

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TRADITIONAL AND THE INTEGRATED CURRICULA IN GHANAIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS RUBY S. AVOTRI

### Introduction

A major purpose of education, according to Dewey (1916), is to socialise the child into society. This socialization process transmits cultural values by teaching children to conform to the norms, values and practices of the society. Socialization can take place through formal or informal education. The type of and direction of the socialization process, however, depends on the philosophy, political structures and the culture of the society. Although several social institutions, such as the home, the church and the mass media, engage in this socialisation process at various levels, formal systematic education is provided only by the school system.

Before formal education was introduced into Ghana (then the Gold Coast), indigenous Ghanaian education was being practised. This was non-formal, and non-certificated in terms of competencies, and took place at various stages of a child's life. Knowledge was presumed to be static and the pedagogic techniques used were basically memorization and the strict imitation of adult behaviour. Questioning the logic, meaning or analysis of knowledge was discouraged as children were to be 'seen but not heard' (Lesourd, 1986). Most knowledge was, therefore, shrouded in mythology and mysticism.

Formal education was introduced into Ghana in the 16th. by the British merchants (Ghana Information Services, 1974). The education system, ideas and practices were therefore similar to traditional British education. The aim of education was to train clerks for administration and for commercial activities.

Christian missionaries later established schools which had a similar curriculum structure and organization.

Traditional British education, dubbed 'Westminster' education, therefore inculcated in children foreign ideologies, culture and values, while those that were traditional in Ghana were taught to be primitive and evil. Learning was defined by the teaching and mastery of specific subjects and one's level of ability was determined by the capacity to memorise and reproduce facts from these subjects because colonial educationists argued that schools and colleges must help their pupils solve only mental problems (Blege, 1986). However, schools, according to the functionalists, are an integral, functioning part of the society, vital to its continuation and survival (Feinberg and Soltis, 1985). Academic knowledge, therefore, is useful only if it can be applied to solve societal problems, otherwise it could be detrimental to the society.

According to Whitty (1981), traditional English education laid no explicit emphasis on social and political education. Any explicit citizenship education was geared towards the working class where

there were perceived social problems. "Practical and vocational education," Whitty said "had always enjoyed low status within the English education system when compared with an education grounded in liberal humanist conceptions of culture" (Whitty, 1981). No wonder in Ghana vocational and practical training were regarded as suitable only for people of low academic ability, and most parents strongly objected to their children going into apprenticeship or vocational schools instead of academic institutions because of the colonial mentality that linked status to academic qualifications.

Formal education is supposed to transform a society from "pre-literate to contemporary nationhood" (Lesourd, 1986). However, the sort of transformation that took place in Ghana could not help the country revolutionize and modernize the economy to meet the demands of the growing society because the education system did not emphasise the teaching of life experiences in the

curriculum. Ghana, an agricultural country that exported raw materials and imported most of her manufactured goods, was still in the process of developing her socio-economic base after centuries of colonization. Ghana therefore needed skilled and semi-skilled intermediate level manpower in particular for the industrial sector, but the education system did not provide such people and hence did not enhance socio-economic development. Rather, it trained people only for white collar jobs, who were strong devotees of formal schooling that had a strong academic emphasis (Lesourd, 1986). It trained people who could not be employed while there were jobs for which no one was being trained. It therefore was found to be ineffective and inadequate to the needs and aspirations of Ghanaian society.

#### Educational Reform in Ghana

After independence, in 1957, the government decided that the Ghanaian educational goals should be redefined. A Report on the Proposed New Structure and Content of Education for Ghana, of 1972, criticised the old education system as 'elitist', and one which did not develop the co-operative attitudes and concerns needed for the growth of the society. It recommended a form of education that would target the development of the nation's potential, especially in the industrial, agricultural and commercial sectors (Ministry of Education, 1972). It was argued that if this goal was achieved, education would help to develop and modernise the country's traditions and culture to meet the demands of the fast-changing Ghanaian society. Based on the above recommendations, a new education system was introduced nationwide in 1987.

