

A Meta-Analysis Study: A Comparison Of English Language Policy And Planning In Ghana And The Philippines

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Abstract

This study examines and compares English Language Policy and Planning (LPP) in Ghana and the Philippines, two postcolonial countries with multilingual contexts and strong reliance on English for education and national development. Using a qualitative meta-analysis approach, data were collected from official documents, curriculum frameworks, and policy reports issued by the Ministries of Education and other authoritative sources in both countries. The analysis focuses on three main aspects: the historical background of English language policy, current language policies, and the structure of English curricula. The findings reveal that both countries have been significantly shaped by colonial legacies, resulting in the dominance of English in education while simultaneously attempting to integrate local languages to promote inclusivity and cultural identity. Ghana demonstrates a fluctuating policy trajectory between indigenous language instruction and English-only approaches, whereas the Philippines adopts bilingual and mother tongue-based multilingual education policies. Despite different strategies, both countries face similar challenges in balancing globalization demands with linguistic diversity and educational equity. The study underscores the need for inclusive and context-sensitive language policies that support both global communication and local language preservation.

Keyword: English Language Policy, Language Planning, Curriculum, Ghana, Philippines, Multilingual Education

1. Introduction

English plays a pivotal role in education and society as a global lingua franca, facilitating communication, access to knowledge, and opportunities in a rapidly globalizing world. In many post-colonial countries like Ghana and the Philippines, English serves as a bridge to economic growth and international integration, while also being central to educational policies and planning (Boakye-Yiadom et al., 2022).

Comparing Ghana and the Philippines is particularly significant due to their shared colonial histories and reliance on English for national development, yet they diverge in their approaches to integrating local languages and addressing linguistic diversity. This comparison aims to analyze the similarities and differences in how both nations implement English policies, balancing the demands of globalization with cultural preservation and inclusivity. Furthermore, various language ideologies can coexist and be present simultaneously within a language policy or society. Multilingual and multicultural countries like Ghana and the Philippines must continually adapt their Language Policy and Planning (LPP) to emphasize inclusive language policies, promote the maintenance of local languages, and construct a national identity that values linguistic diversity while addressing the demands of globalization. These efforts are essential in ensuring social inclusivity and cohesion, particularly in the context of neocolonialism and increasing global interdependence (Zeng & Li, 2023).

The effectiveness of language education in Ghana and the Philippines is dependent on their ability to align educational goals with religious values. Because globalization continues to impact educational practices around the world, countries must manage the complexity of language use in classrooms to ensure that their work does not only improve academic performance but also improves and reflects their native language. The ongoing debate over these issues highlights the importance of dialogue among educators in creating inclusive learning environments that reduce the use of foreign languages (Anyidoho, 2018). With this dynamic in mind, the discussion will have a greater impact on the multilingual population who are navigating the pascal colonial language.

By paying attention to the introduction before, the following research questions are explored in this paper:

1. How is the historical background of English policy in Ghana and Philippines?
2. How is the current English policy in both country Ghana and Philippines?
3. How is the English curriculum in Ghana and Philippines?

2. Methodology

In this qualitative study, documents were analyzed for this goal. This uses meta-analysis study where the data are gathered from the websites of 2 countries, Ghana and Philippines Ministries of Education and curriculums. Due to the proximity of Ghana and Philippines and their regional location, the need for English language teaching in two countries is significantly increasing. According to the changes in the educational system of all two countries, the increase in school hours, and the establishment of private schools, there is still a weakness in teaching this language, and students still have weaknesses in communication and other skills. These reasons have led the researcher to choose these two countries to study and research their foreign language teaching system. The information and charts that were obtained from the websites of the countries' ministries and other government websites were the primary sources in this study.

