

Moving from Page to Playground: The Challenges and Constraints of Implementing Curriculum in Ghana

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Abstract

The process of translating curriculum intentions into practice, that is to say moving from page to playground, is acknowledged by curriculum experts as the most critical phase of the educational change process. It often is fraught with challenges and constraints which, if not handled expeditiously, lead to implementation failure – a characteristic of most innovations and reforms in education. Drawing on the literature on curriculum implementation and using evidence from curriculum implementation studies conducted in Ghana, this paper argues that the main reasons for the failure of educational programme implementation in the country appear to be the lack of appreciation by both experts outside the school system and educators in the system of the practical imperatives and implications of the phenomenon of curriculum implementation, and, consequently, the inability to address these at the point of need. The paper further traces the roots of many of the problems that have confronted the implementation of curricula in Ghana to inadequate pre-implementation preparations, and makes recommendations for achieving successful curriculum implementation in the future.

Keywords: curriculum change, curriculum implementation, educational change, implementation failure, obstacles to implementation

1. Introduction

Many changes have taken place in the pre-tertiary curriculum in Ghana over the last few decades. These changes, usually in the form of newly designed or revised curricula, have been necessitated by the continuing need to update both subject matter and teaching methods, as well as by recurring changes in the education system. The final destination of any curriculum is the classroom where teachers and students translate plans and intentions into activities and actions. Implementing the curriculum is therefore the most crucial and sometimes the most difficult phase of the educational change process. Inability to manage the difficulty often results in implementation failure, which has been a characteristic of most innovations and reforms in education. Implementation failure refers to a situation where an initiated or planned change does not happen in practice. This has been attributed to a number of factors including dogmatic resistance, lack of clarity about the programme in terms of its goals and means of achieving them, and in terms of teacher roles; lack of required resources; teacher unpreparedness; and lack of support from leaders at the central administration, district and school levels. Fullan (2001) acknowledges the importance of these factors but thinks that the issue is “more a question of the difficulties related to planning and coordinating a multilevel social process involving thousands of people” (p. 69).

This paper argues that in Ghana the main reason for the failure of educational programme implementation appears to be the lack of proper understanding by both experts outside the school system and educators in the system of the issues involved in this “multilevel social process” and how to translate these into actual practice. Drawing on the literature on curriculum implementation and using evidence from curriculum implementation studies conducted in Ghana, the paper takes the view that the explanatory factor for the failure of educational programme implementation in the country is the lack of appreciation by stakeholders of the practical imperatives and implications of the phenomenon of curriculum implementation, and, consequently, the inability to address these at the point of need. The paper highlights the need for both programme developers and implementers to have a shared understanding and appreciation of (1) the concept of curriculum implementation; (2) a model of implementation that aligns with their understanding of the sources of curriculum knowledge, the nature of curriculum change and the role of the teacher; (3) the factors that affect curriculum implementation, and (4) how these factors have played out in the Ghanaian context. The rest of the paper is devoted to a discussion of these issues.

2. The concept of ‘curriculum implementation’

Readers of this paper would perhaps expect to find in it a comprehensive discussion of the term ‘curriculum’ (an important word in the title of the paper), to aid their understanding of the issues discussed. I do not, however, intend to discuss the varieties of definition offered or their implications for different aspects of curriculum work, since these have been extensively documented in the professional literature (see, for example, Smith & Lovat, 2003; Kelly, 2004; Glatthorn et al., 2006; Marsh & Willis, 2007; Tanner & Tanner, 2007). Suffice to recall here that a curriculum is “the mix of socially prized knowledge, values, attitudes and skills together with all the activities, experiences, materials and methods deliberately designed to achieve well-defined objectives with a

given group of learners” (Cobbold, 1999, p. 36). The curriculum is usually implemented by the school in its environment or outside the school environment but under the school’s supervision.

In general, implementation is the process of putting into practice an idea, programme, method, procedure, desired purpose, or set of activities and structures new to the people attempting or expected to change (Fullan, 2001, 1991). With respect to the school curriculum, Fullan distinguishes “implementation” from “adoption.” According to him, curriculum adoption is the decision to use a new curriculum but curriculum implementation focuses on the extent to which actual change in practice occurs and on those factors which influence the extent of change. Sharing the view of most educational researchers (e.g. Hopkins, 2013), Fullan further explains that the educational change process consists of three overlapping phases – initiation, implementation and institutionalization– and that implementation is critically important in that it is the means of accomplishing desired educational objectives. As the link between the other two phases, the amount and quality of change which occurs or fails to occur at the implementation stage significantly affects what outcomes are achieved in any given change efforts (Cobbold, 1999).

