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INTRODUCTION TO CURRICULUM STUDIES

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Introduction:
If I ask you who a good person is, you will list some characteristics of such a person. You might mention honesty, tolerant, trustworthy, respectful, etc. If I ask you who a useful person is you add some other characteristics such as skillful, committed, creative, resourceful etc. Families, communities and societies want their children to develop these characteristics as they grow. However we need to realize that people don't acquire such good and useful characteristics by chance. They learn them directly by being told, or indirectly by going through some experiences in life.

The good characteristics you identify in a person can be attitudes, values, skills or knowledge. Some of these characteristics can be learned at home or within the community or society. However, some are so important and complicated that they have to be left to specially trained professionals (teachers) to transmit, in expensive institutions or schools. A school is an organization that provides instruction, such as an institution for   the teaching of children. Schools engage learners in certain prescribed activities within a specified period of time in order to achieve the desired characteristics in attitudes, skills, perceptions and behaviour. It is within this context that we are discussing the school curriculum in this course. The concept of the school curriculum then covers the wide range of planned and unplanned learning activities that learners go through in a school.

Objectives:

1.   Explain the curriculum in your own words
2.   Distinguish between aims, values and views of knowledge with examples from the Ghanaian curriculum.
3.   Explain the accomplishments you expect from children who have gone through basic education in Ghana.
4.   Identify the factors that inspire the teachers confidence in using the curriculum.

1.1:   The Meaning of Curriculum
You have just read that the school curriculum covers all planned and unplanned activities of learners in a school. These school experiences or activities may take place inside or outside the classroom, or even outside the school environment. Once they are part of what the school has planned, they are included in the curriculum. To understand fully what a curriculum means, consider these other characteristics that it has:

• Both academic and non-academic experiences are involved. This means that school organized cultural activities, cleaning activities and physical activities as equally part of the curriculum as are mathematics and language activities.

• The intention of the curriculum may be manifest or latent. A manifest curriculum activity is one that is obvious like a social studies lesson or other subject lessons. These are clearly seen as school curricular activities. The latent ones include attending morning assembly, inspection of dressing or asking for permission for absence. These are not seen clearly as activities from which children learn, but they actually are. Both manifest and latent

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situations in the school are intended for some kind of learning and so are included in the concept of the curriculum.

- The academic components of the curriculum comprise subjects. The academic component is manifest and is often what comes to people's minds when we talk of the curriculum. They are easily laid out in a time table.

- The non-academic components include activities undertaken outside the formal time table. (Co-curricular). There are extracurricular or extra academic activities performed by school pupils that fall outside the regular academic curriculum of the school. These activities are recognized by the school and are an essential part of the life of pupils such as sports, debates, interest clubs and societies.

The curriculum is therefore a deliberate, systematic and planned attempt to improve the knowledge, skills, attitudes and all competencies of the learner, with the hope of improving the society through this. A definition of the curriculum will always be broad because it involves a wide array of school activities. School children go on excursions, join boy scouts and girl guides as well as cultural and religious groups in school. All these activities are supported by the school as they are sources of developing knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The broad nature of the curriculum has made it possible for different educators to dissect it into several forms by giving names to describe segments of curriculum activities. These include the official curriculum, explicit curriculum, hidden curriculum, observed curriculum etc. Now, having been introduced to the concept of the curriculum lets us take a brief look at an issue which will open our minds better on what makes it so important. What happens if we feel that it involves too

1.2: Aims, values and views of knowledge
The explanation of the curriculum stated in the previous unit suggests that the curriculum activities are intended to make learners develop some competencies. They are simply intentions. We hope to achieve them and will do our best to achieve them. These intentions are related to aims we want to achieve, values we hold or cherish and our views of knowledge.

Aims:
Aims are or targets we focus on achieving. For instance, the school curriculum should aim to develop the following:

- The spiritual development of pupils. Can you imagine the chaos that will happen in our society if people had no idea of any spiritual control over our lives, especially knowledge of God in any religion? The belief in spiritual forces in our lives comes may start from our homes, but the school, through its activities, gives us opportunities to continuously practice a religious life and makes it part of our lives.

- The moral development of children makes them grow to be liked by and more acceptable to people who they come into contact with. People do not automatically grow up to be good people. They need to constantly learn to put up the behaviours that make people good. The school provides the opportunity for this through direct teaching and group engagements.

- The social and cultural development of learners. Former students of "good" schools believe that they are the best husbands or wives. Does this mean that "bad" schools produce bad people? It is the aim of schools to produce people who are social and uphold our cultural values to the satisfaction of everybody. This can be achieved by the way the curriculum is run in the school.

- To prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. This is another crucial aim which the curriculum has to fulfil. Skills for work and life in the 21st century and for the uncertain opportunities of the future have to be provided for by the school curriculum. The activities of the curriculum must be designed to help learners develop such skills.

Now, what is the source of these aims? These aims stem from the values of a community, society or nation. We therefore need to briefly discuss the issue of values.

Values:
Values are the importance or usefulness of something. We regard some issues as more worthy and others as less worthy of our attention. The aims we want to achieve are designed from the cultural, social and economic values the people hold. For instance societies who hold a strong value for spirituality and morality will flag this in their aims, but others may not. We are discussing values here because it is when we combine the idea of values with the aims that we get to understand what we need to emphasize in the schools. For instance, do you think schools should emphasize individual achievements or collective achievement? Will you promote more individual work or group work in your JHS class? Well, this will depend on the value you place on this issue.

Ghana values liberal democracy and so the national curriculum will be organised in a way that promotes this value. However, it is not that simple when we want to answer the question "whose values are the curriculum promoting"? This is because local values must also be considered in delivering the content of the curriculum. Differences in ethnic and religious values for instance means that teachers need to reflect on how they present the curriculum to their learners and the activities they engage learners in. The current issue of LGBTQ for instance is gradually creating a challenging contradiction in the western books we use for teaching in Ghana since most western countries accept LGBTQ alliances whilst we do not accept it.

Apart from the issues of societal values and its curriculum implications, we can also talk of individual values as teachers. Though in some cases we are unable to fully identify our own values, we do have values. In some cases our personal values may conflict with the expectations of the curriculum. Does this make the situation more complicated? It does, and it is for this reason that teachers need to understand that they need to be reflective and think carefully about what they are doing in effecting the curriculum and how they are doing it.

For instance, should the curriculum be implemented in such a way that learners see themselves more as equals or unequal? How much attention should we give to diversity as we plan curriculum activities? Should the curriculum emphasize social justice and open learners' minds

to inequalities in our society? These questions should make you realise that there are a lot of issues about values which influence how we organise and carry out curriculum activities. The values that communities, societies or individuals hold are not often expressed or explicit and may sometimes contradict. This makes it harder for teachers or even schools to be clear about their own positions about values. However, reflective teachers should realise this and try to take some value-positions which will guide their decision making on the choices they make in teaching.

Views of knowledge
The aims of a national curriculum are always based on our understanding about the nature of knowledge. Also, the social values teachers holds tend to influence their view of knowledge. So, this means that our discussion on the aims and values that the curriculum should emphasize will not be complete if we do not look at the views of knowledge. Indeed, these views of knowledge, as we will soon see, also influence our choice of curriculum delivery strategy. Most of the decisions that teachers take about what to teach and how to teach, are based on one view of knowledge or the other.

Views of knowledge refer to how people view knowledge and how people gain knowledge. Do people gain knowledge by talking and working with people in groups or by engaging in individual experiences and thinking about them? Do people gain knowledge by accepting the views of powerful people or by developing their own lines of thinking? In teaching, should we encourage learners to always agree on one set of answers or learners can come out with different or diverse answers that are all acceptable? You will notice immediately from these questions that teachers' views with respect to any of these questions may differ and that they are likely to organise the way they teach in line with what they think about knowledge.

Now, let us organise the questions I have asked here into specific views so that we can understand them better. We will put them into three views of knowledge.

First, some people argue that there are different forms of knowledge so subjects contain different forms of knowledge. Therefore in implementing the curriculum, teachers need to pay attention to the different forms of knowledge and devise specific strategies for teaching each form. This means the role of the teacher in understanding and controlling learning is the most important concern in handling the curriculum. How will teachers who hold this view approach the curriculum?

Second, there are those who believe that we can only get knowledge by interacting with the environment and learning from such environmental experiences. This view of knowledge believes that we develop our intelligence by engaging in experiences with the environment and materials and then apply the intelligence to know more. How will teachers who hold this view approach the curriculum?

Third, other people suggest that we can only gain knowledge by interacting and talking with other people. That means it is only by sharing experiences that we gain knowledge. They call it an 'interactionist' approach. To those who believe in this view, something can only be

knowledge if we share it with others and we all make common sense of it. If sharing is the way to gain knowledge, how will teachers who believe in this view approach the curriculum?

Dear learners, as you read through this information and answer the questions that have been posed, you also need to begin to think of what you have been doing or are going to do in your classroom. At least, you should by now realise that in using the curriculum to help learners acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes, you need to take some crucial decisions. What will you emphasize and how will you get learners to achieve your aims of delivering the curriculum?

More will be said about this in other courses you will be studying in future.

1.3:   Curriculum expectations

Now, let us turn our attention away from the abstract issues of aims, values and views of knowledge to discuss more concrete things about what is expected of you and learners as the front runners in making the curriculum active.

We can discuss curriculum expectations or curriculum goals at two levels. We will look at the overall expectations or goals, which include the knowledge, skills attitudes that learners are expected to demonstrate by the end of each grade. Then we will look at the specific expectation, which includes a description of the expected knowledge, skills and attitudes in much greater detail. You will remember from the explanation of curriculum that it involves all the teaching experiences for learners in the school. From this we notice that the curriculum guides all educators on what is essential for teaching. The way the curriculum is structured and organised serves the purpose of enhancing or facilitating student learning. The overall expectations of the curriculum then are what have been specified in it for learners to know and be able to do as they strive to achieve learning each year.

