

## **Perception on Mass Media Restrictions on Educational Policies Implementation in Ghana**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Press freedom and independence is a fundamental ingredient in a functional democracy. Since ideas and information are so important for the growth and survival of a free and democratic society, such a goal cannot be achieved unless every citizen has a fundamental right to give expression to his ideas and opinions. Using an online survey of 673 participants, the researcher investigated on perception on mass media restrictions on educational policies implementation in Ghana. Though the study disclosed that the media in Ghana have high level of participation, it further revealed that, constitutional interference and political interference both have a significant negative effect on mass media participation on educational policies implementation in Ghana. It was therefore recommended that in order to contribute to free formation of public opinion and by virtue of Ghana been a democratic state, the state should economically support and allow the media to work in free environment without applying any coercion.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Constitutional Interference, Mass Media, Political interference, Press, Freedom*

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### **I. BACKGROUND STUDY**

If anything is dynamic in today's world, it is the concept and process of communication. Every aspect of it including its channels keeps evolving by the year. Globally, the media contribution has been a great instrument of information and is a font of cheap and easily accessible education for billions of people (Sociology Central, 2011). Mass media play a very vital role in developed, developing and less developed countries. People critical of media even acknowledge that media vigilance is necessary to check the excesses of persons placed in authority (Yamamura & Sabatini, 2015). Before the 1990's, mainstream media systems in most countries of the world were relatively national in scope, and since then most communication media have become increasingly global, extending their reach beyond the nation-state to conquer audiences worldwide (Florescu, 2014). All of these have occurred as a consequence of the deregulation policies adopted by various countries in order to permit the creation of cable and satellite channels as well as information dissemination (Matos, 2012).

Throughout the world, the mass media have played a useful role either to ensure the practice of democracy or to safeguard it against abuse. The mass media are seen today as playing a key role in enhancing globalization, facilitating culture exchange and multiple flows of information and image between countries through international news broadcasts, television programming and new technologies (Keefer & Khemani 2014). The mass media is a group that construct messages with embedded values, and that disseminates those messages to a specific portion of the public in order to achieve a specific goal (Sociology Central, 2011). This means they are the collective communication outlets or tools used to store and deliver information or data.

Koch-Baumgarten (2007) asserts that the mass media in the political process has changed primarily from a rather passive conveyor of messages to a political actor in its own right, such that the media are now taking an active part in the public representation of politics by shaping the agenda of the political discourse and by contributing their own preferences in political debates. Some authors even argue that the growing dominance of the media has led to the emergence of a new type of democracy termed media democracy (Strömberg & Snyder, 2008). The media has been labelled as the watch dog over government. This means that the media operates a system in which it is both an actor and a facilitator. It opens up channels of communication to enable public to access government and its structures, and to engender public involvement and discussion of government activities (Kosec, & Mogue, 2018). By providing and facilitating the flow of information, the media constitute an important component of the political process in democracies. The media educate through the provision of news and information.

Mass media can play a key role in enabling citizens to monitor the actions of incumbents and to use this information in their voting decisions. It has been identified to serve a number of functions within the context

of government policy making, and recently relevant in a growing era of electronic governance (Bertot et al., 2012). For instance, the media plays a vital role in the policy agenda setting stage, thus it helps to identify problems in the society which eventually serves as great information which is adopted and dealt with by policy makers. Analysis of the media are very current in educational practice but have played a very significant role in the transformation of education in many jurisdictions. Audiovisual media thus television and the internet, as well as traditional media, such as books, magazines and radio in the past few decades, has significantly affected the mindset of children and young people (World Bank (2017).

How the government treats the media industry affects the development of news media and the quantity and quality of news generated. Notwithstanding its essential role, the media faces appreciable levels of restriction in a variety of ways in its initiatives in participating in policy implementation within governments around the world (Freedom House, 2017). The Ghanaian media is not exception to some of these restrictions as it faces various forms of hindrance from governments and other bodies resulting in minimal media representation and contribution. Indeed, many social science scholars have argued that the media's ability to hold government and other sections of society accountable to the public is the main justification for the unfettered media freedom found in many liberal democratic constitutions around the world (Roy, 2014).

Despite these challenges facing the media, not much work (in terms of empirical evidence) has been done. Most of the existing literatures available on this all important subject were scholarly opinion pieces, newspaper articles, civil society and anecdotal reports, which are often not reliable especially in Sub-Sahara Africa where democracy and press freedom is now growing.

The tradition of free and independent press has permeated somewhat into the developing world like Ghana. Literatures, however, is emerging which focuses attention on the importance of the 'fourth estate of government' in the policy process. A key interest of this research is to focus on perception on constitutional and political interference that restricts the media to produce and disseminate information on educational policies in Ghana.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Mass media**

The media is not a monolithic entity but rather a broad term encompassing a variety of content provided to the public, over a range of platforms. Traditionally, when one thinks of the media, newspapers, magazines, radio and television comes to mind. Mass media, as the term suggest, is a mode of mass communication that link all individuals within a society through dissemination of information via use of technology (Matos, 2012). It keeps a common man aware of the erudite things happening within a society as well as around the globe. That is, the means of connecting people from different parts of the globe by sharing information using technology. It can therefore signify channels of communication that involve transmitting information in some way, shape or form to large numbers of people. It connotes various means materials or products, both in print and electronic broadcasting forms used in transmitting, distributing or diffusing information to a large number of people (Boulianne, 2015).

McQuail (2000) describe mass media as a means of communication that operates on a large scale, reaching and involving virtually everyone in a society to a greater or lesser degree. Regarding the meanings, mass media contents are produced by specialized agencies according to a pre-determined schedule within in a national or dialectal community (Hanson, 2013). Mass media programs have pre-package contents and are distributed according to some essential controls and time schedule.

Media is a plural of medium, which means a channel or strait through which something is conveyed or spread (Copelands, 2010). In other words, mass media are channels of communication in a modern society, primarily the print and the electronic media. It is an impersonal communication sources that reach large audiences. Regarding the audience, the technical requirements and possibilities of mass media themselves together with the given language delineate the boundaries of their use so that in principle they are available for each member of a nation or language community, rather than for socially restricted groups only, that is they are media for masses of people (Conroy-Krutz, 2018).