The new system shifted from the British subject-centred curriculum, to an integrated curriculum which emphasised an inquiry approach to teaching and learning. It also emphasised the attainment of affective objectives, and the development of

vocational and creative skills, as well as, the attainment of cognitive objectives. These attributes were expected to help children appreciate the need for change, and the improvement and preservation of the society and the environment (Ministry of Education, 1972). It was assumed that the attainment of the affective objectives would have long term effects on both students and the society in relation to the development of students' general self-concept, interests and attitudes in adulthood (Bloom, 1976). Subjects such as social studies, culture, life skills, integrated science and vocational subjects were therefore introduced. It was anticipated that social studies, for example, would facilitate the development of more positive attitudes towards society and the environment among students (Ghana Education Service, 1987).

#### Objectives of the study

The aim of this paper is to report the preliminary findings of a study which set out to find out the extent to which the objectives of the new curriculum were being met. Specifically, to find out how effective the new social studies curriculum and inquiry teaching and learning had been in developing positive attitudes to society and the environment in students educated in the integrated curriculum as compared to those in the traditional curriculum during the period of overlap. Bloom (1976), among others, suggests that the quality of instruction and a student's learning history largely determine variations in learning outcomes. If this assumption is valid, one also would expect that students studying social studies in the new integrated curriculum through inquiry learning would have more positive attitudes to society and the environment than students in the old, traditional curriculum where separate social science subjects are taught. Also, those in the fourth year of secondary school would be expected to have more positive attitudes than the students in their second year. Essentially, it was anticipated that the results of the study would provide insight into the extent to

which the above objectives are being met.

#### Method

##### Sampling

The target population was students in secondary schools in Ghana who study social studies or social science subjects. These students were studying either the traditional (old) or the integrated (new) curriculum. Two groups of students were randomly sampled for the study. Group 1 was made up of 2nd and 4th form students studying the old curriculum, while Group 2 comprised 2nd, 3rd and 4th form students studying the new curriculum. However, the 4th form students in the new programme had already completed three years of Junior Secondary Education in new schools and were commencing three years of Senior Secondary Education studying the new curriculum in old schools. The sample

studied comprised 1385 students, of which, 695 were studying the old curriculum and 690 the new curriculum.

#### Procedure

The students were administered a questionnaire designed to seek their attitudes to society and the environment. The questionnaire included 32 Likert scale items of which 19 focused on attitudes to society and 13 on attitudes to the environment. The response options were 'Strongly Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' (scored 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively). The variance in the responses was analysed to determine differences among the groups with respect to total scores, and the two sub-scales of 'society' and 'environment'. For each section of the questionnaire the means for groups differing in the curriculum studied, gender, socio-economic status (SES) and year level were compared. A critical value of  $\alpha=0.05$  was adopted for significance.

#### Results

Initial results, shown in Table 1, clearly indicate differences in attitudes between both the curriculum and the form level groups. Contrary to expectation, students in the traditional curriculum had more positive attitudes to society and the environment (Table 2). Furthermore, the results showed significant differences between students' attitudes and the number of years spent in secondary education. Further analyses of variance was run to determine the interaction between the dependent variables and factors SES and gender. In all cases, the results showed that students from high socio-economic background and girls generally had most positive attitudes to society and the environment. In summary,

1. Students in the traditional curriculum generally had more positive attitudes to society and the environment.
2. There is a significant difference between the number of years spent in secondary education and student's attitudes in each group.
3. Girls in both groups have more positive attitudes than boys.
4. Students from high socio-economic background generally have most positive attitudes.