When you begin to teach a class you are given a syllabus. The syllabus for each subject is broken down into yearly expectations which you will use to design your scheme of work by spreading the year's expectations over semesters or terms and then weeks. The teacher will however be expected to take a close look at these expectations to find suitable relevant activities that will help in achieving them. Please take a closer look at the syllabus of your school to see how the expectations are written. You will study the mechanics of writing them in other courses.

Please notice that these overall expectations relate to the knowledge and skills that are learned in school. However, there are essential behaviour expectations which make it possible for learning to take place. Again, note the difference between content expectations and behaviour expectations as we discuss the specific expectations because we will refer to both here. Now let us turn our attention to the specific expectations.

The overall expectations we have discussed also has expectations for teachers who teach and learners who learn. However, for teachers, the expectations relate to their behaviour as they are not learners. Therefore we will present teacher and then learner behaviour expectations separately even though in real terms it takes the two groups to make learning happen in the school.

We will first list the expectations from teachers. Teachers are expected to:

- Engage learners in learning experiences
- Recognize learners' gradual progress in accomplishing the curriculum goals.
- Recognize individual differences among learners and ensure that all learners enjoy their learning (inclusivity).
- Show enthusiasm in engaging and learning with learners.
- Let learners realize you care about them
  (These are just a few of the expectations. You are expected to identify and add more in your face-to-face discussions. You are also to discuss why these are necessary)

Let us also look at some of the expectations from Learners. Teachers expect students to:

- Come to class every day prepared for learning with the expected learning materials.
- Put forth their best efforts in learning
- Be respectful to themselves, their peers and teachers.
- Participate in all learning activities, pay attention and ask questions.
- Follow directions and take responsibility for their own actions
  (These are a few and you are expected to add more in your class discussions)

Dear learners, please note that we have dwelt on specific behaviour expectations so far. However, most crucial learner expectations are those that relate to the competencies learners are expected to display or show after learning. They are the outcomes of learning including the knowledge, skills and attitudes. You write these in your lesson plans and schemes of work to guide teaching. They are written for individual subjects and take different forms. They are for individual content and it is impossible to list them here. You will however be studying more about these in your courses on methods of teaching.

Now, let us turn our attention to another issue which is often the concern of educational managers, administrators and national curriculum planners. Are teachers well capable of teaching children well using the curriculum they have now? Do they have enough knowledge of the subject content of the curriculum? Do they have the skills to plan and organize the needed curriculum activities for children to learn the content? The issue of teacher knowledge and teacher confidence is therefore important to discuss.

1.4:   Curriculum knowledge and teacher confidence
A teacher with a good knowledge of the curriculum will be more confident than one with a weak knowledge. Teacher confidence is the main factor that can seriously impact a teachers ability to do a good job with his learners and make them enjoy learning. As you go through this programme of training you will need to appreciate the content you are going to learn. Remember that you may not find all of it easy or interesting, but your ability to master the content will be the main thing that will help you have confidence and enjoy your work as a teacher.

To understand better the importance of curriculum knowledge on teacher confidence, let us briefly discuss of the factors that influence teacher confidence:

- The educational qualification of teachers is important. To get a higher qualification you will have to learn more and this is more likely to increase your curriculum knowledge and hence your confidence.

- Skills of the teacher are also important. Quick decision making, skills in organising learning and leadership as well as innovativeness and creativity. People vary in their possession of these skills. A teacher may develop them from experience but some effort is needed. More skilful teachers are more confident.

- After the first year of teaching, the teacher should never be the same as decision making rapidly improves with experience. This however depends on the teachers desire to learn from experience. Reflect on your actions and their outcomes to learn from experience and grow in confidence.

- The intrinsic motivation of the teacher is perhaps one of the most important factors responsible for teacher confidence. If you love children and love your job , you will be enthusiastic about your job, prepare well, engage children more actively and display more confidence.

Dear learners, we cannot mention all the factors you will need to be mindful of in order to develop more curriculum knowledge and more confidence. For instance issues like working with other teachers, having positive interactions with your learners and gathering resources and materials to teach will all improve your curriculum performance and confidence. You need to discuss these further so that as you progress through this programme, you will recognise the value of all what you are learning and be more committed to your learning.

Self-Assessment Questions

UNIT 2:   FACTORS CONSIDERED IN DESIGNING THE CURRICULUM

    a) Needs of the community and nation
    b) Objectives of the curriculum
    c) The curriculum content
    d) Implementing and evaluating the curriculum

INTRODUCTION
- Designing an effective learning curriculum is easier said than done. It needs to be designed with the understanding that different factors inform its development. An understanding of these factors is vital to teachers, parents/guardians and all those who are concerned about how pupils learn because it enables them to have an insight into some key elements that shape what the school does. The burden of this chapter is to examine some major factors one should ponder over in designing the curriculum.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES
It is anticipated that after reading through this chapter you should be able to do the following satisfactorily.
    i.   Explain key factors considered in designing the curriculum
    ii.   Describe the relationships that exist between community needs and curriculum development
    iii.   Discuss what curriculum objectives are and their importance
    iv.   Examine the nature of disciplines or content that will help achieve a given curriculum objectives

Often, learning programmes are designed with a large goal in mind, such as improving productivity through the training of citizens, dealing with rural-urban migration, raising critical thinkers, among others.

2.1: FACTORS THAT DETERMINE THE DESIGNING OF THE CURRICULUM
Bishop (1985) and Tyler (1949) identified the society as one of the major if not the first factor in designing a curriculum. Curriculum is as broad as education, as large as life itself. No school is an island to itself; the school is an integral part of society. There are always social, economic and political context within which education operates. Education should therefore be responsive to the changing needs of a community. These changing needs therefore provides basis for reviewing or designing the curriculum.

Dampson & Apau (2019), recommends that in designing a curriculum for a school, there is the need to take into consideration the values that are upheld by the local people, their needs, aspirations, and problems encountered by the society or community in which the school is found. For example, if Ghana wants to build an agrarian society, the curriculum to be developed should concentrate on activities that will transform its products into experts in the agricultural sector.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CURRICULUM
In any purposeful activity there is the need for an objective. It provides us with a sense of direction. Objectives are statements that describe the endpoints or desired outcomes of the curriculum, a unit, a lesson plan or learning activity.

Objectives aid students, teachers and parents by specifying the direction of the curriculum and goals. Curriculum objectives according to Aboagye (2003) are generally obtained from society, disciplines and the nature of learners.

Arguably, objectives are among the sensitive elements of every curriculum. Objectives basically refer to anticipated outcome of a particular programme.

In other words, they define projections enshrined in a monitored course of a study. Curriculum objectives therefore can be viewed broadly as specific statements of educational intention which delineates (describe, draw, explain) either general or specific outcomes (Wilson, 2004). The objectives guide teaching and learning and as well define both learning and learners' expectation.

The pre-tertiary curriculum framework which is standard-base spells out two (2) categories of objectives. They are the general objectives and specific objectives. (Each subject curriculum has its formulated general objectives and specific objectives.) Every curriculum objective should be concise, understandable, measurable and feasible for teachers and learners alike to accomplish.

The following are the broad and general objectives:

i.   **Provide learners with knowledge:** This means the syllabus give learners up to date knowledge in the various domains (skills) that is cognitive, values and attitudes and psychomotor skills. This is what the syllabus aims at, in developing in the learners. This can be achieved when learners are encouraged to fully participate in the learning process.

ii.   **Develop in learners the ability to apply:** This means as teachers and teachers to be, we are to develop in learners the ability to transfer what they have in a new situation, in order to promote a lifelong endeavor, confidence and competence in their livelihood.

iii.   **To understand Ghana's History:** Another general objective of the curriculum is to instill in learners an understanding of Ghana's history which talks about important past events like Local Industries, Chieftaincy, coming of the Europeans, Governors of Ghana before independence, how Ghana gained independence, our culture and rights and responsibilities as citizens.

iv.   **Inclusive Education:** Inclusive education means creating an opportunity for citizens to be educated, irrespective of one's ethnic background or religion background, one's health status or social status. Inclusive education is important because all children can be part of educational activities and develop a sense of belonging and to become better prepared for life. In classroom situation, all learners must be fully involved in all activities.

v.   **Promote Financial Literacy:** Financial literacy is the ability to understand and effectively use various financial budgeting, management and investing in order to be successful in their financial activities. There are five key components of financial literacy: earn, spend, save and invest, borrow and protect.

Other objectives include:
- Promotion of mathematics (as a foundational building block to learning)
- Promotion of Ghanaian language
- Promoting knowledge about the Environment and climate

NOTE: These general broad objectives are the core foundation of all general objectives formulated for every subject curriculum. Again, it is important to note that the new subject curricular use the term "content standard" for general objectives (NaCCA, Teacher, Resource pack, 2019)

2.2: SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE GHANAIAN BASIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM.
The word specific means precise, concise or definite. In relation to specific objectives, one can say that they are specific statements setting measurable expectations for what learners should know and be able to do (UNESCO, IBE 2019).

Specific objectives always find their source from stated general objectives. In other words, specific objectives in the Ghanaian basic school curriculum are derived from general objectives. In the new subject curricula, specific objectives are captures as learning/performance indicators.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES.
There is a strong linkage (connection) between general objectives and specific objectives of the curriculum. This means that both categories exert influence on each other. That is, they work hand in hand to ensure that learners demonstrate the knowledge, skill and values expected of them at the end of an educational programme The levels of relationship can be seen in both differences and similarities.

DIFFERENCES

1. General objectives spell out broad intended learning outcomes (Educational expectations). Specific objectives outline specific measurable intended learning outcome. For instance, a general objective may be stated requiring learners to identify causes of environmental pollution, but specific objective may ask learners to identify 4 causes of environmental pollution.

2. Specific objectives are driven by general objectives. That is, specific objectives are carved from general statements.

3. The realization or achievement of specific objectives leads to the attainment of general objectives. This implies that successful achievement of specific objectives naturally addresses stated general objectives.

SIMILARITIES

1. Both objective statements take into consideration, values and attitudes as well as cross-cutting issues.

2. General objectives and specific objectives do not operate on different or separate assessment forms and procedures. Rather, they rely on forms of assessment and assessment procedures to determine successful learning across the domains of learning (i.e., cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains)

3. Both depends on pedagogical approaches in lesson delivery.

4. General and specific objectives are both stated in verbal terms/forms. This means that both require learners to demonstrate observable learning behaviors before, during and after learning.

