

Implementation of Ghana's Standards-Based Curriculum by Religious and Moral Education Teachers in the Kwahu West Municipality



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ABSTRACT

The study examined the fidelity of implementation of Ghana's Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) by Religious and Moral Education teachers in the Kwahu West Municipality of the Eastern Region, Ghana. The convergent parallel mixed method design was adopted for the study. Using the census and purposive sampling procedure, 181 respondents consisting of 175 RME teachers and six (6) head teachers from the public primary schools in the Kwahu West Municipality were selected for the study. A questionnaire and interview guide were used to gather the requisite data for the study. The data was analysed using frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation, and a thematic approach. The study found that the RME teachers were somewhat prepared for the implementation of the Standards-Based Religious and Moral Education Curriculum. Again, RME teachers were to a very large extent implementing the key features of the Standard-Based Religious and Moral Education Curriculum. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ghana Education Service (GES), and the head teachers organise detailed and frequent in-service training programmes for the RME teachers. This study contributes to the growing literature on improving the school curriculum in the Ghanaian context. This study would also assist leaders in directing and enabling teachers to engage in professional development activities which will, in turn, assist them in becoming efficacious in implementing the new curricula.

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INTRODUCTION

Countries all over the world try to modify and make changes to their educational curriculum to suit relevant contexts or contemporary challenges. Thus, the vision of any country is expressed in many ways, including the implementation of the school curriculum and other academic programmes offered by schools in that country. Implementation plays a key role in determining whether an intended curriculum achieves its desired outcomes. To attain the desired outcomes of a curriculum reform (i.e., students' development and application of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) therefore necessitates more than changing teaching and learning outputs. It involves making coordinated, multifaceted changes at the classroom,

school, and policy level (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.¹ A multidimensional and complex mixture of ingredients determines the extent to which a curriculum change is implemented in a way that reflects the curriculum's intent. Policies (e.g., goals, targets, and tools), people (i.e., all of those who play a role in curriculum design and implementation), and places (e.g., where curriculum implementation unfolds) affect implementation, along with how these various policies, places, and people interact.²

However, starting a process of curriculum implementation will largely be influenced by the kind of curriculum model adopted by the state or country. For instance, the adoption and development of a standards-based curriculum has become a feature of most educational reforms in the world. Thus, instead of most teachers developing their own goals, they are now required to have their students meet standards at the state, district, or national levels. Doolittle has however stated that a Standards-Based curriculum SBC represents a huge paradigm shift for many teachers, although it is generally believed that it helps teachers to link the taught curriculum to the required standards.³ Thus, the introduction of a Standards-based curriculum means moving teachers into unfamiliar territories, where lessons are different, new content is encountered as well as an encounter with unfamiliar teaching strategies. It also means facing strange problem sets, different assessments and an altered scope and sequence. Generally, the role of the teacher is seriously altered in a standards-based curriculum. For instance, Standards-based instruction involves shifting from a reliance on the teacher as a "sole authority of right answers" towards the use of logic and verification as evidence.⁴ Moreover, a standards-based approach to curriculum implementation forces teachers to select activities based on their contribution to meeting the standards required by the state rather than based on teacher preference.⁵

One of Ghana's visions is to provide a curriculum that can address the moral and social needs of its citizens⁶ and also help in solving national, political, and social problems.⁷ Religious and Moral Education (RME) has thus been described as a vital and indispensable part of human growth and development in Ghanaian society.⁸ The introduction of RME as a subject in Ghana's basic schools is therefore aimed at assisting the youth to acquire sound religious and moral principles as well as develop appropriate attitudes and values that will help them to make good choices and decisions in their adulthood for the good of society.

The Government of Ghana through the Ministry of Education and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessments (NaCCA) since September 2019 began the implementation of a standards-based curriculum (SBC), which aims at making students able to direct their own learning process and be actively involved in knowledge building. The new curriculum has maintained Religious and Moral Education (RME) as a stand-alone curriculum with features that make the teacher a facilitator of knowledge. The new curriculum is a shift from an objective-based curriculum to a standards-based curriculum. The introduction of the SBC was to ameliorate the setbacks in the objective-based curriculum such as disjointed scope and sequence, overloaded content, more theoretical than practical, less emphasis on the application of moral values to shape the life of learners, and more teacher-centred than child-centred.⁹ The SBC sought to foster the development of national core values and skills required for long-term development and learning. This reform was triggered by the Education Strategic Plan (ESP 2018-2030) which outlines Ghana's strategic educational reforms for the pre-tertiary level.