For Leithwood (1991, cited in Cobbold, 1999), “implementation is the process of reducing differences between existing practices and practices suggested by the innovation” (pp. 17-18). This definition ought to be read cautiously with the keen eyes of an informed curricularist, otherwise it might be taken to mean that implementation only relates to a new instructional programme being used alongside an old programme. Cobbold (1999) clarifies the issue:

It should...be noted that it is possible for an innovation to have no precedent in actual practice (though such innovations are rare) and yet it being put into practice can be termed implementation. Thus, implementation implies either of two scenarios: modifications being made in an existing set of practices or a completely new set of practices being carried out. In both cases the process of implementation occurs over time (p. 18).

Lewy (1977) defines implementation as “the open use of a programme throughout an entire school system” (p. 22). That is to say, an educational programme may first be tried out in a few schools and later be used in all schools in the system. It is the latter stage which Lewy describes as implementation. This definition aligns with the view of Loucks and Lieberman (1983) who define curriculum implementation as the trying out of a new practice and what it looks like when actually used in a school system.

Hopkins (2013) defines implementation as the phase of attempted use of the innovation. He echoes the need to understand what happens during implementation and what behaviours and factors make for success at this stage. Consequently, he identifies the key activities occurring during implementation as the carrying out of action plans, the developing and sustaining of commitment, the checking of progress and overcoming problems. He also outlines the major factors that make for success at this stage as:

- clear responsibility for coordination among school head, coordinator and external consultant;
- shared control over implementation between programme developers and implementers; cross-hierarchical work and relations; empowerment of both individuals and the school;
- mix of pressure, insistence on ‘doing it right’ and support;
- adequate and sustained staff development and in-service training;
- rewards for teachers early in the process in the form of empowerment, collegiality, meeting needs, classroom help, and load reduction (Hopkins (2013, p. 43).

Ultimately, curriculum implementation aims at bringing about change and hopefully improvement.

Drawing from Rogers’ (1983) work, Cobbold (1999) identified three stages of implementation: re-invention, clarification and routinisation. Re-invention is the period during implementation when the implementers either make changes or modifications in the programme, usually to fit their organisation or institution, or change the structure of the organisation to accommodate the new programme. Cobbold’s extensive review of the literature reveals that the amount of re-invention that occurs and why it occurs depends on a number of factors which have to do with the nature of the innovation itself and the individuals implementing it. Generally:

1. Innovations that are relatively more complex and difficult to understand are more likely to be re-invented.
2. Re-invention occurs when the implementer lacks detailed knowledge about the new idea, due perhaps to relatively little contact between the implementer and the programme developer.
3. An innovation that is a general concept or tool with many possible applications is more likely to be re-invented.
4. When an innovation is implemented in order to solve a wide range of users’ problems, re-invention is more likely to occur. This is more so where there is a wide degree of difference in the individual and organisational problems and each individual and organisation matches the innovation with a different problem from another.
5. Re-invention may occur when programme developers encourage implementers to modify or adapt the

innovation as is often the case in a decentralised educational system or under an adaptation and/or enactment approaches to implementation (Cobbold, 1999, pp. 19-20).

Clarification is stage of implementation where the relationship between the innovation and the institution implementing it is defined more clearly as the new idea is put into full and regular use so that the meaning of the new idea becomes clearer to the implementers. Routinisation, the third and final stage of implementation, is the point when the new idea becomes an institutionalised and regularised part of the adopting school's ongoing operations. This results from "an emphasis on 'embedding' the change within the school's structures, its organization and resources" (Hopkins 2013, p. 44). It is also at this point that "the new programme finally loses its distinctive quality as the separate identity of the new idea disappears. Also, problems might have been overcome, criticisms and oppositions to the new programme abated and the programme's features internalized by the implementers" (Cobbold, 1999, p. 20).

Cobbold (1999) ends his review of definitions of curriculum implementation with the following important observations:

1. Curriculum implementation is the process of using an instructional programme (whether revised or newly designed) in all the educational institutions and at all the levels targeted to use that programme.
2. Curriculum implementation involves changes in the behaviour of people, especially the implementers, in the direction suggested or implied by the programme. Such changes will depend on the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. In effect, a process of reorganising and adding to what one is able to do, and how one feels, is immediately set into motion.
3. Curriculum implementation is a slow and gradual process during which the implementers grow from their existing practices through relatively immature approximations of practices suggested by the innovation, to eventually relatively sophisticated use of the innovation.
4. Curriculum implementation also involves certain changes in an existing programme or within the educational system. These include the need to adjust the teacher training programmes to the requirements of the new programme through modification in both pre-service and in-service training activities and effecting changes in the national examination system, if there exists one.
5. Problems in exactly how to use the new programme may crop up at the initial stages of implementation due to lack of the knowledge and skills required, negative feelings about the programme and implementation activities, unavailability of particular resources and the nature of the existing institution (Cobbold, 1999, pp. 20-21).

The above observations are worthy of note by both developers and implementers of instructional programmes. Studies on implementation have revealed that the level and direction of understanding that programme designers and implementers bring to the task of implementation determines the level and direction of commitment they put into the process (Fullan, 2007; Hopkins, 2013).