ACTIVITY
1. In your view, how do you understand the term "curriculum objectives"?
2. With reference to the Ghanaian basic school curriculum, what are general objectives of the curriculum?
3. What are specific objectives with reference to the Ghanaian basic curriculum?
4. State two (2) objective statements for each of the categories of objectives
   a. General objectives
   b. Specific objectives
5. Discuss five (5) relationships between objectives and general objectives.

2.3: THE CURRICULUM CONTENT

This has to do with the selection of subject matter. It involves selecting subject units and topics that constitute, for example, a syllabus or course outline and a curriculum.

Curriculum content simply means the totality of what is to be taught in a school system. The content component of teaching learning situations comprises the important facts, principles, attitudes and values, skills, knowledge, theories and generalizations that learners are exposed to. For a given objective to be attained there must be experiences that give the learners an opportunity to practice the kind of behavior implied by the objective. For example, if an objective states that the student must develop interest in reading a wide variety of books, this objective cannot be achieved if students have no opportunity of reading many books.

There is need for psychological considerations when selecting curriculum content for a school. Learning experiences must be such that learners obtain satisfaction from carrying on the kind of behavior implied by the objectives. Learning experiences refer to any interaction, course, programme or other experiences in which learning takes place, whether it occurs in traditional

academic settings (schools' classroom) or non-traditional academic setting (outside of school's location).

According to Tyler, learning experiences are the interactions between the learner and the external conditions in the environment to which he/she can react. It is an activity, which may be planned by the class or teacher but performed by the learner for the purpose of achieving some important learning objectives. It is necessary to plan for learning experiences that will provide for the three domains as a strategy for multiple learning. A single learning experience should involve cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning; hence it should be comprehensive.

OVERVIEW OF THE CONTENT OF THE GHANAIAN BASIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM.
The content of the Pre-Tertiary Education curriculum comprises multiple elements/components; levels, number of subjects, subjects/pillars, assessment and evaluation procedures, instructional time, duration, among others. Each level has definite number of subjects that learners are expected to offer. The number of subjects increases as learners progress from one level to another. However, instructional time duration (period) remains same for some of the levels but increases at certain stages.

At the early years or kindergarten level (KG1&KG2), learners are to offer four (4) subjects; Literacy, Numeracy, Creative Art and Our World Our People with these integrated themes: History, RME, Geography, Science, Physical Education (P.E.) in a span of two years.

The Lower Primary level (B1-B3) are to offer six (6) subjects; Numeracy, Language and Literacy (using dual immersion approaches), Science, Creative Arts which basically shall focus on these three (3) aspects: Visual, Performing Arts and Life Skills, History, and Our World Our People with the following integrated themes: RME, Agriculture, Computing, Geography and Physical Education. Religious and Moral Education (R.M.E) will however be an optional theme under this very subject (Our World Our People) at this level. Moreso, this is the level where learners are to be exposed to digital literacy hence the introduction of the subject 'Computing'.

At the Upper Primary (B4-B6), eight (8) subjects are to be offered in all. They are Mathematics, Literacy, which shall comprise English Language, Ghanaian Language and French. At this level, English language will be used as the medium of instruction. The remaining subjects include Science, Creative Arts with six (6) integrated themes: Music, Arts, Financial Literacy, Drama, Dance and Visual Arts, History, Our World Our People with at least four (4) integrated themes; R.M.E, Agriculture, Geography and Civics, Computing and Physical Education. Religious and Moral Education (R.M.E.) will however be an optional theme under this very subject (Our World Our People) at this level.

There are nine (9) subjects mounted to be offered at the J.H.S. level. They are Literacy (Ghanaian Language, (English Language Arts, French or Arabic), Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, Our World Our People (Religion, and Moral Education, Civics, Agriculture and Geography), Creative Design and Technology (Visual Art, Home Economics and Pre-Tech.), Computing with emphasis on application and Physical Education. At this level, learners can choose whether they would want to offer/study French or Arabic. Religious and Moral Education (R.M.E.) will continue

to be optional whereas the introduction of Creative Design and Technology shall focus on Visual Art, Home Economics and Pre-Technical Skills. Furthermore, digital literacy instruction or 'Computing' shall emphasize on application.

2.4: CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION
This refers to how teachers deliver instruction and assessment using specified resources provided in a curriculum.

Curriculum Implementation
According to Lewy as cited in Kankam-Boadu and Asare-Danso (2015:109), "Implementation means the open use of a programme throughout an entire school system". For instance, when the JHS programme started, schools were established in phases. The first set of schools were established in the regional capitals except for one region in the 1975/76 academic year. More schools were added in the regional capitals and eventually in the1987/8 academic year Junior Secondary Schools were established in all towns and villages in Ghana. It is at this stage that JSS curriculum can be said to have been implemented.

Processes Involved in/Stages of Curriculum Implementation.
Kankam-Boadu and Asare-Danso(2015) have suggested some stages involved in curriculum implementation. These include:

1. Design: this is the first phase of the implementation process. The purpose is to ensure that the instructional programme designed meet the desired objectives (content standard and indicators). In order to ensure success at this stage, it is incumbent on the designer to critically consider all the various elements of the curriculum i.e., the aims/goals/objectives, content, learning experiences as well as the resources available amongst others.

2. Try-out: here according to Bloom as cited in Kankam-Boadu and Asare-Danso (2015), there are three major types of data that can be collected. These are:
   a. Judgmental data: This involves the opinion of those who have used the instructional programme, for example, teachers, learners, supervisors, subject organizations etc.
   b. Observational data: These are data collected in the classroom on student-teacher interaction, methods of teaching among others.
   c. Student learning data: student learning data are collected during the various forms of assessment.

3. Field Trial: this is the phase where information about the new programme is gathered. The various sampling techniques are used in the collection of data. However, Bathory as cited in Kankam-Boadu and Asare-Danso(2015) stipulates that the respondents are basically students and teachers.

4. Dissemination: this stage is characterized by four components. These are:
   a. Translocation: this requires the planning and movement of people and resources required to implement a new programme. It calls for an effective in-service training for

teachers/facilitators whereas programme supervisors/authorities equally ensure that all necessary logistics/resources get to the schools

b. Communication: this simply involves the passage of information about the new programme from person to person (the general public or stakeholders). This can be achieved either through visits, media (radio, television, newspapers etc.).

c. Animation: This is where motivation is provided for implementers of the programme who in most situations are teachers and learners.
d. Re-education: This requires an intimate relationship and constant interaction between teachers (implementers) and curriculum designers (NaCCA) to ensure the former has in-depth understanding of the curriculum.

Implementation of a Standard-Based Curriculum
From the New Jersey Science Curriculum Framework as cited in the National Pre-Tertiary Education Curriculum Framework (2018), implementation of a standards-based curriculum can be achieved through the following steps:

1. Establish a coherent national philosophy to guide education.
2. Use evidence to guide research on learning and teaching.
3. Align the basic school curriculum by:
    a. Identifying the standards in the current curriculum
    b. Comparing established practices to the developed standards
    c. Recognizing curriculum deficiencies
4. Use the curriculum framework ads a model to develop activities related to content standards.
5. Implement the standards.
6. Align both teaching and assessment with the standards.
7. Provide ongoing professional development.

ACTIVITY
1. What is curriculum implementation?
2. Identify five (5) steps involved in the implementation of standard-based curriculum.
3. Outline any five (5) stages involve in objective-based curriculum implementation.

UNIT 3:   CURRICULUM AREAS

a) The Liberal content of the curriculum
b) The vocational content of the curriculum
c) Co-curricular activities and character training
d) Curriculum basics and other areas.

INTRODUCTION

The liberal content and the vocational content of the curriculum
Among the aims of education in Ghana includes the development of vocational skills for employment as well as preparing individuals to deal with complexity, diversity and change. The focus of this chapter is on the examination of the nature of liberal and vocational/technical content of the curriculum. The interrelationship between the two as well as the need for their integration in the school curriculum are explored. We would also look at the provisions that have been made in Ghana's education for the achievement of liberal and vocational aims of education.

OBJECTIVES
By the end of the session, you should be able to:
i. Show the difference between what is seen as a "liberal education" and "vocational education".
ii. Explain four benefits of vocational education
iii. Explain four benefits of liberal education
iv. Describe the provisions that have been made in our basic school for the achievement of both liberal and vocational aims of education.

3.1: LIBERAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Liberal Education
The word "liberal" comes from the Latin word "liber" which means "free". Liberal therefore indicates. Freedom.

One line of thinking is that liberal education was the term given to that education which was meant for the free citizen.

A second line of thinking is that liberal education is that form of education which "liberates" or "frees" the mind from ignorance, making the individual exercise a mind which is free to inquire, open and reflects on a lot of issues about the world.
After reading this bit, the whole thing may seem to you as a display of words. You are right if you think so, but if you also think of the thousands of years through which this concept or idea of liberal education has travelled, you will not expect a straightforward meaning.

Anyway, if you look at the two schools of thought mentioned in the last paragraph, the difference is not great and therefore can be merged. The free citizen at that time was the one who was in the

position of reflecting, enquiring and searching for the truth about the world, society and other issues. The slave was not in that position as the slave was the worker.

Liberal Education is that type of education which make the individual develop the habit of reflecting on issues, enquiring freely and searching for the truth about things without bias. It provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (eg. Science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest (Dampson, 2009). A liberal education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong intellectual and practical skill such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings

Vocational Education
Vocation is an <u>activity</u> performed by a person. This is the general meaning of the word. Take note of the word "activity". Another word for this could be an "engagement" or what engages a person. A person is said to have a vocation if he is engaged in producing something and what he produces is of value to society. Vocational educational is an education which tunes the individual to a specific or precise job. It leads the individual directly into a certain job. Vocational education also called Career education or Technical Education prepares learners for jobs that are based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic and totally related to specific trade, occupation or vocation, hence the term in which the learner participates. Dampson and Apau (2019), noted that up until the end of the twentieth century, vocational education focused on specific trades such as, for example, an authomobile mechanic or welder, and was therefore associated with the activities of lower social classes. Consequently, it attracted a level of stigma. However, as the labour market becomes more specialized, and economies demand higher levels of skill, governments and businesses are increasingly investing in the future of vocational education. Vocational education has diversified over the twentieth century and now exist in industries such as retail, tourism, information technology, funeral services and cosmetics, as well as in the traditional crafts and cottage industries.