3. Findings

3.1 Historical Background

3.1.1 Ghana

Languages spoken in Ghana may be broadly dichotomized as Northern and Southern languages. The number of indigenous languages of Ghana is reported differently. However, individual researchers and research teams have pegged the number between 50 and 80. For example, the 2021 Population and Housing census reports 53 indigenous languages. The languages are distributed over a population of about 30.8 million (2021 Population and Housing Census of Ghana) in 16 administrative regions (Boakye-Yiadom et al., 2022)

Table 1: Ghana's language policy on education

PERIOD	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4 ONWARDS
1529-1925				
Castle-schools era	-	-	-	-
Missionary era	+	+	+	-
1925-1951 (British Colonial Rule)	+	+	+	-
1951-1955 (British Colonial Rule)	+	-	-	-
1956-1966 (Independence 1957)	-	-	-	-
1967-1969	+	-	-	-
1970-1973	+	+	+	+
1974-2002	+	+	+	-
2002-2007	-	-	-	-
2007-present	+	+	+	-

Key: (+) medium of instruction includes Ghanaian language; (-) medium of instruction excludes Ghanaian language (Culled from Owu-Ewie, 2006).

Table 1 shows that the emphasis on the indigenous Ghanaian language in education has changed over the years. Contrary to what was expected, the full emphasis on the Ghanaian language occurred a few years after Ghana gained independence from British rule in 1957. After this period, between 1970 and 1973, Ghana fully transitioned away from English as the language of instruction. The policy realignment that sparked the most complex debate occurred between 2002 and 2007, which encouraged the use of English as the language of instruction at all levels. From 2007 to date, a more bilingual approach has been implemented with 4,444 combined Ghanaian and English as the language of instruction in primary schools. In all these situations, it is still debatable which language should be used as the language of instruction in the early grades of primary school (kindergarten to grade three), English or Ghanaian? This policy is aimed at the nine government-supported languages: Akan (Akuapem, Asante, Fante dialects), Ewe, Ga,

Dagbani, Dagaare, Dangme, Gonja, Kasem and Nzema. Another source of confusion is the many vague statements in the policy. This policy was in effect from 1956 to 1966 benefiting students studying in “metropolitan and urban areas”, “Late exit” was recommended for children with higher English proficiency. In this case, the scheme was assumed to benefit students with a certain socio-economic status.

3.1.2 Philippines

The historical development of English policy in the Philippines showcases a dynamic interplay of colonial legacies, national identity formation, and global aspirations. During the Spanish colonial period (1565–1898), Spanish was introduced primarily for religious and administrative purposes, with the friars serving as the main implementers. Despite efforts to propagate Spanish, such as the 1863 Education Decree mandating Spanish in schools, the language remained largely inaccessible to the majority, as indigenous languages continued to dominate local communication. By the end of Spanish rule, less than 3% of the population could speak Spanish, reflecting the limited success of linguistic assimilation (Zeng & Li, 2023).

The transition to American rule (1898–1946) marked a significant shift in language policy. The Americans implemented a centralized education system with English as the sole medium of instruction, viewing it as a tool for modernization and unity in a multilingual society. Initiatives such as the importation of American teachers and educational materials, alongside mandatory public education, facilitated the rapid spread of English. By the end of American colonization, English had become a lingua franca widely used in government, education, and commerce, embodying the ideologies of assimilation and internationalization.

Following independence, the Philippines sought to redefine its language policies to reflect national identity while retaining English for its economic and global advantages. The 1974 Bilingual Education Policy institutionalized English for technical subjects and Filipino for national identity, while the 2009 Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy incorporated regional languages in early education to promote inclusivity. Despite these efforts, English remains dominant, symbolizing modernity and global connectivity, while challenges persist

in achieving equitable language access and preserving cultural heritage (Zeng & Li, 2023).

3.2 Current Language Policies

3.2.1 Ghana

At present, the policy states that English should be used as the medium of instruction from primary one, with a Ghanaian language studied as a compulsory subject to the Senior Secondary School (High School). The government on 15th August, 2002 approved this policy to be implemented in September 2002. Since the announcement of the change of policy, the debate over the language of education has picked up momentum from academics, politicians, educators, educational planners, traditional rulers, and the general populace. Ghana has been a strong advocate of the African personality since Nkrumah's era.

