



Implementation of the Standard-Based Curriculum: An Overview of Pre-Tertiary Curriculum in Ghana (1951-2019)

George Asante¹, David Arhin^{2*}, Nicholas Essien³, Samuel Bentil⁴, Georgina Asibey¹

¹Department of Business and Social Sciences Education, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana

²Department of Education and Psychology, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana

³Department of Mathematics and ICT Education, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana

⁴Department of Social Studies Education, Presbyterian University, Abetifi, Ghana

Email: *arhindavid8@gmail.com, *asantegeorge5@gmail.com

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Abstract

The process of converting curriculum plans or intentions into practice, that is to say moving from page to playground, is agreed by curriculum experts as the most critical stage of the educational transformation development. This process sometimes meets challenges that may cause implementation failure. This study reviewed relevant literature on the series of curricula that have been implemented in Ghana from 1951 to 2019. In the review, some perceptions of teachers about the implementation of the recent and now-in-use Standard-Based Curriculum (SBC) were presented. The review was done through content analysis and teachers' interviews. The content of six curricula was reviewed and ten basic teachers were interviewed. The content analysis shows that two courses, Ghanaian History and Our World Our People (Citizenship Education) have been introduced at the foundational level through the SBC. Also, the main areas of emphasis for the SBC are Mathematics, English Language, Science, Creative Arts and Computer Literacy. The findings from the interviews show that teachers believe that the SBC would encourage group work, assist learners to get lifelong skills, prepare learners for the job market, promote inclusive education, promote gender equality, and promote Ghanaian culture and society. This was concluded that the current curriculum is updated and proactive as compared to the previous curriculum. However, they believe that the SBC lacks teaching and learning materials, and comes with the challenge of collaboration and management since teachers were not well trained to implement it. It is recommended that professional development workshops and in-service training should be organised periodically for practicing teachers, who will in turn mentor learner-teachers and also build on their experience to enhance teaching and learning.

Subject Areas

Sociology

Keywords

Curriculum, Education, Basic School Teachers, Perspectives, Standard-Based Curriculum

1. Introduction

Global Trends in Education

Education is the social process of fostering a person's development of their entire personality. Physical health, cultural, social, moral, intellectual, or cognitive aptitude, and economic capacity to support future self-development and value make up an individual's totality. Education may also be thought of as the discipline of transmitting information from one person or generation to the next, in the form of experiences, ideas, skills, practices, and values. Ecole Hoteliere de Lausanne Insights (EHL) [1] asserts that the expansion and development of our professional environment have a significant influence on schooling. Therefore, educators must adequately equip learners with the most crucial job competencies, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, people management, and creativity. Employers want young professionals who can demonstrate leadership qualities and the ability to make difficult decisions. Schools must thus support learners' development in these areas as instructors now play a more facilitative role. Educating kids nowadays involves showing them how to study, how to embrace learning, and how to find and create experiences in their chosen disciplines. Eaton [2] contends that 21st-century learning is therefore centred on asset-based evaluation methods through increasing creativity and collaborative generation of new knowledge. Currently, lifelong learning is gaining traction in education throughout the majority of nations [3]. The ability to battle difficulties like poverty, violence, squalor, and moral degradation is one of the talents that education helps learners acquire to flourish in the global future. Therefore, a foundation for addressing these issues is education that aims to enhance civic and social involvement, create democratic citizenship, discern between perceived and actual dangers, foster resilience, and better equip individuals to handle hardship [4]. For both young and elderly, education is now a reflection of one's whole life.

Ghana's formal education system was established during the colonial era. The Danes, Dutch, and English merchants in particular were among the first to seek to establish formal education in the Gold Coast. They founded schools in the middle of the eighteenth century with Christian missionaries to combat the high prevalence of illiteracy among Gold Coast natives and to preach Christianity among the populace [5]. Ghana's formal education system has been continuous-

ly changed up till this point. Since the days of the colonies, several administrations have supported this. Ghana's educational reform, however, is not only determined by its political leaders. More agents contributed to these changes.

According to Fullan and Stiegelbauer [6], and Fullan [7], educational change is the product of human players in the change process as well as the roles and tactics of various change agents. Ellsworth [8] asserts that Fullan's concept of educational reformation poses issues such as "What are the consequences of change for persons or groups pushing or opposing it at certain levels?" and "What responsibilities do the many educational stakeholders play in bringing about change? All parties involved in education, in Fullan's view, are change agents. The executive arm of government, the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Ghana Education Service (GES), Parents and Guardians, as well as the learners or learners themselves who are directly impacted by educational reforms or policies, will all be involved in bringing Fullan's notion to Ghana. In addition, Fullan notes that the change process includes four stages: initiation, implementation, continuance, and result. These stages include in-depth comprehension, access, and application of educational creativity and innovations as advocacy from the central government through to teacher advocacy, which will result in an external transformation in education [6] [7]. Colonial education in the Gold Coast was a British effort to improve their industrial base using raw materials [9]. According to Djamila and Djafri, the primary goals of European colonial formal education were to utilise the Gold Coast's natural riches and establish a market for their processed commodities there. Notably, the Europeans primarily sought to civilise the Gold Coast colony through trade with the indigenous people [10]. In the early 1880s, colonial governments started to give colonial education a lot of attention.

