

Impact of the Quality of Free Senior High School Policy Pedagogy Content of Curriculum on Graduate Employability in Ghana.

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ABSTRACT

The Free Senior High School (Free SHS) policy introduced in Ghana in 2017 significantly expanded access to secondary education, yet concerns persist regarding the employability of its graduates. This study examines the impact of the quality of Free SHS pedagogy and curriculum content on graduate employability in Ghana. Anchored in Human Capital Theory and Skills Mismatch Theory, the study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 254 teachers and 92 Free SHS graduates drawn from 24 public senior high schools across Ghana's Northern, Forest, and Coastal ecological zones. Descriptive statistics, the Relative Importance Index (RII), and multiple regression analysis were employed using SPSS.

Findings from teachers indicate that the curriculum's pedagogical content has a moderate impact on graduate employability (composite mean = 3.26), with strengths in personalized and culturally responsive teaching but notable deficiencies in critical thinking, problem-solving, and teacher professional training. Graduates similarly perceived the curriculum as positively influencing overall employability (RII = 0.767), vocational skills, and career alignment, while highlighting gaps in teamwork, technical skills, and hands-on practical learning. Regression results reveal that both the Free SHS policy and the quality of pedagogy content significantly predict graduate employability, with pedagogy quality exerting a stronger effect ($\beta = 0.737$, $p < 0.05$).

The study concludes that while the Free SHS curriculum contributes positively to employability, its effectiveness is constrained by limited emphasis on experiential learning, technical skills, and teacher capacity building. Strengthening curriculum quality and pedagogy is therefore critical to improving graduate employability and aligning secondary education with Ghana's labour-market demands.

Keywords: Pedagogy content, Curriculum, Labour Market and Employability

INTRODUCTION

Education remains a vital factor in developing human capital and enhancing employability in today's economies. In Ghana, the 2017 implementation of the Free Senior High School (Free SHS) policy aimed to ensure fair access to secondary education and create a skilled workforce that meets labour market needs (Wahid, 2024; Ministry of Education, 2018). Ideally, the policy should go beyond access, offering high-quality teaching and relevant curricula that foster essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and technical abilities, aligned with national development goals. This aligns with Ghana's progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 8, promoting decent work and economic growth (Appiah, 2025). In a perfect scenario, Free SHS graduates would seamlessly move into employment, entrepreneurship, or further studies, significantly contributing to socio-economic development.

However, the situation on the ground indicates a widening gap between the delivery of the Free SHS curriculum and graduates' employability. Although enrollment has risen sharply, issues such as overcrowded classrooms,

insufficient teaching and learning resources, and inconsistent teacher preparedness remain concerns. These factors are likely to impact the quality of pedagogy (Wahid & Loveline, 2024).

Employers in Ghana report that many graduates lack key employability skills, such as practical experience, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving, all of which are vital for success today (Wahid, 2025). The gap between the education curriculum and labour-market needs has widened, creating a mismatch that makes it harder for graduates to find well-paying jobs.

Ghana also faces serious unemployment issues, especially among youth and recent graduates. Recent figures show that about 60% of graduates entering the labour market each year struggle to secure stable employment (Ecofin Agency, 2026). Youth unemployment remains very high, with up to 32% of Ghanaians aged 15–24 unemployed in 2025 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2025). This unemployment leads to socio-economic instability, increases underemployment in the informal sector, causes frustration among educated youth, and reduces the effectiveness of public investment in education.

This study is important because it has the potential to change policy discussions from prioritizing access to focusing on how education affects employability through quality. By exploring how pedagogy and curriculum under the Free SHS policy impact graduate employability, the research will offer empirical data to guide curriculum reforms, enhance teacher training, and develop skills-based education policies. Ultimately, the results will help Ghana align secondary education with the demands of the labour market and its sustainable development objectives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory argues that education is an investment that enhances individuals' skills, knowledge, and competencies, thereby improving their productivity and employability in the labour market (Becker, 1964). It suggests that when education systems deliver high-quality teaching and relevant curricula, graduates acquire more marketable skills that align with employer needs, thereby improving employment prospects and economic growth. Regarding Ghana's Free Senior High School policy, this theory indicates that merely increasing access is insufficient without quality teaching practices and curricula tailored to labour-market demands. If teaching remains overly theoretical and disconnected from practical skills, the expected benefits of public investment in Free SHS, such as reduced unemployment and a more productive workforce may not materialize (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018). Therefore, Human Capital Theory offers a valuable framework to understand how gaps in curriculum relevance and instructional quality can contribute to graduate unemployment in Ghana.

