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**An Analysis of Dominant  
and Alternative Approaches  
to Education Reform in  
Sub-Saharan Africa:  
the case of Ghana**

Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor

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## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my late parents and also to my late brother Sayibu and to my sister Azara who so wished to see their little brother hold the only PhD in the family.

I also wish to dedicate this thesis to my family; (Samira, Napsy and Luksina). I hope that after having gone through this very long and challenging journey with me, my sons will understand and appreciate the importance of education and seek to achieve the highest levels of academic and intellectual laurels



## Preface

To what extent should we base contemporary education policies on the cultural, social, political and historical contexts of the countries that they involve? Historically, education has served different purposes, and different roles have been attributed to it. Education has been perceived as an instrument to transfer knowledge from one generation to another, to preserve generational understanding and the necessary knowledge for survival.

Education has been viewed as a medium for emancipation and also to help individuals develop their full potential. Education has been attributed the roles as an instrument for domination, civilization, conversion, evangelization and conquer, classification, inclusion and exclusion, indoctrination and manipulation, regulation, emancipation and discipline (Freire, 1970; Murphy, 2006; Bourdieu, 1998; Foucault, 1996; fuller, 2003; Wolf, 2002, Odora Hoppers, 1998-2008; Haavelsrud, 1986-2009; Hovdenak, 1990-2009) and many others. Education has been seen as an instrument capable of inculcating democratic values in individuals and capable of producing peace loving as well as war loving individuals.

Education has also been perceived to perform the roles of economic development, eradication of poverty and the great equalizer (the Bretton Woods Institutions and their supranational conglomerates – World Bank, International Monetary Fund and others). The importance of education for individuals and also for nations cannot be overemphasized. After World War II, the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) devoted all the programs to the reconstruction of Europe and when this noble job was completed, the BWIs included education as one of their portfolio items. The BWIs see education as both a method for countries to achieve economic growth and also for the elimination of poverty.

This is very clear when one visits the website of the World Bank it is stated that: “Education is central to development and a key to attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and inequality and lays the foundation for sustainable growth” (World Bank 2009). It is no surprise therefore that every

country as individual entities and collectively have set very high stakes in implementing education policies that will give them the best of what they seek.

When I started this project these were the most intriguing issues that I sought to address. My own educational journey prompted some questions. I grew up in a small town and my dad had a rice farm in a small village of about 150 inhabitants. It was mandatory that my cousins (extended family relatives who moved to live with us so that they could attend school) and I follow my dad to the farm every weekend and also during the long summer vacation to help him with farm work. Each time we visited the village we were generally seen as privileged both by the youth and also the old. It was basically because we lived in a bigger town than the village, we were in school, wore cloths and shoes, brought our own drinking water and sometimes food and all these were different from what was available in the village. At the same time I saw myself looking at kids from the city as privileged and also those who lived abroad.

There was something in me always wanting to go beyond my small town and experience more things than were available to me. Though I liked school very much, I did not particularly like my school, my teachers and my environment. There was something that was inadequate but I did not know what it was. Now I know that it was education; I wanted to know more about how children come to learn what they are taught. Why they learn some things and not others. Who decided what should be learned and why? My touch was ignited when after several years of wondering what I wanted to study, I ended up in education without any prior plans to become an educator. Now that I am in education, the questions that I wondered about when I was a small boy still remains. This dissertation is part of my attempt to understand even more about the dilemmas I had while growing up. I have reason to believe that now I understand a lot of what happens in classrooms and how they have come to be but there are still many things that I am eager to know. All these form the micro part of my study. There is however a macro dimension and that is the relationship between different countries, their people and their education

systems. I became very curious about how education policy is formulated, implemented and maintained. This is the crust of this study.

Ghana the country I have chosen to study emerged from colonialism to political independence in 1957. Significant education progress was made in the first ten years after political emancipation. However the impact of several years of social, economic and political exploitation – the slave trade and colonization – did not serve as a good prelude to independence. Instead, this uniquely oppressive period in Ghana's history helped to set the stage for its underdevelopment. Ghana's self-directed evolution was severely thwarted by the political destabilization and human capital extraction of the slave trade. Colonialism brought political subjugation and economic dislocation. The naturally evolving political and economic institutions were either destroyed or made to serve the designs and interests of the imperial state in London. In essence, Ghana entered the second half of the twentieth century, the period of its political independence with a whole series of social, cultural, economic, political and psychological challenges and handicaps.

In addition to the historical legacy, Ghana also suffers from a host of current challenges. Ayittey, (1998) categorizes Ghana's current challenges into two broad categories: internal and external. The internal challenges are those of leadership and Ghana's ability until fairly recently to develop the political democracy that it acquired as a result of its relationship to the developed countries of the Northern hemisphere to its advantage. However, Ghana like most developing countries does not have the capacity to influence the external challenges which are mainly economic in nature and are controlled by countries in the Northern Hemisphere in any significant way.

Despite the ending of colonial rule by European imperial powers, a strong residue of colonial influence remains in Africa. The socio-political elites who emerged in the new independent Ghana were mainly educated in European and American universities; in the language of the colonizer, as such those languages are the primary or official government languages in many countries. Until very recently, the education system was a replica of the British colonial

education system, still educating people for purposes other than self sufficiency and development. It is under these premises that this study seeks to analyze contemporary education reform policies to see the extent to which the current education system was designed with Ghana's development agenda as the guiding principle.



## Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the role my adviser played in my intellectual development from 1994 when I first met him. He has introduced me to a wealth of ideas and very many fine scholars and colleagues many of whom have influenced this thesis in diverse ways. They are too many to mention but the late Basil Bernstein and Johan Galtung have influenced my thinking and action in many ways. Thank you Magnus!

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### **Abbreviations**

DFID	Department for International Development, UK
DST	District Support Team
DTST	District Teacher Support Team
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
GES	Ghana Education Service
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SMC	School Management Committee
SPAM	School Performance Appraisal Meeting
TED	Teacher Education Division
WSD	Whole School Development
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
G8	Group of 8 most industrialized countries
NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific & Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programs
HIV/AIDS	Human immunity virus/Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome
BWIs	Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF/World Bank)
WB	World Bank
IMF	International Monetary Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
UN	United Nations
EFA	Education for All
UNICEF	United Nations Children's International Educational Fund
CPP	Convention Peoples Party
NLC	National Liberation Party
NRC	National Redemption Council

FUPE	Free Universal Primary Education
GES	Ghana Education System
JSS	Junior Secondary School
SSS	Senior Secondary School
ODA	Overseas Development Association
BESIP	Basic Education Sector Improvement Project
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
CWEC	Common World Educational Culture
GSAE	Globally Structured Agenda for Education
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
WSD	Whole School Development
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOEYS	Ministry of Education Youth and Sports
DFID	UK Department for International Development
SMC	School Management Committees
IPSA	International Political Science Association
RCPSE	Research Committee on Political Socialization and Education
CEF	Commonwealth Education Fund
AP	Afrocentric Perspective

## **1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The newly independent nations of Africa that emerged as sovereign nation-states when the European colonial empires dissolved in the late 1950s and the 1960s faced severe challenges of constructing national political and economic infrastructures. Ghana, like other newly independent African nations, has faced serious challenges of nation building. Social, cultural, political, economic and educational conditions in Ghana, including remnants of former colonial patterns; the need to create national institutions; and the special situation created by language, tribal, and ethnic divisions are illustrative of most developing countries in Africa as well as in other parts of the developing world (Fafunwa 1982).

This study explores some of the challenges of developing an adaptive and sustainable education system in Sub-Saharan Africa with special emphasis on Ghana and especially analyzing the major education reform movements of the mid 1980s. The development of the Ghanaian education system since independence in 1957 has been remarkable, the most spectacular education feature being the rapid rate of expansion. Enrolment at the primary, secondary, vocational and higher levels have been impressive. The government of Ghana invested heavily in education right after colonial emancipation and the education system expanded at all levels. This massive investment and expansion was made possible through the determination of African leaders and sacrifices made by African parents all determined to provide a better standard of living for their citizens. It was also made possible through some African governments who saw the expansion of education to all its citizens as a political necessity (Gutek, 2006).

However, according to Rwomire (1998), this exponential expansion of the education system in Ghana and in many other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa was accompanied by manifold challenges and dilemmas. Education systems across Africa in the mid 1980s were confronted with a number of severe

predicaments, such that the initial euphoric confidence in education was replaced by skepticism and disillusionment. Bigala (1993) and Moorad (1989) support Rwomire by asserting that despite the great enthusiasm and faith placed in education and the heavy public expenditure/investment devoted to formal schooling, most African countries have not made any significant advances either in educational development itself or in the expected economic gains to the individual and to the state. There has been no significant economic growth, no improvements in public welfare, no significant social benefits such as desirable social and political unity, the promotion of human rights, or respect for law and order. The situation is more severe in the rural peripheries than in the urban centers, it is even more so among minorities groups, people of various forms of disabilities and women who are traditionally excluded from education systems across the world. The World Bank (1993) went further in categorizing the main educational issues in Africa in the mid 1980s as stagnation of enrolments and the erosion of educational quality.

The early 1980s ushered in a series of challenges for Ghana considered as the once premier education system in Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2004). There was an acute shortage of school buildings, infrastructure, material inputs, teaching, planning and administrative personnel at almost every level of the educational system. In contrast to these shortages, there was an astronomical increase in the number of children in schools and also a growing population of those seeking education at all levels (Isahaku, 1993). It became obvious that the government of Ghana could no longer cope with the demand pressures on the education systems. The reason for the increase in the demand for education and especially at the tertiary levels was partly due to poor planning; Ghana embarked on an ambitious basic education development plan right after independence under the Nkrumah government without adequate human and material resources to cope with the plan. Responses from the international community from both the eastern block and the west to assist this desperate and precarious situation, coupled with domestic initiatives did not seem to be yielding the expected results.



This era also coincided with major global economic crisis as a result of increases in crude oil prices, a massive external debt overhang, a collapse of primary commodity prices globally and Ghana's diminishing ability to service let alone pay principal on its debts. These crises provoked the need for economic restructuring and many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa were faced with additional challenges. They lacked the capacity that most developed countries had; the institutions, infrastructure and human resources to plan an exit strategy out of the economic crises. A second layer of challenges was lack of the much needed financial resources to restructure the failing economies of most Sub-Saharan African countries. Faced with these uncertainties for the future of their respective countries, most countries including Ghana were forced to approach the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) – the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other multilateral and bilateral finance institutions in the North - comprising mostly of developed countries of the Northern Hemisphere including also Japan and Australia - for assistance. The assistance most often came with very severe conditions attached to them and the most pervasive of these conditions were those that required debtor nations to cut public support for social services including education and to turn these over to private and/or partial private provision. This was the era of Structural Adjustment.

In the past four decades, African countries faced with these severe economic crises and incapable of initiating internal evaluations of the crises situations have largely depended on external agencies and governments for assistance to improve their education sectors. These agencies have conducted studies to generate analytic information to guide their assistance packages. According to the Working Group on Education Sector Analysis (WGESA) a research entity partly funded by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa<sup>1</sup> (ADEA) a World Bank affiliate and also UNESCO -

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<sup>1</sup> The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) is first and foremost a forum for policy dialogue. Created in 1988, it was initially set up as a framework for better coordination among development agencies.

commissioned studies entitled *Analyses, Agendas and Priorities for Education in Africa* prepared by Joel Samoff et al. (1996); the outcomes of sector analyses in Africa have tended to reflect the viewpoints of the agencies that sponsored them and have therefore created doubts about their reliability, relevance and utility. Furthermore, the reports have not been accessible outside the agencies which commissioned them. According to Samoff et al. (1996), nearly all studies that they reviewed were conducted by teams of researchers headed by and predominantly composed of foreigners. The conclusions and recommendations had little or no relationship with the pressing needs of the host countries. Locally initiated and executed sector studies did not, generally, measure up to standard in comparison with foreign aid supported studies. The WGESA-commissioned study covered the period 1990-1994. Based on the above findings of the WGESA and our own review and analysis of policy documents (see list of documents reviewed in appendix) in Ghana (see also Isahaku, 1993) we would like to analyze dominant and alternative approaches to education reform in Sub-Saharan Africa.

These evaluative studies were also expected to produce the information needed by both domestic governments who were in many situations unable to initiate such studies by themselves or by bilateral and multilateral finance and aid institutions including the BWIs to correct the challenges facing indebted nations. Samoff (1999:51) also observed that: "These externally initiated studies of education in Africa undertaken during the early 1990s are most striking for their similarities, their diversity – of country, of commissioning agency, of specific subject – notwithstanding." With few exceptions, he argues that "these studies have a common framework, a common approach, and a common methodology. Given their shared starting points, their common

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It acts as a catalyst for promising policies and practices through the pooling of ideas, experience, lessons learned and knowledge...One of its major objectives is to encourage exchanges and reinforce links between African ministries of education and development agencies.

findings are not surprising.” African education is in crisis. Governments cannot cope. Quality has deteriorated. Funds are misallocated. Management is poor and administration is inefficient.

According to Nwomonoh (1998), different views on education development within nations are derived from different historical, political, cultural, economic and philosophical ideologies. Views about how to develop an education system may also be due to contradictory paradigms in social, economic and human science as well as cultural likes and dislikes. Ideologies, paradigms and cultures influence each other in support or in contradiction. Sometimes ideologies, paradigms and cultures melt into a unifying force of great strength and impact. Sometimes only two of the three are consistent whereas the third might be in opposition (Odora Hoppers, 1996).

What is a good person and what is a good society are basic questions in any education. How education can contribute to the formation of persons and societies with the desired qualities is also a basic question in most societies. Answers to these questions vary over ideologies, paradigms and cultures. What constitutes quality education is always a controversial question within a nation-state’s educational system. The quality of the discourse underlying policy formulation in education is of importance whether the policy reached is consensual or of a kind that is controversial but still accepted by the minority. The quality of the discourse is of importance in the governance of the nation-state because minority views and oppositional views more easily will accept the dominant policy if the oppositional minority policies have been heard and considered in the discourse. If the discourse is inadequate or may be lacking and dominant views are institutionalized without regard to opposing and/or alternative views, there is a danger of system break-down (Haavelsrud, 1996).

If we turn our attention to the process of globalization over the last three decades, we see that the importance of education for development has increasingly been embraced internally by many politicians and academics and externally by many development theorists, international donors and technical assistance agencies, namely the BWIs, other affiliates and partners and several

national overseas aid agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). These powerful agencies have offered prescriptions for enhancing the equality, efficiency, and quality of education systems all based on the evaluations describe above by Samoff, (1996). These prescriptions are implemented as contemporary education reform policies by governments and policy makers who often have little or no choice but to do so in exchange for access to much needed funds. These common prescriptions and international forces however are not uniformly implemented or unquestionably received. According to Arnove and Torres (1999) there exists dialectic at work by which these global processes interact with national and local actors and contexts to be modified and in some cases transformed or resisted. In this globalization process, the quality of the discourse developed concerning the question of what constitutes quality education for the social, cultural, economic and political development, has not received the same attention as the discourses behind comparative educational policies within nations.

Haavelsrud (1996) examined several educational documents within the United Nations (UN) and concludes that: "a major problem to be solved in the future is the problem of domination and oppression in developing further guidelines to quality education and communication control" (Haavelsrud, 1996:213). He further argues that the unfair and unequal participation in present day world structures have made too many societies silent, marginal and peripheral. Their potential contribution he says are therefore wasted before it is even known. Odora Hoppers (1996) sees the 'neo-liberal' agenda of the World Bank and IMF as part of the lifeline of industrialized countries. In her study, she suggested that analytical emphasis should be shifted away from the recipient of aid to the powerful provider. In so doing she argues, that a better understanding of the role that industrialized countries play in subjugating the broader understandings of education to the narrow understanding of schooling of the western type will become clear. She further sees that such an analysis may then include a concept of pedagogy that integrates a deeper understanding

of socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-economic relations and realities in developing countries. It seems apparent that when we take the educational problem beyond the national level, contradictions are greater and more complex and the democratic discourse less developed than within nations. It is to expect that dominant actors on the global scene will utilize their dominance to instill the kind of education they believe in and disregard marginalized voices - often coming from weak voices internally and also externally (Odora Hoppers, 1996).

As part of an ever stronger globalization we find different conditions that prompt the continuous flow of assistance from countries in the North to those in the South. In recent years, a substantial part of this assistance is directed toward the development of specific types of education development. This relationship between countries in the North and those of the South is based on a global discourse which is of importance for this study. Questions such as “why is the North interested in helping the South”? “Why has education become the cornerstone of contemporary assistance from the North?” “What type of education is being proposed by countries of the North?” Who has access to what level of education and with what outcomes? What types of jobs will be available for whom? Will decentralization and privatization of education promoted by international donor agencies as well as by some national elites lead to greater equality, efficiency, and quality? What will be taught and in what language? In seeking answers or explanations to these and other questions that may arise during the course of this study, we have explored many critical theoretical, methodological, and historical researches in the field of education development and especially in developing countries.

On this background we have developed theses to investigate the discursive process underlying global policy formulation in education. According to Sadler (1912:8), “the education policies of a nation are focused on its spiritual aspirations, its philosophical ideals, its economic ambitions, its military purpose and its social conflicts”. In terms of African education and in particular the contemporary education reforms sweeping across Ghana, we

argue that the forces of international donor agencies and transnational actors such as the World Bank are far more important and dominant in directing the course of Ghanaian education development than the views expressed by Sadler. Education reform policies in Ghana and in many African countries according to our data are basically “blue prints” produced externally and from above with very little regard to the spiritual aspirations, philosophical ideals, economic ambitions and social conflicts within them.

In our theses, it will be vital to focus on how dissimilar knowledge, cultural, historical and philosophical systems interrelate in the discourse among countries in the North and those in the South. It is expected that in these interrelations between actors in the North and recipients in the South, different world views may be confronted, and there may arise a danger of misunderstandings, manipulations and subordinations. Odora Hoppers (1996) argues that the consciousness of otherness and the experience of divergent interests and insights into the numerous mechanisms of human communication are necessary prerequisites to a free and democratic exchange of ideas. The expressed ambition of countries in the North to strengthen local participation and empowerment in the South often contradict the historical practice of the North in formulating and implementing development plans and projects. History shows clearly that in the past the practice has been to exclude those whose participation is supposed to be strengthened. It would seem reasonable to take a look at the awareness of the actors in the North and the powerful role they play in formulating and expressing the interests of others.

Our research using some of the dimensions of Odora Hoppers (1996) and Haavelsrud (1996) seeks to contribute to our knowledge reservoir about the quality of the discourse behind policy formulation in the field of education development in Africa with specific references to Ghana. This focus on the meeting between knowledge preferences from above and knowledge preferences from below will further our understanding of the dynamics between the North and the South. Some leading questions include:

- To what extent will each side adapt to each other's preferences? To what extent will the North adjust their policies by taking the South's priorities into account?
- To what extent will the South adapt to ideologies in the North in order to secure as much assistance as possible?

It is not difficult to find consensus among researchers in the North as well as in the South about the importance of education in empowering marginalized groups, in reducing population growth, protecting and sustaining the environment, improving health, establishing the rule of law, peace and human rights, human dignity and equality as well as developing democratic governance and increase political participation.

The controversy is not so much about what the desired goal would be as it is on the means to this end. What theoretical, methodological, cultural, and economic approaches and strategies should education policy makers use to meet the challenges in education in Ghana? The approaches that have been used in the last 50 years are common knowledge to anyone who is interested in the crisis in African education. We also know that most of the methods used so far have not yielded the desired results (Samoff, 1996; Isahaku 1993).

The North has developed global educational policies for the South without the same discursive controls that are found in the North; see for instance the discourses around the "No Child Left Behind" in the United States and also the "reform 97" in Norway . The discourse on the global level is dominated by specific political ideologies. In the late 1970's, there emerged a neo-liberal argument, emanating especially from within some major institutions in the North through their development, multilateral and finance institutions and agencies. The World Bank is perhaps the most influential neo-liberal player in recent times to lead efforts in the North in the complete overhaul of education systems in developing countries (see for instance the work of Psacharopoulos and Woodhall, 1986).

After nearly 50 years of education development in Africa, a review of available research by Colclough (1993), Samoff (1996), Whitty (2002), Carnoy (2004), Klees (2000), Haavelsrud (1986), Odora Hoppers (2007) and others reveals that the neo-liberal argument is not convincing enough. In their individual analysis of external intervention in African education, they all argue that such a system is likely to be harmful to the already questionable “efficiency” of African education. They also contend that it is likely to widen the desperate gap both in terms of educational provision and equity among persons and groups and also between the South and the North. Colclough (1993) for instance, suggests that alternative revenue generating measures are likely to provide a more sustainable solution to help governments facing strong financial constraints, under situations which are more tightly defined than those generally proposed by neo-liberal approach.

In the 1990s, we see a complete new agenda being laid by entities like the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children’s International Education Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Projects (UNDP) and even the World Bank through conferences such as the Education for All (EFA) which laid down a new agenda that, “all children of school going age should be in school by the year 2015”. The United Nations (UN) Social Summit in Copenhagen in March 1995 for instance proposed the 20/20 formula, which provided that the North should earmark 20% of their national development aid budgets to education in developing countries. Similarly, developing countries were expected to earmark 20% of their national budgets to develop education in their respective countries. In 2008 several evaluative reports that have assessed the state of global education and especially in developing countries all show very clearly that these targets will be missed in most African countries and in some countries the situation today is said to be worse off than it was when these pledges were proposed (Samoff et al. 1996). Many countries from both the North and the South have not lived up to the promises they made, other internal and external circumstances have made meeting these pledges rather



challenging. The current global economic melt down makes the situation even more difficult.

In Norway, just like in many other countries of the North, the Government issued a report to the parliament in 1996 called "Verden i Endring" – a changing world – basically in response to the ongoing discourse about education and development. The government among others stated that its report has been influenced by the UN convention, which stated that education is a right for all children. The importance of education for empowering women, vulnerable groups and minorities was highlighted in the government's report. Increased education was said to have a favorable effect on population trends, environment and health. The report also indicated that a certain level of basic education was said to help in building democracy, increased political participation and strengthen human rights. A certain level of education was said to be a necessary precondition for achieving human resource development and institutional building. A higher level of education was said to strengthen the premises for private sector development (St. Meld nr 19. En verden i endring 1995/96:22-23). Norway is not alone in issuing reports about the issues confronting global education and what the needs of the most vulnerable populations are. The issues have long been identified the challenges have been and continue to be how to resolve these crisis.

In choosing policy alternatives between the different types of education, our interests include the "invisible" structural factors and power relations between the North and the South and how this interplay works to influence policy formulation on education in the South and particularly in Ghana. We analyze the formulation of contemporary education policy and how this reflects the ideals of the "wider society," i.e. contemporary hegemonic power held by the North (Odora Hoppers 2008). We investigate the degree to which such policies contribute in engendering, women's empowerment, democracy, private sector development, poverty alleviation and real endogenous capacity and structural development in the South (Ball, 1994; Hovelsrud, 1996; Bernstein, 1996; Hovdenak, 1998; and others).

## **1.2 Brief Political Geography of Ghana**

Modern Ghana comprises the former British colony of the Gold Coast and the former mandated territory of British Togoland. Ghana is a Republic and the 2005 estimated population was 20.7 million (World Bank, 2005) and is expected to grow on average 2.1% a year between 2000-2015. Ghana covers an area of 92,099 sq mi (238,536 sq km), and is located in West Africa, on the Gulf of Guinea. The capital and largest city is Accra. It is bordered by Côte d'Ivoire on the west, Burkina Faso on the north, and Togo on the east. The coastal region and the far north of Ghana are savanna areas; in between is a forest zone. The country's largest river is the Volta and it is used also for generating hydroelectricity at the Akosombo dam. The dam was constructed in 1964 and it created an enormous man made Lake on the Volta. In addition to the capital Accra, other important cities are Kumasi, Tema, Sekondi-Takoradi, Cape Coast, and Tamale. Ghana's population is composed of many ethno linguistic groups, the principal of which are the Akan (Ashanti and Fanti), Mole-Dagbani, Ewe, and Ga-Adangme. English is the official language. Some 69% of the population is Christian (Pentecostal and other Protestant churches, and Roman Catholic) and 16% is Muslim (living mainly in the north), with the remainder following traditional religions (Dickson, 1966).

Ghana's economy is predominantly agricultural, with 60% of the population engaged in subsistence agriculture. The biggest cash crop is cocoa. Rice, coffee, cassava, peanuts, corn, sheanuts, oranges and bananas are also widely grown. Fishing and lumbering are important, although inadequate roads and facilities have hindered the development of the timber industry (Jones et al. 2004).

Ghana had a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of US\$ 380.00 (World Bank, 2005). The structure of Ghana's economy with an over-reliance on primary products is also endowed with many minerals; the most important being gold, but also industrial diamonds, bauxite, and manganese are found in the north, south, and coastal regions. There is some offshore petroleum

exploitation, and exploration for additional reserves identified significant deposits in 2007. Exploration is expected to begin in 2010.

The major industries in Ghana are mining, lumbering, light manufacturing, aluminum smelting, cocoa and other food processing, and shipbuilding. The major exports are gold and other minerals, cocoa, timber, and tuna. Imports include capital equipment, petroleum, and foodstuffs. The Netherlands, Nigeria, Great Britain, the United States, and China are Ghana's major trade partners. The country has a large but poorly maintained road system; old and delapidated rail lines built mainly during the colonial era to transport primary products from the southern hinterland to the coastal area for export connect the major centers in the south.

Ghana is governed under the constitution of 1992. The executive branch is headed by a president, who serves as both head of state and head of government. The unicameral legislature consists of a 230 seat Parliament. Both the president and the legislature are popularly elected for four-year terms; the president's tenure is limited to two terms. Administratively, the country is divided into ten regions (Jones et al. 2004).

In pre-colonial times the area of present-day Ghana comprised a number of independent kingdoms, including Gonja and Dagomba in the north, Ashanti in the interior, and the Fanti states along the coast. In 1482 the first European fort was established by the Portuguese at Elmina. Trade was begun, largely in gold and slaves, and intense competition developed among many European nations for trading advantages. With the decline of the slave trade in the 19th century, only the British, Danes, and Dutch still maintained forts on the Gold Coast. The Danes and Dutch withdrew in 1850 and 1872 respectively in the face of expansionist activities by the Ashanti kingdom; the British, however, remained and allied themselves with the Fanti states against Ashanti (Boateng, 1966).

In 1874 the British defeated Ashanti and organized the coastal region as the colony of the Gold Coast. There was fighting between British and Ashanti again in 1896, and in 1901 the British made the kingdom a colony. In the

same year the Northern Territories, a region north of Ashanti, were declared a British protectorate. After World War I part of the German colony of Togoland was mandated to the British, who linked it administratively with the Gold Coast colony. In the Gold Coast, nationalist activity, which began in the interwar period, intensified after World War II. Kwame Nkrumah of the Convention People's Party (CPP) emerged as the leading nationalist figure. In 1951, Britain granted Ghana a new constitution, which had been drawn up by Africans, and general elections were held. The CPP won overwhelmingly and Nkrumah became premier (Dickson, 1966).

On Mar. 6, 1957, the state of Ghana, named after the medieval West African empire, became an independent country within the Commonwealth of Nations. At the same time the people of British Togoland chose to become part of Ghana. In 1960, Nkrumah transformed Ghana into a republic, with himself as president for life. By a 1964 referendum, all opposition parties were outlawed, and many critics of the government were subsequently imprisoned. Nkrumah followed an anti-colonial, pan-African policy and grew increasingly less friendly to the West. Falling cocoa prices and poorly financed large development projects led to chaotic economic conditions, and in 1966 Nkrumah was overthrown by a military-police coup. A National Liberation Council (NLC) was set up to rule until the restoration of civilian government.

Relations with the Western powers improved, and in 1969 the NLC transferred power to the government of K. A. Busia, who had been elected under a new constitution. Busia's government was undermined by labor problems, an unpopular currency devaluation, an allians complaint order and serious inflation, and in 1972 it too was overthrown in a bloodless coup led by Col. I. K. Acheampong. The constitution was suspended and a National Redemption Council (NRC) set up to govern; it pursued a more neutralist course in foreign affairs and concentrated on developing Ghana's economy. The country's large foreign debt was brought under control; imports were curtailed; and the state took controlling interests in foreign-owned mining and timber firms (Jones 2004).

However, in 1978, Acheampong was forced out of office by a group of military officers led by General Akuffo. Low wages and high unemployment led to a series of strikes that further disrupted the economy. Formerly one of the most prosperous nations in W Africa, Ghana's economy was in severe decline. In June 1979 a group of junior military officers led by Flight Lt. Rawlings took advantage of the chaos to overthrow the military rule of Akuffo. The Rawlings government lifted a ban on political parties in 1979 but denied potential leaders the right to participate. Many of the previous military leaders were executed. Rawlings purged the country of opposition, then turned the government over to an elected president, Dr. Hilla Limann. The international community disapproved of Rawlings's tactics, and Nigeria afraid that the Rawlings experiment may be copied by Nigeria's dissatisfied junior military officers cut Ghana's crude oil supply. Poor economic conditions, restrictions on the press, and allegations of corruption led to popular discontent (Jones, 2004).

Rawlings seized power again in 1981 and tightened his political control throughout the 1980s. He enlisted economic help from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, and in the late 1980s the economy began to show significant growth. In 1992 the government promulgated a new constitution and lifted the ban on opposition parties. Later that year, Rawlings easily won a disputed presidential election. In 1994 several thousand people were killed and many more displaced in ethnic fighting in northern Ghana. In the 1996 elections, which were generally termed fair, Rawlings was returned to power. Ghana's economic recovery continued into the late 1990s. Under the constitution, Rawlings could not run for reelection in 2000. In the December elections, the candidate of the opposition New Patriotic party, John Agyekum Kufuor , was elected president; the party also won a near majority in the parliament. The governing National Democratic Congress was hurt by the declining economy. Kufuor oversaw improvement in the economy, although poverty remained widespread in Ghana, and in Dec., 2004, he won reelection and his New Patriotic Party secured a majority in the parliament. In 2009,

John Atta Mills was elected to office as president with a majority of about 40,000 votes (0.46%) between his party, the National Democratic Congress, and the New Patriotic Party, marking the second time that power had been transferred from one legitimately elected leader to another. This secured Ghana's status as a stable democracy. In 2008, Ghana placed 7th out of 48 sub-Saharan African countries in the Ibrahim Index of African Governance which was based on data from 2006. The Ibrahim Index is a comprehensive measure of African governance, based on a number of different variables which reflect the success with which governments deliver essential political goods to its citizens.

Ghana has vigorously pursued education sector development plans with the assistance of external support, and the education sector per se has improved. Adult literacy rate increased from 58.5% to 73.8%, with youth literacy education increasing from 81.8% to 92.2% between 1990 and 2000. Yet Ghana is still estimated to have more than one million children not attending primary school. The task of catching up with the years of missed educational opportunities, while striving to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of education for all with gender parity, places a huge challenge on the government.

