

‘Shooting’ where the Ducks are? A tale of Cultural Promiscuity and Ideological Dissonance associated with Ghana’s Curriculum Policy making

Kwame Odei-Tettey

Department of Educational Administration and Management, University of Education,
Winneba.

Francis Yennumi Lambon

Department of Educational Administration and Management, University of Education,
Winneba.

Rosemond Sam

Ministry of Education, Accra, Ghana

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ABSTRACT: *Education in Ghana predates the arrival of Europeans in the Gold Coast, as indigenous system of education which incorporated authentic and indigenous values to impact social organization existed. Traditional education was therefore an integrated phenomenon, which combined physical character training with intellectual and human capital development. Educational practice has since changed fundamentally, and it provides the raison d’etre for the major assumption of this paper - the idea that education policy, and especially curriculum policy, should be examined within a specific location before modest attempts at generalisation are made. This paper focuses mainly on Ghana’s education provision in the contexts of colonisation, and the more recent trends with the movements of global forces of education under globalism. This connotes that Ghana’s education policies have for a long time been devolved from supra-state institutions to either the Ministry of Education or Parliament, and as a result greater priority is given to global/international than national curriculum. Consequently, the central question for education delivery in regard to ‘what knowledge is of most worth?’ has largely been ignored in Ghana and not given urgent attention. Policy makers, other decision-makers, and educationists, have tended to look backwards to justify the curriculum design in terms of global tradition rather than focusing it on fundamental epistemological enquiry based on culture and national needs. Whenever policy makers attempt to address this question, the answer has almost always been due to social pressure of a global, political or economic kind. These kinds of social change have tended to be more significant than changes in ideas or educational theory and practice. The paper therefore concludes with an advocacy for a model of educational system that integrates cultural values as a spring board for effective social organization and national development.*

KEYWORDS: Indigenous values, cultural dissonance, plagiarised aspirations, moral character formation, native systems of education, educational pedagogues

INTRODUCTION

*'Stories of the hunt will be stories of glory until the day when animals have their own historians'.
- A Zimbabwean proverb.*

There is an interesting debate across Africa in the 21st century about why was Africa, the Cradle of Writing, held in deference by the comity of nations for its ingenious innovation and creative use of papyrus and quill but now find it undignified to write without tables and chairs? This debate is predominantly centered on the subject of the essential relevance of the nexus between education and culture. A key question that associate the debate is: how else can children write? The view that it is undignified and inhumane 'to sit on the floor and write' in Ghana's schools is an epitome of the artificial tension existing between culture and education. This is a well-meaning view and a justifiable one as that, but it is somewhat misplaced. It refuses to acknowledge the coherence of culture and cognition. This debate points to how most people in some other cultures like India and East Asia still choose to sit on the floor with crossed legs, even in prestigious political meetings or musical gatherings. This is the basic posture that many people from the West in the 21st century want to pay substantial sums to emulate as part of their yoga classes. This picturesque account of the connection between education and culture embody the subject of this paper.

Significantly, some African policy makers and educators feel that education has little to do with *culture* or *identity*. These two concepts, unfortunately, still carry for some policy makers and educators, connotations of the colonial era - when culture was used as the basic identifier of barbarism and the black race. Rather ironically in the post independence era, and even till today, Ghana seems endangered with *another kind of culture*. This one is the product of the notion described above and it chases the elusive 'Western dream' through schooling with the aim of avenging the wrongs done to Ghana (and by extension Africa and the black race) by the West. In this ironic culture: equal opportunity is sought, somewhat superficially through unquestioning emulation, to somehow catch up with the West, and sadly, on their terms rather than on African terms. Western dresses, furniture and architecture, and teaching in the English language (often without comprehension, and mostly through rote) are only some instances of this culture, vehemently demanded, as Ghanaian (African) children's basic rights in schools. Non-progressive as it sounds, this calls for an urgent contemporary national and indigenous' discourse on education, to reconstruct the social reality of the Ghanaian people that has long been scripted in foreign places, because per the prerequisites of the challenges that globalism present currently, there is a greater need to decolonise Ghanaian minds and policies from these plagiarised aspirations.

This education-culture discourse in Ghana today resonates with the historic debate between two major Indian thinkers – Gandhi and Tagore – whose respect for each other refined their differences and also enriched the discussions on issues such as, development, nationalism, education, language, science and its domination (Bhattacharya, 1997). Gandhi led the movement of 'non-cooperation', and supported the 'swadeshi' (the indigenous) with the

boycott of British goods, including British-run schools in India. Tagore on the other hand, ran his own indigenous school but felt, as he wrote in a letter to Gandhi in 1921, that the “struggle to alienate our heart and mind from those of the West is an attempt at spiritual suicide ... (as indeed) for a long time we have been out of touch with our own culture” (Bhattacharya, 1997). However, Gandhi maintained that: “It is unbearable for me that the vernaculars should be crushed and starved as they have been. I hope I am as great a believer in the free air as the great Poet. ... I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any” (Bhattacharya, 1997). This response from Gandhi defines the heart of this paper because in spite of these differences, both Gandhi and Tagore developed their own distinct models of indigenous education. Against this background, the paper adumbrates the intent of the global systems that have sought to segregate culture and education in Ghana. History is replete with narratives regarding the power of African culture and how this culture was connected to Africa’s education to produce a rare breed of society that was enviably admired by many, including countries in the western hemisphere. The paper acknowledges at this point that before the arrival of the Europeans in Gold Coast, native systems of education which incorporated authentic and indigenous values such as: honesty, dedication to family and society, truthfulness, kindness which tended to impact social organization including occupational arrangements and work ethics existed. The argument is that some of the values of Christianity and Islamic religion in Ghana today were already embedded in the native culture and imbued in citizens before the arrival of the Europeans. So, moral values such as honesty, endurance, courage, chastity, truthfulness and respect for old age constituted an important component of the whole indigenous educational system. The predisposition of these traditional values meant a very high moral character-formation of the citizens. Oti-Agyen (2007) has said that, these values mentioned previously existed in the pre-colonial era and were transmitted to children through storytelling of exemplary and patriotic nature of their ancestors or forebear. In these story telling for example, children were taught to be truthful, and that it was a taboo to tell lies. As a result people grew up to be truthful individuals in the society. For example, in Ghanaian communities, children are taught some of the moral values at home in a form story telling where good character in the folks-tales (Ananse stories) are always praised while bad ones are often discouraged and condemned. The main objective of this is to encourage the children to identify themselves with acts of heroism and good character in the stories.