The primary function of the mass media system is to provide information to several millions of people (Sarrassat,et. al, 2018). The mass media is extremely influential. Each of the media is presumed to affect perceptions and behavior in a distinctive way. The media has been cited as a methodology for reducing the knowledge translation gap, creating communities of practice, and reducing traditional hierarchical divisions (Wantchekon, et. al, 2015). Social movements have also embraced social media as a means of spreading their aims and reaching wide audiences (Keefer& Khemani, 2014). As mass media address nations, their development is a strand of the modernization of nations.

## 2.2. Functions of the media

In the democratic systems which mean the management of people, the media which is free of executive, legislative and judicial powers is defined as the fourth power which inspects the government on behalf of society attributes a critical role (Demirsoy, Dikener & Karakoç, 2013).

There are two components of the idea that free journalism is a necessity for democracy (Biswas, 2009). The first one is media which functions as a supervisor over the government. The media has a huge and independent power, it functions as a fourth element which monitors the other elements of the government and inspects it.

The second is the obligatory status of media for citizens to have information. Media provides knowledge and news related to basic events necessary for the betterment of people in a particular jurisdiction (Biswas, 2009). At the same time, it also functions as a forum through which people get access to various information and also exchange information.

Generally, the media is seen as providing the society with the following (Freedom House, 2016).

- (a) Information
- (b) Education
- (c) Entertainment

A strong and independent media, together with other civil society groups can play mutually reinforcing roles to exert pressure on governments to support democracy and socio-economic development (Hassan, 2014). The media is seen as “watch dog” (Biswas, 2009). The role of the media as watchdog is a traditional characterization of the role of the news media in particular. Biswas (2009) describes the media as a watchdog by scrutinizing the activities of public administrations and other institutions and practices that directly and indirectly affect the public. When one thinks of the press as watchdog, one thinks of the press as reporting on the happenings of government (Cordis & Warren, 2014). It involves reporting on the programs and activities of the three branches of government. This role is evidently appreciated when the press is able to engage in fairly long-term, detailed, in-depth investigative journalism, the kind that is able to report to the public on large-scale orderly wrongdoing by public or private officials who may be engaged in any form of nepotism, corruption, swindle or other kinds of wrongdoing (Costa, 2013).

## 2.3. Educational policies and the media

A fundamental principle of the governance reform agenda is to build more effective and responsive states accountable to their citizens and free, plural, and independent media systems can play a crucial role in this process (Norris & Odugbemi, 2009).

It’s an inevitable thing and surely nearly impossible to imagine modern politics and policymaking without some kind of media involvement. Mass media can, and often do, play a critical role in policymaking (Pew Research Center, 2010). Preparing students to become productive members of the future workforce is undoubtedly an important function and goal of the education system. In the past decade, education policymakers have made an increasingly self-conscious effort to shape the media conversation about education reform (Alasoluyi et al., 2016).

The typical view of many policymakers and educationist is that, media matter in the early stages of the policy process, they can help to set an agenda, which is then adopted and dealt with by politicians, policymakers, and other actors. Lindland et al., (2012) sees such view as ill-health since the work of the media is in a continuum. Education reformers understand that their jobs do not stop with policy design and implementation; they recognize that they must take media conversations about learning and education seriously if their proposals are to gain traction with the public and policymakers (Lindland et al., 2012). Educational advocates and experts must be aware of existing media narratives about learning and education if they are to effectively shift the public conversation about education reform to one in which learning processes, innovation, professional education and other key aspects of true reform are appreciated (O’Neil, 2012).

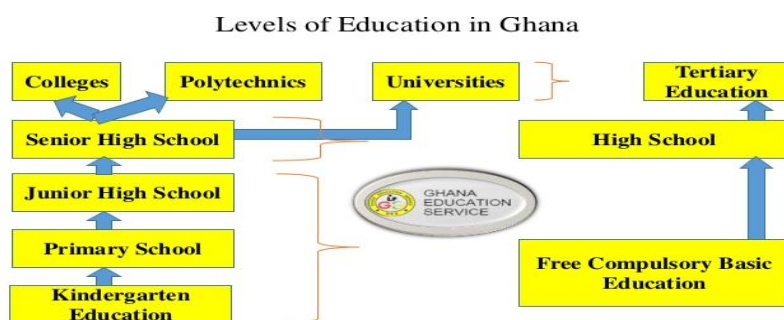


Fig 1 Ministry of Education, Ghana

Indeed, mass media are in the unique position of having a marked impact on policy, but from outside the formal political sphere, they are often not recognized as policy player (O’Neil, 2012). The media has been a great pusher for educational policies, however, there are times their information has not been the best for the public due to the limited information they provide (Pew Research Center, 2010). The primary problem with the media coverage is that it presents a narrow story of education when compared to the stories that educational advocates and experts want to tell.

#### 2.4. The concept of a Free Media

Right to freedom of speech and expression is one of the most important fundamental right (Hassan, 2014). It includes circulating one’s views by words or in writing or through audio-visual instrumentalities, through advertisements and through any other communication channel. It also comprises of right to information, freedom of media and also the freedom to publish and circulate. Thus, this fundamental right has a vast scope. The term freedom of expression means to indicate any act of seeking, receiving and conveying information, ideas, regardless of the medium used (Mudgal, 2009).

In democracy, the free media is an essential agency. It is the most important medium of public opinion which thumps and revitalizes the democratic system of government with guarantees that the people are entitled to receive news and views, without interference and to disseminate it regardless of the frontiers (Freedom House, 2017). This is a critical aspect of the right as it means that everyone has the right to obtain information. Thus, states that deny media freedom also trample upon the rights of their citizens to receive information freely (Freedom House, 2017). The instrumental rationales for freedom of expression is that the free flow of information and exchange of ideas is good for democracy because it makes for better democratic decision-making by government, improves transparency and accountability, and gives citizens the ability to make informed political choices (Hassan, 2014).

