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Postcolonial Analysis of Equity in the Ghanaian Education System

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**POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS OF EQUITY IN THE GHANAIAN EDUCATION
SYSTEM.**

ENOCK YEBOAH

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**POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS OF EQUITY IN THE GHANAIAN EDUCATION
SYSTEM.**

BY

ENOCK YEBOAH

Thesis submitted to the Department of Secondary Education of the College of Education,
Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of
Master of Secondary Education (Curriculum and Instruction)

2024

DECLARATION


Candidates' Declaration

We hereby declare that this thesis is a result of our original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidates' Signature:  Date: ...05/01/2024..... Name: Enock Yeboah

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised following the guidelines of supervision of the thesis laid down by the Kutztown University of Pennsylvania.

Supervisor's Signature:  Date: May 1, 2024

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Mark Wolfmeyer

ABSTRACT

The paper contains information on the Ghana education system. As a product of the system, I will explain the Ghanaian education system's structure in the first part of the paper. In this part of the paper, I explain the Ghanaian education system from early childhood to the tertiary level, the assessment practices used in Ghana, and diversity and inclusion in the education sector of Ghana. I will give a brief overview of all the educational levels in Ghana and the age brackets of all levels. Early childhood education in Ghana starts at birth to age 4, and kindergarten starts at age 4 or 5. The primary level, which is six years, starts at age 6, and the junior high level starts at age 12. Students write standardized tests at this level: the Basic Education Certificate Exams (BECE) and the SHS. Students are required to write the West African Senior School Certificate Examination, which is the same in all West African countries. I will also explain how the Senior High School in Ghana is categorized based on performance, population, and resources. I will elaborate on the assessment strategies in the Ghanaian education system, as well as inclusive education. The new form of assessment by the Ministry of Education will also be explained in the first section. The first chapter of the study also delves into the country's diverse nature and how education seeks to achieve inclusion at all levels. The challenges of striving to promote inclusive education and equity will be explained. Ghana, as a country, is made up of more than 75 ethnic groups.

In the second chapter, I will proceed to use postcolonial theory to explain equity in the Ghanaian education system. Chapter two is where I will use postcolonial theory to explain how the colonial masters of Ghana have highly influenced postcolonial education. I will elaborate on

how the use of the colonial masters' language (English) and Western-centric curriculum affects postcolonial education in Ghana.

Chapter three of this paper discusses how standardized tests are used as gatekeepers in Ghana. I explore the functions of standardized testing as a significant gatekeeping mechanism in the Ghanaian education system. I will emphasize the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and Basic Education Certificate (BECE) as significant gatekeeping standardized tests. I will give the historical context of standardized testing, tracing it back to the colonial era (the Common Entrance Exams) and how the colonial era influenced the postcolonial assessment. I will again explain how this standardized testing promotes inequality in a country seeking to achieve equity in education. I recommended abolishing standardized testing like the WASSCE in Ghana and using Senior High School transcripts as a requirement for university admission.

In the final chapter, I will review the World Bank (WB) reports and their involvement in the Ghanaian education system. I explain the positive impact the World Bank's involvement in the education system in Ghana has on Ghanaians and the education sector. I also delve deeper into the negative implications of the involvement of the World Bank on the Ghanaian education system, the culture, and the economy of Ghana. It was prevalent that the World Bank system and aim of education, which focuses on individualistic education, contrast with the collectivist society of Ghana.

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DEDICATION

To my families

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The Ghanaian Education System

Introduction

Before colonization, education in Ghana was solely informal. Education was basically done at home. Parents teach their kids and family members. It taught taboos, history, music, rhetoric, and other topics for survival in society. It aimed to make the child a part of the totality of the social consciousness. It had nothing to do with reading and writing. Apprenticeship was the foundation of education. Precolonial Ghana's economy was founded on household sharing of farm products, and members of each home specialized in providing needs, including shelter, clothing, furniture, and cooking equipment. As a result, trading with other families took place on a relatively local scale. Family members and parents passed their culture, traditions, history, and beliefs to the younger generation through music and oral form (Saphir, 2001). This informal education took place until the arrival of the Western form of education (formal education)

According to Saphir (2001), the Portuguese came to introduce formal education in Ghana during the 16th century. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive on the west coast of Africa. When they arrived in Elmina in 1471, they built forts to safeguard their trade with the native populace. By 1529, the Portuguese had established one such school in the Elmina castle, replacing the earlier schools that "were attached to the castles and torts." The fundamental subjects of arithmetic, writing, and reading were taught. The purpose of education was to promote the Bible and teach bookkeeping and trading skills to the mulatto children of African women and European merchants. Since Western education did not begin to educate females in Europe or Africa until much later, this kind of education was only available to male children. By 1850, "more than 1,000 students enrolled in their schools were receiving instruction in arithmetic, reading, and writing, and the Basel and Wesleyan Methodist missions provided the

main educational drive in the coastal areas of Ghana" (Antwi 31). Because of the efforts of Christian missionaries operating there, Western-style education started on the coast and eventually made its way into all parts of Ghana. Antwi 38 reported that before Kwame Nkrumah took office in 1951 and introduced the Accelerated Development Plan for Education, European missionaries primarily managed and funded schools.

Over time, significant adjustments have been made to the Ghanaian educational system to increase accessibility, quality, and relevance. Ghana's educational system, which has a long history of innovation, is known for its many levels of instruction, each of which has distinct characteristics and objectives. This page thoroughly analyzes the institutions, significant stages, and most recent developments in the Ghanaian educational system.

The pre-tertiary education

The pre-tertiary education consists of kindergarten, primary education, junior high school, and senior high school. This structure has been explained below. Nevertheless, the current education reforms in Ghana have initiated some pre-tertiary amendments. According to the current reforms, Kindergarten, primary school, Junior High School (JHS), and Senior High School (SHS) are all classified as basic schools. JHS 1,2, 3, and SHS 1 will now be referred to as BS 7,8,9 and 10 respectively. JHS 1 to SHS 1 students will have a Common Core Program (CCP) comprising 9 subjects (Mathematics, Language, Science, Religious and Moral Education, Physical and Health Education examinable, Career Technology, Social Studies, Computing, and Creative Art and Design). There are different forms of assessment, which will be discussed in the assessment section.

Early Childhood Education

The age range for early childhood education is from birth to age four. Several organizations, including community-based creches and kindergartens, provide early childhood education. Preschool education, consisting of crèches (between the ages of 2 and 4) and nursery schools (between the ages of 4 and 6), has now been made compulsory in Ghana. Preschool education's primary goal is to advance physical and mental health. The curriculum emphasizes language development, math, writing, drawing, music, and dancing, among other things. The primary goal of the ECE Policy, according to the Ghana Education Service, is to strengthen the ECE subsector to advance the physical, cognitive, psycho-social, and emotional developmental growth of all 4- and 5-year-olds, including the underprivileged, vulnerable, and children with special needs.

Basic Education: According to the Ministry of Education (MoE), the current education reform for 2018-2030 stated that Kindergarten, primary school, JHS, and SHS are all described as Basic Schools. In 1996, the government of Ghana introduced the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) Program to help promote education at access to education for all.

The main objective of this strategy plan was to guarantee that by 2005, every child of school age would have access to a high-quality fundamental education.

Primary Education

From the age of six, children in Ghana must attend school. Additionally, they begin basic school at this age. The six-year primary education program is divided into a three-year lower primary phase and a three-year upper primary phase. The official language used is English. English is used to teach in class. However, the lower primary is mandated to use the local language as a medium of instruction, and English is taught as a subject.

The primary curriculum emphasizes the development of problem-solving skills, reading and writing, math, and arithmetic skills. English, the local indigenous language, math, biology, music, dance, handicrafts, and citizenship education are among the courses students offer. A completion certificate is not given. Students typically turn 12 when they finish primary school. In primary education, the school year is 40 weeks long. Students' progress to the Junior High School without any external examination. Promotion is based on the sole discretion of the class teacher and the headmaster. This level of education is free and compulsory for all Ghanaian citizens. However, the 2020 MICS-EAGLE Ghana Education Fact Sheets confirmed that 71 percent of the school population completed primary education. The data indicated that the poor citizens and the rural areas have the lowest completion rate.

Junior High School. The Junior high school prepares students for further education, emphasizing a broader curriculum. The required school years end with the junior high phase. The average age of the kids at that point is 15. Students are taught courses like English, math, social studies, and integrated Science throughout the junior high phase, in addition to fundamental design and technology, religious and moral education, French, and ICT. Students take exams to get the Basic Education Certificate at the end of the junior phase. The junior high phase has a 45-week academic year.

The Senior High School. Students are taught English, math, social studies, and integrated Science during high school. They also have a variety of electives to choose from in addition to these courses. As well as general education (arts or sciences), these electives are used in the specialties of agriculture, business, technology, and business. Exams for the West African Senior School Certificate (WASSCE), which has been used in place of the Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSSCE) since 2007, mark the end of senior secondary education. The Ghana

National Office of the West African Examinations Council administers these tests. To get the West African Senior School Certificate, students must pass exams in four mandatory subjects: English, mathematics, social studies, and integrated Science. Successful SHS completion leads to the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) award.