In spite of these high moral foundations, modernization theorists like Parsons (1964) believe that the obstruction to Ghana’s development are internal and embedded in Ghana’s traditions and cultures. He has argued that, countries are underdeveloped because they have the wrong cultural and social systems, and wrong values and practices that stymies development. Parsons (1964) was especially critical of the traditional values of underdeveloped countries and argues that these countries are too attached to traditional customs, rituals, practices and institutions, which were antithesis to the progress of the respective countries. This paper however believes that Parsons’ analysis is inaccurate due to the evidence from East Asian countries like Japan and South Korea. The paper consequently argues that traditional values and customs like truth and honesty are necessary ingredients for progress and development as exemplified by the modes of social organisation in Japan and South Korea. Rather, the advent of Africa’s

encounter with Europeans introduced into the African education system, certain values which make the younger generation to believe that everything African is bad including African education and religion which are embodied by African values. This view is supported by Rodney (1981) who has argued that the role of colonial education and its colonial imperialism was for Africans to subscribe to its values, class stratification which has led to neocolonialism in Africa. He links colonial education to material gains. Indeed, this paper argues that the colonial education project is the root of most of the malpractices that are found in the social organisation in Ghana today.

As discussed previously, prior to the coming of the Europeans into the Gold Coast, children were imbued with authentic Ghanaian values such as truthfulness and honesty using the native African traditional religion as a conduit. Through this religion, children learnt values that held the society together as people feared to wrong the society. Indeed, Puplampu et al. (2006) believe that “it is not an exaggeration when one talks about a pre-colonial traditional Africa that was socially peaceful and harmonious, and developing at a pace that was responsive to demands and needs imposed by the human and physical environment that was in place”.

The discussion above begs some fundamental questions: What can be done to integrate the cultural values in Ghana’s educational delivery? And how can Ghanaian cultural values so integrated in the educational system be used to achieve Ghana’s development? In examining these fundamental questions, the paper argues that, the ‘indigenous tradition’ of schooling has to emerge as alternative educational ideas. These ideas are rooted in the anti-colonial struggles of Ghana that challenged imported knowledge, images, values and beliefs. Most of the proponents have advocated for Ghana’s education to emphasise self-reliance, equity and rural employment. They see this indigenous schooling tradition as one that:

- a. reasserts the importance of education’s relevance to the sociocultural circumstances of the nation and learners
- b. assures that ‘relevance’ implies local design of curriculum content, pedagogies and assessment, using learners’ rich sources of prior knowledge
- c. moves beyond the boundaries of the classroom/school through non-formal and lifelong learning activities (UNESCO, 2005).

As with the Gandhian model of Basic Education (see Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1938), the paper advocates for a Ghanaian indigenous school system that emphasize ‘education for life, and through life’, and must use productive craft such as used for weaving, carpentry, agriculture or pottery in the past, as the medium of interdisciplinary hands-on learning in the primary curriculum, with the mother tongue as the medium of instruction. At the upper primary stage the distinction between traditional ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’ streams should be made through flexible tracks, where science, home science or agricultural science are placed at par.

The historic Gandhi–Tagore engagement connects with this contemporary indigenous education debate. This debate makes it useful to examine the indigenisation-modernisation dilemma of the colonial era which has continued to reconfigure now in Ghana, around

differently nuanced curricular dimensions, ranging from the ‘developmental–ecological’ crisis, ‘rational–moral’ values, ‘academic–everyday’ knowledge, ‘intellectual–manual’ work, English or mother tongue as the medium, to the material–cultural politics of identity (see Rampal, n.d.). Ghana’s education realities of today epitomises these uncertainties. In developing its educational system, Ghana has continued to perpetuate the traditions of colonial education which has tended to alienate Ghanaians from their cultural values. This leads us to examine the question of how traditional Ghanaian values can be integrated in the country’s educational system the way East Asian countries like Japan and China have done with the values of Confucianism.

This may be achieved by not forcing cultural values on children. Rather, they must be guided to gradually imbibe them to become part of their frame. The thinking behind this practice is that these values are meant to have an enduring impact on a person’s life and to have it transcend even into their places of work in future. This portends a pathway for inculcating Ghanaian cultural and moral values into modern educational curriculum to help with the moral training and development of Ghanaians as practiced in East Asian where the school system has inculcated Confucian value in the pedagogues and has contributed to the forces that have propelled these countries’ progress (Agbemabiesi, 2003; Ansell, 2006).

Statement of the problem

The problem that underpins this study is that education in Ghana has not helped the country in its progress and development the way it should. Indeed, education seems to reinforce malpractices such as corruption and nepotism which impedes development, and this points to the question of the kinds of values that embed education delivery in Ghana. Compared to Ghanaian cultural values and education delivery, there has been significant research on Confucianism in East Asian countries, where the countries have integrated Confucian values in their education delivery to promote the development of these nations. So, the paper believes that integrating authentic and traditional Ghanaian values into education will lead to strong character formation among Ghanaians and consequently, development for the nation.

