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**RESTRUCTURING EDUCATION IN GHANA  
A CASE FOR RECONCEPTUALIZING  
EDUCATIONAL AIMS**

**Agnes Atia Apusigah**

**A THESIS  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines three decades of educational reform in Ghana between 1970 and the present. Government reports and secondary literature reveal that Ghanaian reformers sought to democratize and transform education but largely failed in their efforts. I argue that this failure stems from their adoption of development and implementation strategies that did not encourage democratic negotiation.

Drawing upon Miller, Freire, and Dewey, I present a conceptual analysis of democratic and transformative educational aims. I argue that reforms which are imposed externally and do not encourage genuine democratic participation among all actors do not lead to meaningful change. Democratic negotiations require that environments conducive to dialogue be created for all actors, that discourse reflects the characteristics and conditions of the participants' lives, and that all system actors be full participants to the process of change.

Aims talk, the alternative discourse that I advocate as the basis of future educational reform in Ghana, would facilitate democratic negotiations by requiring that educational reforms become educational projects in the Freirean sense. As educational projects, reforms would encourage critical dialogue during which participants would problematize their socio-economic and political realities. Aims talk would connect democratic means with democratic ends. Aims generated as part of such projects would be seen as tentative; they would reflect the characteristics and conditions of the

participants, and they would provide the grounds and foresight for periodic review.

Finally, aims talk would require that participants commit to dialogue that is moral and transformative.

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**Agnes A. Apusigah**



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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background**

Three waves of reforms have characterized the last three decades of Ghanaian educational history. These reforms have included the Dzobo Reforms of 1975, the Anfom reforms of 1987 and, for the purposes of this thesis, the Basic Sector Improvement Programme also known as the Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education reform (ongoing). These reforms were embarked upon to improve the education system in ways that would reflect the educational needs of a fast growing Ghanaian society. Basically, they involved the restructuring of the content and structure of education in order to provide a democratic education for all Ghanaian children. As a composite of this democratization drive, classrooms were to shift from the use of transmissive practices to the use of transformative methods.

The reforms were embarked upon against a background of an education system which had been described variously as dysfunctional, undemocratic, oppressive, and inefficient (Ghana, 1966a; Fobi, Koomson & Godwyll, 1995; Education Commission (EC), 1986; Education Advisory Committee (EAC), 1972). Policies were drawn to address these problems and reflect the new emphasis; however, as shown in this thesis, they did not impact practice. This thesis has been inspired by a need to address the factors that have contributed to the dismal performance of the reforms.

By the beginning of the 1970's, it had become clear that Ghana's educational system needed a complete overhaul. Critics charge that it was not meeting the needs of the changing Ghanaian society (Antwi, 1992a; Nimako, 1976; McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975; EAC, 1972). It was undemocratic as it was highly selective and elitist (EAC, 1972); thus, reforms were initiated to reverse this trend. In June, 1972, the Education Advisory Committee (EAC), was set up to review the system. The EAC presented its report in October, 1972; they prescribed a new structure and content for education. The structure of pre-university education was cut down from a maximum of seventeen years (i.e. six years of primary education, four years of middle, and seven years of secondary) to thirteen years (i.e. six years of primary, three years junior secondary, and four years senior secondary) for university-bound students. In terms of content, the main issue was to diversify school curricula at all levels.

The restructuring exercise was expected to help reduce the length of pre-university education, upgrade basic skills training by exposing students to a minimum of secondary education, and to diversify curricula at all levels in order to make education more responsive to individual and societal/national needs (Dare, 1995; Antwi, 1992a; McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975; EAC, 1972). It took two years for the recommendations to be adopted and even then, the changes were made on an experimental basis only. They never were implemented fully

(Dare, 1995; Education Commission (EC), 1986). After a decade of reform initiatives, Fobi et al. (1995), Ghanaian educators, made the following observation in a report on educational development in Ghana: Ghana's educational system in the 1980's was in near collapse and viewed as dysfunctional in relation to the goals and aspirations of the country. Academic standards, support for teachers, instructional materials, school buildings, classrooms, and equipment had declined for lack of financing and management. By 1985 the system could be described as "clinically dead". (p. 63)

The education system did not seem to have achieved anything beyond changing the structure of education. As a result, by the middle of the 1980's another move was made to reform the system.

The Education Commission (EC), which worked for this second wave of reform, was charged with the task of reviewing past educational initiatives, including the 1972 reforms. They also were directed to make "recommendations for the formulation of a national policy on education such as would enable the realisation of the objectives of the revolutionary transformation of the society, and enhance the availability of educational facilities to the greatest extent possible" (Ghana, 1994a, p. 4). No significant changes were recommended regarding the structure and content of education in this report; in fact, the broad goals of education remained the same as they had been for the 1975 reforms (Antwi, 1992a, b; EC, 1986). This time, however, the reforms were to be adopted nation-wide and adequate financial arrangements were made to ensure that at

least a minimum of infrastructure, equipment and other teaching/learning materials were procured for all schools. With financial assistance from a number of lending/donor agencies, the reforms were implemented in 1987.

Despite, these efforts the education system remained dysfunctional and undemocratic. Fobi et al (1995), assess the performance of the 1987 reforms, eight years after their implementation. He and his associates express dissatisfaction and a need for improvement. They argue that:

the content and structure touched all levels of the education system and attempted to address the perennial problems of access, retention, curriculum relevance, teacher training, provision of physical structures, and financing. The eight years that have passed since the announcement of the education reform have seen many changes in the system. Yet today, many people believe the reforms require significant adjustments if its objectives are to be realised. This has initiated a new cycle of policy review and analysis. (p. 63)

Basically, the efforts had not affected practice. It was argued that the efforts have not led to the transformation of teachers and the learning of students (Fobi, et al., 1995; Ghana, 1994a). The general dissatisfaction with the performance of the educational system led to a third wave of reforms that were directed at addressing the inadequacies of the system. This third wave of reform was targeted at the individual sectors in particular. One of these reforms was *The Basic Sector Improvement Programme*, also referred to as FCUBE (Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education). The FCUBE

has been geared toward providing free compulsory basic education for all school aged children by the year 2005 (Ghana, 1996a). Another reform in this third wave was *The Tertiary Sector Improvement Programme* (TIP), which sought to improve the quality of tertiary education (Ghana, 1994b).

The three waves of reform (1970's, 1980's, 1990's) restructured the system in order to increase efficiency while making it functional and democratic (Antwi, 1992a; Fobi et al, 1995; McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975). The struggle for efficiency, functionality and democracy resulted in calls for change in the orientation of the whole system, seen as a composite. These calls referred to a change from a transmissive education to transformative education (Ghana, 1994a; EC, 1986; EAC, 1972). Citing an address given by the President of Ghana, Jerry John Rawlings, The Anfom Commission, for example, reported the following in 1984:

the fundamental message of his (Rawlings) inaugural address was that our children must "grow up free from the stultifying influence of the educational oppression which has prevailed for far too long". He observed that a system which denies the majority of children equal educational opportunities, which values conformity before creativity and which encourages self-interest cannot be described as anything other than oppressive. He, therefore, charged the commission to formulate "recommendations of national policy on education such as will enable the realization of the objectives of the revolutionary transformation of the society in the interest of social justice". (p. 66)



President Rawlings' address spelled out the type of education anticipated, and criticized the "old education". It is worth noting that President Rawlings' comments came ten years after the implementation of the Dzobo reforms of 1975.

Implicit in the President's remarks is an indication of the kind of education desired to ensure what he called "revolutionary transformation". He identified three aspects of educational oppression characteristic of the existing educational system: oppression as denial of equal opportunity; oppression that occurs as conformity is valued before creativity; and oppression that stems from the system's encouragement of self-interest. On the other hand, President Rawlings asserted that education that is "non-oppressive" which is to say "transformative", values creativity and promotes social justice.

In this thesis I contest the notion of democracy and transformation as they were made available in each of the three waves of reform in Ghana. Though President Rawlings called for democracy and transformation, he did so in very restricted terms. A historical review of reform documents shows a significant gap between the democracy and transformation called for by policy and the democracy and transformation brought about in practice. I argue that this gap can be seen to follow from the restricted notion with which Rawlings began. If education is to lead to actual social transformation, I argue, it has to move past educational oppression as defined by the President, to include oppression as imposition from without, whether by policy makers, teachers/educational authorities, textbooks or examining bodies. Democracy also will require more than a mere restructuring of the educational structure, content and the provision/expansion of

facilities. The whole concept of reforms has to be transformed. The concept of democracy which has been interpreted in the reforms to mean equal opportunity and diversification of curriculum will have to be expanded in ways that can result in the adoption of democratic means in reform processes. In particular, they will have to be expanded in order to include the process of negotiating reforms democratically (i.e. the means of reform) as an element of what constitutes democratic aims in education.

This thesis explores this possibility by drawing attention to educational aims. I argue that democracy is essential to transformative practices and that unless the reform process is democratized, attempts to change the Ghanaian education system will be in vain. The thesis focuses on analyses of the central concepts, "aims", "transmission" and "transformation", and reviews the connections that are established among them. In the end an alternate approach to reforms - aims talk - is developed that focuses on the connections among the three concepts and their implications for Ghanaian education. The opportunities to expand the notions of democracy and transformation that are made possible through a process of "aims talk" can enable reforms success.

In his analysis of educational models, John P. Miller (1993) a Canadian educational theorist, painted pictures of transmissive and transformative educational positions that throw light on the educational shift advocated in the Ghanaian reforms. He identified two strands characteristic of transmissive educational positions:

one strand is the behavioral, while the other has focused on students studying the standard subjects taught in a traditional style (e.g., lecture and citation).... In the behavioral strand, this relationship (*curriculum* -

*child*) is known as the stimulus - response, S-R, while in the traditional strand, curriculum, the teacher, or text conveys information to the student. In both cases there is essentially a one-way flow or transmission of skills and knowledge. (p.56)

In the case of transformative education, Miller had this to say:

one strand has focused on the individual. At the extreme, this focus is found in Summerhill (1960), where its founder A. S. Neil felt that the school must fit the child rather than making the child fit the school. Certain elements of the progressive education and humanistic education in the 1960's are also part of this strand. The other strand involves social change orientation, which argues that educators must take a more critical view of the role of schools in society so that schools do not just mirror dominant economic interests, and that schools must be on the cutting edge of social and political change. Today, the work of educators such as Michael Apple and Henry Giroux reflect this orientation. This position is most successful when the two strands are brought together. (p. 62)

The two pictures painted by Miller bring out in clear terms what the Ghanaian reforms advocate. At the individual level, we find in the reforms the need to stress self-activity, the development of creativity and inquiry skills, "teaching pupils 'how to learn' in order to lay the foundation for that learning which will be part of their life long after they have left school" (EC, 1986, p. 26). At the social level, the President did not mince words in stressing that a new national policy of education which is "non-oppressive"

must realize the objectives of the revolutionary transformation of the society by attending to social justice. Education is viewed as playing an essential role in bringing about social change.

The contrast between transmission and transformation is addressed by Paulo Freire. Freire (1970) compares *banking education* which suffers from what he calls “narration sickness” with *dialogic education* which involves continual reflection and action. In addition, he contrasts “*systematic education*, which can only be changed by political power, and *educational projects*, which should be carried out *with* the oppressed in the process of organizing them” (Freire, 1970, p. 36, emphasis in original). The first comparison has value for school and classroom processes while the second has value for initiating and negotiating reforms. In my thesis, the two comparisons are used to inform my inquiry into the level of democracy in reform processes and how that impacts classroom processes. Freire draws attention to the active roles of learners in transformative systems and the lack of it in transmissive systems. The contrast allows me to argue for democratic participation of all actors in transformative systems and to call for the application of this principle in the initiation and negotiation of the Ghanaian reforms.

Deweyan analysis of educational aims reinforces the need to engage all participants in transformative processes. Dewey’s (1966) argument for democracy as an educational end focuses on how systems guided by democratic ideals engage actors in interactions and how, through such interactions, lives are transformed. Dewey’s analysis of educational aims also provides avenue for paying attention to policy and practice. His

conceptual analysis is used to ground criticism of the continual pursuit of reforms that remain only at the policy level and to argue for the need for a translation of reform goals into practice. Dewey establishes a closer connection between ends and means by arguing that to attain the ends we must pay attention to the means. He emphasizes the crucial role of means as the transforming stage in the aims-making process. In addition, he worries about externally determined aims because he considers them an indication of a lack of equity in social relationships (Dewey, 1966). Dewey's worry provides an avenue for talking about the process of aims-making, the effects of social interactions on the aims-making process, and the sources of aims. Taken together, they emphasize the need to democratize the aims-making process, that is to say, to democratize ends (policy) and means (practice).

In my thesis, I focus on the reform process and the methods that can be adopted so that Ghana can meet its transformative goals. I argue that restructuring the physical elements alone, though necessary, is not sufficient for reaching transformative goals. There is need to give a deeper meaning to the entire reform process instead of paying attention to the structural aspects or systematic changes (i.e. equalization of educational opportunities) only. I demonstrate how a consideration of educational aims, which is to say a consideration of how ends and means of education are related, contributes to this task of giving a deeper meaning to the reform process. The transformative education advocated is defined in terms of means that lead to reform ends and in the process lives are transformed (Dewey, 1966). Such ends are not static, undemocratic or short-term. Such ends are flexible, evolving and sensitive to changing times and needs. Above all

they are democratic and provide foresight for embarking on educational reforms. I argue that paying attention to educational aims, that is interpreting the reforms in terms of attainable aims and translating transformative goals into cogent and operational aims, especially from a Deweyan perspective, fosters the attainment of the goal. I assert that if Ghana is to achieve its goals, it has to reconsider the question of educational aims.