¹ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], *Draft Change Management: Facilitating and Hindering Factors of Curriculum Implementation* (British Columbia : OECD, 2019).

² Michael Honig, "Complexity and Policy Implementation: Challenges and Opportunities for the Field," in *New Directions in Education Policy Implementation: Confronting Complexity*, ed. M. Honig, 2006, 1–25.

³ S Doolittle, "Assessment Programs in New York State: A Whole Village's Effort," in *National Conference for the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance, Philadelphia, PA*, 2003.

⁴ John Bay, Elvis Reys, and Benjamin Reys, "Effectively Implementing Standards-Based Mathematics Curriculum in Middle Schools," *Middle School Journal* 30, no. 4 (1999): 503.

⁵ Jacalyn Lund and Deborah Tannehill, *Standards-Based Physical Education Curriculum*, 3rd ed. (Burlington: Jones & Bartlett Learning, 2015).

⁶ Rebecca Ganusah, *The Impact of Religion on Morality in West Africa* (Legon: Ghana: University of Ghana, 2002).

⁷ Ernest Kofi Tamakloe, "The Curriculum Process," in *Introduction to Education in Ghana*, ed. Okechukwu C. Abosi and Joseph Brookman-Amissah (Accra: Sedco Publishing Ltd, 1992).

⁸ NaCCA/MOE, *Religious and Moral Education Curriculum for Primary Schools* (Accra, Ghana: Ministry of Education, 2019).

⁹ Seth Asare-Danso, and Anthony Mensah. *Methods of teaching religious and moral education for colleges of education*. (Cape Coast: Beret Outlook Press), 2021.

Prior to the commencement of the 2019/2020 academic year for basic schools in Ghana, teachers in the basic schools were taken through training all over the country to familiarise themselves with the new curriculum.¹⁰ However, during the implementation process, realities in terms of challenges relating to the curriculum content, alignment of teaching and learning philosophies to the aims of the curriculum, as well as the adoption of learner-centred pedagogies and assessment coupled with the unavailability of textbooks set in. This resulted in a lot of teachers and other stakeholders in education complaining and seeking immediate redress to the identified challenges.¹¹ Moreover, the tendency for teachers to continue in their “old ways of doing things” in the face of the change in curriculum was high. For instance, in the Kwahu West Municipality, lesson observation of some RME teachers as a requirement for a three-semester Top-up Bachelor of Education Sandwich programme unearthed some challenges in relation to the standards-based RME curriculum implementation. It was observed that although the RME teachers identified and indicated the competencies to be developed by learners in their lesson plans by the close of the various lessons, most of the activities carried out by the teachers during the teaching and learning process were not activities that could lead to the attainment of the specified competencies. Moreover, the implementation process saw the frequent use of paper and pencil assessment procedures which was largely in line with the previously used objective-based curriculum rather than the competency-based assessment procedures required of a standard-based curriculum.

Some studies have been done on the implementation of the RME curriculum at the basic school level, with a focus on either general factors that influence curriculum implementation or mainly on the learner factor in curriculum implementation.¹² In a most recent study, Aboagye and Yawson sought the perception of some Ghanaian teachers on the implementation of the new curriculum.¹³ However, with the introduction of the standards-based curriculum in Ghana in September 2019, it appears that little or no empirical study has been conducted in the area of teacher implementation of the RME standards-based curriculum, hence this study. Therefore, this study examines how RME teachers in the Kwahu West Municipality are ‘faithfully’ implementing key features (i.e., learner-centred pedagogy, inclusion and equity, differentiation and scaffolding, integration of I.C.T and development of core competencies) of the newly introduced standards-based curriculum. The study looks for answers to the following research questions: “How were RME teachers in the Kwahu West Municipality prepared for the implementation of the Standards-Based RME Curriculum?”; and “How are teachers implementing the key features of the Standards-Based RME Curriculum?”. The study involved RME teachers and head teachers from the public primary schools in the Kwahu West Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana in carrying out the study. The findings of this investigation will lead to an assessment of RME teachers’ pedagogical practices in SBC implementation which could be used to make adjustments in future training programmes for RME teachers in the municipality or elsewhere. Since the Standards-Based curriculum is in its formative stage of implementation, it is envisaged that the results of this study would trigger any quick adjustment in terms of misconceptions on the parts of teachers with regard to the aims and objectives of the curriculum. Thus, curriculum planners might initiate further interactions with teachers to correct any misconceptions with regard to the new curriculum. This study may assist leaders in directing and enabling teachers to engage in professional development activities which will, in turn, assist them in becoming efficacious in implementing the new curricula. The subsequent paragraphs consider the Methodology, Results and Discussions, Conclusions, and Recommendations.