Purpose of the study

The study sought to explore the urgency for integrating Ghanaian cultural values into educational pedagogues to enhance an enduring character formation of Ghanaians for national development.

Objective of the Study

The objectives that guided the study were to:

1. investigate how indigenous Ghanaian cultural values can be inculcated in educational pedagogues to help the character formation of students and inculcate in them the sense of duty and work commitment for national development.
2. show the importance of integrating authentic Ghanaian cultural values in education delivery for national development.

Research Questions

1. How can indigenous Ghanaian cultural values be inculcated in educational pedagogues to help the character formation of students, and inculcate in them the sense of duty and work commitment for national development?
2. What is the importance of integrating authentic Ghanaian cultural values in education delivery for national development?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is drawn from concepts pertaining to the research questions thus:

Inculcating indigenous cultural values into educational pedagogues to promote character formation for national development

Hirst (1975) and Lawton (1983) have since long ago attempted to address themselves to the question of ‘What knowledge is of most worth?’ in education delivery as had been previously asked by the Institute of Education at the University of London. This question attempts to look at the criteria for curriculum design and to provide the basis and justification for giving education. Hirst (1975) for example looked at the question of knowledge and schooling and came to the conclusion that many theories of education were incomplete if they did not work out some principles to decide which subjects should be taught in schools. He critiqued some extreme progressive views of education and stressed ‘child-centred’ curricula and some ideas about education for autonomy. He believed that it was inadequate to talk about motivation, and at the same time ignore the fact that education is not just concerned with learning how to learn. It must however also include ideas about the nature of knowledge and what should be learned. Hirst (1975) therefore distinguished between seven ‘forms’ of knowledge, which had different key concepts and different kinds of validation procedures and also methods of enquiry. He advanced this view as one way of looking critically at existing school curricula. Hirst’s seven forms of knowledge were: mathematics and formal knowledge; the physical sciences; the human sciences, including history; moral understanding; religion; philosophy; and aesthetics. Some time after Lawton (1983), without contending the value of his colleagues’ philosophical views on the question of knowledge and worth from the curriculum perspective, advocated that it was necessary to go beyond academic knowledge and beyond philosophical linguistic analysis. He claimed that sociological and anthropological approaches to knowledge which pertains to culture should also be considered. Hirst’s proposal consisted of two kinds of enquiry: the first being concerned with the human universals which, he claimed, existed in some form in all human societies, and that these human universals gave rise to different kinds of cultural systems involving different kinds of knowledge. He argues that such differences would be more evident in more advanced societies than in developing societies despite sharing human universals. His second set of assumptions was that the human universals could be analysed into distinctive cultural systems with each containing different kinds of knowledge which should be used as a basis for curriculum development. Essentially, Hirst’s approach advocated that every school curriculum should necessarily consist of some kind of selection from national culture. He acknowledges that many curricula contain within them serious gaps and omissions of this sort.

As one possible approach to examining selection from the culture, Hirst (1975) projected a number of cultural ‘systems’ that were derived from human universals: socio-political, technological, communication, economic, belief, moral, rationality, aesthetic, and physical or maturational. He believes that these cultural systems may be used not only as a basis for a curriculum design, and replacing existing school subjects. Rather, the cultural systems may be used as a checklist to make sure that there were no important gaps left in the curriculum. As typical in the case of Ghana, the cultural aspect of socio-political, economic and morality systems are strangely neglected and sometimes completely ignored in curriculum design. Hirst (1975) recommends using the cultural systems as one side of a matrix, the other axis being existing school subjects. The intersection of these two could provide a means of analysing where knowledge omissions existed and should be filled. This paper believes however that, such a matrix will not be adequate to provide a complete answer to the culture-education divide in Ghana. It will only indicate the first stage of a cultural analysis in Ghana’s curriculum design procedure.

These views are reinforced by Locke’s observation that a child is born with a mind that is a *tabula rasa* (blank slate) on which the society writes its messages (Locke, 1964). He argues further that for a society to claim that the knowledge it produces makes sense, it must be derived from the world the citizens directly observe. This means that, the school environment and the kind of pedagogues that is given should be defined by the worldview of that society - and that is culture. This will help in the character and moral formation of citizens.

The instrumental theory of value by Dewey (1923) and and later by Bode (in Childs, 2018) believe that moral values are not external and objective, but they are subjective in the sense that they are products of the society. These are never absolute principles but contingent upon time and space (Oti-Agyen, 2007). Oti-Agyen further argues that these kinds of values are acquired through experiences, needs and desires.

METHODOLOGY

The study used the embedded design variant of the mixed method research approach to conduct this research. This design made it possible collect quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, but then used the qualitative data to support the quantitative data. The study used the survey method in the first phase and then in the second phase, used a qualitative, open-ended semi-structured interviews to collect detailed views from participants to help explain the initial quantitative survey (Creswell, 2014). For the purposes of data collection, Ghana was zoned into 3 belts namely Northern, Middle and Southern belts where one basic school was selected from each belt. These schools are: Lolga, Mpemso and Navio Basic Schools respectively. The sample characteristics were, headteachers, teachers, pupils and parents with an estimated population of 700. A total sample size of 95 respondents was used to collect the data for this study. For the quantitative data, a multistage sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 80 respondents, and this was categorised thus: 3 headteachers selected using maximal variation purposive sampling; 11 teachers using convenient sampling; and 66 pupils by simple random sampling (see Bryman, 2016). The sample size for the qualitative data was

15 respondents which was formed by 3 headteachers, 6 parents and 6 teachers. These were also selected using maximal variation purposive sampling. The quantitative data was analysed using frequency counts and percentages, whereas the qualitative data used thematic analysis.

