and use of family resources, health seeking decisions, and education decisions for children are usually vested in males. There is always a strong son preference over daughters in patrilineal societies (Adongo et al., 1997). Families coming from patrilineal backgrounds have a strong preference for male so far as family provided education access is concerned. This is because transfer of office and properties goes to sons who are then tasked to cater for their families. Being patrilineal, however, is not a standalone reason for education decisions and outcomes. It is expected that there will be more male headed households in northern Ghana as compared to the southern Ghana. Twerefour (2014) posits that MHH is concentrated in the savannah zone (Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions) and these are the regions that have been ranked as the poorest (GSS, 2015).

According to Kelly & Bening (2007), all areas in Ghana are ethnically mixed with different languages. The northern regions, however, have seven distinct language groups with numerous dialects (Manoukian, 1952). Economically, the north is characterized by small holder farming systems

(Kuivanen et al., 2016). They are usually exposed to droughts and floods (Abdul-Razak, & Kruse, 2017). This kind of farming system is labor intensive. Informal fostering is also a common feature of the societies that are bilateral. Societies in the north have large Muslim populations as compared to the south.

In terms of education, there is a great gap between education in the north and that of the south. Darkwah (2010, p. 29) posits that both the first primary and secondary schools were set up over a century later in Northern Ghana than in the south. Some scholars have argued that the disparity between the north and south is intentional and systematic because the colonial administration needed to keep a pool of unskilled workers for the mines and plantations in the southern part of Ghana (Bening, 1990; Brukum, 1998). It is obvious then that the southern part has always had a head start in terms of formal education. According to Darkwah (2010), education has often been predominantly male territory and in the northern region where education has been considered as less of a priority over the years, women tend to be more disadvantaged than in the south.

2. Southern Ghana

The societies in southern Ghana are predominantly matrilineal, tracing their lineage through the mother line. Examples of such societies are Ashanti, Fante, Nzema, Kwahu and almost all Akan speaking societies in the south. Succession and inheritance go to sisters' children and especially the sister's son. Couples after marriage usually live with the wife's family (matrilocal residence) or wives' provided house. According to Nukunya (2003), the mother's brother in matrilineal societies performs a significant paternal role normally reserved for the fathers and is expected to play a key role in crucial education decision-making.

Matrilineal and patrilineal societies in Ghana are different because transfer of position and properties is through the female line in matrilineal societies and male line in patrilineal societies. However, just like the patrilineal societies, sons are the first to be considered for office and inheritance. The difference is that it is sons of sisters unlike in the patrilineal societies where sons of fathers are considered. Educational decisions can be in response to this system. It is expected that boys will be the preferred choice of education access consideration because they are tasked with the responsibility of taking care of their sisters' children.

The dynamics of household decision-making around which child should progress from JHS to SHS can also be in response to the general livelihood strategy of the family, the power dynamics and complex resource allocation between members. Decisions about education transition are likely to happen within the complex array of how families and households are organized and the type of society.

3. Comparing the Northern and Southern Ghana contexts

There are differences in the way kinship and descent are organized in northern and southern regions of Ghana. The dynamics of household decision-making around who to educate and the micro-level family and household decisions on education access would happen within the two contexts. Apart from the variations in their family formations organized around extended family, polygamous family, or households, and the three types of nuclear family or households, deeply rooted social and cultural factors can structure education access decisions. Additionally, *gender and age impose certain power structures within these groups* (Laird, 2005 pp. 462-463). The two descent systems under consideration have a strong preference for sons because of their inheritance system. Therefore, families are more likely to favor sons for educational access as compared to daughters.

E SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Over the years, access to education has become a national concern for developing countries. The governments of these countries have tried to widen education access for a chunk of its population through the adoption of a series of interventions. This has pushed researchers into researching education interventions to enable the adoption of evidence based effective intervention. According to Evans and Popova (2015), these syntheses have reached conflicting conclusions about which interventions improve education outcomes. These studies pay attention to demand-side and supply-side macro-interventions and have reached quite independently but broadly similar conclusions that access has expanded but across the board interventions disproportionately benefit the rich and not the poor (Ahadzie, 2000; Conn, 2014; Glewwe, et al., 2014; Guerrero, et al., 2012; Kremer, et al., 2013; Krishnaratne, et al., 2013; Masino & Niño-Zarazúa, 2015; McEwan, 2014).

The study will expand our understanding of access to education beyond such government interventions and discuss how the interaction between macro-level interventions and micro-politics within the family and households determine gendered access to education. Furthermore, this study will offer valuable

insights into how micro-politics within the home and discussions around education decision-making can shape debates on educational change and inform broader gender-sensitive policy development. Additionally, the study will address the imbalance in the existing literature by providing new data to explore both macro-level factors and micro-level politics and how they intersect to determine children's education.

Furthermore, there is a dearth of literature on micro-level factors that influence educational opportunities. Although existing studies at this level identify various determinants of education access, they often overlook the processes involved in gaining access (Bray & Kwo, 2013; Fuller et. al., 1995; Glick, & Sahn, 2000; Lloyd, 1994; Monkman & Hoffman, 2013; Powell & Steelman, 1990; Ranasinghe & Hartog, 2002; Sathar & Lloyd, 1994; Yamada & Ampiah, 2009). Exploring micro-level family dynamics is crucial because successful transitions to secondary education heavily depend on interactions between schools and families at this level (World Bank, 2008).

The disproportionate focus on evaluative analyses of macro-level demand-side and supply-side interventions are contingent on large scale macro-planning, and across the board interventions such as fee-free education, conditional cash transfer, governments provision of the basics of education support in terms of classrooms, teachers and instructional materials and general infrastructure (Birdthistle et al., 2011; Esuman & Bosomtwi-Sam, 2013; Duflo et al., 2009; GNECC, 2009; Kazianga et al., 2013; Kuyini, 2013; Langsten, 2017; Lucas & Mbiti, 2012a; Petrosino et al., 2012 Nkrumah-Young et al., 2008). Whilst this enables the exploration of access issues (Birdthistle et al., 2011; Freeman et al., 2012), inquiries often emphasize quantitative methods or approaches in explaining access to education. These studies map patterns of school enrolments in regional, ethnic, or social terms and measures progress in access in terms such as enrolment rate and completion rate. Exploring access using qualitative research methods is important in providing context-specific accounts of access to education that studies conducted with quantitative methods often ignore (Dunne & Leach, 2005; Liu, 2004).

Sociologically, the study will unearth how government intervention within one social institution (education) affects another institution (family), and how the various social forces within these two social institutions (education and family) shape the outcome of access to education for children in the Ghana specific context. It will also examine how status in this case gender influences how girls and boys are treated with regards to education decision making in the family. Additionally, two main sociological theories macro and micro, account for varying inequitable education outcomes. Despite the importance of the linkages of macro and micro approaches in sociological studies (Coleman,

1987a), thus far no dialogue between the two theories accounts for inequalities in education access. The study aims to create a new contextualized theory to account for the macro-micro linkages.

Using the current free secondary school policy in Ghana as an exemplar to examine how families distribute education opportunities will enable the existing literature to be built on and extended to interrogate other angles of the access to education. This study will focus on the process of access and specifically interrogate the interaction between both macro level intervention and micro level politics. A new contextually grounded theory that would be created would enable the exploration of inequitable education concerns in the Global South context.

F. DEFINING AND CLARIFYING TERMINOLOGIES

Throughout the thesis, I have used certain terms. Terminologies and concepts do not lend themselves to a single universal definition, thus, in using these terms, I define how it is employed in this research.

Structural policies: the institutional and normative context of government interventions on ensuring equitable education (For example, Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), Free SHS Scheme, Girls Participatory Approaches to Student's Success (G-PASS), Capitation grant and School feeding program. The meso and macro-level factors are examples of structural policies. The difference is that the macro-level factors happen at the national levels whilst the meso level factors happen at the regional and district levels.

Macro: Demand-side interventions and supply-side interventions centrally planned and budgeted for by the central government at the national level, and policymakers are required to create policies based on the vision of these interventions. Implementers are also required to implement these interventions at the regional and local levels.

Meso: School-level factors and the actual implementation of centrally planned education interventions and policies at the school and regional levels.

Micro: These are household level factors that determine access to education such as decision making, household incomes and parental preference for a particular gender for education. Family politics is an example of household level factors that determine access to education.

Family politics: It occurs at the micro level within households. It encompasses intra-household relations, gender relations and different household factors that structure how access to education is negotiated, engendering children's education access experience. It entails all family processes which involve gendered norms, the ability to negotiate, and the support of allies, around household resource dilutions in potential in whose interest situations on decision making in the family. In whose interest situations involves the different interests that play out concerning issues of access to resources in the family and other constitutive elements that structure the agency of all the actors involved in the negotiation of access.

Micro and macro are further adopted and used in this thesis to acknowledge a set of literature or theoretical frameworks that explain education inequality. Micro explains inequitable education access, distribution, and social mobility as a function of individual characteristics such as social origin, rational choice etc., (for example, Breen et al., 2009b; Kerckhoff, 2001; Pollak et al., 2007). Those that emphasize how institutional and structural changes engender inequitable education access, distribution and the consequent social mobility are referred to as macro (Breen, 2010a; Breen & Jonsson, 2007).

A family is a group of people who are united by blood, ties of marriage, or adoption (Assimeng, 2006; Calhoun, Light & Keller, 1997).

A household refers to a group of people, residing in the same house who share eating, sleeping and housekeeping arrangements. A family can be a household when they share housekeeping arrangement, and a household can be termed family if members are related by blood, marriage, and adoption. I use family and household interchangeably in this thesis. Nevertheless, the household employed in this thesis refers to the situation where members in sharing eating, sleeping and house-keeping arrangements are also family members.

Transition: Transition through the education system is a series of branching points at which students continue schooling, change direction, or leave (Boudun, 1974). The concept of transition as used in this study covers specifically, entry into Senior secondary education (SHS), the progress from grade to grade within senior secondary school levels, repetitions and drop-out.

Decision-Makers: These are the adults who are making decisions about the education transitions of children in their families. They are usually the parents of these children. The Decision-makers are different depending on the type of family or household. In female headed households, the decision-

maker is a woman, in two parent nuclear family or households, decision-makers are either the two parents or one of the parents.

Gatekeepers: Traditional norms regarding the education of girls persist in many Ghanaian societies, where boys' education is often prioritized over girls. Gatekeepers are individuals whose actions or inactions perpetuate and uphold these prevailing norms. In this research, we define gatekeepers as those responsible for maintaining the established traditions and barriers related to educational transitions.

Gatekeepers are also employed to acknowledge the institutional structures that circumscribe research, approve research, and provide ethical clearance for the research and or access to research participants.

Allies or supporters are individuals who back educational decisions made within the family, whether these decisions pertain to transitions or non-transitions. They emerge from the negotiation of relationships concerning the allocation of resources and access to education.

G. CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapters one and two are introductory chapters. Whilst chapter one explores the puzzle to be unraveled and provide background or context of the Global South, Africa, and the Ghana specific situation to set the stage for the empirical and theoretical exploration, the rest of the thesis will proceed as follows. The next chapter provides an overview of the existing literature about education access. It provides key research trends relevant to the issue under exploration. It groups the debates on education access broadly under the framing or heading macro and micro perspectives. It reflected on how the two key theoretical framing have shaped the focus of research on education. Its further accounts for how the field have evolved, highlighting what evidence has been generated and the global education regimes that have pushed research inquiry into specific directions. After outlining the theoretical explanations for unequal education access and inequitable distribution of education, it underscores the need for a new contextualized theory or framework to account for children's education access in the Global South context. It emphasizes various gaps in knowledge and how these needs to be addressed through the development of a new theory if we are to frame effective access policies and account convincingly for access to education in the Global South.

The third chapter outlines the methods that were employed to research education access and non-access. It explains the research process, the parameters of the research site, the methodological choices,

strategies, designing, and the methodological innovations that were employed in this research. Additionally, it emphasizes my experiences and ethical considerations. It also presents the spectrum of data generated and collected for the analysis. It further provides an account of how I applied the grounded theory methods, and other methods additively from conception, data analysis and theory construction.

The fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh chapters are analytical and theoretical chapters. The substantive analytical chapter begins in chapter four with an exploration of the free secondary education policy or intervention in Ghana. After a discourse analysis of the policy detailing the conceptualization, the consultative processes, the policy prescriptions, and proscriptions, it was complemented with what policymakers make of the policy they created and whether this would adequately enable equitable education access and distribution for children in Ghana. In chapter five, the implementation approaches and constraints were theorized. Chapter six emphasized the need to account for individual and family realities to enable a nuanced understanding of access given family specificities. It highlights negotiation of education access within families, attending to resource issues, residency, and other axis of intersections that shape these negotiations (including household dynamics, gender, religion, rurality, and knowledge). My aim in Chapter seven is to extend the analysis of the negotiation of education access beyond categorizing family types to other range of intersections such as kinship negotiations and ethos within Ghana.

Chapter eight is the substantive theoretical chapter. It draws attention to the longitudinal aspects of negotiating access over time. It considers access as a process that involves negotiations of several access scales attending to the tensions, ruptures, and inconsistencies in how these negotiations creates access types which changes as continuous negotiations happen in other access dimensions. Chapter eight further integrates the debates in the empirical thesis analysis chapters together. A theory is developed based on these empirical patterns theorized in other chapters.

The concluding chapter reiterates the single overarching thesis narrative foregrounding the unique contribution of the thesis to education access literature. It highlights the empirical, theoretical and policy contributions. Finally, it postulates the need to employ the newly created theory in other in other contexts or new cases, to offer confirming or disconfirming evidence to the new theory. This is important for further development of the theory.

Table 3: Chapter Outline

**NEGOTIATING TWO SPACES: EXAMINING HOW STRUCTURAL
EDUCATION POLICIES AND FAMILY POLITICS SHAPE THE EDUCATION
OF CHILDREN IN GHANA**

Chapters	Introductory Chapters
1	Understanding Access to Education in Ghana: Setting the Stage for An Empirical and Theoretical Agenda
2	On Education Access and Progression to Secondary School: A Narrative Review and a Meta-Synthesis of the Field
	Methodological chapter
3	On Researching Unequal Access to Secondary Education in Ghana, Ethics, Grounded Theory Methods, Innovations, And Drawbacks
	Empirical and Theoretical Analysis chapters
4	Secondary Education for All? Examining How Ghana's Secondary Education Policy Works the Equity Gaps in Access to Secondary Education
5	Bringing Education Access Policy to Life: What Have Policy Implementers got to do with It?
6	Negotiating Access after Access: Insights into the Micro-Level Dynamics of (Un)Meaningful Secondary School Transitions in Ghana
7	Locating Education Access in Kinship Discourses
	Theoretical chapter
8	Theorizing Access: Linkages between the Macro-Meso-Micro Access Space
	Concluding chapter
9	Concluding the Macro-Meso-Micro Access Debate: Summaries, Theoretical and Empirical Contributions and Suppositions

Source: Author's creation.

CHAPTER 2: ON EDUCATION ACCESS AND PROGRESSION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL: A NARRATIVE REVIEW AND A META-SYNTHESIS OF THE FIELD

There is a long academic tradition of investigating inequitable education access and distribution. This thesis draws on three relevant categories of previous research. The first focuses on studies examining education policies and normative institutional factors. The second explores meso level factors such as policy implementation and what happens in the regional and school districts. The third focuses on the individual and how the differential social backgrounds influence their education access decisions or attainment and consequent social mobility. The synthesis of the literature centers on these areas of scholarship generally framed explicitly or implicitly with two main branches of theoretical explanations in the field, micro and macro theories (Breen et al. 2009a, 2009b; Hout, 2015; Hout & Disprete, 2006; Scherer et al., 2007; Shavit & Blossfeld, 1993; Shavit et al., 2007). The first, micro-level rational choice approaches emphasize the individual and how their differential social backgrounds influence their education access decisions or attainment and consequent social mobility (Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997, 2001; Breen & Yaish, 2006; Goldthorpe, 1998, 2021). The second theoretical approach, macro-level institutional and structural approaches account for institutional and structural changes and how they engender inequality patterns (Arum, 2000; Beller & Hout, 2006; Breen, 2010a; Breen & Jonsson, 2007; Garner & Raudenbush, 1991; Nee & Matthews, 1996; Shavit & Muller, 1998).

To synthesize the field, the chapter will provide a review of works grounded explicitly and implicitly in these branches of theories. The review emphasizes the normative and institutional context of interventions. This review will further be categorized into the two broad themes macro and micro. The macro level analysis will be based on studies that have done evaluative analyses of demand and supply education interventions and other structural determinants of access. The micro-level review will comprise studies that focus on the individual and family level situations that determine access. The review will also highlight studies on access to education, commonly referred to as zones of exclusion.

It will also include an overview of the free SHS intervention, which is the case selected. This review is presented both as a narrative review and a meta-analysis. The works considered for this review will primarily include studies on access to education in Ghana and the broader African regional context. Indeed, it is impossible to cover a comprehensive collection of views and works from the whole field of education access, thus a concentration on Ghana, South Sahara Africa (SSA) and the Global South.

To ground the analysis of the findings in the specific literature, I will bring specific literature to the analysis's sections requiring such contextualization in chapters four, five, six and seven. Each analyses chapter would be grounded in the literature specific to the themes or objective of the chapter. The arrangement of the literature is appropriate for and follows the grounded theory procedure or method of enquiry of the thesis. There are three types of literature review that occur with grounded studies. First, it recommends going to the field without prior knowledge of the literature review to enable categories to emerge naturally from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1970). Strausian approach advocates the review of literature at the onset to support the development of the research question (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). The constructivist approach to literature review is intended during data collection and after as a vantage point to add value to the process of theory construction (Charmaz, 2006).

Having outlined the substantive use of the literature, I begin the section with a focus on Ghana's education profile, policy stance, and education sector priorities.

A. INTRODUCTION

Ghana boasts a strong education policy profile, with each policy introduced under the mantra of 'free education for all'. Under normal circumstances, a well thought out education policy should translate into unimpeded access for those that the policy is intended to help. One should therefore expect to see universal access not just in policy but in practice. However, Ghana faces a significant gap between its education policies and outcomes. Over the years, the country's education policies have been shaped by global educational initiatives such as the Education for All (EFA) movement, Millennium Development Goal 3 (MDG3), and more recently, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4). The educational system in Ghana follows a 6-3-3-4 system from primary, JHS, SHS and University, respectively.

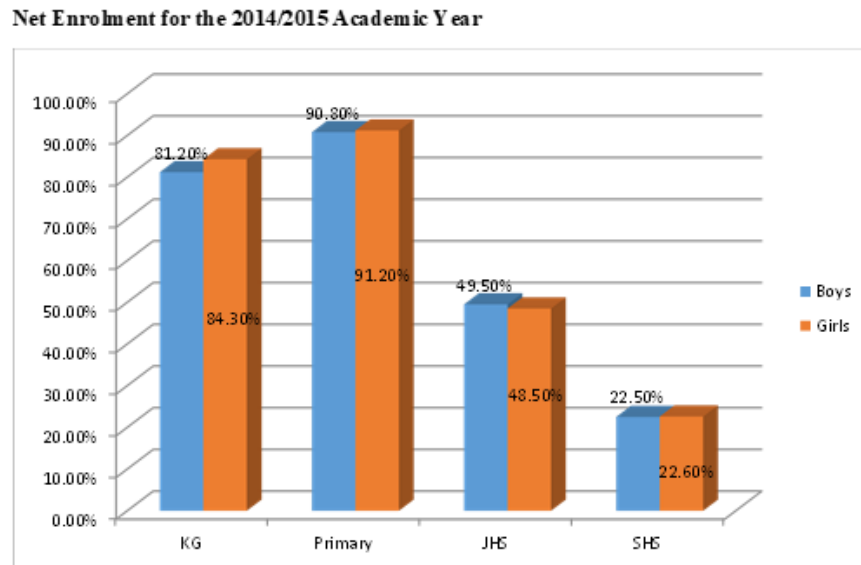
Ghana's education sector priorities encompass several key frameworks and commitments including the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education and Inclusion), various government policy promises, the Education Strategic Plan (2010-2020), the Education Sector Medium Term Development Plan (2014-2017), and the national medium-term development policy framework known as the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA II). These priorities inform the annual education sector budget (MOE, 2017).

Apart from the education sector priorities, the policy stance of Ghana as at 2017, were: moving Ghana's education system away from passing examinations to building character; nurturing values and raising literate, confident and engaged citizens who can think critically; reforming and strengthening the education system and institutions; implementation of the free SHS, and investment for Technical, Vocational and Agricultural Education and training as the driver in industrialization.

The country has fared well on some scores. In terms of access, supply and transition, the total number of schools increased by 4.6% from 21,309 schools to 22,289 schools between 2014/15 and 2015/16. In terms of social equity, there are several targeted programs in deprived areas to improve access, equity, and quality. The government of Ghana provided Complementary Basic Education to over 150,000 out-of-school children reached across five regions most of whom were mainstreamed into the primary system. The government also Implemented the Girls' PASS program of supporting girls to transition and complete JHS in deprived areas. There are other ongoing social interventions such as Capitation Grant to pupils, Provision of School Uniforms, School feeding subsidy for the registration of 438,000 candidates (Basic Education Certificate Examination) and girls' scholarships. This has resulted in universal primary access, and gender parity at the kindergarten (KG), and primary school levels. On other scores, the country experienced subpar outcomes. The transition rate from Primary 6 to JHS1 has reduced. Nationally, the transition rate decreased by 4.4 percentage points from 99.1% in 2014/15 to 94.7% in 2015/16. For deprived districts, transition rates steeply declined by 8.5 percentage points (from 91.7% to 83.2% between 2014/15 to 2015/2016) The diagram below shows the enrollment rate for 2014 and 2015.

Figure 3: Net Enrolment from KG to SHS

Net Enrolment from KG to SHS



Source: EMIS 2014/15

Typically, the challenge for the state lies in translating its policy stance into the provision and allocation of resources necessary for implementing education policies effectively. Therefore, access issues tend to be pronounced at the upper secondary school levels as compared to the primary school levels. Senior High School education covers three years for students aged 15 to 17 years. As noted previously, education access issues have usually been framed using macro and micro-education theories, consequently I turn my attention to the macro and micro.

1. Macro: Normative and Institutional/State Policy Context

Historical evidence from Ghana indicates a shift from one educational intervention or policy to another over time. Highlighting access as a policy consideration is due to the influence of global education regimes, which initially highlighted education access first as a Millennium Development Goal and more recently as a Sustainable Development Goal (United Nations, 2015).

Thus, countries paid attention to access as policy in several ways such as policies that build demand for education e.g., fee-free policies, conditional cash transfers and merit-based scholarships (Garlic, 2013), and those that build supply of education (Glewwe & Lambert, 2010). I call this macro-level

access in previous chapters. Ultimately, the goal is to make access to education free. Accountability measures of this type of access focus on measuring access as retention rate, enrollment rate, completion rate and GPI. It has frequently meant that each educational policy had come with responsibility for planners and policymakers to create incentives for children to attend school.

The first education policy was a ten-year plan crafted in 1945 by the British government to ensure universal access to primary education. Subsequently, in 1951, the Accelerated Development Plan (ADP) was introduced to widen access. These interventions saw an increase in primary school enrollment but resulted in poor quality education (Akyeampong et al., 2007). A decade later, a series of reforms were made with the overarching aim of improving access whilst addressing quality. In 1961, the Education Act committed the government to four more years of free basic education (Republic of Ghana, 1961). But the state could not implement the Act due to political instability (Ahadzie, 2000). Unsurprisingly then, enrolment in primary school began to decrease. The 1980s saw the introduction of new reforms in Ghana's education sector (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2016). These reforms shortened the length of secondary education in tandem with an economic recovery program that was being implemented. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana stated that basic education is free and compulsory legally and the Free Compulsory Basic Education (FCUBE) program was introduced in 1995 in response to the constitutional provision (Ahadzie, 2000; Akyeampong, 2009).

The objectives of the FCUBE concur with the Education for All (EFA) declaration adopted during the conference on education in Jomtien 1990 (Bennell and Furlong, 1999). This conference which was convened by UNESCO, the world Bank, UNICEF, and UNDP, is significant because the consensus reached by the 155 participating countries including Ghana, led to a commitment to provide universal basic education (World Bank, 2000).

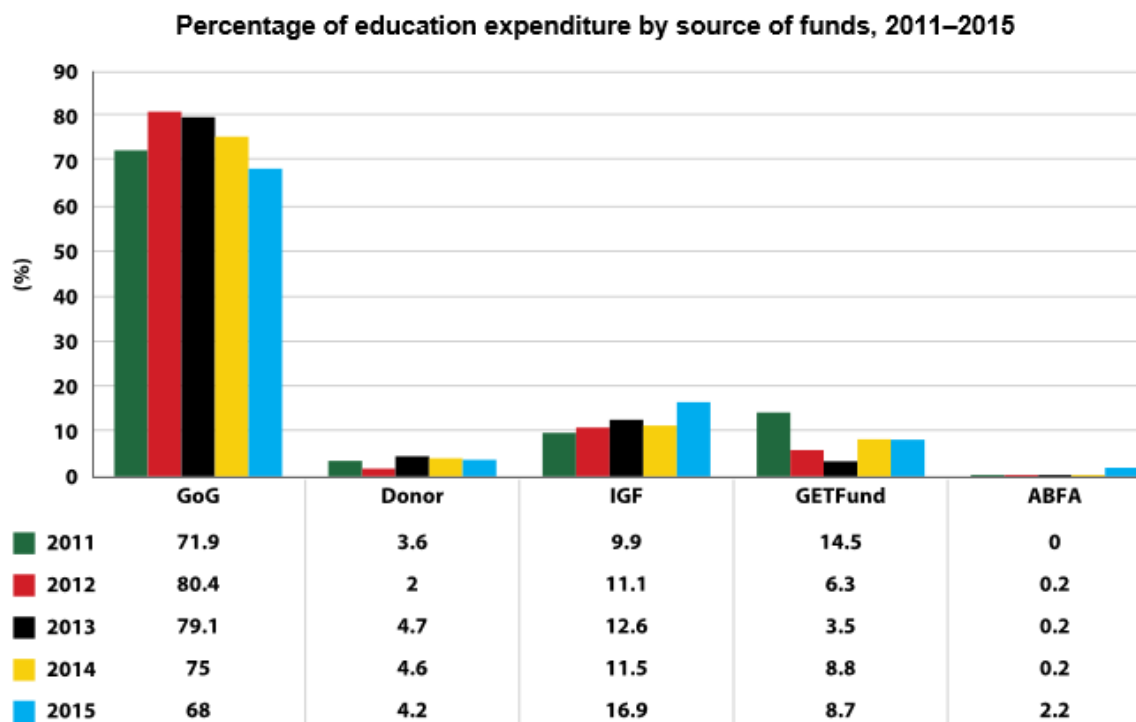
In 2004, the capitation grant was also introduced to decentralize education participation (Thompson & Casely-Hayford, 2008). There are various targeted programs such as the school feeding program, the free distribution of uniforms for primary schools as well.

Throughout the trajectory of education programs outlined above, access to primary basic education has been a priority. As a result, whilst the country has seen a drastic improvement in the enrolment and retention rate at the basic education level over time, transition from JHS to SHS has been low (Darkwah, 2010). Despite the programs introduced by successive governments to improve education access, it is debatable whether the Ghanaian state has genuinely committed to achieving universal access at all levels of education. This is evident in two ways. First, Ghana's education reforms and

initiatives partly rely on international donor funding, and the sustainability of this support is questionable, as demonstrated by the declining donor contributions to education programs.

According to UNESCO (2017), aid to education in sub-Sahara Africa is decreasing even though it is home to more than half of the world's out of school children. In 2015, sub-Saharan Africa received less than half of the aid to basic education it received in 2002. Donor funding for Ghana reduced in 2015 to 4.2% from 4.6% and has decreased over the past 3 to 4 years. In Ghana, the government of Ghana (GoG) has been the major sponsor of the actual education expenditure. For instance, GoG funded about 75% of the actual expenditure in 2014. This percentage dropped to 68.0% in 2015, a decline of about 11.8%. The budgetary allocation has increased since 2015. The total budgetary allocation for 2017 is GH¢ 8551.81 million compared to GH¢6,532.35 million in 2016 (MOE,2017). The diagrams below show trends in actual education expenditure from 2011/15 and the 2016 financial performance and sources.

Figure 4: Trends in Sponsor of Actual Education Expenditure



Source: Cole and Abdulai, 2017.

Table 4: 2016 Financial Performance (Actual Expenditure)

2016 Financial Performance **(Actual Expenditure)**

Sources	Compensation	Goods & Services	Capex	Total	%
GoG	5,339,592,636	5,350,358	-	5,344,942,994	70.40%
Donor	-	154,328,741	215,674,627	370,003,368	4.90%
IGF	121,153,460	1,563,775,052	104,226,062	1,789,154,574	23.60%
DACF	-	83,615,512	648,672	84,264,184	1.10%
Total	5,460,746,096	1,807,069,663	320,549,361	7,588,365,120	100.00%

MOE: 2017

Second, governance and capacity challenges within the government (World Bank, 2008), hinder the full implementation of these policies. Consequently, many children are denied access, with the issue often exacerbated by gender disparities in economically disadvantaged regions.

Over the last two decades, evidence from the Education Management Information System (EMIS) shows that the rates of enrollment in both primary, JHS and secondary school has increased substantially across all regions in the country, however, some regions are faring better than others and primary school is also better than the JHS and SHS. Ghana will be on track to achieving the sustainable development goal 4 (SDG) with the introduction of the Free SHS policy. The SDG goal four is a new global education goal set to ensure inclusive, equitable quality education and to promote life-long learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2016). Under SDG 4, every child is to be provided with 12 years of free education. Ghana has taken steps in this regard with the introduction of the free SHS program, as it is to provide additional 3years of education to the existing 9 years of free education the country already provides.

2. Macro Level Interventions

Beyond the macro-level policy context, which has been thoroughly discussed under institutional and normative factors, the government and international organizations have also introduced various interventions at both the macro and meso levels to improve access

The push towards fulfilling the promise of education for ‘all’ is what has notably resulted in countries creating and adopting education access policies. Researchers thus, unsurprisingly, and rather frequently pay significant attention to such access policies (macro-level policies or interventions) and the institutional structures that engender such policies and implementation in education inquiries. The hope is that conducting such studies would reveal why similar interventions fail or succeed when implemented elsewhere. According to Vivalt, (2015), well designed education interventions can improve access and students’ achievements.

Macro level interventions come in different forms, demand-based interventions and supply based interventions. According to Ganimian & Murname (2016), developing countries are increasingly interested in adopting evidence-based education policies.

2i. Demand and Supply side Interventions

The literature available discusses demand side interventions and how it impacts access to education. Demand-side interventions are fee-free policies, conditional cash transfers and merit-based scholarships (Garlic, 2013). Interventions of this nature have become necessary because the socio-economic status of students affects their ability to access and participate fully in all levels of education (Banerjee et al. 2013; Bock & Cammish, 1997; Caseley-Hayford, 2000; Logan & Boku-Betts, 1996; Morley et al., 2009; World Bank, 2011).

Scholarships highlight the link between cost and access, serving as a key driver for the development of interventions. Focusing on cost of education, Boyle et al. (2002:73-75) note that the cost of education can result in students’ non-enrollment and dropping out. Brown and Park (2002) make a case for how such withdrawals are gendered. Girls are more likely to be withdrawn from school than boys. In Guinea and Ethiopia, Mukudi (2004) reinforces these findings that the inability to pay for the direct cost of education leads parents to withdraw their children from school especially girls. Brown (2002) categorizes such withdrawals as temporary withdrawal and limited attendance.

The literature that explores the relationship between cost and access has shown that interventions can expand access to economically disempowered populations. To improve access, more African countries over the years have waived tuition fees for primary education. This concurs with the Education for All initiative championed by the International Education community (Blimpo et al., 2015). This waiver has usually covered direct costs (school fees). Several studies on school fee eliminations intervention on student enrollment in primary and secondary schools in Madagascar, Malawi, Kenya, and Uganda,

have reached similar conclusions that fee elimination increase enrollment (Al-Samarrai & Zaman, 2000; Deininger, 2003; Fafchamps & Minten, 2007; Lucas & Mbiti, 2009). It is not surprising that every Constitution in Africa has made provision for fee-free primary education. The 1992 constitution of Ghana for example, has such a provision. Funds are directed to schools in Ghana through the Ghana Education Trust Fund, the District Assemblies Common Fund, the Ministry of Education, the Capitation grant scheme, the Student Loan Scheme, and other bodies such as the Scholarship secretariat (African Development Fund, 2003; Abdul-Rehama et al., 2018). There was an increase in primary school enrollment rate when fees were eliminated as a demand-side strategy in Ghana (Akyeampong, 2011).

In Kenya, the government disbursed funds to schools through the Free Primary Education Grants, Free Day Secondary Funds, and the Constituency Development Funds (Itegi, 2016). The evidence from Kenya indicates that fee-free primary education increased enrollment rates, and students without fee waivers performed poorly on test scores (Lucas and Mbiti, 2012a).

Similarly, in Gambia, fee elimination program increased access to Secondary education (Moussa et al., 2015). It is also instructive to note that, except for Gambia (Blimpo et al., 2015), most of these interventions were not rolled out gradually across regions to cater for the differential needs of each region, nor did they exclusively target the poor who needed it the most. The World Bank, (2011) suggests that the success of most education interventions can be hampered if they are not rolled out gradually.

A second set of scholarly publications similarly evaluates the impact of macro education interventions that target specific needs such as conditional cash transfer (CCT), (The transfer of cash to parents on the condition that they invest in their child's education). This intervention is meant to build demand for education, and countries that have implemented this have shown increased enrollment (Angelucci & di Giorgi, 2009; Baird, McIntosh, & Ozler, 2011; De Janvry et al., 2006; Todd & Wolpin, 2006).

The intervention programs that were implemented across the African context in the 1980's varied in terms of the amount of cost governments bore. In the 1980's the governments of these countries could not bear all the cost of financing the education of their citizens and this shaped the kind of interventions that was been implemented. Under the World Bank and IMF tutelage, most sub-Saharan countries created a favourable policy environment to encourage the proliferation of private schools to fill in the gap. This is also because providing a place in school for the larger cohorts of children every year, coupled with rival demands, was a policy challenge for most Sub Sahara African countries at the time when these countries were going through economic challenges. Most countries, therefore, introduced

what came to be known in education circles as ³cost-sharing (Atuahene et al., 2013). Cost sharing was introduced to top up government subsidies, cut the cost of education budget for governments and increase access (Ahmed & Sayed, 2009; Akabzaa & Hettey, 2010; Akyeampong, 2009a; Lerotholi, 2001).

Apart from the demand side interventions, there is supply-side intervention. This relates to interventions focused on enhancing the supply of education rather than boosting demand. These efforts include improving teacher capacity, updating curricula, enhancing resource quality, constructing or upgrading schools, reducing class sizes, providing teacher incentives, and integrating new education technologies.

Other interventions which usually occur at the school level, such as the provision of separate toilets for boys and girls (Birdthistle et al. (2011), sanitary products (Oster & Thornton, (2011), water treatment and sanitary programs (Freeman et al., 2012) can all be classified as supply side intervention. In Ghana, trained teacher supply shows gradual improvement, but there are untrained teachers in deprived areas as teachers rarely accept postings to remote areas. There is also a high attrition rate, and this leads to poor teaching and learning outcomes (MOE, 2017).

The two sets of studies, supply, and demand side interventions show contradictory effects on occasions. While supply side interventions such as the quality of resources encourage school attendance by girls (Reetika, 2006; Swaminathan and Jayshree, 2004), other demand side interventions such as school feeding, and fee waivers do not produce similar effects (Sefina, 2005).

An important aspect of these interventions is that, in many African countries, the primary strategy has been to offer fee waivers. Governments cover tuition fees, while individuals remain responsible for other direct and indirect costs, including uniforms, textbooks, transportation, and the opportunity cost of being in school.

Efforts around ensuring access were concentrated on demand-side capabilities (Riddell & Niño-Zarazúa, M. (2015). Secondly, there was emphasis on basic education, as compared to secondary education. Despite the evidence of success in terms of access, enrollment, and participation, an evaluation of these interventions shows there is accessibility and participation gap with respect to socio-economic status, gender, region, and geographical location especially with secondary education

³ Cost Sharing is a shift of costs as a burden for the government or taxpayers to being shared with parents and students (Johnstone, D. Bruce, 2004)

(Somerest, 2009; Pritchett, 2013). Consequently, education access remains an elusive goal for diverse children.

The activities of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and Civil Society Organizations (CSO) can also improve demand and supply of education. In Ghana, UNICEF conducted a partial mapping of NGOs whose work focuses on education. Their draft report provides information on the location of NGOs and their thematic focus. NGO's such as, Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), Northern Sector Action on Awareness Centre (NORSAAC) and Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) have been crusaders of girls' education, and they are found in the northern regions of Ghana. They provide scholarships to needy but brilliant girls. There is no framework for coordinating the work of these NGOs and other civil society organizations (CSOS) (NESAR, 2017).

The studies that broach the inequitable education subject as a macro level issue are often steeped in macro and micro theories as previously indicated. Macro and micro theories were popularized by Bourdieu's social theory (Bourdieu, 1966/1974). Steeped in the structure versus agency debate, framing of research on education access gives primacy to structure or agency in explaining inequitable access to education or the role of education in the social reproduction of positions in society.

It is not entirely acceptable to determine inequitable access to education by exploring macro or structural factors, or implementation (meso) factors (Goggin et al., 1990) only. It is critical to examine education access by considering other scales of access negotiations such as micro-level household or individual access issues. Micro level factors, specifically interventions at the household level, are key intervening variables that determine the success or otherwise of education access for children. This project, among other considerations noted, also aims to investigate more fully these micro-level household factors.

3. Micro-level Interventions

Whilst Bourdieu's social theory (1967/1971), is an example of macro theory, Archer (1996), provides an example to how micro-level theory can frame education access enquiry. Archer set off critiquing Bourdieu's inability to make explicit the agentic element of his structure versus agency theory. The main argument outlined is that social spaces are no longer rigidly structured, thus, instead of focusing on structure and institutions, enquiry into access must focus on the individual in explaining inequitable access to education. The scholarships framed with the micro theoretical approach highlight individual realities for example, social background, decision making, choices, other personal characteristics and how these realities and individual interventions engender unequal access to education.

This type of intervention occurs at the family level. For example, a chunk of the private cost of education, especially secondary school education, is hidden and spent daily in lesser amounts because reality does not always back up government's statements of cutting cost. Bray and Bunly (2005), assert that when the government is unable to meet its funding obligations to the public schools, the schools will shift the burden to the parents to continue to run (Lerotholi, 2001). The decision as to whether the hidden cost will be borne, by whom, and for whom is an activity that occurs based on micro-level individual realities with implications for access, equity, and efficiency (Lerotholi, 2001). The inability to bear the additional cost of schooling leads to school attendance interruptions.

Hunter and May (2003), provides insights into how poverty and income shocks can disrupt children's school attendance. Other studies take this forward by exploring coping strategies employed by poor families during income shocks. They suggest that, particularly in such situations, families may withdraw girls from school to either increase household labor or reduce expenses (De Janvry et al., 2006; Robilla, 2006). Whilst poverty disrupts school, it also takes on gendered nature. Girls rather than boys from poor families are the most affected by linkages between access, education, and child labor because of strict gender roles (Dachi & Garret, 2003; Ersado, 2005; Guacello et al., 2005). Meaningful⁴ access cannot be achieved because child labor encourages absenteeism and eventual withdrawal from school. Within the constraints noted above, the role of the family is important in keeping children in school, especially girls. Therefore, examining the experiences of children both in school and out of school will significantly improve our understanding of the other determinants affecting educational access

Another set of scholarships provides a rich and critical reflection on how dominant cultural norms sustain gendered access to education. They emphasize how hindrances for schooling are gender specific due to the gendered division of labor in the local context, and cultural acceptance of girls' needs for education (World Bank, 2008). Additionally, family earnings or investments influence access, gender, and quitting school (Ackers et al., 2001: 369; Birdsall et al., 2005; Boyle et al., 2002; Brown & Park, 2002; Bruneforth, 2006; Cardoso & Verner, 2007; Dachi & Garrett, 2003; Hunter & May, 2003; Porteus et al., 2000; Ranasinghe & Hartog, 2002; Vavrus, 2002). In South Africa, a study by Fuller & Laing (1999) found a link between families' financial capabilities and the possibility or

⁴ Meaningful access is full and unfettered educational opportunity devoid of all manners of exclusion; that which is crowned by successful learning and improved life chances for all classes of beneficiaries whose improved knowledge and skills, positive values and attitudes should contribute to reducing socio-economic inequities and poverty in the wider society (Obanya, 2011)

prospects of keeping a daughter in school. In Malawi, when school fees begin to soar, girls from needy families are likely to drop out of school (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003). In Guinea, however, Glick & Sahn (2000) evaluated the relationship between family incomes and investment in girls' and boys' education and noted that an increase in families' income leads to investment in girls' education without a corresponding effect on boys.

The dynamics at the family and micro levels are pivotal in shaping educational access. For instance, Lloyd and Blanc (1996) noted that extended family networks in Sub-Saharan Africa have significantly facilitated access for many children, more so than if educational access were solely reliant on their biological parents.

A study of some African countries (Kenya, Tanzania, Cameroon, Niger, Malawi, Namibia, and Tanzania) provided other perspective on how the family dynamics influence access to education. It became evident that women rather than men provided better meaningful educational access for both boys and girls when they are head of the household (World Bank, 2008).

In a similar study, Lloyd, and Gage-Brandon, (1994) reported that teenage children, especially boys are significantly more likely to have ever enrolled in school if their mother is reported head of the household in which they reside. Girls often more than boys drop out if they have younger siblings. Nonetheless, girls benefit more than boys in terms of grade completion when living in a female-headed household.

Real change in transitions in secondary education, thus, depends to a considerable degree on what takes place at the micro-level, relations between schools and families and community, and within the schools itself (World Bank, 2008). Simply stating that unequal access to education or difficulties in transitioning between school levels are linked to family income and produce gendered outcomes is insufficient to fully address the issue. It is equally important to explore the micro-level dynamics and competing priorities that drive these outcomes.

In the studies detailed above highlights the importance of examining micro-level household dynamics, as macro-level interventions alone do not guarantee meaningful access to education. This discussion lacks empirical understanding of the decision-making processes and the political dynamics at the micro, family, and individual levels that influence who receives access to education, especially in the context of government-led macro interventions.

3.1 Micro-level intra-household and family dynamics in other global south context: South Asia and China

Outside of the Ghanaian context, most families in Africa exhibit considerable degrees of cultural homogeneity to that of the matrilineal society in Ghana such as the Ovambo of Namibia, the Bemba of Zambia, the Yao of Malawi and the Cewa of Malawi and that of the patrilineal system in Ghana such as the Nuer of Southern Sudan, the Swazi of Swaziland, the Zulu of South Africa, the Yoruba of Nigeria (Nukunya, 2003).

Outside of Africa, the kinship and family system in some global south countries is primarily bilateral, for example Southeast Asia. Thus, there is flexibility on what ties to accord importance in matters of inheritance, succession, marriage, status, and residential options for married couples. In most Southeast Asian countries, residential preference for married couples is the matrilineal residential type where the couple live with the wife's parents (Bryant, 2002; Guilmoto, 2012b; Heuveline et al., 2017; Hirschman & Loi, 1996; Zimmer & Ki, 2001). Other societies for example mostly northern Vietnam and Chinese population of Singapore and Malaysia prefer neolocal residence, where the couple live in their own residence provided by either the husband, wife or both, independence of their parents (Werner, 2009). According to Hirschman & Teerawichitchainan (2003), The bilateral system explains the greater gender symmetry in Southeast Asia. This also account for lower preference of sons than in South Asia and comparatively high female autonomy (Booth, 2016).

Unlike the Southeast Asia, there is tremendous gender asymmetry in household roles and authority in South Asia (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001) and women participate less in labor force (Dasgupta & Verick, 2017) on the Indian sub-continent because they practice patrilocal and patriarchal kinship and family system in South Asia. The Buddhist-dominated countries for example Sri Lanka and Bhutan are, however, an exception. Southeast Asian families are primarily nuclear families (Bourdier, 1998; de Guzman, 1985; Demont & Heuveline, 2008; Limanonda, 1994; Schröder-Butterfill, 2004; Schröder-Butterfill & Marianti, 2006). There are single parents' households because of widowhood or desertion, however this constitutes a small percentage for example in Malaysia, Cambodia, Singapore, and Vietnam (Yeung & Park, 2015). This is like South Asia, where single-parent households constitute a small percentage below 5%.

Extended family systems are important in both southeast Asia and South Asia, despite the proliferation of nuclear family types (Minn. Popul. Cent., 2016). Extended family can be localized (residential) or

social. The nuclear families exist side by side the extended as intergenerational support and extended kinship relations and transfers continues to persist (Knodel et al., 2010; Xenos, 1996; Zimmer et al., 2008) even after a physical move from a localized extended family arrangement to a nuclear upon marriage. This has created a variety of living arrangements where elderly are co-residence with different family members and sons and daughters and sons and daughters provides care for the aging parents (Beard & Kunharibowo, 2001; Friedman et al., 2003; Knodel & Debavalya, 1997; Zimmer & Kim, 2001; Zimmer et al., 2008). There is contrast in this arrangement between Southeast Asian countries and South Asia. Whilst sons and daughters provide primary care in Southeast Asian countries (Friedman et al. 2003), sons are the predominant care providers in South Asia such as India and Nepal (Barik et al., 2017; Ghuman & Ofstedal, 2004; Gollandaj et al., 2013; Liebig & Rajan, 2003). Daughters are predominantly the primary care givers in countries like Thailand and Indonesia (Zimmer & Kim, 2001; Dommaraju & Tan, 2014). Despite the variety of living arrangements created, sons and daughters remain part of the extended family socially, and they honor their ties to the extended family by assuming care giver roles for the elderly members.

Changes in family structure and composition continue to occur due to socio-economic developments and ideological changes such as religion. Family changes have occurred over the decades due to religious influences (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001; Morgan et al., 2002). South and Southeast Asian countries are predominantly Muslims for example Brunei, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Maldives. Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka are Buddhist majority countries. The Hindu and Muslim religion is practiced by Indians and Nepal predominantly practice Hindu. Most people in Philipian are Catholics. The religious composition of several other countries in these regions are mixed for example Malaysia and Singapore. Religion is acknowledged because of the influence it has on gender relationships at the household level.

In addition to the above, the phenomenon of son preference persists. Although not a new phenomenon, part of this region has had skewed sex ratio for example China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and other South Asian countries (Das Gupta, 2006; Dyson, 2012; Kaur, 2016; Klasen & Wink, 2002). This is acknowledged by scholars (Klasen & Wink 2003; Sen, 1990) as emanating from son cultural and biological factors. In contrast to China, and South Asia, such aversion to daughters is rare in Southeast Asia (Wei-Jun et al., 2018). There is nuance to the discussion of actual estimate of missing women (Klasen & Wink, 2003). Whilst this is not the focus of the study, acknowledging this also situates the issue of who families are likely to provide resources for education.

Whilst the study acknowledges that the underlying constitution of families and kinship systems can influence how education access is negotiated within households (complex or simple interplay of interests), the composition of families and their negotiation of access may differ in context specific places in the region given the ethnically diverse nature of the region for example, Chinese, Sinhalese, Tamil, Malay, Indian and the diverse household systems created due to the flexibility of their bilateral family systems. The diverse family forms and the complexities of these family dynamics and the influence on education access is rarely underscored.

B. OTHER APPROACHES

1. Maximally Maintained Inequality and Effectively Maintained Inequality

Whilst exploring institutions and structures such as policy and implementation constraints is far too familiar in the field of education access, other scholars have theorized unequal access to education in terms of Maximally Maintained Inequality (MMI) (Raftery and Hout, 1993). MMI states that *the least advantaged lose out of education expansion because those who are advantaged are better placed to take new educational opportunities* (Ron, 2016, p. 82). Similarly, Lucas (2001) theorized unequal access to education employing the concept, Effectively Maintained Inequality (EMI). EMI states that *Socio-economically advantaged actors secure for themselves and their children some degree of advantage wherever advantages are commonly possible* (Lucas, 2017; 2001, p. 1652). MMI and EMI both explore micro-level individual realities and how the inequalities in personal conditions explain inequitable access to education, thus, we can subsume this discussion under micro theoretical approaches, as their underlying concern noted here do not shift significantly from the micro theoretical approaches.

While these studies have helped us uncover what works and in what context, the important interactions and complementarities between macro level interventions and micro level realities of the individual and their families have remained uncharted.

2. Gender, Culture and Access

Gender inequality also serves as the impetus for the development of gender friendly and equity policies in Ghana and the Sub Sahara Africa region. A plethora of studies that evaluate programs targeting girls

(Baird et al., 2011 for Malawi; Kazianga et al., 2013 for Burkina Faso; Kremer et al., 2009 for Kenya), have a consensus finding that reducing cost of attendance leads to gains in enrollment.

In Ghana, the Education Sector performance review (ESPR, 2016), shows that there is an improvement in gender parity across all levels of education (primary, JHS and SHS) in terms of initial access. Notwithstanding, there are context-specific gendered schooling patterns. Research shows such variations across Ghana (Akyeampong et al., 2007). However, a snapshot of the general situation in the country shows improvement (ESPR, 2016). This improvement in gender parity is usually attributed to collective advocacy and specific gender initiatives. In Ghana, the ministry of education and Ghana Education Service has developed the Girls Participatory Approach to Student Success (G-PASS) program with funding from DFID to hasten attainment of gender parity in schools (MOE, 2015). This program was expanded in 2014/2015 to all the seventy-five deprived districts, covering 45,000 girls as well as differential support from non-governmental organizations such as Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), (Northern Sector Action on Awareness Centre (NORSAAC) and Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) who have supported by providing scholarships to needy but brilliant girls.

Ghana is still very patriarchal and rigid in its understanding of gender roles and decision making. But the fact that there are matrilineal and patrilineal societies in Ghana suggests that there might be remarkably interesting variation at the regional and local levels. Therefore, to understand access to education as a process and how gender plays a part in determining access, it is only practical to look at the individual context, the regional context as well as the type of society one comes from, and how that engender access. Such discussions are missing from the literature and this project aims to address this gap.

3. Exclusion, Dropping out, Retention and transition under Zones of Exclusion

Research within Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) has identified what have come to be known as zones of exclusion (Akyeampong et al., 2007). They classify six zones of exclusion to include: those who will never go to school, those who start but not finish, those who participate but attend infrequently, those who fail to transit to secondary school, those who drop out of secondary school and those who participate but learn little. A substantial body of literature has developed to documents issues around exclusion, dropping out and retention. Research around these zones offers insights into access, transitions, equity, and the dynamics that shape

changing access patterns over time (Adu-Yeboah, 2011; Akyeampong, 2010; Rolleston & Oketch, 2009; Rolleston et al., 2010). Even though these zones create a framework of research around access, the focus of these zones of exclusions does not undergo a significant shift from the two main branches of framing. We can consider the insights they proffer as outcomes of the macro structural and micro dynamics. It does not emphasize how access as a process of negotiations of various access scales in diverse access dimensions could be investigated.

C. LIMITATIONS AND UNRESOLVED ISSUES IN THE SYNTHESIS OF THE FIELDS

Two key observations stand out from the literature review. Most academic research on education access has overwhelmingly concentrated on assessing macro-level interventions that address both the demand and supply of education, such as fee-free policies, capitation grants, and the provision of basic educational support (Baid et al., 2011; Blimpo et al., 2015; Birdthistle et al., 2011; Blimpo, 2015; Esuman & Bosomtwi-Sam, 2013; GNECC, 2009; Itegi, 2016; Kuyini, 2013; Langsten, 2017; Lucas & Mbiti, 2012; Mbiti, 2012a; Mousa et al., 2015; Petrosino et al., 2012; Nkrumah-Young et al., 2008). The focus on macro education interventions also underlines how these studies address the issues of retention and enrolment (Birdthistle et al., 2011; Freeman et al., 2012). These scholarships usually overlook the enabling and inhibiting role of family (micro-politics) in determining who receives education (Akyeampong, 2003; Akyeampong, et al., 2007).

Where micro-level situations such as family and sibling size, maternal and paternal preferences for keeping sons, or daughters in school, household structure, child labor and parental belief have been emphasized, they underscore context specific dimensions of the issue of access (Ackers et al., 2001; Bray & Kwo, 2013; Fuller et al., 1995; Glick & Sahn, 2000; Lloyd, 1994; Monkman & Hoffman, 2013; Powell & Steelman, 1990; Ranasinghe & Hartog, 2002; Sathar & Lloyd, 1994; Yamada & Ampiah, 2009). However, they seldom provide any single exhaustible explanation of the processes that result in the differences in access to education observed in different countries. In instances where access as a process has been addressed, (Ampiah & Adu, 2011; Hunt, 2008; Rolleston & Oketch, 2008), the studies do not have an explicit focus on the interaction between macro or structural intervention and micro-level intervention in decision making that determine access.

Thus, whilst the literature above is profoundly revealing and provides understanding of inequitable access to education for children, and that framing inquiries with the two theories have provided a rich and critical reflections and understanding of how (policies and structures) and micro level realities

shape access to education, there are issues. Despite the importance of the linkages of macro and micro approaches in sociological studies (Coleman, 1987a), thus far no dialogue between the two main theories to accounts for the varying inequitable access outcomes of interventions both macro and micro has been established. Access issues are underscored in unrelated terms as either macro or micro.

Due to the missing macro-micro linkages, current research cannot account fully for or explain convincingly why inequitable education persists despite policies that aim at equalizing education opportunities particularly in SSA. This is because access to education involves outlier situations. Outlier situations involve inequitable access situations which can rarely be explained convincingly with any of the two branches of theory (for e.g., why education access remain an elusive goal to diverse children despite free education access policies) and requires an intrinsic imbrication of the two branches of theory to explain.

The significant disjuncture between the two approaches to research or the disparate way education access is researched needs addressing. Creating a new theory that enables a dialogue between the two is thus imperative to provide a very reflexive and nuanced account of children's education access or non-access experiences. No discussion focusing on the education access of children can be conducted in isolation from the various dimensions where scales of access are negotiated including the broader education policy, implementation, and micro-individual factors.

Additionally, creating a new and contextualized theory to frame education access inquiry in Africa and the Global South cannot be over emphasized. This is crucial for several reasons. First, the empirical contextual grounding of the two often employed theories are western or Global North. This context is different from Global South. Global North and South are different in terms of unequal economies and histories. The term Global South thus recognizes a complex set of inequalities faced by countries located in the Global South and the role of unequal global progress in sustaining it. The differences in economies, histories, and privileges of the two diverse settings are replete in literature (Barnes & Sheldon, 2010; Crossley & Watson, 2003; Harber, 2014; Sutcliffe, 2001).

Without recourse to the privileges that people in the Global North enjoy because of where they live (Parameswaran, 2014), and the geopolitical positioning of Global South countries in the international context (Alasuutari & Andreotti, 2015), it is possible to argue against uncritical transposition of education theories grounded in the empirical context of countries located in the Global South just by considering the differences in their educational structures, education policy implementation cultures and the differential family types, and the compositions that circumscribe differential education opportunities for children.

Creating a contextualized theory will enable us to account for policy, implementation, micro-level social dynamics and their intrinsic imbrication in engendering education access for children. For example, will education be truly free at the family levels because a free education policy or intervention has been created?

In terms of methodology, the research examining access to education is typically quantitative. They draw from existing relevant data sets such as UIS and other country specific relevant data set such as EMIS, GSS, GLSS and Household survey/large scale questionnaire research (Admassie, 2003; Brown & Park, 2002; Carr-Hill, 2012; Ersado, 2005; Meekers & Ahmed, 1999; Shapiro & Tambahe, 2001; Wils, 2004). Others take a more statistical approach (Connelly & Zheng, 2003; Zimmerman, 2003). These are inadequate in exploring contextual education access issues that leads to theory. The studies that provide in-depth qualitative and context-specific accounts of educational access (such as Chi & Rao, 2003; Dunne & Leach, 2005; Liu, 2004) rarely examine the interaction of all possible access scales such as macro, meso and micro.

Macro education policies matter, the implementation of education interventions is important, the micro realities and how the individuals and families take advantage of interventions to ensure children go to school also matter, especially the gendered nature of such access. The lack of empirical understanding of the discussion on the interaction between macro education intervention and micro-level politics, and how the imbrication of the two translate into meaningful and unmeaningful education outcomes for children will be addressed.

In the quest to understand the mutually constitutive way policy, implementation, households, families and individual responses, structure education opportunities, my attention was drawn to the theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). The goal was to create a framework of analyses from intersectional theory to address the interlinkages across access scales. However, intersectionality's theoretical bases are the outcome of already happened discriminations (court decisions). Whilst the theory's matrixes of domination and subordination as seen in the use of identities (such as sex, gender, religion, and class) provided insights into ways in which interlinkages structure privileges and inequalities, the epistemological grounds of intersectionality were different from the new contextualized education access theory that I envisage. Intersectionality relates to practices and experiences by people through laws or judgments (MacKinnon, 2013, p. 1020) and I did not think it would be theoretically consistent to pick a theory with conceptual issues completely different and transpose it onto another social phenomenon (education access) been explored with grounded theory methods.

D. CONCLUSION

The chapter examined education inquiry under the themes structural (macro and meso) and micro. It further emphasized the limitations of framing research with such theoretical transpositions given the remarkably different empirical and contextual foundation of these theories. The need to construct and or discover a new and contextualized theory to explain education access, thus, necessitates exploring methodological choices that would enable theory to be constructed from empirical data.

The next chapter details the methodological choices and strategies I used to explore education access and develop a novel theoretical framework for examining education access in the Global South.

CHAPTER3: ON RESEARCHING UNEQUAL ACCESS TO SECONDARY EDUCATION IN GHANA, ETHICS, GROUNDED THEORY METHODS, INNOVATIONS, AND DRAWBACKS

A. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters, I reviewed the relevant literature and theories on access to education. The literature suggested that inquiry into access to education in the Global South have often employed macro and or micro theories whose contextual and empirical foundation is the Global North. Given that educational institutional structures, policy making environment, implementation cultures and the family formations of the Global South are remarkably different from the empirical contextual foundation within which the two often applied theoretical approaches (macro and micro) are embedded, it was, imperative to construct a new empirically driven theory to provide a contextualized understanding of education access phenomenon in the Global South context (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The need to construct and or discover a new and contextualized theory to explain access influenced my methodological choice of study. I employed the grounded theory method.

Additionally, I explicated in the previous chapter that the constitution of Ghanaian families and family practices play a critical role in delineating questions surrounding education access experiences of Ghanaian children. The implications of these practices for the choice of methods required to unravel the complex processes underlying the education access experience of children became immediately apparent. For example, a child's education access can be linked to specific family members located within both nuclear and extended families. It also pointed to the subjective but complex nature of their access experiences.

In this chapter, I give an account of the methodological choices, and strategies that I employed in this research. I also reflect on the challenges and the methodological innovations I employed to circumvent these challenges. I organized the chapter into four sections. The chapter begins with an exploration of existing research methods in education access studies. I pay attention to the qualitative/ quantitative dualism, the perceived advantages, and shortcomings. Next, I will explain the philosophical foundations of the research design I employed, the ontology, and epistemology that served as a precursor to the methods. I also explore how I applied the grounded theory methods, and other methods such as the feminist methodology additively.

