An analytical review of the changing facets of Ghana's education policy discourse(s)

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Abstract

An analytical appraisal of key documents on Ghana's education suggests that her post-independence education policy has evolved from predominantly socialist and social democratic ideals towards neo-liberal and capitalist ideological policy direction over time. This article traces and documents this discursive shift in Ghana's education policy discourse(s). In the process, the article presents and discusses effects of the shift in policy direction and language of implementation on Ghana's recent education reform initiatives. Essentially, the article argues that the visible changes in Ghana's education policy discourse, owing particularly to the advent of neo-liberal discourse of vision of international competitiveness may not support the achievement of the goals of recent education reform initiatives on a sustainable basis. The article concludes against this backdrop that at this moment in time, Ghana's education policy needs to focus on capacitating students with skills, knowledge and expertise to enable them deal with her domestic problems rather than subjugating her internal and national priorities to a mirage of international credibility criteria of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other pro-capitalist institutions.

Keywords*:* education for knowledge economy; education for all; education for national integration; socialism; social democracy; Ghana's education policy

Introduction

Over the last 50 years, education reform initiatives in many nation states in sub-Saharan Africa have witnessed a significant philosophical shift from the locus on achieving a 'decolonising agenda' and meeting domestic needs of their citizenry to a focus on matching international trends. In Ghana, as an example, an analytical appraisal of key documents on education suggests that her post-independence education policy has evolved from predominantly 'socialist' and social democratic ideals towards neo-liberal and capitalist ideological policy direction in recent times (Nudzor, 2013a, 2013b). Contributory to this state of affairs, according to Kuyini (2013:10), for example, are the ratification of international protocols and conventions, and the thirst to attract foreign aid and international investments as a way to offset declining economic prospects. Consequently, in Ghana as well as in many other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, recent education reform initiatives introduced are influenced by the unavoidable storm of globalisation captured in both the World Bank and International Monetary Fund's (IMF) modernist education policy discourse of education for knowledge economy (EKE), and the global rhetoric of 'education for all' (EFA).

The effects of the World Bank and IMF's modernist education policies have been written about extensively and a great deal of critique is directed towards their model of funding education and their financing strategies in recent times (see for example: Adie, 2008; Akyeampong, 2009; Bray, 1987; Kadingdi, 2004; Kuyini, 2013; Nudzor, 2013a, 2013b; Tomasevski, 2005, 2006). Indeed, the preponderance of available international development literature also indicate with exemplifications the ways by which the neo-liberal ideological and policy

undertones of the World Bank and IMF's philosophy have led to the institutionalisation of economic exclusion and thus jeopardising efforts to universalise education and failing to reduce poverty particularly among the socially and economically marginalised (Bray, 1987; Hatcher, 2001; Hill, 2001a, 2001b; Nudzor, 2013a; Tomasevski, 2005).

This article continues this debate from where others have left off. Using the context of Ghana as an example, this article traces and documents the discursive shift in her post-independence education policy discourse(s). In the process, the article presents and discusses effects of the shift in policy direction and language of implementation on Ghana's recent education reform initiatives. Essentially, the article argues that given a weak economy, the visible changes in Ghana's education policy discourse, owing particularly to the advent of neo-liberal vision of international competitiveness, may not support the achievement of the goals of recent education reform initiatives on a sustainable basis. Against this backdrop, the article concludes by lending support to Kuyini's (2013) view that at this moment in time, Ghana's education policy needs to focus on capacitating students with skills, knowledge and expertise to enable them deal with her domestic problems rather than subjugating her internal and national priorities to a mirage of international credibility criteria.

So although the focus of this article is on tracing and discussing the effects of the discursive shift on Ghana's education provision and delivery agenda in recent years, it is imperative to establish two key points from the onset to set the argument of the article in context. First, it is important to describe crisply what the article views as the difference between the Ghana's nationalist vision of education and the vision driven by international and multi-lateral agencies and organisations. For the purposes of this article, Ghana's nationalist vision of education relates simply to the view of education as a unifying force and a

vehicle for crystallising national identity, visions and goals (Nudzor, 2012, 2013a). It is concerned fundamentally with equipping Ghanaian citizens with the requisite skills, competencies, abilities and attitudes, and capacitating them to solve the myriad of problems that the country is faced with (Kuyini 2013). Avowed African nationalists (for example, Kwame Nkrumah, Amilcar Cabral, Sekou Toure, Julius Nyerere and Leopald Senghor) refer to this vision of education as a resource and/or tool for emphasising the goal of national integration and nation-building aimed at disabusing the minds of the citizens of the colonial history, experiences and vestiges (Dei, 2004, 2005; Nudzor, 2012). On the other hand, the vision of education driven by international organisations (typically the World Bank, IMF and other pro-capitalist institutions and agencies) relates directly to the capitalist and neo-liberal ideological rhetoric of education for knowledge economy (EKE)[1]. It hinges on a good proficiency level of English, which is lacking among pupils from a whole pyramid of socioeconomic background realities and among many teachers, particularly in primary and secondary schools. Essentially, and for the purposes of this article, this 'international vision' of education is concerned primarily with the work of the World Bank (and its affiliate multi-lateral agencies') with developing countries, and emphasizes the willingness and ability of developing nations to cultivate the highly skilled, flexible human capital needed to help them compete in a global market. (See Adie, 2008; Ainsworth, 1984; Birdsall, 1982, 1983; Chitty, 2003; Hatcher, 2001; King, 2004; Kuyini, 2013; Mingat and Psacharopoulos, 1985; Olssen, Codd and O'Neil, 2004; Psacharopoulos, Tan, and Jimenez 1986; Thobani, 1984 for further discussion of the World Bank's philosophy and discourse relating to structural adjustment and education for knowledge economy.)

