

Basic School Teachers' Perceptions about Curriculum Design in Ghana

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Abstract

This study focused on teachers' perceptions about curriculum design and barriers to their participation. The sample size was 130 teachers who responded to a questionnaire. The analyses made use of descriptive statistics and descriptions. The study found that the level of teachers' participation in curriculum design is low. The results further showed that the importance of teachers taking part in curriculum design include contributing to successful implementation of curriculum, knowing the needs of the students, developing some skills and contributing their knowledge in the design process. Finally, huge workload, lack of expertise, inadequate funding and lack of availability of information emerged as the major barriers to teachers' participation in curriculum design. The study recommends that decentralization of the curriculum design process and providing school curriculum leaders are appropriate for increasing the level of teachers' engagement in curriculum development.

Keywords: curriculum, curriculum design, teacher, barriers, participation

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Education is an instrument for the achievement of national goals (Odili, Ebisine and Ajuar, 2011, Fuseini and Abudu, 2014). This accounts for the huge chunk of money government earmarks for education in the annual budgets. In order to make education meaningful and relevant to the society it depends on how the curriculum is developed. A curriculum is the total of educationally valuable experiences that learners undergo in a school or other training institutions (Adentwi, 2005). The process of curriculum planning and development differs from country to country (Eunitah, Chindedza, Makaye and Mapetere, 2013). It is centrally designed or decentralized (Elliott, 1994; Carl, 2005; Eunitah *et al.*, 2013). In some countries like Burkina Faso, Ghana, France and Zimbabwe, the curriculum is centrally managed (Adentwi, 2005; Ziba, 2011; Eunitah *et al.*, 2013) and in others, such as Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and United States of America they practice decentralization (Adentwi, 2005). Both centralization and decentralization have their strengths and weakness. For instance, centrally prescribed curricula have the problems of finding the right curricula for all schools because of less interaction between the curriculum planner of the system and the classroom (Stenhouse, 1975; Eunitah *et al.*, 2013) while that of the decentralized or school-based curriculum teachers are active in the curriculum development process (Maphosa1 and Mutopa, 2012). In a centrally planned system, the teachers are just ordered to carry out the curricula that they did not take part in designing (Chitate, 2005; Oloruntegbe *et al.*, 2010; Maphosa1 and Mutopa, 2012; Eunitah *et al.*, 2013) making the curriculum liable to a high rate of rejection by the implementers. However, because teachers are key players in the educational sector it is critical that they play a central role in curriculum development. It is in the light of this that Skilbeck (1984) and Obanya (1985) indicated that to develop a relevant curriculum, teachers must take part since they can feed their field experiences about what and how to teach into the work of the curriculum team in designing a curriculum to suit different schools.

Despite the positive contribution teachers could make to curriculum development, research has shown that teachers are neglected in the process (Yigzaw, 1981; Carl, 2002; Oloruntegbe *et al.*, 2010). Even in the school-based curriculum where teachers take part in developing the curriculum (Maphosa1 and Mutopa, 2012), their work has largely been influenced by the central government (Ziba, 2011). In Ghana and particularly the study location (Wa Municipality), studies have primarily been silent on the importance of teachers' participation in curriculum design. It is therefore, important to ascertain the level and importance of teachers' engagement in curriculum development. Most studies on curriculum emphasize teachers' participation with little focus on the barriers they meet in their attempt to take part in the curriculum design process. Some few studies have nonetheless, touched on the issue of barriers to teachers' taking part in curriculum planning (Bowers, 1991; Ramparsad, 2001; Chinyani, 2013) not as a major aspect of the study but as a peripheral issue. This makes it worthy to investigate the barriers to teachers' participation in curriculum designing.

1.1 Context of the Study

In Ghana, basic education is the minimum period of schooling needed to ensure that children acquire basic literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills as well as skills for creativity and healthy living. It entails vigorous instruction in the academic skills of reading, writing, numeracy and problem solving, and should serve as the foundation for further learning at higher levels. Basic education comprises two years kindergarten, six years primary and three years junior high school. Teachers responsible for this level possess different qualification and are trained either by the country's colleges of education or universities offering professional

courses in education.

