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PERSPECTIVES OF EDUCATION STANDARDS IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL: AN ANALYSIS OF QUALITY METHODS IN GHANA'S EDUCATION SERVICE

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Abstract
Quality education should be a significant concern for every government since it is a primary tool for national development. This paper analyzes the educational standards in Ghana's Senior High schools, focusing on quality methods implemented by the Ghana Education Service. The study investigates the effects of quality methods on academic standards, perceptions of teachers, parents, and students, and challenges faced during the implementation by a survey. The findings highlight a diverse range of perspectives, emphasizing the importance of sustained efforts, teacher development, students improved learning outcomes, and constraints of educational inputs. The paper suggested stakeholder consultations to deal with other challenges raised by the respondents for a complete realization of educational goals.

1 Introduction

Education plays a significant role in nurturing the holistic development of individuals, shaping their cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains from the foundational stages of primary school to the advanced levels of tertiary education. This comprehensive educational journey ideally equips individuals to think critically, engage effectively with their surroundings, and empathize with others. In essence, education enables individuals to think with their heads, act with their hands, and feel with their hearts, creating a well-rounded foundation for a fulfilling and impactful life [1].

The past and present education trend in Ghana follows its colonial masters' educational system, though it has been restructured after gaining independence. Regardless of alterations made in recommendations given by the Kwapong Review Committee in 1966 [2], the Dzobo Review Committee in the mid-1970s [3], and the Anamuah-Mensah Review Committee in 2002 [4], equity goals were still enforced, and this is evidence of rigorous implementation of Free Senior High School education Policy in 2017 by the current New Patriotic Party lead by Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo. The government expended an estimated 5.12 billion Ghana cedis in implementing this policy between 2017 and 2021 [5]. From the ensuing discussions, it is believed that the enormous interventions made by the past and present governments in education should help place Ghana's education on top of the global school ranking. Nevertheless, recent criticism that Ghana's education system has been subjected to, particularly the senior high school level, indicates low standards. That was confirmed by 2015 organizations for economic co-operation and developing global school rankings, where out of 76 countries ranked on various indicators, Ghana's school system was rated at the bottom of the table. Against this background, this paper seeks to investigate educational

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standards in Ghana with a keen focus on secondary education and to analyze the quality methods in Ghana's education service. The questions of this study are: (1) What are the effects of the implementation of quality methods by Ghana education service on the quality of education in senior high schools? (2) What perceptions do teachers have on the effectiveness and impacts of professional development programs provided by the Ghana education service? (3) What do parents and students perceive about the impact of quality methods implemented by Ghana's Education Service on students' learning experiences and educational outcomes?

2 Research Methods

A comprehensive insight into education is available through the standards in Senior High Schools in Ghana. Beyond the analysis of the related standards, the study conclusions are based on a survey among the stakeholders. The data presented focused on descriptive statistics and the distribution of responses.

However, there were some biases; the sample size did not represent the entire population as certain groups(age, gender, employment status) were overrepresented. Again, the sample size was small (n=96 for socio-demographic characteristics, n=5 for education directors, n=51 for teachers, n=8 for parents, and n=31 for students), which limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. The study relies on perception and self-reported outcomes rather than objective measures, which could introduce subjectivity and potential biases in the reported impacts of quality methods. There was also limitedness in exploring the variables because the study only explores perceptions and impacts to the neglect of thorough investigation of potential confounding variables

The survey questions are presented with the results. The sample consists of education service directors, teachers, parents, and students. The sample composition is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the study respondents

	Characteristics	**n = 96**
Age	Under 24	33 (34.3%)
	25-34	11 (11.5%)
	35-44	30 (31.3%)
	Over 45	22 (22.9%)
Gender	Female	31 (32.3%)
	Male	65 (67.7%)
Religion	Christian	91 (94.8%)
	Muslim	4 (4.2%)
	Other	1 (1.0%)
Highest level of education	Junior high	1 (1.0%)
	Middle school	2 (2.1%)
	Senior high school	30 (31.3%)
	Bachelor's degree	36 (37.5%)
	Master's degree or above	27 (28.1%)

We consider the study a pilot experiment for finding the critical issues for development opportunities and preparing a broad survey in the country.