#### Discussion of results

It was anticipated that the new integrated curriculum, particularly in social studies, would help students to develop more positive attitudes to society and the environment. The results however, show that this is not so, as students in the traditional curriculum had higher mean score than those in the new curriculum. This does not however, mean that the integrated curriculum should be completely condemned. To investigate this view, further analysis showed significant improvement in attitudes with increase in secondary school education by comparing the mean scores between the year levels (2nd and 4th forms) in each group. In both groups students in form four had higher mean scores than did students in their second year of

secondary education. However, the differences in the means were greater between the second and fourth year students in the new

curriculum than those in the old curriculum. This is an indication that the new curriculum was effective in improving attitudes within the new group, even though the difference was not significant when compared with the traditional curriculum. It is possible that some of the students in the new curriculum might not have gone through the 6year primary programme that was supposed to prepare them for the new programme at the junior secondary level and had gone through the old curriculum instead. A change in their attitudes might therefore, take longer than previously anticipated. Each curriculum is unique. The effectiveness, at this stage could, therefore, be best judged if the comparison is limited to classes within the same group. Although the new curriculum was trailed upon in selected schools for at least ten years before its introduction nationwide in 1987, it must be emphasised that the programme is still in its transitional period and might be experiencing teething problems. Therefore, the results could be partly explained by certain unmeasured characteristics within the groups or other variables that could significantly influence the development of attitudes, other than the type and content of the curriculum.

Educational reforms, according to Yoloye, are policies and programmes that aim at a major and nationwide change and new developments in one or more aspects of an educational system (cited in Durojaiye, 1981). There is a need to evaluate the existing system so that effective changes can be made. This idea is supported by Bishop who suggested that a reform programme should first of all make a realistic appraisal and analysis of the existing situation, find out what changes are needed, the available resources and how these could be implemented, before any major changes are embarked upon. He stressed that, to alter "what is" you must know "what is" (Bishop, 1985). Evidence showed that previous educational changes, like the Continuation Schools Programme, in Ghana failed because they were not based on any research of the existing system. This was due partly to economic constraints. However, most often, decisions related to education in Ghana have been based upon political considerations, as well as personal interest and influence. "Behind most reforms", according to a Ministry of Education Report, "were prestigious committees or nameless incumbents in positions of influence each securely guarding his name and reputation" (Ministry of Education, 1990). The decision to introduce the new system in Ghana also was not based on any research findings. The new programme was introduced nationwide when the committee set up to evaluate the success of the experimental schools and advise the government was still in its planning stage. The committee's report was submitted three years later.

No wonder the new programme is faced with serious teething and implementation problems related to educational materials and teaching. Informal discussions held with both students and teachers revealed an unavailability of books and other educational resource materials and equipment. The practical aspects of the social studies curriculum, for example, was being neglected in most schools because of a lack of transportation and funding for practical or fieldwork. These and other problems should now be the focus of further studies.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers were not properly trained for the new schools. Most of the teachers had been trained in the traditional system but now had to teach concepts that they poorly understood. This relates to the integrated curriculum and the inquiry concept. For example, interviews held with some of the teachers revealed that most were confused about the replacement of the separate social science subjects by social studies and advocated a change back to the old system.

#### Conclusion

These results are a clear indication that the new educational programme is not presently achieving its desired goals.

Educational reforms generally take place at three levels, namely, curriculum design, implementation and monitoring. It is apparent that the amount of money and resources spent on developing and improving an educational system do not automatically guarantee its effectiveness or success (Bloom, 1976). A policy could fail because of lapses at any of the three levels. In this study, however, the improvement of attitudes with an increase in the number of years spent in school is an encouraging indication that the programme could succeed. In view of the importance attached to it, and the amount already invested in its planning and implementation in Ghana, there is a need to review the programme and to take remedial measures soon so as to make it more effective and viable.

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Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of attitude scores of  
students in the Old and New Curricula by Forms

Group	Total		Society		Environment	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Old Curri	98.3	8.5	60.2	5.4	38.2	4.3
2nd Yr.						
4th Yr.						
New Curri	91.2	10.0	54.2	6.7	36.8	5.2
2nd Yr	85.6	8.7	51.5	6.3	34.1	4.3
4th Yr.	94.7	9.2	57.1	6.1	37.6	4.5
Total	94.6	10.1	57.5	6.73	37.1	4.7

