LESS BAD THAN THEIR REPUTATIONS: A SYSTEM'S ANALYSIS VIEW OF PROBLEM INTERDEPENDECIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE MULTIARENA POLICY PROCESS IN SELECTED WEST GONJA DISTRICT FAILING SCHOOLS IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA.

Kwame Odei-Tettey, Ph.D.
Department of Educational Administration and Management
University of Education, Winneba
P. O. Box 25, Winneba, Ghana. West Africa.
Telephone: (+233) 207500994
Email: ktettey@outlook.com

ABSTRACT: *It is assumed that when schools fail, the educational multiarena policy groups may be shirking their responsibilities in the educational policy process. However, the findings of this paper refutes this perspective and shows that these groups are very much aware of their responsibilities and do not flinch on it. They are often faced with problem interdependencies which stalls their efforts, even though the problem interdependencies invariably provide the platform for these groups to cooperate and come to consensus on policy interventions. Thus, the paper reveals that the massive failures of pupils in the BECE are due to interdependent problems, which also provide the opportunity for the groups to act. The study was conducted in 3 basic schools in the West Gonja District in the Northern Region of Ghana. The research methods used are survey and semi-structured interviews in the mix-sequential model. The study involved a population of 3 separate interest groups composed of pupils, schools management, and community members. The study used a simple random sampling to select 60 pupils and 21 teachers, and the purposive sampling techniques to select 12 community members, 6 headteachers and assistant headteachers from whom data was obtained.*

KEYWORDS: Multiarena policy groups; Problem interdependencies; Systems analysis; Mobilization of bias; Partisan mutual adjustment; Educational governance.

"I know no safe depository of ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves: and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion" – Joel Samaha.

INTRODUCTION

Educational and community leaders as well as pupils have long been involved in encouraging school growth and good academic performance through the building of physical and educational infrastructures, the procurement of Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs), the recruitment of good teachers for quality education delivery, and effective learning habits. This paper takes a view that in recent years, both the spate of these activities as reflected in educational development policies and the diversity of approaches used in achieving these ends have increased. These efforts have sought both expanded resource generation and increased ingenuity

from actors in the school policy process – the multiarena policy groups. While the intensity of their efforts are considerable, it is doubtful whether they are effective at yielding the anticipated returns of increased or successful academic performance in the schools. Despite these concerns over effectiveness, educational and community leaders continue to press for the adoption of school-community collaborative measures which promise immediate benefit of successful academic performance for basic schools.

This paper therefore deals with issues regarding new modes of multiarena policy analysis for successful academic performance in basic schools: first, a different type of educational governance and its individual actors are identified and examined. The theoretical discussion about these actors points out the reasons for their emergence and roles, their mode of operation, and their links in terms of the conventional interactive forms of decision-making; second, the new mode of educational governance that provide common goods - regarding the roles of actors in determining educational successes - are empirically examined in the West Gonja District. These roles are gauged according to the actors' responsibility and instrumental capacity, and finally; how this new mode of educational governance fit into the overall context of multiarena policy analysis in basic schools, and what their implications for the management of success in these schools are.

Duze (2011) and Heffernan and Poole (2004) have discussed the challenge of falling standards of education all over the world in contemporary times and Ghana is no exception. In 2007, an educational reform policy was introduced in Ghana that sought to replace the old educational system from the basic to tertiary levels with changes in structure, content, teaching and assessment methodologies (see Republic of Ghana, 2008). This reform policy also made provisions for new modes of governance in terms of roles played by educational leaders and external stakeholders, as well as rules regarding the building of infrastructure, and the procurement of human and material resources. Years after the introduction of this educational policy, the standard of education continue to fall year-on-year especially at the basic school level in Ghana. For example, the results of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) taken by the pupils from West Gonja District schools in Ghana show that majority of them do not obtain the pass aggregate to qualify them into the senior high schools. Consequently, this paper makes a claim that the 2007 educational policy interventions in Ghana has not resulted in any significant improvement in educational standards (see Table 1 below), and therefore brings to the fore a thesis that a new mode of educational governance that functions in a multiarena policy making could raise standards and create successful schools. This thesis is interrogated by the idea that basic schools in the West Gonja District are constituted by multiarena and multilevel educational policy systems that are pummeled with complex problem interdependencies in the context of diverse educational, social and economic conditions in which three actors with diverse interests depend on each other to provide successful schools. Consequently, the community (including parents), pupils, and the schools' management (including teachers) are examined as distinct and individual arenas for policy making. Besides, the complementarity of their efforts that emanates from the problem interdependencies and which create the opportunity for making good policies across the multiple arenas for successful academic performance in these basic school are also explored.

Statement of the problem
The problem for the study stems from the abysmal academic performance of pupils from a large number of basic schools in Ghana of which basic schools from West Gonja District are no exception. Thus, the poor academic performance of West Gonja District basic schools are reflected in the results of the BECE from 2007-2015. Records of the BECE results from the West Gonja District reveals that there has been a downward trend in the BECE results in the district. Table 1 (below) presents a picturesque description of this situation.

Table 1: Trends of BECE results in the Gonja West District from 2007 – 2015.