Teacher education in Ghana has passed through many stages, resulting in various categories of teachers in the system, who possess different professional qualifications – certificate, diploma and degree. Currently, the training of teachers is located in the colleges of education (formerly teacher training colleges) and three public and two private universities. The requirements for entering a college of education have shifted from Middle School Leaving Certificate to Senior High School Certificate. Minimum entry requirement for the teacher education universities has been a Senior Secondary Certificate from the beginning. Currently, the colleges of education have aggregate 24 in six subjects, while the universities have aggregate 20 as the minimum entry requirement. At both levels, teaching experience is not a mandatory requirement. The duration for teacher training in the colleges of education is three years; in the universities, the duration ranges from two sandwich semesters for candidates with university degree in their subject areas, to four years for entrants with only secondary education. The emphasis of training is on both content and methodology for candidates with only secondary education, but tilted towards methodology for entrants with appropriate qualifications in their subject (content) areas.

The colleges of education train teachers for the Basic School (Preschool – Year 9) level, while the universities prepare teachers for all levels, though many of their products prefer to teach in post-basic institutions. With the upgrading of colleges of education and other available opportunities, most teachers teaching at the basic level now have first degree and above. This therefore, means that teachers teaching at basic education in Ghana have varied experience and qualification. At any of these levels, they are introduced to the concept of curriculum planning and development, psychology of learning, methodology of teaching and a considerable depth of content area that they intend to teach after graduation. As such, teachers teaching at basic education can adequately participate in curriculum design. It is therefore, prudent to investigate their level of participation in curriculum design.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This sub-theme presents detailed but succinct discourses on participation in curriculum design and barriers to participation in curriculum design.

2.1 Participation in Curriculum Design

Curriculum design “is a process which involves making basic decisions about who will partake in curriculum decision-making process and how it will proceed” (Adentwi, 2005: 54). In developing a curriculum, the teacher is a critical part of the team. The degree of involvement of teachers in the curriculum design process varies enormously based on whether the system is centralized (i.e., less involved) or school-based (i.e., more involved). Teachers equally have different motives for participating in this process.

Some studies have found that there is little or no teacher involvement in curriculum development (Carl, 2005; Oloruntegbe *et al.*, 2010). For example, Oloruntegbe *et al.* (2010) found in their study in Nigeria that teachers are often implementers of curriculum reforms, but are rarely involved in the development and how best to carry out such reforms. Similarly, in a study in South Africa, Carl (2005) discovered that teachers were for the most part excluded from participation in curriculum development at curriculum levels outside the classroom. In the same vein, Moku (2010) also discovered that in South Africa school teachers were demotivated to engage in curriculum development. The little or lack of teachers involvement in curriculum development is worrisome since teachers are key to the success of any curriculum. This situation suggests that certain barriers are limiting their ability to take part in this curriculum making process (*See section 2.2 for details on the barriers*).

With respect to the significance of involvement of teachers in curriculum design, Rugg and Shumaker (1928) pointed out that teacher involvement in curriculum development is critical. They therefore, suggested that teachers work in partnership with curriculum specialists to organize content and materials when designing a curriculum. In a like way, Caswell and Campbell (1935) backed teacher participation in curriculum committees at all levels because they believed such engagement would help teachers match content with student needs as they have regular interactions with them.

In terms of motivation for participation in curriculum, Bowers (1991) indicates that in the study of Ruth Wright in Canada the top reasons for teachers’ involvement in curriculum development included opportunity to improve the existing curriculum, increased effectiveness as a teacher, feeling that one's contributions and suggestions are helpful and satisfaction from participating in decision-making that affects one's own work. Bowers (1991) reports further that, Wright concludes that, for administrators to motivate teachers to become involved in curriculum development, they must convince teachers that their involvement will make a significant and recognized contribution to the educational development of children. More so, teachers involved in curriculum development help in identifying their needs and coin solutions to address these felt needs (Maphosal and Mutopa, 2012). These authors claimed the teachers are able to do so because they are the ones

who deal with pupils.

