



Reimagining Ghana's Education System through a Political-theological Lens

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ABSTRACT

Ghana's education system has undergone significant reforms since independence, with policies aimed at increasing access and improving quality. While initiatives such as Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) and the Free Senior High School program have expanded educational opportunities, concerns remain regarding the system's effectiveness in fostering critical thinking, ethical leadership, and national development. Existing frameworks predominantly emphasize political and economic factors, often neglecting the role of theology in shaping educational philosophy and practice. This study therefore explored Ghanaian education through a political-theological lens, arguing that theological insights can contribute meaningfully to addressing systemic challenges. Using a qualitative research approach, the study engaged in a critical literature review, historical analysis, and thematic exploration of theological perspectives on education and governance. It then integrated political and theological perspectives to develop a transformative model for education that emphasizes holistic human development, social justice, and national cohesion. The study's key contribution lies in its proposal for a reimagined educational framework that incorporates ethical and theological values alongside pedagogical strategies to produce morally grounded and critically engaged citizens.

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Publication History

Received:

22nd March, 2025

Accepted:

12th June, 2025.

Published:

23rd October, 2025.

To Cite this Article:

Boaheng, Isaac.

"Reimagining Ghana's Education System through a Political-theological Lens." *Journal of Education and Learning Technology* 6, no. 10 (2025): 931-946.
<https://doi.org/10.38159/jelt.20256101>.

Keywords: *Education, Political Theology, Ghana, National Development*

INTRODUCTION

Over the past five decades, Ghana's education system has witnessed significant expansion, with remarkable improvements in enrollment and completion rates at various levels. The introduction of policies such as Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), School Feeding Program, and Free Senior High School has increased access to education for millions of Ghanaian children. However, despite these quantitative gains, concerns persist regarding the quality and effectiveness of the country's educational system in fostering critical thinking, innovation, and problem-solving skills necessary for national development.

Although access to education has improved, the prevalent teaching methods and research practices in Ghana often fail to cultivate cognitive skills essential for innovation and effective problem-solving. The overemphasis on rote memorization and standardized examinations limits students' ability to engage in analytical and independent thinking. Addressing these educational shortcomings requires a deliberate shift towards student-centered pedagogies, competency-based curricula, and an assessment system that evaluates conceptual understanding rather than rote memorization.

A contribution to the national discourse on how the country might improve its educational system to address the sociopolitical needs of the people, this paper provides a theopolitical framework that can potentially address Ghana's needs. It is a literature-based research that seeks data from existing

publications. This paper begins by tracing the historical development of Ghana's education system, highlighting key policy shifts and their impact on national development. It then explores the role of theology in shaping educational thought, drawing on Christian ethical principles to propose a framework for reform. Finally, the study discusses practical strategies for integrating political-theological insights into Ghana's educational policies, with a focus on fostering holistic development. Through this interdisciplinary approach, the study aims to contribute to ongoing discussions on education reform in Ghana, offering a vision that balances academic rigor with ethical and spiritual growth.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF GHANA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

This part traces how education in Ghana has evolved, beginning long before colonial influence and continuing into the period after independence. Long before European contact, Ghanaian societies had their own ways of teaching and training the younger generation. These local systems focused on instilling moral values, social norms, and cultural practices that supported both personal development and the well-being of the community. Learning was mostly hands-on, with knowledge, skills, and traditions passed down through real-life experience and daily involvement in family and community activities.¹ Young boys acquired skills in farming and hunting by informally training under their fathers, mainly through observation, imitation, and hands-on experience. Similarly, girls were taught domestic responsibilities by their mothers through direct, practical instruction. This customary approach to education emphasized learning by doing rather than theoretical study.

A distinct aspect of traditional education in Ghana was its focus on preparing individuals to take on leadership roles within their communities in various capacities.² In addition to the broad leadership preparation given to everyone, specific instruction was provided for individuals destined to become chiefs, spiritual leaders, queen mothers, or kings. This indigenous educational system was deeply rooted in the communal values and shared way of life characteristic of African societies.³ The main goal of education was to equip individuals with practical knowledge and abilities that would benefit both themselves and those around them. Learners were taught to serve not just their immediate family or group, but to think about the well-being of the broader community. Essentially, traditional education aimed to develop capable individuals who prioritized the collective good over personal gain. As a result, this system was designed to shape responsible adults who could actively support the progress of their society.

The colonization of Ghana led to the introduction of Western education which gave no attention to the traditional learning patterns.⁴ The Westerners assumed that Ghanaians were ignorant, without any knowledge and so needed superior learned teachers to impart knowledge on them⁵ The pedagogical model introduced by the colonial masters was, therefore, oppressive just as their rule was oppressive.⁶ They implemented an educational approach where learners played a largely passive role, receiving information without being actively engaged in the learning experience. This method treated students as empty vessels to be filled with content, discouraging independent thought and critical questioning. As a result, it distanced Ghanaians from their own traditional knowledge systems and fostered reliance on Western ways of understanding the world, approaches that frequently overlooked or misunderstood the cultural and social context of Ghana.

The initial purpose of the education system was to raise people to help the colonizers in the administration of the nation.⁷ Consequently, Ghana's premier university, the University of Ghana, was established with a focus on liberal arts to produce clerical and administrative support staff for the

¹ Kofi Abrefa Busia, *Purposeful Education for Africa* (London: Mouton, 1964), 13. This article draws from sections from Isaac Boaheng, *A contextual political theology for the Ghanaian society and its implications for human flourishing* (Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Pretoria, 2023).

² Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge & Christian Missions* second edition (Accra: SonLife Press, 2022), 113.

³ Busia, *Purposeful Education for Africa*, 17.

⁴ Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge & Christian Missions*, 115.

⁵ Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge & Christian Missions*, 115.

⁶ Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge & Christian Missions*, 115.

⁷ Osei Safo-Kantanka, *Who owns the Land and Who rules the Land* (Kumasi: PRISEBS "B" Enterprise, 2021), 431.

colonial rulers. In those days, the brutalities that manual workers faced at the hands of colonial masters made Ghanaians develop a love for white-collar jobs and a dislike for jobs that depended mainly on skills rather than certificates. Consequently, people attended school with the aim of earning certificates and having recognition in the society rather than acquiring practical skills for addressing societal needs. The love for white-collar jobs has since been with Ghanaians up to date.