Senior high schools in Ghana are categorized based on the school's academic performance in the West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). The categorization is also based on the school population, resources, and facilities (Baidoo-Anu et al., 2023). Category A schools are rated the best, followed by B and C, which are classified as average schools, and D as low-performing schools. E and F are private High Schools and Technical institutions, respectively. Many researchers have criticized categorization as promoting inequality in education. Various researchers indicated that the historical and contemporary documentation of disparities such as in-group favoritism, stereotyping, discrimination, and marginalization against the out-group has also been linked to the categorization of students based on gender, ethnicity, race, academic achievements, and abilities (Allport et al., 1954; Bygren, 2016; Diehl & Fick, 2016; Fiske, 1998). Students do not have the right to decide which category of school they want to attend. Their placement is done by a computerized school selection, which depends on their performance in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) standardized test.

An educational reform in 2007 extended the duration of senior secondary education by one year, creating a 4-year senior phase. However, this reform was reversed by the new government in 2009, and the nominal duration has now returned to 3 years. The short-lived reform has not affected the evaluation of the Senior Secondary School Certificate.

Tertiary institutions

The Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) is responsible for tertiary Education in Ghana. It has recently replaced the previous National Accreditation Board.

Our tertiary institutions comprised Polytechnics, now technical universities, universities, university colleges, theology colleges, and Colleges of Education, all offer higher education in Ghana. Three recognized theological colleges, twenty university colleges, 10 Technical Universities, 46 Colleges of Education, and 15 public universities are available nationwide. University colleges are private organizations associated with accredited universities that grant university graduates degrees. Technical Universities primarily offer higher professional education programs.

The University

Ghana's three cycles of university education are bachelor's degree programs, master's degree programs, and Ph.D. programs. Candidates must theoretically possess a West African Senior School Certificate with six passes and a maximum aggregate score of 24 to be admitted to bachelor's degree programs. Each program has its cutoff point. A student must have at least a credit pass in 3 core subjects (English, Math, and Science) and three other Electives. The length of a bachelor's program can range from 2 to 4 years, depending on the chosen concentration (and whether it is a top-up or straight entrance degree). The typical length of a bachelor's program is four years. However, programs in the disciplines of medicine and surgery or dental surgery typically take six years.

A level is awarded to each year of a bachelor's program: the first year is level 100, the second year is level 200, the third year is level 300, and the fourth year is level 400. In Ghana, bachelor's degree programs typically entail a high level of specialization. Programs typically concentrate on one main program, though you can choose a second (related) concentration. Not

every bachelor's degree program has a capstone essay. In theory, Ghanaian students can enroll in master's degree programs with a bachelor's degree. In reality, though, admission to master's degree programs requires that applicants have a bachelor's degree with at least second-class honors.

Master's degree programs often last one or two years. Students must have a bachelor's degree to be admitted to a master's degree program. These study programs typically continue the previously achieved bachelor's degree specialization. The most prevalent master's degree programs fall into one of two categories. Students follow theoretical subjects in the master's degree programs that are supposed to last one year. The curriculum ends with a final paper that is often based on a literature review. The Master of Philosophy program, a notional 2-year research master's degree, is the other primary master's program type in Ghana. Students study theoretical courses for a year as part of these programs. After conducting their own independent research, they write a final paper to wrap up the curriculum.

A doctorate is awarded following at least four years of doctoral program-related study. A master's degree is required for those who want to pursue a doctorate. The Ph.D. and DPhil degrees are given upon satisfactory completion of the doctorate program.

Colleges of Education.

These tertiary institutions are established to train only teachers at the Basic Schools. Each college of education is affiliated with one of the universities in the country. It was previously a three-year diploma in Basic Education but has recently been turned into a four-year degree awarding institution.

Diversity and Inclusion

Any inclusive and fair educational system must include both diversity and special education. As a result of the tremendous cultural diversity of Ghana and the necessity to meet the educational needs of children with disabilities, these concerns take on particular dimensions in the context of Ghanaian education. Ghana is diverse, with more than 70 ethnic groups and seventy-eight languages. English is the official language which is used in all schools. Ghana is renowned for having a diverse culture, with many different ethnic groups and languages being spoken all around the nation. This diversity is mirrored in the classroom, where pupils from various cultural backgrounds mingle. Making a learning environment that is inclusive and sensitive to these variations is crucial. Oduro (2017) asserts that while Ghana's cultural diversity offers potential for inclusive education, it also necessitates culturally sensitive teaching methods.

Ghana has improved inclusive education through legislative changes. The 2015 Inclusive Education Policy seeks to guarantee that all children, including those with disabilities, receive top-notch instruction in standard classrooms. This policy provides the framework for inclusive practices. The government's dedication to inclusive education is highlighted by the Inclusive Education Policy (2015) (Ghana Ministry of Education, 2015). Despite inclusive policies, difficulties still exist in their efficient execution. For kids with disabilities in particular, a lack of resources, such as qualified teachers and accessible infrastructure, continues to be a significant obstacle to meeting their various learning needs. The difficulties in implementing inclusive education in Ghana, including insufficient infrastructure and teacher preparation, were emphasized in a study by Adu and Tawiah (2019).

Ghana has benefited from global partnerships that support inclusive education. Initiatives to increase the quality and accessibility of education for underserved communities have received

support from organizations like UNICEF and UNESCO. Significant advancements in inclusive education have resulted from UNICEF's Partnership with Ghana (UNICEF Ghana, 2020). Like many other countries, Ghana is impacted by international education trends. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) strongly emphasizes fair and inclusive quality education for all. Ghana's educational guidelines follow this international commitment. Ghana's educational policies reflect its commitment to inclusive education and align with SDG 4 (United Nations, 2015).

Diversity and special education are developing ideas in Ghanaian education that reflect the nation's dedication to inclusivity and cultural diversity. Despite substantial policy changes and international cooperation, implementation issues continue. To guarantee that diversity is recognized and that children with disabilities receive the assistance they require, it is imperative that infrastructure be developed and teacher training is adequate. With the common objective of ensuring everyone has access to high-quality education, Ghana's educational journey toward inclusion is still impacted by internal and external influences. The diversity in Ghana's education is much more about supporting disabled students than focusing on the culture and background of the students in the classroom. As stated earlier, Ghana has English as its official language, but none of the citizens speak English as a first language.

The entire student population can be considered emerging bilinguals or English language learners since they speak more than one language and have a native language used at home with family rather than English. However, little effort has been made to help these students achieve both content and language development. A student must have a credit pass in English before he/she can be admitted into any university or tertiary institution. A student can get an A in all subjects if he gets a D7 in English. He would not qualify for any public University in Ghana. The

colonial masters mainly influenced these policies in Ghanaian education. The following section gives a more detailed explanation of the assessment practices in the Ghanaian education system.

Assessment Practices

Assessment plays a pivotal role in Ghana's education system, providing a means to measure student learning, inform instructional decisions, and evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs. Continuous assessment is an integral part of the Ghanaian educational system. Teachers regularly assess students' progress through quizzes, assignments, and class participation. Continuous assessment contributes to a holistic understanding of students' abilities. Continuous assessment is emphasized in Ghana to provide ongoing feedback on students' performance (GES, 2020).

Assessments in Ghana are designed to ensure the quality of education. Standardized examinations like the BECE and WASSCE help measure the effectiveness of the curriculum and teaching practices. Ghana's assessment structure contributes to quality assurance in education by evaluating curriculum outcomes (Asiama & Boadu, 2019). Students at the JHS and SHS levels take external exams before progressing to the next level. The BECE and WASSCE serve as gatekeeping mechanisms, determining access to higher education. High performance in these exams opens doors to prestigious institutions and scholarships, while poor performance can limit educational opportunities. The BECE and WASSCE serve as gatekeepers in Ghana's education system, impacting students' educational trajectories (GES, 2020).

Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE)

The BECE is a national examination taken by students at the end of junior high school (JHS) in Ghana. It comprises core subjects such as English Language, Mathematics, Integrated Science, and Social Studies. The BECE is a high-stakes assessment determining eligibility for

senior high schools (SHS) and technical and vocational institutions. According to the Ghana Education Service (GES, 2020), the BECE is a critical examination that shapes students' educational pathways.

West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE)

The WASSCE is the main examination for admission into tertiary institutions in Ghana. Administered by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), it covers a wide range of science and arts subjects. Students typically take the WASSCE after completing three years of senior high school. The WASSCE, conducted by WAEC, is a significant assessment of Ghana's education system (WAEC Ghana). It was established in 1952. The WASSCE is taken by Anglophone countries in West Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Gambia).

Ghana's assessment structure, encompassing national examinations like the BECE and WASSCE and continuous assessment, plays a crucial role in shaping students' educational journeys and maintaining the quality of the education system. These assessments are tools for measuring learning outcomes and gateways to higher education and opportunities for Ghanaian youth.