3. Models of curriculum implementation

Implementing a curriculum implies bringing about change, and any change that is attempted in a user system involves movement in some predetermined direction (Cobbold, 1999). According to Fullan and Pomfret (1977), curriculum change consists of five components. These are changes in subject matter or materials, organisational structure, role and/or behaviour, knowledge and understanding, and value internalization. Subject matter component refers to the content of the curriculum that teachers are expected to acquire on their own, or in cooperation with peers. Organisational structure refers to formal arrangement and physical conditions. The components here do not pertain to changes in users but changes in the conditions under which users interact. The third component refers to the habits that members who are directly involved in putting an innovation to practice are expected to acquire. The fourth component is the knowledge and understanding that users have about things like philosophy, objectives, subject matter and role relationships in the innovation. Finally, value internalisation is the users' commitment to implementing the various components of the innovation.

In order to determine if any change has occurred in any or all of the components described above, one of three models of the implementation process discussed in the research literature may be used. These are the fidelity, adaptation and enactment models. The three models are based on different assumptions about curriculum knowledge, curriculum change and the role of the teacher.

3.1 The fidelity model

The initial and most extensively documented model to curriculum implementation is the fidelity model. It investigates the degree of faithful implementation of the curriculum, and the criterion for success is the faithful use of the curriculum as intended by the developers or sponsors of the programme (Snyder et al., 1992). That is to say, when programme developers prescribe a fidelity approach to implementation, their intention is to measure the extent to which actual use of the curriculum corresponds with its intended use. Minor changes introduced by the implementers might be tolerated but the emphasis is clearly on ensuring that practice concurs with the

intentions of the designer (Cobbold, 1999). He makes the pertinent observation that fidelity perspective to implementation seems highly optimistic about achieving pre-determined goals through the use of systematic, rational processes. This is consistent with the observation by Leithwood (1991) that developers tend to view the programme “as a relatively complete solution to a clearly defined problem in the school or school system” (cited in Cobbold, 1999, p. 30). Consequently, implementers are encouraged to focus their attention on the new programme and its prescriptions and to trust that “faithful” implementation will solve the problem. The assumption that emerges from this is that implementation is a non-problematic phenomenon which occurs without hindrance provided people understand the value of an innovation and readily follow its prescribed practices. Because curricula are not always faithfully implemented, adequate training prior to implementation and support and monitoring during implementation have become standard features of this approach.

A number of assumptions underlie the fidelity perspective. First is the assumption that curriculum knowledge is created outside the classroom by the experts who design and develop the curriculum. The second assumption is that curriculum change is a rational, systematic, linear process that can be better administered the more we know about the factors that either facilitate or hinder the smooth operation of the process. Thirdly, the teacher is regarded as a consumer who should follow the directions and implement the curriculum as the experts have designed it. As an imparter of the curriculum to learners, the teacher’s role becomes crucial to the success of the curriculum (Cobbold, 1999).

Sympathizers of the fidelity orientation are likely to see the curriculum as a static thing (document) – a textbook or a syllabus. This is what Snyder *et al.* (1992) imply when they state that from a fidelity point of view, “A curriculum is something concrete – something that can be pointed to – something that a teacher can implement and something that can be evaluated to see if its goals have been accomplished” (p.427).

3.2 The adaptation model

The adaptation approach, also called mutually adaptive or evolutionary approach, rests on the assumption that the exact nature of implementation cannot and/or should not be pre-specified but rather should evolve as different groups of users decide what is best and most appropriate for their situation (Fullan, 1991). Adaptation may be conceptualized as a continuum with different points located along it. One end of the continuum is where minor adjustments to the curriculum may be envisaged. The other end of the continuum is where users make all sorts of modifications to suit their own interests. This is the point of evolutionary changes. Between these two polar ends is mutual adaptation. Here an external idea or innovation influences what users do while users more or less equally transform the idea for their situation. This is the central feature of most curricula implementation. It allows for adjustments and revision in needs, interests and skills of participants and institutions as well as in programme goals and methods in the light of institutional context, organisational patterns, as well as beliefs about knowledge and professional ideology (Cobbold, 1999).

It would appear that mutual adaptation grants a measure of deserved respect both to the developers and the implementers of a programme and therefore makes the two groups meet on equal terms. Thus, there is some measure of negotiation and flexibility on the part of both designers and practitioners. Adaptation also is premised on ethical and moral grounds because it permits some self-direction for implementers while recognising the legitimate role of policy makers in setting educational goals. The thrust of the adaptation perspective, according to Cobbold (1999, p. 32), is that “every effort should be made to ensure that a programme is reasonably well-developed at the very beginning but room should be allowed for reasonable modifications to be made in order to fit the programme effectively into the local context.”