Below is a diagram noting the study design.

<i>Study design</i>	
<i>Philosophical Groundings</i>	Ontologically, I acknowledged that individuals have value-laden, multiple, and constructed subjective realities) Epistemologically, I consider the researcher as a constitutive part, albeit occupying a multiplicity of subject locations, of the research
<i>Research Design and Methodology</i>	Qualitative methods Grounded theory approach
<i>Data Collection</i>	Purposive sampling, Limited participant observation, A few cases, In-depth Interviewing
<i>Data analyses</i>	Inductive Approaches Identification of Codes, categories, and patterns Comparative analyses and construction of a theory from the data

Source: Author's creation

B. EXPLORING RESEARCH METHODS IN EDUCATION ACCESS STUDIES: THE QUANTITATIVE-QUALITATIVE ANTINOMY

The body of works on education has employed diverse research methods from various disciplines including Sociology, Economics, and Psychology, to answer questions posed in education. The three main types of methodologies namely, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach has often been employed (Creswell, 2009). Quantitative approaches assume that researchers can uncover a singular, objective truth about reality and measure it scientifically (Gorard, 2001; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Researchers doing empirical analyses of primary quantitative data (e.g., large-scale surveys) and other relevant datasets, from notable institutions such as the UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report, the World Bank, Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), Statistical organisations, national census departments, and education institutions are inclined to employ quantitative approaches.

Furthermore, quantitative researchers explore evidence to support or refute an established a priori hypothesis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

While I acknowledge that they produce useful information for grasping facets of the education phenomenon, quantitative research fails to elucidate the different layers and scales of education access. The tendency of scholars to conduct their study using the quantitative paradigm rarely yield contextual theory. Groups whose education access and non access patterns and processes reveal unusual and disparate characteristics remain uncharted or understudied. This is especially evident in the lack of scholarship on access to education that leads to theory and access within families.

To address the limitations of quantitative research in fully exploring the complexities of education access, some studies use qualitative methods to better understand the contextual factors influencing access. There are however limitations. The limitations include the lack of analytical rigour, objectivity, reliability, replicability, and generalizability. Researchers often hesitate to use qualitative methods due to concerns about generalizability. Policy makers and institutions frequently dismiss qualitative findings, believing that the inductive nature of these analyses lacks reliability. Even though researchers cast the quantitative and qualitative paradigms as diametrically opposed approaches, it is not about typologies but about their causal pathways or their different routes to knowledge.

To circumvent these challenges, researchers have deployed methodological triangulation, combining methods that often traverse the quantitative/qualitative divide to explain education access. In mixed methods studies, qualitative methods are often added as supplementary elements to explain findings, rather than being fully integrated as methods with their own distinct analytical value

Employing any research method come with certain advantages and limitations in addressing the gamut of education phenomena. I employed qualitative methods for my inquiry because it was crucial for capturing participants' lived experiences and perceptions of education access within their community contexts (Flick, 1998, p. 26; Terre, Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006, p. 287). I focused on an emic, idiographic perspective, which involved deeply engaging with the participants' social contexts to gain an in-depth understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Whilst I situate my methods with broad qualitative research, I specifically employed grounded theory methods or approaches (GTM).

Within the qualitative tradition, the grounded theory gave me the best practical option to explore access in a way that enable me to develop a theory. It also enabled me to explore the complexity, richness and dimensions of participants access experiences and the ambiguities, contradictions, and negotiations they confronted (Schwandt 1994, p. 118). Certain philosophical foundations and theoretical frameworks were pivotal in guiding my choice of grounded theory as the methodology for this study.

1. Philosophical grounding: Ontology and epistemology as precursor to the methods

Ontologically, my world view acknowledges that the world consists of individuals with value-laden, multiple, and constructed subjective realities, due to subjective experiences of the world around them. Even though, ontologically, traditional grounded theory is post-positivist in its intent and founded on the premise of critical realism, it can be adapted to fit with a variety of ontological and epistemological positions such as the interpretivist approach.

From an epistemological standpoint, I consider myself an integral part of the research, albeit occupying multiple subject locations of the research process and the creation of knowledge about the access reality and experiences of research participants. My epistemological stance aligns with interpretivist and constructivist perspectives, reflecting the belief that it is impossible to separate the researcher from the research subject

C. STUDY SITES

I engaged the research field scattered geographically over the southern, middle belt, and northern halves of Ghana. I selected these sites purposively because access issues tend to be more pronounced in the northern regions as compared to those in the south (ESPR, 2016). I included the middle belt to enable a comparative analysis of the three geographical belts.

At the time of the study, Ghana had sixteen administrative regions, but for purposes of administering public education, it remains under the previous twelve regional demarcations. Therefore, I conducted the study in six out of the twelve regions. These regions included Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Central, Ashanti and Greater Accra.

In each of the six regions, I conducted the study in two districts. I selected the districts based on their gender parity achievement as reported by the Education Management Information System (EMIS) data. First, the highest scoring district and the lowest scoring district in each region. In these regions, I selected the following districts: Mion, East Mamprusi, Talensi, Nabdam, Jirapa, Nandom, Cape Coast Metro, Mfantseman Municipal, Atwima Mubiagya, Atwima Kwanwoma, La Dade-Kotopon Municipal and Ningo Prampram.

In each of the selected districts, I selected two communities, one peri-urban and one rural for the household or family level data generation and collection. Overall, I visited twenty-four communities. Below is the map of Ghana showing the study sites.

Figure 5: The maps of Ghana showing the regions



Fig5.1: Ghana map showing the new regions

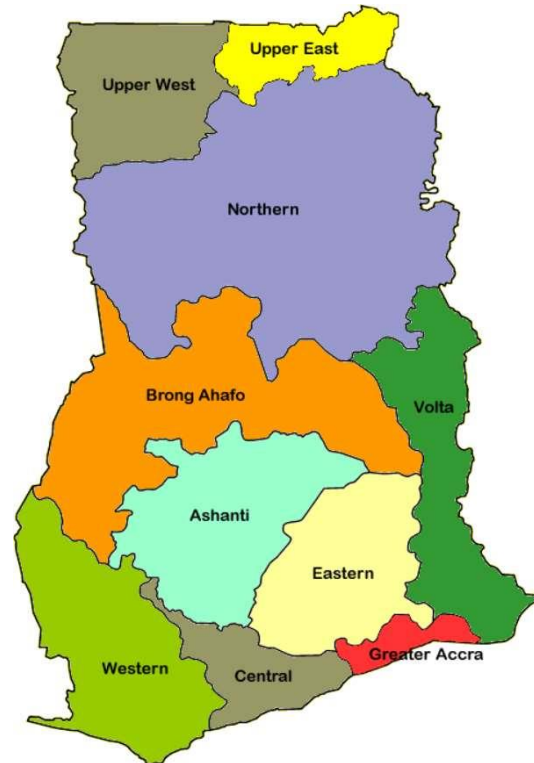


Fig5.2: Ghana map without the new regions

For this study, I employed the old Ghana map because despite the newly created administrative regions, education administration was still decentralised with respect to the old regions as at the time of study.

1. On negotiating multiple gatekeepers: The long route to access

1i. Institutional access and gatekeeping

When the Gatekeepers are many, negotiating access to participants happens at multiple access points or locations. At the institutional level, the protocols involved obtaining ethical clearance from both the Department of Sociology and the Social Science Division. I submitted applications to the Departmental Research Ethics Committees (DRECs) and completed the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC 1A) forms. However, the research was not approved, as it was considered to lack straightforward ethical concerns.

My proposed respondents included children from ages fourteen. Thus, the DREC sent my CUREC 2 application to the Social Sciences & Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee (SSH IDREC) for a full ethical clearance and approval. I was asked to explore in-country clearance in Ghana. The options included the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), University of Ghana, and other Ethical review committees for health research in Ghana such as The Ghana Health Service Ethical Review Committee, the Kintampo Health Research Centre Institutional Ethical Committee, and the Navrongo Health Research Centre Institutional Review Board. I could not use any of these review boards because my research was not in collaboration with any member of these institutions. Further, my research was not health related, so I did not consider Health Ethical Review boards. I sent a letter to the Ministry of Education to enable me to access the Ghana Education Service, their schools, and the policy implementers.

Another key ethical concern was whether I planned collecting special category data. My interviews did not touch on special category data. The final issue was the age of my respondents. Children cannot legally consent, so I prepared assent forms to enable them to assent after their legal guardians had consented to the interview. I also included a child protection protocol to address potential child protection issues. Finally, I took the Ethics course, and I completed the safeguarding children's course "An Introduction to Safeguarding" run by Oxfordshire safeguarding children's Board on October 23, 2019. I also took the course "Research Integrity: Social and Behavioral Science" on May 21, 2019. I submitted a risk assessment form. I addressed all the concerns raised. I received the institutional ethical clearance in December 2019. This process took about six months to complete.

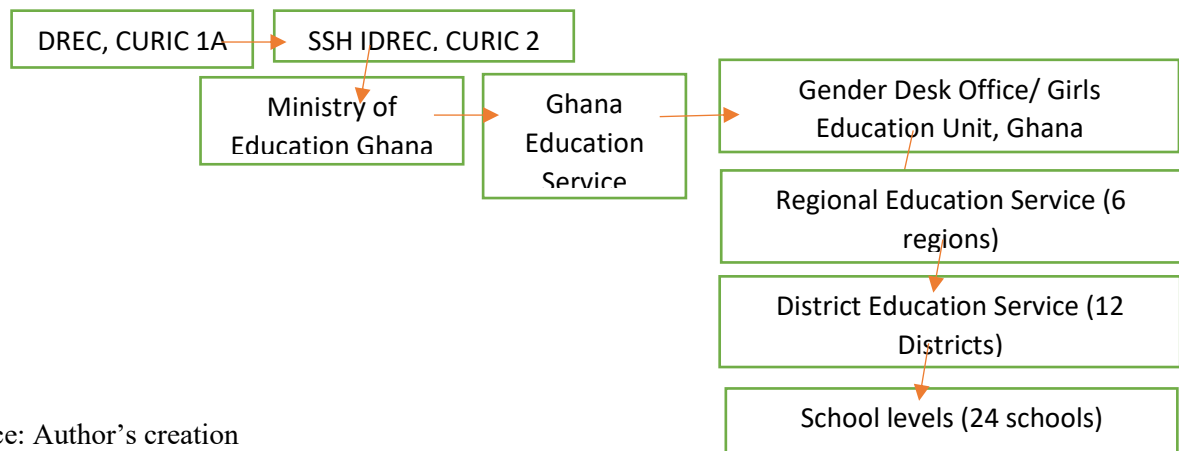
While in Ghana, I followed up on my letter requesting permission to conduct the study at the Senior High Schools by contacting the Ministry of Education. They responded by referring the matter to the National Office of the Ghana Education Service. Despite multiple visits to their offices, I was unable

to secure a response. They directed me to the Girls Education Unit or Gender Desk office of the National Ghana Education Service. The national gender desk office asked me to provide the regions I intended to explore, the districts and the schools. They were not going to give me blanket access to the entire country for my selection. To assuage their concerns, I selected the regions and asked them to help me select the districts and the schools they approve of. Overall, I selected six regions, they approved twelve districts/ municipalities and 24 SHS. It took more than three months to get the access letter from the Ghana Education Service from December 9, 2019, when I submitted the letter, until March 16, 2020, when the GES approved the research.

At the regional level, I found that I needed additional approval letters, even though I had already received authorization from the national Ghana Education Service. Obtaining these regional approvals took some time. Once I had them, I presented them to the district education services to secure approval for the selected schools.

After the clearance, my interviews with the regional and district policy implementers went without hurdles except for the COVID-19 which made it difficult to schedule interview sometimes. They were running shifts in their offices. This involved allowing one group to work from home and others from the offices, a directive that was part of the initiatives to contain the virus. Below is the access route.

Figure 6: School and country level institutional gatekeepers and access route:



Source: Author's creation

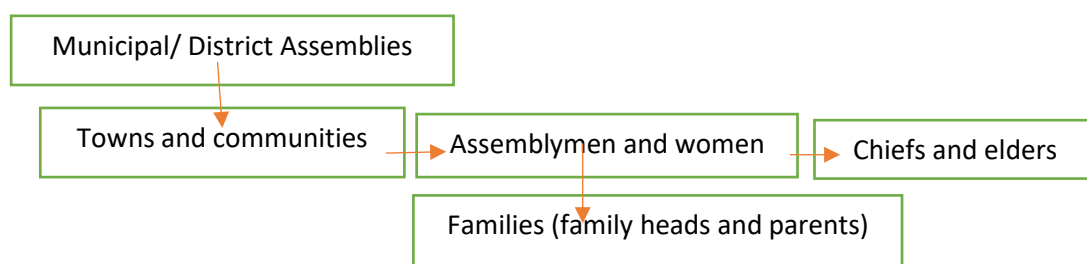
1ii. Community access and gatekeeping

As a researcher, gaining access to communities involves exploring connections with towns, villages, and communities. I was unfamiliar with the towns and villages, which meant I lacked local networks that could facilitate access to research participants. I visited the various district Assemblies in each district. The district Assemblies gave me the contacts of the assembly members of the communities within their jurisdictions. The engagement officers helped me contact the assembly men and women. Engagement officers are liaisons or contact persons between local government structures (assemblies) and the communities in the districts. They lead district assembly engagement with their communities to improve civic participation in local governance.

I narrowed my search to two communities in each district. The assembly members helped me with the community entry process. They led me to the chief and elders of the community or town to introduce myself and how long I plan to stay in their community in most instances.

The assembly members further aided in putting me into contact with potential participants. They announced my research at the community centers. After this introduction I embedded myself in the community activities. This was necessary because I was not a local, in the sense of geographical and cultural ties. Thus, I relied on the assembly members to aid in the process of identifying and gaining access to potential participants and specific community study locations.

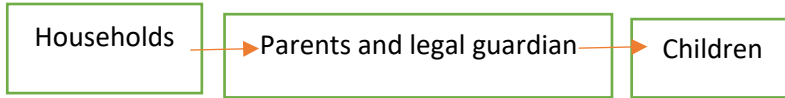
Figure 7: Community and district assembly level access pathways and gatekeepers



Source: Author's creation

At the household and or family levels, I sought permission from family heads in instances where potential participants lived in an extended family. I also sought permission from parents and legal guardian of the children who took part in the study.

Figure 8: Household-level gatekeepers



Source: Author's creation

D. NEGOTIATING ACCESS TO AND BECOMING IMMERSED IN THE 'RESEARCH'

1. Am I an insider or an outsider?

Qualitative research is inherently subjective, thus a key under girding belief is that the researcher is not detached from the research context. Consequently, researchers need to not only articulate their epistemological and ontological positions but also to acknowledge their social locations as integral to their research practice and scholarship (Hale, 1998; Kirby & McKenna, 1989; England, 1994; Katz, 1994; Mattingly & Falconer-Al-Hindi, 1995; Rose, 1997). Qualitative researchers define social locations with the terms Insider/ outsider to distinguish social positions and belongings (Mohammad, 2001, p. 101). I navigated both insider and outsider positions in complex and shifting ways, with my position varying depending on the specific research site in Ghana.

On one hand, my insider position as a Ghanaian was bolstered by my proficiency in Twi, the local language. This linguistic and cultural connection facilitated my interactions in communities across the Ashanti, Central Region, and Greater Accra. Some individuals felt that my time away from the country meant a loss of connection to local realities and practices even though I remained engaged. This challenge was particularly evident in communities where I lacked proficiency in the local language, making communication difficult, and often requiring a translator or interpreter.

My negotiation of access to participants, my data generation and collection, my analysis and theorisation of participants experience of access and non access, then, recognized and reflected on the multiple and fluid situatedness of me as a researcher, and of the settings and interactions between the participants and me.

2. Gatekeepers

Gatekeepers have the potential to function as important links to participants. Thus, I built trust with gatekeepers. The key gatekeepers at the community levels were the traditional leaders and the assembly members. Building trust with the assembly men was crucial to gaining the trust and access to participants at the community levels. I was amazed at their level of knowledge and information about their communities. They knew everybody in the community. I depended on gatekeepers who functioned as cultural brokers and facilitated contact with potential participants (Knight et al., 2004; Eide & Allen, 2005; Yancey et al., 2006).

Whilst most gatekeepers were helpful at the community levels, there were a few gatekeepers at the District Education levels who resisted my attempts to contact some of the central implementers at the district levels. For e.g., I met a gatekeeper (engagement officer) who asked about my name, my age and what I had come to the education office to do. After I had answered his questions, he retorted: *I know why you are here, they have sent you to come and fish out those who are saying terrible things about the policy right? No one will grant you an interview. First you lied to me about your age and your mission here in this district. Even if they would send someone, why would they send an underage?* I did not lie to him about my age. I only had my school ID card, the ethical clearance form, and the access letters from the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service, and the regional Education Service and yet he would not believe I was just a student researching the access policy for my dissertation.

Apart from a few gatekeepers who made access to participants difficult, gatekeepers at the district and community levels were helpful. This also explains why I employed reputational sampling as a method to access key participants.

2i. In the trenches, collaborating with Gatekeepers at the Community Level

There were two broad geographical areas, the north, and the south. I collaborated with the assembly members and women in every community in these areas. A key strategy was to immerse myself in community life whilst there. It was impossible to immerse myself in all aspects of community life to the same extent at every location due to the sheer number of communities I visited. Thus, the level of engagement in the south was different from that of northern Ghana. Engaging communities and participants depended on the extent of my shared cultural references. I share geographical propinquity with the south, and no cultural synergy with the study locations except the local language. Despite

little to no cultural synergy, all I needed to gain the trust of participants in the south was for the assembly member to introduce me to the families.

In the northern Ghana, however, gaining access and trust of participants was different. I share no geographical and cultural synergies. Thus, to enable me to gain the trust of the people, I needed to embed myself in the economic activities of the community and the research participants. I became more involved in the daily activities of the parents by actively participating in their productive tasks, including weaving and farming. On occasions, I took an active role in the field, learning about the participants and taking part in their economic activities, I did not do this on my own. I had help from the assembly members. The goal was to enable me to become a part of the cultural communities I was exploring (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007; Coffey, 1999). This enabled me to build more trust.

Figure 9: A picture of the researcher taking part in the economic activity (weaving) of the participants.



Figure 9: A picture of the researcher taking part in the economic activity (weaving) of the participants.

To an audience outside the Global South, I am a local researcher because I am a Ghanaian researching Ghana, but there is nuance regarding the extent of being local. In this research context, my being Ghanaian was the only geographical tie I had with participants. Based on cultural synergies between myself and the researched, I was not a local (Fournillier, 2009; Taylor, 2011; Voloder, 2008). Thus, whilst I shared a strong geographical tie because we were all Ghanaians in the broad sense, I shared little or no cultural closeness with participants in the various locations of study.

E. METHODS

I employed a combination of complementary qualitative techniques namely participant observation, in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews, autobiographic narrative, and a combination of Grounded Theory Methods (GTM) or traditions.

1. Techniques for data generation and collection

1i. Participant Observation

I spent over a year and half on the field collecting and gathering data. I employed participant observation, a technique that enabled me to overtly participate in aspect of the community life. I employed this method mostly in the northern regions where I learnt and participated in their economic activities such as farming, weaving, shea butter production and shea nut collection. I gathered information about these activities to enable me to situate information about their decisions on access within the economic pathways of the communities and to help me understand participants access decisions within the context of their everyday lives (Cook, 1997; Valentine, 2001).

I limited participating in the economic activities of the participants to the northern regions. I could not employ this throughout the research because the research field span geographically over six regions, twelve districts and twenty-four communities. Immersing myself in local economic activities was also because these economic venues were the preferred interview venues of diverse participants. Interviewing the participants at their places of work enabled them to speak freely about their families and the micro-politics of access decision-making away from the gaze of other family members. I admit that this technique was minimally employed. I utilized observation to explore the families who invited me into their homes. This process was more seamless in communities where I spoke Twi, the local

language, compared to those where I had to rely on a translator/ interpreter. I visited a few families' multiple times before conducting the actual interviews, or the informal conversational interviews.

This approach allowed me to witness the intricate relationships and detailed interactions within families—between parents, siblings, and parents and children—and to see how these relationships unfolded across different environments, influenced by ethnic, cultural, kinship, generational, and gender dynamics.

This technique more broadly, enabled me to gain insights into family beliefs and practices, and to analyze the similar trends or the different extents to which micro-politics of access to education play out in families, communities, and the Ghanaian families in general.

I allocated time with each family based on the commute and their availability, typically ranging from a few hours to a full day. Now and again, I would return to a town if the key targeted participant were absent. Scheduling interviews was sometimes difficult. For example, a farmer who goes to farm in the morning and comes back in the evening would hardly get time for the interview. In order not to disrupt their schedule, I agreed to their selected time and interview venues. Thus, I conducted interviews in participants farm, a participants pito (a northern Ghanaian local drink) brewery hut, offices, and other venues. I employed observations, and minimal participation.

1ii. In-depth, semi-structured, and informal conversational Interviews

I employed the in-depth interview techniques to generate a chunk of the data. While participant observation offered valuable insights into the daily lives of participants, it was inadequate for addressing complex issues such as family decision-making, individual negotiation strategies, and subtle conflicts over access to education, which required anonymity and deeper trust. Further, unlike the participant observation technique that I restricted to the exploration of micro-level households, I implemented the in-depth and semi-structured interview technique at all levels of data generation.

This approach helped me generate information that was critical to understand fully the children's access experience, implementers approach to implementation, the policymakers understanding and position on the policy they created, and the meanings they ascribed to policy provisions.

I used the interview questions mostly open-ended as prompts for example:

- Tell me about how you implemented the free SHS policy in your school?

- How does the Free SHS policy scale up access indicators (enrolment, transition, GPI, retention, and completion)?
- How was the policy created?
- What are the trade-offs with this intervention? (Quality versus access)
- Is everyone getting a chance at secondary education in your family?

I will attach a full complement of the prompts and the interview guide for policymakers, implementers and children and guardians at the end of the thesis as an appendix. The open-ended technique was vital to capturing the whole gamut of, emotions and meanings, and intimate at the structures that underscore the versatile experiences of respondents. This enabled deeper understanding of the varied experiences of participants important for the construction of a new theory (Mattingly, 2001).

There are however limitations to this technique. First, discrepancies might arise between participants' statements and actions due to social desirability (Valentine, 2001). Second, ineffective interviewing skills can undermine the effectiveness of this method. To address these issues, I structured the study to interview multiple individuals within each family, thus I could cross-check their responses for consistency and seek clarification to minimize misleading information. Furthermore, I have gained considerable experience in conducting interviews particularly those exploring micro-level relationships or dynamics over the years.

Thus, through this technique, I was able to explore how policy, implementation, family, kinship, and gender relations circumscribe education access for children who qualify to transition from JHS to SHS in an environment where access to education is free. I drew on 328 semi-structured, in-depth, informal conversational interviews and on few occasions autobiographical narrative to gain an enhanced understanding of the negotiation of scales of access from different viewpoints including policymakers, implementers, and individuals at the family levels. I selected the interviewees from six regions, twelve districts and twenty-four communities. I selected the regions based on the north and south dichotomy of access to education, and family formations in Ghana.

1iia. Interview venues

Interview sites of research are considered micro geographies of power (Elwood, 2000). Interview locational choices however do not erase the power differentials between the researcher and participants. It is important to reflect upon the interview venues because of the extra information and

contextual understanding I gained from observing the choices of venues of participants even though interview sites or venues are not part of the primary subject of inquiry.

I conducted my interviews at multiple venues. These venues were sometimes negotiated, chosen by participants, or were suggested by me. Participants chose interview venues only after I had explained the nature of inquiry and the content of the interview to them to enable them to choose a place, they felt comfortable speaking. Where they were reluctant to choose a venue, I suggested different venues. I knew about venues because the first thing I did at a study location or community after the community entry process, is to learn about the micro geographies of potential venues and the broader social geographies of the community. For example, what is the role of a particular site in the community? Who will be at this venue? Importantly, how will the participant and his roles and identities and positions be constructed in a particular place?

The interviews thus took place in a variety of venues including community centers, farms, homes, car of a participant, participants offices or workplaces. Oberhaus (1997) and Falconer- Al Hindi (1997) noted that conducting interviews in the home can give participant more control and enable the collection of rich data (Elwood & Martin, 2000). Two participants who were interviewed in their homes were happy to show me their children's school items. See attached below.

Figure 11: A picture of a trunk containing the provisions of a year one SHS Student



Source: Author's field work data



Figure 12: A picture of items on the school's prospectus



Figures 11 and 12 constitute a full list of items bought on the prospectus in addition to the child's provision. Without these items and provisions for school, children who get placement in boarding schools rarely go to school.

The home as interview venue enables collection of rich data, however, in this research context, it is not entirely true. There were other concerns at stake such as the power differentials among family members. The nature of the research made it unlikely for all participants to choose their homes. For example, I interviewed many of the children in the community centers. Interview participants are unlikely to choose their homes to discuss micro-politics of such decision-making which requires them to speak about other members of the family. Those who chose their homes also had other considerations. For example, scheduling for a time when family members and significant others were absent.

Below is a picture of myself and a research participant during our interview section in her house.



There were participants who chose their workplaces. This was widespread among participants who were policy implementers. A few participants (parents) working in the formal sector who were uncomfortable talking about other family members at their workplaces chose neutral grounds like the community centers or asked their colleagues to excuse them. The children were mostly reluctant to choose venues. I helped by suggesting different venues. The majority opted for community centers. In the community centers, we sat far away from the earshot of others.

I negotiated other interview venues such as following people to their farms. Negotiating venues occurred in situations where the participant work made scheduling an appropriate time challenging.

Figure 13: Home as an interview venue

Below is a picture of myself and participants in their farm in the Upper East region.



I had the opportunity to interview the participants when they took their break in the afternoon. After the main interview which captured the particularities of their education access negotiations, I stayed with them on the farm engaging in a more informal conversations about access, the family dynamics and other broader community issue of education access.

Throughout the interviews, my main concern was confidentiality in the interview sites and whether the participants were comfortable speaking.

At these interview locations, I made observations that provided me with a better understanding of the issues explicitly discussed in the interviews. Exploring the interview venues of participants also enabled me to understand the power relationships undergirded in their decision-making process on access by observing the physical attribute of a site, observing the people who are present and the interaction with others.

Figure 14: Farm as an interview venue

1iii. Autobiographical narrative

I applied this technique anecdotally. I used this technique to investigate unique field cases and gain a deep understanding of individual girls' experiences. For instance, it was applied in districts that had reportedly achieved gender parity despite anecdotal evidence indicating significant challenges in increasing access. Although these districts had met the Gender Parity Index (GPI) targets, girls still faced limited parental support for pursuing secondary education

This was quite unique from the categories that had been developing. Employing this technique enabled rich data generation, offering valuable insight into the micro-politics of participants access to education. It is an effective method for enquiring into the stories of people and those whose decisions circumscribed the nature of access that was available to children (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 26, p. 477; Saleh, Menon & Clandinin, 2014, p. 272).

2. Sampling Strategies and Representativeness

I interviewed various categories of participants. I classify policymakers and policy implementers as elite research participants. I gained access to them through their institutions. I selected them based on their knowledge of the subject matter. Recruiting participants at these institutional levels were complicated due to gatekeepers and the need for permission letters from the Ministry of Education, National Education Service, Regional Education Service of the selected regions and the District Education Service of the selected districts. Once I received the permission letters, gaining access to interview participants were uncomplicated. A few potential participants however, had misgivings about the research project and my intentions. They wanted to know if I was 'Anas (Anas actual name Anas Aremeyaw Anas, is an award winning undercover investigative journalist),' and whether the government had sent me solicit their views about the free SHS policy even after they had read the information sheet introducing the research. I explained my research and showed my ID cards, and this was instrumental in dispelling the misgivings about the research project.

At the community and household levels, I implemented the reputational sampling technique. The assembly members helped me with the community entry process. I also relied on the assembly members who assured participants of the confidentiality associated with the interview, and the importance of the project. The assembly members introduced me to participants who satisfied the criteria for inclusion. Another avenue I explored to diversify my sample was the community assembly

announcement system. I contacted the unit committee members of the community to announce my research during their morning, afternoon and evening broadcast and announcements.

I did not need a special letter to approach policymakers. I searched the policy document which had a list of all the policymakers who created the policy. I approached them individually and through other networks I had made from my regular visit to the Ministry of Education and the National Ghana Education Service.

Even though I selected the sample of participants who co-generated the data with me from diverse regions, districts, communities, and the different spaces of access negotiations (for example, policy, implementation, diverse family, and households), they are not necessarily representative of the entire population of Ghana. Representation is a question that so often arise in qualitative research (Dowler, 2001). The validity of qualitative interviews rest on theoretical sampling and whether the data rich and in-depth can elucidate the structures and causal mechanisms, which underpinned the observable access experiences and behaviours of my participants (Winchester, 1999, p. 62).

After a careful reflection of my methods and the data generated, I must admit that the reputational sampling technique I employed in the community also inevitably biased my sample towards students who had difficulty transitioning. This was because in the communities, people are likely to introduce you to those with access challenges because of the belief that a researcher can help channel their concerns to appropriate authorities.

To correct this notion, I made efforts to recruit children at the secondary schools through their institutions. This was incredibly challenging. I had letters from the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Office to enable me to access those who had transitioned successfully and were in school. However, apart from the school's permission to engage the children, I needed signed permission notes from the parents of the children. Getting official permission from parents through the schools took months with little success. I was able to interview a few students about their successful access transitions. Also, the COVID-19 situation and governments directives for the schools meant that, children in the SHS were attending schools in batches. At different points, the secondary schools acting on government directive called back only the level 3 SHS students to school because they had pending final WASSCE exams to write. Thus, most headteachers only gave me 15 minutes to interview the few students whose parents' granted permission through the school. I discussed the limited data of the successfully transitioned students and how that would bias my sampling with my supervisor. It was all right to leave the field after a year and half of research since the data from policymakers gave diverse accounts of positive transition stories anyway.

Although the contexts of the experiences of the students in the schools I could not access might be different, there are similarities in the accounts of the successful access stories. Also, the value of the research is not in replicating the responses given by these students but in understanding and elucidating individual experiences as valid and meaningful.

F. SOURCES OF DATA: DATA GENERATION VERSUS DATA COLLECTION IN THE CONTEXT OF POSITIONING DATA FOR ANALYSES

Grounded theory research allows the use of data from diverse sources. Thus, this study incorporated data from various sources. Incorporating data from diverse sources is important in developing a social context to the research (Charmaz, 2006). It is also useful triangulating positions that can rarely be obtained from a lone source (Patton, 2002). It also provides an opportunity to understand phenomenon from a variety of viewpoints (Charmaz, 2006; Goulding, 2002).

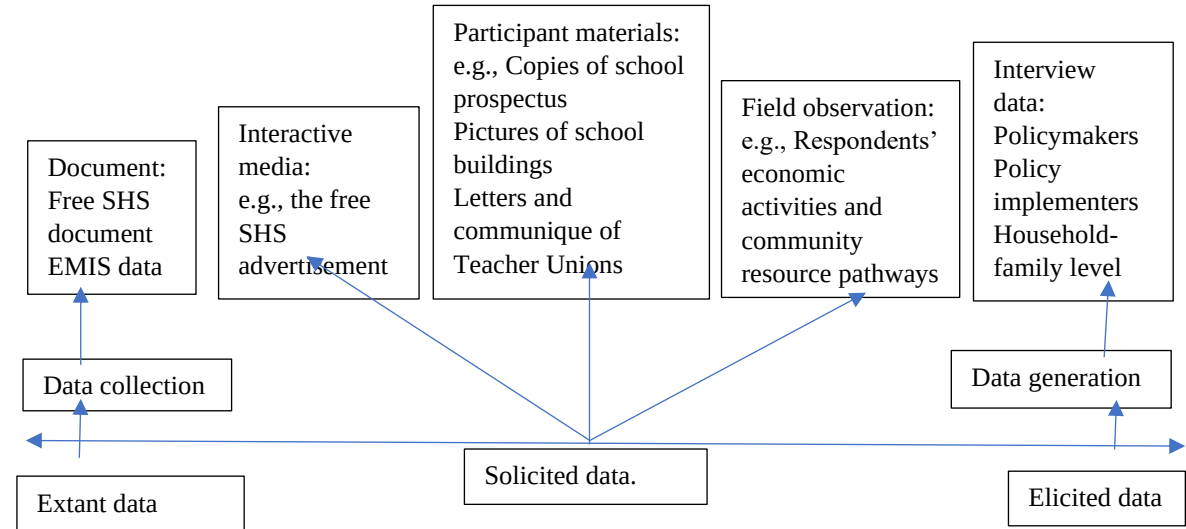
According to Mills & Birks (2014), the dictum ‘all is data’ applies to the different variants of the grounded theory methods. These are Glaser’s traditional version, Straus’ evolved approach, Charmaz’ constructivist variant, or other schools of thought. I employed three sources of data for this study. Whilst all is data, enables the researcher to solicit data from a diverse data source unrestricted, the researcher is positioned very differently depending on the type of data. Thus, all is data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), however, all is not data in the same manner because although the researcher shapes elicit data (for example, interview data), she has no control over extant data (example, policy document) and solicited data (for instance, interactive media, participant materials and field observation).

Despite the availability of a universe of potential data sources such as Letters, interviews, conversations, speeches, sermons, proceedings, symposia, fictional and non-fictional literature, media publications, Ethnographies, biographies, diaries, comments, manuscripts, records, reports, catalogue, song lyrics, personal diaries, newspaper editorials, newspapers, magazines, government reports, policy documents, organizational policy, procedure manuals, journals, log books, letters, biographies, non-fiction books and novels (Bernard & Ryan, 1998; Birks & Mills, 2011; Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), researchers favor elicit (interview data) when employing GTM. The researcher can contextualize the data analyses easily when data is sourced through interviews as compared to extant and solicited data because of the differences in sensorial environment (Ralph et al., 2014).

The sensory experience of the interview is stronger because the interviewer asks explicitly or implicitly the who, what, why, how, and when questions necessary for exploring contexts. For instance, the tones, mannerisms, inflections, gestures, and emotions of communication can inform how the researcher contextualizes the data analysis.

Conversely, due to lower sensory experience with extant data, the researcher lacks the context needed to optimally position extant data for analysis. In the broad spectrum of data re-sensorial awareness about the data I sourced, I did not need to establish contextual position of my interview data for the analyses. I, however, did for the extant data and the solicited data. I used two main documents, the free SHS policy document and the EMIS data. I also employed other documents anecdotally such as letters communicating directives to the District Directors of Education about implementing the free SHS, commune of the teacher union groups about their concerns with the policy. The figure below shows the spectrum of data I sourced for the study.

Figure 15: Spectrum of data sourced.



Source: Author’s creation based on spectrum of data collected and generated

I refer to the interview data as generated data because the researcher and the interviewee are co-producers of the data. I relied heavily on interview data. I conducted 328 in-depth interviews overall. The interaction between the interviewees and myself thereof generate the data as the interview encounters makes the data co-constructed (Birks & Mills, 2011). I refer to the extant and solicited data as data collection because this data existed independent of the researcher-researched human influence or interaction.

The analyses of the data generated, and data collected occurred differently. Following Ralph et al. (2014)'s recommendation to determine the contextual position of extant data before analyses, I established the important "who, what, when, where, why, and how" context. The table below shows how I established the contextual position of the free SHS policy document.

Table 5: How I established the contextual positioning of the extant data

Table showing how contextual positioning of the extant data was established			
	Purpose	Questions	Answers
Who	To identify	Who participated in conceiving the documents	Policymakers assembled by the Ministry of Education
		Who was its production intended to benefit	Children who are eligible to transition to SHS
What	To define	What stated or assumed purpose the document serves	To ensure equitable distribution of education and solve the number cry in Ghana's secondary schools
When	To chronicle	When was the document produced?	It was produced in 2018, but the lifespan of the document is not stated
Where	To locate	Where was the document produced?	Ministry of Education, Ghana
		Where is the document intended for use?	By policy implementers at the Ghana Education Service
Why	To rationalize	Why will the text be used?	It is the document that presents the provisions of the education access policy under study
		Why is the text unique and dependable?	How access is conceptualized in the policy document sets the tone of access at implementation and household family levels
How	To explain	How do authors of the text proposed it be used?	As a guiding framework for implementing the free SHS policy.

Source: Author's creation based on Ralph et al. (2014).

Establishing who created the policy also made sampling for the policymakers interview easy. This is because they are the key actors relevant to this data. They defined its scope, chronicled its position in time, its context, rational and justification. The analyses of this policy document and the interview data from the policymakers enabled a constant comparison of the policy provisions, the policy position, and policymakers' perspective of the policy they created in a theoretically sensitive way.

Further, I established the contextual position of the documents like the communique of the teacher union groups that details their concern about the free SHS policy when I interviewed the policymakers from the teacher union groups. I also established the contextual position of the EMIS data I collected. The EMIS data is produced at the EMIS and data planning unit of the Ghana Education Service (GES). It is compiled at the schools, the districts, and the regional levels. The national level collation and compilation is then done by the National EMIS and data planning officers at the GES. I asked for copies of the EMIS data questionnaire. I investigated how the data was collected and why they restricted the data collection to certain issues of access and not others at each district and region selected for the study. By asking targeted questions, I positioned the extant data for the analysis. Positioning the data this way enabled me to determine the context of data implicitly. Furthermore, it enabled me to develop a theoretical sensitivity to the data in its unique context. Overall, going through this process aided me in establishing the three-dimensional context (the position of the extant data, the position of the researcher, and the position of the extant data to both the researcher and the study) to support analysis as Ralph et al. (2014) proposes.

1. Consent Process

I obtained consent by communicating the main purpose of the study to the participants as well as how the data will be used. I explained that there will be no direct benefits to them except that their participation will help broaden the understanding of the topic under research. I assured them of anonymity and how the data once collected was going to be used; thus, for academic purposes and other publications. I also sought permission to have their voice tapped. I did not tape record those who did not want their voices tapped. I told them that once they consent to take part in the study, they are free to opt out of the study without giving any reason whatsoever and that they are not obliged to respond to all the interview questions. I actively sought the informed consent of participants in a continuing manner. This is encouraged in qualitative research because of the emergent nature of enquiry (Kirsch, 2005). Thus, I reminded them about consent throughout the process, which is during recruitment, prior to the interview, and after data generation. I issued the consent forms to participants who were 18 years and older and assent forms to participants who were under 18. Competent youth could not apply in this research context because in Ghana, all people under 18 years are considered children.

2. Research population, Data generation and Collection in Ghana

I generated data from 328 participants. I did not collect the data in a linear fashion due to the emergent nature of issues and leads when doing grounded theory methods, however, for the purpose of category, I group them into three stages. Charmaz (2006), encourages GT researchers to be flexible and reflective in generating data. I knew from the central research questions that the issue of access would entail diverse issues. However there needed to be a starting point for the data collection or generation. I decided it was necessary to start with the policy and policymakers to become sensitized to the official version of access or policy access. Thus, I decided to start the process with policy documents and continue with interviews with policymakers. The first phase of data collection was a series of interviews with policymakers. This group comprised representatives from the two key education and teacher unions, and a member of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education. Additionally, I interviewed key players in the education sector (who have been involved in drafting previous education policies to explore whether their inputs were solicited during the drafting of the policy. I also interviewed representatives from two NGOs (Child Right International, Ghana and CAMFED Ghana), and a representative from the free SHS Secretariat (National). Overall, I interviewed fifteen people under this section. I complemented the interviews with secondary data. The policy and implementation strategy document obtained from the free SHS Secretariate were used as extant data while statistical data was collected from EMIS data 2018/2019 to explore the gender parity and disparity situation of access in secondary schools. Whilst the whole thesis employed grounded theory approach, I applied the grounded normative approach specifically in this chapter to account for policy making practices and to explore the inbuilt assumptions both in the policy text and from the perspectives of the authors. I analyzed the data collected under phase one in Chapter Four titled: Secondary Education for All? Examining How Ghana's Secondary Education Policy Works the Equity Gaps in Access to Secondary Education. Below is a table showing the characteristics of policymakers.

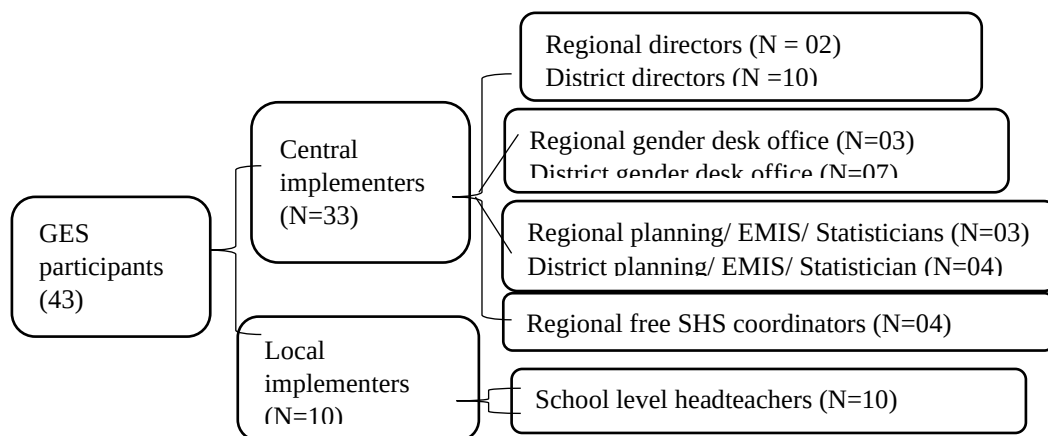
Table 6: Characteristics of policymakers

<i>Policymakers</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Participant</i>
1	Regional Education Office	Director of Education
2	Regional Education Office	Director of Education
3	Accreditation Board	Member
4	NGO	Representative from NGO
5	Free SHS Secretariat (National)	Representative from Free SHS Secretariat
6	Techer Union	Representative from Teacher Union
7	Teacher Union (NAGRAT)	Representative from NAGRAT
8	Select committee	Policy maker with parliament
9	NGO	Representative from NGO
10	NGO	Representative from Child Right International
11	CSSPS Secretariat	Representative from CSSPS
12	Regional Education Office	Regional Director
13	Teacher Union	Policy maker with GNAT
14	Ministry of Education	Staff
15	Regional Education Office	Staff on behalf of regional director

Source: Author's creation

The second phase involved interviews with forty-three policy implementers including directors (regional and districts) Girls' education officers (regional and districts), Data and planning officers (regional and districts), and Headteachers. I interviewed multiplicity of implementers across the different loci and levels of implementation. The data collected under phase two underpins the analysis of chapter five titled Bringing equitable education access policy to life: what do policy implementers got to do with it? Below are the characteristics of the sample of policy implementers.

Figure 16: Characteristics of the sample of policy implementers



- Regional (Regional directors, regional data, EMIS and planning officers, regional gender desk or girls' education officers)
- Districts (District directors, district data, EMIS and planning officers, district gender desk or girls' education officers)
- Schools (Headteachers, assistant headteachers)

The interviewing procedures with implementers differed from those of policymakers and household/family level participants. First, I had to overcome a higher level of suspicion among implementers. A few were reluctant to talk on tape and after refusals, I chose not to tape record the voices because of their fear of identification. I took notes for these interviews and wrote down the information as I could remember after the interviews. Unlike the family levels where my interviews were open ended informal conversations, in which questions emerged from the context of the conversations and discussions in additions to the ones I had on my interview schedule, my interviews with policymakers followed at length the semi-structured interview guide. Implementers and policymakers asked of the interview guide in advance of the interviews, a situation I did not encounter with the household interviews.

The third phase was interviews at the micro-level households and community levels. I engaged in more informal, conversational dialogue with various family members. My ability to establish a sense of trustworthiness in the initial personal interviews with the participants provided the opportunity to talk to ‘appropriate’ people who linked me to other participants and particular family members. These included two hundred children who qualified to transition from the JHS to the SHS and seventy relatives of these children. The data collected in phase one underpins the analyses of chapter six titled *Negotiating Access after Access: Insights into the Micro-Level Dynamics of Meaningful and Unmeaningful Secondary School Transitions for Girls in Ghana*.

I conducted the interviews in five languages. I negotiated linguistic issues during the data generation, but I will discuss them under the section, cross language research and translation. I have command of English. I am a native Twi speaker. I speak a little Ga, but I do not speak any of the Northern, Upper East, and Upper west languages. Thankfully, Twi is the majority spoken language in Ghana. Even in non-Akan dominated areas, people speak Twi. However, there was language barriers with a few parents who did not speak neither Twi nor English. In these instances, I relied on a translator and an interpreter to conduct the interviews under my supervision. I admit that acting as translators and interpreters added another layer of meanings to the interviews.

I visited a few families more than once before the interviews and that enabled me to observe interactions among family members. Poor telecommunication network in communities made scheduling the actual interviews difficult at the family levels. Inevitably, I took every chance including those I visited and participated in their farming activities to get an interview. These were the realities and challenges I confronted and negotiated conducting qualitative research in multiple places.

3. Cross language research and translation

I conducted the interviews in four languages. All interviews with the policymakers and implementers were conducted in English. The interviews with the children were conducted in English and Twi. The interviews with the parents were conducted in English, Twi, Ga, and other languages. The interviews that were conducted in other languages were translated upfront during the interviews. Even though I speak a little Ga, I do not speak the other languages. Cross-language thus presented its own barriers with translation (Larson, 1988; Temple, 2002) and necessitate a mention in this chapter.

Translation is important because of the potential to distort the meaning and intent of participant in the research process (Fenna et al., 2010). Poor quality translation can affect the accuracy of the findings (Frederickson, Acuna, & Whetsell, 2005; Schultz, 2004; Temple, 2002). The discourse on translation explores recommendations on minimizing poor quality translation. They advocate that researchers pay attention to the timing of translation, who, what, how and the processes of translation in qualitative research (Chen & Boore, 2009; Fenna et al., 2010; Smith, Chen, & Liu, 2008; Suh, Kagan, & Strumpf, 2009). Whilst this is profoundly revealing, discourse related to translation in grounded theory research is rare. Grounded theory method involved coding and analysis process that requires the creation of meaningful labels and categories for sections of the data. This coding process draws from personal knowledge, extant and elicited data (Birks & Mills, 2011). There are also levels of coding and analyses process where data is fractured and put back together. Thus, poor translation in cross language research where grammar, syntax and nouns vary enormously across languages could impact the coding process, the ability of the researcher to engage in meaningful and constant comparison, theoretical sampling, and the meaning of the findings (Su & Parham, 2002).

The literature available on translation suggests that data can be translated at different points in the research process; before, during and after analyses (Suh et al., 2009). Translating data at each point has its own advantages and shortcomings. Translating data during analyses is advised to ensure authenticity of findings and to minimize the possibility of losing participant's implicit expressions (Larkin et al., 2007). In this study, all data translations were done during interviews and during transcription. Interviews that were conducted in the source language I speak (Twi) were translated during transcription. Those that were done in the source language I do not speak were translated during the interviews.

I discussed the issue of translation with the assembly members who led me to the participants. All parents were allowed to select the translators they felt comfortable with. I could not employ a neutral translator in the field to do the translation. This was because the data collection was done from a non-positivist, or interpretive point of view. These approaches acknowledged the possibility of identity and experiences of the translator in shaping, coloring, and translating what data is collected (Adamson & Donovan, 2002; Squires, 2008, 2009; Temple, 2002; Temple & Young, 2004). Aware of the need for theoretical sensitivity, and the need to ensure that the meaning of data is close to participants' experiences and the wider culture within which it is embedded, I employed a local translator at the specific data collection site instead of a neutral translator (Polkinghorne, 2005). This was also necessary to ensure that they are translating participants' intended meaning and using phrases and concepts embedded in the study's context and not just words from the source language to the target language (Birbili, 2000; Chen & Boore, 2009; Croot et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2008; Squires, 2008; Temple, 1997).

G. DATA ANALYSES AND PRESENTATION

1. Introduction

There are grounded theory methodologies (i.e., Glaserian, Straussian, and Constructivist/ Charmazian) (Kenny and Fourie, 2015). These methodologies within the GT tradition are similar and different on several scores (Apramian et al., 2017; Birks & Mills, 2015; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Denzin, 2007; Holton & Walsh, 2017; Reichertz, 2019). The similarities include constant comparative analysis, theoretical sampling, and theoretical saturation, Integration of higher order concepts, theory development/grounded theorizing, iterative analysis, inductive analysis, emergent design, and methodology (Birks & Mills, 2015; Cho & Lee, 2014; Fassinger, 2005; Kenny & Fourie, 2015).

The differences can be seen in each tradition's epistemological and ontological positions. For instance, the Glaserian version is grounded in positivism. It considers reality as existing outside both the researcher and the researched. Thus, the ontological position is critical realism and epistemological position is objectivity. In opposition to the postpositivist school, Straus version subscribes to an Interpretivist school. Interpretivists have a relativist ontology with a subjectivist epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22). Constructivist approach is the middle ground. Constructivist approach

subscribes to ontological critical realism and relativist or subjectivist epistemological position. Thus, there are multiple realities, but an objective researcher or observer.

Another key difference relates to their approaches to literature review. The Glaserian GT approach recommends going to the field without prior knowledge of literature to enable categories to emerge naturally from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1970). Strausian approach advocate for the review of literature at the onset to support the development of the research question (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). The constructivist approach to literature review is intended during data collection and after as a vantage point to add value to the process of theory construction (Charmaz, 2006). Whilst these differences bother on the timing and rarely the substantive use of literature (Cutcliffe, 2000; McGhee, Marland, & Atkinson, 2007), the contrasting positions on literature review is described as “polemic” and “divisive” issue among researchers (Dunne, 2011).

Other differences include different aims, terminologies, and varied views on what constitutes grounded theory (Stough & Lee, 2021). Exploring the differences is not the key focus or scope of this chapter, thus further reading is recommended for detailed discussions on the difference in terms of coding strategies, data emphasis, and use of memos (Bryant, 2019; Salisbury, John, Hamon, 2013).

Despite these varieties in traditions, my approach to GTM did not follow rigidly any of the traditions. My approach maintained the core elements which are similar among all the traditions, remaining consistent to the GTM historical underpinnings and a bit of each tradition based on my epistemological and ontological positions to the qualitative approaches. I recognize that each application of grounded theory method can be different, and it can further expand its use and develop GTM as a qualitative research methodology. For example, I did not strictly follow any of the prescribed literature review process or timings. I reviewed literature throughout the process of the study. First, it would be challenging to convince any assessor that I am going to conduct the study without any knowledge of the literature. Secondly, the motivation to study access was based on the lack of scholarship on access to education that leads to theory. The need to construct and or discover a new and contextualized theory to explain access, thus, mean I had reviewed the literature to come to such a conclusion. Reviewing the literature enabled me to identify the gaps, to situate my research with a specific study area and to inform the identification of categories and its relation to other categories. This did not inhibit my employment of GT and the emergence of natural categories from the data. I employed reflexivity to lessen the negative impact of reviewing literature on my application. Reflexivity is emphasized in the grounded theory process literature to counteract the uncritical transposition of existing categories from the literature unto the data (Heath, 2006; McGhee et al., 2007; Robson, 2011).

Furthermore, my approach to GTM is in response to the challenges of applying a set of epistemological approaches to qualitative research. For example, I consider myself a primary instrument of data generation and analyses. I also understand qualitative methods to be inherently intersubjective and value laden ensuing from the situational and often-contested relationship between the researcher and the researched. Recognizing that all knowledge is socially situated and constructed relationally, influenced my implementation of the GTM.

Additionally, even though GTM does not necessarily underscore the salience of gender or feminist methodology in any crucial way, I embraced feminist epistemologies and methods that privilege and valorize women's voices, feelings, motivations, decision-making processes, strategies, and knowledge (otherwise neglected in Grounded Theory approach). This was useful in problematizing the often gender-blind methodologies prevalent in GT traditions. For example, GTM in and of itself do not assess women's experience and do not rectify the problem of male bias. Thus, implementing the grounded theory method was circumscribed by what was practical in the context of my study. For instance, I found relying on Straus and Corbin (1990, 1998) approach straight forward, however I also implemented aspect of Charmaz's approach anecdotally as an accessory because it is more adaptable, less structured and reflexive, (2006). Therefore, my approach to GT method is underpinned by my relative ontological stance, my subjectivist epistemological position which interspersed with complementary qualitative approaches and with feminist epistemologies. My approach can thus be considered searchers GTM. This approach enabled me to engage with the daily lives and activities of participants in multiple access locations and it was flexible in adjusting to the sociocultural milieu of changing research contexts based on what was practical.

2. Procedure for conducting the Grounded Theory research, Coding, and data Analysis

The main research question was: How does structural education policy and micro-level family politics structure the education access of children in Ghana.

After data collection, I transcribed the interviews daily, immediately after each fieldwork. The analysis of the data proceeded in stages. Different GTM traditions have different names for each stage of the data analyses process. I use the terms open or initial coding, axial or intermediate coding, selective coding, and advanced coding.

In the first phase or open coding, I coded the transcribed data line-by-line and case by case. I fractured the data into discrete parts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I compared the data with each other exploring the patterns emerging from the individual cases and noting all the possible explanations for the observed

data. Such constant comparisons for patterns and explanations follow the inductive and abductive logic (Birks & Mills, 2011).

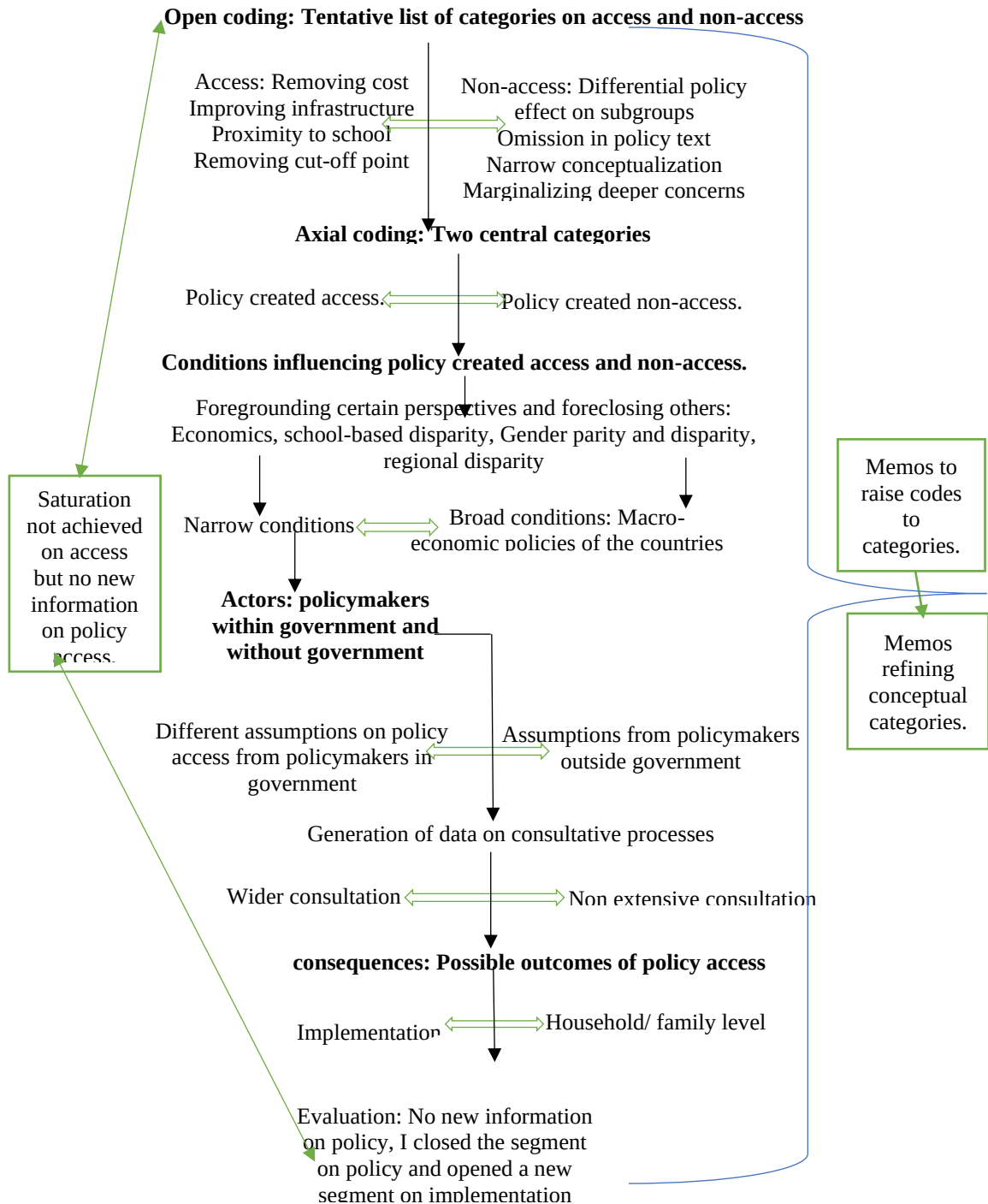
I developed a tentative list of categories or themes from the codes about access and non access. While there were overlapping categories, the significant categories of access included removing costs, improving infrastructure, increasing proximity, and removing academic cut-off points. The significant category of non-access included differential policy effects on subgroups, omissions in policy texts, narrow conceptualization of concepts and marginalization of deeper concerns. The need to discover why the policy employed these provisions to enable access and why these non-access pathways categories were possible, became eminent.

In axial coding, I assembled the data in new ways after the initial or open coding which enabled the creation of categories. I identified two central categories about the phenomenon. First, the policy created access and second, the policy created non-access. I explored conditions that influenced the phenomenon of access and non-access. The key condition was that policymakers foregrounded certain perspectives and foreclosed others in creating the policy. The specific conditions that were foregrounded and foreclosed included: economic concerns, school-based disparities, (non)access experiences, gender (dis)parity. I identified the context and intervening conditions to explain which conditions and why they were foregrounded and or foreclosed. I identified two main conditions, narrow and broad. The narrow, included differential inbuilt assumptions from policymakers from government institutions versus those outside government institutions such as NGO's and teacher union groups. I assembled the data differently to explore the differences in the contextual meaning and assumptions of policy driven access and non-access from the policymakers within government and without government institution. This led to the generating of data on the consultative process that was done in creating the policy. Policymakers within government suggested that there was wider consultation, those outside government noted non-extensive consultation.

If the contextual meaning of access was different from the two main bodies who created the policy, then diverse education outcomes could occur. The possible outcomes are different implementation strategies, and different access routes or pathways for different people. What about those who implemented the policy? What meaning do the implementers make of access given the policy? I closed the segment on policy access. Following Birks, Hoare, & Mills, (2019)'s recommendation to write a story line, I wrote a storyline for it, explaining the conceptual patterns that were identified and the relationship between concepts.

The development of categories under this segment was also based on the extant data or the policy documents and the EMIS data I collected. I adopted a critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2009) approach to further contextualize the research within the environment under study. Exploring these documents complemented the interview data and enabled me to compare documentary information with interview and provided a more comprehensive understanding of the data (Charmaz, 2006, p.37; Neuman, 2003, p.139).