Second, and following up from the first point, it is equally important to emphasize that the vision of education driven by international and multi-lateral

agencies and organisations which this article flags up is worth interrogating further to elucidate two key issues, namely: to exemplify how the 'Washington Consensus' (typified in/by the workings of the World Bank and its affiliates) has affected (and continues to affect) education policy and practice of developing countries; and to suggest what the alternative solution could be for developing countries south of the Sahara. The former of these agendas is the locus of this paper. The latter, although the focus another article is present and/or set-off implicitly in reference in this article to early reform initiatives; skills, knowledge and expertise (SKEs) demanded by domestic problems and the national economy; and to the tenets of socialism. Essentially, the current article aims to trace the shift in Ghana's education policy direction and language of implementation over time, and with the view to highlighting the effects that the vision of international competitiveness has had and continues to have on the policy discourses and practices of Ghana's education system. The rationale essentially is that this attempt is necessary to provide the needed analytic information for facilitating and informing national education policy dialogue to improve the Ghanaian education system (Nudzor, 2014).

The article is organised as follows. The next section presents a brief historical account of educational activities in Ghana and through that highlights the 'decolonising' and 'nationalistic' agenda (Dei, 2004, 2005; Nudzor, 2012) underpinning her socialist philosophy, particularly during the post-independence era. This is followed by the accounts of political instability in government between 1961 and 1981 and its resultant decline in Ghana's economy in the 1970s which paved the way for the introduction of the IMF and World Bank supported structural adjustment reforms in 1983. Next is a brief discussion regarding recent education policy reform initiatives in Ghana with particular reference to the global context from which emerged the rhetoric of Education for All (EFA). Finally, (i.e. before the conclusion), the article

examines the effects of the visible changes in policy discourses and practices on Ghana's education system, and argues that the goals of her recent reform initiatives may not be achievable on sustainable basis because of the shift towards, and the excessive support and dependence on donor driven EKE philosophy on education.

Educational activities in Ghana and the 'decolonising' and nationalistic policy discourse

The history of educational activities in Ghana suggests that the provision of formal education is not a recent phenomenon. Indeed, the historical records show that western-education was introduced into Ghana by the Christian Missionaries as early as 1766 (Foster, 1965; Graham, 1971; McWilliams and Kwamena-Poh, 1975). The schools set up by these missionaries were located in the south of the country in what became the British Gold Coast Colony. The main aim of these schools was to facilitate the training of local inhabitants as interpreters for purposes of trade and for conversion of the people into the Christian faith. As such, the curriculum of these early schools was narrow with the focus on literacy and the Bible and scripture as the main texts of schooling (McWilliams and Kwamena-Poh, 1975).

Under colonial rule, (that is after the signing of the Bond of 1844 which officially marked the beginning of British rule in Ghana), series of attempts were made to formalise and improve upon the quality of general education provision and delivery. One of such significant attempts in terms of how it had impacted the system and helped to transform basic education provision in the country, according to McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1975), for example, was that of Governor Gordon Guggisberg (1919–1927). He emphasized the need for better teaching and improved management of schools and had introduced what is known in the annals of Ghana's history as the 'Sixteen Principles of

education' (McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh, 1975: 54–65). Following on from this, and according to historical records, the colonial administration in 1945 proposed a 10-year education expansion plan aimed at achieving universal primary education by 1970 (Akyeampong, 2009; Foster, 1965; Graham, 1971; McWilliams and Kwamena-Poh, 1975; Nudzor, 2012).

However, for the purposes of this article, the most significant education expansion programme occurred towards the end of colonial rule when demand for education to serve a 'decolonising' and 'nationalistic' agenda (Turner, 1971; Nwomonoh, 1998; Dei, 2004b, 2005; Nudzor, 2012) had increased. This period (that is, the end of colonial rule), according to Dei (2005), for example, was characterised by the activities of leaders who sought to use education as a tool to gain independence. Towards this end, education was viewed and used by the 'nationalists' (as they are commonly called) as a resource and a tool aimed at emphasising the goal of national integration and nation-building and thereby disabusing the minds of citizens of the colonial history, experiences and vestiges (Nudzor, 2012: 350). This decolonising argument stemmed from the revolutionary ideas of avowed socialists such as Franz Fanon, Mohandas Gandhi, Albert Memmi, Ame Cesaire, Che Guevara, among others, who sought political liberation for all colonised people using the power of knowledge. Following from this example, prominent anti-colonial African thinkers and socialists such as Kwame Nkrumah, Amilcar Cabral, Sekou Toure, Julius Nyerere and Leopald Senghor strategically evoked the goal of nation building as a necessary pre-condition for decolonisation (Dei, 2005, cited in Nudzor, 2012: 350 –351).

In Ghana as a case in point, these anti-colonial and decolonising tenets were redefined by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, in his famous saying "the Black man is capable of managing his own affairs" (Nkrumah,

1957) which was later crystallised into the slogan of 'self-reliance' and pragmatised in Ghanaian Education Acts and programmes, especially the Accelerated Development Plan (ADP) of 1951 and the 1961 Education Act, under which provisions were made to expand access to education (Nudzor, 2012: 350). The ADP for a decolonising purpose, and according to (Akyeampong, 2009, cited in Nudzor, 2012), abolished tuition fees and set in motion rapid education expansion with the view to achieving the goal of universal primary education (UPE) for all within 15 years (i.e. by 1966). The 1961 Act, on the other hand, introduced legislation for compulsory universal primary education to consolidate the gains of the ADP. (See Table 1 below for achievements of the ADP and the 1961 Education Acts in terms of growth in the number of both students and schools.)

