

Impact of Teachers' Acquaintance on Fidelity Implementation: Views of Senior High School French Teachers in Ghana

Anthony Akwesi Owusu¹

Abstract

Curriculum illiteracy on the part of teachers has over the years posed a lot of threat to success of programme implementation in many parts of the world. In Ghana, the centralized curriculum design system even tends to alienate teachers the more from the syllabus they are supposed to implement. This study, first of its kind in Ghana, therefore seeks to examine the impact of teachers' acquaintance with the syllabus on fidelity implementation from the view point of teachers of French at the Senior High School level. Data was collected via questionnaire from 88 French teachers sampled from four districts of the Western Region of Ghana. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the participating districts for the study. In the selected districts, census was used to select teachers in both public and private SHSs. The study revealed that a majority (91.7%) of French teachers did not make notes from the syllabus and only 94% of them intimated that they did not often refer to the syllabus as a source of information in teaching. It was again discovered that a significant positive correlation exists between teachers acquaintance with the syllabus and fidelity implementation ($r(72) = .45, p < \alpha$ since $\alpha = .05$ and $p = .040$). Based on this, it was recommended that as a policy, the Ministry of Education (MoE), the umbrella body of the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) of the Ghana Education Service (GES), come out with forums that would help French teachers have access to national curriculum design platforms where their interventions could be considered. This new proposal when pursued would improve the degree to which the French curriculum is implemented with fidelity in Ghana.

Keywords: Ghana education service; Senior high school; Fidelity implementation; programme

1. Introduction

Curriculum innovation and implementation are highly complex phenomena that require further research and investigation (Fullan, 1993). To date, there is insufficient information on the process of curriculum implementation. The extents to which teachers carry out implementation as intended by curriculum designers depend to some extent on the school climate. In fact, how teachers go about moulding curricular to their own context, the strategies that they use during the implementation process and how their students respond to curricula innovations are influenced by the school. In the same vein, the success of curriculum implementation depends on the administrative set up of the school. If the school culture fights against the demands of the implementation process, then failure could be anticipated in terms of programme success. On the other hand, if the school culture favours the programme, its successful implementation could be guaranteed. For instance in Ghana, some heads of second cycle institutions do all they can to promote the learning of French by providing teachers with the requisite materials and giving teachers support on issues pertaining to the study of French. However, some also, by their actions and inactions, tend to discourage learning of the subject in their institutions. For these reasons, it can be said that school support could affect how well curriculum could be implemented in a particular institution.

Curriculum implementation is the process of putting a document or an instructional programme into practice (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). The source of the design of the curriculum determines the kind of

¹Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast

approach to its implementation. In a situation where an individual teacher designs his or her own curriculum, they are the ones who eventually give meaning to it. The teacher, in the implementation process of their own developed curriculum material, is not bound to faithfully implement it because he or she is the creator of the curriculum and can easily modify it. It is often assumed therefore that, the more the teacher acquaints him/herself with the properties of the curriculum, the more effective its implementation could be (Hall & Louks, 1982; Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992).

Curriculum implementers adopt the fidelity approach to curriculum when teachers are required to implement the content of the curriculum to the letter. Simply put, fidelity of implementation is the delivery of instruction in the way in which it was designed to be delivered (Gresham, 1989). Vaughn, Klingner, and Hughes (2000) assert that fidelity of implementation occurs when teachers deliver both the content and instructional strategies of the curriculum in the same way that they were designed to be delivered. Most teachers perceive that there are many ways to teach students and that there is little consensus from research that would warrant change in their instructional practice. The fidelity approach to curriculum implementation is therefore the determination of the degree of implementation of a programme in terms of the extent to which actual use corresponds faithfully to the kind of use intended by the designers and to determine factors which facilitate such implementation (Snyder et al., 1992; Vaughn et al., 2000).