The promulgation of the use of English as the medium of instruction in education and the abandoning of her indigenous languages in education is therefore in opposition to this ideology. Unlike most Francophone countries which had French forced on them as medium of instruction through the Brazzaville Conference of 1944 and made the use of local languages in schools forbidden. Ghana had the British lay a solid foundation for the use of the indigenous languages as media of instruction at the lower primary level. For example, Cote d'Ivoire prior to independence in 1960 entered into an agreement with France to maintain the cultural and linguistic policies of their colonizers (Djite, 2000). Ghana unlike most Francophone countries has come a long way in the use of indigenous languages as media of instruction. The country's recent turn towards the "Francophone phenomenon" is saddening and baffling. The multimillion-dollar question is what necessitated the change of policy (Owu-Ewie, 2003).

The use of the child's primary language in education at least the early stages has been theoretically and empirically confirmed to be beneficial. There is a plethora of evidence for the use of L1 in education but Ghana for a number of reasons has decided to espouse an English only language policy in its education. Terminating the policy of using a Ghanaian language as the medium of instruction is an unscientific way of ameliorating the problems of the old policy (Owu-Ewie, 2003).

3.2.2 Philippines

After gaining independence, two influential policies were implemented in the Philippines. These are Bilingual Education Policy (BEP) (1974) and the Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy (2009). During this period, Filipino was designated as the national language, and the educational system was expanded to include more local languages, with specific roles assigned to each. The language policies reflected a range of ideologies, which were evident in the LPP during this time. After World War II and attaining independence, Filipinos faced the complex issue of allocating and reallocating linguistic functions. With English serving as the academic language and Tagalog assuming the role of national identity, the country encountered significant challenges in rebuilding an educational system that had been all but destroyed. Years of neglect and marginalization of other vernaculars had resulted in ethnolinguistic rivalries and conflicts of linguistic interests. To construct a national identity, authorities renamed Tagalog as Filipino and prescribed it as the education system's MOI, hoping to achieve assimilation and ethnic acceptance (Zeng & Li, 2023).

Meanwhile, with the emphasis on Tagalog, English as a non-native language was maintained and designated as the MOI in some subjects. The emphasis on English and related policies mandated reflects the ideology of internationalism. Adopting dual languages in the educational system by allocating them as MOI in different subjects reflects the ideology of linguistic pluralism. Influenced by neocolonialism and globalization, the Philippines' language planning prioritizes English and Filipino as the dominant languages, which has led to the marginalization of some islands' indigenous languages. This preference reflects a linguistic ideology that prioritizes some languages over others, leading to the linguistic and cultural marginalization of minority groups. Countries facing similar language situations should consider the implications of prioritizing some languages over others in their language planning work. Multi-ethnic and multilingual countries should strive to formulate inclusive language policies, recognize and value their linguistic diversity, and promote equitable use of different languages. In order to meet the needs of international communication, countries should not only attach

importance to the global lingua franca when formulating language education policies but also consider and respect the diversity of languages and cultures instead of pursuing monolingualism and monoculture (Zeng & Li, 2023).

3.3 English Curriculum

3.3.1 Ghana

The English curriculum in Ghana serves as a foundational element of the country’s educational system, reflecting its critical role as the official language and medium of instruction across all levels of education. English is taught as a second language to equip learners with effective communication skills, facilitate academic success, and prepare them for participation in a globalized world. The curriculum is structured to cater to the diverse needs of students at various stages of their education, from Basic School through Senior High School, aligning with national and international standards (For et al., 2021).

In 2020, Ghana introduced the Common Core Programme (CCP) for Junior High School learners (Basic 7–9), emphasizing a competency-based approach. This program integrates traditional literacy skills—Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic (3Rs)—with creativity and critical thinking to foster holistic development. The curriculum focuses on enhancing students’ listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities, while instilling values such as cultural awareness, inclusivity, and digital literacy. Through innovative teaching methods, project-based learning, and formative assessments, the English curriculum aims to create lifelong learners who can effectively engage in both local and global contexts, contributing meaningfully to Ghana’s socio-economic growth (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NaCCA], 2020, p. xvii).