The right to freedom of expression is recognized as a human right by the United Nations and International Human Rights law. It states that "Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference" and "everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice" (Freedom House, 2017). Article 19 additionally states that the exercise of these rights carries "special duties and responsibilities" and may "therefore be subject to certain restrictions" when necessary "for respect of the rights or reputation of others" or "for the protection of national security or of public order (order public), or of public health or morals" (Freedom House, 2017).

The United States remains one of the most press-friendly countries in the world. It enjoys lively, aggressive, and diverse media, and some of the strongest legal protections for reporting and expression anywhere in the world (Freedom House, 2017). The media derives its rights from the right to freedom of speech and expression available to all the citizens.

### HISTORICAL TRENDS IN PRESS FREEDOM

Distribution of countries among the three press freedom categories

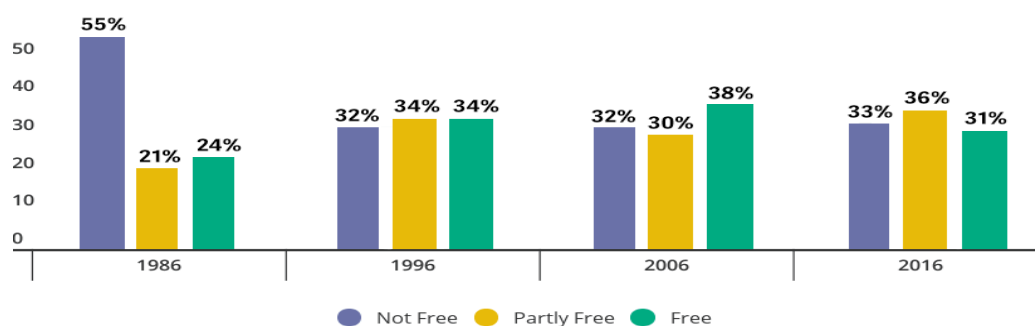


Fig2: Freedom House (2017)

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Governments and many individuals have used defamation laws and related criminal provisions to threaten media who criticized them. Only 13 percent of the world’s population enjoys a free press that is, where coverage of political news is healthy, the safety of journalists is guaranteed, state intrusion in media affairs is minimal, and the press is not subject to difficult legal pressures Freedom house (2017).The varied threats to press freedom around the world are making it harder for media workers to do their jobs, and the public is

increasingly deprived of balanced information and in-depth reporting. Press freedom worldwide deteriorated to its lowest point in 13 years in 2016, driven by unprecedented threats to journalists and media outlets in major democracies and intensified crackdowns on independent media in authoritarian settings.

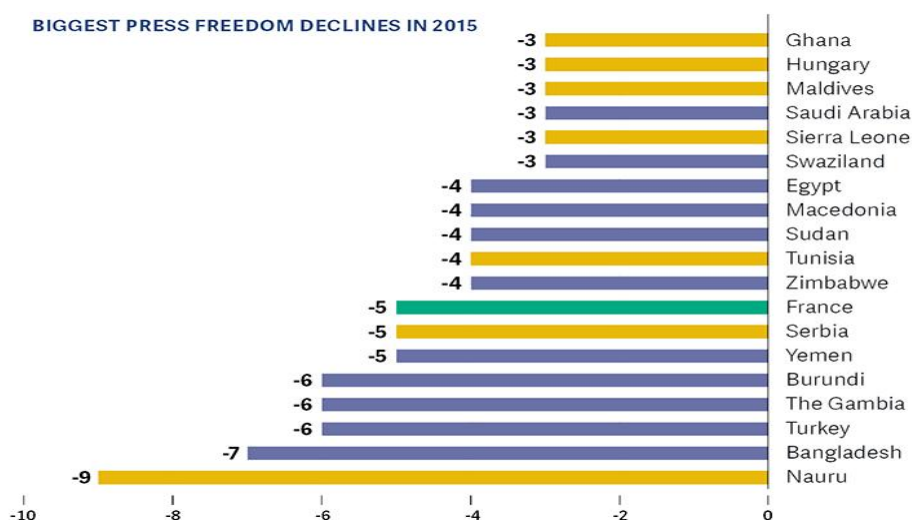


Fig 3: Freedom House (2016)

[https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FOTP2016\\_HistoricalTrends\\_updated0425.jpg](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FOTP2016_HistoricalTrends_updated0425.jpg)

## 2.5. Media in Ghana

Ghana has a vibrant media that plays a key role in political discourse, national identity, and popular culture. Emerging in the nineteenth century, the media gave voice to popular campaigns for independence, national unity, development, and democracy throughout the twentieth century, establishing a distinguished history of political activism for Ghanaian journalism (Afari-Gyan, (1998). Freedom of the press is legally guaranteed in Ghana, and the country has a diverse media landscape. Article 162 (6) of the Constitution of Ghana which requires the media to “uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people of Ghana” (Republic of Ghana, 1992) (Oppong, 2013).

The National Media Policy of Ghana recognizes the electronic, print, film broadcasting, wire services, advertising and public relations as dimensions of the media (Karikari, 2010). According to it, whiles the print media comprises newspapers and magazines printed for mass readership, the broadcast media comprise radio and television involving transmission by airwaves, cable or satellite of sound or images for simultaneous reception by mass audience.

Ghana’s democracy is a hybrid of the North American and British Westminster models combining constitutionalism, participation and representation at both the national and local levels(Gadzekpo, 2008). The appointment of the National Media Commission(NMC) as an oversight body for the media is regulated by the Ghanaian constitution, (Article 166 of the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana) and established under Act 449 in 1993, followed by an amendment, Act 561 in 1998 as an independent body. It is composed of members of several groups of civil society such as the Ghana Journalists Association, the Trades Union Congress and the Association of Private Broadcasters (Karikari, 2010).