Conservatism of implementers hinders implementation of curriculum programmes in that people fear change. Watson as cited in Fullan and Miles (1992) asserted several decades ago that few people welcome an aid totally in an unchanging environment. He opined that people resist change because the natural drive for newness and excitement was being counteracted by opposing forces. Most times, teachers in Ghana tend to experiment implementation of reform programmes with old methods which have outlived their usefulness. Teachers in this category are often untrained ones and those who are teachers simply because of lack of jobs. They stick to old ways of teaching and would defend their entrenched positions by statements like “we had always taught this topic this way.” This attitude mitigates the smooth implementation of curriculum programmes in Ghana.

Lack of clarity or inadequate understanding of the philosophy and spirit behind the content of a curriculum programme constitutes a hindrance in its implementation. Curriculum illiteracy on the part of teachers poses threat to curriculum implementation in Ghana. The consent of teachers to a curriculum does not necessarily indicate that they comprehend or identify with the programme. It has been discovered from research that teachers who are supposedly implementers of curriculum sometimes cannot even identify its main features (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). For the programme to be successful, curriculum planners in view of this, need to ensure that they describe the programme in detail for the easy assimilation and digestion of the implementers. Without this, is it not possible that quality implementation will be discountenanced in Ghana?

Furthermore, for curriculum to be implemented well, teachers must have competent grasp of the subject matter and the right approach to implement the programme well. The issue of teacher qualifications could be tied to this point. In Ghana, a number of people claim the title ‘teachers’ but as to whether they possess teaching skills is another matter. Wang and Cheng (2005) noted that of all the factors necessary for curriculum implementation, the orientation and skill of teachers was probably the most important. The successful teacher in this type of curriculum is not only a facilitator of student learning, but also an active agent of development. Implicitly, a successful teacher would transcend a mediocre curriculum but an excellent curriculum is unlikely to be successful in the hands of an incompetent teacher. The argument, in the Ghanaian context, is likely to engender debate as to teachers’ intellectual capacity to implement curriculum programmes.

Statement of the Problem

Ghana operates the centralised education system where the content of what is to be taught is prepared and sent down to teachers on the field to implement. The problem that arises with this situation, documented from research, is often a mismatch between curriculum designers’ intentions and the degree to which teachers translate those intentions into teaching experiences does not fully allow teachers to make any input

into the design of curriculum. In other words, the entire curriculum (the course of study) is handed over to teachers to implement. Teachers therefore run into serious implementation problems especially with the French as a foreign language curriculum. In the end, some of the topics may never be taught and others may also be taught partially. It was therefore important for the researcher to ascertain whether teachers' implementation capacity of the French programme would be enhanced with if they acquaint themselves well with the syllabus. No research in this area has ever been conducted in Ghana and hence to motivation to conduct this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact that acquaintance with the syllabus by teachers would have on fidelity implementation of the SHS French curriculum from teachers' perspectives. Specifically, the study had as objectives to determine the percentage of French teachers who made notes from the syllabus. It also sought to find out how often these teachers referred to the syllabus as a source of information for teaching. Finally, the study sought to determine whether a significant relationship exists between teachers' acquaintance with the syllabus and fidelity implementation of the SHS French curriculum.

Research Questions

1. What is the percentage of French teachers who make notes from the syllabus?
2. How often do French teachers refer to the syllabus as a source of information in teaching?

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no relationship between teachers' acquaintance with the properties of the French syllabus and their fidelity implementation.

H₁: There is a relationship between teachers' acquaintance with the properties of the French syllabus and their fidelity implementation.

Significance of the Study

This study is so important because it would provide useful information to French teachers to explore ways of making themselves familiar with the French syllabus at all levels of education in Ghana. Also, the study would seek to drum home the fact that much as it is advisable for teachers to look for relevant materials to enrich lessons, it would be even more important to use the syllabus to enhance pedagogical content quality of French lessons. Finally, the outcome of this study would also confirm or disconfirm theories on fidelity approach to curriculum implementation to enhance further research on the subject.