2.2 Barriers to Participation in Curriculum Design

Barriers to participation in curriculum design refer to the obstacles that people meet as they try to take part in the curriculum development process. As the teachers wish to take part in the curriculum construction process, they meet certain barriers which limit their want. The obstacles they meet are beneath.

First, a critical barrier to teachers' participation in curriculum development is their lack of information about the role they are to play (Connelly and Ben-Peretz, 1997; Ramparsad, 2001; Mokua, 2010). Connelly and Ben-Peretz (1997) for example, have noted, teachers and curriculum developers are unfamiliar with the changed functions they are to perform in this partnership. In the case of Ramparsad (2001), the writer stated that though it is important to involve teachers in the curriculum designing process, however, the exact process to follow in doing so is unclear. This indicates that even if teachers want to participate they would not be able to do so as their roles may not be well defined.

Some studies point out that teachers' lack of expertise in curriculum design is in itself a barrier to their participation in the process (Bowers, 1991; Ramparsad, 2001; Handler, 2010). Bowers (1991) advances that teachers are not trained to do this. For Ramparsad (2001), under-qualification of most of the teachers in South Africa makes this approach to curriculum development very demanding on teachers and so their lack of interest to take part. According to Handler (2010), literature however, provides little consideration of professional knowledge, specifically knowledge of curriculum theory and critical pedagogy, as an underlying reason for the failure of teachers to fulfill meaningful leadership roles supportive of educational reforms and improved student outcomes. This means that the limited knowledge that teachers have tend to serve as an obstacle to their engagement in curriculum design.

Furthermore, the huge responsibilities teachers are to execute limit their willingness to take part in curriculum development (Bezzina, 1991; Bowers, 1991; Chinyani, 2013). For instance, Bowers (1991) argues that a teacher's day is filled with preparing lessons, teaching, and grading making them have little time or energy left for the painstaking effort required to develop new curricula. In a related way, Chinyani (2013) reported that teachers in Zimbabwe cited reasons such as heavy teaching loads averaging 36 periods per week for secondary teachers and 11 subjects for primary school teachers, with an average class of 45-60 pupils. This situation limits their ability to take part in any curriculum planning activities since they face time constraint. Similarly, Bezzina (1991) found in a study in Sydney that time constrain was perceived by teachers as barrier to their participation in curriculum design. This is because the teachers undergo stress and there is competing priorities for the time. This suggests that the unavailability of adequate time at the disposal of the teachers serves as a barrier to their participation in curriculum design.

In addition to the above, teachers feel reluctant to take part in curriculum development because they think there is no remuneration for their effort. In this respect, Bowers (1991) indicates that Jean Young found in his study in Alberta Canada that many of the teachers, especially those doing local committee work, seemed to resent the lack of funds for release time or extra pay for their work, that materials developed would not be used and feeling unappreciated. In a like way, Stenhouse (1975) reports that changes not accompanied by incentives or not changing old incentives that are counter-active to the new situation will necessary produce psychological barriers which can raise serious problems. Again, unavailability of incentives is the cause for the teachers' rejection to take part in the process. Literature shows that the teacher feels not motivated to take part in curriculum design at the national or school level because their efforts are usually massage regularly making it lose its originality. In the view of Elliott (1994), albeit teachers participated in coming out with the original draft orders for each National Curriculum subject area, they have seen the results of their efforts continually modified by ministers. This makes them less interested in participating in the process.

On a whole, the missing link is that there are few studies focusing primarily on barriers to participation in curriculum design. Most of the studies usually capture barriers as a minor issue. This gap therefore, permits an investigation.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The issues considered here include study design, sampling design, tools for data collection and data analysis. The detail discourses of these key issues are in the subsequent sections.