Skills Mismatch Theory

The skills Mismatch Theory explains unemployment and underemployment as results of a gap between the skills gained through formal education and those required by the labour market (McGuinness, Pouliakas, & Redmond, 2018). It highlights that even with educational qualifications, individuals may stay unemployed if their skills do not meet employer expectations. In the context of Ghana's Free SHS policy, the theory suggests that shortcomings in curriculum content and teaching methods, such as a limited focus on technical, digital, entrepreneurial, and soft skills, can result in graduates who are academically certified but lack practical workreadiness. This mismatch is a significant factor in youth and graduate unemployment in Ghana, where employers often cite deficiencies in problem-solving, communication, and workplace skills among SHS graduates (World Bank, 2020). Consequently, the theory is well-suited to analyze how curriculum and pedagogy under the Free SHS policy affect employability outcomes.

Conceptual and Empirical Review

Pedagogy, broadly defined as the arts and sciences of teaching, includes methods, strategies, and approaches that facilitate effective learning (Loughran, 2013). Core elements involve instructional methods like collaborative and



personalized learning, curriculum design, learning theories such as behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism, along with monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (Pane, Steiner, Baird, & Hamilton, 2015). A strong pedagogical content promotes culturally responsive teaching, critical thinking, teacher development, and technological integration, leading to better learning outcomes (Gay, 2018). Ultimately, pedagogical content shapes how educational objectives are delivered, and effective strategies create a dynamic environment that improves learning outcomes.

Adjei (2021) investigated how well the SHS curriculum matches Ghana's labour market needs. The study aimed to evaluate the relevance of the curriculum to employability skills and its effect on graduate job preparedness, based on a survey of 500 respondents, including teachers, experts, and graduates from Accra and Kumasi. Data collection involved questionnaires and curriculum analysis, with analysis conducted using descriptive statistics and content analysis.

Findings indicated a disconnect between the curriculum and labour market demands, with content mainly theoretical and lacking practical and soft skills. Teachers reported limited training in modern pedagogical strategies, while experts noted that reforms have been insufficient to keep pace with economic changes.

The study concluded that the current curriculum does not adequately prepare students for employment and recommended incorporating critical thinking, entrepreneurship, and digital skills. Although it did not examine teaching methods, my study fills this gap by linking pedagogical quality with employability outcomes, providing evidence on how content and teaching practices influence graduate readiness and informing educational policy.

Nyarko (2020) investigated teaching practices in Ghanaian senior high schools and their influence on graduate employability. A mixed-methods study involving 300 teachers and 200 graduates found that most teachers primarily used lectures, with few interactive techniques. Graduates reported that their education did not adequately foster critical thinking, teamwork, or problem-solving skills, which are vital for employment.

Teachers mentioned curriculum overload and a lack of pedagogical training as obstacles to adopting innovative teaching methods. The findings revealed a gap between current teaching approaches and employer expectations. The study concluded that pedagogy affects employability but did not determine if adopting better methods improves employment outcomes. My research addresses this by empirically linking teaching quality to employment results, providing actionable curriculum recommendations.

Teye and Agyeman (2022) examined how the Free SHS policy influences curriculum delivery and employability. Their aim was to investigate teaching methods and how well they align with employer expectations. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were gathered from 700 participants, including teachers, policymakers, and employers, via interviews and document reviews, then analyzed through thematic coding. They discovered that classroom instruction was predominantly exam-oriented, with limited focus on employability skills. Teachers reported feeling pressure to complete syllabi for WASSCE, which hindered experiential learning opportunities.

Employers observed that graduates lacked essential workplace skills, including communication, time management, and adaptability. Curriculum planners highlighted resource and training shortages as barriers. The study concluded that SHS pedagogy under the Free SHS policy is insufficient in preparing students for employment. It recommended enhancing teacher training in active learning and restructuring the curriculum toward practical skills. A limitation of the research is its qualitative design, which restricts the generalizability of findings. My research adds value by incorporating quantitative data and stratifying results by demographics and regions, providing more detailed insights into the curriculum's impact on employment.