The NMC among other functions was established mainly to promote and ensure the freedom and independence of the media for mass communication. It is to take all appropriate measures to ensure the establishment and maintenance of the highest journalistic standards in the mass media, including investigation, mediation and settlement of complaints made against or by the press or other mass media (Karikari, 2010). Ghana has recently passed its most awaited bill (The Right to Information Bill) awaiting the President’s signature (Daily Graphic, March 26, 2019). Prior to its passage, many civil society groups and stakeholders had made various assumption that the delay in passing the bill into law was to allow exemptions of certain vital information bordering around the government policies which its intend to conceal from the public (Akoto, 2012). This bill implies that the taxpayer including the media can have access to information concerning what government plans to do on their behalf (Boateng, 2018)



Fig 4: Media Fraternity in Ghana (MFWA 2017)

Conversely, some civil society groups do not appear to see a match between the media and their watchdog as anticipated by the framers of the Constitution of Ghana. This situation is not only limited to Ghana, but most media in developing countries (Kostadinova, 2015). The media has been criticized for failing to assert itself as the fourth estate over other arms of government (Müller, 2014). They have failed to exercise skepticism over the actions and inactions of public officials anticipated by the framers of the Constitution. The Ghanaian media has also been guilty of partisanship and unprofessionalism (Gadzekpo, 2008; Karikari, 2010).

## 2.6. Social responsibility theory

Social responsibility is a theory that asserts that businesses, in addition to maximizing shareholder value, have an obligation to act in a manner that benefits society (Uzuegbunam, 2015). This postulates that individuals and companies have a duty to act in the best interests of their environment and society as a whole. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) emphasizes that a business ability to maintain a balance between pursuing economic performance and adhering to societal and environmental issues is a critical factor in operating efficiently and effectively (McQuail, 2006). The social responsibility of media journalism is of ultimate value because media journalism is considered as the mirror of the society. It must, therefore, provide an honest, all-inclusive, and intelligent account of the events in a context that provides meaning (Uzuegbunam, 2015). This theory encourages total freedom to press and no censorship, but it should be regulated according to social responsibilities and external controls. In Social Responsibility Theory, the press is taken to be for the people and society. The tasks of the press are to make a code of conduct and follow it, to develop a standard in journalism, to make journalism better, to protect journalists and to have penalties if any journalist violates the code of conduct. It can therefore be seen as ethics that guide any action, be it in media or other organizations that put an obligation towards environment, society, culture and economy. The media like any other sector should not harm, but should promote environment and socio-cultural aspects in relation to the economy of the place (Uzuegbunam, 2015).

## 2.7. Constitutional Interference and Mass media participation

The diversification of the media sector across the African continent was accompanied by better legal and institutional frameworks in support of media freedom (Freedom House, 2017). The new constitutions adopted in the region in the last three decades have all enshrined some right to the freedom of expression, though many constitutions still retain sub clauses that impose excessive restrictions on the right related not only to national security, but to public order, morality, insults, or other vague notions that have been used to criminalize critical journalism (Balule, 2008).

Nevertheless, by the end of the 1990s, though many legal provisions in the region pertaining to media and freedom of expression failed to measure up to international standards, the decline in the legal and extra-legal harassment of journalists in the region, and the adoption of the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in 2002 seemed to confirm a sense of impetus in the region towards greater media freedom and pluralism (Senghore, 2011).

The rules regulating media have historically differed among three basic types of communication media: print media, broadcast media, and common carriers (Maina, 2011). Differences in regulation are often associated with technological differences. Every time a new medium emerges like the Internet, regulators must create the new rules within which this medium will operate. But other regulations, are created to protect the interests of the public against the influence of the powerful media industry. The media industry usually cites the merits of deregulation when it is faced with such constraints (Duncan, 2011). Most government had hid behind protecting the interests of the public to deny most media its freedom.

In America for instance, the term national interest has been employed as a mechanism to regulate and stifle the smooth information flow in the name of protecting the security of the state despite the constitutional provisions in that country that guarantee media freedom (Wasserman & de Beer, 2005). In Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, only one country does not have constitutional guarantee for media freedom; but in each country, the degree to these freedoms depends on whether its constitution expressly provides for the freedom, the right to information access, and the degree of media freedom may be limited on national security grounds (Bank, 2014). Most of these laws lack clear-cut definition and gives governments space to manipulate them to their advantage.

Mensahand Owusu-Amoh (2018) adopted a qualitative research design from the perspective of Participatory Action Research (PAR) to explore whether Ghana's Fourth republican constitutional provisions on the independence of the media has lived up to its expectations. 20 participants were drawn from the print media industry in Ghana composed of newspaper editors, senior active media practitioners from four media outlets. Ghana's Fourth republican constitutional provisions on the independence of the media and of expression were subjected to a qualitative assessment on whether the constitution has it lived up to expectation. The study showed that the constitution marked a takeoff point for media liberalization that led to increased private ownership participation and broke the culture of silence to some appreciable extent within the public sphere. Some shortfalls were identified and these were: the media lacks right to information, some archaic laws still exist in the statute books and huge court fines cripple media outlets.

Acharya and Sigdel (2016) undertook an analysis of press freedom provisions as spelt out in the 2015 Nepali constitution and noted that despite the general improvement in fundamental rights and of the media specifically, restrictions on these rights are unclear in wording and are subject to several interpretations. They cited censorship in the 2015 document and requested that the court or lawmakers interpret the provisions clearly.

In Ecuador, the president sued EL Universo newspaper for an alleged defamatory editorial that criticized the president's management of police unrest that turned fatal and labelled him a dictator. The owners and opinion editor were fined \$40 million, a penalty huge enough to collapse the media outlet, and also suffered a three-year prison term (Kellam & Stein, 2014).

Furthermore, in Ghana, the ruling class hides behind the judicial system to suffocate the media because the huge financial penalties their judgment hands down to the print media in favor of politicians is an indirect attempt to stifle media independence (Karikari, 2014). Media freedom is so central that the key obligation of the courts is to defend and abrogate laws and administrative tendencies which obstruct its observance to the mandate of the constitution rather than suffocate it.

Kellam and Stein (2014) in their paper "Silencing Critics" revealed how presidents "restrict media freedom in democracies. They concluded that media freedom is more susceptible to encroachments by presidents when other political bodies neither check and balance executive authority nor have in place mechanisms to sanction its actions. They appear to argue that in the absence of strong state institutions to regulate activities of a president, the media watchdog role is stretched to the extent that it criticality makes it vulnerable to executive crackdowns.

