

58 Years of British Colonial Education System in Ghana: Structural Challenges and the Way Forward (2)

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This paper is a continuation of my series of education policy suggestions as we prepare for Ghana's 58 independence anniversary on 6th March, 2015. Read the previous article here >> <http://tinyurl.com/lf385jf>

In the previous publication, I highlighted some of the structural weaknesses of Ghana's education model and offered suggestions for structural reforms capable of delivering quality lifelong learning to all citizens. I argued that the current education system in Ghana has been characterized by three key features namely disjointed curriculum strands, lack of access or unequal access to education and lifelong learning at all levels of the system and a weak and incoherent administrative control within the education system, particularly at the district levels.

In this paper I turn my attention on the need for an integrated education and lifelong learning policy. In my considered opinion, the lack of integration of education and lifelong learning has contributed significantly to the situation where most of our people are undereducated, under skilled, and underprepared for full participation in social, economic and civic life. Most of the unemployed lack the basic education on which to build, and many of those in work are locked into low skilled and low paying jobs. A vast proportion of students leaving the school system, either before or after completing the final year, do so largely unprepared for the rest of their lives. In order to begin addressing this legacy, urgent attention should be given to the development of a National Credit and Qualifications Framework (NCQF) through which a much closer integration of education and lifelong learning can be achieved. The need to emphasize lifelong learning provides a distinctive opportunity to recognize and highlight the learning that takes place everywhere including the work place, often informally, to encourage employee learning.

The NCQF could be Ghana's Lifelong Learning Framework. This nationally integrated system will link one level of learning to another and enable learners to progress to higher levels from any

starting point in the education and lifelong learning system. Learning and skills which people have acquired through experience and informal training should be formally assessed and credited towards qualifications. The NCQF could help make the relationships between qualifications and credit transfers clearer and easier respectively. It can clarify entry and exit points and routes for progression within and across education and training sectors.

Under such framework, a person may not hold a university degree but could progressively obtain vocational training qualifications equivalent to a masters' level qualification at a university. Through this Framework people of all ages and circumstances can get access to appropriate education and training so they can meet their full potential. As in the case of the United Kingdom, a NCQF can also provide an extremely important way of recognizing 'outcome-based learning' (learning that is related to things that a person can do) and 'quality assured learning' (learning that has been assessed and checked by someone else) in a wide range of settings (for example, learning in the workplace). It is therefore suggested that the present National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Qualifications Framework. (NTVETQF) be reviewed and integrated into the proposed NCQF. The establishment of a national Ghana Examination and Qualification Authority (GEQA) should be a priority to underpin and develop the progressive integration and qualitative improvement of the education and lifelong learning systems.

Qualifications at the secondary school and post-secondary (further education) level could be provided by the Ghana Examination and Qualifications Authority, which would be the national awarding and accrediting body in Ghana, and delivered through various schools, colleges and other learning centres. The intention is to bring logic to the various post-compulsory education qualifications which are offered by various providers. Almost all school candidates should gain GEQA qualifications in the fourth year of secondary school, and the great majority obtain further qualifications in fifth or sixth year or in further education colleges.

By implication, Ghana could withdraw from the 60-year WAEC Convention since its examination has largely not reflected the unique needs and identity of the Ghanaian society. Every country chooses, at any stage of nationhood, what development agenda to pursue which is then aligned with the kind of education its citizenry experience. Grouping five sovereign countries as homogeneous entity to write the same examination both in content and form is very questionable. If a relatively small country like Scotland has a distinctly different education system from the rest of the United Kingdom, why must Ghana tie its educational aspirations with that of

Nigeria, The Gambia, Sierra Leon or Liberia? In any case, the Nigeria students, for example, have opportunity to choose between WAEC and NECO. The National Examinations Council (NECO) is an examination body in Nigeria that conducts the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination. It was established in April 1999 by then Head of State Abdulsalami Abubakar to deny WAEC the exclusive right to conduct examinations in Nigeria. Several empirical studies have acknowledged the reliability and validity of NECO's exams, suggesting the capacity of individual countries to have their own independent examination body. As I have argued before, the Ghana office of WAEC, if possible, can simply be converted into the office the Ghana Examination and Qualification Authority (GEQA) whilst the staff could be maintained and retrained for their new role.

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