Okrah, Ampadu, and Yeboah (2019) examined how well the senior high school curriculum in Ghana aligns with labour market expectations. Through interviews with students and industry professionals, they discovered that while some career-related skills are incorporated, many critical employability skills- such as applied problem solving and creativity- are underemphasized.

Although their study connects curriculum skills to employer needs, it does not specifically evaluate the impact of the Free SHS policy or the employment outcomes of those who benefit from it.

My research will directly analyze components of the Free SHS curriculum, pedagogical approaches (like competency-based versus lecture-based methods), and education quality indicators, and will empirically link these to measurable employability outcomes, thus bridging curriculum relevance with tangible labour market results.

Abdul-Rahim, Adom, and Adu-Agyem (2022) assessed the impact of the Free SHS policy on educational quality at Kintampo SHS using questionnaires and interviews. They observed improvements in enrolment, academic performance, and access. Nonetheless, challenges such as larger class sizes and limited resources affected instructional quality.

The study mainly examines general education metrics like enrolment and test scores but does not explore employability or how curriculum content and teaching methods influence labour market readiness.

While evaluating overall educational quality, my research will also include employability indicators such as graduate skills assessments, and analyze how curriculum and pedagogy relate to these outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a quantitative cross-sectional survey method to investigate teaching practices in Ghanaian senior high schools and their impact on graduate employability. This approach was suitable as it allowed for the collection of standardized data from a sizable population at one point in time, facilitating statistical analysis of patterns and relationships between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Ghana was stratified into its three main ecological zones, namely, the Northern Zone, Forest Zone, and Coastal Zone, to ensure geographical and contextual representation. From each ecological zone, two regions were purposively selected, resulting in a total of six regions. The selected regions from each zone are:

1. Northern Zone: Northern Region and Upper West Region
2. Forest Zone: Ashanti Region and Bono Region
3. Coastal Zone: Central Region and Greater Accra Region

The selection of regions was guided by the need to capture variations in educational contexts across the zones. Within each selected region, four public senior high schools were randomly selected, yielding a total of twenty four (24) senior high schools included in the study.

The study population comprised senior high school teachers and SHS graduates from the selected schools. Using a stratified sampling approach, teachers and graduates were treated as separate strata to ensure adequate representation of both groups. From the sampled schools, a total of 254 teachers and 92 graduates were selected using simple random sampling. This approach minimized selection bias and ensured that each eligible participant had an equal chance of being included in the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Data were collected solely through structured questionnaires, designed to capture information on teaching practices, pedagogical approaches, curriculum implementation, and perceived employability skills. The use of questionnaires ensured uniformity in data collection and facilitated quantitative analysis.

The collected data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Both descriptive statistics (including means and standard deviations) and inferential statistics were employed to examine relationships between teaching practices and employability outcomes. Additionally, the Relative Importance Index (RII) was used to rank pedagogical factors based on their perceived influence on graduate employability.

This integrated methodological and sampling approach ensured adequate regional representation, methodological rigor, and reliable empirical evidence to support the study's objectives

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Quality of the Free Senior High School Pedagogy Content of Curriculum on Graduate Employability (Teachers perspective).

This targeted at evaluating the quality of the free SHS pedagogy content of the curriculum on graduate employability. The inquirer employed descriptive statistical procedures including mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis to provide critical and rigorous assessment of the quality of the free SHS pedagogy content of the curriculum and how that induces graduate employability based on teachers perspective.