The Benefits of Vocational Education
There are strong arguments for the development of vocational aims of education in Ghana.
We can look at the benefits of vocational development from a general level and a specific level. At the general level we can say that we need vocational education for the following purposes.
- To satisfy the manpower requirements of the country.
- To enable the individual earn a living in today's world of work.
- The realization that practical training is the best way to train a person for a vocation rather than theory.

However, in order to understand the benefits of vocational education, we need to go into more detail than this. Let us therefore consider the following specific benefits of vocational education:

1. Liberal education is "bookish". This is only favorable to children who can succeed at academic tasks and is not suitable for children who are not so academically endowed. The introduction of more vocational subjects would therefore serve the needs of many children who have their aptitudes in this area of life.

2. The resources that lay hidden in Ghana including our wood, minerals and metals, rich soils etc., can best be made use of if we are able to develop the suitable manpower resources to work them.

For example, more weavers would mean the need for more cotton which can be grown on our soils and then we can have more cloth made in Ghana.

3. Ghana has often relied on foreign states for our supply of skilled labor in the technical industries especially, mining, timber, brewing, locomotive engineering etc. A lot of scarce foreign exchange is often spent in importing such personnel. The development of Vocational Education in our schools would pave the way for these trades to be studied to higher levels here in Ghana so that we can reduce the importation of skilled labor. This will make us rely less on other countries and save foreign exchange.

4. Many school leavers in Ghana today are unemployed because school education has been "office" oriented. School leavers who could not be employed by the public service and company offices had no skill to engage in self-employment. They therefore continue to roam the streets, creating unemployment problem. With the introduction of vocational education, individuals who leave school can easily become self-employed on private jobs, and this would ease the unemployment problem.

5. The Economic Recovery Programme in Ghana has made it possible for foreign investors to bring capital into the country to establish industries. The establishment of these industries would be of great value to Ghana, as more manufactured goods will be produced locally for our consumption. However, foreign investors need to have a store of trained vocational workers to satisfy the industrialization plan of our country.

6. Many curriculum planners have accepted that a broad-based education (i.e., the provision of a wide variety of subjects experiences) is good for basic education since children have varied aptitudes and talents.

7. Children can then find out ways suit them for further education.

8. Together with the liberal subjects, Physical Education, Music, Arts and the sciences, the introduction of vocational subjects would help to broaden the base of education even further. This explains the inclusion of vocational subjects in the J.S.S. is important.

9. There is also the argument that hard work is a habit which is learnt and therefore an education which eliminates physical work from children for long periods of time is likely to instill laziness in them. The introduction of vocational education would promote the love for manual work among children who would therefore not grow up to look down upon such work as the case in the past.

The Benefits of Liberal Education
Some people have argued that the reason why today we have accountants, bankers, medical and legal professionals who are dishonest and corrupt is because we have relegated liberal education. We only concentrate on technical and professional knowledge and have largely left out that which touches the hearts and minds of people and make them do what is right, fair and just. It is the heart and the head (mind), which makes us human and reasonable.

Vocational education is mainly based on the use of the land. If education is to train the three "H" which are heart, head and hand, then over concentration on one is bad. We need liberal education to make us reflect on our deeds and make individuals more useful to the service of humanity.
Some of the specific arguments that have been raised about the benefits of liberal education include the following:

1. The human personality should be allowed to develop freely. The Greeks believed that a proper development of the human beings should start from the development of the mind.

2. Liberal education would enable people to understand the world better and to know their rights and responsibilities.

3. In Africa, some people are full of superstitions, taboos and cultural rules. As such, liberal education would be useful in opening the minds of the people to understand nature in a different way.

4. Liberal education helps an individual to understand and fit into the general culture of mankind.

   It must help to free an individual from his behavior determined by his culture. The individual in the village has his behavior determined by his culture only, and this prevents him from adopting any new modes of thinking or philosophies. In developing Liberal aims of education, the cultures of other areas are opened to the individual who is then free to adjust his behavior.

5. There was the early conception that the mind is an instrument which can be sharpened and later used. It was for this reason that preference was given to liberal subjects in the Elementary school. It was hoped that such subjects as Poetry, Latin, History, Mental etc. would sharpen the minds of the pupils so that they would perform better academically, in the later and other areas. However, some people do not agree with this. What is your view on this?

Obviously, liberal education cannot be replaced by vocational education. It is people's ambition to work which put pressures on the educational system to focus on more vocational aims of education. Hence, both liberal and vocational aims of education are important because they are two sides of the same coin.

Provisions for Liberal and Vocational Contents in Ghanaian Basic Educational.
We are now going to discuss an issue which would assist you to assess how adequate our educational system provides for the development of liberal and vocational aims of education.
An outline of liberal content of the basic school curriculum

LIBERAL CONTENT OF THE CURRICULUM (PRIMARY)
- Language and Literacy (Ghanaian Language, English Language and French Language)
- History
- Science
- Mathematics
- Our World Our People (RME, Agriculture, Computing, Geography, Physical Education, Civics)

VOCATIONAL CONTENT OF THE CURRICULUM (PRIMARY)
- Creative Arts (Visual Arts, Performing Arts and Life Skills)
- Creative Arts (Integrated Theme: Music, Arts, Financial Literacy Drama and Dance
- Computing

LIBERAL CONTENT OF THE CURRICULUM (JHS)
- Literacy (Ghanaian Language, English Language, French and Arabic)
- Mathematics
- Science
- History
- Physical Education
- Our world our people (RME, Moral Education, Civics, Geography, Agriculture)

VOCATIONAL CONTENT OF THE CURRICULUM (JHS)
- Creative Design and Technology (Visual Arts, Home Economics, Pre- Tech)
- Computing with Emphasis on Application.
- Our World Our People with emphasis on agriculture

3.3: THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIBERAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION.
It is important to point out that the roots of liberal education can be traced to Athens where it was reserved for the freemen (elites) while slaves were made to do manual jobs which were considered menial.

For those of us in developing nations where slavery is officially abolished, liberal education is no longer for people as in Aristocratic Athens. In addition, the content of liberal education has changed considerably from the classical liberal arts. For the wholistic development of the learner, it will not be very helpful to maintain a clear cut distinct between liberal and vocational education. The two groups should be integrated so that the curriculum becomes more comprehensive.

A close look at the two, liberal and vocational education will reveal that each contains elements of the other. It is reasonable to say therefore, that both types must not be separated or reduced to a single element.

Our environment is replete with problems. The education the child receives must equip him/her with skills to ensure his/her survival and not inert knowledge, which is valued for its own sake. The emphasis now is on action knowledge that is knowledge that has value. "The antithesis between a technical and a liberal education is fallacious. There can be no adequate technical education which is not liberal, and no liberal education which is not technical. There is no education which does not impact both technique and intellectual vision" (Akinpelu, 1981). In simple language, education should turn out pupil with something he knows well and something he can do well.

3.4: CO-CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES
Co-curricular activities are those activities, programmes and learning experiences that complement the regular curriculum and form part of a coordinated approach to an all-round education.

Co-curricular activities fuel one's learning by stimulating creative thoughts, improving social and organizational skills, developing one's interests and talents, and offers learners the chance to switch off and do something they really enjoy. Other benefits include relationship building, time management skills, developing self-esteem and exploring a plethora of interest.

A few examples of common educational opportunities that may be considered co-curricular include student newspapers, musical performances, art shows, debate competitions, sporting activities, school bands, recitations, science projects, etc. The above activities are sponsored by a school or college but are not part of the academic curriculum. However, they are acknowledged to be an essential part of the life of an educational institution.
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UNIT 4: CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES

Introduction

Curriculum activities are the structured learning events that the teacher takes children through both inside and outside the classroom. The purpose of these activities is to help learners accomplish the competencies or goals of the curriculum. Remember that we explained the curriculum as the planned and unplanned activities that help learners to achieve our aims of education. Well, that means curriculum activities do include both planned and unplanned ones. However, in this session we will focus on the planned ones because these are structured and are the ones that dominate. You will be learning a lot about different curriculum activities and how they designed or planned throughout your programme of study. In this course however, you will be introduced to the basic structure of curriculum activities. These include the time table which lays out when to do what in the school. We will also briefly discuss the lesson and lesson planning, which is the main event under which the activities are carried out. After that we will talk about the need for activities to be suitable to the child and then we will end the unit with a brief discussion about the environment of learning. We hope you will find this unit exciting as it covers issues you are quite familiar with.

Objectives
1.	Explain why the time-table is such an important tool for curriculum delivery.
2.	Describe the key elements of the lesson plan and what makes each important.
3.	Explain ways in which curricular activities can be made learner-centred.
4.	Explain the ways in which the learning environment can be used to improve learner performance.

4.1: Time table planning

A time table is a list of the times when particular activities or events will happen. It is schedule of events, which organises school activities throughout the day, week, term or year. For each activity, it specifies a stating and an ending time. In our schools, the time table is specified for a week and is the same for each week throughout the term. One activity specified on the time table is usually called a period. How many minutes do a period have in the schools you know? Is it uniform for all schools and classes? If there are differences, what accounts for these differences?

The number of minutes each period has is known as the <u>allocated time</u>. However, teachers need to translate the available allocated time into learning, through <u>instructional time</u>. Therefore as a teacher you will have to minimise the time your learners waste through daydreaming, talking, joking etc, which reduces the effective use of the allocated time. That means in teaching you should try increase the learners' <u>time on task</u> or <u>engaged time</u>. If you are able to do this, you will maximise the use of the allocated time, by increasing instructional time. Now, what we have said here refers to what you do during one period. For the whole day however, the total time available for all activities is the <u>mandated time</u>. This is because it is established by the state, to be used for both academic and non-academic activities for the day. How many hours is the mandated time for learning in Ghana?

