



# POLICY ANALYSIS IN EDUCATION

*BY*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I, first of all, owe immeasurable thanks to the Almighty God, for His bountiful provisions since the cradle of my education. That the writing of this book has been successful is attributable to God's enablement. I am also highly grateful to Professor Daniel Al Mackay, formerly of the Department of Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta, who whipped up my interest in educational policy issues in a course which he competently handled during my doctoral studies. I must also thank all those authors whose published works provided me with the foundation knowledge and whose ideas I have borrowed from to authenticate some of my own arguments. The contributions made by my students, particularly, in the University of Education, Winneba, at both undergraduate and graduate levels during lectures to review my own stand on some educational matters are also deeply acknowledged. I am also highly indebted to Professor Robert Manford, Director of Consultancy Centre, University of Education, Winneba, for patiently reading through the manuscript for useful ideas to help fine tune the book.

I am also very grateful to my able secretary, Miss Anastasia Ocran, who was never tired with the typing of the initial script and subsequent numerous corrections.

Finally, I must express my unqualified thanks to my dear wife, Marian, who constantly prompted me to get on with the writing.

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## Preface

If we accept that the provision of adequate and high quality education is about the best thing that happened to any nation in its quest for socio-economic development then, consciously or unconsciously, we endorse the crucial role which policy performs in this type of education. The justification for this assertion is that education, being such an expensive and expansive service to provide, requires huge amount of resources – both human and material.

Human and material resources without which no education can take place have been limited in the past and present and these trends point to the fact that they will remain limited in both short and long terms. The mere fact that relevant and highly trained education personnel as well as educational infrastructure, equipment, and materials are often in short supply, places a huge responsibility on all of us to utilize them with extreme care.

It is incumbent on all of us to ensure that we derive maximum benefits from any resource we may have. This responsibility implies that we use any resource in accordance with laid down plans, regulations or laws. It is the strict adherence to these carefully laid down plans, regulations or laws that will enable us to reap good outputs from any inputs we may make in education.

It is also the adherence to this national responsibility that will pave the way for us to reach the target in terms of educational goals, objectives or standards that we set for ourselves.

No worthwhile educational target can be reached without proper course of action and clear directives. This is what educational policies are all about. One crucial function that education performs is to solve societal problems such as illiteracy, poverty, ignorance, unemployment, inequality, diseases, and squalor.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE MEANING AND SCOPE OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY

A school is established primarily for teaching and learning to become effectively operative. The main aims of the school are to provide cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills to the youth so that they can participate effectively in the socio-economic development of their country. In other words, teachers teach pupils/students so that they can utilize their head, heart, and hands in production. In another sense, every modern community establishes a school to transmit its culture to the rising generation. Teaching and learning in the school are, however, directed and controlled by a wide range of educational policies.

What is policy? As Bittel (1985: 103) observes, if ever there was an area of management where the terms were mixed up, this is it. Policy is often mixed up with terms like *plan*, *regulation* or *law*. Bittel explains the terms as follows: Plans are what come out of a planning process. Plans or programmes are what you intend to do in the future. As you plan, however, you must set targets. These targets are termed as *goals*, *objectives* or *standards*. After setting these goals, you establish general guidelines for reaching them. These guidelines are called policies.

Policy is a course of action or inaction intended to accomplish some ends rather than specific decisions or actions. From the concept, Bullock, Anderson and Brady (1983) stated *inter alia*:

- Policy is goal oriented behaviour.
- Policy consists of a course of action – not independent decisions made by government officials.
- Policies are actions of governments, which may be different from what governments say they do.
- Policy is directional (positive or negative). Positive policy indicates that a government has decided to solve a problem, while negative policy means that government does nothing to resolve the issue.

The Ministry of Education (2000) distinguishes two types of policy. It observes that a policy may be understood as a kind of “social discussion.” For example, what does society want to achieve through the education of its population? What sort of characteristics do we want to develop in our children? How should higher education contribute to national welfare? Secondly, the Ministry identifies what it terms as “operational policy.” This is also referred to as “policy objectives” such as what is to be found in the tertiary educational system, statements of what needs to be done at that level or “strategic objectives” which is a term used in the overall budgetary planning system of the government.

Policies may thus be arranged in order of hierarchy and at the top of that hierarchy is the constitution which sets out the fundamental rights and duties of government and citizens.

Levin and Young (1994:62) consider the term *policy* as a general guide that shapes decisions or actions. According to them, policy may also be thought of as rules or a general approach to things. A policy decision as it affects school education, then, is one that has important implications for particular settings such as a country, region, district, community or school. Giles and Proudfoot (1994:67) define policy as an authoritative