¹⁰ Kale-Dery Severious, “GES Begins Nationwide Training on New Education Curriculum,” Daily Graphic Online, 2019, <http://www.graphic.com.gh>.

¹¹ Edmond Kwesi Agormedah et al., “Investigating Teachers’ Experience and Self-Efficacy Beliefs across Gender in Implementing the New Standards-Based Curriculum in Ghana,” in *Frontiers in Education*, vol. 7 (Frontiers Media SA, 2022), 932447.

¹² Hans Kweku Anderson, *The Learner Factor on the Implementation of the Basic School Curriculum* (University of Cape Coast: UCC Press, 2017).

¹³ Emmanuel Aboagye and Joseph Anthony Yawson, “Teachers’ Perception of the New Educational Curriculum in Ghana,” *African Educational Research Journal* 8, no. 1 (2020): 6–12.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Curriculum Implementation

The term implementation may have two meanings according to policy perspectives.¹⁴ One shows policy intentions and the other implies policy results. For instance, this study covers both - what policy requires and how teachers understand policy intentions and have applied them. Thus, implementation concerns initial experiences of attempting to translate policy intentions into practice.¹⁵ Similarly, Afangideh describes the concept of curriculum implementation as the actual engagement of learners with planned learning opportunities.¹⁶ Curriculum implementation may therefore be seen as a process that is based on the fundamental assumption of student growth and improvement of learning. The process involves aligning instructional planning with learning outcomes which are specified in the curriculum framework. Resources are thus selected based on usefulness in meeting learner outcomes. Curriculum implementation therefore implies the interactive stage of the curriculum process which takes place in the classroom through the effort of the teachers, learners, school administrators and parents. It also integrates the application of physical facilities and the adoption of appropriate pedagogical strategies and methods.

Implementation, no doubt, plays a key role in determining whether an intended curriculum achieves its desired outcomes.¹⁷ However, introducing a curriculum change at a school, district, or national level does not guarantee that those charged with implementation will implement the curriculum in ways that lead to deep changes to classroom practice. Educators may therefore implement a curriculum with fidelity by following the curriculum as prescribed, adapting the curriculum to the needs of their local context while adhering to its core principles, complying with the curriculum by only implementing surface-level changes, adapting the curriculum to fit with existing practices, or not implement the curriculum at all.¹⁸ This, therefore suggests that when planning for and managing curriculum change, it is important to come up with a strategy for implementation support, since quality of curriculum implementation of any society is the bedrock of its political, economic, scientific and technological well-being.

Teacher Preparation for Standards-Based Curriculum Implementation

Standards-based curriculum reforms come with greater teacher responsibility and task since it means providing all learners with rich and engaging instructional activities. Capacity building and continuous teacher professional development are therefore seen as key ingredients in support of any standards-based reforms.¹⁹ In the United States of America, the introduction and implementation of the NCLB and its attendant challenges established the relevance of having quality teachers in every classroom.²⁰ Thus, every curriculum implementation effort needs to focus on improving teacher quality through training, since teacher quality is vital to the realization of improved student achievement. When teachers are poorly informed about an intended innovation, it is certain that its application may remain limited and its impact on student learning is likely to be unclear. Combes affirms the relevance of teacher preparation prior to curriculum implementation when they assert that “many implementation efforts fail because someone underestimated the scope or importance of preparation.”²¹ Fullan has therefore pointed out that educational change is not a single event, but a multidimensional process that includes 3 dimensions and that should form the basis and justification for training before any curriculum implementation;²²

¹⁴ John Lane, “Implementation, Accountability and Trust,” in *The Policy Process*, ed. Hill. M. (Harvester, Wheatsheaf: Prentice Hall, 1997), 297–313.

¹⁵ Fredrick Stoller, “Innovation as the Hallmark of Effective Leadership,” in *Leadership in English Language Education, Theoretical Foundations and Practical Skills for Changing Times*, ed. M. Christison and D. E. Murray (New York: Routledge, 2009), 73–97.

¹⁶ M. E. Afangideh, “Curriculum Implementation at the Basic Education Level,” *Curriculum Organization of Nigeria: Curriculum Theory and Practice*, 2009, 168–79.

¹⁷ Milbrey Wallin McLaughlin and Lorrie Shepard, *Improving Education through Standards-Based Reform* (Stanford, CA: National Academy of Education, 1995).

¹⁸ Ariel Tichnor-Wagner et al., “Studying Implementation within a Continuous Continuous-Improvement Process: What Happens When We Design with Adaptations in Mind?,” *Teachers College Record* 120, no. 5 (2018): n5.