**Map of Ghana: Political Geography**



Source: Google Maps 2009

### **1.3 Early Education Development in Ghana**

The History of Western education in Ghana dates back to 1592. Over the centuries Western education has had different goals, from spreading the Gospel to creating an elite group to run the colony. After Ghana gained its independence in 1957 the Western education system, then modeled on the British system, has undergone a series of reforms. The reforms in the 1980's were fundamental as they moved the western education system away from purely academic to cater more for the manpower needs of Ghana; at least according to the constitutional amendment. The present structure of education, which starts at the age of 6 years, consists of 6 years of primary education, 3 years of Junior Secondary School, 3 years of Senior Secondary School and 4 years University or courses at other tertiary institutions. The first 9 years form the basic education system and are free and compulsory (Dickson, 1966). The development of the Ghana education system can be divided into three broad eras; the mercantile, the colonial and the post independence era.

#### **1.3.1 The Mercantile Era**

As was the case in many colonies during the early colonial period, the main goal of education was to make "civilization" work hand-in-hand with evangelization. This statement gives a clear description of how education in Ghana was implemented. Initially it was the Portuguese, Danish, Dutch and English merchants who set up schools in their Forts (Christianborg Castle Accra – Danish, Elmina Castle – Portuguese then Dutch and Cape Coast Castle – British) to educate their mulatto children by native women. Unmistakably linked to the implementation of western type formal education in Ghana were the Christian Missionaries, who realized that in order to spread the word of God they needed well-educated local assistants.

John Von Richelieu, one of the Danish Governors to Ghana, approached the Basel Mission Society of Switzerland in 1828. They played an important role in establishing an education network in Ghana. Representatives of this



organization were able to convince the Chiefs of Ghana in 1832 to send their children to the Government School at Osu. This was meant to create acceptance for the western type formal education among the people. They also concentrated on the interior of Ghana, away from the European influences on the coast.

Besides reading, writing and arithmetic, workshops were organized for students to acquire practical skills. Carpentry, masonry, blacksmithing, shoemaking and sewing for girls were taught, as well as practical agriculture and medical and health education.

One of the greatest achievements of the Basel Mission Society was the transcription of local languages (Twi, Ewe and Ga languages) to facilitate education and the spreading of the Gospel. By 1894, 62 years after their arrival in Ghana, they had established a Training College, three grammar schools, seven boarding schools for boys and girls and 98-day schools.

Continuing and complementing the work done by the Basel Mission Society were those the mission initially educated and those it called to the cause of spreading the Gospel (Dickson, 1966).

### **1.3.2 The Colonial Era**

In 1874 the British Government had full colonial authority of the Gold Coast colony. Already great progress had been made in the education sector. Various Mission Schools were now scattered over the interior of Ghana. By 1882 there were 139 schools. However the education systems used varied widely. This prompted the government to draw up its first plans in 1882 to guide the development of education. An Inspector of Schools was instated from 1887 until 1890. Then the office of the Director of Education was created. In 1918 the first real targets for the development of education were set by Sir. Hugh Clifford:

- Primary education for every African boy and girl
- A Training College for teachers in every province

-Better salaries for teachers

-A Royal College

Ultimately the proposed targets and recommendations from several committees' such as "the Phelps-Stokes Fund" from America and the 1922 Committee led to the opening of the Prince of Wales College in 1927. Later it became the Achimota College. It offered general secondary education as well as post secondary technical education and teachers training for both sexes. The former College is now a prestigious (secondary) school and the present University of Ghana has its roots in the Achimota College.

Great strides were made on the education front from 1922 till 1938. Several Industrial Schools were established, focusing on technical and agricultural education. A separate Department of Education was established to develop education in the neglected Northern territories. At the Prince of Wales College scholarships were awarded to students to continue their studies in British universities.

By 1933 an important emphasis was placed on the training of teachers by the government. Also several local languages were approved as examinable subjects for the Cambridge University School Certificate. Many different topics such as domestic science, child welfare, bookkeeping and typewriting found their way into the secondary education system.

The Second World War affected the progress of education as all the European inspectors, teachers other colonial employees were mobilized for war. Consequently the first African Director of Education was appointed, Mr. V.A. Tetty. Before Mr. Tetty Ghana had known other native education pioneers. One of Ghana's greatest scholars ever was Dr. James Kwegyir Aggrey. In 1898 he went to study in the United States on a scholarship. He obtained a string of degrees, including a B.A., a MBA and a Ph.D. On his return to the Gold Coast he was appointed Vice-Principal of the Prince of Wales College.

Dr. Aggrey campaigned with great commitment for women's education. He believed that educating a man was to educate an individual, while educating a woman had a far greater effect on family and society.

By the 1950's there were approximately 3000 primary and secondary schools in Ghana and 6.6% of the 4.2 million citizens were in School. The British laid a solid foundation for the western formal education system in Ghana, however only a small group had access to it. The Nkrumah Government in 1952 saw education as a major instrument for national development and introduced the policy of education for all (Dickson, 1966).

### **1.3.3 The Post-Independent Era**

The 1961 Act, (Act 87) initiated by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah was aimed at achieving Free Universal Primary Education. The Act made Education compulsory and free.

Section 2 (1): "Every child who has attained the school-going age (six-years) as determined by the Minister shall attend a course of instruction as laid down by the Minister in a school recognized for the purpose by the Minister"

Section 20 (2): "No fee, other than the payment for the provision of essential books or stationary or materials required by pupils for use in practical work, shall be charged in respect of tuition at a public primary, middle or special school."

The Ghanaian Education System at this point (end of the 1960's) consisted of six-years of primary education, followed by four-years of middle school and five years of secondary education. At the end of the five years suitable students went on to do a two-year sixth form course that could lead to a three-year University course. Students, who were not suitable to continue, completed two-years of pre-vocational classes.

The system was soon regarded as too long and too academic. Thus in 1974 a reform of the system was initiated, instating the Junior Secondary

School on an experimental basis. The Junior Secondary School introduced practical subjects and activities allowing students to acquire occupational skills, which after an apprenticeship lead to the qualification for self-employment.

Due to a wide range of factors such as the economic decline, bureaucracy and sheer lack of interest the JSS-system never went beyond the experimental phase. By 1983 the education system was in a state of crisis. It faced drastic reductions in Government financing, lack of educational materials, and deterioration of school structures, low enrolment levels and high dropout rates. Most qualified teachers migrated to Nigeria and other African countries during this period and leaving the Ghanaian education system in its worse shape since independence. This mass exodus of teachers was not limited to the primary and secondary levels, many university professors also joined the band wagon of migration to Nigeria. I remember in 1981 more than half of my professors at Ahmadu Bello University were from Ghana.

The Reforms of the 1980's with the assistance of several development partners (World Bank, Department for International Development (ODA) and other agencies) the education system was reviewed and proposals were implemented in 1987.

A brief summary of the objectives of the implemented actions:

- Increase access to basic education
- Shorten the pre-university education structure from 17 years to 12 years.
- Make education cost-effective
- Improve quality of education by making it more effective to socio-economic conditions

The Junior Secondary School structure was now implemented on a nation wide basis. Primary school consisted of 6 and 3 years of junior secondary school were a standard; meaning 9 years of free and compulsory basic

education. The reforms saw further changes from hours spend at school to educational resources such as infrastructure of class blocks and libraries, school supplies and technical skills equipment.

Although the reforms helped to solve some of the problems, the results achieved by students at the primary school level were low. The government then embarked on the BESIP/FCUBE (Basic Education Sector Improvement – or more popular- the Free Compulsory, Universal, Basic Education Program) program, which was aimed at providing every child of school-going age with good basic education. This will later be streamlined to conform to the “mandates” of the “Education for ALL” drive.

Some of the objectives of the FCUBE program were:

- Improving the quality of learning and teaching
- Improving access to basic education facilities

The Tertiary Education sector also underwent reforms. By 1979 Ghana had 3 Universities with a number of research institutions and professional associations. The main objectives of the reforms were to improve quality, efficiency, access, equity, relevance and sustainability.

The present structure of education, which starts at the age of 6 years, is a 6-3-3-4 structure representing, 6 years of primary education, 3 years of Junior Secondary School, 3 years of Senior Secondary School and 4 years University. Students who successfully pass the Senior Secondary School Certificate examination can also follow courses at a Polytechnic, Teachers Training College or other tertiary institutions (Coulombe and Wodon, 2007).

As mentioned earlier on, the first 9 years form the basic education and is free and compulsory. The basic education is designed to expose children to a wide variety of ideas and skills and instill attitudes that will help them cope creatively with their environment and stimulate them to be an asset to their country.

The curriculum used in schools is work-oriented. The Primary School

level curriculum consists of English, Ghanaian language and Culture, Mathematics, Environmental studies, Integrated Science, Religious and Moral Education and physical activities such as Music, Dance and Physical Education. The Junior Secondary School level makes a distinction between Agricultural and General science and incorporates subjects such as pre-vocational Skills and pre-technical skills. Students can also take Social Studies and French as a 3<sup>rd</sup> language if they so desire.

The Senior Secondary School curriculum has Core subjects and Elective subjects. Every student takes four core subjects: English language, Mathematics, Integrated Science (incl. Science, Agriculture and Environmental studies) and Social Studies (economics, geography, history and government). Students also choose 3 elective subjects from 5 available programs: Agriculture Program, General Program (Arts or Science option), Business Program, Vocational Program and Technical program (Coulombe and Wodon, 2007).

Basic and Senior Secondary School run a 40 week school year and students are tested using an internal continuous assessment (30% of final score) and an external examination conducted by the West African Examinations Council (70% of final score).

Ghana has developed a road map known as Vision 2020, it was initiated to guide into a middle income country status. The basic objectives of the Vision 2020 document are to: “reduce poverty, increase employment opportunities and average incomes, and to reduce inequities in order to improve the general welfare and the material well being of all Ghanaians” (Minister of Education).

The Vision 2020 document contains an education policy with the objectives to ensure all citizens regardless of gender or social status, are functionally literate and productive at the minimum. It further states that in order to achieve Vision 2020, the education system must embrace science and technology as it is the technological era and countries that fail to recognize this will not be able to escape the clutches of poverty (Minister of Education). The education policy mainly extends to four major groups of the education

system:

- a) Basic Education (FCUBE – Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education)
- b) Secondary Education
- c) Teachers Education
- d) Tertiary Education

The Vision 2020 education policy has objectives for each sector within the education system. Besides the objectives for each sector all sectors must embrace an increase in scientifically and technological education as well as making education more accessible to girls in order to obtain a gender balance.

The objectives for the Basic Education level (FCUBE) are:

- 1) Improving the quality of learning and teaching
- 2) Improving access to basic education facilities
- 3) Encouraging private sector participation in the provision of education facilities
- 4) Improving management efficiency

(Coulombe and Wodon, 2007)

#### **1.4 Statement of the Research Problem**

In 2006, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) carried a debt burden amounting to three times the value of its annual exports. The region spends more on paying its debts than it does on health and education. In 1999, the public debt of the region was estimated at US\$235 billion. Annual debt service amounted on average to US\$17 billion and this is the equivalent of 3.8% of the region's GDP, it accounts for 16% of SSA annual exports, and 35% of the *education* spending for all countries in the region. These revealing figures clearly show that SSA's external public debt is the principal barrier to the region's development challenges. This holds back progress in all sectors, including *education* by

forcing indebted countries in the region to allocate scarce resources to loan repayment rather than to the well-being of their people. Budgetary belt-tightening, of which the social sectors are the first victims, have undermined health and *education* systems, slowed progress toward Education for All (EFA) targets, Millennium Development Goals, the development of democracy, safe guarding human rights in the region and hampered the development of effective measures for combating AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other preventable diseases (Adedeji, 1996).

Different approaches have been experimented domestically and internationally to “assist” SSA countries break the vicious cycle in which they are encapsulated. The inability of SSA countries to meet international, bi-lateral, multilateral and domestic development targets is testimony to the fact that most of the approaches have not been successful enough.

On reviewing contemporary international development initiatives like the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, the G8 Action Plan for Africa, New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and several poverty reduction strategies, we observed significant changes taking place in the context of development generally and particularly in development cooperation. The reductionist economic approaches to development and particularly for improving education systems in SSA which were pursued vigorously by the World Bank with support from the wealthiest countries in the world since the mid 1980s are gradually giving way to the inclusion of social and human dimensions in development agendas. Those who formulate policies for these international initiatives (especially UNESCO and UNDP) have been forced to realize the brutal mistakes of their past policies and the effects these have had on the people in SSA. The effects have been most severe for the most vulnerable and especially among the younger and older generation, girls and women, displaced people and marginalized groups are among the worst victims. The best illustration of this new external wave is that education has become central. Every international initiative now places education at the heart of the processes of shaping political socialization for



effective political participation and “good governance”, for human capital development and maintenance, for economic and sustainable growth, for equitable redistribution of meager national resources, for effective health care and against HIV/AIDS, for slowing down population growth, for the promotion of peace, and for human rights and recently cultural diversity and solidarity within and between generations (UNDP 2004). In light of these initiatives, external efforts to help develop education systems in SSA or educational cooperation, is also defining new paths.

Our study is therefore intended to be a contribution to these new paths.

#### **1.4.1 Main Research Questions**

This study will not serve its purpose if we do not trace the possible origins of the African education development challenges as we believe that the overall African development crisis can be partly located therein. In this context, we begin our study with a historical analysis of educational development in Ghana from independence in the 1957 to date. We then attempt to identify the major actors in designing and executing education policies in SSA. We discuss the foundations on which educational development in the region generally and more specifically in Ghana were and are based, the philosophical orientations which guide them, the pedagogic discourses if any from which they are framed, policy and strategic orientations and the methodological approaches used in identifying the courses of the education crisis in Africa. We have chosen to frame five broad research questions and identified four analytical strategies with which we will discuss our questions. Our main research questions are:

*How did the education systems now in practice in SSA evolve? Who has been involved in developing these systems?* In our historical analysis of the development of education in the two cases studies (Ghana), we will look broadly at the introduction of Western type education. We will be interested in the major actors who contributed to developing western type education.

*What is the motivation for participating in developing western type education in SSA?* In answering this question, we will be interested in the motivations of the early actors in establishing western type education in the two countries. In contrast to this, we will examine the changes that have taken place and try to establish current motivations for involvement in education in the two countries and especially from the World Bank and other western actors. Why for instance is Norway interested in education development in SSA?

*What was the nature of the contributions of the major actors?* A lot has been written about the contributions of external actors in developing education systems in SSA but very little is known about domestic efforts and we will provide some guidance to this effect. Insights into the nature of contributions will also throw some light on the fifth main research question.

*What was the level of domestic participation?* This is one of the most important objectives of this study. In the current era where democratic foundations are expected in every human relationship, we will analyze the extent to which domestic voices were included in discussions about education in the two countries. Complementary set of questions will include; was participation voluntary? Who was invited to participate? Who was represented and with whose mandate? Who was head and who had the dominating voice and why?

*On what foundation, philosophy and pedagogic discourses were all these initiatives based?*

We anticipate our study will contribute in the ongoing discourses about development in SSA and particularly in throwing more light on what has gone wrong in developing education systems in SSA in the last four decades. We will use Ghana's experiences as our major focus, and in as much as we do not assume that Ghana is the best representatives of all SSA countries, we believe that Ghana having said to have pioneered education development in the region

and one of the countries that was worse hit by the economic crises present a very unique examples to emphasize our point of departure. Remarkably, Ghana is also the country that is said to have sustained its growth from the mid 2005 to date (World Bank, 2004).

#### **1.4.2 Analytical Strategy**

Our main research questions as outlined above will form the major threads that will run through the whole study.

##### 1. Epistemological Shifts:

One of our observations is an epistemological shift from a cumulative to a structural approach in the context of development planning and particularly in education reform. This implies moving from an approach based on spatial<sup>2</sup> and temporal<sup>3</sup> additions to a *holistic*<sup>4</sup> vision that is *integrative* and *future-oriented*. This is indeed a qualitative change and has initiated a movement towards a reference framework that is capable of producing some structure, coherence, and continuity in planning and development for the future.

In view of this shift, we believe that, there still remain questions about the terms and conditions for including and excluding actors situated outside SSA countries and their domestic agents in the development discourse and particularly, the pedagogic discourse (Bernstein, 1999; Haavelsrud, 2004; Hovdenak, 1999). Over the past five decades, there has been a top-down and from outside rationality of a framework for development in SSA and particularly in the education sector. There are very many explanations about why this type of relationship has come to be (see Samoff, 1996). We argue that the result of the relationship overtime produced a dependency framework where many countries in SSA tended to depend very heavily on actors outside

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<sup>2</sup> The sum of fragmentary projects

<sup>3</sup> succession of cycles of projects

<sup>4</sup> all levels and branches of the system

their respective countries and their co-opted domestic agents for developing SSA education systems. The lack of effective domestic participation in the pedagogic discourses, we argue have created problems such as: the lack of a solid institutional capacity; to manage, maintain and guide policies and reform in education, lack of adequate human resource mapping, resulting in overemphasis on certain sectors and serious deficiencies in others, brain drain, financial difficulties the education systems face, the lack of an African oriented curriculum in schools and teacher training among others.

## 2. Autonomy, Responsibility and Accountability:

This new framework will require countries in SSA to claim back their autonomy and responsibility for their development, cutting loose the five decade old umbilical cord between the center and the periphery and advising external actors, to take a back-bencher role - of support, partnership and accompaniment. Such an approach will give countries in SSA both a dominant position in defining their development priorities and a key role in implementing them. Promoting this trend, however, requires a change in attitude not only among the external actors but also among the leaders and policy makers within SSA countries. This will probably lead to a “cultural revolution” that may result to SSA countries beginning to think about “counting their own strengths first” and seeking advice only for supplementary purposes. The process of taking responsibility for one’s own development will lead to strengthening national capacities. The learning process is part of designing, planning and guiding programs - tasks which the countries must assume.

## 3. Technical Assistance Approaches & New Trends:

New emphasis on sector-wide approaches and in poverty reduction strategies are gradually replacing traditional technical assistance partnerships and require SSA countries to “learn to build by building.”

#### 4. Philosophical Foundations of African Education:

This involves strengthening the meaning and relevance of education and particularly African education. It calls into question the purposes and objectives of training and their links with professional skills, technological developments, socio-cultural and political socialization, the formation, development and maintenance of human capital, earning a livelihood, and life skills for the most disadvantaged. We argue that this is probably the most important reason why education should assume a prominent role; education should act as a “server”, a “conveyor” a “relay” for other sectors and thereby justifies its role as the sector with highest priority in developing SSA.

The consequences of such a shift in development thinking and particularly in developing educational systems in SSA is significant. Moving the center from the outside (“other-centered”) to the country (“self-centered”) strengthens national leadership, mobilizes local potential and emphasizes the internal players and dynamics as the main factors in development. In institutional and technical terms, the self-construction of programs goes beyond issues of appropriation by developing capacities as part of a problem-solving process in which the solutions add to local or indigenous knowledge and build skills that are relevant to a given context (Odora Hoppers, 2008). The conditions for effective outside intervention are therefore met because the very resources and internal dynamics that they are designed to strengthen and accelerate have been created. The concept of support expressed by financial support and knowledge-sharing thus becomes entirely justified (Samoff, 1996).

## **1.5 Structure of the Thesis**

This analytic study comprises five separate papers each of which address a unique but complementary aspect of this dissertation.

1. The first paper addresses the historical development of western education in Ghana. We explore the systems of traditional or “African” education that was developed before the arrival of western type education. We analyze the colonial government’s efforts as well as missionary education approaches in the pre-independence years. We trace education development and reform in the post independence period to the early 1980s. The early 1980s marked the massive external intervention and interest in education development in Africa. We critique the importation of whole systems with all the different cultural variables that were embedded in it and argue that the challenges Ghana soon faced in developing its education system was part due to the fact that the system was not modified adequately to meet the local needs of Ghana. Based on this line of argument, we contend that the current wave of external reform “blue-prints” are likely to cause similar malfunctioning like the colonial system did.
2. In our second paper, we explore the methodological orientations of the research and also socio-cultural, epistemological, economic dilemmas and ethical implications we encountered during the entire research process. We have chosen the qualitative approach as we found out very early in our research process that there are several merits for using the qualitative methods in research on Africa. However, we agree that the qualitative method must be employed with caution otherwise, it can present many challenges to the research process. We found out that if some of the challenges we encountered during this research process are not carefully addressed and given due attention, they may not only disrupt the research process, but may also have serious consequences for the various participants we encountered in the process. Our orientation is critical and discursive, employing theoretical perspectives relevant to the approaches to be adapted, and concentrating on a “within and below” model Haavelsrud (1996). We explore qualitative and documentary approaches to data collection and analysis and an extensive study and analysis of relevant documents from Ghana, the neo-liberal research community, and from within the UN system and the Bretton Woods institutions. We make consultations with resource persons within Ghana and those in the Diasporas and researchers with internationally recognized conceptual perspectives.

Another discourse at this level is the concept of discourse coalitions, which explains how a group of actors who share an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories influence policy-making processes on the national as well as the international arena.

A final level of analysis is the significance of local knowledge in discourses of policy planning nationally and internationally (see Apple 2006; Haavelsrud 1996; Odora Hoppers 2008). Their analysis will help us illuminate the “invisible” structural factors and power relations on the national and global level and to what extent these dynamics influence educational policy formulation within the World Bank and in Ghana.

The interplay of these discourses, we believe will add relevant substance to the existing knowledge development in meeting the development aspirations of both the North and the South. The power of the information revolution has helped us extensively in sourcing data.

3. Our third paper addresses the theoretical lenses with which we base our analysis on. We reflect on contemporary trends in education policy and education research to suggest that both policy and research often lose sight of the broader context of educational practice and endanger education development in Africa. We argue that neo-liberal and market centered policies in education are the most apparent examples of this danger. We argue further that contemporary social theory and empirical research based on social science foundations still have an important role to play in the understanding and interpretation of the changing relationships between the state, civil society and education. We recognize the ambivalence of our endeavor and emphasize that sociology of education alone cannot prescribe the detailed direction of education policy. However, we contend that lenses used by sociologists of education are necessary and do play a modest role in the development of education policy and practice. Economists have for the last two decades dominated research in the field of education policy and until sociologists of education recapture the front seat in the education policy/practice debate serious damage will be done to contemporary education reform movements. The theoretical frameworks we have explored are three fold. Firstly, we employ established development theories to explain the center-periphery relationship using Haavelsrud’s (1996) “four views of educational needs” model. How does such a model apply to the donor/recipient relationships in terms of policy formulation for the development of education in Ghana? Central to this, we intend to explore the modernization thought as well as the dependency and neo-liberal development and education theories and how these are connected to policy formulation for educational

development. We examine the relevance and adequacy of contemporary development theories and neo-liberal ideas in Ghana.

Secondly, we present some counterpoint pedagogic models developed within the field of educational reform that seems most relevant to this study. The works of (Bernstein 1960 to 1996, Apple, 1996, 1999 and Haavelsrud, 1996-2008, Odora Hoppers 1999-2009) and others are used to explain the scenarios that are confronted when educational reform is contemplated. Bernstein (1999) for instance, suggests that educational reforms arises out of a struggle to construct, reconstruct and impose pedagogic identities considered to be crucial to the reproduction or production of the dominating principles as these are projected and institutionalized in education. In order to analyze pedagogic identities and particularly their change through the process of educational reform, he argues that we should look at the discursive arena. He further states that these identities arise out of contemporary cultural and technological change that emerge from dislocations; moral, cultural, economic, political etc. and are perceived as the means of regulating and effecting change.

The third fold involves a critical presentation of the theory of “discourse” or discourse coalitions in the relationship and inter-relationship between power and knowledge. Foucault (1971) argues that knowledge and power are inseparable, that forms of power are imbued with knowledge, and power relations permeate forms of knowledge. No body of knowledge, states Foucault, can be formed without a system of communication, records, accumulation, and displacement, which is, in it, a form of power. Conversely, no power can be exercised without the extraction, appropriation, distribution, or retention of knowledge. Power and knowledge are two sides of a single process. The theory of discourse in this study is about what can be said, and thought, it is also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. (Foucault 1971).

According to Ball, discourse provides a particular and pertinent way of understanding policy formulation “for policies are, pre-eminently, statements about practice... intended to bring about idealized solutions to diagnosed problems.... they legitimate and initiate practices in the world, they privilege certain visions and interests” (Ball 1990:22).

Haavelsrud (1996) emphasized that there is an enormous inequality between developed and developing nations in terms of their capacity to produce knowledge at academic institutions. Likewise, it would be equally important to design educational systems that would enhance the possibility of accepting local knowledges and identities as valid educational content and form and argue that the only way is to develop dialogic democracy (Odora Hoppers 1998).



4. The fourth paper is an analysis of the role of education in sustaining democratic political development in Ghana. At the macro-level, we focus on the sustainability of Western type liberal democracy in Ghana by exploring how certain generalized Western conceptions are not suitable in specific African contexts. At the micro-level, we discuss the ideological foundations on which liberal democracy is constructed and specifically on the notion of the “individual” and argue that this notion may not be applicable in many African contexts. Finally, we challenge the validity of Universalist claims made on behalf of democracy and raise some questions for further research. In conclusion we propose that education can serve as a factor in the development and sustenance of good governance in Ghana. We also propose more emphasis on indigenous knowledge systems as a condition for sustaining Western type liberal democracy in emerging African democracies.
  
5. In the fifth paper, we critically examine the discussion about the impact of structural adjustment reforms on the education sector in Ghana in the 1980s. The paper highlights two main analytical approaches, which featured prominently in discussions. The first approach seeks to substantiate non-market solutions to the challenges of resource allocation in the social sector such as education. The second analytical model underscores the rationale of market-oriented solutions through the use of cost benefit analysis and social rates of return to investment in education. It is suggested that both approaches through their evaluative frameworks, tend to justify either non-market or market solutions to resource allocations in the education sector in Ghana.

We argue that while both conceptual models provide a useful insight into the process of resource allocation in education under the structural adjustment regime in Ghana, they are nevertheless constrained by their underlying theoretical and instrumentalist’s assumptions. The contentions raised in this paper further suggests that if interventions to correct the imbalances in resource allocations to education, are not locally grown, - from “within and below” but are imposed or conditioned from “outside and above” (Haavelsrud (1996), they may not be effective in solving the imbalances they seek to correct. We also argue that they can further weaken the gains made in Ghana during the period right after independence in terms of access, cost reduction, quantity and quality of education.

We argue that the market oriented assumptions are invariably imbedded in technical rationality and neo-liberal thinking; we believe that this is an ideological model that is not yet adequately and sustainably grounded in Ghana. Consequently, we explore some alternative models which may be more sustainable and help resolve the

decades old imbalances is a multi-disciplinary approach, which integrates various strands of local knowledge and social thought. We explore two approaches that Dale and Robertson (2002) use in examining contemporary global movements and their implications on education. Their studies identify what they call a Common World Educational Culture (CWEC) and a Globally Structured Agenda for Education (GSAE). The CWEC assumes that the international community consists of nation-state systems, composed of individual sovereign countries. They argue that the nation-state system based on its European origins and thrust to modernization, is a universal structure in which the individual actors, the nation-states, conform to general world patterns. In contrast, they explain that in GSAE, social and economic forces are operating supranationally and transnationally, rather than internationally, and are working to break down nation-state boundaries and are reconstructing relations between nations. In this analysis there seem to be two contesting realities that are in tension when considering educational reform movements in the African context: the nation-state and an emerging global society. An important point in this consideration is that the nation-state is an existent and historically defined entity, while the emerging global society and economy if we may add is fluid and ill defined and subject to various ramifications. According to Dale and Robertson, despite differences between the two opposing constructs, both approaches agree on three fundamental principles: 1) on the importance of supranational forces; 2) that the education policies of individual nation-states can be influenced by external forces; and 3) that policy-making in nation-states is shaped by both national and supranational forces.

We argue that, the fundamental differences between Dale and Robertson's two approaches to contemporary education reform movements are mainly based on Western cultural experiences are driven by the need to maintain capitalism. We support Bernstein's (1996) postulation when in his analysis of the contemporary trends in education reform, he argues that this global pedagogic device is characterized by dominant forms of symbolic control conducive to the maintenance of the present asymmetric world system. The asymmetric discourse underlying the choice of symbolic controls on the global level is of such a quality that resulting educational priorities might be seen as a tool for strengthening the very asymmetry that produced them. We further suggest that only such an alternative and holistic approach can reflect the multi-faceted and complex aspects of educational gains in developing societies and particularly in Ghana.

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## 2.0 THEORETICAL DISPOSITIONS & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS<sup>5</sup>

### **Abstract**

*In this paper, I reflect on contemporary trends in education policy and education research to suggest that both policy and research often lose sight of the broader context of educational practice and endanger global education. Neo-liberal or market oriented policies in education is the most apparent example of this danger. This paper argues that contemporary social theory and empirical research based on social science foundations still have an important role to play in the understanding and interpretation of the changing relationships between the state, civil society and education. I recognize the ambivalence of my attempt and emphasize that sociological insights alone cannot prescribe the detailed direction of education policy. However, I argue that sociological points of departure are necessary and do play a modest role in the sociology of education and for that matter in the development of education policy.*

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<sup>5</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Joint Curriculum & Teaching Conference in 1999 in Dayton, Ohio-USA. The background for this paper is from the Annual Conference of Norsk Forening for Utvikling Forskning organized in Tromsø, Norway in 1998.

## **2.1 Introduction**

In the last two decades, there appears to have been considerable debate amongst contemporary social theorists as to whether we are living in late capitalism, post-modernity, post-traditionalism and so on. In this paper, we want to explore two main themes.

First, the ways in which sociology might help us to make sense of contemporary education policy. And, secondly, the ways in which sociology might be positioned in relation to future developments in education policy and practice. In this context, we will draw mainly on two areas of education policy. Firstly on privatization of education, in the context of school choice, local control, cost effectiveness, national curriculums and standardized tests in the West. Secondly on the return of investment in education, user fees, cost control and more emphasis on basic education in West Africa. I argue that most Western donors, bilateral partners, World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and in some cases Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) are imposing reforms on countries in the south just like how they approved one party dictatorships right after independence and also imposed Structural Adjustment policies and multi-party democracies on indebted nations of the South in the mid 1980s.

## **2.2 Sociological Dispositions**

We wish to investigate the extent to which some sociological dispositions can help us to make sense of contemporary education reform trends in many parts of the world aimed at restructuring and deregulating state education systems. We think that the most critical emphasis in all such initiatives have been policies aimed at eradicating centralized educational bureaucracies and creating in their place systems of education which entail significant degrees of institutional autonomy, a variety of forms of school-based management and administration, issues of quality and equity, addressing the concerns of traditionally marginalized and under-represented groups. In many cases, these changes have also been linked to an increased emphasis on parental choice

and on competition between diversified, specialized forms of provision and local control. This according to Le Grand & Bartlett (1993), has created what is now commonly known as 'quasi-markets' in educational services. We argue that such policies have received particular encouragement from what was known as the New Right governments in Britain and USA in the 1980s, and have subsequently been fostered by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Africa, Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe (Arnove, 1996 and Isahaku, 1993). The political rhetoric of the New Labor in Britain, New Democrats in USA and even "den nye AP" (Labor Party) in Norway have all begun to place increasing emphasis on diversity, decentralization and choice in education Hovdenak (1998). According to Green, (1994) these directions in education policy have not penetrated all countries, and they have been mediated differently by the traditions of different nation states and different political parties, the similarity between the broad trends in many parts of the world suggests that education policy may be witnessing something sociologically significant – something perhaps rather more important than the ideologies of the different political parties in the North. We believe that sociologists should wake up and play a role in this evolving trend otherwise we will be left to do damage control and this is a more challenging task. The current trends suggest that economists are well positioned to direct the course of education provision in education globally.