The perennial problem, for Ghana in particular, has been how to get people involved. I suggest paying attention to educational aims by engaging in what I call “aims talk”. The terminology is borrowed from Nel Noddings, an American Educational Philosopher. Noddings (1996) used the term casually, in *Response to Suppes*, to refer to discourse on educational aims. I develop the concept to reflect its practical ramifications. Thus “aims talk” is not just conceptual but also more importantly performative. It emphasizes the provision of spaces and a permissive environment for negotiating the process of aims-making. This process of aims-making focuses on the avenues and spaces that are opened for participation. It addresses the question of inclusion while raising issue with attempts to exclude some actors in reform processes. Aims talk is defined by Dewey’s (1996) discourse on aims as relating ends and means and Freire’s (1970) thesis on the development of critical consciousness for liberatory practice through dialogue. These are reinforced by Ayim’s (1997) call for respect and consideration of others in talk. I argue that “aims talk” facilitates democracy and enables the reforms to achieve the qualitative changes that they anticipate. Above all, it addresses the question of inclusion and empowers all actors to engage in the reform processes in ways that are meaningful to them.

My interest in aims does not lie in setting new aims, but, rather, in working with educational aims in contexts that permit paying attention to the process of education. Aims as foresight (Dewey, 1966) are processual, and direct attention to both the ends and means of education. What matters most is not what ends are set but how the ends are arrived at in the process (the means) of education. For Dewey ends are only temporary terminals; once reached, they become means to subsequent ends. Aims as foreseen ends give direction to the activity and “influence the steps taken to reach the end” (p. 102).

### **Conceptual Framework**

I turn, now to a discussion of how the actual work of the thesis is done. I provide an indication of the central issues around which the thesis is organized. My map of the thesis consists of three sections: “questions”, “propositions” and “aims talk”. The first, “Questions”, comprises the key issues that propel the thesis. Though the questions are not physically stated in the discussion they underpin, underlie and direct the discussions. These questions also lay the ground work for, and give context to, the thesis. They structure the thesis. The second section, “Propositions”, shapes the conceptual ground work, which is to say, both the work that needs to be done and how it is to be accomplished. This section focuses on how the questions are shaped by evidence and how the central issues are resolved. Like the first section, the propositions are not stated outright but underlie the discussion. The third section, aims talk, consist of what is entailed in the alternate discussion provided in aims talk, what is accomplished by engaging in aims talk and the practical ramifications of paying attention to aims via

aims talk.

### **Questions**

Four main questions propel this thesis. They arise from the compelling issues that instigated this conceptual analysis. These questions also form the basis for the criticism I make in the thesis and provide ground for the main assertions and claims.

1. a. Have the Ghanaian reforms been democratic and in what ways have they been or not been democratic?

b. Has the goal to democratize education been adequately pursued? What have been the limitations?

c. What does it mean to democratize education?

2. a . In what ways have the reforms in Ghana portrayed a change in orientation from a transmissive to a transformative educational position?

b. How successful has the change been and what has been problematic?

c. What does it mean to pursue a truly transformative education?

3. a. How does democracy relate transformation and aims? What is the relationship?

b. How can the reforms in Ghana be made truly democratic and transformative?

4. a. What is aims talk and why it is necessary to engage in it?

b. What possibilities does aims talk make available for initiating and negotiating reforms that are meant to be democratic and transformative?

c. How does aims talk necessitate a reconception of educational aims?



## **Propositions**

Three main propositions guide my thesis. They evolve from considerations of transformative education as posited by Dewey and Freire. They also form the basis for the metaphor I use to define the process by which educational aims are reconsidered, namely, aims talk.

**Proposition I.** For Ghana to reach its transformative goal for educational reform, educational reform procedures must be democratized.

Such democratization will demand:

a. the expansion of the net for initiating and negotiating reforms so that all parties are made active members of the team. When the net is expanded to involve all actors, the goals of the reforms can be perceived as belonging to all and not just those of policy makers or reformers;

b. the revision of the top-down approaches to reform initiation and negotiation to more interactive processes which provide for two-way communication. That is to say, reform initiation and negotiation should be mutual and go both ways, top-down and bottom-up; and

c. that attention be paid to local conditions; cultural, economic, geographical, and actual classroom effects, when initiating and negotiating reforms. If the reforms are to have actual impact on the lives of people and not remain on paper, there is urgent need to consider factors that defined the "old education" in order to problematize them and work for change.

**Proposition II.** That educational aims be reconceived in the spirit of true democracy and transformation.

This requires that educational aims be:

a. flexible. Such aims must be evolving and open to continual assessment. This can ensure the sustainability implicit in transformative and democratic processes;

b. the product of the efforts of all actors and not just those of the policy makers (i.e. politicians, bureaucrats, financiers and leaders from recognized institutions). This is prerequisite of an educative community. It leads to empowerment and in the case of Ghana, can ensure that all actors work towards a diversified yet unified purpose;

c. intrinsic to education. Aims must emerge from educational interactions and experiences, be sensitive to existing conditions and reflect the needs and aspirations of participants. Policies and decisions must serve as general guidelines only. Such policies and decisions must be adaptable to individual and social needs and reflect the cultural/geographical diversity of Ghana; and

d. process-oriented. Aims become ends in view. That is to say they must reflect the processes that lead to them. The ends must stay in view of the process.

**Proposition III.** That the changes advocated in the reforms compel not just conceptual but also practical engagements. This implies that the reforms in Ghana:

a. reach beyond policy making to affect practice. There is need to approach the reforms in ways that are empowering, considerate and respectful of the views of all actors;

b. diverge from the elitist rationalist analysis of problems and solutions to engage all actors in effective problematization of their realities in the aims making process; and

c. pay attention to the practical relevance of educational policy and decision making to school level and classroom interaction.

### **Aims talk**

Aims talk is the avenue by which I describe how Freire's (1970/73) critical dialogue, Dewey's (1938/66) ends-means continuum, and Ayim's (1997) appeal to morality in talk can be engaged in conceptual and performative interaction. Freire's critical dialogue, which involves constant reflection and action, is meant to raise the necessary consciousness for the liberation of participants so that they can contribute to social transformation. It lays emphasis on both personal and social agency in the problematizing process. Dewey, on his part, engages in aims discourse as a counter-action to externally determined aims. His intrinsically determined aims emerge from education, stay in view of the process and are sensitive to individual and social needs. For Ayim, talk is amenable to control, and good talk implies ensuring that all discussants get to participate effectively. This requires being considerate and respectful of "others" and making an extra effort to get even the shy and reticent to participate. Taken together, Freire, Dewey and Ayim, emphasize the importance of individual and social interactions. This position they advocate abhors dominance and the tendency to act on behalf of "others" especially when those "others" are capable of their own action.

My interest in aims stems from the fact that, going by Deweyan interpretations, aims establish a relationship between ends and means. I recommend paying attention to aims, in the light of the alternative interactive discourse made available through aims talk, in order to open avenues for matching democratic ends and means, and policy with

practice.

### **Methodology**

The work of this thesis is largely conceptual; it involves an analysis of the central concepts, transmissive education, transformative education, and educational aims. In the analysis of these central concepts, additional critical concepts such as dialogue, democracy, education, aims talk and problematization are illuminated and put into perspective. The analysis is supported by documentary evidence that contextualizes discussions in the specific history of Ghanaian reforms. The conceptual analysis problematizes educational reforms in Ghana and enables me to establish my claim that there is a need to reconceptualize educational aims. The combined use of historical evidence and philosophic analytic tools provides the relevant background for the problematization and reconstruction of education and educational reforms in Ghana.

The following section shows how I work with available evidence and develop the key concepts of the thesis. The discussions are presented in one subsection, under the heading, conceptual analysis. It covers the broad spectrum of the kind of work that is be done in the thesis.

### **Conceptual analysis**

Conceptual analysis enables me to provide a critical analysis of my concerns while situating it in Ghana's unique history. At the conceptual level, three things happen: concept assessment, concept development and concept interpretation. They happen within a specific context as provided by, and in, documentary sources. Though philosophers including philosophers of education, do not do empirical work (Noddings,

1995), they rely on empirical data (in this case historical documentation) to authenticate and legitimize their discourse. My engagement with aims talk, as performative practice, enables me to go beyond mere analysis to seek alternative action in the pursuance of educational reforms in Ghana. The emphasis is on beseeching educators and policy makers to rethink educational aims and to be guided by such conceptions when seeking change in education.

The choice of method is based on the belief that what happens in institutions, including schools, society, policy, curriculum, is a function of the beliefs, ideas, and assumptions inherent in institutionalized systems. Our conceptual structures, to a large extent, frame policy and practice. It is important to be aware of such structures when initiating change. If reforms are to be successful they must be attentive to the conceptual relationships that underlie the call for change and how they influence the reform process and educational practice. Conceptual analysis opens possibilities for questioning these relationships. It undertakes a critical analysis of the relationships in ordinary language use and their implications (Noddings, 1995). In the end new concepts are developed as one assesses and interprets old ones.

The analysis in this thesis involves a combined use of the three phases of historical and conceptual analysis. It begins with historical assessment of the reform and supporting documents in order to show how the democratic and transformative goals are discussed and pursued in the reforms process. This is followed by an assessment of the success of the reforms on their own terms. Here, the gap between educational policy and practice is depicted. A conceptual analysis of “transmission”, “transformation” and

“educational aims” is undertaken, illustrated, and the hypothesis that a limited notion or weak version of democracy in the reform policies can be postulated as a significant factor in the reform demise. Finally, from the assessments and interpretations of the works of Dewey (1938/66), on aims, Freire (1970/73) on dialogues, and Ayim (1997) on talk, aims talk is developed as an alternate mode for re-interpreting educational reforms in Ghana.

Whether aimed at concept development, assessment and/or interpretation, conceptual analysis calls for a rigorous criticism of the explicit and implicit meanings of key terms. It reveals tensions and limitations in order to make clear how the concepts function in ordinary language. Conceptual analysis seeks an understanding of what the concept can and can not do. In the end, it clarifies and regulates conceptual practice. Conceptual analysis leads to the illumination of concepts and issues, thus making it possible for complex analysis. Such illumination in turn makes it possible for genuine assessments and interpretations to be made and new concepts to be developed (Coombs & Daniels, 1991). These conceptions guide the development and use of the central metaphor of this thesis, aims talk.

As the thesis develops, the distinctions between concept assessment, interpretation, development become invisible. In fact they happen concurrently. For instance, the development of the concept, aims talk, necessitates the use of assessment and interpretation skills. Also, the work does not end after the concept has been developed; the discussions move on to show how it functions in the context of reforms. This, again, leads to re-assessment and re-interpretation of the metaphor.

Through conceptual analysis possibilities are revealed for examining the reforms in Ghana in new and authentic ways that can reasonably be expected to improve the performance of reforms. For instance through such analysis attention is drawn to the fact that aims need not center on ends only but on ends and means. Also, it is revealed that the discourse on aims enjoins paying attention to democratic ideals such that education assumes a transformative and democratic form. Conceptual analysis, however, has its own limitations. In my use of conceptual analysis, I am aware of inherent difficulties such as the tendency to over/underestimate and/or misrepresent opinions expressed in reform documents. A conscious attempt, therefore, is made to minimize and/or overcome such difficulties by constantly comparing primary and secondary sources. It is hoped that, in the end, a fair representation of the expressed views is presented.

Coombs and Daniels(1991) provide a view on the import of conceptual analysis, which fits into my own thinking about the possibilities of, and the need to engage in, conceptual analysis. They argue that:

if our conceptual structures lack logical coherence, blur important distinctions, or create useless dichotomies, or if we understand them so poorly that we are unable to translate them adequately into research instruments and policy prescriptions, curricular policies and research studies will fail to be fruitful.

Coombs and Daniels show the relationship between theory and practice and how our thought patterns can affect what we do or not do. The assertion by Coombs and Daniels, I think, hints at a failure to match educational policy with practice and to match

democratic ends with democratic needs. My own discussions are guided by a need to circumvent such occurrence. Through critical assessments and interpretations of the Ghanaian reform initiatives in the light of educational aims, the attention of policy makers and reformers is redirected to new thinking that can inform both educational policy making and practice. As an interpretative mode, conceptual analysis reshapes our thinking and belief systems, provides meaning, facilitates consciousness-raising and provides a basis for developing criteria for fashioning educational reforms that can meet the needs and aspirations of the Ghanaian people.

### **Conclusion**

It is hoped that the alternative discussions of educational reforms provided in this thesis can be useful to Ghanaian educators, politicians, bureaucrats and educational financiers. It is hoped, as well, that this category of participants will appreciate the adverse effects of domination and, on that basis, begin to act in the spirit of good talk by making spaces available for all other participants to problematize their own realities and contribute to their own and the society's democratic and transformative process.

In addition, it is hoped that attention will be directed to the democratization of reform and educational processes. It is my belief that the continual attention to physical input and isolation of educational systems from policy and decision making has resulted in the dismal performance of reforms. I argue, therefore, that if Ghana's reforms are to be successful, there is a need not only to adopt policies and decisions that seek to democratize and transform education but also to change attitudes and procedures when initiating and negotiating reforms.



I also hope that aims talk can become a significant element of reform discourse, and that it can be made an integral part of the quest for a democratic and transformative education in Ghana. Aims talk, as a dynamic and performative engagement, focuses on all actors, connects ends and means, and provides direction for education and educational reform processes. Such dynamism shifts the perception of reforms as institutional/political actions, where reforms are initiated top-down, as sets of procedures or actions to be followed, to a perception of reforms as educational projects, where all interested parties (policy makers, educators/teachers, parents, teachers and learners) collaborate to promote change in the educational system (Freire, 1970). The significance of aims talk lies in its ability to democratize and make reforms sensitive to national, societal and individual needs rather than compliance to external demands.