Year	No. of pupils presented	No. of passes		No. of failures	
		n	%	n	%
2007	800	317	39.6	483	60.3
2008	878	267	30.4	611	69.6
2009	971	412	42.4	559	57.6
2010	997	362	36.3	635	63.7
2011	917	302	32.9	615	67.1
2012	925	270	29.2	655	70.8
2013	1065	214	20.1	851	80.0
2014	772	205	26.6	567	73.4
2015	802	217	27.1	585	72.9

Source: West Gonja District Education Office (2016).

Table 1 shows that this incidence of plummeting academic performance in the West Gonja District occurs year-on-year and this present a formidable difficulty to the multiarena educational policy groups in the district to change this trend of examination failures.   Situations like these epitomize the urgency of policy intervention by mobilizing the efforts of the multiarena policy groups involving the schools' community, schools management, and pupils to create conditions for effective teaching and learning for successful schools in the West Gonja District.

Purpose of the study
The study sought to investigate the activities of the multiarena policy groups in creating successful schools in the West Gonja District of the Northern Region of Ghana in the context of problem interdependencies.

Objectives of the study
The study sought to achieve the following objectives. To:
1. investigate teachers' role towards reversing the trend of basic schools examination failures in the West Gonja District of Ghana.
2. investigate pupils' role towards reversing the trend of basic schools examination failures in the West Gonja District.
3. explore the problems faced by the West Gonja district Community in its contributions towards creating successful schools.

Research questions

The underlisted questions were used to investigate the problem of this study:

1. what is the role of teachers towards reversing the trend of basic schools examination failures in the West Gonja District?
2. what is the role of pupils towards reversing the trend of basic schools examination failures in the West Gonja District?
3. what are the problems faced by the West Gonja Community in their contribution towards creating successful schools?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical framework of the study embodies the roles and responsibilities of educational multiarena policy groups in dealing with problem interdependencies to improve academic performance in basic schools. The issues discussed in the framework include:

Teachers' role towards reversing the trend of examination failure

The discussion associated with this theme pertains to research question 1 which seeks to examine the attitudes of teachers towards teaching and learning in the effort to reverse the trend of examination failures in the West Gonja District basic schools. The relevance of the teacher to school, teaching and learning has been discussed extensively in the academic literature. Schunk, Meece and Pintrich (2012), Goodlad (1994), Fredrickson (2004) and Musaazi (1985) for example have discussed the idea that educational systems at the various levels depend on teachers to execute educational programmes and improve standards. This makes the teacher indispensable to the school system. Haney, Lumpe, Czerniak, and Egan (2002), and Farrant (1982) have argued that one crucial role of the teacher is imparting knowledge to pupils to make them better citizens. Besides, the teacher helps pupils to develop their educational goals as a manager who organises pupils to accomplish their set objectives. Secondly, teachers' attitude is informed by the recognition that they are resource person who provide information to guide pupils to achieve their educational objectives. Farrant (1982) for example has claimed that to be effective at their tasks, the teacher must be an example or a good role models to the pupils. This idea is corroborated by Plato (386 B.C.) who has long ago said that the teacher is like a torch bearer who leads a man lying in the dark cave out of the darkness into the bright light of the outside world. Plato believes that the teacher must be a person of high integrity and must possess high self-worth. Akinade and Osarenren (2005) have added that a teacher is the person who implements the curriculum. They act as the conduit for focusing pupils' attention to learning. Gyakari (2005) has commented on this subject of teachers' role in the multiarena policy analysis in his research on students low performance in the BECE that female teachers in Ghana's basic schools resort to petty trading alongside teaching while their male counterparts also engage in extra classes in the urban areas and farming in the rural areas in order to reduce their poverty levels. Gyakari (2005) concludes that this culture affects pupils' academic performance negatively because teachers spend much time on private schedules than preparation for lessons.

Ampiah (2008) and Agyeman (1986) also believe that, the quality of education in Ghana is generally found to be on the decline. They claim that this situation is worse in rural schools than in urban and private schools, and this is the result of poor teaching, excessive loss of instructional time, poor motivation for teachers and insufficient trained teachers. Other reasons have been put forward to explain the poor academic performance of pupils. These include: poor service conditions for teachers (Gyakari, 2005), and teacher absenteeism or lateness (Rosenblatt & Shirom, 2005; Miller, Murnane & Willet, 2008). The literature illustrates these as negative attitude of teachers that compromise their role in improving school standards.

Pupils' role towards reversing the trend of examination failures

The issues raised in this discussion points to research question 2 and they relate to pupils role towards school and learning for reversing the trend of examination failures in the West Gonja District's basic schools. Thornberg (2008) has stated that pupils' desire of freedom from adult control is a source of perennial conflicts in both the home with parents, and in school with teachers. This results in various emotional difficulties like aggression, moodiness, boisterousness, and shyness in pupils. These combine with the difficulty of grappling with the numerous subjects they learn in school to exacerbate this incidence of emotional distress. This difficulty further culminates in deficiencies in educational attributes such as poor study habits, academic under achievement, poor self-concept, low self-esteem and lack of motivation for learning (see Osarenren, 2002). The import of Osarenren's (2002) argument is that a relationship exists between the above attributes and academic performance. A number of other factors influence pupil's attitude to school and learning. These include absenteeism from school (Kearney, 2008), the copying of uneducated foreign cultures through their addiction to television and video (Adjei, 1995), and the infrequent patronage of libraries (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988).