The New Assessment Practice

The new education reforms have introduced various assessment practices to replace the old BECE and WASSCE systems. According to the reforms, a new examination called the National Standard Assessment Test (NSAT) will now be taken by primary 2, 4, 6, and BS 8 (JHS 2) students. The BECE will now be replaced with placement exams at BS 9 that will be used to promote students to BS10 (SHS 1). After BS 10 (SHS I), students will write a Common Core Exams for BS 11 (SHS 2). Students will select either a career program (i.e., vocational and technical program) or a high school diploma program like science, business, or arts. So, students

will start their elective subjects at BS 11. WASCCE has also been replaced with University Entrance Exams, and students are awarded a high school diploma after BS 12. The curriculum emphasized computer literacy, Science, and technology integration.

However, the practices of these assessments were influenced a lot by colonization. The following section employs postcolonial theory to explain how colonization has influenced and affected Ghana's education system.

The Ghanaian Education System in the Postcolonial Era

Postcolonial theory is an interdisciplinary paradigm that evolved in the late twentieth century to investigate colonialism's and imperialism's cultural, social, political, and economic consequences. It focuses on colonized peoples' experiences and impacts in formerly colonized territories, frequently emphasizing the power dynamics and cultural intricacies inherent in colonial contacts.

A postcolonial theoretical framework is used in this literature study to critically assess equity challenges in Ghana's education system. This research will make use of postcolonial theory. The terms colonial, precolonial, and postcolonial have diverse literal meanings.

Colonial refers to the period during which Europe acquired, partitioned, and dominated many countries, particularly in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and South and Central America, for primarily economic and religious reasons. The term "precolonial" refers to the period preceding the colonial era. Postcolonial also refers to the period following the colonial period and describes how colonial views shaped people's conduct in former colonies (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2006). Postcolonial theory investigates and examines the general aftermath of colonialism and the subsequent imperialism (Ashcroft et al., 2006). This examination digs into the historical, cultural, and structural elements that shape educational gaps in postwar Ghana, drawing on fundamental themes from postcolonial theory. This review gives insights into the complexities of equity concerns in Ghana's educational landscape by addressing the legacy of colonialism, the influence of Western educational paradigms, and the intersections of power and knowledge. Postcolonial theory has been regarded as an intellectual tool for research and academic critique due to its insightful critical strategies, broad application to culture and society, global reach, close contextual analysis, and search for answers to critical questions about culture,

representation, and identity (Burney 2012). The critical postcolonial theory framework has been successfully used in assessing "markets," equity, and "modernity" in Melanesia by Tim Anderson (2011) and in Cameroon by Ambe Njoh (2013). It has been used worldwide and in Ghana in various fields of study. (Obeng-Odoom, 2016) examined land reforms in Ghana using a critical postcolonial paradigm. It was helpful in gathering evidence from historical and present socio-legal and political-economic sources.

This gives more reasons to use as a theory in my research as I delve into the different cultural backgrounds to access equity in the Ghana education system. The postcolonial theory will be ideal when dealing with different cultures with different ethnicities, languages, genders, and social classes. Ghana is known for its multicultural system, with more than 78 ethnic groups and tribes with different cultural backgrounds. Burney (2012) indicated that postcolonial theory encompasses a wide range of discourse and fields of study, including the impact of language on identity, identity politics, the literature of formerly colonized countries, the impact of colonial educational systems, curriculum, and teaching issues, cultural differences, governance, and links between western knowledge and colonial power. Language was identified as a significant theme of postcolonial theory.

The thesis will cover a wide area of language, post, and pre-colonial education, programs, and policies to shape the education system in Ghana. There are 78 different languages spoken in Ghana. These are all possible areas that can be critiqued using the postcolonial theory. The theory is preferably used to critique many areas, as mentioned above. This makes it ideal to use postcolonial theory in this study. Many scholars in Ghana and abroad have used postcolonial theory in various fields. In Ghana, Dankwa (2009) employs postcolonial theory to investigate conceptualizations of female same-sex desire outside lesbian identity constructions. Asante

(2016) also conducted a study on maintaining and reproducing whiteness in postcolonial Ghana through "skin toning." Postcolonial theory will be helpful for the Postcolonial analysis of equity in Ghana's Education System. In the following, I explain how postcolonial education in Ghana has been affected by its official language, western-centered curriculum, geographical disparities, and rural-urban divide.

Imposition of English as the Medium of Instruction

Adopting the English language as the medium of instruction in schools is one of the most persistent legacies of British colonialism in Ghana. This linguistic imposition was not an accident; it was a planned effort to assert colonial authority and influence the minds of the colonized. As a result, English proficiency became synonymous with success, while individuals who lacked fluency were frequently excluded, creating huge gaps in educational achievements and opportunities. Mfum-Mensah (2005) conducted a study on the impact of colonial and postcolonial Ghanaian language policy through the lens of postcolonial theory. He revealed that after colonialism, the Ghanaian education system emphasized the use of the English language, causing them to neglect their native language. Students see English as education, which has caused parents and stakeholders to have a negative attitude towards the local languages. Students are seen as good students only if they can speak good English. This has caused parents and teachers to neglect their children's creative abilities and only focus on their ability to speak English.

The English-only language-in-education policy in Ghana may have adverse effects. Opoku-Amankwa (2009) found that using English as the medium of instruction creates anxiety among students and hinders effective classroom participation. Appiah (2020) argues that using English as Ghana's primary school language may adversely affect children's social, scientific,

and economic development. Owu-Ewie (2015) highlights that the policy of using English from Primary four onwards has not been consistently enforced, leading to challenges in its implementation. Taluah (2016) points out that teaching and learning English in Ghana often neglects oral communication skills, and many English teachers are unqualified. These findings collectively suggest that the English-only policy in Ghana may have negative implications for students' learning and development. English has evolved into a gateway language for educational opportunity and socioeconomic growth. As a result, skill in English became synonymous with success, while people who lacked it were frequently shunned. Mfum-Mensah (2005) indicated that the preference for English in Ghanaian society originates from how its use has become connected with literacy and academic intelligence and how schools, particularly literacy in English, have evolved as a new social order in Ghanaian society. This linguistic divide continues, resulting in considerable educational attainment and opportunity discrepancies.

The legacy of English as a medium of instruction poses severe problems about fairness and equity. Students from English-speaking families have a significant edge because they are more likely to excel in English-language examinations. Those from non-English-speaking backgrounds, on the other hand, suffer significant hurdles navigating an educational system that promotes English-language ability. Most private school students are more privileged to speak and write better English than public school students, but in the end, they all write the same standard test at the Junior High and Senior High levels.

Furthermore, the dominance of English perpetuates a Eurocentric worldview, marginalizing indigenous languages and knowledge systems. The education system often overlooks local languages, which carry rich cultural heritage. This erasure of linguistic and cultural diversity contributes to the marginalization of specific communities and reinforces the

legacy of colonialism. The native language of the colonized country, which is a symbol of their culture, is seen as inferior (Burney, 2012). Next, I explore the Western-centric curriculum content and its impact on educational equity in postcolonial Ghana.

Western-Centric Curriculum Content

Another dimension of the colonial legacy in Ghana's education system is the Western-centric curriculum content. Okyere (2021) examines the impact of Western education on Ghana's economic structure, arguing for a change toward capitalism. The curriculum, inherited mainly from the colonial period, reflects Eurocentric values and perspectives. The curriculum focuses too much on Western education, which produces more educated illiterate in the Ghanaian context. As a product of this educational system with a Western curriculum, I have realized that the education system in Ghana produces more educated people who are illiterate about the things that can help develop the nation. It is too focused on theory and does not solve the immediate problems in the country. It has displayed a lot of Ghanaian students who were able to manufacture tools to solve problems, read and write, and speak good English. Craft, which used to be a terminal presentation of what the student can think and create, has been taken off the curriculum. It was to help identify and develop the creative power of students. According to Diop (2013), the West still dominates Ghanaian education, with intellectuals criticizing the sheer duplication of Western curricula. This is killing the creative minds of the Ghanaian people. The curriculum often overlooks indigenous histories, cultures, and knowledge systems.

For example, history textbooks in Ghana have historically centered on European history, relegating indigenous Ghanaian history to a secondary role, if not entirely ignored. Howard (2018) investigates how an elite secondary school in Ghana encourages sameness and unity by teaching students' Western values while alienating them from their indigenous cultures. This

Eurocentric approach distorts the historical narratives and contributes to a skewed understanding of national identity and cultural heritage. Saphir (2001) conducted a study into history teaching in the Ghanaian Education System using postcolonial theory. He reveals that because these countries had no written history, the British imposed their European history on Ghanaians and other former colonies. He used the term Sankofa, meaning Ghanaians should go back and study their history. The study also outlines some challenges that make it difficult for teachers to teach Ghanaian history effectively, such as the lack of Ghanaian History textbooks, students' inability to visit historical sites to understand the history in Ghana, and history being taught as an elective subject at the High Schools. This means most students can complete school without knowing about Ghana's history. The inadequate Ghanaian history textbooks and resources are due to the greater emphasis on the Western curriculum. Writers and educators focus on writing about Western history rather than their own history.