Finally, my engagement in aims talk lies in the alternate option that it provides for initiating reforms that are dynamic and culturally/community appropriate, without rigid compliance to external directives. Like Dewey (1966), I am concerned about aims in education as they are set by forces proximally distant from the system and a given community, and as such, seek a complementary role for all interested parties in the reform process.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN GHANA**

#### **Introduction**

In the last three decades, Ghanaians have witnessed three major attempts to restructure the education system in order to chart a new system that is democratic and transformative. These three periods of reform, the Dzobo reforms of 1975, the Anfom reforms of 1987, and the Basic Education Sector Improvement Programme (1996 - 2000), are the object of my attention in this chapter. I argue that these reform attempts have not been successful, particularly with respect to two themes: democracy and transformation. Attempts to democratize education have centered on the equalization of educational opportunities while efforts to transform have focused exclusively on changing classroom practices. Such reductionism has resulted in reforms that are dictated externally and are controlled by an elite group of bureaucrats, politicians, financiers and leaders of recognized institutions. Neglected in the process, I argue, are the many teachers, learners, and parents who have central roles to play if Ghanaian education reforms are to be successful.

Various accounts, comprised of primary reform documents, personal experience, and secondary literature written by, or in consultation with, Ghanaian educational theorists, are examined to show how the reforms discuss the question of democracy and point to a shift away from transmissive education toward transformation. Each of the eras is characterized in terms of the political contexts out of which they emerge, the types of administrative control involved, membership on the reform commission(s), and

by their published mandate. The nature of their initiation at the national and local levels, and the effects of this implementation upon educational practice and public opinion also are discussed.

A number of issues emerge from these documents. They include exclusive (elitist) participation in the reform processes, top-down approach to policy and implementation, examination-oriented curricula and pedagogy which emphasize teacher and text dominance to the detriment of more active forms of learner engagement, the encouragement of "packaged" (preset) curricular materials, and coercive external influences on the reform process, both political and financial in nature. The overall effect of these issues is constraint. I conclude that the reforms fail to meet their democratic and transformative goals.

#### **Educational reform initiatives (1970 to present)**

Educational reform in Ghana since the 1970's, has involved restructuring the educational system to meet the turn of the century educational demands of a growing Ghanaian society (Ghana, 1996a, Ghana, 1996d; Ghana, 1994a, Education Commission (EC), 1986; Education Advisory Committee (EAC), 1972). The initiatives have been directed toward charting an educational system that is democratic, insofar as it is functional and sensitive to Ghanaian conditions and accessible to all Ghanaian children irrespective of their geographical and socio-economic backgrounds (Ghana, 1996a; Ghana, 1995; Fobi, Koomson & Godwyll, 1995, Ghana, 1994a, b; EC, 1986; EAC, 1972). In addition, reform initiatives have been directed toward transformative education insofar as they have called upon education to prepare students to become

whole and self-directed learners who can initiate and negotiate change and contribute to the social transformation of the Ghanaian society (World Bank (WB), 1995; Antwi, 1992a; Bridges, 1989; EC, 1986; EAC, 1972).

Two major attempts have been made to reform education since the beginning of the 1970's. These are the 1975 (Dzobo) and 1987 (Anfom) reforms. In fact, the main reform was the 1975 Reforms. The 1987 reforms were embarked upon a decade later to redress problems that the 1975 reforms had encountered (Fobi et al., 1995; Antwi, 1992a; EC, 1986). This second wave of reforms assumed more radical dimensions with greater emphasis on the transformation of the educational system. (Ghana, 1996a, 1994b; Fobi et al. 1995, Ghana, 1995).

The 1990's have seen another wave of reforms in Ghana. This third wave of reforms has concentrated on addressing specific inadequacies of the system and problems in individual sectors (Ghana, 1996a; Fobi et al., 1995). One example is *The Basic Education Sector Improvement Programme*, commonly known as the FCUBE (Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education). This sector reform (FCUBE) is part of the broader national reform (1987 reforms), and as such they run side by side.

In the discussions that follow, I examine each of the three reforms in order to show how democracy and transformation are reflected in them. My observations lead me to believe that while the reforms have made elaborate provisions for democratizing and transforming education in principle, these provisions were not implemented in the practice of educational reform. I suggest that a limited or weak view of democracy, one that emphasized accessibility and curriculum diversification to the exclusion of other

crucial elements of the democratic process, was to blame. Participant involvement, for example, has been defined in terms of representation, which I argue, is even sectional and thus reinforces dominant values in education. This limitation prevented system actors from getting involved actively in ways that could have promoted such critical democratic and transformative qualities as personal and social agency.

### **The 1975 Reforms**

The 1975 reforms were a result of efforts that had been initiated at the beginning of that decade to redeem a nearly collapsed educational system (Antwi, 1992a; McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975; EAC, 1972). The Ministry of Education (MOE), in an attempt to salvage the system, drafted some proposals for consideration (Nimako, 1976; EAC, 1972). At a 1972 public meeting in Accra, the national capital, on the state of the nation's education, an Education Advisory Committee was appointed to study the Ministry's proposals. By October of that year, the EAC had presented a report which contained a number of proposals. Some of them were aimed at improving access to schools and diversifying curricula to meet the wide-ranging characteristics of Ghanaian children. Other recommendations called for improved teaching and learning such as would make learners active constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients. These recommendations were accepted in principle by the Ministry as the basis of the structure and content of a new educational system; however, they were implemented in only a small number of schools as part of a pilot project.

In the discussions below, I present an analysis of the political and administrative contexts within which the 1975 reforms were initiated. I also consider the membership

of the EAC, the committee's reported goals and strategies, and a summary of the results.

**Political context.** The origins of the 1975 reforms have been traced to the beginning of the decade when the country was under the civilian rule of the second republican administration (Antwi, 1992a). This administration, which came into office after the 1969 elections and was headed by K. A. Busia, made a number of moves to reform education. For instance, in 1971 alone, two Committees - the Joint Committee on Education and the Education Sector Committee - were appointed to review education and report for improvements (EAC, 1972). Their two separate reports were presented in the same year but it is not clear what was done with them. It is known, however, that before the civilian administration was overthrown by a military regime in January 1972, the MOE was working on fresh proposals for reform (EAC, 1972). Antwi (1992a) explains that the popular support for reform of the existing educational system provided the new rulers with an opportunity to legitimize their own authority and to court public support. As a result, they made the proposals available for public discussion in May 1972.

**Administrative control.** It has been asserted that, since independence, Ghana has maintained a centralized system of education (Antwi, 1992a; Atta, 1992a, b). Attempts to decentralize have centered on day to day administration and dissemination of information and not major policy and decision making such as the initiation of reforms. The administration throughout the first reform period falls in line with this claim.

The government department in charge of education at the time was called the

Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (EAC, 1972). I do not know whether the department carried the same title before the military take over, it is however known that the head of the Education department had to change title from Minister under civilian rule to Commissioner under military rule (Antwi, 1992a). The Commissioner headed the administrative machinery, was responsible for education, and was accountable for all policy matters on education throughout the country.

Antwi (1992a) asserted that “notwithstanding the concentration of power in the hands of the Minister, the Ministry’s direct concerns in education centered only on general policy” (p. 72). Responsibilities for such areas as curriculum, inspection, general supervision of schools, provision and management of schools were the responsibility of the Ghana Education Service (GES), a national professional body, and its decentralized regional, district, and circuit offices. The GES was formed in 1975 to unify pre-university educational administration (Antwi, 1992a,b; Nimako, 1976; McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975). Until then, educational management and administration rested with the Ministry of Education, local education authorities, and religious units.

Dictated by the EAC and administered by the MOE and the GES, the 1975 reforms can be seen not to have been negotiated among all citizens, though it was asserted that there was national support for educational reform (Fobi et al., 1995). Apart from the negotiations which occurred at the committee level, the policies and decisions that were taken were done at the Ministerial level in liaison with the GES and passed down to the classrooms. Instead of serving as general guidelines, these reforms became

“packages” that had to be implemented. As “packages”, they had been received by educational institutions, teachers and students as blueprints simply to be followed with no room for adaptations.

**Membership.** There were twenty-two members on the EAC. They included one representative from each of the three existing Universities; five representatives from the teachers’ union (GNAT); three representatives from educational units; four from religious groups; one from the Ministry of Local Government; one from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR); one from the Trades Union Congress (TUC); one from the Ghana Chamber of Commerce (who could not attend); and two members who represented parents (EAC, 1972). It was chaired by Rev. N. K. Dzobo, a Ghanaian religious Minister, educator, and university professor. Apart from the two parents, all other representations were from identifiably elite institutions. In other words, they were people who had had the best of Ghanaian education.

The EAC (1972) report is silent on the selection process for Committee members; it states only that members were appointed by the Commissioner of Education, Sports and Culture, a functionary of the ruling government. Some evidence regarding this selection process can be gleaned from other reports. Nimako (1976) asserts that the EAC was made up of peoples of all shades of opinion. The extent to which this assertion is true is, however, subject to contest. In the first place the meeting was held at the national capital; no other meeting was held outside the capital for the participation of rural populations, whose interests seemed to have instigated the reforms. Education in the capital and other cities in Ghana is comparatively better off in



terms of resources, both human and physical, than in the rural areas (Opare, 1991). Second, those who participated were, themselves, highly educated technocrats who were representatives of organized groups. Third, there is evidence to suggest reluctance on the Ministry's part to listen to the views of the wider public. Earlier in 1970/71, a Joint Committee, comprised of teacher representatives and Ministry officials, was set up to "review the educational system and propose any necessary reforms" (EAC, p. 4). This Joint Committee presented its report in 1971. A second report (the Konuah report), was presented the same year by the Education Sector Committee of the Medium Term Development Plan. Membership of this second Committee included Ministry officials, "representatives of organizations interested in education and other private individuals" (EAC, p. 4).

Though it mentioned the two 1971 reports in passing, the EAC went on to state that "in May 1972 fresh proposals on the reform of pre-university education were issued by the Ministry of Education" (p.4). That fresh proposals were made after two consecutive reports had been presented the year before, suggests that the recommendations of these more public groups were not accepted by the ruling government. The fresh proposals that were made in May, 1972, called for diversification of the curriculum to include practical subjects. At a public meeting in June 1972, these fresh proposals were presented to the Ghanaian public for comment. The need to diversify curricula was to figure in the report of the Committee that was appointed to work out the details for reform. It was at this meeting that the EAC was selected. Although, the EAC (1972) report indicates that views were sought from the public, the

consultation process was not discussed. There was no indication of who was contacted and by what means, or by what means people were elected to participate.

**Mandate.** The EAC's (1972) terms of reference were:

to comment on the new structure and content as contained in the Ministry's proposals on education, and to recommend to the Commissioner for Education, Culture, and Sports, any necessary innovations in our pre-university education which Ghana can afford to finance from her own limited resources and which, at the same time, will eliminate some of the present inadequacies in the system and free it to meet present economic and social needs of Ghana. (p. 5)

In an introduction to the report (i.e. EAC, 1972) a general concern was expressed about the need to define educational objectives to meet the demands and needs of a changing Ghanaian society and to chart a new system of education that could redress the defects of the existing education system (EAC, 1972). Writing about these objectives, the EAC focused on problems relating to political independence. These included: the development of national potentials and consciousness, the development and modernization of traditions and culture, and the development of a "new Ghanaian" who was to be sound in mind, body and spirit. The EAC asserted that the educational system could be used to realize the broad national goals that had been outlined but they claimed that "the old-fashioned system of formal education" that was in place could not be expected to bring about these changes. They said that, on the whole, the system had been found "ineffective in meeting the present economic, social and political needs of a

fast growing Ghanaian society” (p. 1). Hence, they advocated a new system that could promote national potential, emphasize the development of national consciousness, be progressive, and could lead to the development of the whole learner. These needs, the EAC argued, would require a new system of education that was more interactive and could cater to the diverse potentials of learners. They pointed out that the old system of education could not meet the needs of the changing needs of Ghanaian people.

The defects identified by the EAC included: elitism, a lack of concern for the needs of society, and excessive length of pre-university education. The EAC argued that these defects were to a large extent the result of an undemocratic education that favored an elite few to the neglect of the majority. They asserted that it privileged intellectual work at the expense of skills and attitudinal development and encouraged rote learning and memorization instead of teaching learners how to learn. It was, they concluded, meeting neither individual nor societal needs. It also failed to provide for the needs of children of varying intellectual, socio-economic and geographical backgrounds (EAC, 1972). The irony here is these same elite groups, as always, continued to spearhead and chart the course of reforms.

**Nature of the initiative.** The structure and content of education prescribed by the EAC was aimed at restructuring the system in order to resolve the problems of the existing undemocratic education system and its outdated transmissive educational practices (Antwi, 1992a; EAC, 1972). The goal was to chart a new system of education that was sensitive to the changing individual and societal needs of Ghanaians and that could prepare learners to facilitate and support social change (EAC, 1972). The new

system was approved by the ruling government in 1974 and adopted for implementation on a pilot basis the following year.

The reformed system had two focal points: first, to restructure the existing educational structure by reducing the number of years spent in pre-university education for university-bound students, and expanding training opportunities for those who were not university-bound. Second, it was to reform educational content by diversifying curricula to cater for the diverse potentials of learners. Innovations in teaching and learning were directed towards shifting from transmissive to transformative practices (EAC, 1972).

The EAC (1972) argued that the length of pre-university education was too long and favored only those who were intellectually advantaged and motivated. It did not favor rural communities in particular, whose economies were skill-based and who could not afford the financial obligations of a prolonged education. Appendix I shows the structure of education prior to the 1975 reforms. It depicts a total of seventeen years in pre-university education (i.e. six years of primary education, four years of middle, and seven years of secondary education) and three to four years of university education. If one were fortunate enough to have a continuous education, one would have to be twenty-six or twenty seven years old before getting a bachelor's degree.