Table 4.1: Quality of the Free Senior High School Pedagogy Content of Curriculum (Teachers perspective)

| Parameter | N | Min | Max | Mean | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|------------------------|------------|----------|----------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| PG1 | 257 | 1 | 5 | 3.11 | 1.073 | -0.05 | -0.88 |
| PG2 | 257 | 1 | 5 | 3.14 | 1.331 | -0.1 | -0.92 |
| PG3 | 257 | 1 | 5 | 3.08 | 1.224 | -0.12 | -0.95 |
| PG4 | 257 | 1 | 5 | 3.11 | 1.233 | -0.08 | -0.9 |
| PG5 | 257 | 1 | 5 | 3.23 | 1.128 | -0.15 | -0.85 |
| PG6 | 257 | 1 | 5 | 2.93 | 1.112 | 0.05 | -1.01 |
| PG7 | 257 | 1 | 5 | 3.12 | 1.237 | -0.1 | -0.92 |
| PG8 | 257 | 1 | 5 | 3.07 | 1.202 | -0.08 | -0.89 |
| PG9 | 257 | 1 | 5 | 3.4 | 1.053 | -0.3 | -0.58 |
| PG10 | 257 | 1 | 5 | 3.29 | 0.885 | -0.25 | -0.72 |
| PG11 | 257 | 1 | 5 | 3.8 | 0.836 | -0.75 | 1.05 |
| PG12 | 257 | 1 | 5 | 2.71 | 1.174 | 0.15 | 1.05 |
| PG13 | 257 | 1 | 5 | 3.69 | 0.986 | -0.6 | 0.87 |
| PG14 | 257 | 1 | 5 | 3.76 | 1.013 | -0.65 | 0.92 |
| PG15 | 257 | 1 | 5 | 3.44 | 0.951 | -0.32 | 0.62 |
| Composite Score | 257 | 1 | 5 | 3.26 | 1.097 | -0.35 | -0.78 |

Source: Survey, 2025.

‡ Overall Perception of the curriculum on Graduate Employability

The composite mean score of 3.26 portrayed teachers' perception of the curriculum content as moderately impactful on graduate employability. By implication, while the curriculum garnered substantial endorsement, other facets exhibit notable short falls and inefficiencies, notably in critical thinking and problem-solving skills, depicting a suboptimal impact of the curriculum on graduate employability.

Interpretation of Key Statistical Metrics

Mean Scores: Evaluating Strengths and Weaknesses

High Mean Scores = (Strong Positive Perception).

The parameter PG11 “*The pedagogical content of the curriculum contains personalized learning needs of students*” with the highest score (Mean = 3.80, SD = 0.836) suggest that the free SHS curriculum designed addresses individual needs which aligns with the instructional strategies and diverse learning needs of students, depicting a positive impact of the curriculum, reflecting a positive learning experience.

Moreover, the parameter with PG14 “*The pedagogical content of the curriculum provides culturally responsive learning strategies*” with mean score (Mean = 3.76, SD = 1.013) allude to the fact that the curriculum offers adaptive and culturally relevant instructional strategies that resonate with the diverse cultural background of students. Also, the parameter PG13 “*The pedagogical content of the curriculum provides culturally responsive teaching strategies*” with mean score (Mean = 3.69, SD = 0.986) demonstrated that the curriculum fosters cultural inclusivity by providing contextually relevant and culturally responsive instructional strategies tailored to the needs of students.

Low Mean Scores (Areas of Concern).

The research findings based on the parameter with low mean scores PG12 “*Teachers are offered the professional training needed to effectively deliver the curriculum*” (Mean = 2.71, SD = 1.174) portrayed a substantial gap in the curriculum relative to the professional training needs of teachers. The findings thus suggest a deficit capacity-building and professional upskilling among teachers, adversely impacting their ability to adapt to rapidly changing methodologies and strategies to effectively deliver the curriculum, highlighting teacher professional training and development needs as a significant area of concern.

By the same token, the parameter PG6 “*The current curriculum of the free SHS is designed to enhance students’ critical-thinking skills*” with mean score (Mean = 2.93, SD = 1.112) underscores teachers skepticism in students critical thinking abilities. The high SD score further suggest that the findings lean towards the overall perception of teachers that the curriculum does not adequately address students’ critical-thinking proficiency, posing adverse effect on graduate employability.