Table 2. Education Levels in Ghana

Level	Grades	Description	Key Features
Kindergarten (KG)	KG1–KG2	Early childhood education for children aged 4–6 years.	Lays the foundation for basic literacy, numeracy, and social skills.
Primary School	Basic 1–6	Elementary education for learners aged	Focuses on foundational skills in literacy,

		approximately 6–12 years.	numeracy, science, and social studies.
Junior High School (JHS)	Basic 7–9	Lower secondary education, covered by the Common Core Program (CCP).	Prepares learners for further education (SHS) or vocational training. Emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, and the 4Rs (Reading, writing, arithmetic, creativity).
Senior High School (SHS)	Basic 10–12	Upper secondary education, equivalent to Grades 10–12.	Offers academic, technical, and vocational tracks. Equips learners for tertiary education, the workforce, or entrepreneurship.
Tertiary Education	University, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education	Higher education level for professional, technical, and academic training.	Includes bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, as well as diploma and certificate programs in various fields.

Ghana's education system is structured into five main levels, each designed to address specific developmental and academic needs of learners. The foundation is Kindergarten (KG), covering KG1 and KG2 for children aged 4–6 years. This stage focuses on fostering basic literacy, numeracy, and social skills in a playful and engaging environment. It prepares children for formal education by nurturing their curiosity and cognitive development.

The next level is Primary School, spanning Basic 1 to Basic 6. This level provides elementary education for children aged approximately 6–12 years. The curriculum emphasizes foundational skills in literacy, numeracy, science, and social studies, along with the development of

values such as respect, responsibility, and teamwork. Primary education lays a solid foundation for learners to transition smoothly into more advanced levels of education.

Following primary school is Junior High School (JHS), which includes Basic 7 to Basic 9. This level is covered by the Common Core Program (CCP), introduced in 2020 to provide a holistic education for learners aged approximately 12–15 years. The CCP aims to develop critical thinking, creativity, communication, and digital literacy skills, often referred to as the "4Rs" (Reading, writing, arithmetic, and creativity). The JHS level prepares students for Senior High School (SHS) or vocational training, offering a strong foundation in both academic and practical skills.

Senior High School (SHS), covering Basic 10 to Basic 12 (Grades 10–12), represents the upper secondary level. It is designed for learners aged approximately 15–18 years and offers various pathways, including academic, technical, and vocational tracks. SHS prepares students for tertiary education, the workforce, or entrepreneurship. The curriculum promotes specialization while ensuring students acquire employable skills and global competencies.

Finally, Tertiary Education encompasses universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. These institutions provide advanced academic, technical, and professional training in various fields. Students may pursue bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees or opt for diploma and certificate programs tailored to their career aspirations. This level equips graduates with the skills and knowledge needed to contribute meaningfully to Ghana's socio-economic development. The government has implemented policies to make secondary education tuition-free to increase enrolment rates and reduce dropout rates.

Ghana's education system is characterized by its commitment to inclusivity, equity, and quality at every level. The curriculum emphasizes holistic learning and lifelong skills, ensuring learners are prepared for both national and global challenges. By integrating technology and fostering creativity, Ghana aims to develop globally competitive graduates who can thrive in diverse fields.

3.3.2 Philippines

The Philippine is a country of linguistic diversity with more than 100 languages (Galang, 2000). Before English language conquered the Philippines, no one language was spoken by majority of the Filipinos and none was a good choice as the national language. Thus, English was chosen as a medium of instruction and a dominant language of government, media, and business. This influence of English was further strengthened by globalization as it compels the Philippine government and businesses to adopt English as a language of trade. As a result, the government adopted policies to ensure that Filipino students develop adequate proficiency in the English language. One of these was the 1974 Bilingual Education Policy (BEP) which aims to use English language as the medium of instruction in science and mathematics. The BEP was reaffirmed in 1987 as set forth in the 1987 Philippine Constitution (Barrot, 2019).

Then, the curriculum in the Philippines is well known as K-12 program. The K to 12 English Curriculum (also known as the Language Arts and Multiliteracies Curriculum or LAMC) was developed as a response to the poor performance of students in NAT across subjects. It is founded on the belief that language, thinking, and learning are interrelated and that language is the foundation of all human relations. Its overarching goal is to develop communicatively competent and multiliterate learners who are competitive in this global economy (Department of Education, 2016).