3 Total Quality Management in education

Recently, many academic institutions have embarked on the mission to improve quality to remain competitive. Many schools worldwide have started implementing the approach and the toolset of Total Quality Management (TQM) to achieve the needed outcome of education. According to Deming [6], total quality has a systematic approach to education reforms. This philosophy provides

a framework that can integrate many positive educational developments, such as teamwork, state-based management education, cooperative learning, and outcome-based education. Total quality management education emphasizes teacher competencies, creativity, commitment, teamwork, and effective communication and how educational administrators are expected to realize the full potential of all personnel in an educational organization. Many more studies have focused on the feasibility of implementing TQM in educational settings. According to Narasimhan [7], the first application of TQM in the United States higher education was at Fox Valley Technical College (FVTC).

As a result of the TQM approach, FVTC has become more efficient in areas such as placement of graduates, employer satisfaction with contracted training programs, acceptance of college credits at receiving institutions, and improvements in its learning environment. There is a fundamental belief that students' achievements increase through faculty effort and control of the variance cost in schools applying TQM. The support of professional teachers is essential in stimulating curriculum improvement, instructional improvement, and improvement to the social climate.

Ngware et al. [8] investigated the extent to which secondary schools in Kenya practiced aspects of Total Quality Management. They found that most schools are not committed to strategy quality planning, though they promote human resource development initiatives. The implementation of the TQM mentality aiming at constant improvements in education has been proven in many studies to have positive effects on ensuring equality of opportunity in education, reducing learning time and education costs, increasing the number of individual experts or professionals, and providing social awareness [9].

Embracing a fresh managerial approach involves incorporating innovative learning and teaching methods with the aim of fostering success for each student[10].Educational heads must be committed to their school to ensure that all actions guarantee fundamental rights. TQM provides an atmosphere in which educational rights are reinforced and maintained. Total quality management (TQM) establishes an environment that upholds and sustains educational rights.It is a systematic approach concentrating on the ongoing enhancement and development of an institution ,parental engagement in education,allocation of time,resources,labour and land,scrutiny of teachers effectiveness,and involvement in decision making[11].

The identification of problems and remedial solutions. TQM can help to recognize and tackle factors that cause educational issues, such as dropouts, low participation, poor academic performance, repetition, and poor management styles [12].TQM applies an all encompassing,organized,uniform and organization-wide outlook to address issues and fortify management.Presently,numerous public educational institutions such as scools and colleges in developing nations lacks even fundamental educational supplies[13].Inadequate physical infrastructure,materials and human resources are widespread issues.TQM addresses not only managerial aspects but also the processes of teaching and learning(T&L) within classrooms.It serves as a strategy for ongoing enhancement in classroom instruction,ensuring quality in evaluating diverse standards that contribute to effective teaching and service excellence.

4   Results and discussion

The socio-demographic characteristics (Table 1) of the study participants show a diverse and representative sample. The teeming majority of the respondents were aged between 35 and 44 years (31.3%) and were dominated by males (67.7%), Christians (94.8%) with varying educational levels, and employment statuses with employed representation (63.5%). The rural-urban divides and income variations representations enhanced the contextual understanding of the study population. The socio-economic dynamics and demographic data are crucial for understanding how different groups within the population perceive and experience the impact of quality education methods. Challenges and opportunities linked to age, gender, educational levels, and employment influence the effectiveness of educational initiatives; differences in employment status and income levels affect the accessibility of educational resources, whereas age and educational background can shape perspectives on the relevance of quality methods.

The evaluative scrutiny of the Ghana Education Service's initiatives reveals a mixed perception among directors regarding the existing academic standards (Table 2), with a substantial consensus on the concurrent fairness (60.0%) and goodness (40.0%) of the quality of education. Principal

among the instituted quality methods is teacher training and professional development, showcasing an accompanying positive educational outcome through favorable teacher feedback on students' progress. Nonetheless, the explication of challenges, notably inadequate funding (60.0%) and a deficit in teaching and learning materials (40.0%), underscores the exigency for sustained endeavors to elevate educational quality.