The Western-centric curriculum content is problematic from an equity standpoint as it perpetuates a hierarchical view of knowledge, wherein Western knowledge is privileged over indigenous knowledge. This hierarchy can marginalize students from indigenous backgrounds and devalue their cultural identities (Bhabha, 1994). The Western-centric curriculum worsens educational disparities. Students from affluent families, often conversant with Western knowledge, have an advantage over their indigenous colleagues. These students tend to do better in exams and traverse the school system more efficiently.

On the other hand, students from marginalized backgrounds may struggle with the curriculum, impeding their academic development and future chances. The persistence of these discrepancies is a primary concern of equality.

Moreover, the perpetuation of a Eurocentric curriculum can hinder critical thinking and creative problem-solving. It may limit students' ability to engage with their own society's complex realities and find innovative solutions to local challenges (Bhabha, 1994). Fordjor (2003) highlights the value of traditional Ghanaian education alongside the Western system, emphasizing its relevance in the country's social and economic progress.

The continuance of Western-centric curricular content in Ghana's education system is a postcolonial issue with significant equality consequences. Recognizing the historical roots of this issue, as well as the contemporary neocolonial factors that keep it alive, is critical. Decolonizing education is essential in promoting inclusivity, cultural relevance, and equity in Ghana's educational landscape. One critical task is to incorporate indigenous knowledge into the curriculum. Indigenous history, stories, languages, and cultural traditions are all included. Such integration honors indigenous knowledge and enhances students' sense of cultural identity. Curriculum reform should also include the active participation of local communities and educators. Decisions will better represent Ghanaian society's needs and ambitions if the voices of people directly impacted by educational policies are included. The final part will discuss the geographical disparities and its effect on the postcolonial Ghanaian Education System.

Geographic Disparities and the Urban-Rural Divide

Ghana's geographic distribution of educational resources reflects the colonial legacy, with urban areas typically enjoying better schools and greater access to educational opportunities. This urban-rural educational divide is a persistent issue in Ghana's education system and significantly impacts equity. Geographic imbalances and an urban-rural split exist in Ghana's educational system, with implications for educational equity (Takyi, 2021). Geographic

variables, such as location and ethnic variety, influence differences in access to local public services, including education (Akramov, 2008).

During the colonial era, urban centers served as administrative hubs, and resources were concentrated in these areas. As a result, urban schools were better equipped, had more qualified teachers, and offered a more comprehensive range of educational opportunities compared to their rural counterparts. During the postcolonial era, the subsequent governments emphasized developing schools in urban centers rather than rural areas to maintain their legacy. The Senior High Schools (SHS) in Ghana are categorized into A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. Category A to D are for public Senior High Schools, E is for public Vocational and Technical institutes, F is for Private High Schools, and G is for private Vocational and Technical Institute. Placement into these public Senior High Schools and Vocational/Technical institutions has always faced equity challenges. All category A schools are centered in urban areas with enough resources as compared to other categories.

These disparities have endured despite efforts to address them. Access to quality education remains a challenge in many rural areas of Ghana, where schools may lack basic infrastructure, qualified teachers, and learning materials. Students in these areas often face long and arduous journeys to school, discouraging attendance and hindering their educational progress. There is a performance disparity between urban and rural areas, which is attributable to the unequal distribution of educational facilities and resources (Takyi, 2021; Ansong, 2015). The urban-rural divide exacerbates inequalities in educational outcomes. Students in urban areas tend to perform better on national examinations and are likelier to continue their education beyond the basic level. In contrast, rural students often face educational barriers that limit their academic success and upward mobility opportunities.

Inequities in access to educational resources and opportunities are intertwined with the historical legacy of colonialism, as colonial authorities favored urban areas for establishing schools and infrastructure. Efforts to bridge the urban-rural divide remain ongoing, but the historical disparities continue to shape the educational landscape in Ghana, impacting equity. This affirms the social reproduction theory, stating that Schools are not equal-opportunity institutions but vehicles for perpetuating societal disparities (Collins, 2009). The rich and the upper-class citizens always get the best education for their kids. In rural locations, access in terms of cost and geographical distance is a significant impediment to equity, whereas, in urban areas, the affordability of private schools and insufficient infrastructure are issues (Anlimachie, 2015). In Ghana, private schools perform better than public schools, but due to the high cost of private schools, low-income parents cannot afford to send their kids to such schools for quality education.

Academic accomplishment factors vary by area, with the Middle and Southern Belt regions having higher academic achievement (Ansong, 2015). These regions in Ghana are known to have an excellent quality education system, with most grade A schools and Universities centered there compared to the Northern part of Ghana. Geographical disparities and rural-urban settlement remain equity challenges in the Ghanaian education system during the postcolonial period.

Postcolonial education in Ghana has been affected by the colonization of various sectors, contributing to the inequality in education and poor education systems in Ghana. The education system needs to be decolonized to help address the implication of the Western-centric curriculum, urban-rural divide, and overemphasis on the English language in the Ghanaian education system. Restructuring the curriculum and rethinking it to make it more equitable,

inclusive, and culturally relevant is a necessary aspect of the decolonization of education in Ghana. Adding local ideas and knowledge to the curriculum is an imperative step to decolonize the education system in Ghana. There should be more emphasis on the language, indigenous history, culture, customs, and traditions of all the tribes in Ghana. Textbook examples should be contextualized to reflect local activities and emphasize the Ghanaian context. Effective teacher training and development should be needed to implement and use local teaching and learning materials to explain concepts to students. Assessment should be fair and not too focused on only standardized tests to help ensure equity in assessment.

Social class in Ghana

Social class is defined by many researchers using different parameters. The basic parameters are known to be one's income and occupation. According to Rucker and Galinsky (2017), a person's social class is determined by various elements, including wealth, education, occupation, and perceptions of their place in society. Anyon (1998) defined social class as one's relationship with the process in the society by which goods, services, and culture are produced. How one relates to the people at work and society, one's relationship to the system of ownership, and the content and process of one's own productive activity. She categorized social class in the United States into the working class, Middle class, Affluent class, and Executive elite class. In the context of Ghana, Boadu (2002) divided social classes into the lower, middle, and upper classes. Economic progress, social mobility, and personal development are all based on education. However, socioeconomic class is frequently a determining factor in educational access and quality, which supports social exclusion and inequality. The quality of education, student experiences, and access to school are all significantly influenced by social class in

Ghana. Furthermore, Ghana's hidden curriculum perpetuates social class disparities by propagating ideals, attitudes, and actions that benefit the middle and upper classes.

In Ghana, social class significantly influences both educational access and quality. Compared to children from impoverished households, wealthy families typically have access to higher-quality schools, teachers, and resources (United Nations, 2019). Due to unequal access to resources, there is a discrepancy in educational opportunities, which affects students' outcomes in many ways. Also, students' social classes impact how they see the educational system. For instance, teachers may give preference to students from wealthy households, which may result in better grades and more career chances (Anyidoho, 2013). For instance, students in Ghana's private elementary schools receive good teacher-student relationships and proper care from their teachers.

Standardized Test as a Form of Gatekeeping in Ghana

Introduction

Moving from postcolonial theory, I will explore the functions of standardized testing as a significant gatekeeping mechanism in the Ghanaian education system. The chapter emphasizes West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and Basic Education Certificate (BECE) as major gatekeeping standardized tests. I will account for the historical context of standardized testing, tracing it back to the colonial era and how the colonial era has influenced the postcolonial assessment. The essay explores how WASSCE functions as a gatekeeper, specifically deciding who is admitted to postsecondary education and shaping professional pathways. Cultural and language barriers and socioeconomic ramifications, such as differences in access to preparatory materials, are considered. The chapter also explains how standardized tests perpetuate inequality in the Ghanaian education system.

Standardized testing has been used globally as a standard educational tool to assess student's performance in a particular course or a general assessment. Despite aiming to objectively assess students' knowledge and skills, it frequently acts as a gatekeeper, limiting access to educational opportunities and promoting educational inequality. This section of the thesis explores the function of standardized testing in Ghana's educational system and how it affects equity.

Standardized tests have been used for hundreds of years. It was initially used in the 1800s in the United States and took the form of an oral exam. Horace Mann made the decision to convert the oral examination into a written test in 1845 (Huddleston & Rockwell, 2014). He thought that this would be a more efficient and successful method of evaluating the education of

young elementary school pupils. Early in the 20th century, the public school system found this kind of testing to be appealing due to its systematized and reliable nature (Huddleston & Rockwell, 2014).

Additionally, the testing enabled the schools to distinguish between the high and low scorers (Huddleston & Rockwell, 2014). Bobbitt (1913) also indicated that principals and administrators should use tests to determine weak and strong teachers and rate teachers' pay or access to other privileges. The standardized test is to assess students' performance and evaluate teachers. Standardized tests provide reliable, fair, and valid assessments that produce meaningful results. However, it has become an impediment to both teachers and students. Morgan (2016) indicated that administrators pressure teachers to improve students' grades so their school will be rated among the best. School ratings are highly based on students' performance on standardized tests. Teachers pressure students to perform well because society rates good schools based on their standardized test performance (Morgan, 2016). (Au 2009) explains how the school standardized test has turned the school system into an industry, with students as raw materials, teachers as workers, and administrators as managers. He indicated that the school is a factory assembly line where teachers are manipulated and dictated to by the managers(administrators).

In Ghana, standardized tests play a significant role in the education system. Students are expected to take a nationwide standardized test, Basic Education Certificate Exams (BECE), before progressing from Junior High School to Senior High School. A student must pass the West African Senior School Certificate Exams (WASSCE) to be admitted into any tertiary institution. In a country emphasizing standardized tests, limited research has been conducted on the inequality in standardized tests and how they misplace most students, depriving them of their

future goals. The following section gives a historical overview of standardized testing and how the colonial masters of Ghana influenced the precolonial education and testing system.

The situation regarding standardized testing in Ghana is similar to that of developing and developed countries. In Ghana, there are several standardized tests like the Basic Education Examination (BECE), taken at the basic level before one can progress to Senior High School, and the West African Senior High School Certificate Exams (WASSCE), which is a significant standardized test at the second cycle level (Anamuah-Mensah Committee report, 2002, p28, Anane 2010). Unlike developed countries, limited research has been conducted on standardized tests and its implications on students and the country's development. These levels are crucial aspects of the life of students in Ghana. Therefore, it is prudent to conduct a study of this kind to reveal the consequences associated with standardized testing in Ghana.

Historical Background of Standardized Testing in Ghana

Historically, the standardized test has been traced to emerge from the colonial era. The British introduced the standardized test system in Ghana. It is traced back to the early 1900s. Standard entrance exams is known to be the first standardized test in Ghana. It was introduced in the year 1925. A student must pass the competitive comprehensive Common Entrance Exams (CEE) to gain admission into any secondary school. The primary purpose of standardized tests in the early years was to select students for further studies. Aissat & Djafri (2011) claim that the British government's attempt to supply their industry with raw materials led to the colonial education system in the Gold Coast, Ghana. According to the author, colonial education catalyzed domestic economic growth. Therefore, the standardized test was the means to measure and separate the weak from the strong. Britain introduced education in Ghana, which was

influenced heavily by their own system, including the standardized test. English proficiency and British subjects were emphasized a lot in the test. According to Kimble (1963), Africans in the 19th century, including Ghanaians, developed an interest in Western education due to its perceived association with prestigious job opportunities, higher social status, increased authority, and a way to avoid strenuous manual labor.

Even after colonization, standardized tests still play a significant role in the Ghanaian education system. In 1961, after independence, the government introduced the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) to set and conduct standardized tests for Senior High School students in West African countries. In 1971, the Ghana government introduced the Junior High School system. Before a student can progress to the High school level, he must pass the Basic Education Certificate Exams (BECE) standardized test. A standardized test is now used for different purposes in Ghana besides promoting students from one level to another. Standardized tests are used to assess the performance of schools and school districts to ensure accountability (Au, 2009). This assessment information helps decide resource allocations and school improvement. In Ghana Senior High Schools, excellent performance in the WASSCE helps determine their category. High-performing schools are moved to Category A, and poor-performing schools are put into Category C. Standardized tests are also used to identify academically weak students. This is helpful to provide the necessary support for the right students at the right time. Standardized tests also determine high school placement in Ghana.

The overemphasizing of standardized tests in Ghana has developed my eagerness to learn more about the purpose and significance of education in Ghana and the impact of standardized tests. According to Djamila and Djafri (2011), the whole process of colonial education in the Gold Coast (Ghana) resulted from the British quest to wheel their industry with raw materials.

From the author's point of view, the objective of colonial education was to provide an impulse to economy at home. This led to the introduction of standardized tests to sieve and select individuals who would advance to higher education and who would be considered for employment. McWilliam & Kwamena (1975) also indicated that educational assessment was primarily utilized for placement, selecting people to advance through the educational and secure work in an administrative position. After colonization, the purpose of education seems to remain the same in Ghana. (*Ministry of Education* n.d.)The education sector report emphasizes the ongoing changes in the education sector, which aim to transform the landscape into being more accountable and efficient in achieving results. I decided to find out the purpose of education by browsing through the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service websites. The Ministry of Education's website states that education's mission is to ensure quality and accessible education for all.

Through the formulation, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of policies with motivated staff and appropriate systems, Ghana's education system will meet the needs of the labor market, improve human development, and increase national integration." Education is the ultimate game changer and opens many doors of opportunity and promise. It is the meal ticket out of deprivation and underdevelopment." and with the vision of providing quality education to all citizens irrespective of backgrounds.

The Ghana Education Services first two objectives are to increase inclusive and equitable access to and participation in education at all levels and to ensure provision of life skills training and management of personal hygiene, family life, gender, health, HIV/AIDS/STIs, etc. the purpose of postcolonial education still influence by the colonial and western principles. Training students to meet the labor market makes the curriculum developers and implementers develop

curricula and train students to suit their interests. The focus is using the standardized test to sieve the required students for the labor market. However, students come to the classroom with many imperative skills and knowledge gained through their interaction with the World, observation, communication, experience, and experimentation (Fredua-Kwarteng, 2003). these skills must be valued and developed by curriculum developers and implementers. When these skills are developed, they will help create employment and reduce unemployment.

As a developing nation with few and limited industries, it cannot focus its education on training students to fill the labor market; instead, it can focus on educating students to help change the abundant raw materials for meaningful use in the country to create employment. Both the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ghana Education Service aim to ensure equity in the education system, but the end product that determines the students' faith and future is a reflection of inequality. Standardized tests are used to determine who gets to the next level of education. In the next section, I will explain how standardized tests affect the implementation of curriculum by teachers in the Ghanaian education system.

Standardized Testing and the Curriculum

Crocco and Costigan (2007) indicated that teachers in New York narrow the scope of the curriculum due to high-stakes testing. Several studies have indicated that testing negatively impacts curriculum (Lipman, 2004; Amoako, 2019). Most teachers in Ghana prepare students for exams (WASSCE and BECE). These teachers select topics they think are likely to appear in the final exams and teach students. This results in their inability to complete the entire syllabus. This makes the experienced curriculum different from the intended and the implemented curriculum. In Ghana, Anane (2010) examined the impact of the Secondary School Certificate Examination

(SSSCE), which currently has WASSCE outcomes, on teachers' instructional methods and curriculum in Ghanaian schools. The study utilized a descriptive survey approach. 20 schools were selected randomly from a total of 82 Senior Secondary schools in the Ashanti Region. A total of 314 questionnaires were distributed. 251 teachers, including over 80% of the total teachers, responded by completing the surveys. 30.3% taught Mathematics, 34.7% taught science, and 35.0% taught English. The discovered that excessive focus on the standardized tests SSSCE leads to a shift in content from a comprehensive curriculum to a more exam-oriented teaching approach. This results in a restricted curriculum, and students experience a different form of the curriculum rather than the intended curriculum. Studies have shown that focusing on standardized testing redirects and shifts teachers' focus to teaching students to pass exams and not necessarily transferring lifelong knowledge.

This situation is still in practice in Ghana. Still, curriculum developers and implementors pay less attention to how standardized testing affects the curriculum and promotes inequality, unlike in the US, where a student's high school transcript is considered for university admissions. In Ghana, only the WASSCE certificate is used for admission into tertiary education. Too much emphasis on standardized testing results in inequality, as students from rural areas struggle to pass the WASSCE (Akyeampong, 2010). As a product and a teacher of this education system, I have observed numerous intellectually capable students who could not pursue higher education due to their failure to meet the standardized test (WASSCE) requirements, resulting in significant setbacks in their lives. Remedial education incurs significant expenses, rendering it unaffordable for the majority of low-income students. Despite the adverse effects of standardized testing, there is limited research in Ghana on how standardized testing impacts the curriculum and promotes inequality.

Utilization of standardized testing as a means of controlling access in Ghana

The Education System in Ghana uses standardized testing in several areas. The major ones are the BECE and the WASSCE. Students' ability to get admission into the SHS depends on their BECE performance. Even the choice of school and the study program depends on standardized testing. Students who perform well are more likely to get the opportunity to be placed in prestigious schools (grade A schools). Students with good grades are selected to pursue Science. This denies students their choice of school and program of study. Although students can choose about five preferred schools, their performance determines their placement in these schools and programs. School Placement (2020) explained how computer placement is designed to place students into their desired programs using best aggregates. Every year, we witness parents and guidance storming the placement center to register their disappointment with their wards' unfair and unequal treatment of computer placement in High schools. Some were not posted because they performed poorly on the standardized test. Ajayi (2022) states that students from low-income countries tend to apply to weaker secondary schools compared to similarly qualified students from high-performing elementary schools. This is because they feel they will spend less money when the school is closer to them. They consider proximity first and not quality because of financial constraints.

Students are also expected to write the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) before graduating High School. This serves as a qualification and a gateway to the university. Students who get good grades get the opportunity to enter various public universities. English, Math, and Science are critical in this standardized testing. Students must get a credit pass C6 or better before being admitted to any tertiary institution. A student can have As and Bs, but if that student has a D7 in English, Math, or Science, that student will not

get admission into any University in Ghana. As a product of this assessment practice, I grew up as a High School teacher in this same education system. I can say that the negative consequence of this assessment practice is overwhelming. So many students have been deprived of their future plans and have become street youth because of the English language, Math, and Science, which are mandatory to have a credit pass before one can be admitted into any public university. The colonial master's language has become an impediment to students' academic success. I had the opportunity to teach as an internship teacher at the high school for four consecutive long vacations, which allowed me to mentor more high school students. I also taught at the high school for more than a year. I realized that most students could pass their electives but fail in English Math and Science (EMS). The struggle to pass EMS ended most students' academic lives, depriving them of entering tertiary education. This accounts for a high form of inequality among students. The table below indicates the trend of students who passed EMS from 2016 to 2020 (Armah & Opoku-Amankwa, 2021)

Table 1: Percentage of students obtaining the tertiary education qualifying grades (A1-C6) in WASSCE core subjects from 2016 to 2020.

	English	Math	Science	Social STDs
2016	53.2	32.8	48.5	54.5
2017	54	42.7	43.7	52.3
2018	46.8	38.3	50.5	73.3
2019	49	65	63.2	75.4
2020	57.3	65.7	52.5	64.3

The table shows that in 2016, only 32.8% of the students graduating from High school were able to enter tertiary institutions in Ghana, leaving about 68.2% at home. In 2017, only

42.7% could enter tertiary because of mathematics. The above table explains how standardized tests limit Ghanaian students from achieving their academic goals. Students in rural areas and category C schools have more negative impacts of standardized testing, promoting inequality compared to those in urban areas and good schools. According to a 2014 report by the Ghana Ministry of Education, 46% of students eligible for postsecondary education come from the top 20% of senior high schools in the nation, while 8% of students come from the bottom 20% (106 schools). Out of 637 senior high schools included in the Ghana Education Service 2020 annual digest report on the 2019 West African Secondary School Examination performance, 483 schools had a passing rate of less than 50%.

The table indicates the general performance of students who can have tertiary education to be 49% since only 49% passed English. This means 51% of the student population could not further their education in 2019, and most of these students were from category C and rural schools. Educators in category C and rural schools might not have enough resources to aid their teaching and learning. It has been discovered that inadequate educational infrastructures and teaching and learning resources substantially impact teaching and learning (Baidoo-Anu, 2018; Baidoo-Anu & Mensah, 2018; Adane, 2013).

On the other hand, category A and B schools are well-resourced (mainly by the big old students' network). This gives Category A and B schools a high percentage of their students the opportunity to advance to prestigious universities (Akyeampong, 2007). The categorization of secondary schools in Ghana could potentially exacerbate the differences in the resources provided to different school categories.

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be disadvantaged by standardized testing. These students from rural communities are less likely to attend good

schools with the resources and qualified teachers. Language barriers also affect students from poor backgrounds since standardized tests are conducted in English, and passing English subjects is a compulsory requirement to enter into tertiary. These communities use their native language more than those in the cities, which use English most of the time. These students can express themselves and communicate well in English. This gives them a significant advantage over those in rural areas. These perpetuate inequalities as students from rural areas find it challenging to be placed in prestigious schools and Universities. Moreover, students from low-income families cannot afford extra tutoring services to help their kids prepare for standardized tests.

Violence results from Standardized Tests in Ghana

Global student demonstrations and violent incidents have occurred due to concerns about standardized testing. For example, countries such as the United States and India have witnessed student protests against high-stakes testing. These protests are frequently motivated by apprehensions regarding the adverse effects on students' psychological well-being, the excessive emphasis on test readiness, and equity issues. According to Wilson (2018), protests were increased against the Colorado Mathematics, English Language, Arts, Science, and Social Studies Assessments (CMAS) in the spring of 2015 from Colorado high school students.

In Ghana, standardized assessments give rise to many manifestations of violence. Students engage in various deviant behaviors due to their inability to excel in the BECE and WASSCE examinations. Students vandalize school property and assault teachers and invigilators because of being prevented from participating in cheating during tests or not receiving assistance to pass their exams. Given that students perceive completing their examinations as the pathway to achieving success in life. Successfully passing these tests is the sole means by which students advance to the subsequent level of education in Ghana. This makes students aggressive and

willing to pass at all costs. According to a report by JoyNews on October 8, 2020, it was stated that students from a senior high school in the Eastern region of Ghana physically attacked the officials from the West African Examination Council (WAEC) who were present to supervise the social studies tests during the 2020 WASSCE. The school then issued an apology on behalf of the students.

The students also reported experiencing unjust treatment from the invigilators. According to a school official who spoke to JoyNews, the student reported that the headmaster physically assaulted one teacher while another student alleged that their exam paper was torn. This exemplifies the presence of biased and disparate treatment by invigilators and the display of deviant conduct by students. Students from Tweneboah Kodua SHS, a school in the Asanti region, were observed vandalizing school property and threatening to skip examinations. This was in response to alleged mistreatment by the school headmaster towards a teacher who was accused of aiding students. Students reported that they obtained the exam questions before taking the test due to the delay. This enabled them to complete the task ahead of schedule and with high proficiency. Students express dissatisfaction with the government and the school system since they did not encounter any questions in the examination covered in the materials provided for their preparation (JoyNews, 2020). Students who receive the questions before the tests have an advantage over other students writing the same papers. Students subjected to such humiliation and mistreatment will not have the psychological well-being necessary to perform effectively in future exams.

Students also participate in physically assaulting invigilators and lecturers who try to stop them from engaging in examination malpractices. An officer from the West African Examination Council (WAEC) was physically assaulted on Monday, September 12th, 2022, while monitoring

an examination at Santa Maria SHS in Accra. Occasionally, teachers may be physically assaulted by pupils, resulting in the loss of their employment and potential incarceration due to the consequences of standardized testing. The 2020 WASSCE exams experienced a significant increase in disorder, destruction of property, unruly behavior, verbal abuse, and disrespectful language towards prominent individuals, including the president of the Republic of Ghana (Alorvi, 2020). Students were observed criticizing and threatening the president and calling the spirit of river deities in his presence. School premises were subjected to acts of vandalism, and certain teachers and examination authorities were also subjected to threats or physical harm. Multiple schools participated in this event (Alorvi, 9 August 2020).

Regarding examination malpractices, Falson and Awuah (2014) indicated that every year, WAEC provides Ghanaians with a significant number of candidates who are caught cheating in their examinations. WAEC cancels the results of these candidates and may also refer such offenders to the Police for legal action in the courts. However, the act of cheating persists and, usually, escalates on an annual basis. There have been allegations and counter-allegations regarding the causes and reasons behind the increasing prevalence of examination malpractices in Ghana. Examination malpractices seem to be a significant problem in the Ghanaian education system, occurring at all levels and involving various stakeholders. Falson and Awuah (2014) emphasize the growing prevalence of these malpractices, with Falson explicitly focusing on the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). Asante-Kyei & Nduro (2014) and Dzakadzie (2015) explore the factors contributing to this trend, with Kyei identifying students and teachers as the key participants and Dzakadzie discussing the attitudes of different education stakeholders. These studies collectively highlight the need for comprehensive strategies to effectively address examination malpractices in Ghana.

The violence, maltreatment, and some form of harsh treatment students go through during this exam make it problematic to use as the sole determinant of a student's ability to progress to the other level in education. Again, the various forms of malpractices and examination leakage lead to some schools performing better than others, and some individuals who are lucky not to be caught performing better than others make this form of assessment questionable for such an authority. Students study for three years, and a one-time exam determines their future. A student who experiences bad moments during that time misses the opportunity to progress to another level. Uncontrollable circumstances like sickness and mental issues can affect students during this period, but there is no provision for such students.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Analyzing the works and research used in this paper, it is clear how standardized testing promotes inequality in Ghana. How does it reduce the curriculum? Teachers focus on preparing students to pass the BECE and the WASSCE. Students engage in all manner of malpractices and ways to pass their exams to progress to the next level in life. This results in them engaging in violence, destroying national properties, and injuring teachers, headteachers, and invigilators. Students' temporary situations that could affect their WASSCE performance are not considered. Students attending high-grade schools perform well compared to those from low-grade schools and those from poor or low-income backgrounds.

When examining the US education system, institutions grant admittance based on high school transcripts. This thesis proposes the utilization of high school transcripts in addition to the WASSCE as a prerequisite for university admissions in Ghana. The utilization of senior high school transcripts might alleviate the burden on the WASSCE examination and mitigate the malpractices commonly associated with it. Multiple studies emphasize the significance of high

school transcripts in higher education. This initiative is expected to foster equity and enhance the Ghanaian education system, as it will encourage students to approach their high school education with a sense of seriousness rather than relying solely on final exams to achieve success. According to Belfield & Crosta (2012), a high school transcript's Grade Point Average (GPA) strongly indicates college performance. A significant association exists between college GPA and the number of credits earned. Adelman (1999) highlights the importance of high school academic intensity and attendance patterns, as these contribute to students' readiness for university. According to Venezia and Jaeger (2013), the process of pupils transitioning to college can present difficulties due to differences in high school education and non-curriculum issues. Notwithstanding these obstacles, the high school grade point average (GPA) remains a reliable measure of college success, frequently outperforming standardized assessments (Camara & Echternacht, 2000). I also recommend abolishing the BECE and the WASSCE as another option; if not, it can be used with the student's accumulated transcript. Using one set of exams like the BECE to determine a student's placement and program at the Senior High School is not solid as compared to their accumulated transcript, which can best be used to determine student strengths and weaknesses in a particular area of study or subject.

The involvement of World Bank in the Ghanaian Education System: How it promotes and affects equity.

Introduction

The World Bank has played a vital role in education development worldwide. The World Bank Group (WBG) partnered with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) IN 2002 to accelerate the progress towards the Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3, which aim to achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality, and empower women and education for all goals. This partnership supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal 4. The World Bank Group's education strategy for 2020 is to improve equity and learning outcomes in developing nations through strengthening their education system (World Bank 2020). According to the report, the World Bank has allocated about US\$ 17 billion in funding from the International Development Association to support educational initiatives in the most economically disadvantaged countries. During this period, the World Bank Group (WBG) effectively administered a total of US\$3.3 billion in grants allocated by the Global Partnership Education (GPE). Notably, one-fourth of this amount was utilized as co-financing for operations conducted by the International Development Association (IDA). This has been helpful to many countries worldwide, especially African countries like Senegal, which had all newly appointed teachers undergo training using the updated curriculum, ensuring their preparedness to deliver quality education, and the construction of 195 new schools in rural regions has been significant in expanding educational access. Sudan has also received more than 850 construction of new classrooms. In Cambodia, 100 new formal schools and 1,000 community-based new facilities have been opened. Many other countries like Ethiopia, Gambia, Niger, and many more benefit massively from the World Bank Group (World Bank 2020). Ghana is also an African country that receives much support from the World Bank and other organizations.

Ghana's education system is supported by many organizations as partners to help ensure quality education in Ghana. These organizations support various aspects of education, like infrastructure, teacher development, and curriculum enhancement. These organizations include the World Bank, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), International Monetary Fund (IMF), African Development Bank (AfDB), Global Partnership for Education (GPE), NGOs, Civil Society Organizations, and other partners. In this section, I will focus more on the World Bank and how it supports Ghanaian education, the benefits and cultural conflicts, and the impact on the Ghanaian economy.

Ghana needs external support to achieve educational excellence. Global institutions like the World Bank have substantially impacted Ghana's educational policies and activities. This thesis chapter examines the World Bank's involvement in the Ghanaian education system to help understand the various aspects of the partnership. I aim to bring to light the detailed knowledge of the intricate link between external influence and the education system in Ghana. This analysis aims to provide significant insights for informing policymakers, curriculum developers, and international cooperation in Ghana through equitable assessments and a critical perspective.

The positive influence and impact of the World Bank on the Ghanaian Education System

The World Bank is the leading investor in education in the World. It was founded in 1944. The World Bank believes that education is the key to development. Based on this, the World Bank has been providing loans to developing countries to strengthen their education system (Spring 2008). He indicated that the World Bank is linked to other organizations worldwide that promote education worldwide. Their educational policies influence the local education system and the culture of the citizens in the country. The World Bank has had a

tremendous impact on the Ghanaian education system. For decades, the World Bank has been seen as the major international player in the Ghanaian education system. They assist financially and technically. The World Bank has assisted in increasing access to basic education in Ghana.

The World Bank has supported the construction of new schools and refurbishing dilapidated buildings, especially in rural areas. This has helped increase the enrollment rate, especially at the primary level. Enrollment at the primary level increased from 67% in 1990 to 94% in 2018. Nyarkoh & Intsiful (2018) reported that the World Bank has allocated financial resources towards developing more than 8,000 classroom blocks and has facilitated the acquisition of over 35 million textbooks for primary educational institutions over the past 19 years. The academic landscape transformed the proportion of elementary schools equipped with at least one English textbook per student, increasing from 21% in 1988 to over 72% in 2007.

The World Bank's effort has helped promote equity in education as students in rural areas also get access to education. The World Bank 2010 report stated that gender parity at the primary level was achieved as girls were equally enrolled at the primary level. However, there is still a gap in technical and vocational schools at the higher level.

The Secondary Education Improvement Project (SEIP) is one of the major projects of the World Bank. This project helps construct new senior high schools in districts with no public high schools, providing scholarships and bursaries to low-income students, especially girls, even before Ghana's free senior high school system. After introducing the free senior high school project in 2017, scholarships were turned into exams. According to the World Bank (2021) results briefing, high school enrollment in the poorest district increased from 39% in 2014 to 72% in 2017, even before free Senior High School was introduced. 21 new senior high schools have been constructed, and 125 rehabilitated. The World Bank also trained about 3000 math and

science teachers, and over 20,000 low-income students received scholarships or bursaries between 2014 and 2019. The program provided quality secondary education to almost 568,000 children, with the majority from rural and poor districts in Ghana, with much improvement in girl-child education. (World Bank 2021). This has helped improve the level of equity in the Ghanaian education system.

The adverse effects of the World Bank's Involvement in the Ghanaian Education System on culture

Despite the diverse benefits of the World Bank's involvement in Ghanaian education, there are several covert adverse effects that Ghanaians are not focusing on these covert effects. The primary aim of the World Bank is to promote a knowledge economy and global culture. Spring (2008) indicated that the World Bank's idea is to equip learners with the competencies and skills they need to succeed in the knowledge economy. These competencies, which involve operating independently, will require significant changes in Ghanaian cultural practices and negatively impact the rich cultural practices. This competency is associated with an individualistic personality, contrasting a collective nation like Ghana. Ghana is 7th most collectivist nation in the World (Spring 2008). Education that contrasts this principle will have a replica effect on the education system and the economy. Spring (2008) explained that the primary goal of education by the World Bank is to develop autonomous individuals for the person and their professional capacity. This form of education focuses on carrying out personal projects and promoting a sense of self-making choices. This type of education will instill in children the competitive marketplace that promotes individual competition. However, critical scholars like Wolfmeyer (2023) advocate for teaching and learning based on students' culture and integrating students' backgrounds. He emphasized the importance of recognizing human

diversity in the classroom. He explained that teaching is not universal, and, for this matter, the diversity and identity of students are significant and should be considered.

However, In the recent inaugural speech by Professor Ernest Kofi Davis on Socio-Cultural Issues: A Missing Ingredient in Mathematics Curriculum Development and Delivery in Ghana. He stated how our cultural background is missing from Ghana's curriculum development and delivery. Davis (2024) noted that the cultural function of mathematics is ignored or denied in school. This prevents students from building on the previous knowledge they bring from home. He highlighted the significant discrepancies between mathematics taught in schools and mathematics practiced at home. The mathematics curriculum does not include local measurements, such as bags of rice, tubers of yam, or olonka, often used for home measurements. Students learn different things in school and practice different things at home (Davis, 2024). The lack of cultural integration in the curriculum makes the implementation of the curriculum difficult. Gervedink Nijhuis, Pieters, & Voogt (2013) stated that Curriculum implementation frequently fails due to a lack of cultural knowledge among curriculum developers and aid groups. Suppose individualistic education works for the United States, Australia, Denmark, Germany, and other world-known individualistic countries. In that case, this cannot work in countries like Ghana, China, Columbia, Nigeria, and many others identified as collectivist nations.

Due to several cultural and societal factors, Ghana is described as a collectivist society (Spring 2008). The Ghanaian collectivist nation prioritizes social peace, collaboration, and interdependence, highlighting individuals' connectivity within the communities. The extended family structure is an essential practice that makes Ghana a collectivist society. The Extended family is one critical cultural practice in Ghana. Family is a fundamental part of the Ghanaian

society. The bond extends beyond the nuclear family to extended relatives like uncles, aunts, grandparents, and cousins. In some parts of Ghana, like the Akans, uncles are supposed to care for their nephews. Family members' interdependence promotes a shared responsibility for each other's welfare. How can individualistic education affect this kind of family system?

An individualistic education will produce citizens with goals that fit their personal needs and not think about the welfare of others (Spring 2008). This contradicts the cultural practices in Ghana. The results will increase poverty since some uncles will now see no benefits in taking care of their nephews and cousins but will instead focus on their nuclear family. It is also likely to increase school dropout, reducing the country's literacy rate. Individualistic education will gradually change the mindset of Ghanaians, shifting from the extended family system to placing more emphasis on the nuclear family, reducing the love and unity among family members.

