

# GHANA

## Education Strategic Plan



### COUNTRY PROFILE

Region: Sub-Saharan Africa  
Population: 25,500,000  
Income Level: Lower-Middle  
Reform Name: Education Strategic Plan  
Reform Dates: 2018 - Present  
Size of Schooling System: 19,120 schools;  
6.9 million learners



**basic education**

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





# BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

## MOTIVATION FOR REFORM

Ghana has undergone multiple educational reforms since independence and is now implementing the 2018-2030 Education Strategic Plan (ESP). When the former Minister of Education (MoE) set the goal of improving the national education curriculum through the development of a curriculum framework, a needs assessment was undertaken to assess problems in the existing curriculum. This curriculum and its problems were compared to the educational systems of other nations, further demonstrating the need for education reform.

The ESP was developed to correct issues related to educational capacity in the country.

- ➔ For example, Ghanaian schools and students lacked resources such as textbooks and educators lacked the capacity to build curriculum and professional development programmes.
- ➔ Further, the ESP was enacted to reflect the Ghanaian value system. By focusing on 21st century skills, the new Ghanaian curriculum is used as a tool to strengthen values in the country and to enhance social-emotional learning and expression in classrooms.
- ➔ Finally, the ESP was developed to improve teacher education, enhance curriculum development with an additional educational focus on 21st century skills, and be used alongside Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

## AIMS

The ESP was designed to complement the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those pertaining to education and human rights, and largely focuses on developing new frameworks and curricula to support student learning and success. This effort was intended to align Ghana's educational offerings with those of other countries. The reform was designed to impact all levels of education, from primary to tertiary schooling.

## KEY CHANGES INTRODUCED

As indicated, the ESP was developed in part by observing international trends in education systems. As a result, an objective-based or content-based curriculum was drafted. In addition, the new curriculum was standards-based, and was to be implemented across all schools nationally, ensuring that all students and educators follow the same standards, including those for 21st century skills.

The National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) through Transforming Teaching, Education, and Learning (T-TEL), a Ghanaian non-profit organisation, led the drafting of policies to reform teacher education. The policies aimed to convert colleges of education into university colleges and implement a new Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) teacher education curriculum to improve the quality of education provided to student teachers.

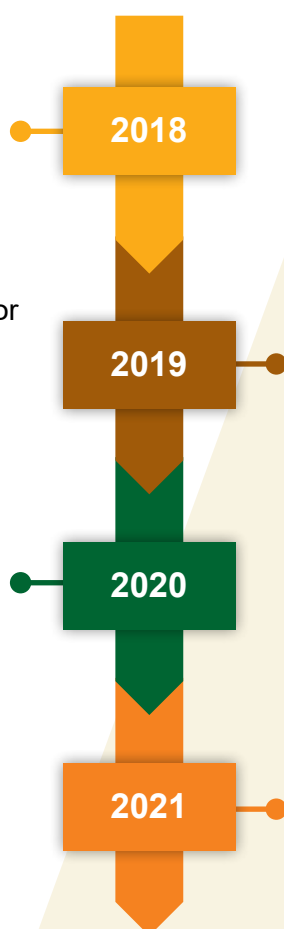
## CURRENT STATUS OF THE REFORM

A review of the ESP has been undertaken including a review of ESP documents and curricula, which are currently being piloted in schools. During the ongoing piloting of the new curricula, those involved with implementing the reform began actively developing educational textbooks and additional learning resources to distribute across the country. Curriculum development has been implemented in phases, starting with primary school, then junior and secondary school, with the draft of the senior high school curriculum currently being finalised. Once educational resources have been finalised

and distributed, Ghanaian education officials will shift the focus of the reform toward teacher training for the new curriculum. The ESP will adopt a cascading training model, where there will be tiered training from the national level down to the district level. Upcoming teacher training for the ESP curriculum will focus on junior and senior high school teachers. The reform includes approximately 250 national trainers, who will train teachers at the district level on understanding the new curriculum and implementation of new lessons.

