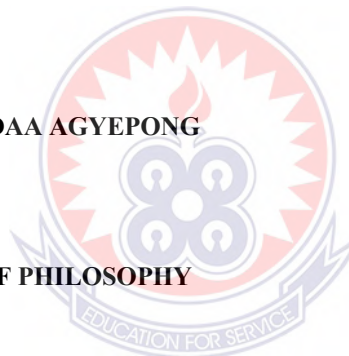


**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**PERSPECTIVES ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM OF  
THE COMMON CORE PROGRAMME AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION**

**GRACE DEDAA AGYEPONG**

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

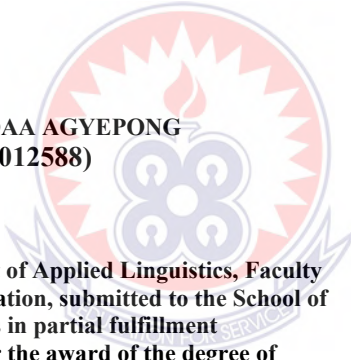


**2023**

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**GRACE DEDAA AGYEPONG  
(220012588)**

The logo of the University of Education, Winneba, is a circular emblem. It features a central white sunburst or starburst design. Below the sunburst are four stylized human figures in a circle, representing a community or service. The entire emblem is set against a red and white background. The text 'UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA' is written around the bottom edge of the circle.

**A Thesis in the Department of Applied Linguistics, Faculty  
of Foreign Languages Education, submitted to the School of  
Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
Master of Philosophy  
(Teaching English as a Second Language)  
in the University of Education, Winneba**

**JUNE, 2023**

## DECLARATION

### Student's Declaration

I, **Grace Dedaa Agyepong**, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

**Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....

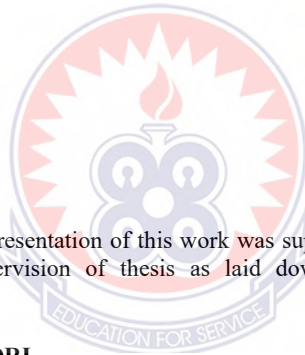
### Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

**Name of Supervisor:** **DR. KWAKU OFORI**

**Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....



## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Mr. Asiamah Ameyaw Daniel, my father, Mr.

S. K. Adjepong and my kids – Evelyn, Daniel, Evita, Emmanuel and Dorinda.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere gratitude and praise go to God Almighty for his grace and direction that carried me through this enviable feat in my life. I am highly indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Kwaku Ofori, for his wise counsel and direction towards the fulfillment of this dream. It was an honour to have benefited immensely from your tutelage. It would have been a herculean task for me to finish this thesis without your frequent reminders and interventions.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| CCP    | Common Core Programme                              |
| CCT    | Coalition of Concerned Teachers                    |
| CIDA   | Canadian International Development Agency          |
| CSOs   | Civil Society Organisations                        |
| ECG    | Electricity Company of Ghana                       |
| GES    | Ghana Education Service                            |
| GNAT   | Ghana National Association of Teachers             |
| ICT    | Information Communications Technology              |
| NaCCA  | National Council for Curriculum and Assessment     |
| NAGRAT | National Association of Graduate Teachers          |
| NDC    | National Democratic Congress                       |
| NPP    | New Patriotic Party                                |
| NTC    | National Teaching Council                          |
| PTA    | Professional Teachers Allowance                    |
| SDGs   | Sustainable Development Goals                      |
| SISO   | School Improvement Support Officer                 |
| USAID  | United States Agency for International Development |

## ABSTRACT

The English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme was implemented in January 2022 amidst a litany of challenges. The purpose of the study is to assess stakeholders' perspectives on the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme. The study adopted the qualitative research approach and used a semi-structured interview guide to obtain primary data. The study used the social constructivism theory of learning as its theoretical framework. The study revealed that societal needs, technology, deficiencies of the previous English Language Curriculum, ideology of the ruling party and leadership idiosyncrasies, national and international framework, global trends and dynamics informed the development of the English Language Curriculum. The study found that while important components of the English Language teaching such as prescribed textbooks and the library period have been excluded from the curriculum, teaching learning materials, summary writing and school infrastructure have also been sidelined. These omissions are however impeding the smooth implementation of the curriculum. The study however revealed substantially that the curriculum is adequate for the teaching of the English Language in the Ghanaian classroom because it is well suited for training learners in the English Language for national life; it has simple language and well organised scope and structure. The study also found that the effectiveness of the pedagogical approaches for teaching and learning and the modes of assessment project the curriculum as fit for purpose. The study further revealed that ineffective communication and public education, unqualified teachers and wrongful pedagogy due to insufficient resources deter the smooth implementation of the curriculum. As a consequence of the surfeit of challenges that hinder the implementation of the curriculum, the study recommends intensification of public education on the curriculum, inculcation of vital societal values in curriculum development for learners, inclusion of important teaching and learning aids in the curriculum and a reduction on over-politicization of educational issues to ensure smooth implementation of the curriculum.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

The issue of curriculum development as a mechanism of reforming educational systems in the world, particularly Ghana, is laden with many concerns. Critical amongst such concerns are the partisanship and elitist consensus in the education sector that derail the system of the requisite input by all stakeholders to ensure smooth formulation and implementation of tenets of educational curriculum. Cognizant of these, the introductory part of the study takes a closer look at curriculum development in general, its rudiments and more specifically, the English Language Curriculum under the Common Core Programme, to verify how its components and pedagogical tools can achieve the intents of English Language teaching at the basic level.

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

A major consideration of education everywhere in the world is a curriculum that incorporates societal needs, individual aspirations and global dynamics. This implies the formulation of a carefully thought-out curriculum by governments or educational institutions to accomplish the intents of society. The term curriculum, however, remains as ubiquitous and nebulous as it is vague and susceptible to a flood of definitions and a litany of interpretations. More than two decades ago, Cobbold (1999, p. 36) explained curriculum as “mix of socially prized knowledge, values, attitudes and skills together with all the activities, experiences, materials and methods deliberately designed to achieve well-defined objectives with a given group of learners.” This definition aligns concisely with the view of Shao-Wen (2012) who conceptualizes curriculum as the modes of achieving target educational goals and

objectives. In a recent scholarship, Campbell-Phillips (2020, p. 1074) also noted that curricula constitute learning guides “designed to address students’ educational needs, facilitate learners while establishing relationships between teachers and students.” Following from the foregoing, it could be put succinctly that curriculum is a blueprint that encapsulates the totality of the educational system, spelling out the philosophy, aims and objectives, contents of subjects, pedagogy, resources, among others, which are expected to shape the behaviour of learners.

Fundamentally, there are two schools of thought on curriculum – the progressive curriculum school of thought and the traditional school of thought curriculum. Whereas rationale for the traditional oriented curriculum, according to Eyisi (2016, p. 91), is essentially aimed at inculcating the ability of reading and writing in learners, the progressive curriculum is pivoted on imbuing in learners, creative application of knowledge to be able “to meet the dynamic societal needs, values, and aspirations” since, to the greatest extent, curriculum as Udom (2013) argues plausibly, acts as the avenue for solving societal problems. In our parts of the world today, even after inheriting the colonial legacy of traditional oriented curriculum, a relic of grammar education, bequeathed Africans, there is a gradual but steady paradigm shift towards problem-solving, creative and critical thinking receptive educational curriculum in African countries due to emphasis on science, mathematics and technology in the contemporary epoch.

According to Akdemir, Karamese and Arslan (2015), a curriculum, among a myriad of functions, provides strategic framework for the attainment of set objectives of the educational system, hence curriculum development is viewed largely by scholars as an essential element that is supposed to meet the needs and requirements of

stakeholders. Invariably, curriculum development involves mechanisms at various stages implemented over a specific period defined by educational institutions, a community or a country. Curricular, it must be emphasized, are time-bound; they do not exist in perpetuity since exigencies of the time such as war, pandemics or technology could cause changes. Developing curriculum encompasses designing, selection of content, planning, implementing, strategies/methods of teaching, evaluating and needs assessment (Khan & Law, 2015). This, for all intent and purposes, reinforces the assertion that achieving targets of an educational system hinges on an effective curriculum development which can adapt to changes in the community.

Fullan and Pomfret cited in Cobbold (2017, p. 3), aver that curriculum consists five components which are “changes in subject matter or material, organizational structure, role and/or behaviour, knowledge and understanding, and value internalization.” Brady and Nunan cited in Shao-Wen (2012) opined that the development of curriculum entails four key elements – objectives, content, methods, and evaluation. Considering the spate of globalisation in the current century, scholars argue that the inclusion of foreign languages like English, French, Arabic, Chinese and Swahili in the curriculum of certain countries stems from the role such languages have assumed in their foreign policy, international trade, economic growth and national development. In some instances, as the case of Ghana, Nigeria, the Gambia, Sierra Leone and Liberia, common traits could be observed in their curriculum development for learners at the Senior High Schools so they could sit for the same West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). It is obvious from the foregoing analysis that the components of a curriculum are thus not just mere enumeration of items to be delivered to learners. Rather, they constitute essential

portions of the culture, requirements and aspirations of the people that have painstakingly gone through critical scrutiny by scholars and stakeholders in education to ensure full realization of the aspirations of society.

The role of educational curriculum, though generally etched in many theories and empirical data, is country-specific as culture, global underpinnings and technology may usually occasion. The American or US curriculum is deemed the most vibrant in the world because it offers both practical and theoretical perspectives on overarching disciplines to learners by instilling independence of mind and thought in learners in order to appreciate and analyse issues, and solve problems. For instance, in other industrialized and emerging economies, as compared sharply with the developing world, such as the four Asian Tigers – Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, - and Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (the BRICs), curricular are designed to equip learners with scientific and technological skills as well as patriotism to meet the growing demands of industry and adventure. Regards the lapses in their old curricular, suffice it to mention that a body of literature including Aishammari (2013), Dagher and BouJaoude (2011) and Bashshur (2009) claim that most non-western countries including Ghana, inundated with economic challenges – infrastructural and fiscal deficits – have adopted western educational curricular with glowing emphasis on science and technology and the English Language to overturn the economic quagmire and development challenges.

The significance of the English language in Ghana's education system is minted in both history of formal education and obviously underlined by its current place as the language of instruction in schools. In respect of the enviable position of the English Language in national and international affairs, much premium is placed on the

development of the English Language curriculum in especially Anglophone countries in Africa. A cursory look at English Language as the lingua franca, the official/national language and the language of instruction in basic schools, at least from basic four, under Ghana's new educational curriculum, points to its multifaceted tasks in ensuring social cohesion and eschewing social upheavals that normally emanate from ethnicity and tribal bigotry. Mindful of this, the study sought to provide stakeholders' perspectives on the components and contributions of the English Language Curriculum under the Common Core Programme to measure its reliability as an instrument for attaining the purpose of teaching the English Language as a second language.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

A myriad of changes has occurred in the pre-tertiary education curriculum of Ghana over the last three decades. In an explicit explanation, Cobbold (2017, p. 1) asserts that these changes, "usually in the form of newly designed or revised curricula" had been orchestrated by the need to upgrade both subject matter and pedagogy as well as "recurring changes in the education system." It is equally important to note that the ideologies of political parties and their ascension to political power also necessitated changes in the educational curriculum in the Fourth Republic. Braimah et al. (2014) have decried the politicization of educational reforms right from the days of colonial rule until the Fourth Republic, where it has become more pronounced given the fact that the two political parties, the National Democratic Congress and the New Patriotic Party observe educational reforms or change of curriculum as a vehicle to attract more foreign assistance to the education sector and votes in the next election.

The NPP Manifesto for election 2016 gave hints of a possible new pre-tertiary education curriculum when they annex political power. Subsequently, after the NPP had won political power, preparations began for a new educational reform with clear intention of changing the structure and organisation of the curriculum, subject content (addition of new subjects and amalgamation of others), and the inculcation of more practical, learner-centred creative pedagogical approaches, which scholars like Zein (2017) describe as indispensable in teaching and learning.

The Akufo-Addo Administration in September 2019 implemented the standard based New Pre-Tertiary Education Curriculum to address the loopholes in the old curriculum. Later in 2022, the Common Core Programme was also implemented as part of the innovation in the new curriculum to cater for learners at the Junior High School level. In the express view of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) (2019, p. 1), while the old curriculum was examination-driven, teacher-centred, inept in its assessment modes and its content overload, the new curriculum is premised on the “4Rs – Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic and cReativity;” is focused on science and mathematics as the basis for technological advancement. Thus, it lays strong foundation for tertiary education and lifelong education.

In a further elaboration of the above situation, Torto’s (2017) study on the implementation of the old Basic School English Curriculum in the Cape Coast Metropolis in Ghana gives credence to this claim by NaCCA about the old curriculum. In her findings, she asserted that teachers in the study area encountered a litany of pedagogical challenges such as being oblivious of the aims and objectives of English Language teaching; non-participation of learners in lesson delivery among others. Contrary to this, however, in a study on teachers’ perception of the new



educational curriculum by Aboagye and Yawson (2020, p. 7), these scholars note that: “The new curriculum in Ghana has seen a complete overhaul” as enormous changes have occurred in content, approaches to teaching, learning outcomes, and others. The study, nonetheless, was concerned with the failure of the developers of the curriculum to consider the cultural imperatives of the Ghanaian child, the non-involvement of teachers in the planning stage of the curriculum and the poor state of internet connectivity in most parts of the country which were deemed hindrances to the smooth implementation of the new curriculum.

Despite a number of good reasons that can be adduced for the enactment of the new educational curriculum in Ghana, its implementation has been observed hugely as a charade, and a herculean task due to the partisan politics in education, inadequate resources, abysmal training of teachers on the new curriculum and insufficient motivation of teachers. As noted by Thomas (2012), most of the educational policies enacted by politicians fail to consider the level of expertise needed in the generation of the plans. Far too often, the implementation stage of educational curriculum especially in Ghana suffers great deficit. Alvin Powell of the Harvard News Office opined that “curriculum reform may be easier to pass in legislation than to realize in the classroom” (Campbell-Phillips, 2020, p. 1079). This is not only reflective of the lackluster support for the new pre-tertiary curriculum, but also deeply amplifies the Ghanaian experience as effective implementation of curriculum remains its bane for years now.

With respect to the dual mandate of English Language as the medium of instruction and as a subject under the Common Core Programme, as well as its status in governance architecture, business, communication, international relations and

diplomacy, one would have thought that policy makers would have put in place measures to avoid the numerous challenges that saddle the design and implementation of the Common Core Programme. This is because the challenges that were associated with the design and implementation of the new pre-tertiary curriculum for primary schools as Aboagye and Yawson (2020) have asserted, could have served as a guide or reference point.

The English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme for Junior High Schools (JHS) is perforated with a plethora of challenges. Just as the pre-tertiary English Language Curriculum, it has been observed that the developers of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme did not avert their minds to the social background of the Ghanaian child, minimal teachers' involvement in the development as well as the poor state of electricity supply and internet connectivity in most rural communities of the country which are setbacks to the implementation of the new curriculum. These challenges in the design, development and implementation of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme are, however, not limited to insufficient teacher-involvement in the development of the curriculum, inadequate training of teachers, deficient teaching resources, poor power supply and internet facilities, and politics of blame game. Considering these imminent challenges that confront all stakeholders, especially implementers of the curriculum, the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme needs to be subjected to holistic analysis to ascertain whether its components, pedagogical approaches, modes of assessment, among a host of others, are adequate to be able to achieve the general principles, aims and objectives of English Language teaching at the JHS level. Unfortunately, this subject matter finds little space in the literature. For instance, Borti (2015) used the Ghanaian experience to examine the challenges in African

classrooms, Taylor (2016) concentrated on how to reposition Ghana schools as English language learner schools, Torto's (2017) study focused on the previous basic school English Curriculum, Apau (2021), and Aboagye and Yawson (2020) explored teachers' perception of the new educational curriculum for primary schools in Ghana while Osei (2021) investigated the readiness of Ghana for the entire Common Core Programme. This study therefore seeks to assess stakeholders' perspectives on the English Language Curriculum for the JHS level under the Common Core Programme to add to the extant literature on curriculum development on English Language.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study is assess stakeholders' perspectives on the English Language Curriculum as part of the Common Core Programme for the JHS level instituted by the Akufo-Addo Administration in 2021 to replace and address pitfalls in the decade old curriculum for learners at the JHS level.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives of the study include:

1. Assessing the factors that were considered in the development of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme for the JHS level.
2. Exploring the components of the English Language teaching that were excluded or sidelined in the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme for the JHS level.
3. Analyzing the extent to which the English Language Curriculum is adequate for the teaching of the English Language in the JHS classroom.
4. Investigating the challenges that hinder the smooth implementation of the English Language Curriculum in the JHS classroom.

### 1.5 Research Questions

1. What factors informed the development of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme for the JHS level?
2. What are the components of the English Language teaching that were excluded or sidelined in the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme for the JHS level?
3. To what extent is the English Language Curriculum adequate for the teaching of the English Language in the JHS classroom?
4. What challenges bedevil the implementation of the English Language Curriculum in the JHS classroom?

### 1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study would be realized in a three-level stratum of contributing to policy making, actual practice or implementation of the curriculum by teachers and empirical data. Most often, developers of the English Language Curriculum fail to appreciate the arduous role of teachers as implementers, hence their refusal to solicit views from them. Torto's (2017) study of the implementation of the old Basic School English Language Curriculum provides clear evidence to this trajectory. Furthermore, her study points to the essence of the implementation stage of curriculum development, which hitherto was left within the remit of only a few hands to handle. On that score, the current study would serve as a blueprint to policy makers to be able to take informed policy decisions on imperatives of the teachers' voices in curriculum development, importance of workshops and seminars as well as all-inclusive mechanisms and approaches to nurture the curriculum to achieve its aims and objectives.

Sequel to the above, it is worthy of note to point out that the study constitutes a huge reference point for teachers and full resource pack for learners, not only at the basic level but also all persons who are learning the English Language as a second language. The components of the English Language, creative pedagogies or approaches to handling the English language both as subject and medium of instruction and real objectives for teaching English Language so elucidated in findings of the study definitely repose the study to a supplementary material status worth consulting by teachers and learners as well as other stakeholders.

The volume of literature on curriculum development on English Language teaching at other levels sharply contradicts studies on the subject at the basic level, especially under the Common Core Programme introduced a year ago. It is intriguing though, how researchers hardly find any new materials on related literature on the area of study within the Ghanaian context. In another development, it is rather quite easy to access extant literature on History, Social studies, Science and Mathematics as far as curriculum development is concerned. This study therefore adds to existing literature on English Language Curriculum at the basic level.

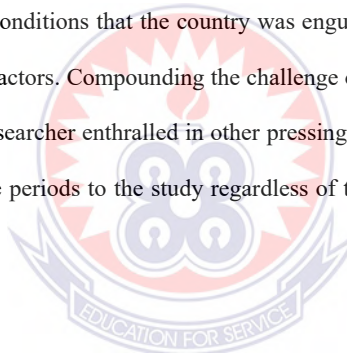
### **1.7 Delimitation of the Study**

The study dealt with the English Language Curriculum under the Common Core Programme even though a number of items on other related areas were reviewed. It specifically explored the components of the subject and the approaches to teaching the subject at the JHS level with the view of offering a perspective as to whether implementers find the curriculum useful as a vehicle for achieving certain ends. Against this backdrop and cognizant of the role of the English Language in national affairs, a nexus between the curriculum and this function is also clearly spelt out in

the study. Moreover, primary data was discovered through the qualitative approach where interviews were conducted and express opinions, knowledge and attitudes on the subject matter were duly articulated by interviewees, hence generalization of findings is a difficulty no matter how reliable and credible the data is.

### **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

Generally, the study was carried out successfully. However, a paltry of constraints impeded the early completion of the study as anticipated by the researcher. Financial challenges remained the main bane of the study given the number of resources that had to be procured within restricted space of time for the conduct of the study. This was mainly due to the harsh economic conditions that the country was engulfed in as a consequence of COVID-19 and other factors. Compounding the challenge of limited finance was the time factor where the researcher enthralled in other pressing demands of family, had to devote much of leisure periods to the study regardless of the health implications.



### **1.9 Organization of the Study**

The study has five chapters. Chapter One captures the introduction to the study where the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose, objectives, research questions, significance of the study among others are stated. In Chapter Two, the study focused on the theoretical framework and the literature review. Chapter Three contains the methodology used in the conduct of the research. It provides the philosophical paradigm, method, research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection sources and data instruments and ethical considerations. Presentation of data and analysis of findings of the study are found in Chapter Four

while Chapter Five highlights summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations as well as suggestions for further studies.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

At the heart of the literature review is a body of relevant literature on the study. First, the concept of curriculum design and development and the theoretical framework for the study are captured. Again, relevant literature on Ghana's curriculum development trajectory, components of curriculum, pedagogical approaches in handling the English Language at the basic level of education, challenges of curriculum development in Ghana among others, are reviewed taking cues from archetypical examples from global and national perspectives.

#### 2.1 Curriculum conceptualized

The etymology of the term curriculum is a Latin word "Currere" meaning "the race, the path, lap or course or runway" which one applies to reach a target or goal in a course of study (Subharani et al. 2014, p. 48). Shao-Wen (2012, p. 154) associates himself with the root of the word curriculum and explains further that in the course of time, "Currere" became a diminutive noun and assumed the meaning, "racing chariot" or "race track." However, by semantic extension, the great philosopher, Cicero, as Shao-Wen opined, associated curriculum with curriculum vitae which meant the course of one's life. Moreover, Cicero related curriculum with "curricula mentis" which metaphorically referred to "the (educational) course of the mind."

The use of curriculum became widespread in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is a widely-held belief that if the teacher is the guide, the curriculum constitutes the path. Put simply, every school system follows a list of rudimentary structure of ideas, activities and



belief systems which normally replicate the societal norms, values and beliefs, some codified while others remain conventions. These arrangements compose the curriculum. In the scholarship of Cobbold (2017), curriculum is a living document, not static but rather quite inclined to the changing dynamics of society so as to ensure products of the educational system are not alienated from the societal set up. This notwithstanding, on many occasions, due to factors relative to support from foreign entities, educational curricula of mostly developing countries are fraught with foreign elements or features which normally separate learners from their societies.

Closing the gap on tremendous technological advancement and innovation in the developed world urged most developing countries to effect inevitable changes to their educational sectors in terms of reforms to meet, for instance, the Fourth Industrial Revolution Era (FIRE) and the demand of society. In this sense, educational institutions and academic support organizations provided were therefore required to aid the design and modification of curriculum according to what exactly the students need with respect to global demands, hence the inputs of development partners are huge. Curriculum, being one of the most essential elements of an educational institution, must also constantly evolve to meet the growing and fast changing demands of its learners. On this score, these situations paved the way for curriculum developers and experts to revisit and redesign existing curricular, eventually creating a culture of change of curricular always (Alsubaie, 2016). Of great significance to the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process, is curriculum development that focuses so much on teachers' contribution to the success story of a curriculum for innovation and change (Melesse & Melesse, 2020).

## **2.2 Research Philosophy - Social Constructivist Worldview**

According to Al-Ababneh (2020) a researcher's choice of approach in a study is related to the philosophy they espouse which are linked to the nature of reality (ontology) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology). In simple terms, the philosophical worldview or paradigm that acts as blueprint to a research connotes a laundry list of belief systems that serve as a guide to one's actions (Eyisi, 2016) and the theoretical framework which underpins the study.

Social scientists subscribe to a glut of research assumptions relative to positivism, post positivism, pragmatism, social constructivism, among others. As a result, researchers with scientific lining cling to the positivist paradigm while those with normative inclinations usually embrace the social constructivist or interpretivist worldview. This study chose the social constructivist claim to knowledge as its philosophy. According to Creswell (2013), the social constructivist philosophical paradigm claims that individuals create specific meanings, denotations and understandings out of their interactions and encounters with issues and persons in the society. The idea is that meanings obtained from the experiences garnered from a particular social setting are used in the construction of knowledge, which though subjective at the early stages, becomes objective and applicable to a wide range of disciplines. On that score, knowledge then is not fixed but always under construction due to differences in norms, beliefs, interests and experiences of people and societies.

For all intent and purposes, development of the English Language Curriculum under the Common Core Programme could not ignore the specific societal needs of Ghana in the compilation of the components and pedagogical approaches of the curriculum. Obviously, the philosophy, goals, objectives, instructional resources and assessments

in the curriculum as well as meanings of concepts, exemplars and terms which compose the curriculum are therefore akin to the society for which the curriculum was made. Accordingly, the interactions and participation of the researcher and interviewees in shared experiences, processes, norms and values of the society in search of primary data are in sync with the propositions of the social constructivist worldview.

In the opinion of Eyisi (2016), the constructivist paradigm entails dialoguing, listening, taking notes and mingling with interviewees to secure the needed data. In line with this, therefore, the researcher set out to gather data from policy makers, CSOs, lecturers, teachers, parents and other stakeholders of the educational system in Ghana. Conversely, the social constructivist adheres to the belief that realities are multiple and thus, socially constructed, cognizant of the avalanche of meanings different societies could ascribe to a phenomenon. It is against this foregoing analysis that the study is fortified by the social constructivist paradigm to ascertain the validity of the English Language Curriculum as a social construct of the Ghanaian society.

### **2.3 Theoretical Framework: Social Constructivism Theory of Learning**

The study is underpinned by social constructivism theory of learning framework to evaluate the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme. In the ensuing paragraphs, the researcher discusses this theory by underscoring its assumptions, strengths and weaknesses as well as justifications for its adoption for this study.

Acquisition of knowledge or learning takes place using varying degrees of strategies, approaches or forms. It is this particular situation that constitutes the basis of the three broad learning theories – behavioural, cognitive and constructivism. Under

behavioural theory, almost all activities are centred on the teacher where the learner remains as passive as an empty vessel and only assimilates whatever is impacted. Its instruments include rote learning, repetition and recall. The cognitive theory of learning involves the processes of thinking, concept formation, reasoning and problem solving where the mental processes of the learner are highly activated. The constructivism theory of learning on the other hand, emphasizes that learning takes place within an atmosphere of learners' active participation to be able to "construct or create basic knowledge by themselves through enquiry and discovery" (Akpan et al., 2020, p. 49).

According to Akpan et al. (2020), Lev Vygotsky propounded the social constructivism theory of learning in 1968. As these scholars claim, Vygotsky viewed language and culture as essential elements in human intellectual development as well as how human beings perceive the world, which means that learning concepts are transmitted using language as the vehicle, interpreted and understood by experience and interactions within a given cultural setting. Contributing to the discourse on the social constructivist theory of learning, Kapur (2018) also noted that social construction of knowledge occurs in different forms and ways and at diverse settings. A poignant direct benefit of social constructivism theory of learning from the aforementioned is that through group discussions, teamwork, role play, dramatization or any instructional interaction in an educational system and other modes like social media platforms, religious and market places, new knowledge could be attained.

Social constructivism theory of learning is marked by a barrage of assumptions, prominent amongst which is the belief that knowledge develops out of social interactions, shared experience and not from an individual possession of a virtue or

preserve of some status. This provides one of the reasons scholars like Kelly (2012) advocate that all instructional methods should necessarily include research projects, case study, group work, brainstorming, guided discovery learning and problem-based learning. Supporting this assertion in their recent scholarship, Akpan et al. (2020) stressed that the teacher could group learners or pair them, and provide cues or guidance by reinforcing, questioning and directing all the groups or the pairs so that they can discover concepts or gather learning experiences in line with set goals.

Related to the foregoing assumption is the use of the discussion method in the construction of new knowledge. Omwirhiren (2015) has observed that the discussion method uses guided interaction to capture an exact subject matter. Therefore, as a facilitator, the teacher utilizes the discussion method to enhance learning when learners are provided the opportunity to develop their communication skills, mental skills like critical thinking, reflective thinking and assess divergent views in class or in the environment.