Before Ghana gained independence, the industrial sector—shaped largely by colonial economic interests—was underdeveloped and had minimal impact on the country’s economic progress. Following independence, Nkrumah’s administration identified industrialization as a crucial element for modernizing the nation and driving development. As part of this vision, a broad initiative was launched to promote import substitution, focusing on producing goods locally instead of relying on imports, with the goal of restructuring the economy and reducing reliance on external markets.⁸ Transitioning from imported products to locally made goods was intended to strengthen the national currency, boost economic growth, and help lift the country out of persistent poverty. As part of this industrial push, Nkrumah recognized the need for skilled technical professionals and therefore established the Kumasi College of Technology—now known as the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology—to train individuals in science and technology to support the nation’s development.⁹ Eventually, the University of Cape Coast was founded with the primary aim of preparing qualified teachers for senior secondary schools. Additionally, polytechnic institutions were set up to provide practical training for middle-level technical personnel across different sectors. Over time, the country saw the growth of numerous other higher education institutions—both public and private—including Colleges of Education, all contributing to the advancement of human capital in Ghana.

Over the years, Ghana's education system has undergone multiple reforms, each adding its own value to the sector’s progress. Currently, all citizens have access to free and compulsory basic education, contributing to a relatively low rate of illiteracy. The Free Senior High School initiative, introduced as a key policy by the NPP government, has been maintained by the current NDC administration. While these advancements are positive steps, the overall influence of the education system on national development remains limited.

TRADITIONAL PEDAGOGY AND ITS IMPACT ON STUDENTS

Ghana’s education system is characterized by the use of traditional teaching methods (TTM) with a huge emphasis on rote memorization and teacher-centered instruction. The system fosters a passive learning environment where students are accustomed to receiving knowledge without active participation. This passivity results in a lack of boldness and initiative, with students often waiting for directives rather than taking charge of their learning journey. There is also the scarcity of opportunities for leadership within the classroom setting contributes to weak leadership skills among graduates. Furthermore, the TTM has a rigid structure which instills an aversion to risk-taking that causes students to shy away from exploring unconventional solutions or challenging existing systems. Moreover, Ghana’s educational framework promotes a dependence on foreign ideas, as students are not encouraged to develop context-specific solutions. Most textbooks used at institutions of higher learning are imported books which generally deal with problems that may not even exist in our country. To worsen the situation, examination questions mostly demand memorized facts rather than analytical skills.

This approach often suppresses creativity and innovation, as students are conditioned to absorb information passively rather than engage in critical thinking or problem-solving. Consequently, many graduates exhibit limited originality, hesitancy in proposing unconventional solutions, and a reluctance to challenge established norms. Many graduates from Ghana’s education system face unemployment unless they find jobs in the public or private sectors. They often lack the necessary skills to independently address community challenges as a way to generate income. Despite significant investments by both government and private entities in education, the system appears to produce a

⁸ Charles Ackah, Charles Adjasi, and Festus Turkson, “Scoping Study on the Evolution of Industry in Ghana. Learning to Compete,” Working Paper, No. 18 (World Institute for Development Economics Research), (2014), 1.

⁹ Safo-Kantanka, *Who owns the Land and Who rules the Land*, 431.

surplus of unproductive graduates. This has contributed to a rise in criminal behavior among unemployed youth, increasing social problems and crime rates. According to Tornyozuku, worsening youth unemployment drives many young people to resort to illegal activities as a means of earning a living.¹⁰

This section proposes a policy for Ghana's education system that is both culturally appropriate and firmly rooted in biblical and historical principles. The goal of this policy is to cultivate knowledgeable citizens equipped with the practical skills necessary to support a science, technology, and innovation-led industrial transformation.

THE POLITICAL-THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF EDUCATION

The creation of humankind in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27)—including moral, intellectual, creative, spiritual, and political aspects. Proper stewardship of the divine image in humankind requires proper nurturing, use, and development through any ethically sound available means. Of interest to this section is the development of human intellectual capacity through education. As noted previously, Ghana's education system has not been effective in catalyzing national development. Based on this fact, the present section formulates a theology of education to address the challenges inherent in the current education model.

Theocentric Approach to Education

Earlier, it was emphasized that education serves to nurture the intellectual capacity bestowed upon humanity by God. Since both human reasoning and the methods to cultivate it are divine gifts, education systems should place God at their core. In other words, education should prioritize a God-centered (theocentric) approach before focusing on human-centered (anthropocentric) perspectives. Therefore, Ghana's educational philosophy must be firmly rooted in biblical values, ensuring that the teachings across subjects align with scriptural principles. Applying this vision in a religiously diverse country like Ghana presents challenges. The church must take a strategic role in promoting the integration of sound biblical foundations within education. Given the country's pluralistic nature, the church should engage inclusively in shaping national educational policies. Furthermore, it should spearhead efforts to use education as a means for societal transformation, beginning within its own institutions where it has full influence over curriculum and teaching methods. Christian leaders and education policymakers are encouraged to advocate strongly for the theocentric focus in education and work to gain wider acceptance for this approach.

The principle of a God-centered education demands careful evaluation of teaching materials to eliminate any content that is morally harmful. Those involved in education must ensure that resources are free from materials that could negatively influence students' values. Additionally, parents have a responsibility to monitor their children's social media use to protect them from exposure to inappropriate content as they seek knowledge. To accomplish this, Christians should actively collaborate with other stakeholders in shaping national curricula and education policies. If Christians withdraw from this process, individuals from other religious backgrounds may dominate the discussions and potentially introduce ideas that conflict with biblical teachings into the education system. Given that approximately 71.3% of Ghanaians identify as Christians, God entrusts them with the responsibility to lead efforts—together with both religious and secular groups—to develop an inclusive and effective education system that can bring about societal transformation.

The theocentric nature of education relates to education's role in enhancing moral transformation, which is discussed in the next section.