Figure 17: The grounded theory analysis process

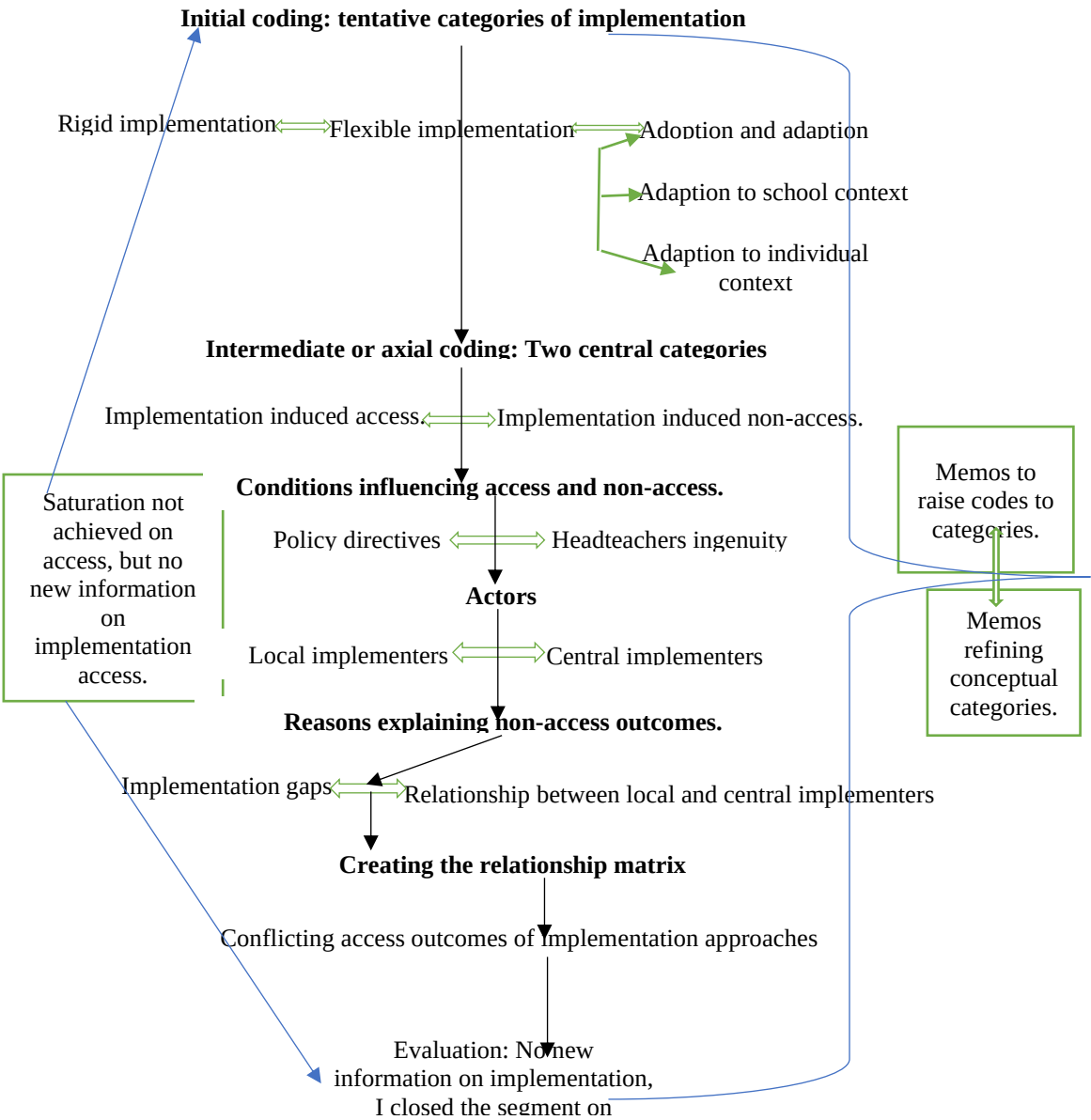


Source: Author's creation

I began data generation and collection on the new segment that was identified (implementation). In the initial coding, I created categories of implementation. These I labeled as approaches to implementation which included rigid implementation and flexible implementation. I created sub-categories to explain the implementation that differed from the two extreme implementation approaches. These I termed adoption and adaption to school context, and adoption and adaption to individual student context (allowing school and individual student context to dictate implementation).

In the intermediate or axial coding, I made connections between the categories and sub-categories and compared it with each other to explore the similarities or differential access outcomes of the approaches (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 26). The outcomes of the strategies were successful and unsuccessful transition outcomes. I explored the key intervening conditions that mediated access outcomes at implementation. The actors included both central implementers, and local implementers. The local level implementers were the headteachers and the central implementers were the (Director General, Regional Directors, District Directors, Regional Statisticians, District Statisticians, EMIS Officers And Planning Officers; Gender Desk Officers or Girls' Education Unit Officers; Regional Free SHS Coordinators). After delineating the outcome of the implementation by these actors, I explored why unsuccessful transition outcomes were recorded. I assembled the data differently to interrogate the relationships between and among local and central Implementers that led to these outcomes. I created a relationship matrix between implementers. This enabled me to explain the implementation gaps that led to unsuccessful transitions of those who attempted to transition or progress from JHS to SHS. There were still questions about access even though all categories about implementation have been exhausted. If implementation approaches were not entirely successful in enabling access, then what explain these conflicting outcomes beyond implementation. I wrote a storyline, closed the segment on implementation, and began data collection at the micro-level households and families for explanations.

Figure 18: The grounded theory analysis process



Source: Author's creation

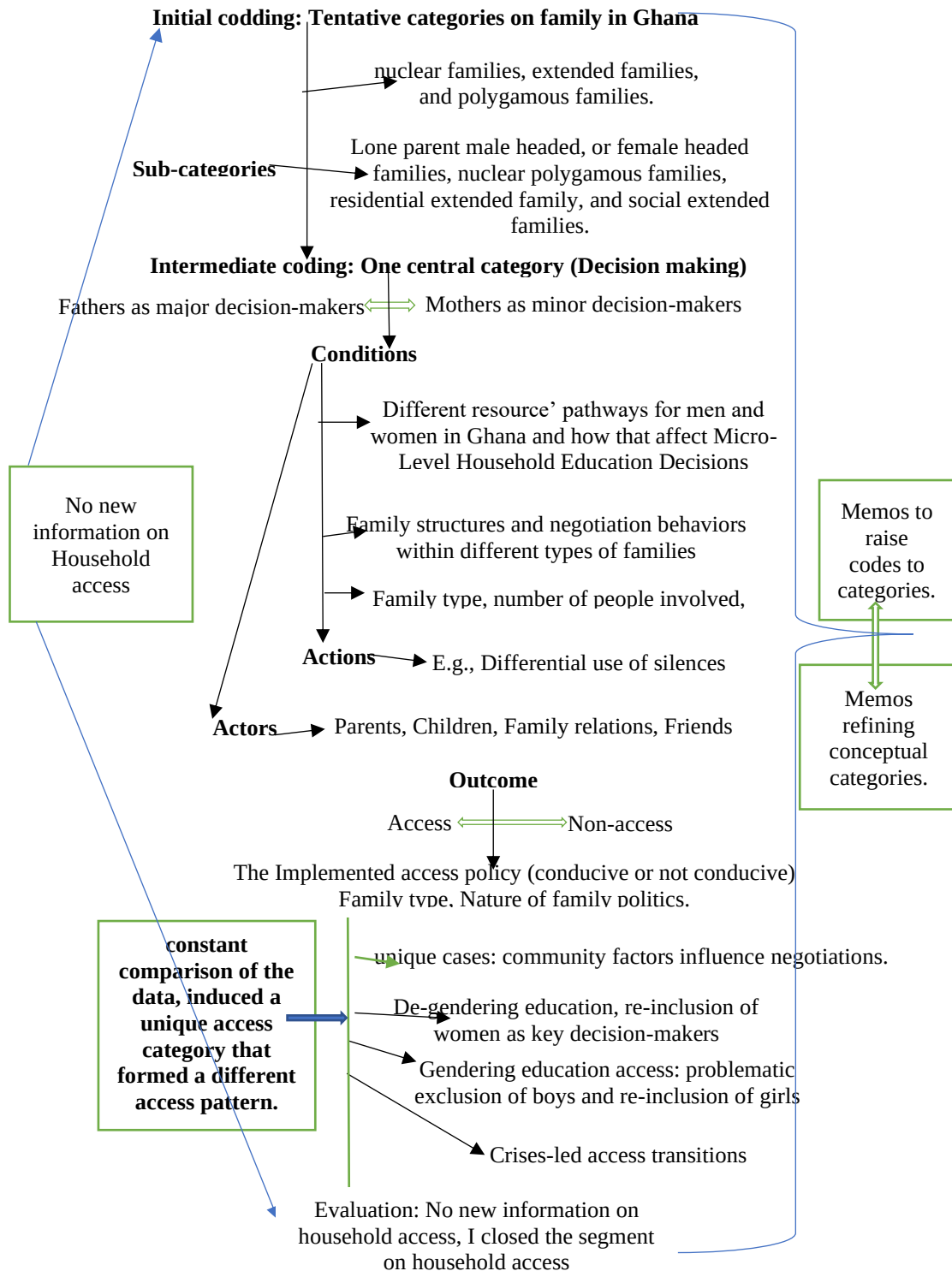
The last segment on implementation gave an indication that beyond the two structural contexts, policy and implementation, micro-level household and family realities could be the missing link to explaining access to education for children in Ghana.

In the initial coding, I developed a tentative list of categories. I admit that the initial tentative list was influenced by the types of families I observed from the literature on families in Ghana. While there were overlapping themes, the initial list included nuclear families, extended families, and polygamous families. The sub-categories included Lone-parent male headed or female headed families, nuclear polygamous families. Within each category, I gathered data about the decision-making process around children's access to education. It emerged that fathers often make decisions on transition to SHS. From the data, two possibilities made this possible. First the differential resource pathways for men and women in Ghana which is explained by structural macro-economic decisions such as the structural adjustment policies, and the previous education policies, which tended to focus on men. Differential resource pathways are also explained by the geography of Ghana, where some regions produce certain staple foods and have certain crafts such as weaving. The second was family structures and negotiation behaviors within the diverse types of families and households.

During the intermediate coding, I explored conditions that influence negotiation behaviors within families. Conditions such as type of family, the number of people involved in the decision making and the interplay of interest were identified. The specific strategies to negotiation (i.e., the actions from specific family members such as mothers and fathers) were observed. This included the differential uses of silence by men and women. I entertained all explanations for the observed use of silence. The use of silence also denoted the power relationships (power to, power over) between members of the families. I identified children as the least in terms of power to make and negotiate access to education. In exploring family members and their negotiation strategies. I delineated the consequences (i.e., the outcomes of their strategies to negotiation e.g., gendered pathways to access such as: education access still privileges boys when children negotiate secondary education access; when gendered norms of what is considered good behavior for children determine who goes to SHS, boys' transition to SHS. Another consequence was different access routes when a family is struggling financially. I delineated the access routes as direct and indirect (mediated or negotiated). The (un)successful access transitions were based on the implemented access policy (conducive or not conducive), family type, and nature of family politics. Through a constant comparison of the data, I induced another pattern that could form a category. This was the waning of extended family support. Exploring this further, the data showed different coping strategies that I considered alternatives to the SHS education such as apprenticeship training. Since opportunity for such training involved similar negotiation of access, I

entertained the possibility that children will follow the apprenticeship paths or ask for help outside their families. Whilst generating data for this category, I got surprises or unique cases. Community factors influenced access in a way that led to three consequences: first, de-gendering education, the re-inclusion of women in education access decision-making. Second, gendering education access where boys were excluded from access and girls re-included, and third, crises-led transitions where access transition outcomes have been overachieved but under unethical conditions.

Figure 19: The grounded theory analysis process



Source: Author's creation

Without any more category or conceptual pattern emerging, I created a story line to conceptualize the story in this segment as advocated by (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116). Creating the story line facilitated the construction and presentation of the findings that led to the creation of a coherent grounded theory (Birks & Mills, 2011, p. 176).

2i. Selective coding

The next phase of analyses was selective coding. I connected the core categories in each segment, defined the type of access happening in the various segments and constructed relationships between the access types. For example, I conceptualize access at the micro-level as constituting relationships between micro-level household or family members. This relationship entails negotiations around contested and varying interests. Such relationships are underpinned by the cultural and gender-specific ways in which members negotiate education opportunities. They are also influenced by regional contexts.

Connecting the categories across segments or different access locations involved exploring the changing forms of access as it moved from policy to implementation to household/ family levels and conceptualizing them as abstract or theoretical, formal, and non-formal, substantive, and practical access.

2ii. Advanced Coding and Presenting the Theory

After selective coding, I did advanced coding. This is the level of theoretical integration. The memos and the literature review aided in the theoretical integration. I developed the storyline further as suggested by (Birks & Mills, 2011) and explored the nexus or the mutually constitutive relations of access types. I clearly stated the problems the theory is engaged in as:

- Construction or enaction: The process through which access is constructed and or enacted as it moves from one access phase to the other access phases. At the macro-level stage, access is constructed as policy, very theoretical with abstract propositions, aims of the policy, and vague definition of policy terms. As access is constructed through other phases or environments, it changes form and assumes different forms.

- Implementation: the institutional practices and approaches adopted to bring policy from abstract theoretical constructs into formal and non-formal access practices. It is access in action.
- Embedding occurs at the micro-level household phase such as the everyday access and non-access decisions by family actors. It also involves responses to decisions such as resistance or acceptance of non-access decisions.
- Integration: Integration occurs when the advantages or constraints in one access phase or environment are reproduced in other access phases (meso and micro).

I also developed the postulates of substantive theory. These sets of propositions possess sufficient face validity and conceptual robustness for formal testing of the nested theory of education. The last chapter is grounded in the intrinsic imbrication of access scales comprising theoretical, formal, and non-formal, substantive, and practical access.

3. Presenting the theory

Overall, the presentation entails writing a story line for each of the segments. These segments are seen in the three main analytical and theoretical chapters in this thesis. The substantive theoretical chapter, which was based on selective and advanced coding, weaves the segments together, exploring each segment's relationship to each other.

3i. The use of Memoing

I wrote memos to record my decision-making trails at various stages of the research from conceptualization to completion. Memo writing is important in GTM. It serves as an audit trail for decisions that ground the multiple phases of the research (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). It also enables the creation of definitional statements (Birks, Chapman & Francis, 2008). For example:

What is happening?

My mother told my uncles about my access situation.

My Aunties love some of us and they hate some of us that is why they helped my brother with money and provisions to go to school and not me.

I have an extended family, but I could not ask anybody for help because they would tell me they do not have money.

If you cannot buy the items on the prospectus, then you need to solicit help from other relatives.

I have nobody to turn to

Reflecting on the above extracts, and questioning them enabled me to answer the question what is access to education at the micro-households and family levels? I identified parameters for this group of data. It helped me in the later conceptualization of access as relationship construction.

Through memoing, I did a constant comparison where patterns of similarities and differences were identified (Green & Thorogold, 2004). For example: Why is relationship construction different in diverse contexts?

In the Upper East and Upper West, participants mentioned their fathers, and fathers' brothers' multiple times. In the Ashanti region, it was the mothers' brothers and their maternal granduncles.

Questioning these, was important in leading to the explanations that family types, and descent systems influence the type of relationships construction and who is called upon to support children to enroll in school. Writing memos enabled me to explore the data and establish context, contemplate, and challenge my interpretation of the data (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 81-82).

Some of my memos were just musings. For example:

This is the fifth interview with a policymaker and the interview drags on for almost two hours. Why does the policymakers interview drag on and on? Hmm policymakers?

This question got me going back to my interview data on policymakers again. I realized that it depended on which policymaker or implementer I was exploring. For e.g., free SHS regional coordinators interviews went on for long hours about how the policy has enabled access for everyone. Every time I probed for clarification and drew their attention to those who face non transition situations, they reiterate the same point about how the policy has enabled everyone to go to school. Other policymakers such as those from the teacher union groups and the education NGOs had a different approach to the interview. This helped me to further understand access from the differential views of those within government and those without.

There are scholarships on guidelines for memo writing (Richard, 2005; Charmaz, 2006). Whilst these guidelines are profoundly revealing as they provide technical rules or methods for memo writing, I wrote my memos in a more informal way. This was reflective of how I question things in my mind. I wrote my memos in my fieldwork notepad and named the pad musings from Aboabea's fieldwork. Apart from the memoing notepad, I also kept a separate fieldnote data where I wrote my observations.

Following Straus and Corbin (1998), advice to classify memos into operational, coding, and theoretical memos, I created a similar structure for my memos. The operational memos contain my decision trails

and the rationale. The memos I created from questioning the data that led to constant recategorization were recorded as analytical memos. Example:

In one of the supervisory meetings with my supervisor to discuss my data collection, and the potential bias in my data generation, we established that using the reputational sampling strategies in the communities have biased my data generation toward those struggling to transition to SHS. However, this category has been established across all communities and districts. That is what the participants and the communities are interested in since this cuts across all districts and regions. I should continue with such access and non-access exploration within families in the communities for greater depth and breadth of information. Besides, policymakers gave diverse accounts of successful transition stories anyway.

Classifying memos were helpful but I must admit that some of the memos were simply descriptions and musings that I did not classify. I wrote lengthy memos. This is also because I write copiously. As these memos became lengthy and complex, I figured out some of the conceptual relationships that were instrumental in how I linked the different scales of access, achieving abstraction that remained grounded in the contextual data.

H. CATEGORY OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AND ANONYMIZING

There were distinct categories of people who participated in the research. The first set of people are policymakers. I classify them as elite research participants or subjects. Elite subjects because they are selected from a small group of individuals (Walford, 2011). Some of the participants within this group are public figures, for example the leaders of the various Teacher union groups. It means that much of what they disclosed to me at the interview were concerns their union has already raised. Furthermore, some (though not all) elite subjects are public figures. This means that much more personal information that could be used to identify an individual from anonymized comments and descriptions is publicly known or accessible than is the case for the average research participant.

Anonymizing these groups of elite subjects, took a delicate and balancing act. Firstly, I needed to anonymize in such a way as not to reveal their identities. Secondly, I also needed to balance this to avoid undermining the context of the study. To enable me to situate their responses and actions, I avoided everything that was too person specific such as their ages, the exact location of their work. I simply described them as policymakers and gave a bit of background about the number of years they have been involved in education policy formulation. Providing a bit of background for example stating that this respondent was drawn from a teacher union, or this policymaker has been engaged in policy for about 32 years was necessary because it was not enough to analyze what was said but also who

said it. This concurs with (Walford, 2005) assertion that the fact that the interview is with a particular named person in a particular capacity is central to exploring policy.

Another category of participants are the policy implementers. This group can also be considered an elite group because they are from a small group of individuals. In a bid to gain access to interview this category of people, I needed to provide the names of the regions, the districts, and the schools to the Gender desk office of the Ghana Education Service (National). The letter had the names of the school and region listed on it. Thus, anonymizing this group of elite subjects was complex. I took into consideration the ethics clearance of my institution, and the anonymity preference of the respondents. Specifically for the implementers, because the selected schools and districts within which they are coming from are already known to the gatekeepers who granted permission to the regions, the districts, and the schools, offering them standard anonymization would be inadequate to ensure confidentiality. They hold sensitive positions; they are at the forefront of implementation. Some implementers specifically enquired whether I was a journalist or whether the government has contracted me to do this research. Going into this study, I did not think it had any political connotation but my encounter with this category of participants and their data seems to suggest that repercussion was possible if unmasked. I, thus, employed a generic code such as central implementer, headteacher, and their positions to describe them. I avoided the use of pseudonyms and categorical descriptors. I, however, used direct quotes in some instances. Direct quotes without any contextual details and deductive identifiers were good to mask them. I completely avoided mentioning the specific schools and the districts in the thesis research output. Sacrificing these details was necessary to enable me provide confidentiality to this category of participants.

The next category of respondents were parents, family members, and children. This group constituted the bulk of the research participants. I categorize them as average participants. I used pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. Whilst I mentioned the towns and described the types of families to contextualize and situate their everyday access, I left out the information that were too person specific, I did not mention for instance the school they chose, and the families they belong to. Overall, I retained some contextual information to support the analysis but that is insufficient or too general to unmask individuals who participated in the study.

1. To use or not to use visuals

Anonymity and elite research are not easy bedfellows, thus, using visuals in research with elite research participants demands a considerable degree of retrospective scrutiny. I took several photographic images. Some of the images were also given to me by the research participants. I observed the eagerness of some participants, especially implementers to show me pictures, and to ask me to take pictures and this seemed empowering for them as they describe why they contextualize implementation of the policy. Using visuals or pictures in the research output can, however, compromise confidentiality. For example, in the course of my interviews with the implementers (free SHS coordinators), they provided visual images of the infrastructure projects ongoing at various stages of completion to buttress their claims that the government is solving the infrastructure deficit that derailed the Free SHS implementation in the earlier stages of implementation. In my interview with the headteachers also, they asked me to take pictures of school blocks, dilapidated buildings, and school infrastructure. They asked me to take the pictures as a reason the headteachers defined in other cost and billed students even though the policy goal is to ensure that SHS education is cost-free.

These visuals would have provided important school context and the school specific infrastructure dynamics into details. It would have enriched the analytical details and enabled a direct engagement with the school's condition within which headteachers were implementing (Crow and Wiles, 2008). It would also situate their assertions regarding their adaptation of the policy to their school context.

I decided not to use the visual images of the schools and their infrastructure. This was after a careful thought through of what participants wanted and the need to ensure confidentiality. As earlier intimated, I consider the implementers as elite research participants who can be identified from contextual information. Including the visuals they provided in the research output, will be sufficient infrastructure context to unmask which school and which headteachers.

It is apparent that the strategy of anonymity would not work in the face of scrutiny if the visuals of school buildings were shown. Consequently, it seems the analyses and the discussion of the implementation approaches of the headteachers undermined school context. This did not affect the depth of the analysis of the implementation chapter too much as the available detail is still rich enough to locate and situate their accounts. Avoiding the use of visuals in this context was, however, a measure intended to ensure confidentiality since these visuals used in tandem with other contextual information can enable easy identification of participants.

2. Ethics around Interviewing Children and Young People

One of the anticipated ethical issues was research with children. The mere fact of interviewing children ages 14 to 18 suggested potential unequal relationships. The existence of such a relationship can result in conflict of interests. This research, however, is not influenced by considerations of personal gains beyond that simply accruing from successful research in general). I mitigated this by explaining the nature of the research to the children. I established a rapport with the children. I emphasized that they could ask questions about the research before deciding whether to take part. I emphasized that their participation was entirely voluntary even if their legal guardian had consented to the research. If they do agree to take part, they can withdraw from the study at any time by informing me without giving any reasons by advising me of this decision before the data is analyzed for publication. The data collected until this point of withdrawal will be destroyed and all backups will also be deleted.

Initially, I aimed to follow best practice guidelines for obtaining informed consent and conducting research with competent youth. I could not apply best practice guidance on researching competent youth because in Ghana, everybody below 18 is considered a child and there is no room for competent youth even when they turn 16 years as happens in Europe. The children were asked to assent only after their guardians had consented to the study and I have explained the research to them.

One key issue was deciding on interview venues. I had suggested community centers. Thus, most of the interviews with children were held at the community centers where we sat further away from the centers out of the earshot of others.

I also paid attention to the sensitivity of questions. I anticipated and prepared questions that were not sensitive. For example, instead of asking how children feel about parents' decisions on their access to education, I asked about how they think about parents' decisions to avoid the risk of emotional reactions.

I anticipated the provision of sensitive information such as sexual orientation and political opinions might be disclosed to me because I was dealing with teenagers even if I did not intend to ask for this and the possibility of dealing with allegations of abuse or misconduct. My interviews did not touch on such special category data. However, I explained to them that if they disclose something to me that can be classified as special category, I must seek the explicit consent of their parents because consent for them to participate is different from the processing of special category data.

I also explained to them their right to restrict processing of their data, their right to correct the information they have provided, their right to ask that their data be deleted. I also included a child protection protocol that provided information about how I will deal with any child protection issue that will be disclosed to me. I am obligated to report to the social welfare officer and the Department of Social welfare in the district.

I did not process personal data of children beyond what was relevant for the research. I also anonymized individuals in the research output such as their names and their other identifying details. Incidental findings were not applicable.

I. CHALLENGES, METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS, AND IMPLICATION FOR UNDERSTANDING EDUCATION ACCESS

The long route to access and the negotiation of multiple gatekeepers delayed the actual fieldwork data collection. On analysis, one key issue I struggled with was critiquing my own work and determining at what point I could say the data is under interpreted or if there are further claims that needed exploration. Where there are overlapping categories I reflect to see whether I have under theorized. My attention was, however, drawn to the need to explore kinship during the confirmation of status. Thus, I looked at my raw data again and the memoing that accompanied my decisions at each stage of the data analysis and theorization stage to explore kinship. Going back and forth the data can be frustrating sometimes but the constant comparison is what allowed the creation of new categories that I explored under kinship. This helped me in further conceptualizing negotiation of education as negotiation of kinship relationships. By locating the individual in the collective (kin group), the research acknowledges the role of other kin outside the household in the secondary education transition outcomes. This enabled the conceptualization of education access as also related to the notion of connected kin-selves in context where kinship relationships are significant.

Additionally, I grappled with the tension of reporting honestly versus the messiness of doing grounded theory research. Visuals help to show the mess and how the mess makes sense in enabling me to report the processes and the presentation of findings. Consequently, I employed visuals to match set linkages, categories, and sub-categories to enable me to read across these visuals and see where patterns are emerging.

A key implication of using this method is that it enabled me to explore the daily lives and experiences of access in multiple locations. A focus on the micro-household/ family issue led to the discovery of education access as relationship construction. Further, the conception of access as processual have methodological implications. It means that policy and implementation access alone do not necessarily enable a person to go to school. This implies that the study of access requires examining all the different scales of negotiations. This could impose extra-cost for fieldwork.

The challenge of using multiple gatekeepers and reputational sampling initially biased the sample in favor of those who were struggling to progress to SHS. Thus, the issue of successful access did not gain much traction. This left me with another unresolved question, whether those who went to school unimpeded had to negotiate similar scales of access. I made up for this with the interviews of policymakers from government who highlighted diverse successful education progression stories.

Furthermore, in selecting specific regions and not others, I lost out on other variations in the respondents from those regions not considered. Notwithstanding, there was enough variance among the sample as I considered several regions, districts, and communities.

Methodologically, I adopted and adapted the GTM without staying true to any of the three GT traditions. Furthermore, I employed other approaches anecdotally such as ethnography which fueled my employment of passive participant observation. Additionally, even though GTM is a gender-blind methodology and does not prescribe a way to valorize women's voices in and of itself, I centered women's voices because of my feminist underlying. My use of other approaches additively and employing different points of references was salient to ensure sensitivity to practical concerns in the research process. I call this methodological innovation the searcher's approach to GTM. The searchers GTM explores unplanned and spontaneous solution to practical research issues throughout the research process by adopting and adapting any methods, which enables the examination of facets of a phenomenon if staying true to a tradition is too rigid to address multiple experiences.

J. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have presented my methodological choices, innovations, and my application of complementary qualitative techniques in exploring access to education in Ghana. I have highlighted the unique way I employed the grounded theory method focusing on how my subjective position as an integral part of data generation, and analyses influenced the study. I have also emphasised the quandaries of doing grounded theory in qualitative research in multiple places.

Overall, the grounded theory approach enabled an understanding of access as happens in three phases. Its inductive underpinning enabled an explanation of the scales of negotiations, actions, decisions, and access outcomes of those involved in the negotiations and those affected by the process of access in an environment where education is said to be free. Grounded theory supported the depth of analyses and understanding of access through the eyes of diverse people in the negotiation continuum, those creating education policies, those implementing it and those experiencing access, and doing so in a context of an iterative data analysis approach that is sensitive to the gradation within that data and its meaning.

The subsequent chapters present my analyses and the construction of the theory of access. The next chapter discusses Ghana's Secondary Education Policy, the underlying structural factor, and how it works the equity gaps in access to secondary education.

CHAPTER 4: SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR ALL? EXAMINING HOW GHANA'S SECONDARY EDUCATION POLICY WORKS THE EQUITY GAPS IN ACCESS TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

This is the first analyses chapter towards the construction of the theory of education access. It explores Ghana's secondary education policy, the underlying structural factor, and how it works the equity gaps in access to secondary education. It pays attention to why secondary education remains an elusive goal for people within minority communities despite the increase in access to secondary education in the Global South through growing education policy interventions. It theorizes that even though education policies set the tone for public access, there are often differential policy outcomes mediated by existing structural privileges and barriers. It questions how education policies can make inroads into the private sphere e.g., family or household to ensure equitable access. Drawing on Ghana's recent secondary education policy using a grounded theory approach, and qualitative interviews with the makers of this policy, and education practitioners, the chapter answers the questions; How does public education policy make inroads into private spheres to improve education outcomes of children? How do educational interventions drive access? How do policy provisions shape meso-level implementation and micro-level individual responses? The findings reveal that, policymakers frame access solutions foregrounding certain perspectives and shutting out alternatives, making exclusive access readily available for some people, and foreclosing access to others. Additionally, matters of inequitable access get lost when policies are assessed using easily measurable indicators. Finally, while understanding what the policy and strategy document fail to capture is crucial to uncovering policy-driven non-access, equity gaps are rarely bridged when policies are implemented cookie-cutter-style across different contexts.

A. INTRODUCTION

Important as education is, equitable distribution is a major policy concern for most countries especially in the Global South where marked disparity in education persists despite records of different implemented education policies. This chapter explores the free Senior High School policy and how the provisions and the prescriptions of the policy distribute education (in)equitably. It further examines how the policy provisions shape meso-level implementation and micro-level individual responses. Exploring the free SHS policy to understand how equitable access and inclusion is achieved is necessitated by the marked disparities in access to secondary education in Ghana which research has

shown happen along regional, school-based, economic and gender lines despite efforts at the policy making and implementation levels to ensure even and equitable access (Darkwah, 2010). Based on Ghana's documented education access concerns, the children most likely to be out of SHS are those who come from poor families, females, from the northern regions of Ghana and those who attended poor schools. In Ghana, just like other Global South countries, education policies structure how children go to school. How children from varying backgrounds can take advantage of these policies depends on the policy provisions and prescriptions. In regions where access tends to be pronounced, policy goes a long way to either enable or impede equitable opportunities to education. It is common for policymakers to emphasize how the policy they spearheaded has improved equitable access. Curiously, interest in education policy has remained rarely chartered in Ghanaian Sociology.

In the Global North however, a review of sociological studies on equity in education suggest that education influences social mobility (Halsey et al., 1980; Trow, 2005) and differential labor market opportunities for the rich and poor due to stratified education systems (Shavit et al., 2007, p1). Sociological research that deals with inequality and equity in education has often been organized around four theoretical approaches: The functionalist approach highlights socialization and the inculcation of common societal values (Parsons & Bales, 1956). Equitable education is a matter of merit (Rawls, 1999; Meuret, 1999) and children who become disadvantaged in education can be explained by any deficit in their primary socialization (Ainsworth, Bell, & Stayton; 1974; Rawls, 1999). Socio-cultural reproduction theory also posits that inequality in school is a result of social constraints and not individual choices (Bourdieu, 1971; Bourdieu, 1974; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979)

Bourdieu & Passeron, 1971). The third theory, cultural relativism and pluralism speak to cultural traditions. This framework suggests that the education process must adjust to extant cultural traditions to avoid social problems that afflict culturally different youth (Hogg & McComb, 1969). The methodological individualism theory also implicates individuals in the inequality of the education system (Benadusi, 2002; Rawls, 1971). The focus of these approaches has been to explain inequality in education access and how equity relevant policy measures can be adopted to avoid discrimination and ensure a fair distribution of education. The empirical basis for these sociological approaches is, however, steeped in research in the Global North with little to no attention paid to the Global South.

Other sociological education equity studies suggest that avoiding discrimination in policy and implementation is insufficient in ensuring fair access to education (Crahay, 2000). According to Jacob & Holsinger (2008, p. 4), equity considers *the social justice ramifications of education in relation to the fairness, justness, and impartiality of its distribution at all levels or educational sub-sectors*. How

equitable an education system is, therefore, has to do with fairness in access and distribution of education (Jacob & Holsinger, 2008, p. 4; UNICEF, 2010).

Education systems deal with the complex whole that involves the macro, meso and micro issues of access. The goal in this chapter is to extend the literature on equitable education access by demonstrating how an interrelated part of the system, (macro-level policy) could set the tone for (in)equitable distribution of education in other parts (meso and micro). I consider a specific policy, the free SHS policy and how this implemented intervention increases the equity gap in the different social and spatial locations in Ghana.

1. Contextualizing Education access policy in Ghana and Sub Sahara Africa

Today, universal access to secondary education is a key part of the global agenda (SDG4). Ghana and other Global South countries have been on the journey to ensuring this goal is a reality since 1957 when Ghana attained independence. In Ghana, Article 25(1)(b) of the 1992 Constitution states that *Secondary Education in its different forms, including technical and vocational education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and, by the progressive introduction of free education.* The earliest efforts at reaching this goal can be traced back to the pre- and post-independence education policies. Pre-independence education policies aimed at producing literates (Boahene, 2000; Djamila & Djafri, 2011; William, 1964). The first attempt at creating access to education was bedeviled with challenges such as uneven access created along geographical (Bening, 1990; Brukum, 1998, pp. 131), gender (Graham, 1971, pp.133) and economic lines (Bening, 1990; Brukum, 1998).

Unequal access to education spearheaded efforts by past governments post-independence to increase access and equity in education. Various reforms and restructuring influenced by macro-economic structural environment, global context and worldwide education regimes have taken place. These restructuring birthed the Accelerated Development Plan of 1951, the 1961 Education Act, Reforms of the National Liberation Council, The New Structure and Content of Education of 1974, The 1987 education reforms, and the New Educational Reform of 2007 (Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh, & Addo, 2016). A common feature of these policy efforts has been about expanding access, improving curricular and reducing the duration of years spent in school.

Specific secondary education policies that have been employed to bridge the equity gaps include free secondary education for students of northern extraction. The southern and northern Ghana varied in upper secondary education financing schemes. Secondary education in northern Ghana was free

covering tuition, feeding, and boarding costs in contrast to the southern Ghana where the government's cost sharing scheme persisted before the free SHS policy (Koramoah, 2016; Asare-Bediako, 2014). Additionally, the Cocoa Board scholarship and merit scholarships for secondary schools, the hardship scholarships, the Senior High School subsidy, and the progressively free secondary education are all education financing schemes. These interventions were targeted based on economic need, regional education gap, and academic merit.

The key policy precursor to the current free SHS policy was the progressively Free SHS policy which absorbed a chunk of the fees of day students in government-assisted secondary schools in Ghana, to attain the goals of Article 25(1) (b) of the 1992 Constitution. SHS education was partially free, direct cost of secondary education was made free for day students. The government also built several hundred and twenty-three out of the two hundred that were proposed under this scheme by 2016 to increase accessibility (Mohammed & Kuyini, 2020).

These policies were made in fulfilment of political promises. Other African countries with similar implemented policies targeting secondary education including Kenya in 2008 (Esuman, 2008), Tanzania in 2014 (Ministry of Education & Vocational Training (MoEVT) (2014) and Uganda in 2007 (Werner, 2011), just like Ghana were also made in fulfilment of political campaign promises.

In these countries, access gaps have been created because earlier cost-free policies aimed at universalizing primary education has been implemented creating a situation where there was an increase in the number of children who completed primary education but could not progress to secondary school under different cost conditions (Lewin, 2011). Whilst free secondary education policies implemented in these countries all aimed at broadening access, they only absorb the cost of secondary education partially. These policies, however, increased enrolment rates.

Ghana's progressively free SHS similarly increased enrolment numbers. Notwithstanding, transitions to secondary schools remained an elusive goal to many children (Cann, 2019; World Bank, 2017). Inequitable access has persisted based on urban and rural communities, northern and southern, rich, and poor dichotomy (Cooke, Hague & McKay 2016; Kuyini 2013; World Bank 2011b; World Bank 2010). This has necessitated the introduction of the free SHS policy.

2. Ghana's Free Senior High School Policy Provisions

In September 2017, the government introduced the free SHS in fulfillment of their education campaign promise (Offei, 2018; Adogla-Bessa & Ayorkor, 2017). The government spent 2.7 billion, 2.8 billion and 3.1 billion in 2017, 2018 and 2019 respectively to finance the free SHS policy implementation. This makes the free SHS perhaps the most financially ambitious policy intervention to be implemented in Africa (Essuman, 2021; Cudjo, 2018). All cost is absorbed making secondary education in Ghana cost-free.

The policy covers all costs associated with upper secondary education (Chanimbe & Prah, 2020; Addae et al., 2019; Adu-Ababio & Osei, 2018; Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2018) including recurrent fees for continuing students as indicated earlier in the introductory chapter. Other cost borne by policy include house dues, and ⁵teacher motivation. All fee items are absorbed including feeding. Those placed as boarders are given three meals a day and day students are provided with one meal a day.

The policy has an equity component. First there is 5% of declared vacancies to be made available to stakeholders including (Traditional Authorities, Landowners, Teachers, Old Students, Missions) Furthermore, the policy reserves an additional 30% of declared vacancies in elite schools solely for students from public JHS (Free SHS policy and Strategy document, 2018, p. 21).

Whilst the policy gives concession to public schools and makes room for protocol placement, how the provisions ensure equitable access and education distribution remains unclear. Based on qualitative interviews with policymakers and grounded normative analysis of the findings, this chapter builds on the fairness and impartiality in the distribution of access to education debate. The goal is to provide an understanding of equity given this access policy. The central research question being addressed in this chapter is, how do specific education access policy work the equity gaps in Ghana's secondary schools? Other related questions to be explored include: What kind of access do people with varying backgrounds have under this policy? How do structural privileges and barriers mediate access outcomes, and how does the policy enable families to ensure equal SHS progression for all? This chapter problematizes education policy as key to how, which, and what access and non-access is made available to different people in context-specific situations.

⁵ Teacher motivation fee: a GHC10.00 fee previously paid by parents to cover the two-hour additional teaching periods that teachers worked. Under the free SHS, teacher motivation fee was increased to GHC20.00 and absorbed by the government of Ghana under the free SHS intervention has taken on that responsibility.

B. STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTER

The remainder of the chapter will be organized as follows. The first section is the analysis section with findings and discussions. The section that presents the key findings will proceed as follows. First, it explains how access policy drives access through the policy provision. Specific policy packages and how they enable access are examined. Specific non-access is also explained in four ways. Non receipt of offer or rejection of offer, lack of contextualization, projecting what the intervention will not do on subgroups and effect sizes of different households such as the wealthiest, poorest and the next poorest and finally, how the imperative of other equitable distribution such as gender is ignored.

Second, the findings section explains how certain perspectives such as economics are foregrounded and how other perspectives such as school-based disparities are foreclosed. Further, it explains how gender is foreclosed. Next, it contextualizes the meaning of policy-driven access by exploring who has authority to officially ascribe meaning to the access policy and how implementers define access based on the cultures of their implementing institutions. It further explores other possible but alternative meanings by those directly and indirectly affected by the policy, such as parents.

The subsequent findings section conceptualizes how the access policy makes inroads into the private sphere (households or families) to improve access outcomes. It suggests how an enabling environment is created for micro-level household access decisions. In-roads are categorized in two ways, direct and indirect, and these have the propensity to create three types of effect (no changes, surface change and deeper changes) in attitudes at the household levels towards access to secondary education. A further exploration of the consultative process based on the perspectives of the policymakers will be reported in two ways, widespread consultation, and non-extensive consultation.

The discussion section explores the concepts and the constitutive elements of policy derived access and non-access and how this affects implementation and micro-level household responses to the policy. The concluding section will reiterate the key findings highlighting the (non)access deterministic nature of the education policy being explored.

The chapter is based on the empirical data from policymakers as noted earlier in chapter 3, the methods chapter. The interviews with the policymakers were complemented with secondary data from two documents (the free SHS policy and implementation strategy document, and the statistical data on gender parity and disparity in access were collected from Education Management Information system (EMIS) data 2018/2019). Throughout this chapter, direct quotations from the Policy document are in italics to differentiate them from direct quotations from the interviewees.

Whilst the whole thesis employed grounded theory, the grounded normative theory (GNT) approach, is applied specifically in this chapter to account for policy making practices and to explore the inbuilt assumptions both in the policy text and from the perspectives of the authors. The traditional way of researching policy focuses on measuring impact, privileging the interests of policymakers, and often not questioning the basic assumptions behind the policy. However, the focus of researching policy in this chapter underwent a significant shift from the traditional way of researching policy. I approach the policy as a more complex process that can be contested through deeper investigation of who the recipients and non-recipients of the access are (Ball, 2006; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Sutton & Levinson, 2001). To this end, my analysis also aligns with the critical policy school of thought (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010: 70).

C. FINDINGS:

1. Access Policies Driving Access and Non-Access: The Policy and The Issues.

1i. Driving Access: Removing Costs, Improving Infrastructure, Increasing Proximity, and Removing Academic Cut-Off Points

A fundamental driver of access policies in pre- and post-independence Ghana is to build demand for education. This has conventionally been done by reducing the costs of attending school. The free SHS policy addresses this problem by eliminating the direct cost of schooling, the costs of complements, and by improving infrastructure at the SHS.

Table 7: Approved fees by the Ghana Education Service (GES) 2017/2018 academic year

<i>FEE ITEM</i>	<i>DAY STUDENTS</i>	<i>BOARDING STUDENTS</i>
<i>One-time fee item for first year students</i>	435.00 GHC	438.00 GHC
<i>Recurrent fee items</i>	101.47 GHC	105.47 GHC
<i>Teaching and learning support for Technical and Vocational students (TVET)</i>	100.00 GHC	100.00 GHC
<i>Feeding fees (3meals for boarding and one meal for day students)</i>	112.00 GHC	460.80 GHC
<i>Total- SHS</i>	648.47 GHC	1,004.27 GHC
<i>Total- TVET</i>	748.47 GHC	1,104.27 GHC

Source: free SHS policy and strategy document 2018

The respondents I interviewed emphasized that the policy and the cost provisions were the catalyst to the increasing numbers in enrolment at the SHS in Ghana in recent years. They also believed that once all these costs were borne by the government, a child's wider context did not matter. Children should go to school unimpeded regardless of economic background. Two policymakers explained saying:

We have increased access to education by over 40%. So, from 800,000 now to 1.2million children over three years 2017/ 2018, 2018/2019, 2019/2020, kids were falling off on annual basis, ... but once the economic barriers have been completely removed, they could go to SHS unimpeded (Policymaker, Free SHS Secretariat)

Another policy maker with over 32 years of experience in policy making also corroborated when he revealed that "there is nothing the parent is supposed to pay, and I am struggling to understand under the free SHS policy what will really prevent a parent from taking their child to school". The removal of economic barrier he said, 'should enable access for every child.'

The large increase in student numbers necessitated a rapid expansion and improvement in infrastructure and the policy makes provision for building new schools and adding new buildings to existing schools. However, at time of writing, only forty-four out of the planned 124 new SHSs have been built (Essuman, 2018, MOE, 2018). A Policymaker and a member of a parliamentary select committee on education noted that:

There is a lot of infrastructure work ongoing. Initially we were overwhelmed by the drastic increase in numbers, which is why we introduced the ⁶double track system as a short-term approach. We are constructing new classroom blocks, dining halls, dormitories across the country at various stages of completion to meet demand.

The free SHS program introduced a *catchment area initiative* (Free SHS Policy Document, 2018) with the aim of making commuting to school easier and reducing transportation costs. This initiative gave students the last option among the six choices of schools they must select so that the computerized selection program could easily place them in a school within their catchment area.

Policymakers also discussed the elimination of cutoff points as a barrier to entry and access. According to a policymaker at the regional education office in the central region:

Nobody fails, ...we do not conduct exams and say somebody has failed even at the basic level or even say somebody has been repeated, we do not do that. It is a smooth transition from the JHS after the basic education certificate exams (BECE) to the SHS level.

⁶ Double track system is an intervention that allows schools to take on more student. The staff and students are divided into two tracks. One track will be in school whilst the other is on vacation and vice versa. This system enables schools to increase enrollment whilst reducing class sizes.

While the interviewees showed detailed knowledge about the policy and what it aspired to achieve in terms of improving access, they did not show an understanding of how the policy can drive non-access.

2. Driving Non-Access: Going beyond the Obvious Meanings, Differential Policy Effects on Subgroups, Omissions in Policy Texts, Narrow Conceptualization of Concepts and Marginalization of Deeper Concerns

Ghana's free SHS policy like other policies drives access when we look at the easily measurable access indicators such as enrollment rate, completion rate and GPI. Even though most studies are not able to separate other factors to identify specific policy as a uni-causal input in improved access indicators, the general understanding is that cost-free access policy explains an unusual increase in numbers of enrolment, retention, and completion. Policymakers explain the increase in numbers as a direct effect of the policy they enacted. Access policies can however create non-access, and this can be explained when we go beyond the obvious meanings of the policy. For example, when policymakers discuss access, they mean offer. The policy promises to offer secondary education to everybody. Offer does not necessarily mean acceptance of access. A focus on the non-receipt of the offer or a rejection of the offer could paint a better picture of policy driven non-access in context-specific places.

The MOE (2016)'s Education Sector Performance Review states that 40% of children can transition to SHS without government intervention. We can contextualize the potential non-access outcomes of the rest of the population. If for example in the 2017/2018 academic year, enrollment increased by 11% and 31% in 2017 and 2018 (Ministry of Education 2017; Tamanja & Pajibo 2019), the backlog of children who are denied access needs to be explained. These include children who are offered admissions but do not go to school. What explains the rejection of the offer if secondary education is cost free? Policymakers, however, often concentrate on offer, sometimes on the receipt and rarely on non-access and those who will not take their placement in their analyses of access. Policymakers with the NGO's however differed in their understanding of whether the policy could provide access for everyone.

A policymaker who works with an NGO in response to a question on whether the policy could get everybody into school explained:

We feel that there will be instances where people will still not be able to go... Not because school fees have not been paid but because other school going cost are not absorbed by this package but in the main, we will expect that with the little effort, most people should be able to go so in the broad sense, it should address largely access issues and the equity challenge.

For policymakers, the relevant parameter when discussing how the intervention drives access is the numbers. They do not venture into the non-receipt of the offer and the differential easing of cost burdens on different income families. Policymakers cannot control whether individuals accept the intervention's offer for which they are eligible.

We can further explore non-access through the differential policy effects on sub-groups. What is missing in policymakers' projections is whether enrollment rate is same for children from the poorest households and the next-poorest households. It is obvious the effect sizes cannot be the same for all households, yet access is not contextualized to determine how the provisions will result in differential access outcomes for this subgroup when you leave the populations to the sub-units where the economic heterogeneity of the population come alive. Questions such as how the policy would fare in provision of access for people within different wealth quantiles has remained unanswered. The possible outcome of the lingering questions is that, at the individual levels, those who can afford can now doubly afford, and others could be further pushed down the non-access bracket without targeting.

Paramount among other policy-driven non-access concerns within subgroups is the differential policy effect given regional, district and individual factors and environments. Access policy meant to drive access could drive non-access if provisions for prevailing contextual issues are not factored in. What making provisions same for everybody regardless of regional context means is that access is rarely improved in regions where access issues tend to be pronounced. A policymaker from one of the NGOs in Ghana, had questions about the lack of tailoring with the policy provisions and he opined:

So even the whole idea of everyone going to school free is debatable, is that also the best use of our resources? Is it tailored enough? so clearly, there is room to tailor even within a constituent of vulnerabilities, there is room to tailor let alone the whole Ghana as a constituent.

The idea is that different income groups such as lower, middle, and higher-income groups exist, provide a compelling argument for tailoring, otherwise the package will mean more to others and less to others and probably nothing to others. Therefore, meaningful impact could best be explained if the policy could tackle access for the disadvantaged.

Omissions in policy text can drive non-access. Such omissions are possible when provisions are made without thorough research. The government of Ghana has no official data explaining the extent to which the nature of commuting or transportation issues affected transitions into SHS as the Ministry of Education, Ghana, has no studies on this. The policy, however, provided for non-access situations that arise because of distance to school through the catchment area provisions despite having no baseline study on the extent of the situation. The provisions however omitted situations where children are placed in regions further away from their catchment areas as day students. In districts with only

one SHS or no SHS, coupled with bad transportation networks in most communities, the catchment area initiative cannot be implemented giving rise to ill-placement. Ill-placement happens under three conditions: First, where a student is placed in other districts or regions as day students making daily transportation to and from school difficult. Second, when a student of one sex is placed in a single sex school of the other sex and when a student is placed as a boarding student but has a special condition that makes taking placement as a boarder difficult.

When students are ill placed, parents are supposed to pay for and secure hostels or private accommodations for their children. Also, the fear of allowing children to live on their own in private accommodations in other regions unsupervised, and the potential exposure of children to vices and sexual predators accounted for the rejection of offer and the eventual non-access outcomes of diverse children.

Apart from omission concerns, the narrow or poor conceptualization of policy terms could create non-access situations or school-based disparities. For example, the policy makes provision for 30% placement into elite schools to bridge school-based disparities. *Thirty percent of declared vacancies in option three schools will be reserved solely for students from public junior high schools* (Free SHS Policy and Strategy document, 2018, p. 21). The 30% concession for public schools to tackling the school-based disparity is a good policy initiative, nevertheless, it is inadequately conceptualized. Key questions remain unanswered, such as whether all public schools are considered sites of non-excellence and which specific schools are selected for this concession.

There is 5% of declared vacancies referred to as protocol placement. *Five percent of declared vacancies would be made available to stakeholders including (Traditional Authorities, Landowners, Teachers, Old Students, Missions)* (Free SHS Policy and Strategy Document, 2018). It is not clear how this will be administered beyond listing names of stakeholders whom the policy has privileged to influence school placement. Perhaps ensuring broad access to primary and JHS education of acceptable quality will provide equal opportunity for children to compete fairly for places in category A schools.

The free SHS policy also marginalizes deeper concerns. Key tensions in the policy such as neglect of equity issues (e.g., regional or geography, gender), remain unresolved. First, even though the policy problematizes geography determined access, policy prescriptions have no varying approaches to tackling differential regional and district issues that confront secondary education. I quote from the policy document: *There are disparities in access to, and participation in secondary education. This is manifested across regions, and districts, gender, and economic status of parents* (Free SHS policy and

strategy document, 2018, p. 27). It is difficult to explain how the policy's 'same solution template' approach would bridge the geographical disparities in secondary education.

Additionally, the policy document suggests inequity in education is a product of socio-cultural factors such as marriage, teenage pregnancy, the opportunity cost of education and a host of other factors. These issues affect girls disproportionately; however, gender is not used as one of the key entry points to addressing multiple exclusions. There is a taken-for-granted understanding that even though multiple access exclusions occur because of socio-cultural issues and historical inequalities in the policy non-access diagnoses, somehow, a cookie-cutter style solution would resolve these. The poor conceptualization of the equity dimension of the policy explains non access.

3. Foregrounding Certain Perspectives and Foreclosing Others

3i. Foregrounding Certain Perspectives and Foreclosing Others: Economic Concerns

The situational analyses reported in the access policy document shows that Ghana's secondary education is saddled economic, gender, regional, and school-based disparities. Despite situating the need for the policy around these concerns, the economic concerns are foregrounded, and the solutions underscore economic concerns predominantly. The idea is that tackling the economic concerns implicitly means tackling all the other concerns. A policymaker, from the national Free SHS Secretariat had this to say:

...the free SHS is just to remove all the cost barriers for secondary education in Ghana, and it just has this multi-purpose objective to improve access, improve quality and equity, because basically secondary education has been inequitable. Removing the cost and expanding infrastructure tackles all the grounds in the secondary space including skills development and ensuring equitable access to education.

From the extract above, we are not sure how removing cost alone tackles all issues. Policymakers, however, believe that giving the economic perspective primacy over others solves other education concerns. Additionally, in framing the policy, they defined economic or wealth broadly but did not conceptualize wealth into quantiles and how much those in any given vulnerability or wealth bracket need, defining out differential wealth categories, a problem which a reliance on a relevant data set like the Ghana Living Standard Survey could mitigate partially.

3ii. Foregrounding certain perspectives and foreclosing others: school-based disparities

The policy's poor conceptualization of public versus private school to solve school-based disparity has been explored under how the policy creates non-access. Whilst the underlying motive of this 70% versus 30% categorization is to ensure equitable distribution of access to elite schools, the definition and conceptualization of public schools as a place where students rarely make excellent grades to qualify to elite schools cannot be accurate. Yet this the perspective that is foregrounded sustains the argument that all public schools are subpar. What categorization can be made between public schools in rural areas and those in urban areas? What about public schools in the city centers and private schools in poor and deprived communities? This category under equity is poorly defined and scarcely conceptualized to understand the nuance and how that ensures equitable access.

3iii. Foregrounding Certain Perspectives and Foreclosing Others: (Non)access Experiences

The policy emphasizes those who have access and their experiences of access. Access rate is defined in the strategy document as placement acceptance rate, retention rate, improvement in infrastructure and a decrease in repetition. The table below shows the performance indicators targeted, and actuals, used to explain access.

Table 8: Performance Indicators Targeted and Actuals

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS, TARGETED AND ACTUALS							
Indicators	Definition	Baseline 2016 (%)	TARGETS (%)				
			2017 Target	Actual	2018	2019	2020
WASSCE Pass Rate	Proportion of SHS3 students who achieved A1-C6 in WASSCE in six relevant subjects and qualify for tertiary education	24.2	26	29	30	32	35
JHS to SHS Transition Rate	Proportion of JHS 3 students in an academic year who progress to SHS in the next academic year	67.8	74	78.8	80	85	90
Placement Acceptance Rate	Proportion of students placed that accept offer and enroll after placements by CSSPS	73.50		90	92	94	96
SHS Retention Rate	Proportion of cohorts of students that start SHS1 and stay on to complete SHS3 after three years	95.3		96	97	98	99
Poor Household Enrolment	Proportion of student enrolled from poor household						
Public JHS enrolment in elite schools	Proportion of enrolment in elite schools from public JHS		30	38	40	40	40
WASSCE Pass Rate Disaggregated by Gender	Proportion of females and male SHS3 students that achieve grade A1-C6 in six relevant subjects and qualify for tertiary education	Girls (21)	22	23.60	25	39	33
		Boys (22.5)	23.70	27.90	29	34	38
SHS Repetition Rate	The proportion of students who repeat a particular grade in an academic year.	0.7	0.6		0.5	0.4	0.3

Source: Free SHS policy and strategy document 2018

These indicators, while commendable, rarely explain access and non-access outcomes in context. The table does not reveal any indicator figures on progress with respect to percentage rates of students enrolled from poor households. They, however, accounted for students from the public JHS as an equity indicator. For instance, questions such as whether students are forced to take placement because changing placement is almost impossible is lingering. Furthermore, could changes in entry criteria such as changes in entry cut-off points explain the increase in enrolment rates? Whilst the retention rate is commendable, could the decrease in repetition rate be explained by the policy's withdrawal of support for each year of repetition? The policy is silent on these questions.

Policymakers rarely provided insights on non-access and its relation to policy neglect. For example, in explaining how specific policy neglects and the seemingly one-fit-for-all solution could drive non-access, eleven out of the fifteen policymakers disagreed that the policy could drive non-access. They explained that the policy is inherently good and non-transition or non-access outcomes are the fault of individuals at the private sphere and not a policy mishap. A policymaker, and a member of the parliamentary select committee on education shared light on this:

This is a public access policy, and it means that we are talking about structural and normative access for everybody, and it is very unwise for a few people to put their non-access version of reality on everybody else. People can decide whether to allow their children their children to go to secondary school or not even though the government said it is free. What do you expect the government to do? Move into people's private homes with bulldozers and drag their children to school?

Policymakers foreclosed any discussion on policy-driven non-access. They have faith in the ability of the policy to provide equitable education and blame parents and individuals for non-access outcomes. Foregrounding the access experiences predominantly and foreclosing other non-access experiences determines what solutions are prescribed by policymakers and the kind of implementation that is advised. For example, what are the experiences of those who could not transition to SHS despite the policy? Are there alternative training programs available to them cost-free? When access experiences are foregrounded, the main solution prescribed is cost-free education and even with that, cost is also defined narrowly in terms of direct fees.

3iv. Foregrounding certain Perspectives: Inbuilt Assumptions, Policymakers from Government Institutions versus those Outside Government Institutions

3iva. Policymakers from Government Institutions

Most policymakers emphasized that the policy would create access for everyone. Those who view the policy in this manner are primarily individuals affiliated with government institutions. They believe that even though the policy centered cost predominantly and other issues minimally, it has a transformative potential to bring about immediate changes with longer term consequences on ensuring gender equality in education. A policy maker whose history of drafting education policies dates to the 1992 notes:

The free SHS creates certain kinds of awareness, ... an in-built mechanism for promoting something beyond the superficial of what people say is only cost. ...we call it the soft dimension of peoples thinking about the differential valuing of boys' and girls' education that will hopefully change because after all they are not required to pay any fees.

The idea of SHS education been cost-free is given a meaning which is perhaps larger than life. There is the hope that people will begin to think differently about girl's education even though no aspect of the policy is meant to create such cultural awareness. All policies have the potential to transform, however how likely is this potential to be realized in this context? Policies have manifest and latent functions. Policymakers tend to prioritize interpretations and functions that align with the goals of the policies they create; however, they must first address the explicit, manifest functions before extending their arguments to the more implicit, latent functions.

3ivb. Policymakers Outside Government Institutions (union groups, NGO's)

Policymakers, especially those that were recruited from the education union groups, practitioners outside the mainstream GES, and practitioners from the NGOs had reservations about the policy and how the inbuilt assumptions could constrain conversations about access. They criticized the policy routines for focusing on easily measurable education indicators, which they felt were insufficient to address issues like historical access inequities. Additionally, they raised concerns about the absence of complementary policies to tackle key contextual challenges. This is made clear in the following excerpts:

Governments make a farce out of education policy routines, unfortunately, there is no democratic solution to this. Look at all the policies we have had since independence. Our policies are genuinely nice on paper, but this has been a big swindle. The problem is that our policies are inherently problematic. They provide limited options, that work essentially to increase enrollment figures in the now, while prepping to do major surgery, but what is required is to stop the gushing wound from happening. We as policymakers can bridge the geographical and gender gap with good policies if we want to, but we pretend to have such conversations, and that is what we call policy talk, knowing that nobody is ready to do the difficult job of bridging the disparities (Policymaker, NGOs).

Another policymaker, who is also a teacher and a teacher's union representative also opined:

The 30% concession for the public schools is a great initiative, but how long will we take affirmative action to bridge the gap. ...why is nobody interested in drafting policies that tackles historical inequalities of access to education. What we need is a policy that at the core of it is not about trying to create a pseudo balance.

Some of the policymakers also accept that the relevance of the government education access policy is limited, and they suggested a different approach would be better. A Policymaker and education practitioner outside the GES reflected:

Perhaps equal quality education will do and not handouts. The problem of inequitable access is persistent. ...in our communities, the best grade from a school is usually aggregate 26 or 27. The government's 30% quota will still not get a girl from this community into an elite SHS. This 30%

concession privileges a few people. How about tackling the inequality at the primary and JHS level so that with time, the children from these schools can equally and fairly compete for placements in the privileged schools.

The reflection of the policymaker above concurs with earlier suggestions that the best way to solve inequitable access into elite schools is to address the resource challenges bedeviling public basic schools to create a fairer, and a merit-based access pathway into elite schools (Chanimbe & Prah, 2020).