2. Theoretical Overview

This section delved into the conceptions of curriculum implementation and the characteristics of teachers involved in implementation process. The purpose was to establish a theoretical basis for further discussion of the teacher factors or variables affecting curriculum implementation in foreign language education in Ghana. The current study also explored teacher-variables that contributed to the faithful implementation of the intended French curriculum at the SHS level. It therefore involved curriculum implementation in the context of French as a foreign language (FFL). As a policy, Ghana operates with the centralised curriculum development process which only hands over the already designed 'intended curriculum' to the classroom teacher to implement.

However, classroom teachers may not implement the curriculum as intended, due to constraints such as their entrenched beliefs and perceptions regarding the contents of the designed material, their qualification, their teaching experiences, inappropriate or inadequate skills and knowledge, among others. It is important to note that in the process of implementation, teachers may alter the intended programme Elmore and Sykes (1992). They may do this by redefining, reinterpreting, and modifying their teaching behaviour based on their classroom realities. They can welcome the designed programme but still find it extremely difficult to put it into practice, and eventually choose not to implement it.

In fact, Elmore, et al., (1992) drew attention to a very important issue of implementation in understanding the confusion and frustration that centralised curriculum development often brings to teachers when they attempt to put the programme into actual practice. Though Snyder et al. (1992) argued that research on curriculum implementation is relatively new, and that even the term “implementation” could not be found in curriculum literature before the late 60s, recent works have revealed otherwise (Fink, & Stoll, 2005; Fullan, 2008). From the 1970s through the 1990s, much more attention was directed to the implementation problems involved in translating proposals into practice by scholars, researchers, and practitioners. At present, research on curriculum implementation is more prevalent. Duyilemi (2000) argued that among the various phases of curriculum development, implementing the material in question is the most challenging part. Perhaps this view point may be true to an extent. Fullan and Park (1981) also asserted that implementation is ‘changing practice’ that consists of alterations from existing practice to some new or revised practice in order to achieve certain desired student learning outcomes. They alleged that implementation is considered changing practice because the emphasis is on actual use rather than on assumed use. Actual use in fact entails whatever change may occur in practice. That is why the terms of change, innovation, reform, revision, and renewal are all frequently used in the context of describing implementation. They elaborated further, stating that change would likely occur in curriculum materials, teaching approaches, and beliefs, perceptions or understandings about the curriculum and learning practices (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991), and that all of these changes are aimed at effectively attaining some educational goal. According to Pal (2006), implementation is the transacting an authoritative decision. ‘Authoritative’ implying that the implementer (the teacher) only has to comply and ‘apply’ without question.

Fidelity Approach

The concept of implementation fidelity, sometimes called adherence or integrity, is a determination of how well a programme is being implemented in comparison with the original programme design. Deviations from, or dilution of the programme components, could have unintended consequences on programme outcomes.

The majority of curriculum implementation has been studied from a fidelity perspective or approach (Snyder et al., 1992). The intent of this approach according to Snyder, et al. (1992) was to “measure the degree to which a particular innovation is implemented as planned...[and to]... identify the factors which facilitate or hinder implementation as planned, assuming the desired outcome of curricular change is fidelity to the original plan” (p. 404)

Researchers of fidelity approach view curriculum as something concrete, something that can be pointed to, something that can be evaluated to see if its goals have been accomplished (Jackson, 1992). Its degree of implementation can be determined by finding out if teachers have faithfully followed implementation principles as planned. Teachers must have professional training (Natriello, Zumwalt, Hansen, & Frisch, 1990) to be able to do this. The implementers must also attain the appropriate skills and knowledge in their subject areas (Supovitz & May, 2003). Furthermore, the documents that specify and interpret the content of the programme - the syllabus, the textbook, and the teachers’ manual, among others must be readily available (Eash, 1991; Supovitz, et al., 2003). Snyder et al. (1992) add that a clearly defined innovation makes those charged with implementing it know exactly what to do. The fidelity of the teacher to the curriculum implementation therefore depends mostly on those conditions.