Bryman (2006) has advised that research should ensure that participants are protected from any physical or psychological harm that may arise from the research process. He emphasised that ethical factors that have the tendency to compromise the research in various ways must be given attention. This research followed and addressed the underlisted ethical issues in carrying out the research: informed consent, protection and confidentiality. Consequently, the names given to the schools that were used for the research are pseudonyms to obscure the true identities of the school.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained from the field are presented and discussed below.

Inculcating indigenous Ghanaian cultural values into educational pedagogues

The data presented in this section sought to answer how indigenous and Ghanaian cultural values can be inculcated in educational pedagogues to enhance duty and commitment to work for national development. The Tables below presents the data obtained for this subject.

Table 1: Traditional religion and values for moral development of students

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly Disagree	8	10%
Disagree	8	10%
Neutral	12	15%
Agree	28	35%
Strongly Agree	24	30%
Total	80	100%

Fieldwork data (2023).

Approximately 65% of the respondents agree that traditional religion and values will help in the moral development of student and about 65% also agree that traditional religion and values will help students' moral development. This implies that traditional religion and value system nurtures a child to fit into the indigenous Ghanaian society perfectly. Thus, when inculcated into the educational system, traditional religion and values can aid in the upbringing of a child holistically.

Table 2: Traditional religion and values to help students to develop kindness and commitment

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly Disagree	8	10%
Disagree	4	5%
Neutral	16	20%
Agree	24	30%
Strongly Agree	28	35%
Total	80	100

Source: Fieldwork data (2023).

Table 2, 65% of the respondents agreed that traditional religion and values will help students to be kind and develop a spirit of togetherness and unity. This view conforms with the Confucian political and social relations sustained in the extended family-like “network institutionalism” (Ansell, 2006), which generates interdependence, mutual obligation and reciprocity, and strict hierarchical social relations according to age, gender and status. This then call for the need to integrate authentic cultural values in Ghana’s educational pedagogues.

Table 3: Traditional religion and values to prevent crimes, stealing and other negative acts among students

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly Disagree	12	15%
Disagree	4	5%
Neutral	20	25%
Agree	16	20%
Strongly Agree	28	35%
Total	80	100

Source: Fieldwork data (2023).

Table 3 shows that 55% of the respondents agree that traditional religion and values such as Taboos and myths will prevent crimes, stealing and other misdemeanour among students. The predisposition of these traditional values is high moral character- formation. These were transmitted to children through storytelling of exemplary and patriotic nature of their ancestors or forebears (Oti-Agyen, 2007). Character training curbs the urge for one to slide into the social vices as stated above.

Table 4: Traditional religion, values and beliefs for environmental protection and national development

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly Disagree	12	15%
Disagree	4	5%
Neutral	12	15%
Agree	28	35%
Strongly Agree	24	30%
Total	80	100%

Source: Fieldwork data (2023).

Table 4 shows that 65% of the respondents agreed that traditional religious values and beliefs such as taboos will protect the environment and sustain it for national development. Therefore integrating the authentic Ghanaian cultural values in educational pedagogues will protect the cosmic order for national development.

Table 5: Traditional values for national cohesion and development

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly Disagree	8	10
Disagree	12	15
Neutral	28	35
Agree	28	35
Strongly Agree	32	40
Total	80	100

Source: Fieldwork data (2023).

Table 5 shows that 75% of respondents agreed that traditional values such as respect for the elderly, kindness, unity and generosity bring national unity cohesion and development as demonstrated in Table 5. This view provides the justification for integrating authentic Ghanaian traditional values in educational pedagogues. The data contradicts Parsons (1964) view that, the traditional values of underdeveloped countries such as customs, rituals, practices and institutions, including values like *collectivism* were the causes of their underdevelopment and lack of progress.

Table 6: Traditional religion and values to promote harmony in the cosmic order

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly Disagree	12	15%
Disagree	4	5%
Neutral	12	15%
Agree	28	35%
Strongly Agree	4	5%
Total	80	100

Source: Fieldwork data (2021).

Table 6 shows that 45% of the respondents agree that traditional religion and values encourage people to live in harmony with nature to promote cohesion, unity, development, and stability in the cosmic order.

Table 7: Moral values are common values of the traditional religion in Ghana.

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly Disagree	4	5%
Disagree	0	0.0
Neutral	8	10%
Agree	20	25%
Strongly Agree	48	60%
Total	80	100%

Source: Fieldwork data (2023).

From Table 8, it is evident that 85% of the respondents agree that moral values such as: honesty, endurance, courage, chastity, truthfulness and respect for old age are common values of the traditional religion in Ghana.

The views expressed in this data set points to the urgency for integrating authentic Ghanaian cultural values in educational pedagogues. Contrary to the views expressed by the data however, these cultural values are under threats of annihilation by the spread of Western culture and thought in Ghana's education system. For example, the Western tradition of schooling infused in Ghana's education has been dismissive of the civilisational knowledge resources of indigenous children and also, subjected them to intense mockery and alienation, while their very existence and identity is described in humiliating terms. In some Ghanaian schools, some teachers are deeply conditioned by social biases against some sub-cultures, and stereotypically see such as uncivilised, and uninterested in education'.

To enhance the civilisational knowledge resources of indigenous children, Edwards and Usher (2000) have argued that, it is necessary to use spatial metaphors to frame emancipatory pedagogues to counter the domesticating tendencies of education. However, in Ghana today, spatial metaphors are used to denigrate cultural identities especially of some school children. The rural and urban poor children have undergone many dehumanising, even inhumane inequalities, as their communities reconfigure and intensely metamorphose into modern metropolis. This is exacerbated by the media's relentless imprints of surreal images on young fertile imaginations and blossoming aspirations like East Legon Hill Mansions, with fancy social amenities that seem to give a commonplace realism while modest buildings and huts in poor areas remain remotely despicable. Yet schools make no attempt to sustain the 'spatial consciousness' of poor children to interrogate what Harvey (1973) calls the relationship that exists between the poor child and his 'turf' or neighborhood (see also Rampal, 2007).