Furthermore, Singh and Kumar (2014) argued that expression means freedom from interference from authority which would have the effect of interfering with the content and circulation of the newspaper. There cannot be any interference in the name of public interest. By this, most constitutions or regulations pay lip service to the principle of media freedom and of expression because their practices usually are utterly different.

Chantraine, (2013) investigated the connection between media freedom and media law, with focus on the Criminal Libel Law that was repealed in 2001 in Ghana.

Development journalism was the applied theory. The study was handed out with anonymous surveys with respondents from a state- owned respective private press. In total 21 journalists participated in the quantitative survey and three participated in the qualitative study. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied on a randomly selected sample of the journalistic population. The result shows that journalists perceive themselves as nation builders, agents of empowerment and watchdogs with the aim of promoting democracy and empowerment to the population. The majority did not think that media laws, such as the Criminal Libel Law, hindered their objectivity. However, the qualitative study showed that similar laws could have a deterrent effect. Furthermore, there was an equal belief on whether ownership affected journalism practice or not. The interviewees thought that Ghana had a free media, possibly even too free and needed to be monitored

Ogbondah's (2002) holds the position that the tendency for constitutional paragraphs to remain contradictory and ambiguous allows the political leadership to find justification for interferences aimed at limiting the freedom of the media.

## 2.1. Political interference and Mass media participation

There is a strong relationship between mass media and politics. The relationship causality runs from both directions (Freedom House, 2015). Mass media is often depicted as watchdogs of political governments in a democratic society, which implies that the media should function on behalf of the public. Hence political success in the modern era has got a positive correlation with control of over the mass media. The stronger the control the greater the success and vice-versa (Nyarko & Teer-Tomaselli, 2017).

Today, the monopolization among the media owners and the relationships between media and politics are the new objectives of the studies on media (Gadzekpo, 2008). Although it is generally accepted that media don't have a definite effect on groups, the power to determine the agenda gives media the potential of behaving on behalf of government (Elmas-Kurban, 2011). The political structure of a nation can affect the possibility of the media in achieving its objectivity (Alan, 2010). There are major ways that politics can interfere with media using it as a steering instrument. Firstly, policies regarding structure and organizations can be applied through market regulations such as restriction on different kinds of information through regulation concerning media ethics.

Shardow and Asare (2016) examined the extent to which the media and their journalists are independent from their ownership structures (public/private) to perform their watchdog roles. The qualitative case study found that journalists working in public media are prevented from exercising their watchdog role on top functionaries of the political appointees. The study also found that journalists exercise their watchdog functions if the target is a rival to their owners' political camp, and this watchdog exercise is not dependent of whether the target of the investigations is in government or not. However, when the target happens to be in the same camp as that of their owners, they appeared constrained in exercising their investigative role. This study concluded that there are marginal differences between the two main ownership structures in the coverage of government.

Görmüş, (2012) postulates that the media which is stopped from being an observer is the state journalist. The necessities of state are at the forefront for the state journalist not social problems, or worries of the society. State journalists are such journalists that their mission is to hit the society using envisagement and plans of the politicians related to the public, not transferring the social demands from society to the politicians.

Alver, (2011) assert that in Turkey, a journalist or an editor may have to change and give publishing due to orientations and pressures coming from inside or outside the media organization for news he desires to produce. Doing so, it neglects its role as an observer. Karikari, (2010) have argued that the media for example in Ghana has failed to exercise skepticism over the actions and inactions of public officials anticipated by the framers of the Constitution. The Ghanaian media has been full of partisanship. Above all, the media has even witnessed the phenomenon of politicians setting up and owning media establishments to pursue both business and political interests. Their sole aim as a media is to promote their political agenda and not to serve the society.

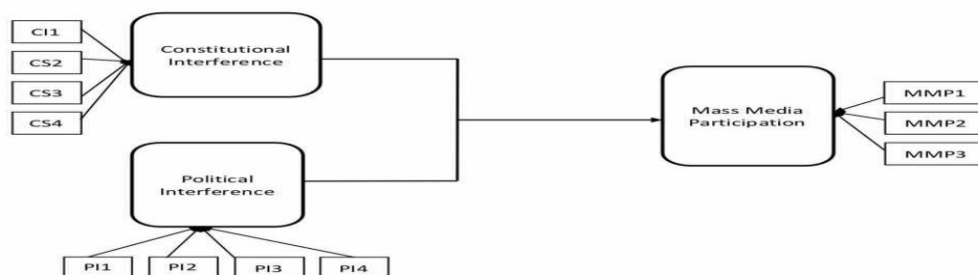


Fig 5: Conceptual framework

## 2.2. Hypothesis

1. Respondents will report relatively high level of Mass Media Participation in Ghana
2. Constitutional Interference will have a significant negative effect on the mass media participation on education policies implementation in Ghana.
3. Political Interference will have a significant negative effect on the mass media participation on education policies implementation in Ghana.



### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research design

According to Reddy and Acharyulu (2008), research design has to do with the methods and procedures for the acquisition of the necessary data to structure and solve the research problem and thus stipulates what information is to be gathered, from what source it is to be gathered, and by what means. A good research design makes it possible for the gathering of information relevant to the research problem and this is done through objective and economical procedures (Smith & Gerald, 2010). Judging from the nature and objectives of the study, the researcher deemed it appropriate to adopt the cross-sectional survey design. According to Zikmund (2000), cross-sectional survey design involves the gathering and analysis of data collected from a representative subset of the population of interest at one specific point in time. The cross-sectional method is normally used in order to make inferences about possible relationships or to gather primary data (Cherry, 2015).

#### 3.2. Population and Sample size

Research population is a collection of individuals or subjects known to share some similar characteristics (Hassan, 2015). It therefore can be assumed that all individuals or subjects within a certain population have some common, binding characteristic of trait, and it is for the benefit of this population that a research study is conducted. Based on these definitions, the study is based on all Ghanaian citizens who are above 18 years, either at home or abroad.