Problems of community contribution to successful schools

The discussion in this section is drawn from research question 3 which explores the problems face by the West Gonja District community's contribution to reversing the examination failures and create successful schools. Communities, educators, and other interest groups' seek ways to utilize limited resources efficiently and effectively to solve educational problems in order to deliver quality education. These reinforce the idea of community participation in successful schools delivery. A plethora of research exist regarding the various ways communities contribute to successful schools delivery (see Gelsthorpe & West-Burnham, 2003; Alexander, 2010; Lazarus et. al., 2008; and Warren, Hong, Rubin & Vy, 2009). Furthermore, Blank, Melaville and Shah (2003), and Colletta and Perkins (1995) have argued that community engagement in educational delivery may take the form of: research and data collection; dialogue with other stakeholders; school management; curriculum design; development of learning materials; and school construction. Heneveld and Craig (1996) have suggested five ways of community support for education. These are: preparation of pupils for learning; provision of financial and material support to schools; communication between the school, parents, and community; school governance; and provision of assistance with instruction.

However, community involvement in successful schools delivery is associated with a number of challenges. Cohen-Vogul, Goldring and Soureker (2010), and Crewe and Harrison (1998) have

raised one of such challenges as the complexities and questions of power and conflict within communities. Mutch and Sandra (2012), Schutz (2006) and Shaeffer (1992) have also recounted social and economic marginalisation; differences in the vision of individual interest groups about access and quality of education; teacher resistance of the community; poor teacher-community relations; and illiteracy of community members as other key challenges to community's contribution to successful schools delivery.

Shaeffer (1992) has argued further that for community's contribution to educational delivery to be successful, certain conditions have to be fulfilled (see also Mutch & Sandra, 2012; Schutz (2006). These conditions include: an understanding of the rationale for participation; an open, transparent, collegial school climate; understanding local conditions for educational demand and achievement; research and planning skills; school management skills; community trust in the schools; and resource mobilization from community groups and power centers. Auerbach (2009) and Shaeffer (1992) have noted that although community contribution is crucial for successful school delivery, it does not provide sufficient conditions to solve the problems of education in the community. He stresses that any strategy used to achieve a high degree of community contribution will require a careful examination of the dynamics of the community because each community is unique.

These issues as discussed in the Literature Review pertains to the conditions that have to be eliminated in order to create successful schools in the West Gonja District. These factors compromise the role of interests groups in the multiarena policy process to improve academic performance, and this is the heart of the current research.

METHODOLOGY

The research was a cross-sectional because it sought to measure the actions, attitudes and characteristics of the multiarena policy groups in 3 selected Junior High Schools (JHSs) in the West Gonja District in the specific context of their role in reversing the trend of BECE failures. The methodological issues covered in this research include the following:

Research design

A mixed sequential research model was used to conduct the research. This involved the use of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods which provided a conduit for data validation (see Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Thus, the main research method used was the survey which provided a systematic way of collecting data from a broad spectrum of multiarena policy groups from 3 selected junior high schools in the West Gonja District.   The choice of survey method for data collection was based on Sarantakos' (2013) idea that one important attribute of survey methods is that, the data gathered under this method reflects larger population, and hence conclusions drawn reflect the general attributes of the entire population. Schutt's (2009) has also added that survey data is versatile, efficient and creates opportunity for generalizing the findings from the data.

In-depth semi-structured interviews were used as the second method for data collection. This was a face-to-face meeting between the researcher and the respondents which offered a platform for presentation and exchange of ideas and opinions. This helped the research to explore the

experiences, thoughts and feelings of the multiarena policy groups in the 3 selected JHSs regarding their strategies for reversing the failing trends of BECE failures in the schools (see Schutt, 2009). Thus, the interview data was used to corroborate the survey data (see Creswell, 2014; Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006).

Site and subject characteristics

The study was done in 3 selected failing schools in the West Gonja Districts. The district is located in the northern region of Ghana, with a land area of 8,352sq km. The indegens are mostly Ganjas who speak the Gonja language, and are predominantly farmers.

Population

The population for this study included 3 multiarena policy groups, namely: JHS pupils; the schools' management (which included the school heads and teachers); and Community members from 3 selected junior high schools in the West Gonja District. These are the Kurabaso, Yabum, and Jafo Junior High Schools. These multiarena policy groups were chosen because of their specific roles in creating successful schools. The community group is constituted by traditional rulers, the towns' opinion leaders, and parents.

Sample and sampling procedure

The simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used to select a total sample size of 99 for the study. These two sampling techniques were used to enable data to be collected from respondents who have relevant expertise and roles to play in the multiarena educational policy interventions. These are experts who function to reverse the failing trend of basic school s in the West Gonja District. The second rationale for using the simple random sampling method was used to give an equal and independent chance of being selected to pupils and teachers of the 3 selected JHS (see Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Opoku, 2005; Schutt, 2009). Using this technique, the research selected 60 pupils and 21 teachers as respondents for the survey. The purposive sampling technique was also used to select 12 community members, 6 headteachers and assistant headteachers for both the survey and interviews.