According to Shilling (1993), a lot of the analyses of education policy are characterized by a lack of theory and a lack of sociological insights. In this context, we are interested in the analysis of how far contemporary social theory can help us make sense of recent trends in formulating education policy and especially in developing countries. Some researchers have argued that current shifts in the ways in which education is organized reflect broader changes in the nature of the countries in the north and have been characterized by some commentators in the USA as post-Fordism and by others as post-modernity. However, Kenway (1993) contends that the rapid rise of market orientations in education is much more significant than post-

Fordism; she therefore terms it as a 'postmodern' phenomenon. In her pessimistic version of post-modernity, she argues that, "transnational corporations and their myriad subsidiaries ... shape and reshape our individual and collective identities as we plug in ... to their cultural and economic communications networks" (p. 119). Her picture is one in which notions of 'difference', far from being eradicated by the 'globalization of culture', are assembled, and displayed, celebrated, commodified and exploited (Robins 1991). Such trends, she implies, can be detected in the current emphasis on both tradition and diversity in education policy. In another commentary, Ball (1990) claims to see in the new forms of schooling a move away from the 'Fordist'<sup>6</sup> school towards a 'post-Fordist' one – the educational equivalent of flexible specialization driven by the imperatives of differentiated consumption replacing the old assembly-line world of mass production.

There is also a view that portrays the rhetoric of "current education reform movements" as offering more positive images of *choice* and *diversity*, reflecting *the needs of communities and interest groups* brought into prominence as a result of complex contemporary patterns of political, economic and cultural differentiation. This move has resulted in the intersection of the traditional class divisions upon which common systems of mass education were built. A perspective that gave us an opportunity to contrast post-modernity with the oppressive uniformity of modernist thinking – as "*a form of liberation, in which the fragmentation and plurality of cultures and social groups allow a hundred flowers to bloom*" (Thompson 1992:225-226). Others suggest that part of the appeal of the current education reforms lies in their declared intention to encourage the growth of different types of school (public, private and parochial) especially in USA. They argue that current reforms are responsive to the needs of particular communities and groups. This thinking seeks to favor making possibilities for community-based welfare - decentralization, rather than bureaucratically controlled welfare -

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<sup>6</sup> The "Fordist" school is a characterization of the organization and structure of schools like factories for the mass production of motor vehicles.



centralization and by so doing, “reducing the state and empowering civil society”. This perspective has sometimes been viewed positively, particularly by groups who have been traditionally underrepresented and/or marginalized by centralized power structures. However we think that, to a large extent, “radical” pluralist ideas also turn to support concepts that promote diversity and may even seem more attractive than unicentric notions of comprehensive schooling and, indeed, unicentric notions of citizenship. We also think that such an analysis makes some aspects of the rhetoric of the new policies thus seem to connect to the aspirations of groups who have found little to identify with in the “*grand narratives*” associated with class-based politics. In light of the forgoing contestations, contemporary reforms can be viewed as a rejection of all totalizing narratives and their replacement by “*a set of cultural projects united [only] by a self-proclaimed commitment to heterogeneity, fragmentation and difference*” Boyne & Rattansi (1990:9). We therefore caution that this may possibly be misunderstood as support for schools run on a variety of principles and may reflect a broader shift from the assumptions of modernity to those of post-modernity. We are very pessimistic about this new trend of empowerment of marginalized groups and all the rhetoric that is associated with it. Our experiences in Ghana revealed that the cultural and philosophical foundations on which contemporary trends to strengthen civil society are based was crafted in the global centers of Europe and America with very limited local participation. Our fear is that just like the “white elephants” of the immediate post independence era in Sub Saharan Africa, if the structures that finance and support the contemporary base changes, the entire contemporary project will lack a foundation on which to stand.

### **2.3 Empirical Support**

In the context of the various positions on educational reform, we think it may appear very convincing and may even be suggestive as they sometimes are that these different but similar versions of contemporary reform are indeed rationale. According to Apple (1996), we should be wary of overstating the move

into post-modernity and to avoid the danger of substituting one weak grand narrative for another. Translating this to the micro platform, Apple suggests that instead of accepting this rhetoric at face value, we should ground our understandings in the lives of teachers and students in schools (see also Hovdenak, 1998). This micro perspective though very central in the North American sociology of education enterprise will not be taken up in this paper. We are looking for theoretical support to ground our research and we often encounter various problems with these current education reform theses. This is because there is very little theoretical analysis of the impacts of the imposition of grand narratives on developing countries. It is more problematic if we get eclectic and start asking questions about the sources of these grand narratives and how relevant they can be cultural settings that are still struggling for an ideological base. Adedeji (1986), Haavelsrud (1996) have argued about the irrelevance of contemporary theories in the analysis of development challenges in Africa. According to Hickox, (1995) available theory on contemporary reform is notoriously vague and also tends to exaggerate the extent to which we have moved to a new regime of accumulation. Allen (1992) contends that in so far as recent changes in management practices represent an adjustment to the problems of Fordism rather than signifying an entirely new direction, neo-Fordism may be a more appropriate term than post-Fordism.

We think there is a growing body of empirical evidence that suggest we should be cautious about the optimistic readings of post-modernity as they may be dangerously naïve and misleading. For instance, rather than benefiting the urban poor, as many of the advocates of quasi-market systems of public education claim Moe (1994) and Pollard (1995), emphasis on parental choice and school autonomy in recent reforms seems to be further disadvantaging the disadvantaged. There is no doubt in the United States that it is increasing the differences between popular and less popular schools on a linear scale – reinforcing a vertical hierarchy of schooling types rather than providing the promised horizontal diversity. In a critique about the Norwegian reform policies

of the 1990's Hovdenak (1998), has also articulated similar concerns about the hierarchical and hegemonic tendencies of the reforms and raises questions about power, control and voice in policy formulations. Many researchers argue that for most members of disadvantaged groups, as opposed to the few individuals who escape from schools at the bottom of the status hierarchy, the new arrangements seem to be just a more sophisticated and intensified way of reproducing traditional distinctions between different types of school and between the people who attend them (Gewirtz et al., 1995; Lauder et al, 1995; Smith & Noble, 1995; Whitty, 1997).

There is ample evidence from a whole range of empirical studies suggesting that to regard the current espousal of heterogeneity, pluralism and local narratives as indicative of a new social order may be to mistaken phenomenal forms for structural relations. Marxist critics of theories of postmodernism and postmodernity, such as Callinicos (1989), who reassert the primacy of the class struggle, certainly take this view. Harvey (1989), who does recognize significant changes, suggests that postmodernist cultural forms and more flexible modes of capital accumulation may be shifts in surface appearance, rather than signs of the emergence of some entirely new post-capitalist or even post-industrial society. Lash (1990), argues that current reforms would seem to relate to a version of post-modernity that emphasizes 'distinction' and 'hierarchy' within a fragmented social order, rather than one that positively celebrates 'difference' and 'heterogeneity'. In short empirical support for postmodernity is inadequate and cannot authenticate its theoretical positioning. The situation is worsened by the apparent lack of authentic evaluative analysis and empirical testing of the various positions. This is why we think it is problematic to globalize the positions and especially if those adopting the outcomes of these unauthenticated positions do not have a choice but to accept them. We believe that despite new forms of accumulation, and some limited changes in patterns of social and cultural differentiation, the continuities seem as striking as the discontinuities.

#### **2.4 Debating Centralization & Decentralization**

It may be a good idea though threatening to sociologists of education that if they do not try and very soon to resolve the discontent and disconnection between contemporary social theory and what happens on the field (praxis) then some less ambitious theories probably in the field of political sociology and the new economics of education will take over the discipline. We think that contemporary social theory focuses too much on the rhetoric and not enough on the reality of education reform. We also think that political sociology and economics of education may be able to resolve the impasse as they may be more willing to dig beneath the rhetoric to identify some of the significant but less visible political, economic, ideological and social dislocations within education systems globally.

We argue that even if current policies are new ways of dealing with old problems, there clearly have been changes in the mode of regulation in various countries. This is so because with the de-legitimation of conventional political, economic and bureaucratic control (centralized authority) by democratically accountable public bodies, there are more and more quasi-autonomous institutions with devolved budgets competing for clients in the marketplace. In the United States for instance, we can see that such quasi-autonomous institutions, state-funded but with considerable private and voluntary involvement in their operation, appear to make education less of a political issue. According to Dale (1989), when we wear our sociological lens, it becomes evident that the new arrangements for managing education and other public services are simply new ways of resolving the problems of accumulation and legitimation facing the state in a situation where the traditional Keynesian 'welfare state' is no longer viable. Weiss (1993) often characterized as a conspiracy theorist thinks that the new rhetoric is an attempt to 'export the crises in education in the north to the global arena. We question Weiss's skepticism but can not rule it out completely and will not go into this problem here, however we know that the conspiracy model is not new within Africanists discourse.

Politicians and policy makers in Sub-Saharan Africa however do not seem to see postmodernist evangelization of the rhetoric of contemporary educational reform. This is partly because they are not positioned to analyze or even critique reforms as they are not usually evolved from within but imposed on them from the “outside-and from the top”. To a large extent and may be more important, the egocentric interests of politicians, bureaucrats and policy makers in most African countries outweigh their patriotism for development of their respective countries. Policy makers in Africa have bought educational reform blue prints or must accept them because some group in Washington decides that a particular type of education is best for Africa. In short education reform is either imported or imposed and not evolved. This is not a regional issue, it certainly has a global reach because although the extent of any underlying social changes can easily be exaggerated by various ‘post-ist’ forms of analysis, both the discourse and the contexts of political struggles in and around education have been significantly altered by recent reforms. Many observers argue that not only have changes in the nature of the state influenced the reforms in education, the reforms in education are themselves beginning to change the way we think about the role of the state and what we expect of it. Green (1990) for instance observes that education has not only been an important part of state activity in modern societies, but also played a significant role in the process of state formation in the 18th and 19th centuries. Current changes in education policy can also be linked to a redefinition of the nature of the state (centralization) and a reworking of the relations between state and civil society (decentralization).

Most African regimes are struggling with the old and well positioned idea that the responsibility for education and welfare, beyond the minimum required for public safety, is to be defined as a matter for individuals and families. It is very difficult for Africans who have traditionally seen the state as the most dominant player (the employer of last resort) begin to perceive an idea of scaling down the state, and broadening the responsibilities of civil society most often without adequate training or even beginning to perceive civil society

in market instead of in community terms. Although one of the many origins of the concept of civil society was the attempt by late 18th century liberal economists to protect an autonomous economic sphere from the growing administrative power of the state, political radicals used it as a context for democratic debate and the fostering of active citizenship (Foucault, 1988).

However, Meehan (1995) suggests that, by the mid-20th century in Britain and some other countries of the north, the establishment of political democracy led to a view in many countries that state bureaucratic regulation itself might serve as 'a tool to improve the collective life of society'.

Unfortunately, this is still the African perception of the state but also unfortunately however the perception is for a different reason than empowering civil society. This reliance on the state led to a decline in the autonomy and vitality of civil society. In this contemporary era, civil society is being reconstituted and reconstructed. But, as many of the responsibilities adopted by the state during the postwar period begin to be devolved to a marketized version of civil society, consumer rights increasingly come to prevail over citizen rights. So some aspects of education decision-making have been privatized not so much in the strictly economic sense as in the sense of transferring them to the private sphere. Meanwhile, others have become a matter of state mandate rather than local democratic debate. This can be seen as part of that broader project to create a free economy and a strong state – a minimalist state in most respects but a more powerful one in defining its parameters (Gamble, 1988).

Most African regimes implementing imported or imposed education reforms do not realize or accept without critiquing the role of the state in contemporary education reform. Western democracy as we know it is still a new and developing phenomenon in many African countries. It is therefore a challenge that as far as democratic citizenship is concerned, in developed as well as developing democracies; the rhetoric seems to be producing the worst of both worlds – reducing the opportunities for democratic debate and collective action about education within both the state and civil society. Our concerns

about this reallocation of power, responsibility and empowerment are mainly based on what we experienced in Ghana. There is no doubt in our minds that Ghana has vigorous and robust civil society membership, what we saw as lacking was the institutional capacity of the contemporary civil society in Africa.

In the North, and especially in USA, we are seeing reform trends where the contemporary state is gradually submitting responsibility to a marketizing civil society. Some of the unintended consequence is an abdication of the responsibility for ensuring social justice as well. This is done by deregulating major aspects of education and increasing a limited number of state powers so as to strengthen state capacity to foster particular interests. Our argument is that in the process, the state actually authorizes the marginalization of the influence of interest groups such as local authorities and cannot empower the poor but actually make them more vulnerable (Bernstein, 1996).

Let us transcend this analysis to the micro level in order to present some potential implications of contemporary reforms. It is often claimed that self-management empowers teachers, but on the contrary, a number of studies have shown that classroom teachers are less positive about the recent reforms than head teachers (Bowe et al (1992); Bullock & Thomas (1994); Levacic (1995)). While head teachers usually say that local management has increased the involvement of teaching staff in decision-making, a study of the effects of self-management on industrial relations in British schools by Sinclair et al (1993) suggests that the very logic of the reforms is that “head teachers are no longer partners in the process of educating pupils – they assume the role of allocating resources within the school,- they have become “corporate managers” who are more interested in ensuring that the activities of teachers – their “employees” are appropriate in meeting corporate goals. They have become givers of rewards to those employees whose contribution to the corporation (the education enterprise) is most highly regarded” (Sinclair et al 1993:8). Sinclair further argues that, teachers’ work have become more intensified in the name of the interests of the school community. We think that

the celebration of flexibility and claims of enhanced professionalism can easily become a cover for the exploitation of teachers and worsening conditions of their service. How does this perspective affect pupils? What can we say about teacher quality and enthusiasm or about pupil academic achievement? These are very interesting questions which is outside the parameters of this paper. According to Blackmore (1995), in an Australian review of the empirical evidence, the self-managing school retains “strong modernist tendencies for a top-down, executive mode of decision-making ... [alongside its] ‘weaker’ post-modern claims to decentralize and encourage diversity, community ownership, local discretion, professional autonomy and flexible decision-making” (Blackmore, 1995:45).

According to another analysis of empirical data, the more genuinely participatory forms of teacher involvement in decision-making can also have unintended consequences. In a report on Minnesota charter schools, it was found out that “as much as teachers appreciated being board members and making administrative decisions, wearing two hats required a great deal of time and effort” from which they would eventually require some relief (Urahn & Stewart, 1994:51). Parents as stakeholders are often called in as part of the support from below. In our opinion, parental involvement requires some level of training to engage in the school space and to a large extent the parents associations that we encountered very informally in conversation in Ghana suggest that they lack leadership and the skills that go with it, they lack direction as no official document exist to guide their conduct and their level of participation. As a result they tended to be agencies for managing parent’s meager contributions for end of school parties rather than serving as an arm of school governance.

The so called strategies for local empowerment may also present similar challenges and/or limitations, since communities are far from equally endowed with the material and cultural resources for self-management of their schools, as Gordon (1994) has demonstrated in the case of New Zealand. In another education reform experiment in Chicago schools, Lewis & Nakagawa (1995:172)



claims that “even if the model is implemented well, the exogenous factors that lead to the failure of the minority poor in school ... would seem to require more than a change of school governance can deliver”. Certainly, such strategies are unlikely to succeed in the absence of changes in the broader distributive policies adopted by the central state. Such research calls into question the frequent assumption in current policy discourse that it is the poor and the teaching profession who have the most to gain from contemporary reforms. There are others who regard the autonomous schools which have sprung out of the contemporary reforms as genuinely empowered. It is apparent that the neo-liberal rhetoric and also some school improvement literature, takes the discursive repositioning of schools as autonomous agencies at its face value rather than recognizing that the atomization of schooling too often merely allows advantaged schools to prevail (Angus 1993; Hatcher 1996).

We must recognize that in the process of recontextualizing the reform discourse, for the schools which are unable to capitalize on their market position, the devolution of responsibility can often merely lead to the devolution of blame. This is particularly true for schools in the inner city and poor rural settlements as there is a danger that too much emphasis upon the power of individual school faculty to seek their own salvation may only result in further damage to the morale of an increasingly exploited workforce. Examples from failing schools in the United States are already testimony to this problem. In Beloit for instance, the failure of Wright Elementary school to meet district, state and federal standardized test benchmarks has resulted in a decision to shutdown the school. Parents have been advised to send their children to other schools in the district. Teachers have been laid off and the district is debating about what to do with the building. In the light of all these, most schools in the area are already complaining about overcrowded classrooms without the arrival of the displaced Wright Elementary school kids. We should also be aware that the kids are not going to have unconditional access to all the schools in the district, the challenges of neighborhood boundaries and bussing have not yet been resolved.

## **2.5 Policy Implications**

We have strong convictions that sociologically informed studies of education policy can thus help to provide lenses which are at some variance with the taken-for-granted assumptions of much contemporary education policy. Within the African context, an added layer of an indigenous or unique local lenses will we be needed. This brings us into the second part of this paper; which is concerned with how sociology of education can help us in the formulation of future education policies. We argue that even if sociologists of education were able to agree on the epistemological status of the discipline, which is very unlikely, there would be a variety of ways in which sociology of education could be positioned in relation to other forms of practice.

Whitty (1985) argues that he does not believe that theorizing and charting changes in the social order and the interplay of social forces enables sociologists of education to provide solutions to educational problems in a direct or simplistic way. He criticises the work of Mannheim, (1947) and questions whether sociologists of education should eschew engagement with policy altogether? Whitty thinks that there is some sort of imperative that requires all sociologists of education to forge explicit links with the world of policy and practice. It appears many sociologists of education now seem somehow less engaged with social justice issues than they did three decades ago. According to Whitty, while sociologists of education seem to have become more isolated in the academy and increasingly disengaged from wider social movements, broader social theorists such as Giddens (1994) seem to be showing a greater willingness to address the political challenges posed by a changing social order. He claims that many sociologists of education *especially in the United States* (my emphasis) have abandoned engagement with the world of policy and practice, they have virtually abandoned their discipline, and more particularly its characteristically critical mode of engagement with the world of policy and practice, to engage more directly with technical issues of school effectiveness and school improvement Reynolds et al (1996). We think this is partly because they feel professionally that they are bound to respond to the fast reform

movements domestically and in the process have lost sight of the more encroaching global dis-configurations in education policy. According to Grace (2003) the sort of “policy science” that characterized American urban education in the 1970s became trapped within assumptions of the particular policy context *and in so doing missed the global or more macro picture* (my emphasis). She argues that such work laid itself open to the charge of “producing naive school-centered solutions with no sense of the structural, the political and the historical as constraints” Grace (2003). We believe that much the same could be said of contemporary school improvement movement in Africa today.

Grace however suggests an alternative to ‘policy scholarship’ which maintains a sense of both theory and history because it is only through such holistic analogy that we can recognize the ‘bigger picture’ and she explains the specific contribution that sociologists of education might make to help our understanding of both the limits and possibilities of progressive policy and practice. Fay, (1975) envisages that the term ‘policy scholarship’ seems too detached to communicate the sort of relationship between critical theory and progressive practice which Grace is suggesting. We think that whatever the debate may be, there is a clear and reinforced disarticulation between the academy and the world outside which has led to a widening gulf between progressive educators and the communities they claim to serve. We also believe that the lack of holistic reviews of education policies in post independence Africa is partly responsible for the way universal education is currently being perceived. There is no doubt in our minds that many children of school going age are still not engaged with schooling but the Universal Primary Education movement has been in Africa since the post independence era. Our position is that instead of setting new goals to enrolling all kids in school, sociologists of education should be looking at why previous policies aimed at achieving universal primary education have not succeeded. It is widely assumed that if schools are set up children are bound to attend them.

We question this logic and wonder how sociologists of education who are dissatisfied with this condition can re-engage with education policy so as to re-

energize education policy with the everyday experience of struggles in and around education while maintaining a critical stance.

## **2.6 Recontextualizing the Engagement**

Whitty (1985) suggested that the practical implications of sociological work for ... political and educational practice are as much concerned with the ways in which policy is made as with specific substantive policies. Following Haavelsrud (1996), and others, we argue that the most important role for sociologists of education and especially in developing countries is advocacy, militancy or more realistically providing leadership for action against alienation. This may sound very radical and militant but we know that the extreme ignorance of majority of the people about their dehumanization makes it impossible for them to rise against the status-quo. It is important for sociologists of education to identify and bring together those constituencies that have been traditionally excluded or marginalized from education policy and decision-making either intentionally or, as an unintended consequence of decisions made with the best of intentions.

How can the field of education policy be recontextualized? The reassertion of the rights of everyone's participation in education policy would seem to require the development of a new public sphere somehow between the state and a marketized civil society, in which new forms of collective association can be developed. According to Foucault (1988), new forms of association, such as trade unions and political parties, arose in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a counter-balance to the prerogative of the state, and that they acted as the seedbed of new ideas. It will be interesting to investigate what might be the contemporary versions of these collectivist forms of association to counter both the prerogative of the state, the prerogative of the market, external partners and last but not least the prerogative of local education bureaucrats.

Sociologists of education need to ask how we can use the positive aspects of choice and autonomy to facilitate community empowerment rather than

exacerbating social differentiation. Sociologists of education have so far done very little to develop a concept of public education which looks significantly different from the state education so often criticized in its role in reproducing and legitimating social inequalities (Young & Whitty, 1977).

Apple (1996) argues that we should recognize that there are some aspects of past practice in schools that should be defended as gains of collective struggles by progressive forces over the years. Our fascination with recent neo-liberal reforms can blind us to the potential of other ways of struggling to achieve social justice. As Henig (1994) rightly says, “the sad irony of the current education-reform movement is that, through over-identification with school-choice proposals rooted in market-based ideas, the healthy impulse to consider radical reforms to address social problems may be channeled into initiatives that further erode the potential for collective deliberation and collective response” (Henig, 1994:222). But if new approaches to collective decision-making are to be granted more legitimacy than previous ones, what new institutions might help to foster them – initially within a new public sphere in which ideas can be debated but, potentially, as new forms of democratic governance. It is clear that careful consideration will need to be given to the composition, nature and powers of new institutional forms if they are to prove an appropriate a way of reasserting democratic citizenship rights in education in the 21st century and beyond.

It may also be interesting to begin to question citizenship and its mandate and also to ask questions about the appropriateness of our current constituencies through which we express community interests in the 21st century. Mouffe, (1992) poses the following questions: Have our communities changed, if so how? Can the current forms of democracy adequately express contemporary complexity community views? Is it possible to rethink or develop a radical pluralist conception of citizenship that involves creating unity without displacing specificity?

## 2.7 Conclusion

Many sociologists of education have for a long time engaged in explaining and charting the effects of neo-liberal education policies in most countries of the north and to a large extent they have been engaged at the micro level, we need to expand this noble encounter to include disenfranchised regions of the world as well. Most people affected by the wave of reforms sweeping across the globe which have its origins in the north are not aware of what is happening to them and even where they are, they do not have the resources to challenge the insurgence. We think it is an ethical duty for sociologists of education to intervene and bring to light the plight of the disenfranchised. It seems clear to us from our research that, if the only future for public education lies with the particular marketized forms that are currently fashionable, it will become increasingly difficult to articulate, let alone implement, an equity agenda in education policy. We have to understand that while neo-liberalism is increasingly regarded as part of the **taken-for-granted world of education policy** in many countries and especially in the north, it is but one possible response to current social conditions and it may not actually provide us with the solutions to the educational challenges of countries in the south.

In this context, we believe sociology of education still has a modest role to play in our understanding of the limits and possibilities of education policy in countries of the north and also of the south and in the future development of education as a public rather than a private issue.

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### **3.0 METHODOLOGICAL IMPERATIVES**

#### **Abstract**

*This paper is a reflection on some of the challenges I encountered while collecting data in Ghana and Nigeria. In this paper, I explore some socio-cultural, epistemological and economic dilemmas in education research in Africa. I also make an attempt to foreground some ethical implications within this context. I have chosen the qualitative approach. I found out very early in my data collection process that there are several merits for using the qualitative method in research on Africa however, just like the numerous shortcomings of the quantitative approach, I argue that the qualitative method must also be employed with caution otherwise, it can present many of the same challenges to the research process. I also found out during the process that some of the challenges I encountered if not carefully addressed and given due attention, they may not only disrupt my data collection process, but may also have serious consequences for the various participants I encountered in my research process.*

### **3.1 Introduction**

This paper is an attempt to understand why most of the countries in West Africa have been unable to develop an indigenous education philosophy as a foundation for the development and implementation of education policy in the region. Nearly all countries in the region have since independence relied so heavily on Western education philosophies and Western expertise for reforming their education systems, as indicated in earlier studies (Odora Hoppers, 1998; Haavelsrud, 1997 etc). The troubling issues here are not the use of Western philosophies and expertise but the seemingly total dependence on ideas and expertise from outside. Elsewhere, I have argued that Africa's heavy reliance on Western philosophies and expertise has resulted in the failure of programs designed for sustainable education development in Africa (Isahaku 1993). Adedeji (1968) also argued that Africa has constantly been used over several decades as a laboratory for testing development theories developed mainly in the west. He claims that the dependence of Western philosophies and expertise is partly responsible for the contemporary development crisis in Africa.

Mphahlele (1996), in agreement with Robbotom & Hart (1993: 598) articulated some of my research experiences in a very pragmatic way, by stating that some institutional procedures may control and delimit research discourse. These procedures include, among other things, aims of the research to be conducted, methods of data collection; techniques used in the process, and instruments of the research. The institution or university that one attends usually has its own research procedures and rules. Very early in my data collection process, I realized that during my doctoral coursework at the University of Tromsø there were often some convergences between my institute's (the institute of social sciences and in particular the department of education's) epistemological leanings and those of the expert researchers who run courses for doctoral courses. The same was true of researchers who were invited from other institutions both within Norway, Scandinavia and even from abroad. There were similar convergences between the recommended texts and our institutional epistemologies. My experiences were that, many of the

institutional epistemological positions did not adequately represent mine. My African points of reference, based on knowledge systems that served as the bases from which I draw my references, were sometimes in conflict with the institutional positions. Simply put, there were little or no convergence between my institution's epistemological underpinnings and my scheme of references. As I continued my education in my institution, the differences began to narrow to the extent that I became completely acculturated. As this process continued, I started feeling that my institution benefited more from my research than I did. My research could be seen as a testing ground for my institution's research epistemologies. An example may make this more apparent. In one such research seminars, the expert researcher was presenting to participants of the seminar; what I later referred to as the major epistemologies in the world and they basically consisted of broadly defined knowledge systems from the East and the West without a mention of any established knowledge systems from Africa.

While writing a paper for this seminar, I found myself apparently validating popular beliefs since I could not find anything else to use. I began to question my beliefs about the equal importance of what I learned from my grandfather and to accept some of the dogmas about the superiority of the Eastern and Western patterns of constructing knowledge over the African pattern. Fortunately though, my academic adviser – Professor Haavelsrud was very interested in my encounters with my grandfather and insisted that I should find a way of incorporating this knowledge system in my writings. He radically opened me up to question the status quo and I have always radically believed that new and realistic findings should be enabled by locally evolved approaches rather than using foreign-based approaches. I question the validity and reliability of foreign approaches in local context. I also think that, the symbolic control by institution and expert researchers through the choice of research methodologies and theoretical approaches can be to the extent that the student may end up writing the institution's or the research expert's interpretation of his/her research experiences.

I argue that research on African development should be about creating and validating knowledge from Africa that is relevant to Africa's needs. African development requires research methods that are compatible with African epistemologies. Transformation in research is needed, whereby institutions and researchers reduce seeking international recognition, learn and understand epistemologies of their students and help them to develop research approaches that converge with their learned knowledge systems than imposing dominant epistemologies on them.

My academic advisor introduced me to concepts of discourse analysis and my experience of discourse as a tool used by institutions to control the process and, hopefully unintentionally, the outcome of research became the focus of all my analysis. According to Michel Foucault discourse can be used to analyze the production of knowledge and power. Muwange-Zake (2001), explains that Foucault interpreted discourse as a tool that controls: the production and structure or constitution of knowledge (the way we view the world and reality); knowledge systems (or 'epistemes'); social dynamics, and strategies (i.e. the organization of our social world and ourselves, including our thinking and emotions and how we fit in society); as well as acceptable, permissible or desirable practices.

According to Pinkus (1996), discourse is a form of power that circulates in the social field and can be attached to strategies of domination as well as those of resistance. He further contends that discourse is related to, or is a function of, historically specific contexts, what I may refer to as *specific epistemological systems*, such that discourse would change with social contexts. This view could be the basis of his worry about discourses that have acquired 'international' status, dominating the world, shaping and creating meaning systems that have the status and currency of 'truth'. How could a discourse be specific to a particular context and yet lead to universal truths? Jary & Jary (1991), describe discourse as any structure of knowledge which determines the way in which the world is experienced and seen.

Mphahlele (1996: 239) cited in Muwange-Zake (2001), stated that the candidate's desire to be unrestricted and the institution's desire for control constitute discourse, and that the latter happens through the application of rules and regulations, which delimit the field, and methods of study. According to Mphahlele, cited in Muwange-Zake, Foucault believed that the production of discourse is selected, controlled, organized and redistributed by a number of procedures. Hence, discourse appears to be the medium or power used by research institutions to convey rules and regulations to define what knowledge is, and how and by whom knowledge must be produced and controlled. Pinkus 1996 explains that, the way universities structure proposals and theses, directly or indirectly affect the structure of a research student's pattern of thinking. This view is similar to Foucault's views that "power is exercised within discourses in the ways in which they constitute and govern individual subjects", and Mphahlele believes that this is what makes it difficult to think outside (the box) rules and regulations. Mphahlele further believed that to think outside the box, is to lack the ability to satisfy the requirements of the discourse, and eventually of the qualification that the candidate desires. Thinking outside the box would probably require alternative discourses, theories and methodologies, which, according to Pinkus (1996), have hitherto been marginalized and subjugated by the powers that control discourses. Haavelsrud (1996), shares a similar view when he laments that scholarship from developing countries is often undervalued and under-represented in the discourses about development.

However, Mphahlele (1996), Pinkus (1996), Haavelsrud (1996) and Bernstein (1999) all believe that discourse at the same time offers possibilities or sites for criticizing, challenging, resisting, and contesting powers that control it. Such possibilities may offer opportunities for transforming research in education, with the hope of developing alternative discourses. Alternative discourses may be already in existence; if one is to believe Englund's (1996: 17), view that any given discourse is always struggling with other potential and possible discourses. In doing this research, I have been exposed to this very

struggle and it appears that very little is new in the field if it does not originate from the dominant field or if it is not a grand narrative. Most contemporary discourses are still foreign-based approaches and terms of reference, however some spaces are now being created and subjugated voices are now being heard at least in some academic discourses and this bright side of the institutional strangulation gives me much hope in my research pursuits.