Compared to previous English curricula, the LAMC is decongested because students no longer cram the minimum learning competencies and standards in ten years; rather, they are covered in 12 years. In short, students cover fewer learning competencies per year in a 12-year basic education curriculum. Meanwhile, more advanced English subjects are offered as core subjects (i.e., Reading and Writing and Oral Communication) and applied track subjects (i.e., English for Academic and Professional Purposes) in the senior high school. This curriculum also introduced some pedagogical innovations.

First, it adopted the MTBMLE from grades 1 to 3. This means that different subject matters (except in English and Filipino subjects) are taught in the L1 for concept mastery until grade 3. From grade 4 to senior

high school, English remains to be the medium of instruction. The implementation of this policy is based on the assumption that using mother tongue during primary education facilitates learning. The Philippine education system has undergone significant reforms, particularly with the introduction of the K-12 program which mandates thirteen years of basic education:

Table 3. Education Levels in the Philippines

ECDC	DepEd	TESDA	CHED
Health, Nutrition, Early Education, and Social Services for children ages 0-4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten • Elementary School • Junior High School • Senior High School Alternative Learning System 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary Education Associate Degree/Short-Cycle Tertiary Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate Degree/Short-Cycle Tertiary Education • Bachelor level education • Advanced/Post Graduate level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Post-Baccalaureate - Master Doctorate

CHED - Commission on Higher Education, DepEd - Department of Education, ECCD - Early Childhood Care and Development, TESDA - Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.

- a. Basic Education: The K-12 system is divided into three levels:
 - 1) Primary Education: Covers grades K to 6. The curriculum includes foundational subjects such as mathematics, science, Filipino, English, and social studies.
 - 2) Junior High School: Comprises grades 7 to 10. Students continue with core subjects while beginning to explore electives.
 - 3) Senior High School: Encompasses grades 11 and 12, offering specialized tracks such as Academic, Arts and Design, Sports, and Technical-Vocational-Livelihood. Each track includes core courses along with specialized subjects tailored to students' interests.
- b. Higher Education

It is governed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), it encompasses universities and colleges that offer degree programs. The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) regulates vocational training programs. The Commission on Higher Education

(CHED) promotes relevant and quality higher education (tertiary level). CHED's mandate is ensuring access to quality higher education, guaranteeing and protecting academic freedom for continuing intellectual growth, the advancement of learning and research, the development of responsible and effective leadership, and the education of high-level professionals (Department of Education. 2022).

The Philippine education system aims to enhance employability by equipping students with necessary skills through a more extensive curriculum. However, challenges include varying quality between public and private institutions and issues related to funding and resources. In summary, both Ghana and the Philippines have structured their education systems to enhance access and quality through reforms aimed at addressing historical inadequacies while facing ongoing challenges related to resources, quality of instruction, and equitable access for all students.

4. DISCUSSION

The Philippine education system has been shaped by the periods of colonization the country has experienced. This has led to a history curriculum favouring the American perspective and thus disadvantages crucial elements of local history. The consequences of the lack of awareness this has caused in the general public are manifold: it has made them more susceptible to misinformation and historical revisionism. It has worked to the advantage of politicians who take advantage of it. Nevertheless, the Philippines can still reverse this trend by utilizing its high literacy rates and social media presence to promote reliable historical education. They can also push for better historical education policies through petitions and appeals to local government agencies and Senate committees related to education – such as the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the Committee on Basic Education and Culture, and the Committee on Education, Arts and Culture – amongst others.

The curriculum reflects a legacy of Spanish and American colonization, with language and content shaped to favor narratives aligned with the colonizers' interests. This has marginalized indigenous histories and cultures, leaving gaps in public understanding of critical

historical events, such as the Philippine-American War and local political struggles. The prioritization of topics like World War II over more formative local conflicts perpetuates biases and reinforces neocolonial perspectives. Furthermore, the diminished emphasis on history as an independent subject and the political manipulation of its content contribute to a lack of critical awareness among citizens, making them susceptible to misinformation and revisionist narratives. Addressing these issues requires grassroots efforts to advocate for comprehensive and unbiased historical education, leveraging high literacy rates and widespread social media access to foster a more informed society (Foundation, 2023).