¹⁹ Edward Sean McDonough, *Measuring Fidelity of Implementation Using the Survey of Enacted Curriculum* (The College of William and Mary, 2014).

²⁰ Johnson Rice, “Teacher Quality: Understanding the Effectiveness of Teacher Attributes,” Economic Policy Institute, 2003, http://www.epinet.org/content.cfm/bookteacher_quality_execsumt.

²¹ Claude Combes, *Research Design IT* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

²² Michael Fullan, *The New Meaning of Educational Change* (Teachers college press, 2015).

1. the possible use of new or revised materials (instructional resources such as curriculum materials, standards, or technologies);
2. the possible use of new teaching approaches (i.e., new pedagogies, especially learning partnerships with students);
3. the possible alteration of beliefs (e.g., pedagogical assumptions and theories underlying particular new policies or programmes).

The above three dimensions as presented by Fullan no doubt make it imperative for teacher preparation through training before any curriculum innovation since, in the first place, new or revised materials need to be understood by teachers so they can effectively translate it to learners. Secondly, the introduction of new pedagogies requires the understanding and demonstrations for better and effective use in real classroom situations, and finally the need for teachers who are key to curriculum implementation to understand the philosophies and theories that underpin a new curriculum.

METHODOLOGY

The Convergent parallel design under mixed method research was employed for the study. This approach involves the collection of different but complementary data on the same phenomena. In a convergent parallel design, the results or data are merged by comparing, interpreting and discussing them by stating the degree to which they converge, diverge, or are related.²³ The population for this study consisted of all public primary school RME teachers and head teachers in the Kwahu West Municipality of the Eastern Region of Ghana with an estimated total population of 312 teachers and 78 head teachers from 78 public primary schools in the municipality.²⁴ 175 RME teachers and 6 head teachers formed the sample size for the study. Out of the 312 RME teachers in public primary schools, 175 of them were sampled based on the census method, from 40 schools across all eight (8) circuits to form the sample size for the teachers. The Circuits used were Nkawkaw 'A', Nkawkaw 'B', Nkawkaw 'C', KwahuNsabah, Aweregya, Awenade, Fodoa, and Asuboni Rails Circuits. The 40 schools were selected from the public primary schools in the various circuits using the simple random sampling technique, where the names of all the schools were written on pieces of paper so that each school had the chance of being selected.

Questionnaires and interview guides were the instruments for data collection. A discussion was held with RME teachers and head teachers of the various public basic schools selected for the study to agree on a convenient time to administer the instrument. The RME teachers were supervised by the researcher to complete the questionnaire. Interview sessions were held with six (6) head teachers and 12 RME teachers in the study area. To answer the research questions formulated to guide the study, the type of statistics that was employed in the analysis of the data was descriptive statistics. Specifically, the data from the questionnaire was used to answer research questions 1 and 2 through the computation of frequencies, percentages and means and standard deviation. This was done with the use of computer software called Statistical Product for Service Solutions (SPSS) version 21. Data gathered with the use of the interview guides (from head teachers and RME teachers) were analysed using the thematic approach, which involves systematically organizing and interpreting open-ended feedback to uncover meaningful insights and identify underlying patterns within the data. For this study, a sample of the proposal and data collection instruments were submitted to the University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board for perusal, advice and approval before it was used on the field for data collection. Consent was sought from participants in this study. The purpose of the study was explained to participants before the interview and questionnaires were administered. Both teachers and head teachers were assured their anonymity and privacy.

²³ Vicki Plano Clark and John Ward Creswell, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2011).

²⁴ Kwahu West Municipal Directorate of Education, [KWMDE], 2022, 2.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS/FINDINGS

The background information of the respondents was assessed and provided first, then the research questions that served as the study's guiding principles. The characteristics of the respondents of the survey, who were RME teachers and head teachers from the public primary schools in the Kwahu West Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana are shown in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively.

Table 1: Characteristics of Teachers

Variable	Subscale	No.	%
Gender	Male	60	34.3
	Female	115	65.7
Age	Below 20 years	1	0.6
	21-30 years	14	8.0
	31-40 years	129	73.7
	41-50 years	22	12.6
	51-60 years	9	5.1
Religious Affiliation	Christianity	146	83.4
	Islam	19	10.9
	African Traditional Religion	10	5.7
Highest Academic/ Professional Qualification	Diploma	28	16.0
	First Degree	141	80.6
	Master's Degree	6	3.4
Years of Teaching Experience	Less than a year	2	1.1
	1-5 years	36	20.6
	6-10 years	99	56.6
	11-15 years	12	6.9
	Above 15 years	26	14.9

Source: Field Data, 2022

Table 2: Characteristics of Head Teachers

Variable	Subscale	No.	%
Gender	Male	3	50
	Female	3	50
Age	20-30 years	0	0
	31-40 years	1	17
	41-50 years	3	50
	51 – 60 years	2	33
Religious Affiliation	Christianity	5	83
	Islam	1	17
	African Traditional Religion	0	0
Highest Academic/ Professional Qualification	Diploma	0	0
	First Degree	4	67
	Master's Degree	2	33
Years of Teaching Experience	1-5 years	0	0
	6-10 years	2	33
	11-15 years	1	17
	Above 15 years	3	50

Source: Field Data, 2022

This part of the study covers the main findings that emerged from the study. The results are organized and discussed in accordance with the research questions guiding the study. This was done to ensure the achievement of the various research questions set at the beginning of the study and to provide

well-organised discussions to enhance easy understanding of the findings of the study. It comprised data from the questionnaire and interview guide.

Preparedness of RME Teachers for the Implementation of the Standards-Based Religious and Moral Education Curriculum

Research Question 1: How are RME teachers in the Kwahu West Municipality prepared for the implementation of the Standards-Based RME Curriculum?

The aim of this research objective was to find out the preparedness of RME teachers in the public primary schools for the implementation of the Standards-Based RME Curriculum in the Kwahu West Municipality. The responses given by the RME teachers are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Preparedness of RME teachers for the implementation of the standards-based Religious and Moral Education curriculum

Statements:	M	SD
I had training on the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) in my municipality.	3.09	.62
The training I had was adequate for the proper implementation of the SBC.	2.75	.81
The training I had adequately exposed me to the features of the SBC.	2.89	.95
RME was featured in the training programme prior to the implementation of SBC	2.75	.98
I understood the teaching and learning philosophy of RME.	2.63	.80
I was clear with the general and specific aims of RME during the training.	2.30	.89
I was adequately taken through the instructional expectations of RME.	2.15	.90
I was introduced to the core competencies during the training.	2.39	.90
I understood all the core competencies for effective SBC implementation.	2.51	.99
From the training, I know the pedagogical approaches to use in teaching RME.	2.59	1.03
The training exposed me to the principles of inclusion and equity in teaching.	2.53	.82
The training effectively exposed me to assessment procedures in the SBC.	2.91	.66
I had enough training on the use of learner-centred pedagogies.	2.62	.86
I had an understanding of the use and application of differentiation and scaffolding in teaching and learning.	2.49	.77
I had enough training on the integration of ICT in teaching and learning.	2.25	.71
Since the inception of the SBC I have attended in-service training programmes on the SBC implementation.	2.18	.98
Professional learning communities provide me adequate support for teaching and learning of RME.	1.66	.86

Source: Field data, 2022

Scale: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree,
 3= Agree, 4= Strongly Agree

Mean of means = 2.51

Mean of Standard Deviation = 0.85

From Table 3, a mean of 3.09 and a standard deviation of .62 were achieved for the statement: “I had training on the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) in my municipality”. This means that the respondents agreed that they had training on the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) in their municipality. Again, when the RME teachers were asked whether the training they had was adequate for the proper implementation of the SBC, they agreed to the statement. Here, a mean of 2.75 and a standard deviation of .81 were obtained for this item showing the respondents agreed to the statement. Also, from Table 3, the teachers agreed that the training they had adequately exposed them to the features of the SBC. This is evidenced by the mean score of 2.89 and a standard deviation of .95 for this item. The mean is approximately 3, showing that the respondents agreed to the statement. Regarding the statement; “RME was featured in the training programme prior to implementation of SBC”, the majority of the teachers

agreed with the statement. This can be seen from the mean of 2.75 and a standard deviation of .98 that were realized. Also, a mean of 2.63 and a standard deviation of .80 were recorded for the item “I understood the teaching and learning philosophy of RME”. This means that the majority of the teachers agreed with this statement. This is because the mean falls on scale 3 (agree) looking at the scale under Table 3.

The result depicts that, the training effectively exposed the RME teachers to assessment procedures in the SBC. With a mean of 2.91 and a standard deviation of .66, it could be concluded that the mean falls into the scale of 3 (agree). Thus, the majority of the RME teachers agreed with the statement. Again, when the respondents were asked whether they had enough training on the use of learner-centred pedagogies, they agreed with the statement. Here, a mean of 2.62 and a standard deviation of .86 were obtained for this item showing the respondents had enough training on the use of learner-centred pedagogies. Also, from Table 3, the RME teachers had an understanding of the use and application of differentiation and scaffolding in teaching and learning. This is evidenced by the mean score of 2.49 and a standard deviation of .77 for this item. The mean is approximately 3, showing that the respondents agreed to the statement.