### **3.2 Research Experiences**

In view of the above discussion, I argue that most development programs are still designed from what I call “Outside and Top-Down”<sup>7</sup> and are still not in touch with the realities of those in the “Inside and Bottom-Up”<sup>8</sup>. The top-down model in development research has been widely criticized (see Haavelsrud 1999) and new approaches have been suggested yet the old models seem to continue to dominate development discourse. Preliminary evaluation reports from the Education For All (EFA) by 2015 initiative have all stated lack of adequate discourse within many developing countries. African leaders and policy makers are very good at preparing progress reports often based on some pre-determined formats or blue prints developed outside (and from the top) the country by foreign experts and present such reports at conferences to show that they are conforming to the guidelines set by the power brokers. However, the content of these documents do not always conform to what is being done at the country and local levels (inside and from the bottom). This was made very apparent to me when I visited Ghana and Nigeria in June 2004. I had read many of the reports presented by Ghanaian and Nigerian ministries of education to the UNESCO EFA monitoring committees. On the ground in Ghana, I discovered from my interviews, interactions and observations that many of the statements in the reports were false. These reports were made superficially to enable the ministries of education to draw on the money that

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<sup>7</sup> The use of this term has been inspired by Haavelsrud (1997); I have modified it to mean policy initiatives formulated by foreign experts at both the official and professional recontextualization arenas both externally and internally without a discourse with those from within and below.

<sup>8</sup> See (1) above.



was earmarked for distribution at various stages within the EFA framework. Africa cannot afford to continue to be the laboratory for experimental development ideas; it is time to look inward and from below for the resources needed for a more sustained development that is in touch with local realities. This is even more crucial when most African countries are facing severe debt crisis, it will be worthwhile to use meager resources to develop sustainable internal expertise or what I may call indigenous human capital than pay exorbitantly to hire foreign expertise.

My reliance on secondary data was first a result of two failed attempts to collect field data in Cameroon, Ghana and Nigeria. Secondly, I was unable to secure financing for a long and sustained stay in Ghana to collect primary data and thirdly, I noticed very quickly after my initial visits to various ministries of education in that to a large extent, most of the people I wanted to talk to and the documents I wanted to study were not locally produced but mainly designed from abroad or by foreign experts. I also used extensive internet resources thanks to the research community (both sponsored and private) for making their data available electronically. My experience with this research has revealed that it is becoming more and more possible to conduct qualitative and also quantitative research without sustained presence at the site of the research. However, having been born in Nigeria and lived for eight years in Ghana, I have acquired a fairly good system of networks that when I returned to conduct research it was very easy to reconnect to those networks, and finding my way to data sources was not as much a challenge. Another thing that worked to my advantage was the use of electronic mailing; I was able to collect field data that would have been difficult if not impossible to collect had I been on the field physically. My respondents were in constant touch with me through electronic mailing systems and cellular phones. The use of this method of collecting data made it possible for me to contact and interview significant dignitaries at their leisure. My respondents were more forthcoming with information than when I met with them sometimes in their home. Another very important factor in my decision to rely more on secondary sources is that

since I was educated in Ghana and Nigeria, I found my educational experiences as equally relevant. My educational experiences in Nigeria and Ghana were no less valuable and authentic than those of the people I observed and interviewed. I was also inspired by Odora Hoppers's use of herself as her primary source of data in her PhD dissertation at Stockholm University. Odora Hoppers eloquently described her intellectual foundations and approaches as her own experiences. This approach made me wonder why I could not do the same. After all, I have lived the very experiences that I am asking my respondents about. The answers I received only reminded me of my own experiences and further reinforced my findings. According to Odora Hoppers (1998), "there is no problem as vexing to an African researcher than that of choice of attitude to research as a field, choice of research question, and following from that, research method" pp. 1. She further argues that "to draw on one's own experiences is easily dubbed 'unscientific' and a taboo". Like (Denzin 1978, Spradley 1979, Patton 1980, Lincoln and Guba 1985, Salkind 1991, Nachmias and Nachmias 1992, Leedy 1993, Berg 1995), I perceived my interviews more as conversations with intent and a purpose to gather new information, a form of triangulation. Since I have not lived physically on the continent for some time, I needed to add to what I knew until I exited. I say physically because there is no doubt that I am in constant touch with what is happening in Ghana and thanks to electronic media, I am more up-to-date than many who live there.

In Berg's (1995) view, interviewing vary from a long list of specific do's and don'ts to lengthy, abstract, pseudo-theoretical discussions. While conducting my interviews, I often went out of context into discussing a wide range of issues on African political and economic development and in most cases, I was exposed to a whole set of ideas and realities which I never contemplated, and which later became very relevant for my analysis. Interviews are also perceived by some as a game in which respondents receive intrinsic rewards (Holstrom, cited in Manning 1967). In my view some of such rewards should not be seen negatively as certain rewards go a long way to assist the

researcher in the process. For instance, I was able to get free used cellular phones from an electronic retail store in Norway called ELKjoep<sup>9</sup> during one of my visits to Ghana. I gave the phones to my respondents and assisted them to get subscription and activate them. The result was that I was able to link up with them with minimal efforts when ever I needed some information from them. It was also very valuable during the triangulation process as I could very easily call them to cross check new or conflicting information. In line with this, Cannel and Kahn (1999: 526-595) argue that, the choice of the qualitative interview technique, is based on the procedure's ability to provide maximum opportunity for complete and accurate communication of ideas between the researcher and the respondent. McCracken (2001) sees the qualitative method as one that can take us into the mental world of the respondent, to glimpse the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world. McCracken is also of the view that interviews give an opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves.

In the field of qualitative research, there are several types of interview and it is up to the researcher to choose one that most suitably fits the research being conducted. Standardized (structured) interview, the semi-standardized (semi-structured) interview and the un-standardized (unstructured) interview are some of the types identified by Berg (2004). Patton's (2002) uses similar interview categories and he has identified the standardized open ended interview, the general interview guide approach, and the informal conversational interview as some of the effective ways of collecting field data from a distance. Patton's approach was more suitable for my purpose as I mainly relied on un-standardized interviews and informal conversational interview methods. I did however supplement Patton's approach with triangulation of interviews and documents, observation and counter interviews. According to Berg (2004), un-standardized interviews may be useful when researchers are familiar with the life styles of their respondents' religious or ethnic cultures or customs, and similar

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<sup>9</sup> Elkjoep is an electronic merchandise chain in Norway

attributes. The choice of un-standardized interviews in the first place, is used when the researcher wants to get acquainted with the field, physical or otherwise so as to be able to formulate or ask questions that are both relevant to the research problem and at the same time meaningful to respondents. The point here is that I knew that there was a need for me to fruitfully interact with the individuals that I had structured conversations with in order to get the most out of them during my interactions. I often side tracked and talked about the local football team if I found out that they were interested in football. In addition, un-standardized interviews did not involve the use of schedules of questions or interview guides, and allowed me to gain additional information about the various issues I was interested in investigating.

After a few days in Lagos and Abuja, I found that it was a complete waste of my time to schedule appointments and this was the same as in Accra. I started off with intentions to use structured interviews and here again I quickly realized that this approach of interviewing would not give me the information I needed within my limited time frame and resources. The structured format also made things a little too official and I did not like that approach because it was difficult to talk about other things that had the potential of opening people up to talk more freely. Well over two thirds (seven) of the first nine scheduled appointments for interviews were cancelled because respondents were not at the interview locations at the scheduled time. Many attempts to reschedule seemed impossible as respondents were difficult to track down. I decided to write up a list of the people I had to talk to and tracked them down wherever and whenever possible; during their lunch breaks, at home on their dinner tables, and even sometimes in the evenings at the sports club. This proved very effective as one unscheduled appointment led to another and soon I discovered how to track the people I needed down. I soon became interested in the activities respondents were involved with and became part of their daily schedules.

The inherent assumption with qualitative methods is that the researcher does not need to have advance knowledge about the necessary questions to ask so that he/she cannot predetermine fully a list of questions to ask. I am very

familiar with all the places I visited, Lagos, Abuja, Accra and Kumasi; however I have also been away for almost 10 years and cannot claim to be well informed about the realities on the ground. I have lost direct or first hand contact with the trends of events especially with regards to the latest issues in reforming African education. It was very essential for me to interview as many actors as possible in order to get as much information about the realities on the ground in terms of education as possible. I also choose the un-standardized method because it made room for me to develop, adapt, and generate questions and follow-up probes appropriate to the given situation and the central purpose of my research. In other words, it made room for in-depth data collection. This interview form also makes what Douglas (2001) refers to as «chit chat» or the establishment of rapport.

Despite the clear advantages of choosing qualitative research method in my research, one should be aware that this approach does not offer protection against all field challenges. The point here is that challenges inherent in research processes may not only disrupt research, but also have serious consequences for actors on the field, if not given the necessary attention. Doing in-depth interviewing may mean coming into closer contact with a «stranger», asking questions that my respondents may not have given any thought to before my appearance, or would otherwise not wish to be confronted with. While some of these experiences were enlightening, relieving and interesting, I also observed that I sometimes seemed to intimidate my respondents. Some of the challenges I experienced were clearly how I coped with the expectations and frustrations of my respondents before, during and after my interviews. In Lagos I mainly interviewed people at the Federal Ministry of Education offices in Victoria Island. At the ministry, my main contact was a school mate that I had been in contact with several months before I visited Nigeria. He had promised to get all the government White Papers on the latest education reform initiative copies for me before my arrival. He had also arranged meetings for me to meet officers whom he believed know more about the new education initiatives.

Mr. Adebayo at the ministry was responsible for the EFA sub-committee. He had a lot of documents from all the meetings, and allowed me to look them over and photo copy whatever was of relevance to me. His staff was also very helpful as they made me all the copies that I needed. Mr. Adebayo also gave me references to Abuja and Kaduna though I could not make it to Kaduna. In Abuja there was an EFA team from the UNESCO regional offices in Accra holding regional consultative meetings. I was very delighted when I heard that they were there. I took every advantage to discuss the details of their assignments and to ask questions. They were very forthcoming and when I mentioned that I was also going to be in Accra in a few weeks, they expressed their willingness to help me with whatever information I needed, and also to direct me to the “right quarters” if they did not know.

After Abuja I went to Zaria for three days and met with two professors at the department of education. We talked extensively about EFA, about their level of involvement in designing the local component. They expressed frustration because according to them bureaucrats and not academia were leading all the reform initiatives. One of them sat in an advisory board but complained that they were there to basically listen to the experts. They were told what the problem is and the strategy to fix it. Their input was not necessary he complained. While in Zaria I spent half a day (afternoon) with the principal of the secondary school I attended. Mallam Mahmoud, the principal did not know what EFA was and after a few questions he recollected and pulled out a questionnaire that was sent to him and his teachers to complete. The main questions centered on attendance, parent teacher association and their activities, an inventory of sorts of school material and physical conditions of the school. Only two of the 15 teachers returned their questionnaires complaining that they had completed a similar one a few months earlier.

The way my respondents and I interacted in Lagos, Abuja, Zaria and Accra sometimes posed some challenges. To a large extent some of my initial questions were not understood, so I had to give examples and subsequently instead of asking questions I more than often discussed the issues and the phenomena

being researched. Sensitive research topics sometimes had implications both for me and for my respondents. Mrs. Fatima Madugu, the only female teacher at Command Secondary School my alma Mata, was upset when in our conversation I mentioned that the education of girls can lead to population reduction in poor areas and also for reducing teen pregnancies. We had a long discussion about this issue and I quickly realized that I had entered a terrain that was heavily contested. Farberow (2003) argues that, sensitive topics can be equated with those areas of social life surrounded by taboo. In the same light, I observed that controversial topics such as those related to the equal education opportunities for boys and girls sometimes provoked some sentiments depending on whom I was talking to. Female respondents were more likely to see the education of girls as the “way things should be in order to empower girls” though Mrs. Madugu was of a different opinion.

On the other hand, some of my male respondents and especially at the Zango, the Hausa enclave in Accra where my brother in law had his dental clinic, saw the education of girls as something bad for the family and also for community cohesion. I was often asked; “so if we send the girls to school, how will the young be catered for at home?” Brewer (1990a) criticizes this line of thinking and argues that it does not allow for the possibility that research may have a sensitive or controversial character for situational reasons. The study of the perceived “imposition” of reform on the regimes in West Africa for instance was often regarded as sensitive and provoking by my respondents in the academia, sensitive in the sense that they would sometimes ask me not to quote them and provoking because they themselves will confess that the implementation of the reforms fell short of their expectations, yet there was nothing they could do but to follow whatever those at the top asked them to do.

Other researchers like Sieber and Stanley (Sieber and Stanley 2001:49) define «socially sensitive research» as studies in which there are potential consequences or implications for the participants in the research. Unlike Farberow’s conception of sensitive research, the definition of Sieber and Stanley (2001) is broader in scope and includes topics which might not ordinarily be

thought of as sensitive, and alerts researchers to the wider implications of their work (Lee 2004:3).

My research mainly involved interviewing government functionaries, donor and multilateral agency staff, researchers, school teachers and students, and some parents. Some of the issues I covered were certainly sensitive and sometimes controversial. For example, there seems to be an element of mistrust between politicians, the government officials responsible for executing reforms, teachers, students and parents. There was also some of this sentiment between my core respondent group and researchers working for non-governmental organizations. What seems to strengthen this mistrust between the actors is the fact that due to extreme corruption in Ghana, donor and multilateral agencies preferred to deal directly with the recipients of development assistance than government functionaries. Donors and multilateral agencies suspects government functionaries of corruption and this usually results in reforming project financing as well. While donors and multilateral agency staff were busy accusing government functionaries for malpractices, teachers, students and parents were also of the opinion that there was something fishy about the interaction between donors and multilateral agencies on the one hand and regime officials on the other. To be a researcher in the midst of such potential conflict zones was sometimes problematic.

My respondents often wanted to know which side I was on and it was not enough to say that I was neutral. Secondly, while interviewing donor and multilateral agency staff, there was always the contention that I may be on an investigation team inside academia or some radical activist group, at the same time government functionaries suspected I was working for the donors and still teachers and students were sometimes unsure about the purpose of my interviews and thought that the outcome of my research was going to bring more educational supplies to their schools. Parents seemed to be my only allies as they often thought that something had gone wrong and I was investigating to get things straight for the benefit of their children. Following Lee (2002), one who is outside such social conflicts can easily be suspected of being a 'tertius gaudens',



the third party who benefits from the conflict of two others Lee (2002:31). When this picture is painted, it may be difficult for the researcher to follow a research strategy which allows repeated interviews without raising suspicion or increasing mistrust. Interviews in this situation may be characterized by efforts on the part of all actors to win the favor or sympathy of the researcher and incidentally my current residence in the United States increased the suspicion that I am most likely working for donor or multilateral agencies. While donor and multilateral agency staff are busy blaming the government and corruption for failure of education reforms, researchers have other issues to blame and teachers, students and parents on their part have their own ideas about what is wrong and what needs to be done. In the context of all these shortcomings of the qualitative method, researchers should be cautious when collecting data as the process can very easily be hampered because respondents are providing information that may be skewed as a result of the uncertainties on the ground.

### **3.3 Power and Authority in Research**

The issue of who wields power in research situations and the possible consequences of unbalanced power relations in research are important for making field workers aware of some likely challenges they might encounter during the research process. According to Lee (2004:71), where members of a group to be studied are powerless or disadvantaged, they may fear exploitation, or be skeptical about research. Also, unbalanced power relations as a result of the fact that the researcher is linked to countries characterized as major aid/donor nations may, following Warren (1999), generate into mistrust and accusations of spying or working for those countries. With this in mind, it is therefore necessary for me to approach the field in a way that was not seen as being sent by the donor country to find faults. The point here is that the way respondents locate researchers may be vital for the type of information made available. Despite the fact that I may be linked to the donor country and thus viewed as powerful in relation to respondents, this power gap is further widened by the attitudes of many Africans towards natives who live abroad. Simply, many

Africans have great respect for their natives who live abroad and the likelihood of being placed high in the hierarchy is great. Locating me as an African and a 'been to' (a terminology for natives who live abroad) may be advantageous for data collection in some cases but it also has a potential to taint the data. This is contemplated because rapport establishment may be facilitated since many respondents may be interested in knowing a little about how I am managing life in my new country of residence. Making room for some small chit chat about my new country before interview sections may ease the tension that may be created by my status as a researcher from Europe or America. However, it may also taint data as these people have seen many researchers like me come and go and we may have all asked similar questions for different research purposes and these respondents learn very quickly about the answers we expect from them and may not be honest with what they say. On the other hand, one should be aware of what I termed as 'over-rapport' – talking out of the context of research questions and this could lead to waste of time talking about things that may not be of direct benefit to the study.

When respondents locate a researcher as an outsider or from abroad, and therefore viewed as powerful, rapport establishment might take time and interview sections may be characterized by mixed feelings. This was especially so among academia in higher education institutions – Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria and also University of Lagos, Akoka campus. In many situations this attitude sorts to impede field entry and free flow of information. At times during my earlier attempts at data collection, I felt being located at the other end of the power continuum, where I was seen as one who is part of some NGO or donor agency and in some cases as if I could alter the views of the dominant country. When one is located at the powerful end of the continuum, one is bound to be confronted with all the grievances, injustices or discriminations directed at respondents. I have been haunted by the feeling that some respondents tell me all they have, because they may be nursing the thought that I am in a position to help them or alter their situation.

Even though the conversations we had were relevant for my research, my thoughts haunted me because I knew, as one who understands some of the stereotypes about “been-tos” that whatever explanations I give on my role as an independent researcher who has nothing to do with any dominant player, I will still be looked up to as a ‘been to’, and capable of altering their situation. I made several formal and informal trips in the context of data collection for my research and do not know how the respondents I contacted feel when they do not perceive any changes in education. The point being made here is that one can risk losing the confidence of respondents or even erode the researcher power, if respondents know that even the ‘been to’ could not help them. Promises of making those who have power to alter things may not be sufficient to win back respondent confidence. Many researchers have been in and out interviewing them about many other issues, health, education, food, environment, family and household economy etc, and their socio-economic situation do not seem to have improved. Respondents sometimes showed some fatigue with all the questioning. Some even told me they have answered similar questions in the past when this person or that came from one country or the other. There were others who will simply not want to talk to you because many like you have come and gone and nothing has changed.

### **3.4 Research Limitation**

Closely related to power relations between the researcher and the respondent is, how fear may influence the research process. Following Lee (2004: 68), the presence of the researcher may be feared because it produces a possibility that one may reveal some of the things that are being discussed to sources that may land the respondent in trouble. Payne et al. (1998) made it clear that in many organizational situations «fear of scrutiny» is common. Fear can also make granting of access difficult. Lee pointed out that granting access carries with it certain risks from the gatekeeper’s point of view. The fear here is that the research may «expose unflattering or sensitive aspects of the situation, disrupt routine, or give voice to dissident elements» (Lee 1995:20). Respondents,

who feel threatened by the presence of a researcher, may choose to provide either untrue stories, irrelevant or one sided answers to interview questions.

In the case of some respondents who are engaged in corrupt practices themselves, the presence of the interviewer may result in anxiety, uncertainty, suspicion and respondents may even turn to be on the defensive. In a situation where many parents have been called upon to pay user fees for their children's education, where many teachers have been laid off and others have not been paid salaries for several months, and some politicians and executives in the respective ministries of education have lost their jobs due to decentralization, a lot of anxiety was noticeable. The presence of a "stranger" to question them about the situation of education in their local district was easily misunderstood as investigative, and I was often also misunderstood and mistaken as being a government agent either trying to fix a deplorable situation, finding information about their earnings so as to increase school fees or levy taxes etc. There is therefore the need to assure respondents about the true intentions of the researcher, but the question is whether this declaration on the part of the researcher is enough to cool down the situation, establish trust and thus create the necessary atmosphere for data collection? My way out of this was to always position myself and make respondents as comfortable with me as possible before starting my interviews.

### **3.5 Research Expectations**

Interactions between researchers and respondents are based directly or indirectly on the expectations they have to each other. While the researcher may expect that the respondent will be co-operative and give all their best, the respondents do not only expect researchers to ask questions they understand and are capable of answering fully, but also expect some favor to be done in exchange. According to Johnson (1999), reciprocity and exchange are important for trust-building. Scott (2001:79) stressed the need to repay what he referred to as 'social debts' and build up generalized obligations in research. Scott also pointed out, that this is necessary to secure co-operation or friendliness,

openness to questions and inquiries. Ways to promote this type of security and trust building may among others include providing support, advice, loans, the use of researcher's car and phone etc. Even though rewarding respondents could make them accept to take part in research, it could also be dangerous for information gathering since the paid person may be tempted to create stories where they do not exist.

Not rewarding respondents may at times attract reactions from community members who have had negative experiences with «strangers» who come questioning and taking pictures of their relatives. Anger, insults and spreading of hate, may be the consequence of such actions. Such reaction, it may be frightening and affect the research process if not taken into account and addressed accordingly. While in Ghana similar reactions were exhibited on occasions when I tried taking pictures of deplorable school buildings in a poor neighborhood. My intention of taking pictures was to be able to send copies to them as a form of exchange for the use of their time and also as evidence of the decay of school buildings in my research. I overheard people saying 'you must charge him for taking the pictures; he would be making money out of it'. I was being likened to people who have been there earlier and probably used similar pictures for commercial purposes. Researchers should also be aware that it is not entirely true that our work does not have immediate or probable future gains to us, as such I do not think it is completely out of place to reward respondents who have been helpful during the research process.

The absence of reciprocity and exchange may mean reducing the incentive to answer questions put to respondents by an 'inquisitive stranger'. How does a researcher handle such situations? As indicated earlier the popular perception of many Africans is that all 'been tos'<sup>10</sup> are wealthy. It is therefore not strange that respondents find it difficult to understand that a 'been to' can also be poor and incapable of meeting the needs of respondents. The only way out is to give the

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<sup>10</sup> Been-to is a term common used in most of English speaking West African countries to refer to an indigene who has been abroad for a long period of time. Most often those individuals actually live in countries other than their country of birth.

indication that I am willing to help and to help when I can. Research can be quite frustrating especially when researchers collect data but can not disseminate it because of contractual agreements entered into prior to the interview.

### **3.6 Research Ethics in the Qualitative Arena**

It is important to understand what is appropriate to do when a researcher plans an interview with people who engage in activities that are attracting some public attention, for instance education of young girls. It is especially important with the introduction of user fees in elementary schools and the new accountability requirements (Woodhall, 2004). Parents who are now asked to pay user fees want to see some returns on their investment. Parents even expect teachers to answer questions about their children's behavior challenges, issues most teachers are not competent to assess or do not want to assume responsibility for. Another controversial problem for parents who have serious financial constraints is whether to put kids in school, on the streets or in marriage. Many parents especially in urban centers choose both and one has to be careful not to preach to parents about this sensitive issue. A parent I helped in Abuja, Nigeria returned a major favor by giving contacts to enter the World Bank policy center in the Federal Ministry of Education. Her introductions turned out to be very valuable as the people trusted me straight away and did not demand any rewards for the information they provided.

Another ethical consideration comes to the fore, as one is confronted directly with the state of poverty under which most respondents live. Life in the urban cities like all other cities is an on going struggle for survival. When foreign researchers get into the field in developing countries, they must be prepared to meet people who are living in the most deplorable situations that many can imagine. It may be difficult in this case for the researcher to put on the professional mask and carry out interviews without emotional stress.

Another important ethical issue is consent seeking. Even though it could not be difficult to seek consent from respondents before interviewing, it is

doubtful, if respondents really know the implications of the commitments they undertake by doing so. Most of the parents I interviewed were not literate. It is difficult to say to what extent their consent to the research is valid, since most of them may be unaware of the latent implications of the research if any. Even when they are made aware of the implications by the researcher, I wonder if their consent is a result of the typical respect people have for strangers.

In cases where respondents are promised monetary rewards for their time and information, it may be a legitimate and ethical way of seeking consent and treating respondents with respect, but this may indirectly rob the respondent of the right to accept or refuse to take part in the research. Doing so will mean playing on respondents' poverty, knowing very well that many cannot resist this temptation even if they had the desire to do so. A way out may be to seek concern without promising remuneration, but paying for using their time after interviews.

In the Ministry of Education, I often went straight to the superior officers, who then referred me to their subordinates. In this case, even though I may ask the subordinates for their consent, they may have no choice but to consent to interviews. Not doing so might mean disobeying their superior officers who directed me to them. In many cases, I was not sure if the junior officers were willing to talk to me or they did so because I was sent down by their superior and in some cases the superior introduced me as his/her equal or even superior. I wonder what the case might have been if I had gone directly to the junior officers.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

In conclusion, we argue that conducting research in many developing countries and especially in Sub-Saharan Africa present certain very unique challenges and that a researcher should recognize these before embarking on their journey. While some of these challenges may be interesting, they may also impose emotional stress either on the researcher, respondent or both. The main challenges discussed here include those related to power relations, fear on the part of respondents, the expectations and frustrations experienced and the ethical dilemmas involved. Since the research process is full of surprises, researchers must do a lot of thinking before, during and after data collection. The above seem to call for the establishment of trustful relations between researchers and the respondents. One should also not forget to reward respondents financially or otherwise for granting interviews. What is left unexplored in this study includes the issue of health and the security of researchers while collecting data and especially in foreign cultures.

Based on my experiences, I argue that to a large extent, my institution's dominant discourses with which I was armed before engaging in my data collection helped me in various ways to understand what I was looking for in Lagos, Abuja and in Accra. It influenced my choices of research theories, methods, style of writing and interpretation of findings. I further argue that in some cases, institutional influences are capable of perpetuating certain truths. Since, discourse determines the way knowledge is produced, organized and interpreted; I propose transformation in research towards the incorporation of locally evolved discourses to enable research to be holistic, comprehensive and capable of involving the researcher's experiences before the researcher encounters the institutional discourse.



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## **4.0 EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN GHANA**

### **4.1 History of Educational Development**

In Ghana, the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s were marked by a “discovery” of the importance of education as the driving force in the transformation of colonial Ghanaian society into a “modern” one. However, in the two decades that followed, the discourse about the potential of education as a major factor for economic growth and development has gradually become more challenging than policy aspirations and external prescriptions had anticipated.

At independence, many countries look to reform education to accelerate economic and social development. Ghana was no exception, and the newly independent government saw in education the keys to social and economic development. Analyst and commentators of Ghana’s development history have often compared her to South Korea and Malaysia and spoken of how both countries, having started on the same economic level as Ghana, have achieved faster economic growth whilst Ghana struggles to break through into middle-level income status. What is worth pointing out is that at the time of independence, Ghana had a carefully articulated plan of how education was going to support the efforts to become a prosperous economy. On March 5, 1957, Ghana’s first president, Dr Kwame Nkrumah addressed the old Legislative Assembly for the last time and outlined his government’s vision which had education at the centre. It is instructive to remind ourselves of what Nkrumah said and the policies and strategies that his government introduced to pursue his vision for education. Essentially the development of education was to achieve three goals: first, it was to be used as a tool for producing a scientifically literate population. Secondly, for tackling mainly the environmental causes of low productivity; and thirdly, for producing knowledge to harness Ghana’s economic potential. Investments were channelled into the whole system of education, from primary to tertiary, to fulfil these aspirations and goals. This approach to education development contrasts with what

happened in later years, especially in the 1980s when reforms in education under international influence focused almost exclusively on primary (basic) education. So what was Nkrumah's vision? When he addressed the Legislative Assembly two days before the declaration of independence he made it clear what the development agenda and challenge was. He said,

"We must seek an African view to the problems of Africa. This does not mean that western techniques and methods are not applicable to Africa. It does mean, however, that in Ghana we must look at every problem from the African point of view ... Our whole educational system must be geared to producing a scientifically-technically minded people. Because of the limitations placed on us, we have to produce, of necessity, a higher standard of technical education than is necessary in many of the most advanced countries of the Western world ... I believe that one of the most important services which Ghana can perform for Africa is to devise a system of education based at its university level on concrete studies of the problems of the tropical world. The University will be the co-ordinating body for education research, and we hope that it will eventually be associated with Research Institutes dealing with agriculture, biology, and the physical and chemical sciences which we hope to establish ... today in a country of five million inhabitants nearly half a million children enjoy primary education. We must, however, provide further outlets for these children and give them an opportunity to learn something of engineering, tropical agriculture and of the problems of tropical medicine and hygiene. Only with a population so educated can we hope to face the tremendous problems which confront any country attempting to raise the standard of life in a tropical zone" (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975:94)

There are some important points to note from these statements and how they shaped the choices that were made in the newly independent Ghana. First, there was a determination that education would be used to unblock the restrictions that the environment and other humanly induced conditions placed on economic growth. Through research and advances in science and technology solutions would be found for the problems of disease, poverty and low-productivity. This signalled the importance attached to advanced knowledge for development and placed universities at the forefront to "make

available to the country the knowledge and experience gained through research” (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1987:112).

Unfortunately, nearly two decades after Nkrumah’s overthrow, funding of higher education reduced drastically and hampered universities and research institutions capacity to engage in productive research. In the mid 1970s, universities expenditure on research and development was about 0.7% of GDP and fell further to 0.1%-0.2% of GDP during the economic crisis of the 1980s (Effah 2003). The focus of international development assistance on basic education during this period also meant that higher education received even less attention, and lost out in terms of funding to primary education. Fortunately the situation is changing and today there is more recognition of the important role higher education can play in poverty reduction (World Bank, 2007). But, at the time of independence Ghana’s leaders were fully convinced of the benefits that higher education research focused on local development related problems could bring to economic progress.

Secondly, science and technology were seen as instruments for accelerating economic growth. A scientifically literate population capable of contributing to creativity and innovativeness was the answer to poverty and low-productivity.

Thirdly, technical education would be Ghana’s route for accelerating technological and economic growth. The establishment of technical schools and polytechnic institutions was expected to lead to increases in the middle-level technical manpower base of the country. Students in these institutions were also required to undertake intensive study of mathematics, science, technical drawing and English as foundation subjects for further learning. Through apprenticeship schemes with industries, technical education was linked to labor market requirements, and outstanding students were encouraged to pursue their education to university level (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh 1975).

Fourthly, primary education would function as preparation for higher levels of education. In 1960, Ghana introduced fee-free compulsory primary

and middle school education, and immediately identified teacher training and teacher welfare issues as areas for investment to promote quality primary education. This stands in contrast to the international imperatives on basic education in the 1990s, which projected universal access to primary education without sufficiently linking this to teacher development and welfare, and also to systematic expansion of post-primary education. The situation is changing somewhat, with international development institutions such as the World Bank now arguing for greater investment into secondary education to accelerate Africa's economic growth (World Bank, 2007). Post-independence education strategists in Ghana were under no illusion about the importance of improving access to further education and training if demand for primary education was to grow to achieve EFA.

Today, Nkrumah's plans for education may seem ambitious, but closer examination shows that they were informed by a realistic assessment of resource constraints and "in accordance with the various policies laid down in the decade before independence" (see McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh 1975:94-115). Education's agenda was clear: to reduce poverty through increased economic productivity riding on the back of advances in science and technology.

Some of the achievements of the early post-independent era included a well-trained and motivated teaching force that was recognised as fundamental for ensuring quality of educational provision. Teachers enjoyed salaries comparable to people with similar qualifications in other professions with Nkrumah declaring that he wanted the profession to "to give service that is second to none" (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975:97). Another achievement was the establishment of a Ghana Education Trust to support the rapid expansion of secondary and technical education. The prognosis was that Ghana would not be self-sufficient in secondary school products, considered key to its economic growth strategy, until about 4 percent of each generation was entering secondary schools. This analysis assumed that "50 percent of each generation entered primary schools, (and) when this had been reached,



the next ten years, ... should achieve 100 percent primary and 10 percent secondary education' (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh 1975:102). Finally, there was the introduction of a new education Act in 1961 which articulated the vision of education and the structures for delivering its goals. For example, the Act gave the responsibility for expanding primary education to local education authorities. The result of these policies was the expansion of access at all levels of education (see table 1), and in just a matter of a few years after independence, Ghana had an education system that could be described as one of the most respected in Africa (World Bank 2004).