Furthermore, the decline in community bonds is a possible cultural consequence of the global influence of education in Ghana, which emphasizes individualized learning. Ghanaians prioritize communal bonds over personal ambitions. Ghanaians value the deep sense of community where they share resources, celebrate successes, and offer assistance in difficult times. Ghana's cultural customs are deeply influenced by the concept of Ubuntu, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals with the community. This ideology emphasizes the importance of communal relationships by asserting that an individual's identity is connected to the community. This enhances personal dedication to the welfare of the community and its members. An education focusing on individualism might impede community relationships and prioritize personal success, undermining the solid communal bonds in a collectivist society. Individuals' pursuit of academic success through self-direction and competitiveness may lead to isolation and reduced collective support. The transition from communal assistance to individual

requirements signifies a departure from collectivism, where the community's demands usually precede individual objectives. Independent education will lead to significant alterations in Ghanaian culture.

Furthermore, individualistic education will make citizens less modest in social situations and less sensitive to social rejection (Spring 2008). Ghanaian cultural practices stress interdependence and mutual support as essential values. Individualistic education, which makes citizens less sensitive to rejection, will emphasize personal achievements that can change social interactions among community members and provide a more competitive and self-centered atmosphere.

This individualistic education system is gradually eradicating all these practices, which has helped in the development of Ghana. Most rural communities were using this system to keep their community clean. Individualistic education prioritizes individual efforts and success. In a collectivist society like Ghana's, where community values and teamwork are traditionally vital, a growing tendency towards individuality may undercut the emphasis on communal goals and connections.

Individualistic education with a curriculum that does not integrate Ghanaian cultural values and norms could create a cultural disconnect. A curriculum that fails to integrate the people's cultural practices will influence teachers' teaching methods. Teaching methods that do not recognize students' diversity and identity will create more problems for students (Wolfmeyer, 2023). Ghana is a country with a diverse population coming from different ethnic and tribal backgrounds. The introduction of individualistic education neglects the collectivist cultural practices, which do not factor in students' cultural background in the classroom. Saphir (2001) reported that there is an inadequate textbook to teach Ghanaian history and culture. This makes it

difficult for teachers to understand and consider diversity and their students' identities. Individualized education does not focus on the country's cultural values, which is shifting the government's focus to make available the necessary teaching and learning materials that support diversity and inclusion.

Another effect of individualistic education is the decline of moral values in citizens. Traditional Ghanaian education places significant importance on moral and ethical principles. Individualism education to train people for the knowledge economy may neglect the cultivation of moral values and emphasize the importance of academic success, resulting in a generation lacking a solid ethical foundation. Recently, the Ghana parliament was concerned about declining moral values and patriotism among citizens. They were concerned about the education system and the products or the kind of students our education system produces. The members of parliament lamented the dwindling education in Ghana, which has been producing dishonest people with less integrity and loyalty to the country (United Television, Ghana, 2023). They called for the redirection of the focus of education as investors are no longer interested in employing Ghanaian graduates but prefer Indians. Too much partnership is reducing the focus of our education system and alleviating from emphasizing our morals and values.

Additional Negative Impact of the World Bank's Involvement in the Ghanaian Education System

In this section, I explain some additional adverse effects of the World Bank's involvement in Ghanaian education and how it affects the economy and national development. Despite the numerous positive effects of the World Bank's involvement in the Ghanaian education system, the involvement comes with some negative consequences that should be

addressed. In this part of the study, I will highlight some of the negative impacts of the involvement of the World Bank.

Diminished national ownership and authority over dependency will make the government reluctant and dependent on foreign aid. This reduces the control the government will have over its own education. The NPP government's awareness of how foreign aid can lead to total control of the country's affairs leads to the significant campaign message 'Ghana Beyond Aid' of the presidential candidate who is currently the president.

Creating half-educated citizens by overemphasizing the primary and secondary levels has also led to the emphasis on standardized tests as a criterion to limit the number of students attending tertiary institutions. Most students cannot further their education at the tertiary level after high school. These students end their educational careers at the high school level. Since they have some form of formal education, they feel reluctant to involve themselves in farming activities and other menial jobs that can help them make decent money. This makes them a burden to their family and the nation. They experience half of formal education.

Increase in debt and conditionalities. These benefits from the World Bank come with costs and loans that increase the country's debt. High debts result in seeking help and IMF bailout programs, which come with many conditionalities that ultimately impede the growth of the education sector. For instance, in 2014, the IMF directed the Ghana government to freeze employment, which led to a lack of teachers to teach at various school levels. Brain drains and loss of professionals result in dependence on foreign cultures due to the negligence of the Ghanaian culture.

Critique and Recommendations for the World Bank's Involvement in the Ghanaian Education System

The World Bank has a good and meaningful role in the Ghanaian Education System and is not exempt from criticism. The biggest concern is the Western-centric educational programs that may accidentally marginalize indigenous knowledge and culture. The standardized nature of educational interventions may not adequately address the diverse cultural landscape in Ghana, perhaps resulting in cultural uniformity. The neglect of cultural education could lead to reduced enrollment in tertiary education since low-income students cannot afford higher education, and extended family members will not have the urge to help their relatives since they will be more individualistic due to the nature of education.

The Ghana education system should recognize the harmful effects of the World Bank's emphasis on individualism for the knowledge economy and restore educational practices back towards authentic Ghanaian cultural values. Education in Ghana should focus on cultural sensitivity and contextualization to address the criticism of cultural imposition. Implementing educational strategies that focus on the diverse cultural practices in Ghana will help improve the educational system and promote economic development. The assessment practices and procedure should also consider cultural relevance and community engagement. This can offer comprehensive support for the education system and promote equity.

Improved cooperation with local stakeholders, such as teachers, administrators, and community leaders, is crucial. The involvement of local and community members, especially parents and community elders, in decision-making is critical to improving the effectiveness of intervention and encouraging community ownership. This helps to promote cultural involvement in the education system.

Focus on teacher training on cultural competency. Teacher training programs should emphasize content, culturally responsive, and competency teaching. This will equip teachers with the needed knowledge to implement and develop teaching strategies that incorporate the cultural background of students. Investing in teacher development is essential due to teachers' significant role in education.

Community empowerment programs. The Ghana Education Service should review and collaborate with the World Bank to design programs that promote community empowerment. This involves promoting community-driven programs that enable local communities to actively participate in educational decision-making processes, fostering a sense of ownership and ensuring sustained beneficial outcomes. This will help reduce the colonization of the education sector in Ghana.

This part of the thesis aims to improve the effectiveness of World Bank initiatives in the Ghanaian education system by tailoring them to the country's specific needs and to help promote a collaborative and equitable approach to educational development.

Conclusion

Postcolonial analysis of equity in the Ghanaian education system has revealed the intricate historical interplay of historical legacies, structural obstacles, and external factors that influence the Ghanaian education system. Throughout the analysis of equity in postcolonial education in Ghana, the structure reveals some inequality and access disparities in the educational system. However, the government continues to increase educational opportunities in all parts of the country. Postcolonial theory emphasizes the importance of language in postcolonial education, which also offers a valuable perspective to understand the lasting influence of colonialism on educational policies and practices in Ghana. The use of postcolonial theory in the study reveals the importance of decolonizing the Ghanaian education system to empower marginalized communities and prioritize indigenous knowledge systems and cultural integration in Ghanaian education.

The analysis of standardized tests as a form of gatekeeping in Ghana has highlighted the significance of assessment in perpetuating inequalities and maintaining disparities, as well as a shift in the curriculum focus, causing teachers to enact the curriculum. This makes students experience a curriculum that is different from the intended curriculum. There have been some recorded incidences of violence results from standardized testing in Ghana's education system. Standardized tests such as the WASSCE and BECE in Ghana are intended to objectively evaluate students' academic achievement. However, these tests frequently perpetuate inequalities and cultural biases.

Consequently, standardized tests in Ghana put students from marginalized backgrounds at a disadvantage and reinforce disparities in the Ghanaian education system. It also causes

violence, which puts teachers' and invigilators' lives at risk. This violence by students, vandalizing school properties, causes financial loss to the country.

The World Bank's involvement in the Ghanaian education system has brought forth both positive and negative impacts on the education system. Although the involvement of the World Bank has helped with the expansion of infrastructure development and supply of books and teaching resources, they faced criticism for promoting individualistic education, which focuses on building and training students for the knowledge economy in a collectivist society like Ghana. This results in the neglect of the cultural practices of Ghanaian society and promotes educational practices that neglect the cultural practices of the people of Ghana. This makes it difficult for students to see themselves in the education they receive in the school. The Ghana education system should focus on improving cooperation with local stakeholders, such as teachers, administrators, and community leaders, focus on teacher training on cultural competencies and pedagogy, and encourage community empowerment programs to help center the education system on the local and cultural practices of the country.

In summary, the postcolonial analysis of equity in the Ghanaian education system emphasizes the significance of implementing a comprehensive and culturally appropriate strategy for educational improvement. This calls for addressing the inherent inequalities and examining the influence of external powers and the fundamental power dynamics and historical injustices that sustain gaps in the availability of high-quality education in Ghana. Adopting culturally appropriate teaching strategies and paying attention to equity and social justice in all educational policies and reforms is imperative. My goal is a Ghanaian education system that supports my country's people's personal and social growth as individuals and as a group.

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