## TIMELINE

- Existing teachers required to take National Teaching Council (NTC) examination to maintain teaching licences.
- Rapid increase in enrolment rates in secondary schools; double-track system established.
- Public opinion poll (iPoll) disbursed.
- MoE establishes special secretariat for reform to achieve policy objectives.
- March: COVID-19 - Directive issued to the University of Ghana to move academic programmes online.



- New pre-tertiary level national curriculum piloted.
- Four-year B.Ed. programme launched.
- Government announcement of intent to end double-track system by 2021.
- All schools reopen after nine months of closures caused by COVID-19.
- Parent involvement in early childhood education (ECE) remains low in rural areas and among parents of students with disabilities.
- Increase in senior high school enrolment leads to a shortage of teachers, inadequate infrastructure, increased teacher workloads, insufficient learning materials and resources, classroom overcrowding, and delayed school funding.

# DESIGN

The design of the ESP curriculum and associated resources followed two key policy priorities, namely:

the implementation of a free senior high school policy

the provision of training to establish alignment between skills and labour demand in the Ghanaian education system.

The initial budget for implementing the ESP prioritised the free senior high school policy, the retraining of licenced teachers, completion of stalled senior high school building projects, the upgrading of senior high school buildings in 42 Ghanaian districts, and the rehabilitation of 50 basic and secondary school structures. Additional items included in the budget were the construction of 20 technical and vocational education and training (TVET) centres, establishing a University of Environment and Sustainable Development, the provision of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) teaching in 7,000 schools, and the construction of 10 STEM centres in the country.



The ESP's new pre-tertiary framework was developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) through a collaboration with the Ghana Education Service (GES). This framework emphasises student-centred learning and continual assessment over national examinations. The framework also streamlines several academic subjects and has a greater emphasis on languages and ICT and STEM education.

The ESP's B.Ed. programme was developed through a six-year project that included five Ghanaian universities. In addition, in collaboration with T-TEL and with funding from the United Kingdom, 105 education experts provided teacher development support.

## KEY CHANGE LEVERS

Three policy areas are seen as key change levers in the ESP:

✓  
improving equitable access to education

✓  
improving the teaching and learning of STEM subjects

✓  
improving sustainable management, financing and accountability in the delivery of education.

Through these policy changes, education officials hope to provide more equitable access to education for students from all communities and backgrounds nationally, as well as improve the accountability of educational professionals, schools, and systems.

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Ghanaian education officials ensured high stakeholder engagement during the development and implementation of the ESP.

Stakeholders involved in the process included community leaders, school leaders and personnel, religious groups, and families. Education officials engaged with stakeholders to understand the type of training required to make the reform a success and the topics that should be included in the new curricula, among others. Experts from the National Schools Inspectorate Authority, National Education Council, and National Council for Assessment were also invited to serve on committees to assist with development of the ESP.



The Ghanaian public was involved by making new educational documents publicly available on the MoE's website. This enabled Ghanaians to directly access the upcoming educational plans and provide feedback to the government, improving the quality of the reform and its objectives. Outreach to the public also supported a public understanding of the challenges with creating and implementing the new reform. Through the Elementary Select Committee on Education, members of the public were made aware of how learning is transmitted, and how learning transmission can be difficult. Additionally, reform leaders placed a large emphasis on the public in the recognition of ways Ghanaian society affects education and the implementation of reforms. Stakeholders were reminded that curriculum implementation is heavily affected by the actions of others, in that a lack of prioritisation of the curriculum would serve to undermine its significance.

## CURRICULUM CONSTRUCTION

Reform leaders established a curricular writing committee to effect key changes in the national curriculum. During the construction of the new

curriculum, a needs assessment was conducted with a select number of senior high schools to determine students' needs, and feedback was gathered from educational professionals and citizens.

### Junior high school curriculum

When developing the junior high school curriculum, a standards-based model was used. The new junior high school curriculum is seen as progressive compared to the previous version.

### Senior high school curriculum

The senior high school curriculum was also developed using a standards-based approach. Education officials incorporated the following into both the curricula: expectations, pedagogy, resources, required content, activities, and assessments. The senior high school curriculum was developed with the aid of teacher and teacher learning consultants. Secondary school students communicated directly with curriculum writers so that content, subjects, and pedagogy would be appropriate for secondary level students and so that students could practice learner agency.