The discussion method can, in most cases, take the form of debates, think-pair-share, role play, dramatization, among others, of which the rules set can promote democratic thinking, personality development, tolerance, retention of knowledge, creativity and stimulation of exchange of ideas on a subject matter. Here, other complementary role of the teacher is to support, guide, monitor and provide the reinforcements needed for learners to overcome tasks assigned of particular importance to proponents of this theory is a socially constructed classroom/school that facilitates learning. This means that the school environment and the classroom setting should be replica of the society where learners could freely mingle or interact with each other and have enough resources to manipulate under a free, uninhibited and conducive atmosphere. This

situation aids the development and promotion of episodic memory, which is the capacity to reminisce or recall past events on account of an episode or encounter that surrounds or is related to it. As Kanno (2018) put it, these episodes serve as benchmarks or memory prompts that enhance retention and recall which support effective learning of concepts and other phenomena. Based on the trajectory provided above, it could be realized that social constructivism theory of learning “shifts the responsibility of knowledge acquisition from the teacher to the student and also transforms the student from a passive listener to an active participant and a co-creator of knowledge among co-learners” (Akpan et al., 2020, p. 55).

Social constructivism theory of learning is further underlined by the assumption of rational behaviour. This implies that learners are intrinsically motivated entirely by their desire to maximize their self-interests in all social activities they engage in (Stone, 2012). By implication, learners, even in social interactions, cooperating and collaborating with others, crave to the rationality project or utilitarian principle of maximizing efforts at deriving personal gains from others and events. Despite the fact that this aspect of social constructivism theory of learning is hugely under studied, it yields to the logic of active participation and social inclusion of all learners in learning tasks assigned in school while de-emphasizing the teacher-monopoly in the classroom. Social constructivism theory of learning therefore leads to the creation of interaction between teacher and students which aids the development of knowledge through the investigation process and consensus building out of individual constructions or compositions (Erdem, 2020; Howell & Annansingh, 2013).

One key strength of this theory as elucidated by Kapur (2018) is that learners are able to recognize the connection between their attitudes, norms and behavioural traits and learning outcomes. From this standpoint, learners' social and interpersonal skills are sharpened to yield effective communication in the world outside the classroom, which pay dividend to the fact that learning in seclusion does not always promote self-development. Some level of clarity is brought to this matter when Dewey argued that: "education is not an affair of telling and being told, but an active and constructive process" (Toward Social Constructivism in Pre service Education, 2006, p. 3).

Over the years, however, the social constructivist theory of learning has received some scathing attacks for inconsistencies and other setbacks in its application. Critics argue that the theory restrains the actual role and relevance of the teacher in the classroom when learners are made to organize and determine their learning activities (Kapur, 2018). Thus, in a typical situation where resources are not sufficient to aid construction of individual learning, the learners find it so difficult to interact and meet expectations of the tasks given thereby deepening their woes in an otherwise unfriendly environment. Again, if the differences between students' cultural backgrounds and intellectual abilities are too wide, it serves as a great deterrent for cooperative learning with respect to providing equal access and use of materials at their disposal where some are regarded as "great minds" and others, "lesser minds."

Although scholars are embroiled in a never-ending dithering debate about the effectiveness of social constructivism theory of learning particularly in Sub-Saharan African countries, its relevance to this study regardless of its shortcomings, is premised on two mutually inclusive principal viewpoints. Foremost, the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme is perceived as a social

document bounded by the belief systems, norms, traditions, history and philosophy of the society although it is reinforced by a science and technology education to make society better. It is these societal values that determined the aims, philosophy and competences that the curriculum aspires to inculcate in learners. Largely, aside the components of the curriculum which profess societal needs and aspirations, the pedagogical approaches cannot also alienate learners from their social roots either. On this premise, the social constructivist perspective of learning could best capture the imports of this study.

Moreover, in a globalized world, where education goes beyond the classroom and lecture theatres, Ghana's education system, has invariably, moved from over-reliance on the behavioural and cognitive approaches where students are expected to act on and merely copy behaviours of teachers by memorizing and recalling facts. Conversely, educational reforms in the Fourth Republic have the objective of principally imbuing in learners, analytical, innovative and creative skills through the mechanisms of critical thinking and problem solving, digital literacy, emotional intelligence, collaboration and cooperation, synthesizing given phenomena and interacting with both natural and artificial resources in the classroom as well as the environment to produce practicable solutions to problems. Obviously, essential to this study is the current trends in Ghana's education system and exigencies of the era including use of technology, COVID-19, etc. which downplay students' mealy acquisition of knowledge from the curriculum and teachers' guidance to rather elevating the discourses on students' interaction with social events and processes with least teacher interventions to construct new knowledge from their creative minds regardless of the topic under study. In all its shapes and forms, the theory provides for



an in-depth theoretical and empirical analysis on the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme.

#### **2.4 Curriculum Design and Development**

Mohanasundaram (2018), in *Curriculum design and development*, argued that almost all curriculum designs have four main components which include the aims of the curriculum, areas or subjects to teach to realize the aims and objectives, interconnection between target learning experiences and attainments and actions to reorient the instructional programme, learners and teachers. The study also enumerates a laundry list of areas that should be considered in curriculum development.

Educational communication is the first area of importance as far as curriculum development is concerned. According to the study, educational communication constitutes all speaking, listening and other relational constructs and concepts in relation to learning. In effect, it reflects the language used for instruction, how best to carry out evaluation of teaching, speech communication and effects of media on children and child development processes. The second area according to the study is personality development, which entails means to enhance and groom both the outer and inner self of learners to boost their self-confidence, enhance their communication, and widen their knowledge horizon, etiquettes and manners, among others.

The author also considers environmental education as an integral part of curriculum development. On this subject, he opines that curriculum allows learners to explore issues about the environment so that their actions would not endanger it. From this, learners also develop deep sense of environmental issues and garner enough skills to make informed decisions in life, being aware of almost all situations, cause and effect

relations and their positive aspects and repercussions. In essence, environmental education infuses in learners, awareness of their surroundings, what molds or could pose threats to their very existence to be able to make conversant decisions.

Additionally, the study asserts that a good curriculum development should incorporate preparation of learners for the world. This means that there should be a positive correlation between the world of learning and the world of work. Organizations and business have, at a point, decried the dichotomy between academic work and the world of work, where graduates were not fit for the job market. Religion and ethics should also form part of the factors to consider in curriculum development as a curriculum must necessarily embrace the societal values and norms and not alien cultures that isolate learners from their history, heritage and values. This standpoint is basically borne out of the assertion that curriculum is a product of society and for the consumption of society.

Furthermore, the author points out that curriculum development should cover play and use of leisure, learning to learn, initiative and self-direction, flexibility and adaptability, social and cross-cultural interaction, the principles of technical skills and constructivism, among others. These elements instill creativity, innovativeness and personal development skills of learners, which the hard and fast, routine classroom work cannot offer.

The flaw in Mohanasundaram's analysis, however, is that it gave the study fairly uninhibited global perspective and focused too much on the case of India. Consequently, no attention was paid to issues in Sub-Saharan African countries like Ghana. The present study would exploit these gaps to assess the development and implementation of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core

Programme for basic schools in Ghana. Moreover, even though the study was limited to schools in India, the issues tabled are quite substantial in the analysis of data for the current study.

In his study on teachers' involvement in curriculum development with the caption, *Curriculum development: Teacher involvement in curriculum development*, Alsubaie (2016) espoused the idea that for curriculum development to be effective, teachers must be part and parcel of the development process. With regard to the success of curriculum in schools, the study further argued that the philosophy, goals, objectives, instructional resources and assessment of an effective curriculum should be tailored along the prescriptions of the society. Therefore, since every curriculum is a brainchild of the society that produced the students enrolled in schools, curriculum developers should not be oblivious of incorporating the needs of society in it.

In the opinion of the author, curriculum development could be a herculean task, however, the involvement of all stakeholders, especially teachers who are in direct contact with learners and the instructions in the curriculum, is an essential feature of a successful curriculum development and revision. In respect of the fact that it is the duty of teachers to introduce the curriculum to students in the classroom, their involvement in curriculum development is as vital as the curriculum itself. Again, if other persons design and develop the curriculum, the study notes that teachers have to make frantic effort to know, understand and appreciate the curriculum before implementation. Further, one of the environmental factors that affect curriculum implementation and success is the teacher. On this premise, the study therefore stresses that teachers' involvement "leads to effective achievement of educational reform" (Alsubaie, 2016, p. 105).

The study further underscores some challenges teachers face as far as curriculum development is concerned. These include painstaking effort to understand and impact components of the curriculum, using the pedagogical approaches, in students. It posits that society expects teachers to follow a particular pattern, act and reflect the needs of society in schools as parents' surrogates. Meanwhile, these systems which teachers are expected to follow to exhibit societal values are quite unclear or non-existent when they (teachers) are excluded from curriculum development. Indeed, in the widely-held view of the author, some of these processes are also too complex and cumbersome to apply at the elementary stage of education because the actual inputs of teachers were ignored in development of curriculum.

However, the gap in the study is that it failed to identify the category of teachers; those at the elementary, second cycle or tertiary level, who should be directly involved in which kind of curriculum development and the specific role whether pedagogical, technical or consultancy that teachers could play, an aspect the present study would attempt exploring. The article is nonetheless relevant to the study in diverse ways. First it brings to the fore some important factors in curriculum development such as societal considerations. Again, it projects the role of teachers as inevitable personalities in curriculum development which have direct bearing on curriculum development in Ghana. The impactful role of students as stakeholders in curriculum design and implementation is equally given prominence in the paper.

Nyame (2020) on his part, evaluated the effects of school-based curriculum development (SBCD) on Ghanaian students in his scholarship, *The development of school-based curriculum in Ghana Schools: The effects on students*. He conceptualized school-based curriculum as a curriculum that caters for students'

needs while meeting the local or societal interests and national aspirations other than being a vestige of another country's culture. The study again reckons that the impact of societal values and practices on curriculum design and development cannot be whisked so easily.

The study outlines three principal reasons school-based curriculum should be introduced in schools in Ghana. Foremost, the author asserts that SBCD would meet the students' needs and interests of the school community. However, the study bemoans the fact that in most instances in Ghana, curriculum design reference learners in towns, cities and urban centres to the neglect or little consideration of those in remote areas in terms of their social settings and rural life experiences. Regarding the input of rural communities in curriculum design, the study clearly suggests that the designers can consult the rural folks – parents, school administrators, students, among others – so that their demands could be factored in the curriculum. Although this could be a daunting exercise, it is worth pursuing to bring different interests and shades of opinions, competing claims and demands of all stakeholders and facets of society – rural and urban – in a curriculum that is nationalistic.

Again, the issue of inculcating school learning within local contexts, knowledge and resources as essential component of curriculum development was underlined. In effect, the curriculum should be cognizant of the life of students in society, a meaningful connection between learners and the society and model the learning atmosphere around same. The author advances the argument that a place-conscious education synchronizes with the notion that education must meet societal needs by producing well-balanced individuals to serve society but not to alienate people from their communities. This is in line with the mission statement of the Education Act of

Ghana (Act 778) which stipulates that education should produce well-balanced individuals with the requisite aptitude, attitude, skills and values for societal good. By shaping the societal needs through the school system, as the study claims, society will become what we expect; where everyone can “participate meaningfully in the process of place-making” (Nyame, 2020, p. 119).

Moreover, the author believes that curriculum development should embrace new social issues and technology in education. This argument is therefore underpinned by the point that the curriculum should be flexible and have the potency of meeting new social issues, new knowledge, and dynamics of the world to be able to embrace use of technology as a tool for teaching and learning. Hence, provision of simple ICT equipment to teachers and schools is a precondition to facilitate effective teaching and learning if learners are to be prepared fully for the contemporary world of work.

The above notwithstanding, the gap inherent in the author’s argument is quite revealing since the author failed to avert his mind to the economic quagmire in most developing countries which makes it difficult to provide the needed resources to schools for effective curriculum implementation. Besides, it is rather a staggering undertaking to inculcate most local initiatives in a curriculum without following a benchmark because some local dynamics and culture could send a country into the Stone Age practices. Unfortunately, the study did not recognize foreign interventions in educational policies in the developing world due to foreign aid which normally relegate local dynamics and initiatives to the background in curriculum design and implementation. Regardless of the dearth in this article, the present study aims to fill in the gaps by analyzing some of the challenges of curriculum development and

implementation in Ghana within the spheres of the nexus between the global capitalist economy and developing countries.

In his contribution to empirical data on curriculum development in Ghana, Kwao's (2017) study, *Challenges of curriculum design and its implications on policy: The case of the junior high school (JHS) teaching subjects in Ghana*, analyzed the challenges of curriculum design in Ghana and its implications on policy using the subjects taught at the JHS level. The study was engrossed in finding out the missing interest areas in the curriculum which had bearing on human capital development to be able to inspire national development at the end.

In its introduction, the paper pointed out that curriculum design should be sensitive to the needs of individuals and society. Again, the framers of the curriculum should be knowledgeable about the antecedents of human development and its corresponding pedagogy that reflects contemporary education. This implies that the development of a curriculum should be based on well thought-out plans to encapsulate societal needs and the dynamics of contemporary times so as not to alienate learners from their societal norms and the world at large.

Based on the idea that some subjects at the JHS remain examinable while other are not, the study, put out some recommendations for policy makers to consider in the design of a curriculum. First, the author argues that all subjects must be given equal preference and attention to serve the intended purpose of building three domains of education – cognitive, affective and psychomotor – so as to develop varied talents and potentialities of students towards human capital development, placements and job opportunities.

Moreover, since the design of curriculum involves experts, the study suggests that experts in various fields of endeavour or disciplines must be included to ensure that all subjects are given equal attention and not to place some students at a disadvantaged end because of their preference for certain subjects. Related to this proposal, the study believes that it would be worthwhile for all stakeholders of education to be involved in curriculum development to enhance smooth implementation.

According to the study, the duration for JHS and SHS are quite short for the completion of the contents in the curricular. Therefore, if the durations at both ends are extended to four years, it would serve the educational system well. Simply put, “the curriculum at the JHS level should be revised to reflect the best practices, prospects and opportunities for students” (Kwao, 2017, p. 93).

In the purview of the researcher, the implementation of the Common Core Programme is riddled with unmitigated structural and pedagogical deficits which need serious redress. As such, Kwao’s scholarship provides a very clear outlook of the current challenges and therefore, would be very useful to the present study in various ways.

### **2.5 Pedagogy of English Language Teaching**

Anatory’s (2018) scholarship, *The use of modes in teaching English language: A case of secondary schools in Tanzania*, using the mixed method (both qualitative phenomenology and quantitative survey), investigated the use of modes/style in teaching the English Language in schools in Tanzania. On types of visual modes employed in teaching the English Language, the study focused on power point presentation, overhead projector, black board, paper handouts and flip charts. The rest



are video, artifacts and phonographs. The results showed that teachers made use of the black board than all other visual modes in lesson delivery which give impetus to the point that the teachers employed traditional approaches to teaching. Thus, because teaching aids are not in existence, they use what is at their disposal to achieve intended goals.

Some of the oral modes explored by the study included oral presentation by students, lecture method by teachers, question and answer method, role play, discussion, singing, reading and storytelling. The study discovered that teachers used students' oral presentation, question and answer, and reading methods most of the time as the multimodal methods of teaching the English Language. These methods, the study asserts, are employed by teachers due to laziness or their insufficient training in other approaches.

On written modes, the study observed that teachers used books, flash cards, moving images, dictionaries, still pictures, newspapers, flyers and brochures. Books turned out to be used more by teachers as a written mode in teaching. This shows that although the teachers of the English Language use several written modes to teach, the use of books was more pronounced, which is only a confirmation that the traditional modes of handling the subject still persists. The study asserts that teachers need to be quite innovative in their use of written mode and not to always succumb to the use of only textbooks in teaching.

The study noted that teachers needed training on the use of multimodality in the teaching of the English Language. Furthermore, the authors were worried that qualified teachers to handle the subject were inadequate compared to the large class

sizes and so called on policy makers to take action on that. Also, the study called on the Tanzanian government to do something about the language policy in education.

The current study draws a lot of inspirations from this article though it tells the story about English Language teaching in Tanzania. Indeed, it would facilitate how the Ghanaian story could be told through analysis of primary data.

In a study on pedagogy titled *Pedagogical knowledge in English language teaching: A lifelong-learning, complex-system perspective*, Dadvand and Behzadpoor (2020) assessed how pedagogical knowledge could promote a lifelong-learning. The study employed a mixed method, used a systematic review of the literature and semi-structured interviews with experienced teachers, teacher educators and conducted a survey using 336 practising teachers in Iran. At the end, the study developed a nine-component model on pedagogical knowledge.

These are knowledge of culture and cultural differences which includes local culture of where the school is sited, English culture, and the similarities and difference that exist between them; some attributes of the learners encompassing learners' social backgrounds, students' language skills and abilities, students' interests and motivation and affective/appropriate student- teacher relationship; knowledge of second language learning such as the processes involved in language learning, how to facilitate students' cooperative learning, progress and difficulties of students learning activities and how to deal with their errors and recalcitrant behaviours; knowledge of second language teaching by the use of educational goals and objectives, various teaching approaches, teaching techniques and methods and lesson planning as well as knowledge base for technology.

According to the study, the other types of pedagogical knowledge are knowledge of assessment or means of testing students to embrace such areas as theoretical basis of language tests and assessment procedures, knowledge base for test/exam design, knowledge base for test/exam grading and different methods for evaluating progress and achievement. The last group comprise knowledge of classroom management encompassing classroom time management, classroom order and instructional management; knowledge of educational context of which curriculum content and curriculum goals, institution/school policies, instructional materials and available teaching/learning resources; knowledge of democracy and principles of equity, equality, inclusion and diversity like sociopolitical/cultural context of instruction, discrimination and marginalization and the power dynamics associated with language use; and knowledge of (professional) self-assessment, professional relations and knowledge base for professional development.

As the authors claim, if teachers are abreast of the pedagogical knowledge on content, teaching, learning, classroom management, students, culture of the students and the English Language, they stand at a better position to design appropriate pedagogical approaches in their lessons to be able to achieve target goals. The study was carried out in Iran but it is quite imperative for assessing the Ghanaian situation in the contemporary era.

Awuah (2022), on his part, examined the kind of pedagogical approach and variety of English to use in Ghanaian classrooms. In his article, *English language teaching: Which approach should we use in our Ghanaian classrooms?* he argues that the spread and use of English language worldwide has caused an upsurge in different varieties of English with its attendant deficit of hardly being able to determine the

norms of Standard English (SE). Thus, the globalized spread of English language has obviously impacted English Language Teaching (ELT) where there exists no uniform target variety of English as language of instruction in schools and persistent challenges in “setting suitable teaching goals and objectives commensurate to teaching and learning outcomes” (Awuah, 2022, p. 2017). However, the author advocates a pragmatic and humanistic approach for English Language Teaching (ELT) in schools in Ghana.

In the opinion of the author, English has assumed a perpetual existence in the affairs of Ghana as the official language, the medium of instruction in schools and for the conduct of government business as witnessed in parliament, the courts, the civil service, the media, preaching in some churches, among others. Given its role and variety as a global phenomenon, English Language Teaching is so encumbered with colossal challenges. Awuah (2022) therefore asserts plausibly that at present, non-native speakers of the English language outnumber the native speakers, however, native speakers control the nature of English Language Teaching (ELT) by prescribing, among others, the standard norms, influencing curriculum development and providing resources for teaching and learning especially in developing countries like Ghana.

Worst yet, at the pedagogical level, the study claims that the influence of native speakers on ELT is quite pervasive because curriculum development pays little or no attention to local contexts; test development and assessment in general are highly incompatible with local teaching and learning philosophy, goals and objectives; unjustified stress on learners for appreciating a specific variety of inner-circle English to total disregard for more popular localized varieties, among others. These situations

have great repercussion on teachers and learners as well as the approaches and methods in ELT. Mostly, these ineptitudes in ELT have far-reaching consequences on learners and society as they lead to failures and disruptions of English Language teaching and learning goals and objectives.

With due cognizance to the above lapses in curriculum development which have unnerving bearing on English Language Teaching, the study espouses the idea that English Language curriculum and resources should be creative to meet the escalating complexities surrounding English Language pedagogy as well as local content. Accordingly, the author's argument is in favour of the adaptability factors in ELT. By and large, this means factors that would ensure that the various aspects of ELT curriculum and materials, methods and approaches are adhered to achieve intended purposes. Among the features of the adaptability approach is usage of only English Language in classrooms (immersion). In this sense, learners have to be encouraged to express themselves freely in the way they want in daily activities like laughing, joking, and expressing their opinions in English.

Additionally, as the writer argues, English content courses or subjects should be taught exclusively using the English Language. This is usually called direct method which is only possible if students are given enough exposure to English through the vehicle of English-speaking environments within a non-native context. Taking inspiration from the functional dimensions of language use, Awuah (2022, p. 225) suggests that "curriculum designers or language teachers should organise and structure the language curriculum in ways that would fall in line with the theory of language as social action." He therefore identifies four areas of language use on which

learners' knowledge could be built or broadened – text structure, experiential, interpersonal, and textual grammar. Accordingly, as he opined:

*Each of these four areas serves various aspects of language use in everyday life. Knowledge of text structure, for example, would help learners with different types of written and spoken texts in different cultures and contexts. Knowledge of experiential grammar provides learners with grammatical resources for representing the world, making them aware of the people or things, processes, and circumstances involved in language use. And, while interpersonal grammar relates to knowledge of the successful incorporation of linguistic choices based on various social relations and attitudes, textual grammar helps learners organize the message so as to facilitate the smooth flow of information (Awuah, 2022, p. 225).*

Awuah (2022) avows that a careful scrutiny and systematic analysis of the four areas of language use could provide important insights into designing curriculum for English Language learners. Quite regrettably, Awuah's scholarship was obviously silent on the inadequacy of teaching resources that could augment ETL in Ghanaian schools and the role of development partners to the extent of prescribing the contents and structure of the curriculum. It is however certain that the present study would find this scholarship relevant in exploring the pedagogical aspects of the new curriculum under study.

In their scholarship captioned, *Overview of pedagogical changes in the teaching of English language*, Ene et al. (2013) examined the pedagogical changes in language teaching and learning particularly as it affects English Language Teaching (ELT) developing countries like Ghana and Nigeria. For more than a decade now, the pedagogical approaches to English Language Teaching have undergone some remarkable changes, which range from the use of the traditional methods of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) to the more current Communicative Language

Teaching (CLT). The study therefore discusses in detail each of these pedagogical paradigms.

The first pedagogical approach identified by the study is the Grammar Translation Method (GTM). For until fairly recently, this method was widely used in the teaching of English Language in order to achieve the mental dexterity needed for further education at the higher level. It is also referred to as the Classical Method. According to the study, this method is normally used in the area of understanding grammar and translation, where English grammar is translated with the aid of local languages.

The Direct Method, which is an improvement on the Grammar Translation Method emphasizes that foreign language teaching must be done in that language only without any translation in local dialects or linking meaning in local languages to the target area of study. The authors argue that the Direct Method became popular in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century particularly in private language schools in Europe.

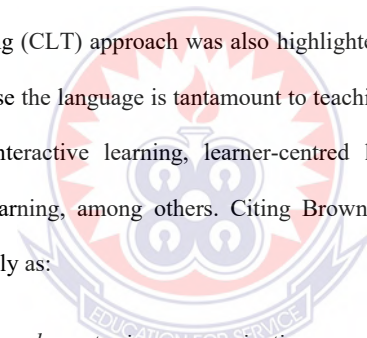
The next method identified by the study is the audio-lingual method. Although this method adopted most of the principles of the Direct Method, it also lays emphasis on linguistic patterns of language and incorporates good habit-formation by learners. It also involves extensive mimicry of patterns and memorization of language rules. In effect, the teacher is the focal point for the teaching and learning process and learners are only expected to follow suit.

Discovery or expository learning is yet another approach presented in the study. Under discovery learning, students take charge of their learning by creating their own language rules through interactions in groups using socially friendly resources which synchronize with the manner they learn their native language at an early age. The main role of the teacher here is to guide or facilitate learning in the classroom.

Learners therefore become actively enthralled in all processes and procedures to be able discover new knowledge due to the free atmosphere in the school.

The Audio-Visual Method (AVM) was equally identified as one of the modern pedagogical approaches to the teaching of English Language as a foreign language. It advocates the use of visual stimuli and emphasizes spoken language. More than two senses are sensitized when the AVM is used since it appeals to learners' sense of hearing, sense of sight and sense of touch (feeling) as well as the aesthetic sense. This aids processing of information in the English Language to native languages because learners have the benefit of using several senses in their own translations.

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach was also highlighted in the study. Here, teaching learners how to use the language is tantamount to teaching them the language itself. CLT involves interactive learning, learner-centred learning, cooperative learning, content-based learning, among others. Citing Brown (1994), Ene et al. (2013, p. 96) capture CLT aptly as:



*Beyond grammatical discourse elements in communication, we are probing the nature of social, cultural, and pragmatic features of language. We are exploring pedagogical means for 'real-life' communication in the classroom. We are trying to get our learners to develop linguistic fluency, not just the accuracy that has so consumed our historical journey. We are equipping our students with tools for generating unrehearsed language performance 'out there' when they leave the womb of our classrooms.*

The study used the case of Nigeria to identify these pedagogical instruments. However, the findings are so transferable to what pertains in Ghana and other developing countries where the traditional methods of teaching the English Language in schools have not parted ways with the contemporary times, hence the need to shift the focus to the modern pedagogical approaches. The literature is very pertinent to the current study which seeks to address the pedagogical approaches and their relevance



in the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme. All the methods tabled above would impact on the current study in diverse ways.

Taylor's (2016) study, *Repositioning Ghana schools as English language learner schools*, also assessed the pedagogical approaches which could improve the teaching of the English Language in Ghanaian schools. Unlike scholars like Awuah (2022) who proposed the exclusive use of English in English Language teaching, the author offers quite a myriad of divergent strategies to handle English in Ghanaian schools to improve students' academic performance and proficiency in English.

The study argues in favour of the content and language integrated learning. This approach entails using learners' home language to teach content areas of a subject. The argument is that while there is the need for students to acquire the English Language for specific purposes, they also need to comprehend academic concepts in order to progress or succeed in school. According to the study, learners, especially children, are able to grasp educational concepts better when taught using the local language than in English. Although this contradicts the English-only policy in teaching the English Language, it facilitates easy understanding of concepts.

According to the study, another approach to English Language teaching is the integrated content-based instruction. This strategy emphasizes that students should be provided authentic activities and real-life experiences which demand the use of academic language in relevant ways. Accordingly, as the author claims:

*An integrated approach to content-based instruction derives learning objectives from the academic content, language content, and ongoing assessment of the student's language skills. To foster communication, much content-based language instruction should be activity centered. Implementation of this approach in Ghana should give attention to teaching concepts, computation, applications, and problem-solving. This will take into consideration the characteristics of the teacher, the learner,*

*the setting, and the relevancy of the students' local dialect to the English language* (Taylor, 2016, p. 11).

Academic language proficiency forms part of the pedagogical approaches to English Language teaching. Academic language is conceptualized by Taylor (2016, p. 11) as:

*... the oral, auditory, visual, and written language proficiency required to learn effectively in school; it is the language that students need to follow instructions and to complete assignments" and not necessarily the strict adherence to the English language required by the government for educational purposes.*

With recourse to the foregoing, academic language is deemed the language of the school, any language students are comfortable with which facilitates the academic skills needed to achieve English proficiency. As the author argues, a properly developed academic language aids students' ability to understand standardized tests and the English Language at latter stages.

The study was also not silent on the sheltered instruction approach to English Language teaching. This pedagogical approach consists a number of teaching strategies developed for teachers and aimed at lowering the linguistic demands of the lesson without compromising on the integrity of the subject matter. Under this approach, however, a variety of learning styles are used to ensure teachers adjust the language demands of the lesson in diverse ways, not excluding modifying speech rate and tone, and employing context clues and models widely. As Echevarría and Graves (2001) have contended, different varieties of sheltered strategies — use of visuals, manipulatives and speech adapted to the level of students' language proficiency, controlled vocabulary, collaboration among students, among others — can be applied in lesson delivery to promote English Language proficiency in Ghana.