Education and Moral Transformation

According to Augustine, sin does not promote the effectiveness of human political power.¹¹ Ghana's political issues cannot be resolved without a fundamental moral renewal among its people, a task that

¹⁰ Delight Enyonam Tornyozuku, "Causes and Effects of Unemployment among the Youth in the Ga West Municipality, Greater Accra Region." (University of Ghana, 2017), 18.

¹¹ Augustine Aurelius, *The City of God*, vol. 2 (Frankfurth an Main: Outlook Verlag, 2019), 91.

religion is uniquely positioned to support. However, this moral revival cannot rely solely on religious organizations. The country's national education policy must address the ethical development of its citizens. Education should nurture the spirit and character of individuals in a tangible way, aiming to foster moral growth for everyone. This involves deliberately cultivating a sense of reverence for God, empowering people to stand against wrongdoing in their various roles. Jesus' teachings to his disciples about leadership (such as in Mark 10:36-45) serve as an example of education focused on transforming the heart and soul to create effective leaders. Similarly, Plato emphasized education's role in moral development, arguing that it should raise awareness about the harmful impact of evil on society and encourage voluntary adherence to laws.¹² Wesley also shares this view when he argues that education must lead people toward perfection.¹³ His idea of holiness and perfection rests on the belief that true personal transformation, achieved through an education system grounded in biblical principles and tailored to the local context, should naturally lead to social virtues such as humility, receptiveness to feedback, peace, gentleness, and love. Consequently, a person cannot be considered well-educated if they respond with anger merely because they have been criticized.¹⁴ In reality, education should promote qualities such as self-discipline, altruism, and a focus on others, alongside fostering understanding and wisdom. Therefore, the success of Ghana's education system should be measured by how well it reduces criminal behavior and disorder, while producing skilled individuals willing to make meaningful sacrifices for the betterment of their community.

Education should also foster a strong sense of community responsibility. The goal of the education system shouldn't be limited to producing knowledgeable individuals but should focus on cultivating graduates who genuinely care about the well-being of their society. Encouraging students to develop community awareness and concern is a powerful way to reduce corruption, bribery, and the misuse of public resources, as these qualities emphasize putting others before oneself. As Busia highlights, "the true measure of an educated person lies in the breadth and depth of their compassion—the range of people they actively care for, and the actions they take to relieve suffering, right injustices, or create better opportunities for others to lead meaningful and dignified lives."¹⁵ Therefore, Ghana's education must, therefore, go beyond the impartation of knowledge of certain facts or the acquisition of basic competencies in literacy and numeracy to cause a change in students' social, attitudinal, emotional, and psychological make-up, and perception of life. Students must be trained in conduct and formed in character for their private and public lives.

The transformative power of education is highlighted in Goal 4 of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which states that a nation's education system should provide learners with the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, peace, non-violence, global citizenship, and an appreciation for cultural diversity and its role in sustainable progress. Education should also expand individuals' perspectives and encourage acceptance of all people, regardless of differences. Thus, even if personal religious beliefs oppose issues like transgender identities or the LGBTIQ+ community, discrimination against these groups should not occur. The education system must foster respect and tolerance for people of diverse sexual and religious backgrounds. From a Christian viewpoint, some denominations may regard transgenderism and LGBTIQ+ identities as contrary to biblical teachings, yet this does not justify intolerance or discrimination. Beyond avoiding discrimination, believers are encouraged to engage thoughtfully with other Christian groups to understand differing views and divisions on these topics. Such sensitivity is essential and must be carefully managed within society.

This will not only help maintain unity in the Ghanaian pluralistic setting but will also help to achieve the fourth aspiration of *Agenda 2063*, namely "By 2020 all guns will be silenced. By 2063, all conflicts emanating from ethnic, religious, cultural diversity and all forms of social exclusion will have

¹² Madonna M Murphy, "Plato's Philosophy of Education and the Common Core Debate," *Online Submission*, 2015, 10.

¹³ Paul Kwabena Bofo, *John Wesley's Theology and Public Life: His Sociopolitical Thought in the Ghanaian Context* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2014), 2.

¹⁴ Amu cited in Philip Tetteh Laryea, *Patriotism and Nation Building: Perspectives from the Life and Utterances of Ephraim Amu* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2017), 131.

¹⁵ Busia cited in Okodie Anane-Agyei, *Axioms of K. A. Busia: A Compilation of Philosophies, Ideas and Policies of a Statesman* (Accra: Abibrem Communications, 2014), 105.

been eliminated.”¹⁶ Education should help individuals understand that their well-being is deeply connected to the welfare and advancement of others in their community—regardless of wealth, gender, or strength. In Jeremiah 22:1-9 and Amos 5, God, speaking through the prophets, chastised Israel’s political leaders for neglecting their duty to protect the poor from injustice and exploitation, despite knowing what was right. This highlights God’s expectation that leaders safeguard the vulnerable and address their needs. Achieving this vision depends on prioritizing the community’s welfare over personal interests. Such a moral shift, where self-centeredness is replaced by concern for the common good, can be fostered through education. The education system may expose students to leadership principles that address the needs of the voiceless and the marginalized.

Finally, there is a pressing need to intentionally shape our education system so that it fosters pride in our own people and cultural heritage. This shift can help reduce Ghana’s preference for foreign products, ultimately strengthening the local economy. Such an approach would counteract the legacy of early European missionary efforts, which, despite good intentions, inadvertently led many Ghanaians to undervalue their own culture by promoting the idea that European culture was superior. While the missionaries’ goals were positive, their methods were not well-suited for the task. Today, it is crucial to blend their good intentions with a respect for cultural identity in the Ghanaian context. In our globalized world, no country can develop in isolation; cultural exchange through international interaction is inevitable. A more culturally sensitive strategy involves embracing beneficial aspects of foreign cultures without wholesale rejection. At the same time, Ghanaians should be encouraged to cherish and promote their rich cultural traditions. The era when the educated distanced themselves from the uneducated—preferring foreign names and foods because they were seen as superior—must come to an end. Consequently, the country’s educational philosophy should guide learners to value indigenous products and culture and recognize the important contributions of all members of society, including those without formal education. Most importantly, since education is linked to societal progress, it must focus on developing human resources dedicated to the collective good. The following section will explore this further.