The historical and English curricula in Ghana are interconnected in their approach to instilling cultural identity and cognitive development. Both aim to promote a sense of national identity and awareness, albeit through different means. The history curriculum, especially in primary schools, emphasizes heritage, focusing on themes such as Ghanaian heroes, cultural preservation, and patriotism. This thematic orientation mirrors the approach in English language teaching, which incorporates cultural narratives, local stories, and traditional folktales to enhance linguistic skills while embedding cultural consciousness.

While history primarily deals with the past and its interpretation, the English curriculum often utilizes historical and cultural contexts as mediums for comprehension and critical analysis. For example, stories about Ghanaian independence and notable figures might appear in English textbooks, serving dual purposes: improving language proficiency and reinforcing historical awareness. However, the history curriculum's reliance on thematic content over critical inquiry has parallels with the English curriculum's challenges in fostering analytical skills when tied closely to cultural preservation.

Together, these curricula reflect a broader educational objective: cultivating well-rounded citizens who appreciate their heritage and communicate effectively. Yet, they also reveal tensions in balancing cultural preservation with fostering critical and creative thinking, as highlighted in the analysis of Ghana's history curriculum (Oppong, 2022).

5. Conclusion

The Philippines has initiated English curriculum reforms to respond effectively to the demands of 21st century education and the current educational problems of the country such as low achievement test scores and congested curriculum. Overall, the current curriculum may need to improve its clarity, specificity, and internal coherence as well as the integration of some essential principles of 21st century learning and language teaching and learning.

Ghana has made strides in integrating local languages into early education, the Philippines continues to grapple with a history curriculum heavily skewed toward American perspectives. Addressing these gaps requires transformative approaches to education policy that balance the global advantages of English proficiency with the need to preserve and promote indigenous languages and histories.

The English curricula in both the Philippines and Ghana reflect the deep-seated influence of their colonial histories, shaping their educational systems and national identities. In the Philippines, the adoption of English as the primary medium of instruction under American colonization positioned the language as a tool for both modernization and cultural subjugation. While it opened access to global opportunities, it also sidelined indigenous languages and historical narratives, reinforcing a neocolonial mindset within the education system. Similarly, Ghana's English-only education policy, rooted in British colonial rule, aimed to unify its linguistically diverse population under a single language. However, it has often marginalized local languages, creating barriers to cultural preservation and inclusivity in education. Both countries share challenges, such as curricula that prioritize external influences over local histories, contributing to a populace less aware of their own cultural and political legacies.

Ultimately, the cases of the Philippines and Ghana illustrate the complex interplay between language, history, and identity in postcolonial nations, underscoring the need for educational reforms that embrace cultural diversity while fostering critical consciousness about historical and contemporary challenges. This balance is crucial for building informed, empowered, and globally engaged citizens in both contexts.

In conclusion, both Ghana and the Philippines have navigated their colonial legacies in distinct ways while striving to integrate English into their educational frameworks. Ghana's policy has shifted towards a bilingual approach, mandating English as the medium of instruction while also requiring the study of a Ghanaian language. This reflects an effort to balance global communication needs with the preservation of local languages. Conversely, the Philippines has adopted a dual-language policy, promoting Filipino for national identity while maintaining English for its global utility. The introduction of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy underscores the Philippines' commitment to inclusivity and cultural preservation.

Both countries face ongoing challenges in ensuring that their language policies effectively support educational equity and cultural identity. The effectiveness of these policies will depend on their ability to adapt to the demands of globalization while fostering local linguistic diversity. Continuous dialogue among educators, policymakers, and communities is essential for creating inclusive learning environments that respect and promote both local and global languages.

However, as Ghana and the Philippines move forward, they must prioritize language policies that empower local communities and reflect their unique cultural contexts. This approach will be crucial in achieving social cohesion and educational success in an increasingly interconnected world.

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