3.1 Study Design

The study used the survey study design. According to Neuman (2007), a survey is right for measuring respondents' beliefs and opinions. This study design was proper for this study because it laid the foundation for gathering data from teachers on their level of involvement, the benefits of their participation and the barriers they face in an attempt to take part in curriculum design. The data gathering from these teachers was at only one point in time.

3.2 Sampling Design

The study respondents constituted trained and untrained teachers (pupil teachers) from basic schools in the Wa Municipality of the Upper West Region of Ghana. These teachers were selected from four circuits out of a total of twelfth from the municipality. Stratified sampling aided the selection of the study respondents. The study employed stratified sampling in selecting both the trained and untrained teachers. In doing the selection, the teachers were first stratified into trained and untrained teachers and simple random was then employed in selecting the right sample from each stratum. The sample for the study was one hundred and thirty (130): constituting 108 trained teachers and 22 untrained teachers. The determination of the sample size depended on Best and Kahn's (1995) assertion that there is no fixed number of subjects that determine the size of an adequate sample.

3.3 Tools for Data Collection

The tool for data collection constituted a questionnaire. The teachers answered a questionnaire. The questionnaire was in three sections. Part one consisted of a background factor. The second section comprised issues on curriculum design and importance of teachers' participation in curriculum design. The last part covered barriers to participation in curriculum design and ways of improving teachers' participation in curriculum construction.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The quantitative data were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences and analysed. The analysis entailed using descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies and percentages). The descriptive statistics helped to analyse teachers' level of participation in curriculum design, availability of school curriculum leader, incorporation of teachers' contribution into the curriculum and the importance of teachers taking part in curriculum design. In terms of the qualitative analysis, it involved inductive coding. This entailed identifying key patterns and describing them aptly. Where necessary, the qualitative data aid in buttressing the quantitative data. The roles and reasons for not having school curriculum leaders, reasons for the none inclusion of the teachers' contribution into the curriculum, the importance of teachers' participation in curriculum development, barriers to teachers' participation in curriculum design and alternative ways to improve teachers' participation in curriculum development were analysed qualitatively.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This theme dilates on the results and discussions of the study. The results and discussions are focused on three key areas which are curriculum design situation, perceptions of teachers about barriers to participation in curriculum design and alternative ways to improve teachers' participation in curriculum design.

4.1 Curriculum Design Situation

The issues under consideration encapsulate participation in curriculum design; curriculum leader- roles and reasons for not having; incorporation of views into curriculum; and importance of teachers' participation in curriculum design. The subsequent sections provide details of these issues.

4.1.1 Participation in Curriculum Design

Table 1 presents the details of teachers' perception of their levels of participation in curriculum design. In the case of the professional teachers, the results show that 46.3% indicated that their participation in curriculum design is *low or very low* while 40.7% said it was *high or very high*. These results show that most of the professional teachers held the perception that their level of engagement in curriculum development processes is *low or very low*. For the non-professional teachers, the results illustrate that 50.0% showed that their participation in curriculum construction is *low or very low* whereas 31.8% said it was *high or very high*. This result denotes that majority of the non-professional teachers held the view that their level of participation in curriculum design processes is *low or very low*. Comparing the two respondent categories, the results showed that they both perceived their level of participation in curriculum development as *low or very low*. In spite of the fact that both teacher categories indicated their participation levels as not encouraging, the professional teachers still have a relatively higher level of participation compared to their counterparts (i.e., non-professional teachers). The effect of the little involvement of teachers in the designing process of the curriculum is that the rich practical experiences that they would have brought on-board would be missed. The current finding that teacher's participation in curriculum design is nothing to write home about is consistent with that of Carl (2005) and Oloruntegbe *et al.* (2010) discoveries in South Africa and Nigeria.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Teachers' Level of Participation in Curriculum Design

| Item on Curriculum Design | | Teacher Category | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------------------|------|------|-------|--------------------------|------|------|-------|
| | | Professional Teacher | | | | Non-Professional Teacher | | | |
| | | VL/L | U | H/VH | T | VL/L | U | H/VH | T |
| What is your level of participation in curriculum design? | <i>f</i> | 50 | 14 | 44 | 108 | 11 | 4 | 7 | 22 |
| | % | 46.3 | 13.0 | 40.7 | 100.0 | 50.0 | 18.2 | 31.8 | 100.0 |