Education and Human Resource Development

A nation’s socio-economic progress is largely influenced by increased efficiency in areas such as agriculture, forestry, livestock farming, and mineral extraction; the growth of infrastructure like roads, railways, and transportation networks; the creation of industries; and the establishment of trade partnerships with other countries. All these aspects of development rely heavily on an education system that equips individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to contribute to these objectives. The advancement of society is closely tied to the educational attainment of its people. Ghana cannot achieve sustainable socio-economic development without quality education that yields “Well educated citizens and skills revolution underpinned by science, technology and innovation...”¹⁷

For education to effectively drive a society’s socio-economic progress, it must pursue four key objectives related to developing human resources: economic growth, civic engagement, personal enrichment, and the promotion of equity. These aims should be recognized both in terms of individual benefits and community impact. Education equips individuals with practical skills that advance their careers and simultaneously enable society to enhance and sustain development while remaining competitive globally. It also cultivates civic competencies, empowering people to actively engage in political and social processes, which strengthens the entire community through informed participation. Furthermore, education nurtures human talents and passions, supporting personal growth and contributing to society’s collective knowledge and achievements, which hold intrinsic value. Lastly, education plays a crucial role in fostering fairness and social inclusion, since a lack of access or unequal distribution of educational opportunities can lead to social injustice and exclusion.

¹⁶ African Union Commission, *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want – Framework Document* (Addis Ababa: African Union Commission, 2015), 38.

¹⁷ African Union, “Agenda2063 Report of the Commission on the African Union Agenda 2063 The Africa We Want in 2063,” 12.

For Ghana's education system to meaningfully support national development, it is essential to implement a teaching approach that addresses the previously mentioned shortcomings. The following outlines the necessary pedagogical reforms needed to achieve a comprehensive and effective education.

A REIMAGINED EDUCATION DELIVERY (PEDAGOGY, FACILITIES AND CURRICULUM)

Problem-based Learning Approach

As mentioned earlier, one major reason Ghana's education system falls short in driving national development is its failure to equip learners with problem-solving abilities. The dominant reliance on rote memorization—where students repeatedly memorize information—results in graduates lacking hands-on and practical skills. While this method helps learners retain basic facts and build a foundational understanding, it emphasizes surface-level learning rather than deep comprehension and creativity. Consequently, it does not prepare students with the innovative and productive abilities required to address real-world challenges. For Ghana to achieve the transformative progress envisioned in Agenda 2063, it must shift towards a more practical and skill-oriented approach to education that develops a workforce capable of meeting the technical and managerial demands essential for sustainable growth.

To address this challenge, the study recommends implementing problem-based learning (PBL) across all educational levels in Ghana. PBL is a learner-focused teaching method where students acquire knowledge by actively engaging in guided problem-solving. This approach echoes Wesley's view that education should prepare students with practical skills to tackle real-world issues, rather than merely transferring information.¹⁸ In this model, the drive to resolve a problem fuels the desire to learn. Learning becomes more than just following a teacher's directions; it encourages students to think independently and creatively, enabling them to develop innovative solutions to challenges.¹⁹ The PBL is informed by this fact: Since human beings are endowed with creative abilities their learning process must draw out the creativity in them. It is, therefore, imperative for Ghana to adopt the PBL model to encourage students to acquire critical thinking skills which include problem-solving skills, research skills, questioning skills, reasoning skills, creative skills as well as creativity, and innovation. Amu argues that "The eventual aim of education is to develop the critical sense, as a man [or a woman] without critical sense is uneducated."²⁰ Amu's quote alludes to the fact that education and skill development are inseparably intertwined. The point is that, knowledge, no matter how vast or sophisticated, becomes empty and ineffective if it is not applied to real-life situations. For knowledge to be truly transformative, it must move beyond theory into practice, addressing the concrete challenges and opportunities that people face in their daily lives. Education that merely fills the mind with facts but fails to empower individuals to solve societal problems, innovate, or improve their conditions will remain sterile. It is only when knowledge is translated into action—whether through problem-solving, creativity, or meaningful service—that it has the power to transform lives and contribute to personal growth and national development.

Problem-based learning (PBL) might be unfamiliar to many educators in Ghana. It demands that teachers exercise creativity and innovation by posing thoughtful, challenging questions that encourage students to engage in deeper reflection and critical analysis. Educators are urged to adopt a question-and-answer teaching style, asking insightful questions that push students to move beyond surface-level understanding and develop a more profound intellectual grasp of social issues and potential solutions. Students should be guided to transcend basic sensory knowledge and elevate their thinking to the level of pure reasoning.²¹ This will help students nurture thinking skills to help students actualize their full potential and contribute effectively to national development.²² Equipped with these skills, graduates will be better positioned to secure meaningful jobs and potentially create employment

¹⁸ Boafo, *John Wesley's Theology and Public Life: His Sociopolitical Thought in the Ghanaian Context*, 100.

¹⁹ Samuel Peni Ango and Esther Rutor, "Education" In *African Public Theology* edited by Sunday B. Agang, H. Jurgens Hendricks and Dion A. Forster (Carlisle: HippoBooks, 2020), 147.

²⁰ Cited in Laryea, *Patriotism and Nation Building*, 106

²¹ Cited in Laryea, *Patriotism and Nation Building*, 107.

²² Ango and Esther Rutor, "Education," 147.

opportunities for others, helping to decrease unemployment rates within their communities. This, in turn, could help curb the outflow of talent and establish the country as a hub that attracts top graduates from across Africa and beyond, contributing significantly to advancing the industrial revolution.