Regarding the inbuilt assumptions of the policy and its ability to drive equity, a policymaker and head of a secondary school from a teacher union group lamented:

One of the things we see in education policy is the idea of what works, and you and I know that cost-free policies that run on the mantra free education for everyone is the easiest and cheapest education policy to implement. Cheap education policies only exacerbate the issues eventually, it does not solve it... however, for policymakers, a simple one fit for all solution for all diverse access concerns, free education, and you are good to go.

For the policy maker above, you do not need to do any critical assessment or even a situational analysis to implement such policies. Interviewees under this section considered this an inadequate approach and an attempt at solving complex problems with simple solutions. This policy was described as inherently problematic. Policymakers drafted outside the mainstream GES mostly concluded that the free SHS is particularly good for rich people and poor for poor people. They accept that it is impossible for government to shoulder all the burden of providing education, however, they contend that an effective way to tackle this was to target the farthest left behind and provide comprehensively for their needs before anybody else. They lamented that despite years of drafting education policies, valuable lessons about effective targeting have been overlooked. Instead, policies are now approached with a narrower understanding of what constitutes a good education policy. A Policymaker and an Educational Practitioner outside of the GES commenting on what could be done to mitigate the policy mishaps said:

We need to have a nuanced understanding of access that emphasize the importance of additional policies to deal with key contextual problems, however, you cannot convince a government in a hurry to fulfil their Free education promise to take the time to figure it out before the policies are rolled out.

Apart from the concerns raised by the policymakers above, reinforcing the need to tackle contextual issues, the government's performance indicators on equity make no mention of gender except to explain differential West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) pass rates for children (Free SHS policy and strategy document, 2018).

3v. Foregrounding Certain Perspectives and Foreclosing others: Gender (Dis)Parity Index and policy implication explained.

The policy also forecloses gender as an important contribution to broader education concerns. Even though there is acknowledgement that gender issues exist, they are selectively conveyed and reframed as a cost issue which will disappear once cost-free policies are implemented. The narrowing of policy to emphasize cost and the limited focus on gender as an equity issue set the tone for non-access and crises-led improvement in Gender parity indicators.

3va. *Gender parity*

Gender parity index (GPI) is the ratio of female to male values of a given indicator. GPI in education is often calculated as female gross enrolment ratio over male gross enrolment ratio. It is just like other easily measurable access indicators employed to determine relative access to education for males and females in quantitative terms. GPI is useful for planning interventions geared towards eliminating gender disparity. *It measures progress towards gender parity in education participation and or learning opportunities* (UNESCO-UIS, 2009:49).

The table below presents the GPI figures in Ghana. Even though there are 16 administrative regions and 230 districts in Ghana, the figures are limited to the six regions and twelve districts that were selected for the study.

Table 9: Gender Parity Index Table (the yellow columns do not directly feed into the formula)

	Total Populat ion of 15- 17yrs	Male Populati on 15- 17yrs	Female Populati on 15- 17yrs	Total Enrolme nt	Male Total Enrolme nt	Female Total Enrolme nt	Total Enrolme nt 15-17 years	Male Enrolme nt 15- 17years	Female Enrolme nt 15-17 years	Gross Enrolm ent Ratio	Gross Male Enrolme nt Ratio	Gross Female Enrolme nt Ratio	Gende r Parity Index (GPI)
<i>National</i>	184608 4	933554	912530	115584 1	600815	555026	621290	312132	309158	62.6	64.4	60.8	0.95
<i>Regional Analysis</i>													
<i>Central</i>	163707	82144	81563	119251	60743	58508	70119	34428	35691	72.8	73.9	71.7	0.97
<i>Greater Accra</i>	273667	128617	145050	101658	55279	46379	56351	30061	26290	37.1	43.0	32.0	0.74
<i>Ashanti</i>	359556	178995	180561	269234	138364	130870	158656	80013	78643	74.9	77.3	72.5	0.94
<i>Northern</i>	187574	98672	88902	94100	52223	41877	47484	25802	21682	50.2	52.9	47.1	0.89
<i>Upper East</i>	81798	43330	38468	51127	26555	24572	21954	10398	11556	62.5	61.3	63.9	1.04
<i>Upper West</i>	54907	29155	25752	32035	17626	14409	11114	5300	5814	58.3	60.5	56.0	0.93
<i>District Analysis</i>													
<i>Cape Coast</i>	13595	5651	7944	22436	13238	9198	16295	9298	6997	165.0	234.3	115.8	0.49
<i>Mfantseman</i>	12539	5523	7016	10984	3862	7122	6948	2196	4752	87.6	69.9	101.5	1.45
<i>La Dadadekotopon</i>	11606	5650	5956	8866	5724	3142	4810	3202	1608	76.4	101.3	52.8	0.52
<i>Ningo</i>	5344	2678	2666	2687	1203	1484	1689	740	949	50.3	44.9	55.7	1.24
<i>Prampram</i>													
<i>Atwima</i>	11225	5632	5593	14836	9329	5507	9649	6116	3533	132.2	165.6	98.5	0.59
<i>Nwabiagya</i>													
<i>Atwima</i>	6513	3278	3235	3996	639	3357	2738	404	2334	61.4	19.5	103.8	5.32
<i>Kwanwoma</i>													
<i>Mion</i>	5741	3074	2667	568	367	201	294	204	90	9.9	11.9	7.5	0.63
<i>East Mamprusi</i>	9344	4936	4408	4477	1896	2581	2452	1056	1396	47.9	38.4	58.6	1.52
<i>Talensi</i>	6096	3264	2832	3037	1952	1085	1499	984	515	49.8	59.8	38.3	0.64
<i>Nabdam</i>	2491	1325	1166	2349	1040	1309	1513	687	826	94.3	78.5	112.3	1.43
<i>Jirapa</i>	6628	3581	3047	3695	1162	2533	1740	468	1272	55.7	32.4	83.1	2.56
<i>Nandom</i>	3408	1819	1589	2791	2194	597	775	589	186	81.9	120.6	37.6	0.31

Source: Author' creation from EMIS Data

Even though GPI is spearheaded in policy document because it is crucial for planning, there are issues. It is decoupled from gender as a social construction and the other complexities of contexts (within and outside of the school system). Employing GPI turns attention away from gender issues that serve as barriers to access and participation in the management of learning outcomes. For example, comparing equal numbers of boys and girls in school as gender parity achieved suggest that a particular gendered process in relationships between men and women undergirding their un(unequal) access to education has been dealt with. Nevertheless, both boys and girls may be enrolled in school without any changes in the practices or attitudes that discriminate against them.

Also, if gender parity is achieved at one, and underachieved at less than one, this provides insights into numbers, however, it is immediately obvious that the question of disparity is not answered at all. The puzzle is why look at parity only when the intention is to understand disparity as an aspect of non-access. The experiences of those who have access are what is emphasized in GPI and what policymakers account for in drafting policies. These experiences are foregrounded whilst those without access (that is within the disparity bracket) are foreclosed.

GPI is useful for the major implementing body, the Ghana Education Service because they are responsible for those who have access. Their mandate is to those within their schools in the districts, regional and national levels. For policymakers, addressing disparities could drive the integration of broader social programs into policy development. However, disparities are often the very issues they choose to exclude from consideration.

3vi Practical Implications of Employing the Gender Parity Index

As already noted, GPI *measures progress towards gender parity in education participation and or learning opportunities* (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2009, p. 49). Whilst the GPI is important in clearly enabling the policymakers to plan for those who have access, there are issues.

It does not exhaust the inequality concerns that it seeks to address. In fact, it does not reflect the level of women's empowerment that it seeks to enable. In page 49 of the UNESCOs Institute of statistics document that introduces GPI as a measurement of progress in gender parity, it mentions that GPI is also a reflection of the level of women's empowerment in society (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2009). We are not sure what to make of empowerment as used in the 2009 UNESCO document. There are two key meanings of empowerment, first the instrumentalist understanding of empowerment which

is measured in quantitative terms to include the ability to exercise choice based on resources, agency, and achievements (Kabeer,1999). Second, the processual understanding of empowerment which refers to the process by which those who were unable to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability to do so (Kabeer,1999, p. 1). In this case, it would entail the ability to make education choices. It is unclear which type of empowerment the GPI in its current usage implies.

Aligned to the above argument, GPI does not measure progress effectively towards gender parity in education participation beyond the processing' of children through school (Unterhalter, 2012, p. 74). Gender equality concerns extend beyond simply counting the number of boys and girls in school. Ensuring institutional accountability is difficult when progress is measured primarily by gains, without attention to the losses. The focus on easily measurable success indicators creates a challenge in moving beyond them. Monkman & Hoffman (2013) argue that the call to move past access metrics like enrollment in education policy has largely gone unanswered (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2005; Gordon, 1994), as policies remain centered on these more quantifiable outcomes.

3vii. Refocusing on Disparity and putting 'gender' back into the GPI and GDI

What will happen if we ditch parity for disparity? Policymakers prefer parity to disparity because parity enables them to measure progress. Focusing on disparity, however, enables us to focus on the declines and the failures. Furthermore, it is an impetus to ask how disparity is widening, what disparity means, who the actors are, and the actions and inactions that have led to the disparity. Asking who is included in the disparity brackets (such as those who failed their exams and consequently cannot progress to the next level of education, those who chose other apprenticeship options willingly rather than formal education, those whose access is hampered by inequality axis of gender, income, location, school-based disparity), takes us beyond the limiting view of GPI (the counting of the number of girls and boys in schools).

3viii. Putting 'Gender' back into GPI

Once the true figures of parity and disparity are identified, policymakers and implementers can reintroduce a genuine focus on gender in the Gender Parity Index (GPI) within education policies. In reality, GPI reflects sex, not gender. A more accurate term would be the 'Sex Parity Index' (SPI), as this better captures its actual meaning.

Using 'GPI' when it refers to 'SPI' gives the illusion that gender is being addressed in schools. The challenge is how to move beyond this mislabeling and truly integrate gender into parity and disparity indexes. I propose two solutions. First, policymakers and practitioners need to remove the 'gender' in the name GPI. This would make the manifest meaning of GPI, if incorporated into policy, come alive. It would mean we are dealing with sex parity and disparity in schools. Secondly, keeping 'gender' in the name. However, this raises two concerns. Maintaining the term 'gender' allows for conflating sex with gender in policy documents and misleadingly representing the measure.

3ix. Re-Gendering GPI: Putting the Gender back in the Parity and Disparity Discussion

Gender as a social concept is widely accepted but it is contextual in how it affects boys, and girls in different societies and across different historical times. Surprisingly official or institutional approaches to gender equality hardly engage gender as a social construction, thus, the heavy reliance of GPI now recommended to be renamed SPI. I suspect this is so because to be able to account for the different contextualization in which gender manifest, there is the need for a common scale of measurement.

Thankfully, research indicates indices that traverse contexts. Anyidoho (2021), highlights gender ideologies, myths, gender relations of power, and gender division of labor as the common indicators that sweeps across contexts. These three commonalities can be employed as a broad framework to measure gender parity and disparity in access to education. Institutions can be tasked to modify the frameworks whilst answering the questions about what has happened to power relationships underpinning decision making on education. What has happened to the division of labor and the disproportionate burden of household labor that one gender is often required to provide. Answering these questions would enable us to create a common baseline or frame of reference that allows flexibility to account for different contextualities and the situated mutations of gender manifestations in every society. This will further enable each region to employ their own interpretations of gender to evaluate their progress towards gender equality.

Sex parity and disparity in schools then become the surface or the hard numbers to help explore further how negotiations around the three common manifestations of gender are faring in different contexts. Whilst a comparative analysis can be done using the sex parity and disparity indexes, the actual indication of progress or success should be conditioned on when a positive sex parity in actual school numbers corresponds with a positive deeper behavioral change in gender parity's common

manifestations across contexts (power relationships, gender sensitive socialization, division of labor and the of myths around exaggerated biological differences).

To be useful as a measure of gender equality progress, the dimension or index must be defined in a way that indicates progress or improvement in the issues that created inequality in the first place. While this is not always easy because of the indeterminacy in the processes of gender relations, the progress made in the factors that constrain and undermine the equitable participation of girls and boys in education should be the primary locus of measurement.

4. Access is not, it becomes: The Contextual Meaning of Policy-Driven Access

The policymakers, the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Ghana Education Service (GES) have the authority to officially ascribe meaning to the policy intervention they create. Similarly, policy implementers also define it in certain perspectives because of how implementation works the access gaps in their polity or districts, and the unique cultures of their implementing institutions. Policymakers should have knowledge about what the policy is set out to do and what it could do. It is expected, however, that there would be reasonable differences of opinion in what the free SHS means for different people depending on whether they are policymakers, implementers, or parents of children who the policy is meant to help. Those directly or indirectly affected by the policy could discern meaning based on their circumstances. It is, however, expected that policymakers would have a deeper exploration of the meaning of the policy prescriptions set out in the policy document and its limitations.

For most policymakers, the free SHS policy addresses Ghana's secondary education concerns. The removal of cost alone is enough to get everybody into SHS regardless of the policy provisions. The differential context of implementation, and the possible differential household responses to the policy were rarely factored into their publicizing of the policy. They created their own meaning and advertised it to the general populace through the adverts about the policy using mediums such as the print media, radio, and television programs to explain the policy to the public.

Context played little role in the development of the policy, and the data suggest that it remains overlooked when projecting potential access outcomes. A false sense of confidence arises when policymakers extend the surface meanings of the policy and strategy documents to infer simplistic, one-dimensional latent meanings. These inferred assumptions, circulated in public discourse, exaggerate the policy's positive effects, often extending to outcomes that are unlikely to materialize.

Further, the imposition of positive meaning shaped other meanings. For example, the completely free narrative assuaged parents and significant legal adults and guardians of any responsibility they had to ensure the upper secondary education of their children. Their framing of meanings since the policy, both enables and constrains certain conversations and ways of understanding. The extract below is an example of the false narratives that was used in advertising the policy on two radio stations, Oman FM, and Peace FM:

Free SHS nea wohia ene adware

The extract suggests that under the free SHS policy, a child's only requirement is to show up to school, creating a false impression that parents bear no further responsibilities in their child's upper secondary education once the policy is in place. This oversimplified belief, promoted by policymakers, reinforces an unrealistic expectation of the policy's impact and downplays the ongoing role of parental involvement.

Important questions about meaning that need to be addressed include: What does the policy mean for children with rich or poor parents? What does the policy mean for implementers directly involved in the day-to-day running of upper secondary schools, and what does the policy mean for households with or without exit options? Exit option is defined in two ways. First, other recognized training alternatives that parents must pay the full expense for because they are not supported by the cost-free policy provisions. These include technical and vocational schools, which are not covered under the free education policy. The second exit option also includes informal apprenticeship training such as hairdressing, seamstress, and carpentry, recognized by government but the training and completion of which do not come with a government official certificate of completion. The former exit option involves money and the payment of expenses to make it happen, the latter is also an option for those who cannot bear the cost of this formal and informal training. There are those without exit options because they cannot go through the training alternatives and other recognized informal apprenticeship options.

A policymaker from an NGO, Child Right International, who was dissatisfied with how the policy was advertised and sold to parents, had this to say:

Parents are big stakeholders in education. The role of parents was underestimated big time as far as the free SHS was concerned. They were made to believe that they had little to no role at all in the secondary school transitions of their children. I also saw media campaigns and journalists who emphasized that free access meant no responsibility from parents.

The meaning they advertised and constructed narrowed the scope and complexity of the issues. Policymakers assigned meanings fell short of engaging context, nuance, variations in regions,

individual circumstances, and the social construction of gendered access. It also neglected the role of parents as key stakeholders. Access, however, became what policymakers said it was and the complex realities of the issues ignored explain non-access to SHS, especially for those whose parents were not aware they needed to support with buying items on the prospectus and paying for hostels in places where the catchment area policy has failed.

5. Public Access Policy, Making In-Roads into Private Spheres (Households) to Improve Access Outcomes for Minority Groups

Access policies are prescriptive. They prescribe solutions and back it with the funding to bring the policy to life at the level of Implementation. At best, an enabling environment is created for the private domain (families and households) to then make education decisions for children who qualify to progress to upper secondary schools.

The Free SHS policy impacts private spheres (families and households) both directly and indirectly, potentially resulting in one of three outcomes at the household level: no change, a surface-level shift (superficial change), or significant, deeper and more meaningful changes in attitudes towards upper secondary education.

Education does not happen automatically after policies are enacted. It depends on the policy provisions and prescriptions on the one hand and the family responses on the other. At the private sphere, families and households can grant or deny admission to school. Where families have traditionally transitioned to SHS and are capable of, and willing to provide both material and non-material support, public education policy only makes it easier to allow children to progress to SHS. These are families that would prioritize their children's education with or without the availability of free education policies. In this situation, the policy has made in-roads but triggered no change in attitudes towards education.

Another way is when families desire education but could not enable access because of cost. If children acquire education because of the cost-free policy, the policy is said to have made in-roads directly given that the policy is the key reason for access but triggers no change in attitude. Parents were inclined to take transition decisions already. A third way is when there are enduring inequities in families granted access, and families finances of education have frequently been used towards sponsoring one gender, for example boys only. When the intervention frees families of financial burden and girls can acquire education because there is no cost, and not necessarily because of change in attitude, this type of change is surface change.

All three scenarios can be seen in easily measurable quantitative access indicators such as enrolment rate, transition rate and GPI. The final type is when children receive no material and non-material support from families, irrespective of cost. Such children are excluded from education opportunities, and any possible indirect family negotiation of education. Public education policy engenders no change in attitude in this case whether surface or deeper. Where policies lead to a change in attitude towards non-transitions and a further positive access outcome, there are both surface and deeper changes. Policies are said to have made complete in-roads when it triggers both surface and deeper attitudinal changes towards boys' and girls' education.

What this policy has predominantly done is to free families of financial burdens to enable them to make positive education decisions. An outcome of surface changes could be the immediate increase in the number of enrolments following the policy creation. Different intervening variables such as implementation approaches and family dynamics can, however, structure how these in-roads are made.

Deeper level changes are, however, more enduring because it has to do with new ways of thinking about education and de-gendering access in the process. Policies, however, rarely trigger such deeper changes in attitudes in the households because of the poor conceptualization of policy prescriptions and provisions. Private spheres (households and families) often reinforce gender norms that hinder equitable access to secondary education. Policies that fail to promote meaningful shifts in these attitudes will have limited impact on achieving lasting equitable education outcomes.

To that end, I posit that public education policies provide assurance for equitable gender access, but it is the private sphere—families and households—that insures or safeguards this access. Although assurance and insurance are different concepts, they can reinforce each other. Sustainable improvements or lasting gains in education outcomes can only be achieved when progress results in both surface and deeper changes in attitudes and practices.

Given the foregoing, it is safe to speculate that education policies do not guarantee positive education outcomes. The policy performs persuasive functions implicitly in private spheres. Unlike the Domestic Violence Act that makes it possible to protect domestic violence victims, and strict law enforcement against perpetrators is a key aspect of the Act, such as prohibiting abusers with restraining orders and a bridge of which has direct consequences, education policies have no such force.

Consequently, it is expected that access to SHS despite the policy would remain a subject of implementing approaches and family level decisions. Subsequent chapters explore the role of implementers and families in translating the policy into education outcomes.

6. Consultative Process and Meso-Level Implementation

6i. Widespread Consultation

On consultative processes, the findings reveal that most policymakers were consulted and took part in the brainstorming process right up to policy draft until the policy came to be. The policy document listed the names of people and organizations acknowledging them for their contributions to the free SHS Education Policy and Strategy document. These include some Ministries, boards, all directors, and staff of the Ministry of education, Computerized School Selection and Placement Secretariat (CSSPSS), teacher unions, headteacher unions and NGOs, parents, and the public.

I was consulted right from the word go. When policies are made, consultation is widespread. People came on board to make this policy happen. You can look at the policy document and see the numbers of people who participated in the making of the policy. Everybody, and organization who mattered was brought on board and that is why the policy is so comprehensive (Policy maker).

Whilst some policymakers were happy about the widespread consultative approach to the drafting of the policy, others believe they were only called in after the fact.

6ii Non-Extensive Consultation

The policymakers who felt sidelined were mainly those from the teacher unions named in the policy document as having contributed to the making of the policy. A representative of one teacher union was surprised their name was listed as having contributed to the formulation of the policy. He had this to say:

It is always surprising the power of the political over the technocrats. We represent an association that is thick in the implementation of education policies and yet we are sidelined when education policies are made. It is quite surprising that our name is mentioned in the policy document. What did we contribute and how did we do that? ...they just put the name of our association there after the fact.

It was further explained to me that the only time they were consulted was after the policy was out and it was communicated to them. They thought that, as teachers were the ones tasked with the implementation of the policy, their teacher union would be part of the policy drafting process, but they were not. They issued communiques detailing concerns such as workload on teachers, learning process and contact hours, expected challenges to implementation such as sacrificing their holidays, among others. A key among such communique was the one done in August 2018. It was mainly through such communique that their concerns and inputs were factored into the policy, consequently they did not

think the minimal role they played should merit been named in the policy and strategy document as policymakers who were extensively consulted.

These sentiments were also shared by the few implementers who were drafted under this chapter. A new chapter will be dedicated to policy implementation and the role of implementers and education practitioners in bringing the policy to life.

6iii. Meso-Level Implementation

The Free SHS secretariat was created by the Ministry of Education to see to the implementation of the free SHS policy. Whilst the head office is located at the Ministry of education as a key part of the policy-making structure in theory, they are practically the bursary aspect of the policy. The secretariat is headed by the national coordinator and assisted by a deputy coordinator. It also comprises of regional coordinators who are mostly fieldworkers mandated to monitor and feed the secretariat with real time data on students' headcounts, and school supplies such as uniforms, books, and textbooks. Before the policy came to be, there were GES SHS coordinators. Most regions have disbanded the GES SHS coordinators. Only one of the regions has kept both the education service's SHS coordinator in addition to the free SHS coordinator.

The policy provision and the creation of a secretariat shape implementation, however, the main implementer is the Ghana education Service.

D. DISCUSSION

Education access in the policy is conceptualized primarily as cost removal. This is a simplistic way of conceptualizing access, and it presents possible non-access situations. First those within the lowest wealth brackets who are unable to afford the additional cost that implementation and implementers at the meso-level would define in, such as purchasing school items on the prospectus, paying for hostel facilities or accommodation in places where the catchment area policy has failed, would be excluded from upper secondary education.

Other issues emanating from the policy provision include the catchment area policy. It is not clear how this would be implemented flawlessly as there are districts with no secondary schools in certain parts of the country. Children would therefore continue to receive placement in other districts and regions creating catchment area implementation mishaps in the process.

Further, equity issues are defined out. Far from equity, equality principle is applied as the provision is same for everyone regardless of their peculiar situations. Under this policy, all students have equal access to education (Atchison et al., 2017) but inequitable pathways to access. Notwithstanding, this rarely reduces disparities because of differences in school categories, and other underlying disparities such as gender, region, and personal economic circumstances of children.

Equalizing the access provision does not necessarily equalize opportunity for all children. Defining out equity issue for e.g., gender has implication on implementation. It means implementers at the Gender Desk Office are presented with no framework about how to implement the gender equity aspirations of the policy. The policy situates girls' education as high priority in its baseline analyses and yet continue to marginalize the importance of gender in understanding sufficiently the full range of issues related to access for children and the solutions that are necessary. The policy narrows the scope of relevant gender issues and simplify complex social, cultural, political, and economic issues reducing these to just the economic, thereby encouraging initiatives that are not designed to address the gender inequities in education identified.

The narrow conceptualization of wealth also means that implementers at the data and planning unit of the Ghana Education Service are not required to generate or collect data based on differential wealth quantiles of children progressing to SHS. Consequently, targeting, and contextualizing implementation to individual students' situations becomes challenging.

Additionally, even though the policy seeks to equalize education opportunities, there are certain zones of exclusions inherent in the policy. First, the policy excludes repeaters as children who repeat classes are asked to pay for each year of repetition. Second, when children who have passed the BECE exams and are successfully placed are unable to transition with their cohorts, they are excluded unless they re-sit the BECE exams.

Furthermore, the policy conceptualization begs the question whether implementers can define in what policymakers and the policy document has defined out. This is, however, debatable as it would depend on factors including the institutional directives on implementation and implementers own conceptual understanding of how the policy enhance educational opportunities for the socially and economically disadvantaged.

Also, policymakers' articulation of meaning suggests a blurring in the meaning of the 'free.' Whilst those who were directly involved in drafting the policy say it is 'absolutely free,' those within the NGOs, teacher and headteacher union groups and civil society space questions the ability of the policy to enable equitable education without targeting. What the 'absolutely free' policymaking crusaders do

is that the meaning they create of this policy sets both legitimate and illegitimate boundaries of policy discourse. For example, it is inaccurate to create the impression that all a child needs to transition to SHS is to pass the exams because governments have taken all the cost burden off parents. Creating this meaning sets the tone of ‘free,’ absorbing parents of any responsibility towards enabling access for their children at the private sphere or household levels. Implicit in this official meaning is the explicit call for parents to be irresponsible. It is difficult to make transitioning to SHS compulsory, or force parents to make transition decisions for two reasons. First, the ‘free’ is only aspirational in practice. The policy can only influence families directly and indirectly, triggering three kinds of changes (deep change, surface change and no change) in parental attitudes towards enabling access for their children. There is no compulsory intent as the policy is not backed by a law that makes education transitions compulsory. Secondly, making transitions compulsory can rarely be pursued as the policy presents a one fit for all approach to tackling access which would have consequences for poor parents.

Following from the points noted above, it is safe to suggest that a clear path towards ensuring equitable education is largely missing and this could create enduring access issues at implementation and consequently micro-level households and family levels.

E. CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the policy and the strategy document as a key structural and or public access issue and what the makers of this policy make of it. The chapter explored the extent to which the policy provisions bridge the equity gaps and how that shape education outcomes for children. The policy is analyzed to account for possible drivers of access and non-access, for example, how certain perspectives are defined-in, and others foreclosed, and how that could shape access for different people.

Overall, the findings suggest that local variations in education outcomes will be based on what perspective the policy amplifies and what it excludes. First, on driving access, the focus on cost removal could trigger a sharp increase in measurable indicators such as enrolment rate, transition rate and GPI. However, whilst this will largely get people in schools outside of the 40% who could transition on their own without help, for others, it will be a challenge, without deliberate targeting for differential wealth quantiles, gender disparity and regional variations.

Further, there is a disconnect between the conceptualization of education problems and the solutions posited in the policy document. Policymakers accept that these problems, especially inequity in access along wealth, gender lines, regions and schools persist, however, they focus on the cost aspect of the

solutions. A review of the policy document and discussions with policymakers reveal a paradox: while we are led to believe that removing costs can address various access issues, the reality is that these issues are often complex and interconnected. A simple cost removal solution is unlikely or inadequate to resolve them comprehensively.

This makes Ghana's sharp increase in secondary school access outcomes puzzling. Further on conceptualization, the poor conceptualization of terms such as public versus private school, and the lack of clarity in what constitutes protocol placement and elite placement limit the equity aspiration of the policy.

It is recommended that a simple collection of the biographical data when students are registering for the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) coupled with the use of other relevant data set such as Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS) could guide policy in determining individual financial needs to enable targeting policy provisions along need-based distribution.

Also, focusing solely on gender parity in policy documents can obscure the more complex work needed to address gendered disparities. To bridge this gap, I recommend using the Gender Disparity Index for a more nuanced understanding while also advocating for a more thorough exploration of gender issues, moving beyond the basic or simplistic calculations of the Gender Parity Index and Gender Disparity Index.

In conclusion, the policy in its current form and the policymakers understanding of it does a poor job of bridging the equity gaps for those in the minority brackets defined along gender, regional, wealth and school-based disparities. At best, the policy assures access for everyone but a further exploration into the meso-level implementation and micro level household responses is key to understanding what insures equitable access to upper secondary education in Ghana. The subsequent analyses chapter explores implementers and the approaches they adopted to bring the free SHS policy to life.

CHAPTER FIVE: BRINGING EDUCATION ACCESS POLICY TO LIFE: WHAT HAVE POLICY IMPLEMENTERS GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Education policies are only as good as the implementation efforts. Nonetheless, although policy research is commonly seen as an essential and inherently valuable aspect of policy process, the role of policy implementers—who play a critical role in determining educational access and barriers—has been notably underexplored. When implementation has been explored, it has often been treated as an ancillary topic. This chapter highlights the central importance of implementers in structuring education opportunities. It also emphasizes the implementation approaches adopted by policy implementers and how they mediate education outcomes. Using in-depth interviews of implementers and education practitioners, I answer the questions; what approaches to implementation were employed by education practitioners to translate Ghana’s new secondary education policy the ‘free SHS Policy’ into practice? How do implementers navigate adopting specified policy directives whilst adapting them to their contexts? What outcomes related to access or lack thereof might emerge from different implementation approaches? The findings suggest that implementers are constantly negotiating between prioritizing approaches that are appropriate for their districts and following government directives about implementing the access policy. Most implementers applied the education directives cookie-cutter style and suggested that implementation was easy. Consequently, non-access situations arose for those in regions with existing structural barriers. A few implementers who tailored the guidelines to their local contexts reported that the implementation process to be challenging. Contextualizing implementation, however, had conflicting results; it produced both access and non-access outcomes. Where additional policies to deal with key contextual problems were identified, access outcomes increased for those who faced non-access situations. I conclude that even though implementers shape access, their influence in enabling successful access outcomes is minimal in places where structural barriers persist.

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the implementation of the Free Senior High School (SHS) policy, evaluating whether and how the approach is effectively achieving its goal of creating equitable access. The success of an education policy action depends on how it translates into access and quality outcomes for those the policy intervention is meant to help. This has got to do with what approaches to implementation are employed by education practitioners, and how key contextual issues are dealt with.

In dealing with contextual issues, implementers face the dilemma of prioritizing approaches that are appropriate for individual students, schools, and districts, and how to follow government directives about implementing the access policy. This concern has remain rarely explored. The main assertion in this chapter is to advance the argument that implementers can shape education access outcomes given specific implementation approaches.

The chapter is organized as follows: First, I outline the various implementation traditions and approaches used in education policy discussions. Next, I provide an overview of the education implementation context in Ghana. Finally, I analyze the findings, focusing on both local and central implementers. At the local level, the analysis explores different implementation approaches, classifying them into rigid, flexible, and adaptive approaches to implementation.

The next section will address the roles of central implementers in mediating access. It will also conceptualize the dynamics between central and local implementers emphasizing the relationship matrix among implementers, their relation to access, and how the gaps in implementation are created. The chapter will conclude by discussing how these constraints limit the effectiveness of implementers in achieving successful educational access outcomes for children.

The empirical grounding of this chapter is data generated from implementers of the Ghana Education Service at the regional (Regional Directors, Regional Data, EMIS and Planning Officers, Regional Gender Desk or Girls' Education Officers), district (District Directors, District Data, EMIS And Planning Officers, District Gender Desk or Girls' Education Officers) and Schools (Headteachers, Assistant Headteachers) levels.

1. [Implementation traditions and approaches](#)

Globally, education distribution and access, and how that works social mobility and creates opportunities for different demography is a crucial concern in sociological studies (Trow, 2005). Implementation, an interrelated part of the education system can also explain differential access and how access is distributed. However, while policy as an education issue has been studied for many years, exploring implementers and how they translate goals into policy action (implementation) as the main research topic is recent. Consequently, theories that explain implementation issues are rare. Perhaps, this is also because such studies are treated as ancillary topics. The few research that centers on implementation, have explored issues using different frameworks based in part on their own

theoretical backgrounds. These traditions spanning *political science*, *institutional analysis*, *network theory*, *critical theory*, among others could in part drive the methods adopted in specific implementation studies (Young & Lewis, 2015, p. 4). It also explains why there are no agreed-upon implementation definitions (Fixsen et al., 2005; Hill & Hupe, 2002; Honig, 2006). A few studies that treat implementation as a main research topic have been done in the Global North contexts. Specific education policies whose implementation has been researched extensively include the ‘No Child Left Behind Policy’ introduced in the USA. One of the key findings was that “the impact on state agencies, school districts, schools, teachers, and students have been negated, expanded, and modified during implementation” (Anderson’s 1975, p. 79). This chapter will also explore implementation as a main topic necessary for theorizing education access.

The concern of earlier studies has been about delineating barriers to successful policy implementation (Stewart et al., 2008), such as issues of accountability (Odden, 1991; Honing, 2006), and how implementers create and modify policy whilst bringing the policy to life (Jacobsen & Young, 2013). An attempt at analytical framework has focused on implementation success or failure (Goggin et al., 1990). A myriad of studies on implementation success or failure has adopted top-down and bottom-up approaches (Pulzl & Treib, 2007). The bottom-up approach emphasizes the role of local-level administrators as a key factor to achieving policy aim (Birkland, 2005). The term street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 2010) or front-line implementers (Weimer & Vining, 2017) have come to be associated with implementers at the local level. Top-down conversely suggests that implementation is best studied, focusing on implementers at the top (Maznamin & Sabatier, 1989; Meter & Horn, 1975). The two approaches have sometimes been merged. Such a hybrid approach to studying implementation seeks to overcome the weakness associated with adopting one approach or the other because local and central factors affect implementation outcomes (Pulzl & Treib, 2007).

In furthering the hybrid implementation tradition, this chapter also employs data collected from implementers at various levels, local and central. However, unlike studies that concentrate on explaining successful or failed implementation through the absence or presence, of variables or indices, this chapter seeks to expand our understanding of how context informs implementation practices, and the approaches used by implementers to ameliorate policy defects and their (non)access outcomes.

In furthering the implementation research as a hybrid debate, this chapter will similarly examine the full extent of vertical (all levels of government) and horizontal interactions (different actors within each vertical level) to provide greater insight into the implementation of the free SHS policy.

Furthermore, this chapter extensively explores a more direct link between specific policy and implementation in the Global South context, given that the few theoretical approaches that problematize implementation is grounded in the empirical evidence from the Global North context.

In exploring how implementers navigate specified policy directives whilst adapting them to their context, the analysis will underscore the relationships among implementers in the vertical order and provide insights into what works, for whom and under what conditions. The overarching goal is to show how education implementation efforts create access in the process and how non-access can arise due to implementation mishap.

2. On Implementation: The Ghana Contexts

The Government of Ghana, through the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, school regions and districts have implemented different policies since independence. Whilst there are a host of studies on the policies that are the subject of numerous implementation efforts, implementation studies as the main concern are limited. When implementation has been explored, it has often taken the form of evaluative studies, where there are base-line studies, mid-line studies and end-line studies. Key education policies that have been problematized in Ghana include the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) (Akyeampong 2009; Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Maikish & Gershberg, 2008; Rolleston, 2009; Tomasevski, 2006) and the capitation grant scheme (Akyeampong, 2009; Maikish & Gershberg, 2008; World Bank, 2004).

In the recent past, when the policy to extend the duration of SHS from three to four years was implemented, a plethora of scholarships on the subjects emerged to theorize the relationship between academic outcomes and the duration of time spent in school. These sets of scholarships are on the policy itself. Policies have often been studied separately from implementation because the implementation of policies sometimes happens years after policies have been initiated. For example, the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (fCUBE) was initiated in 1996 with support from the World Bank and other international donors. However, it was not until 2005 that the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2003-2015 introduced the capitation grant to schools nationwide to put the implementation of Universal Primary Education in effect (Nishimura et al., 2009).

The next set of scholarships tackles the implementation of the policies. For instance, Nudzor (2013) noted that there was a disjuncture between the FCUBE policy goals (a right-based policy rooted in social democracy) and its implementation (neo-liberal policy implementation) where parents were

made to pay for the private cost of education. Implementation research on specific policies is rarely chartered. There are, however, evaluative studies such as those commissioned by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Department for International Development (DFID) and other bodies that reassess the impact of implemented policies. Such scholarships are considered grey literature. A few of these studies are, however, published in academic journals, such as the one on Complementary Basic Education in Ghana (Casely-Hayford & Hartwell, 2010). Apart from the limited research that examines implementation and how their approaches mediate access outcomes, implementation research has often been done quite disconnected from the policy that necessitated the implementation in the first place.

A set of studies has emerged in recent times on the implementation of the free SHS education policies in Ghana. The proliferation of studies emphasizes the challenges that has marred the smooth implementation of the policy (Chanimbe & Prah, 2020; Matey, 2020; Public Interest & Accountability Committee, 2020; Chanimbe, 2019; Tamanja & Pajibo, 2019; Asumadu, 2019; Addo, 2019; Amissah, 2019). They noted that the challenges include overcrowding, lack of elective textbooks (Amissah, 2019), inadequate infrastructure (Amissah, 2019), delay in the disbursement of funds to schools (Matey, 2020), Supply and logistics issues for example over or under supply of food and poor accommodation for staff (Public Interest and Accountability Committee, 2020).

A study by Chanimbe & Dankwah (2021), similarly forefront the issues with implementation to include inadequate teachers, delay of school funding and overcrowding in classrooms. Chanimbe (2019), broaches the covert roles of diverse stakeholders to lessen the adverse effects in the policy's implementation. Specific aspects of implementation such as the double track system which was introduced to deal with the increase in enrolment and infrastructure deficit have been examined. Tamanja & Pajibo (2019) also noted that the double track system was fraught with challenges.

A host of scholars have emphasized the need to delineate schools into categories to enable the exploration of the differences and similarities in the challenges that have bedeviled the implementation in context specific schools (Asumadu, 2019; Public Interest and Accountability Committee, 2020).

Whilst these studies are profoundly revealing in providing an understanding of the challenges that have marred the implementation, the approaches to implementation have rarely been chartered. Similarly, they overlook the quandary implementers face with contextualizing implementation to their local contexts and following implementation directives. I am yet to come across any studies that is empirically grounded in data from both local level implementers such as headteachers at the school,

who are thick in implementation, and central implementers such as district education and regional level implementers.

It is important to explore approaches to provide an understanding of how diverse kinds of implementers across the regions and schools have brought the policy to life. Education implementation occurs both at the local levels and the regional and or national levels. Each local level implementation is distinct given local implementers approach to implementation, their encounters with central implementers and implementation directives from the District, Region, and the National Education Service. It is ambitious to capture what is simultaneously occurring at the local and central implementation levels as a dialectic process. Consequently, researchers rather explore implementation as a unidirectional top-down or a bottom-up process. In this chapter I adopt the hybrid implementation approach. I believe that we should see both the forest and the trees. This will enable the interconnectedness of the local level implementation to the discourses and meaning-making that occurs at other levels of implementation.

The key orienting point in this chapter is, therefore, to unravel how implementation of specific access policy mediates equitable access outcomes given the policy. While the chapter focuses on education practitioners at the secondary education level, practitioners at this education subsector cannot be considered alone as their ability to function depends on the ability of the whole education system. To this end, we consider implementers at various levels comprising actors at the horizontal and vertical levels in answering the questions: How do implementers navigate adopting specified policy directives whilst adapting them to their context? What non(access) could arise for those in regions where access issues tend to be pronounced? How does implementation engender education access?

B. FINDINGS

1. Approaches to Implementation, Local Level Implementers

The findings from the data suggested that implementing education policies is shrouded with many challenges, including inter-alia complexity of schools, implementers understanding of the policy, anticipated and unanticipated structural constraints, policy provisions and implementers own interpretation of policy intentions. To overcome this, implementers adopt several approaches to implement the free SHS policy.

1i. Rigid Implementation

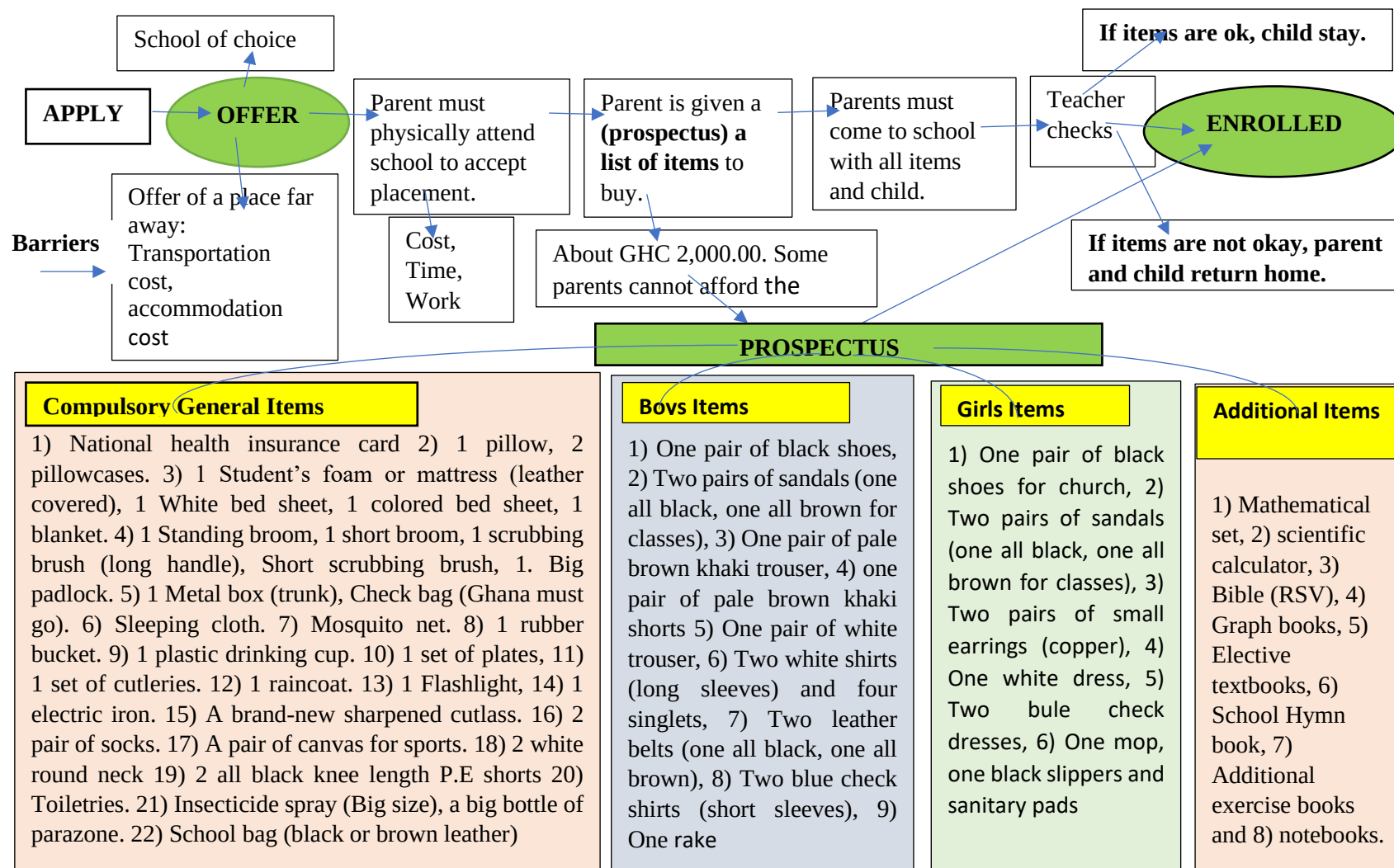
Many of the implementers followed the directives about implementing the free SHS. Headteachers offer admissions to students who have been successfully placed in their schools by the computerized selection program. Those who come for admissions are given a prospectus containing a long list of items to purchase (General items, items for girls, items for boys and other additional items) for school. These items are inspected upon arrival when the school officially reopens, and if the listed items have been brought, the student is said to have successfully transitioned. This way of implementation is rigid and linear; it did not involve negotiation among implementing actors as it assumed every student being brought for admission can satisfy the admission ⁷requirement. Implementing the policy this way is straight-forward and involves a simple routine of crosschecking items students brought. What follows below is the voice of an interviewee:

All we do as heads is to admit them after they have successfully been placed in our school. Of course, they are given prospectus with items to buy and bring. Once that is done, they become our students. This is the policy directive we must follow, and I guess it makes everything easier (Headteacher)

This way of implementing the policy was widespread among the headteachers I interviewed. Six out of the ten headteachers adopted this implementation approach. The table below shows the process mapping of how children go to school and the items on the prospectus they must bring.

⁷ Satisfying admission requirement happens in two ways. First, students must be successfully placed at the school, they should receive and accept the admission offer letter from the school. Second, students who have admission letters are required to bring the expected number of articles or items listed on the school's prospectus. Students who do not bring these items are sent home.

TABLE 10: PROCESS MAPPING OF RIGID IMPLEMENTATION AND HOW CHILDREN GO TO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL



Source: Author's creation based on the secondary school prospectus of twelve SHS

Charging additional fees despite the government barring such charges are some of the ways in which a headteacher could go against the implementation directives. Poor infrastructure and inadequate furniture explain why implementers go against this implementation plan to charge extra fees. Some intimated to me that they could not go against the linear implementation directive as others who had tried to do the contrary had had severe consequences. This sentiment was made known by a headteacher in the excerpt below:

Going against this simple implementation routine could attract severe sanctions, two headmasters were relieved of their post and some others were interdicted for this, so it is not worth contextualizing implementation. A simple infraction of implementation guidelines, and you are accused of charging illegal fees and labelled a puppet of the opposition party.

While the fear of sanctions and the political labelling and tags were key drivers for the strict adherence to policy directives, some headteachers were happy with the policy directive because they said it was easier to implement as compared to previous policies. Before the free SHS was launched, headteachers were responsible for the collection of school fees as part of the administrative process. They spoke about how difficult it was to collect fees from students every term and every academic year. Some intimated that parents whose children could not transition because of fees were constantly knocking on their doors for help and they could do little to nothing about it. Some said the solution was to go into hiding for about a month after issuing the admission letters to safeguard their sanity. With this free SHS, following the implementation directive as told made their lives easier. In the words of one headteacher:

Because of the free SHS, now I can sleep when I sleep. I do not have to carry the cane and drive students from their classrooms. I do not have to deny a student an entry into our school because of fee-related issue. This current implementation situation is heaven.

These sentiments were shared widely among many of the headteachers I interviewed. I enquired about how they followed up on those who are successfully placed in their schools but do not take their placement and how they know the time is due to close their admissions. The findings suggest that reporting duration and close of admissions differ among the schools. There is no fixed date for closing admission.

The new implementation system where they did little was relieving. There were, however, a few others who implemented the policy, taking into consideration the context.

1iii. Adoption and Adaption to school context

This involves contextualizing implementation, and prioritizing approaches appropriate for schools and districts. It was rare to find headteachers who emphasized implementing approaches that were appropriate for their schools. Following the policy directives to implementation meant adhering to a sequential process that moves logically and predictably from one step to the next such as from placement to admission to sending the spaces of those who did not come for their admission back to the Free SHS secretariat and closing admissions. However, some implementers who intimated to me that they prioritized approaches based on what they thought was necessary said that successful implementation is always messier than what central planners and authorities think it should be. A Headteacher in defense of why they contextualize expressed this view:

We are the foot soldiers of implementation; we are on the ground implementing the policy, and it is not as straight forward as the directives suggest. You must contextualize it all the time whilst making sure that you do not fall into trouble.

Some headteachers who used their ingenuity to try other methods failed as the efforts were counterproductive to the policy intentions. For example, in schools where the furniture was inadequate to accommodate many students, headteachers asked parents to pay for furniture as part of the admission process. This encountered considerable backlash. Asking parents and students to pay and or collecting monies from students has been the easiest go-to approach to solving school-based resource, furniture, and infrastructure needs. In a similar development, a headteacher who received some backlash when he tried contextualizing made these revealing comments which suggest that those who dared to adapt implementation to school context risk being sanctioned:

If this implementation can be successful, then parents must be made to pay to complement the efforts of governments. For instance, our furniture is inadequate, and at one point, students were sitting on makeshift chairs. How do we implement this smoothly without asking the parents to contribute something? In the past, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) dues levied every student helped. I asked the parents to pay a small token, some paid but others claimed they cannot come to school just because of these ‘moneys’, so I stopped, well I do not want to risk being transferred to a remote area.

The above extract was an example of how contextualizing implementation had failed.

There were occasions when implementation was successful. Other headteachers employed strategies that proved very productive in shoring up access and adhering to government directives at the same time. The issue of excesses of students who have transitioned and the lack of infrastructure to meet the demands necessitated the introduction of the double-track system. The double-tracking or multiple stream system categorized students into two tracks: gold, and green. Headteachers were asked to implement this in a specific way: That one track comprising students offering all the courses will come

to school, and all teachers are expected to do a double job of showing up and teaching the two streams of students. It meant that teachers had little to no vacation after one track or stream. Some headteachers refused this way of implementing the policy and adapted the tracking system to their contexts. They grouped the tracks according to courses. One approach could involve organizing students into tracks: Track One would include Arts (General and Visual) and Home Economics, with teachers for these subjects present at school. Track Two would consist of Sciences (General Science and Agriculture) and Business, with teachers for these subjects, who were previously on vacation, being the only ones present during this period.

This adaptation received criticism from the Ministry of Education initially as headteachers who attempted contextualizing it this way were warned, but later, when it proved successful, the central implementers whose job is mainly supervisory at the regional levels accepted this for some schools and Districts. Some headteachers whose schools have been earmarked for the tracking system even refused to track as they said their numbers were normal and they could do with one track and their Districts have been exempted from tracking. A headteacher who was among the first to implement the tracking system differently noted:

Even with the tracking system, they wanted to insist on a particular style when those of us on the ground knew that it would inconvenience teachers greatly. Wesley Girls was the first school to defy the tracking order and do it their own way here. A few others like me also implemented the tracking differently as per my school situation. Well, you could be sanctioned, but with time, it becomes acceptable if your adaptation succeeds.

The above extract speaks to occasions when implementation was adapted to suit teachers' availability and free them from the undue pressure of doing a double job given the implementation.

It was further explained to me why thinking about teachers' convenience was key and how grave a mistake it would be if local implementers had not insisted on that when central implementers had missed the point. Those policies would be accepted if teachers supported the policy. You cannot garner support from teachers if the implementation puts them in an uncomfortable situation. A headteacher narrated:

We do the routine work at the lower levels of implementation, and we are the face the public see when they think about the policy, ...if the policy will command public trust, we must mute any resistance by teachers. The teacher union can strike and call the policy misguided if they feel overwhelmed by the sheer amount of work, and that will be the end of the policy.

Headteachers do a lot of introspection and reflection about the possible consequences before they decide whether to implement the policy standardized matter, or to center the needs of other implementing personnel in their schools. Prioritizing teachers in implementing policies is what makes the policy aspirations achievable. The implementation of policies is often impossible without the co-

operation of the teachers. They can easily undermine reforms in the implementation phase, while blaming policymakers for having attempted bad policies.

Contextualizing implementation has sometimes got to do with adapting it to individual student's circumstance. This is discussed below.

1iii. Adoption and Adaption to individual context

Adoption and adaptation to student's context involve contextualizing implementation and adopting approaches appropriate for student's circumstances. The main concern with adapting policy to students' circumstances has to do with whether the implementing approach will enable students to transition successfully or whether it will hinder their access. For most headteachers, this has got to do with initiating welfare systems to ameliorate potential non-access that their strict implementation system causes. In some of the Day schools I visited, the headteachers spoke to me about the Ghana Secondary Education Improvement Project, (SEIP) program. Under this system, children who are struggling to provide their non-cost fee items are given a yearly amount to help them meet some of their educational needs, such as books, food, and transportation. Apart from this initiative, implementers who adopted initiatives to help shore up access used other means such as asking the old student association to adopt and provide the needs of students who are struggling financially. Sometimes teachers are asked to take in students who are having problems in their families that threaten their access and potential stay in school, such as dealing with abusive parents, a sexual abuse situation, or generally coming from underserved communities. A headteacher explained:

On numerous occasions, we have had to sidestep the linear sequence of implementation to accommodate the needs of students. The policy directives outlining implementation do not come with a welfare system to mitigate the potential cost or effects of implementation. Such as the inequality it creates and to accommodate the needs of students who will still not be able to go to school despite the policy provisions.

Such appreciation of the policy has led a few implementers to ask the old students and other housemasters and mistresses for help. There are instances where teachers are encouraged to give up their welfare monies, to help disadvantaged students.

I was also keen to learn how implementers identify students who need extra support to transition to Senior High School (SHS) despite policy provisions. The typical response was that they addressed these concerns during the admissions process by speaking directly to some students to assess their needs.

A headteacher noted:

We talk to some of the students and their parents sometimes during admissions. As implementers, we cannot carry the truth tied to a few students across other students and assume that they all belong to the group that can afford the non-fee items or have similar family situations.

On how they select which student to enquire about their ability to transition smoothly, the data shows that implementers rely on their past experiences and different cues from parents (i.e., outward appearance, speech, mannerisms, etc.). A key strategy they employed was appearance. When the uniform material looks old and seems to have been used or resembles a ‘hand me down’, as they say, they know to probe. The appearance of the adults bringing them to school and the quantity of provisions as well as their inability to buy all the items listed on the prospectus was another sign. When parents approach implementers with their issues, they can help sometimes. The ensuing quotations below present three headteachers narration of how they identify children who needed extra help to enable them transition.

Knowing who needs help is commonsense. After implementing several other Ministry of Education policies, with time, you gain experience, and you can instinctively or intuitively know who needs help. A parent can bring their daughter to school, and the appearance alone, ayayayaya eiiii, the uniform check look like it was handed down from an old student or a relative a decade ago.

Most needy families are humble in their speech when they come for admissions. You can also tell from the provisions the child brought to school for the first time. These ways of identifying students who need help have helped a lot of students transition to SHS successfully.

When you speak to the child, they are bringing for admission, and the child is very timid, she seems afraid even while in the presence of the adult who brought her, then there could be something wrong, so we speak to the child separately to see if they need help transitioning.

Even though these methods of identifying underserved students are subjective, they seem to have enabled access to those who would otherwise find it difficult to transition smoothly. Once poor students are identified, they are sometimes exempted from purchasing all the required items listed on their prospectus. Sometimes, housemistresses and housemasters of the schools are called to provide them with some of the required items on the school’s prospectus. This policy implementation approach has not achieved considerable access outcomes as they can only help a few people at a time. There were concerns about the large numbers of students who need help but are turned away because implementing the policy this way is difficult. The account by the headteacher below highlight the situation:

Incidental fees have not been totally removed. Thus, the socio-economic status of a parent is still a crucial factor in whether a child transitions successfully or not. This, we implementers cannot do anything about it. The parents must find the monies anyhow they could. There are those who are placed and admitted as day students coming from far away communities who must rent in the communities. If parents have no money for rent how do implementers raise monies to help them? So, on a few occasions we help but that cannot be a go to approach every time, because it is difficult to do.

Adapting the policy with welfare arrangements to help was not widespread and it was dependent on the kind of help a student needed.

1iv. Flexible implementation

This involves allowing the school and students specific situations to dictate the approach to implementation. None of the implementers adopted a fully flexible implementation. Those who adapted the implementation to students' situations did not do so in every access scenario that needed contextualization.

1v. Contextualizing implementation and conflicting access and transition outcomes

Contextualizing implementation could sometimes have conflicting outcomes. Generally, access outcomes have been positive for children in instances where school heads or implementers such as housemasters and mistresses have intervened and made exemption for some students. This is the general pattern as headteachers have stories of students they have helped this way who could have lost out on secondary education since the implementation started. At other times, stepping up to help has led to non-access outcomes. A headteacher had this to say:

I have had two occasions where a teacher's intervention led to withdrawal from school. One of my teachers brought a girl who they suspected was having issues at home. She lacked confidence and brought only a fraction of items listed on her prospectus. She seemed afraid even though she was accompanied by her uncle. We asked her to stay with a teacher as it was obvious, they could not rent a place for her just like other day students coming from distant communities. Her uncle withdrew her from the school.

Intervening could come with access issues. Implementers are sometimes accused of favoritism, and some are afraid of setting a trend that they could not control when they provide exemptions for those who need it. In another development, a headteacher narrated:

I helped a student who came to school with no trunk. Her things were in a sack, and this can easily be broken into, so I asked the housemistress if she had in her possession used trunks that past students had left. And she was provided with one. The following year I had ten students who came to school without trunks because of that precedent. You do not want to set a precedent that will come back to bite you. We asked them to go home and bring the items, including the trunks as required. Some of them never came back.

Contextualizing implementation without a structured welfare system provided by government is dicey and often places teachers in dubious situations. Individual implementers' ingenuity can cause non-

access issues. Avoiding any form of adaptation or consideration can also result in non-access for those who need these interventions.

2. The Role of Central Implementers in Mediating Non (Access)

The preceding findings have been about implementers at the school levels. Implementers at the district and regional levels also play a part in the access outcomes of children. This section explores Data Planning Officers (regions and districts), Regional and District Directors, free SHS Coordinators at the regional levels and Gender Desk Officers (regional and districts).

My interviews with regional directors sought to understand how they thought implementation was faring. All regional directors concluded that implementation has been a success. A further probe on their role in the implementation success suggested that though they were not responsible for the direct implementation of the policy, they oversaw the deployment of resources, communicated implementing directives and advice from the Director General of the Ghana Education Service to the districts and the schools, and oversaw the general supervision of the performance of the policy implementation.

While many of the implementers here spoke freely about how they thought the implementation they supervised have achieved success and were very quick to point me to the data on increase in access indicators, they were reticent to provide information about how the implementation could drive non-access. I also realized that the narration of interviewees could be presenting a public relations account of the policy and its implementation. Accordingly, I further probed whether they had a conceptual understanding of the equity bit of the policy intentions and how their implementation protocol which leaves no room for targeting, could achieve that. A few of them suggested that the policy provisions set the tone of implementation. The extract from a regional director I interviewed speak to this:

The policy is not need-blind. It does not discriminate; it is the same provision for everybody.

Others had an operational and conceptual understanding of the policy and its limitations and how a non-innovative implementation approach could cause non-access, they however refused to reconcile how that could bring non-access. Another Regional Director said:

I understand that there are a few costs that parents must bear but these are just nominal, and I do not see how that could prevent a child from transitioning to secondary school.

On how the implementation that requires students to purchase a long list of non-fee items could cause non-access, especially since the policy was sold on the idea of 'Free', there were different opinions

among two regional directors, one director at this juncture referred me to other regional implementers (a Public Relation Officer and an administrator) to interview them on their behalf.

The evidence, however, suggested that, even though the policy provides the basis for the government to supply education more widely, the actions of implementers can do very little to ensure demand and equitable access if the policy is inherently inequitable. For these implementers, demand for access is a key function of household-level factors such as cost-benefit analysis and general micro-level household issues. Another key issue emanating from the data was how despite the policy being labelled “Free”, implementers were convinced that education access could never be completely free. The ensuing excerpts show what central implementers thought about how their implementation is causing non-access:

There will always be private costs and public costs to bear so far as education is concerned. The government has borne the public costs such as infrastructure and provision of school resources. The government has ventured into the private and offered to pay for tuition, boarding, food, and all other fee items. There are still other private costs the parents must bear and that is what is found on the prospectus. We cannot implement the policy if parents refuse to pay the private cost (Public Relations Officer, Regions)

What causes non-access is parental attitude and their inclinations to further shift private cost to government. Free education is not a license for irresponsible parenting (Administrator, Regions).