To redress these problems, the EAC suggested that the length of pre-university education be reduced from a maximum of seventeen years to thirteen years (i.e. six years of primary, three years junior secondary, and four years senior secondary education) for university bound students (Dare, 1995; Fobi et al. 1995; Antwi, 1992a;

Nimako, 1976; EAC, 1972). Thus, the number of years spent in basic school was reduced by one year and the last three years of basic education were upgraded to include lower secondary studies. The introduction of secondary level studies at the basic level was intended to provide an opportunity for those who could not continue schooling after basic education to upgrade their basic skills. For those who continued on into senior secondary schools, the period of time spent studying towards the General Certificate of Education (GCE) at the Ordinary level and then advanced certificate, was reduced to a total of four years. Tertiary education remained the same, ranging from three to four years (see Appendix II).

In order to prepare teachers to meet the demands of the reforms, teacher education was to be restructured. This affected basic teacher education in the main. The existing four-year post-middle colleges were intended to concentrate on preparing teachers for primary classrooms while three year post-secondary colleges were restructured to concentrate on preparing teachers for junior secondary classes (EAC, 1972).

The new content of education was to introduce significant curricular changes. Practical and manual skills were emphasized at all levels to cater to learners of diverse orientations and characteristics (Dare, 1995; Nimako, 1976; EAC, 1972). Part of the move to democratize education involved attracting children who otherwise might not find school interesting due to its traditional emphasis on knowledge acquisition. These changes also were aimed at equipping school leavers, especially those who could not make it to the universities, with employable skills that would enable them to enter the

world of work or go for further training at the end of the designated exit points. (Dare, 1995; Antwi, 1992a; EAC, 1972). There was an overall emphasis, then, on discouraging drop outs and encouraging preparation for employment.

At the junior secondary level, children were to be exposed to pre-vocational courses. At the senior secondary level, learners were to build on what they had acquired at the lower level (EAC, 1972). On the whole, curricula were to be diversified to take care of academic knowledge, attitudinal development and practical skills training (EAC, 1972). Teaching and learning at all levels were aimed at involving actively individual learners in their work. Emphasis was to be placed on the development of skills (inquiry and creativity) and attitudes (appreciation, adaptation and commitment to change, desire for self improvement, cooperation, healthy living, respect for truth curiosity, interdependence and the dignity of labor) (EAC, 1972). The emphasis was on helping learners to *learn how to learn* and to become *continuing* and *self-directed* learners. Classroom practices were, thus, to be changed from “telling and repeating” to emphasize more interaction between teachers and learners as they construct their own knowledge. Teachers were urged to desist from the use of transmissive practices and to adopt transformative ones (EAC, 1972).

Pre-service teacher training for all levels of education was to be re-oriented to reflect these new goals. Teachers were to learn how to create interactive and permissive environments for learning to take place. In-service teachers were to be re-trained to meet the new demands of the reforms. Teacher training itself, pre-service or in-service, was to be interactive so that teachers could acquire hands-on skills for their own careers

(EAC, 1972)

Concerns also were expressed about the examination system. The EAC's report on the selection and certification system identified some criticisms of the existing examination system:

- a. examinations were used as yardsticks for grouping children at a rather tender age into poor and good candidates for education;
- b. some pupils, particularly those in private schools, were denied the opportunity to get a general education because the institutions coached them only in the examinable subjects.
- c. the existing mechanism, the Common Entrance Examinations (CEE), was inadequate for measuring the education of learners (EAC, 1972).

The CEE tested students only in three subjects: Mathematics, English language and General Knowledge. All other subjects were not tested. These other subjects formed the internal subjects and were tested in schools only and not at the national level. This led to less emphasis or even total neglect of the non-tested subjects. In addition, the objective and multiple choice techniques that were used in the national examinations made it easier for learners to master texts and encouraged rote learning instead of teaching and learning for understanding.

The CEE was a selective, nation-wide, one-time only examination. Upper class schools selected students according to their scores (Antwi, 1992a). Students with higher scores got admitted into the better equipped top schools while students with lower scores entered lesser known schools. The examination system, thus, reinforced

educational inequalities by emphasizing “academic” subjects only. Teachers, learners, and parents used all available means to get learners to score higher marks in the examinations so that their chances could improve. This led to a lot of coaching in schools and even to the opening of special private schools that specialized in coaching students to the examinations. The CEE, thus, encouraged the use of transmissive practices such as rote learning, teaching to texts and teacher dominance (EAC, 1972).

Based on these criticisms the EAC recommended that “selection examinations should be designed so as to cater for all aspects of education to be followed at the secondary level” (EAC, 1972, p. 23). In addition, it recommended the establishment of a National Examination and Certification Board and added that such a Board should be charged with working out the details of a more adequate examination process.

**Effects.** The EAC (1972) showed concern for the history of poor implementation of past educational reforms and urged that steps be taken to better that record. They identified several factors contributing to the problem. These included: insufficient financing, inadequate teacher training programs, administrative bureaucracy, conservatism on the part of the educational system as an establishment, the blocking of change by certain personalities and pressure groups, a conservative public colonial attitude toward elitist formal academic work, and inadequate innovations in textbooks and other instructional materials to reflect anticipated curricular changes. Despite these comments, however, their own report suffered a similar fate as it languished for two years before it was adopted. Implementation of the recommended changes began the following year only on an experimental basis. *The reforms were*



*never fully implemented* (Dare, 1995; EC, 1986).

Following the EAC report, some critics asserted that the government of the day lacked the will-power and resources to push the reforms through (Tamakloe, 1992; Aboagye, 1992). Both Tamakloe and Aboagye, Ghanaian educators, argued that the implementors of the reforms faced problems such as a lack of resources, underprepared teachers, and the negative attitude of the Ghanaian public toward manual skills training. On the whole, the Government of the day could not fulfill its promise to provide a democratic and transformative education. The elaborate proposals that the EAC made by way of policy planning remained largely on paper and were effective only in the experimental schools that were opened in the nine regional capitals at the time. By implication, for the larger majority of Ghanaian schools, the existing undemocratic and transmissive practices were continued. Even for those pilot schools, the necessary structures to back the changes were not available.

The 1975 reforms were dependent on already limited local financial resources to fund the project. The EAC mandate itself was limited to making such recommendations as "Ghana could afford to finance from her own limited resources" (p. 5). The EAC report did not discuss the details of finances, as such, and it is not known how much was required to meet the changes that were envisaged. Financial constraints affected the provision of the infrastructure, materials and equipment required for the more diversified curriculum of the pilot schools.

Such implementation, as did occur, involved the gradual phasing out of the traditional middle and continuation classes. These were to be replaced by junior

secondary classes. In theory, graduates of the JSS were to move on into Senior secondary classes for their final pre-university preparations. In actuality, no senior secondary schools were put into operation. Adding insult to injury, students who graduated from the pilot programs were required to enter the existing secondary schools at the third year level. In the end, then, students in the pilot program were held effectively back for a year. Once returned to the traditional secondary schools system, they followed the traditional curriculum and completed as ordinary level students and not senior secondary school (SSS) leavers. Those who qualified entered the traditional sixth form for advanced level studies. For these pilot school students, then, the only benefits they received from the educational reforms were the acceleration of their preparation for university by two years and a diversified curriculum which could not even be carried through to the next level.

The examination system saw some changes such as the introduction of continuous assessments but these were not enough to change the system as a whole. Continuous assessment methods were discussed at all levels but, generally speaking, were not accepted. Although teachers were encouraged to engage in formative evaluation there is evidence to believe that such a focus was not taken seriously; internal assessments did not affect students' final performance records nor did they influence their certification. The one-time only examination, with its concomitant teacher/text dominance, rote learning and memorization continued at all levels. The ailing educational system could not support the demands of formative assessments as they required extra time, materials, and expertise which were lacking (Akwesi, 1994;

Amedahe, 1989, Etsey, 1992).

Between 1979 and 1981, a new civilian administration, headed by Hilla Limann, made further attempts to democratize education. Two policies, in particular, aimed at that goal: deboardinization (i.e. an emphasis on day schools in order to improve community participation and affordability) and curriculum enrichment (i.e. cultural studies) (Antwi, 1992a). The deboardinization policy led to the opening of community secondary schools which were day schools that derived their populations, teachers and students, from the cluster of communities that served as the catchment area. They also derived their resources (financial and physical) in part from the communities and were expected to adapt their school curricula to life in the communities. Existing secondary boarding schools also were expanded to recruit day students.

The Limann initiatives of the late 1970's had an added dimension of improving community involvement especially for the new community day schools. A major aspect of this community involvement drive was the sensitization of education to community living. The Curriculum Enrichment Programme, which was initiated during this period, stressed the teaching of cultural and environmental studies in schools. Local communities provided resource persons and cultural sites for the studies. The initiatives were vital but short-lived; they lasted only as long the rulers themselves. In December of 1981, another military coup ended both the administration and their forward looking reforms.

The 1975 reforms were thus not were successful. The EAC (1972), commenting about the dismal performance of past reform initiatives, pointed out that the lack of

progress was a function of public negative attitudes towards change. They expressed concern about the conservative attitudes, especially of the elite, towards attempts to change curricula from a purely academic focus to a more diversified and skill-based curriculum. The EAC observed that some of the people who resisted change in the past even included personnel from the Education Ministry and the Central Government (EAC, 1972).

After a decade of reform initiatives, Fobi et al. (1995), made the following observation in a report on educational development in Ghana:

Ghana's educational system in the 1980's was in near collapse and viewed as dysfunctional in relation to the goals and aspirations of the country. Academic standards, support for teachers, instructional materials, school buildings, classrooms, and equipment had declined for lack of financing and management. By 1985 the system could be described as "clinically dead". (p. 6)

Fobi et al's assertion confirmed the EAC's fears of a decade earlier. In fact, the 1975 education reforms did not seem to have achieved anything beyond introducing an educational structure that ran parallel to the old system (refer to appendix III), and an educational policy that was effective only in a handful of experimental schools. There was more confusion in the system than correction (EC, 1986). Since the policies and plans set out in the 1975 reforms could not be fully implemented, inequalities remained in the system. The traditional transmissive practices also remained in use. The education system was, thus, unable to live up to its goals and aspirations (Fobi, et al., 1995).

### **The 1987 Reforms**

The Education Commission (EC) was constituted in 1984 to review and report on basic, teacher, technical/vocational, and agricultural education in Ghana (EC, 1986). The EC's first report on basic education was presented in 1986. The report was, generally speaking, accepted for implementation the following year. A new political climate had resulted in a number of socio-economic changes which also affected education. The new revolutionary leaders called for radical changes that were aimed at democratizing and transforming education. A speech by the head of state, J. J. Rawlings' as reported by Fobi et al. (1995), sums up his idea of a democratic and transformative education.

The fundamental message of his [Rawlings] inaugural address was that our children must "grow up free from the stultifying influence of the educational oppression which has prevailed for far too long". He observed that a system which denies the majority of children equal educational opportunities, which values conformity before creativity and which encourages self-interest cannot be described as anything other than oppressive. He, therefore, charged the commission to "formulate recommendations of national policy on education such as will enable the realisation of the objectives of the revolutionary transformation of the society in the interest of social justice". (cited in Fobi et al, 1995, p. 66).

Chairman Rawlings' address spelled out the type of education anticipated, and criticized the "old education". The need for equal opportunities and creative development figured in his idea of a democratic and transformative education. These

ideas were carried through in the reform policies that followed. It is worth noting that Chairman Rawlings' comments came ten years after the implementation of the 1975 reforms.

Implicit in Chairman Rawlings' remarks is an indication of the kind of education desired to ensure what he called "revolutionary transformation". He identified three aspects of educational oppression characteristic of the existing (old) educational system: oppression as denial of equal opportunity; oppression that occurs as conformity is valued before creativity; and oppression that stems from the system's encouragement of self-interest. Chairman Rawlings asserted that education that is "non-oppressive" which is to say "transformative or democratic", values creativity and promotes social justice. It was against the background of the head of state's exhortations that the EC (1986) set itself towards the task of charting a new educational system.

The main shape of the 1987 reforms resembled closely that of the 1975 reforms. The structure and content of education, generally speaking, reflected the same goals of democratizing and transforming education and entailed the restructuring of the structure and content of education so as to diversify the curriculum, promote more active learning and reduce the length of pre-university education. Public participation in the reform process was improved, though still representational.

In the discussions that follow, I examine the administrative and political contexts within which the reforms were embarked upon. These had a strong impact on the general approach to, and performance of, the reforms. Also, I review the mandate, membership, content, and structure of the initiatives in order to illustrate how Chairman

Rawlings' exhortations were interpreted in the reforms. I conclude the review with an examination of the results of the initiatives as they were implemented.

**Political context.** In December, 1981, the third republican civilian administration was forced out of office by a military coup (Antwi, 1992a). The new military rulers declared immediately a revolution which, they asserted, was going to enforce radical changes in Ghanaian social living. Their key political slogans were "accountability" and "development". Fobi et al. (1995) assert that education was seen as the vehicle for achieving the revolutionary military regime's agenda of promoting social and economic transformation. Though the military junta gradually recruited civilian members into their administration the radical changes they initiated in the political, economic and social spheres of Ghanaian life remained (Fobi et al., 1995).

A major part of these changes was the Economic Recovery Program (ERP) which was embarked on in 1983 with financial aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF)/World Bank (WB) (Fobi et al, 1995; Antwi, 1992a). According to Fobi et al, the IMF/WB demanded a number of reforms, including some in education, in exchange for financial support. Thus, with an already decaying educational system and against the backdrop of external pressure, the military rulers embarked on fresh initiatives. The EC was appointed a year following the initiation of the ERP and their report came two years later. Thus, the EC report took a far longer gestation period than did the EAC report. One year after it was presented, the EC report was adopted for implementation. Writing in 1992, Antwi said that the then Secretary of Education, Harry Sawyer, in an address at the National Delegates Conference of the National

Association of Teachers in January 1987, admitted to having implemented the reforms hastily. Antwi (1992a) went on to speculate that the Secretary gave:

the impression that the government was either trying to forestall the abandonment of the programme or was trying to meet the deadlines set by the WB for the approval of aid. ... He suggested that if the Provisional National Defense Council could not [have told] the donor agencies to give more time for pre-implementation work, "we ought to have [had] the courage at least to explain the rush to our own people" (p. 50).

The Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) was the name of the ruling government. Sawyer's comments suggest that pressure was applied by the World Bank during the implementation phase of the 1987 reforms. I believe these pressures were a factor in the continued attempt to centralize education and also to control policy from the top.

**Administrative control.** Administratively, the Secretary of Education, acting on behalf of the ruling government as head of the MOE, had the final say in all educational matters in the country. The Secretary, working with his/her deputies reserved the right, as in the 1975 reforms, to make major policy decisions regarding education in the country. The Ghana Education Service Council (GESC), which liaised between the Ministry and the GES was abolished (Antwi, 1992a). Several appeals from teachers and teacher organizations in the country to government requesting a reconstitution of the GESC went unheeded. It was argued that the government wanted to deal with the GES directly, hence the tilt towards more centralization. Consequently, the powers of the



GES were expanded although it was itself a centralized department. Antwi (1992a) asserted that since January 1981 the GES had been responsible for all administrative matters. He wrote that:

the functions of the GES are centralised and shared among the directorates at the national headquarters of the Service. Accordingly major policy decisions which are taken at the national headquarters are passed down through the regional directors of education and their assistant directors and made to apply to all educational institutions at the pre-university level.

(p. 74)

Regional offices of the GES were decentralized but their powers were limited. According to Antwi the decentralized regional offices served only as information dissemination points as far as policy and decision making were concerned; they only made decisions about non-sensitive issues within their jurisdiction. Thus, as in the previous reforms, the 1987 reforms continued to be controlled rigidly from the top. Teachers, learners, parents and even the decentralized departments were instructed to implement the reforms *in toto*. There was no room for negotiations. The regional directors and the district assistant directors are empowered to make on-the-spot educational decisions relating to transfers of teachers within the region, inspection of first-cycle schools and in-service education of teachers only.

**Membership.** The report of the EC showed that it was made up of local and international members (EC, 1986). Although the names of members were provided,

their identities and the process by which they were selected were not shown in the report (EC, 1986). We learn, then, that Dr. Evans Anfom, chaired the Commission, and that there were sixteen other members, plus three international consultants. There were twenty members in all, six of whom were reported to have been unable to participate in the assignment. Those who could not attend included all three international consultants, Chinua Achebe of Nigeria and Ngugi Wa'Thiongo of Kenya, both published authors and African educators, and Paulo Freire of Brazil.

The EC report claims that various procedures were employed to collect and coordinate views for the reforms (EC, 1986). For instance, members of the EC visited a number of primary, junior secondary, middle, secondary, vocational training, day care and technical institutions, all of which were situated within the Accra-Tema metropolis and surrounding area (EC, 1986). Schools from Ghana's interior were not covered. Also, a number of individuals and representatives from selected recognizable institutions were interviewed. Those interviewed came from institutions which had vested interests in the process: education units, the national union of Ghanaian students, teachers unions, the examinations council, trades unions, governmental departments, and youth groups (EC, 1986). Most of these institutions were situated in the national capital. Questionnaires were sent out to groups and individuals. Other responses to invitations to participate, which came in the form of memoranda, were from the same recognizable institutions, except for a few regional and district office representations (EC, 1986).

The EC report, thus, drew upon documents from past reforms, submissions in

the form of memoranda and educational literature, interactions in selected schools, and responses to the questionnaires. This attempt to include views from different institutions by the use of diverse methods was a remarkable improvement on the EAC report which was centered on the Committee's work.

**Mandate.** The EC was given the task of reviewing past educational initiatives, appraising the 1975 reforms and making "recommendations for the formulation of a national policy on education such as would enable the realization of the objectives of the revolutionary transformation of the society, and enhance the availability of educational facilities to the greatest extent possible" (Ghana, 1994a, p.1). The EC (1986), working to fulfill this national dream, raised issues about democratization and transformation of education. Concerns were expressed about educational inequality and insensitivity.

The EC (1986) report suggested that some sections of the population lacked educational opportunities while a few others had the best of Ghanaian education at the expense of the vast majority (EC, 1986). They wrote: "this grave social injustice needs to be urgently remedied by the provision, at all cost, of educational opportunities at the Basic Education level for all Ghanaian children, irrespective of social or economic status" (EC, 1986, p. 1). In response to these concerns, the EC recommendations were directed :

to ensure that the State provides universal, free and ultimately, compulsory education for all Ghanaian children who attain the age of 6 years for a stated number of years after which depending on their abilities

and capabilities, they may go on to further formal schooling, or into the world of work suitably prepared i. e. employable. (p. i - ii.)

The EC also recommended the involvement of local communities in the management and financing of Basic Education; they also proposed curricular changes aimed at qualitative improvements in educational standards (Fobi et al, 1995; Bridges, 1989; EC, 1986).

The EC mandate was influenced by pressures internal to the education system, as well as, public concerns. Fobi, et al.(1995) report that the system was unresponsive to the socio-economic changes taking place in the country because of the highly academic nature of its content, processes, and product” (p.64).

**Nature of the initiative.** The new structure and content of education that was prescribed was an adaptation of the system advocated in the 1975 reforms (EC, 1986). Some minor changes were made in terms of restructuring. On the whole, the general picture was the same: the length of pre-university education was reduced; curriculum was to be diversified, an emphasis was placed on interactive approaches to teaching and learning, and an attempt was made to equalize opportunities for all students to attend good schools (EC, 1986).

Appendix IV depicts the educational structure that the EC (1986) prescribed, and which is currently in use. It shows nine years of basic education for children ages six to fifteen, three years secondary (senior) and three to four years of tertiary (i.e. polytechnics, diploma colleges, universities) education. As in the 1975 reforms, there were exit points among the three levels of education. At each exit point similar

opportunities were provided. The main structural changes were made on the length of secondary and university education. The EAC (1972) recommended four years of senior secondary education, two of which were to be “senior secondary lower” and two of which were for “senior secondary upper”. The EC (1986) structure prescribed three years of senior secondary without any such divisions. The length of university education was to be four years (EC, 1986). Basic education remained the same for both reforms, that is nine years from ages six to fifteen, comprising six years primary and three years junior secondary school (EC, 1986). Basically the ideas remained the same, that is, to democratize and transform education. Both the EAC and the EC defined democracy in terms of equalization of educational opportunity (i.e. accessibility and diversification of curricula), and transformation, in terms of changes in classroom practices.

Content restructuring under the 1987 reform was similar to that of the 1975 reforms. The main emphasis was to diversify subject content to cover a wide range of subject fields. School curricula were to be amended to cater for the development of various faculties of individuals and to provide a broad-range of skills that would enable school leavers to function in various sectors of the economy and to contribute to social progress (EC, 1986). This meant paying attention to knowledge, skills training and attitudinal development.

Classroom learning and teaching was to be interactive and to emphasize meaning, understanding, problem-solving, and pupil activity. The EC (1986) made the following observation:

**It has come to the notice of the Commission that what goes on in our**

classrooms is the unalloyed class or “frontal” instruction. That is, the teacher lectures to his class, asks questions, and calls on individual pupils to answer them. The result is that self-activity and independent and creative work by pupils is extremely limited. (p. 26)

The EC, discounting these existing transmissive educational practices, envisaged an education system that would equip learners to become “living waters to a thirsty land” (EC, 1986). Like living waters, learners would have to possess the energies, exuberance, inquiry skills, and critical minds that would enable them to initiate and negotiate change on their own and to lead Ghana in its forward march. Learners were to be able to use their education to contribute effectively to the growing needs of the changing Ghanaian society. The existing system of education was thus found to be inadequate in meeting the educational needs of the “new educated” Ghanaian that was anticipated, and whose duty it was to inspire, lead, and transform society (Ghana, 1996a; Fobi et al, 1995; Ghana, 1994a).

Fobi et al. (1995) asserted that the huge expenditures and efforts on education were intended:

to ensure that teaching at the basic level does not generate into rote learning and memorization of facts and that teaching encourages inquiry, creativity, and manipulation of manual skills, teaching and education will be reoriented to imparting skills rather than purely academic knowledge, which by itself does not promote full development (p. 67).

Here, a way out of rote learning and memorization of facts, characteristic of

transmissive processes, is perceived to be skills development. The skills in question were not just manual or employable skills but learning skills (Bridges, 1989; EC, 1986). Instead of receiving and regurgitating facts, learners should learn how to turn facts into information and to generate and construct their own knowledge. The EC (1986) asserted that:

The role that is envisaged for teachers in Basic education is that of a more individualised approach to teaching, which calls for more work WITH pupils than work ON or FOR them. The teaching-learning encounter is expected to be characterised by emphasis on meaning and understanding, problem-solving, and pupil activity, rather than memorization and recall.

(p. 20, emphasis in original)

Teaching and learning had to take the form of “constant dialogue between them (learners) and their teacher” (EC, 1986, p. 26). Teachers must work *with* pupils and *not for* them.

Bridges (1989) alluded to a similar situation when he observed that the aims and principles were *action-oriented* and that they were *not just about knowing and valuing* but about *equipping students to do things* which will transform Ghanaian society. He added that it meant learning was not to be merely passive and receptive but interactive. Above all, he concluded, “this will require some radical readjustments in the traditional style of working with teachers” (p. 4). Bridges’ comment intimates the extent of change that is expected in order to meet the goals of the reforms.

In line with the expected change, teacher education was to be restructured to reflect the quality of teaching envisaged. Teachers were required to possess not only intellectual ability but also a command of their subject areas. Pre-service teacher training for basic school teaching was to be made available only in post-secondary institutions and opportunities were to be made available for the re-training of in-service teachers (EC, 1986). It was hoped that such efforts would lead to qualitative improvements in education.

Antwi (1992a), commenting on the teacher education aspect of the 1987 reforms, observed that “teacher education would be reshaped so that teachers would be taught the skills necessary for imparting enquiry and problem-solving methods and for encouraging creative learning rather than rote-learning among their pupils” (p.45). For Antwi, the onus was on teachers to bring the desired change. As a category of people who had perpetuated the old system, consciously or unconsciously, it was very important to tackle change with a critical and clear view of teacher role expectations.

The EC also was concerned about the examination system. They asserted that the external examination system compelled teachers to teach to examinations and made pupils study mainly for examinations (EC, 1986). They criticized the one-time only examination system and recommended continuous assessments, which they argued, were to be formative, diagnostic, evaluative and guidance oriented (Amedahe, 1989; EC, 1986).

**Effects.** The EC report was adopted immediately and implementation began the following year. In fact, some critics argued that the ruling government rushed the



reforms (Fobi et al., 1995; Antwi, 1992a). The EC's time table for implementation required that the new structure and content be used the following year starting with first graders, and that the old system be phased gradually out; however, this suggestion was turned around. The program was put into immediate use throughout the entire basic system. That meant students who had already advanced in the primary classes had to abandon the old system and join in at whatever level they had reached. The means for reaching these reforms are familiar because they were the same in 1975. They stemmed from the new government's need to legitimize their self-imposed governance.

Writing about the political context of the reforms, Fobi et. al. (1995) asserted that:

the new leaders saw education as the vehicle for achieving change and perceived that most Ghanaians supported this strategy, despite persistent opposition from the elite and the bureaucracy. ... To win political legitimacy, government decided to tackle what successive governments had accepted without success - a significant reform of the education sector.

(p. 64)

Fobi et al., (1995) confirm that the general public saw reform as a national emergency and that the self-imposed rulers capitalized on that public perception to foster their own need for recognition.

This time, however, there was added pressure from the International Monetary Fund /World Bank, the main financiers of the project (Fobi et al., 1995; Antwi, 1992a).

It also has been asserted that the ruling government was under pressure to meet deadlines. Both Antwi (1992a) and Fobi et al. (1995) write that the government had to ignore internal pressures in order to fulfill external demands from the IMF/WB. The need for immediate reform was thus also a function of external force. The loans that were contracted were given under terms that had to be met at all costs to the extent that even suggestions from the government appointed representatives were ignored and resistance was overlooked.

The loans were contracted to ensure that at least a minimum of infrastructure, equipment and other teaching/learning materials were available for nationwide distribution to schools (Fobi, et al., 1995, Ghana, 1994a; Ghana, 1994b). Unlike the 1975 reforms which had been required to work within the confines of local sources, the ruling government on this occasion had to rely on external sources of funding. The education sector received approximately US\$ 400 million in credits and grants between 1987 and 1994. It was one of the largest World Bank funded education programs in the world (Fobi et al., 1995). In 1995, it was asserted that an average of 24% of the annual government total expenditure over the preceding five years had been devoted to education, an amount that was equivalent to 4% of the gross national product (GDP) (Ghana, 1995). Thus, these financial commitments and the demands that came with them were significant; they led to the silencing of resistance from within the country.

Nonetheless, there was resistance from a number of recognizable groups. According to Fobi et al., (1995), there was general public dissatisfaction about the manner in which the reforms were initiated. This public, according to them, included the

Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS), the Bishops Conference (BC), and other professional bodies. Their displeasure centered on the level of consultation and system readiness. It is worth noting that these were the very groups that had been consulted during program development stage and that their resistance was about the manner of implementation and not the content.

Remarkable strides were made during the implementation stage with regard to the participation of system actors. The EC (1986) report gave indications of attempts to include people from the regions in the implementation process and used more means to collect data. Though I argue that these strategies focused on already recognizable groups and centered on representatives only, they were clearly an improvement on the previous reforms.

It also is significant that attempts were made by the EC to gather first hand information from schools though this also was limited to schools within the Accra-Tema metropolis and surrounding areas. No efforts were made to reach the interior, the already underprivileged areas whose plight educational democratization was intended to address. The implementation, however, did occur on a national basis. Unlike the 1975 reforms, it affected all schools and not just a handful of urban schools.

Though, I do not have the figures to show how the resources were distributed, at least for once in a long time, even schools in rural areas saw some renovations and had access to some form of school materials (Fobi et al., 1995; Ghana; 1995). Apart from these improvements in implementation, the structure and content of education remained

pretty much the same (Dare, 1995; Antwi, 1992a, b; EC, 1986).