Table 1: Achievements of 15 years of educational expansion under the ADP and the 1961 Education Act

	1951		1966	
Type of school or college	No. of schools	No. of students	No. of schools	No. of students
Primary	1,083	153,360	8,144	1,137,495
Middle	539	66,175	2,277	267,434
Secondary	13	5,033	105	42,111
Teacher Training	22	1,916	38	15,144
Technical	5	622	11	4,956
University	2	208	3	4,291

Source: Hayford cited in Akyeampong 2009: 180

Thus, propelled by the ideologies of self-determination and a new national identity (Kuyini, 2013), Ghana's post-colonial education was geared towards serving a decolonising and nationalistic agenda[2] (Nudzor, 2012). In particular, riding on what Kuyini (2013) describes as the "euphoric wave of freedom and self-determination", leaders of the new independent Ghana conceptualised education as a vehicle for crystallising national goals and visions. Consistent with this agenda, a number of significant steps were taken. For example, a rapid

expansion of primary education was pursued and attempts were made, particularly by the Nkrumah government, to indigenise the curriculum through the use of Ghanaian languages and new reading materials, and later the introduction of civics education by Busia's government in 1969. Also, attempts were made to set up vocational and technical educations and to harness them to make their graduates employable. Third, and not the least, two new universities (i.e. the University of Science and Technology, now Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and the University of Cape Coast) were established in 1952 and 1962 respectively to achieve the vision of national redemption, reconstruction and self-sufficiency (Kuyini, 2013: 161–163).

Thus, as has been illustrated above, Ghana's education policy, particularly towards the end of colonial rule was marked significantly by what one could succinctly call a socialist educational discourse. This discourse, as was described, sought and/or was characterised by the desire to use education to serve a decolonising and nationalistic agenda.

The period of economic decline and the advent of structural adjustment reforms in Ghana

Ghana's economy grew steadily after independence in 1957, but began to experience a long period of decline in the early 1970s. This is attributed, in part, to the political instability characterised by successive military take-overs in 1966, 1972, 1978, 1979 and 1981. This was a period of harsh and repressive revolutionary zeal on the part of the military which culminated in a significant chunk of the nation's trained and highly qualified teacher workforce seeking greener pastures in neighbouring Nigeria (Akyeampong, 2009; Kadingdi, 2004; Kuyini, 2013; Nti, 1999; Nudzor, 2012 etc.). The political instability coupled with the rise in oil prices in the 1970s resulted, for example, in a major economic decline and consequently affecting education provision and delivery.

According to the World Bank (1989; cited in Akyeampong 2009, and Nudzor, 2012), from 1979 to 1983, total economic output declined by 14% and real per capital income fell by 23%.

The period between 1970s and early 1980s saw the index of real monthly earnings in the formal sector drop from GHC 315 to GHC 62. This, according to World Bank documents, caused poverty to spread. The poor economic circumstances adversely affected educational quality and outcomes whilst at the same time educational infrastructure and facilities deteriorated due to lack of funding (World Bank 2004, cited in Nudzor 2012). In a single year (i.e. 1981/1982 academic year), primary enrolment dropped to about 100, 000 and remained so until 1986/1987 when it began to rise. Again, from 1980/1981 to 1987/1988, the average growth rate of primary enrolment, according to World Bank (1989) figures, stood at 1.59%, well below the 3% growth rate of the school-age population at the time. Dishearteningly, the increase of primary enrolment to 1,535,505 in 1987/1988 only brought total primary enrolments to 1981/1982 levels (Akyeampong, 2009: 178). (See Table 2 for full figures of primary school enrolments between 1980/81 to 1987/88 academic years.) As a result of the decline, educational quality and outcomes were affected and government spending on education dropped from 6.4% of GDP in 1976 to staggering 1.5% of much lower GDP by 1984 (World Bank, 2004 cited by Akyeampong 2009). Also, as school quality declined, the returns plummeted, causing demand for schooling, especially among the poor and disadvantaged to fall sharply (Glewwe and IIlias, cited in Akyeampong 2009, and Nudzor, 2012).

Table 2: Ghana primary school enrolments between 1980/81 to 1987/88

Year	Enrolment	Percent change	Yearly growth rates
1980/81	1,377,737	-	-
1981/82	1,533,859	12.03	12.78
1982/83	1,461,635	-6.12	-5.93
1983/84	1,452,458	-0.63	-0.63
1984/85	1,464,624	-0.83	0.83
1985/86	1,325,485	-9.98	-9.50
1986/87	1,467,074	10.15	10.68
1987/88	1,535,505	4.56	4.66
1980/81-1987/88		11.45	1.59

Source: World Bank 1989 cited in Akyeampong 2009

The road to Ghana's economic recovery began in 1983. This arguably was when structural adjustment reforms strongly supported by the IMF and World Bank were introduced by the revolutionary government of Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings (Akyeampong, 2009, cited in Nudzor, 2012: 351). According to Akyeampong (2009: 178–179), Rawlings had come to power promising probity, accountability and a greater distribution of economic wealth particularly towards the poor and the marginalised. He as a result moved in quickly to restructure the education system, seeing it as a means to achieve this objective. Essentially, the Rawlings' regime, according to Akyeampong (2009), redistributed educational resources in favour of basic education to fulfil the agenda of making education a right for all children. Thus, from policy point of view, the structural adjustment reforms introduced by Rawlings' regime has been hailed by many for helping to create the necessary conditions for improving the economy that led to increasing investments in basic education (Akyeampong, 2009). For instance, with financial assistance from international agencies (particularly the World Bank), basic education alone received US$260 million from 1986 to 2002. These investments averaged US$17 million a year, peaking at US$40 million in 1995 (World Bank 2004, cited by Nudzor, 2012). These investments were aimed principally at increasing the proportion of