I asked the central implementers about my observation in the communities and how there seems to be a disjuncture between what government data suggested was the access situation and the sheer numbers of eligible students who could not transition. Almost all the implementers said they would rather work with the government provided data and suggested I check the Education Management Information System (EMIS) data and other government reports on education outcomes since the free SHS policy was launched. I was given permission to speak to the regional data personnel in the first region I visited. Seeing that I had insightful evidence about reconciling my observation and the government reports, I subsequently requested to interview the data persons in all the other regions and districts education offices I researched. The findings on these will be subsequently discussed. I also observed that the District Directors were more open about discussing the implementation challenges as compared to the Regional Directors. Among some of the complaints they have received include congestion in the schools due to numbers, placement issues, and children refusing to take up placement within the specified period. They, however, stressed teachers’ complaints about the academic ability of most of the children progressing from the JHS to SHS. Some of them could not read, and at the SHS

level, when they are starting to specialize in elective subjects, teachers did not see that level as a space for teaching reading and comprehension skills if the child did not have it already.

The challenges are many. Some of the implementation issues we could do something about it, such as the congestions which brought about the double-track system, but if it is about the academic ability of the child, I do not think SHS is where they need to be taught how to read and write (District Director).

District directors are unable to intervene in matters such as placement, and the academic ability of successfully transitioned students.

2i. On Data: do the numbers add up? Regional, Districts Statistician, Education Management Information System (EMIS) and Planning Officers

My interview with the regional and district data personnel, statisticians, planners and EMIS officers centered on the work they did and how that was important to work the equity gap during implementation. The findings suggested that the data and Education Management Information System (EMIS) office is tasked with gathering data to uncover issues and trends, enabling regional and district education services to align their operations and budgeting with evidence-based insights. *It is positioned as a resource to construct operational plans and develop budgets at the district and levels to ensure that education provision becomes more efficient and responsive to local needs* (Nudzor, 2014. P. 9).

I explored how their roles as implementers intersect with the responsibilities of street-level bureaucrats, including headteachers and other school staff, and examined how this interaction affects equitable access and transitions under the Free SHS policy. The findings are as follows. All seven data personnel suggested that school administrators could analyze data to gain insights into the access situation within their districts and individual schools. They could establish base-line metrics to help ascertain places that are underserved in access and transitions and implement the policy to bridge that gap. A regional planning officer discuss how their work complements what the local implementers do:

Our work is important. Implementers, especially at the school levels, could dig into the data we provide to understand the access situation in their districts and implement the policy with the stated evidence. They can have base-line metrics for which part of the population is underserved and develop additional policies, budgets, and other responsive implementation approaches or protocols to help shore up access.

Local implementers, however, rarely explored data from the data planning office as part of operationalizing implementation or contextualizing implementation to school and student's circumstances.

It was obvious that implementation gap existed because implementers followed implementation procedures and protocols without targeting. I define implementation gap as the difference in access

afforded to underserved students versus privileged peers because of implementation. Merely avoiding discrimination in implementation does not close the inequity gap, rather it leaves the education system highly unequal and inaccessible for children in places where access issues tend to be pronounced.

Another key issue that I sought clarification for was my observation of the access situation on the ground, which does not mirror what the government and the Ministry of Education official data say it was. In every region and district, I visited, I had the opportunity to go through the EMIS yearly data together with the Data Personnel. In answering my observed discrepancies between the sheer numbers of children I met who could not transition to SHS and the GES data which suggest considerable improvement in access indicators (parity rates, enrolment ratio), it was intimated to me that the GES is responsible for children who have already transitioned and are in their schools. They are an important consideration for data collection. They only make the projection of parity rate, enrolment and non-enrolment ratio and other access indicators with Census data as the baseline. When I checked the EMIS report, I observed that it said nothing about specific interventions and their relation to access indicators. I requested copies of the EMIS Questionnaire to see if there were questions that sought to measure specific policy with access outcomes but there were none. I enquired if the data planning, EMIS and statistical unit of the GES have any records of studies, or research or data directly measuring specific interventions and outcome on access (enrolment, transition, completion) but there was none. Despite this situation, implementers are quick to attribute an increase in access outcome to the implemented access policy. I was also curious how they support the implementation of this access policy, perhaps this probably explains why headteachers rely on their subjective markers in their attempt to contextualize implementation to students' circumstance.

Other issues that came up were how they thought headteachers were unreliable when they are asked to provide data on those in their schools. A regional EMIS Data Officer said:

It will surprise you to know that if you call the headteachers for data, they are likely to quote different figures and numbers depending on what the data is for. If you tell them the data has been called to provide them with subventions or resources, they are more likely to inflate the data so please stick to the EMIS data, even though they are not as accurate as we want it to be, at least that is usually the physical counting of the student so we could rely on it to ascertain access because our data sets do not add up.

Another also showed me their district figures for EMIS and how the numbers have changed in the Ministry's own national EMIS figures. I asked whether they have notified authorities about the inaccuracies and the extract below captures the responses of the situation:

At the end of the day, the Ministry of Education (MOE) maintains the overall monitoring and supervision role. What they say is what it is. Besides, even if you draw your supervisor's attention to inaccuracies and it is not rectified, what can you do? (Regional EMIS Officer).

The evidence showed that even though the GES operated a decentralized implementation system, and implementers work in a more distributed authority, the MOE and implementers in the vertical order had the final say in what data, and how data is captured in the final EMIS report. I was, however, curious as to how the data they collect feed into policy that requires everybody (local implementers) to follow the same template in implementing and whether there was something wrong with the data that is been collected and the analyses that is been done for the district and regions? The findings suggested that data and planning officers do not account for variations in the collection of data. A regional EMIS officer in responds to why the data they provided fed into the adoption of an implementation directive that requires every headmaster to follow the same template in implementation maintained that:

...EMIS does not capture particularities or variations. We follow a template that does not require us to collect data on the different reasons for the access indicators we provide for the regions and districts. ...if you want to get to the root of some of the challenges that we get from the EMIS data, then we need to do further studies before we can get the actual causes of some of the things that we see.

There was no such data about regional or district-specific access issues beyond what was captured in the EMIS report. Quiet clearly, the stories behind the numbers in the EMIS data and report are missing because no such data is collected.

The last category of implementers I explored were the Gender Desk Officers and the regional free SHS coordinators and the findings are captured below.

2ii. On implementation: Gender Desk Officers, and Girls Education Unit

The Gender Desk Office works hand in hand with the girls' education unit, guidance and counselling unit and school health education program. These central implementers at the district and regional levels were selected to explore the gender ramification of the implementation of the Free SHS access policy.

Gender parity stands at 0.95 at the SHS level. Even though parity has nearly been achieved in several places, the issues pertaining to gender inequality go beyond the physical counting of girls and boys in school. The interviews with this set of central implementers explored how implementation ensured gender parity, and these were the findings. First, there was no correlation between the work of gender desk officers and the implementation of the FSHS access policy. They provide guidance and counseling to students and oversee improvements in the delivery of comprehensive sexual education in schools. A Regional Gender Desk Officer commented on their work as follows:

Our work is usually in the field. We visit the schools, and we liaise with the guidance and counseling unit to provide counselling service. We do not directly influence the implementation of the access

policy, but we do our best. For example, we offer counselling, we support club activities that support girls, we link with Ghana health service, social welfare and Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVSU) to deal with abuse of any form once the children are in school.

Further probing revealed that implementers identified teenage pregnancy as a major factor contributing to girls dropping out of SHS. They discussed their approaches to addressing this issue, highlighting that, in addition to the differential valuing of girls' and boys' education, teenage pregnancy significantly impacts girls' continued education.

School-related pregnancy issues are reported to the district girls' education officer or any of the implementers comprising District Girls Education Officer, Guidance and Counselling, School Health Education Program (DGEO/G&C/SHEP/CPC). Depending on the nature of the issue, if it is rape or defilement, parents are guided to lodge complaints at the appropriate law authorities and health facilities. Another Regional Gender Desk Officer gave an account of the work they do:

Our work majorly involves promotion of abstinence among schoolgirls, promoting safe schools and creating supportive environment, and linking girls to available services in their communities and districts.

The implementation work of these categories of implementers has got a lot to do with after students have already transitioned and are in schools. Implementers further intimated that they also enforce that, girls who get pregnant along the way come back to school through their back-to-school guidelines. A District Girls Education Officer explained:

Upon confirmation of pregnancy, school authorities are notified. We grant the girl a mandatory 3 months leave of absence (six weeks before and after birth) and the girl can return to school. The class she is admitted to though will depend on the length of time she stays away. We also provide a supportive environment such as club activities and in school services.

While this policy is laudable and support girls to stay in school, I realized that the back-to-school policy is inconsistent with the free SHS compulsory three years duration as most girls who get pregnant do not come to school after three months and consequently repeat a class. I probed further whether they are aware the implementation of the back-to-school guideline under the current policy is impossible and the findings were that they can notify the authorities by including that concern in their annual report if exception to the three-year rule can be made for these girls.

The current statistic on teenage pregnancies in Ghana shows that 2,865 pregnancies were recorded among girls between 10 and 14 years and 107,023 pregnancies were recorded for girls between ages 15 and 19 years (District Information Management System (DHIMS), 2020). It is obvious that children are having unprotected sex, however, the only sexual education emphasized in the guidelines are about

abstinence. I also probed further to understand what they do when the girl in question opts to abort and I was told, in that case the school provides no support.

The Girls Education Unit and the Gender Desk do not influence transitions. Their mandate does not extend to those who are yet to transition, and they do not have direct impact on the implementation of the Free SHS access policy. We can trace this to the omission in the free SHS policy text. At the policy-level there are no differences made between boys and girls and these policy-limitations that preclude educational access in this system makes achieving the gender equity intentions of the policy difficult.

2iii. Regional Free SHS Coordinators

The regional free SHS Coordinators are also keen on the implementation of the access policy. Whilst the headteachers deal only with those who have successfully been placed, their duties extend to placement issues. They supply food and resources to schools given the number of successfully placed students and they report both to the national free SHS secretariat and the regional directors, in the regions they operate. I explored how the work they do ensures access and equitable implementation, and these were the findings. They provide logistics, uniforms, and food to the schools. In the past, headteachers were the spending officers, and they were tasked to procure these things. Now, these provisions are centralized. Additionally, they coordinate the senior high schools, and this helps in the smooth implementation of the access policy.

I explored other implementation issues directly related to their work which creates access and non-access. The first concern involves the implementation of the catchment area policy, which allows children to attend schools within their designated catchment area as day students. The challenge arises when children are either incorrectly placed or placed outside their catchment area, especially in districts with only one SHS, leading to issues of non-access. A regional Free SHS Coordinator explained:

Some districts have one school, other districts do not have a school at all especially in the northern region, western Region, Upper East, and others. We have acknowledged that in our meetings and we would try to change the placement for such cases when it is brought to our attention.

I also probed further to understand how they dealt with implementation issues such as those who will not transition because of placement issue but will not be able to follow-up for about three to four times if they are not provided with positive responses in the first instance. The findings were that these problems persist because travelling to and from the district to the regional capital is a challenge for most parents. Occasionally, the teachers and headteachers of the JHS they completed, can take it up

and follow-up on their behalf and even the district directors also offer such help sometimes. However, they were quick to blame parents for the non-access issues faced by children who encounter placement challenges. A regional Free SHS Coordinator bemoaned the attitude of parents in such situations:

Some parents have an ‘I do not care attitude’, coupled with the attitude of affected individual students, and the environment they find themselves. All these factors come into play so the government will do its best given such circumstances. There is no way you get these challenges solved at once. These challenges will persist.

Another issue fueling non-access during implementation involves parents who refuse to take admission for their children when they are placed in a faith based SHS different from the faith they confess. Implementers could hardly do anything about it, so they resort to sensitization during their enrolment drive programs.

Interviews with children and parents revealed a critical issue: the placement forms did not specify deadlines for securing a place at the school. Consequently, students who were initially accepted often faced denial of admission due to claims of no vacancies when they did not arrive within an unspecified timeframe. I investigated how such implementation practices could lead to non-access for those who had been successfully placed. The findings on these implementation practices uncovered that the absence of a specific deadline on the placement forms contributed to this problem, as there was no specified period after which a reserved place would be considered forfeited.

On the issue of why the regional Free SHS secretariat refuse to send messages and or emails or telephone call reminders about the need to go to the schools to take admissions and confirm their placements, the extracts below depict the general responses I got from the regional implementers under this section:

If you are a Ghanaian, then you need to know there are many places in the country without telephone reception. Sometimes the people in a locality can spot where to stand, which mountain to climb, or which tree to go and stand under or climb just to make a call or receive a text message, how many more emails. So, this two-way communication is largely impossible.

It is a shared responsibility, let us not pretend that the government must do everything. As a parent, it is your responsibility to follow-up and communicate with the school or the free SHS coordinators to ask if they still have vacancy. Going forward, we should even indicate a timeline, but I bet even if we do that, we still must give it a human face because some will just not comply.

When I drew their attention to the issue of education as a right and the need for interventions to protect children even when the legal guardians or parents refuse to or are unable to do right by the children, implementers intimated to me that this would be challenging. It would be easy if they had a reliable or working data system which segregates people based on income levels, tax identification, education

level of parents, and their resources. They suggested that in the absence of such data they cannot implement the access policy by targeting. A Regional Free SHS Coordinator lamented that:

...if you target, the people who will end up receiving the help are the well to do families and their children. Our best bet is to make the policy provisions equal and to also implement this without discrimination.

What works, for whom and under what conditions is rarely considered by implementers because there is no data to objectively inform implementers about these specificities.

3. Interrogating the relationships between and among Local and Central Implementers

With the increase in demand for access to education spearheaded by the access policy, it is expected that the implementation approaches and the relationship among implementers would facilitate and mediate access. Central and local implementers, however, had differentiated relationship to access. Whilst the local implementers influence access directly, central implementers do so indirectly. The relationship between local and central implementers is also mediated by work practices which do not directly align with each other to improve access. For example, the regional and district data planning unit does not process data which has direct bearing, and or is relevant to the implementing policy and consequently the work that the local implementers do. The Gender Desk Office does not directly impact transitions. Thus, it is difficult to link the work each party does with the goal of the implementing access policy. Moreover, implementers are unaware of the unintended consequences of their work on other implementers. This disconnect and lack of implementing engagement amongst the various units in the vertical relationships makes accounting for access and non-access outcomes difficult. The table below shows the relationship matrix among the central and local implementers.

Table 11: Relationship matrix between local and central implementers

TABLE 1: RELATIONSHIP MATRIX				
	Engagement	Alignment	Nested approach	Impact
LOCAL IMPLEMENTERS	Unidirectional: Communication is usually one directional (Directives on implementation from regional directors to headteachers)	Different implementations but work not aligned with central implementer's work. E.g., 1. Headteachers do not request data from the planning unit to aid their implementation.	No collaboration between implementing actors and their roles with respect to implementing the access policy. •Each implementing unit perform disparate roles.	Local implementers work has no impact on central implementers work. E.g., Directives from regional directors did not change regardless of the local level adaptations that were initiated by some headteachers
	Mitigating the policy: Local implementers or headteachers were engaged when they insisted on factoring teacher's convenience in the implementation of the double track system.			
	Issue of trust: Headteachers rarely dig into data when administering additional welfare policies			
CENTRAL IMPLEMENTERS	Subverting implementation: No deliberate attempt to subvert implementation	Work does not align. E.g., 1. Data and planning unit do not produce data that is tailored and specific to school context to enable administering additional welfare policies.	No critical linkages of the work of central implementers to local implementers. They all perform disparate roles. E.g., data planning officers (regions and districts), regional and district directors, free SHS coordinators at the regional levels and gender desk officers (regional and districts). NB: They all perform roles that are delinked from the local level implementers.	Central implementers work has no impact on local implementers work. E.g., Directives from regional directors did not change regardless of the local level adaptations that some headteachers initiated.
	Unidirectional: Communication is usually one directional (Directives on implementation from regional directors to headteachers)			
	Mitigating the policy: Rarely engaged local implementers			
	Issue of trust: Regional and district data planners do not trust the data that headteachers provide when they call for data.	The work of gender desk office does not align specifically with the implementation efforts at the school levels.		
	Subverting implementation: Central implementers (data planning unit) complain of deliberate increasing or decreasing of data on the part of headteachers depending on what data central implementers request from them.			

Source: Author's creation based on data from fieldwork

3i. Exploring the relationship matrix between local and central implementers

The relationship matrix diagram shows the relationships between central and local implementers, specific to the implementation of the policy. It centers engagement, aligning implementation, impact, and systems thinking.

The findings reveal three types of engagement. First, one direction engagement. This is seen in central implementers such as the regional directors and or district directors issuing implementation directives to local level implementers (headteachers). This type of engagement is unidirectional as it flows from the top in the vertical relationships to the local implementers at the bottom of the hierarchy.

Engagement also involves mitigating the policy. Local implementers or headteachers engaged the central implementers to consider teacher's convenience when the double track system was introduced. Following the sheer amount of work teachers had to do with the initial tracking plan and the assumption that teachers might see the policy as misguided, the initial tracking plan was mitigated to give way to a new one. This happened after several resistance from the central implementers.

Further on engagement is the issue of trust. Responses from Regional and district data planners indicate that they do not trust the data that headteachers provide. They were of the view that headteachers have a habit of inflating data depending on what the data is been collected for. For example, they cited, if data is requested to enable government provide subventions to schools, they are more likely to falsify or increase data. However, when the purpose of data is to request the school to pay an amount to the government, then there is a decrease in the numbers provided. Thus, there are problematic trust issues between data and planning officers and the headteachers who are directly implementing the policy. Headteachers on the other hand, rarely dig into data when administering additional welfare policies such as selecting students who need help to transition. Headteachers rather rely on their subjective markers in identifying who needs extra help to transition.

The lack of or inadequate engagement was rarely about subverting implementation. Subverting implementation has to do with implementers deliberately acting in ways that court public mistrust in the access policy. I did not come across any explicit instance of such deliberate subversion of implementation. Rather, implementers both local and central did not know how they could engage beyond their disparate work practices to achieve access outcomes.

Another key relationship matrix explored is aligning implementation. While local implementers employed different types of implementations (rigid, adaptation, and rarely flexible) styles to navigate

implementation, there was rarely any alignment with specific central implementers and the work they do. For example, the headteachers never explored or requested data from the planning, data and EMIS office to enable them ground adapting implementation to individual students' context. They used their subjective markers in identifying who needed extra help to transition. Data planning officers did not gather or produce school and district specific data capturing the economic background of incoming students to aid headteachers in adapting implementation. Another example is the Gender Desk Office. Even though the policy has gender equity as one of its goals, the Gender Desk Officers role could not be aligned directly with achieving the objectives of the policy. They did not influence transitions and or access directly. Their work could not be aligned with headteachers to produce equitable access to SHS.

Nested approach to implementation: The approach to implementation of the access policy followed a reductionist approach. Instead of considering implementation where roles of each implementing unit are aligned and there is two-way engagement with other units, each unit had a disparate role, not aligned, or connected in achieving the intended access outcomes. Critical linkages and collaborations between issues of implementation and the implementing actors were absent. The lack of engagement and alignment in implementation created a situation where implementers both local and central shield themselves from critiques when there is non-access. Thus, while all implementers are quick to take praises for the success of implementation and the obvious increase in access numbers, no implementer is held accountable for non-access. While central implementers praise the implementation they supervise for the successful access outcomes, they feel emasculated from the non-access situations the straight jacket implementation directive creates. Local implementers were accountable to central implementers (Regional and District Directors) for implementing directives and procedures and not the (non)access outcomes. Central implementers were also not accountable to local implementers.

The final relationship matrix is impact. Impact is explored because of the relationship between local and central implementers. The work of local implementers has no impact on central implementers' work. For example, local implementers adaptation of the guidelines to their context and their contextualizing of implementation should impact the data planning office to produce data that enables them to adapt effectively. Central implementers like the regional directors should be prompted to adapt their directives to district and local context once headteachers begin adapting implementation to their school contexts. However, directives did not change except in the instance where double tracking was adjusted to suit teacher's concerns.

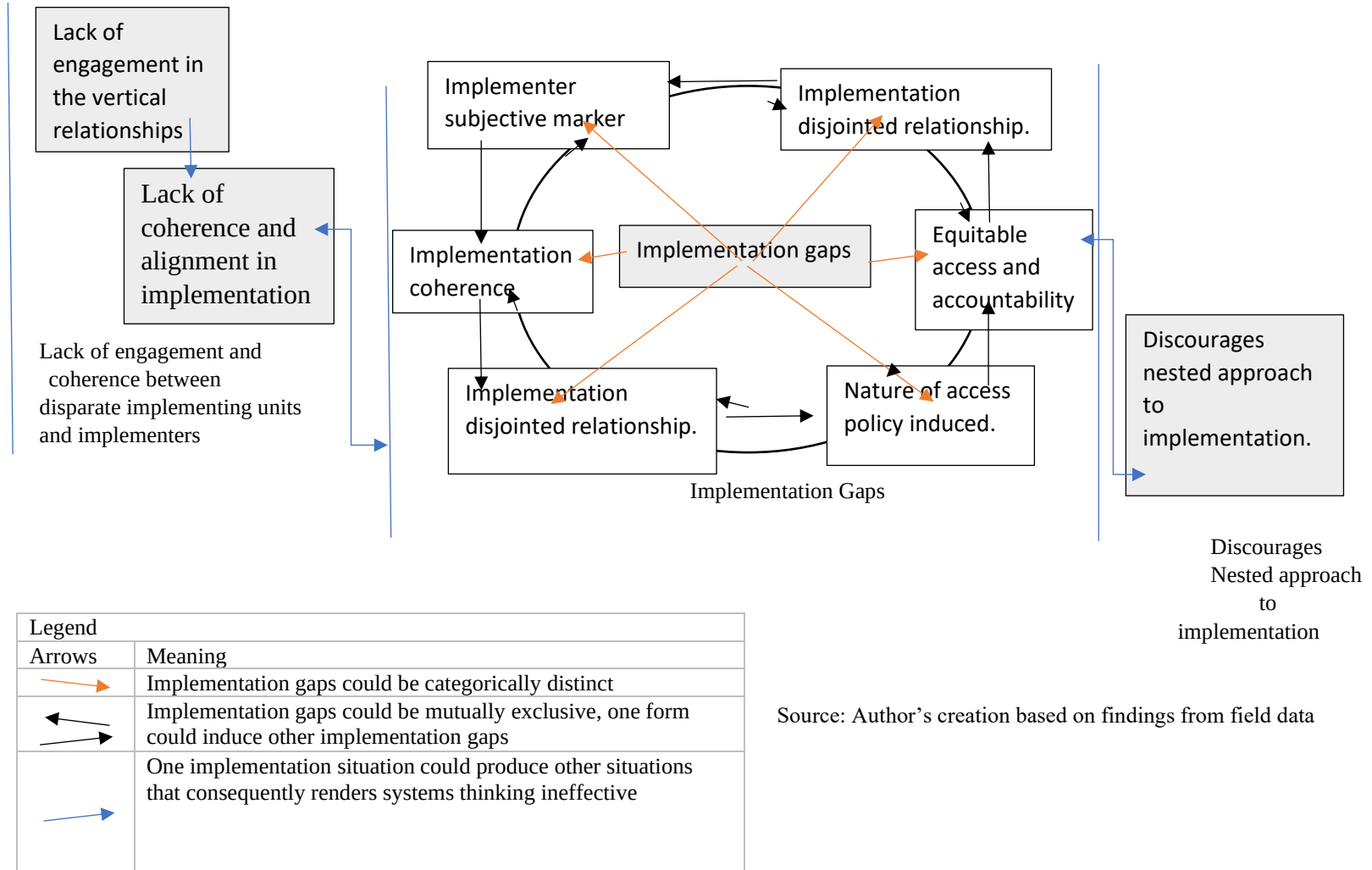
Thus, even though authority is distributed among implementing actors based on division of labor, it is difficult to determine any meaningful impact their work had across the vertical relationships on each other to account for (non)access beyond what their official mandate suggest.

Understanding what each implementing unit has to offer and how their work is aligned to each other could solve some of the noted constraints in the relationship matrix. Further, the issues of engagement, alignment and the impact on implementation could be ameliorated when implementers both central and local give equal weight to agency as they do structure.

3ii. Implementation Gaps

The lack of coherence in the implementation work across the vertical relationships has produced many implementation gaps. When implementers use their subjective markers to adapt implementation to student's context, it could create situations where a significant number of eligible students who need help are ignored. The lack of alignment between implementers and their work could produce incoherence and disjointed implementation relationship gaps. These gaps, (Implementer subjective-marker gap, nature of access policy induced gaps, equitable access and accountability gap, implementation induced access gap, implementation coherence gap and implementers disjointed relationship gap) do not encourage the kind of systems thinking towards implementation where all parts of the implementation system work in harmony towards equitable access outcomes.

Figure 20: Implementation gaps



Source: Author's creation based on findings from field data

The lack of engagement and coherence between disparate implementing units and implementers create situations where several implementation gaps occur such as:

- Implementer subjective-marker gap: The implementation style (rigid, flexible, adaptation) of the implementer engenders this gap. For example, in adapting to individual student's context, when local implementers rely on their subjective markers such as past experiences rather than an objective data, to select who to support with welfare arrangements (e.g., exemption from buying some of the items on the prospectus), this gap is created.
- Nature of access policy induced gaps: It occurs when there are implementation constraints because of the omissions in policy texts.
- Equitable access and accountability gap: Accountability gap occurs when implementers both central and local feel emasculated from the non-access outcomes of their implementation approaches and directives.
- Implementation induced access gap: This gap is created because of what implementation define in. For example, the access policy implied that children would access SHS free of charge. Once implementers introduced additional cost couched in purchasing a long list of items on school prospectus, it created an access gap for some people. This gap created due to the nature of implementation and or the implementing style adopted by the implementer is referred to as implementation induced access gap.
- Implementation coherence gap: the lack of coherence between implementers and their implementation efforts could create this gap.
- Implementers disjointed relationship gap: It explains the power-laden nature of the vertical relations between central and local implementers. Communication and is usually from the top to down and carved in directives with little or no opportunity for local implementers to input in how those directives are carried out. Also, the lack of trust between implementers produces this gap. For e.g., the data, EMIS and planning unit do not trust the data headmasters provide when they request for data.

Whilst these gaps discourage systems thinking, Improvements need to be devised to bridge these gaps. This would involve emphasizing clear linkages, encouraging engagements, building trust, and aligning implementation efforts between the disparate units of implementation and approaching implementation with systems thinking.

C. DISCUSSION

The rationale behind introducing the Free SHS policy is to provide quality, accessible, and equitable upper secondary education to all children at no cost. Subjecting the policy to the equity test in the previous chapter, it was noted that the policy provision was inherently inequitable, likely reinforcing the advantages of middle-income families while exacerbating the barriers faced by low-income families, thus widening the gap in educational access.

Implementation of the access policy could ameliorate some of the excesses and create equitable access. Analysis of the implementers and their approaches reveals that most local implementers adhere strictly to rigid protocols and directives due to their ease of execution. However, this strict adherence often results in non-access situations for those needing additional support. The lack of specific welfare provisions for the most disadvantaged under these directives raises concerns about the policy's effectiveness in addressing inequities.

Furthermore, the characteristics of paying nominal fees and fees couched in the purchase of non-fee items such as list of items on prospectus as part of school and local level implementation, defeated the idea of 'Free'. The purpose of implementing the policy was to remove major financial hurdles to enable as many students as possible to enroll in SHS. Whilst cost is said to have been removed in policy documents, fee payment stayed in the admission and transition process contrary to what the policy was sold on, and local implementers insisted on these as part of the transition process for children going to SHS.

Innovation, adaptation, and adoption were rarely encouraged to enable local implementers at the school levels some freedom to address local issues. A few headmasters, however, adapted the policy to their context and created welfare systems to shore up access. Implementers, however, relied on subjective means of identifying underserved students. Through acts such as exempting students from the purchase of some items on the prospectus and engaging old students to help, access was improved, and it enabled some children within the non-transition brackets to transition. Negotiating networks with old students and other influencers this way to aid in implementation was, however, rarely explored.

Central implementers (regional directors) understand the equity aspiration of the policy and the operational difficulty in realizing this intention under the current implementation scheme, however, they refused to link this to non-access outcomes. They praised the implementation efforts, citing data that highlights the successes. However, I suspect their recommendation to interview other

implementers stemmed from their senior positions and a reluctance to appear critical of the initiatives they oversee.

Although it is challenging to design policies that address every individual reality, effective implementation can align more closely with diverse needs when supported by reliable data. However, the efforts of data planners, statisticians, and planning officers did not directly translate into improved access during implementation

The implementation mishap of the Free SHS coordinators could also account for many non-access situations that are created during implementation. They understand the struggle parents go through to follow up on placement for their children. They acknowledge that the failure to establish effective communication systems between coordinators and schools for notifying successfully placed children about admissions may be a major factor in the observed non-access outcomes. Nonetheless, they are unwilling to acknowledge any responsibility for this issue. They also assume that all the children who fall under this category have opted for other schools or are considering changing their placements, but there is no reliable data to show that.

The work of the Gender Desk Officers does not mediate access. Gender Desk officers do not influence transitions in any way. Their impact is only felt when children have already transitioned. Their back-to-school guidelines for addressing teenage pregnancy and the timelines for re-entry of pregnant girls is inconsistent with the scholarship three-year duration. Their emphasis on abstinence and the total neglect of reproductive health right, access to birth control, planned and unplanned pregnancies, safe sex, legal versus illegal abortion, safe versus unsafe abortion, the use of contraceptives, protection, and general fertility decisions is not at par with reality. Such complacency is particularly troubling in a country grappling with alarming rates of teenage pregnancy.

Overall, there seems to be a disconnect between the policy intentions encapsulated in the Free SHS Policy document and the general implementation strategy and policy implementers fail to recognize how their implementation methods may reinforce these disparities. The influence of numbers on the access debates also risks obscuring subtle form of non-access issues that implementation creates for children.

Further, the equity intentions claimed in the policy document do not reflect in the policy provisions as it seeks to treat everybody equally. Implementation similarly errs by attempting to treat everyone equally, rather than addressing the varying needs and circumstances of different groups. However, simply avoiding discrimination in policies and implementation when dealing with students with unequal platforms do not enable equitable distribution of access to education (Crahay, 2000).

Overlooking the policy's shortcomings by not accounting for the contextual challenges faced by eligible students impeded the development of additional implementing measures to address these issues. Non-access outcome is thus essentially inevitable because *equitable access and inclusion, equitable opportunity to learn, and equitable resource distribution* is taken away (Scott, 2006; 161).

The realities of schools, people, and places were rarely considered during the implementation exercise. Consequently, implementation did not shape the policy in many meaningful ways. However, one of the keyways through which implementing has shaped the Free SHS policy is the tracking system. I call this negotiated tracking; the ability of headteachers to negotiate tracking that takes account of the complexity of their schools and the availability and convenience of their teachers. In terms of individual students' circumstances, however, variation is the exception rather than the norm. Despite the implementation innovation of the few implementers who did not follow implementation directives or protocols cookie-cutter, the policy has not changed much in response to implementation concerns. The iterative nature of implementation and policy, which should shape policy and affect place and people, is little or non-existent. This finding is inconsistent with Odden (1991) and Honig's (2006) idea of di-causal iterative nature in which policy shapes implementation and implementers shape policy.

On exploring the vertical interactions between and among central implementers and local implementers, it is difficult to determine any meaningful impact they have on each other across the vertical spaces to improve access beyond what their official mandate suggest. Given the constraints noted above at the meso-level implementation, it is reasonable to conclude that while policy and implementation do not inherently prevent non-access, depending on how they are executed, they can either facilitate access or inadvertently reinforce existing barrier.

D. CONCLUSION

This chapter unpacked negotiating of access at the meso-implementation-level and how that actively shapes equitable access to and distribution of education. The methodological considerations to data collection adopted was hybrid. The findings in this chapter complement the hybrid debate by exploring implementers both local and central. The multiplicity of implementing actors investigated included actors located horizontally and at every vertical level of implementation. The goal was to examine implementation approaches, understand how they address access for students who might be excluded

under rigid protocols, and explore how these approaches can resolve access issues or conversely reconcile underserved students to the reality of non-access.

The evidence reverberates several issues; first, implementers navigate a slippery slope of adopting specified policy directives or adapting them to their context. Whichever implementation approach is adopted, however, mediate access outcomes. Implementing the policy per the implementation directives was easier; it followed a process that moves predictably from one step to the next but caused non-access situations across all the vertical levels of implementation. Street-bureaucrats (headteachers) influence access outcomes directly as their implementation style determines access and non-access for many people.

The implementation involved several challenges: including the requirement for parents to purchase a lengthy list of items outlined in the prospectus, and addressing issues related to the catchment area policy, which sometimes necessitated renting accommodation for their children. Additionally, parents faced dilemmas about allowing their daughters to live alone and unsupervised in different districts, alongside other non-fee-related expenses. Implementation ensured access for those who had no difficulties navigating these implementation concerns but non-access for those who could not deal with the consequences of these constraints.

Further, following the implementation protocol was said to be easier and more widespread. It did not involve negotiations among implementing actors and between other networks. Implementers were also spared possible sanctions, such as transfers, political labelling, and tags that came with flouting implementation protocols. Implementing the policy this way, however, caused non-access situations. Non-access situations varied widely: some could not afford the required items on school prospectus, others faced challenges with accommodation when placed outside their catchment areas, and some struggled with allowing their children to live alone and unsupervised. Students who missed early admission despite being successfully placed, and those who passed but had to retake the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) to transition because they could not transition with their peers, faced non-access issues. These problems were especially common in regions with significant access barriers.

The evidence shows that contextualizing implementation was challenging. First, it could mean defying implementation directives, risking being labeled anti-government, and facing potential backlash from superiors if the approach fails. It could lead to a situation where all students with difficulties would seek personalized adjustment to the implementation process. However, implementers lack sufficient resources to address the full range of access challenges comprehensively, as there are no specific

welfare provisions in place to mitigate these implementation issues. Moreover, without reliable data or established metrics to determine which students are most disadvantaged, adapting the implementation becomes challenging, leaving headteachers to rely on subjective methods in deciding whom to support in transitioning.

Implementing the policy this way and adopting additional policies to deal with key contextual problems had conflicting outcomes. It increased access chances of those within the non-transition brackets. However, there were situations where backlash from parents made non-access eminent for children. Potential sanctions for flouting implementation guidelines made implementers too cautious about their approach and limited it to only a few people they selected subjectively at a time.

Most central implementers had no direct effect on transitions and access outcomes. However, central implementers such as the regional Free SHS coordinators influenced access and non-access situations directly. How they handle implementation could directly determine access or non-access for a person with placement and catchment area issues. Also, Regional directors attributed the reported improvements in access indicators to the successful implementation of policies. They assume that increasing access will automatically resolve non-access. In practice, access and non-access can simultaneously increase, depending on how the policy is executed.

Further the access policy itself leaves little to no room for targeting, making targeting at the implementation level difficult. This is obvious in two ways. First, the access policy fails to define wealth categories clearly, missing specific wealth quantiles and the support needed for different vulnerable groups. This oversight leaves gaps in addressing differential wealth categories in implementation. Consequently, implementation struggles to address these gaps when the policy itself is poorly conceptualized. While implementation can sometimes mitigate these issues, it has limitations in fully translating flawed policy into effective practice.

When the policy has conceptual flaws, implementation can hardly bridge that gap to fulfil the policy intentions. The challenges lie with how the intentions and provisions of policy are conceptualized and operationalized in different implementation contexts. Except there is an iterative process where implementation lessons shape policy and policy shapes implementation, those who are cut off due to supply concerns created at implementation will not transition.

Secondly, even though the access policy aims at ensuring equitable access and gender equity in access in the policy preamble, there was no provision to tackle this. Thus, Implementers at the Gender Desk Office could not reconcile how the work they do could directly influence transitions.

Overall, there is a significant disconnect among the various actors involved in implementing the policy. Their efforts are misaligned, resulting in a fragmented approach to execution. Evidence indicates that the current implementation process is an imperfect and somewhat insufficient translation of the policy into practice.

The findings depart from implementation studies that give models of what works and fail to explore how demand motivated by the access policy could be met with no supply because of some implementation concerns. The ‘Free’ in the policy provision motivates demands, but implementation approaches could curtail supply.

I conclude that even though implementers shape access, it is only nominal. The findings in this chapter thereof suggest that there is layered experience with access. I recognize the experience across what the policy provides at the macro-level, what implementation allows when translating the policy into practice at the meso-level and possibly, what the micro-level individual household and family situations permits. The next chapter will explore the micro-level responses to the access policy and implementation, and how that enables them to negotiate access at the household levels. I suggest, however, that further studies on implementation should answer questions such as (What can be done to achieve implementation coherence? Can the implementation system distribute authority among both local and central implementers to account for access and non-access outcomes? What reforms can be implemented to realign relationships among implementing actors to ensure equitable access? These issues, when adequately explored, could further the theoretical exploration and understanding of education policy implementation.

The singular focus on implementation at the meso-level overlooks the complexity of, and value of other factors such as family in enabling access. The subsequent chapter, thus, attends to the hyper-local, and how the immediate actors are constructing education access through family types, resource dilution and other range of intersectional family realities or factors.

CHAPTER SIX: NEGOTIATING ACCESS AFTER ACCESS: INSIGHTS INTO THE MICRO-LEVEL DYNAMICS OF (UN)MEANINGFUL SECONDARY SCHOOL TRANSITIONS IN GHANA

Beyond structural education access policy and institutional contexts, how micro-level realities influence children's access to secondary education is an often-neglected topic in education access research. Through a qualitative investigation of micro-level household practices, I sought to answer the question: how does underlying family circumstances determine who enrolls in SHS in response to Ghana's recent implemented education policy. I found that the education policy is only the beginning of education access negotiation for girls. There is a dark underbelly of attitudes towards education within households that girls must successfully negotiate to access secondary education meaningfully. Depending on the family type, residency, the nature of family politics around education, resource dilution, and a range of intersectional inequalities, girls' access to secondary education is impeded or unimpeded. Specifically, a family type rarely mattered if the household decision-making structure was egalitarian, however, family type mattered if the politics around decision-making was polarized. Finally, the longitudinal aspects of negotiating access over time and how the immediate actors or family members construct education access through relationships make access at the level of the family negotiated or mediated.

A. INTRODUCTION

The government of Ghana launched the free Senior High School (SHS) policy in September 2017 (Chanimbe & Dankwah, 2021). Since then, the policy discussion and academic scholarship on ensuring equitable secondary education in Ghana has centered on this policy and its implementation efforts (Essuman, 2018; Ministry of Education 2018; Mohamed & Kuyini, 2020; Takyi, Amponsah, Asibey et al., 2021). Whilst access has improved since 2017, differential education outcomes are often mediated by household and family responses. Limited attention to what happens at the family and household levels render micro-level household realities and politics insignificant. Consequently, important household and gender dynamics underlying the education access processes become invincible in policy documents. Thus, the chapter explores the underlying family circumstances that determine who enroll in SHS in response to the implemented policy. How do families negotiate access after the government provides access? The goal is to explore the politics of access negotiations and seek to understand its complexity within the family. This will enable us to emphasize the

interconnectedness of the family and household-level to the discourses and meaning making of education access that occurs at other levels.

1. Structure of the chapter

I begin by exploring the sociological approaches that have framed family research traditions. This is followed by an examination of the Ghanaian family context. Next, I explore the findings. The findings in this chapter describe the variety of ways in which families and individuals negotiate education access within the family contexts, and other constitutive categories in which they are embedded.

The analysis section is divided into seven sections; first, I highlight the decision-making and the gendered differentiated resource pathways that shape micro-level household decision-making, the diverse kinds of men and women who take education decisions depending on the family type, and the interplay of interest based on the number of people involved in the decision-making.

In the second section, I emphasize family structures, and I highlight the negotiation behaviors within diverse types of families and households. This will also involve how men and women use silence in negotiating access.

The third section considers unique cases when community factors influence education negotiations. I conceptualize this under de-gendering education decision-making and crises-led education transition outcomes. Crises-led transition happens when gender parity has been overachieved because girls are innovating different routes to education outside the traditionally approved patterns and routes. Such transitions occur under unfavorable and exploitative negotiations involving girls and older men.

Next, I focus on children's negotiating behaviors, and I explore the diverse ways girls and boys negotiate access. The goal is to understand children's agencies and how they interpret and seek to craftily navigate the adult and gendered field of negotiating education access. The key issue underscored centers how gendered norms of what is considered good versus unruly behavior for children structure negotiations.

Negotiations that resulted in successful and unsuccessful transitions would be considered in the fifth section. The weakening of nuclear and extended family support given the policy will be underlined. Furthermore, the coping strategies and alternative training opportunities available to those who are denied secondary education will be underscored.

The goal with the analysis sections is to foreground the regional and cultural patterns and highlight the complexity of these negotiations. In the remainder of the chapter, the discussion will focus on how education-seeking behaviors are categorized into direct and indirect, or mediated and negotiated access, based on the preceding analysis. Direct access deals with when parents are willing and able to afford education. This requires simple or no negotiation as transition decision-making is straightforward. The negotiation of access involves different access routes under indirect access. This section further makes sense of the constitutive elements that determine the agency of actors involved in education access negotiations and the conceptualization of the multiple paths to access. It highlights access policy as having two contested meanings: good for middle income or rich parents and bad for poor parents. The discussion further focuses on the conditions which hinder successful education negotiations and the shifting of decision-making household dynamics operating in parts of Ghana.

The chapter concludes with a summary of the major findings and sets out the key micro-level conceptualizations of access in section seven. It reiterates how micro-level household realities and family dynamics create differences in transition outcomes. A key point is made about cost as a simplistic way of conceptualizing access and the conceptual one-sidedness of oversimplifying the variation of experiences of education access to cost and institutional context. I conclude that micro-level education access be conceptualized as constituting relationships between and among household actors, who are engaged in simple or complex negotiations, with contested and varying interests.

2. Sociological research traditions on family

Sociologists of the family have explored the family under two broad categories: family macro sociology and family micro sociology. Family behavior at the macro-level has foundations in the theses of structural functionalism and conflict theory whilst family micro sociology traces its theoretical development to symbolic interactionism. Macro family sociology has focused on the family as an institution and the functions it performs (Murdock, 1949; Parsons & Bales, 1956), and how the family institution deepens inequalities (Christensen, 1964; Hill & Hansen, 1960; Nye & Berardo, 1966). Micro-family sociology, however, emphasizes individual interactions and situations within internal family dynamics particularly the relationship of family members in the context of family unity (Blumer, 1986; LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993; Young & Willmott, 1973). Within family micro-sociology, feminist perspectives examine the politics of gender and power relationships in the family (Barrett & McIntosh, 1982). These perspectives macro and micro have often limited the understanding of the family to nuclear families. Post and late modernism have, however, treated the family as changing,

given social change, and have explored issues such as alternative relations, negotiated family, same sex relationships and other changing family forms (Bauman, 2000; 2003; Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

The analysis of data in this chapter extends the debate in family micro-sociology by exploring how families and the individuals within households negotiate access to education, given a specific government implemented education policy. Further the chapter explores these relationships, how they are managed during negotiations and decision-making, and the outcomes for the variations of families in Ghana.

3. The Ghanaian Family Context

The family circumstances that structure who benefits from educational access must be understood in the context of the norms around family formation, gendered expectations, and power relationships that are influenced by the large socio-cultural organizations (Mbugua, 1992). Ghana's socio-cultural organization of the family can be subsumed broadly under both matrilineal and patrilineal family systems. Even though there are other family systems like the double unilineal and the bilateral family systems, I limit the discussion to matrilineal and patrilineal family systems as the other types (bilateral and double unilineal) originated from the two former types. These systems delineate inheritance, marital norms, transfer of properties and traditional offices, and acquisition of land (Nukunya, 2003; Radcliffe-Brown, 1950). They also delineate the hierarchy of authority within the family.

In the matrilineal kinship system, membership is usually by birth, and inheritance is through one's mother. Research on matrilineal families shows that these nuclear families tend to be more unstable because the interest of the matrilineage trumps all other interest in the marital union (Asante-Darko & Van der Geest, 1983). Matrilineal men are expected to support their sisters and their sisters' children over and above their wives and own children. In contrast, the patrilineal system hinges on the idea of fathers as patriarchs. Children born to couples belong to their father. Transfer of properties and offices is generally to sons, and various forms of patriarchal customs and practices prevail (Nukunya, 2003).

The matrilineal and patrilineal demarcations are now more nuanced because of social change (Kpoor, 2016; 2014), nevertheless, they still constitute a critical context for decision making and reciprocity. The variation of families in all its sub forms (extended, nuclear family [two parents' family or households], lone parent family [male-headed household or female-headed household]) under these lineal descent systems and the form of social organization, create underlying family realities and

conditions that engender education decision making and negotiations. For example, the matrilineal family formation is said to empower women. Matrilineal polygamy, however, places women at a greater risk of financial insecurities and vulnerabilities because the interest of matrilineage family of the men overrides the interest of their conjugal families, thereby affecting women's access negotiation behaviors. These family conditions are, however, rarely explored as key to how education access decisions are made and how that affects children's education opportunities. An analysis of family is, therefore, necessary to improve our understanding of the education access process.

Attending to what access means among households by employing locally grounded approaches that collect and reflect on the distinctions, practices, and contexts of the people will enable an examination of education access as a process of family relationships. This chapter is devoted to exploring the micro-level realities or responses to the implemented access policy (free SHS intervention). Furthermore, within the education policy milieu, the narrow conceptualization of access as a binary category of access and non-access constrains analyses to education beyond structural access issues. In the overall thesis, I discuss access as a process that is multi-layered involving policy, implementation, culture, and social spheres of individual interactions within households. This chapter, however, concentrates on access at the individual household levels and family territorial spaces.

B. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. DECISION MAKING AROUND CHILDRENS' ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Household decisions are shaped by, and constitutive of, gender-differentiated and resource patterns that can concurrently enable family members benefit from decisions and negotiations and disempower others from same. Men, particularly fathers, were the key decision-makers around the upper secondary education of their children. These decisions were sometimes straight-forward, as gender and generational hierarchy determined who takes decisions around what. Additionally, men's decisions had significance in the education chances of children at the SHS level because of the high-cost conditions at this level. The critical point within the decision-making process centers resource allocation and men often had the resources to pay the cost of education.

Many of the children I interviewed mentioned their fathers as the key decision-makers in matters pertaining to their education. Out of two hundred children who participated in the study, hundred and

thirty had their fathers as key decision-makers in their households. The quotation below speaks to fathers as decision-makers:

My father takes decision about my education (She is 15 years old, a potential SHS transitioner).

My father decided that I should not go to SHS, but he told my mother about it (She is 17 years old, she did not transition to SHS when she completed JHS in 2018).

Education decision-making is gendered as fathers rarely involve mothers in the education decisions of their daughters in male-headed compounds. In female-headed households, women take education decisions. Some women who are divorced consult their spouses about upper secondary school education of their daughters because more resources are required to sponsor the education of children at this level.

Decision-making was, however, not always straight-forward, they could entail complex negotiations among family members whereby the decisions depended upon gender norms and expectations, the relative power of household members, and who have more resources (Chant, 1998; Lawson, 1998; Mattingly, 2001). Fathers in both patrilineal and matrilineal varying sub-forms of families made both transition and non-transition decisions. The decisions were carefully thought about sometimes and entail how to distribute resources among household members.

The extract below is from a 59-year-old farmer. He leads a polygamous nuclear family of three wives and seventeen children in the Greater Accra Region:

...I am the man, the head of the house, I provide for my family, so it is my duty to take education decisions. I have a son in SHS2 that I am sponsoring. I also need to make sure that I provide my family with food. I can only do so far, it must be one at a time, decisions eeh, talk about other competing needs such as food.

From the extract above, the matter of who takes the decision about school enrollment and transitions was related to first, a parent's gender and then who wields more resources. In Ghana, men are likely to have more money and or resources as compared to women due to the differential resource pathways for men and women (Darkwah, 2010).

1i. Micro-Level Insights into the ‘Resource’ Pathways for Men and Women in Ghana and how that affect Micro-Level Household Education Decisions

There are two resource pathways (formal and informal sectors) for people in Ghana. Some people work both in the formal sector and the informal sector. In the formal sector, there are two main divisions: the public and private sectors. The public sector is noted for generally offering more favorable working conditions compared to the private sector. According to the International Labor Organization, Decent work entails:

opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men (ILO, 2021).

In the formal sector, workers benefit from stable incomes, job security, and pension plans. Additionally, formal education is typically required to access employment opportunities in this sector. Darkwah (2010) posits that by design, men are more prevalent in the formal sector compared to women. This disparity arises partly because families often prioritize access to formal sector employment for men. Additionally, institutional frameworks have historically supported girls' education primarily to enhance their performance in traditional reproductive roles (Graham, 1971, p. 72). Consequently, more men work in formal sector employments and have more money than women. It was, therefore, not surprising that men more often took education decisions for their children because they are more likely to have the resources to back their decisions as compared to women.

Secondly, there is geographical inequity in the provision of education in Ghana. The historical underpinnings of this inequity are replete in the literature on education in Ghana. According to Bening (1990) the neglect of the northern regions by successive governments was intended to enable the recruitment of unskilled workers for the mining and plantation industries in the Southern Ghana. Thus, the variation in access to education for those in the Northern Regions and those in southern Ghana.

Additionally, the Ghana Statistical Service notes women's general lack of access into the formal sector employment as compared to men (GSS, 2014). Women predominantly join the field of work as traders, seamstresses, sellers, weavers, maids, and domestic helps where income security is not assured (Darkwah, 2004; Gough, 2010; GSS, 2014; Wrigley-Asante, 2014). When men work at the informal sector in jobs such as agriculture, they plant cash crops because they have access to land. This means that men are generally exposed to more financial resources and benefits in Ghana as compared to

women. Also, women from the Northern Regions are generally poorer as compared to women from southern Ghana. Consequently, key decisions that require money and resources to implement are generally left in the hands of men. Men are, therefore, more likely to take key education decisions and have the money to implement it as compared to women.

Judging from the above, one would assume that children living in male-headed households should transition to SHS more frequently because men tend to have more resources than women. This was, however, not widespread among the male-headed households. Out of the seventy children I interviewed from male-headed households, only four of them transitioned to SHS.

When comparing regions however, male-headed households in the Northern, Upper East, and Upper West Regions preferred to give access to sons as compared to male-headed households in Asante Region who gave access to sister's children, preferably sons but also sisters daughters. The extract below is from a 17-year-old, third year SHS student who lives with her mother and three siblings in a female-headed household.

My parents are divorced, and my father has remarried. My mother consults my father sometimes, but he hardly sends money for our education. Transitioning to SHS then was a bit challenging but my mother raised some of the money. She also managed to convince my “⁸chisel” maternal uncle to lend her money.

The extract above depicts the situation in the Asante Region where children from female-headed households, were offered education transition access more often.

Though the girls reported that their families were poor in most female headed households, they still went to school and some even transitioned to SHS. While this finding contradicts the feminization of poverty literature, it is consistent with studies on Ghana which contends that, male-headed households are poorer as compared to female headed households when we consider family consumption, education needs of children and other social outcomes (Ewusi, 1976; Kyereme & Thorbecke, 1987; Twerefour et al., 2014). Thus, further research is needed to explain the discrepancies in Ghana and whether and how this hypothesis needs additional testing.

⁸ ‘Chisel’ is a local term used to describe people who rarely lend or gift money.

1ii. Different Kinds of Men Take Decisions Depending on The Type of Family

Whilst key decisions are usually left in the hands of men, they take decisions depending on the type of family. The findings suggest that it was commonplace to see maternal uncles take education decision for children who live in families that are matrilineal in the rural areas. This was widespread in the Asante and Central Regions but not so for those in the Greater Accra and Northern Regions. Factors such as social change have and are still influencing family dynamics, thus, this finding does not necessarily apply in urban centers and contemporary family settings. The ensuing quotation below presents a 45-year-old woman, she is married to a trader with four children, she narrated how her husband put the interest of his maternal family first when he decided on who to grant access to secondary education in the Asante Region.

Yes, my husband provides for us and that of his sister's children too. My son and his niece both completed JHS, ...but he sponsored his niece in SHS instead. ...Well as for Asante men, if you marry them, you must be prepared to share your husband with his sisters and their children.

In Asante and other matrilineal societies, research show that women in conjugal relationships in nuclear families could experience financial insecurities for two reasons, first husbands are more likely to put the lineage of their matriliney first during resource dilution. The same logic applies when taking education decisions and this is consistent with (Takyi & Doodoo, 2005)'s findings that the interest of men's matrilineage families often overrides that of their conjugal family when making financial decisions.

In the Northern Regions, however, fathers and fathers' brothers are more likely to take education access decisions. This is not to suggest that women do not take education decisions, the analyses thereof present the norm rather than the exception. Thus, when addressing the access question within families, the family types within the regions and the different kinds of men who take education decisions are important consideration.

1iii. When parents take education access decisions from a place of ignorance

Some parents who chose not to transition their children were making decisions based on a lack of information. For example, the parents thought that if they were unable to provide financial support for their daughters' SHS transition within the year of their cohorts, they could do so the following year. This is because they would have more time to raise the money required. Children whose parents took such non-transition decisions could not transition the following year as envisaged. This is because they

could only transition with their cohorts or year group unless they re-sit the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), even if they passed in the first instance. I explored this issue with the free SHS Coordinators both National and Regional and the findings suggest that children who do not transition with their cohorts cannot transition the following year unless they re-sit the BECE. They explained that this was essential for planning stock levels for future cohorts. Whilst the reason they provided for excluding children who are unable to transition with their cohort is unsatisfactory, this would not be highlighted in this section since the critique of the policy has been adequately explored in chapter four of the thesis. Some children were reluctant to retake the exams, and many parents were unwilling to support this commitment. Consequently, these children experienced non-access outcomes.

Some of the non-transition decision outcomes also happened because of misinformation. Parents and children did not know that they could explore the option of self-placement to change the placement of their wards in rare situations where a girl has been placed in an all-boys school or when a peculiar situation such as the health of a child dictates that they attend school at a distance closer to their homes. The quotation below from a 16-year-old girl who was eligible to transition but could not because of misinformation speaks to the issue:

I got placement at a day school farther away from my catchment area in a different region. I could not walk to school and going to school will mean my mother must pay for my rent or hostel. I have an uncle who lives in that town, but he lied that he has been transferred... It was not possible to go to school... The free SHS is not free, if it were free then accommodation would be provided for those in comparable situation to mine.

A further probe into the above situation whether they explored self-placement or pursued for change of placement to a school in her catchment area suggests that they did not because of ignorance. First, there was a possibility of changing placement if placement spaces were still available. Secondly, no headteacher has the right to ask a student not to come to school because they could not afford to buy all the items they require for school.

1iv. Free SHS, Decision-making, geography, and a tale of two Ghana's

Geographic studies on Ghana have demonstrated that there is a difference in the way of life of Northern Ghana and Southern Ghana. First, Northern Ghana is made up of the regions with the highest incidence of poverty. The poverty mapping of Ghana suggests that the incidence of poverty is highly concentrated in the northwestern part of the country (GSS, 2015). This is corroborated by the Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report 2016 (Cooke, Hague, & McKay, 2016).

Apart from the economic differences, education access issues tend to be more pronounced in the Northern Regions as compared to those in the southern regions (ESPR, 2016). The differential family formations and northern Ghana's peculiar, disadvantaged position due to the historical and intentional neglect by various governments to develop the education systems as compared to southern Ghana make the two belts different.

They also must contend with patriarchal structures within the family. Children belong to their fathers, and the belief that 'a girl is on borrowed time with her parents' is pervasive. The idea is that girls will marry and even though their names after marriage do not necessarily change, they belong to their husband's family unless they are divorced.

The findings reveal that some of the children who qualified to transition to the SHS within the period 2017 to 2019 were 17 years and above. I found twelve such cases. This was not the case in the southern Ghana as most children went to school within the right age category or bracket. Legally, the age of a child is below 18 years, I was however compelled to categorize some of the children from the three northern regions whose ages fell above 18 years as children and twelve cases were significant to ignore. When I probed into the age concern, it was explained that children do not generally start basic school at the right age in some communities in the Northern Regions. This is because most communities do not have schools. Those coming from communities without schools need to walk a long distance for their basic education and children who are less than six years old are rarely able to walk such distances. Parents do not enroll them in school until they are convinced that they could walk to school. Thus, even though I found twelve cases, I was told there are many of such cases.

Comparing the Northern and Southern Ghana, the data revealed that children whose families were unsupportive did not transition to SHS. However, the non-transition decisions affected girls more than it did boys in the northern regions. For example, a 47-year old father, with two sons in SHS, but who did not allow his daughter to transition in Kongo, Upper West Region, just like the others I interviewed said:

Why would I not be fully supportive of my son's education. He will grow up and continue my lineage after I am gone. He will take charge of this compound... My daughter is only on borrowed time with us, she will soon marry and that will be the end... When there is no money, I would rather support my son. That is what works here and that is what our forebears have put in place...

Even though non-transitions for girls were widespread in the north, some girls from southern Ghana also suffered non-transition decisions. Girls from southern Ghana, however, rarely had to contend with the idea that, girls are on borrowed time with their parents. Further, institutional, and structural factors

which influenced education access negotiation for girls from northern Ghana differs from those from the southern Ghana such as family structures.

2. Family Structures and Negotiation Behaviors Within Different Types of Families and Households

The constitution of families influences how access is negotiated within the household. In nuclear families, which are constituted of the husband, wife and their children, education negotiation does not entail a complex interplay of interests. However, extended families and polygamous families are different due to the sheer numbers of people involved in the education access negotiations. I differentiate between two types of extended families based on the data gathered. The first type, residential extended family and second extended family as a social arrangement. The residential extended family comprises a series of close relatives built around either patrilineal or matrilineal lines, usually not both. Strict categorization of the extended family based on the residential definition is weakening. The data reveals that the few that have remained exist in less differentiating form. For example, nuclear families could bring a child or children of one of the couple's family members to live together with them and foster a couple of their nieces and nephews. Extended family as a social arrangement, however, enjoins the individual to provide extensive reciprocal duties, obligations, and responsibilities to relations outside the immediate (nuclear) family. The latter is also changing as support from extended families is declining in all social outcomes except funerals.

The excerpt from an interview with Martha a 17-years-old, presents a nuclear polygamous family situation in the Greater Accra region:

...I live with my mother and my mother's children in the same house and my half siblings also live with their mothers in different houses... My father lives in all the three houses. He can be anywhere at any time. I have step siblings at Morbole, and they live with their mother, and we are at Otchebleku... My biological mother and one of my stepmother's live in this community (Otchebleku).

The quotation presents a typical nuclear polygamous family. This type of family was common as compared to the residential polygamous family where the husband and wives shared the same compound. I interviewed four members of this family: the father, two of his wives, and three of his children who had completed JHS and were affected by the father's decisions regarding their transition.

The extract below presents a narration of one of the stepsisters Charlotte and her father Mr. Odotei. First Charlotte 16-year-old:

My mother did not want my stepsister to be in school whilst I stayed at home... when we heard that my father was planning with my stepmother to send my stepsister to SHS, my mother said this will not happen... apparently, my father has told my mother that he had no money for my SHS education. She called on my paternal uncle to intervene... he did and that is why both my stepsister, and I did not transition to the SHS. It is not fair to sponsor one and leave the other.

Mr. Odotei, a farmer, and the father of Charlotte and Martha also narrated:

My daughters Charlotte and Martha were not happy when I took the non-transition decision. Elizabeth showed anger... I get angry too... I told her that she is a fool, and I will ask her does she not know that going to school is all about having money to sponsor her education? I have decided that if I get money, I will allow both daughters to transition but there is no money now.