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), there is no clear-cut answer to what makes an adequate sample for a study but rather the best answer is discretionary to the researcher which is dependent on the available time and energy. 673 subjects from the capital (Accra) participated in an online survey that sort their perception on factors or bodies that restricts the media in Ghana on educational policies participation.

#### 3.3. Reliability and Validity

Validity is a concept concerned with the extent to which an instrument actually measures what it is supposed to measure (Kusi, 2012). Reliability is an estimation of the consistency or repeatability of a measurement. It reflects the degree to which an instrument or scale measures the same way each time it is used under the same condition with the same subjects (Petty, et al., 2009). Cronbach's alpha is a test reliability technique that requires only a single test administration to provide a unique estimate of the reliability for a given test (Sarrassat. et. al, 2018).

Cronbach's alpha is the most common measure of internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha simply provides you with an overall reliability coefficient for a set of variables. It is expressed as a number ranging between 0 and 1.00, with 0 indicating no reliability, and 1.00 indicating perfect reliability. Generally, you will see the reliability of a test as a decimal, .80 or .93. The larger the coefficient, the more repeatable or reliable the test scores. Reliability coefficient of .70 or higher is considered acceptable (Kline, 2010).

**Table 1: Indicator Reliability**

Variables	N	item	Cronbach alpha
Mass media Participation	673	3	.706
Constitutional Interference	673	4	.756
Political Interference	673	4	.797
Overall		11	.892

Source: Field study (2019)

The reliability coefficients for constitutional interference and political interference were .756 and .797, respectively. Mass media participation had .706. All these instruments had a Cronbach alpha values higher than .70, indicating the high internal consistency of each scale instrument.

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics**

Characteristics	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	375	55.7
	Female	298	44.3
Age	18 – 25	292	43.4
	26 – 35	312	46.4
	36 – 45	45	6.7
	46 +	24	3.6
Educational Status	Primary	4	0.6
	Secondary	187	27.8
	Tertiary	307	45.6
	Vocational	175	26.0

*Perception On Mass Media Restrictions On Educational Policies Implementation In Ghana*

Marital status	Single	415	62
	Married	233	35
	Divorce	20	3.0
	Widowed	5	1.0
Do you think Ghana's system of government suits her education policies	Yes	438	65
	no	234	35
Are Ghana's education policies effective	Yes	455	68
	no	218	32
roles of the mass media when it comes to effective implementation of educational policies	Educating the general public	164	24.4
	Actively participating in policy formulation	162	24.1
	Tracking the progress of educational policies	163	24.2
	Being assigned definite roles by MOE and GES in policy implementation	184	27.3

Source: Field study (2019)

The results indicated that out of the total of 673 respondents, 375 respondents representing 55.7% of the sample were males. On the other hand, the remaining 298 respondents which make 44.3% of the respondents were females. 292 of the participants making 43.7% were within the age bracket of 18 and 25 years. More so, 312 respondents representing 46.4% of the sample fell within 26 – 35 years category. In addition, 45 of the respondents (6.7%) were aged between 36-45 years. Lastly, the remaining 24 which represent 3.6% of the sample were 46 years and above.

With regards to educational qualification, the results showed that out of 673 respondents, 4(0.6%), 187(46.4), 307(45.6%) and 175(26.0%) had primary, secondary, Tertiary and vocational qualifications respectively. 415 representing 62% were single while 233 representing 35% were married. 20(3.0%) were divorced while the remaining 5 (1.0%) were widowed. 438 of the participants representing 65% believe that the system of governance in Ghana is suitable for its educational policies while 234 representing 35% of the respondents disagreed on that assertion.

In relation to the roles the media can play for an effective educational policy implementation, 164(24.4%) are of view that the media can play the role of educating the public on the educational policies. 162 representing 24.1% asserted that the media can play the role as active participants in policy formulation. 163(24.2%) believe the media can ensure effective implementation of education policies by tracking such policies consistently. Furthermore, 455(68%) respondents deemed the educational policies in Ghana are effective while the remaining 218(32%) disagreed.

Finally, the majority part of the respondents 184(27.3%) averred that the media can do effective work when they are being assigned a precise role by the ministry of education and the Ghana education services.

**Table 3: Educational policies known by respondents**

FCUBE - Free Compulsory Universal Education	80
Free Senior High	154
Double Track System	110
School feeding	94
Number of years in high school	74
Policy on Voc & Tech education	44
Health education	37
Restructuring of Ghana Edu. Curriculum	77

Source: Field study (2019)

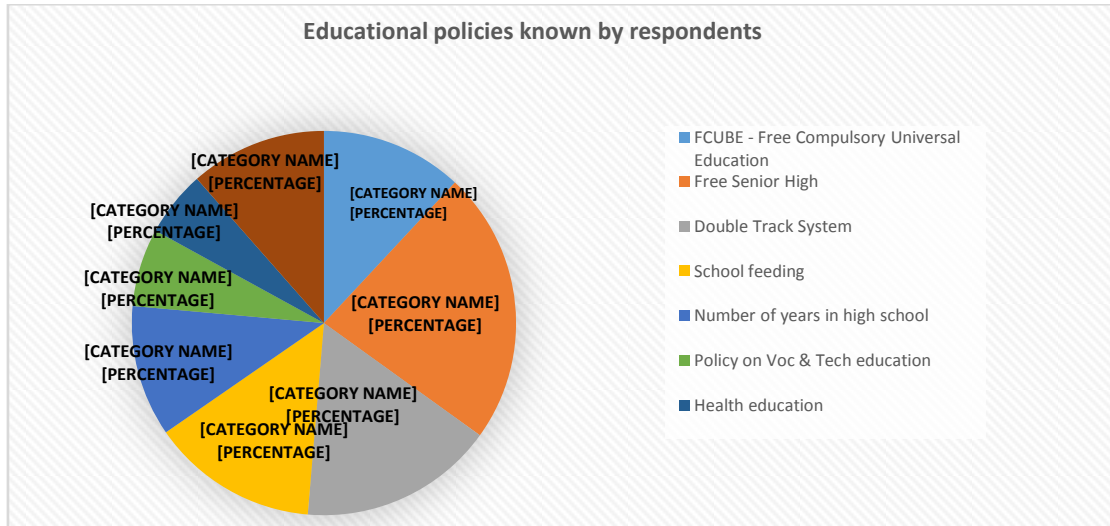


Fig 6: Field study (2019)

The table and graph explained educational policies that were known by respondents. Free senior high school educational policy recorded the highest policy known by respondents followed by the double track system. All these policies were introduced recently (less than 4 years) in to the educational system and might have accounted for such numbers.

Table 4: The Sources respondents heard the policies from

Colleague/friends/family	124
media	449
school	54
stakeholders meeting	21

Source: Field study (2019)

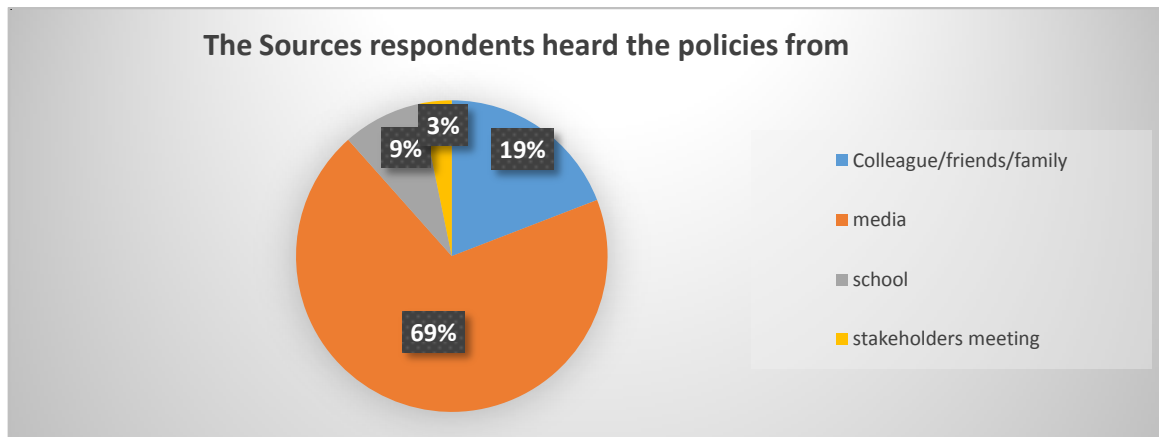


Fig 7: Field study (2019)

The media recorded highest source (449) where respondents got to know about the educational policies mentioned above. Other respondents also got to know about the policies through friends or family members or colleagues (124). The school and stakeholders meeting also recorded 54 and 21 respectively, as a source where they heard about the educational policies.

Table 5: media channel where policies were broadcasted

Print media	64
Radio	151
TV	120
Social media	114

Source: Field study (2019)

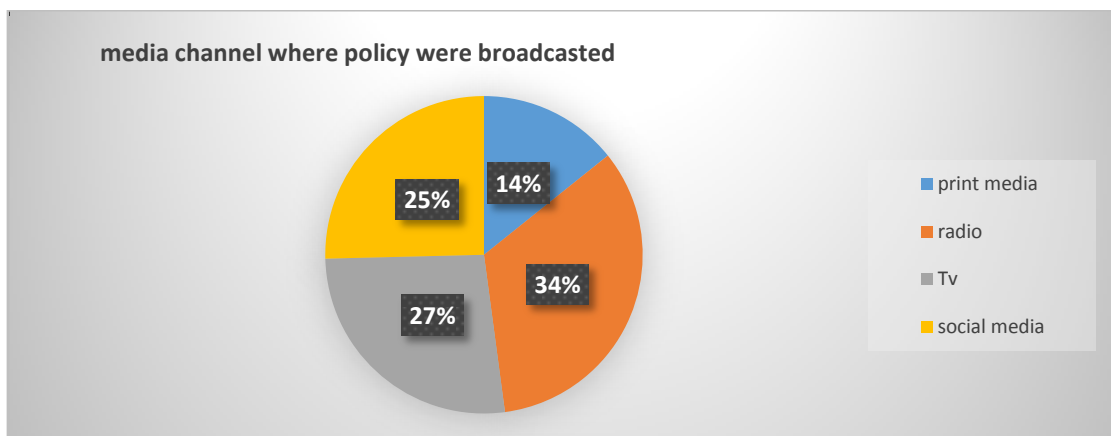


Fig 8: Field study (2019)

Radio recorded the highest (151) among all the media channels where respondents heard the educational policy. It was followed by TV (120), social media (114) and print media (64)

**Table 6: Descriptive Statistics on degree of Constitutional interference, Political Interference and Mass media participation on Educational Policies Implementation in Ghana**

Variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Constitutional Interference	673	1.0	5	14.937	2.543
Political interference				17.425	2.172
Mass Media Participation				10.885	2.071

Source: Field study (2019)

From the table with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 5, Constitutional interference had a mean and SD of 14.937 and 2.543 respectively. Political interference recorded a mean and SD of 17.425 and 2.172 respectively and mass media participation recorded a mean and SD of 10.885 and 2.071 respectively. This means that participants have the perception that there is relatively high mass media participation in Ghana. This therefore supports the first hypothesis.

This could be attributed to the emerging of new media mass in the country as it was stated by Shardow and Asare (2016) that Ghana has witnessed a phenomenon of medias springing up and private owners establishing them to pursue their business and other motives. Such fast rising industry could make people assume that since there are more media in the system, then their services may be on high demand since it's a transmitting agency.

**Table 7: Summary of correlation between Constitutional Interference, Political Interference and Mass Media Participation on Educational Policies Implementation in Ghana**

variables	Mean	SD	N	r	p
Constitutional	14.937	2.543	673	-.384	.000**
Political Interference	17.425	2.172		-.642	.001**
Mass Media Participation	10.885	2.071			

Source: Field study (2019)

Dependent Variable: Mass Media

The results on the table above showed that there was a moderate negative significant relationship between constitutional interference (M = 14.937, SD = 2.543) and mass media participation (M = 10.885, SD = 2.071) in Ghana on educational policies implementation. The Pearson r correlation indicated that there is a moderate negative correlation between constitutional interference and mass media participation [r = -.384, p = 0.000]. This means that the higher constitutional interference in the work of the media on educational policies, the lower their participation in educational policy implementation.