Instrumentation

Questionnaire and interview guide were used as instruments for data collection in this research. The instruments were given to 3 retired educationists to establish the face and content validity before commencing the fieldwork. Thereafter, the instruments were pretested to establish their reliability and appropriateness. The pre-test was done in the Yipala Roman Catholic Junior High School and 20 respondents were involved. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was used to calculate the results from the pretested questionnaire. This produced an overall reliability coefficient of 0.83 which showed that the questionnaire was good for collecting data. The results of the pre-tested interviews were also evaluated against the objectives of the research to establish the appropriateness of the instruments. The evaluation showed that the responses met the objectives of the research.

Data collection procedure

The data was collected within a period of 4 weeks. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher who gave respondents a firm timeline of one week to complete and submit the

completed questionnaire. The interview data was recorded by note-taking and backed up with an audio recording. These lasted for three weeks and was conducted soon after the questionnaires were collected back.

Data analysis
The survey data were coded and inputted in the SPSS (v.20) programme. Data was analyzed using frequencies, simple percentages and mean. The results are presented in Tables. For two of the research questions mean scores were used to ascertain the central tendency or the averages of responses. Furthermore, four stages of qualitative coding techniques were used to analyse the interview data (see Creswell, 2012). This resulted in the development of themes, categories and theories for analysis. Furthermore, systems analysis was used as the analytical framework. The concept is useful in studying concepts like transformation and development of phenomenon like academic performance, and it analyses structures and their interactions in their attempt to achieve the desired transformation and development.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION
The data collected for this research are analysed under three themes which pertain to the research questions. These focus on the roles of the multiarena policy groups, namely:

Teachers' role in reversing the trend of basic schools examination failures in the West Gonja District.
The data presented under this theme was gathered to provide answers to research question 1 which seeks to investigate how the trends of BECE failures is being reversed through the roles of teachers towards teaching and learning in the 3 selected basic schools in the West Gonja District. The data is presented in Table 2 (below) are responses from the survey that were obtained from heads and their assistants and pupils of the 3 selected schools in the West Gonja District.

Table 2: Roles of teachers towards reversing the trend in examination failures

N=66

Item	Headteachers				Pupils				Total			
	GA		BA		GA		BA		GA		BA	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
LN Preptn.	4	66.7	2	33.3	39	65.0	21	35.0	43	65.1	23	34.9
TLMs use	2	33.3	4	66.7	23	38.3	37	61.7	48	72.7	18	27.3
Adeq. Exs.	3	50.0	3	50.0	20	33.3	40	66.7	23	34.9	43	65.1
Markg Exs.	2	33.3	4	66.7	20	33.3	40	66.7	22	33.3	44	66.7
DME	3	50.0	3	50.0	20	33.3	40	66.7	23	34.9	43	65.1
TPS	2	33.3	4	66.7	24	40.0	36	60.0	26	39.4	40	60.6

Source: Fieldwork data (2016).
Key:
TLMs = Teaching and learning materials; Adeq. Exs. = Adequate exercises; DME = Discussed marked exercises; TPS = Teacher private schedule; LN = Lesson Notes Preparation; Markg. Exs. = Marking of Exercise; GA – Good attitude; BA = Bad attiude.

Table 2 shows that 43 (65.1%) of the respondents agreed that teachers in the district prepare their lesson notes weekly before lesson delivery as opposed to 23 (34.8%) who do not. On the question of using teaching and learning materials, the data revealed that basic school teachers in the West Gonja District do not use teaching and learning materials during their lesson delivery, to promote and encourage effective learning outcomes. This is expressed by 48 (72.7%) of respondents. This position is corroborated by Boadi-Suadwa (2004) who has argued that although adequate and suitable teaching materials and equipment are very essential for effective teaching the learning, the supply of these essential teaching aids are not only insufficient and irregular in some communities, they are also not available at all. The study also established that basic school teachers in the West Gonja District do not give pupils adequate class exercises, and where given, teachers do not mark all the exercises within the week. Thus, Table 2 shows that 43 (65.1%) respondents believe that teachers do not give enough class exercises whereas 44 (66.7%) also said that even when teachers give exercises, they are not marked early enough.

The data further indicates that teachers do not discuss the marked exercises with pupils. Table 2 shows that 43 (65.1%) of the respondents held this view. The Table further shows that basic school teachers in the West Gonja District are not regular and punctual to school as indicated by 40 (60.6%) respondents. These findings are corroborated by a study from Ghana's Ministry of Education conducted on 3,500 primary schools. The study shows that, 105 of teachers were absent, 16% of the head teachers were also absent from school on the day of conducting this study. No teaching was taking place in 21% of the schools on this day either (Ministry of Education, 2002).

The analysis of the data on the role being played by teachers in reversing the trend of examination failures in the 3 selected schools in the West Gonja District confirmed that teachers are not doing enough due to such factors like the non-preparation of teachers' lesson notes, the inadequate use of teaching learning and materials, teacher absenteeism and lateness, as well as the poor class exercise regime in the 3 selected schools which are caused by lack of teacher interest and commitment to teaching. These result in the waste of instructional time, and consequently are a part of the causes of pupils' poor academic performance in the BECE in the West Gonja District basic schools.

This means that teachers have a negative attitude towards teaching in the West Gonja District and this is likely to be a factor in the poor performance in the district's BECE examinations. This further suggests that teachers have failed to fulfill their role in the successful schools policy process in the West Gonja District in any meaningful way. Bennel (2004) has attributed this factor to poor teacher salaries which makes them resort to petty trading and farming activities to improve their living standards. Bennel (2004) has explained that this behaviour affects pupils' achievements because much time is spent on the teachers' private schedules, than time used for lesson preparation. Then Boadi-Suadwa (2004) has added that teacher absenteeism causes the non-completion of the syllabus to prepare pupils fully for either internal or external examinations.