Table 1: Ghana: Rapid expansion of access to Education after independence

Level	1951		1966	
	Schools	Students	Schools	Students
Primary	1,083	153,360	8,144	1,137,495
Middle	539	66,175	2,277	267,434
Secondary	13	5,033	105	42,111
Teacher Training	22	1,916	83	15,144
Technical	5	622	11	4,956
University	2	208	3	4,291

Source: Hayford, B.K., 1988

#### **4.1 Ideological Change and Educational Decline**

After Nkrumah's government was overthrown in 1966, rapid expansion of education provision was severely criticised as having compromised quality. In 1967, based on the recommendations of the Kwapong reform committee, 10 years elementary education with a break in year eight for selecting suitable candidates for secondary education was introduced. Those who were not selected went on to complete two years continuation classes with an emphasis on pre-vocational education. The concept of continuation schools must have undermined the credibility of vocational and technical education as it only took those who had failed to proceed to an academic secondary education. Continuation schools were criticised for promoting inferior education for the

masses whilst secondary education had become the preserve of elite Ghanaian children (Dzobo 1987 in MOE 1999). Meanwhile, many children from well-off backgrounds began attending private primary schools to gain direct entry to secondary education. Thus, whilst the majority of Ghanaian children were going through a 6 year primary, followed by 4 years middle and 7 years secondary education, making 17 years of pre-university education, a minority from well-off backgrounds were doing 13 years of pre-tertiary education.

Competition, selection and choice began to take root in primary and middle school education which limited access to secondary education, especially for children from disadvantaged and poor households (see Addae-Mensah, Djangmah & Agbenyega, 1973). By “1985, 30 percent of secondary entrants were from private primary schools, most of the rest coming from the fourth year of middle school” (World Bank, 2004:8). Recently, private sector provision of basic and secondary education has grown, some would say, offering more choice for families than ever before. However, there is growing evidence that it might also be acting as a tool for social mobility and stratification in Ghanaian society (see, Addae-Mensah 2000; Donge et al., 2003).

By the mid 1980s, Ghana’s educational system was in sharp decline following a period of protracted poor economic performance in the 1980s. In 1982, per capita income was 30 percent below the 1970 level, and the index of real monthly earnings had fallen from 315 to 62. This period also witnessed acute shortage in teachers, textbooks, and instructional materials throughout the country’s schools (Akyeampong et al., 2007).

#### **4.2 Educational Diversification**

In an attempt to find solutions to poor access, quality, and educational infrastructure, the populist Rawlings’ government which had come into power through a military coup, turned to the World Bank for assistance to reform

Basic Education<sup>11</sup> as part of the World Bank economic reform package (World Bank 2004; Donge et al., 2003). The blueprint for the reforms emanated from the work of the Dzobo Committee in 1973 which had suggested a new structure of education comprising 6 years primary, 3 years junior secondary and 3 years senior secondary, as well as a new content of education with emphasis on vocational and technical subjects for all children up to junior secondary.

The 1987 education reforms abolished the middle schools (four years), replaced it with three years junior secondary, and reduced senior secondary from seven to four years. Primary and junior secondary combined to become basic education. The reforms also included comprehensive curriculum reforms. Whereas the Middle school was grammar education geared towards preparation for secondary education, the diversified JSS and SSS curriculum was intended to prepare the majority of children whose formal education terminated either at JSS or SSS for the world of work, and the rest, for further education. The new system was also to ensure that *all* products of primary school had access to a higher level of general academic training as pertained in the lower forms of the traditional secondary school to address the inequity between secondary school and the middle/continuation school.

Evidently, diversifying the education curriculum to include technical and vocational elements has not necessarily increased the stock of middle level technical and vocational manpower base of the country. What this policy had failed to see was that formal schools are generally ineffective in changing attitudes towards employment and self-employment especially towards vocational and technical education (see Foster 1965; King & Martin 2002). Besides, as a supply driven initiative it failed to recognise that the kind of macro-economic conditions needed to motivate demand for practical subjects was lacking in what was a poor performing economy. Ghana was only just

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<sup>11</sup> Support related to Basic Education included: two Education Sector Adjustment Credits (EdSAC I and II), the Primary School Development Project (PSDP 1994-1998), and the Basic Education Sector Investment Credit (BESIC, 1996-2002). By 2003, over \$500 million of donor funding had been injected into Ghana's education sector most of it going into infrastructure development and rehabilitation.

emerging from a devastating economic period and did not have an abundant supply of network of production and trade to create high demand for the kind of practical skills formal schools were developing. The 2000 Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) revealed that only about a tenth of workforce in various industrial sectors had a secondary or higher qualification and about 43 percent of people engaged in agriculture had never been to school, whilst 53 percent either completed or failed to complete basic education. With only about 5 percent of the active labor force engaged in production with a secondary or higher qualification, the 1987 education reforms had been far from making an impact on the labor market profile.

Also, as a condition for World Bank support the reforms had placed a lot of emphasis on cost recovery in secondary and tertiary education (World Bank 2004). This meant increases in school fees, textbooks and withdrawal of state subsidies. This hit poor families the hardest who became increasingly excluded from participation in post-basic education.

But overall, the infrastructure base of basic education improved after it had deteriorated during the economic decline of the 70s. Basic schools increased (from 12,997 in 1980 to 18,374 in 2000), and attendance and completion rates improved, but levelled off later in secondary. Growing enrolments also narrowed enrolment differentials between boys and girls (World Bank, 2004). What many commentators and analysts of Ghana's educational progress under the 1987 reforms point out is that, although access improved, the quality of education in all sectors did not (World Bank, 2004; Cobbe 1991; Donge et al., 2003). In 1995, the 'free compulsory universal basic education' (FCUBE) reforms were introduced to address the quality concerns in basic education. More resources were allocated to enhance quality and management for efficiency (World Bank 1996). Community involvement in education decentralisation was intensified. Overall these measures contributed to minor improvements in quality but not of the magnitude that would make a significant difference to educational outcomes at post-basic level.

At the basic level certain challenges have persisted. For example, overage entry appears stubbornly resistant to attempts to enroll all children, especially girls, at the age of six. Regional variations in access and participation are such that as many as 40 percent of school age children appear not to be enrolled in some parts of the country, especially in the North. Besides, levels of achievement are such that further expansion in the future risks increasing numbers who learn little of what is required to successfully complete basic education at levels that assure sustained literacy and numeracy (Akyeampong et al., 2007).

Quality concerns in education have resulted in a sizeable private sector involvement in Ghanaian basic education. Today about a fifth of all primary schools are private (MOESS 2007). As Ghana approached the year 2000, the biggest unresolved challenge facing education was how it was going to make significant improvements in the learning achievements of students from all backgrounds at all levels of schooling (Donge et al., 2003). Increasingly, Ghanaians are developing an individualistic outlook to education where looking for a good school and even paying for it is becoming common.

The lessons of both 1987 and 1995 education reforms in Ghana are particularly important at a time when the international community is pressing and supporting African states to improve access to basic education as a strategy for poverty alleviation. Education developments in the 1980s and 90s have shown that good access to poor quality basic education will not yield the private and social returns of investments to promote economic growth. The quality imperative is growing louder with the realisation that “competitiveness in tomorrow’s economic environment will require (not only) an equitably accessible basic education of 8 or 9 years of acceptable quality , but selective and equitable access to opportunities for further education and training” (World Bank, 2007:2).

Ghana is aiming to become a middle-level income country by 2020. But, to achieve this goal requires manpower with capabilities in abstract and problem-solving skills to tackle the increasingly technological environment of

production and trade. Essentially, these capabilities begin their development mainly from the secondary education level where also, the returns to the individual and society are much higher (see, Lewin 2006; World Bank 2007). Analysis of the rate of return by level of education in Ghana has indicated that upper secondary produces a higher rate of private and social return than the lower secondary (JSS) level (Canagarajah et al., 1997). The relatively low rates of return to JSS are also an indication that overall, JSS has been inefficient in preparing the large number of students who complete, to qualify for SSS or actively participate in the labor market. In contrast, the high rates of return to senior secondary indicate that it functions better as terminal education for entry into the labor market.

#### **4.3 Equity and Access to Quality Education**

More recently demand for secondary education has grown. In the last five years alone, secondary enrolment has grown by as much as 60 percent, although the completion rate of 34 percent in 2006 (MOESS, 2007) suggests dropout is still high. In 2006, secondary net enrolment stood at about 13 percent after stagnating at 10 percent for a decade. What this means is that, the proportion of secondary students not of the appropriate age for secondary is high. Therefore, despite the relatively high enrolments, the secondary education system has not been very efficient in delivering high numbers of graduates for further education and the labor market. The recent Presidential commission on Education reforms in Ghana examined the reasons why most JSS students were unable to access senior secondary, and blamed this on a number of factors: inadequate facilities and infrastructure, parents unable to afford secondary fees, a lack of alternative tracks for students with different interests and abilities, an inability of students to meet the minimum requirements for further education and a lack of interest in further education (GOG, 2002).

Similarly, the diversification of secondary education meant to open up opportunities for the different aspirations and abilities of students, as well as improve streaming into different post-secondary education and training never fully materialized. One reason was that the quality of practical education students received depended on whether they attended a school in a rural or urban area. Generally, there is better quality provision in traditional boarding schools located mostly in cities and towns than in community day secondary schools found mainly in rural or peri-urban areas. Also the traditional schools attracted more qualified teachers than the community schools. Teacher shortages in the technical/vocational subject areas effectively reduced quality of provision and undermined student interest (see Akyeampong 2005). But, perhaps the most important influence on students' subject choice is the opportunity structure outside the school system. This has proved to be decisive for some students when it comes to selecting school subjects, and increasingly, many of these students are seeing liberal arts and science subjects as offering better opportunities than vocational and technical subjects (see King et al., 2005; Ampiah 2003). When in the mid 1990s Peil (1995) asked the adult population of residents in Madina, a suburb of Accra, which subjects they studied were most valuable to them the responses were revealing – “about a third said reading, a fifth mathematics, a quarter both of these, (only) 7 percent indicated vocational subjects”. This says something about the importance attached to core skills in numeracy and literacy for economic survival, and seems to support the assertion that realism about labor market opportunities in Ghana have much to contribute to job aspirations among students (see King and Martin 2002; Akyeampong 2005).

Over the years, the ideological sentiments associated with technical and vocational secondary education has made sure that it remains at the forefront of education policy. But what this does not take into account is the pragmatic implication of costs, and how that might affect equitable access to quality. Community secondary schools which were introduced under the 1987 education reforms to make secondary education more affordable and accessible

to students in rural populations, lacked adequate infrastructure, teachers and equipment to support their practical focus. The lesson is that, implementing a large scale diversified curriculum under resource constraints creates uneven access to quality and choice of secondary subjects (see Akyeampong 2005). Recent international evidence suggest that it is rather better to emphasize generic and problem-solving skills in secondary education as foundation for further training in post-secondary technical and apprenticeship institutions. This has also the potential of providing better access to secondary education (see Lauglo & MacLean 2005). Generally, secondary education is faced with the challenge of providing equitable and meaningful access so that dropout reduces and learning achievements improve significantly. An additional challenge is the rising cost of secondary education to both government and parents and the potential that this has on constraining future growth (Akyeampong 2005).

International evidence suggests that the “quality of secondary education, especially in mathematics and science, has a stronger impact on economic growth than years of schooling. Equitable access to secondary education for poor students, and especially girls is an additional factor enhancing countries’ economic growth performance” (World Bank 2007:9). But this also depends on an adequate supply of qualified teachers who can generate interest in science and mathematics through innovative teaching. Ghana’s progress against these international benchmarks reveals that developments in secondary education still have a long way to go. Of all approximately 14,000 secondary teachers in public schools, about a fifth are not professionally qualified, and for science and mathematics subjects this is even less - 19 percent and 13 percent approximately (NPT/GHA PRACTICAL project, 2007). The general science stream in secondary schools currently stands between 13 to 15 percent of all students, although elective science and mathematics subjects can be selected in other more practical streams. Overall participation in physics has declined to 18 percent of examination candidates, in chemistry to 21 percent, and in elective mathematics to 28 percent. Expansion in secondary education has



predominantly taken place in the general arts subjects of which the relative size has grown relative to other subjects. Technical, vocational and Agricultural streams have all declined, either because “schools do not have the capacity to offer more specialist subjects ... or newly created schools only offer a very limited curriculum” (See NPT/GHA PRACTICAL project, 2007:13-14).

#### **4.4 Technical, Vocational and Polytechnic Education**

Right from independence Ghana has always identified and prioritized technical vocational education and training (TVET) as the sector for providing its middle level manpower base for accelerated development. Unfortunately progress in this area has been slow. In recent years, enrolment in TVET institutions has stagnated at about 18,000 students (MOESS 2007).

Although enrolments in the ten Polytechnics<sup>12</sup> have increased substantially, the increases have significantly been in business related programs and not in science and technology programs (table 2). This is happening despite the government approved norms of 60:40 for science/technology programs against business related programs. What this could be signaling is that probably the formal and informal labor market has more demand for business related graduates than for graduates in science and technology. Proposals to transform the Polytechnic curriculum to support the development of core competencies and generic skills to increase chances of polytechnic graduates fitting in with changing labor market demands suggest a response to the need for demand-driven policies.

Table 2: Enrolment in Science/Technology and Business and related Programmes in Polytechnics

Academic Year	Science/Technology	Business & related programs	Ratio 60:40
1996/1997	4,057	3,363	55:45
2000/2001	8161	10,289	44:56
2003/2004	9908	14,445	41:59

<sup>12</sup> Polytechnics were upgraded to tertiary institution status in 1993 have since then made a slow but determined progress to upgrade their programs to degree status.

Source: National Council of Tertiary Education (NCTE) Statistical Digests

The growth of polytechnic education has always been constrained by the costs. TVET has consistently been allocated about 1 percent of total education spending and shows no sign of change (see table 3). One of the success stories in educational financing in Ghana has been the introduction of the Ghana Education Trust fund (GETfund). The GETfund has generated from 20 percent of all VAT receipts which is then used to supplement financing shortfalls at both tertiary and pre-tertiary levels of education. For the polytechnics, the GETfund has helped to increase funding from 28 percent of assessed requirements in 1998 to 58 percent in 2000 (Effah 2003). The government has committed itself to a new partnership arrangement with the private sector to support TVET outside the formal sector. The government has accepted responsibility for funding the first year of apprenticeship training, and indicated its commitment to match funding levels to that of the secondary sector (Government of Ghana 2004).

Employment has been a major concern of the polytechnic sector where difficulties in interpreting qualifications for placement on the job hierarchy have sometimes affected employability of polytechnic graduates. Although no comprehensive tracer studies have been carried out on polytechnic graduate employment, some analyst suggests that about a third of polytechnic graduates are unemployed (Afeti et al, 2003). Yet again, this is an indication that much of TVET has been supply driven and focused rather narrowly on specialized training that has low market demand.

Table 3: Expenditure by level of education as percentage of total expenditure (2003-2006)

Level	2003	2004	2005	2006
	Expenditure	Expenditure	Expenditure	Expenditure
Primary	40.0	32	30	28
JSS	22.0	16	18	17
SSS	15.0	20	21	16
TVET	1.0	1	1	1
Tertiary	14.0	21	20	23

Source: MOESS (2007)

The history of education development in Ghana suggests that TVET development plans face two main challenges. First, ensuring that sustainable capital and recurrent investment is available to ensure systematic growth and secondly, monitoring the quality of implementation especially the extent to which relevant institutions and structures can be readied to assume new roles and responsibilities.

#### **4.5 University Education Update**

At the time of independence, Ghana had only two (public) tertiary institutions (universities). The last decade has witnessed phenomenal growth<sup>13</sup>. Currently, Ghana has 5 public universities, over 20 private (local- and foreign-owned) university colleges, 10 public polytechnics and several other professional/specialized (both public and private) tertiary institutions. This growth can be interpreted to mean high demand for tertiary education. On average, only about forty-nine percent of qualified applicants gain admission to the public universities creating a demand-supply gap of about fifty-one percent (Oduro & Senadza 2004)

One of the reasons why the tertiary sector is doing so well is due to the GETfund. GETfund support has been used to expand academic and physical facilities (i.e. student hostels, lecture halls, laboratories etc) allowing institutions to increase their intake. Despite the phenomenal rise in intake, participation rate of students in the age group 17 to 21 is very low (below 5 percent) compared to developed countries (over 50 percent). There is therefore still some way to go before the full benefits of an expanded university system can be felt in the Ghanaian economy.

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<sup>13</sup> From 1999 to 2006 enrolment in public universities and polytechnics have increased by over 120 percent (NCTE Statistical Digest)

A challenge that progress in this sector faces is ensuring that there is wider participation from all groups, and not from well-off segments of society. The indication is that much of the increased participation in tertiary education is coming from relatively few urban secondary schools. In the University of Ghana, for example, a study revealed that between 60 to 90 percent of students selected to various degree programs came from the top 50 senior secondary schools which constitute less than 10 percent of senior secondary schools (Addae-Mensah 2000). Expanding the base from which tertiary education draws its students is going to be a major challenge for the future, and will mean improving the quality of secondary education in semi-urban and rural areas, and introducing targeted subsidies for poor households. One step that has been taken by the current government which might help to widen participation from across the country is the on-going initiative to upgrade infrastructure facilities of one senior secondary school in each of the 138 districts. This initiative has the potential of ensuring access to quality secondary education across the country, and increase wider participation in tertiary education.

In 1992 a unique model of university education was introduced into the university system in Ghana. The University of Development Studies (UDS) was set up as an institution that would use research to promote the advancement and dissemination of knowledge and its application to the development needs of Ghana, especially in the North. Most of the work that UDS undertakes is in agricultural science, medical and health sciences and integrated development studies. UDS fits Nkrumah's idea of focusing much of university research on locally relevant development issues that pose a threat to economic productivity. The University of Education in Winneba has also been established focused mainly on education research and teacher development. Together with the University of Cape Coast, it runs an expanding distance teacher education program with over 20,000 enrolled students.

Research in the universities is also growing. For example, about a fifth of the University of Ghana's budget goes to research activities whilst the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and the University of Cape Coast spend about 6 percent and 3 percent respectively (Effah 2003). The challenge for universities and research institutes is, how funding can be targeted more directly at problems of development in health, science and technology to alleviate poverty and increase productivity.

Ghana has also managed a relatively successful diversification of funding for tertiary education. GETFund has come to support infrastructure developments in education and a student loan scheme has been instituted. State universities are increasingly engaging in income generating activities to supplement government subvention. But even with these innovations in funding, the tertiary sector continues to consume a substantial share of education expenditure compared to other education sectors (see table 3). Whilst government spending on both primary and secondary education has been falling, that of tertiary education has increased from 14 percent in 2003 to 23 percent in 2006. The unit cost of tertiary education is about three times that of the unit cost of TVET, and about 12 times the unit cost of primary education (MOESS, 2007). Compared to other sub-Saharan African countries with similar commitments to universalizing primary education, Ghana spends far less on primary education - 28 percent compared to the SSA average of 50 percent (World Bank, 2007). It is not likely that public financing will be able to meet increasing demand for additional places in both tertiary and TVET, which means that private and parental contributions will still continue to be crucial in the future.

Ghana faces a stark challenge: where should it prioritize funding of education to maximize impact on economic development? Financial projections for the future clearly indicate that Ghana will still need the support of development partners to meet its education growth targets (MOESS 2007). For tertiary education, the challenge is to ensure that funding is targeted to coincide with government priority areas. Currently, there is a mismatch

between government priority and practice on the ground. Most of tertiary funding (universities and polytechnics) goes to support students pursuing liberal arts, humanities and business programs. In state universities, the ratio of current enrolment in humanities and science and technology based programs is about 65:35 (MOESS 2007).

What Ghana can celebrate is the contribution that the private sector is making to tertiary education, and the growing number of distance education and sandwich programs on offer in universities. As private access expands, this will reduce pressure on state funds so that more of it can then be used to support other education sectors.

#### **4.6 Education Reform, Market Orientations and Globalization**

In September 2007 Ghana launched new education reforms. Secondary education and TVET have both been prioritized in the reform plans. To address concerns about quality, senior secondary education has been extended from 3 to 4 years. There is a new determination to restructure pre-tertiary education provision so that it focuses on preparing *all* secondary students either for entry into tertiary institutions or for the job market through apprenticeship training in the private sector (MOESS 2007). The reforms have set 2015 – the same as EFA – as the target date for achieving universal basic school completion, and 2020 as the date for all junior secondary students to benefit from senior secondary education. Whilst the changes may be familiar, they seem to reflect new understandings that are in keeping with international trends and experiences in investment in education for economic growth. The new reforms have recognized that the divide between academic and technical and even vocational training is becoming more blurred, and that students trained nowadays require not only skills that are immediately applicable to work, but also flexible knowledge and skills that will enable them to adapt as products and production methods change. The new emphasis is that education acquired by TVET student(s), for instance, should enable them to

utilize the available information for more efficient production. Consequently the reforms are aiming to link schooling to the world of work by developing programs that focus on job market readiness, through alliances with private and public sector agencies (MOESS 2007). There is also a commitment to tracking, monitoring and evaluating student flows to enhance the development and design of programs tailored to job market needs. A new education bill has been prepared which sets out the new structures and institutional roles and responsibilities to support further educational development.

New policy initiatives are being introduced to increase participation to support both small-scale and large-scale industries. A TVET policy Act has been passed by Parliament to support the establishment of a Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET). COTVET will have responsibility for coordinating and overseeing all aspects of TVET, including the establishment of a national qualifications committee to determine standards and competencies. There is also renewed emphasis on apprenticeship and skills training, but this time in partnership with the private sector because of the recognition that “apprenticeship to acquire proficiency in the numerous areas of skill, industry and craftsmanship is today dominated by the private sector” (GOG 2004:26). All these measures are intended to once again rejuvenate TVET and encourage its growth.

Educational decentralization and management to improve the operational efficiency and promote a more responsive approach to education service delivery at district, community and school levels are all part of the new plans. There is renewed emphasis on increasing budget lines and budget shares of district education offices. As part of the education strategic plan implementation process, district education work plans are being drafted with the 2015 educational targets in mind. Already, the introduction of a capitation grant scheme in 2004 for basic school operating budgets has led to an additional 17 percent rise in basic school enrolments. The Basic school system has also been expanded to include 2 years of kindergarten education (MOESS 2007).

#### **4.7 Optimism for the Future**

Ghana has accumulated a wealth of knowledge and experience since independence in 1957 for the development of education. On average, it has introduced one form of reform in every five years, but it is how the country utilises knowledge and experiences from these reforms that will determine the extent to which education and economic development will interact to achieve Ghana's goal to become a middle level income country by 2020. The achievements of the past education reform efforts offer plenty of insights for the new millennium. Today, access to all levels of education has improved significantly, but there are still old and new challenges that would require different approaches to make the interaction of education and economic growth mutually beneficial for accelerated development.

What reforms in education has taught Ghana is that it is much easier to fix the 'hardware' problems of education than the 'software' ones. With huge investments from internal and external sources structural and infrastructural problems of education can be fixed. With expanded facilities access can improve. However, completion rates remain the problem, especially at junior and senior secondary where low completion rates deprive the country of much needed educated youth prepared for work and for further education and training. Just as it easier to take a horse to the river than it is to make it drink, it is proving to be much easier to increase enrolments but much harder to make them stick.

For basic education, the next stage is for initiatives and incentives that can motivate demand from poorer sections of the country. Teacher supply and motivation is at the heart of this challenge. Major incentives for teachers in rural schools such as the provision of good housing with running water and electricity will be crucial. Unless this is done the large majority of children living in rural areas will continue to receive poor quality education. In financing terms, the challenge for the new reforms is about how best balanced



growth in education can be achieved within realistic budget constraints with appropriate shares for basic education, post-basic education and higher.

For the first time in many years, Ghana's economy is showing signs of consistent growth under an increasingly stable macro-economic environment. This offers some real opportunities to use educational growth to accelerate economic development as happened with East Asian economies, where secondary education development became more closely linked to economic growth and emerging labor market needs (World Bank 2007). Also, improvements in the quantity and quality of secondary science and mathematics teachers are needed to increase the number of students studying science and mathematics subjects. There is also the issue of widening participation in secondary education. As access to secondary education improves its recurrent expenditure will need to grow beyond the current level of about 16% towards the international indicative benchmark of 20%-25% by 2015 (Lewin 2006). This will most definitely mean reducing the share of tertiary education budget whilst targeting science and technology-based programs for increased investment.

TVET has focused mainly on pre-employment training for specific skills. Today, global and local economies are much more dynamic and competitive with the informal and private sectors playing important roles. The challenge for the future of TVET in Ghana is how it can respond to markets that are highly competitive and dynamic, and how it can produce graduates with skills that can respond to demands of the local and "global networks of production, (technology) and trade" (World Bank 2007:1). On the basis of what is now known about TVET and development, creating more opportunities for further formal and informal learning in an environment of sustained economic growth is paramount. Fortunately, the economy of Ghana is showing signs that can make strategic investments in TVET and secondary education pay off as happened in East Asia.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

Ghana's education system has made significant strides, but now needs investments that can improve quality; provide equitable access for the disadvantaged; especially poor households and girls; strengthen decentralization of education services; improve teachers' work and living conditions particularly in rural areas; strengthen public-private sector partnerships in education service delivery; reduce overall recurrent spending on tertiary education and increase investment in science and technology related programs in universities, research institutions and polytechnics. Finally, given the constraints on public resources available for education, a medium to long term planning framework will be required to track investments, progress and challenges. The journey has been difficult but the lessons offer hope for the future.

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## 5.0 GOOD GOVERNANCE: A FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION POLICY<sup>14</sup>

### **Abstract**

*This paper is an analysis of the role of education in sustaining democratic political development in Sub-Saharan Africa. At the macro-level, I focus on the sustainability of Western type liberal democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa by exploring how certain generalized Western conceptions are not suitable in specific African contexts. At the micro-level, I discuss the ideological foundations on which liberal democracy is constructed and specifically on the notion of the “individual” and argue that this notion may not be applicable in many African contexts. Finally, I challenge the validity of Universalist claims made on behalf of democracy and raise some questions for further research. In conclusion I propose that education can serve as a factor in the development and sustenance of good governance in sub-Saharan Africa. I also propose more emphasis on indigenous knowledge systems as a condition for sustaining Western type liberal democracy in emerging African democracies.*

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<sup>14</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 27th Annual Round Table Conference on: AGENTS OF AMITY OR ENMITY, TRUST OR DISTRUST AND HOPES OR FEARS? The Conference was organized by the Research Committee on Political Socialization and Education (RCPSE) of the International Political Science Association (IPSA) in Brussels, Belgium, on May 19 - 23, 1998

## **5.1 Introduction**

In the series of papers that will form the basis of my PhD dissertation, I intend to explore five main ideas in five different papers. This is the first paper in the series and in this paper; I would like to examine certain dominant western conceptions of democracy, referred to as “good governance” in developing countries. The emphasis on good governance has dominated development policies and development research literature since the mid 1980s. In their inability to diagnose Africa’s development challenges, many policy designers within the west and their development institutions, and also researchers have argued that Sub-Saharan African countries cannot make any progress toward economic growth and development without a commitment to good governance<sup>15</sup>.

According to this plan, good governance includes upholding the rule of law through administrative and civil services and through legal and judicial institutions. It also includes promoting human rights, particularly civil liberties and political freedom and finally, sound economic choices i.e. macroeconomic policies and regulatory frameworks. They argue that the inclusion of transparent, participatory, accountable decision-making are critical elements of governance and these elements will serve as a vital complement to the scaling-up of public sector management capacity. I agree that in the short run, such a development strategy may be able to bring about a relative amount of “good governance”, that is very important in the social, political and economic development of the region.

However, I argue that the above strategy is not capable of sustaining good governance over the long run. Currently, the region needs long term solutions to its development challenges as it cannot continue to be dependant on outside human and physical resources indefinitely. The international community needs to be patient if they want to help the region in its desire to be self-sufficient. This paper concludes that it will be mistaken to accept imposed

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<sup>15</sup> Investment in Education: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals, UN Development Project, 2005. New York.

or adapted conceptions of democracy from the West without substantially incorporating local elements or traditional value systems, customs and norms. In order to avoid an elitist and alienating approach to good governance and peace, I argue that there is a need to establish frameworks for the establishment of a functional and sustainable democracy. I also argue that it is time to involve the citizenry in a genuine discourse about development in the region and to explore possibilities of developing alternative conceptions of good governance based on traditions and philosophies that are unique to countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The format of the papers will be such that some of the ideas developed in this paper will continue to be reflected in the other four papers. Some of the issues raised will be made clearer as the discussions continue and a separate section to connect all five papers with discussions, commentaries and sometimes modest recommendations together will provide a holistic picture of how education reform appropriate for the region can contribute to sustainable “good governance”.

The second paper in the series will explore some theoretical and methodological perspectives that I have found to be useful and sometimes problematic and yet continue to occupy center stage in the discourse about the development of education and its importance in promoting good governance for social, economic and political development in the region.

The third paper will examine the introduction of western forms of education to the region and argue that some of the current development challenges that the region encounters can be traced back to the original objectives of colonial education and that these objectives continue to exist though the world it was designed to serve has substantially changed. I will also explore possibilities of designing education policies in Sub-Saharan Africa that are capable of building a strong and vibrant civil society in order to help in sustaining good governance such that the citizenry can also benefit from the good things that it offers.

The fourth paper is a critic of some of the external influences to the development of education systems in the region. I will review some World Bank initiatives from 1980 onwards and the ambitious agenda set up by the international community to educate all children around the world by 2015 - Education for All (EFA). I traveled to Ghana and Nigeria to observe, and to talk to policy makers and bureaucrats about the new reforms including the EFA initiatives. My experiences were nothing short of the circulation of “old wine in new bottles” and from what I saw, felt and heard, I argue that a continuous reliance on western development models either voluntarily or otherwise cannot sustain the general development efforts in the region and they are not capable of building a sustainable education system that meets the local as well as the global needs of the region.

## **5.2 Dominant Conceptions of “Good Governance”**

In Ghana and also in Nigeria, the second half of the 1980s, was characterized by the active propagation of the notion of “good governance” by the dominant world powers mainly located in countries in the Northern Hemisphere<sup>16</sup> and their institutions<sup>17</sup>. For the purpose of this paper, those countries will be simply referred to as the north.

By ‘good governance’, the north essentially means liberal democratic government. In this paper, democracy is loosely used to mean what (Galtung, 1996) described as a polity where rulers are accountable to the ruled through a feedback mechanism of one person one vote, where the ruled keep their rulers in power if positive and removing them if negative. Liberal as used in this paper will mean neoliberalism or what Lewit (2002) called “latter-day colonialism” – market oriented determinism i.e. “free trade”, deregulation and privatization of state institutions.

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<sup>16</sup> The North is used here to include all the developed countries in the Northern Hemisphere including Japan, Australia and New Zealand and excluding countries in the former Soviet Union, East and Central Europe.