In terms of examinations, there was more emphasis on continuous assessments; Amedahe (1995) asserts that since 1981 continuous assessment had become a significant part of the evaluation and certification mechanism in Ghanaian education. Teachers had been re-trained in the use of the new assessments and school supplies had been boosted. The CEE had been terminated. Although the one-time only General Certificate Examinations (GCE) existed, they were reserved for private students only. School-based examinations had been replaced by new mechanisms that included class assessments and national end of course examinations. Though this was a marked improvement on the CEE, within a high-stakes environment such as Ghana where education is virtually the only means for social progress, examinations continued to determine instruction. As long as educational opportunities remain unequal and students have to scramble for better schools, selection to those schools are based on performance in examinations, examinations will continue to have high stakes and as such dictate classroom activities. With an already established tradition, this will mean the crude transmissive methods will persist.

The performance of the 1987 reforms was assumed as part of the preparation for the Basic Sector reform in 1996. It was asserted that the quality of education had not changed much (Ghana, 1996a, d; Fobi, et al., 1995; Ghana, 1994a). A number of factors were identified as having accounted for these results. These factors included:

- a. i. teacher absenteeism and lateness;
- ii. misuse of instructional time;

- iii. poor supervision in schools;
  - iv. lack of effective monitoring of teacher performance;
  - v. inappropriate teaching methods;
  - vi. overloaded curriculum.
- b. i. poor supervision of schools.

It has been argued that over the years, no serious attempts had been made to involve communities, who were the first-line beneficiaries of education, in the management, supervision and monitoring of the operation of schools (Ghana, 1996d). This submission raises a major issue that is of concern to me in this thesis, and that is, the need to include all actors in reform initiation and negotiations.

In the particular case of the 1987 reforms, it has been asserted that remarkable efforts were made to expand inclusion and to provide resources yet the reforms did not go as well as expected. I argue that the continued use of top-down policies and as such domination of the process by an elite section of the Ghanaian public (e.g. politicians, financiers, bureaucrats and members of recognized institutions) is to blame. As can be gleaned from the factors enumerated above, the roles of teachers and communities are central to the success of reforms. It is asserted that teachers did not play their expected roles. They used strategies that are termed inappropriate, suggesting methods other than the transformative ones envisaged in the reforms. Also, they did not comply with regulated times and even misused school time. I believe these teacher attitudes were in reaction to their subdued role in the reform initiation and negotiation process. Reformers, as a function of their top-down approaches, figure that a better supervisory

mechanism can compel teachers to perform. I argue that democratic and transformative reforms do not require such intimidation; rather, they require the practice of democracy in the process. The claim that there was not effective supervision also reveals that not only were teachers not involved actively but neither were communities. Learners are not mentioned at all.

### **Secondary analysis**

Despite twenty years of struggle, there is both primary and secondary evidence to suggest that reform efforts aimed at democratizing and transforming education were falling short of the mark. In 1995, The President of Ghana, J. J. Rawlings, in a parliamentary address, expressed dissatisfaction about the performance of the reforms. He asserted that “despite the efforts made in terms of money and time to improve access to education for all children of school-going age, universal enrollment in primary and secondary schools has not yet been achieved” (Ghana, 1995). Adult literacy rate for ages fifteen and above was 53%, and primary and secondary school enrollment rates were 77% and 38% respectively. Thus, the quest for equalization of opportunities was not successful.

Fobi et al. (1995), who assessed the performance of the 1987 reforms eight years after its implementation, also expressed dissatisfaction and a need for improvement.

They emphasized that:

the content and structure touched all levels of the education system and attempted to address the perennial problems of access, retention, curriculum relevance, teacher training, provision of physical structures,

and financing. The eight years that have passed since the announcement of the education reform have seen many changes in the system. Yet today, many people believe the reforms require significant adjustments if its objectives are to be realised. This has initiated a new cycle of policy review and analysis. (p. 63)

Reports by Fobi et al. (1995) and Antwi (1992a) are instructive particularly with respect to preliminary indications of the overarching reasons for this failure. I am interested particularly in their assessments of the significance of consultation procedures and administrative (top-down) control.

Fobi et al. (1995) were concerned about the lack of consultation during the 1987 reforms and argued that it signified a top-down philosophy of Government. Their concern about the direction of reform and for that matter issues about inclusion, however, centered on the provision of more opportunities for bureaucrats and other elite groups to dialogue with politicians and perhaps financiers. They did not express concern for the lack of involvement of systems actors. Antwi (1992a), in a comparative analysis of educational control in Ghana, presented a similar view. He asserted that education in Ghana has been centralized, and state-controlled; and decision and policy making have followed a top-down direction.

Fobi et al, (1995) acknowledge that the ruling government embarked on widespread campaigns about the reforms before implementation and after, but stressed that the campaigns were meant only to inform interested groups (Ghana National Association of Teachers, National Union of Ghana Students, Trade Union Congress,

Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools, Association of Principals of Technical Institutes, Principals Conference, and Ghana Education Service) “about the rationale and structure of the reforms, not to get their input or suggested amendments” (p. 69).

Fobi et al.(1995) also report a lack of tolerance for dissenting views. They observed that “dissenting views were not tolerated, creating tension between policy implementors, students of tertiary institutions, academic elite, certain professional bodies and the catholic secretariat to mention a few” (p. 70). Dissent was expressed against the manner of implementation. Some of the views cited include:

- a. the competence of the average primary-grade-six child was too low to grapple with the junior secondary school curriculum; the training of teachers required more time;
- b. the pace of the reform was too fast;
- c. logistics were not well planned; and
- d. the reduction in the duration of pre-university education was too drastic (Fobi et al., 1995).

The secondary literature stresses the problematic nature of the top-down administration of reforms because of its failure to give sufficient recognition to the resistance of educated elite. I think that they were correct to take note of the problem; however, I argue that the voices of the established agencies and educated elite were not the only or even most important issue. The voices that were most crucial to the success of educational reforms were those of the system actors - people in the first level of



educational service.

Underscoring my point here are some observations about the interests of elite in educational reforms in Ghana. Tamakloe (1992), who analyzed factors that have impeded curriculum innovation in Ghana, observed that people with a vested interest in an old system tend to block innovation. He, and also Antwi (1992a), asserted that the elite of Ghanaian society, in the attempt to prevent their wards from participating in the new educational system and to preserve their own interests in the old elitist system, maneuvered to get their children/wards in lower primary classes, mainly primary class five, to be accepted into the traditional elitist academic-oriented secondary schools which were being phased out by the reforms. They did not want those children to participate in the new system for reasons known only to them. The EAC (1972) expressed similar concerns about the conservative attitudes of bureaucrats and other elite groups, yet this same category of people got elected to represent the rest of the Ghanaian public in reform discourse. It was against this problematic background that the reforms that characterized the 1990's were undertaken. The discussion that follows focuses on basic sector reforms.

### **The Basic Sector Improvement Programme (FCUBE)**

The FCUBE (i.e. Free Compulsory Education Basic Education) was a sector based improvement program that was aimed at mopping up the basic education sector. It was one of a number of similar projects that focused on sector improvements such as teacher education, university education, vocational and technical education. The FCUBE, in particular, was an attempt to redirect attention to the reform goals of

democratizing education and promoting a transformative education drive. In light of these reform goals and the specific need of improving the basic education sector while making it free for all school aged children, the program focused on three key issues: access, efficiency and management (Ghana, 1996a; Ghana, 1996d; Ghana, 1994a).

In the sections that follow, I examine how, and in what contexts, the FCUBE is pursuing these goals. Although the program is still in progress, the program documents: Ghana 1996a (i.e. the policy document) and Ghana, 1996b (i.e. the operational plan) provide elaborate descriptions of what is anticipated. The program consists of two phases. The first phase runs from 1996 to 2000 and the second from 2000 to 2005. The discussions below are based on the first phase.

**Political Context.** Due to pressures to democratize the country, both from within (Ghanaian public, especially elite groups) and without (the international community), the Rawlings administration was forced to hold general elections. This was the same administration that had executed the 1987 reforms. In 1992, the country went to the polls and J. J. Rawlings was returned to office. He returned to office with a number of the officers with whom he worked in the previous regime. During the campaign period prior to the elections their slogan was “continuity and development” and this was carried through in practice when Rawlings was returned to office. In education the reforms were to be continued but this time, the goals were to be fulfilled. The promise to improve and provide free education at least at the basic level for all Ghanaian children was made part of the fourth republican constitution (Ghana, 1996a; Ghana, 1994a).

**Administrative control.** No significant changes were made in the administrative setting. The MOE continued to reserve the prerogative to make major decisions and policies on behalf of the ruling government. The Ministry continued to liaise with the GES on educational matters, while the GES continued to play its traditional supervisory roles. The education system remained centralized and operated along the chain of command that had been defined by the established hierarchy (Fobi et al., 1995; Atta, 1992a; Antwi, 1992a). Under the newly established democratic rule the head of the Education Ministry assumed the title Minister.

**Mandate.** The FCUBE was initiated in fulfillment of a 1992 constitutional requirement which stipulated that “the Government shall, within two years after Parliament first meets after coming into force of this constitution, draw up a programme for implementation within the following ten years, for the provision of free, compulsory and universal basic education” (Cited in Ghana, 1994a, p. 1). This constitutional demand was part of the broad national goal of democratizing education by making it accessible and affordable to all peoples (Ghana, 1996a, Ghana, 1996c; Ghana, 1994a). The government policy document further stipulated that:

the long-term national goal to which [FCUBE] will contribute is an empowered citizenry effectively participating in the civic, social and economic life of the country. The government is committed to ensuring that all of its citizens participate in the political, social, and economic life of the country, regardless of the geographical region, in which they live, their gender, religion, or ethnicity. The central goal of the education

system in Ghana is to ensure that all citizens are equipped with the fundamental knowledge and skills that enable them to be full stakeholders in and beneficiaries of development . (Ghana, 1996a, p.15)

It also stated that the purpose of these reforms was to ensure that all graduates of the basic education system were prepared for further education and skills training, and that the reforms were designed to enable basic school leavers to play a functional role in society as informed, participatory citizens, and economic producers who could pursue self-determined paths to improve the quality of their lives (Ghana, 1996a).

The objectives of the FCUBE are as follows: To

- a. expand access and participation for all at the basic education level with special attention to the girl child and the poor;
- b. improve the quality of teaching and learning;
- c. improve efficiency in education management (Ghana, 1996c).

The FCUBE is meant to improve the provision and quality of basic education. While efforts were aimed at democratizing education, they also were to ensure that education enabled students to contribute to development (Ghana, 1996a; Ghana, 1994a).

**Membership.** Neither the policy document nor the operational plan discusses issues on participation. Nowhere is an indication given of the people who worked for the reforms or who were represented. Fobi et al. (1995) mention an Educational Review Committee but they do not discuss the membership and selection criteria. It is known, however, that a number of consultations were made among educators, politicians, financiers and bureaucrats during the program development and implementation stage.

This is implied in critique on the performance of the 1987 reforms which asserted that the FCUBE reforms were based on consultations, among other improvements (Ghana, 1995; Fobi et al., 1995).

Information provided in a footnote to the table of contents in a World Bank publication, *Republic of Ghana: Basic Education Sector Improvement Program* (1995)

gives an indication of who participated in the process. It stated that:

the operation was prepared on the basis of a series of missions in 1995/1996, which worked closely with Government officials from the MOE and GES, and with donor agencies including ODA [Overseas Development Administration] (UK), KFW [German Bank for Reconstruction] (Germany), USAID [United States Agency on International Development], UNICEF [United Nations International Children's Educational Fund] and EU [European Union]. (p. vi)

The main report also stated that:

since establishing a joint forum with resident donors in 1994, MOE/GES has been engaged in collaborative sector studies. A top-level task group was formed by the Minister for Education to oversee the preparation of reports prepared by professional study teams involving local experts, and a series of participatory workshops has been held involving stakeholders. Parents, community leaders, district and regional officers, teachers, parliamentarians, and MOE/GES staff have all contributed to producing analytic reports that have identified the main issues which have been

addressed in the MOE's Strategic Plan for Universal Basic Education (FCUBE). (p. 5)

The above comment supports the contention made by Fobi et al (1995) that improvements in initiation procedures had been made.

Apart from the cooperation between the ruling government and financiers, there also was a task force that coordinated the results of team sessions. The World Bank report suggests that the final plan was the work not only of financiers but also of local experts, parents, community leaders, district and regional officers, teachers, politicians and MOE/GES officials. This is much more inclusive than had been the case in the previous reforms (i.e. 1975 and 1987 reforms). It is, however, questionable whether parents and community leaders truly participated in the midst of such high ranking officers, experts, politicians and MOE/GES officials.

**Nature of the initiative.** The first phase of the program is still underway, however, the following excerpts from the policy document and operational plan map what has been intended. Unlike the 1975 and 1987 reforms, the FCUBE did not engage in system restructuring so the discussions do not provide for program-wide content and structural changes as in the first two reforms. Rather the focus was on creating the requisite atmosphere to foster democracy and lead to transformation. These issues of focus can be identified.

- a. Improvement of the quality of teaching and learning: Measures aimed in this direction involve curriculum review and development; the production and distribution of textbooks, syllabi, teacher's handbooks and other instructional

materials; the development of an assessment and evaluation system of student performance; and instructional staff training.

b. Improvement of the quality of educational management: Efforts here centered on building the capacity for institutional/organizational analysis and change. Specific measures include changes in staffing and personnel management, performance management, budgeting and financial management, and district capacity building and devolution.

c. Improvements in access and participation: Changes here include infrastructural development, refurbishment and maintenance, and the fostering of community involvement in improved educational services (Ghana, 1996a).