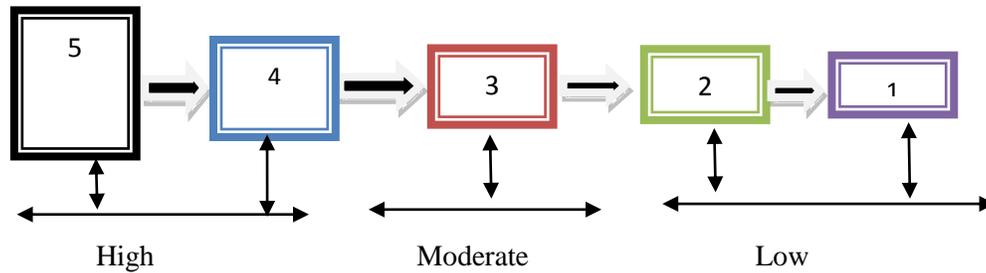
In analysing the reality in the classroom, Dusenber, Brannigan, Fako and Hansen (2003) admit that minor variations might be tolerated, but caution that the emphasis should clearly be on ensuring that practice conforms to the developer’s intentions. When practice conforms to the developer’s intentions, then the degree of implementation can be determined.

Fidelity Dimensions

Researchers in the past have sought to apply structural methods to weigh curricula programmes against certain key elements. In the process, developing measures had posed a challenge. The ones which were developed had often been specific to the programme or policy being assessed. In general, fidelity of

implementation has been measured in many ways: adherence to the programme; the amount of the programme delivered or implemented, which is referred to as ‘dose’ in the medical field; quality of programme delivery; participant(s) responsiveness and; programme differentiation that is whether critical features that distinguish the programme are present.

Specifically to this study, a measure gleaned from Scheirer and Rezmovic (2007) was used to calibrate the degree of fidelity on the Likert (Interval) scale. In this regard, ‘very high fidelity (VHF)’ was assigned ‘5’, ‘high fidelity (HF)’ was assigned ‘4’, moderate fidelity (MF)’ was assigned to ‘3’, low fidelity (LF)’ was assigned ‘2’ and ‘very low fidelity (VLF)’ was assigned ‘1’. The current study determined the degree of fidelity by this calibration. The diagrammatic representation of the degree of programme implementation couched from Scheirer et al. has been presented in Figure 1.



Teachers’ Acquaintance with the Syllabus

The point cannot be contested that teachers’ acquaintance with the properties, features and content of the curriculum material (syllabus) exercises a positive effect on their classroom performance. Natriello, Zumwalt, Hansen, & Frisch, (1990); Elbaz, (1991) observe that teachers’ who teach subjects need to strive and internalise the essential features of those subjects and carry them out as planned. It will be difficult for teachers to deliver their lessons well if they make no deliberate effort to carefully study the syllabus to be able to meet the needs of their students (Elbaz, 1991).

The properties of the curriculum encompass features of the SHS French syllabus, the rationale for teaching French in Ghana, the general aims and objectives of the SHS French curriculum (syllabus), the scope of content of the syllabus, organisation of the syllabus and the time allocation in the syllabus. Teachers will be said to have acquainted themselves well with the properties of the curriculum (syllabus) if they imbibe these variables. All things being equal, the more teachers acquaint themselves with the content of the syllabus, the likely they are to implement the curriculum with fidelity. Tyler (1949) also explained that educational objectives become the criteria by which materials are selected, content is outlined, instructional procedures are developed, and tests and examinations are prepared. ... The purpose of a statement of objectives is to indicate the kinds of changes in the student to be brought about so that instructional activities can be planned and developed in a way likely to attain these objectives.

In Ghana, Arthur (1999) carried out a similar study on the degree of implementation of an instructional programme in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The findings of the study indicated that the majority of the teachers did not plan their lessons within the framework of the syllabus since most of them were not familiar with the content of the syllabus (Arthur (1999)). She also found that most content areas were not adequately taught. Arthur further concluded that written exercises were less frequently assigned by the majority of the SHS Core English language teachers in most of the content areas, and finally the teaching-learning strategies suggesting high pupil activities were usually avoided. From her research work, it turned out that acquaintance of teachers to the properties of the curriculum material (syllabus), promoted fidelity implementation.