Quality of the Free Senior High School Pedagogy Content of Curriculum on Graduate Employability (Graduates Perspective)

The study employed the Relative Importance Index (RII) to provide in-depth assessment of the effectiveness of the curriculum relative to how it stimulates the preparedness of graduates for the fiercely competitive job market. With the Relative Importance Index, the graduates were tasked to rank the various items in the curriculum as incorporated in the survey instrument in order of importance and the relative impact on learning outcomes and fostering employability

Table 4.2: Quality of the Free Senior High School Pedagogy Content of Curriculum on Graduate Employability (Graduates Perspective)

| Descriptive Parameter | RII | Rank |
|-----------------------|-------|------------------|
| FP1 | 0.761 | 2 nd |
| FP2 | 0.666 | 10 th |
| FP3 | 0.684 | 7 th |
| FP4 | 0.675 | 9 th |
| FP5 | 0.677 | 8 th |
| FP6 | 0.61 | 12 th |
| FP7 | 0.643 | 11 th |
| FP8 | 0.732 | 4 th |
| FP9 | 0.759 | 3 rd |
| FP10 | 0.715 | 5 th |
| FP11 | 0.767 | 1 st |
| FP12 | 0.697 | 6 th |

Source: Survey, 2025.

‡ Overall Perception of the Curriculum's Impact on Graduate Employability

The research findings revealed the parameter FP11 "*I believe the curriculum has impacted my overall employability skills*" with RII = (0.767) as the highest ranked parameter, suggesting that graduates have a positive perception about the overall impact of the curriculum on employability. The findings thus underscore that the curriculum has substantially impacted the overall employability skills of graduates through improved learning outcomes, enhanced competitiveness and preparedness to transition into the rapidly changing and competitively tensed labour market. Moreover, the findings further revealed FP1 "*The free SHS curriculum is comprehensively aligned with my professional career ambitions*" with RII score = (0.761) and FP9 "*The free SHS curriculum contributed to improving my vocational skills*" with RII score = (0.759) as the second and third highest ranking parameters. This indicates that the curriculum perfectly aligns with graduates' career ambitions while fostering robust vocational skills development, fostering positive learning outcomes and employability prospects.

On the flip side, the parameter FP6 "*The curriculum improved my ability to work in team*" with RII score = (0.610) was ranked the lowest, indicating potential gaps and shortfalls in the curriculum relative to fostering teamwork skills, highlighting teamwork skills as an area of concern. Moreover, the parameter FP2 "*The current free SHS curriculum offered opportunities for hands-on exposure to practical learning skills*" with RII score = (0.666) and FP7 "*The curriculum is contributed to enhancing my technical skills*" with RII score = (0.643) were both spotlighted as areas of moderate concern relative to the curriculum's effectiveness in areas such as handson exposure or practical learning and technical competence and skills development.

‡ Interpretation of Key Findings

High Relative Importance Index (RII) scores and rankings portray a strong positive perception about the curriculum's effectiveness. By this token, the parameter FP11 "*I believe the curriculum has impacted my overall employability skills*" with RII score (0.767) suggests that the curriculum fosters improved learning outcomes and bolsters the overall employability skills of graduates, constituting a core benchmark and key metric of the policy's success. By extension, the findings denotes that the curriculum design and framework provide essential and industry relevant skills that fosters graduate employability. Moreover, the findings further revealed that the pedagogy content of the curriculum perfectly aligns with graduates career goals and ambitions based on their learning experiences indicated by FP1 "*The free SHS curriculum is comprehensively aligned with my professional career ambitions*", with RII = (0.761). At the core, the parameter FP9 "*The free SHS curriculum contributed to improving my vocational skills*", with RII score = (0.759) highlights the effectiveness of the curriculum relative to its profound role of fostering vocational training and exposure to practical learning skills, reflecting the overall policy objective of addressing the disparity between education and industry requirements.

Moderate RII Scores portrayed by FP8 "*The free SHS curriculum has contributed to improving my problemsolving abilities*", with RII score = (0.732) and FP10 "*The curriculum has contributed to enhancing my digital literacy skills*", with RII score = (0.715) revealed a moderate and balanced perception of the curriculum relative to its effectiveness in terms of fostering technical and digital literacy skills development.

Equally important, the parameters FP5 "*The current curriculum encouraged collaborative learning activities*", with RII score = (0.677), and FP4 "*The free SHS curriculum contributed to improving my critical-thinking skills*", with RII score = (0.675), indicate that the curriculum moderately fosters entrepreneurship skills development albeit, its lack of robust emphasis for business development. Ultimately, FP12 "*The free SHS curriculum has adequately prepared me for the competitive job market*", with RII score = (0.697), also portrays a moderate and balanced perception about the curriculum's effectiveness in preparing students for the competitive job market.