The mutual adaptation model makes some assumptions about curriculum knowledge, change and the role of the teacher. Curriculum knowledge is thought to reside in the outside expert who develops the curriculum to be adapted by teachers to the local context. Change is seen as a more unpredictable, less linear process at the end of which is an active consumer; this process of change needs to be understood to help explain what happens to the curriculum. The role of the teacher in this regard is to shape the curriculum to meet the demands of the local situation (Synder *et al.*, 1992).

Research indicates that some degree of adaptation is inevitable in any successful implementation. In this connection, it makes good sense to agree with the many authors (e.g. Hall and Locks, 1981) who think that the extent of adaptation that can be allowed should be clarified: “How much and in what way teachers are free to vary the programme should be determined by someone and communicated early in the in-service process” (Hall & Locks, 1981, quoted in Snyder *et al.*, 1992, p. 408).

3.3 The enactment model

Enactment orientation to implementation describes how curriculum is shaped through the evolving constructs of teachers and students (Snyder *et al.*, 1992). It is concerned with describing how curriculum is experienced by the participants as well as how it is shaped as it gets acted. Specifically, the enactment model asks questions such as:

- What are the enacted experiences of teachers and students and how do they create them?

- What effect do outside factors have on the curriculum as enacted?
- What are the effects on students of the curriculum as actually enacted? (Snyder *et al.*, 1992, p. 418)

Unsurprisingly, the curriculum is viewed as the educational experiences by the student and the teacher. The externally designed curriculum materials and programmed instruction strategies at the heart of the fidelity and mutual adaptation perspective are seen as resources for teachers and students to use as they engage in the ongoing process of teaching and learning in the classroom. It is teachers and students who create the enacted curriculum and give meaning to it. They are creators rather than recipients of curriculum knowledge (Cobbold, 1999). The advocates of enactment see curriculum knowledge as a personal construct which must answer to both personal and external standards. The assumptions about curriculum knowledge, change and the role of the teacher underlying the enactment model are stated by Snyder *et al.* (1992) thus:

Curriculum knowledge is a personal construct which must reflect personal and external standards. Change is a development process for both teachers and students, rather than only change in observable behaviour. The role of the teacher is that of a curriculum developer who grows ever more competent with his or her students in constructing positive educational experiences (p. 418).

As Cobbold (1999) rightly points out, it is not just content and materials which must change. More importantly, thinking, feelings, beliefs, assumptions and practices must change. The teacher's role is integral to the curriculum process for there could be no curriculum without the teachers and students giving form to it in the classroom.

The foregoing paragraphs have described three models of curriculum implementation, their different assumptions and focuses. The fidelity model assumes that if the planned curriculum designed by experts is carried out by teachers, the curriculum is regarded as implemented successfully. The mutual adaptation approach assumes that implementation is an evolving process and the needs and interests of different stakeholders would change at different stages of the implementation. The enactment perspective focuses on the experiences gained by teachers and students during implementation rather than the curriculum materials and strategies. Its major concern is the effects on students when the curriculum is implemented.

The conditions under which each model should be applied continue to engage the attention of curriculum researchers. Berman (1981 cited in Cobbold, 1999, p. 35) offered part of the solution when he suggested that fidelity approaches are more appropriate under conditions where there are clear and agreed-upon goals, well-designed programmes and minor focused changes. On the other hand, adaptive approaches appear to be more effective in situations where there are conflicts over goals, incomplete development and major changes.

Cobbold (1999) examined the relative merits and demerits of the three models. He reasoned that programmes designed with fidelity mode of implementation in view tend to be more clear, more specific and easier to assess. But they also may be inappropriate for all or some situations and/or lead to rejection by individuals and groups who do not wish to use the particular version being advocated, especially in decentralised educational systems. Adaptive-oriented programmes also have the advantage of allowing for more individual choice, and development suited to a variety of situations; but they more often than not create uncertainty about what should be done. From a research point of view, therefore, such programmes are difficult to assess since they differ from situation to situation (p. 35).

4. Factors which affect curriculum implementation

Terms such as factors, barriers, components or elements have been used to present matters that influence implementation of a curriculum. Fullan (2007) uses a heuristic distinction and classifies the factors that affect curriculum implementation under three broad categories, namely, characteristics of the programme or curriculum change itself, local characteristics and external factors. These are discussed below.

4.1 Characteristics of the programme

There are four factors in this category, which are (1) the need and relevance of the change, (2) clarity about the goals and means of the programme, (3) complexity, and (4) quality and practicality of the programme. Need and relevance refers to the perceived or felt need of the people who implement the curriculum (Snyder *et al.*, 1992). Usually, a general feeling or expression of need by some political groups or by academia is not enough; rather this need must be perceived by the constituencies directly involved in the implementation. For example, if teachers perceive that the curriculum is relevant to them or if they see the need for change, the degree of implementation will be greater. It follows that careful examination of whether or not the change addresses priority needs lays important ground work before and during the production phase of a curriculum. It also implies that frequent communication and open discussion of the curriculum's merit for coping with felt need must maintain and develop an awareness of this topic during the implementation process.