In her work, Arthur (1999) defined the characteristics of the syllabus to include the coverage of content areas, students’ activities and methods of teaching that can be critiqued. In her study, the characteristics of the syllabus were, however, not defined because they were not clearly delineated. As a criticism, I think the

principles in the syllabus that constitute fidelity of implementation upon which her findings could be based were lacking. Furthermore, she used certain behaviour indicators that were not based on the syllabus. I believe that teachers implement instructional programmes by covering greater amounts of content areas and giving out activities to students as expected but whether they are more faithful and committed to the principles underlying the fidelity model of implementation may still remain questionable. At this juncture, it becomes imperative for us to look at the characteristics of the SHS French syllabus in detail.

Teachers' acquaintance with the SHS French syllabus will show that the syllabus comprises grammar/language, essay writing, comprehension, vocabulary development, summary and speech work. Each component comprises its own teaching strategies that are classified into knowledge and understanding and the use of knowledge. Knowledge is the ability to remember or recall material already learned and constitutes the lowest level of learning (GES, 1998). Understanding on the other hand, is "the ability to grasp the meaning of some material that may be verbal, pictorial, or symbolic" (GES, 1998). The ability to use knowledge, according to GES, includes the levels of application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The teaching strategies under knowledge and understanding, referred together as receptive skills, are learnt through listening and reading. Those strategies under the use of knowledge (productive skills) are also learnt through speaking and writing.

Teaching strategies under grammar or language study that constitute the use of knowledge are dialogue and the construction of original sentence. The rest - conversation drills, pair drills, competition drills, substitution drills and blank-space filling also constitute knowledge and understanding (Teaching Syllabus for French, 2010). All the teaching strategies under essay writing, discussion, organising unordered string sentence into lucid paragraphs, debating in preparation to argumentative essay and story-telling sessions in preparation to written work- are subsumed under the use of knowledge. Those under comprehension, - silent reading, oral reading, linking comprehension lesson with literature lesson and testing listening comprehension, constitute knowledge and understanding (Teaching Syllabus for French, 2010).

With the exception of writing compositions on topics selected from specified disciplines constituting use of knowledge, the rest of the strategies under vocabulary development - making vocabulary with selected disciplines and encouraging students to look up definition in dictionaries fall under knowledge and understanding. Summary writing has all its teaching strategies-expressing themes in single sentences, paraphrasing paragraphs and reducing passages to a third of original length while retaining the mood-under use of knowledge except identifying themes of passages. Speech work has pronunciation drill through modeling or repetition, contrastive drill, and poetry recitals under knowledge and understanding while conversation, debating and acting plays, fall under the use of knowledge (Teaching Syllabus for French, 2010).

The arrangements for continuous assessment are grouped into categories such as Projects, Class Tests, Homework, and Terminal Test (Teaching syllabus for French, 2010). The projects are assigned to students to be completed over extended period of time. They comprise practical work (such as creative writing) and investigative study. The student is expected to write a report for each project undertaken. The class tests consist essentially of written assignments covering topics/units completed at some specific period within the term (Teaching syllabus for French, 2010). The homework is also an assignment to be completed within a day or a couple of days. It may consist of essays, summaries, and other problems to be solved. Teachers' acquaintance with these areas of the syllabus improves their fidelity implementation, all things been equal. Teachers get to know all the dimensions and content of the syllabus. So implementation of the SHS French programme may depend to some extent on the effort teachers put into '*knowing their subject matter*' by '*studying*' the syllabus which is the teaching material. The processes leading to acquaintance have been put and explained in a model shown in Figure 2.