## KEY DESIGN FEATURES

The new curriculum is designed to be more student-centred and incorporates more ICT into the pedagogy. Traditional subjects such as Languages and Mathematics have been

strengthened, and additional subjects such as the history of Ghana have been integrated. Cross-curriculum issues, or core competencies, were identified by the National Council for Curriculum & Assessment and include critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, communication and collaboration, cultural identity and global citizenship, personal development and leadership, and digital literacy.

The primary school curriculum focuses on standards, pedagogy, and classroom management techniques. Implementation of this curriculum began in all classes in the same year that the curriculum was piloted (2019). The primary school curriculum was developed through a similar process as the secondary level curriculum. However, there was no involvement of interagency curricular writing groups during the creation process.

Once the curricula were written, each was utilised during a trial period to obtain further feedback before being finalised. Ghana was divided into three regions for this trial. In some regions, teachers were given the new curricula and asked to create lessons based on the curricula without guidance. Other regions of Ghana saw teachers implementing the new curricula after having been given training on effective lesson planning and implementation. While curricula were being piloted in schools across the country, reform leaders also began to concurrently develop textbooks and additional resources.

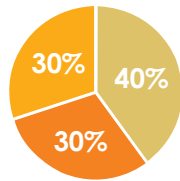


# IMPLEMENTATION

## SYSTEMIC IMPLICATIONS

The ESP changed the requirements for teacher training, instituting a new B.Ed. programme. In this new programme, there is a focus on interactive, learner-focused pedagogies instead of rote learning practices. Moreover, B.Ed. students are assessed in the following manner:

- a portfolio of continuous assessment counts for 40%;
- supervised teaching, 30%; and
- written exams, 30%.



In addition, all B.Ed. candidates receive a monthly stipend throughout the duration of their studies.

To further improve teaching in Ghana and align teaching practices with the new reform, existing teachers were required to pass an NTC examination. A licence to work as an educator must be maintained over time, regardless of when it was obtained.

## RESOURCING AND GOVERNANCE

President Nana Akufo-Addo championed the educational prosperity of Ghana, promising to improve learning outcomes and access to education upon his election. After the election, the government moved forward with educational reforms. The MoE oversaw the development of the government's educational policies, including the ESP. The GES holds responsibility for implementing policies and for managing public education institutions up until the university level. From 2013 to 2018, the government allocated 12-15% of the national budget to the MoE; additional public investments increased the education budget for 2019, increasing the budget to GHS 12.9 billion (\$2.5 million USD) or a 39% increase from the 2018 budget.



Once the ESP had been established, the Ghana Educational Trust Fund allocated \$1.5 billion USD to finance the expansion and upgrading of senior high school institutions, an amount that was received as a loan. In addition, expanded teacher resources were predominantly used for primary schools and junior high schools.

## ASSESSMENT

Ghanaian officials are utilising surveys in all public schools to assess the effectiveness of the reform. The most recent, comprehensive assessment in schools occurred in 2021. This data has not yet been shared publicly, therefore, it is difficult to determine the reforms' effectiveness and impact from this assessment measure. Previous assessments have seen an increase in secondary student achievement in Mathematics, Science, and English.

## TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Changing the structure of teacher development is a large component of the ESP. Before the reform, teachers were training their colleagues in best practices in education but not in understanding and interpreting the national curriculum. This gap in continuing teacher training made previous education reform efforts less effective.

Teachers are now required to spend more time on professional development and training, specifically learning how to implement the curriculum and individual lessons, thereby addressing the gap that previously existed.



Other key changes to teacher training in the new reform include:

- **Key:** A system whereby new teachers observe the schools they will be teaching in to gain an understanding of the schools' context before they begin teaching there;
- **Key:** Ongoing professional development for teachers offered by the NTC, which allows teachers to build a portfolio over the years of their teaching experience - this portfolio provides leverage for teachers to obtain promotions;
- **Key:** Teaching standards prescribed by the NTC to guide teaching practices across Ghana, as well as specific requirements for teachers to follow as they practice teaching to educational standards.