The extracts above are typical of most of the interviews conducted within polygamous nuclear families where girls became casualties of non-transition education decisions. Eight out of nine girls from polygamous nuclear families did not transition to SHS. Education negotiations sometimes involved third parties where a decision must be taken between two daughters and or a son who qualify to transition to SHS.

In female-headed nuclear families, the situation is different. Some households with older children negotiate access by appealing to older children first to help raise money for the younger ones before they consult other extended family relatives. I came across seventy-four such cases. Some also consult the fathers of their daughters for assistance, this scenario was played out within thirty-four families where non-transition decisions were made. A 16-year-old girl, from a single parent nuclear family who has completed JHS but did not transition captures this:

If they want to send someone to school, they usually ask all my older siblings and solicit for their support... I mean money. If they all can raise the money required, then they can send the person to school. They are not successful most of the time in raising the money because they almost always do not have the money to give...

The extract above suggests that transition outcomes also depend on whether older siblings can provide monetary support.

Parents have consistently had specific reasons for deciding against transitions. Favoritism could also explain why a parent enables access for one child and not the other. There is, however, minimal literature that explores favoritism when parents need to dilute resources among their children. For some families, where the man and the woman both contribute a fair bit to the family income, the man continued to hold the title breadwinner, his decisions on access to education stood even if it was a non-transition decision. The following quotation is from a shopkeeper and businesswoman whose daughter completed JHS but was not permitted to continue to SHS because her husband prioritized their son's education instead:

At some point a woman must choose to mute the power struggle during decision-making. The children are ours and we like to pretend we have no favorites among them but that is a lie...my husband is the head of the family so if resources are not enough, he would enable access for his favorite son. If I must choose, I would choose my daughter. ...my husband will choose our son over our daughter regardless of his academic performance. He likes to think that our son took after him in looks but he resembles me rather.

Parents tend to have favorites in how education access is distributed. Overall, parents always have reasons they will choose and or negotiate access for one child over another if they are not able to support all the children through SHS education. It could be about anything, from gender, to favorites, to guilt trips and poverty.

Negotiation behaviors around access are usually gendered. For example, some men weaponize guilt or the unequal power dynamic, such as feeling disrespected and acting out during negotiations around daughters' education to force their wives to tow their line. The use of guilt trips in negotiations within families is consistent with household politics relationships literature (Chisale, 2016). Another factor that can stall education negotiations is the need to avoid power struggles. In polarized decision-making environments, women may defer to their husbands' choices regarding education access.

These patterns of negotiation happen within the diverse types of families and the increasing complexity of the negotiation is related to the family type, the number of people involved and the interplay of interest. The table below is a summary of the family types, the number of people involved, and the interplay of interests.

Table 12: Observed Pattern of the Summary of the Types of Family, The Number of People Involved and the Interplay of Interests

	<i>Types of families</i>		<i>Number of people involved in access negotiation</i>	<i>Interplay of interest</i>
<i>Nuclear</i>	Two parents		Few people involved	Simple
	Lone parent	Male headed		
		Female headed		
	<i>Nuclear</i>	<i>Polygamous</i>	Many people	Complex
	<i>Polygamous</i>	<i>Extended Family</i>		

Source: Author's creation based on fieldwork data

Whilst these dynamics of family patterns engenders negotiation of education access within Ghanaian families and suggest associational view of education access, the South Asia and China region presents

similar, and different social and spatial articulations of family systems in their geographical contexts. These geographical contexts could provide interesting empirical cases for understanding how access to education is negotiated.

The studies on the family dynamics in this region are instructive and capture issues such as family structure and composition, gender inequality, labor market opportunities for women, changing marriage patterns, kinship, and intergenerational relations (Jones & Yeung 2014; Abalos, 2014; Strijbosch, 2015; Thornton et al., 2012; Ghimire & Axinn, 2006, Allendorf & Thornton, 2015; Kaur 2016; Yeung & Park, 2015; Dommaraju & Tan, 2014; Wei-Jun et al., 2018).

These studies, however, rarely capture the social, cultural, and family articulations of education access, such as the implications of family dynamics and relationship negotiations on education access. It is crucial to examine the family and social dynamics influencing education access, particularly at the family and household levels.

New studies should investigate access negotiation behaviors from diverse families and the continuous processes of education access negotiation. Until then, I make a cautious reference to this region in stating that dynamics of family can structure education access negotiation because the diversity of families and other moderating factors may engender differences in how access is negotiated within households.

2i. Speaking from the Margins: Women and Men Negotiating Access with Silence

The actors who negotiate education sometimes employ silence during negotiations within families. There are different forms of silence; these include hostile silence, controlling silence, resisting silence, political silence, and safe silence (Bosacki, 2005, p. 88; Jack, 1999, p. 224). However rarely explored are how different gender norms, and expectations dictate how men and women use silence during negotiations around education. Some scholars contend that silence is not a good negotiation strategy for the party who has the least power in households where politics around decision-making was polarized (Motsemme, 2004, p. 917, Tamale, 2004).

The findings reveal that different family members employ different forms of silence during negotiations, especially when the negotiation environment remains contested. The excerpts below

highlight how interviewees use silence during negotiations. First, a 42-year-old seamstress whose daughter is also a casualty of non-transition education decision:

...I did not rebel against my husband's non-transition decision. I am the woman, and he is the man in the relationship. It is my duty to help him and not to usurp his power to make decisions as head of the family. I keep my silence when he gets angry during discussions around our daughter's education. That is how I keep the peace.

In another development, a mother of a 16-year-old SHS 2 student who rebelled against her husband's non-transition decision for their daughter noted how her husband used silence:

...he got angry, and he has been silent ever since, the kind of silence that keeps you walking on eggshell around him... I made a big mistake because my daughter is in SHS 2 now and ever since I rebelled against his non-transition decision, I am unable to put pressure on him to give me money for our daughter's school needs.

The extracts above reveal that people use diverse kinds of silence permitted by the gendered norms of their social organization. The men in these contexts were more inclined to use hostile silence enabled or permitted whilst the use of silence by the women was to keep the peace (Shangase, 2000). Hostile silence according to (Jack, 1999, p. 222) and (Bosacki, 2005, p. 89), is used to mask aggression and to control others to block any chance for dialogue during negotiations.

Some women stay silent about their husbands' decisions, especially when they have limited support from their extended family. This observation cuts across the diverse types of families in all the regions under study. However, this was particularly pronounced in the two districts I studied in the northern region. This is because voicing out as a negotiation strategy does not always work, it only works if they are ready to make the education of their daughters happen with their own money or with the support of others. Without these networks of support, they keep quiet about non-transition decisions even if they disagree. Secondly, they believe men demand respect and voicing out or talking back during education negotiations could make things worse.

The evidence further shows that daughters also employ silence about non-transition decisions that affect them more than sons. This is because some parents saw keeping silence and not speaking up as good behavior for girls, and these expectations shaped their negotiation behaviors. A 42-year-old mother of five whose daughter was not allowed to transition to the SHS said this about her daughter:

My daughter kept quiet throughout all of this when she was told she would not be going to SHS. ...she is a good girl. She is not the disrespectful type who will talk back at you or throw tantrums like other children. I brought her up properly to respect her adults.

Overall, people negotiated with silences around secondary education. These negotiations often happen when children need to transition to SHS as compared to the basic primary and JHS because secondary

education require more resources as compared to primary education. The table below gives a summary of the observed patterns in the use of silences during negotiations.

Table 13: A summary of differences in the use of silences during negotiation

Participants		Observed patterns	
		Silences	Power relations
Men		Hostile silence and guilt trips or weaponizing guilt	Power over
Women		Peaceful silence with the aim to mute power struggle	Power with
Children	Boys	Rarely use silence	Power to
	Girls	Silence as a sign of obedience and good behavior	

Source: Author’s creation based on data from fieldwork

3. Unique Cases: When Community Factors Influence Negotiations

Traditionally, negotiation of access happens along gender lines and other constitutive factors. Unique community factors, however, influenced access negotiations in two districts which were different from the traditionally approved routes to negotiation. I discuss these under three sub-sections below.

3i. De-gendering education, re-inclusion of women in education access decision-making

Women have the obligation to do both reproductive and their productive jobs. Hochschild, (1989) describes this situation as a second shift which creates situations where women are likely to earn less income from paid work. Darkwah (2010) posit that women are more likely to abandon the work that earns them a living to concentrate on care giving obligations. Similarly, there is the gendered expectation of women that their individual decisions should not overshadow that of the men in their lives.

These factors, combined with diminishing extended family support, make it challenging for women to single-handedly finance their daughters' secondary education, leaving many girls affected by non-transition decisions. However, there are emerging changes at the micro-household level, although such changes are not yet widespread across all the study areas in this study, it was the case in a specific part of the Upper East Region.

This change is made possible because of the latent function of the free SHS policy. The policy has surprising possible emancipatory effect for disrupting and changing gender relations, power and status within households and escalating conflict and tensions. For most people in Jirapa District in the Upper East Region, the latent function of the policy is the opportunity it presents to renegotiate power relations in the households.

In the Jirapa community in the Upper East Region, the men interviewed were primarily engaged in crop farming and livestock rearing, cultivating crops such as yams, maize, beans, and groundnuts. These are typical crops cultivated by many residents in the community purposively for consumption, and only a little is sold. Some children do not view farming as a viable occupation due to its insufficient income. Mothers, however, are mostly brewers (they brew Pito, a northern Ghanaian drink), sellers (both cooked and uncooked foods), and weavers and these economic activities offer substantial financial returns.

The findings reveal that the women often had more money than men because the local market was saturated with the agricultural staples produced by men. With everyone growing similar crops, there was little need to buy from others, leading to lower income from these products.

Fathers and mothers were united in their SHS transition and non-transition decisions in the past in the absence of the free SHS policy. Most non-transition decisions also received the support of mothers even though some made more money than their husbands. This was because despite their relatively high earning abilities, it was not enough to pay for all the school needs of children, especially daughters who are easily told to quit school when they needed to go to SHS. However, with this access policy, most women could single-handedly sponsor their children through the SHS without much support from husbands or kin. This is changing gender relationships and negotiations within families. The accounts of the following interviewees capture the changing gender dynamics around negotiating education. First, is a 41-year-old mother of five children whose husband asked her second daughter to end her education after JHS level, but she singlehandedly took the transition decision and now her daughter is in SHS 2 at Jirapa. She recounts:

It is not like the previous system where your husband could take non-transition decision and you go along with it, because as a woman, you could not raise the money on your own due to the sheer amount involved in SHS education and other related cost. These days, one person can take decisions on education and stick to it if the other partner is not supportive.

Similarly, a weaver, divorcee, and a mother of four children narrated:

My daughter's father was supportive of our son when he was in SHS even at the time when they were required to pay fees. ...I am happy I can make her secondary education happen without her father's

support. I struggled a bit to buy the list of items on her prospectus but ...I made her education happen singlehandedly and it is quite refreshing.

The above extracts show how gender relations dynamics around SHS decision-making are changing.

Interviewees in the recent past left education decisions for their husbands, and they could make decisions on recurrent household expenditure even though they both worked and earned money. Especially for those in polygamous families, the wives can now make education decisions and carry it through without asking for husband's support.

Whilst women were especially appreciative of the new freedom found because of the Free SHS policy, the men complained about how the latent function of the policy could destroy marriages. They bemoaned that their wives are beginning to think that it was acceptable for their education decisions to overshadow that of the men. They also lamented especially about how the ability it affords women to take education decision is fueling discontent in marriages, lack of respect, and how that is destroying the traditions that has kept families together. A 39-years old married man running a nuclear family, whose non-transition decision for his daughter did not materialize made these comments:

Our traditional right as decision-makers is wrongly usurped, our women are taking decisions for themselves and their children. They have become disrespectful. This posturing will break marriages. ...this trend has been going on for a while now but since the inception of this policy, the women have just lost it... Well, let us wait and see.

Even though the interviewee in the extract above said he was the head of his family, his wife suggested that no one was head of their family when I interviewed her.

It can be argued that the positions of members within the households and cultural expectations of their positions affect education decisions. The policy, however, affects men's education access decisions and reduces their predominantly key decision-making influences on daughters SHS progression within the family. This is because the policy and the community context of work is creating situations where most women did not need their husbands' permission to support the education of daughters. They can make standalone education decisions because they can afford it. This is about the ability to pay, and it explains the relationship between women's relative economic power and feeling enabled to defy or ignore their husbands' wishes when making education decisions about daughters.

3ii. Gendering education access: problematic exclusion of boys and re-inclusion of girls

It is well noted that decision-making around resources rests in the hands of men in patrilineal societies (Agarwal, 1997; Fuseni & Kulule-Sabiti, 2016; Fuseni et al., 2019) and this leads to problematic

exclusions of women in decision-making and the gendering of education access. In Jirapa and Nandom Districts in the Northern Ghana, another notable case I observed, which differed significantly from other study sites and families I visited, was that the women actively preferred to provide educational opportunities for their daughters. The findings show that women tend to have preferences for passing education access to daughters in response to what they regard as the ‘vulnerability of their daughters.’ This is the belief that girls who are out of school can become easy prey to bad men. Women’s relative better access to resources, coupled with the provisions of the policy and its concomitant removal of a chunk of the direct and indirect costs, a new trend is beginning to emerge. Women are favoring daughters over sons in secondary transition decisions. A mother of five children who is a weaver noted:

Both our son and daughter completed in 2018, the combined efforts of my husband and I was not adequate to sponsor both. My husband suggested we sponsor our son, but I said no. I sponsored my daughter singlehandedly. I am a weaver, so I make money. And I can now afford to sponsor one because of the free SHS. I chose my daughter because daughters are easy prey to bad men when they are out of school.

Similarly, most of the women admitted that they have always made more money than the men because of their differential resource pathways. When the men make money, it is seasonal and if this does not coincide with the reopening of the schools, then they have little to no money to contribute. Despite the imbalance in the earning capacities of men and women, tradition and cultural expectations that saw men as breadwinners and key decision-makers enabled men to dominate in the education decisions, until the disruption because of the extra capacity Free SHS policy affords women. In an interview with a 69-year-old community elder and an Assemblyman, he noted:

Our women now want to take decisions, and our wives think themselves as leaders, and they want to take all the key decisions about the children. Culturally decision making in the family or within our compound is our right and when the money is not enough, we choose our sons because they become the head of the compound when we join our ancestors, but now the women would choose their daughters... this is a ticking time bomb waiting to happen.

A compound in the Northern Regions is where a man and his wives and children (sons and their wives and children) and unmarried daughters and divorced daughters live together in a household.

3iii. Crises-led transitions; Access transition outcomes overachieved but are girls going to school under the right conditions?

The point about the patrilineal nature of families in the Northern, Upper East, and Upper West Regions, have been made. The belief system and cultural practices associated with patrilineal families are also noted in literature relating to transfer of office and inheritance (Nukunya, 2003). There is no doubt these situations, coupled with other myriads of factors affect who goes to school when a non-transition

decision is imminent. However, the Kongo District in the Upper West Region had a peculiar case that was worth exploring. The district is one of the key places that has over-achieved gender parity. Their gender parity index of (2.6) sets them apart from the other districts in the Upper West Region and the whole country. So, it is obvious that girls are going to school in this district. However, I uncovered that these numbers achieved were crises-led. Girls are transitioning in their numbers not necessarily because they all benefit from the negotiating of education within their families but because girls are negotiating access in their own unique way. A 17-year-old student in SHS3, from a polygamous family with sixteen siblings and two stepmothers gave an account of her situation:

...When I had school placement here, I was given a day student status but because the school is not in my catchment area I could not walk to school. ...my boyfriend is the one sponsoring my education. He allows me to use his motorbike to commute to school. My boyfriend buys my school supplies. He sleeps with me sometimes. ...we were using protection (condom), but I do not know how I got pregnant. Some girls in my class are also pregnant...

After the first interview, I explored this case further to see who, how many, and why the girls were negotiating access this way in twelve cases. Despite their families' non-transition decisions, some girls were able to attend SHS, often with financial support from older men. I present two of the cases, first:

Case 1: She is 18 years old, she dropped out of SHS when she was in SHS 2, she lives with her boyfriend and his family in the boy's father's compound:

I dropped out because my due date to give birth was nearing. The headmistress said I could come back to school after I give birth to my child. I gave birth six months ago and there is no support at home so I cannot go back to school. I wish I could go back to school when my child is 16 months. But I don't think that is possible because the free SHS only sponsors you for three years... if you are pregnant and you give birth and you do not have a support system, you cannot quickly go to school to continue with your cohorts and you will be required to pay the full fees without government support when you are unable to complete within three years.

Case 2: She is 17 years, and she is in SHS 3, I interviewed her at the time she was preparing to write her WASSCE exams:

My father wanted me to become a weaver. Training to become a weaver takes three years, but I also wanted to become a nurse. I see the nurses in their uniforms, and I love it... I have three siblings already in SHS, two brothers and a stepsister. My father said he is supporting too many of my mother's children. My mother was able to convince my father to allow my brothers to go to school. My brothers are useful because they help with the cattle and the farms when they come home on vacations... I cannot head the cattle. I run away to Kumasi when I completed the JHS to work with a 'Waakye' seller when I realized that I will not be allowed to transition to SHS, for financial reasons. I decided to travel because I see young girls from this community migrate to the big cities and market centers to work as head porters and they come back with money... If money was the problem, then I would make money and come back to continue my education. I have also seen girls who also migrated and came back to continue secondary school. When I went to the city center, I worked with a food seller, and I made money. I came back with money and that is how I bought my items on the prospectus, and my cousin who is also a nurse helped me enroll at the SHS. She did not give me money I had my own money. She took me to

school because my father would not do that. After the first year, things became difficult. The money I made from the city center had finished, I knew others in our school who were sponsored by men, and they were better off. I met a man who promised to sponsor me through SHS if I would marry him after the West African Certificate Examination (WASCE) exams. I agreed. He did not intend to get me pregnant before I complete the SHS education... I do not know how I got pregnant; it was a mistake.

The findings revealed the girls come from diverse family backgrounds. Some lived in a household with their cousins and headed by their grandmother, others lived with their boyfriend's family in the boy's father's compound. These girls got pregnant in SHS two and three. There was a certain pattern in the negotiating behaviors of these girls. With lack of or inadequate support from their families, they turn to men who were older for support. The men they mentioned were between ages 25 and 41. The men supported them in diverse ways including providing them with provisions, school items such as backpacks, accommodation for those who were given day student status but who came from other communities and could not afford to rent private or hostel facilities. Some of the men even gave them motorbikes to commute to and from school. These supports were not free of charge. In all cases, there was a promise of marriage immediately after completion of SHS. The negotiation did not include getting pregnant before completion of the SHS. Even with the use of protection, some of the girls still ended up pregnant. I investigated the communities.

I interviewed two Assemblymen from two of the communities my respondents came from. I was told that the girls travel to southern Ghana after completing SHS, and they rarely come back to fulfill the promise of marrying the men from the community. They do not want to marry men who are mostly not literate. An Assemblyman gave an account of the situation sympathizing with the men involved with the SHS girls:

...I understand the men. The fear is that these girls would leave the community to the south and not marry the men after completing the SHS. That is why the men put them in a family way. If you get them pregnant their parents will pressure them to marry you, or they have limited options to travel out of the community after school. The girls have always wanted to go to school and in fact most of them are going to school, just that they have little to no support system.

To interrogate this further at the institutional level, I explored the issue of teenage pregnancy with the District Education Office when I interviewed the implementers such as the Gender Desk Officers, and the findings are captured under the meso level implementation factors in the preceding chapter.

4. Children Negotiating Access

Some children negotiate access when adults take non-transition decisions for them. Girls generally did not have control over access to SHS in a way that boys had when the family was unable to provide material and non-material support. Reasons such as being branded disobedient if they tried raising money on their own as girls or asking for help, are part of the multi-layered factors that impede their negotiation to SHS. To raise money for their education needs, they must work to earn money. Most girls, however, must perform house chores and care giving activities. Time constraint did not also enable them to work outside the home for money. In contrast, boys are sometimes exempt from household chores to work and earn money. Consequently, if parents struggle to afford SHS, the boys' ability to contribute financially often prevents them from being denied access. A 17-year-old boy in SHS 2 whose sister was denied access into SHS citing monetary constraints noted:

I work to earn money for my SHS education. My parents also give me money for school but that is just a top up. In this community, I hardly see girls working to earn money for themselves. My sister sells sometimes when she is not helping with the chores in the house but that is not her own business, my mother is a market woman, so my sister helps her sell some of the time.

Further, what is considered boys work and girls work also play a part when children are negotiating access. For example, boys are frequently seen working on construction sites as laborers or in people's farms as laborers. These kinds of activities are traditionally gender determined and girls rarely do them. When non-transition decisions stem from financial constraints, girls often lack the resources to support their parents in funding their secondary education.

When a family lacks funds to support a boy's education and all other funding options fail, boys can often earn money through work, enabling them to continue their schooling. Girls are rarely given similar earning opportunities. Consequently, whilst a decision maker's non-transition decisions can affect a girl badly, boys are able to turn things around for themselves. A 17-year-old boy who works to earn money for his SHS education noted:

I stay out of the house working all day to earn money, so if my parents cannot sponsor my education, I can support myself, my sisters are girls, and which parents will allow their daughters stay out of the house in the name of working to earn money. They could become pregnant, besides working on people's farms is a boy's work and not a girl's work.

The decision not to allow girls to work outside of the home to earn money unsupervised is about the fear that girls could become pregnant and not necessarily about undermining or threatening the breadwinning status of men. This is because even in situations where women earned more than men, they have deferred the status of breadwinners to the men. Moreover, the fear that when girls are

allowed to work outside the home, they would become pregnant also explains why most girls are prevented from working outside the house to earn money.

The findings show that girls often forgo their own enrollment or transition to support their brothers when only one child can be supported. Conversely, boys do not typically make similar sacrifices for their sisters. When girls have been involved in their education negotiation politics, they have often sacrificed their own transitions to SHS to enable the transitions of their brothers into SHS. They rationalize the transition decisions agreed on by their parents in a way that their brothers did not. Some students, weary of the ongoing negotiation over their transitions, choose to forgo their education to ease their mothers' concerns.

The three ensuing excerpts are from members in one family. In 2019, Aunty Salo, a single parent of five, had to make a transition decision for one of her children and a non-transition decision for the other. Her daughter completed JHS at the time when her son had completed SHS. The ensuing excerpts are from interviews with Aunty Salo and her children. First Aunty Salo:

...our poverty situation is real. I am a single parent, If I had allowed my daughter to transition as well, I would not be able to provide for both children. I had to select one, and my son could go to school. My daughter understands my situation better than my son and she readily agreed to the non-transition decision though difficult.

Emmanuel is Sarah's brother. He is currently a student at the University of Cape Coast:

...I continued my education with the money my mother borrowed, and my sister was asked to hold on until she can raise money.no, my mother knew I will not agree if she had asked me to wait for Sarah to go to school. I must go to school so that when I get to the top, I can come back and help my sister.

A 16year-old Sarah at Efutu who has been denied access into SHS rationalized her mother's decision.

...My mother cannot support my brother at the University and I at the same time if we both transition to the next level of our education and I know it, I understand...

Overall, there are differences in the negotiation behaviors of children, which is mediated by their gender, the kinds of jobs available and the socially permissible and or non-permissible behaviors for girls and boys. For example, girls are seldom permitted to work outside the home to earn money because their fathers think that they would become pregnant. Surprisingly, parents emphasize abstinence because they believe that their teenage daughters are abstaining from sex, therefore, allowing them to explore options when parents are unable to negotiate successful education transition will be the catalyst for teenage pregnancy. This is surprising because the reality of abstinence in the Ghanaian context can be explained by first, puberty rite traditions such as 'bragoro,' 'dipo', and Kyiribra', and other practices in the past that was in place to make sure that girls abstained from sex until marriage (Sarpong, 1977). Second, there is the religious prohibition that encourages abstinence.

However, legally, the minimum age of sexual consent is sixteen. So, while a 16-year-old is considered a child by the Children's Act 1998, she is allowed to consent to sex. This age of sexual consent is not harmonized with the legal age (18), of being considered an adult. Further, there is the reality of romance which is rarely explored and undertheorized among teenagers. Within the mix of such contradictions the statistics on teenage pregnancies in Ghana also show that children rarely abstain. The District Health Information Management System (DHIMS), 2020 indicates that 2,865 pregnancies were recorded among girls between ages 10 and 14 and 107,023 pregnancies were recorded for girls between ages 15 and 19 years. Quite clearly, the focus on abstinence have rarely prevented children from having sex and getting pregnant. The science of contraceptives could help prevent teenage pregnancies and allay the fear of parents that daughters could become pregnant whilst teenagers.

Additionally, suggesting alternative routes to access where children could work and earn money is also restricted based on gender but also based on the differential understanding of what is considered boys work and girls work. They can sell for commission, but lack of capital and time constraints—especially with caregiving and household duties—often make it impractical for them to manage both. A decision maker's non-transition decisions affect boys and girls differently.

4i. Education Access still privileges Boys when Children negotiate Secondary Education Access

At the household micro-level, it is relationships around gender and resources dilution that are continually being negotiated and contested across different access situations. Thus, permutations exist that privileges boys when access decisions are reached. When children negotiate access to SHS, the decisions reached usually enable boys to go to school. Gender plays a pivotal role in explaining why these negotiations often yield unfavorable outcomes for girls. Key scenarios include:

- When there are competing education needs among children, the needs of boys are considered first when children negotiate access.
- When the government provided support is enough to enable a child transition to SHS, education decisions at the micro-level privileges boys when children negotiate access.
- When families must contribute both in monetary and non-monetary terms, education decisions still privilege boys when children negotiate access.

Furthermore, the behavior of girls is taken into consideration during such negotiations. The behavior of boys, whether described as good or unruly, did not undermine their SHS access chances. Boys are allowed to work to earn money to support themselves through school when a family is struggling financially but girls are usually not allowed to do the work considered typical for boys even if they could earn money because of the cultural understanding of what is appropriate work for girls and boys.

5. When a Family is struggling Financially, Boys go to School

Some families despite reporting financial struggles sent their sons to SHS, while citing financial constraints as the reason for their daughters' non-transition decisions. Whilst the sincerity of the reasons they cited needs further exploration, it seems that it is easier to ask girls to terminate their education because it is socially acceptable in their context. The extract below is from Mr. Denu, a farmer with three wives and thirteen children who made transition decision for his son and non-transition decision for his daughters.

My son, the one in SHS is a day student. I have rented a room for him so that he can go to school as a day student. When school reopens, I give him just a little amount of money. If I can raise about GHC 100.00 for him, he will be able to add about GHC 100.00 to it and go back to school.

He was able to rent a place for his son and raise GHC 100.00 for him to go to school but when it was the turn of his daughters, he sighted financial constraint as the reason for his non-transition decisions. In another development, Mr. Denu suggested that he needed somebody to give him a huge sum of money before he could allow his daughters go to SHS:

...if someone can give me at least GHC 4000.00, or GHC 5000.00, I will allow both of my daughters' transition to SHS. This is what I need...

Parents are often willing to make compromises if they cannot fully support their sons financially. In contrast, they typically require full financial provision before allowing their daughters to attend SHS. A mother of three, who is married and live in a nuclear family household rationalizes her non-transition decision:

If my daughter were a boy, I would allow her to go to Senior High School even if I were struggling financially... Boys can cope with every situation. All I needed to do would be to buy him a few things and about two boxer shorts and he will be ready to go... but she is a girl I cannot allow her to go without providing all the necessary items on the school's prospectus.

Another parent also rationalized her non-transition decisions:

Hmmmm, I know that free SHS is fully functioning, and all these things are going to be provided to the children by the government's free SHS policy, but there are other things the parents must buy. If she were a boy, that will be different, I could consider and I could let him transition even if I did not have

the money to get all the things, he needs..., but no, she is a girl, and some of the things she will need are not negotiable, I must get them for her before I send her out there...

A 49-year-old mother also explained:

...my daughter is a girl and if she goes to school without the things she needs for school, she will chase after boys and get pregnant. We do not want any disgrace in the family. She is a good girl, and she is an innocent girl... I do not want her to go and start dating men in school because her father cannot afford to give her the money she needs for school.

The quotations indicate that boys frequently receive access to education, even in financially challenging circumstances.

6. When gendered norms of what is considered good behavior for children determine who goes to SHS, boys' transition to SHS

Another way of determining who benefits from education decisions is to consider what is good and unruly behavior. A way to explore this is to unpack gendered norms of good behavior for boys and girls. When girls are labeled as problematic, it hampers efforts to secure support for their transition, when available government aid is insufficient. Additionally, if a girl becomes pregnant during or after JHS, families are often unwilling to let her continue to SHS.

When influential extended family members label a girl as disobedient, her transition to SHS becomes challenging, especially if she faces difficulties with the standard or direct route. Transitioning normally without hitches has to do with when a child has a school placement at locations parents are comfortable with, and they are ready and willing to support in both material and non-material terms for a child to go to school successfully.

The evidence from the data suggests that a girl who goes out frequently to play and or socialize with her friends can be labeled a bad girl. A girl who talks back at the elderly or frequently disagrees with what the significant adult in her life has decided on, risked been called a bad girl. A girl who is assertive and insists on been treated fairly could as well be classified as a bad girl. Finally, when a girl has a boyfriend, it is also socially unacceptable.

Whilst these traits, which can be found in almost all the diverse types of families, define who is a bad girl and who is not, it does not necessarily define who a bad boy is. The above traits do not readily apply to males. In fact, it is encouraged. A boy need not be in the house around 3 to 4 pm because household chores or the preparation of food for family are usually done by girls. The except below explain these:

She is disobedient, she does not listen when you talk to her. It does not mean her education needs should be neglected..., I will give her the support she requires if I can, but ordinarily, I will not go over and above what I can optimally do, for a girl who is very disrespectful (A father of a girl who did not transition to SHS)

Agyei is 17 years old in SHS2. He has four siblings, he completed JHS with his younger sister who is 16 years old. He lives with his parents and other siblings in a nuclear family household also narrated:

I would not be able to accept my placement at SHS because there was no money, but my Aunties provided financial support. They could decide to help my sister too, but she is a bad girl. She does not sleep in the house sometimes. ...Yes, I know I told you I sleep at my friend's house, but I am a boy.... What if my sister gets pregnant because she is sleeping elsewhere?

Additionally, the girls do not necessarily need to have exhibited unruly behavior. The fear of girls showing unruly behavior after parents have enabled their SHS transition coupled with the fear of girls getting pregnant alone can be a catalyst for non-transition decisions. A father intimated to me about why he decided his daughter must not transition to SHS:

When I allow her to go to SHS, she can become a bad girl. I have seen girls from this community go to SHS and drop-out because of teenage pregnancy. She can hide any unruly behavior whilst at home, but once you allow her to go to SHS and she is out there, she might become a bad girl. It is possible to exhibit two types of behaviors, one at home and one at school...

I was also curious as to who is allowed to determine who is bad or what is unruly behavior. The findings reveal that any adult member of the family can decide who is bad and who is of good behavior. It could be fathers and mothers. Aunties and Uncles who have the financial means to assist or whose opinions matter could also determine who is bad and who is good. Girls did not have to subvert the norms of approved social behaviors or commit any infractions to be branded bad girls. A girl who missed out on SHS because her father decided against it and her relatives refused financial support, labeling her as problematic, lamented:

My Aunties and Uncles could help, but they do love some of us and hate the rest of us. Yes, they tell you that you are not a good girl, and sometimes they say you have a bad attitude meanwhile you have not offended them in anyway. They love those they love, and they hate those they hate.

What is considered good and bad behaviors for children further explain why girls are quick to sacrifice their SHS opportunities for siblings with equal access competing needs whilst boys help parents shove non-transition decisions down the throat of girls.

7. Negotiations that resulted in Successful and Unsuccessful Transitions

Negotiations can result in (un)successful transitions regardless of the type of family, the interplay of interest, and the number of people involved in the negotiation. The key defining element influencing

successful and unsuccessful transitions in indirect transitions is the nature of communication and the power relationships that exist between and among negotiating actors.

7i. Negotiations that resulted in successful transitions

Decision-making about resources, access to education and responsibilities that is done through open communication with one another and ensuring that all actors are accorded with respect led to successful transition outcomes regardless of the family type. Among the twenty children who transitioned successfully through indirect means, three of them belonged to families that were doing averagely okay and had parents who were willing to prioritize their education among other competing demands for their money and non-monetary support. Four of them had help financially and in other non-financial terms, there were also two families where daughters transitioned even though they struggled financially. There were, however, twelve girls who faced non-transition decisions but negotiated their own transitions with older men with promises of marriage in one district. When the politics around access negotiation was more peaceful and parents and legal guardians discussed access in a more mature way, access outcomes were generally positive.

A 54-year-old father and a businessman who co-heads his nuclear family with his wife noted:

The free SHS was welcome news because then my daughter could go to school. The only problem was that she was made a day student in a different town. She is just 16 years so the thought that my daughter was going to stay alone in a rented room without any relatives was a big no for me. I discussed this with my wife. We took a non-transition decision initially, but after negotiations, we borrowed money and I went to the Regional free SHS Coordinator, and her placement was changed. My wife and I decide together on how best to support our children.

A 42-year-old teacher whose family is a two headed nuclear family also narrated:

...negotiating access as a man with my wife do not put us in a power-over type situation. Wisdom, they say, does not lie in one person's head. We discussed education, especially her SHS access issue very maturely. We called her when her result came, and she had placement in a different school. We asked her whether she wanted the school and the course she had been given and she said yes. ...even though we struggled to raise the money, we made it happen.

A 51-year-old auto mechanic who heads a polygamous nuclear family of three wives and nine children noted on further exploration of successful access transitions:

...of course, there are tensions involved when you have three wives who are very opinionated and not humble. I believe in education so when it comes to my daughter's education, I am a skillful negotiator. I borrowed money from one wife, and I used it to buy the items on the prospectus of my daughter from my other wife. I did not have to be truthful about what I needed the money for... my wives live with the

children, so they mostly take their education decisions because they have a better understanding of the academic strengths of our children and that makes my life a little easier.

The family type in all three extracts rarely mattered in whether a child could transition successfully but rather the nature of family politics.

7ii. Negotiations that resulted in unsuccessful Transitions

When the politics around access negotiation happen in power-over situations, where decision-makers rarely consult and or negotiate transitions in a peaceful manner, then the type of family, the number of people involved, the interplay of interests, the external and internal gatekeepers and the gender of the child could exacerbate the situation leading to unsuccessful transitions.

Thus, the nature of family politics around access transitions could superintend other key constitutive access elements like gender, community resource pathways, and family types given the implemented access policy.

Having egalitarian relationships where power is shared, resources are shared, and the decision and negotiation of access is not polarized increase girls' chances of transitioning to SHS unimpeded. However, negotiations that happen in a power-over situations could result in unsuccessful transitions. When negotiating of access occurs within power strive situations, girls' access into senior high schools are slimmer than boys and the type of family rarely matters in this context. A key pattern in the evidence gathered around negotiations that resulted in unsuccessful transitions is the weakening of extended and nuclear family support.

Table 14: A summary of implemented access policy, family type, Nature of family politics and access transition outcomes.

Observed pattern:

<i>Implemented access policy</i>	<i>Family type</i>	<i>Nature of family politics</i>	<i>Access transition outcomes</i>
<i>Conducive</i>	1.Extended family	Conducive	Meaningful transition outcome
<i>Not conducive</i>	2.Nuclear family (two parents' family, lone parents' families [male headed, female headed])	Not conducive	Non transition outcomes
<i>Conducive</i>	3.Nuclear Polygamous family	Not conducive	Unmeaningful transition outcomes with school interruptions
<i>Not conducive</i>	4.Polygamous family	Conducive	Meaningful transition outcomes but with school interruptions

Source: Author's creation from fieldwork data

8. Waning of Nuclear and Extended Family Support

The literature on access to education makes the case that several children in Africa acquire education largely because of extended family support (Lloyd and Blanc, 1996). Contrary to the view that extended family support is crucial for children's education, the findings indicate that extended family members often do not pool resources to assist a child in need. This is evident in two ways. First, most nuclear families I studied revealed that they did not seek extended family support when they were unable to help their daughters transition. They believe that once SHS education is said to be free, nobody will believe the sincerity of their appeal for help. Second, most of the families did not get any substantial support when they approached family relations and kin for help. The snippets below speak to these issues.

A 55-year-old mother whose twin daughters could not transition to SHS because her maternal uncles refused to give her monetary support alluded:

In the past, my maternal Uncles, or my well to do cousin would help. These days everybody thinks it is free, so they are not willing to help.

Sister Aba is 47years, a farmer, a mother of five and she has a daughter who could not transition to SHS, she heads a nuclear family household but said she has no support from her extended family.

Nobody could help me financially. I have brothers, but they all have their children and their wives to take care of so they cannot help me financially when I tell them about my situation.

The last excerpt is from the Greater Accra Region. He bemoaned:

The problem we face as Ga-Adangbe people is that the extended family rarely come to our aid when we are in trouble unlike the Akans where members of the family or anybody within the lineage can help you in times of need...

Education access negotiation behaviors are not only changing but responses to the cry for help are also changing. There are family relations who support education with words and actions and there are those who support with just words. There are also those whose support is not required but whose opinions matter in enabling access for girls. The findings reveal that the extended family system in Ghana is no longer predominantly residential. The extended family as a social arrangement with members having reciprocal duties towards other members is also weakening. We, however, see support from extended family during funerals.

9. Between Aspirations and Realities: Coping Strategies, Alternatives to Senior High School Education, Is Apprenticeship Training the Answer?

The coping strategy differs for diverse kinds of families, different children, and perhaps diverse cultural and geographical belts. Some families, after taking non-transition decisions, are hopeful that somehow, they might get help and those affected by the non-transition decisions could go to SHS someday.

Coping strategies are, however, different depending on geographical context. Families whose breadwinners are farmers in geographical belts where crop farming is the predominant occupation pray for a long-lasting raining season for their crops to enable them raise money for apprenticeship training for their daughters. Despite the decline in extended family support due to the current access policy, some families remain determined to seek help from relatives and friends, hoping for any available assistance.

Others also relied on their faith/religion as a source of hope in negotiating education transition decision. This is important in a context of Ghana because people believe God can influence the transition outcomes of their children. A mother who hopes her believe in God will enable her to enroll her daughter in apprenticeship training after her daughter's father took non-transition decision narrated:

I have nobody to turn to for help. I am praying to God that he is the God that healed the sick, he is the God who opens doors when there is no hope and if Christ does not come to the earth for his second coming on time, and nobody comes to help us, I will still be working and praying and be asking her elder brother to also support the sister learn a trade

Even though apprenticeship training is the most talked about viable alternative for those whose daughters did not transition, most parents without a clear plan or timeline for securing funds, offer the girls a promise of apprenticeship training.

Additionally, parents who plan to give alternative training to their daughters opted for seamstress training, hair dressing training and training at vocational school or centers. While these training options are good alternatives, parents hardly keep their promise of enrolling them in apprenticeship training. Ama is 16 years old; she hopes to learn a trade if her parents find money, but she is not sure when. She tells:

Hmmm because the time for our transition for our year-group is passed, I will accept the hairdressing alternative my parents are suggesting, I hope they find money soon to enable me to learn the trade.

Most of the girls with apprenticeship aspirations have completed SHS since 2017 and their parents have promised to enroll them at the roadside apprenticeship training, but they have since not been enrolled. Surprisingly, apprenticeship training is quite expensive if you compare the money involved to that of the money involved in enrolling girls at the SHS.

Apart from those who are waiting on their parents to find money for their training, other children cope differently. They do not always wait on their parents for alternative training. Some move from hope to accepting the reality that they will never transition soon. Those who become aware of the non-transition decisions of their parents early can migrate in search of jobs. The goal is to return with enough money to continue their education. This alternative is the predominant go to option for children from the northern regions who migrate to the middle belt and southern Ghana. They migrate in search of low skilled jobs, such as food vending, domestic work, and head pottering. The migration literature refers to them as independent migrants because they migrate independent of their legal guardians. The regional capitals such as Accra, and Kumasi are popular destinations for these migrants (Anarfi & Agyei, 2009; Kwankye & Addoquaye, 2009).

C. DISCUSSIONS

The evidence shows that household and family realities matter in accessing SHS education. Household realities, however, entail differential intra-household relationships based on matrilineal, patrilineal social organizations and other changing forms of family formations. These different household factors structure how transition to secondary school is negotiated, and consequently engender children's access experience.

On family access practices, gender-differentiated patterns and impacts, fathers make non-transition decisions more often for daughters as compared to sons. Mothers also make non-transitions decision for daughters even though women whose husbands made non-transition decisions for daughters said they would make transition decisions for daughters if they oversaw education decision-making.

The position of children also influences whom parents will allow to transition to SHS. Girls accept non-transition decisions during negotiations and are more willing to sacrifice their own transitions for their brothers when there is competing access chances. Boys, on the other hand, tend to choose transitions and even talk parents out of sponsoring sisters if it will affect their own access negotiation chances.

On family types, the different forms of social organizations and intra-household relationships inform decision-making on education. The negotiation around access to education is usually straight forward, either a man in a male-headed household or the woman in a female-headed household grant access and determine who enrolls in school. When resources are scarce, older siblings are called to contribute so the negotiation happens intra the nuclear family. Negotiations in extended families and nuclear polygamous families are, however, complex. Consultations are done among multiple actors when the direct legal guardian is unable to support the daughter. Members belonging to extended maternal families consult maternal uncles and aunties. They rarely get the material support they need as extended family support for education is waning given the implemented policy. There is conflict and tension around negotiations that happen in polygamous families. Women or the wives of the polygamous patrilineal husbands must negotiate access for their daughters. Negotiating for sons is easy as husbands tend to allow sons progress to SHS because of the belief that they would take over the fathers' compound in the absence of the father. In polygamous matrilineal families, the women tend to consult brothers and maternal families when daughters become casualties of non-transition decisions.

There are nuances to how education negotiations are done. It is not categorically distinct and rigidly done along categories such as gender, family types, resources, belief systems and regional differences. Different regional socio-economic context, however, produces complex and contradictory experiences of access when interlinked with the categories above.

Another observation is that culture and other constitutive elements determine the agency of all the actors that are usually involved in the negotiation. The cultural acceptance of what negotiation behaviors are acceptable empowers some in the negotiation process. The cultural acceptance of men as decision-makers even when women contribute a fair bit of resources in the running of the household help them in negotiating and acting as gatekeepers of education transition. Women are cautious about the position they take when there are negotiation disagreements. Some do not want their individual positions to overshadow their men and therefore give in even if the outcome will deny daughters SHS education. The cultural acceptance of boys to be assertive also gives them headway when resource dilution is made between them and their sisters. Whilst sisters accept non-transition decisions easily, boys fight non-transition decisions.

Cultural and gender categorization of boys' work and girls' work allow boys to think of alternative means to SHS. Girls are often barred from doing labor-intensive work to earn their own money, which contributes to their absence in decisions about their education.

On the regional front, patriarchal practices affect girls' education more in the selected study areas of the three northern regions as compared to the study areas in the southern regions and Asante region. This conclusion was arrived at because I encountered more families with a man as head who exercise authority as the key decision maker on education in their families.

The use of silences in negotiation was gender determined. It undercut the efforts of women in household decision-making. Whilst the men were inclined to use hostile silences and feeling disrespected as guilt trips to get their wives to tow their line, the women were using silences to keep the peace when the negotiation environment was highly contested. Also, patriarchal restrictions that are based on specific notions of acceptable good female behaviors and bad female behaviors also delineates who uses silences in negotiations.

Two key surprises were the unique way girls in the Jirapa District of the Upper West Region who received little to no family support were negotiating access quite differently from girls in other regions. Some were transitioning to SHS in their numbers, but they were enrolling in school in an unconventional way. They were receiving support by entering relationships with older men with the understanding of marriage as payment or reward for the support.

Throughout the study, the observable pattern has been that removing cost barriers does not necessarily enable girls transition to SHS without family support. In the Northern Region, Upper East, and Upper Wests, removing cost barriers enabled some girls to go to school because they explored alternative means such as migrating to the south to work to earn money for school, although not all of them were successful. Also, the latent function of the implemented policy on household negotiation behavior was the re-inclusion of women as key decision-makers of girls' education in some part of the Upper West region.

When all options at the household level have been exhausted and non-transition to SHS appears inevitable, many families turn to apprenticeship training as a viable alternative. It then becomes the new aspiration for girls unable to attend secondary school.

Overall, each family has multiple paths to SHS, and these include:

- Nuclear family- (mostly parents, rarely older siblings but also depending on whether they are working or earning).
- Extended family- (mostly parents within each nuclear families, rarely extended family members such as uncles and Aunties, hardly friends).
- Polygamous families- (Fathers depending on whether there is a competing need among the children of his wives or mothers of his children)

Girls do not necessarily go to school based on the differential types of family (male headed household or female headed household). The common denominator underlining whether transitions into SHS is successful or not, entails the ability to negotiate, the support of allies, and the nature of family politics around education and resource dilution.

We can also explain access in two ways. There is direct access when a family is willing and able to provide money to support girls' education. Indirect (mediated) access has to do with when interested parties need to negotiate to ensure children go to SHS. The indirect way is based on a person's ability to negotiate, the type of family, the gender (social category and not just the binary biological category) of the negotiator, the culture of permissible or non-permissible negotiations, and the regional context (resource pathways). Girls who receive direct access are more likely to go to school. Material and non-material support from the family is also key. Material and non-material support also explain direct access and indirect (mediated) access. Non-material support explains indirect access further. Children who go to SHS the direct way were rarely the focus of this chapter. Most girls go to SHS through the indirect route. This is because after the government provided support, their transition to SHS depends

on what happens with the families' negotiation of education. Considering access under direct and indirect was only for the purpose of categorizing different routes to education. The intention is not to preclude the mediated or the negotiated aspect of access or to draw attention away from the longitudinal aspects of negotiating access over time.

Furthermore, the gender of a child affects successful negotiation when they are not covered under direct access. Boys are more likely to go to SHS because both the matrilineal and patrilineal systems under which the families are categorized, prioritize boys. Boys from matrilineal families are expected to care for sisters' children when they grow old and boys from patrilineal families are expected to lead their families. In the three northern regions I visited, they are also expected to take care of their father's compound. These expectations, therefore, incentivize investing in boys' education.

The micro-level access realities show there are possible contested meanings of the free SHS policy. The policy is good for rich parents who prioritize the education needs of daughters and can provide direct access. The policy is bad for poor parents whose children can only go to SHS the indirect or negotiated way. I speculate this contested meaning of access because for most of the poor parents' micro-level negotiation happens when resources are not enough.

D. CONCLUSION

Government accounts of access tend to have a one-sided emphasis on policy, normative and institutional context. They provide information on the increasing numbers of SHS students whenever education policies are implemented at the national level. The differences in performance and or stories from children who can access education meaningfully and those who could not, show that different intervening variables structure the nature and outcome of such policies. The missing link are factors ranging from the nature of the access policy, implementation mishaps and community involvement. It could also be about the hyper local context and the micro-level realities of those the intervention is meant to help. This chapter paid attention to these micro-level realities and the decision-making structures of Ghanaian families as an interrelated part of the education access system. The findings reverberate issues.

First, household realities create differences in transition and participation outcomes and determine the differential responses of families to the implemented policy. It was found that in Ghana, decision concerning progression to SHS such as who enrolls in SHS in response to the government policy entail a complex negotiation among family members, and decisions are structured by gender norms,

expectations of family members, and the relative power of household members. The district and regional contextual resource pathways also engender differential responses to access. Furthermore, highlighting the matrilineal and patrilineal-structure and contexts reveals how constructions of what is appropriate male or female negotiation behaviors, within the family influence education decisions.

In a district where gender parity has been overachieved, transitions did not cohere with acceptable changes in attitudes towards the equal valuing of girls' and boys' education. Such access should be investigated to provide a nuance understanding of access for boys and girls. For example, in a district in the Upper West Region, girls are going to school, but it cannot be considered meaningful education access. The micro-level practices and negotiations do not favor girls and as a result, they are innovating their own kinds of negotiation which result in teenage pregnancies that further complicate their access chances.

Based on the forgoing, this chapter conceptualizes access at the micro-level as constituting relationships between micro-level household or family members. It entails negotiations around contested and varying interests. In this context, education access is about relationships in the households and not necessarily about government implemented policy. Such relationships are underpinned by the cultural and gender-specific ways in which members negotiate education opportunities.

These micro-household relationships and negotiations are also influenced by regional contexts. Access to SHS in Ghana is, therefore, grounded in complex, differentiated gendered, family, economic, and regional experiences, and processes of negotiations. Different outcomes (transitions and non-transitions) are therefore expected. Depending on the context, meaningful education is based on the family type of the student, and the nature of family politics practiced at the household level.

Consequently, Ghana's free SHS has no meaning for most children particularly girls outside of their family support system. The intervention under normal circumstances should shape and be shaped by the family, the district and regional context in which it functions. The scheme, however, frees families of financial burdens only if families are already financially sound to support children, especially girls through the SHS. I call this way of access direct access. If transitions into SHS can be made meaningful for everyone, the family and the local context should be considered. Micro-level access therefore constitutes processes that are continually being negotiated and contested by family members and across different families and this is termed mediated or negotiated access.

Education policies aimed at increasing SHS transitions must factor these concerns because outcomes of interventions are shaped by family processes. The popular idea that the policy addresses access

concerns for all children is not a reality for everyone. SHS education did not necessarily become universal for all the children with diverse personal conditions because of the policy. The lack of local context such as family, districts and other range of intersectional factors make education access as a socially constructed, and family created.

Also, the findings question the idea of cost as a uni-causal input in accounting for transitions to Ghana's Senior High Schools. Prioritizing cost only is a simplistic way of exploring access. It conceals micro-level issues such as the decision-making structures, the different forms of social organizations, the nature of family politics, and how these factors structures negotiation of education. Gender determined micro-household politics is endemic, and if policies are not planned and executed in a manner that enables attitudinal changes towards the equal valuing of both girls and boys, this policy will only be a temporal solution to a permanent education access problem. Family structures with its male gaze will always create situations where gender inequity in education persist.

Thus, though the institutional context is an important determinant of access, the finding challenge the conceptual one-sidedness of policy discourses that oversimplify the variation of experiences of access for children who will access education or not, depending on their micro-household realities. Behind the improved access indicators, especially national GPI for Ghana achieved at (0.95), there are stories, and these stories are not always positive. The challenge is for policymakers to develop an account of access complex enough to explain children's diverse experiences with education interventions as happens in their families. Such an account can be made possible when we foreground education research at the household micro-levels and community levels. This is because the emphasis on structural and normative concerns reduces access to data units and does not account for children's differential relationships to access.

I conclude that contextualizing the free SHS based on the issues raised could address some of the equity concerns. As it stands, the policy does not address the concerns for all children. It neglects poor children, especially girls, who have no support system in both material and non-material terms. The intervention under normal circumstances should shape and be shaped by the family. The communities, the districts, and the regional context should also shape how the policy functions. The Free SHS scheme frees families of financial burdens only if families are already financially sound and are willing to prioritize girls' progression to the SHS. I hope this chapter contributes to our understanding of how the varying types of families and their associated gender processes and decision-making structures circumscribe progression to SHS for girls despite the government implemented policy.

The construction of education access as it occurs within families has been highlighted in this chapter. The question of hyperlocal access can further be underscored if we do not separate the analyses of family from the larger kinship within which family is embedded. This is crucial to show what kin connections are important to family members in the negotiation of education. To enable an emphasis on how kinship shapes the education of children, the subsequent chapter locates education access in kinship discourses.

CHAPTER SEVEN: LOCATING EDUCATION ACCESS IN KINSHIP DISCOURSES

This chapter continues the exploration of micro-level family and household negotiation of access in the previous chapter. The previous chapter explored education negotiation by considering the types of family, household composition, and immediate familial influences on who enrolls in school. This chapter extends the argument to kinship in general. It further highlights how connection to kin and disconnections from kin relations are experienced in the negotiating of access process, and how that mediate education outcomes.

A. INTRODUCTION

The analysis of kinship is usually framed as households and extended families structured around either matrilineal or patrilineal lineage (Kpoor, 2016; 2014). There are relevant studies that underscore the importance of extended family in influencing secondary school progression of children such as (Lloyd and Blanc, 1996). Family research, however, pays nominal attention to how negotiation of education also constitutes negotiation of kin connections and disconnections. This chapter explores the unexamined questions about how negotiation of education constitutes negotiation of kinship. Furthermore, it examines how various kinship concepts can be reconceptualized to accommodate such negotiations. Through a qualitative investigation of Ghanaian matrilineal and patrilineal families and how they negotiate opportunities to secondary education, the chapter will make a case for how kins negotiate the boundaries of kinship and reclassify these boundaries depending on the ability of kins to perform reciprocal kinship social obligations towards one another. Locating the debate within the discourse of kinship makes a unique contribution to scholarly literature on access to education. It highlights relationships within and without households and how the negotiation of such relationships forms the basis of practical access to upper secondary education such as providing material support for children's progression to secondary school.

I divide the chapter into five sections. I begin with an overview of the conceptual literature on kinship. The next section explores negotiation of access as negotiation of kinship. It will highlight how people reclassify kinship boundaries through fulfillment and non-fulfillment of kinship responsibilities and how that strengthens and or weakens the kinship bonds. Then, I consider kinship as a negotiated relationship. The analysis is situated within the scholarship of Radcliffe-Brown whose seminal work imposes certain standards for the examination of kinship in Ghana. The concluding section reiterates the key findings from my characterization of education negotiation as kinship negotiation. I conclude

the section by highlighting the chapter's contribution to the literature on kinship and policy. I also propose a tentative way forward for further kinship research.

1. Kinship

Kinship denotes the importance of social relationships created from marriage, consanguinity, and adoption. Kinship prescribes status, rights, and roles in all social institutions such as religion, politics, education, marriage, family, economic, and health (Assimeng, 2006; Calhoun, Light & Keler, 1995; Davis, 1949; Murdock, 1949; Nukunya, 2003). For example, kinship systems determine inheritance and property relations, rights, and obligations of kin and residential patterns (Davis, 1949; Murdock, 1949; Nukunya, 2003).

Earlier studies on kinship focused on exploring ⁹descent. Through descent, kin groups conscript forbears in three ways. First, matrilineal descent group describe the situation where ties of filiation is through the mother, and patrilineal descent gives primacy to the father in tracing a child's genealogy. Inheritance, succession, and status are, thus, based on individuals link to the mother or the father (Fortes, 1950; Heskovits, 1937; Rattray, 1929). Second, those who belong to the double unilineal and bilateral system establish ties of filiation through both sides of the family. These descent systems are expressed in three major types of families recognized in Ghana, the extended, nuclear, and polygynous families (Kpoor, 2016; 2014; Oware-Gyekye et al., 1996). Whilst the above exploration has centered genealogical or consanguineal terms, this model of kinship privileged sexual procreation and genetic relatedness with little appreciation of kinship as choice or a negotiated concept (Schneider, 1972; 1984; Delaney, 1986; Strathern, 1988; Carsten, 2004).

Whilst the previous research focused on norms and social structure based on biological position, other scholarships have played up social or cultural relatedness as the basis for kinship (Dechau, 2008; Schneider, 1996). Furthermore, a plethora of research has focused on the mediation between the biological and cultural understanding of kinship. They argue that kinship is a cultural elaboration of biological facts (Carsten, 2004; Edwards, 2014; Schneider, 1984; Strathern, 1992a; Strathern, 1991). Modern scholarship on kinship also focuses on new forms of kinship such as those constructed through assisted reproductive technologies (Franklin & McKinnon, 2001; Carsten, 2004).

The discourse on kinship in Ghana in recent decades has emphasized the changes occurring within the family (Goode, 1963; Lesthaeghe, 1995; McLanahan and Percheski, 2008; Nukunya, 2003;

⁹ Descent: the principles regulating the organization of kinship groups

Perscheski, 2008; Oppong, 1977; Nukunya, 2003; Chant, 1998). The changes include the increasing nuclearization of family (Kpoor, 2014). As a consequent of these changes, they contend that the importance of kinship is diminishing as people are no longer dependent on lineage property, and status is no longer based on age. This claim is, however, debatable. According to Ming-Chang and Dzorgbo (2012), the changes do not negate the importance of kinship, instead, there are new forms of relationships replacing the old ones in the provision of social support. The new relationships are, however, dictated by old ones. For example, distant matrilineal relatives can step in to provide social support in the absence of an immediate matrilineal relative.

The importance of kinship has also been studied in relation to other significant criteria of relatedness in Ghana (Cartsen, 2000). This includes illness and health (Crentsil, 2007), witchcraft (Parish, 2005), elder care (Coe, 2017), welfare and social support (Lévi-Strauss, 1969). On welfare, Lévi-Strauss, (1969) posit that the provision of social and material support constitutes a fundamental social structure of African societies. Caldwell upheld this assertion when he noted that the limited social welfare system in Ghana necessitates welfare and social support from kins (Caldwell, 1966; 1996).

Negotiations of access around various forms of reciprocal exchanges of welfare and social support whether balanced or deficit (Ming-Chang & Dzorgbo, 2012), could evoke multiple delimitations of relatedness, belonging or kinship. The concept of kinship has, however, remained unchanged in definitions and conceptualizations. Related concepts such as ¹⁰opposition of adjacent generations, ¹¹merging of alternate generations, ¹²social equivalence of siblings, ¹³solidarity of sibling group, and ¹⁴unity of sibling group has remained unchallenged given contemporary kinship practices. Radcliffe-Brown (1952) employed these concepts to denote specific relationships such as father-son relationship, children-grandparents' relationships, children and maternal or paternal uncles or aunties relationship.

Furthermore, there is little appreciation of how specific kinship relationships are forged around specific access issues, for example education, and health. Terms used by earlier researchers, or the previous conceptualizations do not exhaust the nuance in relationships among kins. Terms like social equivalence of siblings which suggest the tendency on the part of children to extend their attitude

¹⁰ Opposition of adjacent generations is the kind of relationship between adjacent generations typical in father-son relationships. The relationship is characterized by formality and avoidance sometimes.

¹¹ Merging of alternate generations epitomizes the relationship between grandparent and grandchildren, characterized by cordiality, informality, and affection.

¹² Social Equivalence of siblings: The tendency on the part of children to extend their attitude towards their parents, to parents' siblings.

¹³ Solidarity of sibling group explain the intimate relationship among siblings making them the closest group of relatives.

¹⁴ Unity of sibling group denotes how siblings appear to outsiders as a group.

towards their parents to their parents' siblings need to be modified. Children do not extend the attitude towards parents, to parents' siblings based purely on genealogical ties, rather, which aunty or uncle can provide resources for their education and other social needs.

Also, it is possible to discuss the fulfillment and non-fulfillment of kinship responsibilities and how that weakens or strengthens kinship bonds without necessarily diminishing the importance of kinship as the basis of social life. This is because despite the decreasing rate of co-residence, majority of Ghanaians dwell on their family connections such as matri-filiation or patri-filiation for social security in times of hardship. Thus, even though there are changes, the changes speak to the temporality of such social change and its linkages to structural issues such as how changes in education policy can spark changes in kinship relationships.

Dwelling on a qualitative investigation of Ghanaian families and how they negotiate access to secondary education, the chapter seeks to illuminate on how negotiation of education opportunities constitutes negotiation of kinship. This is important to add to the paucity of knowledge on how the realities of kinship influence education outcomes. We can locate education access in kinship discourses that traverse the residential family and other nuclear family unit. The findings will be situated in the literature of family, cultural sociology, and anthropological studies.