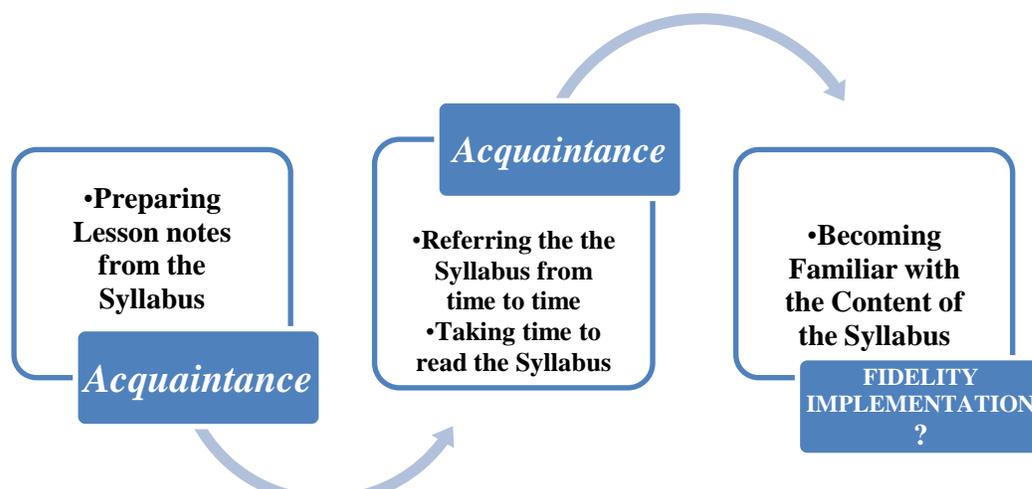


Figure 2: The Nexus Between Acquaintance and Fidelity Implementation (Author derived)

The derived model clearly shows that in the process of teaching, teachers adopt all kinds of strategies to enhance the process. Whereas some depend on supplementary materials provided by individual authors, others too depend on the internet for information to enrich their lessons. However, the syllabus has been known to be the material that contains relevant teaching materials for learners. A model for acquaintance in this study derives from the interactions between teachers' actions that ensure a close touch with the syllabus. For instance, teachers acquaint themselves with the content of the syllabus when they prepare notes from the syllabus and refer to it from time to time and taking time to read it as a source of information for teaching. When they do these, they become familiar with the material which may enable them or not to teach as they are required to do. Figure 1 shows the framework used for the study.

3. Methodology

Design

I used the descriptive design for data collection and the analysis of information.

Population

The participants comprised seventy two (72) SHS French teachers in ten (10) districts of the Western Region of Ghana. The districts comprised: Jomoro; Mporhor Wassa East; Prestea Huni Valley; Sekondi Takoradi Metro; Sefwi Wiawso; Shama, Suaman; Tarkwa Nsuaem Municipal; Bia; and Ahanta West districts. The teachers in schools of these districts are implementers of the French programme whose responses were deemed relevant in interrogating the research questions and the hypothesis of the study.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample for the study consisted of 72 SHS French teachers drawn from ten districts of the western region. The districts were selected using simple random sampling and the SHSs in the selected districts which offer French were considered for inclusion using purposive sampling procedure. Eventually, all SHS French teachers in the selected districts were sampled using census technique.

Instrumentation

A self report instrument (a questionnaire) was used to gather data from the teachers in all the schools. The fifteen-item (15) questionnaire touched on how teachers often made notes by referring to the syllabus and whether they studied the syllabus. The instrument also asked whether the acquaintance with the syllabus impacted on fidelity implementation. All the items were measured on a five-point Likert scale. Before field

administration of the questionnaire, it was pilot-tested in eight schools in the Cape Coast metropolis of the Central Region and the analysis yielded reliability coefficient of .81, the basis upon which actual data was collected.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics of means, percentages and frequencies were used to help answer the research questions whereas the Pearson Moment Correlation was also used to test for significance with the help of SPSS.

4. Results and Discussions

Research Question 1

Table 1 portrays the percentage of French teachers who indicated that the “Yes” or “No” to the question whether they made notes from the syllabus or used other materials. It should be noted that the items were compressed into the items which appear in the tables shown.