In terms of embracing a more hands-on and skill-focused teaching approach, the School of Medical and Health Sciences at the University of Development Studies in Tamale, Ghana, deserves recognition. Following nearly ten years of preparation, the university officially implemented PBL in September 2006 for the education of medical doctors and other healthcare professionals.²³ Unlike other institutions, their training emphasizes equipping students with practical medical skills needed to effectively meet the health challenges of society. Beyond classroom instruction, students participate in a three-week annual community service program, during which they engage directly with local populations to identify their healthcare needs. The insights gathered from these visits are then used to inform and improve the school's teaching methods. Evaluations indicate that graduates from the University of Development Studies tend to be more capable, self-assured, and skilled compared to those from other universities. This successful model serves as an example for other institutions, encouraging them to adopt problem-based learning approaches. This educational philosophy and the PBL method draw inspiration from the system of education originally developed by Plato.

The PBL pedagogy requires the use of practical equipment which many educational institutions may lack presently. There is, therefore, the need for the government to equip teachers and schools with adequate resources required to implement the PBL. The next section considers this issue further.

Provision of Teaching and Learning Facilities

To ensure quality education, it is essential to provide sufficient resources for hands-on learning. Teaching materials must be relevant, current, and connected to real-world issues. Unfortunately, Ghana's education system has long struggled with overcrowded classrooms, inadequate learning resources, and shortages of textbooks, chalk, notebooks, and proper facilities. Many schools still operate on shift schedules, and some students walk over eleven kilometers to attend classes held outdoors, often under trees. In numerous schools, ICT is taught without access to computers or dedicated labs. Basic-level science education suffers from a severe lack of equipment, forcing teachers to rely on two-dimensional sketches on the board to represent tools, asking students to visualize these items mentally. Under such conditions, it becomes extremely challenging for students to relate their lessons to practical, real-life situations.

Aligned with the primary goal of Agenda 2063, it is anticipated that a minimum of 70 percent of high school graduates will continue their education in technical and vocational fields at the tertiary level. Of these, 70 percent are expected to complete programs in science, technology, and innovation, establishing a strong human capital base to support competitive economies that leverage Africa's abundant natural resources.²⁴ The goal is to develop graduates capable of effectively utilizing and overseeing the country's abundant resources. Consequently, the government must allocate sufficient funding and resources to support technical, practical, and vocational education. Prioritizing investment in these areas within the education budget is essential for achieving this objective.

The rapid technological progress of the 20th and 21st centuries, along with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, have significantly elevated the importance of online education. To support effective and meaningful e-learning, investment in the necessary infrastructure is crucial. Factors such as greater flexibility, a wider range of courses, lower expenses, and improved time management have contributed to the growing popularity of online learning.²⁵ Although online education has gained significant popularity, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, it faces several challenges. These include misuse of digital platforms, limited access to electricity, expensive internet data costs, student

²³ Evans Ameade and Anthony Amalba, "Attitude of Medical Students toward a Mandatory Pre-Medical Year in the University for Development Studies, Ghana," *Journal of Contemporary Medical Education* 3, no. 3 (2015): 114, <https://doi.org/10.5455/jcme.20151102103611>.

²⁴ African Union Commission, *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want – Framework Document*.

²⁵ Jamilah Jamilah and Eni Fariyatul Fahyuni, "The Future of Online Learning in the Post-COVID-19 Era," *KnE Social Sciences* 31, no. 3 (June 20, 2022): 500, <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v7i10.11251>.

impersonation, inadequate supervision and support, and the absence of face-to-face interaction.²⁶ It is crucial for all education stakeholders to develop and enforce effective, sustainable policies that uphold quality and ethical standards in online education.

To achieve this, reliable electricity supply must be guaranteed, including expanding the national grid to reach every part of the country so that no one is excluded from digital learning opportunities. Additionally, the government should collaborate with internet service providers to make internet access both affordable and widely available. The current hybrid approach—where instructors meet students in person at distant learning centers—may help address some of the issues linked to fully online education that lacks any face-to-face interaction. However, this system is not without its flaws. Therefore, a thorough national dialogue is necessary to chart the best path forward for digital education. The country’s development plan should establish a clear timeline for preparing and potentially fully implementing e-learning, should that be the chosen direction. It is also important to emphasize that e-learning should be reserved for courses that can be effectively taught without in-person sessions, while programs requiring hands-on or traditional face-to-face engagement should maintain their current format.

The success of any education policy partly depends on appropriate student-teacher relationships. The right relationship, which the researcher refers to as the “liberative pedagogy”, is considered briefly below.

Liberative Pedagogy

Whether education is delivered through traditional in-person classes or online platforms, the connection between teachers and students plays a vital role in the success of the learning process. Typically, this relationship tends to be stronger in face-to-face settings compared to virtual environments. Nonetheless, as previously mentioned, online education remains a valid and valuable method for various reasons. This section aims to suggest a teaching approach that strengthens the interaction between lecturers and students, moving away from treating learners as passive recipients of information and instead encouraging active engagement.

Earlier, it was highlighted that the colonial education system operated on a “banking” model, where students were viewed as empty vessels to be filled with information. This approach has persisted even after independence, with teachers seeing themselves as the sole holders of knowledge meant to be passed down to students. As a result, learners often remain disconnected from their own realities, struggling to relate classroom lessons to their everyday lives. In other words, what students are taught feels foreign and unrelated to their personal experiences. Freire describes such an educational system as oppressive, where the teacher acts as the subject while the student is treated merely as an object.²⁷ He, therefore, argues that “education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction, so that both are simultaneously teachers and students.”²⁸ This “oppressive” pedagogical approach needs to be reversed by developing and implementing a “liberation pedagogy.”

Finding a way to harmonize the relationship between teacher and student is crucial in fostering a liberating educational process. In many traditional classrooms, the unequal dynamic between teacher and student is often justified by the teacher’s expertise in the subject matter. Because of this, some may assume that minimizing the teacher’s authority is the best way to balance this relationship. However, Maher advises against this approach, stating that it contradicts the objectives of liberative teaching for at least two key reasons.²⁹ Firstly, diminishing the teacher’s authority may lead to the teacher shirking their responsibility to guide and educate. Secondly, the goal of liberative pedagogy is to empower both educators and learners, not to undermine the teacher’s role. Moreover, it is inappropriate for students

²⁶ Jamilah and Fahyuni, “The Future of Online Learning in the Post-COVID-19 Era,” 500-502; Tshisikhawe Takalani, “Barriers to E-Learning amongst Postgraduate Black Students in Higher Education in South Africa” (Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University, 2008), 52-63.

²⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 2000), 53.

²⁸ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 53.

²⁹ Jennifer Helene Maher, “Invitational Interaction: A Process for Reconciling the Teacher/Student Contradiction,” *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 56, no. 1 (2002): 87.

to reject their teachers' authority, as doing so would simply replace one form of oppression with another.³⁰ Maher encourages the teacher to begin the reconciliation process through "invitational interaction" which begins with the creation of a conducive atmosphere that both acknowledges the teacher-student divide and facilitates ultimate reconciliation.³¹ The teacher does this by first, clearly indicating their teaching tradition both to themselves and their students and second, demonstrating humility as well as their own vulnerability.

The liberative teaching method challenges the false notion that students come as blank slates to be filled by the teacher. Instead, it recognizes and values the knowledge students already bring to the learning process, thereby avoiding the pitfalls of a "banking" style of education.³² In the "banking" model, knowledge is viewed as a gift bestowed by the knowledgeable teacher onto the uninformed student, casting students as passive recipients and teachers as mere providers.³³ In the liberative pedagogy, both the teacher and the students are subjects who relate as subject-subject and co-creators of knowledge. "The students—no longer docile listeners—are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers [her/his] earlier considerations as the students express their own."³⁴ Thus, both the teacher and the student discover new things for themselves through the teaching and learning process. The teacher must humbly accept this fact and then consider him/herself as a being "in the process of becoming."³⁵ The teacher builds upon the student's existing knowledge, helping them connect new lessons with what they have previously learned from their surroundings. Additionally, teachers should act as strong role models—demonstrating maturity, dedication, integrity, and trustworthiness. They ought to foster mentoring relationships with students and show genuine concern for their overall well-being, extending beyond academic settings. This is the type of educational approach that Ghana requires.

Educational Curriculum Reforms

Apart from changes in the pedagogical approach, there is a need to revise the curriculum of Ghana's education system. Ghana, like other Sub-Saharan African countries, inherited educational curricula from their colonial masters. Consequently, in most African countries, the education curriculum was and still is modelled after Western and North American systems.³⁶ Ghanaian policymakers on education have not given serious attention to the educational needs of Ghana based on local problems and cultures. This is true for all sectors of Ghana's education; namely, primary, secondary, and higher education.

Ghana's educational curriculum should incorporate traditional elements such as folklore, including proverbs, folktales, riddles, stories, and humor. Encouraging the use of Ghanaian drama, music, and dance can effectively infuse indigenous wisdom into the learning experience. However, only those parts of Ghanaian heritage that are relevant should be included. Relevance here means not just cultural sensitivity but also alignment with religious values and practical applicability to the current societal context. What is considered meaningful and appropriate today might become outdated tomorrow due to changing circumstances. Likewise, academic programs may also lose their relevance over time. Therefore, regular curriculum reviews should identify and replace outdated courses, content, or traditional elements to ensure the education system remains aligned with society's evolving needs.

In this regard, a popular song taught and used for teaching Ghanaian basic schools needs examination. The song goes like this:³⁷

³⁰ Maher, "Invitational Interaction: A Process for Reconciling the Teacher/Student Contradiction," 87.

³¹ Maher, "Invitational Interaction: A Process for Reconciling the Teacher/Student Contradiction," 87.

³² Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 53.

³³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 53.

³⁴ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 62.

³⁵ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 65.

³⁶ Busia, *Purposeful Education for Africa*, 43.

³⁷ The Bono-Twi orthography has been used in writing the Akan version. This is a song the researcher sang during his early years in education.

<i>Dabi mekɔɔ wuram</i> ³⁸	One day I went to the farm
<i>Mekɔhuu samane</i>	I saw a ghost
<i>Samane keseɛ</i>	A great ghost
<i>Na mesuro oo</i>	I was so much afraid
<i>Na mesuro papa</i>	I was greatly terrified
<i>Ɔpomaa ne tuo</i>	It clocked its gun
<i>Me nso mepomaa me dee</i>	I also clocked its gun
<i>Ɔde hwɛɛ me so</i>	It pointed the gun at me
<i>Me nso mede hwɛɛ ne so</i>	I also pointed the gun at it
<i>Ateka ateka, ate poo</i>	One-one draw, we shot each other

This song was originally created for early childhood education in a time when hunting and farming were the primary livelihoods for many Ghanaians. It paints a picture of a hunter venturing into the forest and encountering various wild animals. On one occasion, the hunter meets a formidable ghost that frightens him. The ghost then raises his gun to shoot, and the hunter responds by firing back, resulting in both of them “shooting” each other. Typically, this song is performed in pairs, where children point their fingers at one another, ending with a playful “shoot” that causes the other to fall. While this song immerses children in hunting imagery, hunting is now a rare activity in modern Ghana, making the skills and themes taught largely irrelevant today.

Considering the advancements in technology and the evolving needs of Ghanaian society, the researcher argues that this song is no longer appropriate for educating children. Although it may have been effective for training hunters in the past, it does not prepare students for contemporary professions such as entrepreneurship, banking, aviation, engineering, teaching, or medicine. This example highlights how certain elements of Ghanaian education have become outdated and must be updated. While the curriculum should remain culturally sensitive, it must prioritize only those cultural elements that are meaningful and relevant to help students positively influence society. Reflecting this view, a former Ghanaian Minister of Education advocated for an “assertive curriculum”—one that encourages African children to ask questions and respectfully challenge existing norms within the framework of Ghanaian tradition.³⁹

Instead of the outdated song mentioned earlier, Moses Kwaku Oppong’s song “Ohia ma adwendwene” (which illustrates how necessity sparks creativity) could be used to inspire innovation among students.⁴⁰ The song tells the story of two animal friends: a tortoise and a monkey. When the monkey’s mother passes away, he sends a vulture to notify the tortoise about the funeral. The tortoise expresses his sympathy and tells the vulture to inform the monkey that he will attend the funeral rites. Knowing that the tortoise cannot fly, the vulture mocks him. However, the tortoise devises a clever plan. He instructs the vulture to return on the day of the funeral to pick up a sack he will leave in a certain spot, which the vulture should then give to the monkey, explaining that the tortoise is on his way. On the funeral day, the vulture collects the sack and delivers it to the monkey, who is puzzled about how the tortoise will arrive. Upon opening the sack, the monkey finds the tortoise inside, who then emerges and joins the ceremony. Everyone at the funeral is amazed by how the tortoise overcame its inability to fly by inventing a creative solution. This story highlights how limitations can lead to innovative thinking.