The school textbooks also usually maintain an inert distance, and refuses to acknowledge the lives of the communities. These textbooks instead deal with emotive issues for poor students in a cold, and insensitive manner. For instance, they assume that everyone lives in trendy accommodation and environment with modern amenities, it teaches environmental pollution so that fossil fuel are not used in the homes. It also wittingly evades a lot of contradictions that are perceived to be uncomfortable by the mainstream urban and westernized authors, and unabashedly speak on what the poor and unclean must do to clean their environment and themselves. These examples emphasize the underlying understanding that education must inform these 'uncivilised' children on how to live their lives, and also communicate only halcyon and positive narratives to protect the 'purity' of the plagiarized life styles of middle class children. Thus, most textbooks conventionally embed deeply prescriptive and pontificated lessons about cleanliness, hard work, hygiene etc, on the wheels of credulous and insipid generalisations about poor children's world. Hence, many children who live in environments that do not measure up to the norms of the middle-class are alienated, and begin to feel that their life style is 'bad'. The above constitute the 'civilising' agenda of Euro-centric Ghanaian schools, which has been consistently and 'religiously' imposed on poor children, who supposedly, need to be saved from themselves and their world - the world in which the chaos and squalor in their homes is contrasted with the discipline of school. Consequently, per the metaphor used in the title of this paper, the school system has been shooting these alien arsenals (the plagiarised pedagogues) at where the ducks (the poor school children) are.

Another dimension of this education-culture discourse, and in line with the civilizing agenda precludes the expunging of indigenous knowledge from poor and rural children in the curriculum which is aggravated by the use of English language, which is the medium through which education is delivered in Ghana. Rampal (1992a) has argued that, the education discourse has been deeply transactional, impersonal and dense, with condensed information that per this paper is supposed to be learnt by rote because Ghanaian children in essence are unable to decipher. Furthermore, the primacy of the heavily classicised terminologies used for science and mathematics instruction have made these subjects doubly debilitating for most public schools' pupils, and these have contributed immensely to the failure of school pupils to deal with these subjects. In a study commissioned by India's Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) to help reduce the burden of the school bag (a metaphor for the methods

used by India's schools for teaching and learning) showed that the gravitational load of the bag was not the main problem, but that the more noxious burden is that of non-comprehension. The study showed that, a large number of school children who drop-out of school are those who refuse to accept non-comprehension. These pupils are possibly superior to their counterparts who simply memorize to do well in examinations. According to the Government of India (1993), the study distinctively challenged the overarching practice of packaging information in a highly abstruse and compressed fashion. They noted that: barring exceptions, the textbooks seem to have been written basically to convey information or 'facts', rather than to make children think and explore. This makes the distance between the child's everyday life and the content of the textbook accentuates the transformation of knowledge into a load.

This also resonates the artificial and sophisticated style of delivery that dominates in Ghana's school system. This style reinforces the tradition of separating knowledge from life. Often, textbooks model the rhetoric of activity-based teaching without real attempt to encourage the exploration and activities in regard to the culture and environment. So, students are made to observe the pictures of objects, instead of creating opportunities for them to explore the *real things* from their natural environment - be it a common spider or the water bodies. Furthermore, these textbooks have already provided the conclusions about what will be observed. A key example is a typical line in the Christmas carol - 'I'm dreaming of a white Christmas'. Examining this carol shows how distant the school experiences are from the culture and realities of the Ghanaian pupil. Notice the cultural context of this carol and the use of the image, 'white Christmas'. This image actually does not explain anything but will keep the Ghanaian student forever dreaming because per the cultural, geographical and environmental make-up of Ghana, it is less likely to have a 'white Christmas' in the country in the next millions of years. Furthermore, instructions on water evaporation which is given as: 'water changes from liquid into water vapour when water evaporates'. 'The gaseous form of water is water vapour'. 'When the water in wet things dry up, it turns into water vapour and goes into the atmosphere'. 'It is not possible to see water evaporating into water vapour because water vapour exists in the form of very tiny particles'. Such kind of instruction does not provide practical and real explanations. Besides, these statements just go round in circles, as tautologies, and so for these concepts on states of matter and evaporation, it gets difficult for students to comprehend. Should a student asks for the meaning of vapour, s/he is told: 'the gaseous form of water is water vapour'. So this pupil gives up in his/her attempt to make meaning of the subject of the lesson, and simply accommodate what is expected of them - to unthinkingly repeat what they have been taught. Furthermore, there has been almost no systematic efforts to probe and obtain feedback from learners regarding this kind of instruction. Rather, there is a widespread believe that if students do not learn, they must be having some very bad issues, and as a result they may need some form of support, from tuition through counselling to medicines.