Table 1: Percentage of Teachers who Make notes from the Syllabus

Items	YES No. (%)	NO No. (%)	Total No. (%)
Do you routinely make notes from the syllabus before teaching?	6(8.3)	66(91.7)	72(100)
Do you use the syllabus as a companion for teaching?	3(4.2)	69(95.8)	72(100)

The study revealed that a majority 66(91.7%) of French teachers did not make notes from the syllabus even though 6(8.3%) said “yes” they made notes from the syllabus. Clearly French teachers will have a problem implementing the French programme because, they may not be able to internalise the essential features of those subjects and carry them out as planned as was suggested by Natriello, Zumwalt, Hansen, & Frisch, (1990). For Elbaz (1991), if teachers fail to acquaint themselves well would find it difficult for teachers to deliver their lessons well if they make no deliberate effort to carefully study the syllabus to be able to meet the needs of their students.

Research Question

Table 2 portrays teachers’ views on how often they referred to the syllabus as a source of reference for information and how often they took time to study the syllabus before teaching. The outcome of that exercise has also been presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Percentage of Teachers who refer to the Syllabus for Purposes of Making notes from it

Items	Very Often No.(%)	Often No.(%)	Sometimes No. (%)	Not Often No. (%)	Not at All No.(%)	Total No. (%)
How often do you refer to the syllabus as a source of information for teaching French?	1(1.4)	0(0)	2(2.8)	1(1.4)	68(94.4)	72(100)
How often do you take time to ‘study’ the syllabus before teaching?	0(0)	0(0)	16(22.2)	41(56.9)	15(20.8)	72(100)

Table 2 shows that 68(94.4%) of the teachers indicated that they never referred to the syllabus as a teaching material though two (2.8%) admitted that they sometimes referred to it. One (1.4%) responded that they syllabus was very often referred. Then 41(56.9%) said they did not often take time to study the syllabus

even though 16(22.2%) intimated that this was done sometimes. And yet 15(20.8%) said they did not study the French syllabus at all. In Ghana, Arthur (1999) carried out a similar study on the degree of implementation of an instructional programme in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The findings of the study indicated that the majority of the teachers did not plan their lessons within the framework of the syllabus since most of them were not familiar with the content of the syllabus. She also found that most content areas were not adequately taught. The findings of this study concurs with the one done by Arthur which indicated that the majority of the teachers did not plan their lessons within the framework of the syllabus since most of them were not familiar with the content of the syllabus. This finding confirms the study by Arthur (1999) which concluded that written exercises were less frequently assigned by the majority of the SHS Core English language teachers in most of the content areas due to their non-acquaintance with the syllabus. That study revealed that the teaching-learning strategies suggesting high pupil activities were usually avoided due to non acquaintance. From her research work, it turned out that acquaintance of teachers to the properties of the curriculum material (syllabus), rather promoted fidelity implementation.

Hypothesis

Table 3 shows the statistical relationship between teachers' acquaintance with the syllabus and fidelity implementation of the French programme. The questionnaire section which covered this subject was measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (to a very great extent to not at all). In testing the hypothesis, the Pearson Moment Correlation (r) test was used to determine the relationship between the variables. Testing for significance was done at .05 level. At this level of significance, the p –value was compared with the alpha to determine statistical significance. The outcome of the inferential statistics has been presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation between Teacher-variables and Fidelity Implementation

Variable	N	Mean	SD	R	p -value
Teachers' Acquaintance	72	3.0	.64	.454	.040*

* $p < .05$; **Note:** Items on the questionnaire were merged N= Sample size; SD= Standard Deviation; r = Correlation coefficient