According to [10] in his book "Ghana: Evolution and Change in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century," the government gave a lot of weight to the diversification of education beyond the missionaries' goal of producing good Christians. Djamila and Djafri [9] claim that this transformation was brought about by the reports of Matiew Arnold, who held the position of inspector of primary schools from 1851 to 1856. Matiew condemned the colonial government for having a disregard for the field of education [10]. Following this, The Education Act of 1870 was passed, bringing a cooperative structure between voluntary and public schools [10]. Its goal was to provide educational opportunities in communities with underdeveloped educational infrastructure. Furthermore, Sir Gordon Guggisberg is often regarded as the most successful and effective governor in the history of the colony. David Williams described Guggisberg as being particularly sensitive to the crucial importance of education as the "keystone of development" [11]. Williams [12] claims that Gordon Guggisberg described the school system on the Gold Coast as "rotten to the core." Not only does it fall short in that it doesn't go far enough, but its outcomes also show that it is ineffective. Inadequate because it doesn't offer the facilities necessary for secondary and higher education. Ineffective as well since the current system

generally ignores the character development essential for citizenship and leadership [11]. Guggisberg believes that while elementary school provides the foundation for secondary education and should be given the highest regard as something of higher value in itself, it has completely failed to reward achievements. Guggisberg did give competent instructors and technical and vocational education to enable Gold Coasters to support themselves, although this is against colonial policy [11].

At the time of its independence, Ghana had already developed plans for how a quality education would promote the growth of its economy [13]. According to Nkrumah, the development of education in Ghana should work towards three objectives: creating a scientifically literate population; addressing the reasons for poor productivity caused by the environment; and creating knowledge to unlock Ghana's economic potential [13]. Through technical education in Ghana, Nkrumah's concept of education was crucial in the expansion and development of Ghana's economy. He thought that Ghana's path to increasing technological and economic progress required a strong focus on technical education [13]. Because of this, exceptional learners were encouraged to continue their studies at the university level through technical education apprenticeship programmes with industry. According to Guggisberg, good and efficient elementary education and skilled teachers are crucial for the fulfilment of the growth and development of education in Ghana. This is how Nkrumah saw Ghana's educational system [13]. Other educational reforms with curriculums such as the National Liberation Council's 1968 educational reforms, the New Structure and Content of Education Reform of 1974, the 1987 Education Changes, the New Educational Reform of 2007, and the 2019 Standard Base Curriculum Reform followed [14]. The objectives of this research are to: 1) review the implementation processes of the various curriculums of Ghana since 1951; 2) review the growth and developments in Ghana's education under the various curricula reforms; 3) assess the challenges met by the various curriculums and 4) find teachers' perception of the new Standard Base Curriculum currently in use.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Major Educational Reforms in Ghana after Independence

2.1.1. The Accelerated Development Plan of 1951 and Educational Act of 1961

After Ghana earned independence from colonial authority, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah led the first educational reform. The 1951 Accelerated Development Plan (ADP) was approved as soon as Nkrumah became government. The goal of the plan was to make the educational system larger and to construct teacher training facilities so that well-trained instructors would be available to teach in schools. To generate enough trained instructors, "learner" teachers were not rejected but rather put next to one another [10]. By mandating that instructors with the appropriate training teach from African perspectives or ideas, Nkrumah's reforms aimed to Africanize the nation's educational system. It was maybe an effort to

discard Western education that was copied and did not respect the cultural reality of Ghanaian learners [15]. To honor African beliefs and customs, Nkrumah's educational reforms offered African cultural identity studies. To foster learners before they formally encountered English as a medium of information transfer in upper primary and other high levels of education, this approach used native dialects of the nation as a medium of instruction in lower primary [15].

The Accelerated Development Plan provided for the expansion of secondary education by constructing fifteen (15) new secondary schools, including vocational and technical institutes, in Accra, Tarkwa, Kumasi, and Sekonde-Takoradi. The extension of basic, primary, or elementary education as well as teacher training programmes was part of the second phase of educational advances in Ghana, which began in February 1962 as part of a seven-year plan for national rehabilitation and development [10]. The growth of secondary education, post-secondary technology training, management, and secretarial training at technical institutions and universities received significant prominence in the plan. This was done to meet the demands of Ghana's expanding agriculture industry and other economic sectors. The Accelerated Development Plan changed Ghana's educational system to include six (6) years of elementary school [10].

The implementation of the provisions of the ADP according to William and Kwamena-Poh in 1975 led to the opening of many primary and middle schools in the Gold Coast. There were as many as 3115 and 718 public primary and middle schools in colonial Ghana respectively, after a year of the ADP implementation. This led to an increase in the enrolment in schools. By 1966, the total enrolment of pupils in basic schools shot up to 1,137,494 including that of middle school moving up to 115,831 by the year 1957. Also, there were 9860 students in 38 secondary schools. More, more teacher training colleges were established with the number of colleges growing from 12 certificate "A" and 19 certificate "B" in 1961 to 82 certificate "W" colleges in 1966. This period saw nearly 19,000 trained teachers qualified and the total number in the field rose by 28%. Teacher allowances were introduced. Moreover, efforts to Africanize the Ghanaian educational curriculum were achieved under the ADP. African History, Geography and Religion were made part of the elementary and secondary school curriculum. Ghanaian languages such as Ga, Ewe and Twi became subjects that secondary school students could offer at the General Certificate of Education, Ordinary Level (GCE "O" Level), which was conducted by the West African Examination Council (WAEC). Further, many scholarship opportunities were created for students. Students from the Northern part of the country most especially benefitted from the Northern Special Scholarship Scheme (NSSS). Furthermore, the tertiary education system received a big boost under the implementation of the ADP. Funds were given to the University of Ghana at Legon and the establishment of the Science and Technology universities in Kumasi and Cape Coast. In addition, to ensure greater variety in education, technical education was made the responsibility of a separate department under its own Chief Technical Advisor. Seven technical institutes in addition to the Tarkwa School of

Mines were established. Technical courses were made examinable for technical students to have a chance to go on to the University of Science and Technology. To add to the above, the government through the implementation of the ADP was able to resource the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) and the Ghana History Board to help increase literacy in Ghana. The GBC popularized the use of radios and mounted special broadcasts in secondary schools and training colleges. The President's Special Initiative on Distance Learning or Education was developed. More libraries were built throughout the country by the Ghana Library Board in addition to conducive arrangements like home-reading, library vans and bringing library books to colleges, schools and other subscribers [16].