Learner-centred instruction that values students' first languages and cultures is also a key pedagogical tool that could be used in English Language teaching. This approach is premised on the idea that Ghanaian students come from different homes with diverse cultural backgrounds, customs and values. Tapping learners' cultural background inures to relevance of instruction to learners to be able to close gaps between the English Language and local dialects. Indeed, without connecting the lesson to the students' cultural values, norms and beliefs might adversely affect intergenerational wisdom, damage individual and community esteem, and children's potential non-mastery of their home language or the English Language.

Another strategy is the integrated skills approach which embraces all four language skills –listening, speaking, reading and writing – simultaneously to enhance English Language teaching. Scholars argue that reading and writing skills support each other while oral language (listening and speaking) also facilitate literacy (reading and writing). According to the author, “teachers in Ghana should develop their lessons in a way that allows students to understand the English text by listening, speaking, reading, and writing collaboratively” (Taylor, 2016, p.14). Through this approach, students are able to use language in communication and in the natural setting.

Students' collaborative learning, according to the study, constitutes another approach to English Language. Where students are provided opportunity to interact in class, they learn in meaningful and authentic ways. For most part, this remains the import of the social constructivist theory of learning whereby social interactions aid construction of new knowledge. Thus, cooperative learning, group work, discussions, among a host of others, assist language acquisition. Besides, cooperative learning consisting the five significant elements – positive interdependence, individual

accountability, interpersonal and small group skills, face-to-face interaction, and group processing, has huge impact on English Language teaching and learning.

The last pedagogical approach suggested by the study is the teacher collaboration approach. It stands to reason that not only do students benefit from collaborating with each other, but also gain when teachers collaborate in the planning and delivery of instruction. Teaching and learning thus requires minimal intervention by the teacher as a facilitator. There is no gainsaying that at certain intervals, teacher-involvement may be required in tasks assigned learners to ensure effectiveness, reinforcement and assessment of learners' performance.

In its conclusion, the study argues that English as the only language of instruction at the higher levels of the education system has been counterproductive and needs critical assessment. In a heterogeneous society like Ghana, as the study avers, frantic effort must be put in place to integrate cultural backgrounds and values in the teaching of the English Language to enhance students' academic success. As the author explains: "The Ghanaian language and English language should not be viewed as mutually exclusive, but rather the Ghanaian language should be used as a resource to facilitate English language development in school children" (Taylor, 2016, p. 16). Despite the fact that the study has the literary gap of not considering the integration of technology in the teaching of English Language in the contemporary epoch, the study presents crucial pedagogical approaches for handling the English Language in Ghanaian schools, which are relevant for the present study.

## 2.6 Challenges of Educational Reforms and Curriculum Development in Ghana

Braimah et al. (2014) evaluated the fickle nature of Ghana's education system in the post-colonial era in their paper, *One state, two school systems: The instability of Ghana's school system since the fourth republic*, mainly as a consequence of over-politicization of issues especially in the Fourth Republic. Evidentially, it is the content and structure of the educational system that is largely affected by political nuances. These scholars contend that the "instability in the structure and content of Ghana's educational system looks more of a political jingle as well as military musical chairs rather than based on national consensus aimed at mitigating the many challenges facing the school system" (Braimah et al., 2014, p. 145).

The study discovered some challenges with the new Education Reform that brought the JHS and SHS concept in the early 1990s. It argued that provisions were hardly made to secure enough trained and qualified technical and vocational teachers as well as textbooks for the management of the schools. The authors noted that while some of the schools had no teachers, those school with teachers also lacked teachers who could handle the technical and vocational subjects which are part of "the core component of the new school system and a departure from the old school system" (Braimah et al., 2014, p. 149).

Again the study claimed that:

*textbooks, teaching and learning materials, machinery for the vocational and technical education were either not available or inadequate. Indeed, most schools got their first year textbooks in the second year and the second year textbooks in year three. The effect was that the teachers and students never had access to third year textbooks before they sat for the final examination. The net effect was the poor results of which 8,875 representing 21.08 per cent could not pass in any subject Finally, teachers were equally as confused as the students of the New Education Reform. Syllabi of the various programmes were not made available to*

*teachers on time. Accordingly, they resorted to teaching using the old syllabi of the old school system in the whole of the first year of the implementation of the New Reform programme. Again, teachers were not given any form of training in the pedagogic and the nature of the New Education Reform Programme. All these contributed to the poor results of the first batch of the New Education Reform in Ghana (Braimah et al., 2014, p. 149).*

The study enumerates a litany of factors that occasion the haphazard change of curriculum or educational reforms in general in Ghana. First amongst these factors is the intent of the state to build an effective economic security in an era of globalization. Earlier educational reforms orchestrated by global powers were touted to aid economic growth and development in developing countries. Nonetheless, these reforms instead of serving their intended purpose, worked rather to the disadvantage of these vulnerable countries by making them vestiges for manipulation in the hands of all sorts of international financial institutions. Hence, to drift from this trend, developing countries including Ghana continue on the trajectory of educational reforms in search of the ideal school system.

Again, the study argues that the ideologically-inspired policy paradigms of the two political parties –the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), have accounted for the turbulence in the design and implementation of educational reforms. Public policies not excluding those on education are affected by party ideology. Unfortunately, this phenomenon of recourse to party ideology in the educational system normally reject the complexities and competing interests of different groups which are significant to the policy decision making to ensure the public embrace the reform. In the Fourth Republic, as the study reckons:

*education became embroiled in politics and a source of major political campaign messages of the various opposition political parties in the 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008 and the 2012 general elections all in a desperate attempt to identify with the electorates in order to garner votes to capture*

*the levers of government and to implement 'an acceptable' school system. Accordingly, education became the epitome or central political technique based on individual political and ideological consideration since Ghana's fourth republic to canvass for votes (Brammah et al., 2014, p. 149).*

In conclusion, the authors argue that the persistent education reforms which are quite synonymous with alternation of political power constitute a major causal factor in attempting an explanation of the turbulence in Ghana's school system although global trends play a role. The gap inherent in the study stems from the point that it was carried out in 2014 when the NDC was in power but eight years on, the NPP have annexed political power, hence, a lot of issues have occurred during these latter years including the implementation of the Common Core Programme. The present study would consider issues presented in this article and those that have occurred under the Akufo-Addo Administration. This article, therefore, is a reference point for analyzing the design and implementation stages of the English Language Curriculum under the Common Core Programme.

Using the qualitative method in the conduct of their scholarly work on Ghana's educational reforms titled, *Educational Reforms in Ghana: Past and Present*, Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh and Addo (2016) deconstructed issues on the structure of Ghana's educational system, the major educational reforms introduced since independence and the basic reasons for the implementation of different reforms by the various regimes. The study looked at the Accelerated Development Plan of 1951 and Education Act of 1961, Reforms of the National Liberation Council, the New Structure and Content of Education of 1974, the 1987 Education Reforms, and the Educational Reforms of 2007.

More generally, the study argues that the Ministry of Education assisted by the Ghana Education Service (GES) is charged with the duty of managing educational issues in the country. Yet, the authors are skeptical whether institutions like the non-partisan GES could initiate reforms which would end up being duly adopted by the government without recourse to party interest and political expediency. Indeed, considering the situation where the Director-General of GES could be dismissed at the behest of the president anytime, the study points to the fragility of the GES to embark on an independent reform devoid of the usual partisan politics.

The study further highlights some political considerations that normally underscore educational reforms in Ghana. It notes with grave concern the politics in Ghana's education system where it is regarded as an electioneering vehicle. The study cites for instance that while the NPP promised "Free Education" in the campaigns leading to the 2008 elections, the NDC also emphasized "Quality Education" to canvass for votes. In respect of this, the study believes that even though politicians manage educational reforms, technocrats or individuals with specialized knowledge should be allowed to have critical say on reforms.

The study concluded by asserting that the issue of classroom size, students' ratio to teachers, teacher absenteeism and financing of educational activities, among others, continue to plague the education system of the country. However, the politicking in education seems to suggest no end in sight on these challenges. The study unfortunately failed to address the issue of external interventions in educational reforms due to foreign support. It also could not touch on the cultural and economic dynamics as well as the non-involvement of other stakeholders like teachers and parents in educational reforms which the present study would highlight and analyze.



Borti (2015) used the Ghanaian context to explore the challenges in African classrooms in the influential paper dubbed, *Challenges in African classrooms: A case study of the Ghanaian context*. According to the study, developing countries like Ghana are burdened with challenges in the classroom as a result of poverty, ignorance, conflict, inadequate material and financial resources, inadequate professional human resource, among others, which affect appropriate teaching methods in English Language teaching.

The study found out that despite the fact that teacher's support, confidence, knowledge, skills and organization have great impact on the attainment of the objective of a lesson, teachers depended exclusively on the course book and delivered lessons mainly in line with the content in the curriculum. According to the study, communicative activities and other effective pedagogical approaches to make lessons lively are absent.

During lessons, the authors claim that the arrangement of the learners in class was in frontal position (traditional classroom arrangement) and the teacher always in front of the students. Again, as teacher-centred classrooms, the teacher chiefly did a chunk of the talking "leaving the students to answer a few questions that were occasionally asked" (Borti, 2015, p. 34).

Another observation of the study was that students were expected to remain silent until the teacher called them to answer questions. Since the atmosphere in the classroom was not relaxed, students did not normally, out of their own evolution, try to answer questions. It was the preserve of the teacher to call on students to answer questions compulsorily while other students stood up without being given the chance

to respond to the questions. The author claimed that sometimes, wrong answers provided by students are met with instant rebuke.

Even though most educationists claim that teaching aids support effective acquisition of knowledge, the study also revealed that apart from the blackboard, no teaching aid was employed in teaching and learning. Accordingly, lessons were not accompanied with visual representations and so learners were not active in class most of the time because the authors even observed from the study site that there was “no electrical connections to allow for the use of audio-visual aids like computers, televisions or tape recorders” (Borti, 2015, p. 32). Compounding this problem, due to inadequate number of textbooks, students had to be put in triads and pairs to facilitate lesson delivery. Talking the seating arrangements of learners into consideration, pairing students to use textbooks does not yield the dividend of proper English language acquisition for communication.

Among its recommendations, the study suggested that in-service-training programmes should be carried out frequently for English Language teachers so that they would be abreast of the current trends in language teaching and appropriate methodology. The study is significant to the present study on grounds that it elucidated some of the challenges that currently affect schools in Ghana. A lot of inspiration would be drawn from this study in analyzing the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme.

Djebaili's (2022) article, *Reforming the educational system in Ghana under the fourth republic: A reality or a myth?* evaluated educational reforms in Ghana's Fourth Republic and wondered whether it is a reality or a myth. The study advances a number of challenges associated with the reforms even though the reforms were well

intended. The Ministry of Education according to the study, finds it extremely complex to deal with these challenges and so major policy initiatives end up in striking paradoxes.

The author opines that there was the expectation that contributions of foreign donor partners would relieve the education sector of the plethora of lapses and promote progress. Yet, countless management and financial inefficiency and ineffectiveness resulted in minute outcomes. Largely, the reforms targeted form more than content, which is the substance. As the study indicates, a “high school enrolment did not only mean higher numbers of learners at school, it had to do with better syllabuses, an effective teacher training and the availability of school items as well” (Djebaili, 2022, p. 53). Statistically, therefore, upsurge in school enrolments did not orchestrate quality in the education delivery as other equally important components that must accompany enrolments are unavailable.

Djebaili (2022) explains that policy makers charged with educational change were somewhat not the most qualified people to launch effective school reform schemes. In the view of the study, politics was one of the principal factors that greatly hindered tangible progress in the Ghanaian educational sector. Based on these challenges, the study argues that the education system is fraught more with pitfalls than real success. Accordingly, all issues on the educational radar are subject of intense political discourses which leaves the real issues untouched.

The article is important to the present study in so many ways. It highlights the real challenges of educational reforms in the Fourth Republic which has serious or real impact on the new curriculum implemented in 2021. Also, recent happenings in the

educational sector point to some of these challenges which need critical evaluation by the present study.

Contributing to the literature on educational policies in Ghana, Alhassan's (2020) scholarship, *Evaluation of Ghana's 2007 Educational Policy: Effects on Education in the Upper West Region*, investigated the nexus between the provision made for free and compulsory education in the 2007 educational policy of Ghana and its actual implementation in the Upper West Region of Ghana. The results showed that although there was a remarkable progress in the implementation, certain challenges thwarted the overall success.

According to the study, some of the factors that affected the implementation process included the quest to increase enrolment without corresponding consideration of the quality which hampers learners' progress; insufficient motivation of teachers which affected their desire to perform their duties assiduously; governments' inability to provide capitation grants, provision of meals for learners under the School Feeding Programme and inadequate school infrastructure and resources. The rest of the challenges are the lack of governments' commitment or political will to embark on certain policies in education; some communities have no nearby schools, hence, learners walk miles to access education; inadequate training of teachers; lack of public education; inadequate supervision in schools; frequent change of government; among others. On this score, the study asserts that there is a huge gap between policy initiation and the actual implementation on the ground.

Regarding the foregoing findings, the study recommended that internally generated funds must be utilized in the maintenance of the school environment to enhance a learner-friendly school environment. Public education through a public forum, during

festivals and durbars on educational policies can aid the implementation process. Bye laws can also deal with parents who refuse to enroll their wards in school. The study centered primarily on the 2007 education reform, however, the current study would find the paper useful in its analysis of the challenges that confront the implementation stage of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme.

In a paper titled, *Factors influencing Ghanaian public junior high school students' performance in English Language, Mathematics and Science and its implications on national policy progression*, Davis, Ntow and Beccles (2022) examined the plethora of factors that influence Ghanaian public junior high school students' performance in the English Language, Mathematics and Science and its implications on national policy progression. In all, the study sampled ninety-eight (98) teachers and nine-hundred and eighty-two (982) JHS 2 students from three districts of the Central Region of Ghana for the quantitative

Foremost, the study argued that the inability of teachers to complete the contents of the curriculum was due to the numerous co-curricular activities in the curriculum. On the co-curricular activities like sports and debate competitions, the study maintained that they contribute to loss of instructional time in the classroom; hence, the situation has the cumulative effect of untouched cognitive gaps in each of the subject areas over time. Simply put, learners have little time to learn these major subjects which have rippling effect on performance of students. Worst yet, the nature these co-curricular activities are organized most often amount to just waste of instructional time as students' potential talents are not tapped but are rather given way to foreign and unmeritorious games.

Related to the foregoing issue, curriculum overload and meagre time allocation to lessons were also suggested as factors which account for the poor performance of students. For this reason, teachers are hardly able to complete the contents of the curriculum. Meanwhile, the examination body, WAEC, sets questions to cover all topics in the curriculum without due regard to schools in certain parts of the country and the dire consequences of social, economic and cultural factors, for instance, that effect their education.

Davis et al. (2022) asserted that the curriculum implementation is further thwarted by teachers' huge challenge in handling certain topics. Therefore, apart from the curriculum overload, it can be deduced that teachers' inability to handle certain topics results in not being able to cover all areas of curriculum. The study argues further that such a situation demands continuous professional development programmes to enhance both the content and pedagogical skills of teachers. It could however be noted that workshops to provide such trainings to teachers in Ghana have occurred not without the usual ineffectiveness and ineptness in the operations of the GES.

The study contended that there was a huge disparity between educational policies and actual practices. On automatic progression of students' policy, the study asserted that it did not have fruitful impact on performance of students in examinations. Indeed, most of the students who needed to repeat their classes but were promoted to the next stage found it difficult to understand certain fundamental concepts, hence performed poorly in class.

The study was also concerned about the insufficiency of teaching resources and facilities to carry out practical activities on topics. The curriculum demanded that almost all topics should be handled in a practical way to ensure easy comprehension

by students, however, the complementary resources to support teachers' lesson delivery posed serious problems. Nonetheless, the motivation to teachers to improvise resources in teaching hardly existed among the teachers. Confronted with this challenge, teachers either handle the topics theoretically or fail to teach topics that involve so much teaching and learning resources.

The writers recommended that the time allocation for teaching these major subjects must be considered. Again, since co-curricular activities cannot be wiped off, there is the need to secure additional time for the loss in instructional hours to be able to complete the curriculum. They also deemed constant professional training for teachers as worthwhile in the implementation of the curriculum. Regrettably, the study did not delve into the pedagogical approaches of the curriculum which could either enhance or worsen the performance of students. The present study would endeavour to address this existing gap in the study.

Afrifa-Yamoah et al. (2021), in their study, *Challenges students encounter in their study of pronunciation in Ghana: A case study of Osei Kyeretwie Senior High School*, made an assessment of the challenges students encounter in their study of English Language pronunciation, in Ghana using the Osei Kyeretwie Senior High School in Kumasi as a case study. The study discovered that a huge number of students mispronounced selected vowels and consonants. As the writers note, this problem emanates from a lot of factors ranging from policy formulation to implementation stages.

According to the study, teaching and learning strategies used in the teaching of English Language pronunciation is a prime factor in the poor performance of students in this aspect of the subject. The study discovered that in the articulation of the /ʌ/

sound in the word 'front', for example, only 5 out of the 50 learners (10%) could pronounce it correctly. Again, the students could not articulate the sound /ə/ found in words like amount, about, chemical and announce; /əʊ/ as in write; /eɪ/ as in make, wake, bake and sake; /θ/ as in thick, think and thin; /t/ as in stopped and jumped and /ʒ/ as in vision and television. As the authors aver, it could be realized that "the nature of pronunciation in Ghana indicates that there is vowel length neutralization, reduction of diphthongs to monophthongs and fronting and backing of low vowels" (Afrifa-Yamoah et al., 2021, p. 124). This condition has further been exacerbated by poor strategies and approaches to teaching English pronunciation. However, if a teacher employs the correct strategy in his teaching, learners could grasp these areas of English pronunciation correctly. Nonetheless, in the view of the writers, this situation partly accounts for the reasons proactive steps have to be taken to curb the pronunciation challenge in schools.

The issue of unskilled teachers continues to pose challenges to students in the classroom. Thus, according to the authors, English Language teaching requires some finesse since it is not only the content that matters but the skills in articulation of speech sounds, among others. Contrary to the expectations of scholars of the English Language, certain aspects of the English Language such as oral English are handled by persons who are unequal to the task, culminating in lots of challenges in pronunciation by learners.

At another level, the study attributes the English pronunciation difficulty among students to the influence of the mother tongue, local languages in Ghana. The writers observed that students who lived in English-speaking localities are likely to attain better pronunciation because they are always enthralled in the language. Yet, not all



learners reside in English-speaking environments. This phenomenon accounts for the variations in the phonetic capabilities of students and as a result of their biological and physiological differences as well, where some learners possess superiority at replicating sounds than others. Compounding this huge challenge are some aspects of local languages in Ghana that have contrasting pronunciations/sounds for the same letters of the English alphabet. To address this challenge, the authors call for more enthusiasm on the part of learners and exposure to the language in all its ramifications in schools and other places.

Asante-Nimako (2018) is of the opinion that most teachers and students of English often find no motivation in prioritizing the teaching and learning of pronunciation. However, the importance of pronunciation in communication cannot be overemphasized. Consequently, Afrifa-Yamoah et al. (2021) have suggested that teachers in training institutions should be exposed to the appropriate strategies in teaching good English pronunciation. Moreover, the study recommends regular in-service training for the teachers of English in senior high schools across the country to equip them with the requisite approaches to teaching pronunciation. Stakeholders of education should also provide well-resourced language laboratories for the schools to facilitate practice in phonetics regularly.

The study focused on the senior high schools, especially those in the Ashanti Region with Osei Kyeretwie SHS as the case study to elicit the challenges facing students in English pronunciation. Even though the present study is rather focused on the JHS, it would evaluate all aspects of the English Language taught at that level, speech work inclusive, hence the findings of the article is very instructive.

Exploring the pedagogical challenges associated with the old English curriculum in her study, *The implementation of the basic school English curriculum: The case of the Cape Coast Metropolis in Ghana*, Torto (2017) sampled 288 basic school teachers in the Cape Coast metropolis to put on the radar, the actual impact of the implementation of the old Basic School English Curriculum. She opines that the place of the English Language in Ghana, as official language and the medium of instruction in schools from basic four, should guarantee it a special attention in schools. However, basic materials/resources for schools to ensure teachers perform their tasks are mostly non-existent.

The study outlines a number of mechanisms to make teaching of the English Language effective. These include integrating all four language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing, in handling the five aspects of the English language subject which are Grammar, Comprehension, Conversation or Listening and Speaking, Composition and Library; usage of teaching and learning resources in the classroom to facilitate English Language teaching as a second language; language of instruction and following the curriculum judiciously.

Hammering on some of the implementation challenges teachers face in the classroom, the study argues that learners were passive participants in lessons because some of the basic school teachers though have been trained, had not received pre-service training to teach the English Language. They had fundamentally no idea about current methods and approaches to handling the subject. As a result of this, these teachers only teach aspects of the subject which they find convenient and feel comfortable about. The author argues judiciously that if the teachers had received training, they would be able to use the teaching methods and approaches to ensure that learners

enjoy their lessons and are able to use the English Language in real life situations outside the classroom.

Again, the study discovered that lack of teaching and learning materials poses challenges to the teachers. It is common knowledge that teaching aids and instructional materials like posters, charts, the globe, maps and real objects, not only create an enabling environment for language teaching but also motivate learners to capture rather abstract concepts in English Language teaching. Torto (2017, p. 174) argued that “the use of teaching aids and instructional materials are indispensable if students are to be liberated from the fear of English language, then the absence of it will definitely imprison students in the fear of the subject.” The study made the subtle observation that teachers who handle English Language have been introduced to improvisation, but due to the fact that they have not been trained to teach the subject, it is quite problematic for them to improvise to suit their lessons.

Among its findings, the study also revealed that the learners did not actively participate in lessons because teachers did not use language learners could understand. Especially, in the lower primary, most of the teachers spoke English throughout lessons under the pretext that they are not Akans. In the upper primary, however, the study observed that most of the learners could not express themselves well in the English Language and so their non-participation in lessons. Coupled with this challenge, the study also found out that some of the teachers failed to prepare for their lessons and so could get stuck in the middle of lesson delivery.

In its conclusion, the study notes that teachers in the Cape Coast metropolis did not implement the old English curriculum well. This incompetence is borne out of the fact that they have received little or no training to teach English, and no in-service training

either, which make teaching the English Language an enormous task for them. Subsequent to this, the teachers are confronted with non-participation of learners in the lessons, lack of suitable teaching resources, among others, as they endeavoured to implement the English curriculum.

The gap in the study is that it focused on the old English Language Curriculum by espousing the role of the English Language in Ghana and the implementation challenges teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis encountered. Again, the study lumped together basic education so whether the study encompassed the JHS and/or the lower and primary schools, is unclear. The current study would however concentrate on the new English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme for JHS students by using most of the issues discussed above for analysis of data.

Aboagye and Yawson (2020) in a study titled, *Teachers' perception of the new educational curriculum in Ghana*, examined a surfeit of teachers' perception of the new pre-tertiary education curriculum in Ghana, implemented in September 2019. The study points to some loopholes in the old curriculum, which included content-overload, limitations of an objective-based curriculum, and the failure of the assessment modes to gather requisite data for streamlining pedagogical (teaching and learning) approaches, hence the need for the new curriculum for pre-tertiary education (primary schools) to meet the growing concerns of the contemporary world. In its findings, the study alludes to a lot of converging and contrasting views from teachers on the curriculum.

In the first place, teachers perceive the new pre-tertiary curriculum as a total overhaul of the old one because it provides opportunities for group work, supports students to obtain lifelong skills, prepares students for the job market, enhances inclusive education, engenders gender equality, and reflects students' societal needs and aspirations. These aspects of the curriculum appear to favour the social constructivist perspective of learning than the intellectual development theorists like Jean Piaget's propositions. These key features were, in some cases, not included in the old curriculum for basic schools which had pedagogical challenges, assessment discrepancies and above all, were mostly examination-driven.

In furtherance of the above issues, Aboagye and Yawson's (2020) study discovered that the current primary school curriculum does not contain difficult contents for teaching in the view of teachers. However, teachers are not enthused with the huge workloads in the curriculum, the non-provision of teaching learning materials and the long durations for lessons. Some scholars argue that teaching and learning resources are an indispensable part of effective lesson delivery and for that matter, their lack thereof in a curriculum is quite unfortunate. Apart from this, larger class sizes coupled with lack of teaching learning materials pose a great challenge to a learner-centred approach as one vehicle to achieving the targets of the curriculum.

In the opinion of the teachers as gathered by the study, policy makers should endeavour to include teachers in the planning of the curriculum, make books and other learning materials available, train teachers ahead of time and pilot a new curriculum before its implementation. These challenges act as disincentive and demotivational factor to teachers in the performance of their duties. In the view of the authors, the introduction of ICT as a pedagogical tool is inappropriate given that

electricity supply and internet connectivity do not extend to all parts of the country, which put learners in the remote areas at a disadvantage. The fact that these issues were rarely factored into the development of the new curriculum have stern ramifications of which scholars have begun observing the curriculum take a nose dive in its early years of implementation.

Other challenges that have heralded the implementation of the new curriculum for primary schools according to the study encompass inadequate educational infrastructure and side-stepping the cultural and societal needs of Ghanaians. Needless to reiterate that educational infrastructure facilitates effective instructional delivery in schools, however, the dire state of school facilities and inadequate resources for teaching and learning in Ghanaian classroom do not auger well for the implementation of the new curriculum. Meanwhile, policy makers are more fixated on outcomes of summative assessment like the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) for its political expediency.

The study concludes by calling on the government to address these challenges and looming danger to ensure smooth implementation of the new curriculum. With respect to the gaps in the study, it could be seen that the study centred on the primary school English Language Curriculum as well as teachers' perception of the curriculum. No attention was also paid to the pedagogical approaches in the curriculum. However, the current study is focused on the new English Language Curriculum for the JHS, its components, pedagogical approaches and how purposeful the curriculum could address the expectations of stakeholders as far as English Language teaching at that level is concerned.

In his scholarship on the newly introduced standard-based curriculum for basic schools in Ghana, titled, *Teachers' concerns about the implementation of the standard-based curriculum in Ghana: A case study of the Effutu Municipality*, Apau (2021) investigated certain concerns basic school teachers had about the curriculum. According to the study, the previous curriculum was distraught with problems like content overload, the ineptitude of the assessment system to enhance teaching and learning, and preparing learners for exam sat the expense of equipping them with the necessary skills for human capital development. Consequently, the study explains that the implementation of the pre-tertiary curriculum in Ghana is to respond to international best practices; cause a paradigm shift in the previous objective-based curriculum.

The study notes that the success or failure of the implementation phase of the curriculum largely depends on the strong relationship between parents, teachers and school authorities. Collaboration among teachers, where in the course of facilitating the activities of learners, teachers compare and coordinate with others in the use of the standard-based curriculum, was considered very significant. Furthermore, parents' role in complementing efforts of teachers cannot be whisked away. Put succinctly, despite the fact that teachers have adopted and are implementing the curriculum, they would demand a proper working relationship with administrators and other stakeholders, especially parents to effect positive change in learners.

Another concern of teachers was focusing on alternative means of achieving the objectives of the curriculum. The author notes that, this situation is highly expected given the fact that most teachers were sidelined in the curriculum development discourse; they were only called upon to implement. On this, the study argues that

although the standard-based curriculum may possess the propensity to offer the students the skills desired to think critically and solve problems, teachers' alternative means of handling learners may lead to refocusing of these objectives especially when their inputs were minimal in the development of the curriculum.

The study also found out that teachers were concerned about how the new curriculum could impact their personal development. In effect, teachers were anxious of their personal professional development, limitations in the classroom as facilitators and the changes they are expected to bring. Of course, there is a much-talked about teachers as mere facilitators; what that actually means and the extent of facilitation rather than 'teaching' seems dazzling for most teachers. Specific to this, the study was doubtful if the one-week workshop on the new curriculum was adequate for teachers to be abreast of the tenets of the new curriculum. However, contradictory in terms, the study notes that "the more teachers teach, the more they gain experience in the field" (Apau, 2021, p. 2009).

In conclusion, the study recommends training of teachers at the district level, collaboration between teachers and school authorities and NaCCA's future workshops and seminars for teachers. The major gap in the study is that it focused on the pre-tertiary education curriculum for primary schools in Ghana. However, since the Common Core Programme (CCP) is also standard-based and only an extension of the primary school curriculum, the data is very relevant for the present study.