Clarity means users' understanding of the goals and means of the curriculum. Curriculum implementation research reveals examples of educational innovations where practitioners were not clear about what they were to do differently; that is, what change meant for them in practice. At least in the initial stages of

implementation teachers relish concreteness and tangibility. They expect that teaching strategies are clearly described and material is well-thought of. Unclear and unspecified goals and means could cause great anxiety and frustration to teachers who try to implement the curriculum. Fullan (2007) emphasised that lack of clarity represents a major problem at the implementation stage; teachers and others find that the change is simply not very clear as to what it means. Therefore, the better the understanding of goals and what is to be gained from their adoption, the greater the degree of implementation (Snyder *et al.*, 1992).

Complexity is the difficulty and extent of change required of the individuals responsible for the implementation. This reflects the amount of new skills, altered beliefs and different materials required by an innovation. Simple changes may be easier to carry out, but they may not make much of a difference. Complex changes promise to accomplish more, but they also demand more effort, and failure takes a greater toll. Generally, it seems that the greater the complexity of innovation, the greater the degree of implementation (Snyder *et al.*, 1992). Fullan (2007) believes that while complexity creates more problems, it may result in greater change as more is being attempted. It would seem prudent to break complex changes into manageable components and implement them in a divisible and/or incremental manner.

The fourth factor lies in the quality and practicality of the programme. It is important to emphasise here that it is not only the quality that a panel of curriculum developers would attribute to the curriculum, but the quality as it is perceived by the relevant actors supposed to implement the curriculum. Thus, one may talk of contextual suitability, meaning that the proposed innovation must be matched to available funds, specific student characteristics, teaching materials and technologies, the communities' language patterns, teachers' abilities, parents' expectations, and cultural values, among others.

4.2 Local characteristics

A second set of factors focuses on local decision processes and local characteristics of the implementation. First, there is the school district in which the programme is implemented. The attitude of district administrators, inspectors and the like towards the local implementation process is essential if change is meant to be serious. Without the support of district administrators, change may happen with individual teachers or single schools but it will most likely remain isolated in some innovative pockets without affecting the broader system. Just 'moral support' – in the sense of speaking good words to teachers without any concrete implementation follow-through – will not be enough. As Fullan (2007) observes, teachers and others know enough not to take change seriously unless local administrators demonstrate through actions that they should. Moreover, direct support from the central administrators of the district is a critical factor for district-wide change since they lead the development and execution of the change and know exactly the expectation of the change (Fullan, 2007). However, Pratt (1994) believed that "the support of central administration will not be sufficient to ensure implementation; but without it, failure is almost certain (p. 332).

Community characteristics constitute another local factor in curriculum implementation. Even where communities are not directly involved in implementation, they can become activated against certain innovations if the planning and implementation processes do not attend to the political undercurrents in the school's surrounding community (Fullan, 2007). On the other hand, the inclusion of non-professionals, such as parents and the public, at least in settings where community members are used to influence educational practice, can uncover objections and help to accommodate specific circumstances. Parents may then be "one of the most powerful levers to better implementation" (Fullan, 1994, p. 2842) if they are actively included in the implementation strategy through an adequate information system or realistic offers to participate in key phases of development and implementation. In brief, "the greater the community interest and support without controversy, the greater the degree of implementation" (Snyder *et al.*, 1992, p. 417).

Another crucial local factor for implementation relates to the characteristics of the school which is the venue for implementation and, in particular, the role of the school head and the school management team. There is broad research evidence that principals and school management teams cannot change schools just on their own, but that they are the single most important group of persons to make change processes fail. Fullan (1994) writes: The principal is the most likely person to be in a position to shape the organisational conditions necessary for success such as the development of shared goals, collaborative work structures and climates, and procedures for monitoring results" (p. 2842). Change processes need the management's active support and participation – not necessarily as curriculum experts – but as initiators, as change leaders (Fullan, 1994).

Pratt (1994) also echoes the vital role of the principal in any educational change or implementation. He writes: "The support of the principal is almost invariably essential for successful innovation to take place" (p. 323). Active support from the principal enhances implementation since principals have strong influences on the likelihood of change. Writing about the experience in Britain, Ball (1987) corroborates that "it is often the head teacher who is critical in resistance to change,...he can effectively block, stifle, dissuade or ignore groups in school who advocate change" (p. 79).

Another important school-related influence on curriculum implementation is the teacher factor, some

aspects of which have been touched on in the foregoing discussion. Without doubt, the most important person in the curriculum implementation process is the teacher. With their knowledge, experience and competencies, teachers are central to any curriculum improvement effort. Regardless of which philosophical belief the education system is based on, there is no denying the fact that teachers influence students' learning. Better teachers foster better learning. Teachers are most knowledgeable about the practice of teaching and are responsible for translating the curriculum into practical activities in the classroom.