Pupils' role towards reversing the trend of basic schools examination failures in the West Gonja District.

The data discussed in this section pertains to research question 2 which investigates the roles of pupils towards school and learning in their efforts to create successful schools in the West Gonja district. The data captures the perception of the multiarena policy groups which includes teachers, the community and pupils on the subject of pupils' roles towards school and learning, and presented in Table 3 (below):

Table 3: Pupils' role towards school and learning.

N= 93

Pupils Attitudes	Tr. Perception				Cty. Perception				Ps. Perception				Mean			
	Pos.		Neg.		Pos.		Neg.		Pos.		Neg.		Pos.		Neg.	
	F	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
Leisure Time	19	90.5	2	9.5	9	75.0	3	25.0	13	21.7	47	78.3	14	62.0	17	38.0
Home Reading	14	66.7	7	33.3	7	58.3	5	41.7	40	66.7	20	33.3	20	64.0	19	36.0
Homework	18	85.7	3	14.3	8	66.7	4	33.3	55	91.7	5	8.3	27	81.4	4	18.6
Extra classes	15	71.4	6	28.6	9	75.0	3	25.0	8	13.3	52	86.7	11	53.0	20	47.0
Punctuality	20	95.2	1	4.8	10	83.3	2	16.7	21	35.0	39	65.0	17	71.2	14	28.8

Source: Fieldwork data (2016).

Key: Pos. = Positive; Neg. = Negative; Tr. = Teacher; Cty. = Community; Ps. = Ps. = Pupils.

In Table 3, statistical mean was used to summarise the central tendency of the responses to the variables used to measure the multiarena policy groups' perception of pupils' attitude towards school and learning in their effort to create successful schools. These variables include: pupils' attitudes; use of leisure time; reading at home; homework; extra classes; and punctuality to school. A mean of 17 respondents indicated in Table 3 under pupil's attitude to Leisure Time that "pupils use their leisure time on television and video shows rather than studies" (Survey data, Respondent # 11). The respondents are split almost equally on the subject of reading outside school hours. Thus, whereas a mean of 20 respondents believe that pupils read outside school hours. Another mean of 19 respondents perceive that basic school pupils do not use the library when they are out of school. This is corroborated by the interview data which suggests that basic school pupils in the West Gonja district perform poorly in examinations because they do not read. This view is expressed by a respondent who also commented that "the lack of reading by pupils have contributed to their inability to understand questions during examinations" (Interview data, respondent # 5). This data confirms Anderson et. al.'s (1988) assertion that whenever pupils fail to use library facilities, they become limited.

Regarding the subject of pupils' attitude towards assigned homework, a mean of 27 respondents indicated a positive attitude of pupils towards homework. In spite of these efforts however, pupils perform poorly in the 3 basic schools. The interview data further explained this view, that "pupils do their homework before leaving the school or the next morning in school and not at home" (Interview data, respondent # 3). This habit questions the roles of parents and teachers in the delivery of education because the data shows that they have abdicated their role of supervision of pupils' academic work. A further mean of 20 respondents believe that the provision of extra classes will not be a panacea to the failures in the schools and that pupils in the

district do not in fact attend extra classes. On the subject of punctuality to school, the data further shows that a mean of 17 respondents believe that the pupils are punctual to school whereas a mean of 14 respondents disagreed that the pupils are punctual. Sekyere (2002) has discussed such complex and interdependent problem in his research and has argued that pupils' absenteeism is a major cause of falling standards in schools, especially regarding the poor performance in external examinations. He claims that pupils who absent themselves from school do not benefit from classroom teaching, and this leads to the lack of understanding of the basic concepts in the various subjects.

Problems of community contribution to education delivery in the West Gonja District
This theme pertains to research question 3 which investigates the problems that associate community contribution towards basic education delivery in the West Gonja District. The data collected on this question is presented in Table 4 (below). The analysis of the Table presented below uses the mean to calculate the central tendency of responses to the problems of the West Gonja community's contribution to education delivery in the context of such quantitative variables as the provision of infrastructure, TLMs, attendance of Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, support for school projects and the reduction of pupils' support on the farms.

Table 4: Problems of community contributions to education delivery

N = 81

Community Contribution	Teachers				Pupils				Mean			
	Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	**%**	*f*	**%**	*f*	**%**	*f*	**%**	*f*	**%**	*f*	**%**
Infrastructure	1	4.8	20	95.2	8	13.3	52	86.7	5	9.0	46	91.0
TLMs	4	19.0	17	81.0	21	35.0	39	65.0	13	27.0	28	73.0
PTA meetings	17	81.0	4	19.0	49	81.7	11	18.3	33	81.0	8	18.7
School participation	11	52.4	10	47.6	39	65.0	21	35.0	25	59.0	16	41.3
Pupils support on farms	15	71.4	6	28.6	37	61.7	23	38.3	26	66.5	15	33.5

Source: Fieldwork data (2016).