Oppong’s song offers valuable insights for Ghana’s socio-economic progress. The country’s scarcity of certain resources should be seen as an opportunity to foster creativity and innovation essential for nation-building. A useful comparison is the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which naturally faces severe water scarcity. Their available water sources are highly saline and the climate rarely brings rain. Faced with this, the UAE had two options: depend on external aid for water or develop innovative

³⁸ Each line goes with the response “tahinta” or (the variant) “kahinka”.

³⁹ Laud Nartey, “Assertive Curriculum Needed in Ghana; Current Way of Teaching and Learning Won’t Dev Us – Aduwum @UN,” 3 News, September 22, 2022, <https://3news.com/news/education/assertive-curriculum-needed-in-ghana-current-way-of-teaching-and-learning-wont-dev-us-aduwum-un/>.

⁴⁰ This is a common Ghanaian highlife song sung at various occasions.

solutions to make use of their saline water. Through experimentation and technological advances, the UAE created desalination processes to remove salt from water, making it safe for consumption. They also pioneered cloud seeding techniques to stimulate rainfall, showcasing how innovation can overcome natural limitations.

Similarly, Ghana's inventive spirit was showcased during the COVID-19 pandemic when border closures forced the country to produce its own face masks. With imports halted, local industries stepped up to manufacture masks and essential medical supplies needed to combat the virus. This crisis dispelled the passive mindset of waiting for outside help that had long hindered Ghana's development. It revealed the country's potential for self-reliance and innovation. Had the pandemic not occurred, it's uncertain how long it would have taken for Ghana to realize the capacity of its local industries. Based on these lessons, the study recommends reforms in Ghana's education system to actively nurture creativity, such as incorporating and promoting the philosophy behind the song "*Ohia ma adwendwene*," which celebrates problem-solving born from necessity.

Another area that needs consideration is the mode of assessment in the various educational facilities. The next section attends to this issue.

A Reimagined Education Mode of Assessment (Cumulative and practical-oriented assessment)

As mentioned previously, rote memorization remains the prevailing method of instruction in Ghanaian schools. This approach evaluates students primarily on their ability to recall information from memory. Exams mostly consist of content-focused questions that ask students to repeat what they have learned. Those who can memorize facts well are often regarded as more intelligent than those who possess practical skills or demonstrate creative problem-solving abilities.⁴¹ As a result, a "memorize, regurgitate, pass, and forget" culture has taken hold in Ghana, where students focus solely on passing exams rather than fostering creativity and innovation. This approach's main drawback is that it fails to encourage critical thinking and analytical skills. It reduces students to passive recipients of information instead of active thinkers who engage deeply with the material. This exam-centered method not only stifles creativity and innovation but also clashes with traditional Ghanaian learning practices, which emphasize observation, inquiry, and hands-on experience. Moreover, it neglects the nurturing of the divine potential within humans, as reflected in the environment God provided for the first humans, which was meant to cultivate intellectual, creative, and innovative growth.

There is, therefore, the need to change the mode of assessing students. In line with this thought the University of Ghana's first female Vice-chancellor, Professor Nana Aba Appiah Amfo, asserts that "We should be less focused on assessing students based on memory, and more on application."⁴² Focusing more on application means challenging students to become "critical thinkers, technologically adept, humane, culturally sensitive and ready to provide leadership for the nation and continent."⁴³ The same view was expressed by Adutwum in his assertion that "we have tamed the children, we just want them to write down what we tell them."⁴⁴ On exam day, students are expected merely to write down what they've been taught, and afterward, they're often praised as the country's top learners. However, this kind of education system fails to truly transform Ghana. Both education experts emphasize that Ghana struggles to produce graduates equipped to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving global, social, economic, and technological landscape due to outdated assessment methods. Adutwum points out that Ghanaian students are "trained" to think narrowly, simply reproducing information without applying it. He rightly argues that such a confined education system cannot bring about societal change, as overcoming challenges like poverty requires critical thinking, creativity, and practical problem-solving—not rote memorization.

The mode of assessment must include practical application of the knowledge acquired. Each person must be assessed in a way that brings out the best in the person. Since real-life issues require

⁴¹ Safo-Kantanka, *Who owns the Land and Who rules the Land*, 449.

⁴² Emmanuel Bonney, "Rote Learning Not Helpful — UG Vice-Chancellor," Graphic Online, April 23, 2023, <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/education/ghana-news-rote-learning-not-helpful-ug-vice-chancellor.html>.

⁴³ Bonney, "Rote Learning Not Helpful — UG Vice-Chancellor."

⁴⁴ Nartey, "Assertive Curriculum Needed in Ghana; Current Way of Teaching and Learning Won't Dev Us – Adutwum @UN."

practical skill to address, there is the need to have practical experience constituting a greater percentage of the overall marks than the theory aspect.⁴⁵ This will encourage students to take the practical lessons seriously. To enhance students' hands-on skills, it is essential to make industrial attachments during school vacations mandatory within both secondary and tertiary education curricula. The reports generated from these attachments should contribute to the students' final grades. Additionally, student evaluation should be based on continuous assessment rather than relying heavily on a single final exam. It is unfair to judge several years of learning by, for instance, a three-hour exam, especially if a student misses it due to illness, which would result in automatic failure—this would be both unjust and a waste of effort. This challenge can be addressed by implementing a cumulative grading system where the final exam accounts for only a small portion of the total assessment. Universities must take a leading role in driving the industrial revolution crucial for economic growth. The government should also provide strong support to those pursuing technical and vocational education at higher levels. Furthermore, special focus should be placed on encouraging and training women to enter traditionally male-dominated technical and vocational fields.