Results from Interview Sessions Held with Head Teachers in the Selected Schools

Responses provided by all six heads from the six different circuits selected from the municipality were indicative of some kind of preparation in the form of a general workshop organized for all teachers in the municipality prior to the commencement of the 2019/20 academic year. However, they were all quick to add a level of inadequacy in the preparation of teachers for the implementation of the RME curriculum. For instance, on the question of whether in their view their teachers were well trained for the implementation of the curriculum, a male headteacher with eight years (8) experience as head teacher in one of the selected schools responded as follows:

“The whole programme was hastily rushed down (Respondent, 1)

Similarly, a female head teacher with six (6) years experience as headteacher of her school responded that :

“Even though the training was done for the various teachers, it was not accompanied by curriculum materials” (Respondent 2)

As a follow-up question to ascertain how often they as head teachers had organized in-service training for their RME teachers on the implementation of the curriculum, all six head teachers said they had never organized any in-service training on the Standards-based curriculum for their RME teachers. In answering this question a male headteacher responded as follows:

“Not at all” (Respondent 3)

Another male headteacher with five years’ experience as head of his school said that he had only relied on the weekly Professional Learning Community sessions planned as part of the curriculum, but had not organized any specialized training on RME and the SBC implementation for his teachers since the general training offered for all teachers by the municipal directorate prior to the introduction of the SBC in basic schools.

How RME Teachers are implementing the Key Features of the Standards-Based Religious and Moral Education Curriculum

Research Question 2: How are teachers implementing the key features of the Standards-Based RME Curriculum?

The research question sought to ascertain how RME teachers are implementing the key features of the standards-based Religious and Moral Education Curriculum in the Kwahu West District of the Eastern Region of Ghana. The responses given by the RME teachers in the questionnaires are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: How RME Teachers are Implementing the Key Features of the Standards Based Religious and Moral Education Curriculum

Statements:	M	SD
I prepare lesson notes using the scope and sequence in the RME curriculum.	3.03	.57
I integrate ICT in my lessons.	2.83	.99

I indicate the required core competencies in my lesson plans.	3.36	.63
My chosen core competencies are always linked to my performance indicators.	3.12	.53
My RME lessons are more learner-centred than teacher-centred.	3.54	.57
I provide learners the opportunity to interact with varied sources of information, teaching and learning materials and ideas in various ways.	3.47	.64
I assume the position of a facilitator or coach who helps learners in their learning.	3.27	.49
I make learners collaborate whilst learning.	3.18	.39
I make learners demonstrate the result of their learning through a product of performance.	3.06	.48
I guide learners to find answers to their own questions rather than readily provide answers to their questions.	3.25	.43
I set different tasks for learners of different abilities.	3.01	.20
I provide targeted support to learners who are seen as performing below standards or at risk not reaching the expected level of learning outcomes.	2.91	.70
Identified low achievers are allowed more time to complete given task.	3.25	.57
I provide learners who are at risk of not reaching the expected level of learning outcomes, simplified version of a lesson, assignment or reading and gradually increase the complexity or sophistication over time.	3.10	.54
I describe or illustrate concepts or process in multiple ways to ensure understanding.	3.28	.49
I give learners an exemplar or model of an assignment, they are asked to complete.	3.18	.58
I clearly describe the purpose of a learning activity, the directions learners need to follow, and the learning goals they are expected to achieve.	3.26	.49
I expose learners to the use of ICT tools.	2.54	.89

Source: Field data, 2022

Scale: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree,
3= Agree, 4= Strongly Agree

Mean of means = 3.15

Mean of Standard Deviation = 0.57

Regarding the statement: “I prepare lesson notes using the scope and sequence in the RME curriculum”, the majority of the RME teachers agreed with the statement. This can be seen from the mean of 3.03 and a standard deviation of .57 that were realized. Also, a mean of 2.83 and a standard deviation of .99 were recorded for the item “I integrate ICT in my lesson.” This means that the majority of the RME teachers agreed with this statement. This is because the mean falls on a scale of 3 (agree) when approximated to the nearest whole number. From Table 4, a mean of 3.36 and a standard deviation of .63 were achieved for the statement: “I indicate required core competencies in my lesson plans”. This means that the respondents agreed to the statement. Again, when the RME teachers were asked whether their chosen core competencies are always linked to their performance indicators, they agreed to the statement. Here, a mean of 3.12 and a standard deviation of .53 were obtained for this item showing the respondents agreed to the statement.