<sup>17</sup> The United Nations (UN), the Bretton Woods institutions (World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other affiliate institutions), multinationals, bi/multilateral organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations etc



In recent development research and debates, the countries of the north have come to realize that the main development challenge of most developing countries and especially those in Sub-Saharan Africa is good governance. From the mid 1980s, many in the north believed that it would be a good idea to demand the fulfillment of certain conditions before any aid or sometimes any economic partnership can be entered into between them and developing countries. Central among these conditions were tailor made economic restructuring programs popularly referred to as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) and lately the idea of good governance has been demanded of developing countries. African governments that are in need of any form of help from the west, and that refuses to implement this wind of change, risks having the financial tap turned off. Even the United Nations (UN), the biggest official agency responsible for helping Africa out of its development predicament, after many years of sitting on the fence has begun to make very clear statements to the effect that political freedom and democracy i.e. good governance are essential ingredients for human development. The United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Report (1992), for example, stated that:

'The purpose of human development is to increase people's range of choices. If they are not free to make choices, the entire process becomes a mockery. So, freedom is more than an idealistic goal – it is a vital component of human development. People who are politically free can take part in planning and decision-making. And they can ensure that society is organized through consensus and consultation rather than dictated by an autocratic elite' (1992:26)

The World Bank which advances development loans to developing countries has been in the center stage of demanding that specific conditions be met before loans can be granted. During Group of Eight most industrialized nations (G8) deliberations (June 2005), good governance was said to be the

main precondition for loan cancellations for the poorest countries in the world and many of them are located in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990, coincided with the publication of one of the most important World Bank reports; *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth* (1989). According to many researchers and political commentators, this document has had a major impact on development initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa since it was published and continues to be one of the most referenced documents in terms of development research in the region. It contained the Bank's first public reference to the need for "good governance" in Africa and opened the way to a general call by donor governments and development aid organizations for African governments to "democratize" (World Bank, 1989).

According to Amin (1987), Gickman (1988), Parehk (2003), Huntington (1992), Bayart, (1993) and others, the new international consensus is that good government equals democratic government and democratic government means liberal democracy. Recent data from the UN Development Project (2005) also supports this view by concluding that good government can lead to higher economic growth as a result of more efficient divisions of labor, more productive investments, lower transaction costs, and faster implementation of social and economic policies. In this report, the UN presented a convincing argument to suggest that by good governance they invariably mean liberal democracy as they continue to present powerful arguments about the strong relationship between economic liberalism and good governance.

The political and economic supremacy of liberal democracy and especially in the United States and some European countries have become firmly established after the collapse of Communism and the conversion of many one-party states in Eastern and Central Europe to multi-party states. The collapse of Communism inevitably meant that the major political alternatives to liberal democracy no longer existed and Communism no longer provided a model for developing countries to follow.

The collapse of communism also meant that, authoritarian regimes, wherever they may be (in Eastern & Central Europe, Asia, Africa or Latin America), were no longer useful in providing economic growth and social development. The arguments of the 1960s that, newly independent countries needed to suspend democracy and human rights in order to achieve economic and social development are no longer credible even when recent evidence from authoritarian regimes such as China have shown records of faster economic growth than many democratic regimes in Europe. In 1994, the Financial Times reported for instance that:

‘... the claim that authoritarian government works best for development is a claim about history, and it draws mainly on evidence from East Asia, over a comparatively short period. The evidence is anyway unpersuasive as East Asia may well be special, but not because it has had authoritarian rulers’ (Financial Times Aug. 27 – Sept. 2 1994).

Some observers argue that, if authoritarian governments were the key to economic success, then today Africa would be an economic giant. Twenty first century African intellectuals, some Afro-centrists and many critics of development theories of the last three decades have moved away from blaming developed countries for Africa’s political and economic challenges; many African scholars are now more willing to blame their African leaders. These new positions and other more serious internal factors within Africa, have all pushed African leaders into making desperate attempts to introduce good governance or to “democratize”? These reversals from authoritarian regimes to “democracies” are done sometimes very hastily without adequately preparing the population psychologically, without adequate knowledge about the true meaning and functionality of democracy, without the human, material and institutional resources and capacity to effectively run democratic institutions. Democracy does not seem to be a natural development resulting from internal disequilibrium, and the will of the people of most Africa countries; it does not

seem to have naturally evolved from within and from below, from internal needs but basically rushed into, to satisfy some external pressures. I argue in this paper that such hurried democratic transitions can not be sustainable and are already showing signs of weakness all over West Africa.

While in Ghana in May to June 2004 to collect data for this research, I observed a close friend who is currently a parliamentarian in the opposition party – the National Democratic Congress (NDC). He was my contact person for gaining access to the government bureaucracy and he arranged many meetings and interviews with government dignitaries, members of the diplomatic core and top level development aid officials from many organizations. One day, I found a big three-ring-binder in his office titled “the parliamentarians bible” which I later found to be a “cook book” about the qualities, duties and responsibilities of a parliamentarian.

The document was prepared in the United Kingdom. I asked him if he had read it and he mentioned that he had not only read it but has also participated in many courses, seminars and conferences about the functioning of a parliamentary system of government and used the material in this binder as a sort of text book. I asked him if he knew many of the ideas developed in the courses before becoming a parliamentarian and he said he did not know many of the ideas and that the courses were very helpful, however he also mentioned that many of the ideas were not relevant for the type of democracy that he and his colleagues are practicing in Ghana. He mentioned that some of the problems they face in parliament is that many of his colleagues interpret the document very literally though many of the things they want to see done cannot work in the Ghanaian context. About the issue of corruption for instance, he mentioned that helping the people who voted for him in his constituency by attending wedding and funeral ceremonies are sometimes characterized as unethical because in such situations one is always expected to contribute money and so forth with an embedded expectation that during his next fund raiser, these people will support him materially or otherwise. He further explained multiple relationships he has with members of his

constituency and agreed that it is difficult not to show up and even more difficult to show up without contributing money. He did not see this as being corrupt or unethical and sees these actions as very Ghanaian cultural behavior and that any thing short of this will not be good in the Ghanaian cultural context. Odora Hoppers, (1999) and others all characterizes some of these peculiar and complex aspects of social organization and governance in Africa in their respective frameworks of indigenous knowledge systems. They collective call our attention to indigenous knowledge as the embodiment of a different and particularly African mode of thought, a heritage from the past, including specific bodies of multidisciplinary knowledge in different fields of study and social governance. They content that development initiatives that do not take these specific peculiar ways of thinking in the African context are not likely to be successful.

Many researchers, politicians and policy makers in and for Africa have failed to understand that poorer countries and mainly those in West Africa with very low levels of western human capital are less able to afford the type of good governance being propagated , since good governance requires a well functioning and adequately paid civil service and judiciary, proper information technology, equipment and training for a reliable police force and many other outlays for a functional public service and administration. This is because they often make assumptions with western lenses. They forget that many countries developed their current systems of good governance over periods sometimes exceeding a century. They also forget that many countries of what we now call the west, developed their democratic institutions and resources they have today after having practiced “bad governance” for several hundred years and in some cases they exploited many of the countries in the developing world in order to arrive at their present privileged economic positions. Richer countries generally have more literate societies, with civil society organizations and nongovernmental organizations, including the media, better able to act as watchdogs of public sector activities.

There is much evidence to support the postulation that higher incomes can promote political participation and may also be capable of constraining executive authority. Barro (1999) for instance has presented evidence to suggest that economic growth supports the development of democratic political institutions. Glasser *et al.* (2004) have also posited that “western” human capital, a variable that most current reports claims Ghana lack Higgins (2009), Coulombe and Wodon (2007) and World Bank (2007), is a fundamental predictor of economic growth and that rising human capital in turn seems to contribute to improved institutions. The above discussion supports the idea that good governance can contribute to economic growth and bad governance can certainly impede growth. It is also evident from the above discussion that bad government can be improved by investing in other factors such as education and also health because these factors support overall economic growth and human capital formation and accumulation.

### **5.3 Democratic Global Governance Revisited**

Let us first look at democracy in retrospect before returning to the Western type liberal democracy. In the North, the history of democracy can be traced back to between 450 BC and 322 BC in Athens. Today, there is much controversy about the nature and objectives of democracy. To some it means giving citizens equal political rights, while defending large areas of society and the economy against political interference. To others, democracy can only be achieved when powerful elite no longer thwart the aspirations of the masses. According to Hawthorn (1991), the concept of democracy is often discussed without clarification being given to what it entails. The ‘People’s democracy’, as practiced until recently in Eastern and Central Europe, the ‘socialist democracy’, as in the common ownership of the means of production, are no longer valid forms or types of democracy. The focus thus has narrowed at least for the present and probably the immediate future, to different versions of liberal democracy.

Parehk, (1996) argues that, there is a generalized conception in the North<sup>18</sup> that, the Western type liberal democracy is the form of government discovered so far as ideally most suitable for the modern age. According to this view, the unique historical, traditional and cultural and to some extent religious or spiritual contexts of different countries do not and should not significantly change the practice of democracy. Some even think that as the “moral leader” of the world, the North and particularly the United States has a duty and obligation to encourage the spread of democracy and to create a New World order based on democratic values and principles. This is especially so for most developing countries and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa since they have by default taken the position of an unquestioning and subservient receiver of the Western civilizing mission. The chaos in the Middle East and especially in Afghanistan and now Iraq is testimony to oppositions to the Western type democracy in other cultures. There is no question that though the U.S. has long favored democracy for itself, until very recently, it has been equivocal and contradictory about supporting it in other contexts, particularly in developing countries. It is surprising that the United States has so far been very soft in criticizing authoritarian regimes in some of the oil rich dictatorships in the Arab world and at the same time is very hard on others.

There are also certain assertions that free market economics is an indispensable complement to democracy as it is practiced in the U.S. and other European countries, and that no country can be democratic if it does not completely embrace the free market enterprise. It is argued that moderate and consensual moves away from authoritarianism are the only means of achieving democracy. As a result, the U.S. and Europe, through their agents, institutions and agencies, are increasingly attaching political strings to loans and aid and very recently to trade. It is very usual these days to hear discussions about imposing economic sanctions on countries with track records of human rights violations or those with autocratic regimes.

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<sup>18</sup> Parehk uses the West in probably the same way I use the North, so for the sake of uniformity, I will continue to use the North instead of the West.

Liberal democracy is a specific form of democracy dating back almost two millennia after the disappearance of the Athenian model. Parekh, (1996) argues that liberal democracy is democracy defined and structured within the limits set by liberalism and that liberalism is its absolute premise and foundation and thus penetrates and shapes its democratic character. Our reference to democracy in the rest of this paper will be the type of liberal democracy as is practiced in the United States and other European countries. Specifically, our analysis will seek to problematize the concept of the individual within liberal democratic thought.

#### **5.4 Notions of the Individual**

We will now attempt to analyze the ideological foundation on which liberal democracy is built. Unlike the Greek democratic tradition and indeed all the pre-modern societies, the community was their point of departure and they defined the individual in terms of it. Liberalism or liberal democracy as we have it in the United States takes the individual as the ultimate and irreducible unit of society and explains society in terms of the individual. The view that the individual is conceptually and ontologically prior to society and can, in principle, be conceptualized and defined independently of society, is central to the liberal thought and shapes its political, legal, religious, moral, economic, methodological, epistemological and other aspects.

Liberalism is often being criticized for its excessive 'individualism' or 'atomism', for ignoring the manifest ways in which we are 'embedded' or 'situated' in various social roles and communal relationships. The effect of these theoretical flaws is that liberalism, in a misguided attempt to protect and promote the dignity and autonomy of the individual, has undermined the associations and communities which alone nurture human endeavors (Edward 1992, Savege & Scharff 1994, Oppenheimer 1990, Akhtar 1991, Rawls 1996). By the very conditions of his or her existence, every human being is inseparably connected with other human beings and nature. To individuate a person is to decide where to draw the line between that person and other



persons and nature (Bowers 2002). Individualizing is thus a matter of social convention, and obviously different societies individuate human beings and define the individual differently.

Some examples may be useful here: the ancient Athenians for instance, saw the human being as an integral part of nature and society; they believed that a man taken together with his land and political rights constituted an individual. Almost until the end of the middle ages, a craftsman's<sup>19</sup> tools were believed to be inseparable from the person. They constituted the craftsman's 'inorganic body' and were just as much an integral part of the person as were his hands and feet. To deprive the craftsman of his tools was to mutilate him, and he was not free to alienate them.

For the Hindus, the caste into which a person is born is not an accident, but a result of his/her deeds in a previous life. It is an integral part of the person's identity and determines the person's rights and duties as well as of the value of the person's life.

The Chinese view of the family as an indissoluble organism, linking ancestors and descendants into a living union, gives rise to a highly complex conception of the individual.

The Osu caste system is an obnoxious practice among the Igbos in southeastern Nigeria and it has refused to go away despite the impact of Christianity, modern education and western civilization, and the human rights culture.

Traditionally, there are two classes of people in Igboland – the Nwadiana and the Osu. The Nwadiana literally meaning 'sons of the soil' are the freeborn. They are the masters. While the Osu are the slaves, the strangers, the outcasts and the untouchables. Chinua Achebe in his well-known book, *No Longer At Ease* asks: What is this thing called Osu? He answers: "Our fathers in their darkness and ignorance called an innocent man Osu, a thing given to the idols, and thereafter he became an outcast, and his children, and his children's

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<sup>19</sup> The use of craftsman here is not gender specific and the use of he, his or him refers to any human being with a gender neutral connotation.

children forever” (Achebe, 1987:27). The Osu are treated as inferior human beings in a state of permanent and irreversible disability. They are subjected to various forms of abuse and discrimination. The Osu are made to live separately from the freeborn. In most cases they reside very close to shrines and marketplaces. The Osu are not allowed to dance, drink, hold hands, associate or have sexual relations with Nwadiala. They are not allowed to break kola nuts at meetings. No Osu can pour libation or pray to God on behalf of a freeborn at any community gathering. It is believed that such prayers will bring calamity and misfortune.

The African extended family and the clan system are yet another complex way of conceptualizing the individual. In some African societies like mine, the concept of an individual is a status attainable only at a defined stage in life (e.g. when one gets married and more so when one bears children in a marriage). Until then, one’s identity is embedded within the family, lineage or clan. From the above examples, it is therefore, possible that some people in certain cultures never achieve the status of an individual in the liberal sense. In Northern Nigeria and especially within the Hausa, the family head i.e. the oldest male in the family is responsible for the well being of the rest of the extended family which may sometimes be as many as several thousand “individuals”. During census – a Western idea on counting people that was introduced to Africa during colonialism – it is very difficult to get accurate counts because there is often the problem of double counting. For instance my father will often count me as one of his children and my uncles several of them will all include me in their count and then my grandfather will include everyone including me in his count. In the end everyone would have been counted multiple times, now how can you rely on such a census for the purposes of local, regional and national planning? This very serious problem is reflected in the fact that Nigeria has many challenges of determining the number of children in school as well as those who are not. How can Ghana meet the goals of Education for All (EFA) by 2015 when no one knows the number of children being referenced? The West has characterized this cultural challenge as “weak

management and weak institutional capacity” and that if efforts are made to build strong institutions this challenge will disappear overnight. There are numerous such challenges that make the adoption of Western models of political, social and economic organization in many developing countries very problematic and challenging.

Recently, I was engaged in a discussion with a colleague about how to define a poor person. Wearing my “Hausa lens”, I explained that a person cannot be poor but his/her society can be. My colleague asked me why and I explained that in my culture, if the society allows a person to degenerate into poverty, then it is the society that is poor and not the individual. He was shocked by my definition of poverty and asserted that he even found it very difficult to help his own siblings unless they were in a very serious financial problem and even under such a situation he may only give a loan to be repaid later.

According to Parekh (1996), the definition of an individual in the liberal context, is austere and minimalist. It abstracts the person from all his/her ‘contingent’ and ‘external’ relations with other people and nature, and defines the person as an essentially self-contained and solitary being encapsulated in, and unambiguously marked off from the ‘outside’ world by his/her body.

Liberal Democracy cannot be detached from the culture of Protestantism's definition of man's relation to God. It individualizes the relationship, making it more direct, defeminizing it through the peripheral role given to the only feminine Christian deity, Mary. And seeing salvation as a highly scarce good linked to correct faith and God's grace and less to good deeds and correct rituals, and success/failure as indicative of the same in the after life (See also Adams M. B., 1990) and (Broberg & Roll-Hansen 1996) pieces on *Eugenics*.

Liberal individuals seek to run their lives themselves, to make their own choices, to form their own beliefs and judgments, to take nothing for granted or as given. Since they necessarily begin life as socially conditioned beings, their goal is gradually to de-condition themselves, to become ontologically

transparent, to reconstruct and create them, and thus become autonomous and self-determining. They are, therefore, suspicious of, and feel nervous in the presence of, feelings and emotions, especially those that are deep and powerful and not fully comprehensible to reason or easily brought under its control. The liberals preferred mode of governing the relations between individuals is not warm emotional involvement, which leads to overlapping selves and compromises autonomy, but the relatively cold and distant principle of mutual respect (Sandel, 1998).

That human beings have the capacity to rise above their circumstances and critically to reflect on themselves is not in question. What is in question is the liberal view that this capacity alone constitutes human essence and that everything else is merely contingent. Sandel, (1998), criticizes this view and argues that he does not deny the human capacity for self-transcendence, but treats it as a free-floating faculty and assigns it no ontological or moral role, with the result that his concept of the self remains unstable and even incoherent.

How an open society can be created out of closed selves is a paradox to me and I do not think many liberal theorists consider it seriously as they are themselves encapsulated in the dilemma. It can only be seen by someone who is reflexive or one who has experiences of other ways of viewing this complete human-person.

For liberals, the individual is a 'master' of him/herself, owning his/her body and having proprietary rights over its constituents. As such, individuals' lives are their own to do what they like with, and the products of their labor are theirs to enjoy as they please. Individuals relate to their thoughts, feelings, opinions, and rights and so on in similar proprietary terms, and define liberty, equality, justice and obligation accordingly.

In the liberal view since the individual is conceptually prior to society, liberty can thus be said to be prior to morality. Individuals are moral beings because they are choosing beings, and it is their choices which make their conduct distinctly moral rather than 'merely' conventional or customary. Since

morality, including moral rules, principles and ways of life, is a matter of choice, there is and can be no substantive general agreement on the kind of life the individual and the community ought to live. In liberal thought, morality, therefore, comes to center around secondary and behaviorally orientated virtues, which tell human beings not what they should ultimately value and what ends they should pursue, but rather how they should pursue whatever ends they choose. The moral concern of the individual is two-fold, i.e., to maintain his/her personal independence and autonomy and to live peacefully with others by respecting their independence and autonomy. Each leads to a complementary set of secondary virtues (Rawls, 1973).

One set of values is related to qualities of character such as self-discipline, self-reliance, prudence, and the ability to live within the limits of one's moral and emotional resources, planning, foresight, moderation and self-control. The other set of values is related to qualities of reliability, cooperation, keeping of promises, conscientious discharge of one's obligations, and spirit of compromise, civility, tolerance and respect for the law. These are all positive values, which any society will hold in esteem. This is the civil society, the liberals' greatest invention and deeply cherished by them, it is the realm of interest and choice *per excellence*. It stands for the totality of relationships entered into by self-determined individuals in the pursuit of their self-chosen goals. It is a world created by individuals who, though strangers to one another have, nevertheless, found enough in common to bring and to hold them together with a mutual commitment (Kymlicka, 1991).

My concern with such an analysis of the individual is that I find it difficult to situate myself in the construction of the individual described above. I understand that many societies especially in the North are able to function that way. If these characteristics of the individual inform the ideological foundation for liberal democracy, then I am doubtful if many of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa will be able to practice liberal democracy without reconstructing the individual. I am not arguing that the individual cannot be defined within my local construct; I argue that the distinctiveness ascribed to

the individual within the liberal context is sometimes too superficial. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton once stated when she was a senator of New York that the concept of the individual within the liberal context is partly responsible for the current decay in the Western world and wondered if the neighborhood can be “brought back in” as part of the individual. She used the popular African saying that “it takes a village to raise a child”. The problem here is that there are no longer villages as we have them in Africa in the United States so I wondered how this idea can be practiced in a social setting where many individuals have become too self-centered, too self-determining and too self-conscious that anyone other than themselves can make any determination for them.

### **5.5 Democratic Liberalism vs. Liberal Democracy**

In the context of the above dilemma, it is necessary now to look at alternatives to liberal democracy. We may then ask; why and how liberalism has re-modeled the Athenian democracy and whether the latter has a conceptual space for the former. If yes then my concerns are valid and African leaders will have to develop democratic models that are congruent with the African idea of the individual and should not import Western models without any modifications. I argue that liberalism obviously represents a very different view of human beings and of society from the Athenian model.

The Athenian model which resembles the African model I am proposing was grounded in a sense of community; liberalism is individualist and finds it difficult to offer a coherent account of the community. I have encountered many examples both in Norway and in the United States where older people agree with my characterization of their society. They remember times in their youth where they were a part of their society in similar terms as many African societies are. They think that the liberal model is very alienating and especially for older people. In a recent conversation an old fellow in Beloit told me that he misses the good old days when his neighborhood was one big family and everyone was caring for their neighbor and where the children in the

neighborhood were friends happily playing together and not in gangs and killing each other.

Although liberal democracy bears some resemblance to the Athenian one, the two are quite different in their ideological bases, structures and central concerns, since each arose within a specific historical and cultural context. Athenian democracy can, therefore, be an inspiration and a useful corrective model for other forms of democracy and, especially, those emerging with similar ideological foundations like in Africa where the community is still central. Liberal democracy allows individuality and privacy, but certainly ignores the communal soil - the basis for the individual's identity. Liberalism fragments the community and ascribes wholeness to the individual.

We argue that it is possible for a political system to be democratically liberal rather than being a liberal democracy. This idea makes democracy the dominant partner and defines liberalism within the limits set by democracy. Such a model both cherishes and respects the individual and at the same time, defines individuals and their rights in social and communal terms. This arrangement may establish a healthier balance between the individual and the community; it will aim at a fairer distribution of the opportunities required for full citizenship, extend participation to major areas of economic and political life like in Latin America Haavelsrud, (1998), and open up new centers of power. Democratic liberalism is fairly close to social democracy and represents a partial transcendence of liberalism. This however, should not be confused with socialism or even communism as President Obama is currently being accused of doing in the United States by arguing for comprehensive health care for all Americans.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The way and method by which a political system chooses to combine democracy and liberalism should depend on its history, traditions, norms and values, culture, religion, ethnic orientations, challenges and needs. Athenian democracy could not be reviewed in the modern age, so modern Western

societies had to evolve their own distinct forms of democracy - the liberal type, the social type (Scandinavian and Canadian models) etc, all based on their history, culture, religion, challenges and needs. What is true in one historical and cultural setting is not necessarily true in the rest of the world. To insist on the universality of liberal democracy as practiced in one part of the world is to deny the West, its own historical experiences and to betray the liberal principles of mutual respect, dignity and appreciate cultural diversity. Furthermore, it imposes on other countries (and for that matter economically weaker developing countries), ideologies and systems of government which are conceptually and cognitively unsuitable and financially expensive for their current levels of development. It distorts, disturbs and even destroys the coherence and integrity of their ways of life, their histories, their religions, traditions and culture, and reduces them to mimics, unable and unwilling to be true either to their own history, religion, culture and tradition or to the imported/imposed ones. The liberal conception of individual and other liberal ideas are historically, religiously and culturally specific, and any political system based on them can not claim universal validity. The cultural havoc of colonialism, which still lingers with most developing countries, should alert researchers and policy makers of the dangers of importing or allowing the imposition of liberal democracy.

African leaders in particular should, however, be sensitive in this era of transition, to stay away from old conceptions like communocracy (one that all nearly all African military dictatorships have promoted), or the zero party option that many African leaders who have refused to relinquish power after their term in office.

We should also be aware of new “catch words” like “decentralization” used currently by many African governments to buy off time in the implementation of democracy. In most cases, these are based on monopolistic party systems and decentralized state apparatus, like the police and local government.



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## **6.0 A CRITIQUE OF EXTERNALLY “IMPOSED” EDUCATION POLICIES**

### **Abstract**

*In this paper, we critically examine the discussion about the impact of contemporary education reform policies in Ghana in the 1980s. The paper highlights two main analytical approaches, which featured prominently in discussions. The first analytical model underscores the rationale of market-oriented solutions through the use of cost benefit analysis and return on investment in education. The second approach seeks to substantiate non-market solutions to the challenges of resource allocation in the social sector such as education. It is suggested that these approaches through their evaluative frameworks, tend to justify either market or non-market solutions to resource allocations in the education sector in Ghana.*

*We argue that while both conceptual models provide a useful insight into the process of resource allocation but they are nevertheless constrained by their underlying theoretical and instrumentalist’s assumptions. The contentions raised in this paper further suggests that since all interventions to correct the imbalances in resource allocations, be it market oriented rationale or not are not home grown, but are often “imposed” from outside and top-down, they have not proved to be effective. We argue that they have further weakened the gains made in Ghana during the period right after independence in terms of access, cost reduction, and quality of education.*

*In conclusion, we posit that the market oriented assumptions are invariably imbedded in technical rationality and neo-liberal thinking; we believe that this is an ideological model that is not yet adequately and sustainably grounded in Ghana. Consequently, we suggest a multi-disciplinary alternative Afrocentric approach, which integrates various strands of social thought. We further suggest that only such an alternative and holistic approach can reflect the multi-faceted and complex aspects of educational gains in developing societies and particularly in Ghana.*

*Authentic dialogue must lead to action, which is then analyzed and evaluated before further action. Action is not just any action; it involves collective struggle to challenge the existing social relations, which determines some of the basic components of social life, such as free appropriate public education and good governance (Kidd and Kimer as cited in Johnson, 2003, p.89) with my emphasis.*

### **6.1 Introduction**

Our main purpose in this paper is to present a critical analysis of structural and educational reforms that took place in Ghana in the early 1980s and survived well into the twenty first century. We argue that the main objective of structural adjustment programs was to facilitate the repayment of debts owed to Banks in the North. We also argue that the central ideological underpinnings of structural adjustment reforms that were initiated in the early 1980s by think-tanks in the World Bank with support from power brokers in the North like the United State and England, still drive education policy in much of Africa and the developing world, especially those countries that have increasingly come to rely on bi/multilateral support for macroeconomic sustainability. The phenomenon of globalism and other developments in the global economy in recent years have brought issues of structural adjustment and development re-orientations to the fore and have challenged the core foundations on which the rationality for structural adjustment was based on. Furthermore, developing countries recently embracing democracy might need to draw useful lessons from the collective experience of structural adjustment in the last three decades as they seek to re-order governance and institutional patterns in their societies.

## **6.2 Adjustment Policies: a review**

Structural adjustment policies were fortified by certain core economic and fiscal doctrines and predispositions in the 1980s. Invariably, these economic and fiscal doctrines were imbedded in liberal economic and conservative political thought. Some observers refer to the acceptance of these principles as the “Washington Consensus.” The central tenets and conceptual propositions of the “Washington Consensus,” which advocated less state intervention in or “regulation” of the economy, suggested new sets of rules to govern fiscal procedures and to reshape the politics of development interventions. In the second half of 2008 the consensus has come under intense fire and criticism for being responsible for the current global economic and financial meltdown and recession across the globe. Consensus approaches to solving the challenges of economic and social development in developing countries were to fundamentally alter attitudes toward the social sector generally, and educational finance and reorganization in particular. Prior to these interventions, most countries in Africa were used to state control or regulation even if partial in the economic and social sectors. Consensus approaches also required complete or partial de-regulation of the private and public sectors of the economy. De-regulation was the predominant model all across Africa during the structural adjustment years and the initial gains in the model sparked enthusiasm, optimism and promise across the region.

Ghana was often cited in World Bank literature as a model of success. In Ghana, like in many other countries in West Africa, the decline in government spending on education coincided with a period of structural adjustment reforms to restore economic growth (World Bank, 1988). Like most countries in the region, public spending on education rose dramatically right after independence forming in some cases up to 30% of GDP – early 1960s to mid 1970s before declining to about 1.7% in the late 1970s. The share of budgetary contributions to education fell just over 4 percent in the early 1980s, and then dropped to below 4 percent by the early 1990s (ibid, 1998). Other forms of

public commitment in the social sector in Ghana were also affected under the impact of fiscal retrenchment (World Bank, 1988).

By 1983, the tendency to persuade governments in Ghana by the World Bank and also most Northern donor and lender countries to adopt reforms through structural adjustment lending had gathered momentum. The value of structural adjustment loans amounted to 11 percent in 1980 and only six years later, the total value of structural adjustment lending in the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa had reach an astonishing 36% Mosley at al (1991). At the beginning of 1986, Nigeria for instance was among the 12 debtor countries designated by the then secretary of the United States Treasury, James Baker, as top-priority debtors others were Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and the Philippines. All these countries had fully agreed to adopt structural adjustment policies.

Many researchers argue that the “Washington Consensus” was the beginning of a postwar intellectual consensus regarding the implementation of Keynesian macroeconomic and policy doctrines, to steer economies away from depression and recession into fiscal stability and development. The fiscal and economic doctrines were so pervasive in the immediate postwar period, that it became an official policy of the neo-liberal British Labor Party or what Bernstein (1999) and others characterize as the new labor party. Even political forces on the right had conceded, albeit as a signal of a momentary truce, that the neo-classical fiscal expansion models were desirable goals of state economic policy.

This paper seeks to re-examine and critique the methodology and the technical rationality of the neo-classical model as a conceptual framework for education policy and reform in Ghana. This is the area in our opinion, which needs more scholarly devotion and the refinement of conceptual tools - to gauge the true extent of the successes and failures of education policies and reforms prompted by the neo-classical model during the economic challenges in Ghana. This re-examination now is crucial and indeed timely as we have recently seen a near total collapse of global economic systems that depend

solely on the methodology of technical rationality, free market economics and deregulation present. There is now enough evidence to suggest that state intervention and regulation and especially of the financial and social sectors of every economy developing or developed is a more sustainable rationality than the free market and financial de-regulatory models proposed by the World Bank and other countries of the North during the economic crisis in Ghana and other developing countries in the 1980s and 90s.

### **6.3 Data Sources and Theoretical Models**

This paper draws from a variety of sources including empirical, evaluative and theoretical studies. The World Bank has been the most vocal and by far the most important player in promoting neo-classical education reforms in Ghana. Hence, this paper draws from Bank-sponsored evaluative studies, work of independent scholars, the United Nations (UN) and its affiliate organs. An unpublished evaluative report compiled by Haavelsrud for the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD), International Monetary Fund (IMF) sources and reports of international conferences and other texts written on the subject have also been cited where appropriate.

It must be noted that, most of these studies (especially the institutionally sponsored ones) tend to employ the dominant paradigm of 'technical rationality' as the methodology of choice. These studies can be broadly classified in the domain of neo-classical economics, as we see that there is a disproportionate emphasis on the economic rate of returns to schooling. While this methodology, which relies on cost-benefit considerations, sometimes to the exclusion of others, may be useful in shedding light on the dynamics of education policy during economic stress, it is by no means sufficient. Recent research has even proven that the technical rationality models are very weak and theoretically lacks the tools for explaining the relationship between education and economic growth or decline (Krueger, 2001). In light of these shortcomings of the dominant models and rationality, there is a need for an alternative multi-disciplinary approach which reflects on the impact of other



credible cognitive, sociological and cultural processes, which affect the process of schooling in Ghana (Ogbu, 1981; Haavelsrud 1987; Odora-Hoppers 1999).