Conversely, the low RII Scores denoted by FP6 "*The curriculum improved my ability to work in team*", with RII score = (0.610); FP2 "*The current free SHS curriculum offered opportunities for hands-on exposure to practical learning skills*", with RII score = (0.666) and FP7 "*The curriculum is contributed to enhancing my technical skills*", with RII score = (0.643) collectively revealed a limited focus in collaborative and teamwork skills, lack of real-world hands-on experience and practical learning exposure, and limited technical competences, pointing to

significant in gaps in these areas, impacting learning outcomes and graduates employability prospects, underscoring the urgency for policy review and improvements in these areas.

In effect, while the pedagogical content of the curriculum aligns with career goals and fosters vocational skills training and the overall employability of graduates, there are key limitations, including a limited focus on collaborative and teamwork skills and a deficit in technical and vocational skills development.

Table 4.3 Regression Coefficient

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficient | | t | Sig |
|----------|-----------------------------|------------|--------------------------|--|--------|-------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | |
| Constant | -0.035 | 0.126 | - | | -0.276 | 0.783 |
| FSHSP | 0.263 | 0.045 | 0.243 | | 5.855 | 0.000 |
| QFSHSP | 0.737 | 0.044 | 0.689 | | 16.609 | 0.000 |

Notes: a Dependent Variable: GEs: b Predictors: (Constant), QFSHSP, FSHSP

Source: Survey, 2025.

The free SHS Policy (FSHSP): the standardized coefficient $B = 0.263$ ($P = 0.000$) suggests a slight improvement in policy effectiveness increases graduate employability prospects by 0.263, with a moderate effect given the standardized beta (0.243).

The quality of Free SHS pedagogy content ($B = 0.737$, $p = 0.000$, beta 0.689) significantly boosts employability, indicating that enhancing curriculum quality positively impacts graduate prospects. Regression results show that both policy objectives and pedagogy content influence employability. The policy has a positive effect ($\beta = 0.263$, $p < 0.05$), meaning each unit increase in learning outcomes raises employability prospects by 0.263 units, supporting the hypothesis.

Similarly, improved pedagogy content ($\beta = 0.737$, $p < 0.05$) increases prospects by 0.737 units per unit increase in quality.

The pedagogy content has a greater impact, the constant term -0.035 indicates the predicted employability when both factors are zero. Overall, enhancing policy objectives and pedagogy content greatly improves graduate employability, highlighting the need to improve curriculum quality to better prepare students for a competitive job market.

DISCUSSIONS

The composite mean score of **3.26** indicates that teachers see the curriculum as moderately impactful on graduate employability. PG11 (Mean=3.80) suggests the free SHS curriculum prioritizes personalized learning aligned with diverse needs, positively affecting employability. PG14 (Mean=3.76) notes that the curriculum offers adaptive strategies that prepare students for a competitive job market. PG13 (Mean=3.69) highlights cultural inclusivity through relevant instructional strategies. Conversely, PG12 (Mean=2.71) reveals a significant gap in professional training, hindering teachers' capacity to deliver the curriculum effectively. PG6 (Mean=2.93) underscores teachers' skepticism about the curriculum's ability to foster cognitive and critical thinking skills, affecting employability. While the curriculum supports learning outcomes and employability, gaps remain in critical thinking and problem-solving skills, consistent with studies by Aboagye and Yawson (2020), Jackson (2016), and Tynjala (2013). Kusi, Mensah, and Gyansah (2021) found that despite the policy's accessibility, challenges such as inadequate resources and a lack of professional training hinder its effective delivery. Similarly, Owusu &



Ankomah (2021) reported classroom overcrowding, stressing the need for policy to improve delivery and outcomes.