Basically, as implied in the acronym (FCUBE), the program aims at providing a measure of education for all school aged children. This is part of the democratic drive, that is, to at least make basic education accessible and affordable to every Ghanaian child of school-going age irrespective of their socio-economic background (Ghana, 1996d).

To ensure that both the socially advantaged and disadvantaged have equal opportunities in education, the FCUBE provides for some prohibitive financial commitments for participating in education, to be either taken up by the central government or shared with parents (Ghana, 1996c). Thus, the central government provides: free tuition in all basic schools in the public sector, free textbooks for all primary school children whether in the public or the private sector, and free equipment and tools for all. Parents are required to take full responsibility of stationery, meals and

transportation costs. In addition, after primary six, pupils are required to pay not more than 10% of the total costs of textbook user fees. The rest of the total, about 90%, is borne by the central government (Ghana, 1996c). Communities and Parent Teacher Associations are allowed to raise special levies and fees for special projects subject to the approval of the District Assembly. The goal is to keep the cost of basic education to a minimum, affordable and accessible to all (Ghana, 1996a).

**Effects.** The implementation of the FCUBE is still in its youthful stage and, therefore, not much has been written about it. The MOE's assessment mechanisms are in progress; no conclusive reports are available yet. At the data collection stage of this thesis, the program was barely a year old; however, the policy document asserts that the FCUBE reforms are expected to affect three key concerns; access, quality, and efficiency, in multiple but carefully integrated ways. These effects will be seen in:

- a. Teaching and learning (i.e. curriculum reform and review, teacher education and re-allocation, instructional materials development and performance assessments);
- b. management for quality assurance (i.e. efficient utilization of staff at school, circuit, district, regional and national levels);
- c. broadened enrollments (i.e. across regions and gender)
- d. infrastructural development (i.e. construction, rehabilitation and modernizing); and
- e. cost and financing (i.e. resource re-allocation, elimination of redundancy, streamlining) (Ghana, 1996a, p. 16).



As already indicated the program is still underway and thus needs time to materialize before any conclusive judgments can be made about it; however, my experience during the data collection stage of this thesis gives cause for concern. As of August 1997, when the reforms were expected to have been in force for a year, the MOE was still drawing syllabi and assessment programs for schools. The upsurge in the development of the Ghanaian book industry since the 1987 reforms, however, has compensated for the non-availability of syllabi as prescribed texts were available for use. This development has supported efforts to provide culturally-sensitive educational materials. There has been a proliferation of texts that are based on Ghanaian culture and authored by Ghanaians.

These books cover a wide range of subject fields such as language (English and the local languages), the sciences, arts and humanities. Subject Associations such as the Ghana Association of Science Teachers, the French Teachers' Federation, and the Education Teachers' Association are now involved actively in the drawing up of syllabi and textbooks for schools (WB, 1996). During a professional meeting of teacher educators in the University of Cape Coast in August 1996, in which I participated, questions were raised about the selection mechanism that was used to choose authors of the recommended school texts. The arguments that were raised were inconclusive as participants could not substantiate their claims; however, I gathered that the selection process was controversial. Democracy was being questioned.

Financial arrangements for the FCUBE project were contracted largely from donor/lending agencies such as the World Bank/International Development Association

(IDA), USAID and ODA (Ghana, 1996a). As in 1987, the funds came with commitments from the ruling government. During the data collection stage of this thesis in August 1997, a Ghanaian daily newspaper, the *Daily Graphic*, reported that the IMF/WB was threatening to withhold finances if the reforms did not follow their initial course. Once again, the IMF/WB was pressing reformers.

The finances that were contracted were to be used to improve identified sectors of the basic education system, namely, the quality of teaching and learning, management capacity, and access and participation. In fact a greater chunk of the total educational expenditure on basic sector reform was allocated for the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning. Figures presented in Ghana (1996c) show that out of a total of about US\$ 390 million, over US\$ 306 million was allotted to improve the quality of teaching and learning, while approximately US\$ 26 million was to be used to improve management capacity and a little over US\$ 57 million was allotted to improve access and participation. The three identified areas seem, to me, to be of major concern in the basic sector reforms. In addition, the varying allocations confirm that the most significant area of focus is the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning.

#### **Summary and observations**

The foregoing review points to two key issues. First, that the reforms were aimed generally at democratizing education in Ghana, and by so doing provide opportunities for learners to acquire an education that can enable them to participate in social transformation. The review shows that, based on general public concern to reform education, ruling governments took it upon themselves to embark on the three reforms

(i.e. Dzobo reforms of 1975, Anfom reforms of 1987 and the on-going FCUBE reform) that span the last three decades of Ghana's educational history. In all three reforms policies were developed to direct the reforms. In addition, financial assistance was sought, particularly in the case of the 1987 reforms and the FCUBE, to acquire resources for schools in preparation toward policy implementation (Ghana, 1996a; Fobi, et al., 1995; Ghana, 1995; Ghana, 1994a).

Generally speaking, the reforms involved systematic restructuring of the structure and content of education. The restructuring of the educational structure involved the reduction of the length of time spent in pre-university education from a maximum of seventeen years to thirteen years. Content restructuring involved the diversification of school curriculum to reflect the diverse characteristics and needs of learners. To promote transformative education, a composite of the restructuring exercise, an emphasis was placed on more interactive and "problem-solving" approaches.

Second, the review shows that the reforms were not very successful, especially in the case of the 1975 and 1987 reforms. The impact of these efforts on education, though that of the FCUBE can not yet be determined, is anything but desirable. In a 1995 Presidential address it was pointed out that the reforms had not met their targets (Ghana, 1995). There also are indications that teachers have not yielded to the call to adopt transformative classroom practices (Fobi et al., 1995; Antwi, 1992a; Bridges, 1989). Also, it has been argued that despite the efforts in providing physical inputs the reforms have not transformed teaching and learning (Fobi et al., 1995, Ghana, 1994).

The poor performance of the 1975 reforms has been blamed on a number of issues. It has been argued, for instance, that finance was a major problem in the implementation of the 1975 reforms. However, when funding was provided for subsequent reforms, the argument was that teachers did not cooperate in ways that could have impacted practice, and that communities have not been involved in supervisory roles (Ghana, 1996d). Also, it has been argued that sufficient consultations had not been made among elite groups before the reforms were undertaken (Fobi et al., 1995; Antwi, 1992a). Even the elite, who had some space, were still looking for more. No mention is made of system or first line actors such as teachers, parents and students in these consultations. The problem, as I see it, is that these first line actors have not been involved in ways that empower them to act to impact reforms. I argue that the adoption of undemocratic procedures where system actors are excluded from the conduct of reforms and reforms that have been determined externally have, instead, inhibited the performance of the reforms and hence the ability to match policy with practice. This assertion is based on a number of observations that can be gleaned from the review above.

First of all, although the reforms were aimed at democratizing education this has been restricted to system changes (i.e. restructuring of educational structure and content) only. Democracy has been defined in weak terms as the equalization of educational opportunities and the nature of classroom interactions only without any regard for the process of reforms. As a result system actors have not been involved in the initiation and negotiation processes such as would enable them to contribute effectively to the

reforms. The review shows that classrooms are still dominated by memorization, rote learning and frontal teaching (Fobi et al, 1995; Antwi, 1992a; Bridges, 1989).

Also, there is the pressure of examinations which encourages teachers to teach to tests, and text based instruction continues to be the norm (Akvesi, 1994; Amedahe, 1989). Although the examination system has been changed dramatically, examinations still have high stakes in a country where educational opportunities are yet to be equalized and students have to scramble for better schools, and where the selection of candidates is still dependant on not just the passing of examinations but also on the scores achieved. The competitive environment that has been created by this condition compels teachers to teach to examinations and learners to devise and employ means, such as rote learning and memorization, to pass examinations, thus, leaving parents no other choice but to support the system as it is. Syllabi, texts and teachers become the dominant forces in teaching and learning instead of the characteristics of learners and their environmental conditions.

Again, the continued promotion of a centralized administrative system with its top-down approaches to policy and decision making has affected the performance of reforms (Fobi et al, 1995; Antwi, 1992a,b). These approaches to reforms and the resulting perception of reforms as packages (i.e. blue prints) to be implemented to the letter, have not opened the reforms for discussions and subsequent adaptation to learner characteristics as well as existing and emerging conditions. In a system that propagates democracy, it becomes a matter of urgency to promote more flexible ways of working through reforms goals.

In addition, the reforms have been exclusive. Membership in reform bodies has been representational and has been reserved for an elite section of the Ghanaian public. Those who have been elected to represent the public have been those who occupy the higher echelons of society. These have included politicians, financiers, bureaucrats and leaders from recognized institutions. They get to represent the rest of the Ghanaian public on committees, to present memoranda and to participate in surveys during reform initiations and negotiations (World Bank, 1995; EC, 1986; EAC, 1972). Indeed, they get to make policies and take reform decisions. Even when it comes to opposition to reforms, they get to air their voices. Fobi et al. (1995) reinforce such dominance by arguing that the ruling government resisted dissent from such groups and failed to consult effectively with them (i.e. elite groups) in the reform process. They make these arguments amidst suspicions of the interests of these groups in education (Tamakloe, 1992; EAC, 1972). In their analysis, no mention is made of system actors such as teachers, parents and learners, in reform processes.

Furthermore, the reforms, generally speaking, have been dictated externally. They have depended on availability of finances and political motivations. In terms of finances not only has their availability determined the trend and implementation of reforms, they also have dictated who participate. External financiers, such as the World Bank, make decisions on behalf of Ghanaians and determine the pace of reforms. Politics as a motivation for the reforms has determined what is implemented and in which way. The review shows that ruling governments have either neglected the implementation of reforms, as in the case of the 1975 reforms, or adopted approaches

other than those recommended, as in the case of the 1987 reforms. Ruling governments have been at the forefront of all three reforms and the sustenance of the reforms have depended on the motivations of the governments themselves. Attempts to involve the public, as argued by Fobi et al. (1995), have not been interactive. The campaign sessions that were promoted to involve the public, they argue, have been information giving sessions only.

On the whole, these approaches to reforms, which I argue are undemocratic, have limited the functions of systems actors in the conduct of the reforms and have in turn inhibited the performance of the reforms. The top-down policies have excluded system actors from decision and policy making and perhaps, in revolt to such exclusion, such actors have refused to comply with the demands of the reforms, hence, the continued use of transmissive practices which the reforms have been meant to change. Also, the pressure of external examinations restrains systems actors as success in these examinations determines who gets an edge in education. The continued dominance of the reform procedure by people in the higher echelons of Ghanaian society also has not encouraged the participation of system actors and in fact has only reinforced domination. I argue that the adoption of these undemocratic approaches are a result of the weak or limited notions of democracy.

I argue that the weak version or limited notions of democracy, as can be gleaned from the review, have been a major factor in inhibiting not only the goal to democratize education but also to its transformation. I believe that the adoption of stronger democratic practices which focus on the education system and the process of reform can

create the necessary environment for educational transformation. I argue for an expanded or strong version of democracy which reaches past system changes that exclude system actors to adopt an expanded notion where system actors are instrumental in the process of change. I believe that such an expanded notion or strong version of democracy which includes all actors in the process of change makes such actors see themselves as equal partners in the reform process. The inclusion of all actors in the initiation and negotiation process, thus, commits them to reform policies and decisions, and as such, makes it possible for them to play their roles in the reforms.

My claim is based on the assumption that transformative systems are democratic, and that if any education system is intended to transform, then, it must be guided by democratic ideals. That is to say, it must respect the roles of each actor in the process and provide space for all actors to be involved actively in it. Policies and decisions for such systems should be derived from all actors and not from just a few. The concern to democratize, then, becomes one of making it possible for all actors to play their roles effectively, and willingly, rather than allowing one group (i.e. politicians, financiers, bureaucrats and representatives from recognized institutions) to impose their voices and values on others (teachers, parents, learners).

The weak or limited notion of democracy, as implied in reform procedure in Ghana, I figure, has led to the continued reliance on some voices without regard for others. For instance, President Rawlings in his speech to the EC expresses this limited notion in terms of the opposite; an oppressive system that does not provide equal opportunities, that values conformity over creativity, and that encourages self interest



(cited in Fobi, et al, 1995). The EC report which was to translate Rawlings' subsequent call for a non-oppressive and transforming education system, discussed Rawlings' concerns in terms of an elitist, academic-centered and examination-oriented system (EC, 1986). Generally, the question of democracy and transformation, as far as the Ghanaian reforms have been concerned, has centered on access/opportunities and classroom participation. These limited notions have resulted in simplistic conceptions of reforms

These conceptions have in turn resulted in a situation where reformers believe they can figure out the necessary strategies that will work for all parties rather than make it possible for all concerned parties to be involved in the process. The result is that reformers have concentrated on developing strategies and passing them on to education offices for onward transmission to schools to be executed as planned. Cuban's (1990) analysis of such approaches, which I examine in the next chapter, throws light on the flaws in such rationalist thinking. The review above also shows that it is not enough to figure out strategies, provide logistics and expect change to occur (Fobi, et al., 1995, Ghana, 1995; Ghana, 1994a). Rather, it takes the concerted efforts of all actors to execute reforms. My assertion is premised on the fact that the laudable policies established by Ghanaian reforms are yet to impact education and the reform goals are yet to be met.

I believe the issue that should concern Ghanaian reformers should be the manner of implementation. As already noted, though Fobi and his associates were concerned about the manner of implementation, it was not in ways that include system actors. They were interested in elitist participation only. The continual reliance on representations

without any significant attempts to involve all actors, for me, is a major inhibiting factor for the dismal performance of reforms in Ghana. I argue that if Ghana's goals to democratize and transform education are to materialize, then, there is need to pay attention to the roles that these system actors play in implementing change. In fact attention to system actors is not a matter of choice but a requirement of a system which, by implication, thrives on the active involvement by all actors.