Time is a valuable and limited classroom resource that must be wisely used. This is why the time table is important because it prevents wastage of time and energy. Also this is why the some concepts have been underlined in the paragraph preceding this one. The intention is to call your attention to the fact that having a time table alone is not enough to prevent time wastage but what is important is how you use the time allocated on it.

There are other reasons why the time table is important though:

- It directs the attention of learners to one thing at a time and this improves the focus of both the teacher and learners.
- Also, without a time table, both teachers and pupils will not be able to prepare properly. They will not know which materials to take to class each day and at which time.
- The duration of the activities will also make teachers and learners aware of how much content to prepare for.
- Another important reason for having a time table is that the use of resources in the school can be coordinated. For instance who uses the science lab or globe at any time?

Now, let us look at who plans the time table and why? In mentioning, the concept of mandated time above, we indicated that the time table is prepared by the state and that is why it is mandated. However it is professionals who prepare it on behalf of the state. This is to achieve uniformity across the country. Several factors are however taking into account in preparing the time table:

First of all, the number of subjects or courses involved. This will include the number of compulsory and elective subjects students have to take. Also, the importance or weighting attached to the subjects. Core subjects usually have more periods. Another important consideration is the nature of the subjects, because subjects that require a lot of abstract thinking should not be taught simultaneously. It is better to follow an a more abstract subject with a more practical subject. What might also be considered is the availability of classrooms and other facilities, the availability of teachers and the interests of students. These issues should make you realise that the preparation of a time table requires care considerations if the time table is to be useful.

4.2: Lesson planning

A lesson is a learning event. It involves a series of *sequenced activities* that learners go through in order to achieve *set objectives*. This means the sequencing of the activities needs to be properly done for it to achieve results. According to Slavin (1991) a lesson involves a *process* by which information, *skills or concepts* are communicated from the teacher to the students. Teachers sometimes ask their pupils to find out things on their own, from other pupils or from sources like books and computers etc. These can provide important information for pupils. However the most common modes of learning in our schools is through the lesson.

A number of important issues come out of what we have stated about a lesson so far. Some of them are conveyed by the words in italics. One of them is that it is a *process*. This means it has parts which must be linked. What are those parts and how are they linked? We will soon look at this. The second is that it has a purpose, which is, to achieve *set objectives*.

These objectives must be carefully identified and clearly stated. The third is that it is to impart *skills* and *concepts* or knowledge. This means it has a content which must also be carefully selected and tailored to suit the learners.

Dear learner, notice the statement that objectives must be clearly identified. Also notice the statement that content must be carefully selected. In fact, every issue in lesson planning needs a careful concern. For instance, the characteristics of your learners must be clearly known and your selection of teaching strategy should be carefully done to fit the content. Lesson planning is therefore an activity which requires skills. The skills needed will be exposed to you in this programme, but in this course you will be introduced to the important elements involved in the *process* of lesson planning as lesson planning is a critical part of knowledge about the curriculum.

Lesson planning needs to be done with commitment. The amount of benefit and satisfaction leaners will gain from a lesson depends on the lesson plan. With a good lesson plan, the lesson delivery is more likely to be successful than not. Commitment is important because you need to take pains to identify the necessary strategies, materials etc that will make your lesson effective. Next, lesson planning requires co-operation and perseverance. You need to involve other teachers and seek their opinions in order to do a good job. Also after teaching you need to take another look at your lesson plan to see what you need to revise before your next lesson. This means you need to persevere.

Now, having discussed what lesson planning is about, let us turn our attention to the process of lesson planning. Here, we need to note the elements of the lesson plan and what makes each of them good.

- A lesson plan is guided by the *background* characteristics of the learners especially their age. It also includes some specifications of the lesson which influence your decisions about what to put into it such as the class, time, duration, topics etc. What do you think are the others? Why must you state these variables? Why do I call them variables?

- Every lesson plan has a *structure*. A structure refers to the elements or parts that it is made up of and how they are related. The elements every lesson plan should have include the objectives, relevant previous knowledge, introduction and teaching and learning materials. It also includes teaching and learning activities, core content and feedback strategies, and evaluation. Furthermore we have closure activities, distributed practice, assignments, advance preparatory assignments and remarks. Now, you need to note that the terms used for these elements usually differ from country to country. For instance, distributed practice is known as homework in Ghana and in our new Educational system the terms strands and sub-strands are used for topics and sub-topics etc.

- Lesson plans are expected to conform to a *format* determined either by the country, state, district, or school. For instance in some cases the plan is written vertically and in prose form. In other cases it is horizontal in a block format. It could be a combination. In either case you need to ensure that the necessary rubrics mentioned in the structure are included in one way or another.

- Every lesson plan should have *objectives* that are clear or unambiguous. Another term might be used such learning targets, benchmarks, indicators or learning standards, depending on the contexts. In any case they need to be specific, achievable, measurable and appropriate for the topic/class? Such objectives need to be related to the domain of the topic (cognitive, psycho-motor, and effective). You will learn more about writing lesson objectives in another course on teaching methods. Remember here that these objectives must enable you to cover the expectations of the curriculum.

- The lesson plan should involve a step by step *presentation* of learning activities. The steps or order of the activities should follow a logical sequence and timed appropriately if possible. The lesson content and activity should be relevant and appropriate to the topic, class and age level of the learners. Content should also be sufficient for the duration so that time is not wasted.

- The lesson activities should start with an introduction. The introduction should focus on one or more intentions. The intentions may be to stimulate interest or curiosity on topic, revise or explore previous knowledge, or provide advance organizers for the current lessons. Introductions must be very short but they should be powerful in order to make the learners anxious to learn. If the introduction is not well planned, it can switch learners' interest off the topic. Dear learners, also note that the lesson introduction should link meaningfully and smoothly with the first activity.

- We have explained that the lesson involved a series of *sequenced activities*. The activities must be carefully selected. Lesson activities are often called strategies or methods. There is the need to *vary* them so as to maintain learners' interest. Teachers in Ghana commonly use the questioning technique too often. Many other techniques such as role plays, case studies and story based discussions, brainstorms, demonstrations and many more need to be used. Remember that these activities need to be *interesting* enough to make learners interested in *participating* and not feeling bored. Also remember that the learners' *age* should guide you in deciding on activities that will be interesting to them. Learners' age should also guide how fast you will proceed in teaching or going conducting the activities. You will be covering these strategies in your lesson on teaching methods. Note however that in curriculum delivery the most important skill at all levels of teaching is the ability to select and use the strategy that is most relevant for the kind of content you are teaching. There is a lot to this statement and you will be learning a lot more about how to get this done.

- The learning environment is another thing to look at in lesson planning. The activities you plan to engage in will depend on the materials available in a particular learning environment. For instance, the materials you will use in teaching a particular topic in a particular locality may differ from another. This factor should be considered in writing your lesson plan. Conditions of the classroom form part of the learning environment. If for example a classroom has inadequate furniture you can decide to take some lesson outdoors. In the lesson plan you will also need to state the instructional materials you will use. Also known as teaching and learning resources they include cardboard drawings, chalkboard

sketches, conceptual maps, flow maps, concrete objects, using pupils as aids to demonstrate etc.. You will need to describe how you will use them and when you will use them.

- In the lesson plan you also have to indicate way you will conclude your lesson. It is important to note that what learners will remember most immediately after a lesson are what you highlighted in this conclusion. Many of the other lesson content will take time and revision to remember. Therefore your conclusion strategy should be well selected. Are you going to present a summary of the lesson or let lesson provide self-expressions of things learned? Are you going to ask them questions on issues of importance which you expect them to remember or request them to relate what they have just learned to real life situations? Whichever strategy you choose should be appropriate for the topic and especially the objectives you set for the lesson. In actual fact, the objectives of the lesson should be in your view as you plan your conclusion, which is also called closure. Why is it called closure? Discuss this in class. However, you need to make sure this closure is interesting and that learners are actively involved in it. Remember it is their closure to take along not your closure.

- One final feature you need to consider in your lesson planning is how you will evaluate the lesson. What will you look back on to tell you whether your lesson has been successful or not? You can choose to state a few of the things you will look at. For instance whether your feedback strategy was okay; whether you were able to sufficiently correct learners misunderstanding; whether objectives were achieved and the evidence of that etc. If the teacher does not reflect on a lesson to find out what to improve, then such a teacher can never learn from experience. Learning from experience only works when the learning is consciously done and not assumed.

Okay, dear learner, this is just the beginning of a lot of professional issues you will be learning about concerning how to conduct curriculum activities. A lot will follow as has been mentioned here so let us end the discussion on lesson planning here. This does not end the unit anyway. We will next take a brief look at one critical issue that should guide all aspects of curriculum activities. This includes inside or outside classroom activities, as well as inside and outside school activities. That issue is the need to make the child the centre of all our teaching efforts.

4.3: Ensuring use of child-centred activities

In structuring a curriculum for schools, the planners have options in deciding an organisational pattern for it. Usually these organisational patterns range between two extremes, such as being subject-centred on one side and child-centred on the other. The subject-centred curricular organisation tends to be content-oriented. On the other hand the child-centred curricular organisation tends to be child-oriented. In many cases, curriculum planners may choose a combination of several sorts. The choice often depends upon the philosophical position of the country or district on the purpose of education. In Ghana, our curriculum prefers a child-centred orientation. Therefore let us briefly look at how the curriculum can ensure the use of learner centred activities as expected by this approach.