Source: Field Survey (2014)

f=frequency; %=percent; VL=Very low; L=Low; U=Uncertain; H=High; VH=Very High; T=Total

4.1.2 Curriculum Leader: Roles and Reasons for not having

This section presents the situation on availability of school curriculum leader, the person's roles and reasons why some schools do not have them. In terms of availability of curriculum leader in schools, the results are in Table 2. The results show that 82.6% of the respondents said *no*, illustrating that they do not have a curriculum development leader whereas 13.8% said *yes*, denoting they have a school curriculum leader. The results show that most of the schools in the Wa Municipality do not have curriculum leaders. The implication is that the benefits that are associated with having curriculum leaders in schools elude the school.

Though some of the respondents (13.8%) indicated that they have curriculum leaders in their schools, only a hand full of those people could enumerate some of the functions performed by the curriculum development leader. For example, a professional teacher (15/05/2014) reported, "the function of the school curriculum development leader is to organize in-service training for teachers on curriculum issues." Another professional teacher (15/05/2014) stated, "the role of the school curriculum leader is to link the teachers and the curriculum designers and updates teachers on issues related to the curriculum." Other respondents noted that such a leader attends curriculum meetings and organizes school based in-service training for teachers on issues of curriculum.

Table 2: Presence of Curriculum Leader in School

| | | Teacher | | |
|--|----------|---------|------|-------|
| | | Yes | No | Total |
| Do you have a curriculum leader in in your school? | <i>f</i> | 18 | 112 | 130 |
| | % | 13.8 | 86.2 | 100.0 |

Source: Field Survey (2014)

f=frequency; %=percent

The respondents that said they do not have curriculum leaders in their schools gave multiplicity of reasons to buttress their stand. For instance, a non-professional teacher (15/05/2014) indicated, "our school doesn't have a curriculum development leader because we don't always partake in curriculum design." Another professional teacher (15/05/2014) noted that "we don't even participate in curriculum design let alone having a curriculum leader." Furthermore, a professional teacher (15/05/2014) stated that:

If teachers are not involved at the national level in curriculum development how much more can we have them at the lower level. Premium is not given to teachers so they don't exist.

In addition, a professional teacher (15/05/2014) noted, "we do not have a curriculum leader because our view will still be overlooked." Some other respondents have noted that that they do not have a school curriculum leader because the education office didn't appoint one, because teachers have been undermined in the curriculum designing process and because of lack of knowledgeable people in curriculum issues. Others stated that they do not have school curriculum leaders because nobody ever mentioned it and they never also asked, the school does not consider it important, designing of curriculum is not decentralized to the level that each school will have such a person, no remuneration for the person and lack of awareness of the need for that person.

4.1.3 Incorporation of Views into Curriculum

This theme deals with whether the views of those teachers that participate in the curriculum design process are captured in the curriculum or not. Where they are not included what could be accounting for such a situation.

On the issue of whether the teachers' contribution to curriculum development process are incorporated or not, the results are in Table 3. The results show that 90.8% of the teachers said *no*, indicating that their views are not included into any curriculum development process that the take part. This denotes that majority of the teachers held the view that their contributions are usually not incorporated into the curriculum they participate in designing. This could invariable serve as a demotivation for their participation in curriculum construction (*See section 4.1.1*).