educational resources allocated to a re-structured 9-year basic education system which had become the centre of wider education reforms by 1987. Aside this, significant investment savings were also made, as part of the 1987 education reform, by reducing 17 years of Ghana's pre-tertiary system of education to 12 years comprising 6 years primary, 3 years junior secondary (now junior high), and 3 years secondary (now senior high). In continuation of primary education universalisation efforts, the savings accrued from down-sizing the pre-tertiary system were used to expand school places to increase intakes and enrolments. These significant investments, according to historical records, led to a reasonable surge in enrolments of pupils particularly in primary and junior secondary schools across the country. Unfortunately, however, this, according to Akyeampong (2009: 179), (and as Table 2 shows), did not result in steady growth in enrolment rates until after the initiation of the fCUBE in 1996. Similarly, the surge in primary school enrolment as a result of these investments did not go hand in hand with quality education provision. As enrolments increased tremendously, the quality deteriorated dramatically.

Thus, although laudable in relation to how it led to significant investments into education provision and delivery in Ghana, structural adjustment however was, and still is, controversial in terms of its neo-liberal and/or modernist and market-driven policy undertones and effects on Ghana's education system. The effects of neo-liberal ideology on Ghana's education system in relation to its inherent undertones of privatisation, consumerism, choice, cost recovery and the rhetoric of education for knowledge economy are discussed fully under a separate heading in this article. However, for the purposes of the arguments in this section, and according to the World Bank's website and a series of its education sector policy papers (for example, Ainsworth, 1984; Birdsall, 1982, 1983; Mingat and Psacharopoulos, 1985; Psacharopoulos, Tan, and Jimenez, 1986; Thobani, 1984), structural adjustment, as is underpinned largely by EKE,

refers to the World Bank (and its affiliate multi-lateral agencies') work with developing countries to cultivate the highly skilled, flexible human capital needed to help them compete in a global market. Theoretically, EKE offers a criticism against the welfare state based on a number of presumptions which are perceived and condemned as collective, socialist and economically misguided (Adie, 2008; Chitty, 2003; Hatcher, 2001; King, 2004; Nudzor, 2013a; Olssen, Codd and O'Neil 2004). The neo-liberal ideology underpinning the EKE philosophy is that by minimising state powers, market mechanisms will be able to operate to ensure economic prosperity, the maximisation of individual freedoms and the provision of a base for all social interactions (Olssen et al., 2004: 136). Thus, broadly speaking, the EKE philosophy underpinning the IMF and the World Bank's education sector financing strategy aims at creating an individual who is enterprising and a competitive entrepreneur (Adie, 2008; Bray, 1987; Dale, 1986; Hill, 2001a, 2001b; King, 2004; Nudzor, 2013a, 2013b; Trowler, 1998). It is concerned primarily with developing people in terms of transferable core skills to become 'good, compliant, ideologically indoctrinated pro-capitalist workers' (Hill, 2001b, cited in Nudzor, 2013a: 183).

As partially alluded to earlier, the IMF and the World Bank's EKE policy discourse has played out rather interestingly in the Ghanaian educational context. As a result of the acceptance of IMF/WB demands for economic recovery in 1983, Ghana's education policy and practice began to be influenced and dictated to by market-oriented thinking, which was part of the IMF/World Bank demands for reduced public spending in education. Another aspect of the IMF/World Bank's EKE policy reforms concern cost recovery or what is referred to in other contexts as 'cost-sharing'. This, according to Mingat and Tan (1986, cited in Bray, 1987: 121–122), was based largely on the argument that since students who attend higher education are commonly from relatively prosperous families, differentiated costs and high subsidies seem to be an

instrument for promoting inequity. These resulted in the introduction of school-fees and increased privatisation of education services. In particular, the demand by the IMF and the World Bank for cost effectiveness in education provision from mid-1980s led, for example, to the institution of cost recovery measures across the sector and the setting up of the University Rationalisation Committee (URC) to restructure university education in terms of content and funding (Kuyini 2013: 163). Thus, this began the alignment of Ghana's educational policies towards the demands and trends of international and pro-capitalist institutions. Following on from this, and in the words of Kuyini (2013), a number of educational reforms and reviews, including the University Rationalisation Committee Report (Republic of Ghana, 1988); the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) Programme of 1996 (Ministry of Education, 1996); the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) Act 581 (Republic of Ghana, 2000) and the Education Reform of 2007 (Government of Ghana 2007) have articulated this EKE orientation more broadly through gearing the education system and graduates towards international competitiveness.

The period of global EFA policy reforms and basic education provision in Ghana

The next significant push towards deepening education provision and delivery in Ghana (i.e. after the major economic downturn of the 1970s and the 1980s) embraces the period of major constitutional and policy reforms engineered by the global Education for All (EFA) rhetoric (Nudzor, 2012: 351). This phase was characterised by Ghana's participation and endorsement of international agreements and conventions including: the Jomtien Education for All Conference in Thailand, the United Nations (UN) Convention/Declaration on the Rights of the Child, the Beijing Declaration on Women's Rights, the Lome Convention, the Millennium Development Goals (MGD) Conference in Dakar,

Senegal among others. Ghana's participation in, and ratification of these key international agreements and declarations coupled with commitments to her own internal constitutional reforms in 1992 led to major constitutional and educational reforms of which the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (fCUBE) policy initiative was a formidable part (Nudzor, 2012, 2013a, 2013b).