Another major problem that Ghana has had to grapple with, especially regarding its curriculum policy, is the notion of 'catching up' with the 'global information explosion'. Whenever it is claimed that school children from western countries, are taught concepts of valence and chemistry much later in their education than their counterparts in Ghana, it is countered that those countries in view of the level of development can afford to learn at a slow pace. However,

the reality is that, it is now important to advocate for a social constructivist approach to student's learning as India for example has sought to do. Through its National Curriculum Framework. India has done this with a focus on the cultural context of concept-formation (Government of India, 2005). Driver et al., (1985) has explained this phenomenon along the belief that all children are natural theory-makers. This proposition emanates from the notion that long before they commence school, children are able to construct their own theories and explanations for the environment in which they live. This portends that children's learning is nothing like a process of accumulating and storing information about different subjects. Indeed, it is about their ability to apply their concepts of phenomenon to real life issues. Children often form consistent 'alternative frameworks' or 'naive theories' that may even be contradictory to established knowledge (Driver et al., 1985). Therefore, Ghanaian schools will need to deliberately raise, address and consciously examine children's intuitive ideas before they introduce them to alternative ways of perceiving the world. This phenomenon underlie the reasons for the many students' failure in maths examinations. This makes them to feel despondent with numbers for the rest of their lives. The irony here is that, unschooled children and adults enjoy solving folk and oral riddles and play folk games, with sticks and stones, felling entertained, and these also make their mathematical abilities sharp. Besides, the indigenous methods of counting, sorting and measurement have their own methodologies which relate to real-life contexts so meaningfully. Rampal et al. (1999) and Rampal (2003a, b, c) have found that unschooled children and adults who sell in the market on the street or do vocational work are adept at mental arithmetic as part of their daily transactions, and use effective algorithms and strategies to get results.

Then again, the mathematics as presented in textbooks has conventionally been perpetrating gender disparities. Mary Harris has done a careful examination of mathematics textbooks and mathematics manuals used by teachers and has concluded that the mode of communication used in the Class 1 book, *Let's Learn Mathematics*, is deeply formal and has the propensity to alienate girls right from the initial stages of their schooling. Harris' report showed that girls have their own productive ways of working and understanding mathematics than the structured and decisive ways prescribed in the text (Harris, 1999). So, addressing gender biases in the texts is not just an issue of including many examples of females. Rather, the effort must focus the notion that women have persistently played relevant and crucial roles in defining and processing traditional knowledge in the knowledge creation space in different spheres of life.

In view of these debates, Ghana has to consciously give a place to children's unschooled knowledge of science and mathematics as well as other subjects in the school system. This effort must focus on those children who are vulnerable and stand on the brink of being pushed out of school, by being brunt about dealing with some key issues about inequality and difference in the school system, as well as empowering children to reflect on their lived experiences, even though unpleasant, instead of sticking with the prevalent 'culture of silence' at school that does not promote real learning.

Scientific Temper versus Cultural Beliefs

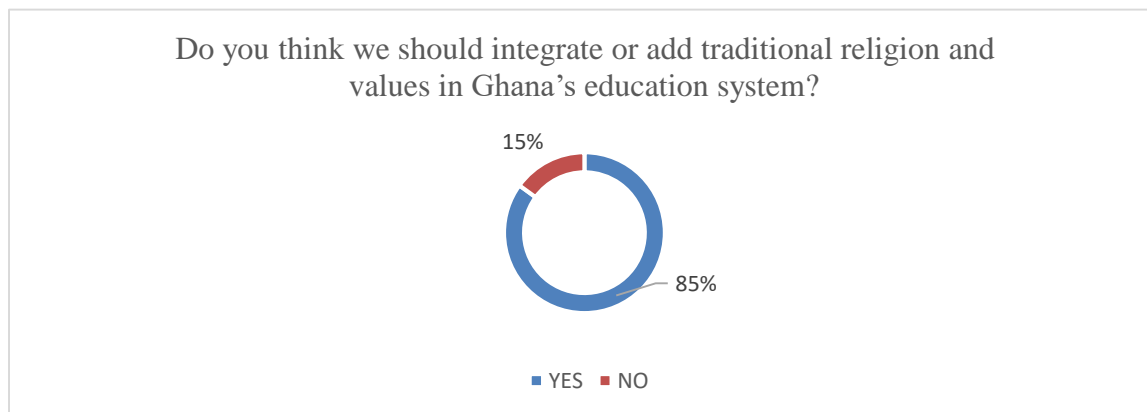
Another important area for Ghana is notion of science for development needs to be a shared vision in the country. Rampal (1992b) has long ago argued that science has often taken an

overly positivist and even erroneously glorious posture, and projected as the panacea for all national problems. This paper makes an argument that scientific thinking is perceived to be opposed to peoples' religious and customary beliefs, superstitions and cultural practices in Ghana. This pertains from the idea that standard science courses in schools do not allow for thought and critical reflection to intelligently deal with students' indigenous knowledge or to sensitively interrogate socio-cultural beliefs that stands to contradict science. This is made precarious when the media unwittingly unleashes a barrage of usually indecent and condescending content against socio-cultural beliefs, with no effort for critical inquiry or communicative explanation. So, this paper claims that instilling scientific thinking into Ghana's culture has been slow and complex as the process is embedded within the various complementary layers of social cognition such as myths, beliefs, folklore, superstitions, taboos, etc.. This social cognition has influenced people's thinking for centuries which Horton (1970) classify as broadly constituting a 'closed system of thought' that makes it impossible to even examine alternatives to the body of dogmas that are projected and constrained by the tendency to reason only within a 'limited idiom'. This suggest that the language of science needs to be carefully used while invoking such ideas that may relate to people's sacred and social beliefs in attempting to provide 'scientific' explanations to them. So, to move Ghana towards a scientific thinking community as shown by the data, Rampal (1994) and Ogunniyi (1988; 1989) have suggested that, alternative explanations have to be provided and cultural dogmas may have to be worked on to become less sacred, because they will lose their absolute validity, if deliberate effort is made to loosen the social structures that sustain them.

This subject has consistently and creatively engaged the attention of negritude writers as they search for solutions regarding how to inculcate indigenous beliefs and legends as new knowledge is presented. So, dismissing cultural beliefs and values in a haste, without examining how past civilisations used explanatory metaphors to explain natural occurrences, can be counter-productive. It has the tendency to alienate and give an impetuous view of science as being too 'impersonal' and opposed to all that are held dear and sacred in traditional societies - the culture.