The respondents that indicated that their contributions do not surface in any new curriculum designed gave a litany of reasons to support their case. A professional teacher (15/05/2014) for instance, has noted, "our views are not incorporated into the curriculum because we are not consulted in the design process. We also do not even know the time the curriculum is even developed." Furthermore, a professional teacher (15/05/2014) reported that "they don't even consult us to know our views how can our views be incorporated into the final

curriculum.” Moreover, a non-professional teacher (15/05/2014) has indicated that “our views are not incorporated into the curriculum because our contributions are not respected by the supposed experts in charge of curriculum development.” Another professional teacher (15/05/2014) said that “our views are not made part of the curriculum because such decisions are made at the national level.” Besides, a non-professional teacher (15/05/2014) pointed out, “our contributions are usually not included in the curriculum because the designers think that teachers are many and they cannot take all our views.” Other reasons given included not having a curriculum leader and governments pushing their ideologies into it neglecting inputs from teachers.

Table 3: Teachers’ Perception about the Incorporation of their Contributions into Curriculum

| | | Teacher | | |
|--|----------|---------|------|-------|
| | | Yes | No | Total |
| Are your contributions incorporated into the final curriculum? | <i>f</i> | 12 | 118 | 130 |
| | % | 9.2 | 90.8 | 100.0 |

Source: Field Survey (2014)

f=frequency; %=percent

4.1.4 Importance of Teachers’ Participation in Curriculum Design

This section provides a discourse on whether teacher’s participation in curriculum design is important. The details of teachers’ views about the importance of their participation in curriculum development are in Table 4. In terms of importance of teachers’ participation in curriculum planning, it was found that 94.4% of the professional teachers said *yes*, denoting that their engagement in the curriculum design process was important. Similarly, 72.7% of the non-professional teachers also said *yes*, illustrating their involvement in the curriculum design process was necessary. In all, the results showed that both teacher categories perceived their taking part in the curriculum construction process as important.

Table 4: Comparative Analysis of Teachers’ Perception about Importance of their Participation in Curriculum Design

| Item on Curriculum Design | | Teacher Category | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------------------|-----|-------|--------------------------|------|-------|
| | | Professional Teacher | | | Non-Professional Teacher | | |
| | | Yes | No | Total | Yes | No | Total |
| Is it important for teachers to participate in curriculum design? | <i>f</i> | 102 | 6 | 108 | 16 | 6 | 22 |
| | % | 94.4 | 5.6 | 100.0 | 72.7 | 27.3 | 100.0 |

Source: Field Survey (2014)

f=frequency; %=percent

Those respondents that said *yes*, teachers’ participation in curriculum development was important advanced numerous reasons to back their point. These reasons are in four categories namely they being the implementers, knowing the needs of the students, they developing some skills and their contribution of their knowledge in the design process.

In the first place, many of the teachers indicated that since they are the implementers of the curriculum then it is appropriate that they are part of the design process in order to facilitate its easy implementation. In connection with this, a Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) pointed out, “for the fact that teachers are the very people that implement any planned curriculum it is important that they take part in its design to help make the implementation easier.” In addition, a Non-Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) stated, “teachers forming part of the curriculum designing team will ensure that they have adequate understanding of the curriculum aiding in a smooth implementation of the curriculum.” More so, a Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) observes, “teachers’ participation is important because they would be able to provide credible inputs as to how the contents of subjects should be in order to ensure its smooth implementation.” Furthermore, a Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) noted, “our involvement in curriculum development will motivate us to ensure that its implementation is successful since we contributed to its formulation.” Also, some of the teachers reported that it is important they are involved in the designing process of the curriculum because they know better the challenges they encounter in the classroom when implementing the curriculum and this will help them rectify such problems. This implies that in order to ensure smooth implementation of the curriculum, there is the need to involve teachers in its construction.

With respect to teachers’ participation in curriculum design helping capture the needs of pupils into the curriculum, the respondents gave reasons in this regard. For instance, a Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) indicated that:

It is critical that teachers participate in curriculum development as they teach and assess the pupils and therefore are able to give feedbacks on existing curriculum and the way forward.