Unfortunately, though understandably, teachers who are to implement the curriculum frequently view change as meaning more work. In addition to their already overloaded schedule, they have to put in extra effort without being given extra financial reward. Also, they know that new curriculum programmes will require them to learn new teaching skills and competencies which will mean attending courses and seminars. It has also been found that teachers or practitioners tend to reject pedagogical strategies or teaching methods that are different from what they are currently using. They are reluctant to change or modify their current instructional strategies and understandings of classroom practice.

Teachers' commitment and attitudes, competencies and interaction patterns make up a crucial group of factors for implementation. Both individual and collegial aspects are important. It has been found that teachers' attitude to innovations is influenced by a history of negative experiences with previous implementation attempts which in itself is an unfavourable condition for change since system members may have built up a cynic or apathetic attitude towards change regardless of the merit of the new idea.

It must be reiterated that teachers are a constant factor in the education system and thus have a key role in classroom innovation. If they are not motivated to engage in the implementation of an innovation, then nothing will happen. Engaging teachers in the planning process increases their sense of ownership of the innovation. It also helps to equip them with skills required by the innovation and enhances the likelihood that the innovation will be adapted to local circumstances (Thomas, 1994). Thus, it is now accepted by curriculum researchers that to ensure effective implementation it is important to involve persons affected by the change in the process leading to that change.

In addition, in a school where there are more change-oriented teachers, implementation is more likely to succeed than a school with more change-resistant teachers. Moreover, teachers seem to have changing interests during different phases of implementation. Initially, concrete proposal and non-paternalistic support seem to be important in order to counteract feelings of being de-skilled. Later, a more comprehensive view on the substantive and methodological implications of the innovation becomes possible.

Furthermore, it must be noted that individual teachers' learning is socially situated in a network of co-teachers, managers, administrators and other relevant participants. The quality of working relationships among teachers is strongly related to implementation. Collegiality, open communication, trust, support and help, learning on the job, getting results, job satisfaction and morale are closely interrelated (Fullan, 1994). Indeed, teacher-teacher relationships seem to be the most essential element that affects the success of the implementation of an innovation. Pratt (1994) commented that "curriculum improvement is most likely to come about in an institution that has developed an ethos of collegial support" (p. 332). Snyder *et al.* (1992) called these relationships "collaboration and cooperation between teachers". Collaboration implies and creates stronger interdependence, shared responsibility, collective commitment and improvement, and greater readiness to participate in the difficult business of review and critique (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992).

Collaboration and collegiality leads to a greater sense of efficacy and, as Fullan (1994) found in his research, when teachers have a greater sense of efficacy, it leads them to take action and persist in the effort required to bring about successful implementation. If a teacher can't or won't do it, it simply can't be done. Therefore, a greater sense of teacher efficacy might yield a greater degree of implementation (Snyder *et al.*, 1992).

An important factor in curriculum implementation discussed by Pratt (1980) is the availability and adequacy of resources. The four main kinds of resources Pratt identified are time, material resources, administrative support and expertise. Since support from administrators has been mentioned earlier, the emphasis here will be on time and material resources. Both Pratt (1980) and Posner (1995) appreciate that time is the most precious resource of the teacher. In the words of Pratt (1980):

Each new curriculum requires extra time for teachers to prepare lessons and materials, to become familiar with the concepts and skills to be taught, to prepare or administer new tests, and to gather reference sources. In addition, many new curricula impose extra time-consuming responsibilities on the teacher: for coordination of team teaching, for individualisation or remediation, for greater amount of evaluation and marking, or for in-service training (p. 430).

Because teachers have a lot to cover within a stipulated time frame, they are constantly making compromises based on priorities. That is, a teacher will not implement a change if it is not in support of his/her priorities. It has also been noted that individuals will always want to do the same old thing just to avoid the pressure that comes along with change. This therefore implies that if resources needed to effect change are not

available, the tradition goes on.

Whether a change will become a reality or not depends so much on the provision of material resources as recommended by developers. Material resources, according to Pratt (1980), present few problems provided the curriculum designer provides a detailed record of what the change requires and budget accordingly, and provided establishments are willing to provide the necessary funds, facilities, equipment and materials. Pratt (1980) and Posner (1995) openly state that in the real world these requirements are not met. In such cases the limited resources determine the *fate* of the change. However, change cannot continue to depend on existing facilities. The reason is that the existing material resources though may be meeting the demands of a particular change half-way through, may not satisfy all the necessary requirements thereby hindering successful implementation.

4.3 External factors

The last group of factors identified by Fullan (1994, 2007) in curriculum implementation is the influence of the government and other external agencies. Lacking role clarity and having ambiguity about expectations, and with an absence of regular interpersonal forums of communication, ambivalence between authority and support roles, such bodies could affect the degree of implementation to a certain extent. Fullan (1994) is critical of government agencies which all too often “have been preoccupied with policy and programme adoption, and have vastly underestimated the problems and processes of implementation. The policy maker and the local practitioner inhabit different worlds, each side ignorant of the subjective world of the other” (p. 2843). It is important therefore that a procedural relationship between local schools and government agencies is established.