Deas (2018) examines the US Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative in his influential article dubbed, *Evaluating Common Core: Are Uniform Standards a Silver Bullet for Education Reform?* In its analysis of the educational curriculum (CCSS),



the study takes a holistic look at the merits, demerits and pitfalls concerning the prospects for changes.

Foremost, the study makes it explicit that the rationale that uniform standards will yield corresponding improvement in student learning in US schools is totally flawed. As the author notes, essentially policy makers “underestimated the basic level of resources and support necessary for America’s public education system to be properly equipped to actually implement the standards (Deas, 2018, p. 49). Furthermore, the foundation tasked to develop the curriculum missed an earlier opportunity to engage stakeholders like parents, teachers and communities. It is instructive to note that during the period of the development and implementation of the common core standards, states in the US faced grave financial challenges, however, they made efforts to implement the standards. Thus, even though the states experienced limited funding and budget cuts, states designed long-term plans for the implementation phase.

According to the study, although the development of standards for academic subjects has historically been the responsibility of area specialists in universities and schools, workgroups related to the corporation commissioned by National Governor’s Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers (NGA/CCSSO), met privately to develop the curriculum overlooking the role many K-12 educators could play. As the study claims, only one K-12 educator was involved in the development of the common core standards.

The study argues that these states revised and “created aligned curriculum materials and adopted and implemented new assessments that were aligned to the new standards” (Deas, 2018, pp. 49 – 50). Further, many of the states designed several

changes to the standards to suit their settings. These encompassed teacher professional development, preparation, induction and evaluation. Moreover, some of the states adopted special initiatives to implement the new standards in their lowest performing and deprived schools.

The study observed that most proponents of the uniform state standards claim that it would enhance broad-based sharing of experiences in schools, districts and states. Thus, efficiency in classrooms would increase across and within all states. Again, they assert that the common states could aid smooth transfer of students to other schools without any interruptions. The advocates further aver that the common standards would offer all American students to be career or college-ready.

In contrast to the above, the critics of the common standards claim that the top-down, high-stakes standards would derail the classroom of its usual rich variety of experiences. To them, “a one-size-fits-all model of education is not ideal for every child” (Deas, 2018, p.51).according to the study, the common state standards could restrict teaching to mere testable information and stifle knowledge, flexibility and creativity that it is billed to address. Regardless of the standpoint of the two schools of thought on the common core standards, the study is highly skeptical whether or not the adoption of a uniform standard for US schools will improve, harm or have no effect at all on students in the classroom.

In spite of the fact that the study was restricted to examining the US uniform standards, almost all the issues tabled are at the core of Ghana’s Common Core Programme, which was implemented in 2022.They perfectly sum up the Ghanaian situation, as it does the US. It is apparent that policy makers in Ghana only adopted a curriculum framework parallel to the US system without considering the avalanche of

challenges in the US model. The study is significant to the present study as it identifies a list of challenges with the uniform standards in the US, which are similar to the implementation challenges with the Common Core Programme in Ghana, thus, the study would assist the researcher in the analysis of data.

Osei (2021) questions the readiness of Ghana for the new curriculum in his article, *Are we ready for the new curriculum, the Common Core Programme?* Observing the nature of the workshop organized for teachers on the Common Core Programme and the fallouts, the author was not enthused about the nation's preparedness for the new initiative. First, the author noticed that the GES had neither printed any textbooks nor approved any textbook on the curriculum. The only available material was the curriculum that must act as the reference for teaching and learning in the classroom.

According to the author, what compounds the problems was that there had not been any in-service training for teachers who were to handle the learners at the JHS level. Contrary to this claim, the author was present at one of the workshops for teachers on the curriculum. The author further notes that the preparations towards the implementation of the programme were quite low. For French and Arabic to be implemented as mandatory subjects, the paper was unsure of where the nation could secure the sizeable number of teachers to handle these subjects nationwide.

Though the paper admits that the new curriculum is well-packaged to prepare learners to compete globally, it asserts that Ghana is not ready for its implementation. Accordingly, the paper wished that the programme was shelved for some time for adequate preparations to be made to ensure smooth implementation. This assertion, the author makes, as a result of his observation of just one training session of teachers

on the Common Core Programme. Obviously, a day's observation cannot be construed as satisfactory enough to make such assessments about the curriculum.

Despite the fact that the paper identified basic structural and implementation challenges, teachers were eventually trained on the curriculum later on. Again, the paper failed to recognise that the Common Core Programme is a living document; hence the training of more French and Arabic teachers could be done subsequently. Thus, the document is not a one stop shop; it is subject to review. Furthermore, the study took a holistic view of the CCP and did not touch on equally important subject-specific curriculum such as the English Language Curriculum, its components, pedagogical approaches and its role as the medium of instruction. Further, how adequate the curriculum could serve the intent of language teaching at the basic level was not explored. While capitalizing on these gaps, drawbacks and omissions, the present study would evaluate the components and pedagogies of the English Language Curriculum, to ascertain their efficacy in the Ghanaian classroom.

### **2.7. Conclusion**

The chapter fundamentally looked at the review of relevant literature as well as the theoretical framework – social constructivism theory of learning. The reviewed literature encompassed three principal thematic areas namely curriculum design and development, pedagogical approaches of English Language teaching and the challenges in educational reforms and curriculum development in Ghana. Extant literature was reviewed on these themes and specific gaps identified to reposition the study within the proper context of empirical data.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

The actual purpose of this research was to assess stakeholders' perspectives on the English Language Curriculum under the Common Core Programme ratified by the Akufo-Addo Administration and implemented in 2021 as replacement of the earlier curriculum to be able to address drawbacks in the decade-old curriculum for learners. In this chapter, the methodology that underlies the study is carefully dealt with. The chapter focuses on the research approaches and design that underscore the research. In effect, this chapter provides the research approach and the research design such as population of the study, sample size, sampling technique, research instrument, method of data collection and analysis, among other arrangements which are necessary to ensure that objectives of the study are achieved.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

The qualitative research approach was adopted with a case study design to conduct the study. Denzin and Lincoln cited in Aspers and Corte (2019, p. 147) for instance argue that “because qualitative research is interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counter disciplinary, it is not akin to one definition. Scholars mostly aver that the qualitative research approach finds space within the social constructivist paradigm with noteworthy strategies like grounded theory, ethnographies, action research and case study, utilized in the collection of primary data from the field. It pays fervent attention to naturalistic and non-numeric data (Nassaji, 2020).

As experts affirm, the choice of a research approach is hugely occasioned by the objectives of the study. For instance, where this study sought to assess the factors that were considered in the development of the English Language Curriculum, examine the components, pedagogical instruments, challenges inherent in the design and implementation of the English Language Curriculum under the Common Core Programme, among others, the qualitative approach which prioritizes non-numeric data was indeed preferable. Furthermore, the flexible nature of data collection under the qualitative research approach provided a windfall for the researcher to observe the issues in the educational sector and actions of interviewees; Directors of Education, lecturers, teachers, parents and other stakeholders of Ghana's education system with keen interest to be able to deduce from phenomena and infer meanings that are pertinent to the study. In effect, this pays glowing tribute to validity of data.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned virtues of the qualitative research approach, it has certain querulous challenges and vicious pitfalls. Ostensibly, without any aversion to this approach, it is characterized by the challenge of generalization of findings (Celik, Baykal & Memur, 2020) because the opinions of persons interviewed at specific social settings are not transferable to other places given the differences in social beliefs, experiences, among others. However, as Creswell (2013, p. 252) notes, to meet transferability criteria under qualitative study, one has to engage in a "rich, thick description of the participants or setting under study" which this study has duly followed under the population and sample size. In fact, despite its downsides, the researcher was aided by this approach in gathering data to be able to achieve the purpose of the study, lending credence to the point that the nature of research questions and objectives enormously determines the research approach.

### 3.2 Research Design

The research design entails the strategy used by a researcher to link various components of a study so as to address the research objectives and questions with coherence. Thus, the design incorporates the methods for data collection and analysis in the description or exploration of a phenomenon. Key types of research designs under the qualitative approach - grounded theory, ethnographies, action research and case study –have sufficed in recent times. A case study research design was used in this study. By this design, the study evaluated one case or issue (the English Language Curriculum) within a bounded system (the Common Core Programme). The suitability of this design could be observed in light of its ability to assist the researcher in unearthing detailed, circumstantial appreciation of how the English Language Curriculum could serve its intended purpose by using data from multiple sources.

### 3.3 Population of the Study

According to Amedahe and Gyimah (2018) the population constitutes the group such as the individuals, institutions and organizations that conform to certain criteria to which a researcher intends to gain information, new knowledge and draw conclusions. In other words, the population represents the entire body of persons or institution used for a study. The target population also refer to the small group within the population that i the focus of data collection. The population of the study encompassed both policy makers and other stakeholders of Ghana’s education system. The target population consisted of the 120 stakeholders in education, namely Director for Basic Education Division, GES (1), NaCCA (6), Regional Directors of Education (3), Directors of Education (9), Deputy Directors of Education in charge of Supervision and Monitoring (20), Lecturers (University of Education, UEW) (2), GNAT (10),

NAGRAT (5), CCT (5), CSOs (5), English Language teachers at the JHS (50), facilitators for the workshop on the CCP (5) and students selected from three regions of Ghana – Ashanti, Eastern and Greater Accra (3). Of course, the motive behind the selection of this population for the study is palpable in the sense that they have thorough information on the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme as policy makers, practitioners or stakeholders of Ghana’s education system. The study targeted students of 18 years and above at the JHS level because such people have attained certain level of maturity to decide on policy issues as voters in national elections. The study site was also informed by the number of urban centre schools with the requisite school resources in the Greater Accra Region as compared to those deprived schools in rural communities in the Ashanti and Eastern Regions.

### 3.4 Sample Size

In his influential article titled, *Sampling Methods in Research Design*, Turner (2020, p. 8) defined sampling as “the selection of a subject of the population of interest in a research.” As he contends further, it is highly impossible in most cases to study the vast majority that compose the population site that largely remains one of the reasons for collecting data from just a gist of the population seen as more practical and at a lower cost. On sample size, Rusu (2020, p. 183) argues that determining the sample size in qualitative research is underscored by a lot of factors such as “research topic, questions the research must answer to, research complexity, theoretical framework, epistemological tradition, research’s type of approach, used methods, research population’s structure and access thereto, resources and time at disposal for finalizing the investigation.”



Vasileiou et al. (2018) also claim that the choice of proper sample size in qualitative study is yet to be settled by empirical studies. One aspect of qualitative research is data saturation concept of adequateness of data collected (Casteel and Bridier, 2021). As a result of appropriateness of the data and the principle of data saturation, the study sampled thirty (30) interviewees drawn from stakeholders of Ghana's educational system: Director of Basic Education Division, GES (1), NaCCA (2), Regional Directors of Education (3), Deputy Directors of Education (Supervision and Monitoring) (3), Lecturers (the Department of Curriculum Development and the Department of English Language Education, UEW) (2), Headmasters (2), JHS English Language teachers (3), CSOs (2), GNAT, NAGRAT and CCT (1 member each), SISOs (3), Students (18 years or above) (3) and Parents (3). Clearly, the interviewees were purposively selected based on their roles as policy makers, implementers, beneficiaries or their huge influence on educational policies. Even though scholars like Boddy (2016) assert that the number of participants or interviewees in a qualitative research considered appropriate might range from 12 to 30, the study sampled the thirty interviewees to give the study a wider scope with regard to the enormity of the problem identified.

### **3.5 Sampling Technique**

Generally, the objective of the sampling technique is to obtain a sample that is representative of the target population. Sampling techniques under qualitative study abound in the social sciences and these include convenience sampling, snowball sampling, quota sampling and purposive sampling. The purposive sampling technique was used to select all interviewees for the study. Purposive sampling, also referred to as judgment sampling, is the careful selection of interviewees based on the characteristics and qualities the individual possesses (Etikan et al. 2016). Nonetheless,

as Creswell (2013) notes, the benchmarks for the selection may vary, including seeking a particular narrative to explore, common experience with a phenomenon, membership of association, expertise on a subject matter or a culture and being in a specific position to aid the construction of a theory. Purposive sampling is particularly convenient in situations where a targeted sample must be reached swiftly for better matching of the sample to objectives of the study to enhance credibility, transferability, dependency and confirmation of data and outcome (Campbell et al. 2020). To this end, stakeholders of Ghana's education system such as Directors of Education, NaCCA, Lecturers of English Language Education and Curriculum Development (UEW), CSOs, SISOs, headmasters, teachers, parents and students were purposely selected for the study. Essentially, these stakeholders have expertise or have undergone some experiences with the new curriculum.

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedure**

Two key sources of data, both primary and secondary data sources were applied in the study. Primary data, secured through interviews and observations from the actions and inactions of thirty (30) interviewees was gathered from a list of people including policy makers and implementers in Ghana's education system such as NaCCA and Directors of Education, Deputy Directors in charge of Monitoring and Supervision, lecturers, headmasters, teachers, parents, students (18 years or above), SISOs, CSOs among others. The interviews lasted a period of 30 to 45 minutes. Whereas the primary data supported the researcher to derive new knowledge from the field, the secondary data (the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme, the National Syllabus for English Language (JHS) implemented from September 2012 to January 2021 and other scholarly journal articles and government official documents) assisted in lounging the study within the rightful perspective of empirical

data. Collection of data was carried out through face-to-face planned meetings between interviewees and the researcher. Primarily, procedures that heralded the interviews included dispatching a letter to introduce the researcher to interviewees and institutions concerned three weeks prior to the interview. Dates for the interviews were then set by both parties – researcher and interviewees. On the day of the interview, a short self-introduction by the researcher was done and the rationale of the study was read out to interviewees as well. With the consent of the interviewees, the interview was carried out with recourse to all ethics of research. The interview guide (see Appendix B), a recorder, field notebook and a mobile phone were used by the researcher to collect data while observing the actions and demeanour of each interviewee to aid interpretation of primary data. Some challenges encountered during the data collection include rescheduling of some interviews because some of the interviewees had to attend to some equally important issues, requests for money for the time spent and rephrasing some questions for some category of interviewees.

### **3.7 Research Instruments**

In an attempt to obtain credible data and new knowledge on the study, the researcher prudently utilized the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme, the National Syllabus for English Language (JHS) implemented from September 2012 to January 2021 and an interview guide to collect data so imperative to the research questions and objectives set at the commencement of the study. The study employed three sets of interview guide to meet the role and inputs of different stakeholders; one for policy makers, another for other stakeholders like lecturers, CSOs, parents, headmasters and teachers and the last set for students (18 years or above). In all, the semi-structured interview guide acted as a guideline in the collection of qualitative data from the field. However, due to the flexible and elastic

nature of qualitative research, the researcher could ask other related questions based on responses from interviewees to achieve clarity and precision. Thus, due to the flexible nature of qualitative study, interviews could be “adjusted to meet many diverse situations” (Amedahe & Gyimah, 2018, p. 115). Also, there is always high response rate and the chance to observe other non-verbal behaviours on the field. Additionally, a recorder, mobile phones and field notebooks were used in the data collection.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

In the opinion of Bhandari (2022), there are countless data analysis approaches under qualitative research – content analysis, thematic analysis, textual analysis, discourse analysis –with similar processes but differing concepts. Analysis of data from the field commenced right after field interviews. Each interview was transcribed (audio transcription) by writing verbatim the recorded voices of interviewees immediately the researcher left the field in order to align imagery and personal demeanours of interviewees in the interpretation of data. Data was then cautiously coded by assigning numbers and categorizing into cohesive, overarching themes or in respect of carefully thought out common identifiable themes, topics and issues. Further, analysis of primary data in consonance with secondary data was carried out manually using the identifiable patterns in responses of interviewees. Thus, primary data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Secondary data were used as a yardstick to either confirm or refute claims from interviewees in the analysis.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Ethics of research were followed sternly to ensure that data collected was credible and reliable. Personalities and institutions which had to be consulted were sent letters to

introduce the researcher as well as indicate the motive of the study. Moreover, the interviewees were given concise information about the reasons for the research and took part under a free atmosphere of their consent. In conformity with ethics of research to ensure that consent, confidentiality and data protection were topmost on the taxonomy of issues on the study, interviewees were given a waiver on questions that bordered on their sensibilities, unfavourable terrains, among others. The study is purely for academic purposes and so the confidentiality of data was assured interviewees. In furtherance of the foregoing, primary data was handled in a manner that makes interviewees anonymous since no data is traceable to any of them.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

The chapter dealt extensively with the research approach, design and strategy - the philosophical worldview (social constructivist paradigm), methodology and methods employed in the conduct of the study to meet its objectives. It analyzed the qualitative research method used for the study by espousing both its strengths and weaknesses, featured the sampling technique and size, captured the research instrument, the data

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **4.0. Introduction**

This chapter provides thematic analysis of primary data in line with the research objectives and questions which were set as blueprint to the study. The definite purpose of the study was to assess stakeholders' perspectives on the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme by assessing factors that informed its development and identifying components of the English Language teaching excluded or sidelined in the curriculum. Further, the study focused on analyzing the adequacy of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme as an instrument for achieving the purpose of English Language teaching at the basic level of education and the challenges that hinder the smooth implementation of the curriculum. Thus, this chapter is pivoted on reverberation of primary and secondary data using identifiable themes; their reflections on the research objectives and questions through presentation, discussion and analysis of data.

#### **4.1 Factors that were Considered in the Development of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme**

There is great consensus among scholars that education, at least some level of basic education, is indispensable in securing citizens welfare. This definitely involves some degree of economic and non-economic opportunities and autonomy such as decent standard of living. As espoused by human capitalist theorists, and in some instances by modernization theorists, the stock of one's knowledge and enlightenment constitute huge attributive factors to productivity (Boakye, 2019). About a decade ago, Nowak (2001, p. 245), for example, argued in his scholarship that;

*... many economic, social and cultural rights, such as the right to choose work, to receive equal pay for equal work, the right to form trade unions, to take part in cultural life, to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and to receive higher education on the basis of capacity, can only be exercised in a meaningful way after a minimum level of education has been achieved.*

In essence, the role of the English Language as the medium of instruction in achieving the goals of education in the Ghanaian classroom cannot be underrated. Quashigah (2001, p. 3), confirmed Nowak's assertion when he also opined that internationally, education is viewed as the "root of all development; the crucible for democracy and liberty and is as indispensable to national development as it is to individual development." For Boakye (2019), basic education has now attained the status of a basic human right in almost all countries and a necessity for survival in the modern era. In the Ghanaian context, Kuyini and Mahama (2014) note that access to formal education remains a right for every Ghanaian child as the 1992 Constitution stipulates.

In respect of the foregoing, regimes in Ghana's Fourth Republic have instituted educational policies including reforms and curriculum development to improve educational outcomes, among others. However, as a litany of the literature including Alhassan (2020), Adu-Gyamfi et al. (2016), Braimah et al. (2014) and Nordensvard (2013) have opined, the nature, intent and ubiquity of curriculum design, development and change in the Fourth Republic, point to some systemic flaws in governance. Considering the complexity of issues on curriculum design, development and change in the recent educational history of Ghana, the study attempted to investigate the dominant factors that drove the development of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme. Subsequently, through interviews and observations, data revealed prevailing factors that were taken into consideration in the development

of the English Language Curriculum. They were briefly cataloged and analysed below.

#### **4.1.1 Societal needs**

Every society is governed by a set of rules, norms, values or ethical standards handed down from generation to generation. These cherished core values of the society are normally inculcated in children through several socialization agents not precluding the community, the church and the school to ensure their preservation. The data argued that the needs of every society which include individual, societal and national development must be factored into the development of curriculum for the education and training of learners. The interviewees opined that the English Language Curriculum for the Ghanaian classroom, especially at the early stages of education is embroiled in the preservation of culture, inculcation of values and traditions, language and respect for authority to promote individual aspirations, societal requirements and national needs. Put concisely, certain basic philosophy and belief systems of society formed part of the development of the new English Language Curriculum. Considering the point that schools as social institutions are expected to preserve and instill in the future generation, the knowledge, ideas and customs of a people's culture, in the opinion of interviewees, the framers of the English Language Curriculum were concerned about societal issues as an inexorable element of the curriculum. As they opined, this is the more reason the atmosphere in classrooms, and teaching and learning activities must be modeled around societal settings and interactions.



In the widely-held view of twenty-two (22) interviewees, the sacrosanct standards or values of society are at the fulcrum of the Ghanaian society and that is the sole objective for incorporating them in the English Language Curriculum. The Rationale of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme opines at page 3 of the document that language is a library for storing the elements of culture and a means for transmitting societal values from one generation to another, hence such societal needs formed part of the issues that were considered in the development of the curriculum. Additionally, the philosophy of the English Language Curriculum, found at page 3 of the document emphasizes that “when learners are provided with a good social environment, they develop language faster...” The data further noted that since learners are mainly to engage in discovery learning, thus construction of knowledge with minimal intervention by teachers, societal issues, social institutions, authority, the environment, values and practices were high on the radar for consideration in the development of the English Language Curriculum. In his express view, an interviewee from NaCCA noted that:

*The framers of every curriculum for Ghanaian schools were mindful of the cultural imperatives of Ghanaians. We are a peace-loving people; a people guided by the customs and values of society. We render service to the needy, respect the elderly and live in harmony with one another regardless of social status, ethnic background or religious affinity. Thus, the developers of the English Language Curriculum included these societal expectations and standards in order to inculcate in students such good deeds for the progress of society (Field Data, 2023).*

The data is corroborated by Nyame (2020), who acknowledged that Ghanaian students need a curriculum that caters for both students’ needs and the local or societal interests and national aspirations and not a curriculum that is a complete appendage of another country’s cultural values. Such a curriculum should be premised on vesting critical thinking and independence of thought in students. Regarding the

essence of educational policies to national and individual development, Kwao (2017) has also underscored in the literature that a holistic and integrated approach flagged on societal needs and individual aspirations to curriculum development creates talents and potentials among students and opens brighter avenues for students after school. This remains one vital niche of the social constructivist thought on learning as it they argue for socially constructed classroom –classrooms with lots of teaching resources for learners to be able to

Sternberg's (2007) study on culture and instruction argues that when learners are given the chance to learn in a way that is harmonious with their culture, it boosts their academic performance. However, a cross-section of the interviewees disclosed that some aspects of the new curriculum are engrossed in acculturation and for that matter, they are of the view that the English Language Curriculum does not capture fully the needs of society. Thus, it adopts and use of some foreign cultures which are quite alien to the Ghanaian society. The interviewees noted further that most of the components of the curriculum were fashioned on Western cultural settings. A member of GNAT asserted that:

*Just because America has Common Core State Standards, we also called ours Common Core Programme. This is laughable. However, we have ignored the usual proverbial Ananse stories that portrayed the heroic deeds or flaws of the tragic characters and other African stories which instill good moral virtues in learners in the English Language Curriculum. If such stories would feature in the textbooks which are not yet ready, then I cannot best tell. However, the curriculum should have given hints of such stories with Ghanaian cultural settings and values even if the textbooks were not ready (Field Data, 2023).*

The above excerpts as cross-checked in the English Language Curriculum holds little truth since these supposed Western cultural settings portrayed in the structure and types of comprehension passages are only elements of globalization with virtually no

negative connotations on African culture. Indeed, in their view, Aboagye and Yawson (2020) recognized that the new curriculum for basic schools in Ghana is a reflection of the societal needs and aspirations. It could be inferred rightly that since students are expected to live and work in the society, and could as well be employed through clear exhibition of societal values and standards, it is noteworthy for the English Language Curriculum to cater for these needs in the education delivery of the country.

#### **4.1.2 Technology**

The Industrial Revolution, in its straits, has made technology a necessity in all facets of national life. Breaking away from a traditional education system of merely passing exams to long-life education for learners to attain the requisite aptitudes, attitudes and productive skills required in the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands a technology-friendly curriculum. Thus, in the opinion of twenty-five (25) interviewees, in a globalized world, curriculum development is not just about application of known theories and concepts to imbue in learners, memorization skills and recall of facts. Neither must it succumb to an act of talk to chalk, teacher-centre approach to teaching and learning. Rather, the English Language Curriculum should give room for the use of technology, creative and innovative approaches and strategies, which must fully characterise the needed drift from the traditional mode of education and training to fully-fledged modern education and training that society and individuals aspire. The data posited that it is this quest to change the status quo through curriculum development, which promotes social construction of knowledge, social innovation, critical thinking, application of learnt concepts to problem-solving in the community, among others that birthed the English Language Curriculum. A lecturer at UEW captured this phenomenon so succinctly by asserting that:

*The development of the English Language Curriculum took into account modernization and technology. We have moved from the era of handling issues in the society manually to the use of technology and digitalization. Mobile phones, internet facilities and complex machines have been invented to make life easier for humans. This should reflect in what we teach our students, especially at the JHS for them to be abreast of technology to be able to solve problems in their communities. This is the main focus of the new English Language Curriculum for JHS learners (Field Data, 2023)*

Another interviewee, a Director of Education, also shared her thought by indicating that:

*The new English Language Curriculum envisages that students would be able to acquire digital literacy to be able to compete with their peers anywhere in the world. This vision requires a curriculum that concentrates so much on technology and innovation as pertains in the advanced countries. The previous curriculum was quite deficient in this area and that is the reason why the English Language Curriculum was developed (Field Data, 2023).*

The English Language Curriculum is indeed sensitive to technology as it points out that in the current global development and technological advancement, the learning of a second language such necessarily promote the wellbeing of a people, and not to make them strangers in a globalized world. Indeed, the data is largely in line with Mohanasundaram's (2018) assertion that a good curriculum should inevitably include preparation of students for the world. According to him, there should be an existential connection between what is learnt in school and the world of work. In view of the fact that society is dynamic, its aims and aspirations also undergo a myriad of changes with respect to global trends and necessities of the times. Obviously, the English Language Curriculum hopes to instill in learners a number of core competencies - critical thinking and problem-solving, creativity and innovation, communication and collaboration, cultural identity and global citizenship, personal development and leadership and digital literacy (NaCCA, 2020). This constitutes one of the cardinal tenets of the constructivist perspective on learning. To the constructivists,

construction of new knowledge must be aided by the acquisition of new information, ideas reasons Scholars including Kelly (2012) were on point when they advanced the argument that to engage in discovery learning pedagogy in the classroom, lessons should essentially embrace research projects, case study, group work, brainstorming and problem-based learning on all phenomena. The teacher as a facilitator in the Ghanaian classroom has the inviolable duty, as the constructivists argue, to devise means of tailoring their pedagogy to include the use of technology in learning the English Language. For instance, learners could be guided to surf the internet to search for new words, their synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms among others and utilize them in easy writing on topic such as climate change, entrepreneurship, energy conservation among a host of others stated in the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme. Hitherto, the National Syllabus for English Language (Junior High School 1 - 3), that is, the previous curriculum, hardly inculcated technology in learning deliveries in the Ghanaian classroom. For example, though the National Syllabus for English Language (Junior High School 1 - 3) employed the integration of skills approach to teaching the English Language, in teaching both productive (listening and reading) and receptive (speaking and writing) skills as stated in page xiii of the document, the teacher was to provide more practising examples and opportunities to learner but the use of technology was never stated.

The objective of the previous curriculum was indeed examination-driven and so could not produce well-balanced and socially trained and couched learners. These are the basic reasons for which the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme makes use of ICT as a pedagogical tool to ensure that while learners are not being alienated from their cultural settings, the world of work and the global

necessities after school are also catered for to be able to socially construct knowledge from their social experiences.

#### **4.1.3 Deficiencies of the previous curriculum**

Scholars generally agree that a curriculum cannot be a product of an empty slate. Every curriculum emanates from an existing one, either inside or outside the jurisdiction of a country. In the case of Ghana, curriculum development or change has always been ascribed to the ineptitude of a previous curriculum, which warrants modification by instilling certain national priorities, exogenous influences or global keystones. According to the data, the lapses in the previous English Language Curriculum provided the impetus for the development of the new one. Twenty-six (26) interviewees disclosed that the deficits in the previous curriculum fueled the need for the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme. For instance, as they claimed, under the previous curriculum, students were trained with seemingly inappropriate pedagogies which were teacher-centred and examination-driven. Students therefore memorized and recalled facts, could neither apply, synthesise nor analyse given concepts practically while they (the students) were assessed collectively without considering their strengths and diversity of authentic tasks, and did not ostensibly, engage in lifelong education. Consequently, the students became aliens to their own culture and were unfit for the job market after school.