#### **6.4 The impact of Adjustment Policies on Education**

Researchers have used varying conceptual frameworks in studying the impact of adjustment policies on educational development. Quantitative and qualitative dimensions of educational provision featured prominently in these theoretical frameworks. Examples of these conceptual frameworks include the so-called hypothetical counterfactuals, before-and-after comparisons. The counterfactual methodology adopts a control group approach by comparing a group of countries that have made an agreement with the World Bank to carry out an adjustment program with a control group of countries that have not. An alternative approach is imbedded in the use of “matched pairs” of structural adjustment lending and non-structural adjustment lending countries (Mosley, Harrigan and Toye, 1991).

Reimers (1994) used a comparative approach by comparing the educational performance of adjusting and non-adjusting countries in West Africa between 1980 and 1988 (covering 8 years of the adjustment period). The central proposition of Reimers’ analysis is that the financial contributions of households to education declined dramatically in adjusting countries compared to non-adjusting countries. Reimers also argues that the decline in household spending affected many aspects of education including primary school enrolment, teacher salaries and the purchase of teaching and curriculum resources.

However, Grootaert (1994) and Sahn (1992) to some extent, radically depart from Reimers’ heuristic approach. Grootaert has conducted a case study of the Ivory Coast in which he concluded that focusing on changes in government expenditure as a way of evaluating the impact of adjustment policies on the social sectors, including education, is an inadequate reflection of the efficiency of the delivery of social services.

The empirical data reviewed by Grootaert shows that during the period of structural change in the Ivory Coast, countrywide indicators were stable or declined only slightly. During this period, government expenditure indicators even showed an upward trend, and yet, the poorest segments of the population suffered a significant decline in access to educational benefits. A reading of this data might seem to suggest that evaluative and policy studies must be based on household level information, which takes into account the distributions to beneficiaries of educational services – households and children – and not broad nationwide derivatives.

After reviewing a number of country experiences with adjustment on a before-and-after basis, Sahn (1992) concluded that the intra-sectoral composition of expenditure is of equal or greater importance, than the overall level of expenditures in the social sector. Indeed, this conclusion is consistent with Grootaert's findings in his study of data from the Ivory Coast. Our observations in Ghana was very interesting because what we found out was that if we took away the inflow of financial support from non-government sources, multi- and bi-lateral assistance and soft loans from abroad there were clear negative benefits to the entire financial and economic system and worse when education was taken out exclusively. We came to this conclusion after an extensive conversation with some senior executives of Action Aid a UK based Non-Governmental Organization. I cannot mention their names for reasons of confidentiality. Action Aid through the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) supported school reorganization (capacity building) and equity in enrolment policies in Northern Ghana. We do not have statistical data to support our claim but evidence in schools before and after adjustment were very clear to us. Our observations also show that rural areas were worse hit if compared to the overall economy except where Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) were directly responsible for structural and social support services. Some researchers such as (Hinchliff, 1989-1990) are of the opinion that engineered adjustment programs, of the kind advocated by global financial institutions, do

indeed exacerbate pressures on the education sector and particularly on rural households.

### **6.5 The Drive towards Educational Reform**

According to Isahaku (1993), reforms in the education sector constituted part and parcel of the package of measures and adjustment conditionality which were initiated by the World Bank in the 1980s. Isahaku argued that structural adjustment conditionality if left unchecked may constitute the requirements for the overall structural and institutional transformation in the political economy of West Africa and particularly in Ghana. This would be frightful as Ghana lacks the institutional capacity to sustain the shocks that have been reported in many evaluation reports including some commissioned by the World Bank and the United Nations (UN) – Globalization with a Human Face (UNDP, 1999). The emphasis on education reform as advocated by the Breton Woods Institutions and many developed countries in the North have been focused on two inter-related themes - improving efficiency of schooling and expanding access to fulfill the twin objectives of equity and quality of provision (World Bank, 1986). When these education reforms began in the early 1980s, there was little doubt that they would affect the nature and character of education provision across an array of countries including Ghana. The main emphasis of the debate, which followed, was relative economic efficiencies of public versus private provisions in terms of cost implications, quality and quantity of provision, economic rate of returns and whether or not education contributes to socio-political and economic development as a whole.

There is very scanty research on the impact evaluation of education reforms on the most vulnerable groups in the economy and such omission, oversight or the lack of integration of the most profound issues in educational evaluation in conceptual frames of analysis has left much to be desired. We argue that the most fundamental issues should include, for example, evaluating learning outcomes from a variety of perspectives, such as stakeholder participation, student achievements both in terms of academic

work as well as social and emotional development, parental participation in children's education and also in school activities, teachers overall performance including professional development and pay, and performance of educational administrators and school counselors. Rates of return to investment in education as it relates to communities and not individuals or the state. Such a comprehensive analysis would have given policy makers a broader understanding of the impact of adjustment policies on education and also the economy as a whole.

### **6.6 Dominant vs. Alternative views**

During the 1960s when most West African countries gained "political" and "economic" independence from colonial rule, the dominant view in development research and among education planners and policy makers was that the state should have a major responsibility in the financing and provision of educational opportunities – the "State Regulation position" (see Colclough, 1990; 1997). However, under the strains of fiscal crisis and subsequent adjustment in the 1980s, the stage was set for the ascendancy and eventual domination of neo-classical economic analyses – the "De-regulation position" - of all economic activity in debtor countries including educational policy and development. The dominant neo-classical economic view justifies a wider role for market disciplines in education finance and accountability, while the opposing view supports a substantial state financing or regulation of social services and particularly education of excluded populations. The regulation argument is in part a pragmatic one as the institutional basis on which the entire economies of most West African countries rest are not strong enough, do not have the required infrastructure, the financial incentives to promote investment, are not diversified enough and do not have the political and legal mechanisms to administer a truly free and De-regulated market.

The dominant market orientation to financing educational development was clearly stated in the 1986 World Bank study titled Financing Education in Developing Countries. This study explored three broad policy options, which

were in consonant with the neo-classical economic case for private provision, cost benefit analysis and return on investment in the education sector. The first was: recovering the public cost of higher education and reallocating government spending on education towards the level with the highest returns i.e., primary education; Secondly, developing a credit market for education, together with selective scholarships, especially in higher education; and thirdly, decentralizing the management of public education and encouraging the expansion of private and community supported schools (World Bank 1986). Before we continue to enumerate the other components of the World Bank study cited above, let us critically examine the three components listed above.

**Recovering the public cost of higher education and reallocating government 'spending' on education towards the level with the highest returns**

The above postulation is the most used in policy discourse by the neo-liberal approach to education reform and it is the source on which most education reform policies have been based in recent times. This is the main position of the BWIs since they entered the discourse, financing and restructuring education in many developing countries including Ghana.

While education has many important non-market benefits, it is also valued for its role in helping people to become more productive, have higher earnings and avoid the poverty trap. The extent to which education raises earnings is loosely referred too in education policy discourse as the economic rate of return to investment in education. Estimates of private and social rates of return to different levels of education have been undertaken for a large number of developing countries<sup>i</sup>.

According to recent research conducted by Colclough, Kingdon and Patrinos, (2009); most of the studies on the rate of return to investment in education (RORE) are usually based upon information drawn from samples of

workers in waged work, rather than on all employed persons (i.e. including those in self-employment and agriculture). They are also typically not adjusted for unemployment among the educated, nor adjusted for ability<sup>ii</sup>. Thus, the usual source of data for estimating returns to education is not a random sample of the population. ‘Social’ rates of return to education are somewhat lower than private returns due to the addition to the calculations of publicly financed costs of education. Estimation of returns presupposes that markets function efficiently and that earnings are a reliable measure of productivity at the margin – not necessarily a realistic assumption in places where large proportions of wage and salary earners are employed by the public sector. They posit that estimates also take no account of the external benefits of education, i.e. the benefits of an individual’s education for other people or for society in general. These are thought likely to be substantial in the case of primary schooling which is typically associated with the acquisition of basic cognitive skills: the securing of literacy and numeracy brings sets of behavioral changes that are beneficial to families and communities. Similarly, at higher levels of education, externalities from scientific research bring benefits which extend well beyond the direct benefits for the individual with that higher education. We have also found in the case of Ghana that there are even greater externalities in contemporary globalization configurations and more so if we take into account the impacts of the massive “brain drain” that occurred in many African countries in from the mid 1970s. The presence of externalities is important to the case for *public* investment in education, because private individuals, not being the direct beneficiaries, are not influenced by them in making their schooling decisions. Although there have been important attempts to quantify their scale and impact (Haveman and Wolfe 1984; McMahon 1999), definitive results which allow for the impact of externalities remain elusive. Notwithstanding these omissions, the estimated size of the return to education compares favorably with the return to investments in many forms of physical capital. Accordingly, investment in education has been

judged to have high social priority in developing countries. Within the context of economic returns to immediate and distant family members and also for certain local communities we encountered, there are undocumented huge returns on investment in higher education. We were fortunate to be at a local school in a small town outside Accra where community leaders were blessing a newly renovated school building by “one of their own” who lives and works in America as a doctor. This individual left Ghana in 1984 after completing high school and not being accepted to medical school. He was fortunate to gain admission and scholarship to study pre-medicine and subsequently medicine in USA. He returned to visit home in 2002 and was appalled by the state of the primary school he had attended, on his return to the US, he sent money to the local school district to repair the dilapidated school. This is but one case that we witnessed, there are several such examples that we know about or that we have ourselves done for our families and our local communities.

According to the Director of Research, Bank of Ghana, Addison (2004), recent papers in development economics and finance have begun to assign an important role to remittances as key ingredients in the growth prospects of developing nations and having a potentially positive impact as a development tool for developing countries. He defines remittances as that portion of migrants’ earnings sent from the migration destination to the place of origin. According to him, though such remittances can also be sent in kind, the term “remittances” is usually limited to refer to monetary and other cash transfers transmitted by migrant workers to their families and communities back home. He asserts that remittances improve the integration of countries into the global economy.

Remittances have for several generations been an important means of support for family and local community members remaining at home. As migration continues to increase, the corresponding growth of remittances has come to constitute a critical flow of foreign currency into many developing

countries and Africa in particular. Policy makers in developing countries have started to streamline financial systems, removing controls and creating incentives, with the aim of attracting remittances especially through official channels (Addison, 2004).

Recent global estimates show that, migrants' remittance flows have assumed a significant prominence. In the developing world, remittances now surpass Official Development Assistance (ODA) receipts (Ratha, 2003). Official development Assistance transfers to developing countries in 2001 stood at about US\$52.3 billion (The World Bank, 2004). This figure compares with global remittance flow of about US\$77.0 billion the same year, up from US\$51.1 billion in 1995 (The World Bank, 2004).

According to Addison, (2004), in Ghana the level of private unrequited transfers increased significantly from US\$201.9 million in 1990 to US\$1,017.2 million in 2003. Total transfers have increased from just over US\$410 million to US\$1,408.4 million over the same period reflecting mainly an increase in private unrequited transfers. Private unrequited transfers are estimated to be bigger and more stable than ODA and FDI flows into Ghana since 1990. Also positive, though relatively weak, correlation was found between remittances and ODA on one hand, and between remittances and FDI on the other hand, over the period 1990 to 2003.

The recorded private remittance figures according to some analyst reflects only the "tip of the iceberg" since they do not include remittances sent through informal channels such as hand carriage, families, money couriers or network of informal transfer agents. Based on our estimates the reported figures could represent only about half the actual total. At least as much is transmitted through informal and unrecorded channels which make it impossible to measure the precise amount.



However, despite such glaring evidence on the extent of the flow of remittances, gaps still remain in our understanding of how remittances are or can be used to promote development, especially given that existing policy incentives are not generally considered as having been very effective in channeling remittances towards development (Black, 2003). The appreciation of remittances as a development tool is recent and several questions on how best to capture their development impact remain. I will return to suggest in my conclusion that the size of these remittances defeats the “brain drain” argument previously suggested in development research of the early 1970s, it also means that if indeed the developed countries of the North are really keen on helping developing countries of the South to succeed in their development agendas, they need to repatriate a percentage of the tax dollars of immigrant workers to the countries of their origin. We argue that such a gesture from the North will be more honest, more sincere and go a long way in helping development efforts in the South than development aid which has declined substantially in the last 20 years. Our reason for such a suggestion is that most high educated immigrants are returning far more to the North for minimal or no investment at all in the education of immigrants resident in their respective countries. This indeed is our agenda for global action in alleviating poverty in the South.

The evidence on wage returns to education in developing countries as earlier enumerated continues to grow. These studies also show that, internationally, one additional year of education adds approximately 10% to a person’s wage, at the mean of the distribution (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos 2004). However, returns vary at each level of education, and it is of interest to know how these differ from each other.

Until recently, the evidence has suggested that the returns in developing countries are generally larger at the primary level than at secondary and higher levels of education. Some have interpreted this to be consistent with a notion of

diminishing returns to education. A pattern of high returns to primary and lower returns to subsequent levels of education indicates that even where most children leave the system at or before the end of primary school, poor families are still likely to value educational outcomes highly. Thus, primary schooling – even where it is terminal – has historically been interpreted to be a profitable investment of time (and money, to the extent that direct costs have to be met) for the poor.

We also argue that the use of concepts and the terminology or language by the BWIs is enough evidence to show how their studies conceive education. The World Bank for instance conceived budgetary allocations to education in the early 1970s as government spending or expenditure and not government investment. This terminology bias towards neo-classical conceptualizations skewed the whole structural adjustment approach to economic intervention from the start. It is therefore not surprising that subsequent debates and analysis of the effectiveness or suitability of the neo-classical approach in education policy interventions were more directed toward legitimizing the choice of approach than conducting effective and value added research. The most important policy debate was centered on the need to recover public cost from high education. According to the neo-classical approach, higher education was seen as the sector with the lowest returns to the state or public. However new empirical data (see Colclough et al., 2009), sociological and anthropological research on the subject of the individual within the setting of state and community in West Africa suggest that there are substantial returns to investment in higher education accruing to both the individual, the family, the community, the state and the world as a whole. The Bank's approach paid no attention to the heavy public investments in basic and primary education that had taken place in the region since the 1960s. It did not pay much attribute to the gains that the region had gotten out of that investment and did not recognize the fact that the success of earlier investments at the basic and primary level had resulted in the need for the current high "investment" in higher education. With low institutional support to absorb the elementary

school graduates of the universal primary education era in Nigeria and Ghana for instance forced the governments to build more tertiary and high education institutions so that at least young people will continue being educated rather than hanging on street corners, engaging in crime or becoming social burdens to the state. There is enough research to support more investment in the education of young people as opposed to the public cost of managing crime on the streets by law enforcement, family disintegration, prisons, unemployment and deviant behavior. Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education recently asserted that based on research conducted by the US Department of Education, "for every dollar we spend on these programs, we get nearly \$10 back in reduced welfare rolls, fewer health care costs and less crime" Conference at Teachers College, Columbia University in December 2008.

The World Bank also cautioned against continued "*public spending*" on higher education and conditioned governments in West Africa including Ghana to divert spending on the higher education sector to primary education. The debate about the sector that returns the most in terms of education investment is still unresolved. While there is general consensus within the neo-classical model that investment in elementary education and especially in developing countries brings the most returns, there are other models that look at each country to see which sector indeed returns the most to investment in education. In many developed countries of the North it may be true that returns on investment in high education are mostly to the individual; firstly because cultural ethos defines the individual in austere terms, and secondly for a young person in the North, the cost of education is most often a responsibility of the individual. Some college/university students may be lucky to get parental support but in general, most students get loans from government guaranteed sources to finance their education. This is not the case in most developing countries and especially in Ghana where the cost of education is shared by all members of the extended family and in some cases by the whole community. When the community invests in the education of its youth, the communities just like the individual or the government normally

expects some returns on its investment. In most West African societies, the community be it the extended family, the clan or the neighborhood, considers it its responsibility either symbolically or directly to bring up all the young and this also includes their education. When the community assumes such a responsibility for young people, then the young are defined in communal terms, it is therefore not uncommon to hear members of the community refer to the young as “our children”. In return, the community requires and demands young people to mentor each other, abide by the norms, values and ethics of the community, help develop the community in any way they can - morally, spiritually and financially if they become capable of doing so.

We think one of the most important missteps of the BWIs and their policy prescriptions for education policy in Africa and particularly in Ghana is the fact that policy initiatives were based mainly on illconceived ideological, theoretical, methodological and neo-liberal approaches that were wrong. How then can the BWIs posit that the return on investment in our education is our personal gains and as such we and not the state through the community should finance our education? Though it is not an obligation for the young to help or give back to their communities, it is indeed a moral one. It is a bound that cannot be broken because the consequences to the individual who rejects this thesis can be huge. We know many students who received contributions from members of their extended families or their communities when they gained admission to study abroad. Many of these students must work hard while abroad because the whole community looks to them to help other young people when the need arises. While I was studying at the University of Tromsø, it was not uncommon for me to receive letters from home asking me to contribute money to pay fees for young people in my neighborhood some times these would be young people I do not even know or remember. I have heard other students talk about working hard to get money to buy tickets for some young people in their family or neighborhood who have received admission to study in Europe or America.

### **Developing a credit market for education, together with selective scholarships, especially in higher education**

The World Bank in its “blue print” for correcting the economic crisis required every country including Ghana to create what it called credit markets for education. We argue that this approach is also a pure neo-classical economic principle borrowed and implanted countries where they could not be supported structurally (Isahaku 1993). The creation of credit markets for education assumes that there exists an infrastructure, the institutional capacity to administer this very complex credit system and also an incentive base for this to be attractive. The credit market system has been reported to be failing even in places where the potential for success was high. First of all this system assumes that on completion that loan recipients will be gainfully employed so that they can pay back the loans. In many developing countries where this credit system has been practiced, many of the graduates are unable to pay back the loans. This is simply because they have left the country for greener pastures in the North or have gone underground because the other financial pressures on them are so many that paying back a study loan is the least on the scales of their expenditure preferences. A more institutional problem is because the loan administration can not locate the graduates.

### **Decentralizing the management of public education and encouraging the expansion of private and community-supported schools**

The third policy string that the bank placed on indebted countries was that to qualify for a World Bank loan, countries had to pass a conditionality test i.e. to agree to a policy of decentralizing the management of public education and encouraging the expansion of private and community supported schools. According to Whitty (1998), the institutional strengths in many developing countries and particularly in Ghana during mid to the late 1980s were inadequate to supply the personnel needed for decentralization. Further

Whitty asserted that privatization will lead to a major fall-out from the only promising sector in many developing countries and that is education. He argued that many people and especially the poor and needy will be denied access to higher education if any form of fees is introduced.

In 1988, the World Bank published another study where it traced the remarkable progress of education in the West Africa and other countries in the region in the post-independence era and set out a policy framework for future development through the 1990s. The policy framework for education development set out in the study included three broad themes which perhaps formed the basis for much of the neo-classical economic theoretical discussion. The core of the policy framework was: *adjustment, revitalization and selective expansion* – World Bank 1988.

The theory of adjustment suggested that indebted countries needed to diversify their sources of financing education and specifically the higher education sector and also to create imperatives to contain unit cost in the overall education sector. Selective expansion on the other hand demanded that these countries must include a mechanism that would re-direct future investments in education toward a long term goal of universalizing primary education. The policy framework also required that these countries must prioritize future growth and expansion in distance education, research and postgraduate education.

There were many researchers within the field of economics and specifically using neo-classical human capital theories who vehemently supported the direction that the bank was taking to intervene in the economic crisis facing indebted nations in West Africa and across the developing world. These number crunching economists developed econometric computations to convince the bank that the claims that there is a strong relationship between education and economic growth and subsequently economic development were only a partial truth. (See Mingat and Tan, 1986; Psacharopoulos, 1994; McMahan, 1988; Woodhall 1992; Benhabib & Spiegel, 1994; Lucas 1988; Romer 1990; Mincer 1974; Barro, 1997).

Psacharopoulos (1994), Woodhall (2002) and many others have accepted most of the premises of the neo-classical human capital models; they all argue that there is an excess demand for secondary and higher education in West Africa and particularly in Ghana. They also posited that governments of developing countries and especially those in West Africa are heavily subsidizing higher education at the detriment of primary education and that this has resulted to extreme inequalities in the access to education.

In support of the neo-classical theoretical position, Mingat and Tan (1986) have argued that there is excess demand at low levels of education in developing countries which suggests that user charges could be used to mitigate such demand, and also to mobilize additional resources for education, in an era of increased scarcity and fiscal imbalance. They also maintained that the additional resources mobilized through the introduction of user fees could be used for quantitative expansion at the same level of education, or indeed, such additional resources could even be used for expansion of an activity outside of education. The main thrust of the neo-classical human capital argument is that a policy of user fees would not have an adverse effect on the overall level of realized enrolment an assumption that was never tested in any developing country before the crisis broke out Angrist and Krueger (1991). We suppose this argumentation is meant to assuage those who believe that cost recovery may compromise concerns for equity in the distribution of educational benefits, in societies under stress from fiscal imbalance. These are precisely the concerns raised by Klees (1984) and others (see Colclough, 1990; Albrecht and Ziderman, 1993; Haavelsrud 1990; Isahaku 1993).

Klees, in a very elaborate attack on the theoretical structure of neo-classical human capital economics, accuses the neo-classicists of being more interested in efficiency than concerns about equity and social justice. Klees adds (p.439); "the very real danger of the neo-classical perspective is that it covers with a technical veneer what are really a complex set of political, social, cultural and economic issues." Tilak (1997) has reaffirmed Klee's analysis by asserting that cost recovery measures might not necessarily induce internal

efficiency. The issue raised by Tilak is that students and households already incur significant costs of education, including direct opportunity costs in many developing countries.

We support Tilak's position and argued that in the case of poorer students, fees may compel them to take up part-time work on street corners to sell for their parents and in extreme cases engaged in child prostitution, sweat shops, etc resulting in less time for their studies and subsequently risk dropping out of school or performing poorly. We also contend the neo-classical position is rather a very naïve assumption and shows that those who proposed the theory were not in touch with the realities on the ground and especially in the rural areas. Firstly, it is disturbing to imagine that any theorist or policy analyst would not know that the tradition of studying while working is very alien in many developing countries. This is neither possible in elementary school or in college. The type of jobs found in many of the countries in the North for students attending middle, high school or college is not available in Ghana. Secondly, these policy analysts were proposing the policy reforms because they believed the reforms will improve quality in schools; it is therefore interesting that the same researchers arguing for improved quality in schools do not think that students should spend more time doing their home work rather than doing part-time jobs after school.

There is substantial research to support the thesis that students who work part-time either to supplement family income or for supporting themselves in school turn to do poorly in school. To even suggest that students take up part-time jobs in an environment where jobs do not exist is very disturbing. A third dimension is the fact that the neo-classical proponents have no idea about the level of poverty in many of the countries in which the bank had imposed adjustment strings. The result of these neo-classical contradictions and misunderstanding of the realities in most developing countries and especially in Ghana is that, the overall internal efficiency of education may actually decline instead of increase. Tilak has concluded on an empirical basis that the general case against cost recovery is very strong. There



are numerous studies that provide theoretical and empirical evidence to reject the neo-classical human capital theories on cost recovery in education and have proposed strategies to incorporate the social dimensions of economic growth (see Cornia et al, 1987; Engberg et al, 1996; Cornia, 1992; Samoff, 1991,1999; Fuller and Habte 1992; Colclough 1991; Torres 2008).

### **6.7 Alternative Approaches to the Dominant views**

This approach was inspired by the works of Bernstein, Freire, Galtung, Haavelsrud, McLaren, Giroux, Odora Hoppers and others. I encountered all these scholars during my studies at the University of Tromsø, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and also at Beloit College in Beloit, Wisconsin, USA. Some of these fine scholars were my professors, others my senior colleagues under the supervision of the same professors and others were encountered during my readings oftentimes recommended by my professors. They have over the years engaged me directly and indirectly in numerous ways about what I call the African Development Problematic and specifically on how it relates to education.

In reading the alternative approaches out there to the dominant western view, I encountered what is referred to as the Afrocentric Perspective (AP). The AP is a kind of operational lens that we wish to wear to enable us analyze Africa's development problematic and particularly in the area of education policy and reform. In our opinion, most of Africa's development challenges emanate from among others, some misguided theoretical orientations. These are the foundations on which most of development planning, implementation and evaluation are based. There are question about how to accept the conceptual schemes and propositions, which constitute the dominant development theories. These theories are said to contain universal principles for the explanation of development in societies around the world. Some theorists have contended that the universal approach has not been extensively examined, criticized or assessed either from the empiricist and pragmatic points of view, or from different paradigmatic views of society (Akinowo 1988,

Park 1988). From these discussions and borrowing from Odora Hoppers (1996), the Afrocentric perspective we assume represents a complementary approach to dominant universalism that fraught contemporary development theory and research. For our purposes however, the Afrocentric Approach as a process takes on an advocacy, if you want militancy, a liberating as well as an emancipatory function when the issue of knowledge and cultural subjugation in African societies is discussed in the context of Western domination (Odora Hoppers 1996; Fanon 1965; Freire 1985; Haavelsrud 1998; Spring 1998; Samoff 1998; King 1998; Adedeji 1999).

In our analysis of the Dominant views, we are particularly interested in the advocacy and liberation or emancipatory components of the AP. According to Odora Hoppers 1998, the emancipatory function considers Park's fundamental critique of the way science has removed the "anima" from nature (by reducing social formations and social relations and human beings to objects without history, theology, self-reflection or consciousness) on the one hand; and how it represents and sustains a pervading form of domination (Park 1988) on the other. According to her, this process is reinforced by a number of processes including;

- the occlusion of social knowledge,
- social construction of reality, and
- the way sociological knowledge is applied

#### **6.7.1 Occlusion of Social Knowledge**

The point of contention within the occlusion of knowledge is that positivistic research and especially in the field of sociology of education and particularly within the dominant global financial institutions (the World Bank and the IMF) admits human beings into the arena of inquiry as possessors of measurable primary qualities deprived of such subjective attributes, as will, goodness, and destiny (see Psacharopoulos, 1998 and Woodhall, 2008). As this way of thinking is elevated to the level of the most dominant knowledge in

formulating education reform policies and especially in Africa, it means that sociology and for that matter sociology of education has got itself trapped in the very limitations of this brand of thinking. What can be drawn from this is that the world is presented as peopled by object-like beings standing in abstracted relationships to each other and completely devoid of intentions (Parehk 1996). The subjects of action are ignored as actors, and “solutions” to various social problems are then imposed onto these “object-like beings” that are, in reality, the actual living population that make the society. Conscious action does not exist in this framework and populations are “target groups” without any self-knowledge, history, tradition, and culture. Yet, even as they are taken as if they were bundles of drives and learned reflexes, they are to be beneficiaries of such “knowledge” (Fay 1975, Park 1988).

### **6.7.2 Social Construction of Reality**

Odora Hoppers, (1998) argues that, what is often assumed as universalistic theories are actually always local views projected large. Odora Hoppers critiques this practice of projecting particular versions of reality onto “the other” and posits that it may look harmless in a physical world in which a scientist is studying rocks and stones. But that, the social world is constituted by the people who inhabit it, who have integrity of their own, and whose integrity can be denied only at the expense of destroying the foundations on which such integrity is built - on their particular way of life – their philosophy, their history and their culture. A good example of this projection of one set of knowledge systems usually the Western, as the universal is how classical economics has generalized the economics of capitalism to all modes of production. This generalization has become more omnipotent after the collapse of communism (see paper # 5 on Good Governance). A second example is how some American sociologists for instance; universalize the American system of social stratification. It is common knowledge that this is very characteristic of the American melting pot, and does not represent what is happening in the rest of the world. Many societies are more or less homogenous and their forms of

stratifications are distinctive from the American version. Thirdly, the way in which the Weberian ideal extrapolates social formations under capitalism and development theory, which is a carryover from evolutionary thinking of the C19th, similarly extrapolates the Western development model onto different societies in the world (Park 1988, Berger & Luckman 1966).

### **6.7.3 Universalizing Sociological Knowledge**

According to Horowitz (1968), the rhetoric of the content of scientific knowledge as being value-free can be used towards the ends of diverse value persuasions and this can only be applicable with validity if:

- 1) Sociologists for instance were “all-knowing” about what is best for the people for whom they supposedly toil,
- 2) Sociologists for instance merely provided objective knowledge and were value-neutral as to what is best for the people,
- 3) Those who apply such knowledge in 1 & 2 above always worked in the best interest of people.

However, he argues that as scientific knowledge already excludes any questions of value, it undermines its very capability to decide on the question of good and bad concerning the goals of social action. Similarly the knowledge it produces is only of a particular kind – the analytical-empirical variety –, which also predetermines the kinds of solutions or control for “who” should use this knowledge. The assumption of value-neutrality of sociology and its universal applicability is also questionable because it ignores the fact that Western science developed symbiotically with capitalism, and as capitalism extended its realm to Africa and its practices abroad it is questionable to assume that it is always for the people’s sake (Park 1988). We argue that some scholars of the sociology of education have both supported and promoted domination, the interest of capitalism, evangelism and colonialism for a long time. They have also exalted methodologies that are extractive and alienating

and which deny life to the objects of inquiry. The knowledge that is produced is inconsumable by the providers and is used for the purpose of social control.

What has this meant for Africa and for an education that originates from this kind of background? The Afrocentric Perspective can provide us with a lens to capture the theoretical as well as some practical dimensions of the consequences of decades of subjugation under such a framework. Let us begin by illuminating some specific contradictions that have emerged in the role education can play in development in an African context.

#### **6.7.4 The Afrocentric Perspective**

The Afrocentric Perspective (AP) tries to capture the face of reality as seen from an African or non-western lens. There are several ways by which a researcher can acquire this perspective. We want to mention here that the perspective is not owned or perceived only by people of African descent. The perspective is acquired through a process Freire calls conscientization. The perspective is not necessarily acquired in a Western type classroom context though it may be helpful to have that background. The perspective is partly experiential. It has as its starting point, an awareness of the fact that Africa has been evangelized, conquered, colonized and is still largely managed economically by the major financial institutions in the West like the World Bank and the IMF and politically by the western powers through some bilateral and multilateral development agencies and their affiliates. The Afrocentric Perspective also recognizes that reality in Africa, as in many parts of the developing world, is defined according to how the west would like it to be. There are many ways in which this happens; we argue that the Western type education is one of them. According to Odora Hoppers (1998), the essence of the perspective is not so much to negate the fact of the enormous power that is in the western capitalist system and seek grounds to glibly glorify Africa, as it is to outline the degree of chaos, dislocation, mutation, and debilitation that Africa as a continent has undergone. According to the perspective, Africa's

challenges are partly arising from its prolonged and deeply entrenched subjugation.

In the course of this subjugation, the image and worth of the continent of Africa, along with its people, its culture and heritage has been constantly distorted and undermined by indoctrination based on a series of stunted myths and twisted logic produced by parochial interests originating both from within Africa and also from the West. The “fog of lies” as Martin Luther King once called it, has had the tragic effect of instilling in African people a sense of inferiority and congenital deficiency. Banks (2009) referred to this relationship between dominant powers and subjugated people as internalized subjugation.