In fact, the quality of relationships between central and local actors is a key issue of implementation. However, all too often it has come “in the form of episodic events rather than processes: for example, submission of requests for money, intermittent progress reports on what is being done, external evaluations, all amounting to paper work, rather than people work” (Fullan, 1994, p. 2843).

The factors discussed above seem to be comprehensive in explaining influences on implementation of a curriculum as far as people, events and resources are concerned. Even though large sums of money are spent on implementing new curriculum, several of these efforts have failed. According to Sarason (1990), the main reason for the failure of implementation is the lack of understanding of the culture of the school by both experts outside the school system and educators in the system. Successful implementation of curriculum requires understanding the power relationships, the traditions, the roles and responsibilities of individuals in the school system. Implementers (whether they be teachers, principals, district education officers) should be well-versed with the contents of the curriculum. They must be clear of the purpose, the nature, and the real and potential benefits of the innovation.

As stated by Fullan and Pomfret (1977), “effective implementation of innovations requires time, personal interaction and contacts, in-service training and other forms of people-based support” (p.391). Curriculum implementation requires winning people over and it takes time. Teachers need to feel appreciated and their efforts recognised. Some may argue that they should be given financial rewards but there is evidence to suggest that external motivation contributes minimally to the venture. Individuals contribute their best talents when they are internally motivated and derive a good feeling from being involved.

Many curriculum theorists (e.g. Fullan, 1994; Snyder *et al.*, 1992) have stressed that the above factors cannot be understood in isolation, since they form a system of interacting variables. It is a combination of characteristics occurring in specific settings that determine the outcomes of implementation. The complexity of the reality can only be explored through the study of the interactions between these factors which affect change.

The key to getting teachers committed to an innovation is to enhance their knowledge of the programme. This means teachers need to be trained and workshops have to be organised for professional development. Unfortunately, in any curriculum implementation process not all teachers will have the benefit of such exposure. There are just too many teachers and insufficient funds to go around. The most common approach is to have one-day workshops given by experts with the lecture method being the dominant pedagogical strategy. Among the many extrinsic factors identified that may impede curriculum change are adequacy of resources, time, school ethos and professional support. The intrinsic factors are professional knowledge, professional adequacy and professional interest and motivation.

5. Research on curriculum implementation in Ghana

Studies on curriculum implementation are designed to help specify the practices implied by an innovation; identify the conditions under which implementation is likely to succeed; determine the capabilities required of the implementers and to help explain the success or failure of the innovation (Cobbold, 1999). Studies conducted along these directions in Ghana are scanty. In this section a few of such studies which were sighted during literature search are reviewed.

Omari (1981) evaluated the implementation of the science curriculum for the experimental junior

secondary schools (JSS) established in Ghana between 1976 and 1981. Using a non-participant observation approach, he investigated how six (6) JSS science teachers organised their lessons. He concluded from his findings that the JSS science curriculum was not implemented according to the specifications of its designers. Teachers dominated the lessons and failed to encourage the pupils to contribute towards the development of concepts. Practical work was also not done.

Tufuor (1989) conducted a case study of the implementation of the JSS Science programme in the Cape Coast metropolis, interviewing 27 teachers on issues pertaining to the implementation process. The study found that though considerable success had been achieved, the implementation process faced problems such as inadequate financial support, teachers' use of inappropriate teaching methods, students' weak background in English and Science, lack of furniture and laboratory space.

Ampah's (1991) quantitative exploratory study sought to assess the extent to which the JSS agricultural science programme had been implemented in the Central Region of Ghana, using teachers' perceptions. The findings were that most of the teachers were not adequately prepared to handle the pre-vocational agricultural science in the lower forms of a regular secondary school; most of the teachers felt they did not possess sufficient competencies needed for maximum implementation of the programme as most of them had received no in-service training for the programme; resource required for the implementation of the programme were found to be fairly inadequate; and content expected to be covered was too much. Despite the above drawbacks, the aspects and characteristics of the programme were mostly clear to the teachers; and total degree of implementation was found to be high.

Furthermore, the following factors (in order of priority) were considered important in promoting implementation: teachers' understanding and acceptance of the programme as part of the latter's general education; students' interest in the programme; and cooperative attitudes from other teachers of the school.

Another study was conducted by Eminah (1993) with a focus on the implementation of the JSS Science curriculum in the Western Region of Ghana. The main objective of the study was to determine the extent to which the classroom behaviours of selected JSS teachers conformed to the teaching and learning approaches prescribed in the JSS science syllabus and the teachers' handbook. The study found that JSS science teachers asked lower order cognitive questions; they also did not organise practical work as demanded by the science course. Furthermore, pupils could not read and write in English. The conclusion drawn from these findings was that the desired changes in instructional processes had not occurred in that the curriculum was not being implemented at the classroom level in the manner prescribed by its developers. The teaching and learning strategies being used were at variance with the principles which were intended to guide teaching in the course.