Cognizant of the enormity of the social challenges posed by the previous curriculum that was in operation for more than a decade and the calibre of students that were produced annually, who later turned out apparently with prospects of being drawers of water and hewers of wood in the Ghanaian society, the data further revealed that this constituted the indispensable prime factor for the development of the English

Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme. For example, a Deputy Director of Education, adduced the argument that:

*Indeed, there were several challenges with the old curriculum. First, the methods and approaches teachers used in handling the English Language did not help the students. Teaching and learning focused primarily on the teacher while students' participations in lessons were quite low. Moreover, students were so determined to pass their exams and the only competition among schools was basically the BECE results, forgetting that education has other significant outcomes. Again, expectations of the society were not fully met. The new curriculum is a complete departure from these situations as some creative pedagogies and different modes of assessments of students' performance have been provided for in the training of students for future endeavours (Field Data, 2023).*

The data above are confirmed by the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme because on the basis of the foregoing argument, the developers of the English Language Curriculum formulated the Core Competencies – critical thinking and problem-solving, creativity and innovation, communication and collaboration, cultural identity and global citizenship, personal development and leadership, and digital literacy. In the avowal of another interviewee, a SISO remarked that:

*One key feature of the new English Language Curriculum is the consideration of modern issues and approaches to learning. The previous curriculum was riddled with content overload, which had so much theoretical concepts that instilled in students largely comprehension; remembering and recall. In fact, the actual connection between what was learnt in the classroom and how they are applied on the ground were critically absent. The new curriculum is more practical with more child-centred creative pedagogies. Teachers are therefore to guide students in their discovery of knowledge and not to merely impose what they know on them. However, some teachers are still using pedagogies in the old curriculum (Field Data, 2023).*

While a comparative analysis of the old and new curricular showed no apparent reduction in the contents, most of the issues that hitherto were verbose have been simplified. For instance, under pedagogical approaches, the new English Language Curriculum seems more explicit. The data is aptly confirmed by Aboagye and

Yawson (2020), who provide a deluge of inadequacies in the old curriculum, which precipitated a new one. According to them, the loopholes in the previous English Language Curriculum did not preclude content-overload, restrictions on objective-based curriculum, failure of the assessment system and its examination-driven approaches that were inimical to any contemporary education system. As has been pointed out by Nyame (2020), curriculum development should take cognizance of new social issues, new knowledge, technology and dynamics of the world. Cobbold (2017) has also acknowledged that since curriculum is a living document, it must be inclined to the changing dynamics of society in order not to alienate learners from the societal establishment which changes with time. On this score, if an old curriculum was bereft of modern issues, then it was only imperative to subject it to change to reflect the current trends. Further, it could be deduced from the data that an examination-driven education and training curriculum is not only perilous to human growth and development but also trembling on the progress of a country. This is exactly so in the light of the fact that beneficiaries of such curriculum were incapacitated in the application of concepts and unearthing new knowledge in finding solutions to the surfeit of problems that confront humanity. However, with respect to the English Language Curriculum, higher stakes of educational objectives – application of concepts, analysis and synthesis of issues, evaluation of problems– under Blooms Taxonomy would be achieved.

The desire to use new techniques and methods in pursuit of the tenets of the new curriculum exists among teachers. However, certain traces of the old curriculum are resurfacing in the education sector. Old pedagogical approaches are in use and seemingly spearheading an exam-driven curriculum due to inadequate resources in schools and ineffectual training of teachers at the basic level to brace the change.



This phenomenon is widespread in the rural communities and must be addressed with the speed demon it deserves.

#### **4.1.4 Ideologies of political parties and leadership idiosyncrasies**

Generally, political parties around the world have certain tentative policies and programmes enshrined in their manifestoes. Once bequeathed with political power, these political parties try to implement policies and programmes put forth during the electioneering season for the people's votes. According to interviewees, the NPP, while in opposition, planned of moving Ghana economy from over-reliance on taxation to production and industrialization, which included changing the old English Language Curriculum. Data from nineteen interviewees revealed further that the curriculum was part of a barrage of campaign promises by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in the run up to the 2016 elections. The narrative of this situation, as gathered by the study, indicated that the president in 2018 also made a clarion call on Ghanaians to pursue a new paradigm of foreign policy decision making, *Ghana Beyond Aid*, where the country's over-reliance on foreign entities for its economic growth and national development would be brought to the barest minimum. In other words, President Akufo-Addo envisaged self-propelling foreign policy goals borne out of the collective will and agenda of the citizenry and not based on the whims and caprices of development partners such as the Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF and the World Bank). As Braimah et al. (2014) contend, the state intends to build an effective economic security in an era of globalization devoid of over-reliance on external forces. Consequently, there was the need to change the previous English Language Curriculum to reflect the drive for independent voice in global politics. Undeniably, to achieve this mantra, the new English Language Curriculum, as data suggested, has to embrace technology, attitudinal change, self-reliance and other socially gratifying

values such as collective endeavours, interactions among learners, sharing experiences in class and not the individual quests and selfish desires to achieve some laurels. This would empower the next generation with relevant and purposeful education and training in an era of digital evolution in order to wean the national economy from incessant control by exogenous infractions. Thus, in the view of a member of CCT:

*... the new English Language Curriculum for basic schools was purely a political decision. The NPP manifesto in the 2016 elections gave hints of a possible change of curriculum to define basic education from primary to the secondary level. It also pledged to change the previous curriculum that was seemingly unequal to the tasks of the current century. These phenomena compounded by quests to reduce over-reliance on foreign aid through the Ghana Beyond Aid vision, gave impetus to the development of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme (Field Data, 2023).*

It is patent from the data that, national consensus hardly played out as far as the development and implementation of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme was concerned and that is partly the reason the curriculum is laden with heaps of implementation challenges. The data confirms the assertion by a taxonomy of scholars including Braimah et al. (2014, p. 145) that educational reforms, especially curriculum development in Ghana, since its nationhood, has usually been a product of “individual political party ideological prism” ably stated in its manifesto. Braimah et al. (2014) have again established that all policies in the Fourth Republican era are ideologically-inspired by the two political parties – the NDC and the NPP. The point in the argument of these scholars is that education is largely embroiled in politics and constitutes a major source of foremost political campaign messages of the various political parties. Thus, as they contend, “instability in the structure and content of Ghana’s educational system looks more of a political jingle as well as military musical chairs rather than based on national consensus

aimed at mitigating the many challenges facing the school system” (Brimah et al., 2014, p. 145). Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh and Addo’s (2016) study also confirms the data when it argued that political considerations generally characterize educational reforms in Ghana. Unwaveringly, the data has demonstrated that almost all social and economic policies in the Ghanaian political system, from the education to the health sectors, is riddled with political maneuvering by political parties in government which are affront to discovery of unimpeded knowledge in the classroom.

#### **4.1.5 National and international legal framework, global trends and dynamics**

Data obtained from twenty-four interviewees emphasized that the 1992 Constitution constituted a major reference point for the development of the English Language Curriculum. Accordingly, the data indicated that the Constitution sets the parameters for the drafting of any educational curriculum of the country. On that score, any element inconsistent with the Constitution particularly the dictates of the educational objectives of the country as stipulated in the Constitution is deemed ultra vires, unconstitutional or null and void, and must not be considered as part of the curriculum. In respect of these, as the interviewees aver, the framers of the English Language Curriculum took into account the educational rights of the citizens and the educational objectives of the State. On this issue, a Deputy Director of Education said that:

*The 1992 Constitution was the primary source document for the design of the English Language Curriculum. It envisions an education as a right that should be enjoyed by everyone, hence places arduous responsibility on the State to provide educational infrastructure in all regions and districts for easy accessibility by the citizenry. The Constitution also calls for long-run education of the people to facilitate its educational objectives (Field Data, 2023).*

It must be borne in mind that under the educational rights of the 1992 Constitution, Article 25 specifies that all persons have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities while Article 38, dubbed Educational Objectives, enjoins the State to provide educational facilities at all levels and in all regions of Ghana as far as it is feasible, for the enjoyment of all citizens. Furthermore, the Constitution hammers on free, compulsory and universal education as well as life-long education of the citizenry. Similarly, Ghana's Education Act, 2008, Act 778, provides the specific framework for the country's educational system aimed at producing well balanced individuals with the required knowledge, skills, values, aptitudes and attitudes to become functional and productive citizens. In view of this, subsection six (6) of section one (1) of the Act enjoins the State to engage in lifelong educational programmes. Lifelong learning should also embrace case study, group work, research projects, brainstorming, guided discovery learning and problem-based learning as postulated by social constructivists. These form major niches of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme for the attainment of national priorities.

International legal regime on education obliges countries around the world to factor certain educational principles and standards in their reforms. In furtherance of this point, data from twenty-five interviewees recounted that as a member of international organizations and signatory to a glut of international obligations and conventions, the English Language Curriculum incorporated some international conventions on education. Some of these treaties and conventions are the UN Charter, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the AU Agenda 2063, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, the Global Education Policy Dashboard, among others. Ghana's new English Language Curriculum for JHS learners considered the

tenets, directives and prescriptions of these global forces on education to ensure access and quality education, inclusive education, stakeholder engagements on educational issues among others. For instance, one of the interviewees, a Regional Director of Education, pointed out that:

*The English Language Curriculum took into consideration the SDGs, especially goal 4, which aims at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all irrespective of gender and disabilities. The curriculum was developed to ensure both diversity and inclusiveness as requirements of global conventions on rights to education. These are just typical examples of how international conventions affected the drafting of the curriculum (Field Data, 2023).*

Yet, another interviewee who heads one of the junior high schools in the Greater Accra Region, believed that:

*The curriculum has elements that reflect Ghana's obligations to international bodies it is a member. For example, the AU Agenda 2063 and its aspiration on education inspired the framers of the English Language Curriculum to include creative pedagogies which are fit for purpose. This aspiration envisages well educated African citizens and skills evolution underscored by science, technology and innovation by the year 2063. Of course, this served as one of the blueprints for the drafting of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme (Field Data, 2023).*

The English Language Curriculum aims at creating global citizens – learners who should become productive members of the international community, hence the inculcation of global underpinnings to give learners exposure to global practices. The impact of global trends, dynamics and exigencies on curriculum development is not in doubt though there is a confluence of ideas among experts that societal norms and values play critical roles. Twenty-two interviewees pointed out that cognizant of the modern trends in education, the English Language Curriculum made provisions for interactive teaching and learner-centred activities. Moreover, as they claimed, the developers of the curriculum structured it in such a way that learners could

collaborate and cooperate in class or school as they endeavour to seek new knowledge and skills with the minimal intervention by the teacher as a facilitator. For instance, the data noted that learners are provided students' pack which aids their collaborative learning even in the absence of the teacher. As a result, in case of global glitch such as the COVID-19 pandemic or any other disaster – artificial or natural– which could deprive students of studies in the classroom or the school, learning could easily take place. The researcher noted that the English Language Curriculum indeed came along with students pack to support students in their learning. Significantly, a teacher observed that:

*The new curriculum is learner friendly. Learning can easily take place without the presence of the teacher. The wording of the exemplars in the English Language Curriculum that provide meanings to the various indicators are well structured while other complementary readers like the learner's resource pack do simplification of concepts for students. The resource packs also refer students to read, listen to or view other media sources such as radio and television to enhance their studies. In case of a pandemic, social upheaval or natural disaster, which demands closure of schools, students can engage in independent study (Field Data, 2023).*

The study also uncovered that donor partners have major roles to play in curriculum development in Ghana. On this, twenty-three interviewees claimed that due to foreign aid which provides support for the country in critical areas such as the provision of educational infrastructure, implementation of policies and programmes, pre-service and in-service training and workshops for teachers among a host of others, certain preconditions or requirements of donor partners were factored into the development of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme for JHS. Although a crop of interviewees believed that allowing donor partners to determine the education curriculum of the country amounted to undermining the territorial integrity of the country, others pointed out that foreign assistance has become part of

globalization which cannot be whisked away so easily. In a response to a question on this matter, a member of CCT reckoned that:

*... we should also not lose sight of the fact that we are always assisted by development partners in the implementation of policies on education. Hence, some of their prescriptions also featured in the new English Language Curriculum. For instance, the drift from the use of terms like topics, objectives, teacher-learner activities, core points and evaluation in the previous curriculum to new terminologies such as strands, sub-strands, content standards, performance indicators, exemplars and competencies as well as the expected seating arrangements in classrooms, speak volumes about the impact of development partners in the development of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme. This may have consequences for our culture but we cannot expunge external support and its impact on our economy (Field Data, 2023).*

It is an irrefutable fact that development partners channel aid to support developing countries for particular intent and purposes. For Ghana, the support from several development partners such as the World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the British Council and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to the education sector for specific reasons cannot be overemphasized. For instance, USAID provides funds for the Primary Education Project (PREP) in Ghana while CIDA offers a wide range of support in the form of technical aid, personnel, equipment and buildings (Sekyere, 2013) in return for natural resources. The World Bank, the UK's defunct Department of International Development (DfID) now called the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) also support the Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcome Programme (GALOP). However, all these global partners through the foreign aid regime, influenced the development of the English Language Curriculum in order to conform to standards of globalization and the western world.

## **4.2 Relevant Components of the English Language Teaching Excluded or Sidelined in the Curriculum**

Generally, curriculum development focuses on a number of components ranging from philosophy or needs analysis to subjects, classroom and co-curricular activities. Essentially, Curriculum designers, thus, have to peruse these components prior to, during and after the curriculum development (Zohrabi, 2008). More importantly, the components of the English Language teaching in the curriculum should be explicit to the teacher to be able to achieve the objectives of teaching the English Language at the JHS level. However, some relevant components of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme were either completely ignored or treated as subsidiary elements to other components of the curriculum. In an attempt to identify these components and explore the reasons behind this act, from the perspectives of interviewees, a litany of views was expounded of which the data is thematically analyzed below.

### **4.2.1 Prescribed textbooks**

Poljak cited in Mithans and Ivanus Grmek (2020, p. 203) considers textbook as “the basic teaching and learning material which enables students to acquire the necessary knowledge, develop critical, creative and dialectical thinking and develop their mental skills.” One key component of all English Language curricular is textbooks. They are indeed essential tools for teaching and learning the English Language as they aid lesson preparation, delivery and assessment in diverse ways. They really support the curriculum by replicating societal needs and individual aspirations in the numerous learning experiences of a school system. Data from twenty-six interviewees unveiled that, textbooks standardize the activities, provide real life activities akin to the social setting, and creative pedagogies and strategies of a curriculum for junior high schools.



In addition, the study revealed that English Language textbooks are adapted to learners' development stage and social background while the range of problems and the level of complexity are aligned with the intellectual level of average learners. Conversely, as the interviewees opined, textbooks actually set the base for the structured understanding of the totality of the syllabus under a curriculum for easy understanding and construction of new concepts and ideas. Unfortunately, data from these interviewees emphasized that prescribed textbooks did not accompany the English Language Curriculum.

Teachers therefore have to resort to various platforms including the previous curriculum, old textbooks, the internet and other media outlets such as newspaper publications, journal articles, television and radio programmes to synthesise comprehension passages among others for their JHS lessons. Even though this demonstrates the creative prowess of the handlers of the English Language to improvise for their students, as the study argues, it defeats the purpose of the curriculum as a common core programme and standards-based with the intention of standardising the teaching and learning process of the language across the country. In the opinion of twenty-eight interviewees, therefore, the lack of prescribed textbooks imposes serious pressures on both teachers and students in the classroom. For instance, while on the part of teachers, precious time is spent maneuvering internet sources and combing their communities in search of appropriate materials to be able to teach some sub-strands in the curriculum, for students, not only are strenuous efforts exhibited to try and comprehend lessons without prescribed textbooks, but also the other proper means of knowledge acquisition found in prescribed textbooks are impeded. A teacher shared her experience as follows:

*The English Language Curriculum did not come along with the required textbooks for the teaching and learning of the subject. I personally have to rely on internet sources and the old syllabus to prepare notes for my students. Comprehension passages have to be printed out and distributed for the learners at my own cost. This has persisted for almost a year now. Though we have learners' pack, it is woefully inadequate for handling all the aspects of the language (Field Data, 2023).*

In relation to the above, in January 2022, Civil Society Organisations in education lead by the Executive Director, Institute for Education Studies (IFEST) and the Executive Director, Africa Education Watch (Eduwatch), issued caution to the government about a looming danger for the education sector for the next decade due to implementation of the Common Core Programme without the prescribed textbooks. Yet, policy makers remained adamant and implemented the English Language Curriculum without prescribed textbooks. It must be placed on record that surfing information from internet sources and old materials to facilitate teaching and learning is not bad. It indeed supports discovery learning, insightful learning and learning outside the classroom environment, which eventually broadens the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of the learner. However, it becomes enigmatic and quite bewildering when teachers rely exclusively on these sources to implement a new curriculum. Not too impressed with the status quo, a parent questioned the validity and reliability of such improvised materials in fulfillment of the tenets of the English Language Curriculum devoid of acceptable textbooks. According to her:

*Curriculum carries the niche of unifying what is taught learners everywhere in the country. Hence, lack of prescribed textbooks impugns the credibility of the whole education system at the JHS level. This is because we cannot authenticate the validity and reliability of the materials teachers search and use instead of prescribed textbooks. Whether they are standard or substandard, nobody can actually tell. How do we estimate the appropriateness of such materials for the implementation of the new curriculum when teachers with varied intellectual abilities and cultural settings are left to decide? We have however allowed this to fester for a considerable number of years now. First, the primary schools had no prescribed textbooks. It took about two*

*years before textbooks were distributed to schools and now the junior high schools are suffering the same challenge. I can image how reading comprehension is taught without prescribed textbooks (Field Data, 2023).*

Related to this issue, when a student in the Greater Accra Region was asked: Do the teachers use teaching and learning materials? The student claimed:

*Our teachers use teaching and learning materials such as charts, videos and pictures to illustrate activities for us but the lack of textbooks is our main problem. They normally put us in groups and share the old textbooks for us to read the comprehension passages in it. Sometimes too, we contribute money for the printing of passages so that we can use them for reading comprehension. Those who do not contribute sit beside their friends or are sacked from the class during the English Language lessons and so we all try to pay (Field Data, 2023).*

Almost a decade ago, Braimah et al. (2014) pointed out that the new Education Reform that introduced the JHS and SHS concepts in the 1990s was fraught with a plethora of challenges. These challenges were not peculiar to inadequate trained and qualified technical and vocational teachers but lack of textbooks in schools as well.

According to these scholars:

*...textbooks, teaching and learning materials, machinery for the vocational and technical education were either not available or inadequate. Indeed, most schools got their first year textbooks in the second year and the second year textbooks in year three.... Finally, teachers were equally as confused as the students of the New Education Reform. Syllabi of the various programmes were not made available to teachers on time. Accordingly, they resorted to teaching using the old syllabi of the old school system in the whole of the first year of the implementation of the New Reform programme (Braimah et al., 2014, p. 149).*

The English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme indeed affirms the data above as it failed to prescribe any textbook for use in the Ghanaian classroom. The closest the document could go was to provide areas comprehension passages could capture such as Festivals, Space Crafts, Entrepreneurship, Mining, Forest Depletion, among others as found at pages 16 and 17 of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme for the JHS level. It thus appears that

these horrid phenomena of lack of prescribed textbooks and other supplementary reading materials that hitherto affected teaching and learning decades ago are resurfacing in our basic schools nowadays. Davis et al. (2022) have acknowledged that English Language Curriculum implementation is greatly disillusioned by the enormous challenges teachers encounter in handling certain topics. One of these is the lack of prescribed textbooks. Stressing a number of implementation challenges teachers face in the classroom, Torto's (2017) study on the implementation of the old Basic School English Curriculum in the Cape Coast Metropolis also opined that students were passive participants in lessons. Of course, it could be deduced from the data that this phenomenon is also deep-seated in the implementation of the current English Language Curriculum for JHS partly due to lack of textbooks. Similar to this, Borti (2015) argues plausibly that due to insufficient number of textbooks, students in Ghanaian classrooms had to be arranged in triads and pairs to facilitate lesson delivery. It is obvious from this, that if pairing students to use textbooks yields little dividend as far as English language acquisition for communication is concerned, then the no textbooks syndrome would rather jeopardize the ambitions of the students forever. Osei's (2021) article, though cynical, was on point when it argued that the country was not ready to implement the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme when prescribed textbooks have neither been approved nor printed.

Certainly, the attitude of students governs their intent to learn a foreign or second language. Principally, favorable attitudes cultivated through the availability of textbooks and teachers' motivation augment the learning rate of students (Lightbown & Spada, 2003). From social constructivist's perspective of learning, readily available textbooks, for instance, facilitate discussions, role play, reading for pleasure,

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dramatization of scenes in the textbooks, cooperative learning among others. In fact, where students are demotivated in learning a second language such as the English Language, according to social constructivists, because there is pressure on learners to buy their own textbooks, print their own passages among others, the actual purpose for which the language is learnt will become highly unattainable. It goes without saying that although teachers could play their part effectively and efficiently in the education delivery of the country, if the prescribed textbooks are not supplied, students would continue to hold a complete ambivalence towards the learning of the English Language.

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Congruent to the above, the use of old textbooks is indeed an affront to construction of new knowledge and episodic memory since old and archaic principles and concepts, which have little or no application to the current technological world are imbedded in such old textbooks. As Kanno (2018) has underscored, resources in the classroom should help learners to form mental, visual, auditory, tactile and aesthetic imagery (episodes) in the minds of learners to enhance recall, collaborative learning, discovery learning and application of concepts. Significantly, according to NaCCA (2019), one of the roles of a teacher under the English Language Curriculum is to guide learners to decode text and support them in participating in and making sense of the texts they read. By implication, this is to ensure that good readers do not only cultivate the habit of storing and retrieving given information but to also engage in their own interpretation of experiences and testing those interpretations in given societal contexts. Consequently, literacy learning in the classroom should aid solution of real-world problems in their immediate environment and the world around them. Unfortunately, reliance on old textbooks that have little to no connection with modern

concepts and phenomena in the absence of prescribed textbooks can hardly perform such roles.

#### **4.2.2 Teaching and learning resources/materials**

The rationale for inculcating the use of teaching aids in education especially at the basic levels not far-fetched. It does not only play the significant role of making lessons lively, interesting and easy to comprehend but also enables the teacher to easily express his thoughts and concepts in absolute and concrete terms. The data averred that skills acquisition that aids analysis, synthesis and application of concepts is a product of the teaching resources utilized for learners to actively participate in learning. Interviewees were unanimous in citing some obvious importance of teaching resources, prominent among which are the removal of the monotony in classroom activities, supporting proper interactions among learners and linking learning experiences to the social world. Against this backdrop, twenty-three interviewees were highly skeptical about the reason behind the exclusion of major teaching learning materials from the English Language Curriculum. According to them, teaching and learning materials that needed to be explicit in the curriculum have rather been left in the purview of teachers to decide as they prepare their lesson notes.

A member of GNAT wondered:

*How could the English Language Curriculum achieve its standard-based mantra when there is hardly any uniformity in the resources used to handle lessons in the classroom? Even though improvisation is key in all school systems, we should be mindful of the likely abuse if there are no guiding principles and general ones to follow. Just as the English Language Curriculum dedicated sections to the learning philosophy, aims and objectives, learning domains, among others, teaching learning resources should have been given equal space and attention (Field Data, 2023).*

Additionally, the data posited that if JHS learners were to listen, speak, read and write and make meanings out of texts and interpret them to solve social problems, then the curriculum should have devoted a vital section to clarifying the mode and use of some teaching resources to achieve these targets. When questioned whether common teaching learning materials would be appropriate to serve different cultural settings in Ghana, a response from a lecturer at the Department of Curriculum Development, UEW, in essence, captured the import of all the interviewees' views on the matter. In the widely-expressed view of the interviewee:

*Generally, there are common identifiable teaching aids which should have been specified by the English Language Curriculum while others peculiar to cultural settings could be left for teachers to decide. Leaving the entirety of this component for teachers to use their own initiatives creates a gap between the rural and urban schools in the implementation of the English Language Curriculum as standard-based. Indeed, for certain materials, once you give the chance to teachers to improvise, their real nature and purpose could be altered or compromised (Field Data, 2023).*

The English Language Curriculum for JHS does not state explicitly the teaching resources teachers should utilize in the delivery of specific lessons. Instead, it stipulates that teachers are encouraged to provide resources, use integration of skills and multiple methods relative to the topics they teach in the Ghanaian classroom. This could be seen under the instructional expectations and the note to the teacher as part of the front matters of the curriculum. The data is rightly corroborated by Davis et al. (2022), who emphasized the point that among the factors that hamper Ghanaian public junior high school students' performance in the English Language, Mathematics and Science, is inaccessible teaching and learning materials. According to these scholars, teachers normally have to improvise for practical lessons but the motivation to do so is completely non-existent. Ample scholarly work points to the direction that teaching and learning materials augment group work and reflective

thinking on resources available in class for discussion of phenomena while making the teacher basically a facilitator in the teaching and learning process. Understandably, on teaching learning materials, Torto's (2017, p. 174) subtle revelation that "the use of teaching aids and instructional materials are indispensable if students are to be liberated from the fear of English language, then the absence of it will definitely imprison students in the fear of the subject" is very instructive.

Inclusivity and diversity are catchphrases under the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme for the JHS level and could only be achieved by proper utilization of teaching learning materials. Without doubt, not explicitly stating vivid examples, values and use of teaching learning materials in the curriculum is a setback to its standard-based rhetoric. Comparatively, just as Deas (2018) maintains that inadequate resources pose serious challenges to the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in the US, same challenge is bedeviling the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme in Ghana. By inference, a standard-based curriculum must have standards to be achieved across the educational system by classifying the knowledge, skills and dispositions that learners should know and be able to demonstrate with the support of common teaching and learning resources. Hence, their (common teaching and learning resources) lack thereof, is a dent on the English Language Curriculum.

#### **4.2.3 School infrastructure**

Infrastructure to augment the implementation of the English Language Curriculum is largely unavailable, data from thirty interviewees has revealed, highlighting the disparities between intentions of the framers of the English Language Curriculum and the actual situation on the ground. This is because the much-spoke about



improvement in school infrastructure to support the implementation of the curriculum appears to be a charade. The data reported that schools across the country are beset with challenges of inadequate classrooms, desks, tables and chairs, and teachers' notebooks. Moreover, the data shows that mono and dual desks are inappropriate for the implementation of the English Language Curriculum with regard to the adoption of modern seating arrangements of students (horseshoe seating), a departure from the traditional classroom seating of students directly facing the chalkboard. Speaking to the issue of the proper infrastructure, a teacher posited that:

*Like I said, taking a holistic view of curriculum as all the experiences that students are taken through in an educational system to effect change of behaviour other than just the document that stipulates the arrangements of the learning experiences, I think a number of infrastructural deficits are plaguing the smooth implementation of the English Language Curriculum. In fact, in most parts of the country, schools lack school buildings, desks, tables and chairs among others. Even, given the seating arrangements of students currently, neither mono desks nor dual desks are fit for purpose as far as smooth implementation of the English Language Curriculum is concerned (Field Data, 2023).*

The interviewees also divulged the information that sanitation facilities, language laboratory, library, computers and internet facilities should have been part of every school infrastructure to assist handlers of the English Language and learners to be able to undertake effective teaching and learning respectively in the various schools. They admitted that adequate school infrastructure helps in diverse ways in the implementation of the English Language Curriculum. For a SISO in the Sekyere Afram Plains District of the Ashanti Region:

*Inadequate infrastructure is a bane to the implementation of the new English Language Curriculum, especially in the rural communities, which in turn creates general disparity in the English competency levels among learners in different parts of Ghana. I interact with teachers and students in my circuit every week. The level of infrastructural challenges in the schools cannot be overemphasized. This puts teachers and school managers in an extreme situation of trying their best to implement the*

*English Language Curriculum. In some schools, classrooms are inadequate to the extent that the multigrade system, which is not to be practised at the JHS level is rather being applied. In some schools, infrastructure for co-curricular activities such as laboratories and libraries, the least said about them, the better (Field Data, 2023)*

Adu-Gyamfi et al. (2016), in their scholarship, *Educational Reforms in Ghana: Past and Present*, confirm the data by claiming that, development of educational curricular including English Language curriculum in Ghana is pierced with lots of infrastructural challenges. Nevertheless, the zero-sum game politics in education appears to offer no solution in sight for these challenges. Contributing to the discourse, in his study on the essence of school infrastructure on academic performance, Adede (2012), argued that improved academic performance especially in the English Language was highly correlational with more adequate classrooms, proper stocking of libraries, adequate science laboratories, adequate computer laboratories, sufficient sanitation facilities and water supply among others. Consequently, while some of these facilities directly impact academic performance in the classroom, others support co-curricular activities which are all geared towards personality development and social interactions so keen to the implementation phase of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme.

