

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA



**KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS' IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STANDARDS-
BASED CURRICULUM IN NKWANTA SOUTH MUNICIPALITY**

WISDOM QUOFI MENSAH

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA



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**A thesis submitted to the school of Graduate Studies, in partial
fulfillment of the requirement for the award of
the degree of Master of Philosophy
(Early Childhood Education)**

**Department of Early Childhood Education,
Faculty of Applied Behavioural Sciences in Education
University of Education, Winneba.**

SEPTEMBER, 2025

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I, **Wisdom Quofi Mensah**, hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work, and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:

Date:

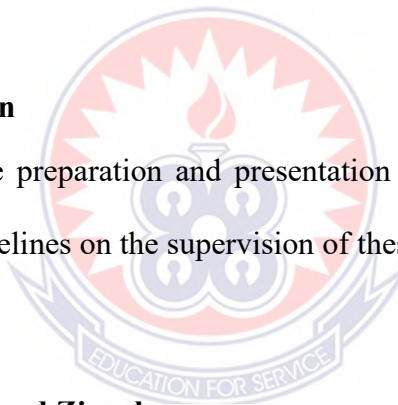
Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on the supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name: **Mr. Samuel Richard Ziggah**

Signature:

Date:



DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my lovely children: Othniel, Gaboala, Oyeafaman, and Okpaaman.



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I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, Mr. Samuel Richard Ziggah, for his tireless support, invaluable guidance, patience, and constructive criticisms that shaped this work into its present form. His mentorship has been a great source of motivation and academic growth.

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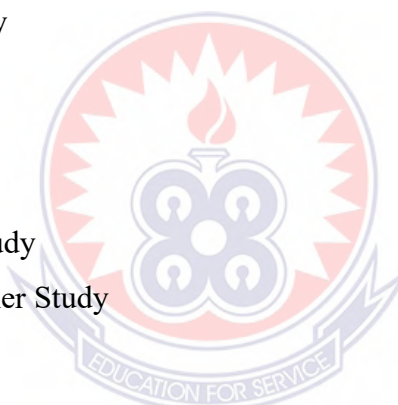
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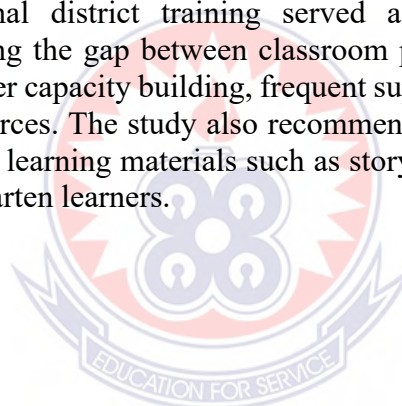
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ABSTRACT

This study explored the kindergarten teachers' implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum in Nkwanta South Municipality. Guided by the Concerns-Based Adoption Model and Educational Change Theory, the study employed interpretivism research paradigm and exploratory case study design using a qualitative research approach. 15 participants were purposively selected from kindergarten teachers out of 18 public schools within Kecheibi Circuit within the Nkwanta South Municipality. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and non-participant structured classroom observation, supplemented by field notes. Braun and Clarke's six-step process for thematic analysis guided the data analysis. Findings revealed that while the teachers demonstrated partial comprehension of the SBC learner-centered and competency-based philosophy, practices in the classroom were inclined to reflect traditional, teacher-dominated methods, and that mechanisms for supporting teachers were weakly institutionalized. Among the key challenges hindering overall implementation were classroom congestion, absence of age-grade content in instructional and learning materials, limited continuous professional development, linguistic diversity, and low parental involvement. Observational evidence showed little implementation of key SBC competencies such as collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving, with the assessment practices biased towards oral recitation and copying exercises. Nevertheless, peer collaboration, improvisation of instructional materials, and occasional district training served as coping strategies. The study recommends that bridging the gap between classroom practice and curriculum intention requires consistent teacher capacity building, frequent supervisory guidance, and provision of context-specific resources. The study also recommends the provision of adequate age-appropriate teaching and learning materials such as storybooks, manipulatives, and visual aids suitable for kindergarten learners.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The curriculum at the kindergarten level plays a vital role in determining the quality of education that children receive, with implications for their future learning outcomes and overall development. Adopting a new curriculum requires teachers to be competent and confident in their delivery to ensure effective curriculum implementation. (Bingan et al., 2023). As such, curriculum design and implementation have been the subject of extensive research and policy focus worldwide (Gouëdard et al. 2020).

Curriculum reforms are common in educational systems worldwide, driven by the need to improve learning outcomes and better align education with the demands of contemporary society. (Priestley & Biesta, 2013). The implementation of a curriculum, however, is not merely a technical exercise but involves complex interactions among various stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and policymakers (Fullan, 2007). Teachers, as the primary implementers of the curriculum, play a critical role in its success or failure (Bingan et al., 2023). Their understanding of the curriculum significantly influences how they implement it in the classroom (Pajares, 1992; McNeill et al., 2016, as cited in (Bingan et al., 2023). Countries across the globe, from Finland to Australia, have invested heavily in developing robust early childhood education systems that cater to the holistic development of children. These systems are often characterized by well-structured curricula, qualified educators, and supportive learning environments (OECD, 2019). For instance, countries like New Zealand with its Te Whāriki curriculum, and Sweden with its National Preschool curriculum, have embraced holistic and child-centered approaches to early education (Blaiklock 2018). These reforms often emphasized play-based learning, cultural relevance,

and inclusivity (Edwards & Gandini, 2015). Essential to any reform implementation are the teachers who are the real enactors, as its success or failure relies on them. Subsequently, teachers' knowledge and beliefs and how they view the reform, dictate how it is implemented (Handel & Herrington, 2003) as cited in (Cameron, 2020). When teachers understand the teaching vision, they identify relevant curriculum goals (Khoza, 2016). The curriculum serves as a guiding framework for teachers in developing appropriate teaching strategies. This demands that teachers play a crucial role in communicating and interpreting the messages embedded in curriculum planning to students (Fathurrochman, 2017) as cited in (Hadisaputra et al., 2024).

Educational reforms in Africa have often been driven by the need to address the challenges posed by colonial legacies, economic constraints, and the demands of a rapidly changing global environment. (Tikly, 2019). Many African countries, such as South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, and Zambia, have embarked on curriculum reforms to improve the relevance and quality of education. (Bunmi & Taiwo, 2017; Akala, 2021). However, the success of these reforms has been mixed, often hindered by inadequate teacher preparation, insufficient resources, and a lack of alignment between policy and practice (Arthur & Obeng, 2023). International trends often influence these reforms, including emphasizing competency-based and learner-centered approaches. (Tikly, 2019). However, the implementation of such reforms has encountered various challenges, particularly in terms of teacher preparedness and the availability of resources (Karakuş, 2021). In 2017, the Kenyan government introduced the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) to equip students with practical skills and knowledge directly applicable to real-life situations. This curriculum emphasized critical areas such as communication, collaboration, creativity, and digital literacy, in line with the country's Vision 2030 development agenda (Heto et al, 2020). The implementation of the CBC has been met with mixed reactions. On the positive side, the

curriculum has been praised for its forward-thinking approach, which seeks to prepare students for the demands of the 21st century. However, there have been significant challenges, particularly in terms of teacher preparedness. Many teachers reported feeling inadequately trained to deliver the new curriculum, and the lack of teaching and learning resources has also been a major obstacle. Furthermore, parents and other stakeholders expressed concerns about the increased workload and the costs associated with the new system (Mwanza, 2018). Similarly, in South Africa, the introduction of Curriculum 2005 and subsequent revisions placed a strong emphasis on developing critical skills in young children, including problem-solving, creativity, and social interaction. The curriculum aimed to move away from rote learning, which characterized the apartheid-era education system, towards a more learner-centered approach (Jansen, 1998).

However, the implementation of the early childhood aspects of Curriculum 2005 faced significant hurdles. Many early childhood educators, particularly those in under-resourced communities, lacked the training and resources needed to effectively implement the new curriculum. This resulted in inconsistent curriculum delivery across different regions, with urban areas generally faring better than rural ones. Despite these challenges, ongoing efforts to improve teacher training and resource allocation continue to support the successful implementation of the early childhood curriculum in South Africa (Chisholm, 2012). Teachers' insufficient knowledge of the curriculum hinders student understanding and progress because a teacher's confidence in a subject has a direct impact on student performance; hence, understanding the perceived barriers to fully implementing a curriculum is necessary (MacDonald et al., 2016; Phillips et al., 2017; Vold, 2017) as cited in (Nevenglosky, 2018). Haque and David (2022), cited in (Kikomelo, 2024), reported that experienced staff have deeper curriculum knowledge and better implementation strategies during teaching and learning.

Early childhood education has been recognized in Ghana as part of the broader educational policy framework. Over the years, the Ghanaian government has undertaken several curriculum reforms to improve education quality at all levels, including kindergarten. The introduction of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) in 2019 marked a significant shift in Ghana's educational landscape. A standards-based curriculum emphasizes clear, measurable objectives that guide teaching and assessment, aiming to ensure that all students achieve a consistent level of understanding and skills (Alvunger, 2021). This approach is believed to improve educational equity and accountability by setting uniform expectations across diverse educational contexts. The SBC was designed to move away from the previous objective-based curriculum, focusing instead on the development of core competencies and skills that are essential for lifelong learning and national development (Ministry of Education, 2019). This curriculum aims to provide a more structured and consistent educational experience for students across the country.

The implementation of the SBC has been met with both optimism and challenges. On the one hand, it is seen as a necessary step towards improving the quality of education and making it more relevant to the needs of the 21st century. On the other hand, concerns have been raised about the preparedness of teachers, the availability of teaching and learning materials, and the overall feasibility of implementing the curriculum, particularly in resource-constrained settings (Tibane, 2024).

Kindergarten education in Ghana is a crucial stage in the educational system, serving as the foundation for primary education. The government's commitment to early childhood education is reflected in policies aimed at increasing access to and improving the quality of kindergarten education. However, despite these efforts, significant challenges remain, particularly in rural areas where resources are limited and teacher training opportunities are scarce (Amoako, 2021).

Kindergarten teachers in Ghana are expected to implement the SBC to foster critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills among young learners (NaCCA, 2019). However, the success of this endeavor depends largely on the teachers' understanding of the SBC. If teachers view the curriculum as beneficial and feel supported in its implementation, they are more likely to embrace it fully. Conversely, the implementation may be hindered if they have concerns or feel inadequately prepared (Karakuş, 2021). The implementation of SBC is not only influenced by the teacher's understanding but also by various support systems from the school leaders, collaboration with colleagues, and the involvement of parents and the community (Amendt, 2020). For instance, strong support from school administrators and peer collaboration can enhance teachers' confidence and commitment to implementing the curriculum (Nguyen, 2020). Furthermore, recent studies (Maepa, 2017; Mbatha, 2016), as cited in (Govender, 2018), indicate that in practice, teachers are still experiencing ongoing implementation challenges and are dissatisfied with the quality and quantity of professional development they receive from within their schools. Despite Ghana's commitment to enhancing early childhood education through the Standards-Based Curriculum, there is limited evidence on how kindergarten teachers actually interpret and implement the curriculum, especially in rural and resource-constrained settings. In the Nkwanta South Municipality, where issues like teacher preparedness, instructional materials, classroom conditions, and professional support persist, little is known about how these factors affect curriculum implementation. This gap highlights the need for an empirical study on how kindergarten teachers in this municipality implement the Standards-Based Curriculum.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The introduction of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) in Ghana was a significant policy shift aimed at enhancing teaching and learning outcomes by focusing on

competency-based education (NaCCA, 2019). The Government of Ghana's introduction of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) in 2019, with full-scale implementation commencing in the 2019/2020 academic year, marked a strategic shift from the traditional objective-based model to an activity-driven, learner-centered pedagogy. The SBC was designed to promote the development of core competencies, including critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, effective communication, and digital literacy, thereby positioning early childhood education as the foundation for lifelong learning (NaCCA, 2019). In the case of kindergarten education, this reform emphasized play-based learning, integration of socio-emotional development, and practical life skills meant to align with international best practices (Spiteri, 2021).

Despite its noble goals, nationwide evidence suggests a profound disconnect between curriculum design and its practical enactment in classrooms. A systematic review by Takyi et al. (2025) reported persistent implementation challenges, including limited teacher understanding of the SBC's conceptual framework, inadequate pre-service and in-service training, and a lack of instructional materials. Similarly, Addai-Mununkum and Setordzi (2023) revealed that while some teachers are aware of the importance of cooperative, inquiry-based learning, their actual classroom strategies are often constrained by overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teaching resources, and a lack of professional coaching.

Moreover, teacher efficacy and readiness remain central issues. Agormedah et al. (2022), in a large-scale study of public basic schools, found that teacher self-efficacy in instructional strategies and classroom management varied widely by gender and experience, with less experienced and female teachers reporting lower levels of confidence in implementing the SBC. In addition, teachers working in deprived or rural contexts often

operate in unsupported environments, where school leadership offers minimal supervision, and parental expectations are misaligned with child-centered pedagogies (Boateng, 2024). The situation is particularly concerning in Nkwanta South Municipality, a predominantly rural area in Ghana's Oti Region. Despite the municipality's growing population and the presence of public early childhood centers, there is a noticeable absence of empirical research examining how kindergarten teachers are implementing the SBC in this context. As a teacher and currently a School Improvement Support Officer (SISO) within the municipality, I have personally observed that many kindergarten classrooms are overcrowded, often holding more than 50 learners per teacher, with limited or no access to manipulative, visual aids, or digital content. While teachers demonstrate interest in the SBC approach, most have received only brief training workshops, sometimes lasting just a week, with no follow-up coaching or classroom-based support.

In my interactions during school visits, I have seen that some teachers continue to use rote learning methods or rely on chalk-and-talk instruction because they lack the materials or pedagogical guidance to fully embrace play-based, exploratory learning. Others struggle to understand how to assess learners using the new performance-based standards, especially when large class sizes and limited time prevent individualized attention. Additionally, language policy contradictions, particularly the diminishing emphasis on Ghanaian language instruction in early grades, further hinder curriculum implementation in multilingual classrooms, where children often speak a different language at home than the language of instruction (Hankerson & Obiri-Yeboah, 2025). Furthermore, there is low parental involvement in most rural communities, where play is often misunderstood as non-academic. Parents expect children to engage in copying notes or recitation, which places pressure on teachers to compromise curriculum fidelity to satisfy community expectations (Sparks, 2024). Leadership supervision, while well-intentioned, is irregular, and

headteachers themselves frequently report being unclear on the expectations and monitoring tools associated with the SBC (Setordzi, 2023).

Despite these challenges, little is known about how kindergarten teachers in Nkwanta South Municipality interpret, understand, and implement the Standards-Based Curriculum. This gap is significant because teachers' implementation practices influence the success of the SBC. If these challenges remain unaddressed, the intended goals of the Standards-Based Curriculum at the kindergarten level may not be achieved. Learners may continue to receive teacher-centered, rote-based instruction that limits their development of essential skills such as creativity, critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving. This could lead to ongoing learning gaps as children advance to higher levels, weakening the foundation of Ghana's basic education reforms. Therefore, this study examined how kindergarten teachers understand and implement the SBC in this rural setting to inform policy and support strategies.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore kindergarten teachers' implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality.

1.4 Research Objectives

This research sought to:

1. Examine kindergarten teachers' understanding of the Standards-Based Curriculum in Nkwanta South Municipality.
2. Identify the support systems available to kindergarten teachers in implementing the Standards-Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality
3. Explore the challenges teachers face in the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum among kindergartens in the Nkwanta South Municipality.

4. Identify kindergarten teachers' strategies to address challenges in implementing the Standards-Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How do kindergarten teachers understand the key principles and components of the Standards-Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality?
2. What support systems are available to assist kindergarten teachers in implementing the Standards-Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality?
3. What challenges do kindergarten teachers face in implementing the Standards-Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality?
4. What strategies do kindergarten teachers use to overcome challenges in the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study provided insights into kindergarten teachers' understanding, challenges, and strategies, enabling policymakers and educational authorities to refine and adapt the Standards-Based Curriculum for more effective implementation. By identifying gaps in support and resources, the research highlights the need for professional development, training, and institutional support, fostering a better-equipped teaching workforce in the Nkwanta South Municipality. The findings would contribute to improving kindergarten education by addressing localized challenges and promoting tailored interventions, leading to better learning outcomes for young children in the municipality and Ghana as a whole.

The findings would contribute to national efforts to improve foundational education outcomes, particularly in underserved and rural areas, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Adipat & Chotikapanich, 2022). This study is both timely and

significant, as it addresses an urgent need for evidence-based solutions to strengthen curriculum delivery at the kindergarten level.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to the Nkwanta South Municipality, focusing exclusively on kindergarten teachers in the Kecheibi Circuit. It does not include teachers from primary or other educational levels or other municipalities. The participants of the study were delimited to public school kindergarten teachers in the Kecheibi Circuit. The study did not include school administrators, parents, or education policymakers, even though these groups may influence the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum. The research focused on the teachers' understanding, challenges, support systems, and strategies for implementation. It did not evaluate the overall effectiveness of the Standards-Based Curriculum on student outcomes or analyze curriculum design from the perspective of policymakers or curriculum developers.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Kindergarten Teachers: refer to trained or untrained educators who are officially assigned to teach children in the KG1 and KG2 classes (ages 4–5 years) in public basic schools within the Nkwanta South Municipality of Ghana.

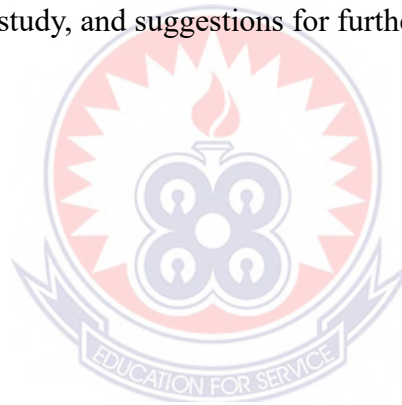
Implementation: the practical actions, strategies, and decisions taken by kindergarten teachers to adopt, adapt, and deliver the content, pedagogy, assessment, and learning outcomes prescribed in the Standards-Based Curriculum within their classrooms.

Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC): Ghana's official national curriculum introduced in 2019 for basic education, which emphasizes core competencies such as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, digital literacy, and character development through activity-based, child-centered, and play-based approaches at the kindergarten level.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The study was organized into five chapters. Chapter One presents the introduction, background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations, limitations, operational definitions of terms, and organization of the study. Chapter two dealt with the related literature review.

Chapter three dealt with the research methodology, which included the research paradigm, research approach, research design, population, sample, sampling techniques, instruments, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. Chapter four discusses the analysis and discussions of results, and chapter five deals with the summary, conclusions, recommendations of the study, and suggestions for further studies.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

This chapter reviewed literature relevant to kindergarten teachers' implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) in Ghana. The purpose of this literature review was to examine existing theoretical and empirical studies that explain how teachers understand, implement, and respond to curriculum reforms in early childhood education. The review was organized into several sections. First, the theoretical framework discussed the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) by Hall and Hord (1987) and the Educational Change Theory proposed by Fullan (2007). The Educational Change Theory helped to explain how educational reforms are introduced and implemented within school systems, while CBAM provided insight into teachers' levels of concern, understanding, and stages of adopting a new curriculum. These theories guided the study by helping to interpret teachers' responses to the Standards-Based Curriculum and how these responses influence classroom practices. Second, the conceptual review examined key concepts, including curriculum, the Standards-Based Curriculum in Ghana, teachers' level of understanding of the SBC, teacher support systems, implementation challenges, and coping strategies. These areas directly addressed the research questions of the study by exploring how well teachers understand the curriculum, the support available to them, the challenges they face, and the strategies they use in implementing the SBC. The chapter concluded with a summary of the reviewed literature and highlighted gaps that justify the need for the study.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework integrates the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) by Hall and Hord (1987) and Michael Fullan's Educational Change Theory (2007). These theories provided a robust foundation for understanding and analyzing the

complexities of kindergarten teachers' implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) within the socio-educational context.

2.1.1 Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) by Hall and Hord (1987)

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) by Hall and Hord (1987) is a comprehensive framework that helps understand and support the implementation of innovations, such as the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC). The CBAM is particularly relevant to the study as it provides tools to assess teacher concerns, use levels, and implementation fidelity. The following aspects of CBAM relate to the study's objectives and research questions:

The Informational and Personal stages provide insights into how teachers perceive and understand the curriculum's principles and components (RQ1). The Collaboration and Refocusing stages help identify strategies teachers use to address challenges and refine the SBC for better outcomes (RQ4). According to Hall and Hord (1987), addressing teachers' concerns at different stages ensures a smoother transition and enhances adoption. Nawastheen (2021) highlighted the importance of understanding teacher concerns and levels of use in adopting competency-based education reforms. The Mechanical Use and Routine levels highlight teachers' challenges during the adoption phase (RQ2). The Orientation and Integration levels underscore the role of training and collaboration in assisting teachers (RQ3). Hord and Roussin (2013) noted that identifying levels of use allows targeted interventions to support teachers during transitions. The Innovation Configuration (IC) highlights the support structures needed for fidelity in implementation, such as professional development and resource allocation (RQ3). IC mapping facilitates fidelity and sustainability in curriculum reforms (Hall and Roussin, 2013). It provides insights into teacher-driven strategies for addressing implementation challenges (RQ4).

Fernando (2010) argued that IC maps are instrumental in achieving fidelity and addressing variability in implementation.

2.1.2 Educational Change Theory (2007)

The Educational Change Theory (Fullan, 2007) provided a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involved in implementing reforms such as the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC). The theory emphasized the complexity of change in educational systems and highlighted the interplay between individual and systemic factors. This made it a suitable framework for exploring the objectives and research questions outlined in this study.

Fullan's Educational Change Theory (2007) provides a structured framework for understanding the process of educational reform. The theory delineates three distinct but interconnected phases: Initiation, Implementation, and Institutionalization. These phases provide insights into how change unfolds and the factors that influence its success or failure.