The regression results showed that the free SHS policy significantly boosts graduate employability ($\beta=0.263$, $p < 0.05$), with improved pedagogy content also positively affecting employability ($\beta=0.737$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that curriculum content significantly impacts employability. The Ghana Ministry of Education states that the free SHS policy promotes ethical values, civic responsibility, and lifelong learning (Ministry of Education Ghana, 2018). Inclusiveness in curriculum implementation addresses gender disparities and special needs, fostering equity and employability (Akyeampong, 2019). Additionally, the curriculum aligns with industry demands by integrating practical skills, vocational training, and digital literacy to equip students for the modern labour market (Adarkwah, 2021). Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of the free SHS policy and the relevant curriculum in expanding access and developing employability skills.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

This study targeted at evaluating the quality of the free SHS pedagogy content of the curriculum on graduate employability.

The findings portrayed teachers' perception of the curriculum content as moderately impactful on graduate employability. By implication, while the curriculum garnered substantial endorsement, other facets exhibit notable short falls and inefficiencies, notably in critical thinking and problem-solving skills, depicting a suboptimal impact of the curriculum on graduate employability.

The findings further revealed that the pedagogy content of the curriculum emphasizes culturally responsive and adaptive instructional methodologies that fosters inclusivity and context-relevant learning approaches. Also, the findings further portrayed that the curriculum reinforces structured learning techniques that are considered effective relative to strengthening the preparedness of graduates for the job market.

The results show that increases in free SHS policy and the quality of the free SHS pedagogy content led to significant improvements in learning outcomes and graduate employability. This underscores the importance of improving the quality of the pedagogy content of the curriculum that fosters increase in graduate employability.

In effect, while the pedagogy content of the curriculum aligns with career goals, foster vocational skills training and the overall employability of graduates, there are key limitations including limited focus in collaborative and teamwork skills, and deficit technical and vocational skills development (TVET).

Recommendation

The identified quality of SHS (Senior High School) pedagogy content in relation to graduate employability necessitates a comprehensive and urgent overhaul of the curriculum. This is not merely about tweaking existing modules; it demands a fundamental rethinking of how SHS education prepares students for the realities of the contemporary job market. The core recommendation for broad-based stakeholder consultation is critical because the issue of employability is multifaceted and cannot be addressed effectively by a single entity.

Firstly, involving government agencies such as the Ministry of Education, Ghana, and the Ghana Education Service is essential. As policymakers and regulators, they establish the overall educational framework. Their involvement ensures that any curriculum updates align with national development goals and can be effectively carried out throughout the education system. They are responsible for resource distribution, policy directives, and maintaining equity in access to quality education.

Secondly, including parents is essential. They are the main beneficiaries of education and have a strong interest in their children's future. Their insights into the skills and attitudes they see as necessary for success, along with their



views on the current curriculum's weaknesses, can offer valuable feedback. Additionally, their support is key to effectively adopting new teaching methods and creating a home environment that supports learning.

Thirdly, students themselves, especially those nearing graduation, provide a unique and often overlooked perspective. They are the direct recipients of the curriculum and can express what they feel is missing or what could be improved to better prepare them for the workforce. Their experiences with internships, part-time jobs, or even their ambitions can inform the relevance and practicality of the curriculum content.

Fourthly, teachers, as the implementers of the curriculum, are indispensable. They possess frontline experience with the strengths and weaknesses of current pedagogical strategies. Their practical insights into what works in the classroom, the challenges they face, and their ideas for innovative teaching methods are invaluable. Empowering teachers to contribute to curriculum design fosters a sense of ownership and ensures that changes are practical and sustainable.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the active participation of industry actors is essential. The rapidly changing dynamics of the labour market are best understood by those working within it. Businesses, employers, and professional organizations can offer direct feedback on the specific skills gaps they see in entry-level graduates. This includes not only technical skills but also vital soft skills like critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and adaptability. Building strong public-private partnerships enables the co-creation of a curriculum that directly responds to market needs. This could involve industry professionals guest lecturing, providing internship opportunities, offering mentorship, or even helping develop industry-specific training modules.

The focus on experiential learning, practical and hands-on exposure, and problem-solving skills by policymakers is a positive move. This indicates a shift from rote memorization toward a more applied, competency-based approach. Experiential learning, such as apprenticeships, simulations, and project-based activities, enables students to use theoretical knowledge in real-world situations, helping to close the gap between classroom education and workplace expectations. Problem-solving skills are widely recognized as vital in any professional environment, and developing them through the curriculum will prepare graduates to handle challenges effectively.