In the succinct view of Breen (2001, p. 129): “The classroom is the meeting point of various subjective views of language, diverse learning purposes, and different preferences,” hence infrastructure to consolidate and accommodate all shades of opinions in an English Language class must not be in short supply. In furtherance of the foregoing, it is not impervious to reason that access to equitable quality education and lifelong learning, as part of the niches of the English Language Curriculum, are attainable through adequate provision of school infrastructure. Of course, a consideration of the dilapidated school infrastructure and the objective-based scope of

the previous English Language Curriculum, apparently, in the view of policy makers orchestrated the change of curriculum at the basic level, yet no significant changes have been done to school infrastructure.

#### **4.2.4 Summary writing**

All international education programmes and protocols emphasise improvement in the quality of education around the world. Yet, not just improvement on already existing frameworks but innovative ideas that drive effective changes to the social setup. Gradually but steadily, many educational curricular in most countries are drifting away from mere acquisition of knowledge, understanding and comprehension of concepts to application, analysis and evaluation of problems to be able to derive solutions. Considering the spirit of independence of thought and mind that heralds every innovative venture, interviewees were skeptical about the exclusion of summary writing as a major component of the English Language Curriculum for the JHS level. Thus, according to twenty-five interviewees, summary writing has been subsumed under reading and given little space and expression in the English Language Curriculum for JHS learners. The interviewees were however concerned that what drives the contemporary world is one's ability to create substance personally and not just rehash of other people's thoughts and beliefs as reading comprehension passages normally portray. This data holds truth in the sense that page 55 of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme provides only one Content Standard under Sumarizing, where students are to determine the central idea in a paragraph and analyze to identify supporting ideas. This is the only aspect on summary writing for Basic 8 students. In view of this, the primary data re-emphasized that in an era of digital evolution, where learners are being swayed from memorization of facts and figures, and copying texts verbatim, summary writing

should have been a major component of the curriculum to assist students in deriving new perceptions, support concept building and idea formations. Interviewees added that even though reading and listening comprehension and all other components of the English Language Curriculum could boost students' creative abilities, they only play second fiddle to summary writing in this time and age. This is because summary writing lays so much emphasis on creativity, innovation and individual ingenuity. In their responses to this question, a headmaster in particular observed that:

*Summary has become part of students' everyday activities. In all the aspects of language teaching, students are always encouraged to express themselves orally and in writing. I think that the many expressional errors we correct in our daily interactions with students could be avoided if summary writing was considered appropriately and taught dispassionately at the JHS level. Indeed, for some learners, this is the termination period in their education, hence effective knowledge in summary writing is essential as they enter the world after their JHS education (Field Data, 2023).*

A teacher also recounted that:

*Students at the SHS always complain about their inability to grasp and apply summary writing skills. With reference to this, developers of the English Language Curriculum for JHS should have averted their minds to this phenomenon at the SHS level so that summary writing could be given a major priority at the JHS for smooth transition to the SHS level. Indeed, summary writing currently is more beneficial to learners than reading comprehension (Field Data, 2023).*

The actual impact of summary writing is still to be settled by empirical data. However, it is quite obvious that summary writing does not only infuse in students the spirit of brevity, it also instills in them precision and speed in the application of knowledge. As Eyisi (2016) puts, two schools of thought exist on curriculum – the traditional school of thought and the progressive curriculum. The traditional school stresses literacy; reading and writing while the progressive school on curriculum underlines creative thinking, problem solving, synthesis and evaluation of issues among others which are at the heart of the constructivist school of thought on

learning. Unfortunately, summarizing given little space under reading, for example at page eleven (11) of the English Language Curriculum for JHS. To this end, if the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme is underpinned by the progressive curriculum school of thought based on the philosophy, learning domains, pedagogical approaches and competencies it ascribes, then summary writing should have been properly constituted and taught as part of the English Language Curriculum for the JHS level.

#### **4.2.5 The library period**

The study further identified the library period as one essential component of the English Language teaching that has been excluded from the curriculum. From the narrative of twenty-one interviewees, hitherto, a period on the timetable reserved for library has been omitted from the new English Language Curriculum. In their claims, these interviewees noted that they had perused the new English Language Curriculum and a number of timetables for a litany of junior high schools in the Greater Accra, Eastern and Ashanti Regions to no avail. Evidentially, as they asserted, the library period that offered students at the JHS level the means to engage in independent work, read story books and journals to improve their vocabulary, has been removed from the curriculum. In respect of the fact that some of the interviewees were able to prove their case with their school timetables, and the English Language Curriculum in their possession, and verification by the research through observation confirmed their claims, it lends credence to this assertion. Consequently, while some interviewees recounted that the library period was taken off to increase the instructional hours in the classroom, according to a cross-section of interviewees, this viewpoint only portrays a simplified version of what contact hours really mean. According to them, since the library period provided the opportunity for learners to engage in reflective

practice, learn more about phenomena taught in the classroom and reposition learners for higher learning, which constitute an important part of the contact hours in school, that argument is not sound. A Regional Director of Education, for instance, claimed that:

*Although the library period has been taken off the official timetable, teachers of the English Language are supposed to inculcate reading of supplementary books in their lessons. Some of the contact hours could be spent at the library or on the school compound for students to engage in extensive reading. The library period is therefore part of the curriculum just that it is not on the timetable (Field Data, 2023)*

Obviously not enthused about the omission of the library period, in a sharp rebuttal to the foregoing assertion, a teacher opined that:

*The instructional hours are virtually not enough to handle the quantum of workload in the English Language to allot part for library sessions. Now, we have 50 minutes per lesson for four days. That is 200minutes for a week. You could imagine how tedious and impractical it is assigning the various aspects of the English Language to only four periods of 50 minutes per week. However, in the previous curriculum, the English Language was allocated six periods per week plus a library period. Now, students are only encouraged to do their own library research and readings outside the instructional hours because the instructional periods are woefully inadequate (Field Data, 2023).*

As Mohanasundaram (2018) has underscored, personality development, a situation that involves boosting and grooming both the outer and inner self of students to lift their self-confidence, communication, widen their knowledge horizon, etiquettes and manners, among others, should be a key indicator in assessing the dexterity of a curriculum. He further argues that curriculum development should embrace flexibility, learning to learn, initiative and self-direction, and social and cross-cultural interaction, and constructivism. Accordingly, these elements apprise learners with creativity, innovativeness and personal development skills, outside the monotonous

classroom activities. A perusal of the National Syllabus for English Language (Junior High Schools 1 – 3) (the previous curriculum) shows that the library period was an essential part of the teaching of the English Language in the JHS classroom. At pages 33 and 34 of the document, the essence of the school library and period are emphasized, where for instance, students were to read at least fifteen (15) books yearly. Teachers were also urged to provide time for learners to tell stories read in class and dramatize part of books read. Again, teachers were to check on students’ reading using the table below:

**Table 1: Checking on Pupils’ Reading**

Title: .....

Author: .....

Nationality: .....

Publisher: .....

Year of Publication: .....

Library Type: .....

No. of Pages: .....

Date Started: .....

Date Completed: .....

Main Characters and Others: .....

Summary/Gist of Text:.....

The part I like best/don’t like and reasons:



*Extract from the National Syllabus for English Language (Junior High Schools 1 – 3), page 34.*

Although the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme for the JHS level at page 15, under *Reading Material*, states that: “It is a requirement that each learner should read five books on different topics each term, that is, fifteen books per year,” it only encourages the teacher to use their “initiative in improvising and planning new materials” while the library period is non-existent. All these have dire consequences on the new English Language Curriculum as a standard-based document. The exclusion of the library period from the English Language Curriculum is therefore reminiscent of uprooting one of the livewires of personality development and inculcation of the spirit of reading in learners.

Arguably, the library period simulates the democratic thinking abilities of learners outside the classroom. Where a school possesses a school library, all students can engage in independent study during the library period to build the self for future endeavours. In this instance, a teacher’s role as a facilitator would be akin to guiding students’ activities in the library by monitoring what students read and reinforcing their exploits. Consequently, students’ sharing of knowledge obtained from library research, which is part of the constructivist’s participatory approach, could kindle exchange of ideas in a think-pair share, group discussions, debates or project work, which enhances social inclusion, critical thinking, problem-solving and collaborative learning.

#### **4.3 Adequacy of the English Language Curriculum for the Teaching of the**

##### **English Language in the Ghanaian Classroom**

Education, one of the priorities of all successive governments of Ghana, has been the subject of many reforms, particularly in search of a model that would fit the expectations of the citizenry, needs of society and the aspirations of the nation (Adu-



Gyamfi et al., 2017). Since the Common Core Programme was implemented in January 2022, stakeholders have had cause to complain about the litany of structural and functional challenges of the new curriculum. While scholars including Apau (2021), and Aboagye and Yawson (2020), have described the New Pre-Tertiary Education Curriculum for primary schools as a total overhaul of the previous curriculum, other scholars like Osei (2021) believe that same cannot be said about the Common Core Programme because of the persistent hydra-headed monstrous challenges that hinder smooth academic pursuit in the Ghanaian classroom, creating a serious cavity in the implementation phase. Taking a lot of inspiration from the foregoing, the researcher sought to analyse the adequacy of the curriculum for teaching the English Language at the JHS level. Primary data unearthed prevailing factors that subsume overarching versions on this subject matter. Subsequent to this, the various issues are succinctly deconstructed and analysed as follows.

#### **4.3.1 Purpose of the English Language in national life**

A glut of differing opinions was offered by interviewees on why the English Language Curriculum is adequate for nurturing learners for national life. Accordingly, the interviewees revealed that the adequacy of the English Language Curriculum could be realized from the rationale and the specific purposes for which the English Language is taught at the basic level of education in Ghana. Primary data spelt out the rationale of teaching the English Language at the JHS in a threefold schema. First, twenty-seven interviewees argued that learning English as a second language is to support learners with the requisite communication skills and competence as vehicle for appreciating the core cultural values and norms of other people. This, they claimed, will also equip learners with the language and skills to be able to participate fully in all global activities and the technological advancement of the world. In the

opinion of interviewees, in respect of the fact that the English Language Curriculum uses several means including the training of learners in speech work, listening and reading comprehension, grammar, composition, among others just as other countries do globally to imbue communication skills in learners, the curriculum is adequate and fit for purpose. Speaking to the issue of whether the curriculum is adequate or not, a member of NaCCA gave a direct response:

*Yes..... the curriculum has been developed in such a way to equip learners with all the requirements of effective communication using the English Language. You know, globally, English has attained the status of the most extensively used language in business and trade, in the digital evolution and tourism, among others. What this means is that the English Language projects the curriculum as a carefully couched document for training learners for the contemporary world. Truth be told, it is satisfactory for its objectives just that more need to be done at the implementation phase for it to be more purposeful (Field Data, 2023).*

Anyidoho (2018) has acknowledged communication as an inevitable vehicle in the human society given its role as an avenue for humans to effectively share their thoughts, feelings, ideas and information with others. She opines that although human communication in the form of body movements, signs and other non-verbal acts sends the necessary information to others, however, speech and writing are by far superior in terms of accuracy, effectiveness and efficiency. Based on this observation, the various means earmarked by the English Language Curriculum – inclusion, scaffolding, creative pedagogies – to transmit cultural values, and enhance socialization and collaboration among learners through verbal and written language are apt in the contemporary epoch.

Interviewees further claimed that English remains the national language of Ghana. It is also the lingua franca for most Ghanaians. These are the reasons the curriculum has the objective of training learners to be proficient enough in the English Language to

embark on national and official engagements. The data indicated that English is the official language for government business; it is used in all national discourses – executive undertakings, parliamentary business, judicial proceedings, interactions in the security services, international relations and diplomacy, the media, among others. Considering the particular status of English in the national life of Ghanaians, the English Language Curriculum is quite remarkable in explicitly outlining a surfeit of national issues to be learnt by all students. Thus, regardless of students' cultural backgrounds, many of the strands, sub-strands and content standards in the English Language Curriculum such as the topics for reading – Ghana's natural resources, mining, festivals, energy conservation, modern communication, governance, drug abuse climate change, among others – have been tailored towards acquiring national life – patriotism, cooperation, tolerance, unity, peace and stability – to prepare students to take up their proper roles in the future. Giving a narrative on how adequate the English Language Curriculum is as far as training learners for national assignments is concerned, a Regional Director of Education submitted that:

*Although Ghana is a heterogeneous society, English has persistently been our unifying force since our nationhood. In fact, students speak their mother tongue at home but English as a lingua franca acts as a common language for all. The curriculum has critically incorporated topics and techniques of national life to imbue in learners, loyalty and commitment to duty, peace and unity, among others. Sincerely speaking, as I have observed, issues of governance, social issues, water resources and climate change are featured in comprehension passages. All these prepare learners for a meaning life in future; a life of love for one another, devotion to duty and the maintenance of the peace and security that we all enjoy. Are these not what the society demands of the next generation? In its totality, the English Language Curriculum is suitable for addressing national concerns (Field Data, 2023).*

On his part, a member of a civil society organisation (CSO) avowed that:

*To the best of my knowledge, the rationale, general and specific aims and learning domains of the English Language were critically adapted to suit*

*our cultural heritage, national life and the international community. If you look at it critically, these are to provide learners solid foundation in the English Language to be able to combine the language and national objectives in solving societal and national challenges (Field Data, 2023).*

The data argues plausibly that the foregoing is indicative of the adequacy of the curriculum in preparing the youth for future national endeavours. Apparently, the data is largely confirmed by Nyame (2020), whose scholarship opined that curriculum development should take cognizance of societal interests and national aspirations. Nyame further asserts that a curriculum must meet societal needs by producing well-balanced individuals to serve society in various capacities and not to rather estrange them from their communities. As Alsubaie (2016) has also underscored, for curriculum development to be effective, the philosophy, goals, objectives, instructional resources and assessment should model ideals of the society.

Certainly, allowing learners to cooperate, work in groups and discover new ideas from essay topics like official letter writing, speech writing, debate writing, article writing, appropriate use of registers prepares them for future national assignments. Again, comprehension passages on adolescent reproductive health, diseases and their prevention, sports and games, bad farming practices, social, moral and cultural values, among others also instill in learners, communication and collaboration, personality development and leadership, critical thinking and problem-solving, and creativity and innovation, which are imperative for higher cognitive learning; making enquiries about their environment, engaging in teamwork and contributing to national affairs in diverse ways.

According to Muib (2018), language plays a critical dual role in any formal education system – as a subject of the curriculum and as medium of instruction. These two functions of language, usually captured under the nomenclature; language of education and language in education imply preparing learners adequately in the English Language for these two fundamental roles in the Ghanaian context. The data asserted that the English Language is not only a content subject, but also a language and ultimately the medium of instruction at the JHS level. Against this premise, twenty-four interviewees opined that English as the language of instruction across the curriculum has a special duty of spearheading students' understanding in most of the subjects studied under the curriculum. In view of this, it is significant that learners secure foundational and analytical skills in the English Language to promote the learning of other subjects. The data contradicts the assertion by Taylor (2016) that English as the language of instruction has been counterproductive and needs critical assessment. Subsequently, as Anyidoho (2018) mentions, English has consistently been the medium of instruction in Ghanaian schools, at least from upper primary, according to the language-in-education policy in Ghana since 1957. Consequently, even though there are intense pathways to educating students at the JHS level, the English Language Curriculum provides flexibility in the acquisition of the English Language as learners learn the language at their own pace, in groups, in discussions, through collaborations and in a more practical and friendly manner to support the learning of other subjects with ease. In the assertion of a member of NaCCA, which captured the essence of other interviewees, she opined that:

*The curriculum provides the needed methods and techniques for training learners in the English Language. Of course, this is so essential as English remains both a subject and an integral part of implementation of the Common Core Programme as the medium of instruction at the JHS level. I must add that, once teachers of English get things right, learners*

*would have no challenges learning other subjects like Science and Mathematics because the elements of grammar, comprehension and composition are highly necessary for grasping concepts in those subjects (Field Data, 2023).*

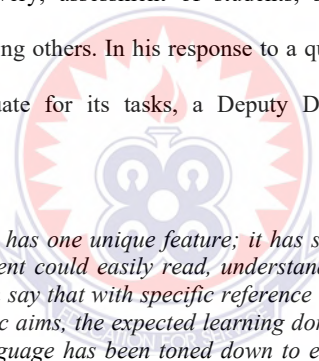
The data is corroborated by Mohanasundaram (2018), who espoused educational communication or language used for instruction in schools as one major component of a curriculum. The role of English in the language policy of the Ghanaian classroom and its subsequent impact on national affairs cannot be overemphasized. Securing a good appreciation of the English Language concepts, invariably, does not only aid prospects in the language but other subjects as well because of its role as the language of instruction in schools. Undoubtedly, vocabulary growth and exposure to the rudiments of the English Language at the basic level of education correlate strongly with later academic success, not only in the English Language but all other subjects taught using the English Language.

As the data has shown careful perusal of the curriculum proves that elements of nationalism, allegiance to the state and cooperation among the citizenry have been featured in the various strands and techniques of teaching the English Language. The inclusion of patriotic values in the teaching of composition and comprehension as well as the use of collaboration, group work, discussions and role playas teaching techniques, therefore, make the curriculum equal to its task as it saturates the necessary elements of social cohesion, national telepathy and empathy in young learners as the English Language is used as language of instruction.

#### **4.3.2 Simplicity of language**

Generally, definitional precision, brevity of assumptions and aptness of pedagogies support fruitful implementation of a curriculum. Interviewees expressed this view in light of how simplicity of events and processes could support the proper functioning

of a system. Consequently, they showed their pleasure about the succinctness of the scope, structure and substance of the English Language Curriculum, which facilitates both classroom and co-curricular activities. According to them, the language of the curriculum is down to earth, pedagogical approaches are simply stated and all other components of the curriculum are clearly defined in simple language. The primary data pointed out for instance that the language used in couching the rationale, the philosophy, core competences, learning domains and a host of others were simplified for easy appreciation and application by all teachers. This is to ensure that the curriculum is user friendly to all teachers who have to use it in their daily activities – preparation of lesson notes, lesson delivery, assessment of students, search for information related to the curriculum, among others. In his response to a question on how he considers the curriculum adequate for its tasks, a Deputy Director of Education retorted that:



*The English Language Curriculum has one unique feature; it has simple language. Even every serious student could easily read, understand and act accordingly. As I sit here, I can say that with specific reference to the philosophy, the general and specific aims, the expected learning domains and the core competences, the language has been toned down to ensure that teachers are able to use the document effectively. Thus, with little in-service training, teachers could still implement the curriculum without any difficulty (Field Data, 2023).*

In support of the above claim, other interviewees explained that instructions in the curriculum for lesson preparation and delivery are self-explanatory to teachers. As they acknowledge, rather than the legalistic expressions and terms, compound and complex sentence structures observed in most public documents such as Acts of Parliament, the 1992 Constitution and presidential statements in Ghana, simple sentence structures were used for writing the English Language Curriculum.

Buttressing her argument with evidence, a teacher read an example of indicator and exemplars (B7.1.1.1.3) from the curriculum as follows:

*B7.1.1.1.3: Use appropriate language orally to describe experiences about oneself and others.*

*Use*

- *language: tense structure, variety of sentences, figurative expressions etc.*
- *vocabulary: nouns, adjectives, adverbs, etc. to talk about one's experiences and those of others in specific situations e.g. the hospital, shopping in the market/supermarket, at the bus terminal/station ... (English Language Curriculum for B7 – B9, p. 21).*

The researcher's perusal of the English Language Curriculum for the JHS level corroborated the data above. In fact, the wording of the curriculum from the philosophy of the curriculum, the pedagogies, organization of the curriculum to learning competencies, show that the language is simple. It is important to acknowledge that a curriculum written in simple language is indeed an asset to students as they would benefit from the easy understanding and appreciation of the ideas and concepts by their teachers. However, regards all these issues, a number of questions came up. How simple could the language in the curriculum be? If the language is simple for teachers, but the necessary teaching resources and motivation for teachers are non-existent, can this support the successful implementation of the English Language Curriculum so obsessed with training young learners at the JHS to think critically and solve real problems? Can just the supposed simplicity of language support smooth implementation of the curriculum? In fact, the current situation in Ghanaian schools portrays so much implementation challenges as reiterated. Hence, to cite simplicity of language of the curriculum particularly and be dismissive or



contemptuous of the contributions of other pressing needs in the classroom is identical with the curriculum's death on arrival.

#### **4.3.3 Organization of the curriculum**

One key element of the English Language Curriculum identified by interviewees is the organization of contents and experiences in a chronological progression; from simple to complex, easy to difficult or complex issues and concrete to abstract concepts. Conversely, the data gathered from twenty interviewees revealed that the curriculum attempts efforts at engaging learners in prerequisite learning. This means that there are fundamental principles, concepts or ideas that are learnt ahead before applicable topics are later introduced. For instance, the data emphasized that world classes come before phrases, phrases precede clauses and clauses come before sentences in the English Curriculum. There is therefore a logical arrangement of the strands, sub-strands, content standards, indicators and exemplars in the curriculum; easy to difficult, and basic to complex, in order for learners to find the necessary closer connections to their daily activities, experiences and real-life situations, and to build relationships between concepts and life experiences. This trend, according to interviewees, is in consonance with international conventions on education and other global standards. In essence, the curriculum has all that it takes to be used in the Ghanaian classroom to educate young learners of the English Language. Pursuant to this, a headmaster emphasized how the arrangements of the contents in the curriculum augment the teaching of the subject:

*Through my own checks, I admit that arrangements of strands, sub-strands and content standards in the curriculum easily facilitate education of young learners of the language. Clearly, simple and easy concepts are introduced which gradually lead learners to relatively complex issues. In my opinion, the framers were certain that the simple concepts which normally consider the social context of learners would aid*

*appreciation of these concepts which could later be relied upon to unearth more discoveries about complex situations. This is great (Field Data, 2023).*

A differing opinion was however provided by other interviewees, who believed that certain strands should have preceded others in the curriculum. They cite the example that the teaching of English sounds should have come before conversation/everyday discourse and listening comprehension in the curriculum since the teacher would use the speech sounds as a yardstick to measure effective conversation or everyday discourse or communication among the learners. Sharing her views on the adequacy of the curriculum, a teacher said that:

*I'm not too sure about the reason for that. .... some of the topics, which were taught before others in the previous curriculum have now alternated in the new curriculum. In my personal view, these changes should not have occurred. The situation does not facilitate easy understanding of certain concepts. For instance, teaching of speech sounds should have come before listening comprehension and everyday discourse in the curriculum. We are all privy to this. We were taught this in college. This might be a mistake on the part of the developers of the curriculum (Field Data, 2023).*

Relative to the foregoing, other interviewees held a contrary opinion. According to them, there are no problems with the arrangements of the strands and topics in the curriculum. They contend, for instance, that once conversation/everyday discourse and listening comprehension are taught before the English sounds, the teacher is able to work on the identifiable problems that learners have on English sounds. This situation is in line with the general principle of teaching from the known to the known. Furthermore, it feeds into acts of discovery and enquiry learning on the part of the learners to ascertain for example, the English sounds they utilized in their daily discourse in earlier learning experiences. This phenomenon also promotes active participation of learners in the teaching and learning process than the teacher-

monopoly as learners could easily interact and use previously attained knowledge in conversation lessons in the classroom to construct new knowledge.

As evinced from the data, one general principle of education is that teaching is done from the known ideas or notions to the unknown. It is interesting to note that in the opinion of interviewees, the curriculum subscribes to this principle and does not guide teachers in oblivion. Despite the fact that the developers of the curriculum formulated the objectives, contents, experiences and the stages of problem-solving and thinking critically by grade or class levels, one particular striking pedagogical technique in the curriculum is that all strands from Basic 7 to Basic 9 are the same. That is, the various strands; Oral language, Reading, Grammar, Writing, and Literature feature in the English Language Curriculum for all the stages (Basic 7 to 9). However, subsequent stages constitute buildup on the previous learning experience. Scholars refer to this situation as spiral curriculum. The curriculum ensures learner-empowerment and independence. Thus, teaching and learning is not carried out on abstraction but based on certain previously acquired knowledge of learners. Hence, interviewees generally estimate the English Language Curriculum as quite an adequate blueprint for the education delivery of the country at the basic level.

#### **4.3.4 Pedagogical approaches in the English Language Curriculum**

The nature and quality of the social and emotional interactions between teachers and students are pivotal to any educational system the world over. In recognition of this, the English Language Curriculum is awash in a preponderance of pedagogical approaches and techniques which interviewees assert would ensure the attainment of the objectives of the curriculum.

There is a general consensus among scholars that educational systems in the current century should empower learners with the requisite skills, competences, attitude and aptitude as a remedy for the constant evolution of the educational landscape (Herodotou et al., 2019). More often than not, references are made to critical thinking, collaborative learning, insightful learning, discovery learning, digital literacy, problem-solving and innovation in contemporary education reforms. What is palpable and quite negotiable is how best to achieve these learning competencies expressly with respect to the teaching and learning approaches that facilitate complex skills development at the basic level of education. Undeniably, pedagogical approaches in the education delivery of the country are of prime importance to stakeholders. The study therefore set out to inquire from interviewees some pedagogical approaches in the English Language Curriculum. Data gathered were wide-ranging from the stance of the different interviewees and are captured in the succeeding discourses.

#### **4.3.4.1 Learning-centred pedagogy**

One distinctive area that demonstrates a clear departure of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme from previous curricular is its consistent obsession with learning-centred pedagogy as opposed to teacher-centred approach to teaching. Learning-centred pedagogy is characterized with other terminologies such as progressive, constructivist, humanistic, democratic education, problem-based or enquiry-based learning and child-centred learning (Shah, 2021; Lattimer, 2015; Schweisfurth, 2015). According to primary data, the Common Core Programme is susceptible to students' construction of knowledge with minimal teacher intervention. As a teacher notes:

*The English Language Curriculum is imbedded with creative pedagogies – creative teaching, teaching for creativity and creative*

*learning. Learners are highly involved in the teaching and learning process. All activities in the classroom are centred on the learner (Field Data, 2023).*

The data argued that the curriculum specifies the creation of learning-centred classrooms, where a lot of resources should be provided for learners to be able to manipulate objects, mingle and interact with friends in pairs, groups or clusters to discuss concepts, ideas and scenarios so that as they actively engage in discovering new phenomena, collaborating to find answers to problems, applying, analysing and evaluating information, they would develop some degree of learner-autonomy. A SISO hinted that:

*The curriculum has been designed in such a way that learners take charge of their learning. The teacher only comes in to provide guidelines, materials and support systems where situations demand it. With the English Language Curriculum, too much of explanations, notes taking and recitation of facts have been relegated to the background. It is about building on talents and not spoon-feeding by the teacher (Field Data, 2023).*

While admitting that learning in a structured environment in a teacher-centred classroom may make students feel more secure and that drilling, recitation and explanations by teachers provide them with security. In fact, as teachers can effectively manage both the content of the lesson and classroom events. Thirty interviewees asserted that under the learning-centred model, learners are given the opportunity to share knowledge, burdens and experiences through their unique skills and resources available. Thus, the consequence of this approach is deep learning of the English Language as juxtaposed with rote learning, memorializing and recall. The study therefore observed that learning focuses less on teacher telling and more on student exploration of knowledge in a learning-centred classroom. For instance, a member of NaCCA contended that:

*The English Language Curriculum focuses on learning-centred classrooms. In this sense, the teacher's role is limited to providing the needed guides and materials to students for hand-on activities. Collaborative learning, exchange of ideas and discussions in class are encouraged. The classroom atmosphere is likened to the home environment for learners to feel safe and accepted as they engage in authentic tasks assigned by the teacher or their own groups or leaders. Learning is also organized around the problem at hand and not a particular discipline (Field Data, 2023).*

Succinctly provided in the English Language Curriculum document for JHS, is learning-centred pedagogy ably heralded by creative pedagogies to augment classroom activities. These findings on learning-centred pedagogy support the observation by Ene et al. (2013) on discovery or expository learning. According to these scholars, under the discovery or expository learning, learners take full control of their learning by creating their own language rules using the vehicle of social interactions and socially friendly resources which synchronize with objects in their immediate environment. The teacher only assumes a facilitator's role in the classroom. Students therefore become largely engrossed in all teaching and learning processes in order to arrive at expected knowledge target. Again, as Taylor (2016) has opined, collaborative learning, which is a technique under the learning-centred approach, offers opportunity to learners to interact in class, and learn in meaningful and authentic ways through discussions, group work, role play among others. Invariably, as Shah (2021, p. 20) has underscored, "learning becomes an active and interactive process "with the learner as the focal point in the teaching and learning process.