Key:
TLMs = Teaching and Learning Materials; PTA = Parent-Teacher Association

The data from Table 4 indicate that a mean of 46 respondents believe that the West Gonja community does not contribute to the provision of school infrastructure. The interview data explained that "due to Ghana's decentralization policy, the community perceive the provision of school infrastructure to be the responsibility of the District Assembly which is a key stakeholders in education at the district level" (Interview data, Respondent # 6). Another mean of 28 respondents believe that parents do not pay attention to the provision of TLMs and other essential needs of the pupils like food, pens, pencils, and exercise books. The interviews explain that pupils whose parents are too poor to provide them with "basic necessities such as food, clothing, school materials, tend to absent themselves from school" (Interview data, Respondent # 2). This underpins the difficulties associated with responsible parenting in the district.

As part of the community's support for educational delivery in the district, a mean of 33 respondents indicated that the school management and the PTA organise PTA meetings to discuss the academic performance of pupils on a regular basis. Another mean of 25 respondents said that members of the West Gonja Community do collaborate with Management of basic schools in the District in their effort to improve pupils' academic performance. A respondent explained this situation in the interview that "we support educational projects by providing labour" (Interview data, Respondent # 5). In spite of this community support for the schools, a mean of 26 respondents iterated that parents in the district keep the children at home to work on the farms during the farming and harvests seasons. Gadagbui (2003) has explained this phenomenon in terms of family values. She argues that the influence of social class on education is mediated by culture which in turn determines family expectations, values and attitude regarding education (Gadagbui, 2003). The basis for his argument is that pupils educational success hinges on parents' educational and income status. Gadagbui (2003) has therefore claimed that the family support provides *a necessary condition* for the success of a pupil's educational endeavour.

The reputation discourse associated with the challenges in the multiarena policy process.
The data discussed thus far shows a mixed and contradictory evidence to the hitherto held view on the reputations of the various interest groups (the multiarena policy groups) for educational delivery in the West Gonja District. These multiarena policy groups have been perceived negatively as doing very little to salvage basic schools in the district from the massive and continuous failures in the BECE (see Table 1 above). However, the data indicates that the multiarena policy groups perform the roles expected of them to achieve success in the BECE within certain challenging circumstances. Thus, their performance become compromised by the exigencies of the problems captured by the data which are interdependent. However, these interdependent problems also provides the opportunity to collaborate for further action as illustrated below by the discussion on the analytical framework of this research - systems analysis.

Concluding with system analysis: Aspects of problem interdependencies and their structuring effects for successful schools.
The paper has shown that the massive failures of pupils in the BECE at the West Gonja District are due to problem interdependencies such as:
a. the negative attitudes of teachers as expressed in the lack of teacher interest and commitment, waste of instructional time, teacher absenteeism and lateness, use of inappropriate TLMs, inadequate class exercises and discussion of marked exercises,
b. the negative attitudes of pupils towards learning which are reflections of behaviours like lateness, irregular school attendance, lack of attention in class, improper note-taking and exercises, the distractive use of mobile phones, and various forms of gross indiscipline which reflects on improper use of time, poor reading habits and home learning,
c. limited and sometimes apathetic community participation in the school which leads to: engaging pupils on the farms during school hours; and poor school plant management due to the diffused roles of the District Assembly.

These problem interdependencies are embedded in the multiarena policy process in the District's schools. Consequently, system analysis is used in this study as the analytical framework to interpret these problem interdependencies that associate the multiarena policy process in the West Gonja District basic schools. This is a useful interpretative tool that seeks to bring an understanding to the roles played by the multiarena policy groups in the context of environmental pressures and supports to reverse the trend of failing schools. This presents system analysis as a useful framework for analysing the complexities of role performance that associate the multiarena policy process. The system's model that has relevance for this process is parallel to Easton's (1965a; 1965b) use of systems to analyse political life where inputs go into a decision system and yields outputs. Easton's model is modified in the discussion to show the urgency of collaboration and interaction for solving the interdependent problems.

This model presents system analysis as a continuous problem-solving framework through four broad stages. A UN Report (1981) describes these stages as: objectives setting after problem definition; exploration of alternative approaches to arrive at acceptable decision; the assessment and ranking of these alternatives; and the choice of one single alternative as the most appropriate option for achieving the desired objective. This model suggest that system analysis is a scientific tool for increasing the degree of rationality in the multiarena policy process in the West Gonja District where such rationality is based on the canons of efficiency (see United Nations, 1981). Figure 1 (below) is used to illustrate this position:
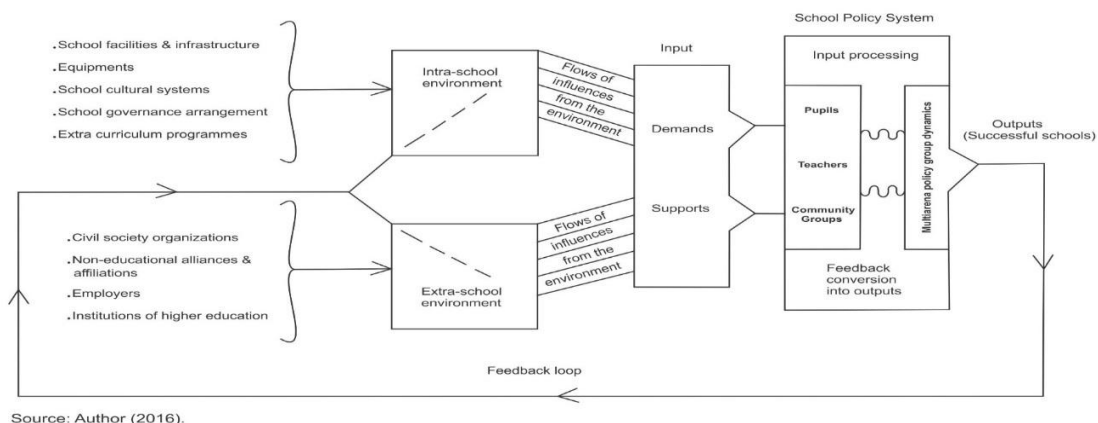
Source: Author (2016).