Thus, the 1992 constitution and policy acts that followed it set the stage for the national provision of basic education (Maikish and Gershberg, 2008). For example, the constitution formulated the policy entitled "Basic Education - A Right: Programme for the provision of Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education by the year 2005" (MOE/GES 2001), which was to be implemented as a requirement for the return to constitutional and multiparty system of governance in the fourth time in the country's history. In line with this constitutional provision, the then government of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), through the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service, came out with a policy document to launch the fCUBE policy officially in April, 1996. In principle, the fCUBE policy aimed to eliminate school fees in order to increase demand for schooling (Akyeampong 2009). With financial assistance from the World Bank, fCUBE focused on demand and supply educational activities. Regarding the former, investments went to support education policy and management changes with key areas targeted including (but not exclusive to): increasing instructional time, reducing fees and levies, improving headteachers' management skills and motivation levels, and improving school supervision. Concerning the latter, investments focused primarily on improving physical infrastructure and increasing the number of school places through the large-scale construction of additional classrooms and schools (Akyeampong, 2009, cited in Nudzor 2012: 151–152).

From the year 2000 onwards, owing largely to Ghana's ratification of global education for all policy imperatives, coupled with the mid-term national review of the fCUBE policy implementation (MOE, 2000), new policy initiatives intended to strengthen and revitalise the fCUBE policy have been introduced (Nudzor, 2012: 155–156). Notable among these policies are the 'capitation grant scheme', the 'school feeding programme', the 'eleven-year basic education policy' and the 'free uniforms' and 'exercise books' initiatives (GES, 2004; MOE, 2005, 2006; Nudzor, 2012, 2013a, 2013b). In case of the capitation grant scheme, the Government of Ghana conceded that the levies charged for school-related costs had the effect of deterring many poverty stricken families from sending their children to school (GES 2005), hence its introduction to increase access to basic education. As Maikish and Gershberg (2008) succinctly point out, the capitation grant scheme was developed to support the fCUBE policy financially and administratively. The scheme was launched as a pilot programme in 2004-2005 and launched country-wide in 2005-2006. It aimed basically at removing the financial barrier to enrolling in schools while, at the same time, compensating schools for any loss of revenue incurred by eliminating students levies. It allocates a per pupil allotment of funding (i.e. 4 Ghana Cedis (GHC) per pupil per year) to all basic public schools (kindergarten through junior secondary school) to encourage effective implementation of decentralisation by empowering schools to plan and carry out school quality improvement activities using accountability guidelines and forms (Maikish and Gershberg, 2008, cited in Nudzor, 2012: 355). On the other hand, the 'school feeding programme', as the name suggests, provides at least a decent meal a day for vulnerable school children in deprived settings, whilst the 'eleven –years basic education policy' has extended basic education in Ghana from 9 to 11 years (comprising 2 years kindergarten; 6 years of primary schooling and 3 years of Junior High School). The 'free uniform' and 'free exercise books initiatives', like the capitation grant concept, are intended to make primary

education really ‘free’ by off-setting the private costs of education on poor and poverty stricken families (Nudzor, 2013a: 181–182).

Thus, based on social and economic arguments of education as a critical determinant of personal development and social mobility (Nudzor, 2012), EFA provision, particularly in countries in sub-Saharan Africa, is considered by many as a laudable social goal. However, this is not to be taken that attempts to universalise primary education in the sub-Saharan region are without some teething issues. In particular (and for the purposes of this article), owing to the excessive dependence by many African countries on foreign donor support for their reform programmes, education reform initiatives aimed at education for all provision have shown significant alignment with international trends. In most cases, and as a result of ‘conditionalities’ attached to foreign donor funding, these reform initiatives have had to be competed with, hybridised, dominated and marginalised by the EKE policy discourses of the foreign donors, especially those of the IMF and World Bank. Kuyini (2013) argues out this point forcefully. He contends that recent education reform programmes in Africa articulate EKE policy orientation more broadly through gearing their educational systems and their graduates towards international competitiveness.[3] Using the 2007 Education Reform of Ghana as an exemplar, he illustrates the following key components which help to elucidate his argument:

1. Universal Basic Education shall now last 11 years, made up of 2 years of Kindergarten, 6 years of Primary School, and 3 years of Junior High School (JHS). At the basic level, emphasis shall be on literacy, numeracy, creative arts and problem-solving skills.
2. After Junior High School, students may choose to join different streams at Senior High School (SHS), comprising General Education and Technical, Vocational and Agricultural Training (TVAT), or enter an apprenticeship scheme with some support from the government.

3. Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (fCUBE) and cost-sharing at the senior high and tertiary levels shall be maintained.
4. Greater emphasis will be put on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Science and Technology (Government of Ghana, 2007, cited by Kuyini 2013: 163–164).

Thus, for Kuyini (2013), emphases in the above quote on expressions such as '*literacy, numeracy, creative arts and problem-solving skills'; 'technical, vocational and agricultural training (TVAT); 'apprenticeship schemes'; 'cost sharing'; 'Information and Communication Technology' (ICT) and 'Science and Technology'* set out this EKE policy agenda implicitly for the educational system in Ghana.

This EKE orientation is also visible, for instance, in the Government of Ghana's 2005 White Paper on the Report of the Education Reform Review Committee findings (MOE, 2005). This document was published by the government of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) to endorse officially the recommendations of the Education Reform Review Committee which was set up in January, 2002 to review education reforms in the country. Aside revealing the ideological position of the NPP, the document (i.e. the White Paper) thus predicted and/or forecasted the future direction and philosophy of education provision in Ghana for the next couple of decades if not more. For purposes of buttressing the argument in this section of the article, the following lines of the 2005 White Paper on the Report of the Education Reform Review Committee are worth noting:

> …Government accepts that education should result in the formation of well-balanced individual with **requisite knowledge, skills, values, aptitudes to become functional and productive citizens**. As the workers of a country aspiring to **great economic ambitions**, **they should be trained to become enterprising, and adaptable to the demands of a fast-changing world driven by modern science and technology**.

> Ghana's new system of education, especially for the youth between age 12 and 19, should be reformed to support a nation aspiring to build a **knowledge-based economy** within the next generation.
>
> Essentially, the education process should lead to improvement in the quality of life of all Ghanaians … and also raise their living standards to the level that they can observe through the **global interchange of images, information and ideas. They should be equipped to create, through their own endeavours, the wealth** that is needed for **a radical socio-economic** and political transformation **of this country**. To this end, **greater emphasis than hitherto needs to be, and will be placed on Technical, Agricultural, Vocational education, and on structured Apprenticeship training** (MOE, 2005: 9–10).[4]

Thus, clearly the illustrations above reinforce Adie's (2008: 251–252) assertion implicitly that in response to international trends, governments worldwide are having to promote reforms in their education systems to match global economic and technological advances with the aim of producing citizens who can become productive members of society. Be it as it may, the revelations in this article, raise broader and critical issues regarding Ghana's commitment and capacity to meeting the vision of international competitiveness which appears to have crept into her educational discourse, policy and practice over time. For example, the question begs asking whether Ghana can implement her myriad of domestic educational initiatives and projects alongside the EKE vision of international competitiveness, especially at the time when she is financially and heavily dependent on foreign donor support? Conversely, the question also comes to mind whether this new vision of international competitiveness is the right focus for Ghana at this moment in time?

The next section of the article discusses broadly the adverse effects of this discursive shift (from a socialist and global education for all policy discourses

towards the neo-liberal ideological discourse) on Ghana's education system. The rationale, as pointed out earlier, is that a discussion of the effects of this shift is necessary to provide the needed analytic information for facilitating and informing national education policy dialogue to improve the Ghanaian education system (Nudzor, 2014). The discussion will also provide answers (although implicitly) to some of the intriguing questions and issues highlighted above.

Effects of EKE's vision of international competitiveness on Ghana's post-millennium education reform initiatives

The preponderance of available literature (for example, Akyeampong, 2009; Kadingdi, 2004; Kuyini, 2013; Nudzor, 2013) suggest a potential philosophical dilemma on the part of governments of Ghana regarding whether to pursue the vision of international competitiveness or focus on domestic-oriented education policy. Although this issue of philosophical dilemma warrants further interrogation, this section of the article does not seek to focus on it directly. Instead, the section aims to discuss crisply the effects of the discursive shift (i.e. from a socialist and global education for all policy discourses towards EKE's ideological discourse wrapped in the rhetoric of international competitiveness) on Ghana's education policy and practice. The hope is that this effort will help to drive home forcefully the argument of this article that 'straight jacket' external accountability models (such as those of the World Band, IMF and other pro-capitalist agencies) which impose change from the 'outside' end up hurting badly the very systems they set out to assist (Nudzor, 2013c).

To begin with, there is credible evidence in the literature to suggest that EKE's vision of international competitiveness has long-term effects on educational outcomes of countries and systems who buy into and operationalise this vision. Tikly, (2001), for example, makes this argument vigorously. He contends that policies aligned to EKE are more likely to result in creation of highly

differentiated educational environments where students are classified not according to their abilities but other prevailing social and economic variables. He argues that in these differentiated environments, students belonging to a top tier will benefit from a private 'world-class' education that prepares them to be globally competitive; students who belong to a middle tier will receive a 'good' but not 'world class' education, whilst the majority of students belonging to the third (lower) tier, will have a local, state education that will make them 'marginally competitive for low-skill jobs' (Tikly, 2001: 161)[5]. Kuyini (2013: 172) gives currency to this prediction in the context of Ghana. He asserts that this trend has become evident in the declining student performance at the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE) across the country, and that this is crystallised more especially in poorer northern Ghana, where there are fewer private schools compared to the more affluent southern Ghana. He cites the Tamale area in northern Ghana which for successive years slipped down the performance league table from a position of 60th in 2004, to 69th in 2005, 91st in 2007, 98th in 2009, down to 103rd in 2010 (GES, Tamale, 2011, cited in Kuyini 2013: 172). He argues against this backdrop that the adverse effects of the differentiated educational environments created as a result of adherence to external accountability models of change are felt most severely in/by poor communities where social and cultural capitals are least developed than in affluent communities.

Also, as a result of the shift in the education policy discourse(s) resulting from the alignment to EKE philosophy, Ghana's spending on education has increased drastically in recent times to over 10 per cent of GDP (World Bank, 2010). In a general sense, many have argued this as showing government's sensitivity and commitment to education as one of the pillars of development. However, the increasing demand for education coupled with governments' inability to integrate running cost of 'new' education reform initiatives into national