The chapter further problematizes the fluidity of kinship and treats it as a continuum. This reveals how kinship is forged, maintained, and broken in their negotiation of education opportunities. A key concern is how kins do and undo kinship even as they fulfill kinship education responsibilities towards other kin without assuming a priori biological or social kinship relatedness.

It will problematize kinship as choice. The goal is not to wage into whether kinship is biologically constructed or otherwise, or whether the two are emphasized in determining kinship connections, but to show that kinship can be permanent and or temporal by virtue of people's choosing. Choosing to kin or de-kin does not happen in a vacuum but around access negotiations such as education.

B. NEGOTIATION OF KINSHIP IS ALSO NEGOTIATION OF ACCESS

A key aspect of kinship is negotiation of access. Access in kinship discourse has centered on inheritance, property relations, and residential patterns (Nukunya, 2003). Especially in traditional societies, the negotiation of such resources has been based on the principle of seniority, position of people, gender, age (old or young), affinal relations, the roles, statuses, and obligations of kins. Education or training as a life skill or for job is an important access category of contention. The

empirical data grounding this chapter suggests that education is a major kinship negotiation ground involving both kin and non-kin relations. I demonstrate negotiation of education as negotiation of kinship through the fulfillment and non-fulfillment of kinship responsibilities.

1. Fulfillment of kinship responsibility

Let us consider, a matrilineal family in the Asante Region of Ghana. Whilst exploring gendered education access in Ghana, I interviewed four members of this family in Amadumadankwanti, a town in Asante Region. The family lives in their own rented house located in the heart of the town. It is a shared house as the man's aging mother, his younger sister and his sister's son also live in the house as co-resident kins. The four interviewees comprise a marriage couple (spouses), their son, and the husband's sister's daughter. The wife describes her husband as a matrilineal man who takes his responsibility to his kin seriously:

Yes, my husband provides for us and that of his sister's children. My son and his niece both completed Junior High School, ...but he sponsored his niece in Senior High School instead. ...Well as for Asante men, if you marry them, you must be prepared to share your husband with his sisters and their children.

In my interview with the niece in question who received help from her maternal uncle to progress to SHS, she noted that her uncle offered to sponsor her secondary education because her grades were better than her uncle's son. She also disclosed to me that her uncle's son would go to school if he got placement in a day school in their catchment area because he has a health condition (sickle cell), that needs to be monitored and managed when he gets a crisis. Her cousin in question, however, blames everybody else for his inability to go to school.

In an interview with the father (Mr. Kofi Opoku), he disclosed that he has four children of his own with the wife. A 15-year-old son and three other children who are still in primary school. He is fostering his sister's daughter, the girl he sponsored to progress to SHS. He further intimated that his niece is not the only one he is sponsoring in school. He has two other nephews who live elsewhere but are dependent upon him. The excerpt below is from Mr. Kofi Opoku:

My niece is not the only one I am sponsoring in school. I have two other nephews whose mothers rely on me for material support for issues not just school related. I am under considerable pressure. Sometimes the look, and pressure that relatives give me make me feel as if I am the only person on whom they can rely. I help those I can, but I also cut others off. When I help a relative, the bond between us is strengthened, and we communicate on a regular basis.

Extended family relations and other kins have supported the education of children of kins. This finding concurs with earlier findings by Lloyd and Blanc (1996) that extended family's networks in Sub Sahara

Africa have provided access to children than would have been possible if the issue were left entirely in the hands of their biological parents. Enabling access to children of kins usually happens when these children are fostered kins. At other times, parents of children who are unable to support their children's education call other kins to support in both material (monetary) and non-material terms (encouragement and using their networks to help children secure accommodation in school areas). Helping this way constitutes performance of kinship responsibility just like other duties such as helping to organize marriage ceremonies, naming ceremonies, and burial rites. When kins perform such obligations to kins, the kinship bond is strengthened. Support from kin is, however, waning.

Increasingly, such extended family relatives rarely perform such responsibilities towards kin group members. The excerpt from Mr. Opoku suggests that an increasing dependence on kin sometimes induces a contrasting feeling of responsibility on the one hand, and a wish to disengage with kin at the same time. These experiences can be amplified by structural policies such as education policies. Ideally, an education policy that caters for a chunk of school needs of people, such as the free SHS policy should discourage increasing dependence on kin for school needs. It should also encourage kin to help provide the remaining access needs which is nominal considering the government intervention provides interesting relieves. Kins are, however, still encouraged to depend on other kins for extra support. Depending on the nature of kin relatedness and the negotiation of kin relationship that exist, kins support or refuse to support others. Kins hide behind the cloak of the free policy provision to shun such responsibility to provide for others.

2. Non-fulfilment of kinship responsibilities weakens kinship bonds

Two key factors, social change (Kpoor, 2014; Nukunya, 2003), and migration from traditional rural areas to urban city centers and overseas (Connell & Conway, 2000; Cox, Eser, & Jimenez 1998; Kuptsch & Martin, 2004), are noted in the literature on kinship to account for the non-fulfillment of kinship responsibilities. According to Kpoor (2014), social change has spearheaded increasing nuclearization of the family. In Ghana, however, kins continue to belong to extended families and general kinship relations such as lineage and descent are kept side by side. Whilst these factors, nuclearization of families and social change, explain the non-fulfillment of kinship responsibilities, other concerns such as the increasing cost of living also explain such non-fulfillment of responsibilities. In the context of the education policy (the free SHS policy under consideration), the government's proclamation of secondary education as completely cost-free given the policy provisions also provide a reason for kins to rarely fulfill their responsibility of helping children of kins go to

school. Previously when access was based on cost-sharing schemes between government and guardians (Koramoah, 2016), extended family support was enormous in helping children attend secondary school (Lloyd & Blanc, 1996). However, kins are increasingly unwilling to help others who need support to transition. The quotation below speaks to the issue:

I got placement at a day school farther away from my catchment area in a different region. I could not walk to school and going to school will mean my mother must pay for my rent or hostel. I have an uncle who lives in that town, I could go and live with him, but he lied that he has been transferred to a different region... It was not possible to go to school...

Also, where the non-fulfillment of such kinship duties is concerned, a person is always looking at three ways for help. First, those who come from matrilineal societies look up to the matrilineal family and or kin relations for support. Patrilineal families also consult patrilineal family members for support. Where such support is not forthcoming, matrilineal families can seek help from their father's relatives even though the father is the cutoff point of his lineage and vice versa (Nukunya, 2003). The Asante Region of Ghana practices matrilineal system of descent. Notwithstanding, there were instances where a mother has approached her father's sibling or paternal relatives for help. Akua from Amadumadankwante in the Asante Region of Ghana, a typical matrilineal society, notes:

Ideally, I will not consult my paternal uncle. It has been ages since I had any contact with him. But I took his contact from a distant cousin I bumped into at Kejetia market. I called the said uncle on multiple occasions, but he did not pick up. He called back asking who I was. I introduced myself as his niece and that I needed him to send me money to enable me to buy school supplies for my daughter. He sent me 50dollars from USA New York for my daughter's school.

Akua's daughter could still not go to school because the money was inadequate. She told me she texted him back to top-up, but he said he had no money. She is still in contact with him though. She calls him on WhatsApp very often and he returns her calls occasionally. Akua disclosed to me that, often, instead of returning her calls, he just sends her a small token when he sees her missed call. The point in this quote is to show that when it comes to negotiation of access such as education, matrilineal families negotiate the boundaries of kinship beyond the matriliney and vice versa for patrilineal families. The lines are blurred and who is kin has frequently meant who can provide help or support. Those who are bilateral have easy options to consult both or either matrilineal or patrilineal sides of their family since they belong to both groups and lineal considerations do not form the basis of descent groups.

Also, social change or migration do not necessarily render kinship ties residual. In Ghana, access related issues such as care, education are still left in the private or domestic spheres or domain. For example, unlike most Global North countries where institutions perform functions such as caring for the aged in institutional homes, Ghana is different. Similarly, no institution will follow up on a child

who is denied access to upper secondary education. Consequently, the fulfillment of such responsibility rests with kins.

Another point to note from the above quotation from Akua, centers on who is likely to sustain such kinship relationships. Whilst anybody can sever or maintain kinship relationships, those with the greatest need for assistance or support from kin are more likely to keep the relationship afloat. Akua keeps calling her paternal uncle even though he seldom returns her calls. It is obvious that those who are providers in these kinship relationships are those likely to sever the relationship. Regardless of who sever or keep the relationship afloat, when kinship relationships are strained, it can be limited and subsequently severed.

Whilst the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of kinship responsibilities weakens and or strengthen kinship bonds, the weakening or strengthening of kinship bonds can lead to the reclassifying of kinship boundaries through the negotiation of kin group or kin-relations.

3. Reclassifying kinship boundaries through (non)fulfillment of kinship responsibilities

Kinship responsibilities are a reciprocal social obligation that members of a kin group share or have towards other members. In the exploration of education access within the Ghanaian family context, the findings concur with earlier studies that the fulfillment of such kinship responsibilities strengthens kinship bonds (Ming-Chang & Dzorgbo, 2012). Kinship responsibilities in this case involve helping children to progress to SHS in situations where the immediate parents, legal guardians or members within a household are unable to provide the school needs of children. Education needs in this case implies other nominal fees that implementers define in, such as purchasing the items on school prospectus. Other direct costs also include school supplies such as books and uniforms that the government policy provisions do not cover. Similarly, transportation cost for day student, the cost and efforts involved in effecting change in school placement, as well as securing accommodation for those placed as day students in places outside their catchment area are all additional cost that families must bore to enable progression to SHS.

The ability of kin to support other kins this way does not just strengthen and weaken kinship bonds; it also leads to the reclassifying of kinship boundaries. In the face of the pressure to support, or demand support, kins are torn between recognizing other kin and offering support or denying them support. Whilst deservedness of support is based entirely on choice of the kin who is rendering support, it can lead to negotiation of kinship boundaries based on exclusions and inclusions. When a dependent

relationship with kin is unwanted, it can cause inconvenience. When kins feel overwhelmed by such responsibilities, they live on the edge of performing kinship or de-kinning. They select who to exclude and de-kin, and who to include as kin. The refusal to offer expected help also allows the kin in need to question kinship boundaries. Whilst questioning kinship boundaries can lead to severing of relationship or de-kinning, the permanency or temporality of such severs needs further research to ascertain. Such severance can be absolute or limited as kins can keep basic interactions just to keep relationships afloat. Additionally, such severs can be in relation to support for education only. This is because mutual help is significant in determining whether, and the kind of support kin will receive. Boni (2010), on researching funerals, argues that when kins do not reciprocate funeral donations, it could lead to severing of relationships. The process of negotiation and choice is, however, important in explaining the permanency or temporality of such servers. Biological relatedness, thus, does not necessarily define interactions in terms of performance of kinship obligations. Instead, social relatedness does, independent of biological relatedness. Social relatedness involves an ongoing relation between the people related or unrelated in consanguineal terms and involves negotiations around access and reciprocal support of each other.

Bearing in mind the above observations, does the essence of kinship remain the same or change with changing times? I make two contentions. First, the principle forming the basis of kinship is changing. Changes have never been about strengthening or weakening kinship bonds. This is because kinship bonds or solidarity has always been about negotiation of relationships. Changes have, however, got to do with the form of kinship, for example, conscripting new members through assisted reproductive technology, rather than the marital route with its associated rules of exogamy and endogamy. Such relationships, profound sense of connection, social support, identity, and access to resources is not a given. Second, Individuals have the flexibility to explore relationships based on interest and how access needs are met in the negotiation of kinship relations. Relating this with education access, a key concern that is illuminated in family and education policy discourses, I posit that negotiating of education access alters kinship relationships. Negotiating access contributes to kinship differentiation where kins find different routes to negotiating new networks.

4. Negotiated Kinship or Kin-Relationships

Kinship group alignment has often meant a person is born into a predetermined group, matrilineal, patrilineal, double unilineal and bilateral groups. Depending on the group one belongs to, specific genealogical connections can be used for utilizing descent ties and consequently families. Some

genealogical connections are removed from utilizing descent ties. Whilst genealogy and biological determination has frequently formed the basis of family and descent, there are other forms of family such as adoption and in recent times blended family types, cohabitating couples with children, families formed by assisted reproductive technology, and same-sex unions and marriages (Furstenberg, Harris, Pesando, & Reed, 2019). Increasingly, however, kinship is becoming a choice. Fulfilment of reciprocal duties to kins secures kin relations and once association to kin members. Non-fulfilment of such responsibilities, however, becomes a point of divergence from kin-group associations. Some kin members sever ties with other kin members based on non-fulfillment of duties. The duties in this context include helping children gain access to secondary education.

Fulfillment and non-fulfilment of kin responsibilities and the strengthening of bonds or the consequent severing of relationships is an impetus to reconsider certain terms and concepts that have received less attention in the body of works on kinship since it was explored decades ago. The terms include merging of alternate generations, opposition of adjacent generations, social equivalence of siblings, sibling solidarity and sibling unity (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952). These terms were essential elements of patrilineal and matrilineal societies. Social anthropologists have used these terms or elements of kinship to designate certain relationships among kins.

4i. Opposition of Adjacent Generations

First, opposition of adjacent generations denotes the kind of relationship between adjacent generations typical in father-son relationships (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952). The relationship is characterized by formality and avoidance sometimes. Such opposition which was very institutionalized in traditional societies such as the Tallensi in Ghana (Nukunya, 2003), is no longer institutionalized. Though not institutionalized because of social change, the findings from the exploration of education access negotiations suggest that such opposition, is even more deepened when fathers do not fulfill their duties to provide for their children's upper secondary education. In families where the decision-making structure around access is more authoritarian with a patriarch who takes decisions and demands the decisions are unchallenged, opposition of adjacent generation is rife. In contrast to authoritarian decision-making, when relationships between couples and parents and children are more egalitarian, and children are involved in important educational decisions, there tends to be less intergenerational conflict. Opposition of adjacent generations can also occur between a father and a daughter. The quotations below depict the nuances more clearly.

First, the narration from a 16-year-old girl from a nuclear family in Ghana explain this point:

My parents discussed my progression to SHS. They called me when my results came, and I had placement in a school I did not select, they were worried. When they asked me whether I wanted the school and the course that the computerized placement offered, I said yes. I love my parents, and they work hard to provide for my school needs.

The excerpt below is from an interview with Mr. Odotei. He is a farmer and the head of a nuclear polygamous patrilineal family in the Greater Accra Region, in his words:

My daughters Charlotte and Martha were not happy when I took the non-transition decision. Charlotte showed anger... I get angry too... I told her that she is a fool, and I will ask her does she not know that going to school is all about having money to sponsor her education?...

From the quotations above, the concept of adjacent generation does not readily apply in the first instance as there is cordial relationship between the adjacent generations. The point is to show that even though such opposition does occur, such an occurrence is typical when access needs are left unfulfilled. Opposition of adjacent generations is not limited to father-son relationships, it can also occur with father-daughter relationships.

4ii. Merging of Alternate Generations

Another concept that applies in both patrilineal and matrilineal families is the merging of alternate generations. This term explains the cordial relationships between children and their maternal and paternal grandparents as compared to the relationship between children and their parents. In Ghana, grandparents' step in to perform parental duties for their grandchildren all the time when their adult children are not able to. When grandparents enable access for grandchildren, the merging of alternate relationships is stronger. Nevertheless, non-fulfillment of such duties can weaken the bonds between children and grandparents. Humu is a mother and a trader from the Upper East Region of Ghana. She has a daughter Adai, who has completed JHS and needed to progress to SHS. She suggested to her daughter to visit the grandmother to keep her company until her JHS result and her placement into SHS were out, but she refused. Humu noted that:

The grandparents tell you they are happy to support but they do not have the money. They only make money when their children send them money. I once asked my daughter to go to her grandmother to keep her company when she completed JHS, and she would have none of that. She would rather go and stay with a friend of mine who runs a restaurant. The woman is kind.

Adai, Humu's daughter is one of the children from the Upper East Region who migrated to the city center in Accra to work to earn money for her school. She chose to go and live with her mother's friend who could help rather than her grandmother.

From the above observation, merging relationships do not just happen at alternate generations or between subsequent generations such as grandchildren and grandparents. Merging can happen with other kin and even non-kin members. For example, when a maternal uncle or aunty steps in to provide access to secondary education for their nieces and nephews, the performance of such kinship duties can strengthen the bond between nieces and uncles. I term this merging of non-alternate generations or the merging of other kins of relations. Merging can also happen with non-kins as seen in the quotation above.

4iii. Social equivalence of siblings versus social equivalence of non-siblings

Social equivalence of siblings is a term employed to describe the tendency on the part of children to extend their attitude towards their parents to their parents' siblings (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952). Mothers' siblings are treated like mothers just as fathers. When parents' siblings fulfill kinship duties such as providing access or supporting nieces and nephews to go to secondary schools, social equivalence of siblings come alive as children respect, appreciate, regard them, extend the same respectful courtesy, and countenance they have for their parents to them. Non-fulfillment of expected kinship roles, however, leads to social non-equivalence of siblings. There are children in Ghana who grew up with kins especially parents' siblings, other than their parents. There are also stories about how kins failed to put them in school while they put their own children through school (Darkwah, 2010). It is rare for such children who were treated badly to extend the courteous attitude they have towards their parents to their parents' siblings. Instead of extending such courtesy to parents' siblings, they regard those who provide support in times of need.

The quotation below shows how children who needed assistance to go to school distinguish between aunties and uncles who love or hate them, and consequently enable or deny them access based on their attitudes towards them:

My Aunties and Uncles could help, but they love some of us and hate the rest of us. Yes, they tell you that you are not a good girl, and sometimes they say you have a bad attitude meanwhile you have not offended them in anyway. They love those they love, and they hate those they hate.

The girl in the quotation is from a nuclear polygamous patrilineal family in the Greater Accra Region. She did not progress to secondary school because her father's siblings who could help her did not. Quite clearly, social equivalence of siblings would not work in this situation. She would not extend her polite attitude towards her parents to her parents' siblings who she thought hated her. When this happens, they are negotiating kinship relationships.

Furthermore, social equivalence of siblings can become social equivalence of non-siblings. I define social equivalence of non-siblings as the tendency on the part of children to extend attitudes towards their parents to their parents' non-siblings and other non-close relations. Children make distinctions between which sibling of their parent is helpful in providing access and which sibling is not.

Other principles of kinship relationship at work includes the solidarity of sibling group and the unity of siblings. Solidarity of sibling group explains the intimate relationship among siblings, making them the closest group of relatives. Contrary to this assumption, such solidarity is not a given but negotiated when siblings perform reciprocal kinship duties towards their siblings. This would include stepping up and providing support for siblings' children. Non-fulfillment of such duties weakens the solidarity between siblings. Siblings can look for solidarity outside the close sibling group. When this happens, there is non-solidarity among sibling groups. Where such solidarity is extended towards non siblings who have helped provided access, I term it solidarity of non-sibling group.

Another related concept which needs to be nuanced given new evidence is the unity of sibling groups (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952). The unity of sibling groups shows the dichotomy of what relationships between sibling groups appear to outsiders and what it really is. For example, outsiders can see a sibling group as a united group, despite divisions and fracas when one looks closely. This is not always the case as the distinctions and divisions are sometimes obvious to outsiders. Thus, they do not conflate siblings coming from one family as solidarity of siblings and or unity of the siblings group. I employ the story of Yaa Darkwa and Abiba from the Asante Region, a matrilineal society and Northern Region, a patrilineal society respectively to highlight the complexity of kin negotiations.

First, Yaa Darkwa is a mother of three children and one of the families I interviewed in the Asante Region. She is 43years and she has five other siblings. She has a daughter who could not progress to the SHS. She discussed her daughter's education access issues with her friend rather than her siblings. She intimated to me that she has stopped asking her siblings for help because they would give excuses. For Yaa, her friend treats her better and she is more responsive to her needs.

Second, Abiba is 16 years old. She comes from one of the communities in the Northern Region. She is from a polygamous family. She lives with her father, mother and her father's wives and her siblings (half siblings and biological siblings). Her paternal grandmother also lives in the compound with them as well as her paternal uncle's wife and children. When she wanted to progress to SHS, she went to the city center to earn money. When she came back to the village, she confided in a maternal cousin who she describes as her sister and role model to take her to school. She did not confide in the kins she shares co-residence with or her own siblings.

Abiba and Yaa Darkwa's assertions indicate that solidarity and unity among these kins are thus, not a given, but negotiated. Consequently, contrary to Radcliffe-Brown (1952)'s assertion that children extend their courtesy or relationship they have with their parents towards their parents' siblings, this is dependent on other variables such as fulfillment of kinship obligations towards them. Also, the tensions and or lack of tensions spearheaded by residential types can structure negotiations of such relationships. For example, if parents share residence or live in a household together with siblings as happen with extended residential family systems, then co-activity and competition among siblings nuance the negotiation of kinship that the children of these siblings engage in.

C. DISCUSSION: IN CONVERSATION WITH THE GHOST OF RADCLIFFE-BROWN

From the ongoing analyses, it is emerging that kinship relationships and the related concepts to describe them, are not necessarily "natural" with fixed forms and meanings across space and through time but are socially constructed and variable. They are negotiated relationships which change with the fulfillment and non-fulfillment of reciprocal duties towards kins. Bearing in mind this observation, it is important to debate Radcliffe-Brown's analysis and concepts of kinship and how they can be applied in the current context.

A key aspect of Radcliffe Brown's work included what constitutes kinship in the African context. Radcliffe-Brown and other contemporaries of his time considered issues of marriage, reproduction, statuses, residential patterns, inheritance, socialization, religion (who can worship where), economic relationship and the type of kinship bond or solidarity that are created between specific kins depending on their genealogical ties. Whilst I admit that Radcliffe-Brown produced fantastic analyses of kinship in Africa within the context of his time and the space he studied African kinship, there are issues that merit debating.

First, is Brown's heavy-handed emphasis of kinship in consanguineal terms. The crucial point of individuals as active agents and the mediation by institutional structures in the construction of kinship is lost in his analysis. Using the investigation of Ghanaian families and how they negotiate access to education exemplify kinship as a choice or an individual decision. This means that individuals have the option to determine whether to forge, maintain kinship relationships or sever kinship relationships given certain personal and or structural constraints. Thus, the role of individuals in shaping their own kinship realities can be independent of genealogical ties, a point that Radcliffe-Brown's work rarely accounted for. Radcliffe-Brown mentions marriage, and adoption as part of recruitment into kin,

however these paths to kinship recruitment are still assessed in blood related terms and the nature of such relationships is considered inherently supportive. Contrary to this, such kinship relationships are not always supportive. Support or solidarity is negotiated through shared resources and the fulfillment of duties.

Second, Radcliffe-Brown's seminal works on kinship in Africa did not make a clear distinction between biological kin relatedness and social kin relatedness. Biological or genealogical kin relatedness does not imply social relatedness. Biological ties to kin though permanent, social kin relatedness may be temporal, and it is dependent on treatment of and from other kins. For example, people who are kin do not necessarily subscribe to or nurture solidarity with other kin members. Furthermore, Brown's minimal exploration of the social aspect of kin was done in a way that is still connected to the biological. This conceals the fluidity of kinship. Kinship is fluid when it treats the construction of kinship as a continuum. The formation of kinship even the two ways, the biological and the social, noted in literature, is not always permanent as it is dependent on treatment or whether and how kins fulfill their reciprocal duties to other kin members. For example, a previously unconnected person can be brought into a meaningful relationship with kin or a kin group. This point was made when a woman contacted a distant cousin who she had no contact with previously from overseas to help her with her child's education needs. Similarly, non-kin can become social kin through acts, deeds, and uncommon friendships. To be considered kin thus involves an active process of making or becoming kin irrespective of genealogical ties. I call this process (un)doing and or performing kinship.

The process of doing or undoing kin can enable us to reconsider the concepts that were employed by Brown to specify and explain the kind of relationships that existed between and among kins. First his concept of social equivalence of siblings (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952). As explored earlier, children do not necessarily equate and extend the treatment of their parents to the parent's siblings. Children remember their parents' siblings, but they are more likely to treat their parents' siblings differently depending on how these siblings treat them. The treatment of a mother's sister who fed them when the mother was unable to, or the treatment of a mother's brother who paid their fees to enable them access education would be different from others who did not. Consequently, there is social equivalence of siblings as well as social non-equivalence of siblings.

Further, there is no privilege of the relationship a child has with parents' siblings over others. However, depending on the kind of bond created through the (un)sharing of resources over time, social equivalence of siblings, social non-equivalence of siblings, and social equivalence of non-siblings can

occur. The point is that solidarity or relationship can be built, limited, or severed with people irrespective of the closeness in genealogical and or social terms.

Additionally, it is possible to think of severing kin relationships as 'de-kinning.' Kinship thus is a process of connecting and disconnecting relationships. Disconnecting or de-kinning happens if kins, once genetically or biologically related and or socially related, choose to negotiate or reclassify the boundaries of their kinship.

Apart from Radcliffe-Brown's conceptualization of social equivalence of siblings which must be nuanced to reflect the changing realities of kinship in relation to other relatedness such as education, other terms like merging of alternate generation and opposition of adjacent generation needs further conceptualization. Opposition of adjacent generation, a kind of relationship between adjacent generations as exemplified by father-son relationship in a patrilineal society rarely apply to all father-son relationships currently. Radcliffe-Brown (1952) proffered that such relation was typified by formality and avoidance because a son was considered fully fledged adult only after a father dies. The formalities and restrictions such as forbidding a son from touching his father's prized possession is not wholly true in certain contexts. In households where fathers are in a more egalitarian relationship with their wives and oversee households where decision-making is not autocratic, fathers tend to have cordial relationships with their children. Father-son relationships are fraught with tension and restrictions when fathers shirk their responsibilities e.g., responsibility to provide the education needs of their children. Father-son relationships can, thus, be considered a continuum. There are difficult edges of kindness and rejection competing for attention in the relationship. Fathers and sons are consistently working at these edges to negotiate kin boundaries from limited bond or solidarity to strengthening of such relationships. The (non)fulfillment of education needs of a child for example can tip the balance in any direction.

Finally, Radcliffe Brown did not explore negotiated or bargained kinship. He did not explore how kinship negotiations could be mediated by external factors such as government's institutional structures or policy as in the case of the upper secondary education policy exemplified in this chapter. This criticism is not limited to Radcliffe-Brown alone. I have yet to come across a study which explores negotiated kinship in relation to any specific institutional access policy. Doing kinship happens within contexts both structural macro-level political regimes and micro-level contexts such as household composition. For example, if a government policy on education states that secondary education is cost-free, it can change the dynamics of kinship relationships. Kins can hide under the cloak of cost-free to shirk kin responsibilities. For example, within the context of announced free education, if governments

are unable to fulfill the completely free aspiration of the policy, kins can use the rhetoric of free to withhold help from any kin who need additional resources to go to school.

Additionally, micro-household situations such as sharing a household, living outside the household or beyond the physical boundaries can mediate negotiation of kinship boundaries. To extend this conversation further, I conceptualize that, those kins or relations who share a household and those who do not share a household can be engaged in four kinds of relationships negotiations. These are: bounded space with bounded kinship identities; bounded space with unbounded kinship identities; unbounded space with bounded kinship identities and unbounded space with unbounded kinship identities.

First, bounded space with bounded kinship identities refers to the situation where kin members share a household or living arrangement and provide reciprocal kinship duties towards one another. For example, in an extended residential family setting, polygamous residential setting or any household setting with members belonging to the same kin. When the relationship among members is cordial due to fulfillment of duties such as helping members with education needs, they share a bounded space with bounded identity as one kin group.

Second, bounded space with unbounded kinship identities occurs when members of a kin group live in one household, or share eating and sleeping arrangements but are not in amiable relationship with one another. They do not consider themselves as one kin in view of their actions (non-fulfillment of reciprocal kinship duties towards members of the kin group). This can also comprise of kins who live with other non-kin members in a household but do not share identities and perform no obligatory kin duties towards each other.

Also, unbounded space with bounded kinship identities is used to describe a situation where kins do not necessarily have to be in the same household to have affectionate relationships with each other. Intimate relationships which strengthen the bond of kinship can happen across space (towns, and borders). Negotiating kinship across borders explains unbounded space but with bounded or shared kinship identities. When kins fulfill kinship obligations towards one another exemplified in helping kin members access resources or education even though they live elsewhere or further apart, they have bounded kinship identities but with unbounded space.

Contrary to the concept of unbounded space with bounded or shared kinship identities, kin members can live further apart or across borders but make no effort in sustaining kinship bonds. They do not provide help to other kin members in need. Kins even sever relationships to other kin. I describe this type of kinship relationship as unbounded space with unbounded or unshared kinship identity.

All these relationship variations, bounded space with bounded kinship identities, bounded space with unbounded kinship identities, unbounded space with bounded kinship identities and unbounded space with unbounded kinship identities constitute negotiated kinship. It emphasizes the socially constructed nature of kinship whether kin groups reside in one household or live outside of it. Kinship relationships are, thus, extremely diverse, and dynamic with configurations which changes overtime given any impetus such as house share or living within or without household or a government policy intervention which require members to negotiate access.

Negotiation of kinship is thus practical and happens more often around negotiation of access. Such negotiations happen and lead to the reconfiguration of kinship boundaries through the fulfillment of reciprocal kin responsibilities. Additionally, co-residence, or the lack thereof, are also variables in such negotiations. The negotiation of kinship and the reclassifying of solidarity or disunity boundaries is not always intentional. Sometimes, members are constrained by financial burdens and or other personal interests, which do not allow them to help or contribute to the access of resources or in this case upper secondary education needs of members.

Similarly, kinship negotiations are not always based on common interests. The internal workings of kinship suggest a distinction of relationships and the reclassifying or continuous negotiation of same, based on competing interests, personal interest, most importantly, the (non)fulfillment of responsibilities towards other kin members.

D. CONCLUSION

The exploration in this chapter is born from the dissatisfaction with the way in which kin negotiation was glossed over in conventional education literature. It sought to bring depth of analyses to the study of education by stretching the education debate to include kinship. Thus, I problematized negotiation of education access as negotiation of kinship and how such negotiations affect classification of kinship boundaries and kinship relations through the (non)fulfillment of kinship responsibility towards kin such as enabling access to SHS.

The chapter established four dimensions along which kinship solidarity and its relation to education access can be examined. Through the concepts of bounded space versus bounded kinship identities, bounded space and unbounded kinship identities, unbounded space and bounded kinship identities and

unbounded space and unbounded kinship identities, the dynamics of kinship solidarities can be examined to show how kin and non-kin influence education access.

The chapter further articulated other ways of capturing the dynamic interactions and relationships among certain kins. Specifically, the chapter contends that certain concepts like merging of alternate generations, opposition of adjacent generations, social equivalence of siblings and solidarity between siblings should be reconceptualized to include ties or solidarity that goes beyond genealogy. Reconceptualizing should include solidarity that is born out of treatments of kin or fulfillment of kinship roles. Consequently, terms such as bonding or harmony of alternate generation, merging of non-alternate generations or merging of other kins, social equivalence of non-siblings or social non-equivalence of siblings, are introduced to capture the dynamics of relationships that exist between and among kins.

Considering negotiation of access to education as negotiation of kinship also implies exploring other ways of being related apart from the biological or genealogical connection. Kinship is, thus, socially constructed in ways, and it is subject to (non)fulfillment of social and reciprocal duties towards members. Some duties, however, are often prioritized over others. For example, sending money to support a child to go to school is prioritized by the receiver over calling to check up on kin members without any tangible education support. In most instances, kins who do not fulfill such obligations do so in a bid to extricate themselves from present and future kinship responsibilities or to sever ties with specific relatives.

Also, we can discern associations between negotiation of access and negotiation of kinship in three crucial ways: first, kinship is socially determined. Second, negotiation circumstances surrounding access play a role in reclassifying kinship relations and boundaries of kin groups and third, negotiation is further nuanced based on spaces or household that is shared or unshared among members.

Paramount among others, kinship practices are associated with institutional or governmental structural policy regimes. For example, if a government policy makes education access cost free, kinship relationship around the demand placed on kins to share resources towards the education needs of other kins, changes. It engenders discrete patterns of change within kinship systems. Whether the changes are temporal (surface), or enduring (deeper), change can be explored. New boundaries of kinship are thus, created not only from systems of descent or who is considered a cutoff point in the types of lineages that previous scholarships explored (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952), they are created in view of negotiated kinship relationships around specific access issues. Kinship is thus both natural, social, and negotiated.

Empirically, using the Ghana's education case as an example in part, has contributed to new ways of conceptualizing kinship relationships. Kinship that is negotiated, or who is kin that stems more from choice and negotiation rather than the biologically determined. Depending on the situation, it is like a continuum of solidarity in a relationship. From a more biologically determined to a more socially and choice or negotiation induced kinship.

Policy wise, making more meaningful sense of macro-level education patterns, requires considering detailed micro-level research which examines more closely, relationships within and without households and how the negotiation of such relationships forms the basis of practical access to secondary education. For example, understanding education distribution patterns requires that micro-level accounts of negotiations be examined closely. Here, kinship negotiation strategies are illuminating in assessing such micro-level education access patterns.

Additionally, the outcomes of education policy interventions are mediated by micro-level factors such as negotiation of kinship. When education opportunities depend on the intrinsic imbrication of both policy and relationship negotiations, policy aspirations which ignore how such mediations affect education outcomes run the risk of failing. The free SHS policy, the policy example in this chapter, although well-intentioned, it is also possible to discern how negotiation of kinship can inhibit its aspirations.

I propose two tentative ways forward. First, to initiate more positive attempts to address inequitable access to upper secondary education by considering the individual children's need in the context of their families and the social organizations such as kinship and other community factors. This is not to suggest that formal institutions or public policies should assume the responsibility of providing access in all forms from the family and kin. Notwithstanding, any public policy that fosters or encourages the reliance of vulnerable groups such as children on the generosity of others to access education is adversative to the value and assumption of the value system underpinning it.

Second, to make a more dedicated commitment to supporting families access basic minimum resources. I recognize the difficulty in implementing policies tailored to individual needs due to lack of reliable data on the income and other information both personal and general data on people in Ghana. Data driven policy and implementation is, nevertheless, key to achieving enduring and sustainable positive education outcomes that the education policy envisions.

Overall, I suppose that negotiation of any access can lead to the social (re)construction of kinship. Whilst the chapter draws similar conclusion to other studies that explore kinship as one of family and one of territory, becoming kin or a family implies negotiation of relationships around access where

kins are brought closer with close bonds through fulfillment of kin responsibilities and others become the cutoff point due to the non-fulfillment of kin duties. In this sense, cut off points is not necessarily the children of male members in a matrilineal society, or the children of female members in a patrilineal society. The points of departure are negotiated based on (non)fulfillment of kin responsibilities.

Education interventions or policies can center intra-household or family concerns. The problem envisaged includes difficulty in penetrating what is accepted as private domains of families. Yet, it is the family and its related kinship that create inequality of personal conditions. That is not to suggest that education policies do not create inequalities of opportunities, but when inequalities of opportunities are intrinsically imbricated with inequalities of personal conditions, it creates enduring inequitable distribution of education. Acknowledging the family, household and kinship relationships as the most immediate spaces providing practical access to education is a key step towards inclusive policies aimed at creating equality of opportunities and bridging the gap in inequality of conditions. Considering these institutions (kinship and family), in all its diverse pretexts as fundamental to education outcomes, provide a way to gain a nuanced theoretical grasp of gender-selective education and education access negotiations.

The evidence discussed in this chapter is necessary but not sufficient to conclude that every negotiation of education access is a negotiation of kinship. It should however be adequate to question the conceptualizations of kinship terms denoting relationships between and among kins. It should be necessary to nuance the discussions on relatedness and how negotiation around specific issues can constitute kinship negotiation.

Further research is needed to explore the levels of interactions, the rate of interaction around an education access needs, the amount of support, the direction of support between kins (one-sided support, mutual support), nature of solidarity, consequences of such kinship interactions and non-interactions, and the object or purpose of interaction (for e.g., around education access) and whether and how these interactions create boundaries. Similarly, an analysis of other regions unexplored in this thesis and other cultures with different forms of social organizations in the long term will help deepen our understanding of access as it pertains to the micro-level households and kinship.

As part of fleshing out the interconnectedness of the different scales of education access explored at various levels of negotiations in previous chapters, to the discourses and meaning-making of education access in Ghana, the subsequent chapter will theorize access across the macro-meso-micro nexus.

This chapter continues the exploration of micro-level family and household negotiation of access in the previous chapter. The previous chapter explored education access negotiation by considering the types of family, household composition, and immediate familial influences on access. This chapter extends the argument to kinship in general. It further highlights how connection to kin and disconnections from kin relations are experienced in the negotiating of education access process, and how that mediate education access.

CHAPTER 8: THEORIZING ACCESS: LINKAGES BETWEEN THE MACRO-MESO-MICRO ACCESS SPACES

The previous chapters paid attention to three dimensions or scales of non(access). The first two are (non)access created by structural education policies and enabled by the implementation efforts of implementers who implement and interpret policies in regions, districts, and schools. The third and fourth emphasized how family and kinship mediate education outcomes. In this chapter, the interlinkages between the different scales of access (macro and micro contexts) are theorized. Showing these connections is crucial for comprehending the longitudinal process in the negotiation of access to education. The observed empirical patterns from Ghana are employed in building the nested theory of education access. In addition, nodes of access and their related forms are theorized in relation to concepts such as theoretical, formal, non-formal, practical, and substantive access. Finally, the process of the theory development and its application in framing education enquiry would be explored.

A. INTRODUCTION

Previous education theories are exemplified in policy only research, implementation only research, and household-created only study. Exploring access this way neglects the holistic experiences of access and how the multiple influence on access is mutually constitutive. A Few researchers, however, have expounded on the inter-linkages and the shifting forms of access and how the nexus across the three access scales define the access process and its outcomes. In this chapter, I emphasize a holistic approach that considers the sum of all factors rather than linear relationships between individual elements. This method aims to construct a comprehensive theory that accounts for the multiple, interconnected influences on educational access and progression outcomes

To do this, I structure the chapter in this manner. First, I review the access patterns derived from the empirical observations in the previous analyses' chapters. Next, I develop an applied theory through the analysis of the abstractions from the empirical generalizations. The approach involves examining empirical generalizations and their interconnections across access scales through an intersectional lens. This analysis then forms the foundation for building a formal theory through extension and implication analysis of these generalizations.

In the ensuing section, I explore the development process of the new theory. This will consider the construct of the theory, the explanatory power, the robustness for testing, the scope from a set of

observed patterns in data to a theoretical model, or a theory. The final sections are the discussion and concluding sections. The discussion section will consider the abstractions further, and the concluding section will reiterate the key findings.

In the preceding chapters, the evidence suggested that access happens along three dimensions: policy (macro), implementation (meso), and household or family levels (micro). In this chapter, access is explored as a nexus of the three interacting dimensions, macro, meso, and micro. The conceptualization, thus, goes beyond the structural and or micro to how it is embedded within these scales. I name the theory the nested theory of education access.

Constructing a new education theory is important. Policy wise, making reflections on the linkages would serve as point of departure or forecast about future education access phenomena. Also, from the preceding empirical chapter, policy was found to be a narrow process which does not engage with challenging notions of access negotiations at implementation and household levels. For e.g., how a somewhat abstract idea such as ‘inequitable education access’ in policy is shaped, implemented, and interpreted by different local actors in multiple places. This raises two important questions: first, how is education access co-constructed across macro, meso, and micro scales. How does the interplay between national policies (macro), institutional practices (meso), and individual/family dynamics (micro) shape educational opportunities and outcomes. Second, does the essence of, or meaning of access change when education policy gets negotiated and translated by implementing actors? By analyzing these interconnected levels, I developed a comprehensive understanding of the complex factors influencing education access and progression.

Additionally, the access processes at the micro-household levels are usually unmeasurable because of the complexity of the socio-cultural dynamics and the subjective relationships that produce such outcomes. Thus, policymakers rarely consider how household dynamics can be structured into policy creation to mitigate inequitable education outcomes. Understanding access as not just policy induced, but as a socially and culturally constructed concept is important. A more comprehensive approach that hitherto includes all access scales rather than exclude or compartmentalize will enable policymakers to create policies that weave in all the access contexts. This requires new theories and frameworks to explain the interlinkages and relationships of access across all three scales of negotiations.

B. PROCESS OF THEORY BUILDING

1. A set of empirical observations

I recap the empirical patterns from earlier chapters to show that the theory was constructed from empirical data and observed patterns. Through the theme analyses and the elucidation of patterns in the previous chapters, theoretical models were developed, and the theory was constructed at various levels of abstractions along four theoretical analyses chapters, four, five, six, and seven. At the first stage (chapter 4), access was seen in policy (macro-level). This, more loosely constructed interpretation of access in policy, culminates into what I will term theoretical access in this chapter. Chapter five also conceptualized access as implementation induced, and chapter six and seven have similar thematic focus. They deal with access enabled by micro-household, families, and kinship.

From chapter four, it was noted that structural policies could drive both access and non-access through policy provisions. In the Ghanaian example, the policy provision includes removing cost, improving infrastructure, and increasing proximity of schools to children. Equitable access was enhanced through the concessions into elite schools' provisions for those in public or less endowed schools. On macro-level policy, the table below shows the policy provisions and the implications:

Table15: Macro-level access

<i>Macro-level access</i>			
	Concept: Access creation patterns	Activity level	Implications
<i>Driving access</i>	Remove cost	Direct fees. Indirect fees.	Provide interesting reliefs. Cost as a barrier is removed.
	Infrastructure	Building new schools. Completing community SHS in various stages of completion. Expanding existing infrastructure.	More students have access
	Catchment area school initiative	Placing day students in catchment area schools. Increasing the numbers in boarding schools.	Increasing proximity of children to schools
<i>Other commissions in policy</i>	(concessions)	30% concessions for those in public schools	Bridge the school-based disparity gap
		5% concessions for stakeholders	To appease stakeholders and garner their support for the policy

Source: Author's creation

The main policy aspiration was to enable access for all students progressing from JHS to SHS. There were, however, policy constraints that created conditions for non-access. The table below shows the policy constraints and the resulting non-access implications:

Table 16: Macro-level non-access

<i>Macro-level non-access</i>			
	Concept: Non-access creation patterns	Activity level	Implications
<i>Driving non-access</i>	Meaning of access	Offer. Acceptance. Non-receipt or rejection.	Offer is different from acceptance. Non-receipt or rejection of offer as non-access was not accounted for.
	Catchment area school initiative not workable in all areas/ ill placement.	Placing day students in schools further away from their catchment areas.	decreasing proximity of children to schools. Extra transportation cost. Cost of hostel and accommodation facilities. Difficulty in changing ill-placement.
<i>Other omissions in policy and conceptual issues</i>	Narrow conceptualization of policy terms	30% concessions inadequately conceptualized. 5% declared vacancy concession for stakeholders inadequately conceptualized. Inability to conceptualize wealth of various households into quintiles.	No clear understanding of which public schools are considered. The 5% concessions defeat the idea of equitable access. Same solution template or equal financial relieves regardless of individual students' or household financial needs.
	(Omissions)	No policy solution for gender equity concerns. Not problematizing geography determined access.	Gender-based disparity concerns left unsolved. No tailored policy offers, or reliefs for different regions and districts. Regional-based disparity gap left unsolved.

Source: Author's creation

The policy constraints that created conditions for a chain of non-access outcomes included omissions in policy texts, distance to school, poor conceptualization of policy terms and access definition issues.

Access at this stage remains theoretical as the creation of access is through abstract concepts deductively and inductively in policy. I call this type of access theoretical. It is solely dependent on implementers to decode the meanings of the policy text to bring the policy aspiration to life. It can also be conceptualized as formal access because the creation of the policy formally enabled a chain of access process at the implementation and household/ family levels.

The policy advantages (access), and constraints (non-access) created, present the opportunity for both negotiated accesses, at the meso and micro levels. At the meso-level stage, implementation further exacerbates the non-access process, cutting those who are unable to afford school items on school's prospectus.

On implementation, the observed patterns conceptualized included rigid, flexible, and adaptation implementation. I call access at this stage formal access. Implementation-created access is based on directives governing how students go to school. The approach is usually rigid. Contrary to formal access, non-formal access also happens at the implementation stage when implementers adapt or employ flexible approaches that substantially and or marginally depart from the recommended directives to mitigate implementation constraints. Access at the implementation stage changes form due to the differential approaches (for e.g., rigid, flexible, adaptation) to access implementation.

2. Changing forms of access from macro-level policy space to meso-level implementation space

The study reveals that when policies overlook crucial perspectives and concerns at the outset, subsequent implementation struggles to address these issues effectively. Despite the transition from policy formulation to implementation, economic challenges and school-based disparities persist, highlighting the limitations of current approaches to improving educational access. These concerns are rarely mitigated at the implementation stage. Instead, new costs are defined in at the implementation stage. The added cost came in the form of buying extensive lists of items on the schools' prospectus. This changes the form of access from the completely free that policy envisaged to non-free or less free at implementation. The table below show the implementation (non)access:

Table 17: Implementation (non)access

<i>Formal access: Meso-level implementation non-access when policy intersect with implementation</i>			
	Concept	Activity	Implication
<i>Doing cost</i>	Doing cost that policy constraint defined in e.g., transportation, hostel cost for catchment area mishap and ill placement issues.		Implementation is unable to remove these costs that result from the policy. Defeating the policy aspiration of cost-free education.
<i>Defining in other cost</i>		Implementations define in other cost couched in buying of a list of items on the school prospectus.	Instead of consolidating the free, potential 'transitioners' must bear the cost of these items.
<i>Approaches to implementation (doing and or undoing the implementation defined in cost)</i>	Rigid (doing cost)	Rigid approach to implementation does not wave implementation defined-in cost.	Those within lower wealth quintile are effectively denied access.
	Adaptation un(doing) cost	Adaptation of implementation to individual context wave some of the cost implementation define in.	A few people who can afford the implementation cost benefit from the waiver.
	Flexible (undoing cost)	Flexible implementation can wave implementation defined-in cost. This approach cannot be employed due to policy restriction and implementation directives.	Thus, nobody will benefit from flexible implementation cost waiver.
<i>Access experience</i>		Implementation only deals with those that policy has granted access couched in terms such as access rate, retention rate and placement rate	All approaches to implementation (Rigid, adaptation, flexible) deal with only access experiences.
<i>Non access experience</i>		Implementation cannot deal with non-placement, non-retention, non-acceptance of offer.	No approach to implementation can solve the non-access experiences in the activity section.

Source: Author's creation

The table above captures the access and non-access that remain in the access process after access traverse from the policy to the implementation stage.

The role of central implementers and lower-level implementers or street level bureaucrats are important in defining the kind of access that remains available to children at the implementation stage. However, as conceptualized in chapter five (the chapter on implementation), they are unable to influence access due to implementation constraints. Constraints noted in implementation included the lack of engagement and coherence between disparate implementing units (Gender desk office, EMIS and data planning, regional Free SHS coordination and Headteachers). This produces implementation gaps (Implementer subjective-marker gap, nature of access policy induced gaps, equitable access and

accountability gap, implementation induced access gap, implementation coherence gap and implementers disjointed relationship gap) that makes mitigating the constraints difficult.

Consequently, access and non-access created by the policy do not change form. They remain the same in other instances at implementation. Non-access created at policy due to narrow conceptualization of policy terms, economic concerns, school-based disparity, omissions in policy text, ill placement and non-receipt or rejection of offer do not change or rarely change at implementation. Policy constraints are further exacerbated during implementation, as new costs and challenges emerge, compounding the initial limitations. The constraint that can be mitigated albeit rarely is placement issue.

3. Changing form of access from implementation un(enable) to micro-level household access forms (substantive access)

The issues from policy rarely get mitigated at the implementation stage, coupled with further constraints created at implementation, the household micro-level is the last stage of access negotiation. The observed pattern from chapter six, on micro-households revealed that family context and realities matter in negotiating access. Household realities which influenced education included differential intra-household relationships based on matrilineal, patrilineal social organizations, and other changing forms of family formations.

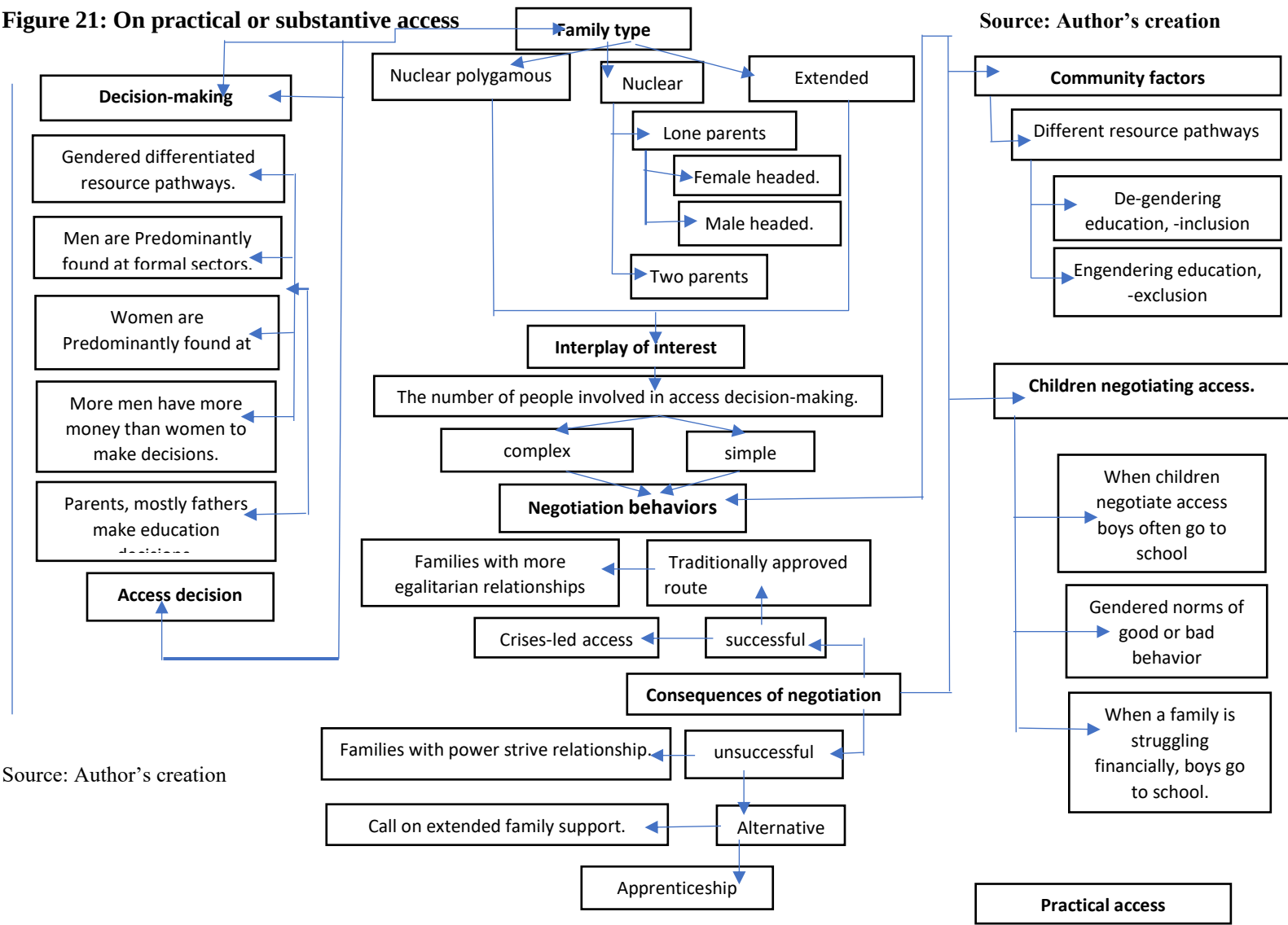
The macro-level policy decisions and meso-level implementation challenges directly impact micro-level household access to education. Economic constraints stemming from policy, coupled with implementation issues like school placement concerns, led to the emergence of two distinct access pathways at the household level. This demonstrates the interconnected nature of access issues across different scales. These are direct, and indirect access. Direct access encompasses those who are willing and able to negotiate the cost constraints undone by the policy and defined in by implementation. They fall within the upper wealth quintile and would be able support the secondary education of their children regardless of the interesting cost reliefs of the education policy. Those who are unable to negotiate the constraints that have traversed from policy in addition to the implementation constraints, go to secondary school the indirect way. The use of direct and indirect is not intended to obscure the longitudinal process of access, or access as a mediated concept. It is employed to highlight different types of negotiated or mediated access.

As earlier conceptualized in chapter six, direct access happens when a family is willing and able to provide money to support children's education. Indirect access occurs when interested parties need to

negotiate to ensure access. Factors, including a person's ability to negotiate, the type of family, the gender (social category and not just the binary biological category) of the negotiator, the culture of permissible or non-permissible negotiations, and the regional context (resource pathways) are crucial in these negotiations. Children who receive direct access are more likely to go to school. An indirect route, however, is based on deciding the best possible way to achieve a desired access based on the practical or on-the-ground situation of the family.

The idea of the development of interconnected processes of education access was possible after exploring the initial case of policy creation which led to the importance of considering implementation. After these conceptualizations, it was possible to theorize across contexts to include micro-level access. The figure below shows the loose theorization of access at the micro-level households. This level of access culminates into what I term practical or substantive access.

Figure 21: On practical or substantive access



C. THE NESTED THEORY APPROACH

Theories of education access explain education access. Theories which examine structure (macro) and or agency (micro) frame inequitable education research (Archer, 1996; Bourdieu, 1967/1971). Framing education research with these theories also explains the compartmentalization of education enquiries into policy only research, implementation only research, and individual or micro-level only research. Consequently, research on education produced and framed within these theories explain access in part or provides an explanation of different facets of access. For example, theories or frameworks of implementation focus on implementation success and failures (Gogging et al., 1990), and whether the approach to implementation inquiries is top-down or bottom-up approach (Pulzl & Treib, 2007). The interplay between the macro, meso, and micro access scales, and the tensions they create in shaping (non)access, remains largely unresolved. However, unlike theories that emphasize specific aspects of access, going forward, the nested theory will resolve this disconnect and explore how access is mutually constitutive of the different scales of access negotiations.

1. What is the nested theory?

This theory provides a holistic view of inequitable education access by bridging the gaps between macro and micro theories, improving the analysis and interpretation of access challenges in the Global South. It underscores the interconnectedness of the macro, meso, and micro access scales. The meaning of access in one scale is meaningful in relation to other access scales. It seeks to provide a holistic explanation of education that takes account of policy, implementation and household responses and their interlinkages in structuring education outcomes. Through several levels of analyses, it engages with four central problems of access namely construction, implementation, embedding and integration to interpret the kinds of access that are often negotiated in the global south. It enables the exploration of education access as continues negotiations. It also helps us to delineate the parameters that would determine the level of educational access that is going to be affordable and sustainable in the global south.

2. Levels of theorization

In developing the theory, the first three empirical chapters provided explanations and meaning descriptions of the observed patterns across the distinct access scales. It involved constructing meaning

descriptions and loosely theoretical explanations of the observed patterns. This chapter builds nested access theory from these first-order theoretical analyses of the previous chapters.

2i. The first-order theoretical analysis

The first-order theoretical analysis is the first level of theorization. It is the process of translating the descriptive categories into theories grounded authentically in the informants' stories. This is based on the observed patterns in data (Shkedi, 2004, p. 6). In line with constructivist understanding of theory building, the theoretical explanations are data driven and remains steeped in data (Charmaz, 1995, p. 28).

The first phase was the macro-level phase. I conceptualized access as policy induced. The second phase framed access was enabled by implementation efforts. The third phase explored access as constitutive of negotiating relationships at the micro-households and family levels. The constructs of the conceptions in each of the phases: macro, meso and micro did not conflict with each other. As access un(changed) forms across these spaces or scales, the relational access categories were made clearer. The fourth phase is the theorization of access as a nexus of the distinct access scales. This phase is also the second order theoretical analyses.

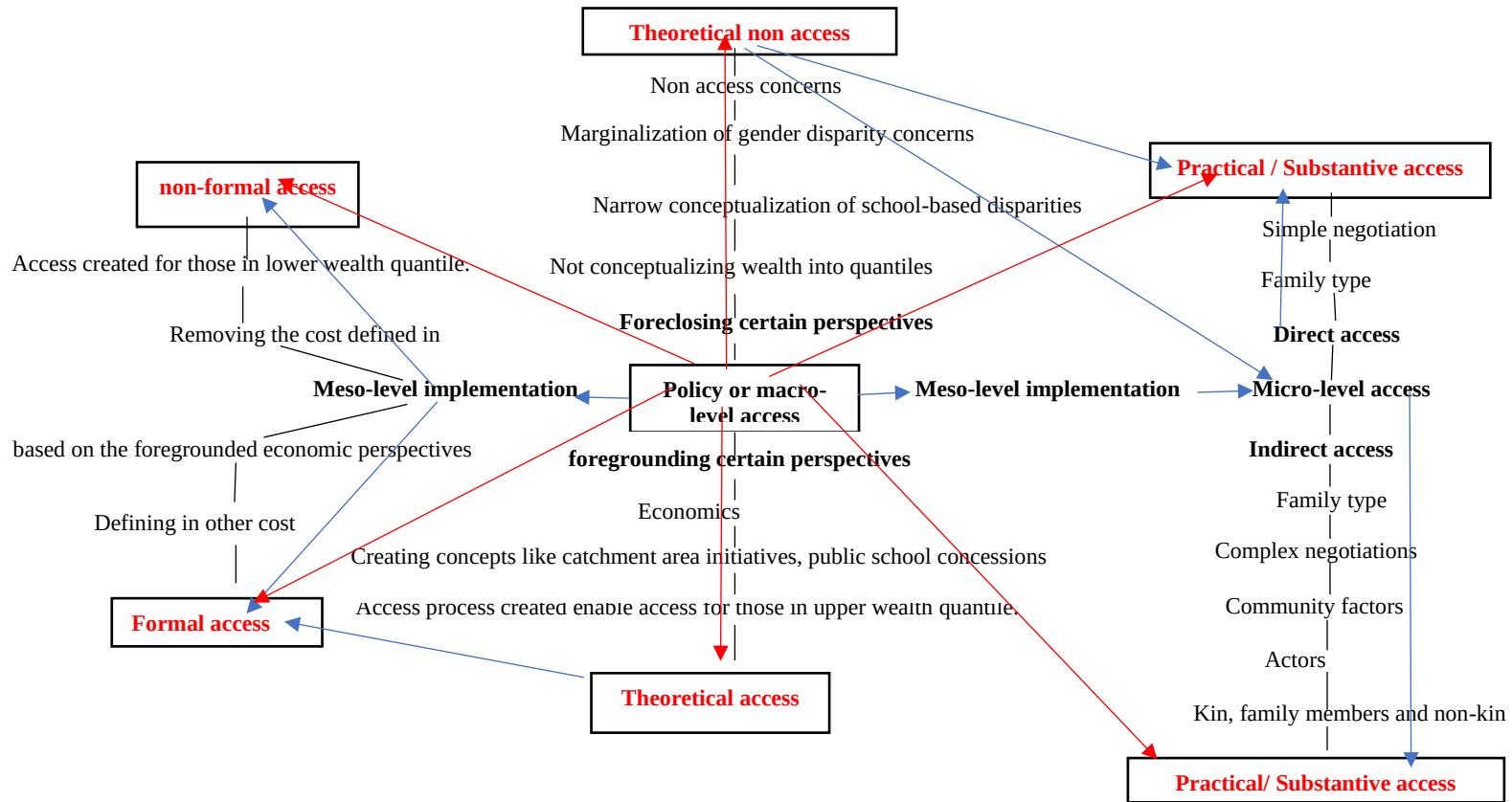
2ii. The second order theoretical analyses

This level of theorization is ¹⁵second order-theoretical analyses. This is because the structure of the existing first-order categories is changed, and new theoretical categorizations are built isolated from the generic properties of the observed phenomena or data patterns in the previous chapters. New and abstract concepts such as practical/ substantive non(access), theoretical non(access) and formal and non-formal access are constructed as abstract propositions to extend the theory towards the mutually constitutive nature of the scales and the relations of the access processes (Turner, 1987).