Another Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) stated, “teachers’ participation in curriculum development is important because they are the people that handle the students and so know what they think is appropriate for them.” Furthermore, a Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) said that:

Teachers work daily with students and so have practical knowledge about what the students consider useful. This knowledge would be useful in ensuring that the content of the curriculum meets the needs of the learners. Similarly, a Non-Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) has indicated, “teachers teach the students and therefore, know the ins and outs of the problems of the curriculum.” This means that when teachers take part in curriculum designing, one is sure that the outcome would reflect the needs of the pupils.

In considering teachers’ participation in curriculum design helping them to develop some skills, respondents advanced some points to support this stand. For example, a Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) noted, “teachers’ participation in curriculum planning helps them to develop certain teaching skills that will enable them to execute the new curriculum with ease.” Another Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) pointed out, “our participation in curriculum design will help us to be aware about the new development before they are implemented so that we can prepare adequately to meet the new challenges ahead.” This shows that teachers perceive their engagement in curriculum design as helping them develop their own capacity.

The last but not the least, taking into account teachers contributing their knowledge to curriculum development, respondent provided some reasons to back their opinion. In relation to this, a Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) reported, “teachers are in the classroom and so they have practical skill that they can bring onboard in the curriculum designing process.” Another Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) has stated that:

Teachers have the expertise in developing the curriculum which when harness will ensure that the curriculum is properly design to meet the challenging needs of the country. It will enable the teachers provide inputs into the curriculum that will improve teaching and learning in schools. This sends the signal that teachers are not tabula rasa when it comes to curriculum development.

4.2 Perceptions of Teachers about Barriers to Participation in Curriculum Design

The barriers to participation in curriculum design that the teachers face in one way or the other contribute to their little involvement in the designing process (See section 4.1.1) denying the curriculum from the invaluable inputs from the teachers (See section 4.1.4). This section provides details of the barriers the teachers meet in their attempt to take part in curriculum design in Ghana and the study place in particular. The barriers to teachers’ participation in curriculum design have been put into five categories based on the pattern of the responses. The barrier categories are workload, expertise, funding and availability of information.

First, workload emerged as a barrier to engagement in curriculum design. In this regard, a Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) said that:

We have huge responsibilities such as teaching, marking of class exercises, marking of test, writing of lesson plans, preparing information sheets among other to execute. These take much of our time and so we are unable to participate effectively in the curriculum design process.

Another Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) advances, “we have many periods to teach in a week and this makes us busy leaving no time for any other serious engagement such as participating in developing a curriculum.” This suggests that too much work on the teachers is an obstacle to their taking part in curriculum designing.

More so, limited expertise surfaced as a barrier to participation in curriculum construction. With respect to this point, the respondents gave different reasons to support their standpoint. For instance, a Non-Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) reported, “many of us lack expertise in curriculum design and so we can’t contribute to its design.” In addition, a Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) indicated, “lack of adequate training for teachers on curriculum design is what has resulted in the deficiency in knowledge in curriculum development.” Furthermore, a Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) noted, “lack of information about the role teachers are to play in the curriculum planning process is what has resulted in their inability to contribute their quota.” Others have noted that teachers feeling that their views would not be wholly included in the curriculum, curriculum leaders not facilitating the process well, lack of curriculum leaders in schools and the curriculum experts not respecting teachers’ opinions are the barriers to participation in curriculum design.

Concerning funding as a barrier to teachers taking part in curriculum development, a Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) for example, has indicated, “teachers feeling that they would not be remunerated if they take part in curriculum design are a barrier to their participation.” Another Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) pointed out that “inadequate funds by Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) of Ghana Education Service to enrobe many teachers into the curriculum design process are a barrier to teachers’ participation.” This shows that with limited funding, the conveners usually try to limit the number of participants in the process in order to cut down cost. As there is no remuneration package for their efforts this makes the teachers less motivated to take part in the curriculum development process.