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah established free primary and intermediate school education in Ghana because he understood that it served as a foundation for higher education. He also made investments in qualified instructors to advance top-notch elementary education. Additionally, Nkrumah founded the Ghana Education Trust to aid in the quick expansion of technical and secondary education [13]. Again using [17], it was the 1951 Accelerated Development Plans (ADP) that brought about the 1961 Education Act, which mandated free, universal, and mandatory basic education for all children beginning at age six. The Middle Form Four (4) learners' performance was evaluated internally to replace the Seventh Standard School Leaving Certificate Examination [15]. To replace the internal evaluation of Middle Form Four (4) learners during Nkrumah's government, the West African Examinations Council developed the Middle School Leaving Certificate (MSLC) Examination. It is crucial to remember that this modification improved the standard of the test and the certifications it produced [15].

Since he promoted the advancement of education at all levels to benefit Ghanaians, Nkrumah's government saw enormous gains in the sphere of education [12]. He contends that from three thousand five hundred and seventy-one (3571) primary schools in 1957 to three thousand seven hundred and thirteen (3713) in 1959, the number of primary schools has grown. In addition, eighty-three (83) new middle schools were added to the existing thirteen hundred and eleven (1311) over the same period [10]. There were fifty-nine (59) accredited government secondary schools during Ghana's period of independence and fifty-two (52) private schools [12]. The secondary schools' upgrades led to an overall rise in enrolment. The National Teacher Training Council was established in 1958 to monitor teachers' interests as a result of the development of teacher education. The Kumasi College of Arts, Science, and Technology and the University College of the Gold Coast, two existing university colleges, received attention under Nkrumah's leadership [12].

However, some challenges that were met by the ADP included the issue of an overstretched Ghanaian economy. This happened due to tackling the educational provisions at all levels and throughout the whole country. It was undertaken at an accelerated pace which overstretched the finances of the Ghanaian economy.

Also, aside from all the provisions of the ADP, standards in education fell. This was because, in an attempt to get as many children into schools, classes were held under trees and makeshift structures. Many teachers were turned out through emergency arrangements which led to massive recruitment of untrained teachers. Standards in education fell. Another challenge of the ADP was the broader expansion of education more than the economy. When one considers the number of pupils and students who entered into schools within the period of the ADP at all levels, it could be seen that a lot of people came out of school. However, the economy of the country could not grow at such a fast rate to create employment for the teeming numbers of graduates from the different school levels. This led to unemployment and hardship in the country which partly triggered the 1966 coup de'tat, leading to the phasing of the ADP with a new 1968 curriculum.

2.1.2. The 1968 Educational Reforms of the National Liberation Council (NLC)

The National Liberation Council implemented significant educational reforms in 1968 after the Nkrumah-led government was overthrown in 1966. Major A. A. Afrifa and General E. K. Kotoka were in charge of this new government, which was composed of both military and civilian individuals. On March 7th, 1966, the NLC established an Education Review Committee to conduct a thorough examination of the formal educational system [10]. The new administration scrapped Nkrumah's seven-year Development Plan, which included giving learners free textbooks. Now, guardians and parents were required to pay a portion of the expense of providing their wards with free textbooks [18]. The NLC administration halted elementary school construction across the country. To help the nation recover from its economic crisis, the high cost of higher education was reduced. The NLC sought to lower the high cost of education by modifying several educational programmes implemented at the time by the Nkrumah-led government (<https://ghana.usembassy.gov/>). Therefore, the purpose of the NLC's educational reforms in 1968 was to address the inconsistency in the educational system. The expansion of secondary education now includes technical and teacher preparation. To better and more immediately address the demands of national growth, both university education and primary-level education were strengthened [10]. Other modifications to the educational policy made during the 1968 reformation were the requirement for eight years of basic schooling instead of Nkrumah's 10 years to be eligible for secondary-level study. A two-year middle school continuation programme was also offered. Learners in their last year of eighth grade have to pass the Common Entrance Examination to be admitted to secondary schools. Five years were spent in secondary school, whereas four years were spent in higher or university education [10].

The implementation process started with the institution of the Kwapong Education Review Committee of 1966-67 to address the failing standards of education such as the problem of general indiscipline among pupils, students

and teachers as well as the needs of Ghanaians concerning the churches' involvement in the management of schools which was not adequately addressed by the 1961 Education Act [16]. The committee proposed presented, implemented and realized educational growth and development in 1967 Reform which included the following: a proposal for textbook fees of 1.50 Cedis (15 Pesewas) per child in the primary school and 3.00 Cedis (30 Pesewas) in middle schools. Also, there was an integrated 8-year course which was replaced with 6 and 4 years of primary and middle school respectively. Pupils continued the secondary school through the common entrance examination conducted by the West African Examination Council. Again, pupils who were not able to enter secondary school pursued a two-year continuation programme to equip them with skills that would enable them to enter the job market. More on the benefits of the reform, the period for secondary education for the GCE Ordinary Level was changed to 5 years and a sixth form programme of 2 years was added for GCE Advanced (A) Level. Moreover, the reform realized the training of post-middle school leavers for 4 years and post-secondary leavers, for 2 years, to become professional teachers. In addition to the above developments, the reform birthed specialist programmes in Winneba (advanced Teacher Training College) in English, Mathematics, History, Geography, and Science previously being taught at 9 colleges. To add to the above-listed gains from the reform, decentralization of the management of secondary schools and the teacher training colleges from the Ministry of Education to the regional and district directorates were realised, including the establishment of a Teaching Service Division of the Public Services Commission (now Ghana Education Service).

Although the 1968 Educational Reform realised some benefits, however, it met some challenges or shortfalls like previous reforms. The 1968 was much emphasized on the pure academic curriculum which did not provide school graduates with employable skills. This led to the need for changes in the education system to place more emphasis on science, technology, mathematics and other applied educational programmes or courses. This shortfall led to another reform led by Prof. K. N. Dzobo in 1972 which was implemented in 1973/74 [16].