A child-centred curriculum can be described as an activity curriculum. This means that it focuses on children's needs, interests and activities. In its extreme form, activities are planned jointly by the teacher and children. The teacher is seen as a stimulator and a facilitator. In the child-centred curriculum therefore children control the learning situation. This makes some people see it as an over-sentimental attitude towards children. What do you think about this view? As teachers we can never be oversentimental about making children the centre of teaching and learning because there is a lot we know about the developmental nature of children which makes them different from adults. Child centered learning is a response to what we already know about children, including their developmental nature, interests and characteristics. Basically, the idea of child-centered learning tries to do the following things:

- ✧ Acknowledge that children's need should determine what they learn at school.
- ✧ Base new learning tasks on what pupils already know. This means that previous knowledge about the topic should be considered.
- ✧ Apply the knowledge of child psychology and development to the content and methods of learning and teaching.
- ✧ Recognize the characteristics that distinguish children of different ages. Thus, children of different primary school classes may differ in many aspects of life. What they are capable of doing at any given moment may therefore differ. This means that all activities for learning should be planned to cater for their individual differences

Now, let us look more specifically at why it is important to ensure the use of child centred activities in teaching them:

- ➤ Children learn better through some form of play activity or the other depending on their age. There are a lot of learning materials that can be used to support them in this respect. If children are empowered to make choices and given enough room to operate as teachers guide and direct their learning they are less likely to get bored with learning.

- ➤ Children learn better when they interact more with one another. In doing so, they involve in learning several hidden curriculum attitudes such as how to control their emotions and how to act as leaders and make decisions. Using child-centred activities therefore leads to a lot more learning than we think.

- ➤ Another reason for ensuring child-centred activities is that it makes learners learn in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. New material or interesting interactions stimulate the natural curiosity of children. School is therefore enjoyable and children are always regular and punctual to school.

- ➤ Also, the use of child-centred activities ensures that teachers will respect the individuality of learners and encourage them to develop their potentials.

Dear learners, we hope you are beginning to realise that when reading through the curriculum materials you use to teach like the syllabus and textbooks, you will have to be thinking about

your classroom and the learners. You should be thinking about how to make the delivery learner centred. Some of the ways you may consider is through the instructional materials you choose to use and how you plan for children to learn both independently and from one another. You will also need to plan the strategies through which you will coach them and help them overcome their individual challenges. Other ways include the following:

- Let children explore in learning

- Plan the questions you will be asking children and the tasks you will be giving them.

- You must know the content well and break down content into steps that target specific competencies.

- Make children responsible for their own learning as you give them autonomy.
   (You will need to discuss all these issues further in your face-to-face meetings)

Having looked at the issues around learner-centred learning, let us now turn our attention to the environment of teaching. The delivery of the curriculum is done within an environment which has to be considered and well used if good results are to occur from teaching.

4.4: Teaching from the environment.

In this discussion on curriculum activities, we will need to look at how we can best manipulate the environment of teaching to support child learning. A famous psychologist who was interested in the effect of the environment in teaching called Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested the importance of the quality of the environment in influencing behaviour. Teaching occurs within an environment and if the environment stimulates the interests of learners, arouses their curiosity and makes it possible for them to display and present their work, learning will be more effective. Environmental forces can provide supportive, neutral or preventive conditions for the effective implementation of the curriculum. The idea means that teachers need to try to structure the environment in order to maximise the benefit of learning.

In this context, we will now briefly discuss the kinds of environments we are referring to. First of all we will define the environment to include the physical, psychological and emotional forces operating within school or classroom. For instance if desks and chairs are not appropriate for children, or learners do not have sufficient resources from home or school to help in their learning, then we can say the environment does not sufficiently facilitate learning. This refers to the physical environment, which is the commonly understood on. However, generally we can consider the physical, psychological and emotional learning environment. The physical environment refers to the design and set-up of the classroom, furniture, spaces and equipment of learning. The psychological environment is the way learners are encouraged to engage with the curriculum, how trust is built, making sure that learners have opportunities to participate, ask questions, take risks and receive feedback. The emotional environment involves how teachers encourage diversity and inclusivity, rewarding and reinforcing all individuals, supporting the emotional needs of learners and encouraging self-expression.   Therefore the learning

environment is more than physical facilities, but includes a space in which learners feel safe and supported in their learning as well as inspired by their surroundings.

In the classroom, teachers need to do a lot to provide children with such a safe and supportive environment. For instance, if learners feel threatened, either by the teacher or other children, the learning environment is not conducive. Some of the things teachers need to consider in making their learning environment more supportive include the following:

- Consider the layout of the classroom and how to make it support learning. The seating arrangements, type of furniture and crowding.

- Other environmental conditions such as noise, lighting, temperature and equipment need to be conducive.

- Encourage learners to become part of creating their own learning environment through contributing, in terms of decorations, artwork, discussions with them on how to make this possible etc.

- Consider the views of connectivism theory of learning which proposes that children connect with each other by learning in groups, connect what they are learning with their lives and hobbies and connect learning with digital media and technologies which excite children.

In discussing the child's learning environment, the home should not be left out. As far as the home is concerned you should consider the following:

- Teachers can share information with parents on materials needed by leaners and other ways they can support their children's learning at home.

- Collaborate with parents to support children having difficulty or challenges with learning.

- Encourage parents to provide children with learning space and time at home.

- Help parents to monitor and guide the learning habits of their children at home.

Dear learner, as indicated earlier, you will discuss these more closely during your face-to-face sessions. You will also encounter this issue again in your future courses. Therefore we will end here on this sub-topic. This also ends the unit on curriculum activities. We hope you enjoyed reading and discussing the issues here and will do further thinking on them to improve your classroom efforts.

UNIT 5: THE CURRICULUM AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION
National development can be considered as a process of improving or changing for the better, the political and socio-economic conditions of the people within a nation. It is a positive or valuable phenomenon, which all nations are vigorously working to achieve. In development however, it is only the human resource which is active. All other resources are passive until the human initiative involves them. Hence the development of human resource is most essential for national development. Human resource development is undertaken by education and is done to assist in achieving national development. Education does this by promoting the transmission of political, economic and social ideas and skills. It also introduces changes to what already exists. You therefore realize that we cannot complete our discussion of the curriculum without trying to assess what we do to make it useful to national development.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES:

It is expected that the reader will be able to do the following after reading through this chapter.

i.   Describe any four challenges that militate against curriculum and national development agenda
ii.   Examine four roles of innovation in curriculum and national development.
iii. Explain any four factors that cause curriculum innovations
iv.   Describe any three curricula provisions that promote economic development of the nation and identify any two economic benefits the nation can gain from a well-planned curriculum
v.   Describe any three curricula provisions that promote political development of the nation and identify two political benefits from a well-executed curriculum

In broader terms, development can therefore be defined as a process of structural change in the economic, political, social and cultural domains of individuals, communities and nations. In this sense, education is a crucial aspect of development (Janaki, 2006). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in its first human development report of 1990 described human development as "a process of enlarging people's choices". Development is therefore all-encompassing. It involves people living longer and healthier lives; people having access to resources needed for a decent standard of living, people being well informed; people knowing their rights; people having families they can manage; and in this modern era; people informed of the dangers surrounding them and how to survive amidst these dangers.

Education as part of the process of development should create a conducive environment for people, individually and collectively, to develop their full potential and to have a reasonable chance of leading productive and creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests.

Development means "improvement in a country's economic and social conditions" more specifically, it refers to improvements in ways of managing an area's natural and human resources in order to create wealth and improve people's lives.

Development is empowerment, it is about local people taking control of their own lives, expressing their own demands and finding their own solutions to their problems.

5.1: CHALLENGES AND CURRICULUM LAPSES

Curriculum development is influenced by a multitude of factors. These factors could be societal or social, political, economic, educational, technological, gender factors, psychological, etc.

➢ **Financial/Economic Constraints**

Effective curriculum development cannot take off without adequate funds for field trials of the new programme, for the provision of new teaching and learning materials and for the training and payment of personnel to implement the revised curriculum. For example, it was for the lack of funds that the Education Sector Reforms, even though designed in 1973/74 could not be implemented until 1987 when it was possible to do so with assistance from the World Bank.

It is on record that US $45 million was provided for science, agricultural and technical skills for the Junior Secondary School Programme. Secondly, the Curriculum Research Development directorate was charged to produce manuscripts in a variety of subject areas. These were financial burdens which Ghana was not resourced enough to shoulder prior to the reforms.

➢ **Lack of Relevant Equipment and Instructional Materials**

Without the relevant textbooks, equipment and instructional materials, curriculum development may be still born. The shortage of books and teaching materials for use in schools, unsuitable equipment e.g., broken tables and chairs are a hindrance to effective curriculum development. Textbooks used in schools may also be obsolete, foreign based and so make the material learned remote from what pertains in children's environment. These tend to impede curriculum changes or development.

It was in this vein that the Curriculum Research Development Division was requested to produce manuscripts in a variety of subject areas for printing by local publishers for the J.S.S. programme.

➢ **Conservative Attitude of Parents, Teachers and Educational Authorities**

The introduction of science and technology, economic development, the explosion of knowledge, etc. are external factors which call for revision in the curriculum. Internally, the school itself may feel that what is taught and how it is taught can better be organized with better results to the learner. However, conservative ideas, religious fanatism, customs and traditions of parents, teachers and even educational administrators block the adoption of innovative proposals.

Centralized and Standardized Nature of The Curriculum

In Ghana, the curriculum is centrally planned in terms of the content material, syllabus, examination etc. by the Curriculum Research and Development Division now National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) of the Ghana Education Service. The prepared syllabuses

and timetables are then sent to various schools. Teachers are thus denied the chance of initiating changes to suit their localities.

> ➢ **Poor Communication About the Nature and Objectives of a Designed Curriculum**

No effective curriculum development will take place without the teacher at the center of it. It is therefore important to see to it that the teachers who are to implement the programme are adequately informed and prepared to handle the curriculum effectively. This calls for the running of in-service programmes and redesigning pre-service teacher training programmes not only to equip them with the requisite knowledge and skills for its effective implementation but also to ensure that they know the nature and objectives of the designed curriculum. It was precisely for this reason that the Three Year Post Secondary Teacher training programme was introduced in 1975 and restructured to meet the needs of the J.S.S. programme.

> ➢ **Demands of External Examination Bodies/Entrance Requirements to Higher Institutions and Vocations**.