budgetary processes over the years meant that governments have had to resort excessively to foreign donor funding support to help implement and/or meet her educational goals. Some examples of initiatives that have gone to scale as a result of donor funding include: the Education Sector Project (EdSeP) funded by the World Bank for promoting equitable access to, and efficient delivery of quality services in pre-tertiary education; the Whole School Development (WSD) programme funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to deliver the objectives of fCUBE policy; and the Quality Improvements in Primary School (QUIPS) programme funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to support effective classroom teaching and training educational managers and planners. Two other examples worth mentioning are the UNICEF sponsored Child School Community Progress in Education (Child-SCoPE) to improve children's reading, writing and numeracy skills in primary schools and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) funded programme for improving infrastructure in Teacher Training Colleges across the country. In the case of EdSeP, for example, it received a World Bank credit of US$ 78 million in March 2004 to promote equitable access to, and efficient delivery of, quality services in pre-tertiary education; as well as fostering innovation, relevance and efficiency in tertiary education (World Bank, 2009, cited in Kuyini, 2013: 167–168). The point being made here is necessarily not the case that foreign donor funding programmes are inimical to the growth and development of developing countries. Rather, the bone of contention practically, and as far as the context of Ghana is concerned, is that most often these foreign donor projects are jeopardised and/or abandoned whenever donor funding ceases to flow or dries up. This already worsened situation is further exacerbated by the fact that even with revenue accruing from the recent oil production which began in 2010, Ghana is still heavily indebted to many donor countries owing largely to

economic imperatives and 'conditionalities' attached to her bilateral and multilateral agreements[6].

Similarly, and as a result of the excessive dependence on donor support and the inability of Ghana to 'bite the hands that feed her', governments over the years have had to concentrate attention on implementing foreign donor driven education reform initiatives to the detriment of more pertinent domestic and national education issues warranting attention. For example, available research report (Casely-Hayford and CARE International, 2003; Kuyini and Alhassan, 2009; Ghanaweb, 2010, 2011a; World Bank, 2010) indicate that as late as 2009, there were areas in the country (especially in parts of the northern regions of Ghana) where communities had no access to a local primary school and some schools were still holding their classes under trees. Similarly, in 2010, the World Bank reported that about 21.1 per cent of the female population and about 13.3 per cent of the male population had never received any formal education (World Bank 2010, cited in Kuyini 2013: 165). Quite recently, Kuyini (2013) also reports of a growing problem of access to secondary education in Ghana. He portends that as the population of secondary school age students increases, not only are there fewer places to contain them, but that policy makers are divided and confused about the structure and content of secondary education. Clearly, these few examples mirror the issue of clear inequality in access to schooling which demand urgent attention at the domestic level. Unfortunately however, and owing to increased global competition coupled with the desire to remain credit worthy in the 'good books' of foreign donor partners (especially the IMF and the World Bank), governments of Ghana, have found it expedient to embrace the vision of international competitiveness overwhelmingly at the expense of policies that stabilise domestic economy and social cohesion, and thus subjugating Ghana's internal and national priorities to a mirage of international credibility criteria.

Another critical effect stemming from the discursive shift (from a socialist and global education for all policy view point towards the neo-liberal ideological position) and its resultant concentration of efforts on international competitiveness is the accusation of infringement on constitutional and human rights of her own citizens. As a result of her difficulty to focus attention on policies and programmes that stabilise domestic economy and social cohesion, Ghana is seen and/or accused by some human rights advocates as reneging on some fundamental aspects of her own constitutional and human rights mandates in relation to education. A case in point worth citing in support of this argument and for the purposes of this article concerns what Tomasevski (2006 cited in Nudzor, 2012, 2013a, 2013b), for instance, has argued as a clear violation or disregard of the 1992 constitutional requirement which brought forth fCUBE in 1996. In her global report of the state of the rights to education, Tomasevski (2006) raised this accusation vigorously against Ghana. Citing from a wide range of sources (notably: MOE, 1996; GOG (Poverty Reduction Strategy), 2003; Asmah, 2004; Education International Barometer, 2004; EFA/UNESCO, 2002; GOG, 2006; Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES), 2006) she painted a rather gloomy picture in her assessment of Ghana's efforts at achieving free and universal education. She explained that the commitment to free, compulsory and universal basic education in Ghana followed from the 1992 Constitution, which has affirmed that basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all. These constitutional guarantees, according to her, were inspired by the fact that prior to the official inception of the fCUBE policy in 1996, education was neither free, compulsory, nor available to all those who could not afford the cost. She added that ten years later, Ghana's educational performance has not improved and that by 2003, merely 59% of 6 to 11year olds enrolled in primary school. She argued that although the debt relief process instituted might lead to making education less costly, there was no

commitment whatsoever to make it free in the 2003 Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). She emphasized that although the PRSP has confirmed that one third of 'out-of school children' could not meet the high cost of education, there was no pledge to eliminate that financial barrier. The government has only pledged that 'regulations on illegal fees will be enforced to ensure that the approved fees (which in most cases are disguised as 'levies') are charged'. She emphasized thus:

> The constitutional guarantee of basic education which should be free, compulsory and available to all has not been translated into governmental policy. Ghana epitomizes bifurcated policy-making because education was shaped by the 1987 structural adjustment programme rather than the law of the land… The government's self-description of Ghana's system of education still refers to the 1987/88 reform as guidance, while less attention has been devoted to the 1996 commitment to universalize basic education by making it free and compulsory…Basic education…is not free, compulsory and available to all as provided under the Constitution of the Republic (Tomasevski, 2006: 36).