2.1.3. The Educational Reformation of 1974

Another overhaul in Ghana's educational system was brought about by the National Redemption Council's (NRC) overthrow of the NLC. The Busia and Akuffo-Addo administration was replaced by the NRC, which was headed by Col. Ignatius Kutu Acheampong. The NRC was a combined military and police type of governance. To recommend improved educational strategies for the nation, they established the Dzobo Committee [10]. The Dzobo Report of 1973 is the name given to the committee's 1973 report. The Junior Secondary School (JSS) and the Senior Secondary School (SSS) were suggested as part of the New Structure and Content of Education (NSCE) for 1974. The Ghana Teaching Service (GTS), which is now the GES, was to lead all educational initiatives in the

nation, and was entrusted with creating an educational cycle that would require school graduates to build a skill set that would allow them to compete in the national labour market once they left the educational system. Therefore, pre-tertiary education was shortened from seventeen to thirteen years by the Dzobo Committee under the NRC. But whereas middle school, which was previously four years, became three years, elementary school remained six years long [17]. The five-year senior high school programme was also shortened to four years. Throughout the nation, new topics including brickwork, metallurgy, masonry, tailoring, dressmaking, and other new fields of study were introduced on an experimental basis.

The Dzobo committee proposed presented, implemented and realized educational growth and development from the 1974 Reform which included the following: Kindergarten education for children between ages four and six was introduced [14]. Also, the first cycle of six years of primary and three years of junior secondary school education was realised. Again, undergraduate courses for secondary school leavers at the tertiary level were put at four years. Moreover, vocational and technical education courses were started at the junior secondary school; artisans and tradesmen served as resource persons in the vocational and technical courses. Moreover, polytechnics were upgraded to facilitate the supply of middle-level manpower. From the above, it is clear that the main innovation was the vocation realization of education and the establishment of junior secondary schools in the country, however, on an experimental basis. For example, in 1976 each of the junior secondary schools was run in every district; one each as a demonstration school for the 3-year post-secondary teacher training colleges. The full-scale (nationwide) practice of the 1974 educational reform came in 1987 [16].

However, aside from the above-listed gains from the 1974 educational reform, access to education especially in the northern half of the country and other areas had intake persistently low. Also, the curriculum of the junior secondary schools had limited provisions for academic, cultural and commercial subjects. In the senior secondary schools, the syllabus did not emphasize the study of indigenous languages, science, mathematics, and other competencies that would keep students abreast with the current world of mass consumer products and services. Again, teacher education was not organized along with the skills needed for imparting inquiry and problem-solving methods which will encourage creative learning rather than learning among pupils. More, though, polytechnics were upgraded to facilitate the supply of middle-level manpower, they were not well organized to facilitate the supply of technical personnel needed in the national recovery effort. Higher education was not organized along with courses related to national manpower requirements which would develop appropriate post-graduate courses relevant to national needs. These and other shortfalls led to another educational reform which was implemented in 1987 under the Provisional National Defence Council, led by Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings [16].

2.1.4. The Educational Reforms of 1987 by the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC)

A commission charged with reviewing the design of the then-existing educational system was established after Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings ousted President Hilla Limann and his administration. In 1987, Evans Anform served as the event's chair. An elementary-level education that will be free, mandatory, and of the highest calibre was given to the committee as its assignment. Consequently, the length of pre-tertiary education was cut in half, from seventeen to twelve years [11]. The elementary and junior secondary schools each lasted three years, making up the nine years of basic education (JSS). Senior Secondary School (SSS), a three-year institution, was established [18]. For the Junior Secondary School and Senior Secondary School, trimester and end-of-term exams were implemented. The General Certificate of Examination (G.C.E.) was eliminated as part of the reform, and its replacements—the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) for Senior Secondary School finalists and the Mandatory Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) for Junior Secondary School finalists—are now required [18]. The changes also resulted in the development of educational studies based on subject areas in secondary school curricula including Agricultural Science, General Arts and Pure Science, Business, Technical and Vocational. In addition to the new core curriculum, learners were required to choose four optional disciplines [11].

The new system was based on a revision of the New Structure and Content of Education in 1974 by the committee set up to advise on the implementation of the Junior Secondary Programme (1986). This new system was implemented by the government in 1987 and in 1988 all pupils in primary school class 6 proceeded to a junior secondary school, except those who had already registered to take the Common Entrance Examination in 1987. Also, a sum of US\$45 million in assistance was received from the World Bank towards the financing of the necessary inputs such as materials, textbooks and equipment for the JSS programme. Again, the Curriculum Development Directorate was charged with the responsibility of producing manuscripts in various subject areas for printing by local publishers. The National Service in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Culture undertook a comprehensive mapping out of schools nationwide to provide a basis for the location of junior secondary schools in rural and urban areas. Areas found to be deficient in physical infrastructure were assisted by the government to put up junior secondary school buildings where the development of these schools was mainly the responsibility of the communities. Teachers were, therefore, trained to handle the new syllabus effectively by utilizing a larger number of post-secondary teachers in the system. Moreover, at the end of nine years of basic education, a system of evaluation based on continuous assessment plus detailed results of individual performance in the Junior Secondary School Living Certificate Examination was used to determine which students would terminate their education and which would continue in any of the five types of 3-year Senior Secondary Schools (SSS). This new curriculum was im-

plemented based on the structure and content to comprise Kindergarten Education, Primary School Education, Junior Secondary School Education (Upper Basic); the Secondary Cycle Education which consisted of Senior Secondary (Technical Institutions and Vocational Institutions) [16].

Major achievements of the 1987 New Educational Reform Programme ensured the opening and running of schools (Community Day Secondary Schools) with community involvement. Also, there was an improvement in the supply of educational inputs such as books, stationery and equipment; the organization of in-service training courses for the teachers to be abreast with the new standards and content. Therefore, teacher training college programmes were restructured and intakes were increased. More, there was an improvement in the supervision of teaching and learning at the district level as a result of the appointment of Circuit Supervisors. Moreover, pretertiary education duration was reduced coupled with the introduction of the Basic Education Certification Examination (BECE) and the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) and the West African Senior Secondary School Examination (WASCCE) to replace the General Certificate of Education Examination (GCE). This expansion of the curriculum of the JHS and SSS provides for broad-based education for the youth [16].