This poison, once upon a time promoted by unscrupulous fortune seekers to justify their “natural right” to strip Africa of its resources, is today dressed in different, subtler clothes. An entire development paradigm has been put in place to give the west more justification to shape Africa in its image, and a new class of technocrats is tuned out to ensure the smooth execution of this project. In the process, African people have lost touch with their ideology, reality, history, and along with it, their self-understanding and thus also lost the roots of their pride.

The distortions are perverse, and the effects of it chilling. However there are some signs of optimism. This optimism also assumes that no human being enjoys being raised in subjugation or terror. The Afrocentric Perspective thus, gives individuals even in the west, the benefit of doubt, hoping that with the exercise of free will and creative reflection of the nature of oppression, all people will come together to tackle the tenets of such subjugation, and ensure that the world is a happier, safer and more peaceful place for all. The optimism also assumes that in the interest of fair play, the West will come to understand how Africa has helped to shape it. This optimism is rooted in the internal ideological logic on which the West is built. It is rooted in Western education itself and this is what Freire calls pedagogy of the oppressed.

### **6.7.5 Development from Within and Below**

As far as AP is concerned, the starting point of discussions about development is to question the restlessness and fuss about “developing” Africa that has become the centerpiece in development theory. It challenges the world to take African societies seriously as they are, and not as the Western world would like it to be. It builds on the strength and validity of local, democratic and participatory knowledges free from external coercion and authoritarianism. This coercion, according to this perspective, emanates from the combined collusion between African leaders clinging onto power in the face of vanishing legitimacy, African elites who have been co-opted and Western development agencies acting on behalf of their “democratic” governments and clinging on to their questionable, and in some cases, obsolete development formulas and allowing no doubts, dissent or negotiated consensus (Odora Hoppers 1998, Haavelsrud 1996, Ake 1988, Timberlake 1990, Goonatilake 1984). The perspective also questions the perfidious assumption prevailing in contemporary development paradigm about the distinction between developed and underdeveloped societies into a dichotomy between good and bad. In the context of this insidious and dichotomous insinuation, African societies are treated as if they have neither validity nor integrity and may be violated at will as long as it still does not “look like the West”. Claude Ake grimly sums it:

*The task of development is no longer how a people might move forward on its own terms... but how it might be transformed **by the West in its own image of what the West consider others ought to be.** From this perspective, development becomes an exercise in self alienation and humiliation (Ake 1988:20 bold emphasis mine).*

The Afrocentric perspective supports a development that is not a traumatic and alienating affair, but one in which people, their interests, their values and their aspirations determine the content, strategies and modalities of development. In an alternative to the dominant western framework, people see, feel, decide and act and merely react or submissively accept. The alternative

perspective holds western capitalist rationality as a relative phenomenon; relative to other ways of social and economic organization (Ake 1988).

### **6.7.6 Pedagogy of the Oppressed**

Odora Hoppers, (2000) argues that a people's culture is a carrier of the values evolved by that community in the course of their economic and political life. The values they hold are the basis of that community's consciousness, the basis of their world outlook, the basis of their collective and individual image of "self", the basis of their faith and philosophy. The people's culture is not a mechanical process governed by economic life flowing into political and cultural life as has been assumed when education is given a role in Africa<sup>1</sup>. In a context in which one nation or group of nations, race or class dominates another; there can never be a "neutral" education transmitting a neutral culture (Bernstein 1996).

According to Ngugi wa Thiongo, cited in Odora Hoppers, (2000), education in such a context is embroiled in a mortal struggle, transmitting two opposed types of culture, and hence, two opposed consciousnesses or world outlooks. I will reproduce below Odora Hoppers's graphic illustration of wa Thiongo's idea of opposed consciousness in full. The figuration is of two people named **A** and the other named **B**.

**A** is sitting on **B**. **A** is carried, clothed and fed by **B**. What type of education will **A** want **B** to get? In Other words, education for what kind of culture and consciousness will **A** give **B**? **A** will want to educate **B** to obscure the fact that it is **B** who is carrying, clothing and feeding **A**. **A** will want **B** to learn the philosophy which says that the world does not change. **A** will want to teach **B** the religion which tells him that the present situation is divinely willed and nothing can be done about it, or that **B** is in the present plight because he has sinned, or that **B** should endure his lot because in heaven he will get plenty. Religion, any religion is very useful to **A** for it teaches that the situation in which **A** is sitting on **B** is not brought about by a man; it is not historical: on the contrary, it is the law of the universe, sanctioned by God. **A** will want **B** to believe that he, **B**, to imbibe a culture that inculcates in him values of self doubt, self-denigration, in a word, a slave consciousness. **B** will now look to **A**'s superior culture. In short, **A** will want **B** to have the education which on the one hand will deny him the real knowledge about the status quo of an **A** sitting



on **B**; and on the other, impart a culture embodying the values of slavery, a slave consciousness or world outlook. This will make **B** subservient, for **A** wants **B** not only to be a slave, but to accept that his fate or destiny is to be subservient.

**B** on the other hand, will want that philosophy that teaches that everything changes, that changes that change is inherent in nature and in human society. He will embrace that religion which preaches that the system of some people sitting on others is against the law of God. **B** may want to reevaluate his past and he will discover that he was not always a slave, carrying, feeding and clothing **A**. Thus, he will embrace that education that shows him quite clearly that his present plight is historical and not natural, that it has been brought about by man, and so can be changed by man. **B** will embrace that culture which inculcates in him the values of self-confidence and pride in self, values which give him courage and faith that he can do something about his present plight, in short, **B** will want that education which not only gives him knowledge about his plight, but a liberated consciousness, a consciousness urging him to fight for freedom.

Now, it is possible that **A** and **B** are not necessarily conscious of the type of education and culture and world outlook they want. But the fact remains that there is an education system which imports a culture embodying a consciousness corresponding to the objective position of **A** and another corresponding to the defective position of **B**. The two types of education, culture, and world outlook, are in mortal struggles for **A** is trying to make **B** to embrace subservience. **B** is also struggling to evolve an education that imparts a culture that frees him from the intended subservient consciousness so that he can, with confidence, overturn and be free to now carry, feed and clothe himself (Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1981:6-8).

The Afrocentric Perspective will be capable - just like Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed - in activating this process because the problem is not just that of an education that obscures **B**'s understanding of oppressive context, but of an education that seeks to make **A**'s position of oppression together with his world view become the universal view. Thus, African children are not only being made to imbibe the culture of the dominant group- the western-, but by the same process, they are not in any way exposed to options that would make them explore the validity or not, of their own cosmology. Neither are they, while engrossed in the process of such an education, in a position to begin any radical questioning of its' (the educational system's) tenets and philosophies. To even begin to visualize the possibilities of raising the status of the

subjugated cultures and knowledge systems would be to engage in a well-meaning dream that the status quo is least willing to consider or share.

One could quite well argue that in such a situation of subjugation, acculturation in education begins to lose its innocent definition as “the inflow of knowledge that is external to the individual or society.” How can it not begin to represent, in the African contest, a specific European/western strategy to undermine indigenous processes using formal education to socialize the children of other cultures to become foundation stones for a new European/western cultural order (Constantino, 1978)? Is it really surprising the extent to which cultural forms is depreciated in Africa in “favor” of western cultural norms? What, for instance, are the long time consequences of the cultural illiteracy that African children face for the rest of their lives after being exposed to this form of education? Examples of this abound, now whose fault is it that many Africans and I am no exception can neither read nor write their own languages but can write for instance English?

From this perspective, the state of cultural illiteracy once instituted turns to open the door and permits a number of other malaises to healthily thrive. Some of such malaises are cultural dependency and what Shils (1957) called a system of Xenophilia. The basic and quite commonplace symptoms of this “xenophilia” in the African context would be, among others;

- a peculiar familiarity among educated Africans, with a distant metropolitan culture, but with no similar relationship (or where it exists, a negation of one’s identity) with the immediate reality of their own dying cultures;
- an uncritical acceptance of prescriptions and yardsticks or norms and behavior from those metropolitan “centers” i.e. blue print education reform policies;
- that entire learning and teaching processes and practices are conducted according to paradigms and schools of thought imposed on them from the center; thus,
- turning Africa into a storage of the different time layers of what Goonatilake called “petrified and fossilized knowledge of the European past surviving into the present” (Goonatilake 1984), without even considering doing the same for African heritage

- and last but not the least the alienation of educated Africans from their respective peripheries.

This approach also visualizes citizenship illiteracy as cultural illiteracy aggregated at the national level. This is further seen to be encouraged and enhanced by the way the “enlightened” center continues to emphasize surface values such as stressing the purpose of education as being to find jobs and speed the ascent up the ladder of social mobility. Graduates from the school system are threatened with cultural disharmony and estrangement and alienating them from the tenets of their beings and normative identity. While these processes of symbolic control goes on, donors, educational financiers and some researchers dwell on such areas that they consider “worth” researching about. An issue such as peoples’ anger and frustrations and subsistence under an education system that is dislocates people, that is unsatisfactory and which imparts contrary values are not considered scientific enough. Instead, concerns usually hang high up at the level of problems like accountability, local control, decentralization, user fees, and return on investment in education at various levels, access, enrolment, and completion, expenditure instead of investment and overall efficiency and management of the school system.

The triumph of citizenship illiteracy is then seen in the way majority of African intellectuals avoid asking questions why the reality of daily African life does not enter scientific theory. In a condition of citizenship illiteracy, the quality and scientificity of knowledge determine, not by organic content, but by whether or not, the center can authenticate it, and no question is raised concerning the intellectuals imprisoned by a set of paradigms that are defined outside their reality; by legitimizing a reward system that is determined elsewhere; and by a system of learning which is by nature imitative, and non-creative (Goonatilake 1984).

### **6.7.7 Freeing Subjugated People**

The Afrocentric perspective shares the concern being voiced about the perversion that characterizes the advisory framework and networks that informs the development industry in Africa. It looks at the way Africa is dying because in its ill-planned, ill-advised attempt to modernize into forms that the West could ultimately tolerate, it has cut itself into pieces, tearing its cities from the countryside, people from their past, and plunging the continent within nearly six decades since independence, from food self sufficiency to widespread hunger. It questions the morality of an advisory industry flourishing in the metropolitan centers, that consumes between 50-70 per cent of all the so called development assistance; and then challenges the foreign experts flirting from one African capital to the other dispensing various economic cures from their brief cases (Timberlake 1990), to critical reflection as to their individual roles in re-colonizing Africa and its people. This happening was better described in Rodney's (1972)"How Europe underdeveloped Africa".

This perspective questions western ethnography and conventional economic approach to development that has suppressed local knowledge and local technology, and which equates physical deprivation and mental ignorance all over the "developing" world (Fuglesang 1984). It questions ethnography that since the beginnings of its contact with African societies has denied abstract thought to and denigrated as noble savages, African people (Temples 1959). It also posits the question as to whether a global frame of reference based on such an ignominious philosophy can be capable of not only liberating itself from its own ignorance, but also liberating people it has subjugated.

### **6.7.8 Dominance of Western Values and Cultural Expressions**

The Alternative perspective questions the logic of western obsession with the written word, and challenges the advocates of this form of cultural and linguistic expression to defend itself from the accusation of the blind sponsorship of this form of expression. When all these are coupled with extensive exploitation and subjugation of Africa in just about every sphere of

life, it becomes necessary to begin to wonder if Africa is subscribing to a conspiracy to induce (what the late Professor Okot p'Bitek called) "literary deafness" all over the continent (Okot p'Bitek 1974).

Further critical attention is also drawn to the "disempowering" effect that the introduction of the written word has had, and continues to have on African people who rely on oral communicative traditions and who would have to pay very highly from an economic and cultural point of view, by adopting the written word as the means of communication. Further assurances would be sought to allay the possibility that the permeation of the western written culture is not one more in a series of strategies to trap Africans into becoming amiable and headless consumers of western products, having, via western alphabetization, learnt to read clearly all the labels and instructions on the myriad of products dispensed to the continent (Enzensberger 1987).

The Afrocentric Perspective ultimately therefore, an SOS for emergency debate about the state of the marital relations between Africa and its European bridegroom; a marriage that, right from its contestable beginnings, has perpetuated abuse, rape and denigration of African indigenous cultural systems bordering on crimes against humanity.

## **6.8 Conclusion**

This paper has reviewed some of the crucial aspects of the discussion about educational reforms in Ghana. While these policy reforms may have reached their high points in the 1980s, and during a considerable part of the 1990s, the discussion about the tenability of these policies must remain unabated. Two main analytical approaches have featured prominently in this discussion. The first analytical approach seeks to substantiate non-market solutions to the problems of resource allocation in the social sector, under the constraints of fiscal retrenchment. The second analytical approach underscores the conceptual and empirical problems of market oriented solutions, in distributing educational benefits in times of economic stress.

However, one is inclined to think that the demands for technical and internal efficiency must be accompanied by concerns for equity and social justice. This is what is missing, or at least, tends to be de-emphasized in the neo-classical theoretical assumptions. The quest for social justice and institutional adjustment of education suggests the integration of various strands of social thought. Hence, the discourse must be deepened by the exploration of rigorous methodologies, which may elucidate the role of agency and subjectivity in the process of educational change. Reliance on the dominant neo-classical economic analysis to gauge the true extent of the impact of structural adjustment led reforms is necessary but not sufficient in elucidating the role of institutional and subjective factors in the process of change.

Deepening the discourse requires the exploration of alternative and rigorously tested methodologies. Such methodologies must draw on classic works including those of the field of sociology of education. There must also be attempts to integrate the reflective nature of educational practice, and its significance for sustainable development. The end of the 1980s did not mark the epilogue or the final scene in this drama to foster structural change, but rather a transitory and critically contingent phase in an unfolding process of dialogue. A multi-disciplinary discursive arena will undoubtedly provide a process of mutual exchange to enrich and guide researchers in our research endeavors.

Currently, educational systems in Africa remain in dire need of reform, and a dose of fresh initiatives to effect the paradigmatic change that is so indispensable to future progress. The need for educational change in much of Africa and particularly in Ghana as it braces through a successful fourth consecutive multi-party democracy is a sentiment which reaffirms the Jomtien declaration of 1990; that education in the modern age is not a privilege, but a basic human right. Hence, the final and most cherished goal of educational change and progress should be to empower ordinary citizens to take action to reorder their societies for the better as has been suggested in this project.

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## **7.0 SUMMARY, GENERAL CONCLUSIONS & SYNTHESIS**

### **7.1 Summary**

In this study we have demonstrated that national policies, and international policies, underwent a change that linked education with development in recent decades.

The education policies in Ghana since independence in 1957 emphasized the establishment of civics and ethics through education and claimed that education should be holistic and that policy endeavors had to consider the emotional needs of the learner (Akyeampong et al. 2007). These documents aimed primarily at shaping “men and citizens” (p. 66), while at the same time acknowledging the economic value of education. Later documents endeavored to shape “men as workers” (p.66) thus demonstrating a shift from a humanist perspective to one that was more economic, utilitarian and market oriented in its scope.

The idea of progress through expansion and higher levels of education was very dominant during the immediate post independence years. Issues of efficiency and equity had not been problematized, and this was perhaps why funding for higher education was not questioned as in the decades that followed. The Nkrumah government for instance was more interested in *progress* and *change* to justify the need to implement new policies. Progressive policies of development that favored change became relevant in education; old practices rooted primarily in the traditional ways indigenous to the various regions throughout the nation were deemed obsolete, whereas the adoption of new, increasingly Western practices became popular. I remember a colleague mentioned in a conversation that traditional languages in Ghana at the time were termed vernacular and were not to be spoken in school; the only language to be spoken was “good English”. Change in education was advocated for the sake of change, and it was deemed inevitable, which made education the object and the means of that change and diminished any possibility of resistance. No

reference to poverty alleviation was significant enough to indicate that education was drifting in this direction.

During the 1980s the idea of change continued to persist; however, unlike in the previous decade, the Ghanaian Education policy documents in this decade laid out more systematic plans to achieve the heralded change. Change had a tone of improvement, but in reality it was more about adapting to what was being perceived as a problem than about creating possible and necessary solutions with local relevance. In this decade changes were implemented to increase efficiency, improve access to marginalized populations (see the Education Strategic Plan 2003-2015). These changes were in part a response to the financial crises that occurred not only in Ghana, but also worldwide. Whereas post independence education policies were centered on expanding the system, expansion was secondary at the end of the 1980s. Instead education funding dominated political discourse. Under these circumstances, policies for the efficiency, planning, budgeting, and methods of long-distance education and accreditation of informal, vocational and adult education entered the stage. The way that they were presented clearly fit within Western rationality, which means that the country adopted the values and practices that were dominant in developed countries (Peet, 2007; Rwomire, 1998:19). One example of this is the adoption of efficiency as a goal and practice of education, which was not a commonly held value in Ghanaian society, where the value of work became more than the speed with which the work was done. This carried over to education. As these changes affected the definition of education, not only efficiency but also quality, cost benefit analysis, return on investment, and funding matters took priority over issues such as system expansion and class delivery.

Education, however, continued to be seen as a process to shape the individual. This decade reprised the holistic aspect of education by emphasizing the mind as well as the body and spirit. The Education Strategic Plans designed during the first Rawlings administration defined education as a powerful tool to shape the future of Ghana, while also making clear that it

was not the panacea for all of society's problems. Education was just one factor with the potential to contribute to the betterment of society, and it was not yet clearly associated with economic matters.

The 1990s were characterized by the implementation of neoliberal policies in educational practice. Everything, from the mentalities to the programs to the techniques, reflected the adoption of a new paradigm in which the economic aspect took center stage in educational practices. The Bretten Woods Institutions (BWIs) and other supranational aid agencies were determining factors in Ghana's adoption of neoliberal policies, and the new democratically elected Rawlings government implemented a program of education based on a modernist ideology. Free, centralized, state funded, public, and inflexible education was described as backwards, antiquated and wasteful. Modernizing the system consisted of decentralizing education, making the public bear its costs and responsibility for some managerial aspects, encouraging new and more private institutions of education, and adopting financial mechanisms such as incentive programs for teachers and students (ESPS 1998-2002 and ESP 2003-2015). The policy documents of the BWIs also encouraged the policy of decentralization during this decade.

In the financial field, highly rationalized accountability techniques became paramount in allocating and distributing funds. Education during this decade became unquestionably connected to the economy, not only through the adoption of more economic practices to manage it, but also through the assumption that it was one of the panaceas for social problems - poverty reduction and alleviation was one of the most important - as the Rawlings education policy documents described it (ESP 2003-2015).

During this same period, elementary education was presented as the means to train workers; higher education, although important, did not qualify as a government objective. Higher education was said to return more gains to the individual than to the state so there was no reason why the state should pay for it. This was more so with regards to the field of social sciences, any money to high education was directed more to science and technology

education. More privatization, more incentive programs, more techniques to measure performance, and more funds to achieve higher student completion rates were all part of the new reform policies of the 1990s. Education was depicted as a contribution to “an integral development of society” (ESP 2003-2015). Templates to evaluate the problems confronting Ghanaian education were prepared from the BWIs and their affiliate bi- and multilateral institutions and development partners including NGOs. There were disclaimers stating that the documents were not cookie cutters and that countries could modify them to meet their unique educational needs however there were hidden penalties as one senior executive informed me “if we did not follow the templates, the funds will not flow”. He also mentioned that there were lots of time constraints so it was easier for them to “just fill in the blanks” on these templates than to worry about adapting it to their unique educational needs. Any help in reversing the education downward trend was better than nothing. Since Ghana did not have the money to implement these policies which they had already bought into, it was unimaginable not to follow these templates. He said that: “it was also very tempting as it made our work very easy”.

## **7.2 General Conclusions**

In this collection of papers we have shown that the current definition of education in Ghana has changed in government policy documents. After exhaustively reviewing several key policy documents – Education Act (1961), Education Services Act 1995 (Act 506), Education Sector Plans (1998-2002), Education Policy Review Report (2002), Education Sector Review 2002, Report of the President’s Committee on the review of Education Reforms in Ghana (2002), Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (2003), Medium Term Expenditure Framework (2002-2004), New Partnership for Africa’s Development (2001), Education For All by 2015 (Dakar Framework 2000), Education Strategic Plan (2003-2015) and many more, we have concluded that the national approach to education changed from a perspective on education as the means to shape students into responsible civic citizens who are able to use their full

capacities and human potential (see the Education Act of 1961) to a perspective on education as the means to train workers who are able to meet their individual economic needs and contribute to the economic development of Ghana (see the Education Sector Plans from 1990 through 2015).

Scholars in the field of education policy analysis have pointed out that policies are made in an attempt to address or solve perceived educational problems. They have suggested that this perception is not neutral; rather, it is influenced by the interests of key players (Haavelsrud 1996; Hovdenak 1999; Bernstein 1999; Pal, 2005; Westen, 2007; Odora Hoppers 2007 and others).

Another perspective that has changed within education is the emphasis on quality and efficiency, which seem to be the terminology much favored in contemporary education reform documents. But what is remarkable is not the use of the terms, but the means proposed to achieve quality and efficiency. First, they are now intimately linked, which means that good quality education occurs when personnel are able to achieve 'more with less,' especially with fewer government resources. The reduction of government resources has been achieved through a more rationalized system, as the analysis has shown (see also Hovdenak 1998).

The changes described above, although unique in their timing and in the way that they have been presented to society, coincided significantly with the policies proposed by the BWIs for the overall economic growth of Ghana. First, the increasing rationalization of resource allocation followed the same method and rationale in education as in the economy. That is, allocation was based on a meritocracy that valued efficiency, quality, accountability, transparency and sound administration. The level of rationalization for resource allocation and administration of the system is radically different in later decades, which indicates not only the maturity of the formal education system as we know it, but also a stronger link between administration and education, as the BWIs advised. Second, the emphasis on elementary education, on the premise that this level returns more on investment than other levels and should receive priority until full participation and completion are achieved, also resonates

with the BWIs recommendations outlined in the plan to universalize elementary education goals. Third, the definition of education as a sector of society with development potential and the potential to solve individual poverty first appeared in the BWIs documents in the 1980s; a decade later it appeared in the policy discourse of the Ghanaian education policy documents that we have analyzed. These three factors indicate a clear influence of international financial institutions at the national level, at least with regard to policy formulation in education and also in the overall economy.

Our examination of policy documents for the last five decades indicates that at an international level the definitions of and approaches to education have indeed changed. The notion of using education to combat poverty appeared recently in policy documents. However, the perspective on education as an investment - another side of the human capital theory - has remained a constant characteristic of all of the documents from the BWIs. The new conceptual approach was not about investing in education, but about the objectives of that investment. Earlier documents (from 1960 to 1970) emphasized that education was an investment for the nation, whereas the latest documents (from the late 1980s to the present time) have stressed that it is primarily an investment for the individual who obtains education, and then for the nation.

We showed that, gradually, international policies for education have adapted an economic rationality that prioritizes efficiency and economic values. We believe that the individualizing techniques demonstrated a significant turning point in the adoption of the notion of education for prosperity. As we see it, focusing on the individual was a technique that eased the establishment of poverty reduction policies. In other words, by shifting the political focus from the national to individual benefits, the policy became more about poverty alleviation and economic values.

We also saw a flow of policies and ideas in the publications from the BWIs to the Ghanaian policy arena now designed by representatives of the country, with technical support from the BWIs and its affiliates. According to



the characteristics of the publications, Ghana's policies seemed to follow a template or pattern that had been pre-designed in the publications. This pattern of ideas has now spread throughout the globe. There are now scores of publications which promote specific theoretical orientations that have been experimented in various ways in different parts of the world. Finally, besides the broader emphasis on poverty reduction and the focus on the individual as the primary benefactor of education policies that are now apparent in nearly every policy document, it is also evident that the BWIs have consolidated their reputation as expert in the field of global education reform conforming to the will of the people and seen as socially responsibly.

### **7.3 Synthesis**

To wrap up our findings then, we have found that at an international level the perspective on education for prosperity changed to the adoption of a poverty approach, but remained the same in its financial approach. The BWIs perspective on education has always been based on market rationality, but their emphasis entered policy discourse in the 1980s and changed from the viewpoint that nations benefit from education to the perspective that individuals benefit first, and then their nations. At the national level, the view of education changed at the end of the 1980s and throughout the 1990s, when the perspective on education suffered a more substantial change that was financial in focus, because older documents had portrayed education as a shared social asset and as the means to achieve human realization. More recent documents have portrayed it as the means to achieve economic stability, as a filter through which to reduce access to jobs, and as the guarantor of a better quality of life for the individual.

In my examination of the policy documents for this research and the resulting analysis, and in comparing them with the research questions and the theory, we identified four dominant themes that are related to each other as well as to the main questions. A discussion of each follows.

Compared to the international analysis, the national policies for education in Ghana were timed differently in terms of their adoption of the education for prosperity paradigm. The first study showed that international banks have indeed advocated for an economic approach to education since the beginning of their intervention in this sector at the end of the 1960s; Ghana did not even begin to discuss the human capital approach until the end of the 1980s. The BWIs economic approach was evident in earlier policy documents but did not materialize in loan agreements until the 1980s.

Despite the BWIs early attempts to materialize the economic approach developed at the end of the 1960s in the education projects; they were unable to diffuse this perspective into national policies until the 1980s. As we explained earlier, a central turning point for the BWIs was their implementation of their individualizing techniques. Focusing on the individual rather than the nation constituted a natural transition to the policies that viewed education as a tool to combat poverty. Additionally, political events such as the oil crisis of the 1970s and the legitimacy crises that the BWIs faced in the 1990s contributed to the development of the perspective of poverty reduction through education (Resnik, 2006, p. 195).

In our interpretation, the adoption of the human capital approach highlights four aspects:

- (a) the power of the financial and technical mechanisms in the loans,
- (b) the role of the BWIs as globalization agents (Neu, Ocampo Gomez, et al., 2002),
- (c) the role of each individual country in supporting this approach; and
- (d) the political potential to address such a 'benevolent' cause as poverty reduction or elimination.

Regarding the first and second aspects, we would like to point out that although the BWIs were created in the 1950s, their work in and influence on education was reduced to diagnosis and general analysis until they began to lend money to countries to develop their education infrastructure. Loan

agreements for specific projects did not start until the end of the 1970s and did not begin to diffuse the BWIs ideas until the 1980s. In the 1980s the notion of human capital was evident in a significant number of projects, and by the 1990s it became the driving force of most educational policies and projects. Based on these observations, we posit that the BWIs have contributed to the diffusion of the education for prosperity paradigm, although the origin of this idea could have been multidirectional, resulting from the influence of different actors at different levels.

Regarding the third and fourth aspects, the role of the individual countries and the political potential to address poverty and education, we contend that this perspective of education has been an opportunity for national leaders. Although the BWIs certainly played a crucial role by fostering a specific mentality of education for development and by constituting a field of discourse (Foucault, 1996a, p. 40; Resnik, 2006, p. 180), national leaders have supported this discourse because it is to their advantage to do so. In the midst of corrupt practices, the discourse on education and its importance has played the role of an easy scapegoat that has helped politicians to gain legitimacy nationally and internationally. Nationally, by emphasizing education, they have been able to distract the public from the real reasons for poverty and because education is a unanimously valued service that few will oppose (Hanales & Edwards, 2000, p. 124). Indeed, speaking out against education or against poverty reduction has become a sort of Political suicide for any government. Internationally, the discourse on education enabled politicians to attract funds for education that made the governments appear to be acting socially responsibly or in line with society's interests by investing in a sector that everyone values (Resnik, 2006, p. 174). This, of course, has solved short-term educational needs while potentially creating long-term challenges and, because most of the funds for educational projects of this type come from external sources it is increasing the national debt thereby continuing to strengthen dependency of developing countries of the south on developed countries of the north.

Rwomire (1998) raised an important question: "Why has education

become such a big business?” (p. 3). Throughout this research we have shown that education in recent years has become a privatized commodity and negotiated with market oriented guidelines. Resnik (2006) called this economic perspective on education the “education-economic growth black box” (p. 179) to indicate that it has become an unquestioned perspective. It is “knowledge that is accepted and used on a regular basis as an unquestioned matter of fact” (p. 179). This knowledge is transforming the way that education policies are formulated, “based on planning according to economic needs” (p. 191), not according to social needs.

This research emphasized three aspects: (a) that the human capital theory has been the ideological basis of the policy changes that occurred during the last decades, imposed in the context of conditionalities or otherwise, (b) that the BWIs have been justifying its implementation since the 1960s, and (c) that there is increasing reliance on the premises of this theory as the trajectory of the international and national levels reveal. Such reliance has transformed the mentalities, mechanisms, and technocracies used to address education, and this transformation needs to be kept under scrutiny for us to be able to evaluate whether our society is actually benefiting from it.

Education has almost ceased to be about learning so much as it is about earning a degree or diploma for the economic benefit of the individual and, consequently, the nation. The same can be said about the emphasis on the discourses on education for development that governments worldwide have promoted. The idea of educating oneself or obtaining a degree to contribute to society’s moral, social, and cultural goals has also been gradually eroded. Popular and official discourses too have argued that education is the means either to obtain a well-remunerated job or to achieve social mobility for the individual and the nation.

International institutions seem to be manipulating the perception of formal education in the societies and economies of underdeveloped and developing nations as a professional and civic necessity. The “Education for All” policies and the Millennium Development Goals are doing precisely this, based

upon the assumption that the communities and individuals whom these policies impact need Western-style education. Webb, Schirato & Danaher (2002) highlighted that, “in contemporary societies, it would be unthinkable for education to be taken out of the hands of the schools and education bureaucracies and given back wholly to the parents” (p. 119). This is not what we are advocating in this study. What we want to emphasize is that all of the stages through which education has passed, from its unstructured organic nascence to the present day when it is associated with poverty elimination and economic development, are the result of human constructs and attempts to solve problems perceived by a specific society at a specific time. It is important to keep this in mind because when we see education as a natural process instead of as a human construct, we lose the capacity to continually question it and to look for alternative methods of conceiving and delivering it.

Education as the mythical silver bullet that will eternally dispatch poverty is an attractive idea. But what makes it so attractive? And, more important, if policies are created by influential groups, what do they gain from this approach? Why has this discourse gained so much legitimacy, and what are its consequences?

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## **APPENDIX**

### **(a) List of Documents Reviewed**

1. Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (2007) – educationl Sector Performance Report, Republic of Ghana, Accra;
2. Government of Ghana (2007) Ghana Education Reform 2007;
3. Targeting Education Funding to the Poor: Universal Primary Education, Education Decentralization and Local Level Outcomes in Ghana (2008) UNESCO;
4. Ghana Education Service (2005) Guidelines for the Distribution and Utilization of Capital Grants to Basic Education
5. Ghana Statistical Service (1997) Core Welfare Indicators
6. Ghana Education Service (2006) 10 year work plan for education in Ghana
7. Ghana Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (1996) Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education Policy.
8. Ghana Ministry of Education and Sports (2007) Preliminary Education Sector Performance Report (PESPR).
9. Ministry of Education and Sports (2003) the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2003-2015
10. Government of Ghana (1992) the fourth Republican Constituion of Ghana
11. Government of Ghana (2003) National Decentralization Action Plan (NDAP)

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<sup>i</sup> See Bernstein eloquent analysis of the relations between education and production for more ideas about how dominant cultural categories are framed, contextualized and re-contextualized in Primary Socialization, Language and Education: Class, Codes & Control v.3 1973)