Finally, on the issue of access to information as a barrier to teachers taking part in curriculum construction, a Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) said, “the non-invitation of teachers to participate in curriculum planning acts as a barrier to their active involvement in the process.” Some others noted that the lack of information as to when inputs are required for designing of the curriculum is a barrier to engagement in

curriculum development.

4.3 Alternative ways to Improve Teachers Participation in Curriculum Design

As the level of teachers' participation in curriculum design is low (*See section 4.1.1*) despite the fact that their participation in the process is critical it became necessary to identify alternative ways to improve upon their involvement. In this light, the respondents suggested ways that when applied would lead to their active involvement in curriculum design.

To begin, the teachers indicated that the decentralization of the curriculum development process is a way to elicit their participation in the process. In connection with this, a Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) stated, "when the curriculum design process is decentralized to the school level we would have our own curriculum leader who would lead as in the curriculum development process to come out with what works." In addition, a Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) pointed out, "decentralization of the process would ensure that our school has a curriculum leader who would spear head the curriculum development process. The leader would ensure that all other members are involved in order to produce the needed results." Others indicated that decentralizing the curriculum design process would ensure that most of them would have the opportunity of participating in the process as their numbers would be easy to manage. In addition, some of the teachers said that the decentralization of the curriculum design process would ensure the capturing of their views into the curriculum in a less diluted manner. They said that this would encourage them to engage more in the process.

More so, giving adequate publicity about when the curriculum development is to take place is critical to teachers' involvement in the process. In this respect, some of the teachers claimed that when given adequate publicity about the time the design process of the curriculum will begin and end it will ensure their participation. They said it would give them the opportunity to prepare for it. This implies that they would normally be on top of issues as they not taken by surprise.

Furthermore, the provision of in-service training for teachers surfaced as a way to improve on their participation levels in the curriculum construction process. In this vein, some of the teachers have noted that giving in-service training is a route to improving on their capacity to contribute positively to the curriculum development processes. They indicated that regularly organizing such in-service programmes for them would make them adequately prepared always. This is because they would be able to refine their ideas for incorporation into the curriculum.

The last but not the least, making it mandatory for teachers to have a representation is one of the surest ways to ensuring their maximum engagement in the curriculum development process. Per this, a Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) pointed out, "laws should be passed to ensure that teachers are involved at each level of the curriculum development process." Another Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) indicated:

Making it mandatory that teacher unions (National Association of Graduate Teachers, Ghana National Association of Teachers and Concern Teachers' Association of Ghana) select representatives to participate on behalf of the rest of the teachers is a way to ensure teachers taking part in the process of curriculum design.

In a like way, a Non-Professional Teacher (15/05/2014) added, "the ministry of education should make it a priority to formulate policies that would make it mandatory for teachers to be made part of the process." This implies that making teachers major stakeholders in the curriculum development process would facilitate their engagement in the process.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Albeit the level of teachers' participation in curriculum design is low, the teachers noted that their participation in curriculum design is very important. The main barriers the teachers meet in their attempt to participate in curriculum design include huge workload, lack of expertise, limited funding and lack of availability of information on when curriculum development is to be executed. The alternative ways to improve participation in curriculum design are decentralization of the curriculum design, organization of in-service training for teachers and making teachers key stakeholders in curriculum construction.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Availability of school curriculum leaders is critical to improving teachers' participation in curriculum development. The Ghana Education Service should ensure that each school should have a curriculum leader who would always lead the staff in curriculum issues. With the presence of this person, it will mean that their views will normally be collated and presented to CRDD for onwards incorporation into the curriculum. To make such people effective in discharging this vital responsibility, they need regular in-service training on curriculum design.

Decentralization of curriculum design at either the district or the school level is a step in the right direction towards improving teachers' participation in curriculum design. As the curriculum design process is at the local level the teachers will always be in the known when the curriculum needs revision. Their contribution

will also be incorporated into the curriculum as their inputs will not have to undergo many screenings that might dilute it.

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