Brinkmann (2019) has observed that implementing learning-centred classrooms demands a systematic alignment between curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and the provision of high-quality teacher education programmes. Unfortunately, even though the universities and colleges of education in Ghana are constantly training pre-service

teachers, the training of in-service teachers on pedagogy for English Language teaching particularly and the new curriculum in general has been a mirage. Some interviewees disclosed that the teacher-centred model still predominates in classrooms chiefly in rural communities with low school infrastructure, inadequate learning resources and unqualified teachers to handle the English Language. These are teachers who still uphold the conviction underscored by scholars like Westbrook et al. (2013) and Carroll (2014) that, learners' minds constitute a tabula rasa, empty vessels that need to be filled with knowledge by teachers. It is about high time educational authorities such as the National Schools Inspectorate Authority and the district directorates of education intensified their monitoring and inspection of schools to ensure smooth implementation of the pedagogical approaches in the English Language Curriculum.

#### ***4.3.4.2 Differentiation and scaffolding***

Scholars dilate on differentiation or differentiated learning/instruction as a process of accommodating learners' differences in terms of abilities at learning and use of facilities. Echevarria et al. (2017), proponents of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), a model that seeks to make content highly comprehensible to English Language learners, strongly advocate differentiated instruction to learning the English Language as a Second Language principally due to the learning abilities of students – beginners, intermediates and advanced learners. The data explained that the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme makes room for learners' considerable strengths and weaknesses in the classroom. Thus, teachers are expected to assign different tasks to learners based on their skills, learning styles, individual needs, accuracy and speed in arriving at same conclusions. Twenty-five interviewees noted, for instance, that the teacher could set

different assessment tasks and practical approaches to suit the capacities of each learner. A GNAT executive member submitted that:

*Teachers are expected to engage learners in differentiated learning using various techniques. For example, the teacher could ask learners to draw an object by allowing a group to trace, while others sketch, another group could look on pictures to draw, yet another set observes real objects to draw and the last group of students draws from memory (Field Data, 2023).*

Data gathered from interviewees also revealed that there are different linguistic backgrounds among students, hence with differentiation, students' individual needs and shortfalls in the English Language are catered for. Thus, as stated in the English Language Curriculum, differentiation could be done by tasks assigned, as supports to students and on students' outcome. For instance, a Deputy Director of Education in the Eastern Region disclosed that:

*Students in our schools have different traits – gifted and special children, among others. To be able to cater for the special needs of all learners and not to leave others behind, learners' abilities should be a guiding principle in assigning them tasks, giving them sufficient time to work or providing them counseling services to improve their performance (Field Data, 2023).*

A teacher also asserted that the curriculum urges teachers that:

*Equity and equality should be key in all lessons and assessment of students. Students who possess some weaknesses must be assisted to catch up with their colleagues through adaptation of certain teaching and learning techniques, which could bridge the gap between higher achievers and weaker students (Field Data, 2023).*

Out of the thirty (30) interviewees, twenty-two said that scaffolding, the application of a plethora of instructional techniques and strategies purposely to take learners of the English Language through learning tasks from the rudimentary level in order to gradually progress towards more complicated issues, also forms part of the pedagogical approaches of the English Language curriculum. Secondary data (the



English Language Curriculum) asserted that the rationale behind scaffolding in the English Language Curriculum is to break learning tasks into smaller units or gradations to support logical progression in teaching and learning activities for learners to absorb easily. In reality, moving on the trajectory of steadily building on earlier concept formations and idea generations ignite creative minds in language teaching. Specific to this matter, a member of NaCCA explained that:

*... the teacher is expected to put learning experiences, concepts and ideas into smaller parts. After grasping the simple concepts like vocabulary, the reading skills, and the outlines of various essay types, with the support of the teacher, learners could proceed to more difficult tasks such as full comprehension passages, summary writing, speech delivery, role play among others. Differentiated learning assists students in acquiring the skills needed for more complex tasks in the classroom (Field Data, 2023).*

The profundity in projecting differentiation and scaffolding as pedagogical tools in the teaching of the English Language is consistent with the promotion of application of concepts, critical analysis and evaluation of ideas in class. For instance, English words have their meanings implicit in contextual usages, and so once learners are provided vocabulary items at the start, in subsequent learning activities such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, such words could be applied, analyzed or evaluated in given circumstances. However, at the time of data collection, three of the interviewees who are teachers in the Asante Akim North, Sekyere Afram Plains and the Sekyere Kumawu Districts of the Ashanti Region revealed that, though they have been trained to use differentiated learning techniques in their lessons, the government is yet to provide major school infrastructure and resources to augment their efforts. One of them appeals that;

*The government should endeavour to provide schools with the required school infrastructure and resources to help especially the underprivileged students. Usually, where there are enough infrastructure and resources,*

*preparing lessons to suit all students in the class is not difficult. However, the current state of affairs is derailing the purpose of the differentiation in the English Language Curriculum (Field Data, 2023).*

Thus, despite acknowledging the government's support to teachers, the interviewees in these districts of the Ashanti Region believed that the central government can do more or better by assisting schools with enough infrastructure and resources to ease the burden of teachers in the classroom. Indeed, to achieve the purpose of English Language teaching at the basic level, as Anatory (2018) advocates, teachers are supposed to be trained in the application of multimodality. Accordingly, the use of all types of visual, oral and written modes could aid differentiated learning and scaffolding. But a number of questions emerge; are resources adequate to carry out these modes? Are teachers at the JHS well-equipped with these modes? The answers are not far-fetched, the government could do better!

#### **4.3.4.3 Inclusion**

In recent times, inclusion has become a major component of most educational reforms throughout the world. As part of measures to ensure equality and participation; equitable access and quality education for all school age individuals in Ghana, the new curriculum prioritizes inclusive education. This is the reason, according to data from twenty-one interviewees, the English Language Curriculum has been designed in such a way that as teachers handle the English Language, no learner is sidelined in all activities with respect to physical impairment or any infirmity of mind that is likely to put them at a disadvantage. As they recounted, all activities both in class and outside the classroom should take cognizance of students' right to equal access to quality education and participation in all the broad objectives of the curriculum. In this sense, teachers are to ensure balanced educational inputs and outputs by all learners through the utilization of a variety of approaches such as connecting learning

tasks to learners' social background, interests and potentials; stressing the importance of individuals in tasks assigned, getting all learners actively involved in every activity, among others. Contributing to this discourse, a member of a civil society organization in education interviewed observed that:

*Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is all-encompassing. No one is to be left behind because of any form of disability. Persons with or without disabilities must be treated equally and fairly. The new English Language Curriculum emphasises this balanced obligation with recourse to international conventions on the rights of the child and other laws on education in general. Now, it is up to teachers to vary their methods in the classrooms to ensure equal access and participation by all learners in the mainstream education at the basic level (Field Data, 2023).*

Inclusion has its own values on the teaching and learning of the English Language. Thus, in the opinion of interviewees, teachers become sensitive to the various needs of learners when planning their lessons and the resources that would be required. Again, the full intellectual development of the individual is highly assured and assessments become authentic rather than the *one-size-fits-all syndrome*. In the words of a lecturer at the Department of Curriculum Development, UEW:

*Inclusion places responsibility on teachers to consider the capacities of all learners when planning their lessons. Once they are given the opportunity, all students are able to bring their potentials to bear on lessons. Thus, the active involvement of all students in classroom and in co-curricular activities helps learners to acquire new skills from one another in a more congenial atmosphere (Field Data. 2023).*

That is, irrespective of learners' background as progeny of low-income families, ethnic minorities or the wealthy in society as reiterated, the curriculum does not discriminate during the teaching and learning process. To be able to achieve the intent of inclusion, the data revealed that the curriculum has two key mechanisms of giving teachers in-service training – peer coaching and continuous professional development. This means, teachers from various clusters of schools normally meet to discuss issues

of inclusion and other strategies to sharpen their teaching skills in the classrooms. Interviewees also asserted that there are Curriculum Leads and other officers at the District Directorates of Education assigned to carry out such responsibilities. Inspired by social justice theorists, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Salamanca Statement, most countries including Ghana have embarked on educational reforms and curriculum change to promote inclusive education, not just to add to enrolment figures, but to also empower all Ghanaian children with the tools of obtaining new knowledge.

#### **4.3.4.4 Information communications technology (ICT)**

The introduction of information communication technology (ICT) in curriculum development is underscored by the influence of new social issues, new knowledge, and dynamics of the world on education across the world (Nyame, 2020). A key issue that emerged from the responses of interviewees is the integration of ICT as pedagogical tool in the teaching and learning of the English Language at the JHS level. A significant number of interviewees (twenty-two), explained that teachers and students often resort to the use of ICT tools – television sets, radio, mobile phones, the internet and computer software like Microsoft Office packages – Word, PowerPoint and Excel in the teaching and learning process. A Regional Director of Education, for instance, noted that:

*We have empowered teachers to encourage the use of ICT tools in the classroom. In our current dispensation, that is the only way learners can catch up with the rest of the world. The world is now a globalized village; hence, we cannot choose to do things differently and expect to attain same development status as the industrialized world. The ICT would help learners to own their learning, search for more information and analyze it themselves to determine relationships, among others (Field Data, 2023).*

Primary data further opined that ICT as a pedagogical approach would improve teaching and learning processes; ensure consistency in the quality of teaching and learning; offer significant opportunities for more learner-centred pedagogical approaches; enhance inclusive education practices; language acquisition and use; encourage collaboration among learners; enhance self-reflection and self-evaluation, boost higher order thinking skills and improve differentiated and scaffolding approaches of lesson delivery. Thus, the use of ICT as a vehicle of language acquisition and use aids the development of the three domains of education – cognitive, affective and psychomotor (head, heart and hand). Kwao (2017, p. 93) corroborates this data when he argued that the three domains of education – cognitive, affective and psychomotor – should be forthright in a curriculum in order to develop varied talents and potentialities of students towards human capital development, placements and job opportunities. In the widely-held view of Machumu et al. (2018) and Ali et al. (2018) to support the data, these scholars explained that ICT is used to promote the teaching and learning process as it enhances participation and collaboration, builds the capacity of learners and provides them a variety of information to be used to analyse, synthesize and evaluate global issues and apply same to daily activities.

Contrary to the foregoing, two teachers, a parent and a member of CSO interviewed, questioned the real import of ICT as a pedagogical tool for all schools in Ghana given the fact that electricity and internet facilities do not extend to every nook and cranny of the country, making rural folks quite disadvantaged in that respect. For a teacher in the Ashanti Region,

*The use of ICT as a pedagogical tool comes with a huge change.  
Electricity supply and internet facilities are not available in all parts of*

*the country. Furthermore, the structure of classroom blocks cannot even house computer and other accessories once they are provided to some schools in the Sekyere Afram Plains, Donkokrom, Wassa and other villages in northern Ghana that I know. So, how are the learners in these hinterlands supposed to benefit from this learning approach? (Field Data, 2023).*

All responses claiming that lack of electricity and internet facilities in many communities in Ghana is a blot on ICT as a pedagogical tool support the findings of Borti (2015), whose study, after using the Ghanaian context to explore the challenges in African classrooms, revealed that there were no electrical connections in most classrooms which could support the use of audio-visual aids like computers, televisions or tape recorders. This view is shared entirely by the president of Ghana. In his speech delivered at the 74<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly in September 2019, President Akufo-Addo acknowledged that technology is a vehicle to project the country to the road of prosperity. In his view, technology could speed up provision of quality education. The president further claimed that:

*It is possible now for our young people to listen to lectures and watch experiments by famous scientists and scholars on their smart phones and laptops, without setting eyes on, or physically ever entering an Ivy League university (Akufo-Addo, 2019, para. 17).*

However, the president admitted that to be able to derive the full benefits of technology, infrastructure at the basic education level need to be improved. Thus, among others, he submitted that:

*We need to provide reliable electricity and internet services to the people in our towns and villages, and, then, they can truly join in the benefits of the technology that brings quality education to all. We can then have a reliable expectation of a prosperous future (Akufo-Addo, 2019, para. 18).*

The president's speech clearly captures the challenges embedded in the use of ICT as a pedagogical tool when some parts of the country have no requisite power supply and internet services. The foregoing data on ICT as a pedagogical tool in the implementation of the English Language Curriculum for the JHS level reflect the oft-repeated statement by scholars that the curriculum is encumbered with total structural and pedagogical deficits which demand solemn attention.

Furthermore, the study found out from twenty-two interviewees that the government has introduced licensure exams for newly recruited teachers and those who wish to teach and licensing of in-service teachers as new policies in the education front to ensure that quality teachers are well-equipped in the discharge of their duties. In the widely-held view of the interviewees, these phenomena put teachers constantly in check on pedagogical approaches and other components of the curriculum. By and large, the significant impact of these on the curriculum is that teachers are always in readiness to search for new information for their professional development which has concomitant effect on the smooth implementation of the curriculum. One of such interviewees, a teacher, averred that:

*Due to the licensing and licensure exams instituted by the NTC and the GES, teachers search for new information to abreast themselves of the key issues on the educational front. The NTC has a mechanism of scoring teachers who have taken certain courses and a number of in-service training online. All these measures aim at improving teacher pedagogy in the classroom. Even what teachers learn before they are promoted to the next rank on their profession is enough to support pedagogical knowledge and practice in our schools (Field Data, 2023).*

Needless to state that measures taken by policy makers to ensure constant training of teachers on the pedagogy in the teaching of the English Language at the JHS has produced some results as data avers. Obviously, the basis of a pedagogical approach to delivering the objectives of a curriculum at the JHS is the recognition that the

professional knowledge, professional values and attitudes, the professional practice of teachers and the school environment support the data. However, more recently, inspection of schools, monitoring and supervision of the work of teachers and the school environment at the JHS are bereft of best practices around the world, creating a huge dichotomy between the pedagogical approaches relative to the English Language Curriculum and the actual practice in the schools. This state of affairs is highly derisive for construction of new knowledge by students especially those in rural Ghana.

#### ***4.3.4.5 Contributions of pedagogical approaches to the suitability of the curriculum***

The pedagogical approaches in the curriculum, according to the data, build the spirit of positive attitude towards learning English as a language, a subject and the medium of instruction for learning other subjects like Mathematics, Science, Computing and History. Taken together, the data avers that the English Language Curriculum is targeted at inculcating certain concepts that are applicable and applied to real life situations in learners. Thus, these approaches— learning-centred pedagogy, inclusion, differentiation, scaffolding and information communications technology, integration of assessment in the teaching and learning process—enable learners to promote permanency of learning and development of language and social skills. Put differently, as a consequence of the realization that teacher-centred activities constitute a snag in the attainment of educational goals of the country in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the data considered the pedagogical approaches in the curriculum as crucial weapons for curbing learning for aggrandizement, self-flattery and examination purposes. As a student notes:

*Madam, we are now provided the needed resources to engage in group work and teamwork. Although we are taught the English Language*



*always in English, teachers allow us to speak our minds with our own expressions and contribute individually to classroom activities. Sometimes too, in groups, our peers, who are better than us in class lead the discussions, the storytelling and debates. We can now see that the kind of insults and aggressive behaviours teachers exhibited when we were in the basic school are being reduced at the JHS. As I have observed so far, we have now developed love for learning the English Language in groups than before (Field Data, 2023).*

Arguably, the data noted that the learning models, activities in the English Language Curriculum and instructions in the Ghanaian classroom have the fervor of empowering teachers to facilitate teaching and learning that optimizes the learning potential of every learner. According to twenty-two interviewees, the curriculum provides guidelines on how to handle each of the strands of the English Language such as Grammar, Oral Language, Literature and Comprehension and does not frown on the use of resource persons, field trips or excursions or any other mechanism that introduces experiences of the world to students. Subsequently, learners broaden their horizon and perspectives on social, economic and political issues which are so imperative for human development; hence, in the considered view of interviewees, the curriculum is adequate. Commenting on the pedagogical tools available to teachers, a teacher shared an opinion that:

*... nowadays, we have the free will to employ whatever method or technique to allow learners to cooperate, team up and manipulate objects as they learn the English Language. I tell you; we live in an era of teacher-centred schools; no SISO dictates to us what to do although they can advise us. Sometimes, we invite resource persons, peruse our school environment and other important places like the market with learners to enhance learners' descriptive abilities of personalities and things in their environment. I also use videos of national events like parliamentary proceedings and sports to help learners to engage in debates and discussions on specific topics (Field Data, 2023).*

Additionally, interviewees shared opinions based on which they believed the curriculum was appropriate. According to them, the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme equips learners with numerous skills; all forms of

discourse not excluding listening to and answering questions, asking questions and challenging claims from others, using both oral and written representations to support statements and arguments, among others. For instance, interviewees underscored the point of view that the application of the rightful pedagogy as in utilization of ICT tools and discussions in learning subject matter, vocabulary or registers, language for various social interactions and formal writing, performs the dual function of improving learners' academic performance and preparing them for the world of work.

The world is now at a stage where authentic knowledge, practical wisdom, exhibition of talents to create substance and not resort to theories earn an individual a status in society. It must be placed on record that the spread of ICT in particular carries an added advantage. Every advanced knowledge is now literary stored mostly in English. Further, all software for multiple functions in education, health, trade and industry throughout the world are readily available in the English Language. Thus, with the growing trend and glow in the digital evolution, knowledge of the English Language and the ability to apply same in all aspects of human endeavours in the globalized world, becomes a prerequisite for better job opportunities, employment and better appreciation of the world around us. Inferring from the data, seemingly, the English Language Curriculum looks quite progressive in terms of its exploits towards current global trends.

The data revealed further that the English Language Curriculum integrates all the language skills in the teaching and learning process. This implies that once a teacher facilitates the teaching and learning of composition, comprehension or any other strand of the English Language at a particular time, any significant grammatical expression, oral language component, literary or figurative expression or

contemporary usage that surfaces in the course of teaching and learning should be dealt with no matter the strand being studied. Again, interviewees claimed that any social value, attitude and acceptable or insolent behavior observed in learning tasks should be dealt with expeditiously by the teacher. This is how a NAGRAT member captured the essence of the integrated approach to teaching:

*The teaching of the various strands of the English Language is not done in isolation. Undoubtedly, while handling tenses in grammar for intense, a teacher could shift to enlighten learners on the type of tense appropriate for the types of compositions such as narratives, descriptive essays, and so on. Again, oral drills are carried out in all lessons while proper pronunciation and spelling of words are done every day regardless of the strands we teach. So, teachers use the integrated approach to teaching every day (Field Data, 2023).*

Both the old and new English Language Curricular capture the integrated approach as a worthwhile strategy in language teaching. The data is validated by Torto (2017), who underscored the point that the integration of all the four language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing, in teaching the five aspects of the English Language is noteworthy. It could be deduced from the above that the English Language Curriculum has a mechanism of inculcating in learners the spirit of tackling challenges that confront humanity head-on based on the exigencies of the time rather than procrastinating. The data profoundly support the assertion by Kwao (2017) that the developers of a curriculum should incorporate antecedents of human development and its corresponding pedagogy that replicates contemporary education. Pedagogy in the broadest sense is not only analogous to techniques and methods of training learners. Rather, it also encompasses critically educating people, building intellectual competences for self-reflection and gaining the capacity to address their interpersonal relationships with others and with the rest of the world (Ali et al., 2018). With recourse to the learning-centred pedagogy especially as benchmark for classroom

activities, learners' minds are conditioned and structured to explore and experiment with knowledge with meagre teacher facilitation. Carroll (2014), in particular, has observed that such models as learning-centred pedagogies influenced by the social constructivist perspective of learning, offer learners ample opportunities to engage in learning actively with their peers.

#### 4.3.5 Varieties of English

The educational system in Ghana has always adopted Standard English as the medium of instruction in schools. However, as studies point out, with the emergence of varieties of English in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, different types of English – Ghanaian English, Nigerian English, British English, American English – are being used in Ghanaian classrooms partly due to usages on the internet, the media space and daily discourses among people. Against this backdrop, the data was not enthused with the silence of the English Language Curriculum on the variety of English that should be used as the language across the curriculum. Particularly, nineteen interviewees championed the argument that the curriculum does not state explicitly the variety of the English Language that must be learnt both as a subject and the language of instruction in the Ghanaian classroom, thus, they were quite hesitant about the adequacy of the curriculum in solving problems of the contemporary era. According to a teacher:

*I have doubts about the curriculum ... the failure of the curriculum to clearly state the variety of English to use in schools is a nightmare to teachers and students. Now, whether to use the American or British spellings or pronunciations or both as in organize or organise, or as in the pronunciation of water, better, hospital, among others, is a huge change, especially when learners are only to be guided in their explorations. As we mark students' work, we are always not too sure which ones to accept; either to call for consistency or combination of varieties since it is not explicit in the curriculum (Field Data, 2023).*

Despite these sound reasons to drum home the fact that there was unclear direction on the variety of English to use, a contrary view from other interviewees was also offered. According to the data gathered from five interviewees, while it remains factual that the curriculum does not state vividly the variety of English to use, implicitly, the wording of the curriculum, which are cast in British spellings such as analyse, synthesise, behaviour, summarise, among others are fairly distinctive and should suffice enough the variety of English teachers should use in the classroom, hence the curriculum is suitable for its purposes. Putting the argument into proper perspective, a NaCCA member argued plausibly that:

*.... this is a perfect observation. However, the curriculum cannot state everything verbatim. Just like any living document, certain things are implied in the curriculum. The wording of the document should show enough signals to all teachers the variety of English they should hammer on. Yet, if a learner is fond of using the American variety for example, it is up to the teacher to support the learner to ensure consistency (Field Data, 2023).*

The data is corroborated by Awuah (2020), whose study argued that given the globalized spread of English Language which has had serious repercussion on English Language Teaching (ELT), there is apparently no uniform target variety of English as the language of instruction in schools. Nevertheless, as he elucidates, a pragmatic and humanistic approach for English Language Teaching (ELT) in Ghanaian classrooms should be adopted. From the data, it could be inferred that the curriculum was mute on the variety of English to elicit the creative abilities and problem-solving expeditions of learners to ensure consistency in their use of a specific variety of English in their critical thinking, digital explorations, cooperative learning, project work, portfolio building, among others. Even though the curriculum is challenged by its silence on the variety of English to use in the Ghanaian classroom, these are quite insignificant to adversely affect the efficacy of the curriculum in the education

delivery at the JHS. Today, as a member of NaCCA notes, every serious curriculum has its internal mechanism of addressing certain inconsistencies in policy intent and actual implementation.

#### **4.3.6 Assessment modes**

Assessment in education has been a topic of intense interest for empirical studies in recent years. This situation is motivated by the significance educational practitioners attach to assessment in education. For instance, in the opinion of Black and Wiliam (2018), classroom assessment makes necessary improvements to teaching and learning, supports teachers to examine their methods and strategies and provides a clearer picture of students' competences and achievement. In respect of these, assessment should be an enjoyable process, inclusive and integrated with the teaching and learning process and provide guidelines and effective feedback to both teachers and learners (Monteiro, Meta & Santos, 2021).

However, the data asserts that under the previous English Language Curriculum, assessment, either formative or summative, was carried out at the end of a learning task – at the end of a lesson, at the end of a field trip, at the end of term, at the end of a stage in the education process (BECE, WASSCE), among others. Contrary to this phenomenon, data from twenty-one interviewees contended that as part of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme, assessment has been streamlined. Currently, assessment could be done concurrently with the teaching and learning process and also at the end of the learning experience. Thus, three forms of assessment – assessment for learning, assessment as learning and assessment of learning – could be carried out any time. Regards this change, interviewees claimed that the curriculum is sensitive to modern trends and practices, and comprehensive

enough for training learners at the JHS especially regards strategies to support students' meanderings and maneuverings to own their own learning and draw conclusions from phenomena. Divulging an opinion on whether the curriculum is adequate for teaching and learning in the Ghanaian classroom, a SISO pointed out that:

*Yes, it is. It is adequate. Based on its assessment strategies alone, the curriculum is okay; no one can dispute that. I must admit, there is no specific period or time limit for assessing students. Learning tasks in themselves constitute the assessment. From all performances or undertakings of the students, the teacher is able to assess them to determine their progress, efficacy of teaching techniques and resources, among others (Field Data, 2023).*

As evinced from the excerpt above, the new assessment regime appears very appropriate for teaching young students at the basic level as it offers instant progress report on learning experiences. However, pertinent question to ask is whether the assessment modes – assessment as learning, assessment for learning and assessment for learning so expounded are enough for training learners to cope with the ever-changing society. Generally, the intent of the English Language Curriculum to employ effective assessment methods to provide the requisite skills to learners is worthwhile. In order that learners adopt creative mindsets and problem-solving attitudes to contribute meaningfully to national and international affairs, such progressive modes of authentic assessments cannot be inimical to training young learners.

As argued by the data, there is no intrinsic deficit in the curriculum to denigrate it as inappropriate for training young learners. The English Language Curriculum has features and applicable concepts akin to global best practices. In essence, the data is rich in espousing the point that the elements of the curriculum could best serve its

objectives and achieve set targets, hence adequate for teaching the English Language in the Ghanaian classroom.

#### **4.4 Challenges to the Implementation of the English Language Curriculum**

The context or policy environment is crucial to the success or failure of public policy implementation (Abubakari, Agyemang & Tei, 2023). Generally, the context of policy suggests the conditions or the atmosphere in which something transpires. In the case of the English Language Curriculum, the study sought to find out the implementation challenges in the context of the policy environment of Ghana. The following are the results and analysis of data gathered from the field.

##### **4.4.1 Ineffective communication and public education**

Of all the challenges bedeviling the implementation of the English Language Curriculum, ineffective communication and public education have gained currency. Thus, according to eighteen interviewees, the government's attempt at informing and educating the public, stakeholders and students about the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme, has been a great disincentive and a deficit to the success of the curriculum. Whether on reduction in the change of pedagogical approaches, restructuring of the aspects of the English Language Curriculum, assessment modes or training of teachers on pedagogy, in the opinion of interviewees, communication from the government, the Ministry of Education and the GES in the media and communiqué to teachers, parents, students and the general public has fairly been rambling and greatly discorded. For instance, while NaCCA was persistent that there would be terminal examination, the National Standard Assessment (NSA) at various stages, the government was also on the trajectory of informing the citizenry that there would be no Basic Education Certificate



Examination (BECE) under the curriculum. A teacher, certainly unhappy about the situation, shared his frustrations which were actually in consonance with the views of others. These are his words:

*.... stakeholders are not happy about the way the English Language Curriculum is being implemented. Initially, at the workshop on the English Language Curriculum, we were told point blank that there will be no terminal exams, no BECE. Only a standardized test would be carried out nationwide in Basic 8. Now, students write terminal exams and are expected to sit for the BECE. Are we serious? (Field Data, 2023).*

The quote above certainly points to discrepancies in communication and public education, which are key to the success of the English Language Curriculum. The foregoing also sends the signal that public education on the curriculum has actually been inaccurate. This is against the backdrop that on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2023, the Ghana National Council of Private Schools, in a communiqué to its members, stated unequivocally that the implementation of the Common Core Programme, of which the English Language Curriculum is a pivotal component, does not affect the BECE. The statement was confirmed by the Minister of Education a couple of weeks later. Viewed from the position of NaCCA on assessment modes in the curriculum and policy makers' current position, there is an indication that no elite consensus was reached on the English Language Curriculum implementation. The above scenario only goes to affirm the conclusion of Osei (2021) that the country was not ready for the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme and that stringent measures ought to have heralded the implementation stage.