Table 2: Ghana education service on educational standards in Senior High school (n=5)

What is your perception of the current academic standards and quality of education in senior high schools in Ghana?	
Fair	3 (60.0%)
Good	2 (40.0%)
What quality methods and initiatives have been implemented by Ghana Education Service in Senior High Schools in recent years	
Curriculum enhancement	1 (20.0%)
Professional learning community	1 (20.0%)
Teacher training and professional development	3 (60.0%)
What are the educational outcomes of the quality methods and the initiatives implemented?	
Enhanced students' performance on standardized test	1 (20.0%)
Positive teacher feedback on students' progress	4 (80.0%)
In what ways have teachers and other educational staff been trained to assist in implementing these quality methods?	
Professional development workshops	5 (100.0%)
What challenges are encountered in the course of implementing these quality methods in Senior high schools?	
Insufficient funding	3 (60.0%)
Lack of teaching and learning materials	2 (40.0%)
What measures are in place to ensure the sustainability of these quality methods in senior high schools	
Continuous monitoring and evaluation	3 (60.0%)
Ongoing professional development for teachers	2 (40.0%)

Concerning the educators' perspectives on professional development programs (Table 3), a prevailing participation rate of 70.6% underscores a keen interest among teachers. The effectiveness of these programs in enhancing pedagogical skills and knowledge is highlighted by a significant proportion, with a parallel alignment of program content to contemporary educational imperatives acknowledged by 72.5% of respondents. The corroborative endorsement of supportive engagement from school management and the Ghana Education Service (80.4%) attests to the integral role of institutional backing in fostering efficacious professional development initiatives.

Table 3: Teachers' perception of professional development programs offered by Ghana education service (n=51)

How often have you participated in professional development programs offered by Ghana's education service?	
Frequently	36 (70.6%)
Occasionally (once a year) or never	15 (29.5%)
What specific professional development programs have you participated in?	
Classroom instructional techniques	35 (68.6%)
Classroom management	6 (11.8%)
Pedagogy	6 (11.8%)

Others	4 (7.8%)

In your opinion, how effective have these professional development programs been in improving your teaching skills and knowledge

Ineffective or somewhat effective	14 (27.4%)
Effective	31 (60.8%)
Very effective	6 (11.8%)

Can you provide examples of how participating in these programs has positively impacted your teaching methods or classroom practices?

Improved classroom instruction	28 (54.9%)
Better classroom management	8 (15.7%)
Enhanced-teacher student relationship	5 (9.8%)
Others	2 (3.9%)

How do you perceive the support and engagement from school management and Ghana education service in facilitating your participation in professional development?

Not supportive	5 (9.8%)
Supportive	41 (80.4%)
Very supportive	5 (9.8%)

Do you feel that the content of these programs aligns with the current needs and challenges in the education sector?

Agree	37 (72.5%)
Disagree	14 (27.5%)

Tables 4 and 5 present parents and students' perceptions of quality methods impact, which clarifies distinct dimensions of the educational paradigm. While parents discern positive implications for their children's academic achievements and overall experience (50.0%), a perceptible disjuncture emerges regarding the effectiveness of schools in engaging parents in implementing quality methods (62.5%). Conversely, students manifest a predominantly positive outlook on the impact of quality methods on their learning experience (87.1%), exemplified by enhanced academic performance and clarified comprehension of instituted procedures.

Table 4: Parents' perception of quality methods impacts on their children's education outcomes (n=8)

How do you perceive the impact of quality methods implemented by Ghana education service on your child's learning experience and academic performance?

Neutral	4 (50.0%)
Positive impact	4 (50.0%)

Have you noticed any specific improvement in your child's academic achievements, behavioral, or overall educational experience that can be attributed to these methods?

Yes	5 (62.5%)
No	3 (37.5%)

How well-informed are you on the quality methods implemented in your child's school?