Figure 1: An interdependent problem solving model of systems analysis

Figure 1 shows that there are four fundamental pillars or concepts in this input-output analysis (also known as the flow model). These are: system, environment, response, and feedback.

System
This refers to the policy system which is the basic unit of analysis in this study and constituted by the 3 multiarena policy groups. The basic assumption underpinning the model is *interaction* which is generated from the behaviour of the multiarena policy groups as they play their individual roles in the multiarena policy process in terms of creating successful schools. The

myriad interactions associated with these roles translate into a *set of interactions* to become the policy. In the West Gonja District schools, the policy system is represented by a system of interactions that is integrative of values, culture, authority, governance and participation through which authoritative and binding allocation of values are made and implemented in the policy process. The constitution of the multiarena policy groups is also called *para-political system* which refers to the inclusive units of political interactions in the multiarena policy process.

The West Gonja school policy system is both open and adoptive where exchanges take place between the policy system and its environment. The various exchanges and their influences create the conditions under which the multiarena policy groups act and react. The West Gonja schools policy system may find these actions and reactions favourable or obstructive to its survival. The school policy system must therefore build the capacity to deal with these obstructions, and adapt itself to the obstructive conditions. This capacity has to be an integral part of the policy system in order to be able to adapt to changing environment and mechanisms to regulate its activities, transform internal structures, and reformulate goals. Furthermore, this system has boundaries which relate to the dynamic formation of political interactions. The school policy system must then maintain its systemic boundaries and boundary conditions through carefully looking after and protecting its capacity to respond effectively to the external environment. This will enable the West Gonja schools' policy system to operate as an effective transforming agent.

Environment
The multiarena policy system in the West Gonja District is a complex set of processes and interactions which seeks to transform inputs like lesson preparation, TLMs, extra classes e.t.c. into outputs like 'successful schools'. This transformation will take place in an environment. And as stated earlier, the multiarena policy system is an open one that needs to build resilience to respond to the environment by facing all the obstructions from the problem interdependencies and adjusting itself to the conditions so presented.

The environment may be categorized into two types, namely: *intra-school* and *extra-school.* The extra-school environment involves the schools' community, and that includes the traditional political authorities, community organisations, parents and perhaps civil society organisations (with educational interests), non-educational alliances and affiliations, employers, training institutions and institutions of higher education.   The intra-school environment however, comprises of such entities as school facilities and infrastructure, equipment, TLMs, extra-curricular programmes, school cultural systems, and school governance arrangements that operate within the school system. The interactions that take place among these elements result variously in conflicts, strains, changes and exchanges that emerge out of the environment. These can prove functional or dysfunctional to the school policy system which have consequences for academic achievement of the pupils.

Response (as inputs)
The interactions that take place in the environment create the problem interdependencies that are unleashed to the school policy system as inputs, and the system responds to this interdependent problem environment by coping with the crisis, stresses and difficulties of reversing the failing

schools syndrome. The system will then have to perform on its own such functions as maintaining order and discipline etc. in the schools so as to uphold and pursue its key value of good academic achievement in the BECE inspite of the difficulties. As part of the response, the school policy system will have to perform three main categories of functions. These are: allocation of values for the schools (which is to achieve successful schools status); motivation of members to accept the allocation of these values as binding and obligatory; and coping with the stresses and challenges directed at the system due to the allocated values. It is important to note that in this schema of the policy system's response, the functioning of the system is driven by: demands and challenges made on it; and the support given to the system from its members.

Thus, the school policy system has to deal with the challenges of the demands made on it with supports from the multiarena groups, but the system can also manipulate and regulate both the demands and supports which are received in the form of inputs from the environment. Under system analysis these inputs as noted earlier are converted into *outputs*, but the system will have to keep watch over the effects and consequences of the outputs through a feedback mechanism which will in turn help the system to constantly modify both the inputs and outputs to ensure perennial examination successes - what is called successful schools. Thus, as advocated by Easton, the school policy system then becomes a conversion mechanism in which inputs are transformed into outputs, helped and guided by feedback. These inputs are the responses that enter the system like examination failures or teacher absenteeism, which is accompanied by demands and supports to change the trend of examination failures:

Demands
The demands will put strain on the system while the support will provide energy to sustain it. And although these two phenomenon are contradictory, they must be seen as change agents that come under one category as inputs which will be converted into outputs. However there may be circumstances under which the school policy system may have to deal with the problems of overload or excessive demand in the form of agitations about the examination failures. The school policy system will then have to use the *mobilization bias* (which is the use of varied regulatory mechanisms) to keep policy making for enhanced academic performance to only those issues that are innocuous and safe to the policy system (see Hill, 2005). The mobilization of bias mechanisms may include:

i. *structural mechanism* which will seek to regulate and moderate the flow of demand. Under this, spurious demands will be scrutinized and moderated through various gate-keeping methods which sometimes even prevent such from entering the system,
ii. *cultural mechanism* which will use certain socio-cultural norms to designate certain demands as incompatible or unnecessary and therefore provide the basis for these to be rejected,
iii. *communication channels* where information will be used to strengthen or weaken or dilute demand to a considerable extent, and
iv. *reduction processes*. This process will reduce the demands to a limited number of necessary options through a process-selection, serialization and scrutiny.