Importance of integrating authentic traditional values in Ghana's educational pedagogues

The data presented in this section sought to establish the urgency for integrating authentic traditional Ghanaian values in the educational delivery for national development. The data in Figure 1 (below) account for the response to this subject.



Source: Fieldwork data (2023).

Figure 1: The need to integrate traditional values

Figure 1 is categorical that 85% of the respondents see the need to integrate traditional religion and values in Ghana's education delivery, whereas only fifteen percent (15%) think otherwise. Among this 85% of respondents from the quantitative data was another who provided in-depth views from the interviews that:

traditional religion and values ensures good moral lives and national development. This is because people will follow the cosmic order and have good moral values that will promote national development. Traditional religion and values makes people to do the right thing by protecting the environment, as well as developing a sense of awe and fear of Supreme Being (God) . These people live good moral lives with kindness, unity, truth, honesty and respect as their core values to promotes national development (Interview data, Respondent #6) .

This perspective is corroborated by interview respondent #1 who indicated that “traditional religion and values promotes respect for elders, truthfulness, and honesty chastity, protects the environment, good moral values, peace, which promote national development”. Respondent #12 also supported this position that “traditional religion and values improve moral lives of people in the society”. Finally respondent #7 also supported this perspective by stressing that “this pertains because the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.” Oti-Agyen (2007) believes that the pre-disposition of traditional values is high moral character formation. These were transmitted to children through storytelling of exemplary and patriotic nature of their ancestors or forebears, but at the same time, contradicts Parsons' (1964) believe about traditional values of underdeveloped countries – the idea that these societies were too attached to traditional customs, rituals, practices and institutions, which he has attributed to be the causes of lack of development and progress in these societies.

The qualitative data also emphasised that traditional values in the form of taboos promote discipline and ethics among people. This shows that traditional religion and values impresses on people to do the right things for fear of retribution. This is because people perceive traditional values and beliefs as instituted by God and hence, will not do anything that might go contrary to these taboos. As a result of this, people will not want to do wrongs especially as

they are forbidden by the taboo. This view is supported by respondent #5 who said that “Ghana’s tradition, culture and values are the basis of life. Integrating them in the country’s educational delivery will help prevent most of the social vices.” Also, respondent #5 iterated that “integrating traditional religion in our education system will invariably inculcate fear in children because they are often afraid of the traditional ways of dealing with things. Even now, people are still fearful of some myths and taboos that belonged to the olden days.” Finally, on this subject, respondent #6 said that one of the benefits for integrating cultural values in education and its pedagogues is that “it foments discipline among children and teaches them about the past, bring togetherness and protect the environment such as the water bodies and animals.”

Traditional religion and values help people to understand their culture and ensure moral conduct. Besides, people are able to learn their history through their culture. This means that traditional religion and values help people to appreciate their culture, its origins, and to correct all forms of moral misconduct. This view was stressed by respondent #7 who indicated that, “integrating traditional religion and values in the country’s educational system will help Ghanaians to know and appreciate their history and culture, to adopt the correct moral conduct.” Among the 15% that said no to the integration of the traditional religion and values into the educational system of Ghana in the quantitative phase were people who also believed that:

Current trends in religious education have rendered traditional religion and values as bad. This shows that the acceptance of integrating traditional religion and values in Ghana’s educational pedagogues by the younger generation will be difficult. This is due to the formed misconceptions of the younger generation due to the negative education given to them about traditional religion and values. The education is usually associate traditional values and beliefs with superstition.

Interviewee #8 also said that “religious education, teaches that traditional concepts like taboos, myths, folktales, stories are all superstition in orientation and cannot be proven. So, the contemporary student will not believe in what they teach and say”. His view was also supported by respondent #15 who said that “No, it will be difficult because in religious education, we were taught that traditional beliefs such as taboos and myths are superstitions and cannot be proven, hence they are not important”.

The qualitative data leads the paper to examine the key question previously debated by Hirst (1975) and Lawton (1983), which is: whose knowledge has value? In Ghana, there have been persistent calls for a critical re-appropriation of indigenous knowledge with the goal to changing social life, encompassing economic, scientific and technological spaces. These calls resonate in the current exigency to acknowledge the country’s cognitive debt from the indigenous knowledge of the ancient African civilisation. This results from the development of modern science which is based on several knowledge traditions, which included the traditions of simple African cultures that came in contact with the voyages of discovery and were part of the colonies of Europe. However, in the process of spreading modern science, the indigenous traditions were deliberately displaced and cognitively lost to science. These necessitates the need to re-examine and reclaim Ghana’s cognitive heritage. Such efforts will

enrich the country's indigenous systems of economic and knowledge production. For the latter, Ghana's schools must not serve only as indigenous sites of production of new knowledge but also, as a site for re-engaging and re-legitimisation of the lost traditions.

Some examples of such traditions being lost through formal education is defined by the question of 'whose knowledge is currently valued in schools'. The indigenous and rural child is knowledgeable about the natural world, and therefore it is absolutely irrelevant for him/her to look at 'pictures' to know the cloud formations, to identify the baby chickens or the leaves of an orange tree. S/he may be taught in the community about hunting, or gain knowledge about medicinal herbs and the rich biodiversity of the Ghanaian forests, which very often international companies vehemently fight to commercially exploit and patent. Ironically however, Ghanaian schools do not appreciate the value of these resources. So, Rampal (2000) has stressed that the structure of schooled knowledge makes the rural or tribal child struggle with meaningless representations even in matters he or she knows much better. Such cultural dissonance between indigenous knowledge, language and school science has been a bane to Ghana's progress and development.