Curriculum improvements outside the syllabuses for examination are usually rejected by students since examinations are strictly based on syllabuses. Examination as well as entrance requirements to higher institutions and vocations (which are determined by examination results) place restrictions on the school curriculum and dictate what should be taught. Unfortunately, however, examination results which is used as a method of assessment favor pupils who are academically brilliant. Less gifted pupils who are interested in non-academic subjects are handicapped.

> ➢ **Failure of Earlier Curricula Reform Projects**

Teachers may reject curricula reforms based on their own experience. They may have tried earlier reform projects and may have had little or no success with them because of poor training, poor administration or inadequate funding. For example, many were those who argued that once earlier attempts by previous governments to blend liberal and vocational educational education had failed, they did not see how the efforts of the Provisional National Defense Council in the same direction could succeed.

> ➢ **Political Issues**

Different governments call for new structures and content of the education or new programmes of education only throw old programmes overboard based on their own political agenda. For example, the PNDC government's determination to effectively blend vocational and liberal education resulted in the introduction of the Junior Secondary School (JSS) and the Senior Secondary School (SSS) programmes. Similarly, interference by pressure groups and other personalities influencing the direction of education also abound in Ghana e.g., The Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT)

> ➢ **Link Between Curriculum and Qualification**

Many Ghanaians look down on vocational and technical education. Since the days of colonialism, any attempts to revise the curriculum in favor of vocational and technical education has always been a disastrous failure. For example, Ghanaian professionals who were educated abroad queried colonial administrators as to why they were replacing the grammar type of education which they saw as another version of making Ghanaians 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' (Williams, 1962).

5.2: THE ROLE OF INNOVATION

Curriculum holds an outstanding place when seeking to promote innovation in education, as it reflects the vision for education by indicating knowledge, skills and values to be taught to students. Innovation means doing things in new ways, and in curriculum, it means adopting different designs for learning to help make learning more meaningful for 21st century learners.

Curriculum innovations involves the introduction of something new in curriculum that deviates from the standard practice, often because society has changed and so must the curriculum. The role of curriculum innovation is very important as it stimulates teachers and taught to explore new ideas, research hidden facts and to investigate new tools to find out something hidden. Innovation emphasizes variety of ways of finding out the solution to different problems. It also facilitates and encourages students to creatively think and analyze something and to unravel multiple problems, (Hausman & Johnson, 2014).

Curriculum innovation is crucial because some practices in education have become outmoded and as a result, learning experiences should be redesigned to be more relevant to student interests, abilities and culture. With a more diverse population of students who have a broad range of abilities, it is relevant that innovation be linked to curriculum goals.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE CURRICULAR INNOVATION

Changes in the curriculum can be quite expensive. They may involve a change in the structure of the school system as occurred with the introduction of the Junior Secondary School. They may also involve changes in subject or even the content of the subjects.

They could also be changes related to the management of the curriculum, either within schools or in the examinations system. Whatever the nature of the changes, costs of some sorts are involved in books, retraining and the like. Nevertheless, curricula innovations are popular and occur for one or more of the following reasons.

➢ Changing needs of the society. These occur over time. The social, economic and political aspirations of a nation may change. For instance, Ghana aspires today to improve the education of girls so that they can contribute better to national development. We also desire to have a more morally upright society and so have introduced Religious and Moral Education as a subject.

➢ The orientation of new governments could also be responsible for curricular changes. For instance, the vision 2020 plan involved the FCUBE of the then NDC government in Ghana. In addition, the new standard base curriculum emphasizes the acquisition of the 4Rs: Reading, writing, arithmetic and creativity.

➢ The demands of pressure groups including donor agencies, parents and teachers can result in curricular changes. For instance, the current in-in-out programme for colleges of education was a proposal from donors. Also, there was pressure from parents for the three-year senior high school programme to be changed to four years.

➢ The desire to introduce modernization into our educational system can also result in curricular changes. For instance, information technology is gradually expanding and would soon be an examinable subject at senior high School level. Shorthand has lost its value in schools.

➢ Sometimes there is the desire to use the results of educational research to improve educational delivery. In such a case, some changes could be made. For instance, research which suggested that community participation in educational decision-making would lead to more serious classroom work by teachers has led to greater efforts to involve communities in the running of schools.

➢ Changing demands of examination bodies and higher institutions can also result in the changes in the curriculum. Some of them may relate to subject combinations, number of subjects and similar changes

Curriculum Provisions for Social Development
Social development can be looked at in two ways. One way is to consider the social development of the individual. Another way is to look at how the nation develops socially. By looking at how the nation develops socially, we are considering an improvement in peace, harmony, respect among the ethnic groups, respect and harmony between the rich and poor, general good conduct and concern for one another. Just think of a good village you know. A good village has many of these characteristics mentioned above and we can therefore say a good village has a good social interaction or social development.

Now, good social development at the national level of the course occurs if the individuals in the nation are well trained socially. This is because the nation is made up of a connection of individuals.

The curriculum applies to individual learners in schools. The provisions in it, therefore, help improve the social conduct of individuals. However, the eventual benefits of this should be the collective development of the nation. The curricular provisions for social development include the following.

➢ The direct teaching of social and moral issues under some relevant subjects can be very helpful if the topics are well taught.

The topics being well taught means that the social and moral lessons in them should be adequately explained to pupils. The introduction of religious and moral education is a response to moral degeneration in Ghanaian society is an example of an attempt to use direct teaching to improve behavior of the people. Other subjects that contain social lessons include Social Studies, English and Ghanaian Language among others.

➢ The school provides a very good avenue for several group activities. There are class groups, group seating, group work during lessons, group and school competitions etc. Group activities provide an avenue for learners to respect each other's views, developing solidarity

or group feeling, planning for group objectives and enjoying social work. As they do these, learners continue to see the benefits of communal activities. You do realize from this list of benefits of group work that a lot is lost in a school where group activities are not promoted.

➢ There are several school activities that either promote group solidarity or provide avenues for the teaching of social attitude. School assemblies for instance are a forum for social lessons, application of sanctions for poor conduct and the like.

Also, sports and games, cultural activities and other co-curricular activities are useful.

➢ Another important school activity that is responsible for our social and moral development is Guidance and Counselling.

This is a service capable of ensuring that most pupils in the schools get the right support to develop socially.

➢ There are other avenues, which bring the school and community together. Open days, speech and prize and other school functions that bring parents, teachers and pupils into interaction are socially rewarding.

Now, having identified these curricular provisions for social development, let us add the benefits that will occur if these provisions are used properly. It is these benefits that are responsible for the national development we are talking about. They include:

● An increased ability to identify social problems and initiate collective solutions. In fact, this is the focus of decentralization in politics and the operation of many NGOs. Communities are expected to work collectively in identifying and finding solutions to their problems. If good training in collective dealings is offered in the school, this necessary attitude will be there to support community development.

● Living practices are often as a result of the social attitudes we acquire from school. These include our preparedness to keep our environment clean, to practice good sanitation, accept health and family planning advice and so on. If learners are properly handled through the school curriculum, they become better prepared to accept these practices, which the whole society accepts to be good. Otherwise, we have a situation where several people do not heed those practices that are good for us all.

● Good social training from the school would also help us to improve our recreation practices.

Curriculum Provisions for Economic Development
In fact, some of the curricular provisions for the different aspects of development may be similar. For that reason, explanations that have already been offered for it under social development would not be repeated. What would be stated however is how that provision applies to the current aspects of development. As far as economic development is concerned, we are referring to how school education, through curriculum, can train learners to help improve economic productivity and standards of living. The curricula activities that promote these include the following.

The direct teaching of subjects and skills. In this case, the teaching of subjects that are both directly and indirectly relevant to work and behavior at workplaces are involved. Such vocational subjects

may not be prominent in the basic school, but all the basic school subjects set the foundation for later vocational learning and work behavior.

> ➢ Visits and field trips to industries, mines, farms and other workplaces are important.
They stimulate the willingness of learners to engage in some vocations. They also see how hard the people engaged in that vocation work.

> ➢ Some schools have activities on their curriculum that engage learners on practical economic activities. These of course contribute to skill development and the love for work.
> ➢ Guidance and counselling activities in school also help learners to choose careers according to their aptitude and interest. This is important for productivity as the output of the people in the work would depend on aptitude and interest in the jobs they find themselves.

Curriculum Provisions for Political Developments

The development of appropriate political behavior includes knowledge of the political and legal structures which safeguard individual rights. In Ghana we can talk of the commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), the National Commission on Children (NCCE) and the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) of the police service.

However, political development goes beyond just knowledge of political institutions. It includes the following:

- Development of leadership qualities
- A knowledge of political rights and obligations
- Respect for political and traditional authority
- The development of patriotism, loyalty and dedication to the state
- Understanding and working with the democratic structures and decision-making processes that have been established in the country.

Curricula activities that promote political developments include:

> ➢ The direct teaching of political issues within some subjects in the classroom. In Social Studies and related subjects, we may teach pupils about our constitution, functions of our president, ministers, regional and political authorities, district assemblies and the like.

> ➢ With the use of prefects and other positions of responsibility, pupils learn to take part in decision-making and control. This is the reason why schools where teachers take all decisions for pupils are not helping them to learn.

> ➢ Schools help pupils to develop patriotism by teaching them to recite the pledge, sing national anthem and the like.

> ➢ The activities of the clubs and societies are also useful. Within these clubs, pupils are trained in leadership. They are also trained to be responsible and patriotic. Schools that do not have these are losing something valuable.

> ➢ Schools also organize debates, talks and drama on political topics.

UNIT 6:   THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN THE CURRICULUM

Introduction

Dear learner, you have now entered the last unit of this course on the introduction to curriculum studies. After looking at the curricular areas and curricular activities, we now need to look at the role of the teacher in other specific aspects of the curriculum such as balancing the curriculum, ensuring inclusivity, engaging with other teachers and finally, remind ourselves about what we did in the last unit which is so crucial, ensuring a supportive environment. We hope you will enjoy this final unit as you did the other units. Please take note of some key concepts that will be stated here because they will be needed in a later course you will take which is related to curriculum studies.