Not informed	3 (37.5%)
Somewhat informed	3 (37.5%)
Well informed	2 (25.0%)

Do you believe that the senior high school your child attends is effectively engaging with parents in the implementation of these quality methods?

Agree	3 (37.5%)
Disagree	5 (62.5%)

Table 5: Students' perception of quality methods impacts on their education outcomes (n=31)

How do you believe the quality methods used in your Senior High School have influenced your learning experience and academic performance?	
Negative impact	2 (6.5%)
Neutral	2 (6.5%)
Positive impact	27 (87.1%)

Do you feel that you have a clear understanding of the quality methods being used in your school?	
Clear understanding	22 (71.0%)
Somewhat clear understanding or not sure	9 (29.0%)

Have you noticed any changes in your attitudes, study habits, or motivation to learn as a result of these quality methods?	
Yes, negative changes	1 (3.2%)
Yes, positive changes	30 (96.8%)

5 Conclusion

The study revealed multifaceted perspectives of education in Ghana with a keen focus on senior high school. The socio-demographic analysis gave a clear understanding of different perspectives within the study (age, gender, educational levels, and employment statuses); this diversity helped us understand the varied challenges and strengths that contribute to the academic milieu.

The findings indicate that the education service directors perceive the current academic standards as fair and reasonable owing to teacher training and professional development initiatives. However, insufficient funding and a lack of teaching materials necessitate sustained efforts.

Again, the research sheds light on teachers' active involvement in professional development programs, with the majority stressing the effectiveness of these initiatives in improving their teaching skills; the alignment of program content with current educational needs indicates a comprehensive approach to addressing the numerous academic challenges. The support given by school management creates an enabling educational environment for effective professional development. Nonetheless, challenges exist that call for the need for resources to ensure the sustainability of these quality methods.

The distinct perspectives of parents and students give insight into the impact of quality methods on the educational experience. The result indicates that parents had mixed perceptions regarding the influence of these methods on their children's academic achievements; there is a challenge to school authorities' engagement with parents on implementing these quality methods. On the other hand, students expressed a predominantly positive outlook, attributing improved performance and improved learning experiences to quality methods.

Owing to the complex nature of education, focusing on implementing quality methods alone may not achieve complete success in achieving educational goals in senior high schools in Ghana. The research revealed a deficiency in stakeholder consultation, particularly between Ghana education service and other relevant stakeholders therefore, we recommend that comprehensive stakeholder consultation must be rolled out to solve other issues raised as challenges by the respondents.

Diverse stakeholders can exert direct and clear influence on curriculum innovations by actively participating in decision-making at both central and school levels.They may play a part in intentional and frequently collaborative curriculum development processes,which are activities aimed at fostering positive educational changes [14]. This can mean not only participation in different working groups, but also in consultative committees or advisory bodies. According to Kärkkäinen [15], experts with a somewhat consultative role for practitioners, parents, and the broader public, seem to drive

curriculum development at a central level, whereas practitioners appear as the key players at the school level.

A good practice is the extensive consultation in Hungary according to the National Core Curriculum (NCC) in Hungary. The public education overhaul commenced with the introduction of the National Core Curriculum in 1995,followed by the subsequent formulation of school-level curricula.Essentially,this serves as a nationwide blueprint for mandatory content in the initial ten years of education,while the school-level curriculum ,whether originated or adjusted,governs classroom procedures.The creation of central-level curricular documents and the NCC unfolded amid professional and political discussions.All schools and pedagogical professional organisations were consulted on the fundamental principles of the framework curricula and lesson plans,with their perspectives captured through questionnaires and informal consultations.Surveys in the field indicated that approximately 60% of teachers endorsed the NCC.Critiques predominantly revolved around the implementation process rather than the curriculum documents itself [16].

We recommend that further research should focus on a detailed examination of the various quality methods and initiatives implemented in Senior High Schools in Ghana; this may involve a case study of a specific school. Lastly, future studies should focus on comparative analysis with other countries to have insights into best practices and areas for improvement.

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