However, some challenges confronted that educational review. Schools in rural areas suffered disparity in the provision of educational inputs like textbooks, equipment and buildings. Also, the large numbers of untrained teachers in the rural areas negatively affected the effective implementation of the reform. There was anxiety among parents, educational personnel and other stakeholders about the quality of products of the new programme (JSS and SSS graduates). The much-trumpeted skills development did not materialize in the case of many students from the new programme. Again, the existing Senior Secondary Schools were unable to absorb the majority of JSS graduates. This brought about a new educational reform in 2007 under the President John Agyekum Kufour-led NPP government [16].

2.1.5. Educational Reforms of 2007

Following its victory in Ghana's 2000 general elections, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) instituted this educational reform. President John Agyekum Kuffour's administration was in its second term when the reform took place. A group was entrusted with reviewing the current educational system in Ghana, and Professor Jophus Anamuah-Mensah served as its head [5]. The committee's goals were to create an educational system capable of producing human capital for industrial expansion via the application of science and technology and to protect cultural identity or traditional indigenous knowledge and creativity [5]. This reform implementation started when the Junior Secondary School (JSS) and Senior Secondary School (SSS) were renamed as part of the new educational system established by the Anamuah-Mensah Committee as Junior High School (JHS) and Senior High School (SHS). The educational system of the nation now

includes a two-year kindergarten programme. To accommodate this, the Universal Basic Education was extended to 11 years, consisting of two years of Kindergarten, six years of Primary Education, and three years of Junior High School (JHS). The previous three years were replaced with a new Senior High School that was four years long [19]. The key subjects of English Language, Math, Integrated Science, Information Communication Technology (ICT), and Social Studies were covered during the first year of Senior High School [5].

Some growths and developments realised from the 2007 reform included the usage of local Ghanaian languages (the child's home language) with the English language as a media of instruction at the Kindergarten and Primary Levels. Also, the system of education was organized into three progressive levels (Basic education, Secondary cycle education, Tertiary Education). The basic level consisted of two years of kindergarten, six years of primary education, and three years of junior high school education. The second cycle level of education saw the realization of four years duration, technical, vocational, business and agricultural education or apprenticeship training of not less than one year. Tertiary education saw a facelift when the colleges of education and polytechnics were upgraded to the level of tertiary institutions, through accreditation given by the national accreditation board, by the act of parliament. Students in the Colleges of Education were certified with a Diploma in Basic Education after their course duration. This educational review saw the birth of distance learning programmes around the country [16].

However, the 2007 reforms experienced some constraints which included: poor teaching and learning resulting in poor performance of children throughout the basic school level. Also, there was inadequate access to educational services especially in the rural areas of the country, coupled with weak management capacity at all levels of the educational system. This happened partly due to unsatisfactory financing arrangements for the education sector. This shortfall has led to the issuance of the New Standard-Based Curriculum [16].

2.1.6. The Standard-Based Curriculum (SBC) of 2019

The pre-tertiary curriculum in Ghana was reviewed in 2017 by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) to address emerging or mega-trends in educational practice on a worldwide scale. The new Standard-Based Curriculum was in full effect from September 2020 as a result of this. The Objective-Based Model, which the nation has used since Ghana's formal education system was established, is paradigmatically changed by the new curriculum [20]. The Ministry of Education asserts that a paradigm change away from the objective-based curriculum and towards the standard-based was required [20]. The former was riddled with issues including overloading learners with information, failing to use the assessment and evaluation system to assist learners in learning and teaching better, and preparing learners for exams at the expense of developing critical skills for human capital development.

This new curriculum model's main goal is to emphasise the development of

the 4Rs—Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and Creativity—as essential abilities for both personal and societal growth [21]. Additionally, it aims to encourage the development of 21st-century skills including critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, innovation, communication, teamwork, cultural identification, global citizenship, personal growth, and digital literacy [22]. To aid in the development of literate, self-assured, involved, and critical-thinking citizens, the curriculum includes values like respect, diversity, equity, and a dedication to excellence.

In the elementary school curriculum, new courses like History and Our World, Our People are introduced. There are also national evaluation exams for Basics 2, 4, 6, and 8 that take the place of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) in the form of a standardized test. The new standard-based curriculum has expanded the concept of Basic Education to include senior high school [23]. As a result, the new curriculum includes instruction for learners in kindergarten through primary school as well as junior high and senior high schools (SHS). From Kindergarten through senior high school, basic education is offered. There won't be a BECE in its place. The sole significant test at the elementary level will be the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (WASSCE). However, each curriculum phase will include practice for the National Standards Assessment Test (NSAT), which will take the form of group projects and activity-based assessments. The National Standards Assessment Test (NSAT), therefore, takes the role of the current National Education Assessment (NEA), National Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), and National Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA). The JHS 3 level is now where French is introduced. Under the standard-based curriculum, extracurricular activities including group and club forms and activities are required for one hour per week. Additionally, kindergarten learning objectives have been reduced from seven to four thematic areas, including Numeracy, Literacy, The Arts, and Our World Our People (Citizenship Education). Although there are still the same amount of courses taught in Lower and Upper Primary, the ideas are now more in-depth and focused on reading and numeracy. For grades one through six in elementary school, Ghanaian history is required. Different disciplines that are taught realistically include physical education and religious and moral education. With its foundation in learner-centered teaching and learning, the new standard-based curriculum has transformed instructors into educational facilitators [23]. The learner-centered pedagogy that stresses the concepts of differentiation, scaffolding, inclusiveness, diversity, and use of ICT as a pedagogical tool is preferred above rote learning, which has no place in this environment. It provides learners with the fundamental learning opportunities needed to go on smoothly to the following stage of their education. To guarantee that “weaker” learners are prepared to advance through other phases, compensatory mechanisms through differentiation are also offered. Pre-primary (Kindergarten I to Kindergarten II), primary (Basic I to Basic III and Basic IV to Basic VI), junior high (Basic VII to Basic IX) and senior high are the progression phases (SHS I to SHS III).

This curriculum is a response to Ghana's demands for development and human resources. It focuses on the cognitive, emotive, and psychomotor learning areas as well as the entire development of the child's values and character in Ghana. The new curriculum aims to change the structure and subject matter of Ghana's educational system from theoretical to character development, fostering values and producing educated, engaged, and critical-thinking citizens (avenu-egh.com).

According to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [24], the Competencies under the Standard-Based Curriculum are:

1) **Critical thinking and Problem-solving (CP)** to develop learners' cognitive and reasoning abilities to enable them to analyse and solve problems. It also enables learners to draw on their own experiences to analyze situations and choose the most appropriate out of several possible solutions. It requires that learners embrace the problem at hand, persevere and take responsibility for their learning.

2) **Creativity and Innovation (CI)** promote entrepreneurial skills in learners through their ability to think of new ways of solving problems and developing technologies for addressing the problems at hand. It requires ingenuity of ideas, arts, technology and enterprise. Learners having this skill are also able to think independently and creatively.

3) **Communication and Collaboration (CC)** develop in learners the skills to make use of languages, symbols and texts to exchange information about themselves and their life experiences. Learners actively participate in sharing their ideas. They engage in dialogue with others by listening to and learning from them. They also respect and value the views of others.

4) **Cultural Identity and Global Citizenship (CG)** helps learners to put country and service foremost through an understanding of what it means to be active citizens. This is done by inculcating in learners a strong sense of social and economic awareness. Learners make use of the knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes acquired to contribute effectively towards the socio-economic development of the country and on the global stage. Learners build skills to critically identify and analyze cultural and global trends that enable them to contribute to the global community.

5) **Personal Development and Leadership (PL)** enhances self-awareness and builds self-esteem in learners. It also entails identifying and developing talents and fulfilling dreams and aspirations. Learners can learn from mistakes and failures of the past. They acquire skills to develop other people to meet their needs. It involves recognizing the importance of values such as honesty and empathy and seeking the well-being of others. Personal development and leadership enable learners to distinguish between right and wrong. This skill helps them to foster perseverance, resilience and self-confidence. In addition, it helps them acquire the skills of leadership, self-regulation and responsibility necessary for life-long learning.

6) *Digital Literacy (DL)* encourages learners to discover, acquire and communicate through ICT to support their learning. It also makes them use digital media responsibly.

The Standard-Based Curriculum (SBC) has at its centre the concept of three integral learning domains on which instruction and assessment are based, which include Knowledge, Understanding and Application; Process Skills; Attitudes and Values.

2.2. Summary of the New Standard-Based Curriculum in Ghana

Basic schools include kindergarten, primary school, junior and senior high schools. Both kindergarten and primary schools use the standard-based curriculum. The junior high school is using the continuation of the standard-based curriculum called the common core curriculum. The Common Core curriculum has a collection of academic standards that outline what all learners, from kindergarten through high school, are expected to understand in each grade level [25]. In Ghana, the Common Core Programme (CCP) comprised of nine subjects, including Mathematics, Languages, Science, RME (a stand-alone subject), Physical (Health) Education (not examinable), Career Technology, Social Studies, Computing, and Creative Art and Design, is now required of all learners in JHS 1 to JHS 3 (basic 7 to basic 9). The current curricula set a new type of test, the National Standard Assessment Test (NSAT), for learners in Primary 2, 4, 6, and JHS 2. In addition, the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) result will still be used to place JHS 3 learners in SHS1. The main areas of emphasis for this CCP curriculum are Mathematics, English Language, Science, Creative Arts and Computer Literacy. However, the new curriculum for the senior high school has been developed, tried and yet to be rolled out. It is expected to begin with the 2024/2025 academic year first-year learners.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design

The study was mixed-method aimed at corroboration, complementarity and triangulation. The triangulation design was used for this study. The researchers were interested in generating complementary data which was a bit different yet, on the same topic. It made access to intuitive sense data available from different sources possible. Both primary (interview) and secondary data (content analysis) were used. Content analysis was done electronically using the Google search engine (Google Scholar) to review materials from published papers, in addition to the manual analysis of the 2019 Standard Base Curriculum of Ghana. The study took into account the educational changes implemented by succeeding administrations in Ghana following its independence. The Accelerated Development Plan of 1951 with its Educational Act of 1961, the National Liberation Council's 1968 educational reforms, the New Structure and Content of Education Reform of 1974, the 1987 Education Changes, the New Educational Reform of 2007, and

the 2019 Standard Base Curriculum Reform are among the many educational reforms mentioned above. Ten interviews were undertaken with teachers in the Ayensuano District in the Eastern Region of Ghana based on the research questions. The interviews stemmed from the recommendation of [26] that the point of saturation is normally attained at the fourth to eighth interview. A semi-structured interview guide was used to gather data from some of the teachers to probe further into some issues on which the content analysis was unable to obtain in-depth information. An interview, according to [27], is a dialogue between two individuals regarding a theme of shared concern. It is better at obtaining narrative information and enables researchers to delve more deeply into people's minds [28]. Interviewees can talk in their voices and convey their thoughts and emotions during the interview [29]. The interview also allowed some level of flexibility for the respondents to express themselves in detail concerning the topic under study [30]. By incorporating triangulation in a mixed-method approach with interviews, researchers can enhance the credibility, validity, and reliability of their findings, ultimately leading to a more robust and well-rounded understanding of the research topic.

3.2. Data Analysis Method

The data were analysed using Content Review, Constant Comparative Analysis, and Thematic Analysis. Content review involves systematically examining and categorizing textual or visual data from the documents on educational reforms in Ghana. This method is particularly useful for summarizing and quantifying qualitative data to identify recurring themes, patterns, or significant content. Constant comparative analysis is an iterative process that involves comparing new data with previously collected data. As new data is collected, it is constantly compared to these existing codes, which are refined and expanded upon as the analysis progresses. This method helps in uncovering patterns, relationships, and emerging themes within the data. Finally, thematic analysis is a systematic approach to identifying and analyzing patterns, themes, or concepts within qualitative data. We familiarize ourselves with the data and then generate initial codes based on interesting features or ideas. The final result is a set of coherent and meaningful themes that represent the essence of the data. These three methods offer structured and rigorous techniques for making sense of qualitative data in a study. We chose these most appropriate methods based on the research objectives and the nature of the data we collected. Content review is effective for summarizing data, constant comparative analysis aids in understanding evolving patterns, and thematic analysis helps in identifying overarching themes that provide deeper insights into the research topic.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Interview Result

The strengths of the SBC or Common Core Curriculum include a betterment or

upgrade in the alignment of educational experiences with Ghana's educational goals. It has and will continue to improve consistency between what we teach our learners and what we assess them on. Also, we can track well our learners' progress due to the School Base Assessments (SBAs), project works and end-of-term examinations we give them or make them do. Again, the high consideration given to extra or co-curricular activities helps us to unearth and sharpen the learners' talents and skills. There is this smooth progress or transition of learners between schools and regions which helps to make education in Ghana very uniform. Equality and equity in the educational experiences of our learners are achieved through the SBC. However, this SBC has some issues of inflexibility which limits teachers' ability to tailor instructions to serve individual learners' differences. It somehow overemphasizes the standardized assessment. This does not give way to comprehensive teaching and learning but rather, narrow. The focus is on assessment items preparation or planning. The SBC doesn't respect the different learning styles of learners which impedes creativity and innovativeness both in teachers and learners. I think that for us to achieve quality education with the SBC, there must be a margin of flexibility given to teachers to help standardize the curriculum. This can be achieved when provision for teacher development and professionalism is made, for us to adapt the curriculum to the learners and their environment, including their learning styles (**Respondent 1**).

The SBC makes learning more experimental for learners. They can experience whatever they are learning in the classroom. It helps the teacher and learners to link their acquired knowledge, skills and values to their immediate environment and even beyond. Even, not only the learners but also teachers can know and understand the relevance of most of the experiences put within the curriculum. This helps in the development of critical thinking both in us the teachers and our learners. On the side, the SBC which needs more teaching and learning resources to effectively achieve its relevance lacks in most of our schools or is woefully inadequate. The implementation has become very difficult. A classic example is the unavailability of test books for the learners to read since the adoption of this curriculum in 2019 to date. Also, there was this inadequate training undertaken for us practising teachers. Even now, there hasn't been continuous in-service training for us. Therefore, my suggestion for a better education is that the government must provide the necessary resources to help us realize the full benefits of this curriculum. There should be also the continuous provision of school-based and cluster-based in-service training for us. Once every term will be better for us to efficiently and effectively utilize the new curriculum (**Respondent 2**).

It can be seen that this curriculum will help the children (learners) to acquire lifelong skills such as leadership skills. This curriculum avails itself to much action in teaching and learning. There is more drama, demonstrations and roleplays involved in its execution, which again promotes group work. Group work or collaboration is very a beneficial skill needed for the job market. The learners are

helped to acquire these from the educational experiences through the SBC. I again see that the new curriculum promotes equality, equity, belongingness and inclusiveness on the part of the learners during instructional time. Creativity is, therefore, enhanced since the learners learn from one another which stems from creative teaching from the teachers. We also build our expertise from here which helps us to practice differentiated teaching and learning. But, there are some shortfalls about the SBC. For example, there are too many standards for one level of instruction which even, and some of the standards are unclear to us. And one serious challenge is that it is difficult to implement it in deprived areas. Here, there are little to no TLMs and even subject books to reference from. When you surf the internet for information, you get too much information which most of the time they are not relevant to the levels we teach and the standards we are to achieve. Therefore, for a better way to achieve greatly from the SBC, more TLMs and necessary test books must be adequately provided for us teachers and our learners. I also think they (the government) should try and make curriculums to represent where teachers find themselves. For example, the curriculum for the forest belt should contain much farming whilst that of the coastal should contain much fishing activities **(Respondent 3)**.

This curriculum is teaching us, teachers. The idea of the 'teacher knows all' is breaking down. We can learn much from our learners now. They teach us many things in the classroom and around the school. The project-based assessment even helps us to do some research to be well-prepared before we get to a classroom. Therefore, collaborative, self-centered and other forms of learning are encouraged both in us (teachers) and our learners. It focuses more on practicality than the mere old style of theoretical learning. On the contrary, the SBC lacks a good implementation policy and planning. It is very costly. The reality is that this curriculum is less decolonized. Why should we always copy other developed nation-states who are well-off to fully or highly run such curriculums? This is because it needs good enough TLRs, and expertise on the part of teachers from the university and teacher training colleges up to pre-tertiary. We all know that there are plans underway to change the senior high school curriculum to suit the basic education curriculum (SBC) which has been in use since 2019. There are no textbooks. Some schools are still under trees and dilapidated structures. School plant is still a problem in this era. How can we fully achieve the aims of this curriculum? The government must financially and strategically review its planning and policies to sustain its maximum implementation. The government provides the necessary TLRs and motivation teachers who are the implementers of the SBC. **(Respondent 4)**.

4.2. Summary of Key Findings/Results

- 1) The current curriculum is updated and proactive as compared to the previous curriculum.
- 2) Demographic factors of respondents influenced the selection of key issues to regulate the development of the current curriculum.

3) The current curriculum requires a high level of creativity and motivation which institutions have not been well-equipped to excute.

4) There are issues of keen factors to enhance the appropriate implementation of the current curriculum, for instance, the confidence level of teachers, adequate teaching resources, and appropriate teaching strategies.

4.3. Discussion

The findings revealed that the current curriculum is updated and proactive as compared to the previous curriculum. This suggests that the existing educational curriculum has been revised and improved in a way that is more current and forward-thinking when compared to the older curriculum. The educational content and methods in use now are more responsive to the evolving needs of students and society, ensuring that students receive a more relevant and contemporary education. The finding agrees with the finding that teachers believe that the new curriculum will stimulate group work, help learners acquire lifetime skills, prepare learners for the job market, promote inclusive education, promote gender equality, and take into account Ghanaian learners' culture and society [31]. Their research also showed that the existing curriculum has a lot of burdens, is short on teaching and learning resources, and has lengthy class durations even if it doesn't have any challenging content for teachers. Teachers also agreed that the government should consult with them when developing curricula, prepare books and other teaching aids, pre-train teachers, and pilot new curricula before implementing them. In short, several instructors should be involved in the development stages of new curriculums before it is implemented.

Also, it was found that demographic factors of respondents influenced the selection of key issues to regulate the development of the current curriculum" indicates that the characteristics of the survey participants (such as age, gender, location, etc.) had an impact on which important issues were chosen for shaping the current curriculum. In other words, the composition of the survey respondents influenced the prioritization of specific topics or concerns in the curriculum development process. Apau [20] found instructors' worries regarding the application of the selected standard-based curriculum and the explanatory sequential design of the mixed-method approach in his study. For the quantitative research technique, 197 primary school teachers were chosen at random, whereas six instructors were purposefully picked for the qualitative portion of the study. According to the survey, cooperation was the basic school teachers' top issue, with concentrating and managing to rank as their second and third top concerns, respectively. He once again demonstrated how age and experience statistically predict the instructors' levels of anxiety as they apply the standard-based curriculum. However, neither the teachers' gender nor their educational backgrounds were statistically significant indicators of their worries with the implementation of the curriculum based on standards. According to the report, district training officers should train and sensitize teachers in each district to build collaborative settings in which teachers, school administrators, and

parents may work together to execute the standard-based curriculum.

The current curriculum requires a high level of creativity and motivation which institutions have not been well-equipped to execute suggests that the current educational program demands students to be creative and self-motivated. However, the institutions responsible for delivering this curriculum lack the necessary resources or methods to effectively support and foster these qualities in students. This misalignment between curriculum demands and institutional capabilities may be a challenge in providing a well-rounded education. Mahama [32] found that the majority of respondents, mostly in-service teachers in Ghana, exhibit moderate levels of creative curiosity and motivation, whereas others exhibit low levels of abstract creativity and together with critical thinking. His study focused on the creative nurturing behaviours of the standard-based curriculum of in-service teachers in Ghana. Both male and female teachers exhibited this. It was discovered that learner-teachers lacked sufficient expertise in innovative teaching, a characteristic of standards-based education. Therefore, learner-teachers must receive new training in the core-competent areas of the new standards-based curriculum to attain a higher level of curricular goals. Moreover, [33] discovered that the learner-centered approach to teaching and learning in colleges is focused more on academic content than practicum. How assessments are done also seems to make it impossible to transmit experiential learning to pre-service teachers. Because of their apparent concentration on exams, tutors find it challenging to include discovery learning into the teaching of content-related courses, according to the observation data.

Finally, it was revealed that there are key factors necessary to enhance the appropriate implementation of the current curriculum, such as the confidence level of teachers, the availability of adequate teaching resources, and the use of suitable teaching strategies. This suggests that for the successful execution of the current curriculum, several essential elements must be in place. These include teachers' confidence in delivering the curriculum, access to sufficient teaching materials, and the use of effective teaching methods. Addressing these factors is crucial to ensure that the curriculum is implemented effectively and produces desired educational outcomes. Ayebi-Arthur *et al.* [34] found that the majority of instructors are quite confident in their ability to manage the updated computing curriculum (SBC on ICT). The majority of teachers, according to their survey, have a favourable attitude towards adopting ICT tools for teaching and learning, but access to IT resources in Ghana's primary schools continues to pose a barrier to the full achievement of the SBC's objectives. The results also showed that some elementary school teachers had enrolled in academic programmes to advance their academic credentials during the previous three years, but the majority had not gone to an ICT-based workshop to meet the demands of SBC. Furthermore, [35] discovered that instructors believed they were moderately effective at engaging learners, using instructional strategies, and managing the classroom. They added that the data's tendency was not very positive because instructors who hold moderate levels of teaching self-efficacy beliefs also

apply SBC with a reasonable level of accuracy [36]. They showed that this pattern of findings indicates that instructors need to have strong self-efficacy attitudes to successfully execute the SBC. Teachers who have a moderate level of self-efficacy are less certain they can carry out their responsibilities concerning the SBC's implementation [37].

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Since Ghana's independence, it has adopted a variety of national curricula, demonstrating its understanding of the need to raise young people who can adapt to an ever-changing society and the wider globe. Due to this knowledge, the nation-state is currently implementing a standard-based curriculum that is in line with the activity form (learner-centered technique) of instruction. The goals and expectations for this curriculum are high, but for it to be implemented successfully and for all of its benefits to be realised, it must be made aware of the obstacles that must be overcome.

In addition to other educational stakeholders, teachers, educational assessors, and academics have differing opinions regarding how successful and efficient the SBC will be in Ghana. Therefore, this study suggests that professional development workshops and in-service training be scheduled for practising teachers regularly. The basic school in-service teachers will then assist in mentoring learner-teachers who are preparing to enter the teaching profession. Also, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) should infuse new concepts and practices that arise during the early stage of the implementation of the SBC. This will help to update the curriculum and the teachers (implementers or curriculum administrators) with new trends in curriculum planning, implementation and evaluation.

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Data Availability Statement

Data is available on request from the authors.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. No funders had any role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript, or in the decision to publish the results.

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