Mathematically from the Table 3, teachers' acquaintance is: $r(72) = .45$, $p < .05$ given $\alpha = .05$ and p – value = .040. Since p –value is less than α , the result is statistically significant. The null hypothesis is thus rejected and a conclusion made that, there is a correlation between teachers' acquaintance with the content of the syllabus and fidelity implementation. By implication, if teachers familiarised themselves with the content of the syllabus, they are well able to implement the curriculum with appreciable level of fidelity. This finding is congruous with the findings of Natriello, Zumwalt, Hansen, and Frisch (1990) who opined that teachers' acquaintance with the properties, features and content of the curriculum material (syllabus) exercises a positive effect on teachers' classroom implementation performance. It would be difficult for teachers to deliver their lessons well if they made no conscious effort to carefully study the syllabus to be able to meet the needs of their students (Elbaz, 1991). The table data also shows a moderately positive ($r=.45$) relationship between fidelity implementation and teachers' acquaintance. In my view, and as evidenced by the co-efficient of correlation, the more teachers acquainted themselves with the syllabus and got abreast of its contents, the more they would be able to teach faithfully as required to. On the other hand, it also implied that if French teachers failed to acquaint themselves with the content of the syllabus, they are likely to do their own thing in the class.

5. Conclusions

The current study explored the impact of teachers' acquaintance with the syllabus on implementation of the SHS French curriculum with a lot of novel ideas coming up. Realisation of intended curriculum is often much more difficult than imagined. In fact, in many cases, implementing the intended curriculum literally

may be impossible. The complexity is attributable to diverse causes. O'Sullivan (2002) argued that, in the case of English teaching reforms in Namibia, the failure of policymakers to consider the realities of the local contexts the teachers worked against implementation efforts. In this study, the failure of teachers to acquaint themselves with the content of the syllabus has proven to work against fidelity implementation. It has come to the fore that having adequate knowledge and a clear understanding of the written curriculum (syllabus) is crucial in implementation of any educational innovation. When teachers are pretty clear about the syllabus they are supposed to teach, it makes matters clear to them as to what is required of them in teaching to the benefit of learners (Owusu, 2012). Many a time, teachers fail to acquaint themselves with the syllabus even though these materials are provided to them. Teachers may have the syllabus in hand, but they may actually not know much about its content except reading it for the purposes of workshops and seminars. This situation creates a lack of working knowledge with the syllabus which is inimical to successful implementation (Wang, 2006). Research has shown that only more responsible teachers really read the syllabus carefully except there is a group meeting and yet even with such teachers, how much they know about the syllabus is hard to determine. For example, they may read a few lines and quote what is written in the syllabus when they write papers. This is what they probably do. Many young teachers do not even touch the syllabus and so most of them are unclear about their content (Wang, 2006). Sometimes, the lack of knowledge about the syllabus was emanates from their lack of interest. The syllabus contains vital information which provides comparative skill to its users in communicating its contents to learners. Syllabus designers are also often not clear about how the material could be used to benefit learners. Ambiguity makes it difficult for teachers to make it their companion and interpret it accurately. When due diligence is done in its design and usage, implementation would be enhanced tremendously.

6. Recommendations

Based on the outcome of the study, the following are recommended:

1. Curriculum experts or designers should invite subject associations for curricula conferences to deliberate on plausible ways of designing workable intended curriculum for SHSs. When this happens, ambiguity often associated with most of the written curriculum (syllabus) would be minimised if not completely eradicated.
2. The curriculum and Research Development Division (CRDD) of the Ghana Education Service (GES) should be resourced adequately so that they can engage teachers in curriculum synchronisation workshops to bridge the gap between designers' intensions and implementers' thoughts about an educational innovation. The non-existence of this union or platform is often cited as the major cause of low fidelity implementation in our schools today.
3. Government should enter into partnership with other stakeholders to come up with strategies that would engage teachers in appropriate professional development programmes with a view to supporting enactment. These measures would help to transform teachers into 'practitioners' of new curricula instead of the usual 'implementers' in a gradual and ongoing manner.
4. Subject associations such the GAFT should organise programmes occasionally based on the syllabus to provide professional support to French teachers. These programmes should provide support in the areas of resource provision; teaching methods and language proficiency among others for teachers. The programmes would enhance teachers' skills of teaching in the use of the syllabus.

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