Furthermore, the recommendation to leverage the wave and proliferation of the digital revolution, including artificial intelligence, is critically important. In today's economy, digital literacy is no longer optional but a fundamental employability skill. Students need to be proficient in using various software, understand data analysis, and be exposed to emerging technologies like AI. This involves integrating digital tools and platforms into the teaching and learning process, not just as subjects to be studied but as tools for enhancing practical learning experiences. Teachers, too, must be adequately trained and resourced to effectively incorporate these digital advancements into their teaching methods. By embracing the digital revolution, the SHS curriculum can develop graduates who are not only digitally proficient but also adaptable and prepared to meet the evolving demands of the 21st-century labour market.

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APPENDIX III: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS ONLY

Quality of the Free Senior High School Pedagogy Content of Curriculum on Graduate Employability.

Please tick (✓) the most appropriate box to indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement by choosing the most appropriate option: 5=Strongly Disagree (SD), 4=Disagree (D), 3= Neutral (N), 2= Agree (A), 1=Strongly Agree (SA).

| | STATEMENT | SA | A | N | D | SD |
|-----|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| PG1 | The free SHS Curriculum is designed to equip students with skills relevant for the competitive job market | | | | | |
| PG2 | The current curriculum emphasizes practical skills development for graduates employability | | | | | |
| PG3 | The pedagogical content of the curriculum is well aligned with industry requirements | | | | | |
| PG4 | The current curriculum offers adequate entrepreneurial skills for students | | | | | |
| PG5 | The pedagogical methodologies of the curriculum are tailored to enhance collaborative learning | | | | | |
| PG6 | The current curriculum of the free SHS is designed to enhance students’ critical-thinking skills | | | | | |



| | | | | | | |
|------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| PG7 | There are adequate teaching materials to enable teachers to effectively deliver the curriculum | | | | | |
| PG8 | There are adequate learning materials to enable teachers to effectively deliver the curriculum | | | | | |
| PG9 | The pedagogical content of the curriculum is adaptable to addresses the evolving industry requirements. | | | | | |
| PG10 | The curriculum is more inclusive, catering to the needs of all students | | | | | |
| PG11 | The pedagogical content of the curriculum contains personalized learning needs of students | | | | | |
| PG12 | Teachers are offered the professional training needed to effectively deliver the curriculum | | | | | |
| PG13 | The pedagogical content of the curriculum provides culturally responsive teaching strategies | | | | | |
| PG14 | The pedagogical content of the curriculum provides culturally responsive learning strategies | | | | | |
| PG15 | Graduates of the free SHS programme are able to secure employment based on the skills acquired through the curriculum. | | | | | |

APPENDIX IV: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GRADUATES OF THE FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Quality of the Free Senior High School Pedagogy Content of Curriculum on Graduate Employability.

Please tick (✓) the most appropriate box to indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement by choosing the most appropriate option: 5=Strongly Disagree (SD), 4=Disagree (D), 3= Neutral (N), 2= Agree (A), 1=Strongly Agree (SA).

| | STATEMENT | SA | A | N | D | SD |
|-----|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| FP1 | The free SHS curriculum is comprehensively aligned with my professional career ambitions | | | | | |
| FP2 | The current free SHS curriculum offered opportunities for hands-on exposure to practical learning skills | | | | | |
| FP3 | The free SHS curriculum has contributed to improving my communication skills | | | | | |
| FP4 | The free SHS curriculum contributed to improving my critical-thinking skills | | | | | |
| FP5 | The current curriculum encouraged collaborative learning activities | | | | | |
| FP6 | The curriculum improved my ability to work in team | | | | | |
| FP7 | The curriculum is contributed to enhancing my technical skills | | | | | |



| | | | | | | |
|------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| FP8 | The free SHS curriculum has contributed to improving my problem-solving abilities | | | | | |
| FP9 | The free SHS curriculum contributed to improving my vocational skills | | | | | |
| FP10 | The curriculum has contributed to enhancing my digital literacy skills | | | | | |
| FP11 | I believe the curriculum has impacted my overall employability skills | | | | | |
| FP12 | The free SHS curriculum has adequately prepared me for the competitive job market. | | | | | |