So, Goonatilake (1998) for example has emphasized the need to consciously 'mine civilisational knowledge' to change the traditions of modern science, through a rich array of techniques, metaphors and intellectual solutions. In this line of thought, the work of anthropologists (see McKinley, McPherson Waiti & Bell, 1992) on small social groups (the so called 'primitive' peoples) has revealed that the impulse to be scientific is universally present. So their work examines the so called 'primitive' societies deliberately. The reason is that the scientific revolution began after the voyages of discovery, and aspects of both projects (the scientific revolution and the voyages) interacted with the search for science and the search of the Europeans' 'other'. Consequently, the imperialist narrative that accompanied the two events sooner or later began to assert the superiority and exclusivity of everything European. In time, these orientations crystallized into a view that denigrated other cultures as inherently incapable of the intellectual work that goes under the rubric of 'science'. Over time, this narrative has blurred subsequent views on knowledge and how it is created. These opinions have however since the last three decades or so ago been gradually challenged and rethought. The fact here is that the search for knowledge about nature was kindled and systematically formalised and nurtured in every major civilizational area across the globe, with significant cross-transmission and cross fertilisation of ideas between them.

Furthermore, a large body of academic work in ethnobiology and anthropology has shown that indigenous peoples have also severally and on their own studied their environment and came to similar conclusions and taxonomies, purely out of intellectual urge, than instrumental need. As a result, Goonatilake (1998) has observed that the only difference between a Linnaeus (the eighteenth century founder of the modern classificatory system) and a native classifier is just by levels because Linnaeus (like the other modern scientists after him) had access to a wider store of plant samples, that was made possible by European expansion into the rest of the world.

CONCLUSION

This paper has highlighted the gulf between Ghanaian culture (which acts as the basis for indigenous knowledge creation), and the formal, distancing and often incomprehensible ways in which schools deliver education. However, the reality of the unschooled youth and adults who have been engaged in Ghanaian crafts is that their knowledge base has been situated in practice, as well as on high levels of innovation, creativity and resourcefulness (see Rogoff & Lave, 1984; Lave, 1996). This view is explained by a narrative in which someone goes to a young radio mechanic with a very inexpensive (and perhaps disposable) radio that had stopped functioning. The radio mechanic handed the radio back the next day, beaming with high frequency, and charged only a paltry sum of 10 cedis (approximately 71 cents) and said with an intense and perceptible pride ‘I learned from my uncle not throw malfunctioning radios away. Rather, it is my responsibility to make it work.’ This belief of the radio mechanic is core to the ethics of his unschooled knowledge as opposed to the schooled knowledge of his contemporaries. It is rooted in the tradition of learning he has gone through as an apprentice with his uncle who also doubled as his uncle. This is an epitome of the hallmark of indigenous system of education that has its roots in a country’s culture, which points to the resourcefulness and innovation to make things work, in the face of austerity and minimal expendable resources, and usually realised through creative recycling. Furthermore, Rampal, (2003a) has argued that when learning is rooted in culture, it tends to be premised on greater participation and collective effort, where thought, action and feelings are organically linked. Ghana’s schools could learn much from such systems of unschooled knowledge. Such an effort provides a platform to counter the hegemonic globalism discourse and its attendant crisis for education. Indeed, indigenous education of this kind is a better way to resist the influence of globalism on education, and rather substitute global education with indigenous knowledge that make things work without expending resources and thrashing anything. Such innovative efforts will enhance Ghana’s drive to attaining real and sustainable development.

It is a matter of concern however that in Ghana today, hands on and practical (be it vocational or technical) education is not popular and hence its demand remains low. Besides, it is perceived to be reserved for the non-academic impoverished and backward learners, and most working-class families decry schools for alienating their wards from their own professions and vocations when the children are offered vocational and technical courses. Recently however, institutes that offer technical and vocational courses have tried to be creatively and academically engaged with education. The current globalization discourse of ‘brain versus brawn’ skills, which has necessitated the penchant for schools in industrialised countries to constantly seek creative twenty-first century skills, as opposed to the near justification of outsourcing low-skill jobs to low-income countries, calls for the need to develop indigenous school curricula with an innovative and academic ‘high skill’ niche for the majority. Consequently, this paper agrees with a claim made by Brown et al. (nd) that, the dominant discourse on education and globalisation needs to be challenged by countries such as Ghana to show “that Britain and the US are not knowledge economies, where the value of knowledge continues to rise, but are characterised by an economy of knowledge that is transforming the relationship between education, jobs and rewards”. The debates introduced by this paper can be expressed in the Zimbabwean proverb found in Brock-Utne (2002) that: *‘Stories of the hunt*

will be stories of glory until the day when animals have their own historians'. This proverb explains the story of Ghana's indigenous knowledge creation. The fact is that, narratives of Ghana's civilisational knowledge need to be told by historians of oral and indigenous knowledge using Ghanaian languages that cradle the Ghanaian people's cognitive heritage and script their aspirations. To achieve this goal, the paper advocates that Ghana has to re-engage, re-interpret and re-evaluate its deep fissures of educational inequality and injustice, using its own cultural resources of spirituality, tolerance and compassion' and perhaps draw on the experiences of the nationalist forces that worked to transform East Asian countries.

As its contribution to the education-culture debate as manifested in the major political contestations in the multicultural Ghanaian environment, the paper advocates for efforts to incorporate cultural or civilisational resources in education. This contribution pertains to the indigenous Ghanaian discourse on schooling which calls for new metaphors for the notion of a national identity for education similar to the 'Gariéb' (The Great River), proposed by Alexander (2002). In this metaphor, the mainstream is composed of a confluence of all the tributaries, which in their ever-changing forms continue to constitute and reconstitute the river, such that no single current dominates, and there is no 'main stream'. This is a metaphor for a dynamic and progressive society produced by this rare form of education and sought for in post-colonial Ghana - the 21st Century Ghana.

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