A New Perspective on Illiteracy

For many years, a large number of Ghanaians have equated formal education with intellectual superiority. Since the introduction of Western education, society has been divided into the educated and the uneducated. Today, those with formal educational qualifications often look down on individuals without such credentials, using certificates as symbols of social status and respectability. This widespread admiration for certificates over practical skills needs to change. As a result, Ghana has numerous mechanical engineering professors who, despite their advanced academic qualifications, lack basic hands-on skills like changing engine oil or spark plugs. Their education focused heavily on theory, which they in turn pass on to their students with little practical application. These professors feel secure in their positions because society praises their theoretical knowledge, even if practical competence is lacking.

This perception of dividing people into “educated” and “uneducated” based solely on formal schooling is not appropriate in the Ghanaian context. Traditionally, education is measured by a person's ability to meet the practical needs of the community. Those considered truly educated are the ones who make tangible contributions—whether by weaving traditional cloth, crafting sandals, producing food, or providing everyday household items. Education isn't about holding impressive certificates, but about actively improving society's well-being. Busia echoes this idea, stating that “An intellectual is a person who has learned to use his brain; who applies his mind to problems and ideas and tries to understand them. There are many illiterates who are intellectuals.”⁴⁶ Therefore, education that only imparts theoretical knowledge without equipping individuals with practical skills is essentially ineffective. In fact, those who are highly intellectual but lack hands-on abilities can be considered as “illiterate intellectuals,” since their knowledge fails to translate into meaningful impact on society. It is crucial to value practical skills over the mere accumulation of academic knowledge that does not contribute to solving real-world issues. Moreover, the top student should not be defined solely by academic exam performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The foregoing discourse requires recommendations to improved the Ghanaian education system. First, there is the need to increase investment in educational infrastructure. The government must make significant investments in physical and digital infrastructure to improve the learning environment. Priority should be given to equipping schools with science and ICT laboratories, as well as vocational training facilities. These resources are essential for bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge

⁴⁵ The enormous success of Artificial Intelligence and the applications—such as ChatGTP—that students now use to write their assignments is an incredible difficult new education challenge. The researcher cannot take on this subject in this study because it is extremely wide-ranging and all educational institutions are scrambling to try to get policies in place to curb its incredible powerful applications.

⁴⁶ Busia cited Anane-Agyei, *Axioms of K. A. Busia*, 102.

and practical application. Aligning these efforts with the African Union's Agenda 2063 can help Ghana cultivate a generation of skilled professionals capable of contributing meaningfully to national development.

Secondly, there should be a deliberate national strategy to promote enrollment in technical, vocational, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programs as a central pillar of Ghana's educational transformation. These fields are critical for industrial growth, technological advancement, and sustainable national development, yet they have often been marginalized in favor of traditional academic pathways that do not adequately prepare students for the demands of the modern economy. Encouraging students to pursue such disciplines will diversify Ghana's workforce and enhance its human capital, creating opportunities for innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic resilience. A strong STEM focus would also bridge the persistent gap between theory and practice in Ghana's education system by ensuring that learners acquire hands-on skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities that can be directly applied to real-world challenges. For instance, engineering and technology graduates can design affordable housing solutions using local materials, agricultural science students can employ modern technologies to boost food security, and ICT students can develop digital platforms to improve trade, health care, and governance. Such an approach will not only reduce Ghana's overdependence on imported technologies but also make the country a hub of innovation in Africa. Promoting STEM education is in alignment with the African Union's Agenda 2063, which envisions a knowledge-driven and industrialized Africa. If pursued strategically, STEM and technical education will empower Ghanaian youth to become problem-solvers, job creators, and leaders of sustainable development, positioning the nation competitively in the global economy.

The third recommendation is the strategic implementation of online and blended learning. With the growing interest in digital education post-COVID-19, it is essential to strategically implement online and blended learning models. This requires addressing systemic barriers such as unreliable electricity, high internet costs, and the digital divide. Policymakers must develop clear guidelines to determine which courses are best suited for online delivery and which require in-person interaction. Ensuring equity in access and maintaining academic integrity are also crucial for the success of digital education in Ghana.

Fourthly, the reform of pedagogical approaches is necessary. Ghana's education system must adopt liberative pedagogical approaches that move beyond rote learning. Teachers should be trained to facilitate student-centered learning environments that promote critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem-solving. In such a model, students and teachers become co-creators of knowledge, engaging in mutual dialogue and reflective inquiry. This approach nurtures learners who are intellectually curious and capable of applying their knowledge to real-world issues.

Fifthly, curriculum reform should incorporate culturally relevant content that speaks to Ghana's unique identity and developmental needs. However, only elements of cultural heritage that inspire innovation and practical thinking should be retained. Outdated songs and stories that no longer resonate with current realities should be replaced with materials that encourage problem-solving and entrepreneurial thinking. This will ensure that learners are not only grounded in their heritage but also prepared for contemporary challenges.

Sixthly, assessment methods should be reformed to focus on competency-based evaluation. Assessment in schools must move away from over-reliance on memorization toward competency-based evaluation. A cumulative, skills-oriented assessment system should be implemented to evaluate students' abilities to analyze, synthesize, and apply knowledge in practical contexts. This will ensure that graduates leave school not only with academic qualifications but with the ability to contribute productively to society and the economy.

CONCLUSION

Ghana's education system is at a critical juncture, facing multifaceted challenges that hinder its ability to prepare students for the complexities of modern society and national development. These challenges include poor infrastructure, outdated curricula, ineffective pedagogical practices, and an assessment

culture that emphasizes rote memorization over practical application. The persistence of the colonial-era banking model continues to stifle creativity and critical thinking. If Ghana is to make meaningful progress, it must urgently reform its education system to become more responsive, dynamic, and innovation-driven. A transformed educational landscape will not only empower Ghanaian learners but also position the nation as a leader in Africa's pursuit of sustainable development and global competitiveness.

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