This study's first objective, which explores kindergarten teachers' understanding of the SBC, aligns with Fullan's emphasis on understanding the change process. Teachers' comprehension of the curriculum's principles and components is crucial for successful implementation. Fullan (2007) highlighted that understanding the change process involves recognizing the rationale, objectives, and benefits of the reform. Teachers must understand the "why" behind the curriculum to embrace it. Studies by Datnow and Park (2019) suggested that a clear understanding of curriculum goals leads to greater teacher commitment and better outcomes. Poor comprehension of curriculum principles often results in superficial or incorrect implementation (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2015).

The second objective, analyzing support systems available to teachers, connects directly to Fullan's emphasis on the importance of collaboration and professional learning

communities in implementing change. Fullan (2007) stressed the need for ongoing professional development, mentorship, and administrative support to build teachers' capacity for implementation. Datnow and Park (2019) asserted that collaborative professional learning strengthens teachers' ability to adapt to new curricula and address challenges. Studies by Timperley et al. (2020) highlighted that schools with robust support systems are more successful in sustaining reforms.

This study's third objective identifies factors that hinder SBC implementation, reflecting Fullan's assertion that implementation challenges are inherent in any educational reform. Fullan (2007) outlined barriers such as lack of resources, insufficient training, and resistance to change as common challenges in curriculum implementation. Buabeng & Amo-Darko (2024) emphasized the role of systemic barriers, including large class sizes and inadequate teaching materials, which resonate with the Ghanaian context. Resistance often stems from teachers' lack of confidence in their ability to execute new practices (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018).

The fourth objective examined the strategies teachers used to overcome implementation challenges, directly tying into Fullan's notion that local solutions and teacher agency are essential for sustaining change. Fullan (2007) emphasizes the importance of adaptive strategies, where teachers modify their approaches based on contextual realities. Hargreaves & O'Connor (2018) highlight the role of teacher agency in overcoming obstacles, such as limited resources, through creativity and collaboration. Research by Herron (2025) underscored that teacher-led innovations are often more sustainable than top-down mandates.

2.1.3 The Concept of Curriculum

The concept of curriculum has evolved, reflecting changing educational philosophies, societal needs, and technological advancements (Swargiary, 2024). Curriculum is a

complex phenomenon. This complexity makes the curriculum a complex as well as controversial endeavor (Pacheco, 2012), as cited in Johnson-Mardones (2015). Curriculum broadly refers to the structured set of learning experiences provided to learners within a formal educational context (Mulenga, 2018). It encompasses objectives, content, teaching methods, and assessment strategies aimed at achieving specific educational goals. (Sewagegn, 2020). There is no shared understanding of the notion of curriculum by either theorists or practitioners in higher education (O'Neill, 2015). Mulenga (2018) explained further that curriculum refers to all the planned and guided learning experiences that an educational institution provides. Similarly, Aneke & Nnabuike (2019) emphasized that curriculum is more than a syllabus or list of subjects; it includes the totality of experiences that learners encounter during their education. Curriculum is defined by a set of planned learning experiences encountered by students; curriculum as intention, characterized by predetermined aims, goals, and objectives describing what students should learn; and curriculum as a process, emphasizing personal growth and self-actualization through experiential learning (Mulenga, 2018).

Johnson-Mardones (2015) argued that, acknowledging the complexity of curriculum as a phenomenon, curriculum design is conceived as a complicated decision-making process that has technical, practical, and political implications. He posited that it is technical because it seems improbable that we can think of a school system without curriculum regulations, guides, and other documents that shape teaching. It is practical because practitioners make decisions about desired or not, effects of these curriculum prescriptions, but also because there are aspects of the practical that escape and resist technical rationales. It is political because the curriculum constrains the world view or views to which students will be exposed as part of their school experience.

2.2 The Concept of Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC)

The Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) is a contemporary educational framework introduced in Ghana to revamp and transform pre-tertiary education to align with international best practices and 21st-century learning needs. Initiated by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA), the review of the Ghanaian curriculum began in 2017 and culminated in the full implementation of the SBC across kindergarten and primary education in September 2020 (NaCCA, 2019; Ministry of Education, 2019). This initiative aimed to address global educational megatrends and domestic challenges associated with the previously used Objective-Based Curriculum (OBC), which was considered outdated and inadequate for developing critical competencies among learners. The SBC marks a paradigm shift from content-heavy, teacher-centered instruction to a learner-centered, competency-based approach. Under the old Objective-Based Curriculum, teaching was primarily focused on content delivery and exam preparation, often leading to rote memorization. Learners were burdened with excessive content, and assessments were used largely for assumptive purposes, neglecting formative feedback that supports effective teaching and learning (Asante et al., 2023). Recognizing these limitations, the Ministry of Education proposed a shift towards SBC to foster skill development, critical thinking, and practical competencies relevant to personal growth, national development, and global participation (NaCCA, 2020).

A key objective of the SBC is to emphasize the development of the "4Rs": Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and Creativity, core skills considered fundamental for lifelong learning and national progress (Asante et al., 2023). The SBC also prioritizes 21st-century competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, innovation, collaboration, effective communication, digital literacy, cultural identity, and global citizenship (NaCCA, 2019). These competencies are embedded across all subject areas and

are intended to produce self-confident, engaged, literate, and ethical learners capable of contributing meaningfully to society.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the SBC advocates a learner-centered model. This means teachers are no longer mere transmitters of knowledge but facilitators of learning experiences. The new curriculum promotes inclusive and differentiated instruction, scaffolding, integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching, and assessment for learning (Adu-Gyamfi & Amponsah, 2021). The emphasis is on real-world problem-solving, active learning, and group-based activities that nurture both academic and social-emotional development.

Structurally, the SBC has also introduced notable changes. At the kindergarten level, the curriculum has been streamlined into four thematic learning areas: Literacy, Numeracy, Creative Arts, and Our World Our People (Citizenship Education), reducing the earlier seven learning domains (NaCCA, 2019). Primary school subjects such as History and Our World Our People have been redesigned to integrate Ghanaian values and heritage, while religious and moral education continues to play a central role in character development.

The SBC spans from Kindergarten (KG) to Basic 6, while Junior High School (Basic 7 to 9) follows the Common Core Programme (CCP). The CCP is also based on the SBC model and includes a set of nine subjects: English Language, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Computing, Career Technology, Religious and Moral Education (RME), Creative Arts and Design, and Physical and Health Education (NaCCA, 2020). The Common Core emphasizes cross-cutting themes such as critical thinking, digital literacy, and values education.

Furthermore, the SBC redefines assessment practices. The traditional Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) is being gradually replaced or supplemented by the National Standards Assessment Test (NSAT), administered at Basic 2, 4, 6, and 8 to monitor

learners' progress and guide instruction (NaCCA, 2020). The NSAT replaces earlier tools like the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA), and the National Education Assessment (NEA), aiming for more holistic and formative assessments that include group tasks, project work, and performance-based evaluations.

Under the new framework, French is introduced at Basic 9 (JHS 3), and extracurricular activities such as club meetings and group activities are compulsory for at least one hour each week. These are designed to support social learning and build leadership, communication, and teamwork skills (MoE, 2019).

The competencies outlined in the SBC include six core areas:

1. **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving (CP):** Focuses on learners' ability to analyze, evaluate, and make informed decisions based on personal and real-world experiences.
2. **Creativity and Innovation (CI):** Encourages learners to apply imaginative thinking and entrepreneurial skills to address challenges.
3. **Communication and Collaboration (CC):** Strengthens interpersonal skills and emphasizes respectful dialogue, active listening, and information sharing.
4. **Cultural Identity and Global Citizenship (CG):** Promotes patriotism, social responsibility, and global awareness.
5. **Personal Development and Leadership (PL):** Develops self-awareness, resilience, empathy, and leadership skills necessary for lifelong learning.
6. **Digital Literacy (DL):** Enhances learners' ability to use technology responsibly for communication and learning (NaCCA, 2019).

Instruction and assessment are anchored in three interrelated domains: Knowledge, Understanding and Application; Process Skills; and Attitudes and Values. These domains

serve as the foundation for evaluating student learning outcomes, teacher performance, and curriculum effectiveness.

The introduction of the SBC is a strategic response to Ghana's national development agenda and the need to produce a workforce equipped with relevant cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills. It moves education away from theoretical knowledge and toward developing values, character, and citizenship, ultimately nurturing responsible and productive members of society (Avenuegh.com, 2023).

2.3 Kindergarten Teachers' Level of Comprehension of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC)

The success of any curriculum reform is intrinsically tied to the level of teachers' understanding of the curriculum's philosophy, goals, and instructional requirements. Teachers are the primary agents who interpret, adapt, and enact curriculum frameworks in the classroom, and their conceptual grasp directly shapes how these reforms manifest in practice. In the case of Ghana's Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC), which was introduced nationally in 2019 to shift pedagogy from rote learning to competency-based, learner-centered approaches, research suggests that many kindergarten teachers have a limited understanding of the curriculum's underlying principles and implementation demands (Akyeampong et al 2020). This lack of deep curriculum literacy undermines the effective enactment of the SBC and contributes to the persistence of traditional instructional methods in early childhood classrooms.

2.3.1 Conceptual Understanding and Philosophical Orientation

The SBC is anchored on developing key competencies such as problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy from the earliest stages of schooling. It seeks to cultivate learners who are not only knowledgeable but also adaptable and innovative thinkers capable of navigating complex social and economic

challenges (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA, 2019). However, evidence from Ghanaian studies reveals that many kindergarten teachers struggle to grasp this philosophical shift. For instance, Osei-Poku and Agbenyega (2021) found that although teachers were aware of the existence of the SBC, they demonstrated only a superficial understanding of its learner-centered orientation and continued to equate quality teaching with content delivery and rote memorization. This misconception reinforces a teacher-dominated culture that conflicts with the constructivist underpinnings of the SBC.

Similar findings have emerged in other African contexts undergoing competency-based curriculum reforms. In Kenya, for example, Waweru and Njoroge (2022) reported that early childhood educators exhibited limited comprehension of the competency-based curriculum framework introduced in 2017, often viewing it as an additional bureaucratic demand rather than a transformative pedagogical model. Likewise, Ahmed (2024) found that many teachers lacked the theoretical grounding to integrate competencies such as critical thinking and problem-solving into play-based early childhood activities. These parallels suggest that conceptual misunderstandings of competency-based curricula are a widespread challenge across Sub-Saharan Africa, not unique to Ghana.

2.3.2 Curriculum Intent–Classroom Practice Gap

Even where teachers express general approval of the SBC’s intent, their classroom practices often fail to reflect its core principles. Pathmarajah (2014) identified a “curriculum intent–classroom practice gap” among teachers, noting that while teachers endorsed the learner-centered ideals of the SBC in interviews, observations showed them defaulting to teacher-led whole-class drills and rote recitation. One reason is teachers’ misinterpretation of learning standards as rigid benchmarks to be tested rather than flexible developmental outcomes to be nurtured (Bullard & Bahar, 2023). This misperception

drives a focus on coverage and assessment rather than competency development and exploration.

This gap echoes patterns in other African reform contexts. In Rwanda, which adopted a competency-based curriculum in 2015, Nsengimana and Mugisha (2021) observed that early grade teachers endorsed the curriculum's goals but continued to rely on didactic methods and summative testing, largely because they misunderstood how to translate competencies into daily lesson objectives. Similarly, Ahmed (2024) found that early childhood teachers often conflated competencies with examination targets, thereby undermining the intended shift toward holistic child development. These studies affirm that bridging the curriculum intent–practice divide requires strengthening teachers' curriculum literacy through sustained professional development.

2.3.3 Influence of Pre-Service and In-Service Training

Teachers' limited understanding of the SBC is partly rooted in gaps within pre-service and in-service teacher education. Pre-service curricula in Ghana's Colleges of Education have historically emphasized subject content and traditional instructional techniques over constructivist pedagogy or competency-based approaches (Amankwah, 2022). Consequently, many newly qualified teachers enter classrooms with minimal exposure to learner-centered methods or the rationale underpinning the SBC. In-service training on the SBC has also been criticized for being brief, one-off workshops focused on disseminating policy documents rather than developing teachers' pedagogical capacity (Adomako & Opoku-Asare, 2022).

This mirrors broader trends across Africa. In Uganda, Olema et al. (2021) found that early childhood teachers lacked opportunities for continuous professional learning, resulting in weak understanding of the competency-based early childhood framework. Eadie et al.

(2021) has noted that many Sub-Saharan African countries implement curriculum reforms without adequately aligning teacher education systems, leaving teachers underprepared to enact the new approaches. Without strong foundational training and ongoing professional learning, teachers' capacity to internalize and implement curriculum reforms remains limited.

2.3.4 Teacher Beliefs, Attitudes, and Cultural Influences

Teachers' understanding of the SBC is also shaped by entrenched beliefs and cultural norms about teaching and learning. Many teachers in Ghana continue to view their role as transmitters of knowledge and authority figures rather than facilitators of learning, which conflicts with the SBC's constructivist ethos (Pryor et al, 2021). Such traditional attitudes are reinforced by societal expectations that associate quality teaching with quiet, orderly classrooms and visible teacher control (Boakye & Ampiah, 2019). Consequently, teachers often prioritize content coverage and discipline over exploratory, child-centered learning.

Comparable cultural tensions have been documented elsewhere in Africa. In Kenya, Chepkilot (2024) reported that teachers perceived learner-centered methods as time-consuming and incompatible with local expectations of teacher authority. In Nigeria, Jimoh (2022) found that teachers' beliefs in rote memorization as a marker of academic rigor impeded the adoption of competency-based instruction. These findings indicate that curriculum reforms must address not only knowledge gaps but also deep-seated belief systems to foster genuine pedagogical change.

2.3.5 Need for Sustained Professional Development and Supportive Structures

Given these challenges, scholars argue that improving teachers' understanding of the SBC requires more than occasional workshops. Osei-Poku and Agbenyega (2021) emphasized the need for continuous professional development that combines mentoring, peer learning

communities, classroom-based coaching, and reflective practice. Ghana Education Service (GES, 2022) similarly recommended embedding curriculum training into ongoing school-based professional learning communities to enable teachers to collaboratively interpret standards, design learner-centered lessons, and integrate formative assessment.

Evidence from other African reforms supports this approach. In Rwanda, Nsengimana and Mugisha (2021) found that teachers who participated in sustained coaching programs demonstrated significantly stronger understanding and enactment of competency-based pedagogy than those who attended only one-time workshops. In Kenya, Waweru and Njoroge (2022) reported that school-based professional learning communities helped teachers collaboratively plan and reflect on lessons, thereby deepening their conceptual grasp of the new curriculum framework. Such findings affirm that continuous, context-responsive professional learning is crucial to enhancing teachers' understanding of curriculum reforms like the SBC.

2.4 Support Mechanisms Available to Kindergarten Teachers for Implementing the Standards-Based Curriculum:

Effective implementation of the (SBC) at the kindergarten level is not solely dependent on teachers' individual knowledge and competence; it also hinges on the strength and availability of institutional, pedagogical, and systemic support structures. Research on the implementation of the SBC in Ghana reveals that successful curriculum delivery depends heavily on institutional supports such as training, supervisory follow-up, provision of teaching and learning materials, and ongoing professional development. Without those supports, teachers often find it difficult to convert policy intentions into effective classroom practice (Hinnant-Crawford, 2016).

According to a comprehensive systematic review recently published, one of the main barriers to consistent SBC implementation remains insufficient teacher preparation and inadequate post-rollout professional development (Buabeng & Amo-Darko, 2025). They also mentioned that teachers reported that initial in-service training was too brief to develop a deep understanding of the new curriculum demands; moreover, follow-up workshops or mentoring sessions were sporadic or non-existent. As a result, while some teachers appreciate the philosophy of the SBC, their capacity to translate it into differentiated, learner-centered instruction is compromised. (Arthur & Obeng, 2023).

Complementing this finding, empirical research focusing on basic school teachers found that although many teachers held positive perceptions of the SBC, a lack of teaching and learning resources substantially limited their ability to deliver according to the curriculum guidelines (Kwarteng, 2024). Specifically, textbooks, workbooks, manipulatives, and ICT tools recommended under the SBC framework were often missing or insufficient. Without these materials, teachers were forced to resort to improvisation, a strategy that, while reflecting creativity and resilience, does not guarantee quality or consistency. (Oppong, 2024).

In addition to resource limitations, weak supervisory and support structures have undermined SBC implementation, especially in rural or remote schools (Buabeng & Amo-Darko, 2025). Arthur and Obeng (2023) highlighted those logistical challenges, including inadequate supervision capacity, lack of transportation, and insufficient oversight, which hinder effective support for teachers. Consequently, many schools receive minimal follow-up after the curriculum rollout, limiting opportunities for mentoring, feedback, or corrective support. This weak supervision undermines fidelity to curriculum objectives, particularly in remote or underserved areas.

Contextual inequalities further exacerbate these challenges. Studies indicate that urban schools tend to fare better because of relatively better resource allocation, easier access to training, and more frequent supervisory visits, whereas rural schools often lag (Arthur & Obeng, 2023; Anlimachie, 2015). These discrepancies create a divide in educational quality, with children in disadvantaged rural settings disproportionately affected by the limited implementation of the SBC. Moreover, large class sizes and high pupil-teacher ratios remain persistent obstacles to implementing the learner-centered, activity-based pedagogy that SBC advocates (Kwarteng, 2024). When class sizes are large, teachers struggle to differentiate instruction, monitor individual learners, and provide tailored support, all of which are critical components of the SBC (Murket, 2024). The overload in workload and limited contact time per learner make it difficult to apply differentiated instruction or formative assessment practices meaningfully (Özkan & Özkan, 2025).

Even when teachers are willing and prepared, time constraints and curriculum workload pose significant problems (Barbarin & Aikens, 2015). Many teachers report that preparing differentiated lessons, acquiring or adapting materials, and conducting individualized assessments requires more time than is realistically available under regular timetable pressures (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2023). Without additional time, these practices are often neglect-ed in favor of whole-class teaching, undermining the philosophy of the SBC.

2.5 Challenges That Impact the Successful Implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC)

Despite the learner-centered, competency-driven orientation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC), its rollout at the kindergarten and lower-basic levels in Ghana has been repeatedly constrained by a range of contextual and systemic challenges. These challenges significantly limit teachers' capacity to translate curriculum intentions into effective classroom practices (Takyi et al. 2025).

One of the foremost obstacles is the insufficient physical infrastructure and the lack of age-appropriate teaching and learning materials (Akpalu et al. 2025). According to a recent study on early-grade implementation, many basic schools lack adequate classrooms, child-sized furniture, and play-based learning spaces, which undermines the SBC's emphasis on activity-centered, child-friendly pedagogies (Kwarteng, 2024). Without such infrastructure, the play-based and exploratory learning methods embedded in the curriculum become difficult to enact meaningfully. Compounding this, many schools report a persistent shortage of teaching and learning materials (TLMs) such as manipulatives, picture books, charts, and digital tools, all essential for interactive, competency-based learning (Dhungana, 2025). The shortage forces teachers to rely heavily on traditional lecture-based instruction, thereby undermining the interactive and exploratory learning principles the SBC aims to uphold (Adarkwah et al. 2024).

Large class sizes and high pupil–teacher ratios pose another serious challenge, particularly in peri-urban and rural schools (Solheim & Opheim, 2019). Overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for teachers to manage group work, provide individualized attention, or monitor learners’ progress (Vakili et al. 2024). Reports indicate that some Ghanaian classrooms have up to 70–100 pupils per teacher, far exceeding recommended ratios, which significantly impedes group-based learning, differentiated instruction, and effective formative assessment (Botchway, 2022). Under such conditions, small-group discussions, peer collaboration, or hands-on activities become nearly impossible, leading to a reversion to whole-class, teacher-centered methods that are antithetical to the SBC’s learner-centered philosophy.

Moreover, the heavy workload and administrative demands on teachers exacerbate the situation (Jomuad et al. 2021). Teachers are often burdened with multiple classes, administrative tasks, and non-teaching duties, leaving them little or no time for detailed lesson planning, differentiated instruction preparation, and individualized assessments, all core pillars of the SBC (Lavana & Nor, 2020). In contexts where resources are scarce and class sizes are large, teachers frequently resort to conventional, less demanding teaching methods, sacrificing the depth, quality, and intended philosophy of the curriculum (Buabeng & Amo-Darko, 2025)

Cultural and community expectations present another layer of challenge. Many parents and community members continue to equate “good teaching” with rote learning, disciplined classrooms, and teacher authority (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2020). Such traditional expectations conflict with the play-based, child-centered, and activity-oriented approaches promoted by the SBC. This tension pressures teachers to revert to familiar, teacher-centered instruction and content coverage rather than exploratory or competency-based pedagogies (Barasa et al. 2022). When families and communities do not value or understand the new pedagogy, teachers may find it difficult to justify or sustain changes in their instructional approaches.

Furthermore, the shift toward inclusion of digital literacy and 21st-century skills in the SBC has exposed significant gaps in ICT infrastructure and digital resources in many basic schools (Buabeng & Amo-Darko, 2025). Many schools lack stable electricity, computers, projectors, or reliable internet access. Without these, the digital and ICT components of the curriculum remain aspirational rather than practical, limiting the potential for interactive, technology-enhanced learning (Kyalo, 2021). This digital divide reinforces inequality, especially between urban and rural schools, where resource constraints are more severe (Kormos & Wisdom, 2021).

Finally, insufficient teacher preparation and weak ongoing support and supervision undermine effective implementation of the SBC (Buabeng & Amo-Darko, 2025). A nationwide study found that a significant proportion of teachers continue to teach without adequate lesson plans or teaching and learning resources, and that many lack a full understanding of the curriculum’s rationale, philosophy, and core competencies (Arthur & Obeng, 2023).

The study noted that initial training is often brief and insufficient, combined with minimal follow-up support, leaving teachers ill-equipped to internalize and apply the curriculum reforms in their daily teaching. Consequently, many revert to traditional pedagogies out of necessity, rather than innovation.