The Pearson r correlation further revealed that there is a high negative correlation between political interference and mass media participation (M = 10.885, SD = 2.071) [r = -.642, p = 0.001]. This means that the

higher political interference (from political appointees or political communicators) in the work of the media on educational policies, the lower their participation in education policy implementation.

**Table 8: Summary of Regression Analysis for Constitutional Interference on Mass Media Participation on Educational Policies Implementation in Ghana**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		standardized Coefficients	t	sig
	B	Std. error	Beta		
(Constant)	11.293	.683		16.541	.000
Constitutional Interference	-.394	.121	-.384	-3.253	.000**

Source: Field study (2019)

a. Dependent Variable: Mass media participation \*  $p < .10$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$

a.  $df = 1, 671$  b. Note: Constitutional interference:  $R^2 = .150, F = 10.583$ .

The regression coefficients presented above indicates that constitutional interference made a significant negative effect contribution in explaining the variations in mass media participation on educational policies implementation in Ghana ( $\beta = -.394, p = .000$ ). Constitutional Interference accounted for 15.0% of the variance in explaining mass media participation ( $R^2 = .150, F(1, 671) = 10.583, p = .000$ ). The results therefore support hypothesis 2 that, constitutional Interference will have a significant negative effect on the mass media participation on education policies implementation in Ghana

It is evident from the 1992 Constitution and Social Responsibility Theory of the press used in this study that, the media both public and private, have the responsibility to vigorously pursue a watchdog role over government. However, some clauses and sections in the constitution restrict them from performing their duty wholly. This study agree with other studies like Mensah and Owusu-Amoh (2018) who concluded that there were some archaic laws still existing in the statute books and huge court fines cripple media outlets in Ghana. They also claimed that complete freedom of media from government is only possible in free market rules. Whenever media is exposed to public regulations, it isn't an observer anymore and turns into a snarling dog in the service of the state.

**Table 9: Summary of Regression Analysis for Political Interference on Mass Media Participation on Educational Policies Implementation in Ghana**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		standardized Coefficients	t	sig
	B	Std. error	Beta		
(Constant)	10.293	.663		14.331	.000
Political Interference	-.378	.061	-.642	-3.486	.003**

Source: Field study (2019)

a. a. Dependent Variable: Mass media participation \*  $p < .10$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$

a.  $df = 1, 671$  b. Note: Political interference:  $R^2 = .310, F = 13.770$ .

The simple linear regression analysis results from the table showed that political interference had a significant negative effect on mass media participation on educational policies implementation in Ghana [ $F(1, 672) = 13.770, p = .003$ ]. The results also reported an  $R^2$  value of .310, which is an indication that 31.0% of the variations in mass media participation on educational policies implementation in Ghana is accounted for by political interference. This result supported the hypothesis 3; therefore, it was accepted. The study hence settles with Nyarko, & Akpojivi, (2017) who stressed that the degree of assault and intimidation in Ghana's media environment were traced to three major sources, namely, security agencies, communities/individual citizens, and supporters of political parties. This happens when journalists make comments on incumbent's policies and when such comments do not settle well with the supporter of these political party hence attacks of any form on the journalist or the media as stated by Media Foundation for West Africa (2018).

### 3.4 Summary of findings

1. Respondents reported a relatively high level of Mass Media Participation in Ghana
2. Constitutional Interference have a significant negative effect on the mass media participation on education policies implementation in Ghana.
3. Political Interference have a significant negative effect on the mass media participation on education

policies implementation in Ghana.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Just as there is no monolithic media entity, similarly there is no single role that it plays. Indeed, the role of a particular part of the media is very much determined by a range of factors relating to the nature of the media itself, in particular the content of the media and the medium used. The Ghanaian media have hesitated between intrepidity and cowardice along a continuum of revolutionary, confrontational, legitimacy, and supportive roles depending on the prevailing political atmosphere. Their roles have been determined by the unstable, complex, social and political environments in which they function. The requirements of probity, accountability and transparency in democratic governance accentuate the importance of the mass media and feedback from the public.

Healthily functioning democracy is possible through a system which people continuously participate in decision making process and keep all the necessary channels open related to it not through a perception that the demands of people are presented to the administrators only from elections to elections. One of those channels is the media. Media can establish the nature, sources, and consequences of policy issues in ways that fundamentally change not just the attention paid to those issues, but the different types of policy solutions sought. Media can draw attention to the players involved in the policy process and can aid, abet or hinder their cause by highlighting their role in policymaking. Media can also act as a critical medium between governments and populaces, informing them about government actions and policies, and helping to convey public attitudes to government officials. They can change the discourse around a policy debate by framing or defining an issue using dialogue or rhetoric to persuade or dissuade the public.

In order to contribute to the free formation of public opinion and by virtue of being a social state, the state should economically support local media institutions without applying any coercion. The regulator of the media should try and avoid political interference that many at time influences the message given to the public. Constitutional elements that cripples the media from exercising its duty should be taken out. This would ensure that they function effectively as the watch dogs without any compromises. Communicators should avoid emphasizing education as a means to individual economic gain. Instead, highlighting the collective benefits of education's role in economic development and other non-financial ends of the education system will encourage more policy oriented thinking among the public. Communicators should emphasize the collective gain and national prosperity that result from careful preparation of the future workforce.

#### **V. LIMITATIONS**

The study had some limitations. The researcher adopted a cross sectional survey. The reason for the adoption of this research design has to do with the time factor. Due to the time period for the completion of this study, the researcher was unable to conduct a longitudinal study thus the adoption of the cross-sectional survey. As this allowed for the gathering of the relevant primary data from the target population at one point in time. It is therefore recorded that future study could adopt a longitudinal survey to reveal whether respondents' perception could change or remain the same especially in a continent of vibrant political environment. Again, the sample collected was small. The study collected data from respondents in the capital city. This therefore means that the study lacks external validity. Future study should focus on collecting data from all the region in Ghana so it could be a better reflection of the population.

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