Also, a mean of 3.28 and a standard deviation of .49 were recorded for the item “I describe or illustrate concepts or process in multiple ways to ensure understanding”. This means that the majority of the teachers agreed with this statement. This is because the mean falls on scale 3 (agree) looking at the scale under Table 4. The findings show that the majority of RME teachers agreed that they give learners an exemplar or model of an assignment, they are asked to complete. With a mean of 3.18 and a standard deviation of .58, it can be concluded that the mean falls into the scale 3 (agree). From Table 4, a mean of 3.26 and a standard deviation of .49 were achieved for the statement: “I clearly describe the purpose of a learning activity, the directions learners need to follow, and the learning goals they are expected to achieve”. This means that the teachers agreed to the statement. Again, when the RME teachers were asked

whether they expose learners to the use of ICT tools, a mean of 2.54 and a standard deviation of .89 were obtained for this item showing the respondents *agreed* with the statement.

Results from Interview Sessions Held with Teachers in the Selected Schools

The interview was used to collect qualitative data to complement quantitative data in order to ascertain the authenticity of the responses by teachers. In doing this, interview sessions were conducted with 12 RME teachers. The results of the interviews are in themes. Some questions in the interview guide solicited RME teachers' views with respect to how they were implementing the features of the curriculum such as to lead to the achievement of the six (6) competencies (i.e. Critical thinking and Problem Solving (CP), Creativity and Innovation (CI), Communication and Collaboration (CC), Cultural Identity and Global Citizenship (CG), Personal Development and Leadership (PL) and Digital Literacy (DL). Various responses were provided by the respondents.

"I refer to the curriculum document for my topics for each lesson" (Respondent 1).

Also, one of the teacher respondents said that:

"My Strands and sub-strands as well as terminal performance indicators are all taken from the curriculum" (Respondent 2).

Another teacher explained that:

"Since in each lesson core competencies are required I try to create activities that may lead to the attainment of the stated competencies" (Respondent 3).

Similarly, one of the teachers indicated that:

"After teaching the concept 'family', students were able to role play or demonstrate the responsibility of members in the family such as father, mother and children. This helped in the achievement of Creativity and Critical Thinking" (Respondent 4).

"In a lesson like God, His Creation and Attributes learners are able to identify and role play the attributes of God in groups, for example, Love, patience and merciful, achieving CC, PL and CI" (Respondent 5)

"By setting and communicating learning goals or targets that learners can understand and articulate for each lesson" (Respondent 6).

"Ensuring assessment and feedback are provided in a timely manner with options to demonstrate their learning" (Respondent 7).

"I use group work and improvise TLMs in most of my lessons" (Respondent 8).

The responses of teachers during the interview session to a very great extent corroborate their responses in the questionnaire on how they were implementing the key features of the SBC.

DISCUSSION

On the preparedness of RME teachers for the implementation of the standards-based RME curriculum, it was found that teachers had training on the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) in their municipality. This finding is in agreement with that of McLaughlin and Shepard who explain that capacity building and continuous teacher professional development are seen as key ingredients in support of any standards-based reforms.²⁵ Also, the RME teachers agreed that the training they had was adequate for the proper implementation of the SBC. This confirms the view of Levine who affirm the relevance of teacher preparation prior to curriculum implementation when they assert that "many implementation efforts fail

²⁵ McLaughlin and Shepard, *Improving Education through Standards-Based Reform*.

because someone underestimated the scope or importance of preparation.”²⁶ The RME teachers however indicated that they were not introduced to the core competencies during the training. This contradicts the view of NaCCA which explains that the RME curriculum emphasises the development of core competencies, which describes a body of skills that teachers at all levels should seek to develop in their learners.²⁷