Objectives:
    1. Describe the aspects of the curriculum that need to be balanced.
    2. Describe the categories of learners that have to be recognised in inclusivity.
    3. Explain why teachers need to engage in communities of practice
    4. Describe the ways in which you will ensure a supportive learning environment in your class.

6.1: Balancing the curriculum

The concept of balancing the curriculum is not a straightforward one. Talking about balancing means that there are different sides which all require attention. Balancing therefore means giving all the sides sufficient attention in the curriculum. Note that giving all sides sufficient attention does not mean giving them equal attention. This is because some of the sides are more important than others. So though all sides must be considered, this should be done with their relative importance in mind. For instance, we can look at a balanced curriculum as one in which activities and subjects for various class levels are selected in accordance with the all-round development of the personality of the child. Remember that in the first unit we mentioned some aims and values of school education. We also mentioned the learning of knowledge, skills and values. Well, the issue then is, what kind of learning in the curriculum is responsible for developing each of these? How can the learning to develop each of these be balanced? There is the need to provide a variety in the kinds of subjects learners are exposed to, including some liberal subjects and some vocational subjects, as well as some hands-on and some minds-on subjects.

Now, let us discuss one key issue in balancing the curriculum which is often determined by the philosophy or policy position of the country. This is the balance between the use of a subject-centered curriculum and a student-centered curriculum.

The subject-centered curriculum places emphasis on oral delivery and using extensive explanations. It expects teachers to plan instruction well for teaching and organise it around the content. The subject-centred curriculum usually consists of a study of specific facts and ideas. The teaching methods usually used with subject-centered curriculum include the teacher-led ones like the lectures, discussions and question and answer methods. The most widely used subject-centred curriculum is the separate-subjects curriculum content. Chemistry, mathematics, Geograpy, Literature etc are taught as separate subjects. Now, notice that there are other strategies where a

theme is chosen and thematic topics are used to teach across separate subjects. This is not usually done with the subject-centred curriculum.

There have been arguments against the subject-centred curriculum. Some feel it does not promote critical or creative thinking. Also they think that because it places emphasis on memorisation of facts and ideas, it does not lead leaners to develop an understanding of societal issues.   As   a result of such critics prefer the student-centred curriculum.

The student-centred curriculum can be described as an activity curriculum. Activities are planned jointly be the teacher and students. One kind of student-centred curriculum is the core curriculum. This is the situation where some traditional subjects are combined, such as history geography and economics etc combined into social studies. Also are language arts and integrated science etc. Another kind of student-centred curriculum is the activity-centred curriculum. This curriculum is organised around the interests and needs of learners but is more flexible than the student-centred one. It emphasizes learning by doing and problem solving.

Dear learner, the truth is that both the subject-centred and student-centred curricular are useful for different kinds of learning. Balancing the curriculum here implies how much of each to use put in curriculum planning and delivery. The balance between what teachers prefer to do and what learners are interested in learning have to be balanced.

6.2: Ensuring inclusivity

The issue of inclusivity has always been very important in curriculum design and delivery, but in recent times it has become an issue of greater interest. This is because of concern about how education is increasingly causing a widening in social disparities and social class. Education should be doing the opposite, which is, narrowing social disparities. This is happening because in the face of larger classes and more complex things being leaned in school, teachers tend to focus on content and the learners that get along with them. Some individuals and social groups are being left behind in the process because they tend to have some disadvantages which are not attended to by teachers.

Now, note that generally, *inclusion* involves designing the lessons you teach in class to meet the needs of all children regardless of their background or ability. This has traditionally been used to describe situations where children with special needs are put into mainstream classes in regular schools. That means, integrating learning disabled children with their peers. However, the concept of *inclusivity* is now being used to refer to equal learning opportunities for all children including groups who have traditionally been excluded.

An inclusive classroom is one in which every child is enabled to fully participate in class activities and also to feel as a valued member of the class. This is what many teachers would wish, but a lot of evidence shows that due to curriculum pressures, large-class sizes and assessment requirements, it is difficult to achieve. There are big variations in the quantity and quality of attention that teachers give to different categories of children in the classroom. Let us first of all identify the categories of children that are often likely to experience barriers in learning which teachers may not attend to. They include:

- Disabilities and special educational needs.
- Gender.
- Social class.
- Ethnicity/Religion/Race.
- Age.

In your face-to-face interactions, discuss briefly some of the ways in which each of these can pose a barrier to the classroom learning of individuals and groups of children in Ghanaian schools.

Now, following this discussion, let us not look at some of the strategies that teachers can use as they try to ensure inclusivity in their classes:

- Get to know your children well and establish a bond with them, where they know you like them.
- Vary your instructional delivery to involve many activities and materials so that every child will have his interest met.
- Let children feel safe in the class and create opportunities for them to engage in peer learning and share in learning.
- Make use f resource persons with interesting experiences that help in teaching.
- Ensure the consistent use of feedback and encouragement of learners' efforts.

6.3: Engaging in communities of practice

One practice which is among some Ghanaian teachers is that they do not want other teachers to be interested in what they do in their classrooms. They even see the presence of supervisors as an intrusion. The practice when they were attending school and college was centred on competition. Unfortunately, this has been extended to the classroom workplace with highly detrimental consequences. Workplace performance, including schools, now rely so much on communities of practice to improve. It is in this context that we need to discuss this activity when looking at curriculum practices.

- A community of Practice is a group of people who share a common passion for something they are doing and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. The purpose of a community of practice is to connect people and provide an avenue for them to pool their resources together and work in partnership towards an objective. Teachers often engage in communities of practice as a part of the professional development activities, in the form of workshops. It is seen as a way of improving their abilities to solve decision making challenges they face in the school and classroom. At a basic level, teachers engaging in a community of practice may just be exchanging information, for instance on lesson planning, classroom management, use of resources etc. Thus, they may help provide a forum for which teachers can help each other with teaching issues.

- However communities of practice should actually do more than that. It creates a platform where teachers can share best practices and generate new ways of doing things in the classroom or new ways of applying learning theories in their teaching. Furthermore they may also promote the use of standard professional practices in managing classroom learning and handling other school issues. Generally some ways in which teachers can benefit from communities of practice

include the following. In all these, the main activity of communities of practice is to encourage peer learning groups and educational workshops, with the goal of achieving better teacher productivity.

From what has been stated above, we may place communities of practice into four main types. These are -

- Best-practice communities, which help in the dissemination of best practices and strategies for their members.
- Knowledge stewarding communities, which gather new knowledge on teaching and learning and make these available to members.
- Innovation communities, which identifying bottlenecks in current practices and provide the opportunity for discussing innovations.
- Helping communities, which provide a forum for community members to help each other with everyday work needs.

In your face-to face sessions you are expected to discuss these possibilities and also how you can encourage communities of practice in Ghanaian schools. But let us remember that the overriding reason for engaging in communities of practice is to be able to ensure a learner friendly or supportive learning environment. Though we have mentioned this in passing when we discussed child-centred curriculum activities, we need to end this unit with an emphasis on this issue. This will be the focus of the final session of this unit.

6.4: Ensuring a supportive environment

The school curriculum can never be effective without the main ingredient. This main ingredient is a supportive classroom environment. In a general sense, a supportive classroom environment is based on a relationship of trust and respect between students and teachers and among students. In a supportive environment, learners have a positive attitude towards learning, because they are motivated, supported and challenged to learn. This means that the emotions of learners are involved; their social relations with the teacher and other learners are involved and the content of learning is involved. In this case, the content of learning should be relevant, meaningful and interesting. The teacher can ensure a supportive classroom learning environment through the following ways:

- Create a sense of community among students. Students should be given the opportunity to help each other and share ideas. You also need to emphasize more cooperation and less competition and also recognize learner contributions.

- Keep distractions to a minimum as you teach. You can achieve this by facilitate learner participation and interaction. You also need to survey the classroom for signs of confusion, frustration, boredom etc.

- Create a climate where children make learning a high priority by focusing on what you are teaching but in a non-threatening atmosphere. Also be business-like and use time purposefully. Celebrate learner success of any kind. Let children make choices in learning.

- Use Routines to make things run smoothly in your class including setting deadlines and giving advance notices of activities, resources children need to bring etc.

- Set limits for children's behaviour. Establish a few rules and procedures at the beginning of the year. Periodically review the usefulness of existing rules and procedures (with students). Acknowledge students feelings about classroom requirements.('I know how difficult it can be to sit and get this done but ....).

- Plan classroom activities. Be sure students will always be busy and engaged. Choose tasks at an appropriate academic level.

- Monitoring what students are doing as you teach. Have eye contact with students and use of questions to call attention. Sometimes you need to modify your instructional strategies when necessary or even change strategy to maintain student's interest and participation.

- Sometimes ignoring the behaviour of misbehaving students and discussing the problem privately with the student later is necessary. This can be supported by promoting self-regulation (by indicating to student how frequently he misbehaves).

- Conferring with parents is a useful way of supporting students in learning.
  Dear learner, this might seem like a long list to you. However you will realise to your surprise that you have been taking many of these actions already, except that you might have been using different strategies to achieve them. They will therefore make an interesting discussion session in your face-to-face. Discuss what you have been doing to achieve a supportive classroom environment. Also discuss what you think you have been doing wrongly and why you think so.

Unit Conclusion

The focus of this module is to draw your attention to the curriculum of the school which will be the main guide for your work as a teacher. This course did not intend to make you capable of designing or creating a curriculum. It intended to expose you to the decisions and actions that you will be taking as a teacher who is the activator of the curriculum. We have sought to inform you about the nature of the curriculum, the divisions in the curriculum and the documents that are designed to guide its use such as the time table and the lesson plan. We also sought to expose you to what you should focus on as you guide learners to accomplish learning such as the aims and values of the community and the desire to use the curriculum as a tool for national development. Furthermore we sought to equip you with specific ways in which you can interact with learners to be able to make all of them enjoy learning and achieve the expect targets on learner performance such as how you can ensure inclusivity and a supportive learning environment for your students. We hope that this course has been useful in making you a better teacher but also that it has provided you will the necessary concepts and knowledge you need to enjoy the subsequent courses you will take on this programme.

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