In aggregate, these systemic and contextual challenges, including poor infrastructure, lack of materials (physical and digital), overcrowded classrooms, heavy workloads, cultural resistance, and inadequate teacher preparation, significantly constrain the successful implementation of the SBC. Unless these structural issues are addressed through sustained investment in resources, capacity building, supervision, and community engagement, the curriculum's learner-centered, competency-based promise may remain unrealized for many children in Ghana.

2.6 Strategies Kindergarten teachers use to overcome Challenges in the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum

The implementation of curriculum reforms in education systems worldwide often encounters multiple challenges that require creative strategies by teachers. Teachers occupy a pivotal position in ensuring that reforms translate into meaningful classroom practices because they interpret, adapt, and operationalize curriculum goals in diverse and often resource-constrained environments. The introduction of Ghana's Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) in 2019, designed to replace the objective-based approach, signified a paradigm shift toward competency-based and learner-centered pedagogy. This curriculum reform particularly emphasized activity-based and play-oriented learning at the kindergarten level, placing teachers at the forefront of driving pedagogical change (NaCCA, 2019; Ministry of Education, 2019). However, research shows that despite the sound philosophical underpinnings of the SBC, many teachers face difficulties related to inadequate resources, limited professional development, and insufficient supervision

(Amoako, 2021; Osei-Poku & Agbenyega, 2021). These obstacles compel teachers to develop practical coping mechanisms that enable them to implement the curriculum effectively. Literature from Ghana and other international contexts reveals a range of adaptive strategies, including peer collaboration, improvisation of teaching and learning materials, selective curriculum adaptation, continuous professional development, formative assessment, community engagement, and the exercise of professional agency and resilience (Vindigni, 2023; Buabeng & Amo-Darko, 2025).

One key strategy teachers employ to navigate curriculum implementation challenges is peer collaboration through professional learning communities (Admiraal et al., 2021). Across Ghana, early childhood teachers often rely on collaboration with colleagues to make sense of new curriculum requirements and to share practical ideas for classroom implementation (Addai-Mununkum & Setordzi, 2023). Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have become informal but vital structures for collective problem-solving and lesson planning. Teachers meet after school hours or during weekends to co-develop lesson plans, adapt indicators to local contexts, and produce low-cost teaching and learning materials (Adu-Gyamfi & Amponsah, 2021). Such collaborative practices foster reflection and confidence among teachers who may otherwise feel isolated in their classrooms. Similar patterns are observed internationally. For instance, Datnow and Park (2019) emphasized that peer collaboration promotes “horizontal capacity” where teachers interpret reform intentions collectively and translate them into practice in context-sensitive ways. Likewise, Timperley et al. (2020) affirmed that teachers’ engagement in sustained professional communities enhances their understanding of curriculum goals and strengthens reform ownership. Studies in Kenya and Rwanda also report that school-based clusters and mentoring groups support teachers in implementing competency-based curricula when formal training and coaching structures are weak (Nsengimana & Mugisha, 2021; Waweru & Njoroge, 2022).

In the Ghanaian context, peer collaboration enables kindergarten teachers to share experiences, demonstrate lessons, and co-create instructional aids, thereby ensuring that the curriculum remains alive despite systemic limitations (Ampadu et al., 2024).

Another widely reported coping strategy is the improvisation and creative use of local materials (Buabeng & Amo-Darko, 2025). Improvisation refers to the innovative adaptation or creation of teaching and learning materials using readily available resources such as bottle caps, stones, paper, or fabric. A study conducted in Ghana indicated that many schools do not receive adequate or timely supplies of approved instructional materials for the SBC (Amoako, 2021). Consequently, teachers, particularly in rural or low-resource settings, produce their own materials to ensure active learning and pupil engagement. Agbenyega and Deku (2020) observed that teachers use locally relevant objects and stories to contextualize lessons, thereby enhancing learner understanding. Mæland & Espeland (2017) described improvisation as a form of pedagogical creativity that reflects teachers' ability to connect curriculum content to the lived realities of their learners. International research supports this finding. Namutamba (2016) in Uganda found that kindergarten teachers created cost-free teaching materials from community resources, maintaining curriculum quality even without government-supplied kits. Similarly, Mwanza (2018) in Zambia reported that teachers' improvisation strengthened learners' conceptual understanding because it grounded abstract ideas in familiar contexts. Improvisation, therefore, should not be viewed merely as a compensatory practice but as a manifestation of teacher ingenuity and professional autonomy. However, scholars such as Akyeampong et al. (2020) warned that overreliance on improvisation without systemic support can overburden teachers and may not guarantee uniform quality of instruction.

Teachers also respond to curriculum challenges through incremental and selective curriculum adaptation. The SBC outlines numerous learning standards and performance

indicators that can overwhelm teachers, especially those managing large classes with limited time and resources. To manage this, teachers often prioritize certain indicators or competencies each term, implementing them gradually and integrating others later as conditions improve (Takyi et al. 2025). This pragmatic strategy ensures that learning is meaningful rather than rushed or superficial. They note that kindergarten teachers sometimes combine multiple competencies within a single activity or simplify learning outcomes to align with learners' developmental levels. Fullan (2007) and O'Connor (2018) described this approach as "adaptive professionalism," where teachers use discretion to reconcile policy demands with practical constraints. From an international perspective, such selective adaptation is not unique to Ghana. Datnow and Park (2019) explained that teachers worldwide exhibit adaptive expertise when they modify lessons without compromising the broader intent of reforms. Hence, the practice of incremental implementation among Ghanaian kindergarten teachers illustrates professional flexibility rather than resistance. It enables teachers to sustain curriculum ideals even under challenging conditions.

Another crucial coping mechanism identified in both local and international studies is participation in continuous professional development and mentoring. Although Ghana's SBC rollout included national and district orientation workshops, many teachers reported that these sessions were too brief and lacked follow-up support (Kuutol, 2023). As a result, teachers seek alternative learning opportunities through informal mentoring, peer observation, and classroom demonstrations. Osei-Poku and Agbenyega (2021) found that early childhood educators often rely on headteachers or more experienced colleagues for guidance and feedback. Such mentorship fills the gap left by irregular formal supervision and enhances teachers' pedagogical confidence. International research underscores the effectiveness of continuous professional learning over sporadic workshops. Darling-

Hammond et al. (2017) argued that sustained, collaborative professional development that includes active engagement and feedback produces lasting improvement in teaching practice. Similarly, Timperley et al. (2020) highlighted iterative cycles of learning, reflection, and classroom experimentation as hallmarks of impactful teacher learning. Therefore, in Ghana, fostering ongoing mentoring relationships and school-based professional learning communities can help teachers internalize and effectively apply the Standards-Based Curriculum.

Formative assessment and reflective practice also feature prominently among teachers' coping strategies. The SBC emphasizes continuous assessment for learning rather than summative evaluation. However, in classrooms with large pupil numbers, completing detailed individual portfolios can be challenging. Teachers adapt by simplifying assessment processes using group-based checklists, anecdotal notes, or peer feedback to track learning progress (Boakye & Ampiah, 2019). Such adaptations maintain the curriculum's emphasis on feedback while reducing teacher workload. Internationally, Black and Wiliam (2018) affirmed that the purpose of formative assessment is to provide actionable information to improve learning, not to create excessive paperwork. Timperley et al. (2020) reported that in New Zealand, teachers developed simplified observation rubrics to monitor competencies efficiently without undermining curriculum goals. Similarly, Ghanaian kindergarten teachers use manageable techniques like group evaluation and quick oral checks, which uphold the principles of assessment for learning within the constraints of large class sizes and limited instructional time.

In addition to instructional strategies, teachers frequently engage parents and communities as part of their coping and support mechanisms. Parental understanding of curriculum reform significantly affects its classroom success. Many Ghanaian parents, especially in rural communities, still perceive academic excellence through the lens of memorization

and written exercises, leading to skepticism about play-based learning (Asare, 2020). To counter this, teachers organize sensitization activities such as open days and demonstration lessons to show parents how play enhances learning and development (Boateng, 2024). These efforts help align parental expectations with the goals of the SBC and often result in community contributions of materials or volunteer support. Epstein (2018) argued that effective school-family partnerships enhance curriculum sustainability by promoting mutual understanding and resource sharing. Similarly, a study from Kenya found that when teachers involved parents in curriculum implementation through meetings and joint projects, resistance decreased and support increased (Waweru & Njoroge, 2022). For teachers in the Nkwanta South Municipality, parental and community engagement remains a powerful approach to bridging resource gaps and fostering a shared sense of responsibility for educational outcomes.

Finally, a cross-cutting theme in both Ghanaian and international literature is the role of teacher agency and resilience. Teachers are not mere implementers of policy but active interpreters who exercise professional judgment to adapt reforms to their realities (Addai-Mununkum & Setordzi, 2023). Despite structural limitations, teachers in Ghana have shown remarkable determination in integrating play-based, competency-oriented approaches into their classrooms through reflection and innovation. Fullan (2007) and Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) emphasized that sustainable reform depends on empowering teachers to act as change agents rather than passive recipients of directives. Nonetheless, scholars caution that individual agency has its limits. Akyeampong et al. (2020) highlighted that without systemic reforms such as smaller class sizes, consistent supply of TLMs, and regular supervision, teachers' adaptive strategies may remain fragmented and unsustainable. Therefore, while teacher resilience and creativity are

indispensable, they must be supported by institutional policies that transform isolated successes into long-term systemic improvement.

2.7 Summary of Literature Review

The literature discussed indicates that even though the Standards-Based Curriculum in Ghana is full of potential to enhance early childhood education, its adoption at the kindergarten stage is beset with bottlenecks. The limited knowledge of teachers about the curriculum, coupled with inadequate training, irregular support systems, and poor resource availability, are recurring impediments to effective uptake. These impediments are most characteristic of rural and disadvantaged areas like Kecheibi Circuit in the Nkwanta South Municipality. Support systems, if and when they are available, are most often fragmented, underfunded, or unevenly delivered, and most teachers must resort to peer networks or make-do. Meanwhile, infrastructural deficiencies, linguistic subtleties, and socio-cultural dynamics continue to ratchet up these issues. The literature is insistent on the need for context-sensitive teacher training, continuous professional development, localized materials for teaching, and a comprehensive policy response to integrate focus both on curriculum intention and classroom practice.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presented the research methodology of the study, which includes the research paradigm, research approach, research design, population, sample, sampling technique, data collection procedures, instruments, trustworthiness, data analysis procedure, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Paradigm

This study is grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, which focuses on understanding human experiences and social realities through qualitative inquiry. Interpretivism posits that reality is socially constructed, and knowledge is developed through interactions and interpretations of individuals within specific contexts (Creswell, 2014). Given that the study aimed to explore kindergarten teachers' understanding, support systems, challenges, and strategies related to implementing the SBC, the interpretivist paradigm is most suitable. According to Cohen et al. (2018), interpretivism emphasized subjectivity, meaning-making, and the understanding of human behavior from the participants' perspectives. This paradigm aligns with the phenomenological approach employed in the study, as it allowed for an in-depth exploration of teachers' lived experiences and how they make sense of the SBC. A key feature of interpretivism is the use of qualitative methods, such as interviews and observation, to capture rich, descriptive data (Babchuk, 2017). Unlike positivist paradigms, which rely on objective measurements and quantifiable data, interpretivism seeks to provide contextual and nuanced insights into the research problem.

The interpretivist paradigm ensured reflexivity, meaning that the researcher remained aware of their influence on the research process and interpretation of data (Denzin, 2018). Reflexivity is particularly crucial in qualitative research, as it enhances the credibility of

findings by acknowledging potential biases and adopting strategies to mitigate them. This study incorporated techniques such as member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation to ensure that the research findings remain trustworthy and reflective of participants' genuine experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This paradigm embraced the idea of context-dependency, recognizing that knowledge and experiences vary across different settings. Since the implementation of the SBC is influenced by local educational policies, teacher training programs, and institutional structures, an interpretivist perspective enables a deeper understanding of these contextual factors (Patton, 2015). This perspective is essential in generating findings that are not only insightful but also applicable to similar early childhood education settings.

3.2 Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative research approach, which is appropriate for exploring the lived experiences and interpretations of kindergarten teachers regarding the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC). Qualitative research is fundamentally exploratory and aims to understand how individuals construct meaning within their social environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given that this study sought to uncover the challenges, strategies, and understanding of teachers, qualitative approach provides the flexibility and depth required for a thorough investigation.

According to Denzin (2018), qualitative research is characterized by its emphasis on subjectivity, context, and meaning-making. Unlike quantitative approach that relies on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research involves gathering rich, descriptive narratives that allow for a deeper understanding of the research problem. This approach is particularly useful in educational research, where personal experiences and contextual factors play a significant role in shaping teachers' perceptions and practices (Leat et al., 2015).

Qualitative approach is also justified by its ability to provide holistic and detailed insights. Since kindergarten teachers' implementation of the SBC is influenced by various personal, institutional, and societal factors, qualitative study enables the researcher to explore these influences comprehensively. This aligns with Patton's (2015) argument that qualitative inquiry is best suited for studies aiming to capture the complexity of human behaviour and interactions.

Furthermore, qualitative approach supports the use of multiple data collection methods, including semi-structured interviews, observations, focus group discussions, and document analysis. These methods allow for triangulation of data sources, enhancing the credibility and reliability of the findings (Babchuk, 2017). Through direct engagement with participants, the researcher can probe deeper into issues, clarify responses, and uncover underlying themes that may not emerge in structured survey-based research.

Another advantage of qualitative research is its adaptability. The study approach allows for emergent themes and patterns to guide subsequent data collection and analysis. As Kekeya (2016) notes, qualitative research is iterative, meaning that data collection and analysis occur simultaneously, allowing the researcher to refine questions and explore new insights as they arise. The approach is particularly useful in studies where participants' voices and experiences need to be central to the findings. Since the study aims to highlight the challenges and perspectives of kindergarten teachers, qualitative methods ensured that their lived realities are captured authentically and in their own words (Cohen et al., 2018).

Qualitative research is underpinned by the belief that reality is socially constructed through human interactions, lived experiences, and the meanings individuals assign to them. This ontological stance makes it particularly suitable for studies that seek to understand complex social phenomena, such as how educators navigate, interpret, and implement educational reforms like the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC). Unlike quantitative approaches that

emphasize measurement and generalization, qualitative inquiry privileges depth, richness, and context, allowing researchers to explore issues in a holistic and situated manner (Pregoner, 2024).

In the context of this study, the focus on kindergarten teachers' personal and professional experiences necessitated the adoption of qualitative methods. Teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and practices are shaped by multiple intersecting factors, including institutional structures, availability of resources, professional development opportunities, and their own beliefs about teaching and learning (Abate et al., 2025; Fulmer et al., 2015). These realities cannot be fully captured through numerical data but require engagement with participants' narratives to reveal underlying meanings and insights. The researcher, therefore, engaged closely with participants, fostering open dialogue to gain a comprehensive understanding of their pedagogical practices, the challenges they face in implementing the SBC, and the support mechanisms available to them. This form of prolonged interaction not only built trust but also ensured that the participants could articulate their experiences in their own words. The iterative and reflexive nature of qualitative research further enabled me to adjust questions and probes based on emerging responses, ensuring that the data remained grounded in participants' lived realities. This approach facilitated the identification of recurring patterns and themes directly emerging from the participants' accounts rather than being imposed by preconceived categories. Such an inductive process is a hallmark of qualitative research, as it allows findings to reflect the authentic voices of the participants while highlighting contextual factors that influence their experiences (Lim, 2025).

3.3 Study Area

This study was conducted in Kecheibi Circuit within the Nkwanta South Municipality in the Oti Region of Ghana. The circuit is characterized by a mix of rural and semi-urban communities with several public basic schools. The Nkwanta South Municipality is in the

northeastern part of the Oti Region and shares boundaries with Nkwanta North District in the north, the Republic of Togo to the east, Kadjebi District to the south, and Krachi East Municipality to the west. Geographically, the municipality is bounded by longitudes $0^{\circ}10'$ East and $0^{\circ}45'$ East and latitudes $7^{\circ}30'$ North and $8^{\circ}45'$ North. Within the municipality, the research specifically focused on schools located in the Kecheibi Circuit, which falls under the municipal education directorate. The geography of the area influences the lifestyle of the people, their economic activities, and their educational decisions, for seasonal conditions are likely to affect farming and schoolwork endeavors too. Kecheibi serves as a central point for the surrounding small villages, and its location positions it as a prominent settlement for social and economic interaction. Connectivity to the area is provided in the form of feeder and trunk roads that link it to the municipal capital city of Nkwanta, as well as other surrounding areas. However, transportation is disrupted during the rainy season because roads become impassable. This has a wide impact on school attendance, the distribution of instructional materials, and the overall distribution of education. The settlement itself is spatially dispersed into clusters of residential zones located across various localities, hence contributing to administration and supervision problems in education.

The population structure of the Kecheibi circuit is predominantly rural, with agriculture being the backbone of the local economy. Individuals there mainly engage in subsistence farming, cultivating crops such as yams, maize, cassava, and groundnuts, which form the local food staples. The Nkwanta South Municipality, according to the 2021 Population and Housing Census conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service, is estimated to have a population of over 135,000 residents (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021), with a considerable majority being from Kecheibi. The circuit is multi-ethnic and consists of diverse groups like the Adele, Konkomba, Nawuri, Basari, and Ewe, among others. Such diversity is also

evident in the schools, where children use different mother languages. While diversity contributes to meaningful cultural exchanges, it also proves challenging to teachers who have to contend with diverse languages and cultures as they roll out the national curriculum.

The schooling context of Kecheibi circuit reflects the overall trends observed in rural education across Ghana. The circuit has several public basic schools, including 18 public kindergarten (K.G.) schools, that reflect the basic layout of early childhood education in the area. These schools are the point of entry into formal education for the majority of children and are instrumental in determining their educational trajectories. There are 22 trained kindergarten teachers serving in these schools as of 2024. All of them are using the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) that was developed by the NaCCA. Though they are willing to discharge professional obligations, teachers in Kecheibi circuit operate under challenging circumstances. The majority of the classrooms lack adequate furniture, are housed in rundown buildings, and remain overcrowded. Moreover, essential age-appropriate teaching and learning materials are scarce, and professional growth opportunities are lacking. These factors collectively impede the adequate provision of quality early childhood education.

Further inequalities exist among schools within the Kecheibi circuit, specifically between schools within semi-urban zones of the settlement and schools within inner rural enclaves. These schools closer to the municipal capital may receive periodic help in the form of training sessions or visits from district education officials. The teachers in the remote schools, on the other hand, work somewhat in isolation, relying heavily on personal initiative and classroom experience to implement the curriculum. These types of variations in access to resources and administrative advice have a significant influence on how the SBC is taught in different settings in the Kecheibi circuit.

The choice of the Kecheibi circuit as the research location was informed by several factors. The settlement is both rural and semi-urban schooling settings, presenting the potential to study the implementation of curriculum in various settings within a single community. Additionally, the relatively high number of teachers in the vicinity, with 22 trained kindergarten teachers spread across 18 schools, ensured the feasibility of accessing all target participants in the study. Third, the multilingual and multi-ethnic character of the community enriches the educational environment, allowing for exploration of how cultural and linguistic diversity can affect pedagogy in early childhood. These aspects combined rendered Kecheibi an ideal site for a study into the ways kindergarten teachers perceive, interpret, and implement the Standards-Based Curriculum in real classroom conditions.

3.4 Research Design

This research employed exploratory case study design, with the focus being on a bounded system, the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers in public basic schools in the Kecheibi circuit of the Nkwanta South Municipality, Oti Region, Ghana. According to Yin (2014), case study design facilitates an in-depth and comprehensive investigation of a contemporary phenomenon in its natural context, particularly when there are no definite boundaries between the phenomenon and the context. In this instance, the phenomenon studied is the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) by teachers of early childhood in a specific geographical, cultural, and educational setting. The use of case study design was considered appropriate because the study aimed to explore the complex and context-specific variables influencing the interpretation and operationalization of the SBC by kindergarten teachers. These variables span from geographical location and availability of resources to training of teachers, cultural and linguistic diversity, community support, and infrastructural conditions, all of which are firmly embedded in the real-life context of the Kecheibi circuit. By focusing on a single well-defined case, I was able to

make an in-depth, descriptive, and interpretive examination of the issues confronting early childhood education in this setting. In particular, the case study method gave the liberty to use multiple sources of data in order to triangulate findings and build up a composite picture of the research problem. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which provided the teachers with an opportunity to share their personal and professional experiences with the SBC, and classroom observations, which provided the researcher with the potential to explore how the curriculum was translated into practice in actual teaching contexts. These additional approaches included in data gathering unveiled the dynamics of teacher practice, providing constraints and adaptations that could not be accounted for by other study designs, such as surveys or experimental designs.

3.5 Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised kindergarten teachers who teach in public primary schools in the Kecheibi circuit of the Nkwanta South Municipality of the Oti Region of Ghana. One of the big education zones in the municipality is Kecheibi, and it has many early childhood learners. According to the current statistics released by the Nkwanta South Municipal Education Directorate (2024), 18 public kindergarten (K.G.) schools are operational in the Kecheibi area and are taught by 22 kindergarten teachers who have received professional training. These are all teaching teachers who are directly involved in the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC), an education reform introduced by the Ghana Education Service (GES) to improve learning outcomes through competency-based teaching and learner-centered pedagogies at all levels of basic education.

The choice of working with this specific population was informed by contextual relevance as well as logistical ease of working in Kecheibi. The limited population of 22 kindergarten teachers forms a whole and manageable population, and therefore, it was feasible for the

researcher to include all the experienced and qualified kindergarten teachers in the area. By doing this, the study avoided the limitations that usually accompany selective sampling and, in the process, ensured that the voices gathered are representative and indicative of the whole set of classroom realities in the area. This census-style inclusion approach not only contributes to the strength of the validity of the findings but also enhances the depth of understanding of the manner in which the SBC is realized across the Kecheibi educational landscape.