# KEY LEARNINGS

## REFORM RESPONSES AND EARLY OUTCOMES

Ghana's ESP has received ample response from stakeholders detailing the early outcomes of the reform. Feedback has been collected since the reform efforts began, which has assisted in guiding the policy design leading up to piloting the programme. However, governmental demands required a faster implementation of the pilot than previously anticipated, with the pilot initially intended to be implemented in phases throughout Ghana's school system. Reform leaders are also monitoring the impact of the junior high school reform efforts more closely, as these students will soon move to senior high school and will need more educational support.

The largest element of this reform includes the curricula for primary and secondary schools. In addition to continuous feedback from teachers, public opinion polls (iPoll) have been used to understand the public perception of the reform and subsequent activities. The results of the iPolls indicate that 72.6% of respondents supported the senior high school reform policies, and that 59.8% of respondents opposed the double-track system designed to increase access to secondary school education by repeating educational sessions at several secondary schools to accommodate more learners. The double-track system was designed to resolve overwhelmed secondary schools after the free senior high school policy was implemented. More detailed feedback on the new curricula indicates that Ghanaians are happy with the content covered but remain unsatisfied with implementation. Due to the lack of supplemental resources (e.g., textbooks), teachers are unable to maximise the learning impact intended by the curricula. Feedback from teachers was varied, with some indicating challenges experienced with implementing new curricula without adequate support and resources, occasionally leading to teacher apathy. Curriculum writers also sometimes faced challenges when drafting documents using the resources available to them.



The feedback received from Ghanaian civilians and teachers indicates a need for greater political support. Reginald Quartey, Director of Curriculum, NaCCA, said when interviewed: "If you start implementation with improvisations, you have failed already... but we do not have the resources not to."

Moreover, Ghanaian schools experience unequal distribution of or access to resources, and ESP reform leaders lack the authority to give orders for the acquisition of more educational materials. While additional curricula and materials can be requested, there is not always a sufficient budget to fulfil these requests.

Not all elements of Ghana's education system have seen improvement since implementation of the ESP reform:

- Decline in primary school enrolment: There was a decrease in primary school enrolment from 2015 (89.5%) to 2018 (83.6%).
- Deeply ingrained teaching methods: Teachers have experienced difficulty in changing ingrained teaching practices
- Improved tertiary education systems are not initiating a stronger workforce: Success in transforming tertiary education into employment has not yet been achieved.
- Senior high schools face overcrowding since the implementation of free schooling through the ESP. Related to this:
  - Public and private school systems are engaged in unintended conflicts;
  - With the initiation of the free senior high school policy, wealthier families have developed concerns about secondary schools facing "overcrowding".

Ghanaian education officials practice continuous improvement, utilising feedback to improve the ESP reform over time.



## 💡 Student involvement in curriculum development is valuable.

Students were involved in the panels constructing the revised curriculum, which led to insight into both the subjects and methods of instructions that the students felt were most beneficial. This process may have contributed to a curriculum that is more relevant and engaging for students.

## 💡 Periods of public feedback improved the quality of the curriculum.

This ensured that the curriculum is relevant to the community and greater society, and concerns were addressed prior to implementation.

## 💡 Adequate teacher development is essential prior to roll out.

The training that took place prior to the roll out of the curriculum may not have been adequate, but

in subsequent years, more success was achieved in implementing the curriculum as intended.

## 💡 Without sufficient supplemental materials such as textbooks, implementation of the curriculum may fall short of the intent.

With major changes to a curriculum, teacher development alone may not be sufficient if materials development does not keep pace.

## 💡 Sufficient financial resources are required to support implementation and ensure equity.

When there is unequal distribution of resources, a sufficient budget is required to be able to meet the need for additional materials or support and ensure that inequalities are not further entrenched by the new curriculum.

## RESOURCES

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## KEY INTERVIEWS

Reginald Quartey, Director of Curriculum, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment