



# GHANA: CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY, AND ASSESSMENT AT THE SERVICE OF THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

## SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO THE CALL FOR INPUTS BY THE UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>

### *1. Domestic legislation and policies governing curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment at the level of compulsory education.*

Article 25 of the **Republican Constitution of Ghana (1992)** provides for Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (fCUBE) in the country. This has led to the formulation of the fCUBE policy and the implementation of fCUBE programme. It also led to the introduction of measures such as Capitation Grant, and School Feeding programmes. Other domestic legislation that regulate curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment in Ghana include the **Pre-Tertiary Education Act 2020 (Act 1049)** and the **Education Regulatory Bodies Act 2020 (Act 1023)** which provide the legal framework for curriculum development and implementation (GhaLII, 2020). Under these Acts, basic education has been redefined to include Kindergarten (2 years), Primary (6 years), and Junior High School (3 years) (NaCCA, 2019a). Similarly, the **Education Act, 2008 (Act 778)**, provides the framework for producing balanced individuals, supplementing earlier laws and focusing on national development goals. **The Ghana Education Service Act, 1995 (Act 506)**, on the other hand, establishes the Ghana Education Service (GES) to coordinate pre-tertiary policies and manage public schools.

#### **1a. Curriculum Organisation around Learning Needs and Skills Acquisition**

Ghana currently operates **Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC)** which was introduced progressively from September 2019 by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA). The SBC represents a meaningful change from the previous Objectives-Based Curriculum (OBC) toward a more competency-based education. According to NaCCA, Ghana's SBC addresses challenges associated with the previous OBC and meets the 21st-century competencies, and measures to international standards (NaCCA, 2019a). The curriculum is organised around six core competencies: critical thinking and problem-solving; creativity and innovation; communication and collaboration; cultural identity and global citizenship; personal development and leadership; and digital literacy (NaCCA, 2019b). Acquisition of these life-skills will enable learners to pursue meaningful living and effective participation in both national and international affairs.

The SBC aims to explicitly balance knowledge acquisition with practical skills development. At the basic education level, subjects are designed to address contemporary challenges. The introduction of '*Our World and Our People*' integrates citizenship education, environmental awareness, and social responsibility, while 'History' as a standalone subject was reintroduced to strengthen national identity (NaCCA, 2019c; SCIRP, 2024).

Implementation gaps between curriculum design and classroom reality persist, particularly in under-resourced schools in underserved communities (Nweah-Ackah Mochiah, Dunyo Adibi 2023) found that teachers and students lack the recommended teaching and learning materials. However, found that teacher preparedness is inadequate, with many receiving only brief orientation rather than comprehensive retraining (Educational

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2026/call-inputs-curriculum-pedagogy-and-assessment-service-right-education>

Research and Reviews, 2021). The tension between preparing students for high-stakes examinations (BECE, WASSCE) and fostering holistic competencies undermines curriculum goals.

Regional disparities between schools in Ghana (Ministry of Education, 2018), leads to rural and deprived areas struggling to effectively deliver the full curriculum.

### 1b. Intercultural Understanding, Local Languages, and Indigenous Knowledge

Ghana formally incorporates Ghanaian Languages as a subject of study in schools from basic to senior high school levels (NaCCA, 2019b). The language policy mandates that local languages serve as the medium of instruction in lower primary (KG to Primary 3), transitioning to English from Primary 4 onwards. It is reported that Ghana has more than 60 languages<sup>2</sup>.

In October 2025, Ghana's Minister for Education, the Honourable Haruna Iddrisu announced a strengthened directive making mother-tongue instruction compulsory in all basic schools. The Minister stated that children deserve to learn in the language they understand best. The Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC) despite raising key concerns such as a lack of trained language teachers as well as sufficient teaching and learning materials in Ghanaian languages, endorsed the policy, noting that research has consistently shown that children understand lessons better when taught in languages familiar to them. They cited the Complementary Basic Education (CBE) model which has demonstrated that pupils can learn to read and write within nine months when taught in their local language (GhanaWeb, 2025). This directive will however face challenges such as some teachers' lack of proficiency in local languages, posting of teachers to regions where they do not speak the predominant language, inadequate teaching and learning materials in Ghanaian languages (GNECC, 2025).

History and Social Studies that incorporate local knowledge, however, they often privilege Akan-centric narratives, marginalising knowledge systems of northern and minority ethnic groups. Indigenous ecological knowledge, traditional governance systems, and local philosophies are referenced but not systematically integrated. The Social Studies subject also introduces learners to intercultural knowledge and understanding.

### 1c. Restrictions on Specific Subjects

There are no formal statutory restrictions on subjects in Ghana's curriculum. However, *de facto restrictions* exist. One key example is the resistance to **Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)**. In 2019, the Ministry of Education's proposal to introduce CSE curriculum guidelines faced significant opposition from religious bodies. According to Saaka (2024), opposition came from the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC), Catholic Bishops Conference, Christian Council, and Islamic organizations. The President of GPCC described CSE as "Comprehensive Satanic Engagement" (Saaka, 2024). As a result, the policy was effectively shelved due to claims that it promoted 'LGBT ideology' and was 'age inappropriate.' The subject Religious and Moral Education has rather been made compulsory.

In addition, the introduction of LGBTQ-related content into the Physical Education and Health Teachers' Manual for Year Two has met serious public outcry. The manual, which was developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) and approved for implementation became a focal point of political controversy amid heightened national debates on sexuality and morality. Cultural and religious reasons have been offered for the resistance. Subsequently, the Ministry of Education and NaCCA have come out to state unequivocally that Ghana's SHS curriculum does not contain any approved LGBTQ-related content and that there is no intention to promote it. They further clarified that teachers are not strictly mandated to follow the teacher manual verbatim, which serves only as a pedagogical guide rather than a binding curriculum (Ministry of Education, Ghana, 2026).

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<sup>2</sup> with the following: Akan(Twi/Fante), Ewe, Ga, Dagbani, Dagaare, Dangme, Nzema, Gonja, Kasem, Gurene and Sisaali officially recognised as languages of mother tongue education (Adongo and Avea, 2023).

Human rights education is not a standalone subject; rather, it is 'infused' across subjects, which means it receives minimal dedicated attention.

Emerging issues like climate change, digital citizenship, and mental health remain inadequately addressed.

### 1d. Flexibility and Adaptability of Curriculum Design

The curriculum design process in Ghana is led by NaCCA. NaCCA, established under Act 1023, is an independent statutory body that holds primary responsibility for curriculum development and revision. The current SBC was designed with flexibility for schools to contextualise content to local realities (NaCCA, 2019b). The Ministry of Education's policy also targets curriculum review every five years allowing for opportunity to adjust and modify the curriculum to suit time relevance. However, the National Pre-Tertiary Education Curriculum Framework acknowledges that technical challenges have not always made it possible to achieve five-year review cycles (NaCCA, 2019b).

### 1e. Actors in Curriculum Decision-Making and Safeguards

NaCCA serves as the primary authority for curriculum and assessment. Other key actors include Ghana Education Service (implementation); Ministry of Education (policy direction); Teacher unions such as the Ghana National Association of Teachers - GNAT, and the National Association of Graduate Teachers - NAGRAT (consultation); Development partners such as UNICEF, USAID, UK FCDO provide technical and financial support. According to Transforming Teacher Education and Learning (T-TEL, 2022), the United Kingdom Aid-supported programme worked with the National Council for Tertiary Education to get all 46 public Colleges of Education (CoEs) to deliver far-reaching reforms.

Meaningful student participation in curriculum design is virtually non-existent. Parent and community involvement is limited to tokenistic consultations. Teachers' input is mediated through unions, but classroom-level insights rarely influence design. Private school perspectives are underrepresented despite the sector educating approximately 28.4% of primary students and 15.5% of secondary students (World Bank, 2024). NaCCA maintains formal independence under Act 1023. According to NaCCA's official statements, it rigorously reviews, evaluates, and approves textbooks and instructional materials to ensure they align with national curriculum standards. Development partner influence is significant, with curriculum reforms often aligning with donor priorities. There is no formal conflict of interest policy governing curriculum development stakeholders.

## 2. Pedagogy and Classroom Learning

### 2a. Official Pedagogical Approaches and Human Rights Alignment

The Standards-Based Curriculum explicitly mandates **learner-centred pedagogy**. Official NaCCA guidance emphasizes social constructivism, learner-centred teaching, activity-based learning, inquiry and problem-solving approaches, collaborative learning, differentiated instruction, scaffolding, and inclusion (NaCCA, 2019b). **However, participatory approaches that can rarely be actualised in large class settings.**

These required pedagogical approaches align with human rights.

The curriculum framework explicitly references inclusion and non-discrimination, stating that Ghana is a multicultural society in which every citizen enjoys fundamental rights and responsibilities (NaCCA, 2019b). The **Inclusive Education Policy (2015)** mandates accommodation of learners with disabilities. According to UNICEF Ghana (2015), the policy defines inclusion as accommodating all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions. Buabeng et al. (2023) confirms the policy adheres to universal design for learning principles.

While UNESCO Institute for Statistics data shows the national pupil-teacher ratio averages 27:1 at primary and 15:1 at secondary levels, these figures mask significant urban-rural disparities. This high pupil-teacher ratio

makes learner-centred approaches impractical leaving teacher to adopt the lecture method where students' verbal participation was limited to a couple of words of brief, well-rehearsed, drilled answers.

## **2b. Pedagogical Freedom and Feedback Mechanisms**

Teachers in Ghana have limited formal pedagogical autonomy. The curriculum specifies content, suggested activities, and expected learning outcomes (NaCCA, 2019b). However, enforcement is inconsistent, creating de facto freedom in practice.

Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) exist in most schools but focus primarily on infrastructure and fees rather than instructional practice. School Management Committees (SMCs) provide community oversight but rarely engage with pedagogy. Student councils exist in secondary schools but lack genuine influence on teaching methods. Circuit Supervisors conduct classroom observations, though these are often perfunctory due to resource constraints.

## **2c. Integration of Alternative Pedagogical Models**

Ghana's educational system includes diverse pedagogical approaches, particularly in private schools: Montessori methods in early childhood education, International Baccalaureate programmes in elite private schools, and project-based and experiential learning in some mission schools. Though these alternative pedagogical models can be easily fed into the mainstream educational system, resource requirements makes it difficult. Again, training teachers for mainstream education is characterized by limited exposure to diverse pedagogical models (Asare & Nti, 2014). The direct link of success in education to examination performance in Ghanaian societies also impedes introduction of alternative pedagogies.

## **2d. Teacher Training and Support**

Teachers for basic schools are trained on **four-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree programmes**, specializations in Early Grade Education, Primary Education, and Junior High School Education. According to T-TEL (2022), the shift from three years diploma to four years Bachelor of Education degree is part of Ghana's drive to professionalize teaching, and to join the select community of nations requiring a bachelor's degree as a minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession. Student-teachers pay for tuition fees while government pays staff and provide teaching and learning materials.

School-Based In-Service Training (INSET) exists to provide support for teachers but is inconsistently implemented. NaCCA also conducts orientation workshops on new curricula, though coverage is incomplete. The Ghana Accountability and Learning Outcomes Project (GALOP), a \$218 million initiative, supports teacher capacity building in participatory pedagogies. Mentoring systems are informal and depend on school leadership initiative. Teacher motivation is undermined by poor remuneration and difficult working conditions. Approximately 38% of the requisite contact hours are lost (Buabeng et al. 2023).

## **2e. Discrepancies Between Official Curriculum and Classroom Practice**

Significant gaps exist between policy and practice. Examination-driven teaching prioritizes examinable content over broader curriculum goals. Resource constraints prevent implementation of activity-based learning. Teacher knowledge gaps exist, particularly in newer curriculum areas. Language of instruction policies are widely ignored due to practical constraint. Inclusive education provisions remain unimplemented in most schools. The Ministry of Education (2018) Education Sector Analysis reports that enrolment of children with disabilities ranges from just 0.2% to 0.4% of total enrolment.

## **3a. Alignment with Human Rights Aims**

Ghana's assessment system is dominated by **high-stakes examinations**, the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) at JHS completion, and the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) at SHS completion. Both are administered by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) (Asetenapa, 2024).

The BECE assessment combines **School-Based Assessment (SBA)/Continuous Assessment contributing 30%** of final grades, with the **external BECE examination contributing 70%**. According to WAEC's official website, the results of the examination is based on Continuous Assessment and the external examination. The Continuous Assessment forms 30% whilst the external examination forms 70% of the total assessment. WAEC uses a nine-point grading scale (1 highest, 9 lowest). To pass, students must achieve a maximum aggregate of 36 across their best six subjects (Asetenapa, 2024).

The Standards-Based Curriculum emphasizes three forms of assessment, which are assessment *for* learning (formative), assessment *as* learning (self-assessment), and assessment *of* learning (summative). According to NaCCA, the National Standards Assessment Test (NST) has been introduced to replace earlier assessments (NEA, EGRA, EGMA) for monitoring learning outcomes at key grade levels (BS 2, 4, 6, and 8).

High-stakes examinations create significant consequences for life trajectories. BECE results determine access to quality SHS through the Computerised School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS), perpetuating inequality (Asetenapa, 2024). The examination system assesses narrow cognitive skills, neglecting holistic development. The Standard Nine (STANINE) grading system has been criticized as a recipe for examination.

### 3b. Safeguards against Discrimination

Special examination arrangements exist for candidates with disabilities (extra time, separate rooms, scribes). NaCCA and GES have validated Ghana's Harmonised Sign Language Curriculum (GhSL), described as a major milestone in Ghana's inclusive education journey. Gruijters et al (2025) found that the Free SHS policy reserves 30% of elite school spots for students with public school backgrounds and 5% for traditional authorities, with lowered academic cut-off points to widen access.

Examinations in English disadvantage learners from non-English-speaking homes. Urban-centric content privileges students from metropolitan areas and socio-economic barriers affect examination preparation (Results for Development, 2021). Students in deprived regions consistently underperform due to resource gaps (Ministry of Education, 2018). Again, the quest for and use of English Language as a medium of instruction in all classrooms against existing national policies is unfriendly to human rights aims. According to GNECC (2025), the Complementary Basic Education (CBE) model has demonstrated that pupils can learn to read and write within nine months when taught in their local language.

### 3c. Impact on Dignity, Motivation, and Well-being

Examination anxiety is widespread, with documented mental health impacts. Ghana's Standard Nine (STANINE) grading system (norm-referenced, comparing students against each other using a standardized bell-curve distribution) promotes and creates an overly competitive environment" that puts pressures on students, parents, teachers, and schools to seek out unethical means to secure higher scores. In an article published by Modern Ghana in 2025, the "access-quality paradox" where there is tension between expanding educational access and maintaining quality, creates significant pressure. It notes that due to the double-track system with free SHS, students were receiving the equivalent of 2 years of instruction across 3 calendar years which put pressure on learners to perform well in studies.

### 3d. Teacher Autonomy in Assessment

Teachers have significant autonomy in classroom assessment (class tests, homework). According to the SBA Handbook schools have the chance to ensure that the performance of students on both practical skills and theoretical knowledge. However, teachers often default to test-based assessment mimicking examination formats. Portfolio assessment is permitted but rarely practiced. Project-based assessments feature in some

subjects (Science, Technical Skills). The SBA Handbook provides guidelines for project work (CAT4, CAT8 and CAT12) involving topic selection and data collection. Performance-based assessment also exists in practical subjects as Visual Arts, Physical Education, and Music. Self and peer assessment are encouraged in the SBC but implementation is limited. Large class sizes make individualised assessment impractical. Record-keeping requirements for diverse assessment methods are burdensome for teachers. Many teachers lack training in alternative assessment design and implementation.

Teachers are, however, not involved, and final examination that students take at the end of their programmes of study (BECE and WASSCE). These examinations are conducted by an independent examination body, the West African Examination Council (WAEC).

### 3e. Budget Links to Student Performance

Schools do not receive funding directly tied to examination results. Capitation grants provided to schools are based on enrolment, not students performance. However, teacher promotions and postings are informally influenced by school performance. Private schools compete on examination results for student recruitment (Results for Development, 2021). School league tables published in media create reputational pressures. Parents, guardians, and society rely heavily on BECE results at the expense of quality training. Teacher evaluation criteria include factors beyond student examination performance, however, safeguards are weakly enforced.

### 3f. Recognition of Socio-Emotional Learning and Broader Competencies

The SBC explicitly includes socio-emotional competencies in learning outcomes. According to NaCCA, the curriculum framework emphasizes character development, acquiring 21st Century skills and competencies, and nurturing shared values within an inclusive learning environment. SBA is intended to capture broader competencies through diverse assessment methods, with emphasis on assessing the 4Rs in various subject areas as well as the core competencies. No standardised tools exist for assessing socio-emotional competencies and teachers lack training in recognising and evaluating these skills (Buabeng et al., 2023). **High-stakes examinations do not assess these competencies, diminishing their perceived importance.** Report cards focus on cognitive achievement, and school inspection does not systematically evaluate socio-emotional learning environments (Ministry of Education, 2018).

#### Positive Examples

- 1) Some schools implement character development programmes with qualitative reporting.
- 2) Co-curricular activities (clubs, sports) provide informal assessment of cooperation and leadership.
- 3) Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), includes competency-based assessment of practical skills (Ghana TVET Service, 2024).

### Conclusion

Ghana has made significant strides in aligning educational policy with human rights frameworks, particularly through the Standards-Based Curriculum, the Inclusive Education Policy (2015), and the Free Senior High School Policy (September 2017). The upgrade of teacher training to degree level and the introduction of comprehensive curriculum reforms demonstrate state commitment to quality education.

However, substantial implementation gaps remain. The examination-dominated assessment culture, resource constraints, and inadequate teacher preparation undermine progressive policy propositions. The 70/30 weighting between external examinations and school-based assessment continues to prioritize standardized testing over holistic educational evaluation.

### Recommendations

1. Human rights education should remain infused across different topics but also treated as a standalone subject with a weekly minimum engagement time of half an hour.

2. Sustained investment in teacher professional development, with particular attention to learner-centred pedagogies, inclusive education, and socio-emotional learning approaches.
3. Address class size disparities, particularly in urban areas, to enable effective implementation of participatory teaching methods.
4. Provide adequate teaching and learning materials aligned with the Standards-Based Curriculum across all regions.
5. Strengthen school-based assessment implementation and consider increasing its weighting relative to external examinations.
6. Develop meaningful alternative assessment pathways for learners who face barriers in standardised examinations.
7. Engage constructively with stakeholders on comprehensive sexuality education to address adolescent health needs while respecting cultural sensitivities.

The right to education in Ghana is formally protected under the 1992 Constitution. However, the right to quality, inclusive, and holistic education remains aspirational for many learners, particularly those facing intersecting disadvantages of poverty, geography, disability, and gender.

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