The Kecheibi circuit was specifically selected as the research locality due to its peculiar mixture of rural and semi-urban characteristics, which provide fertile ground for examining divergences in education delivery. The community itself is a microcosm of the broader challenges to early childhood education in Ghana, particularly in less urban areas. These are not limited to but are among: inadequate infrastructure, limited access to continuous professional development, low levels of age-appropriate teaching and learning materials, and linguistic and cultural diversity of learners. These are elements that have been found to influence the efficacy and faithfulness with which new curricula like the SBC are being translated and implemented in the classroom. Kindergarten teachers in this population have varying professional profiles in terms of years of teaching experience, exposure to in-service training, and pedagogical competencies. This diversity enhanced the research as it allowed for multi-dimensional insights to be brought to the implementation of the SBC, and more particularly, teachers' adaptive responses as they navigate both systemic and contextualized challenges. Their lived experiences as individuals placed them in a good position to provide rich, real, and contextually specific information to policy, curriculum development, and teacher support systems

3.6 Sample Size

The 15 KG teachers were drawn from 18 basic schools within the Kecheibi Circuit in the Nkwanta South Municipality. Specifically, Odumase Basic A (1 teacher), Odumase Basic B (1 teacher), Basare Akura Basic (1 teacher), Ashiabre Basic A (1 teacher), Ashiabre Basic B (1 teacher), Kecheibi M/A Basic (1 teacher), Kecheibi R/C Basic (1 teacher), Krachi Akura Basic (1 teacher), Panku Akura Primary (1 teacher), Alokpatsa Basic (1 teacher), Kofi-Akura Primary (1 teacher), Kpanja Akura Primary (1 teacher), Waja Akura Primary (1 teacher), Charti Primary (1 teacher), and Tutukpene Basic (1 teacher). In total, this yielded 15 participants. It should be noted that although Odumase, Ashiabre, and Kecheibi each have two basic schools, only one teacher was purposively selected from each community to avoid overrepresentation. From the rest of the schools, one KG teacher each was chosen, culminating in a total sample size of 15. The sample size for this study comprised fifteen (15) kindergarten teachers selected from public kindergarten schools within the Kecheibi Circuit in the Nkwanta South Municipality. The selection of this sample size was influenced by the focus of the study, which sought to explore kindergarten teachers' implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum. Since the study aimed to examine teachers' understanding of the curriculum, the support systems available to them, the challenges they face, and the strategies they adopt to address these challenges, it was important to select participants who are directly involved in the implementation of the curriculum at the kindergarten level.

The sample size of fifteen participants was considered appropriate because the study adopted a qualitative approach that emphasizes obtaining rich and detailed information from participants who have relevant knowledge and experience regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In qualitative research, the emphasis is placed on depth of information rather than the size of the sample (Patton, 2015). Furthermore,

participants were selected purposively to ensure that only teachers actively implementing the Standards-Based Curriculum were included in the study.

Additionally, the selected sample size was considered adequate to achieve data saturation, which occurs when no new themes or significant information emerge from participants' responses (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). The number of participants was also manageable for conducting in-depth data collection and analysis while ensuring that the research objectives of the study were effectively addressed.

3.7 Sampling Technique

This study adopted a criterion-based purposive sampling technique to select the participants. This non-probability sampling method was deemed appropriate because it allowed the researcher to intentionally include only kindergarten teachers who possessed relevant experience in implementing the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC). In qualitative research, purposive sampling is widely recognized as a suitable strategy when the aim is to gain deep and meaningful insights from individuals who are well-informed about the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2015). It enables the researcher to deliberately target individuals who can provide rich and detailed accounts, rather than selecting participants randomly.

In the context of this study, purposive sampling was instrumental in identifying teachers with substantial experience at the kindergarten level, particularly those who had taught both before and after the introduction of the SBC. This approach ensured that participants could reflect on the changes and continuities in their teaching practices over time, thereby enriching the study with informed and comparative insights. To guide the selection process, specific inclusion criteria were developed to ensure that participants were well-positioned to speak on the topic.

The inclusion criteria were as follows: First, participants were required to have a minimum of ten (10) years of teaching experience at the kindergarten level. Second, they must have had at least five (5) years of teaching experience prior to the rollout of the SBC to enable them to make informed comparisons between the former and current curriculum. Third, participants were selected from both rural and urban areas within the Kecheibi circuit in the Nkwanta South Municipality. This was done to ensure diversity in perspective, reflecting the varied contextual realities and challenges faced in different school settings.

3.8 Data Collection Instruments

This study employed semi-structured interviews and observation to collect data. These instruments were selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of kindergarten teachers' implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) in Nkwanta South Municipality. The use of multiple data collection methods allows for triangulation, enhancing the credibility and depth of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.8.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection instrument. This approach is particularly suitable for qualitative research as it allows for flexibility in questioning while ensuring that all key themes related to the study's objectives are addressed (Babchuk, 2017). Unlike structured interviews, semi-structured interviews provide the opportunity for a deeper exploration of participants' responses, enabling the researcher to probe further based on the interviewees' perspectives (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). This method is essential for understanding how the kindergarten teachers understand the SBC, the challenges they encounter in its implementation, and their self-assessed ability to apply its principles in the classroom. Through open-ended questions, teachers were encouraged to share their understanding of the SBC, their initial reactions to its introduction, and how they have adapted their instructional methods to align with its requirements. These

responses directly addressed the research question on teachers' perceptions of the SBC. Additionally, by allowing teachers to express their views on external influences such as school leadership, parental involvement, and professional training, the interviews provided valuable insights into the social factors affecting the implementation of the curriculum (Chand, 2025). The interview guide was structured to gather information on teachers' backgrounds, understanding of the SBC, classroom practices, challenges faced, support systems available, and strategies for overcoming challenges. It included questions on participants' demographic and professional characteristics, knowledge of the curriculum's goals and core competencies, classroom implementation practices, and assessment methods. The guide also explored challenges such as limited resources, large class sizes, language barriers, and institutional constraints, as well as the support provided by supervisors, peers, and the Ghana Education Service. Participants were further asked about strategies they use to address these challenges and improve curriculum implementation. The semi-structured interview guide was suitable for this study because it allowed the researcher to collect comprehensive data while remaining flexible to capture participants' unique perspectives. Interviews lasted approximately 30–45 minutes, and responses were recorded with participants' consent to ensure accuracy and reliability in data collection.

3.8.2 Observation

Observation served as a key data collection instrument in this qualitative study. It enabled the researcher to gather first-hand, non-verbal, and contextual information on how kindergarten teachers implemented the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) within their classroom environments in Kecheibi Circuit in the Nkwanta South Municipality. Observation, as a method, involved the systematic recording of classroom activities, teaching behaviors, and instructional practices in their natural settings (Cohen et al., 2018).

The type of observation employed was non-participant structured observation, where the researcher observed teaching and learning activities without taking part in the instructional process. This approach was chosen to minimize the potential for bias and to maintain objectivity in documenting the teachers' actual classroom practices (Babchuk, 2017). An observation checklist, developed in line with the key components of the SBC, guided the process. The checklist focused on indicators such as the integration of core competencies, use of teaching and learning materials, instructional strategies, assessment practices, and teacher-learner interactions.

Observation was particularly useful in enhancing the credibility of the study's findings through data triangulation, as it complemented data obtained through semi-structured interviews. This approach allowed the researcher to compare reported practices with observed behaviors, thereby strengthening the trustworthiness of the results (Flick, 2018). During each observation session, the researcher carefully monitored classroom activities and recorded responses by ticking the appropriate items on the checklist. Where necessary, brief notes were added to provide further clarification on observed practices. The use of the checklist helped to maintain consistency across observations and ensured that relevant aspects of teaching and learning were captured for analysis.

3.9 Trustworthiness of the Study

Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research is essential to establishing the credibility, reliability, and overall rigor of the study (Ahmed, 2024). Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four key criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as the fundamental measures of trustworthiness in qualitative research. These criteria serve as qualitative equivalents to the positivist concepts of validity and reliability, ensuring that the research findings accurately capture participants' realities while maintaining methodological rigor. This study incorporated these four dimensions to enhance the

integrity of the findings regarding kindergarten teachers' implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) in the Nkwanta South Municipality.

3.9.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the research findings accurately represent participants' experiences and perspectives. To enhance credibility, this study employed triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement (Patton, 2014). This approach mitigates potential biases and strengthens the validity of the study.

Member checking was another credibility-enhancing technique used in this study. After data analysis, preliminary findings were shared with participants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations and to allow them to clarify or elaborate on their responses (Birt et al., 2016). This process ensured that the researcher's interpretations aligned with the participants' intended meanings, thereby enhancing the authenticity of the results. Prolonged engagement in the research setting fostered trust between the researcher and participants, which enabled richer data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By spending sufficient time in the field, the researcher developed a deeper understanding of the study context and gathered diverse insights. Through these strategies, the study ensured that its findings were credible and truly reflected the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers in the municipality.

3.9.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the study's findings can be applied to other contexts (Babchuk, 2017). While qualitative research does not seek statistical generalizability, it aims to provide detailed contextual descriptions that allow others to determine the applicability of the findings to their own settings (Tracy, 2024). This study ensured transferability by providing thick descriptions of the research context, including detailed accounts of the Nkwanta South Municipality's early childhood education system,

participants' backgrounds, and specific challenges associated with the implementation of the SBC. Thick description allows readers and future researchers to assess the extent to which the findings align with their own educational settings (Shenton, 2004). By documenting specific details of the research environment and the socio-cultural context, this study enhanced the likelihood that its insights would be meaningful and applicable to similar educational contexts in Ghana and beyond.

3.9.3 Dependability

Dependability concerns the consistency and stability of the research process over time (Nowell et al., 2017). To enhance dependability, this study employed an audit trail, systematically documenting research decisions, methodological changes, and data analysis procedures. The audit trail provided transparency regarding how data were collected, coded, and interpreted, allowing future researchers to trace the study's methodological steps and assess its reliability.

Additionally, a reflexive journal was maintained throughout the research process. This journal documented the researcher's reflections, observations, and justifications for methodological choices, serving as a tool for self-awareness and bias minimization (Berger, 2015). Peer debriefing was also utilized to enhance dependability. Fellow researchers or experts in early childhood education reviewed the research process and findings, providing critical feedback to ensure methodological rigor and reduce potential biases (Shenton, 2004). These strategies collectively ensured that the study's procedures were systematic, well-documented, and replicable, reinforcing the dependability of the findings.

3.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which research findings are shaped by participants' experiences rather than researcher bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, confirmability was ensured through multiple strategies, including triangulation, reflexivity,

and external audits (Creswell, 2017). Triangulation enhances confirmability by verifying findings across multiple data sources, ensuring that interpretations are objective and well-supported by evidence. A reflexive approach was also adopted, wherein the researcher continuously examined their own biases, assumptions, and potential influences on data collection and analysis (Berger, 2015). Maintaining a reflexive journal ensured that the researcher remained aware of potential biases and strived for impartiality in data interpretation. Additionally, an external auditor reviewed the research process to confirm that the findings are derived from the data rather than subjective interpretations (Nowell et al., 2017).

3.10 Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, the necessary ethical approvals were obtained to ensure compliance with research protocols. Ethical clearance was sought from the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Head of the Early Childhood Education Department, University of Education, Winneba, as part of institutional requirements. Additionally, permission was requested and secured from the Nkwanta South Municipal Education Directorate to conduct the study in public kindergarten schools within the Kecheibi Circuit. This approval granted access to selected schools and participants.

This study employed multiple qualitative data collection techniques to gather comprehensive insights. These methods included semi-structured interviews and classroom observations to enable data triangulation.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Individual interviews were conducted with the selected kindergarten teachers to explore their understanding, challenges, support systems, and strategies in implementing the Standards-Based Curriculum. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and was

conducted in a quiet and convenient location. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and later transcribed for analysis.

Observation

In this study, observation was used as another data collection procedure to gather naturalistic and contextual data on how the kindergarten teachers implemented the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) in their classrooms. The observation was conducted in a non-participant and structured manner, which allowed the researcher to watch and record events as they unfolded in the teaching and learning environment without influencing or interfering with the instructional processes (Babchuk, 2017).

The researcher began the observation process by first obtaining permission from school heads and informed consent from the selected kindergarten teachers. The purpose of the observation was clearly explained to the participants, emphasizing that the data collected were for academic purposes only and that their confidentiality and anonymity would be strictly maintained. Participants were also informed that the observation was not for performance appraisal or official assessment.

A structured observation checklist was developed before the fieldwork and used consistently throughout the study. The checklist was based on key indicators derived from the principles and expectations outlined in the SBC framework provided by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA). These indicators included the extent to which teachers applied learner-centered strategies, integrated core competencies (such as collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking), used age-appropriate teaching and learning materials, and employed formative assessment practices.

Observation sessions were scheduled at times convenient for both the teachers and the researcher, ensuring minimal disruption to the school's normal timetable. Each participant was observed during at least one full lesson session lasting between 40 to 60 minutes.

During the sessions, the researcher sat in a discreet position within the classroom to minimize any influence on the teacher's behavior or the classroom atmosphere. Field notes were taken alongside the use of the checklist to capture both observable actions and contextual details, such as teacher-learner interaction, classroom layout, and learner engagement.

Data obtained through observation were later reviewed and coded thematically in relation to the research objectives. The researcher triangulated this data with findings from semi-structured interviews to enhance the credibility and validity of the study (Flick, 2018). This triangulation helped to identify patterns, similarities, and discrepancies between what the teachers reported during interviews and what was actually observed in practice.

3.11 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data, following the six-step approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method allowed for the identification of recurring patterns and themes in relation to the research questions. The researcher thoroughly read and re-read the transcripts to gain an in-depth understanding of the content. Initial thoughts and observations were documented in a reflective journal to guide the coding process. Data were systematically coded using an open coding technique to identify key concepts, patterns, and recurring ideas. Both deductive coding (guided by existing literature and research objectives) and inductive coding (allowing new insights to emerge from the data) were applied. Codes were grouped into broader categories and sub-themes based on their relevance to the study's objectives. A thematic map was developed to visualize relationships among different themes. The initial themes were reviewed against the raw data to ensure coherence and consistency. The overlapping themes were merged, whereas those lacking substantial evidence were restructured. Final themes were clearly defined, ensuring they accurately captured the essence of the participants' perspectives. The

themes were linked to theoretical concepts and research questions to provide meaningful interpretations. The findings were presented with supporting quotes from participants to illustrate key points. A narrative approach was used to describe the themes, emphasizing their implications for the study's objectives.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are crucial in ensuring that research is conducted responsibly, protecting the rights, dignity, and well-being of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study adhered to ethical research principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw. Before the commencement of this study, ethical approval was obtained from the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) Institutional Review Board (IRB) / Ethics Committee and an introductory letter from the Department of Early Childhood Education. Permission was also sought from the Nkwanta South Municipal Education Directorate to collect data from the schools and the participating schools before data collection began.

Before data collection, all participants received detailed information about the study's purpose, objectives, procedures, and potential risks and benefits. Participants were required to sign written informed consent, ensuring their voluntary agreement to partake in the study (Cohen et al., 2018). The informed consent process also clarified that participants had the right to decline or withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the research process. Participants' identities were not disclosed, and pseudonyms were used in transcripts and reports to protect their privacy. Furthermore, all recorded data, including interview transcripts and field notes, were securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. In compliance with data protection protocols, digital files were password-protected, and hard copies of documents were stored in a locked cabinet (Bryman, 2016).

Participation in this study was entirely voluntary. No participant was coerced or pressured into participating. Additionally, participants had the right to withdraw at any stage of the study without explanation. This ensured that their autonomy and personal agency were respected (Denzin, 2018).



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter dealt with the data analysis and discussion of results. The chapter begins with a presentation of the demographic characteristics (bio-data) of the participants to provide context about their professional and personal backgrounds. This is followed by thematic presentations of the main data supported with verbatim excerpts from the interviews and observational field notes. The final section offers a discussion of the observation data in relation to the interview results.

4.1 Bio-Data of Participants

Table 4.1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the 15 kindergarten teachers who took part in the study.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	11	73.3%
	Male	4	26.7%
Age Range (years)	20–29	3	20.0%
	30–39	7	46.7%
	40 and above	5	33.3%
Professional Qualification	Diploma in Basic Education	9	60.0%
	Bachelor's Degree	6	40.0%
Years of Teaching Experience	1–5 years	4	26.7%
	6–10 years	6	40.0%
	Above 10 years	5	33.3%

The bio-data in Table 1 offers the necessary background to the participants' experiences and views. From the data, the teachers were predominantly female 11 (73.3%), while the males only accounted for 4 (26.7%). This is in line with the national pattern, as gendered perceptions of caregiving and nurturing characterize the early childhood education sector of Ghana (Agbenyega & Deku, 2020). Age-wise distribution, the largest proportion of the teachers, 7 (46.7%), fell in the age category of 30-39 years, followed by 5 (33.3%) aged more than 40, and 20% in the age group 20-29 years. This reflects a comparatively young and dynamic teaching pool, which is favorable for the implementation of innovative teaching practices such as the SBC. But novice teachers may also require more formalized mentoring and professional assistance to develop confidence and skill in applying new pedagogical methods (Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2017).

Qualification-wise, 60% of the participants possessed Diplomas in Basic Education, and 40% possessed Bachelor's degrees. Although all the participants possessed the fundamental professional credentials to work as teachers at the kindergarten level, the lower percentage of degree holders suggests potential loopholes in greater pedagogical and curriculum knowledge. Evidence also suggests that more qualified teachers have a better probability of embracing learner-centered pedagogies and adapting to curriculum innovations (Osei-Poku & Agbenyega, 2021). Concerning teaching experience, most of the respondents had substantial professional exposure, as 6 (40%) taught for 6–10 years, 5 (33.3%) taught for over 10 years, and 4 (26.7%) taught for 1–5 years. Experienced teachers may be better at situating curriculum demands within context and managing classroom challenges (Leite et al. 2018). Experience alone, though, will not ensure effective implementation of SBC without targeted training in its student-centered philosophy and practice.

4.2. Analysis of the Main Data

4.2.1 Research Question One: How do kindergarten teachers understand the key principles and components of the Standards-Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality?

This research question sought to examine kindergarten teachers' level of understanding of the key principles, concepts, and components of the Standards-Based Curriculum. It aimed to explore how teachers interpret the curriculum's learner-centred and competency-based orientation and how this understanding influences their classroom practices

The following themes and responses emerged to answer this first research question.

Theme One: Understanding of the Core Principles of the Standards-Based Curriculum

The following are the responses from participants;

For me, the philosophy is to prepare the child for lifelong learning through play and activity, and that is different from how we used to do it. Before, we just drilled children on letters and numbers, but now I see that play and activity make them more interested in learning. It prepares them to be curious and to enjoy learning, which I believe is the foundation for their future education. (P, 2)

They told us it is to make the children creative and problem solvers, but sometimes I only follow the scheme of work without thinking deeply about those goals. I know I should link the lessons to real-life problem-solving, but when I am under pressure, I just cover the topics as they appear in the scheme. In that sense, the real intention of creativity sometimes gets lost. (P, 4)

The SBC encourages critical thinking and values, but some of us need more guidance to really understand how to bring that out in our lessons. It sounds good in theory, but practically, how do I encourage critical thinking in a class of four- and five-year-olds? I try to ask them questions, but I am not always sure if I am doing it the right way. (P, 6)

Yes, I know it is competency-based, but I think many teachers are still interpreting it in the traditional way of completing topics. For example, we feel pressured to finish all the strands and sub-strands in the scheme, rather than focusing on whether the children have actually developed the competencies. So in the end, it becomes more about coverage than mastery. (P, 10)

The responses from the participants demonstrate a clear understanding of the philosophy behind the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC), particularly its focus on developing

children's competencies rather than relying on rote memorization. The teachers recognized that the SBC has been designed to foster thinking, problem-solving, creativity, communication, and life skills, representing a major shift from the traditional focus on drilling letters and numbers. This awareness reflects that the training the teachers received has, at least conceptually, influenced how they perceive their role in early childhood education. Many acknowledged that the curriculum seeks to cultivate lifelong learners who are curious, confident, and prepared to navigate real-life situations.

At the same time, the data highlight the tension between curriculum ideals and classroom realities. The teachers admitted that despite knowing the child-centered philosophy, they often revert to lecture-style teaching because it feels easier, especially under time pressure or when resources are inadequate. This shows that while they value child-led exploration and play, practical barriers such as workload, insufficient teaching/learning resources, and large class sizes push them back toward familiar, teacher-dominated methods. The reliance on the scheme of work for coverage, rather than deeper competency-building, also reflects the ongoing pull of traditional approaches, where completing topics is prioritized over mastery of skills.

Another theme that emerged was the challenge of implementing inclusion and creativity in overcrowded classrooms. The teachers noted that while the SBC emphasizes inclusivity and equal attention for every child, the reality of managing many learners at once makes it difficult to provide individualized support. Similarly, while the curriculum encourages creativity and problem-solving, the teachers admitted that, under pressure, they sometimes reduce lessons to ticking boxes in the scheme of work, leading to a loss of the curriculum's deeper goals. This reveals that systemic constraints, such as class size and limited resources, undermine the ideals of inclusivity and creative pedagogy.

The responses also point to uncertainty in translating theory into practice. The teachers acknowledged that while they understand the goals of critical thinking and value education in theory, they need more guidance on how to apply these concepts with very young children. For example, asking questions to promote critical thinking is seen as a useful strategy, but some of the teachers are unsure whether their methods are truly effective. This signals a need for continuous professional development, mentoring, and the provision of concrete classroom strategies that align with curriculum intentions.

Despite these challenges, the data also show evidence of positive shifts in teacher identity and practice. Some of the teachers reported that they now see themselves more as facilitators of learning rather than as instructors dictating knowledge. They recognize that this new role requires flexibility, creativity, and a willingness to experiment with new methods. While acknowledging that it is not easy, these teachers expressed that the change has improved their engagement with learners and helped them align better with the child-centred vision of the SBC.

Theme Two: Familiarity with Curriculum Content and Learning Areas

Here are responses from the participants;

The documents talk about literacy, numeracy, creativity, and all that, but sometimes I find it hard to connect them during one lesson. I understand that the curriculum wants us to integrate these areas so that learners can see the link between subjects, but when I am in the classroom, it feels overwhelming. For instance, trying to combine a literacy activity with a numeracy task while also bringing in creativity sometimes leaves me confused on which skill to emphasize. At the end, I worry that the pupils are not benefiting fully because I am unable to balance everything within the short lesson time. (P, 1)

I am familiar with the learning areas, but the challenge is that the content is too broad and sometimes difficult to cover within the time. Each strand has so many indicators, and in one term alone, we are expected to complete all of them. I often feel torn between rushing through just to tick the boxes and slowing down so the children can really understand. Unfortunately, because of the pressure of the scheme, I end up rushing, and I feel guilty because some pupils are left behind. (P, 4)

The curriculum emphasizes integration, but honestly, I just separate the subjects when planning, because that feels easier. When I try to integrate, I get lost in how to connect the standards properly, and sometimes the activities don't match well. For example, linking a numeracy standard with a creative arts task sounds good on paper, but when I attempt it, the learners don't seem to follow. So, for the sake of clarity, I just plan them as separate subjects even though I know that is not the best practice. (P, 5)

I understand the indicators and standards, but sometimes I am not sure if I am interpreting them correctly. The wording of some indicators is not straightforward, so I find myself second-guessing whether I am meeting the expectations. There are times I wish someone would explain them practically with examples of classroom activities, because the documents alone are not enough. I often fear that what I think is correct may actually not be what the curriculum requires. (P, 7)

When it comes to environmental studies and creative arts, I am confident, but for numeracy, I struggle with aligning the activities with the standards. I find numeracy more technical, and sometimes the examples given in the curriculum are not practical for the children I teach. While I can easily design activities in creative arts or environmental studies, in numeracy, I tend to depend more on the textbook, which limits my creativity. This makes me feel less effective in delivering numeracy lessons compared to the other areas. (P, 11)

Yes, I know the learning areas, but there are times I just rely on textbooks rather than the curriculum documents. The textbooks provide ready-made exercises and lesson outlines, which save me time compared to trying to interpret the curriculum by myself. I know the curriculum is supposed to guide me, but when I am pressed for time or unsure about how to approach an indicator, I fall back on the textbooks. This reliance makes me feel like I am not fully implementing the curriculum as expected. (P, 15)

The responses from the teachers reveal significant challenges in the implementation of the competency-based curriculum, even though they acknowledge its richness and the good intentions behind it. The teachers recognized that the curriculum emphasizes integration across literacy, numeracy, creativity, and other domains, but in practice, they find this expectation overwhelming. Many of them expressed that trying to connect different learning areas within a single lesson creates confusion about which skills to prioritize, often leaving them uncertain as to whether pupils benefit fully. As a result, some of the teachers admitted that they separate subjects during planning, despite knowing that this contradicts the philosophy of integration. This highlights a clear gap between curriculum design and

teacher readiness, where the idea of integration remains theoretical rather than practical in everyday classroom work.

Another recurring concern is the issue of content overload and the limited time available to cover it. The teachers noted that each strand of the curriculum has several indicators that must be completed within a short time, which creates pressure to rush through lessons rather than allow children to learn at their own pace. The teachers feel torn between slowing down to ensure understanding and moving quickly to satisfy curriculum demands, with the latter often winning out. This has the effect of leaving some pupils behind and generates feelings of guilt among teachers who are aware that the spirit of the curriculum, ensuring mastery and inclusion, is compromised by the reality of time pressure and broad content expectations.

The data also show that the teachers experience uncertainty in interpreting indicators and performance standards. While they understand the framework of the curriculum, many are not confident that they are meeting its expectations. The wording of some of the indicators is described as unclear, leading to second-guessing and anxiety about whether classroom activities actually align with curriculum goals. Teachers expressed a desire for more practical explanations, demonstrations, and examples to make the standards easier to apply. This indicates that while curriculum documents are necessary, they are insufficient on their own without continuous training and support that bridges theory and practice.

Confidence levels also vary across subject areas. Some of the teachers feel comfortable handling creative arts and environmental studies, but reported having challenges in teaching numeracy. Numeracy is perceived as more technical, with curriculum examples that are sometimes impractical for learners' contexts. This lack of clarity forces the teachers to rely heavily on textbooks, which they see as offering ready-made lessons and exercises. Although this reliance saves time and reduces uncertainty, it limits teachers' creativity and

undermines the competency-based approach that seeks to move away from rote learning. The reliance on textbooks further suggests that the teachers often fall back on old methods when faced with pressure or a lack of confidence in curriculum interpretation.

Another significant challenge is the application of performance standards. The teachers acknowledged that while they were introduced to these standards during training, the training was largely theoretical and lacked sufficient hands-on practice. Consequently, in the classroom, many of the teachers resort to using personal judgment when assessing pupils rather than relying on performance standards. This weakens the assessment component of the curriculum, which is supposed to be competency-based and formative in nature. The limited exposure to practical application during training reflects a wider issue where the teachers are expected to implement reforms without adequate preparation.

Despite these struggles, the teachers appreciate the richness of the curriculum and the potential benefits it offers to learners. They agree that the curriculum provides relevant ideas and themes that could transform teaching and learning if implemented effectively. However, the lack of mastery in integrating subjects, the pressure of content overload, and the absence of continuous professional support all contribute to weak implementation. The teachers believe that unless more hands-on training, mentoring, and ongoing support are provided, many would continue to fall back on traditional approaches rather than embrace the intended changes.

Theme Three: Teachers' Understanding of Pedagogies and Teaching Strategies

Participants responded that;

They told us to use play-based approaches, so I now use songs, rhymes, and role play to teach concepts. For example, when teaching numbers, I sometimes use clapping games or songs, and the children get excited. However, it takes creativity and preparation, which can be demanding when you have a heavy workload. (P, 5)

The child-centered method makes the class lively, but sometimes I feel it takes more time than just lecturing. The children are more engaged, and they understand

better, but honestly, when you are pressured to finish the scheme of work, it feels like the interactive approach slows you down. (P, 6)

I try group activities, but with too many children in the class, it becomes difficult to manage. Some children are very active and dominate the group, while the quiet ones get left out. At times, I spend more time controlling behavior than actually facilitating learning. (P, 8)

Yes, I use storytelling and games because that is how the curriculum wants us to engage the children. I have noticed that when I tell a story with moral lessons, the children remember and even retell it to their friends. It makes learning meaningful, but sometimes it is hard to think of relevant stories for every topic.” (P, 10)

“Play-based learning is good, but some parents think the children are only playing and not learning. They ask questions like, ‘Why are they just singing and dancing (P, 12)

The responses highlight teachers’ experiences in implementing play-based and child-centered teaching approaches as outlined by the curriculum. Overall, the teachers recognize that these strategies engage learners actively, improve understanding, and make lessons memorable. For instance, using songs, rhymes, clapping games, role play, and storytelling makes learning interactive and meaningful. Children not only participate enthusiastically but are also able to recall and retell concepts taught through such methods. This shows that the teachers appreciate the pedagogical value of play-based learning in enhancing comprehension and retention.

However, the responses also reveal significant challenges that affect the consistent use of these approaches. One major concern is the demanding nature of preparation. The teachers noted that using play-based or interactive methods requires creativity, planning, and extra time, which becomes overwhelming when combined with a heavy workload and pressure to complete the scheme of work. As a result, some of the teachers feel that interactive methods slow them down compared to traditional lecturing, especially when curriculum demands are extensive and time is limited. This reflects a tension between the curriculum’s emphasis on learner engagement and the realities of classroom workload.

Classroom management also emerges as a recurring challenge. The teachers, attempting group activities, explained that large class sizes make it difficult to ensure equal participation. In such settings, more active pupils tend to dominate, while quieter ones are sidelined, forcing the teacher to spend more time managing behavior than facilitating meaningful learning. This suggests that while group and play-based methods are beneficial in principle, they require smaller class sizes or additional support to be effective.

Another challenge concerns the availability of relevant materials and ideas. The teachers acknowledged that storytelling and games are powerful in making learning meaningful, yet they also admitted to struggling with generating suitable stories for every topic. This shows that while the teachers are willing to use interactive approaches, they lack sufficient resource banks, examples, or support materials that could ease the burden of preparation.

Theme Four: Teachers' Understanding of Formative and Summative Assessment Methods within the SBC Framework

In response, the participants stated that;

I mostly use observation and checklists because that's what we were trained to do under SBC. It is the easiest method to apply since I can watch the children during activities and quickly note down what they are able to do. However, sometimes it feels limited because observation alone doesn't capture everything the child knows or understands. (P, 4)

We use portfolios to track children's work, but sometimes it is too much paperwork to keep up with. Collecting, arranging, and keeping samples of every child's work is time-consuming, especially when you have a large class. At times, I feel overwhelmed and end up skipping some entries just to reduce the workload. (P, 8)

I know summative assessment is not encouraged at this stage, but occasionally, I give small tests to see what the children have learned. Sometimes I just want to be sure if they can recall certain concepts, and testing seems like the quickest way to find out. I still struggle to balance this with the continuous approach the curriculum emphasizes. (P, 9)

I understand formative assessment means checking every day, but with a large class, it is hard to observe every child. There are times I focus on a few active children while the quiet ones go unnoticed. This makes me feel guilty because I know every child deserves attention, but practically, it is difficult to manage. (P, 10)

We use questioning and discussions as part of assessment, but not all children participate actively. Some children are shy, others are not confident in expressing themselves, and a few tend to dominate the discussions. As a teacher, I sometimes feel the responses I get do not reflect the full class performance. (P, 14)

The responses show that the teachers are making efforts to implement the assessment approaches promoted under the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC), particularly observation, checklists, portfolios, and questioning. Many of them recognize the value of these continuous and formative strategies in capturing children's progress holistically. For instance, the teachers find observation convenient and practical since it allows them to monitor learners during activities and record immediate achievements. Similarly, they view the shift from grading to guiding learning as positive, noting that focusing on children's step-by-step improvement encourages confidence and growth rather than discouragement through low scores. This reflects a clear awareness among teachers that assessment is no longer just about measuring outcomes but also about supporting the learning process. Despite this awareness, the data highlight significant challenges in practice. The teachers often feel that observation and checklists, though useful, are limited in capturing the full extent of children's knowledge and understanding. Portfolios, while valuable in tracking progress over time, are seen as burdensome due to the extensive paperwork involved. Managing, collecting, and organizing portfolios for large classes adds to workload stress, leading some of the teachers to skip entries or adopt shortcuts. These responses suggest that although the curriculum emphasizes multiple methods of assessment, the practicality of maintaining them consistently in overcrowded classrooms remains a major obstacle. Another key issue is the difficulty of managing formative assessment in large classes. The teachers admit that they sometimes focus more on active children, while quieter pupils are overlooked during observation and questioning. Similarly, discussions and oral questioning do not always reflect the performance of the entire class, as shy or less confident learners

may remain silent while a few dominate. This highlights the tension between the ideal of inclusive assessment and the reality of class size and pupil diversity. The teachers' feelings of guilt at leaving some children unnoticed underscore their awareness of the gaps but also their limited capacity to address them without structural support.

The responses also reveal uncertainty and confusion about assessment practices. Some of the teachers acknowledged giving small tests or quizzes, even though they know summative assessment is not encouraged at the kindergarten level. This shows a tendency to fall back on familiar, traditional practices when formative strategies feel insufficient. Moreover, the teachers admitted to being unsure about the distinction between formative and summative assessment, particularly when it comes to short quizzes or spot checks. This confusion affects how they interpret and report children's progress, reflecting gaps in their training and ongoing professional development.

A recurring theme across the data is the need for more systematic training and support. The teachers expressed that while they are trying to apply different assessment methods, the lack of consistent guidance makes their efforts feel experimental and inconsistent. They called for more workshops and practical demonstrations that would give them confidence in using the various tools effectively. This suggests that although the teachers are willing to adopt continuous assessment, they lack the sustained professional learning opportunities that would help them overcome uncertainty and standardize their practices.

Theme Five: Teachers' Ability to Interpret and Apply the SBC Effectively in Classroom Practice

Some of the responses for this theme are as follows;

I try to apply the SBC, but sometimes the lack of teaching materials makes it difficult to do it effectively. For instance, when the curriculum requires practical or play-based activities, I often struggle to improvise because the needed resources are not available in the classroom. (P, 2)

I can interpret the curriculum documents, but I need more confidence to adapt them to my classroom reality. Sometimes I understand the guidelines

in theory, but when it comes to designing daily lessons that fit my learners' needs, I feel uncertain and hesitant. (P, 3)

Even though I understand the SBC, I sometimes just follow the old scheme of work to stay on track. The new approach demands a lot of planning and creativity, and with the workload and pressure, it feels easier to rely on the traditional methods I am used to. (P, 5)

Applying it requires creativity, especially with play-based methods, and not all of us are used to that. I find myself spending extra time trying to figure out activities that are engaging, but without enough support or examples, it can be overwhelming. (P, 7)

Yes, I feel prepared, but I still need mentoring to apply the curriculum consistently. I know what the expectations are, but having someone to guide and correct me along the way would give me the assurance that I am doing it the right way. (P, 9)

The responses show that the teachers are making efforts to apply the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) in their classrooms, but they face several barriers that make implementation inconsistent. One of the recurring issues is the lack of adequate teaching and learning resources. The interviewees explained that the SBC emphasizes practical, hands-on, and play-based activities, but in reality, the absence of appropriate materials makes it difficult to implement effectively. While some of the teachers attempt to improvise, they acknowledged that it is often challenging and time-consuming to create engaging activities without sufficient resources. This resource gap limits the extent to which the learner-centred philosophy of the SBC can be realized.

Another theme evident in the responses is uncertainty and lack of confidence in adapting the curriculum to classroom realities. The participants noted that while they can interpret the curriculum documents in theory, applying them in lesson planning and classroom delivery is not straightforward. Some admitted feeling hesitant when designing activities that meet learners' needs, while others confessed that under pressure, they fall back on traditional schemes of work and older methods of teaching. This reflects a tension between the new curriculum's expectations of creativity and innovation and the comfort and security of established practices.

The analysis also highlights the demanding nature of the SBC, which requires teachers to be creative, adaptive, and consistent in planning. The teachers expressed that the curriculum demands a lot of time and effort to design engaging activities, which adds to their workload. For many, this is overwhelming without enough examples, guidance, or practical support. This leads some to selectively implement only the aspects of the curriculum they feel are manageable within the constraints of time and large class sizes. Such selective implementation indicates that while the teachers are aware of what is required, systemic challenges prevent full application.

The responses also point to the need for mentoring and professional support. The teachers believe that having ongoing guidance from more experienced colleagues, supervisors, or instructional leaders would boost their confidence and help them apply the curriculum more effectively. Without such support, teachers are left to interpret the curriculum independently, which sometimes leads to inconsistent practices. This inconsistency is reinforced by teachers' observation that indicators are interpreted differently across classrooms, creating confusion about whether they are truly meeting curriculum expectations. The lack of shared understanding among the teachers highlights gaps in training and follow-up.

Despite the above-stated challenges, there are signs of gradual progress and adaptation. One of the teachers expressed that with time and experience, applying the SBC is becoming easier and more effective, noting improvements in both their own confidence and learners' engagement. This indicates that while implementation is difficult, sustained exposure to the curriculum and iterative practice are gradually helping the teachers adjust. Learners' active participation and responsiveness serve as motivation for teachers to persevere, even when implementation is not perfect.

Research Question 2: What support systems are available to assist kindergarten teachers in implementing the Standards-Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality?

This research question was designed to identify and examine the various institutional and professional support systems available to kindergarten teachers in implementing the Standards-Based Curriculum. It focused on the availability and effectiveness of training, supervision, teaching, and learning materials, and collaborative support structures.

The following themes and responses were given to answer the third research question.

Theme One: Professional Development and Capacity-Building Workshops

Participants responded that;

We had training at the beginning of the rollout, and I found it helpful. The facilitators showed us how to create learning centers, do group work, play-based learning, and use formative assessment. The problem is that after the workshop ended, we were left on our own. Without refresher courses, we easily go back to old methods. (P, 1)

The workshops are a form of support, but most of the time, they are too short. For example, in one training, we had only two days to cover the entire curriculum. That cannot be enough. I still remember feeling overwhelmed because there was so much new information packed into a short time. (P, 5)

Some of the capacity-building sessions I attended were very practical. We were given time to plan lessons, design teaching aids, and even do mock teaching. That really helped me. If such sessions happened more often, teachers would not struggle as much with implementation. (P, 7)

The workshops really give us motivation. After attending one, I always feel energized to try out new things in my class. But since they are irregular, that motivation dies down with time. We need consistent training to keep the fire burning. (P, 13)

What I appreciate most about the workshops is that they help us understand the child-centered approach. However, without follow-up coaching in the classroom, we cannot fully put into practice what we are taught. I think both workshops and on-site mentoring should go hand-in-hand. (P, 14)

The responses highlighted that workshops and capacity-building sessions have been central in preparing the teachers for the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC).

The interviewees generally acknowledged that these workshops were useful, especially in

introducing them to new concepts such as play-based learning, formative assessment, child-centered teaching, and the design of learning indicators. Many described the training as eye-opening and motivating, giving them practical skills such as lesson planning, the creation of learning centers, and even opportunities to practice through mock teaching. These accounts show that workshops are valued as an important form of professional development and a source of inspiration for teachers navigating curriculum reforms.

However, the data also point to significant limitations in the design and delivery of these workshops. The teachers consistently emphasized that the workshops were not continuous, and in many cases, they were short and rushed. Some described situations where a two-day session attempted to cover the entire curriculum, leaving them overwhelmed and unable to process the new information in depth. Others noted that because the workshops occurred once in a long while, they often forgot details, which weakened their confidence in applying what they had learned. This indicates that while workshops provide initial exposure, they lack the regularity and sustained reinforcement needed for long-term skill development.

Another important issue raised was the lack of follow-up and ongoing support after training. The teachers explained that once workshops ended, they were left on their own, without refresher courses or classroom-based mentoring to help them translate theory into practice. As a result, many admitted that they easily reverted to old teaching methods when challenges arose. Several participants emphasized that workshops should be complemented by on-site coaching and continuous professional learning to ensure that what is learned during training is sustained in classroom practice.

The responses also revealed concerns about limited access and inequitable participation. The teachers noted that usually only a few participants from each school were selected to attend workshops, leaving others uninformed. Those who attended found it difficult to adequately share the knowledge with colleagues, which meant that not all teachers

benefited equally from the capacity-building efforts. This created gaps in implementation, as the level of training varied from teacher to teacher, even within the same school.

Finally, the teachers expressed how workshops influenced their motivation and professional identity. They explained that attending workshops renewed their enthusiasm and gave them energy to try new approaches in their classrooms. However, they also pointed out that this motivation was short-lived because of the irregularity of training sessions and lack of reinforcement. Consistent workshops and mentoring were seen as necessary to keep teachers engaged and confident in implementing the SBC.

Theme Two: Guidance from Headteachers, School Improvement and Support Officers (SISOs), and curriculum coordinators

Below are the responses from the participants;

My headteacher supports us by checking our lesson notes and advising us on how to align them with the Standards-Based Curriculum. Sometimes, when he observes our teaching, he gives feedback that helps us to improve. That kind of guidance is very helpful. (P, 2)

The guidance from headteachers is sometimes limited to checking paperwork, like whether lesson notes are written. I feel they should do more practical demonstrations in the classroom, so that we can see how the SBC is supposed to be taught. (P, 8)

When SISOs come, they encourage us, but sometimes the visits feel more like an inspection than support. It would help if they focused more on coaching rather than just pointing out mistakes. (P, 10)

In my school, the headteacher organizes short meetings to discuss curriculum implementation challenges. These sessions are useful because they give us the chance to ask questions and get clarification. (P, 12)

I think the support from supervisors and curriculum coordinators is very important, but it is not regular. Sometimes they can go for months without visiting, and that makes us feel neglected. Regular and predictable visits would help more. (P, 14)

The best guidance I got was when my circuit supervisor demonstrated how to use songs and rhymes to teach literacy. That practical example made the whole concept clear, more than just reading instructions from a handbook. (P, 15)

The responses reveal that the teachers recognize and appreciate the role of headteachers, circuit supervisors, and curriculum coordinators in supporting the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC). They highlighted that this support comes in different forms, such as checking lesson notes, providing advice on alignment with the curriculum, clarifying the use of learning indicators, and occasionally demonstrating practical strategies. Such guidance is described as valuable, as it helps teachers improve their instructional practices and gain confidence in applying the SBC. For instance, one teacher noted that feedback after classroom observation helped refine her teaching, while another explained how a curriculum coordinator's demonstration of portfolio assessment improved her approach to tracking learning. These accounts underscore the importance of supervisory and leadership support as a means of bridging the gap between policy and classroom practice.

At the same time, the data point to limitations in the nature and frequency of support. The teachers reported that headteachers' guidance often focused mainly on administrative checks, such as verifying whether lesson notes were written, rather than offering practical demonstrations of effective teaching strategies. Similarly, visits from circuit supervisors and curriculum coordinators, though useful, were described as irregular and infrequent, leaving the interviewees feeling neglected for long periods. This lack of consistency undermines the sustained support needed for them to develop mastery of the curriculum. The teachers expressed a strong desire for more regular and predictable visits that provide continuous mentoring rather than occasional interventions.

Another recurring concern was the tone and approach of supervision. Some of the teachers felt that supervisory visits sometimes resembled inspections, with supervisors focusing on mistakes rather than offering constructive coaching. This made the visits less supportive and more evaluative in nature. The teachers preferred supervisory practices that

emphasized encouragement, demonstration, and coaching rather than fault-finding. This highlights the need for a shift from inspection-oriented supervision to a more collaborative and capacity-building approach.

Despite these challenges, the interviewees acknowledged that practical demonstrations during supervision were the most impactful form of guidance. They explained that seeing examples of how to use songs, rhymes, or teaching aids made the curriculum concepts clearer than simply reading from handbooks or receiving verbal advice. Practical modeling not only enhanced understanding but also motivated them to try new methods in their own classrooms. This suggests that experiential and hands-on supervision is more effective than paperwork checks or theoretical instructions.

Theme Three: Collaboration and Teacher Networks

The responses from participants are presented below;

One support that helps me a lot is collaborating with other teachers. We sometimes meet after school to discuss how we are teaching certain topics, and through that, we get ideas from each other. This sharing makes teaching the SBC easier. (P, 2)

In my circuit, teachers have a WhatsApp group where we share pictures of teaching aids we create, lesson plans, and even videos of activities. That platform helps us feel we are not alone. (P, 6)

When I was struggling with assessment, a colleague shared her portfolio format with me, which really helped. Also, during our group planning sessions, we worked together to design games using locally available materials. (P, 7)

The collaboration also saves us time. Instead of everyone struggling alone to create teaching aids, we share what we have made, and that reduces the burden on each teacher. (P, 8)

Through networking, I have learned low-cost strategies, like using empty bottles, shells, and sticks as manipulatives. If I were working alone, I might not have thought of these ideas. (P, 10)

The responses above emphasize the importance of peer collaboration and teacher networks as a critical source of support for implementing the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC).

The teachers described how working together with colleagues, whether through informal

after-school discussions, structured cluster meetings, or digital platforms, provides them with practical solutions, encouragement, and a sense of shared responsibility. Collaboration allows them to exchange ideas, share teaching resources, and learn from one another, making the complex demands of the SBC more manageable. For example, one teacher explained how a colleague shared her portfolio format when she was struggling with assessment, while another highlighted how group planning sessions helped them design games using local materials. These accounts demonstrate that peer collaboration serves as both a professional learning opportunity and an emotional support system.

The data also reveal the value of technology and networking platforms. The teachers noted that WhatsApp groups have become important spaces where they share teaching aids, lesson plans, and videos of classroom activities. Such platforms reduce the feeling of isolation, particularly in contexts where official support is limited or irregular. They provide the teachers with a continuous, accessible means of exchanging ideas beyond the formal training workshops and supervisory visits. This suggests that digital networking has become a powerful complement to traditional professional development, enabling teachers to sustain implementation of the SBC through peer-led learning.

Another significant theme is the role of collaboration in fostering practical learning. The interviewees expressed that watching peers demonstrate lessons, either during classroom visits or at cluster meetings, was one of the most effective forms of support. These peer demonstrations helped translate curriculum theory into practice more clearly than written guidelines or handbooks. The hands-on, experiential nature of peer-to-peer learning gives teachers concrete strategies they can immediately adopt in their own classrooms. In this way, collaboration bridges the gap between abstract curriculum expectations and the realities of classroom teaching.

The responses also highlight how collaboration reduces workload and builds teacher creativity. The teachers explained that by sharing teaching aids and lesson plans, they save time and avoid duplicating effort. This collective approach makes activity-based and play-centered teaching more feasible, particularly in resource-constrained settings. Moreover, collaboration exposes teachers to innovative, low-cost strategies such as using empty bottles, shells, and sticks as manipulatives that they might not have thought of on their own. Such peer-driven resourcefulness helps overcome the lack of official teaching and learning materials, enabling teachers to align more closely with the SBC's emphasis on exploration and hands-on learning.

Finally, collaboration provides psychological and motivational support. The teachers admitted that sharing experiences with colleagues helps them realize that the challenges they face are not unique, which fosters encouragement and resilience. Teacher networks thus function as spaces of solidarity, boosting confidence and reinforcing the collective belief that challenges can be addressed through cooperation.

Theme Four: Parental and Community Involvement

The following responses were gathered from the participants;

Parents help by reminding their children to do simple home activities, like reading picture books or counting household items. This makes the work we do in school continue at home. (P, 1)

“Some parents provide small financial support when we need to buy crayons, charts, or other basic items. Even though it is not much, it still helps us to keep the classroom resourceful. (P, 4)

Parents often support us by bringing simple but useful materials like empty cans, bottles, and cartons. We use these to create improvised teaching aids, which help us carry out play-based and exploratory learning even when we lack official supplies. (P, 6)

Community members such as carpenters and seamstresses have come to demonstrate their work to the children. This makes learning more practical and linked to real life, which is what the SBC requires. (P, 12)

During cultural day activities, parents and community members support us by bringing local drums, teaching the children traditional songs, and showing

them cultural dances. This really helps to make learning more engaging and meaningful. (P, 13)

The community also supports us morally. For instance, during school events, chiefs and elders attend and encourage us to continue with the curriculum. That recognition gives us motivation as teachers. (P, 15)

The responses highlight the crucial role that parents and the wider community play in supporting the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC). The participants described how this support goes beyond financial contributions to include material, practical, cultural, and moral assistance that makes activity-based and play-centred teaching more achievable in resource-constrained environments. For example, parents often contribute simple but valuable materials such as empty cans, bottles, and cartons, which teachers use to create improvised teaching aids. These low-cost contributions help bridge the resource gap and allow for play-based and exploratory learning despite the lack of official supplies.

The community's role in providing infrastructure support was also emphasized. Participants noted that community members assist by repairing classroom furniture and providing mats, which make the learning environment more conducive to group and play activities. This kind of support reflects a collective ownership of the school and demonstrates how local involvement directly influences the quality of teaching and learning.

Another significant form of involvement is parental engagement in children's learning. The teachers mentioned strategies such as open days, where parents are invited to observe lessons and witness how play and group work are used under the SBC. This exposure helps shift parental perceptions, especially for those who may view play as non-serious. By observing firsthand, parents gain a clearer understanding of the child-centred philosophy and become more supportive of the curriculum. Similarly, parents extend learning into the

home by encouraging activities like reading picture books or counting household items, reinforcing the continuity between school and home learning.

The responses further show that financial and in-kind contributions, although small, make a meaningful difference. Parents sometimes pool resources to buy crayons, charts, and other basic supplies, ensuring that classrooms remain resourceful. Additionally, skilled community members, such as carpenters and seamstresses, contribute by demonstrating their work to pupils, thereby linking classroom learning to real-life contexts. This practical exposure aligns well with the SBC's emphasis on making education relevant and experiential.

Cultural involvement also emerged as a key theme. Teachers explained that during events such as cultural days, parents and community members support them by bringing local drums, teaching the children traditional songs, and showing the children cultural dances, enriching the learning environment with cultural identity and creativity. Such contributions not only make learning enjoyable but also foster pride in local traditions and values, in line with the SBC's holistic development goals.

Finally, the responses highlight the moral and motivational support that communities provide. The attendance of chiefs and elders at school events was described as a source of encouragement, signaling respect for teachers' efforts and recognition of the value of the new curriculum. This moral backing strengthens teacher motivation and reinforces the social legitimacy of the SBC within the community.

Theme Five: Provision of Teaching and Learning Resources through Government and NGOs.

The responses from participants are presented below;

One NGO brought play equipment such as balls and skipping ropes. That made implementing play-based learning much easier, even if only for a short while. (P, 1)

The school received teaching and learning materials like charts and flashcards from the district education office. Even though they were not enough, they reduced our burden of improvisation. (P, 4)

Sometimes, teachers get support through donations from churches or community organizations. For example, we were given mats that children now use for story-time activities. (P, 6)

Government and NGOs do provide resources, but they are not sustained. You get materials once, and then for many months, nothing comes. That inconsistency makes it hard to depend on them fully. (P, 10)

When we do get resources, they really boost our teaching. But without training on how to use them properly in the SBC framework, some materials end up underutilized. We need both the resources and guidance on their effective use. (P, 12)

The responses above show that government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play an important role in supporting the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) by providing teaching and learning resources. The teachers acknowledged that the government supplies textbooks, teachers' guides, crayons, pencils, and manila cards, while NGOs contribute storybooks, play equipment, and other materials. These provisions reduce the burden on teachers, who often struggle to improvise resources, and help make play-based and activity-driven lessons more practical. The interviewees expressed that whenever such materials are available, they significantly boost classroom delivery and reduce reliance on traditional, lecture-centred methods.

At the same time, the data highlight persistent challenges with the adequacy and consistency of supply. The implementers explained that the materials provided by both the government and NGOs are rarely enough to meet the needs of all classes and learners. In many cases, resources are shared among teachers, limiting their usefulness. Moreover, the distribution is irregular and unpredictable, with schools sometimes receiving supplies once and then waiting months before any further support arrives. This lack of continuity makes it difficult for the implementers to depend fully on external support, leaving them to return to improvisation or chalk-and-talk methods when resources run out.

The responses also reveal that support extends beyond formal institutions to local community and religious organizations, which contribute items such as mats used during story-time activities. This indicates that resource support is a shared responsibility, with communities stepping in where government and NGOs fall short. Such contributions, though small, help create a more enabling environment for child-centred and play-based learning. The teachers noted that while resources are helpful, without proper guidance on how to integrate them into the SBC framework, some materials remain underutilized. For example, play equipment or storybooks may be present, but teachers who lack the skills to embed them into competency-based activities may not fully exploit their potential. This highlights the interdependence between material support and professional capacity-building: resources alone are insufficient without adequate training on their effective use.

Research Question 3: What challenges do kindergarten teachers face in implementing the Standards-Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality?

This research question aimed to explore the major challenges that hinder kindergarten teachers' effective implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum. It focused on identifying both systemic and classroom-level constraints such as resource limitations, large class sizes, inadequate training, and contextual factors.

Below are the responses for this research question

Theme One: Limited Training and Professional Development for Teachers on the SBC

The participants said;

When the curriculum first came, we only had a short workshop. It was more like an orientation, and since then, we have not had any refresher training. Because of that, sometimes I just teach the way I used to, because I am not too sure if I am following the SBC correctly. (P, 2)

The training we received was too brief. They rushed us through so many things in just a few days. Honestly, I left the workshop still confused about how to use the indicators and standards to plan my lessons. (P, 4)

We were told the curriculum is competency-based, but we were not shown practical strategies on how to make children active and engaged. Without continuous training, some of us just go back to the traditional methods. (P, 6)

One big challenge is that there is no follow-up support. After the first training, we were left on our own, and when you have questions about the curriculum, there is nobody to ask. (P, 8)

I feel the SBC is good, but the truth is, teachers like me are struggling because we lack the capacity. They only assume that once we have attended one training, we are ready, but that is not the case. (P10)

The Ministry and GES should not just roll out a curriculum without preparing teachers adequately. The limited training is one major reason many of us are not implementing the SBC the way it was designed. (P12)

The responses demonstrate that the interviewees have a clear understanding of the philosophy behind the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC), particularly its focus on developing children's competencies rather than relying on rote memorization. They recognize that the SBC has been designed to foster thinking, problem-solving, creativity, communication, and life skills, representing a major shift from the traditional focus on drilling letters and numbers. This awareness reflects that the training they received has, at least conceptually, influenced how they perceive their role in early childhood education. Many acknowledged that the curriculum seeks to cultivate lifelong learners who are curious, confident, and prepared to navigate real-life situations.

At the same time, the data highlight the tension between curriculum ideals and classroom realities. The teachers admitted that despite knowing the child-centred philosophy, they often revert to lecture-style teaching because it feels easier, especially under time pressure or when resources are inadequate. This shows that while they value child-led exploration and play, practical barriers such as workload, insufficient teaching materials, and large class sizes push them back toward familiar, teacher-dominated methods. The reliance on the scheme of work for coverage, rather than deeper competency-building, also reflects the

ongoing pull of traditional approaches, where completing topics is prioritized over mastery of skills.

Another theme that emerges is the challenge of implementing inclusion and creativity in overcrowded classrooms. The teachers noted that while the SBC emphasizes inclusivity and equal attention for every child, the reality of managing many learners at once makes it difficult to provide individualized support. Similarly, while the curriculum encourages creativity and problem-solving, the teachers admitted that under pressure, they sometimes reduce lessons to ticking boxes in the scheme of work, leading to a loss of the deeper goals of the curriculum. This reveals that systemic constraints, such as class size and limited resources, undermine the ideals of inclusivity and creative pedagogy.

The responses also point to uncertainty in translating theory into practice. Teachers acknowledged that while they understand the goals of critical thinking and values education in theory, they need more guidance on how to apply these concepts with very young children. For example, asking questions to promote critical thinking is seen as a useful strategy, but some teachers are unsure whether their methods are truly effective. This signals a need for continuous professional development, mentoring, and the provision of concrete classroom strategies that align with curriculum intentions.

Despite the above challenges, the data also show evidence of positive shifts in teacher identity and practice. Some teachers reported that they now see themselves more as facilitators of learning rather than as instructors dictating knowledge. They recognize that this new role requires flexibility, creativity, and a willingness to experiment with new methods. While acknowledging that it is not easy, these teachers expressed that the change has improved their engagement with learners and helped them align better with the child-centered vision of the SBC.

Theme Two: Scarcity of Instructional Materials, Play Equipment, and Teaching Aids

The participants had this to say;

In our school, we don't have the basic teaching aids the SBC talks about. Sometimes I have to draw on cardboard or use stones and sticks to improvise, which is not always effective. (P, 1)

The curriculum emphasizes play-based learning, but without play materials, how can we achieve that? We end up doing more talking than playing because the resources are not available. (P, 4)

The children are supposed to learn through exploration, but there are no puzzles, no building blocks, no picture books. It makes the class boring sometimes. (P, 8)

When you don't have materials, you cannot make lessons practical. Even though we try to improvise, the materials we create are not durable and cannot serve for long. (P, 9)

For creative arts, the curriculum says we should let children use paint, clay, and crayons, but in reality, we don't have any of those things in the classroom. (P, 12)

If the government is serious about the SBC, then they should provide the schools with adequate materials, otherwise we are only implementing it halfway. (P, 14)

The responses clearly show that one of the major challenges the teachers face in implementing the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) is the lack of adequate teaching and learning resources. The participants emphasized that although the curriculum is designed to be activity-based and play-oriented, in reality, the absence of materials makes these approaches difficult to achieve. For example, instead of using standard teaching aids, teachers reported resorting to improvised items such as stones, sticks, or drawings on cardboard. While such improvisation reflects teacher creativity, it is often limited in effectiveness and durability, which undermines the quality of learning experiences.

The lack of resources also affects the play-based philosophy of the SBC. The interviewees acknowledged that the curriculum encourages active learning through play, yet classrooms lack puzzles, building blocks, picture books, and other play materials. Without these tools, lessons become more teacher-dominated, with “talking” replacing the interactive play

activities that children need for exploration and discovery. As a result, the intended learner-centred pedagogy is reduced to more traditional methods, which contradicts the very foundation of the curriculum.

Another significant issue raised is the shortage of textbooks and teacher guides. The teachers reported that in some schools, they share a single copy of these essential documents, making lesson preparation stressful and time-consuming. This lack of reference materials prevents them from fully understanding or implementing the curriculum's requirements and forces them to rely on memory or incomplete resources. It also contributes to inconsistencies in classroom practice. The responses further reveal that the absence of creative arts materials such as paint, crayons, and clay limits children's opportunities to express themselves creatively and engage in hands-on learning. Teachers explained that creative arts lessons, which should be practical and expressive, often become theoretical or skipped altogether because the necessary materials are unavailable. This not only restricts children's creativity but also diminishes their enthusiasm for learning.

The cumulative effect of these challenges is teacher frustration and discouragement. Participants indicated that although they want to teach using interactive, activity-based methods, the lack of materials pushes them back to "chalk and talk" approaches. This sense of compromise leaves teachers feeling that they are not implementing the curriculum fully, which undermines their motivation. Some expressed that unless the government provides schools with adequate resources, the SBC would remain only partially implemented, failing to achieve its intended goals.

Theme Three: Overcrowded Classrooms and Time Constraints

Below are the responses from some of the participants;

In my class, there are more than 60 children. How can I do group work or give individual attention when the number is too much? Sometimes I just teach everyone at once, which is against the SBC. (P, 1)

The overcrowding makes class management very stressful. Instead of focusing on teaching, most of my time goes into controlling the noise and movement of the children. (P, 3)

Time is also a problem. The syllabus is too loaded, and the time is too short. So instead of allowing the children to explore, I end up rushing through the lessons. (P, 10)

The SBC requires us to spend time on play and discovery, but in reality, the school timetable is tight, and we cannot cover everything properly. (P, 12)

When you have too many children and not enough time, you cannot assess them individually. You just make general assumptions, which is not the right way. (P, 14)

The responses highlight two major structural challenges undermining the effective implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC): overcrowded classrooms and limited instructional time. The teachers consistently described how large class sizes, sometimes with more than 60 children, make it extremely difficult to conduct activity-based learning, group work, or provide individual attention. While the curriculum emphasizes child-centred methods, teachers explained that the sheer number of pupils forces them to revert to whole-class instruction, which contradicts the learner-centred philosophy. This shows that although they understand and value the intentions of the SBC, the classroom realities make its practical application unfeasible.

Overcrowding also creates serious classroom management problems. The interviewees indicated that much of their energy is spent controlling noise and movement rather than facilitating meaningful learning. Attempts to implement group activities often lead to chaos, as monitoring such a large number of children simultaneously is nearly impossible. In addition to overcrowding, the teachers identified time constraints as a significant barrier. They described the syllabus as overloaded and the school timetable as too tight to allow for the exploratory and play-based activities encouraged by the SBC. Instead of creating space for discovery learning, the teachers find themselves rushing through lessons in order to cover all strands and indicators. This shift from depth to speed reduces the quality of

learning, leaving little room for children to engage critically or creatively with content. The time shortage also affects assessment practices, as the teachers confessed that they cannot evaluate learners individually. Instead, they resort to making general assumptions about performance, which undermines the goal of continuous and competency-based assessment. Taken together, the responses illustrate that while the SBC is well designed on paper, its implementation is severely hampered by systemic challenges. Large class sizes and limited time prevent teachers from practicing the learner-centered, activity-based, and assessment-driven approaches envisioned in the curriculum. The teachers' voices reveal a strong commitment to the philosophy of the SBC, but also a sense of frustration that the structural realities in schools make it "almost impossible" to carry out effectively.

Theme Four: Systemic Policies and Inconsistencies in Curriculum Rollout

Below are the responses from some of the participants;

The information about the new curriculum did not reach us clearly. Sometimes we hear different instructions from the circuit supervisor and from the headteacher, which confuses us. (P, 2)

There are inconsistencies in policy communication. For example, one officer says we should use portfolios for assessment, another says we should focus on checklists. So, which one is correct? (P, 8)

The GES has not provided enough guidance to ensure uniformity. Even within the same municipality, you will find different schools implementing the curriculum differently. (P, 10)

There is no strong coordination between policymakers and teachers. We are the ones in the classroom, but nobody engages us in decision-making about how the curriculum should run. (P, 11)

The responses reveal that one of the critical challenges affecting the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) is weak policy communication and poor coordination between policymakers, supervisors, and teachers. The teachers indicated that information about the curriculum rollout did not reach them in a clear and consistent manner. They described receiving conflicting directives from circuit supervisors and headteachers, which created confusion and uncertainty in their practice. This inconsistency suggests that the

chain of communication between the Ghana Education Service (GES) and classroom teachers is fragmented, leaving room for misinterpretation of policy.

Another issue raised is the uneven rollout of the curriculum. The teachers reported that some schools received training and resources earlier than others, leading to disparities in how the SBC is implemented across different contexts. This lack of uniformity undermines the goal of standardization, as children in different schools are not receiving the same quality of teaching and learning.

Linked to this is the issue of policy inconsistency in assessment practices. The teachers reported receiving contradictory guidance on whether to prioritize portfolios or checklists, leaving them unsure about which tools to use. Such inconsistencies further reinforce the perception that there is no coherent strategy guiding the implementation. The lack of clarity from authorities not only confuses teachers but also reduces their confidence in whether they are meeting expectations. The data also underscore the limited involvement of teachers in decision-making. Participants pointed out that while they are the ones responsible for implementing the curriculum in classrooms, they are rarely consulted or engaged in shaping its rollout. This top-down approach creates a disconnect between policy design and classroom realities, with teachers feeling excluded from processes that directly affect their work.

Research Question 4: What strategies do kindergarten teachers use to overcome challenges in the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality?

This research question sought to examine the coping strategies and adaptive practices employed by kindergarten teachers to address the challenges encountered in implementing the Standards-Based Curriculum. It aimed to highlight teacher-driven solutions such as improvisation, peer collaboration, and professional innovation.

Theme One: Peer Collaboration and Professional Learning Networks

The following were the responses from some of the participants;

Whenever I face difficulty understanding a strand or indicator, I meet my colleagues after school. We share how each person taught it, and together we plan activities that will work for our learners. (P, 2)

We formed a small teachers' group in our circuit. Every Friday, we discuss how we taught the week's lessons. Sometimes, we design play-based activities together using things we can easily find. (P, 5)

Since we do not get regular workshops, we depend on ourselves. When one teacher learns something from the district training, she teaches the rest of us. It keeps us updated. (P, 8)

In my school, we have demonstration sessions every month. We observe one another and talk about how to improve. It is like our own local training. (P, 11)

The analysis of these statements reveals that peer collaboration plays a pivotal role in enhancing teachers' understanding of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) and building collective confidence. The implementers' informal networks often operate as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), fostering mutual reflection, shared problem-solving, and the exchange of innovative ideas. Within these networks, they rely on one another to interpret curriculum requirements, design effective lessons, and adapt to changes in instructional expectations.

From both local and international perspectives, collaborative professional learning has been recognized as a key driver in translating policy into classroom practice. It enables the teachers to collectively make sense of reforms, share experiences, and co-construct teaching strategies that align with the curriculum's goals. In various contexts, peer mentoring and cluster-based collaboration have helped teachers sustain reform initiatives, especially where formal supervision and in-service training opportunities are limited.

In the context of Nkwanta South, peer collaboration functions as both a survival mechanism and a means of professional growth, addressing gaps in training, resources, and ongoing support. The data indicate that institutionalizing collaboration through school-based PLCs and regular cluster meetings could strengthen continuous professional development.

Formalizing peer learning in this way would enhance teacher capacity, foster innovation, and reduce the sense of professional isolation often experienced in rural educational settings.

Theme Two: Improvisation and Contextual Adaptation of Instructional Materials

Below are the responses from some of the participants;

We hardly get enough materials from the district office, so I use bottle caps and stones to teach counting and sorting. The children like touching things, and it helps them learn better. (P 1)

I make charts from old boxes and use locally made toys for role-play. Parents bring some of the items when we explain how they help their children. (P 4)

For story lessons, I use real objects from the market like vegetables or cooking utensils. It makes the lesson real to them and connects to their home life. (P 7)

When I don't have pictures, I draw on manila cards. The curriculum says to use visual aids, so I just create mine with what is available. (P 10)

The responses above reveal that improvisation goes beyond simply compensating for a lack of resources; it represents creative pedagogical strategy that allows teachers to make learning meaningful and engaging. The educators creatively transform every day, familiar materials into effective teaching and learning resources that promote hands-on, experiential learning. Contextualizing lessons through the use of locally available materials, teachers help learners connect new concepts to their immediate environment, making abstract ideas more concrete and relatable. This approach not only supports comprehension but also encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and active participation among young learners.

Across different educational settings, improvisation has been widely recognized as both a survival mechanism and an innovative teaching method. Teachers in resource-constrained environments often adapt their surroundings to meet curriculum expectations, using materials such as stones, sticks, bottles, and paper waste to create visual and tactile aids. This creativity helps sustain learner-centered instruction and bridges the gap between

policy goals and practical realities. Moreover, improvisation fosters learners' curiosity and inventiveness, encouraging them to explore and discover knowledge through interaction with their local environment.

Constantly creating teaching materials from limited resources demands considerable time, effort, and sometimes personal financial input from teachers. This can lead to fatigue and frustration, especially in schools where institutional support is minimal. To ensure the sustainability of such innovative practices, educational authorities could provide basic teaching and learning material kits or small material grants to schools.

Theme Three: Selective Curriculum Implementation and Adaptive Assessment Practices

Below are the responses from the participants;

I cannot teach all the indicators because the class is too big. I choose the main ones and teach them well before moving to the next topic. (P, 3)

The portfolio work is difficult with sixty pupils, so I assess them in groups. I record short notes on what they can do after each activity. (P, 6)

Sometimes I merge two competencies in one activity. For example, counting and sorting are taught together because it saves time and keeps children active. (P, 9)

The SBC says we should use continuous assessment, but we do it in a simple way. I use a checklist and write short comments instead of long reports. (P, 12)

The narratives suggest that the teachers often exercise professional judgment by simplifying, modifying, or merging activities to ensure that learning remains meaningful and manageable within their available time and resources. This demonstrates a form of adaptive professionalism, where educators creatively interpret the curriculum to meet the needs of their learners without losing sight of its fundamental objectives. By focusing on essential learning outcomes rather than attempting to cover every activity in detail, teachers are able to maintain instructional depth and foster genuine understanding among their pupils, even in the face of resource and time constraints.

This approach reflects a balance between fidelity to the curriculum and responsiveness to real classroom challenges. Teachers strategically emphasize key competencies, such as literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving, while using flexible methods of assessment to gauge learner progress. Informal questioning, observation, and group discussions become powerful tools for continuous feedback, allowing teachers to adjust their instruction and support learners' development effectively. Such flexibility transforms the curriculum from a rigid blueprint into a living guide that accommodates diverse learner needs and contextual realities.

Although selective implementation can result in some inconsistencies in curriculum delivery across different schools, it remains a realistic and effective strategy under current conditions. The teachers' ability to interpret and adapt the curriculum demonstrates their agency and professionalism, ensuring that learning remains purposeful rather than mechanical. To strengthen this practice, educational authorities could provide structured guidance on priority learning standards while still allowing teachers the flexibility to adapt activities based on classroom practices.

Observational Data from Participants

Part of the data collection was the non-participant structured observation of the selected kindergarten teachers. The observation was aided by a checklist focusing on five general indicators: (a) Lesson Preparation and structure, (b) integration of key competencies, (c) use of teaching and learning materials suitable for the age group, (d) instructional strategies, (e) assessment, (f) classroom environment, and (g) teacher-learner interaction. The observations provided contextual data that corroborated the interview data. The results are reported below as thematic descriptions.

Theme 1: Lesson Preparation and Structure

Lesson preparation across the observed classrooms showed inconsistent alignment with the expectations of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC). Although most of the teachers had lesson notes available, only a few demonstrated clear alignments with SBC objectives and explicitly stated learning indicators. In several cases, the lesson plans lacked specific competencies or indicators, making it difficult to determine whether the lessons were intended to promote the key outcomes emphasized in the curriculum.

The structure of lessons also varied. Play-based or activity-oriented components central to SBC pedagogy were rarely incorporated. Lessons often followed a rigid format of introduction, teacher explanation, and choral repetition, with minimal hands-on tasks. While a few of the teachers attempted simple activities such as using stones for counting or singing action-based rhymes, these were not systematically planned or linked to competency indicators. The lack of structured, play-based learning activities suggested that many of the teachers were still transitioning from traditional teaching approaches and facing difficulties in translating the curriculum into practical classroom actions.

Theme 2: Pedagogical Practices and Lesson Delivery

Most of the teachers in most of the classrooms relied predominantly on whole-class, teacher-led pedagogy with minimal learner participation. Lessons often started with the chanting of alphabets, numbers, or rhymes by the teacher, followed by repetition by learners in unison. Few of the teachers attempted group-based or activity-based pedagogy. For example, one teacher used bottle tops and stones to teach counting, but the others used mainly verbal explanation without demonstration. Movement and play-based learning, which is at the heart of the SBC, was not frequently seen. The teachers mentioned large classes and a shortage of space as reasons for the lack of child-centered pedagogy.

Theme 3: Utilisation of Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs)

Few or no pre-prepared teaching/learning resources were evident in most of the classrooms. Only three of the teachers visited had charts, flashcards, or picture books on the subject of the day. The majority of the teachers improvised with locally available materials such as sticks, rocks, bottle caps, and empty cartons. In some of the classrooms, there was nothing for the learners to manipulate, and lessons were taught on bare floors with children sitting on mats. This lack of adequate TLMs constrained the teachers' ability to implement hands-on, inquiry-based learning experiences required by the SBC.

Theme 4: Integration of Core Competencies

There was minimal indication of deliberate integration of the SBC's key competencies: critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, personal development, and digital literacy. Collaborative learning was only observed in fragmented instances, such as when students did pair work to sequence number cards. There was minimal time for students to ask questions, do problem-solving,

or engage in creative tasks. Digital technology was totally absent, with no computers, projectors, or audio-visual equipment in any of the classrooms observed.

Theme 5: Assessment Practices

Observed assessment practices were largely informal and primarily centered on teacher-led questioning and oral recitation. The teachers frequently used choral questioning techniques, with learners responding in unison through simple “yes/no” or one-word answers. There was no evidence of the use of recommended assessment strategies such as performance-based tasks, checklists, or learner portfolios, as outlined in the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC). Furthermore, assessment practices did not appear to support the monitoring of individual learner progress, nor were the outcomes used to inform instructional decisions.

Theme 6: Classroom Environment

The classroom environments observed were generally limited in their ability to support movement, exploration, and interaction as required for effective early childhood teaching and play-based pedagogy. Most of the classrooms were arranged in tightly packed rows or clusters, restricting learners’ movement and making it difficult to organize learning centers or group activities. In many of the classrooms, learners sat on shared benches or mats, with little space to manipulate materials or engage in free exploration. Print-rich materials were notably scarce. Only a few classrooms had charts, alphabet posters, or number displays relevant to the day’s lesson. The majority lacked learners’ work, visual displays, or labelled learning corners, which are essential elements for stimulating curiosity and reinforcing literacy and numeracy concepts. Where charts existed, many were old, torn, or not linked to ongoing activities. There was also minimal display of learners’ own work, reducing opportunities for motivation and self-expression.

Theme 7: Teacher–Learner Interactions and Classroom Environment

Teacher learner interactions were warm but mostly one-way. Teachers were supportive of learners through praise (e.g., clapping or verbal "good" feedback) but without leaving a lot of space for learner initiative or self-expression. Seating in classrooms was traditional, with learners packed on benches or mats facing the teacher. Space was limited, which constrained movement and collaborative grouping. Classroom walls were bare for the most part, lacking print-rich displays, charts, or students' work, which are integral components of a stimulating learning environment in early childhood education.

4.3 Discussion of Interview Findings

4.3.1 Kindergarten Teachers’ Level of Implementation of the SBC

The findings indicate that kindergarten teachers in the Nkwanta South Municipality held partial knowledge and a moderate practice of the SBC. While they were aware that the SBC emphasizes learner-centred pedagogy, activity-based learning, and the development of

competencies, their practice did not align with the envisioned reform philosophy consistently. The majority realized the SBC fosters participatory and interactive learning, and some incorporated group work, storytelling, rhymes, songs, and play activities, which enhance the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's (NaCCA, 2019) vision of encouraging active learning. But such practices had too frequently been superficial and inconsistent, with teachers struggling to link their goals for teaching to curriculum demands or to integrate cross-cutting competences such as digital competency, critical thinking, and creativity.

This result is consistent with the research of Osei-Poku and Agbenyega (2021), which found that while Ghanaian teachers as a whole tend to value the vision of the SBC, there is a disconnect between classroom practice and curriculum intent. Teachers tend to misunderstand the focus of the reform on competencies and standards and simply teach imitations of learner-centred practices without really knowing their rationale. Similarly, Ampofo and Ankomah (2022) indicated that teachers will predominantly perceive standards as rigid test standards, rather than as flexible developmental standards to facilitate instruction and learning. Such an understanding restricts the SBC to a compliance-based process, with activity-based methods introduced in segregation of the overall child-centered approach.

The findings also resonate with African curriculum reform experiences. Mwanza (2018) in Kenya documented that although teachers initially embraced the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), poor conceptual understanding led most to revert to traditional, teacher-centered practices, particularly in settings with a lack of training and support. Likewise, Chisholm (2012) found that in South Africa, the ambitious Curriculum 2005 was patchily implemented in early childhood education because teachers were insufficiently trained to

put its learner-centred principles into practice. These findings imply that across Sub-Saharan Africa, reforms generally suffer from a common gap of implementation between policy design and teacher capacity. Worldwide, literature is in agreement on the priority of teacher understanding and ownership to successful curriculum reforms. In Finland, where early childhood education is among the best in the world in terms of quality, teacher professionalism, and clear insight into curriculum goals are always identified as the trigger for reform success (Sahlberg, 2015). Similarly, Blaiklock (2018) attributed the successful roll-out of New Zealand's Te Whāriki curriculum to ongoing professional guidance and mentoring that strengthened teachers' pedagogical capacity and assurance. In such contexts, teachers do not function as passive enforcers but as active curriculum makers who implement reforms meaningfully in their classrooms.

The theoretical frameworks of Hall and Hord's (1987) Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) and Fullan's (2007) educational change theory provide useful frameworks for interpreting these findings. In CBAM, teachers most frequently begin curriculum adoption at a "mechanical use" level, where practices are adopted routinely or indirectly. Without professional development and mentoring, teachers are stuck at this level and fail to advance to more sophisticated stages of elaboration and integration. The halfway house experienced in Nkwanta South perfectly captures this stage, whereby teachers are experimenting with activity-based methods but lack the conceptual understanding to expand and adapt them constructively. Fullan (2007) further highlights the fact that education reforms require more than structural changes to curriculum documents; they require ownership of the vision and philosophy by teachers. Unless teachers appropriate the meaning of child-centered and competency-based reforms, their implementation can become mechanical and ritualistic instead of transformative. The experience in Nkwanta South thus demonstrated a broader

worldwide issue with curriculum reform: lofty policies fail when teachers are inadequately trained to read and enact them meaningfully.

4.3.2 Availability and Effectiveness of Support Mechanisms

The findings of this study determined that support systems provided to kindergarten teachers in the Nkwanta South Municipality were institutionally weak and irregular and thus impeded the smooth implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC). Although professional development workshops were at times mounted by the Ghana Education Service (GES), it was reported by teachers to be irregular, brief, and poorly organized, and would typically take a range of several days to a week with minimal follow-through mentoring. Therefore, teachers received a bare minimum of time to transform learning into long-term practice in the classroom. This finding attests to the long-standing gap between policy-level provisions and classroom realities in Ghana's early childhood education system.

The teachers also reported that they were provided with curriculum guides and teachers' manuals, but these were in short supply and specialized in nature for application during regular teaching practice. Some teachers indicated that materials provided by the government were not adaptive to kindergarten learners' development needs, hence they had to improvise. This agrees with Yu et al (2024), who argued that teacher support in Ghana is uncoordinated and patchy, especially in rural regions where logistical challenges hinder the consistent supply of resources. Mumuni (2017) also observed that the majority of kindergarten teachers in Ghana tend to rely more on peer collaboration and improvisation than on formal systems of professional support, consistent with what is experienced by teachers in Nkwanta South.

At the African level, evidence confirms that weak professional support for teachers is a universal challenge during curriculum reforms. For example, Bunmi and Taiwo (2017) reported that in Zambia, teachers relied heavily on peer discussion and unintentional sharing of skills due to lack of systematic support access. Similarly, Mwanza (2018) found that in Kenya, implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) was significantly hindered by lack of access to prolonged mentorship and coaching programs. These findings suggest that in Sub-Saharan Africa across the board, professional assistance for educators is conventionally regarded as a discrete intervention rather than as an ongoing development process.

Effective curriculum reform has been significantly associated with the establishment of continual professional learning communities (PLCs) and ongoing coaching models. Opfer and Pedder (2011) identified that discrete, once-off workshops have very little lasting impact compared to continuous collaborative learning embedded in teachers' everyday work. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) also argued that effective professional development must be long-term, practice-oriented, content-specific, and connected to teachers' real classroom needs. The evidence from Finland's early childhood system confirmed this: teachers benefit from having well-structured mentoring and collaborative time that allows them to build practice over time (Sahlberg, 2015). Similarly, in Singapore, curriculum reform has succeeded through teachers' learning from formal professional networks where best practices are constantly shared and reassembled (Tan, 2018).

Consistent with Nkwanta South evidence, peer collaboration and improvisation have become the dominant support approaches for teachers. As much as this speaks to teacher resilience and agency, it also testifies to system weaknesses. Informal networks are effective in maintaining morale and temporarily addressing problems, but cannot be used to replace organized mentoring, sufficient resources, and policy-supported professional

growth. Akyeampong et al. (2013) warned that excessive dependence on informal cooperation can reinforce inconsistent practices within classrooms since peer-provided assistance does not necessarily ensure adherence to curriculum standards.

Theoretically, Hall and Hord's (1987) Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) provided insight into the support teachers need under curriculum transformation. As CBAM provides, teachers progress through levels of concern and levels of use, from survival-minded, mechanical use to innovation and refinement when adequate support is given. The Nkwanta South case shows that most of the teachers remain at lower levels of mechanical application and cannot adhere to curriculum guidelines without internalizing pedagogical values. This finding is consistent with the absence of systematic and structured support mechanisms that can aid teachers in transitioning towards higher levels of curriculum mastery and creativity. Fullan's (2007) theory of educational change also bears on this contention: systemic and sustained support is needed to bridge the gap between curriculum design and classroom practice. Where support is haphazard, as in Nkwanta South, teachers exist in "survival mode," patching things together to survive the day but not able to flourish as curriculum innovators.

4.3.3 Challenges Faced by Kindergarten Teachers in Implementing the SBC

This study revealed a number of challenges that impeded effective adoption of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) by kindergarten teachers in Nkwanta South Municipality. Challenges were structural, pedagogical, and socio-cultural in nature, and varied from inadequate teaching and learning facilities, overpopulation of classrooms, inadequate training opportunities, conflicting expectations from parents, and language policy contradictions. Among the most pressing needs was the lack of fundamental instructional materials such as storybooks, manipulatives, charts, and visual aids, which serve as the foundation for executing activity-based and child-centered learning. The

teachers revealed that the majority of the classrooms were bare, compelling them to improvise from locally available materials. While improvisation demonstrates creativity, it largely did not meet curriculum needs. The conclusion backs Ametepée and Koomson (2021), who assumed that resource shortages are among the oldest issues in the implementation of curriculum in Ghana's basic schools. Similarly, Amoako (2021) noted that shortages in infrastructure, including dilapidated classrooms and lack of child-friendly settings in rural Ghana, add to the shortages in resources to make the pillar of early childhood weak.

Similar work in Sub-Saharan Africa tells the same story. In Nigeria, Adeyemi and Adepoju (2017) concluded that inadequate infrastructure and insufficient appropriate materials grossly undermined the ability of teachers to implement the Universal Basic Education curriculum. In Uganda, Nakabugo et al. (2010) also emphasized the point that resource shortages were a key bottleneck to adopting learner-centered pedagogies. Cross-nationally, it is evident that the provision of resources at adequate levels is a crucial part of curriculum reforms. For instance, Meilasari et al. (2023) noted that in Singapore and Finland, significant investments in learning materials and infrastructure were notable drivers of success in early childhood curriculum implementation.

Huge class sizes were another significant challenge. In the majority of schools in Nkwanta South, the classes were taught by teachers with 40–50 children, far exceeding the optimal pupil-teacher ratio for successful early childhood education. Overcrowding rendered one-to-one teaching, formative assessments, and application of play-based learning methods almost impossible. This is consistent with Mensah and Frempong (2022), who reported that overcrowding was a shared issue in rural schools in Ghana, undermining learner-centered pedagogy as desired in the SBC.

Carney (2022) identified high pupil-teacher ratios as a persistent impeding factor to early childhood education across Sub-Saharan Africa, having class sizes well in excess of global standards. In Kenya, for instance, Micheni (2021). noted that large class sizes under the Competency-Based Curriculum limited teachers in terms of engaging students in practical work. Conversely, in OECD countries such as Norway and Japan, smaller class sizes are maintained in order to facilitate individualized, discovery learning (OECD, 2019). Overcrowding is not just a Ghanaian issue, then, but instead a regional one reflecting broader resource and policy implementation gaps.

Shortcomings in teacher training were another main obstacle. Although teachers in Nkwanta South had been initially oriented on SBC workshop training, this was brief, intermittent, and without systematic follow-up. Many teachers reported that the training did not well prepare them to connect teaching objectives with performance standards or integrate cross-curricular capabilities. This is attested to by George (2024), who established that over 60% of kindergarten teachers in Ghana never received refresher training after the introduction of the SBC. Adu-Gyamfi and Amponsah (2021) also ascertained that inadequate professional preparation ranks among the largest impediments to teachers' capacity to practice curriculum reforms at their best.

This is not exclusively a Ghanaian dilemma. In Kenya, Mwanza (2018) stated that poor in-service training made most teachers unfit to utilize the Competency-Based Curriculum, while in South Africa, Chisholm (2012) asserted that poor training was a main cause of the uneven adoption of Curriculum 2005. However, in countries such as Finland and New Zealand, continuous professional development has been made endemic so that teachers do not only know but also adapt curricula to fit local conditions (Sahlberg, 2015; Blaiklock, 2018).

Parental dispositions were also put in the limelight in the study. Parents in Nkwanta South linked learning to pass exams with memorization and the production of written output, and they disregarded learner-centered learning through play as "non-academic." This left the teacher torn between reverting to traditional teacher-centered instruction, against the tide of the SBC philosophy. Boateng (2024) also determined that low levels of parental literacy and misconceptions about early childhood pedagogy oftentimes led to resistance to learner-centered reforms in rural Ghana.

The challenge may be explained using Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, where the key emphasis is on the social and cultural context in influencing children's learning. If expectations within family and community are not aligned with the philosophy of the curriculum, teachers are confronted by resistance and are likely to compromise reform fidelity. The same is reported in Tanzania, as Mligo (2015) noted, parents resisted play teaching because they perceived it as less demanding, and instead, they would prefer traditional methods of teaching. Worldwide, Epstein's (2018) study of school-family partnerships makes clear that effective curriculum reforms rely on substantial parental involvement to close the gap between what families expect at home and school practices. Lastly, inconsistencies in language policy made it hard to implement the curriculum. The SBC mandates that instruction at kindergarten levels take place in students' mother tongues, yet in multilingual classrooms, teachers were not equipped in all the local languages present. This made them switch back and forth between languages, sometimes getting students mixed up and diluting learning. Gyamfi and Osei-Tutu (2020) recorded such inconsistencies in Ghana, where the policy intent of greater mother-tongue instruction is in most instances, at odds with the language situation in classrooms. Comparable issues feature in other multilingual environments. Within Nigeria, Okebukola (2020) had established that the implementation of competency-based curricula was hampered by low

language competence among teachers, particularly within cosmopolitan towns. Within multilingual countries such as Switzerland and Canada, however, teacher education programs themselves prepare instructors to teach multilingual classrooms with diversity and consistency in curriculum delivery (Cummins, 2014).

4.3.4 Strategies Kindergarten teachers use to overcome Challenges in the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum

The findings of this study corroborate much of the existing literature on curriculum implementation in developing contexts, emphasizing that effective reform is not solely dependent on policy design but largely on teacher agency, creativity, and contextual adaptation. The evidence from Nkwanta South Municipality reinforces the idea that curriculum reform success hinges on three interrelated factors: teacher initiative, peer collaboration, and adaptive instructional practices that respond to local realities. The role of peer collaboration identified in this study mirrors the observations of Osei-Poku and Agbenyega (2021) who found that Ghanaian teachers often depend on informal professional networks for mutual support, reflection, and collective problem-solving. Within these networks, teachers share strategies, co-design lesson plans, and reflect on classroom experiences, effectively creating communities of practice that serve as localized professional development spaces. This finding aligns with the international discourse advanced by Datnow and Park (2019), who conceptualize teacher collaboration as a form of professional capital necessary for sustaining systemic educational change. These informal Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) demonstrate the capacity of teachers to take ownership of their professional growth, creating an enduring system of support that promotes resilience and innovation.

Second, the findings on improvisation confirm that teacher creativity serves as a cornerstone of curriculum sustainability in environments where teaching and learning

resources are limited. Similar to the findings of Agbenyega and Deku (2020) and Amoako (2021), teachers in Nkwanta South demonstrate ingenuity by transforming locally available materials such as stones, sticks, cartons, and bottle tops into effective instructional tools. This approach resonates with constructivist principles, which emphasize experiential and hands-on learning using familiar, contextually relevant resources to promote deep understanding. Internationally, the role of improvisation as both a survival and pedagogical strategy has been documented across several African contexts. Kidega et al. (2024) found that Ugandan teachers relied on household items to meet the requirements of a competency-based curriculum, while Mwanza (2018) observed that improvisation in Zambian schools nurtured learners' creativity and sustained participation. Together, these findings affirm that the innovative use of local materials not only bridges the gap between curriculum expectations and resource limitations but also strengthens learners' engagement by connecting classroom experiences to their lived realities.

Third, the practice of selective curriculum implementation and the use of adaptive assessment strategies observed in this study reflect a pragmatic approach to addressing the constraints of overcrowded classrooms, limited time, and insufficient resources. Teachers' willingness to simplify or merge activities while maintaining focus on the curriculum's central competencies demonstrates a high level of professional judgment. This adaptive behavior reflects what Fullan (2007) described as "pragmatic professionalism," where educators modify and contextualize reforms without undermining their core intent. Similarly, Timperley et al. (2020) emphasized that teacher reflection and context-sensitive adaptation are vital components of sustainable curriculum change. The teachers in Nkwanta South illustrate this balance by prioritizing essential learning outcomes and employing flexible, formative assessment methods such as observation, questioning, and peer feedback to track learner progress. However, this adaptability also points to a systemic

issue: policies need to formally recognize and support teacher discretion. Structured guidance from curriculum authorities such as NaCCA on priority learning standards could help standardize curriculum delivery while maintaining flexibility for teachers to innovate within their contexts.

Nonetheless, these strategies should not replace institutional responsibility. Sustainable curriculum implementation requires a supportive policy environment that provides continuous professional development opportunities, adequate teaching and learning materials (TLMs), regular supervision, and manageable class sizes (Akyeampong et al., 2020). Without such systemic support, teacher innovation risks becoming unsustainable over time.

This study's outcomes therefore align with both national and international evidence suggesting that teacher-driven adaptation and collaboration are essential to the success of early childhood curriculum reforms. As Fullan (2007) posited, educational reform flourishes when teachers are seen as co-constructors of change rather than passive implementers of directives. Empowering kindergarten teachers through ongoing mentoring, recognition of innovation, provision of material resources, and the strengthening of community partnerships would not only enhance their professional confidence but also ensure the long-term sustainability of the Standards-Based Curriculum in Ghana.

4.3.5 Discussions on the Observational Data

The findings presented below emerged from non-participant structured classroom observations conducted alongside interviews with kindergarten teachers in Nkwanta South. The observations aimed to gain a first-hand understanding of how teachers implemented the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) in real classroom contexts (Busetto et al. 2020). The observation checklist focused on seven domains: lesson preparation and

structure, instructional strategies, use of teaching and learning materials (TLMs), integration of core competencies, assessment practices, classroom environment, and teacher–learner interactions. The results are presented thematically and interpreted in relation to existing literature.

Observation of teaching practices revealed that classroom instruction was predominantly teacher-centred, characterized by whole-class teaching, rote recitation, and direct instruction. Teachers frequently used choral responses and memorization drills, while learner participation was largely passive. Only a few teachers attempted activity-based or exploratory tasks, such as using bottle tops or sticks to demonstrate counting. This pattern reflects the persistence of conventional, didactic pedagogies that emphasize teacher authority and content delivery over learner exploration and discovery.

These findings are consistent with Tchombe (2021), who reported that Ghanaian early grade teachers often revert to traditional lecture-style methods due to systemic pressures to complete the syllabus and deeply ingrained cultural notions of effective teaching. Asare and Nti (2022) likewise observed that despite increased awareness of learner-centered pedagogy under the SBC, many teachers lack adequate classroom management skills and professional support to translate such knowledge into practice. Large class sizes, rigid timetables, and limited classroom resources further constrain their ability to sustain play-based and participatory learning. This indicates a disjuncture between teachers' theoretical understanding of learner-centred pedagogy and the practical realities of implementation. The findings echo Altinyelken's (2010) assertion that curriculum reforms in Sub-Saharan Africa often struggle at the classroom level due to structural and contextual limitations rather than a lack of teacher commitment. The observations revealed a general shortage of adequate and age-appropriate TLMs in most classrooms. Teachers seldom used picture books, charts, or flashcards, which are fundamental to early

literacy and numeracy development. Instead, they improvised with locally available materials such as bottle tops, sticks, and stones to facilitate basic counting and grouping activities. While such improvisation reflected creativity and resourcefulness, it also revealed systemic inadequacies in material provision. The limited diversity and quality of materials observed significantly curtailed opportunities for learners to engage in manipulative, experiential, and sensory learning an essential component of play-based pedagogy.

This observation corroborates Adu-Gyamfi et al. (2020), who found that inadequate access to appropriate teaching resources remains one of the most pressing challenges in early childhood education across rural Ghana. Similarly, Altinyelken (2010) emphasized that diverse and developmentally appropriate materials stimulate curiosity, reinforce psychomotor skills, and promote meaningful engagement in young learners. The heavy dependence on improvised and often makeshift resources observed in this study likely explains why many teachers resort to teacher-led methods rather than allowing children to explore and construct their own understanding. The inadequacy of TLMs therefore reinforces teacher-centredness and undermines the experiential learning processes central to the SBC's philosophy.

A major gap noted during observation was the lack of integration of the SBC's six key competencies critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, personal development, and digital literacy into daily classroom activities. Teachers' lessons were largely confined to routine drills and recall-based questioning, with minimal evidence of tasks designed to stimulate creativity or critical reflection. Learners were rarely seen collaborating in groups or performing hands-on problem-solving tasks. There was also no sign of digital tools or technology-enhanced learning in any of the observed

classrooms, underscoring the digital divide that continues to constrain educational equity in rural Ghanaian schools.

These findings align with Appiah and Kusi (2023), who reported that many Ghanaian kindergarten teachers lack the pedagogical content knowledge and scaffolding techniques needed to nurture 21st-century competencies in young children. Akyeampong et al. (2021) similarly observed that teacher capacity gaps remain a key barrier to implementing competency-based curriculum reforms across Sub-Saharan Africa. Without intentional teacher training on integrating higher-order skills into daily lessons, core competencies risk remaining rhetorical aspirations rather than lived classroom realities. The absence of collaboration, communication, and creativity in observed lessons thus undermines the central goal of the SBC to produce learners equipped with lifelong learning dispositions rather than memorized content.

Assessment methods observed were predominantly informal and summative in nature, relying heavily on oral repetition, yes/no questioning, and collective choral responses. Teachers rarely conducted individualized assessments or maintained systematic records of learner progress. Checklists, learner portfolios, and performance-based tasks, which are explicitly recommended under the SBC, were almost completely absent. Many teachers explained during interviews that the large class sizes made individualized assessment impractical and time-consuming.

These findings confirm the results of Martin & Atteh (2022), who reported that Ghanaian early-grade teachers often equate assessment with rote recall rather than as a means of diagnosing learner needs and adjusting instruction. Similarly, Akyeampong and Rolleston (2022) stressed that formative assessment, when properly implemented, can significantly improve foundational learning outcomes, but most teachers lack the requisite training to

use it strategically. The evidence from this study indicates that assessment-for-learning is not yet institutionalized in practice, leaving teachers to depend on superficial checks of knowledge recall rather than ongoing feedback that supports skill development. This gap diminishes the formative intent of the SBC and contributes to the persistent mismatch between curriculum goals and learner outcomes. Teacher–learner interactions observed were generally warm and positive but unidirectional. Teachers often praised and encouraged learners, yet opportunities for reciprocal communication, questioning, or learner-led activities were limited. Most classrooms followed traditional seating arrangements, with learners sitting on benches or mats facing the teacher, leaving little room for movement or peer collaboration. Moreover, the classrooms lacked stimulating physical environments there were few posters, reading corners, or displays of learner work. Overcrowding further reduced opportunities for group work, exploration, and play. These findings are consistent with Aheto-Tsegah and Armah (2020), who highlighted that large class sizes and poor physical infrastructure hinder effective teacher–learner interaction in Ghanaian basic schools. Similarly, OECD (2023) observed that secure, engaging, and print-rich learning environments are critical for early childhood development, as they foster both cognitive and socio-emotional engagement. The limited space and resources observed in this study curtailed opportunities for learners to interact meaningfully with materials and peers, undermining the SBC’s vision of creating active, confident, and socially competent children.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions drawn, recommendations made, and suggestions for further studies.

5.1 Summary of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine kindergarten teachers' understanding and implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) in the Nkwanta South Municipality. The study was guided by the interpretivist paradigm and adopted a qualitative approach, using a descriptive case study design to explore the phenomenon in depth. A criterion purposive sampling technique was used to select 15 kindergarten teachers, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews and non-participant classroom observation. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

The study addressed four research questions.

1. How do kindergarten teachers understand the key principles and components of the Standards-Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality?
2. What support systems are available to assist kindergarten teachers in implementing the Standards-Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality?
3. What challenges do kindergarten teachers face in implementing the Standards-Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality?
4. What strategies do kindergarten teachers use to overcome challenges in the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality?

5.2 Findings

1. The findings revealed that kindergarten teachers demonstrated partial understanding and moderate implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum.
2. The findings showed that the mechanisms for supporting teachers were weakly institutionalized.
3. The findings indicated that kindergarten classrooms were overcrowded, teaching and learning resources were unavailable, and professional development opportunities were inadequate.
4. The findings revealed that teachers improvised using locally available materials to create hands-on learning environments.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concludes that the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality is partial and fragmented. Even though teachers demonstrate awareness of the principles of the SBC and make some effort at activity-based and learner-centered approaches, their practice is not consistent due to inadequate knowledge and a lack of proper support.

In addition, it was concluded that teacher support mechanisms, while present, are poorly coordinated and inadequate. Teachers remain in the early stages of curriculum implementation, and cannot finalize the integration or polishing of practices without sustained support over time. Without an improvement in parental involvement, availability of resources, and teacher development, SBC's visionary dream of revolutionizing early childhood education will not materialize.

The study also concludes that systemic issues such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of good teaching and learning materials, restricted in-service training, and competing parental demands undermine the quality of curriculum implementation to a large degree. These

issues are not Nkwanta South-specific but resonate with general national and regional trends in Sub-Saharan Africa, where ambitious reforms are likely to be stalled under contextual and structural constraints.

Finally, the study concludes that the strategies of peer collaboration, improvisation, and adaptive teaching demonstrate that teachers are not passive recipients of policy but active co-constructors of educational change. However, this reliance on teacher innovation, while effective in the short term, highlights a critical vulnerability. Without a parallel commitment from policymakers to provide tangible institutional support specifically in the form of resources, professional development, and infrastructure, the current level of implementation remains unsustainable and places an undue burden on educators.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on findings and conclusions:

It was recommended that the Nkwanta South Municipal Directorate of the Ghana Education Service (GES) institutionalize routine and practice-based professional development opportunities for kindergarten teachers. Such initiatives should move beyond one-off workshops to include continuous mentorship, instructional coaching, and classroom-based support systems aimed at strengthening teachers' pedagogical knowledge and practical implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC). Sustained professional learning communities would enable teachers to share best practices, reflect on classroom experiences, and progressively build competence in play-based and child-centred instruction.

It is recommended that the Nkwanta South Municipal Education Directorate strengthen and institutionalize support systems for kindergarten teachers through regular, well-coordinated professional development programs, effective supervisory practices, and the timely provision of teaching and learning resources. In addition, structured mentoring and peer-

support systems should be established at the school and circuit levels to promote collaboration and continuous teacher learning. These measures will enhance teachers' capacity and ensure more effective implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum.

Moreover, it was recommended that the Nkwanta South Municipal Education Directorate, through the Nkwanta South Municipal assembly, address the persistent challenge of overcrowded classrooms by recruiting additional qualified teachers and expanding classroom facilities. This measure would help reduce the pupil–teacher ratio, creating a more conducive environment for individualized instruction, formative assessment, and effective classroom management. Smaller class sizes would enhance opportunities for learner engagement and allow teachers to adopt flexible, learner-centred strategies aligned with curriculum expectations. Local education authorities should organize community sensitization and outreach programs to educate parents and caregivers about the value of play-based, child-centred learning. Such initiatives would help align parental expectations with the principles of the SBC, reduce misconceptions about play as a non-academic activity, and foster greater collaboration between schools and families in supporting children's learning and development.

It is finally recommended that the Nkwanta South GES Directorate and school leadership formally recognize and support teachers' adaptive practices by integrating improvisation and peer collaboration into structured professional development programs. Teachers should be provided with platforms such as workshops, cluster meetings, and learning communities to share best practices, locally developed teaching materials, and innovative strategies.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

Despite the strengths of this study, a number of limitations should be acknowledged.

First, the study employed a qualitative approach with a relatively small sample size of fifteen kindergarten teachers selected from public schools within the Kecheibi Circuit in the Nkwanta South Municipality. While this approach enabled an in-depth exploration of teachers' experiences and classroom practices, it limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the study area. The use of purposive sampling may also have introduced selection bias, as participants who were available and willing to participate may not fully represent the views of all kindergarten teachers in the municipality.

Second, data were collected primarily through self-reported interviews and non-participant classroom observations. Although the use of multiple data sources enhanced the credibility of the findings through triangulation, responses obtained from interviews may have been influenced by social desirability bias, where participants presented views, they considered professionally appropriate. In addition, the presence of the researcher during classroom observations may have affected teachers' behaviour (observer effect), leading them to modify their instructional practices.

Third, the study focused mainly on teachers' perspectives and classroom-level practices, without incorporating the views of other key stakeholders such as headteachers, School Improvement and Support Officers, parents, and district education officials. The exclusion of these stakeholders may have limited a more comprehensive understanding of the broader institutional and systemic factors influencing the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum.

Finally, the study was conducted within a specific geographical and contextual setting characterized by rural and semi-urban conditions. As such, contextual factors such as infrastructure, resource availability, and socio-cultural dynamics may differ from those in other municipalities, thereby limiting the transferability of the findings to different educational settings.

Despite these limitations, efforts such as the use of triangulation, careful participant selection, and systematic data analysis were employed to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Study

From the findings of the study, the following are areas recommended for further study:

1. A study can be conducted on how teachers' conceptual understanding of the Standards-Based Curriculum evolves through ongoing professional development over time.
2. A study can be conducted on the comparative implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum in rural and urban schools in Ghana, with a focus on contextual variations and implications.

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APPENDIX A
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION.
Semi-Structured Interview

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this study is to explore kindergarten Teachers' implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) in Nkwanta South Municipality. Your insights will help provide a deeper understanding of the curriculum's impact, the challenges faced, and the support systems available to teachers. This interview will take approximately 30–45 minutes. Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. You have the right to withdraw at any point without any consequences. With your permission, this interview may be recorded for accuracy in data collection.

Section A: Background Information

- Gender: _____
- Age Range: _____
- Educational Qualification: _____
- Teaching Experience (in years): _____
- School Type (Urban/Rural): _____

Section B: Teachers' Understanding of the Standards-Based Curriculum

1. How would you describe your understanding of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC)?
2. What do you consider as the main goals and key components of the SBC?
3. How does the SBC differ from the previous curriculum used in kindergarten education?

4. In your opinion, what core competencies are emphasized in the SBC, and how important are they for early learners?
5. How confident do you feel in applying the principles of the SBC in your daily teaching?

Section C: Classroom Practices and Implementation

1. Describe how you usually plan and deliver your lessons under the SBC.
2. What kinds of teaching methods and activities do you use to promote learner-centered and play-based learning?
3. How do you incorporate the core competencies (e.g., creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication) into your classroom activities?
4. What types of teaching and learning materials do you commonly use, and how do you obtain them?
5. How do you assess learners' progress under the SBC framework?

Section D: Challenges in Implementing the SBC

1. What challenges have you encountered while implementing the SBC in your classroom?
2. How do large class sizes, limited materials, or time constraints affect your ability to apply the SBC?
3. How do language barriers and parental expectations influence curriculum implementation?
4. What professional or institutional challenges (e.g., lack of training, supervision, or policy clarity) have you faced?

Section E: Support Systems for Implementation

1. What kinds of support or guidance do you receive from headteachers, circuit supervisors, or the Ghana Education Service (GES)?
2. Have you received any professional development or training related to the SBC?
If yes, how helpful was it?
3. Are there any mentoring or peer collaboration groups in your school or district that support SBC implementation?
4. How sufficient and accessible are the teaching and learning materials provided by the authorities?

Section F: Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

1. What strategies do you personally use to overcome the challenges in implementing the SBC?
2. How do you and your colleagues collaborate to improve your understanding and classroom delivery?
3. In what ways do you improvise or adapt materials to meet the needs of your learners?
4. What recommendations would you suggest to improve the implementation of the SBC in kindergartens?

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences implementing the Standards-Based Curriculum?

APPENDIX B**CLASSROOM OBSERVATION GUIDE**

Observation Area	Indicators	YES/NO	Comments
1. Lesson Preparation and Structure	Lesson plan aligned with SBC objectives; clear learning indicators stated; activities structured for play-based learning.		
2. Instructional Strategies	Teacher uses learner-centered and activity-based methods (e.g., group work, storytelling, rhymes, role play).		
	Children are engaged in exploratory or play-based learning activities.		
	Lesson encourages creativity and participation rather than rote memorization.		
3. Use of Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs)	Teacher uses age-appropriate and varied TLMs (charts, flashcards, bottle tops, etc.).		
	TLMs are related to lesson content and effectively used during instruction.		
	Evidence of improvisation using local materials when standard TLMs are unavailable.		

4. Integration of Core Competencies	Lesson integrates at least one of the SBC's key competencies: critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, personal development, or digital literacy.		
	Teacher provides opportunities for learners to work in pairs or groups.		
	Learners demonstrate problem-solving or creative thinking during activities.		
5. Assessment Practices	Teacher uses formative assessment (observation, questioning, peer assessment).		
	Assessment feedback is provided to learners to guide learning.		
	Evidence of record-keeping or learner progress tracking.		
6. Classroom Environment	Classroom layout supports learner movement, exploration, and interaction.		
	Presence of print-rich environment (charts, displays, learners' work).		
	Adequate space and seating arrangement for group or play-based activities.		

7. Teacher– Learner Interaction	Teacher encourages learners to ask questions and express ideas.		
	Teacher uses positive reinforcement and supportive communication.		
	Interaction is reciprocal (two-way) rather than teacher-dominated.		



APPENDIX C



FABSE/DECE/A.1



27TH FEBRUARY, 2025

The Director
Ghana Education Service
P.O Box 22
Nkwanta -Oti Region

Dear Sir/ Madam,

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

I kindly write to introduce to you **Mr. Wisdom Quofi Mensah** with index number:8241900026 who is an M. Phil student at the Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Education, Winneba. He is in his final year and has to embark on his thesis on the topic: *"Kindergarten Teachers Implementation of the Standard Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality"*.

Mr. Mensah is to collect data for his thesis, and I would be most grateful if he could be given the needed assistance.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Subbey".

PROF. MICHAEL SUBBEY, (PhD.)
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT





**GHANA
EDUCATION
SERVICE**
NKWANTA SOUTH MUNICIPAL

CR67, Obuse Street, Adjacent
Forestry Commission
Post Office Box: 22, Nkwanta
Digital Address: VO-0029-4339

Kindly quote this number and date on all correspondence.
My Ref. No.: GES/OR/NKSM.01/VOL.1/63
Your Ref. No.:
Date: 18th April, 2025

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

MR. WISDOM QUOFI MENSAH – INDEX NO. (8241900026)

I write to introduce to you Mr. Wisdom Quofi Mensah, an M. Phil student from the University of Education, Winneba who is in his final year and has to embark on his research work on the topic: "Kindergarten Teachers Implementation of the Standard Based Curriculum in the Nkwanta South Municipality,"

Mr. Wisdom Quofi Mensah needs to collect data from your school for his thesis and the directorate would be grateful if he is given the necessary assistance.

Thank you.


JONATHAN KORSINAH
Municipal Director of Education
Nkwanta South Municipal



ATTENTION

All Heads of Basic Schools
Nkwanta South Municipal
Nkwanta

Cc:
The Chief Inspector of Schools
Nkwanta South

Tel: +233(0)244722340
Email: nkwantasouthmreod@gmail.com

 @nkwantasouthmre



Our Ref: SGS – 026/ SF.2 / ECDA07

Date: 19th January, 2026

Mr. Wisdom Quofi Mensah
Department of Early Childhood Education
University of Education, Winneba
Pos: Office Box 25
Winneba

Dear Mr. Mensah,

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

We are pleased to inform you that the Institutional Ethical Review Board has thoroughly reviewed and approved your research proposal titled "*Kindergarten Teachers' Implementation of the Standard-Based Curriculum in Nkwanta South Municipality*".

In light of this, you have been granted clearance, as your application aligns with the ethical standards set by the University of Education, Winneba.

Approval Details:

- **Research Title:** "*Kindergarten Teachers' Implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum in Nkwanta South Municipality*"
- **Approval Date:** 19th January, 2026
- **Approval Number:** SGS-EC-07-26

Please, ensure that your research adheres to the ethical guidelines specified in your proposal throughout the duration of the study. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted for additional review.

For efficient processing of queries and inquiries, please reference all correspondence related to the study and direct them to ethicalreview@uew.edu.gh.

We wish you success in your research endeavors.

Yours sincerely,

PROF. AWAISU I. BRAIMAH (PH.D.)
(CHAIRMAN, IERB)