#### **4.4.2 Unqualified teachers**

Most scholars contend that the best legacy any serious country could offer the citizenry is quality education. The examples of Malaysia and Singapore depict that the economic growth and development of a country is largely dependent on the system of

education (Apau, 2021). However, if the education of young learners in a country is left in the hands of persons who are unequal to their task in the classroom, the future may look bleak for the people. Primary data uncovered that the use of unqualified teachers at the JHS is a setback to the implementation of the English Language Curriculum. Worst yet, twenty-four interviewees actually held the contention, invariably, that the unqualified teachers who flood the Ghanaian classroom every day are unable to apply the correct pedagogies, search for required materials, do not inspire learners enough and mostly handle the English Language as a subject without recourse to the general aims and aspirations of teaching the subject. A member of GNAT captured this viewpoint briefly by arguing that:

*Frankly, some of the teachers, who teach the English Language are unqualified. In most cases, because there are no teachers for the subject, the heads select anyone at all to teach English. Others too are sent to teach English due to their political affiliations and not their competence. As we normally observe, such teachers concentrate on teaching aspects they only like or are capable of teaching. We must begin to check this situation as stakeholders (Field Data, 2023).*

The foregoing is an admission of the scary force behind the activities of unqualified teachers, who handle the English Language in the Ghanaian classroom. In her study, Torto (2017) emphasized that the numerous challenges that confront learners of the English Language at the basic level could be attributed to unqualified persons who handle the subject. As Afrifa-Yamoah et al. (2021) also note, the poor handling of aspects of the English Language in Ghanaian schools, especially oral language, emanates from unqualified teachers who are tasked to teach the subject. Thus, if the assertion by Afrifa-Yamoah et al. (2021) that the pre-tertiary education curriculum is to respond to international best practices, then stakeholders should be mindful of persons who handle the English Language in the Ghanaian classroom.

#### 4.4.3 Wrongful pedagogy due to insufficient resources

Primary data also argued that owing to the inadequate school infrastructure, lack of prescribed textbooks and accompanying teaching and learning materials to engage learners in meaningful learner-centred activities, many teachers now face the dilemma of choosing between reverting to the teacher-centred pedagogy or allowing learners to engage in anything worth trying during the instructional hours. In the estimation of a teacher:

*... so, like I said, we are not too sure of what to do. In fact, teachers of English in our school are only experimenting on what they think could help students. The teaching resources are just not there. I am not doing politics but being frank with you. Most of the time, we allow students to do their own research, collaboration, group work or teamwork to derive some knowledge (Field Data, 2023).*

Explaining their predicament in the classroom due to inadequate teaching and learning materials, a student opined that:

*Well, our major challenge in class is the teaching and learning materials we need to do our own learning. Sometimes, I could see our teachers struggle to find out what we should do without materials. They only direct us to do our own discussions or group work. But the materials we need are always not there. It is all about talking, shouting and arguing about issues. Sometimes too, our teachers prefer teaching us directly than allowing us to do our own things without the necessary materials (Field Data, 2023).*

The above data constitute rather a peculiar way of implementing the English Language Curriculum that is supposed to aid students in the construction of new knowledge. Obviously, this situation is inconsistent with the social constructivist perspective of learning which requires labeling the classroom with sufficient teaching and learning resources for students to own their learning through teachers' guide. It remains a common misconception that once teachers are paid, they could provide teaching and learning materials. In actuality, the meagre salaries of teachers are

deterrent to improvisation. It is more about self-sustenance of the teacher, and less about successful classroom activity without requisite resources. A subtle revelation, so instructive to this discourse, was the point from one of the headmasters interviewed that:

*... whereas the government has not resourced the schools enough for the implementation of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programmed, payment of the capitation and learning grants, and funds for the school feeding programme in basic schools too is now an illusion (Field Data, 2023).*

As acknowledged by Alhassan (2020), inadequate school infrastructure and resources have been the bane of implementation of educational policies in the Ghanaian classroom. It seems that the new English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme was rather hurriedly put together to satisfy a political promise and not a needs assessment of the state of basic education in Ghana as stated in the Education Sector Analysis (2018 – 2030). Consequently, drawing on the impact teaching resources could have on teaching and learning as espoused by the data, it is logical to agree with Hadar (2017) that textbooks have a great influence on the achievement of curriculum goals and in fact, remains the utmost educational material that is harmonized with any mandatory curriculum. Contrary to this assertion, in the case of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme, curriculum goals are being pursued without prescribed textbooks. Obviously, the absence of prescribed textbooks and other teaching resources that could offer examples and illustrations about the real-world, aid critical thinking and development of leadership traits during lessons is really posing grave challenge to the implementation phase of the English Language Curriculum.

#### 4.4.4 Lackluster support from parents and philanthropists

Some of the interviewees bemoaned the lackluster support from parents and philanthropist for more than a year now. In their view, this trend is adversely affecting the implementation of the English Language Curriculum. According to primary data, whereas the government is performing its arduous tasks in our schools, philanthropists, parents and some influential persons in Ghana hardly project the English Language Curriculum with their support to serve the public interest. Thus, rather than supporting public schools in the country in the provision of infrastructure and teaching resources, most parents and philanthropist are interested in beauty pageants and other social events . During such events, the data argued that these individuals lavish huge sums of money on young ladies while the Ghanaian classroom and learners remain bereft of requisite teaching resources. A teacher noted that:

*Some parents refuse to buy the needed school materials for their wards but would turn around to blame every bit of the implementation challenges on the government. They will not attend any meeting called to discuss issues about teaching resources and others to aid the implementation of the English Language Curriculum (Field Data, 2023).*

A significant number of interviewees; twenty-one interviewees, avowed that the lack of support from some facets of society and the blame game have by far enervating effect on the implementation of the curriculum. As a result, the curriculum that is supposed to train learners to gain independence of thought in their learning is suffering popular support. A headmaster was concerned about this phenomenon and had this to say:

*You know, parents and other influential people are adamant about the implementation of the English Language Curriculum. The curriculum demands purchase of lots of materials for students but parents are not ready to assist in that direction. I think this must stop (Field Data, 2023).*

Another interviewee, a lecturer indicated that:

*We face most of these challenges at the implementation phase because those with expertise and money to support our schools are not ready to do so. Go to the rural areas and you will be amazed the kind of infrastructure and resources available* (Field Data, 2023).

Indeed, this bunch of data point to a disclosure that lackluster support from parents especially remains the prime factor that largely obstructs tangible progress in the implementation of the English Language Curriculum in the Ghanaian classroom.

By implication, the relentless laxity of parents about their wards' education is suffocating concerted effort to make the English Language Curriculum work. Development of the English Language Curriculum is an expensive venture. It entails colossal capital investment and rich human expertise but cannot be implemented smoothly without parents support. This, coupled with the number of issues adduced is partly the reasons all stakeholders in the education sector must accord the English Language Curriculum the needed attention.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The results of primary and secondary data were presented and analysed in this chapter using taxonomy of secondary data to corroborate or refute claims by interviewees. The study applied thematic analysis to examine the findings from the field. In sum, the chapter discussed the findings of the study which included the determinants of the curriculum development, components of the English Language teaching excluded or sidelined in the curriculum; the extent the English Language Curriculum is adequate for teaching the English Language in the Ghanaian classroom and the challenges associated with the implementation phase of the curriculum. A number of reasonable inferences and deductions from the data were made in the analysis in conformity with objectives of the study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the summary of findings of the study, recommendations, conclusion and suggestions for further studies are elucidated. The degree of attainment of the objectives of the study is highlighted. Thus, the chapter emphasizes succinct findings on factors that informed the development of the English Language Curriculum, the components of the English Language that were excluded or sidelined in the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme. Further, the chapter sums up reasons the English Language teaching under the Common Core Programme is sufficient enough for teaching learners in the Ghanaian classroom at the JHS. Lastly, the study provides brief account on the challenges that hamper the smooth implementation of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme at the JHS level.

Accordingly, the chapter subscribes to achieving the foregoing feat by stating unequivocally the precise summary of research process and research findings as obtained from data and analysis as well as the new knowledge garnered from the study. The final lap of this chapter expounds the conclusion of the study and some relevant recommendations which stakeholders could find useful in the implementation of the English Language Curriculum as well as a list of suggested areas relative to the study that could occasion further studies.

### 5.1 Summary of Research Process

The principal goal of the study was to offer a perspective of English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme for the JHS level. The researcher delineated the study into five broad areas (chapters). In the first chapter, the study outlined the premise of the argument of the study by discussing from different schools of thought, from curriculum design and development to the implementation stage. The first chapter also focused on the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme. Thus, it identified some initial intrinsic challenges that heralded the design and implementation of the English Language Curriculum. Further, the chapter put forth the objectives, delimitation and significance of the study as well as limitations to the smooth conduct of the study. Other issues like operational definition of terms and organization of the study were also captured in the first chapter.

The second chapter, titled literature review, centred on the theoretical framework; social constructivism theory of learning and review of extant literature. In this chapter, the study underscored the assumptions of the social constructivist theory of learning and its relevance in the analysis of the study, and reviewed relative literature categorized under curriculum design and development, pedagogy in the teaching of the English Language at the basic level and challenges of curriculum development and implementation in Ghana. The literary gaps in some of the literature were identified while the actual relevance of the reviewed scholarship to the current study was stated in order to reposition the study within the proper context. For instance, the gap in Torto's (2017) study is that it looked into the previous basic school English Language Curriculum while Apau (2021), and Aboagye and Yawson (2020) also explored teachers' perception of the new English Language Curriculum for primary schools.



Chapter Three dealt decisively with the research methodology and methods used in carrying out the study. First, the philosophical worldview of the research was explained. The study used the qualitative method; conducted thirty interviews with the aid of the purposive sampling technique and three sets of interview guide. The researcher found it imperative to carry out semi-structured interviews with policy makers and other stakeholders in order to obtain new knowledge on the topic for the study and to augment the scanty literature on the study. Basically, all these processes were to ensure that the researcher could make hard and fast logical deductions and conclusions on the study.

Presentation and analysis of data were captured in the Chapter Four of the study. The sacrosanct opinions and beliefs of interviewees on the topic which were gathered through interviews were transcribed, coded into themes and analyzed accordingly. Secondary data was used as the basis of confirmation or disproof of phenomena and the claims by interviewees in the analysis. The analysis was premised on the objectives of the study.

## **5.2 Summary of Research Findings**

Four key objectives with correlational research questions were set at the commencement of the study as blueprint. Thus, the study aimed at key objectives, which encompassed assessing the factors that were considered in the development of the English Language Curriculum, exploring the components of the English Language teaching excluded or sidelined in the curriculum under the Common Core Programme, analysing the extent to which the English Language Curriculum is adequate for teaching the English Language in the Ghanaian classroom and investigating the challenges that thwart the smooth implementation of the English

Language Curriculum in the Ghanaian classroom. A wide range of general and explicit findings have been made as far as each of the objectives is concerned.

Concerning the first objective, which was to assess the factors that were considered in the development of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme, the study revealed that deficiencies of the societal needs, technology and deficiencies of the previous English Language Curriculum engendered the development of the new curriculum. The study also found out that the ideology of the ruling party and leadership idiosyncrasies, and national and international framework, global trends and dynamics informed the development of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme. The fact that the factors that were considered in the development of the English Language Curriculum for the JHS level have duly been assessed; the first objective has been attained.

In respect of the second objective, which was to examine the components of the English Language teaching excluded from the curriculum under the Common Core Programme, the study found that components like prescribed textbooks were not provided, the library period and teaching learning materials were not explicitly stated in the curriculum, school infrastructure remain in short supply while summary writing, an important component of contemporary education curricular, is given minimal attention. Specifically, the study found out that since prescribed textbooks have not been provided, teachers resort to several sources – old textbooks, newspapers, journal articles and internet sources –to acquire materials for teaching and learning. The downside of this phenomenon is that it defeats the purpose of the English Language Curriculum as a standard-based document and prevents learners from acquiring the necessary modern concepts that aid construction of new

knowledge. The study revealed further that the library period that offered students incredible access to engage in independent work to improve their academic performance hitherto has been omitted from the curriculum to increase instructional hours in the classroom. However, the study observed that the creativity, innovativeness and personal development skills outside the highly monotonous classroom activities that the library period usually provides have been deferred.

Other findings of the study, which included lack of explicit teaching learning materials, school infrastructure and limited attention for summary writing, constitute enormous setbacks on the pedagogical approaches ascribed in the curriculum for the promotion of personality development, creativity, digital literacy, cultural identity and global citizenship, and critical thinking and problem-solving in learners. On the components of the curriculum, clearly, the study has been able to outline a list of components that were either excluded or sidelined in the English Language Curriculum and provided evidence as to the relevance of these components to the teaching and learning of the English Language at the basic level, hence, to a large estimation, the second objective has been achieved.

On the third objective which sought to find out whether the English Language Curriculum was adequate for teaching and learning the English Language, the study found that substantially, the curriculum was adequate. Specifically, the study revealed that the curriculum had the essential elements for training learners to participate fully in national life. Among others, the study further revealed that the simplicity of the language used in writing the curriculum, pedagogical approaches, organisation of the curriculum and the assessment modes are suitable for achieving the objectives of the curriculum. The above provides credence to the fact that the English Language

Curriculum poses, to a large extent, the vital elements for training learners at the JHS, hence the third objective has equally been achieved.

Regarding the fourth objective, which involved investigating the challenges that hinder the smooth implementation of the English Language teaching under the Common Core Programme, the study particularly revealed that ineffective communication and public education, unqualified teachers, wrongful pedagogy due to insufficient resources and lackluster support from parents and philanthropists pose threats to the implementation phase of the English Language Curriculum for the JHS level. In effect, since the study has been able to investigate these challenges and how they adversely affect the implementation of the curriculum, the fourth objective has been achieved.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme, implemented in January 2022 for the JHS level, has so far accomplished some feats. Specifically, the curriculum has altered the trajectory of teacher-monotony of teaching and learning in the Ghanaian classroom and is equipping learners with the essential skills to engage in communication and collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, digital literacy, among others. Thus, through the vehicle of teamwork in class, group work, discussions, role play, dramatization and other techniques in the Ghanaian classroom, learners embark on learner-centred activities with minimal teacher intervention. While the vital feature of the curriculum supports the objectives of teaching the English Language at the basic level, the non-inclusion of certain components of the teaching of the English Language in the curriculum such as the library period and prescribed textbooks, and other structural challenges constitute major pitfalls for the curriculum.

In respect of the relevance of the English Language in the development of the country, all stakeholders of the education sector must rise to the occasion to ameliorate the apparent setbacks – ineffective communication and public education, wrongful pedagogy due to lack of resources, unqualified teachers, lackluster support from parents and philanthropist – to ensure smooth implementation of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

The study has endeavoured to offer a perspective of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme for the JHS level. Among a host of other important issues, it assessed the factors that informed the development of the curriculum, examined the components of the English Language excluded or sidelined in the curriculum, the extent to which the curriculum could serve its intended purpose at the basic level and the challenges to the implementation phase. With due regard to the findings of the study, some recommendations are hereby suggested.

First, the study is not oblivious of the enormous role of policy makers in Ghana's education system, especially their desire to initiate and implement new curriculum to meet certain ends at specific periods. Ideally, for a curriculum to attain the feat of achieving its target goals, the study recommends that all shades of opinions from all stakeholders must be accommodated. The inputs of teachers, parents and students, as findings of the study opined, though quite minimal, cannot be relegated to the background since they have the intent and purpose of ensuring that the curriculum becomes “an all-inclusive document” which facilitates fruitful implementation.

In proximity with the foregoing, it is a fact that every new public policy or programme requires public education to blossom. Yet, for far too long, as the study has demonstrated, public education remains one of the banes of curriculum design and implementation in Ghana. In the Ghanaian context, policies and programmes are normally bereft of the necessary public inputs to ensure general acceptance due to insufficient public education. Consequently, curricular are designed and implemented without adequate consultations and public education on how the people could adjust to accommodate and contribute to the new learning experience as stakeholders. In the opinion of the study, the public should be provided enough orientation or public education on the English Language Curriculum and the Common Core Programme in general to be sensitized on new phenomena on the education front as they walk the path of governance with policy makers.

Experts have deconstructed the essence of teaching resources or aids in the school system. Often times, abstract concepts in the English Language are, for instance, made clearer or conceptualized for learners within the scope of familiar and concrete objects (realia) while teaching and learning is underway. This notwithstanding, inadequate teaching and learning aids continue to plague the implementation of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme in Ghana in diverse ways. Suffice it to say that scarce learning aids in schools has been a historical antecedent in the education system, the situation has worsened in recent times where even supply of desks, tables and pieces of chair as well as textbooks to schools, especially, had to delay for more than two years. Just as the clarion call from many Ghanaians, the study recommends that teaching and learning aids should accompany all other materials supplied to schools to augment efforts by teachers to implement the curriculum.

It is an established fact backed by empirical data that the English Language has assumed a special role in the affairs of countries and international relations. Furthermore, as the study revealed, knowledge of the English Language has become a vehicle for acquiring employment, business partners and other important positions globally. However, in most basic schools in Ghana, the teaching of the English Language is left in the hands of few mortals whose qualifications and competencies in the subject constitute a great suspect, disregarding the English Language as both language and content subject that demands special skills to teach. It thus appears that all our senses are now fixed on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education overlooking the case in point that the English Language is the denominator; the medium of instruction in all these subjects. The study therefore suggests that equal attention and weight should be put on the training of teachers of the English Language and the selection of persons with requisite knowledge and skills in the subject to avoid placing the subject as second fiddle to others in the training of young ones. Yet, not all teachers trained in the English Language are able to handle all the aspects of the subject, hence, if aspect teaching is encouraged, it would enhance smooth curriculum implementation.

The status of Ghana as a developing country obviously puts it at a disadvantage in terms of embarking on national development and even the provision of basic services to the citizenry. As a balancing act therefore, Ghana relies on a multiplicity of donor partners like the IMF, the World Bank and the European Union as well as other countries in the developed world to finance projects, policies and programmes in critical sectors of the economy not excluding education. What is worrying however is how the country becomes subservient to preferences and prescriptions of these development partners in policy decisions like curriculum development to the blatant

disregard of our social norms, values and traditions as a people. The study notes that though it is quite difficult to object to support systems and mechanisms from the external world, it is critical to equip policy makers with essential bargaining power so that our cherished norms would not succumb to foreign cultures especially in the training of young Ghanaians.

A laundry list of empirical studies including Alhassan (2020) and Braimah et al. (2014) have underscored the demerits of the zero-sum game politics and partisanship in the educational sector of Ghana. Admittedly, not only has this situation thwarted efforts by all and sundry including civil society and academia to contribute to curriculum development and implementation in Ghana, but has also aggravated the culture of silence and apathy in many a citizen who could support policy decision making in critical spheres of the nation to assuage it from its economy quagmire in the Fourth Republican epoch. It is the recommendation of the study that the flag of over-politicization of educational issues should be lowered in order to project education as a pivotal national interest on which the future of the country revolves. This way, experts and opinion leaders would not exhibit reluctance in offering best alternatives to public policy in the country.

### **5.5 Suggestions for Further Research**

The study provides a litany of proposals for further studies in consonance with the extant literature reviewed, the primary data on the study and, the findings and conclusions drawn.

The impact of external forces in curriculum development in Sub-Saharan Africa cannot be overemphasized. Of course, the nature of the global capitalist market has put developing countries like Ghana at the periphery where economic growth and national



development are seemingly at the behest of the industrialized world. In the area of education, policy makers in Ghana have had recourse to either factor preferences of development partners in curriculum development or receive sponsorship of diverse forms to put up infrastructure in the education delivery of Ghana. Compounding this, social media offers learners several angles to English Language usage in contemporary times. These situations – donor preferences, and internet usage and varieties of the English Language give students many sources to learn the language. The study therefore proposes a full-fledged study on the impact of globalization on the implementation of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme with respect to varieties of English, thriving E-learning and social media platforms, cultural dynamics, among others.

Opportunities presented to learners in the urban centres in Ghana sharply contradict what rural folks have to contend with. While issues ranging from unqualified and inexperienced teachers, infrastructural deficits, language barrier and cultural beliefs continue to pose threats to the implementation stage of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme in rustic communities, internet facilities, competent teachers and standard educational infrastructure parade schools in cities and towns. The study suggests that a research on the nexus between the implementation of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme in urban and rural Ghana should be conducted. This study will properly inform policy makers on the need to consider both settings in curriculum development in Ghana in future.

Language policy in education everywhere in the world plays a vital role in curriculum development and implementation. Due to the heterogeneity of the Ghanaian society, the English Language is the medium of instruction in institutions of higher learning. In respect of the language policy of Ghana at the JHS level, especially the rural areas where learners' appreciation of the English Language is low, the study suggests a research on language policy and implementation of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme. One of the proposed objectives could be to ascertain the degree of success where other local dialects are used hand in hand with the English Language in lesson delivery.

Scholars and stakeholders of Ghana's education system have, on many occasions, complained about the quality of teachers who handle the English Language in our basic schools. Reports by chief examiners, for instance, have always complained about students' performance in the English Language at the Basic Education Certificate Examination, where specific areas of the English Language such as subject verb agreement feature consistently in annual reports. It is suggested that a quantitative study to determine whether or not there is positive or negative correlation between teacher education or pre-service training in the institutions of learning and the new English Language curriculum implementation should be carried out.

The study also proposes a purposive research on how the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme could facilitate easy projection of students to other stages of the educational ladder (SHS and tertiary education). Taking lots of inspiration from the components and pedagogical approaches in the curriculum, which stress collaboration among students in class, a vestige of the social constructivist thought on learning, one is tempted to find out whether this situation

will reinforce or compromise the real test of individual abilities and independent study at the higher levels. The seemingly niggling question is won't products of the Common Core Programme succumb to too much collaborative learning than building the self for higher academic laurels? A careful study would unravel the actual relationship.

Obviously, assessment in general, deals with evaluating or examining the efficacy of a curriculum, pedagogy, teaching resources and students' capacity at adjusting to or assimilating a learning task. Given the pitfalls in the assessment mechanisms in the previous pre-tertiary education curriculum, the modes of assessment in the new curriculum – assessment as learning, assessment for learning and assessment of learning – constitute quite a peculiar departure from the old system, at least by intent and outcome. The researcher recommends a study to analyze the effects of the new assessment mechanisms with specific focus on the types and kinds of assessment criteria on students' academic performance in the English Language and the implementation of the Common Core Programme in general.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **APPENDIX A**

#### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA  
DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS  
EVALUATION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM OF THE  
COMMON CORE PROGRAMME  
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR POLICY MAKERS (DIRECTORS OF  
EDUCATION, NaCCA)**

The prime goal of this interview is to collect primary data on the topic above in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Teaching English as a Second Language by the University of Education, Winneba. I crave your indulgence to respond to the itemized questions as candid as possible. Information provided will be treated with confidentiality and used exclusively for the purpose of this study. I am grateful for your contributions towards making the study a success.

#### **Factors that were Considered in the Development of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme**

- What factors do you think accounted for the development of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme?
- In your opinion, would you say the developers of the curriculum considered the societal needs of Ghanaians?
- Why were teachers not involved in the curriculum development?

#### **Components of the English Language Curriculum**

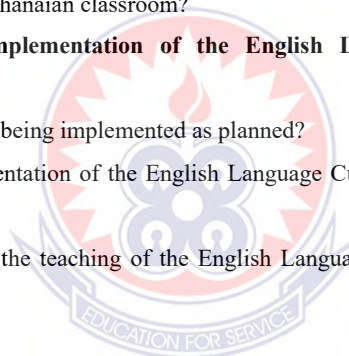
- Which components of the English Language teaching were excluded or sidelined in the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme? Explain.
- How imperative are these components to the teaching of the subject?
- Does the structure and components of the curriculum facilitate easy implementation by teachers?
- How different is the current curriculum from the old one in terms of structure and content?

### **Adequacy of the English Language Curriculum for teaching the English Language in the Ghanaian Classroom**

- What in your opinion, constitutes the rationale for English Language teaching at the JHS?
- Which pedagogical approaches were included in the curriculum? How suitable are these pedagogical strategies in the teaching and learning of the English Language at the JHS?
- Would you say that there are enough infrastructure/facilities and teaching resources/aids to augment the teaching of the English Language at the JHS?
- Does the structure of the curriculum facilitate easy implementation of the curriculum by teachers?
- Would you say the English Language Curriculum is adequate for the teaching of the English Language in the Ghanaian classroom?

### **Challenges Hindering the Implementation of the English Language Curriculum**

- Would you say the curriculum is being implemented as planned?
- Would you say that the implementation of the English Language Curriculum faces some challenges?
- How do these challenges affect the teaching of the English Language in the Ghanaian classroom?



### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN EDUCATION (LECTURER, CSOS, HEADTEACHERS, TEACHERS, GNAT, NAGRAT)**

The prime goal of this interview is to collect primary data on the topic above in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Teaching English as a Second Language by the University of Education, Winneba. I crave your indulgence to respond to the itemized questions as candid as possible. Information provided will be treated with confidentiality and used exclusively for the purpose of this study. I am grateful for your contributions towards making the study a success.

**Factors that were Considered in the Development of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme**

- What factors do you think accounted for the development of the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme?
- In your opinion, would you say the developers of the curriculum considered the societal needs of Ghanaians?
- How involved was your outfit in the development of the curriculum?
- Why were teachers not involved in the curriculum development?

**Components of the English Language Curriculum**

- Which components of the English Language teaching were excluded or sidelined in the English Language Curriculum of the Common Core Programme? Explain.
- How imperative are these components to the teaching of the subject?
- Does the structure and components of the curriculum facilitate easy implementation by teachers?
- How different is the current curriculum from the old one in terms of structure and content?

**Adequacy of the English Language Curriculum for teaching the English Language in the Ghanaian Classroom**

- What in your opinion, constitutes the rationale for English Language teaching at the JHS?
- Would you say that there are enough infrastructure/facilities and teaching resources/aids to augment the teaching of English Language at the JHS?
- Does the structure of the curriculum facilitate easy implementation of the curriculum by teachers?
- Would you say the English Language Curriculum is adequate for the teaching of the English Language in the Ghanaian classroom?

**Challenges Hindering the Implementation of the English Language Curriculum**

- Would you say the curriculum is being implemented as planned?
- Would you say that the implementation of the English Language Curriculum faces some challenges?

- How do these challenges affect the teaching of the English Language in the Ghanaian classroom?

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS**

The prime goal of this interview is to collect primary data on the topic above in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Teaching English as a Second Language by the University of Education, Winneba. I crave your indulgence to respond to the itemized questions as candid as possible. Information provided will be treated with confidentiality and used exclusively for the purpose of this study. I am grateful for your contributions towards making the study a success.

#### **Adequacy of the English Language Curriculum for teaching the English Language in the Ghanaian Classroom**

- What in your opinion, constitute the reasons for teaching English Language at the JHS?
- Are you always taught the English Language in English?
- Would you say that your teachers allow you to perform most of the activities in the classroom?
- What challenges do you think hinder learning the English Language in the classroom/school?

#### **Challenges Hindering the Implementation of the English Language Curriculum**

- Do the teachers use teaching and learning materials?
- Are the teaching and learning materials relevant to you in learning the English Language?
- Would you say that you are provided opportunity to cooperate, socialize and interact while learning with your colleagues?
- Explain the challenges you face with the methods and teaching aids used by teachers in the classroom?