Whilst this admittedly is an indictment on the right to education in Ghana, it is important to note that since the release of this global report in 2006, tremendous efforts have been made, including initiation of several education reform initiatives, to get Ghana on track towards meeting the EFA and sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Thus, from the points alluded to in this section of the article, it is clear that what this article describes as the discursive shift in Ghana's education policy discourse has had dire consequences on Ghana's policy and practice in diverse ways. Essentially, the discussion has shown, although implicitly, that the neo-liberal ideology wrapped in both the IMF and the World Bank's rhetoric of vision of international competitiveness may not be the best philosophical

approach to education for Ghana because her economic activities remain almost entirely, and as Martin Carnoy (cited by Kuyini, 2013: 172–173) puts it, "domestic and unglobalised". As a result of this, therefore, it is the considered view of this article that rather than subjugating her internal and national priorities to a mirage of international credibility criteria, Ghana's education needs to focus on capacitating her students with skills, knowledge and expertise to enable them deal with local and community needs. One such domestic need, which could help distinguish the local focus preferred and/or recommended in this article from those that reflect compliance with global market demands, concerns the need to provide literacy education, particularly in an indigenous/Ghanaian language, including for practical vocational and science education. This is particularly against the backdrop of criticism that reliance on English as the fulcrum for education and development is a misguided policy. Another aspect of the domestic need that Ghanaians need to focus on at this moment in time, in the view of this article, relates to addressing the seeming gender gap alluded to by the World Bank (2010), and which EKE appears to be exacerbating in some ways. So whilst these issues, particularly the local/domestic needs identified, are worth mentioning for the purposes of this article, a thorough discussion of them is reserved for a separate future article.

Conclusion

This article has traced the discursive shift in Ghana's post-independence education policy discourse(s) from predominantly socialist and social democratic ideals towards neo-liberal and capitalist ideological policy direction in recent times. In the process, the decolonising and nationalistic agenda that education used to serve at the post-independence era was highlighted, alongside accounts of political instability in government between 1961 and 1981 and its resultant decline in Ghana's economy in the 1970s which saw the introduction of the IMF and World Bank sponsored structural adjustment reforms in 1983.

Thereafter, the article moved to describe briefly Ghana's constitutional reform initiatives emanating from the context of global education for all deliberations, along with exemplification of how the EKE policy of international competitiveness appears to be playing out especially in the current dispensation of EFA policy imperative in Ghana. Latterly, the effects of the discursive shift on Ghana's education policy and practice are examined briefly to drive home forcefully the thesis of the article, namely that 'straight-jacket' accountability models (typically those of the World Band, IMF and other pro-capitalist agencies) which impose change from the 'outside' end up hurting the very systems they set out to assist.

Thus, largely this article shares Kuyini's (2013) conviction that EKE philosophy which Ghana has adopted and which orients her education towards international competiveness is a short-sighted one which subjugates national domestic priorities to a mirage of international credibility criteria. Essentially, tracing the discursive shift from predominantly socialist through education for all and neo-liberal and capitalist ideological policy direction, the article finds the argument that education should be used to enable students acquire skills for the global labour market not liberating especially for Ghanaians. Typically, the effects of this discursive shift explored in this article suggests that given a weak economy coupled with a large domestic burden, the focus on meeting local and community needs need to remain the topmost priority. Towards this end, Ghana's education at this point in time needs to focus on capacitating students with skills, knowledge and expertise to enable them to solve her domestic problems. So while in the context of this article *literacy; numeracy; creative arts and problem-solving skills; technical, vocational and agricultural training (TVAT); apprenticeship schemes; cost sharing; Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Science and Technology;* are presented as reflecting EKE philosophy that is unsuitable to the context of Ghana, the

rationale essentially is simple. The rationale is for no other purpose other than illustrating the focus of neo-liberal ideological discourse of 'skills for the world of work' particularly on cultivating highly skilled and flexible human capital to compete in a global market, rather than capacitating citizens to deal with their domestic problems.

Notes

1. While the critique of neo-liberalism (and neo-colonialism) as it is presented in this article appears to be clear and sound, it is to be acknowledged that the 'local' and 'global' (international) are seen and presented in somewhat binary terms, which in some way prevents the more complex process of recognising positive forms of interchange. In the article, due recognition is given to some positive effects of the World Bank and the IMF amid the negative ones. The complexity of such positive elements is recognised, particularly in the discussion of how the 'revolutionary' government of Rawlings invoked the assistance of the World Bank and IMF in its educational reforms. However, in the ensuing discussions, a choice appears to have been made for the local in isolation from the global, and thus raising the critical question about the kind of international cooperation and assistance which would be beneficial to Ghana. Admittedly, this is a question worth interrogating, but will be the focus of another article.
2. It needs to be emphasized here that the focus on nationalism does not necessarily escape traces of colonialism since the geopolitical boundaries were drawn by colonists. In this sense, what is seen as Ghanaian identity could arguably be regarded as colonial heritage. For this reason, attention needs to be given to critiques of nationalism and nationalistic identities to portray the fact that decolonisation and nationalism may at times be in conflict.
3. It is important to note that the 'international competitiveness' referred to by Kuyini hinges centrally on a strong proficiency in the neo-colonial language in all Anglophone countries in Africa, namely 'Standard English'.
4. This quote is key to what underlies EKE philosophy of international competitiveness, namely a strong basis in communicative English and indeed English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and is undoubtedly a key problem in Ghana, where many teachers of English and other subjects lack such neo-colonial and neo-liberal requisite foreign language skills.
5. It is important to add that English Language knowledge is a key factor to the social class distinctions spelt out by Tikly (2001). In the case of Ghana, the worst English Language levels of pupils, as the example alludes, are probably in north, isomorphic with other educational problems there.
6. So while the critique in this article is aimed mainly at the effect of the work of pro-capitalist external agencies, it needs to be emphasized that some attention, and indeed criticism, also needs to be directed at what seems to be a relative weak state/civil society which cannot, among other things, successfully negotiate the 'conditionalities' of external funding, which fails to incorporate various externally funded projects within the overall educational plan, and which has not developed a strong vision of education.

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