Support

When the demands are subtracted from inputs in systems analysis, the result is support which operates between the system and its environment. The support in this study is directed at the multiarena policy groups which implies the acceptance of division of labour in the policy process as for example, support to teachers and pupils to concentrate respectively on teaching and learning. Support invokes recognition of the legitimacy and obligation of the system as well as holding respect, loyalty and responsibility to the system. Hence, the support given to the school policy system may be rendered by the multiarena policy groups by recognizing, participating and playing their respective roles to reverse the trend of external examination failures. This confirms the theory that without support at a certain basic level, no policy system can persist.

Outputs

The inputs that enter the system in the form of demands and supports are processed in the system to produce outputs. These are the effects and consequences which have direct relation with the attitude and behaviours of actors in the policy system, which Easton calls the *authoritative allocation of values* or *binding decisions and actions* or *exchange between the system and its environment.* These may take many forms such as the regulation of pupils' behaviour and conduct towards learning, guidance on teacher attitude to teaching, moderating of parental responsibilities, supply of state of the art TLMs which will finally culminate in the realization of successful schools.

Feedback

The feedback is another important component of Easton's systems theory which will determine the capacity of the school policy system to persist over time. This is a dynamic process through which information about the outputs and the environment is communicated back to the system to effect an adjustment, change or modification in strategies, plans or policies. This then becomes a converted input. Without the feedback, the school policy system is likely to operate in the usual unresponsive manner which will perpetuate the old syndrome of failing schools. For the purposes of analyzing the policy process for enhanced academic achievement, feedback may be categorized into two forms:

i. *negative feedback* which relate to the information regarding the system and the regulation of errors, and
ii. *goal transforming feedback* that is concerned with purposeful redirection of the system towards reversing the trend of examination failures.

The nuanced structuring effect for successful schools

Systems analysis as the analytical framework for this paper has shown that policy interventions that are required to improve the academic performance of pupils in the West Gonja District Basic schools are dealt with by the multiarena policy groups, namely: pupils, educationists and the community. Each of these actors have responsibilities for handling specific educational problems which are normally linked to each other. This scenario creates problem interdependence in the school policy system which in turn creates a platform for collective action by the multiarena policy groups to provide common social goods namely: quality education and successful academic performance. The collective action activities take place on two dimensions. These are vertically across multiple levels of the school system and horizontally across multiple

arenas involving the multiarena policy groups. And it is important to also note that no single actor among the three policy interest groups has sufficient potential for action and/or sufficient power to solve these problem interdependence on their own. Neither do they have all the knowledge and information required to solve these complex, dynamic, and diversified educational problems. Hence the multiarena groups have to rely on each other to turn these failing schools into successful ones (see Vespignani, 2010; and Kooiman, 1993). The analysis has thus shown that problem interdependencies create incentives for policy groups to cooperate. This is a contradiction which shows that two opposing phenomenon which tend to mutually obstruct the value of eliminating failures in the West Gonja Basic Schools, also tend to promote willingness for the multiarena groups to come to agreements (see van Vliet 1993). This contradiction also indicates that the multiarena policy groups have a *'less bad' reputation* for their efforts to reverse the failing schools trend in the West Gonja District. The problem interdependence therefore serves as a mechanism that ensures cooperation and expressed in the concept of *mutual partisan adjustment* (that is, adoptive adjustment) which is a mechanism for ensuring cooperation in the absence of a central and legally mandated coordinator or arbiter (see Lindblom, 1965).

Finally, the paper makes a claim that there is lack of persuasive evidence that points to the notion that the multiarena policy groups collaborate in their roles to produce beneficial effects in terms of creating successful schools. However, the application of systems analysis in the discussion suggests that perhaps it is necessary for schools to persist in this type of collaboration because it provides an opportunity for the multiarena policy groups to advocate for policy options and cooperate in the policy process to improve academic performance. Consequently with the application of systems analysis, this study has revealed the importance of collaborative roles of educational multiarena policy groups in dealing with problem interdependencies that impede pupils' academic performance. Thence, the study shows that these multiarena policy groups pursue a modicum of educational policy interventions with a potential for turn-around effects for basic schools examination successes. And concluding with the statement from Samaha (2006) that *"I know no safe depository of ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves: and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion"*, this paper makes a contribution to the debate on the roles of multiarena policy groups in creating successful schools which is captured in the claim that the efforts of the multiarena policy groups have to be 'informed' and encouraged in spite of their difficult circumstances rather than getting them disengaged, because these multiarena policy groups are the custodians of education in communities across the world of which the West Gonja community is not excepted.

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