In terms of how the RME teachers were implementing the key features of the standards-based RME curriculum, it was realized that the RME teachers indicated that their RME lessons are more learner-centred than teacher-centred. This finding is in agreement with NaCCA that, the SBC curriculum encourages teachers to adopt strategies that promote active involvement of the learners in the selection and organisation of learning experiences, making them aware of their importance in the process and also enabling them to assess their own learning outcomes.²⁸ Also, most of the teachers agreed that they describe or illustrate concepts or processes in multiple ways to ensure understanding. This result is in agreement with NaCCA’s assertion that the SBC curriculum encourages teachers to give learners an exemplar or model of an assignment, they will be asked to complete.²⁹ Again, the teachers indicated that they describe or illustrate concepts or processes in multiple ways to ensure understanding. This finding resonates with NaCCA’s assertion that the SBC curriculum encourages teachers to illustrate a concept, problem, or process in multiple ways to ensure understanding. The responses of teachers during the interview session to a very great extent corroborate their responses in the questionnaire on how they were implementing the key features of the SBC. The responses resonate with the view of McDonough, who observed that identifying curriculum components that must be implemented to standard is also an important area of FOI assessments.³⁰ This is because identification of such components according to Darrow, allows both programme designers and programme implementers to better understand where modifications in a programme can be made without risking programme failure.³¹ From the responses, there were indications of some of the use and application of the standards for effective pedagogy such as teachers and students working together, connection of lessons to students’ lives, and teaching through dialogue.³²

Discussion Summary

Based on the key findings of research question one, it can be established that the RME teachers in the Kwahu West Municipality in the Eastern Region were prepared for the implementation of the SBC through the initial training given to all teachers in the municipality, however, the preparation was inadequate. This was because the teachers were not effectively introduced to the core competencies to be developed in learners as well as the instructional expectations for RME as a subject. Moreover, in-service training on the Religious and Moral Education SBC which was needed to complement and reinforce the initial workshops organised prior to the implementation of the SBC was virtually absent in the municipality. With regards to the key findings for research question two, it can be concluded that RME teachers are to a very large extent implementing the key features of the curriculum through their consistent reference to scope and sequence for their lesson preparation, indication, and linkage of core competencies to performance indicators as well as the creation of learner-centred classrooms which has the potential of assisting learners to develop expected competencies stipulated in the Standards-Based Curriculum. The integration of ICT in lesson delivery and the conscious application of the principle of differentiation and scaffolding during teaching and learning were however not clearly present in the classroom practices of teachers.

²⁶ M.D. Levine, *A mind at a time*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002).

²⁷ NaCCA/MOE, *Religious and Moral Education Curriculum for Primary Schools*.

²⁸ National Council for Curriculum and Assessment/Ministry of Education, *Religious and Moral Education Curriculum for Primary Schools*. (Accra, Ghana: Ministry of Education, 2019).

²⁹ National Council for Curriculum and Assessment/Ministry of Education, *Religious and Moral Education Curriculum for Primary Schools*.

³⁰ McDonough, *Measuring Fidelity of Implementation Using the Survey of Enacted Curriculum*.

³¹ Collins Darrow, *Measuring Fidelity in Preschool Interventions: A Microanalysis of Fidelity Instruments Used in Curriculum Interventions* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University, 2009).

³² Stephanie Dalton. *Teaching Transformed: Achieving excellence, fairness, inclusion and harmony*. (Boulder, CO: Westview), 2000.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made for policymakers:

1. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ghana Education Service (GES) organise detailed and frequent in-service training programmes for the RME teachers, in order to better equip them on the implementation of the Standards-Based Religious and Moral Education Curriculum. The in-service training programme should ensure that, the RME teachers are: clear with the general and specific aims of RME during the training; are adequately taken through the instructional expectations of RME; and should introduce RME teachers to the core competencies during the training. Again, the RME teachers should be given enough training on the integration of ICT in teaching and learning.
2. Again, it is commendable that the RME teachers were implementing the key features of the SBC RME curriculum. Yet, it is recommended that the head teachers of the various basic schools assist RME teachers in implementing the basic features of the SBC RME curriculum in terms of ensuring that: they prepare lesson notes using the scope and sequence in the RME curriculum; integrate ICT in their lesson; indicate required core competencies in their lesson plans; ensure that their chosen core competencies are always linked to their performance indicators; and ensure that RME lessons are more learner-centred than teacher-centred.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that, while RME teachers in Kwahu West Municipality acknowledge receiving training on the Standards-Based Curriculum, their preparedness for implementation is somewhat limited. While they indicate the training was adequate in general, they lack clarity on specific aspects of the curriculum, particularly the aims, instructional expectations, and core competencies. Additionally, the training on integrating ICT and the support from professional learning communities are insufficient. This indicates a gap between the perceived adequacy of training and the actual understanding and practical skills needed for successful implementation. However, the findings reveal a strong commitment from RME teachers in the Kwahu West Municipality to implement the key features of the Standards-Based Religious and Moral Education Curriculum. They are actively incorporating aspects like scope and sequence, integrating ICT, identifying core competencies, aligning performance indicators, and shifting towards learner-centered pedagogy. This suggests that despite some challenges with preparedness, teachers are actively engaging with the new curriculum framework and strive to deliver effective instruction.

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