Damalie (1997) employed qualitative methods (interview and observation) to investigate the factors which affect the implementation of the cultural studies programme in Ghanaian JSS. The findings were that the implementation of the programme was inhibited by religious orientation of both pupils and teachers; teachers' lack of expertise in handling the music component of the programme; inadequate time allocation; lack of continuous in-service courses and lack of materials. On the other hand, positive attitude of teachers towards the programme; cooperation of the pupils; the provision of textbooks; the cooperation of parents in supplying needed resources; the practical nature of the subject; pupils' familiarity with some aspects of the content; and the use of resource persons were listed as factors which facilitated the implementation of the programme.

Amoah (1998) investigated the implementation of the social studies curriculum in some districts of the Central Region of Ghana. The major findings of the study were that the social studies programme was not being implemented via the integrated approach. Also, teaching-learning materials were lacking. Teachers and pupils rarely went beyond the textbook material in their teaching and learning, and field work and other methods recommended for teaching social studies were not being used.

Cobbold (1999) evaluated how the social studies programme was being implemented in the teacher training colleges in Ghana. He found that the characteristics of the programme were fairly clear to both teachers and students and that they regarded all the components of the programme as important. Also, the principals, teachers and students involved in the implementation had positive attitudes toward the teaching of social studies. However, the academic and professional backgrounds of the teachers were not found to be supportive of the implementation. Consequently, some important methods recommended for teaching social studies were rarely used by the teachers. The implementation was also found to be hindered by non-availability and/or inadequacy of requisite instructional resources and facilities as well as insufficiency of time allotted to teaching the subject.

Adu-Yeboah (2007) investigated how social studies was being taught and learned in junior high schools in the Obuasi Municipality of the Ashanti region. He found that in general the teachers possessed the required academic and professional qualifications for teaching the subject at that level, and they had positive views about the subject. However, the teachers had inadequate training in the methods and techniques of teaching social studies and, therefore, were not using the recommended teaching methods; the syllabus was perceived by the teachers to be overloaded, yet lesser periods were allocated for teaching; teaching and learning resources were not available; and teachers were not assessing the affective and psychomotor aspects of students'

learning.

Finally, in a study conducted by Ani-Boi (2009) on the implementation of Ghana's 2007 educational reform in primary schools in the Cape Coast metropolis, it was found that there was lack of material resources for successful implementation; and teachers lacked the knowledge and skills required by the reform, though they had developed their own strategies for implementing the reform.

6. Conclusion

From the findings of the various implementation studies conducted in Ghana which have been reviewed in the foregoing section, some conclusions emerge. Firstly, some studies found some level of success in the implementation efforts, and attributed this to clarity of the programme to implementers (Ampah, 1991; Cobbold, 1999) and positive attitude of the implementers (Damalie, 1997).

Secondly, curriculum implementation in Ghana has not been without problems. A major problem has been the disjunction between the prescriptions by the curriculum designers and the practices of the implementers. Consistently, the studies found that the curriculum was not being implemented according to the specifications of its designers. In particular, recommended methods and techniques of teaching were not used by the teachers (Adu-Yeboah, 2007; Amoah, 1998; Cobbold, 1999; Eminah, 1993; Omari, 1981; Tufuor, 1989). This is evidence of absence of shared understanding between the two groups of stakeholders regarding the requirements for implementation of the programmes. The lack of common understanding implies that implementers used pedagogical models different from what the designers had either stated explicitly or assumed. Another evidence of the absence of shared understanding was the inadequate background of the teachers implementing the curriculum, which was found in some of the studies (e.g. Ampah, 1991; Cobbold, 1999; Damalie, 1997).

Thirdly, the obstacles which have confronted our implementation are not particularly different from those documented in the general curriculum implementation literature. The hindering factor frequently mentioned was the unavailability or inadequacy of requisite resources (Adu-Yeboah, 2007; Ampah, 1991; Ani-Boi, 2009; Cobbold, 1999; Damalie, 1997; Tufuor, 1989). This might suggest that we probably have not paid adequate attention to the practical imperatives of the phenomenon of curriculum implementation and have, therefore, not given enough practical expression to the things that matter. Finally, many of the problems that have confronted the implementation of curricula in Ghana have their roots in inadequate pre-implementation preparations.

It is recommended that curriculum designers and implementers in Ghana have a shared and unified understanding not only of the theoretical and conceptual bases of curriculum implementation, but also its practical implications. The Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service should endeavour to put in all the resources, effort and commitment that it takes to ensure considerable success in implementation. It is also important that we support curriculum implementation with monitoring and evaluation. All these should be thought out clearly and talked through thoroughly before any curriculum is put to open use at any level of the education system.

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