The mutual constitutive access scales and relations of access is constructed below:

¹⁵ second-order theoretical analysis, occurs when the structure of the existing first-order categories is changed and used to build a new and different theoretical categorization (Shkedi, 2004: 17)

Figure 22: Nexus of access: The mutually constitutive access scales and relations of access



Source: Author's creation

3. Understanding the Nested Theory Approach

The nested theory of education access is engaged with four main problems. These are:

1. Construction or enaction: The process through which access is constructed and or enacted in different access spaces or environments.
2. Implementation: the institutional practices and approaches adopted to bring policy from abstract theoretical constructs into formal and non-formal access practices. It is access in action.
3. Embedding is defined as the processes through which education access becomes, (or does not become), routinely incorporated in everyday family and cultural context from the mundane to the sublime.
4. Integration: The processes by which the dis(advantages) in one access space or scale are reproduced, sustained, and exacerbated among the access matrices or environments of other access scales (meso and micro).

3i Construction

At the macro-level, access is constructed as policy, very theoretical with abstract propositions, aims of the policy, and vague definition of policy terms. As access is constructed through other scales or access environments, it changes form or meaning and assumes a different meaning. At the meso-level, access undergoes a change in definition to become different in substance or principle. The original access changes from theoretical to formal and non-formal access. Further, access is made substantial or practical at the micro-level. It involves finding the best route possible to make access practical or tangible whether direct or mediated, or indirect. The final access that is enacted at the micro-households' level, involves negotiation of relationships simple or complex. In constructing access through the scales, the final substantive access that remains is a product of the nexus of access across the macro-policy, meso-implementation, and micro-household level households. In sum, access construction means access undergoes changes in essence, meaning or definitions. Undergoing changes mean that access as started at policy could be defined as free however, it can become less free or non-free as access traverse other stages.

3ii Implementation

Education access remains intentions at the policy level. The policy intentions are, however, hardly met owing to the contested way policies are set and translated into action given the implementation directives, implementers own approach, implementation orientations and/or motivations of the actors involved in the implementation process at the various levels of implementation. There are two levels of implementation. Central implementation occurs at the regions, and the districts level. Local implementation occurs at the school levels. Implementation, thus, involves all the institutional practices such as issuing implementation directives, the work of various implementation units, whether systems thinking is adopted or not, and implementation mishaps.

3iii Embedding

Embedding occurs at the micro-level household environment such as the everyday education enrollment decisions by family actors. It also involves responses to decisions such as resistance or acceptance of non-access decisions.

3iv Integration

Integration occurs when the advantages or constraints in one access environment are reproduced in other access places. For example, with the interesting financial reliefs of free education policies, those in the upper wealth quintile have a double advantage to enable successful education outcomes. They are cushioned even if implementation define-in other costs. Access is usually direct at such households; the negotiation of education opportunities is simple and does not involve too many people. The advantage from policy to implementation, extending down to the household level, is sustained across these access environments until practical access is fully realized. On the contrary, the constraints in one access environment can also be reproduced in other access environments until non-substantive access is achieved.

Access to education can thus be meaningfully explored if it engages the problems of construction, implementation, embedding and integration. Engaging these concerns also explain how access undergoes changes in definitions or essence for example access started as policy is defined to be free, but it can become less free or non-free in other access locations.

The nested model or theory analytically connects the macro, meso, and micro intersections of access, examining the systemic foundations and the iterative processes involved in constructing, implementing, embedding, and integrating access at all levels.

Theorizing the nexus of the relational access categories has explanatory power and possesses sufficient robustness for formal testing. As the theory developed, its scope is expanded from a set of observed regularities in data with procedural explanations as seen in chapters four, five, and six, to an applied theoretical model (formal middle-range theory) whose postulates can be tested.

The theory postulates that:

- Policy access often evolves as it moves from the implementation stage to the household micro-level stage.
- Policy constraints related to access tend to remain consistent during the implementation phase.
- Implementation procedures and enactment can alter the nature of access or reshape access during the implementation stage.
- These changes can occur in two ways: either by facilitating unrestricted access or by reinforcing barriers to access.
- Implementation-driven access primarily benefits individuals who already possess access.
- Those lacking direct access may obtain it through indirect or mediated pathways.
- Indirect access involves negotiation of relationships at the household level embedded in community factors, family types and structures, gender, the agency of the actors in negotiation and other cultural constitutive factors.
- Final access then becomes routinely embedded in family social contexts because the family (kin) and non-kin are working individually and or collectively to enact such access.

These set of propositions possess sufficient face validity and conceptual robustness for formal testing of the nested education access theory. The nested theory merit formal testing because first, it provides possible explanations of previously or currently observed education phenomena. For example, previously observed phenomena such as why free education policies fail to enable access for everyone can be explained by this theory. Earlier research on education has investigated particular aspects of access. It is impossible to offer a comprehensive explanation of education outcomes when access analyses are compartmentalized in this way. Second, these propositions lay the foundation for understanding future patterns in education access. The central idea is that access must be analyzed as

an interconnected system across various levels. These new hypotheses project how future education access dynamics should be approached and examined.

Additionally, it conceptualizes access to education as both structural and individual, and whilst the two are related, one gains primacy over the other in different contexts. At the policy context, policymakers see policy as the main driver of access. This policy assertion changes as access shifts between different contexts. This is due to the potential for the policy's original intent to be compromised during implementation. Policy-induced access does not, therefore, imply successful access, as it only suggests the possible chain of causation between initial conditions of access structurally, and the future consequences for individual access. The subsequent links in the chain of access from macro/ structural/policy can be forged through implementation to obtain the un(desired) consequences. Alternatively, the desired consequences are sometimes obtained without the forging ability of implementation in the instances of direct access. Structural policy or macro-level negotiation do not have primacy over the other stages, even though it sets the chain or process of access, it cannot be described as a key determinant of education access.

During indirect or negotiated access, future consequences of access can be created independent of the positive implementation effects. Positive implementation happens when implementers use flexible or adaptive approaches to mitigate costs that emerge during the implementation process. For example, making exemptions for students who are unable to buy the items on the school prospectus, or changing school placements to enable children to go to secondary school. Despite positive implementation efforts, families can only benefit from these implementation efforts if they have successfully negotiated household level access. Similarly, direct access is also created independent of implementation power. This is because children go to school regardless of implementation efforts (rigid, flexible, adaptation and other implementation mishaps). Implementation in this scenario, thus, only establishes how children go to school, and not if they will go to school. Thus, implementation does not have primacy over other access scales in determining access.

Sometimes both direct and indirect access can be created, and it is dependent on the forging power of implementation to the desired consequences. Implementation can also forge undesirable consequences. This occurs when implementation adopts approaches that are antithetical to the policy objectives. For e.g., when a policy is sold on the account of free or cost-free, defining in other cost at implementation regardless of how nominal the cost is, could create a disjuncture between policy aspiration and the desired consequences.

Drawing on an access process and how diverse kinds of access scales mediate education outcomes; the nested theory is developed to explain education access holistically. It expands the limits of the theoretical conceptualizations in the previous analysis chapters and in previous theorizations that sought to answer the structure versus agency question.

The theory can be applied to understand education concerns. It provides means to understand and explain the process through which access, constructed, and enacted at different scales and access environments, is relational and processual.

4. Exploring the nested theory of access and its contributions

Earlier references to education inquiry have concentrated on examining access using frameworks that limited enquiry to one scale, either policy, implementation, or micro-level household and family. Further, previous education theories (macro) also played up policy as a main access category (Bourdieu, 1967/1971). In contrast to this categorization, this theory identifies family and household provided access as a crucial category that provides substantive and practical access whilst policy and implementation categories were considered sub-categories which provides theoretical and formal access.

Research on education produced and framed within the macro and micro theories explain access in part or provides an explanation of different facets of access. For example, theories or frameworks of implementation focus on implementation success and failures, and whether the approach to implementation inquiries is top-down or bottom-up approach. Rarely resolved are the ways in which the macro, meso, and micro access scales are interlinked in creating access and non-access. However, unlike theories that concentrate on explaining specific aspects of access, going forward, the nested theory resolves this disconnect.

In the structural dimension, access is made theoretically available for everyone but that does not guarantee access for everyone. Implementation creates formal access from theoretical access. Theoretical non-access however occurs due to policy conceptualization issues, definition issues, marginalization of deeper concerns and narrow conceptualization of policy concepts. Policy access and non-access rarely change essence as it moves through the implementation stage. How access is configured can be affected by implementation methods and directives, particularly when a policy intended to provide free access instead results in increased costs or barriers to free access.

However formal access is made available for those who have access and falls within the upper wealth quintiles of society. Whilst the constraints in the theoretical policy construct rarely get mitigated at this stage, other cost barriers that implementation creates can be mitigated to enable access for some people. Access enabled this way is termed non-formal access as the approach to implementation departs from implementation directive. This occurs in two ways: adaptive implementation and flexible implementation. Adaptive implementations occurs when implementation of policy is tailored to the contextual needs of school and the differential needs of individual students. Flexible implementation also involves allowing the school and students specific situations dictate the approach to implementation. Adaptive and flexible implementation can positively counteract cost barriers, such as by removing specific fees from the student prospectus.

While non-formal access can be facilitated during implementation, it often remains limited. This is due to the need to overcome specific implementation constraints. As highlighted in Chapter Five, the lack of coordination and engagement among various implementing units creates implementation gaps. These gaps hinder a holistic approach, making it difficult to effectively address access constraints in both policy and execution.

Whilst theoretical access (policy) is made for everyone, formal and non-formal access (implementation), and practical/ substantive access (micro-level household) is not available for everyone. Theoretical non-access and meso-level implementation non-access produces micro-level household responses in two ways: direct and indirect. Whilst the direct involves a few family actors in simple negotiations, the indirect involves complex negotiations. Access decisions under indirect is structured by a host of community factors, actors (kin and or non-kin) and other constitutive cultural elements such as age, gender norms structuring behaviors and gender of the actors negotiating access. Access finally made at this level is practical or substantive access. Often, households with egalitarian decision-making structures succeed in enabling practical access despite multiple access constraints.

The point of departure with this theory is that access as happens at the policy levels cannot be disconnected or detached from implementation propelled and individual household enabled access. Different forms of access (direct and indirect) are shaped by existing access policies. That is if access policy is expressed (or understood) in a particular way, given certain implementation approaches and constraints, certain forms of access will prevail.

Consequently, policy use of the term free is a discursive negotiation ground between policy, implementation, and households. Also, any policy that claims free access deflects attention from more complex negotiation concerns particularly when theoretical constructs are narrowly conceptualized

making it difficult to actualize the free. Access whether free or not, is a complicated triangle of the theoretical (macro: political, social, historical, institutional normative), formal and non-formal (meso: implementation), and practical/ substantive (micro: individual and household) access factors. These distinct scales are negotiated in the education access process.

The theory provides a way of piecing together the fragmented macro and micro theories to improve analyses and interpretation of education access issues in the global south. For example, we can interpret access by emphasizing access as relationship construction or negotiation of relationships which exemplify the collective or associational view of access.

Additionally, engaging the four central problems of access outlined in the theory enables us to interpret the kinds of access that are often negotiated in the global south. It also helps us to delineate the parameters that would determine the level of educational access that is going to be affordable and sustainable in the global south. It will also enable the exploration of education access as continues negotiations.

4i. Application of the nested theory of education access

It is useful for deconstructing educational policy enactments. Researchers can answer questions like why education remains classed, familial, gendered, and ‘regioned’. Furthermore, studies exploring why education opportunities are unevenly distributed despite policy and implementation efforts can be framed with the theory.

4ii. Critique of the nested theory of education access

On the application of the theory to explaining previous education phenomenon and the forecasting of new phenomenon, there are advantages and difficulties. The theory is based on data that has depth and breadth. There is, however, difficulty when the empirical underpin of a theory is a specific case, and yet is used to generalize to other cases. The theory is based on the Ghana context-specific situation but can be applicable and extended to other Global South contexts. As a single case, there were no sampling limitations because of the depth and breadth of the data collected. However, applying this to other context apart from Ghana raises questions about external generalizability (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

Qualitative research's use of generalisation is often about the conceptual rather than the empirical. In this context, the route to the knowledge production aimed at theoretical constructions and not about empirical generalisations. The goal was to provide a perspective or a means to explain education access phenomenon grounded in the realities of the global south, rather than instinctively reaching elsewhere for theories or perspectives decoupled from the realities of the phenomena that I seek to explore and interpret.

Consequently, employing the theory to other empirical cases in other global south contexts is about offering a perspective that explains, confirms, or disconfirms evidence rather than conclusive evidence as happens in all theoretical approaches.

There are, however, scholarships that address how empirical generalization can be achieved. Kennedy (1979) proposes that generalization from a particular case to general cases is possible when a range of characteristics and units are investigated. The data underpinning this study was collected from several districts and regions with distinctive characteristics across the breadth of Ghana. These districts and regions have different arrays of access conditions and population characteristics. If generalization is not simply a function of the numbers but the number of units one has observed and the range of population characteristics, then generalizing from a particular case to other cases is possible. I refer to the evidence trial under the methods section in chapter three of the thesis for clarification.

Furthermore, even though this theory is based on the Ghana case, it can be an exemplar for researchers to adopt and adapt to study other cases towards the cumulative development of knowledge on access to education in the Global South context (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Besides, the goal is not about empirical generalizations, but the goal is that the theory will provide a framework or perspective that speaks to other empirical conditions (Small, 2009). Consequently, employing the theory in other empirical cases in other contexts or new cases is about offering confirming or disconfirming evidence rather than conclusive evidence as happens in all theoretical approaches.

The most important critique is the methodological implications. The methodological implication for research is that approach to education access enquiry cannot be limited to quantitative exploration of access. Also, all access scales and the linkages must be explored to understand or explain access. Consequently, enquiries cannot be delimited to one access scale irrespective of resource or logistical constraints. To enable confirming or disconfirming evidence, the theory should be tested.

4iii. On testing the theory

Given the diversity of education systems, I suggest that the theory be tested further. The test should center on specific education policy, its implementation efforts, and its micro-level household and individual responses. This is crucial for understanding how and why the nature or meaning of access evolves or remains consistent as it moves through different access scales. Consequently, the hypothesis about changing forms of access can be tested. Additionally, this approach can be used to predict access outcomes, such as how various households might respond to different access policies and implementations.

D. DISCUSSION

Historically, unequal access to education has never been ended with cost-free policies. Policies create fertile ground for implementation. However, the implementation apparatus often fails to alleviate policy constraints and instead exacerbates access issues, undermining the policy's goal of providing completely free education.

Earlier theories on access focused primarily on the structure-agency debate. It is now evident that addressing issues of unequal education requires a theoretical framework that allows for a comprehensive examination of access. The nested theory recognizes that distinct access forms, policy induced, implementation enabled, and household family allowed, can be categorically distinguished, and analyzed apart from each other. Additionally, it moves beyond a mere distinction to a more relational view of the access forms. This implies that access as happen in any of the scales is informed by, and mutually constitutive of the imposing education policy, as well as the implementation and household level realities in various contexts.

The relational view further suggests that policy shapes the way access is negotiated by setting the ground rules and commanding attention through the creation of conceptual categories. For example, policy defined what it means to access SHS education and what the provisions are. The pursuing of the inclusion of those from non-elite schools into elite schools based on the 30% concession is all a creation of policy. These categories form the building blocks of access and influence how access is negotiated. This results in a binary classification of schools, distinguishing them as either exemplary or subpar. It created types of schools and category of children who can enroll in them. It also underscores the mutually exclusive nature of policy's conceptualization of access leaving no room for nuance in its categorization that schools that are public can also be elite in its characteristics.

Additionally, even though policy is neutral, it creates different access realities (direct and mediated access) for subgroups, as the kind of access is defined in other stages.

The theorization of everyday access as a concept then covers how families act in everyday negotiations that might enable or undermine education outcomes. Policymakers rarely capture this type of access in policy documents; however, family, or substantial access is the main category of access within the access relationships explored. For example, even if the policy enables access to an elite school for a person from non-elite school, implementation approach can curtail access for the person without family support.

Overall, free education policies can engender both access and non-access whether stated explicitly or covertly. It points to a chain of causations for both access and non-access. Access then is a complex undertaking involving the theoretical (non)access (policy), formal and non-formal (implementation) and practical or non-substantive access (contestations and negotiations at the household levels).

E. CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to develop a comprehensive theory of education that can be used to investigate access issues. This theory offers a framework for examining education access by considering specific policies, their implementation, and the responses of households.

The empirical ground of the nested education theory is a particular structural education policy, the free SHS policy, introduced in Ghana in 2017. Whilst the policy provided interesting reliefs in its abstractions, other access scales, structure or mediate its aspiration to provide education to all potential students progressing from JHS to SHS entirely cost-free.

This chapter builds nested education theory from these observed patterns. The chapter further accounts for the procedures in building the theory. It showed how these procedures enabled the creation of a set of propositions that is useful for exploring education access and possessed conceptual robustness for formal testing of the theory. Through the construction of access at each stage of the access process, with procedures that were skeptical and critical of earlier findings in previous empirical chapters, new data sets were collected on the implementation. Additionally, through a critical review of the development of access at the meso-level implementation stage, it was tested at the micro-level household stage. Testing involved exploring how family micro-household levels responded to the

implementation. The final stage of the theorization is this chapter under review where access is theorized across the nexus of the distinct conceptualized access scales.

This theory would enable policymakers to pay attention to how different actors negotiate and achieve education outcomes. It would be insightful in helping policymakers work the education distribution gap through the identification of friction in the access chain or processes. Furthermore, it would provide a template for implementers to pay specific attention to the socio-cultural access environments. It would provide a frame for critiquing policies designed to address poverty traps, which often lead to the formulation of free education policies. Additionally, it will help policymakers understand that tackling structural and micro-level family issues is essential for improving access to education

Overall, policy imposes a specific chain of processes through the definition of policy concepts and conceptualization of policy prescriptions. This direct implementation which produces formal and non-formal accesses, and influence household-level responses to and negotiations thereof, produces practical or substantive and non-substantive accesses. Access is not necessarily free as policy intervention suggests, rather, access in any one category takes its meaning from other categories and it is different for every child. For those who can negotiate practical access, it will be meaningful access, for others it will be unmeaningful access or non-access, because as access moves across the scales identified, opportunity to progress to SHS becomes stratified.

An effective policy should aim to mitigate economic disparities while also addressing socio-cultural, gender, and other intersectional factors that influence access. Rather than making education cost-free for everyone, a well-designed policy should focus on targeted support. Without such measures, the varying influences of family background on cultural, economic, and social networks could result in unequal distribution of educational access if the policy fails to account for these differences.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUDING THE MACRO-MESO-MICRO ACCESS DEBATE: SUMMARIES, THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND SUPPOSITIONS

A. OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

I explored two key questions in this thesis: How does the nexus of structural education policy and family politics shape the education of children in Ghana? Why does access to education remain an elusive goal to diverse children despite education policies which seek to equalize education opportunities? To address these central questions, I used the empirical case from Ghana to address four specific questions in four analyses chapters. The questions are:

- How does Ghana's upper secondary education policy work the equity gaps in access to education?
- How do policy implementers bring education policy to life?
- How do micro-family and individual realities circumscribe opportunities for education beyond the structural and institutional policy contexts?
- How does the negotiation of kin relations constitute negotiation of education access?

The thesis considered the free SHS policy, a macro-structural education policy which aims at providing equality of education opportunities to children progressing from the JHS to the SHS. The free SHS policy was created in response to the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4). Ghana reviewed its former education policy, the 'Progressively Free SHS Policy,' which required parents to pay part of the educational costs while exempting them from additional fees like those for exams and libraries and to adopt a new one "the free SHS policy" where education is free in its entirety (Abdul-Rahaman, et al., 2018; MOE, 2017). This policy response addressed the issue where many children completing Junior High School (JHS) were unable to advance to Senior High School (SHS) due to varying financial conditions. Alongside the low progression rates, there were persistent disparities in upper secondary education, which continued to vary by gender, school type, and geographic region.

1. Summary

In chapter one, I set up the puzzle that needed unravelling. Why does education access remain an elusive goal despite free education policies. I also questioned the ability of Ghana's new education policy (the free SHS policy) to ensure equal opportunity and equitable distribution of education given the underlying pattern of geographic, gender, economic, and school-based disparities which persist and affect those areas with pronounced access issues. Furthermore, I provided an overview of the policy under consideration, and how the constitution of Ghanaian families could be interacting with the structural education intervention (the free SHS Intervention) to engender access for Ghanaian children. It also provided background information about the biases in the educational system that work to the disadvantage of geographical Northern regions in Ghana as well as the north/ south economic divide.

In chapter two, I synthesized the field, examining the research traditions, theoretical models employed in framing education inquiries, the findings, and how such inquiries were framed. I reviewed the literature under two broad themes. The macro-and micro-based accounts of education access in the field. The macro noted the significance of institutional factors such as policy dynamics, and laws in delineating education opportunities in different contexts (for example, policy reforms can account for access outcomes or indicators such as enrollment rate, completion rate, and GPI). The micro-based explanation views inequitable education outcomes a function of individual social background and rational choices of diverse kinds of people.

In addition, I reviewed the small but growing body of work that explores zones of exclusion in education. I also emphasized the limitations and unresolved issues that needed attention, such as the focus on either macro or micro issues without integrating the two. This separation made it difficult to account for access situations that fell outside this theoretical dualism. Furthermore, I critiqued the uncritical transposition of the macro-micro theory from the Global North to the Global South. This was against the backdrop that institutional and structural changes differ by societal settings (for example, educational institutional structures, policy making environment, implementation cultures and the family formations of the Global North are remarkably different from the empirical contextual foundation of the Global South).

Given the gaps emanating from the review of literature, the next chapter explored the best possible methodological choices to investigate education access. I employed the grounded theory approach within qualitative research traditions to answer the central research questions in chapter three. This methodological choice was appropriate for two reasons. First, I did not want to superimpose an existing theory to the study given that the education policy (the free SHS) was new. Second, the overarching goal of the thesis to develop a new and contextualized theory to explain inequitable access to education in Ghana and the Global South contexts, meant that it was not possible to frame the study with theories whose empirical grounding was western, and contextually different from that of Ghana. This was also my attempt at solving the important macro-micro sociological linkages.

I commenced chapter four with a discussion of the structural policy under consideration. I followed it up with an exploration of the policymakers who conceptualized the intervention. The findings indicated that policymakers often frame access solutions from specific perspectives, excluding alternative views. This approach results in secondary education being readily accessible to some while remaining out of reach for others. Furthermore, the intervention was couched in cookie-cutter style without recourse to regional, school-based disparities and other equity concerns identified in the policy preamble. I leveraged these findings to conceptualize policy as capable of simultaneously defining, or enabling, and restricting access. The findings further revealed that policy conceptualization and prescription are theoretical, and formal. I proposed that in other access environments where the policy is implemented, implementers need to adopt approaches to bring the free aspiration of the policy to life and to prevent the inevitable access proscription due to policy gaps.

In chapter five, I developed the notion of access as formal, wherein implementers are tasked to define how children go to school. In this manner, a policy initially aimed at providing free education access is modified when implementers impose or introduce additional costs. This fits with the conceptual work of Jacobsen and Young, (2013) that policy implementers modify policy to bring policies to life. The analysis of implementation shifted focus from the predominant implementation success and failures that often frame implementation studies in literature. This set of studies employs top-down and bottom-up approaches to explore implementation (Birkland, 2005; Goggin et al., 1990; Maznamin & Sabatier, 1989; Meter & Horn, 1975). Instead, I focused on how implementers at various levels, central and local, implemented the policy. This concurs with the existing hybrid approach in literature which gives primacy to both local and central implementers in implementation studies (Pulzl & Treib, 2007). I paid attention to the approaches adopted at implementation such as rigid and flexible implementation and the conflicting access and transition outcomes for children. Additionally, I

examined the relationship between and among implementers and created a relationship matrix between local and central implementers. Creating this matrix enabled a theorization of implementation gaps. These gaps, (Implementer subjective-marker gap, nature of access policy induced gaps, equitable and accountability gap, implementation induced gap, implementation coherence gap and implementers disjointed relationship gap) were identified and explained in relation to how they discourage nested approach to implementation.

In chapter six, I turned my attention to family as key determinants of education access. I presented the case of diverse families and how the family types, decision-making structures, resource dilution and other intersectional factors such as gender and community resource pathways engender education outcomes. In chapter seven, I highlighted the negotiation of access at the family levels as relationship construction, analyzing it in the context of broader kinship literature. I examined the complexity of kinship beyond the simple framing as households, and nuclear or extended families and theorized the negotiation of kinship as negotiation of education access.

A common oversight in the literature is the fragmented theorization of education—either focusing on macro-level institutional factors or micro-level individual factors—without exploring how the interaction between these perspectives provides insights into inequitable education access. This lacuna prevents a convincing explanation of access situations that require a linkage of the two theories. Thus, in chapter eight, I demonstrated that such linkage is possible. I employed the empirical patterns from the earlier analysis and theoretical chapters to provide the missing linkages. Taking the empirical observations and conceptualizations of the distinct aspects of access together, I developed a theory that incorporated the various accounts (macro-meso-micro) together. I did this by exploring how access changes forms as it moves from one stage, for example, policy where it is theoretical to implementation where it is formal and informal, and then family where practical or substantial access is negotiated. Chapter eight was driven by the central question: How does the intrinsic imbrication of macro-meso-micro engender access to education. I created a new theory to account for all the scales and negotiations. Indeed, through this new theoretical lens, we can address and solve the pertinent problems of linkages. I then presented the ways in which the theory was created.

I am not alone in seeking answers to linkages. Coleman (1987a) notes the importance of establishing macro-micro linkages in framing inquiries. The understanding gained from this study thus provides an input into explaining access beyond the conventional macro and micro theories, to noting how such linkages is possible.

B. KEY FINDINGS

The findings concur with the work of others who highlight the importance of changes in institutions in enabling access and non-access to education (for example, Beller & Hout, 2006; Breen, 2010a; Ganimian & Murnane, 2016; Vivalt, 2015). Specifically, access is enabled institutionally through policy provisions such as removal of cost, improving infrastructure and increasing proximity to schools. Whilst the policy provided-relieves can enable access, how policymakers frame the access policy foreground certain perspectives, mostly economics and foreclose others such as school-based disparity. Further the narrow conceptualizations of policy terms and policy constraints such as omissions in policy texts, poor conceptualization of policy terms and access definition issues also create conditions for a chain of non-access outcomes at the implementation and micro-level household stages. Access at this stage remains theoretical as the creation of access is through abstract concepts deductively and inductively in policy.

A key finding at the meso-level stage suggests that the role of central implementers and lower-level implementers or street level bureaucrats are important in defining the kind of access that remains available to children at the implementation stage. Implementation approaches such as rigid, flexible and adaptation, coupled with other implementation constraints such as lack of engagement and coherence between disparate implementing units, produces implementation gaps which engender education outcomes.

Beyond the two structural contexts and its constraints, underlying family circumstances also determine who enrolls in SHS in response to the implemented structural education policy. The evidence shows that household and family realities matter in determining access to SHS education. Household realities, however, entail differential intra-household relationships based on matrilineal, patrilineal social organizations, broader relations of kinship and other changing forms of family formations. The access of children to education is thus structural, negotiated and influenced by different household factors.

Whilst I maintain that structural or institutional macro-level changes in policy, and micro-level individual factors engender inequality of education opportunities for people, the findings in this thesis note that both macro and micro approaches intersect in producing such unequal education outcomes.

Efforts to theorize the connections across these access dimensions reveal the varying advantages and disadvantages that emerge as access evolves from policy to implementation and household-level responses. This evolution shifts access from theoretical concepts to formal, non-formal, substantive, and practical forms.

I refer to the cumulative disadvantages and advantages as entangled (in)equalities and equalities. Entangled inequalities in access refer to gaps between positions occupied by individuals as seen in (in)equalities of conditions (for example, gender, regions, income, families) and how the sum of these, enables their experience of structural education interventions ((in)equality of opportunities).

The integration of macro and micro issues, and the changes in access forms or meanings make access to education a process, and not an event that happens automatically with institutional education policy. This process involves the policy's overarching goals at the macro level, how these goals are enacted and translated into practice at the meso level through implementation, and the practical constraints or opportunities encountered at the micro level within individual households and family situations.

The resulting (non)access are thus, termed negotiated non(access). Negotiated because of encounters at the family levels or the complex negotiation of (in)equality of opportunity at policy and implementation levels, and (in)equality of conditions at the family levels. Access to education thus involves opportunities and conditions that the participants in the given interaction situations both at the institutional level and the individual levels have arrived at. The reality of education access is thus a negotiated or mediated access.

C. EMPIRICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO LITERATURE

The use of the Ghanaian case was important in illuminating inequitable education as a function of macro-meso-micro interactions. Ghana is an interesting case because Ghana's education policies serve as a blueprint for other African and Global South countries where completely free secondary education remains unavailable to 80% out of 264 million children across sixty-five countries (Chanimbe & Dankwah, 2021).

Additionally, Ghana's education system and policies are like most Global South countries with free education policies (for example, Kenya (Brudevold-Newman, 2017; Essuman, 2008; Otieno & Colclough, 2009; Radoli, 2011), Uganda (Asankha & Takashi, 2007; Essuman, 2008; Jacob & Lehner, 2011; Werner, 2011), and Tanzania (Godha, 2011; Ministry of Education & Vocational Training, 2014, p. 3). The free education mantra underpins most education policies in Africa (Oketch & Rolleston, 2007). Nonetheless, it is rarely found elsewhere besides the Global South.

Also, Ghana is one of the few countries with prior cost-sharing financing scheme to have implemented an entirely cost-free secondary education policy (Johnstone, 2003; Kiprop et al., 2015; Lewin, 2008).

This study is different from previous works on secondary education in several important respects. The accounts by other scholars have highlighted the importance of program effect, cost, and implications (Bennell, Bulwani, & Musikanga, 2005). The issue of inequity in access to secondary education is also exemplified by (Govinda, 2003)'s research. Most importantly, others have interrogated the importance of secondary education to skill acquisition, the job market and employment (African Economic Outlook [AEO], 2014; Lauglo & Maclean, 2005; Werner, 2011). A recent study by Mohammed & Kuyini (2021) on Ghana also accounted for policymakers heavy handed emphasis on the political dimension, the neglect of other aspects such as equity, efficiency, responsiveness, and the implications of such neglect. Whilst this thesis similarly explores the policy, paying attention to the neglect of other equity dimensions, it shifts significantly in focus by emphasizing the importance of the macro-meso-micro linkages in explaining inequitable access to education.

The thesis further contributes to the literature on education transitions elsewhere apart from the Ghana and Africa specific contexts. The existing scholarly explorations of education underscore aspects of access and education transitions. Whilst the scholarship on the role of policies to education is replete and include access and the impact of education policies (Allon, 2009; Blimpo et al., 2015; Breen & Jonson, 2005; Ganimian & Murname, 2016; Garlic, 2013; Hout, 2015), less attention is paid to educational transitions (for example, Mare, 2011). The concerns on transitions, center school-to-work transitions and social mobility (for example, Carneiro & Lee, 2011; Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992; Hout, 2012; Shavit & Muller, 1998). The changing forms of access as it moves from policy to implementation and then to micro-level households are rarely highlighted. The case of Ghana serves as a prime example of how access evolves through these stages.

The marginal exploration of the changing forms of access stems from the simple fact that the numbers of students enrolling in schools usually increases with the introduction of new policies. Additionally, it is challenging and ambitious to capture education access issues instantaneously occurring at the policy, implementation, and hyper local family levels as a dialectic process.

Furthermore, existing account of access transitions from primary to secondary or from lower secondary to senior secondary schools has remained marginally explored in recent times. The thesis provides empirical grounds to conceptualize how such access progressions or transitions are negotiated in

different access environments. It gave primacy to household or micro-level family relationships as important in negotiating such access scales.

On the theoretical front, the nested education theory accounts for both macro and micro factors of access and furthers the dialogue between the two theoretical dualisms. As noted earlier, previous studies on access relied on one of the two theoretical dualisms (macro and micro) in explaining inequitable education distribution. The micro-level approach explains education access and attainment as a function of individual decisions based on their differential social backgrounds (Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997; Breen & Yaish, 2006; Goldthorpe, 1998; 2021). The macro-level institutional approach on the other hand, emphasize the influences of institutional and structural changes on differential education outcomes and social mobility (Beller & Hout, 2006; Breen, 2010a; Breen & Jonson, 2007; Garner & Raudenbush, 1991; Nee & Mathews, 1996; Shavit & Muller, 1998).

By constructing the new theory, it is theoretically possible to explain education (non)access in the Global South context where access concerns are complex, intertwined and require a dialogue between the two branches of theories. For example, we cannot completely explore questions like why access remains an elusive goal for several children in the Global South countries despite free education policies by framing the inquiry with any of the two branches of theory.

D. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Since the free SHS was launched in September 2017, enrollment increased from 432,780 in 2016 to 472,730 in 2017, 500,000 in 2018 and then to 600,000 in 2019. Whilst this is commendable, upper secondary education remains an elusive goal for some children. According to Mohammed and Kuyini (2021, p.13), this increase in enrollment is still lower compared to the percentage in enrollment recorded at the JHS (85%) and primary school level (95%) (BFT, 2019). This implies that the free aspiration and its implementation has not enabled access for everyone and therefore crucial to revisit the policy.

My research notes that the policy will benefit from a review. The analysis of chapter four or the policy chapter is profoundly revealing on what needs revising with the policy. The findings indicate that the policy's goal of providing free education is undermined at both the conceptualization and implementation stages. Unless families can cover additional costs, some children will be unable to advance to Senior High School (SHS).

Recent stream of studies provides a scathing critique, emphasizing implementation concerns such as inadequate infrastructure, delay in disbursement of funds to schools, supply and logistic issue, overcrowding, lack of textbooks, sustainability concerns, and equity issues (Chanimbe & Prah, 2020; Matey, 2020; Public Interest & Accountability Committee, 2020; Chanimbe, 2019; Tamanja & Pajibo, 2019; Asumadu, 2019; Addo, 2019; Amissah, 2019). These scholarships do not link the implementation challenges to policy conceptualization and implementation approaches.

This thesis, however, notes the interlinkages between the policy conceptualization and the implementation approaches. It further emphasizes the disjuncture between the equity policy intentions and uneven access outcomes that are recorded. The policy in its current state and implementation is particularly good for rich parents, and extremely poor for poor parents. This is because whilst policymakers framed the access solutions foregrounding mostly economic perspectives, they did not emphasize differential wealth quantiles for targeting and contextualizing to individual students' situations. Other alternatives such as school-based disparity, regional disparity, and gender-based disparity were rarely emphasized. Additionally, matters of inequitable access get lost when policies are assessed using easily measurable access indicators. Finally, understanding what policy and strategy documents fail to capture is crucial to uncovering policy-driven non-access. Equity gaps are rarely bridged when policies are implemented cookie-cutter style across different context specificity.

I am not alone in calling for a revisit of the policy that set the free SHS in motion. Others like Mohammed and Kuyini (2021) have pointed to issues like the political dimensions, effectiveness, equity, efficiency, and responsiveness as previously mentioned. My findings shift focus on tackling these issues in disparate terms to exploring the macro-meso-micro linkages. I emphasize targeting both policy conceptualization and implementation to include only students whose parents are unable to pay. Whilst it is difficult to create policies that address every reality, implementation can be done in a way that jives with the differential realities of people if there is reliable data to support the implementation of the 'free' based on needs. This is important currently because the government of Ghana is under unprecedented public pressure to revisit its policies and public spending in general.

Policy wise, it is also imperative for policymakers to capture particularities of family, community, and regional contexts and how the differences in these particularities engender education outcomes in the creation of policies. The empirical findings in chapter six give contours to what is known and unknown and show the role of differential family, kin and non-kin relationships in engendering access outcomes.

Additionally, on the policy front, government accounts of access tend to have a one-sided emphasis on policy, normative and institutional context. The missing link could range from the nature of the

policy, implementation mishaps, and community involvement. It could also be about the context and micro-level realities of those the education interventions are meant to help (inequality of individual condition).

To address these concerns, all access inquiry should examine the following changing access forms (theoretical, formal/ non formal, substantive versus non-substantive, practical versus non-practical, direct versus indirect) to enable the creation of tailored education policy interventions. Also, policymakers have usually relied on numbers, but behind these numbers there are stories and lived experiences that provide deeper understanding into the numbers and how these experiences can help us better draft education access policies. I suggest a focus on experiences should target children in the contexts of their families. This is crucial because in collectivistic societies, the welfare of the family can be an exclusionary factor in access to education.

The challenges highlighted nonetheless pale in comparison to the importance of the policy. The free SHS Policy has enabled upper secondary education opportunities to more JHS graduates as compared to any other policy in the history of Ghana.

E. LIMITATIONS

As in all qualitative studies, there are limitations. The key limitation has often centered on generalizability to other contexts, or the usefulness of the findings outside the interpretation of the contexts of the research (Eisenhardt, 1989). Different researchers have mitigated the problems of generalizability differently. Scholars have employed different blends of interpretive choices, and analytic strategies such as multiple case studies to mitigate this. Others, however, employed a single-case study to enable depth and richness of data. In this study, I consider Ghana as the bigger case. Within Ghana, the study was conducted in six regions, twelve districts and twenty-four communities. Employing grounded theory methods enabled the instantiating of the ideas or findings that were typical across multiple contexts as categories (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Through the process of decontextualizing data from individual cases, and recontextualizing into categories, and continuous coding processes, the reduced data sets were employed to explore the theoretical processes or relationships among the clusters of meaning across access scales. These theoretical constructs and themes have explanatory force both in individual accounts and across the sample and contexts. Thus, they can apply and be applied beyond the immediate sample to other contexts that are similar.

The different contexts that were employed include policy, implementation, households, and regions. The weaving together of different layers of contexts as interconnected is important in recognizing and explaining access through its parts (specific contexts such as policy or family) and access in its entirety (across contexts). This way the individual experience of access can be explained in a generalizable way.

Whilst I accept that generalizability to other contexts pose problems for different schools of thoughts, it is less valuable to critique an approach or method beyond its value. According to Flyvbjerg (2007) the value of case studies is depth, equally, the value of random-sample studies is breath. Case studies provide powerful examples in illuminating the particulars of human experience and generating theories (Stake, 1995). The reasoning in case studies is to enable theoretical sampling. Thus, the objective is to employ cases that can replicate or fill theoretical categories (Eisenhardt, 1989). This is different from quantitative sampling which concerns itself with representativeness. Although these two approaches have different values and different purposes it is always possible to achieve theoretical generalization with case studies.

The Second limitation concerns employment of cross-sectional data. The data generation, collection, and observation of the phenomenon was done at one point in time. The findings, thus, cannot account for changes across time which require the tracking of data over time to enable.

Furthermore, I admit that the study cannot convincingly account for all Global South contexts. This is despite their similar educational institutional structures, policy making environment, implementation cultures, similar geopolitical and geographical positions, and family formation which emphasize the collective rather than individualistic terms. In similar scenarios, however, transferability is possible. Transferability in view of reproducing the process of research and not the craftsmanship in the data generation. Also, “the nested education theory” that was generated or constructed can be tested in different global south contexts to mitigate the issue of generalizability. Until the theory is assessed in other contexts, I make a cautious reference to other Global South contexts with similar fee-free education policies and educational structures.

Additionally, other Global South contexts, where individual identity is emphasized in the collective and not merely in individualistic terms, will appreciate the role of the family and kinship as a collective

unit in structuring the education outcomes of children. In chapter eight of the thesis, I refer to such access as practical access. Differences, however, exist in the detailed nature of practical access that occurs in other collectivistic societies where the general wellbeing of the family can be an exclusionary factor structuring education opportunities.

Further research is needed to underscore how inequitable education access can be convincingly explained elsewhere in other Global South contexts. This is important to test the theory. Therefore, this is not about generalizing the findings to other contexts but more about transferability in a similar scenario, where we are likely to see similar findings, and the testing of the new theory to further its development.

F. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

My research provides four key insights for future research. First, access to education is not just an event. It is a process that involves negotiations at various access dimensions. Does this account of inequitable education conclude the debate on access to education? Perhaps not, but like all social phenomena, it points to the tensions, ruptures, and inconsistencies in how children go to school. Scholars must thus adopt perspectives that enable an exploration of access issues as continuous negotiations.

Second, to better understand access as a process, we first need to appreciate the role of policy and understand that implicit in policy prescription is always proscription, that is counterproductive to access due to conceptual gaps in policy.

Third, my research lends support to other research that encourages implementers to adopt a nested approach to implementation. My findings show that the lack of engagement and coherence between disparate implementing units of the implementing body, the GES (such as the free SHS Coordinators, Gender Desk Officers, EMIS And Data Planning Units, And Headteachers and others) create situations where implementation gaps occur. These gaps need to be bridged to enable successful implementation as noted in chapter five of the thesis. Additional research is recommended to further untangle the complex relationships between and among implementers. This should emphasize the idea that the issues around access to education are linked, multifaceted and complex.

Additionally, no study on inequitable education is fully comprehensive without examining access across various scales. Researchers investigating family access must approach their work with sensitivity, as exploring how families manage access and allocate resources can be emotive and be deeply personal. Such explorations always have undertones of culture, tradition, religion, resource pathways, gender and the complexity associated with relationship constructions.

Finally, I recommend that the nested education theory be employed to frame future education studies to provide confirming and disconfirming evidence to enhance the development of the nested education access theory.

G. FINAL WORD

Can inequitable education access be convincingly explained? I had my doubts during this research. This thesis has, however, demonstrated that by considering education access as a process involving negotiations at various dimensions or points, and recognizing the intrinsic interconnections among these dimensions, it becomes possible. It is my hope that I have provided original insights into the field of inequitable education scholarship by exploring not only why education remain an elusive goal to people despite free education policies, but by creating a new theory that addresses the macro-micro linkages. I hope that the findings and the new theory shed light on aspects of the field that have previously been unclear or inconclusive both in theory and in practice.

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APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF NEW TERMS AND THEIR MEANINGS

New terms	Meanings
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Accountability gap:

It occurs when implementers, both central and local, feel emasculated from the non-access outcomes of their implementation approaches.

Conceptual access/ Theoretical access:

conceptualization of access problems and the access solutions in the policy document e.g., conceptualization of terms such as public versus private school, protocol placement versus elite placement.

The creation of such conceptual categories defines what it means to access SHS for different categories of people in abstract terms.

Direct access:

Direct access occurs when a family is willing, and able to provide both material and non-material support for children's education.

De-kinning or cutting kin:

The process by which a person previously connected to a kin or kin group in a significant way is brought into an insignificant and temporal relationship with the kin or kin group.

Severing kin relationships or disconnecting relationships. Disconnecting or de-kinning happens if kins, once genetically or biologically related and or socially related, choose to negotiate or reclassify the boundaries of their kinship.

Formal access:

it occurs at the implementation level when implementers adopt approaches and implementation directives to bring the policy to life.

Implementation coherence gap:

A gap created due to the lack of coherence between implementers and their implementation efforts.

Implementers disjointed relationship gap:

It explains the power-laden nature of the vertical relations between central and local implementers. For e.g., Communication is usually from the top to down and carved in directives with little to no opportunity for local implementers to input in how those directives are carried out.

Implementation induced access gap:

This gap is created due to the nature of implementation and or the implementing style adopted by the implementer.

Implementer subjective marker gap:

It occurs when local implementers rely on their subjective markers such as past experiences rather than objective data, in implementing education policies.

Indirect access: Indirect access occurs when interested parties need to negotiate to ensure access. It involves negotiation of relationships at the household level embedded in community factors, family types and structures, gender, the agency of the actors in negotiation and other cultural constitutive factors.

(In)equality of opportunity:

This refers to the different or unequal access opportunities that policy invariably creates despite its equality aspirations due to poor conceptualization, or inadequate definition of policy terms.

(In)equality of conditions:

This refers to different personal or individual conditions such as differential social backgrounds.

These two conditions (in)equality of opportunity and (in)equality of conditions, underly negotiation of education access for participants in any given interaction situations both at the institutional level and the individual level before practical access is arrived at. The reality of education access is thus a negotiated access.

Kinning or doing kin:

The process by which a person previously unconnected to a kin or kin group is brought into a significant and lasting relationship with the kin or kin group.

The process by which a person previously connected to a kin or kin group in an insignificant way is brought into a significant and lasting relationship with the kin or kin group.

Mediated or negotiated access:

Access to education thus involves opportunities and conditions that the participants in the given interaction situations at both the institutional level and the individual levels have arrived at.

The complex negotiation of (in)equality of opportunity and (in)equality of conditions.

Merging of alternate generation:

This term explains the cordial relationships between children and their maternal and paternal grandparents as compared to the relationship between children and their parents.

Merging of non-alternate generations or the merging of other kin relations:

Merging relationships do not just happen at alternate generations or between subsequent generations such as grandchildren and grandparents. This term is used to describe merging of relationships with non-alternate generations or with other kin relations or even non kin members.

Nature of access policy induced gaps:

It occurs when there are implementation constraints because of the omissions in policy texts or conceptual gaps in policy.

Nested education access theory:

It is an approach to understanding inequitable education non(access) that relates together analytically problems of access as construction, embedding, integration and implementation.

Non-formal access: This involves mitigating the policy constraints and implementation constraints at the implementation levels outside of implementation directives.

Practical access/ Substantive access:

It encompasses how families act in everyday access negotiations that might enable or undermine access to SHS given their different access realities (direct and indirect) for subgroups.

Social equivalence of siblings:

A term employed to describe the tendency on the part of children to extend their attitude towards their parents to their parents' siblings.

Social equivalence of non-siblings:

The tendency on the part of children to extend attitudes towards their parents to their parents' non-siblings and other non-close relations.

Social (re)construction of kinship:

It explains the choices of individuals to determine whether to forge, maintain, or sever kinship relationships given certain personal and structural constraints. Thus, the role of individuals in shaping their own kinship realities related to or independent of genealogical ties.

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR POLICYMAKERS

University of Oxford, Department of Sociology

**Topic: NEGOTIATING TWO SPACES: EXAMINING HOW STRUCTURAL POLICIES
AND FAMILY POLITICS SHAPE THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN GHANA**

Ethics Reference Number: R66548/RE001

In-depth Interview Guide

Demographic and Work history

Profession ----- Highest Educational Grade attained -----

----- Position -----

Are you originally from this town? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Master Status-----

How old are you? ☐ 20-29yrs ☐ 30-39yrs ☐ 40- 49yrs ☐ 50-59yrs ☐ 60-69yrs ☐ Over 70yrs

Time started: ----- Time ended: -----

Main Question: How was the free SHS policy created?

- Tell me about how the policy was created?
- What were the policy considerations?
- What is the policy aspiration?
- What provisions in the policy tackles cost?
- How are other cost components emphasized?
- What are the trade-offs with this intervention? (Quality versus access)
- How does the policy emphasize equity in its prescription?
- How will the policy enable access for diverse children?
- How do you explain the policy's cookie cutter style approach to cost without an emphasis on different income levels of parents?
- Will the policy enable access to SHS for everyone?
- How will the policy bridge school-based disparity?
- Why did the policy create -----
- How will the Free SHS policy scale up access indicators (enrolment, transition, GPI, retention, and completion)?

Extensive consultation versus narrow consultation

- Were you invited to participate in the creation of the policy?
- How were you invited?
- Why were you asked to participate?
- What was your input?

**SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DECISION MAKERS, PARENTS/
GUADIANS AND ALLIES**

University of Oxford, Department of Sociology

**Topic: NEGOTIATING TWO SPACES: EXAMINING HOW STRUCTURAL POLICIES
AND FAMILY POLITICS SHAPE THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN GHANA**

Ethics Reference Number: R66548/RE001.

In-depth Interview Guide

Demographic and Work history

Profession ----- Highest Educational Grade attained -----

---- Year of graduation-----

Are you originally from this town? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Master Status-----

How old are you? ☐ 20-29yrs ☐ 30-39yrs ☐ 40- 49yrs ☐ 50-59yrs ☐ 60-69yrs ☐ Over 70yrs Number
of Children----- Master Status of Children----- Number of Siblings-----

Time started: ----- Time ended: -----

Main Question: How does the Free SHS policy elicit micro-interventions at the family level?

Decision Makers

- How are you related to the child?
- In what capacity were you taking decisions concerning her education and progression to SHS?
- Did you want her to transition to SHS?
- Why did you want her to transition to SHS? why not?
- Did you garner support for your decision?

Probe: How did you do that? What was the strategy? Did you achieve the desired result? How?

- Who supported you? Who was against your decision? How did they support your decision?
- What did you do to get her to transition to SHS?

How does the Free SHS policy elicit micro-interventions at the family level?

- Did the free SHS policy play a part in your decision to allow her transition to SHS?
- How did that help you in arriving at your decision?
- How did it help you in garnering support for your decision?
- How did it not help?

- How did you make sure she did not transition or progress into SHS?
- How successful were you with your decision?
- How did your activities affect her transition to SHS?
- How do you feel about her educational attainment now?
- Would you take the same decision given the same opportunity?

Allies/ Supporters

- How are you related to the girl?

- In what capacity did you support the decision to see her transition to SHS?
- In what capacity were you against the decision to see her transition to SHS?
- Why did you support such a decision? And how did you do it?
- Why were you against such a decision? And how did you do it?

How did the free SHS intervention influence your support for or against her transition?

- How were you convinced to support and or kick against the decision?
- Were you successful with your stands?
- Did you change your mind at any point in time?

Probe: What brought about the change? What did you do? Did it affect your relationship with those who were with you on your earlier stands? How did you resolve this?

- How did your activities affect her transition?
- How do you feel about her educational attainment or transition now?
- Will you be part of such a decision given similar circumstances?

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE (POLICYMAKERS AND IMPLEMENTERS)

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Demography and work history

Profession-----, Educational attainment-----

Age-----, Organization-----

The government of Ghana introduced the free SHS policy in September 2017, the goal is to ensure access, equity, and equality. Ensuring equity in education access in Ghana has to do with tackling four concerns: regional variations, gender disparity, socio-economic disparities, and school-based disparities. Our interview will be centered on equity in the provision of SHS education in Ghana.

Main question

How is the free SHS intervention faring with respect to providing equitable secondary education?

Regional Disparity

- 1) Do you think the free SHS intervention will ensure equity in the provision of education to Ghanaians?
- 2) How has the free SHS intervention fared in different contexts and regions?

Gender Disparity

- 3) How does relieving the cost burdens on parents ensure that both girls and boys go to school?
- 4) When a family is struggling financially, who becomes the first casualty of non-enrollment decisions?
- 5) If girls become the first casualty of non-enrollment decisions in a way that is not so for boys what does that imply?

Probe: This probably means that it is not necessarily a question of money or cost but differential attitudes towards the valuing of boys and girls. How does an intervention that is tailored to remove the monetary cost of education ensure that girls go to SHS?

- 6) Is the root cause ingrained gender-based discrimination?
- 7) How do you get girls and boys to remain in school, given that the issues that deny them full participation even when they are already enrolled could be very much micro-level household issues apart from money?

Regional variations

- 8) In terms of regional variations, what works to ensure meaningful education access in all regions?
- 9) Do you have regional specific context intervention in each of the regions?

Socio-economic disparities

- 10) Does the free SHS enable all children to access SHS cost free?
- 11) What about transportation cost and hostel accommodation cost for those with no SHS in their catchment area

- 12) Probe for the long list of items on schools' prospectus
- 13) Other cost that the headteachers define in

School based disparities

- 14) How does the free SHS intervention ensure that every child who qualify to transition to the SHS have an equal chance of getting a very good education?
- 15) The categorization of schools as category A, B, C apart from the TVET schools also means that all the schools are not equal. How will the free SHS policy help ensure that every child has an equal opportunity to go to a category A or elite school.

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR POLICYMAKERS, POLICY IMPLEMENTERS LIKE THE FREE SHS COORDINATORS, HEAD OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS, DIRECTORS OF EDUCATION

University of Oxford, Department of Sociology

Topic: NEGOTIATING TWO SPACES: EXAMINING HOW STRUCTURAL POLICIES AND FAMILY POLITICS SHAPE THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN GHANA

Ethics Reference Number: R66548/RE001

In-depth Interview Guide

Demographic and Work history

Profession ----- Highest Educational Grade attained -----

----- Position -----

Are you originally from this town? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Master Status-----

How old are you? ☐ 20-29yrs ☐ 30-39yrs ☐ 40- 49yrs ☐ 50-59yrs ☐ 60-69yrs ☐ Over 70yrs

Time started: ----- Time ended: -----

Main Question: How does the Free SHS policy scale up access indicators (enrollment, transition, GPI, retention, and completion)?

- How has this intervention affected enrollment?
- How has it affected transitions or progressions?
A: from JHS to SHS
B: within SHS?
- How was the implementation like?
- What are the implications for girls and boys?
- Has the free SHS intervention improved gender parity in your district, school, Unit?
- What does the Girls Education Officer do?
- How has the free SHS changed or helped you in your work?
- Did you make an input in how the free SHS intervention was to be implemented with respect to girls in your unit or district? If yes, why yes and why not? What was your input?

What are the trade-offs with this intervention?

- Tradeoff of access versus quality?
- Are Decision makers aware of these tradeoffs?
Probe: Few contacts hours
Whether parents and decision makers care?

How does the Free SHS policy elicit micro-interventions at the family level?

- How are parents responding to the free SHS intervention?
- Does the free SHS policy play a part in parents' decisions to allow their daughters to transition to SHS?
- How?
How do your activities affect girls' transition to SHS?

Are there any implementation issues or concerns?

- What are they?
- How are these affecting implementation and education access?

What are some of the on the ground practices that affect the education of girls and boys in general and their transition into SHS specifically?

- Will this intervention change on the ground practices of gender-based discrimination that affect the education of girls?
- How will this intervention help?
- Is there any special approach as part of the free SHS designed to tackle specific gender related issues?
- Are the interventions tailored to tackle district specific and regional specific issues of access to education for girls and boys?

**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CHILDREN WHO TRANSITIONED TO
SHS UNDER THE FREE SHS SYSTEM AND CHILDREN WHO COULD NOT
TRANSITION DESPITE THE FREE SHS AND FOR BOYS IN THE SAME FAMILY
UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS**

University of Oxford, Department of Sociology.

**Topic: NEGOTIATING TWO SPACES: EXAMINING HOW STRUCTURAL POLICIES
AND FAMILY POLITICS SHAPE THE EDUCATION OF THE GIRL CHILD**

In-depth Interview Guide

Demographic and School History

School-----

Grade-----

Year of enrollment-----

Are you originally from this community? ☐ Yes ☐ No

How old are you? ----- Number of Siblings-----

Household Composition-----

Time started: ----- Time ended: -----

Central Research Question

How do structural policies and family politics shape the education of girls?

Research Questions

- (1) What political triggers at the micro-level inform which child is chosen to take advantage of such structural policies or interventions?
- (2) Who determines who gets enrolled in response to structural policies and why?
- (3) What other underlying family circumstances determine who enrolls in senior high school (SHS)?
- (4) How are the complexities surrounding household decision making in relation to your family resolved?

Main Question: Who determines who gets enrolled in response to structural policies and why?

Purpose: To identify the decision makers and why they were supportive or unsupportive of their daughters' education transition.

Interview questions

- Who took the decision to send you to SHS? Who took the decision to stop you from transitioning or progressing to SHS?

Probe: what was his/her role in the house/family/community?

Why did they want you in school? Why did they prevent you from transitioning to SHS?

- Is she or he the major decision maker in matters relating to your education?
- What exactly did the person do to keep you in school? What did the person do to prevent you from transitioning to SHS?
- Did she/he get other members of the family supporting this decision?
- How did they support the decision?
- What role did they play to support this decision?

- Was there any decision at any point in time in the decision-making process not to put you through school?

If the response is yes,

- What was the decision?
- Who took the decision?
- Why did she/ he want you out of school?
- What do you think about such a decision?
- Did the decision maker garner support for this decision?
- Who were the supporters?
- How exactly did they support him/her?

Do you think the free SHS policy played a role in your family's decision to allow you to transition to SHS?

If the response is yes:

- How has that helped in the decision to allow you to transition to SHS?

If no:

- How has it not helped, what happened?

Main Question: What political triggers at the micro-level inform which child is chosen to take advantage of such structural policies or interventions?

Purpose: To uncover who the gate keepers are

Interview questions

- Is everyone getting a chance at secondary education in your family?
- What is the family tradition with respect to putting the female and members through school?
- Is it a tradition that supports the idea of allowing a girl's transition to SHS?
- Who controls access to this tradition?
- How have they guided this tradition?
- What strategies have been employed to keep this tradition?
- Was anybody against this decision to send you to school?
- Who was she or he? and why?
- Who are the allies in the approach of the protectors of this tradition?
- Did their activities affect you?
- How did it affect you?
- How do you feel about that?

Is there a gendered pathway to SHS transitions in your family?

- What accounts for the gendered pathway to SHS transitions?
- Is this changing with the implementation of structural policies by various governments? And how is free SHS going to shape such a gendered pathway?

Main Question: What other underlying family circumstances determine who enrolls in Senior High School

Interview questions

- In between those who fail to enroll, those who start but fail to complete and those who remain out of school, what underlying family circumstances account for this?
- To what extent do micro level politics at the family level play a part in this?
- To what extent does the free SHS intervention play a role in this?

Was there any disagreement between those who supported the decision to get you educated and those who did not?

- What was the basis of disagreement?
- Who were those for or against the decision?
- Who wielded more power to carry their decisions through?
- How did the other /others respond?

If they rebelled the decisions:

- Who were the rebels and what mechanisms of rebellion did they employ?
- How did the idea that the free SHS is taking a chunk of the direct and indirect cost, play out in this disagreement?
- Were the differences settled at any point in time in the decision-making process? How did it happen?
- What was the nature of relationships after this? How?

Main Question: How are the complexities surrounding household decision making in relation to your family resolved?

Purpose: To understand the kind of complexities, tensions and contradictions that characterize the decision to allow a girl or a boy to transition to SHS and how the various allies in decision making respond to this?

Interview questions

- What do you think about the decision to send you to school?
- How did you feel about the decision not to send you to school?
- How did you respond to both decisions?
- How did other members of the family or household feel about this decision?
- Were you consulted during the decision-making process? Who was consulted?
- Did you take part in the discussions about this decision and the way it was carried out?
- How did you participate, can it be described as active and or passive? How did the others participate?
- How has situations changed and or remained the same for other girls who follow you in the family?
- How did you respond to the approach or cause of action of the protectors of this family tradition? How did the others respond?