Participation, though has been identified as a contributing factor for the dismal performance of the Ghanaian reforms, the 1987 reforms in particular, it has not been addressed adequately (Ghana, 1996d). Reformers in Ghana have conceded that teachers have not played their roles as expected to impact reforms. Also, as a way of intensifying supervision in schools they have intimated that communities have not been involved in ways that could have boosted supervision. By this concession, I believe, they realize it takes more than the top hierarchy to change education and that there is need to involve all actors. Here, I argue for the involvement of not only teachers and parents but also learners. In an attempt to improve supervision, the FCUBE reform addresses a third dimension. In addition to access and quality of teaching and learning, efficiency in management is stressed (Ghana, 1996 a, b). This, I argue, is not going to yield the necessary results, for the resort to, what I believe, is intimidation will not commit teachers to their work and provide them with the space to develop novel strategies for interacting with learners in ways that foster creativity and lead to transformation. Unless democratic procedures are adopted in the process of reforms these efforts, as before, will only come to nothing.

Democracy, I believe, is crucial for transformation and unless reformers begin to pay attention to democracy in its strong sense, stop imposing reform policies on system actors, and regard all actors as active collaborators in the search for a true education, the efforts to reform will only be in vain. Policies will remain on paper as they can not impact practice, and reform goals can not be fulfilled because those who should support the programs to fruition compromise them instead. Unless the envisaged democratic goals are matched in practice with democratic means as deliberate efforts are made to include all actors in the reform initiation and negotiations, we can forget about ever fulfilling the goals of reforms. Ghanaian reformers will have to better their understanding of democracy and begin to practice democracy in its strong sense.

In the next chapter, I focus on reaching such an understanding as part of the search for a truly democratic and transformative education. I examine how an expanded notion or strong version of democracy which stresses the active participation of all actors in educational processes is a necessary part of a transformative educational system and how a focus on educational aims make it possible for the goals to transform and democratize education to be fulfilled and as such enable policy to influence practice in a real way.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **TRANSFORMATION AS A GOAL OF GHANAIAN EDUCATION**

#### **Introduction**

A major assertion was made in the previous chapter that the educational reforms in Ghana articulate a shift in orientation from the use of transmissive practices to the adoption of transformative practices. Such practices are part of the educational democratization process. It also was suggested that democracy, which emphasizes participant action, is a necessary part of transformative processes. The analyses revealed that in policy Ghana's educational reforms articulate the transformation and democratization of education. In practice, however, the adoption of undemocratic procedures during the reform negotiations and initiation has limited success. The result is that reformers have not been able to change practice. They have not been able to match practice with policy and democratic means with democratic ends.

This chapter throws light on these assertions by illuminating the main concepts in question in order to show that the adoption of strong democratic procedures is an essential part of the transformative process. The main focus is to show that the search for a transforming education system must be matched with an equal concern to democratize educational reform processes. The emphasis on the adoption of democratic procedures stems from the fact that democratic systems provide conducive environments for participants in the education process to interact actively among themselves, to confront their realities and in the process to transform their worlds. It is argued that paying attention to educational aims, where education is viewed as a

transformative process, which has democratic ends and which emphasizes participant action, makes this possible (Dewey, 1966).

The task undertaken in this chapter involves the analysis of the concepts transmissive education, transformative education, and educational aims, with a searchlight on democracy. The analysis of transmissive education systems provides an understanding of the nature of the existing Ghanaian education system and illuminates the reasons why Ghana had to pursue an alternative approach. It shows that transmissive systems limit the performance of actors by the adoption of uni-directional approaches in which reform goals are determined externally and actors do not determine or negotiate their purposes. The analysis of transformative systems gives direction to the alternative that Ghana is seeking. In the process, individual and social agency are identified as essential qualities for transformation. Participation, specifically personal and social agency, is further explicated in Deweyan analysis as critical for democratic systems.

These analyses show that transformative systems foster effective communication, active interactions and reflect existing conditions. A strong version of democracy, then, will have to reflect these three elements. I argue that these three elements, which foster participant involvement, are democratic qualities and are very important for transformative processes. Finally, an analysis of aims, in which ends stay in view of the process, portrays the connection between transformative educational processes and educational aims. This connection helps me to establish the claim that Ghana needs to pay attention to educational aims in its search for a truly transforming educational system. John Dewey's (1966/1938) discourse on aims and Freire's

(1973/1970) discussion of transformative systems have been adopted as models for interpreting aims and transformative systems respectively.

The analysis of Freire's position focuses on his exposition of the act of educating as a problematization process whereby individuals, working in groups, negotiate actively their socio-economic conditions, and in the process transform their lives. Such problematization is enhanced through critical dialogues and is intended to lead to critical consciousness and liberatory practice. Freirean dialogue, counter-distinctive from banking education, emphasizes individual agency within social interactions in meaning making processes. For Freire (1970) banking education, corresponding to transmissive education systems, is dictatorial, while dialogical education, corresponding to transformative education systems, is democratic and liberatory. The plausibility of Freirean interpretations lies in his emphasis on shared experience, participant involvement, and effective communication (dialogue) in meaning making.

The analysis of Dewey's position centers on two critical concepts, democracy and growth. These concepts underpin his discussions of "aims as ends in view", in which the connection between ends and means is emphasized. Dewey's analysis is premised on the assertion that in an aims making process it is the means (processes/practice) to the ends (policy), and not the ends per se, that constitute the transforming stage (Dewey, 1966). Dewey argues for democratic ends in education and the adoption of democratic means for reaching those ends, since it is such democratic means that lead to transformation. While democracy is crucial for educational transformation, transformation necessitates the connection of ends and means which in

turn connects aims and transformation. These connections and interactions open space for matching democratic ends with democratic means and policy with practice. Democracy for Dewey, like Freire, is a shared experience that results through interactions and consensus building.

Democracy, an engaging concept for both Deweyan and Freirean analyses, becomes a crucial factor for transformation. It fosters individual action within social interactions and effective communication. In the end, it provides for the participation of all parties in interactions. The significance of democracy in my analysis, then, is that it requires the active participation of all persons in the meaning making process and does not privilege any group, or form of meaning. It also demands that a conducive environment be provided for education to take place and that education reflects learner characteristics and conditions. Within conducive environments, individuals interact and confront their worlds out of which they construct their own meanings and change them.

Although the discussion that follows focuses on the positions of Freire and Dewey, it is reinforced by secondary writings on the engaging issues. The first section of this chapter concentrates on Freirean analysis. In this section, I examine the meanings presented by Freire and Miller on transmission and transformation in which I depict the dichotomy between the two systems. In the second section I focus on Deweyan analysis of democracy and transformation in the context of educational aims. This analysis draws attention to educational aims as means for promoting a transformative and democratic education.

### **Transmissive education**

The analysis of transmissive educational systems gives an indication of the contradictory nature of the Ghanaian education system. To embark on reforms that are aimed at democratizing the educational system when educational practices remain transmissive constitutes a negation of the Ghanaian reform goals. Transmissive systems that are characterized by teacher/text dominance, one-way communication and passive participation of learners, thus, contradict the goal of democratizing and transforming education.

Basically, in its original form, a transmissive education system concentrates on passing down information from one person (i.e. authority) to another (i.e. learner). In its most general form it stresses the perpetuation of an existing culture, the maintenance of a status quo and as such holds on to tradition. Insofar as the maintenance of tradition is concerned this type of education works but in fast changing and democratic societies transmissive systems become inadequate. They are inadequate because they limit individual action. Within such systems the goals of education are imposed externally and learners are not enabled to develop the critical awareness that is key for confronting the daily realities of a fast changing world.

Transmissive systems are dictatorial, less interactive and conformist. This interpretation is evident in Freire's (1970) analysis of banking education where learners are turned into depositories and teachers, depositors. Miller's (1993) analysis, like Freire's, focuses on the nature of classroom interactions and draws attention to the unidirectionality of interactions. Both Miller and Freire draw attention to the rigid and controlled environments that propel transmissive systems and how such environments



limit the functions of learners in the meaning making process. In the discussions that follow I examine both perspectives.

**John P. Miller.**

Miller's (1993) analysis of transmissive education focuses on the direction of interactions. He identifies two strands, namely, the behavioral and traditional. In both strands, he emphasizes the uni-directionality of instruction where learners are turned into passive recipients of information. Educational processes also are dictated externally by teachers, texts, and/or curriculum. This analysis reveals that transmissive systems do not encourage interactions among learners and their environments and as such do not promote change.

Miller (1993) defines transmissive educational positions and draws a distinction between the two strands as follows:

One strand is the behavioral, while the other has focused on students studying the standard subjects taught in a traditional style (e.g., lecture and recitation)... In the behavioral strand, this relationship (*curriculum - child*) is known as the stimulus - response, S-R, while in the traditional strand, curriculum, the teacher, or text conveys information to the student. In both cases there is essentially a one-way flow or transmission of skills and knowledge. (p. 56, emphasis in original)

There seems to be not much difference between the two strands. Both center on the relationship between curriculum and learners. The only distinguishing feature, for me, is that the behavioral strand focuses on connections between stimuli and responses

while the traditional approach focuses directly on the nature of interactions. In the end, however, it is the nature and direction of interactions that spell out their transmissive qualities. In both cases, it is the uni-directionality of interactions, where learners serve as passive recipients, that is at issue.

**Behavioral strand.** In the behavioral strand, learning and teaching are defined in terms of the connection and/or bond that is established between a stimulus and a response (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1993). Teaching and learning are possible only to the extent that appropriate stimuli are provided. When stimuli are provided, learners are expected to exhibit specific responses. When these expected responses are exhibited, behavior is rewarded; on the other hand, when an unexpected response is exhibited behavior is punished. In fact, all efforts are made to minimize unexpected responses and to maximize expected responses.

The emphasis on expected behavior makes this type of approach to teaching and learning conformist. Learners are expected to show only a certain kind of behavior or response. Any other behavior (i.e. unexpected behavior) becomes a threat. Thus novelty, diversity and difference are not encouraged. Teachers' instruction and textual information become the authoritative word. All that is required of learners is the ability to reproduce what has been taught by teachers or learnt from texts in the forms in which they have been passed down. Teaching and learning are, thus, determined by teachers, texts and other external pressures and not what learner characteristics and experiences provide.

The goal of teachers in the teaching and learning process is to get learners to

reproduce what has been presented as the desired performance. There is more emphasis on the ability to recall and exhibit defined responses than on the capacity to make reasoned judgments and novel responses. Teaching and learning are viewed as information storage processes. Memorization and rote learning become central strategies for reinforcing this kind of learning.

This type of education concentrates on the perpetuation of existing culture and the maintenance of the status quo. Teaching affects learners insofar as it is able to inculcate in them skills for *coping with* and not necessarily changing or improving existing conditions. Learners are trained to fit into existing culture. This quality derives from a need to maintain standards, ensure continuity and preserve existing culture.

Typical transmissive engagements respect authority rather than the role of learners and their characteristics in interactions. In authority (i.e. teachers, texts, curriculum) lies experience, knowledge and wisdom. In learners there is inexperience, lack of knowledge and ignorance. It is, therefore, the role of authority to fill ignorant minds and initiate them into the world of experience, knowledge and wisdom. Experience, knowledge and wisdom come along with power, hence, the somewhat invincibility of the authority of teachers, texts and curriculum in interactions.

**Traditional strand.** The traditional strand of transmissive education also focuses on uni-directional classroom interactions and relationships (Miller, 1993). Like the behavioral strand, the emphasis on learning is on how to cope not to change. Classroom interactions enable learners to reproduce what they have been taught by teachers or read from texts. Teachers and texts become the authority figures. They

determine and dictate learning and teaching. Traditional mass teaching styles, whether lecture or recitation, exemplify such approaches. Here, the teacher poses as the all-knowing master of instruction whose duty it is to pass information on to passive learners. Learners are expected to listen to the teacher's instruction, to ask questions sparingly, and to comport themselves by sitting quietly with a keen ear and without interrupting the teacher unnecessarily. Learner participation is limited to storage and retrieval of information on demand. The closer the retrieved information is to its original form the better the student is rated.

**Common characteristics.** The exposition on Miller's (1993) two strands of transmissive education presents some major characteristics which are worth emphasizing. These include: first, an emphasis on authority rather than learners. In systems where authority rather than the characteristics of learners and their experiences in the environment are emphasized, it is authority instead of learners who determine the mode of instruction. In fact, learners are considered as empty vessels that need merely to be filled. They are not considered to be knowing beings who, when given the necessary guidance, can construct their own meanings and create knowledge. Learners are not empowered to explore their environment and construct meaning out of it. Second, transmissive systems emphasize the use of non-interactive methods. This follows from the first. As empty vessels learners are treated as that part of the teaching learning process who have no significance in the knowledge making stage. Their role is to receive, store and reproduce information when need be. Third, during teaching and learning, there is emphasis on conformity rather than diversity. Learners are called upon

to conform to standards and their abilities are measured against those standards and not on their own merits.

The net effect of these three characteristics is that learners are rendered inactive, and their participation is reduced to storage of information rather than construction of meaning. As will be seen in later discussions on transformative systems, such reductionism incapacitates learners from engaging in educational processes in ways that can lead to meaning making and enhance their ability to transform their lives and change society. Hence, systems that seek to transform can not afford to adopt, or continue to use strategies that do not engage the active participation of learners in meaning making.

Extending this discussion beyond teacher-student interactions, to include educational reform processes, I argue that change that is meant to transform must make room for free interactions among system or first line actors (i.e. teachers, parents and learners) whose actions have direct impact on classroom actions and change. Instead of relegating them to the background and imposing change on them, they should be regarded as active knowing beings who can effectively initiate and negotiate change by themselves. Rather than isolate them, system actors should be brought into the process. Freirean analysis throws further light on my assertions. The analysis of Freire's (1970) position on banking educational systems, in the discussion that follows, reinforces the debilitating functions of transmissive practices in education.

### **Paulo Freire**

Banking system of education, a transmissive type education, is described as that

type of education that is characterized by narration, that emphasizes authority rather than learners, and that promotes communiqués rather than communication (Freire, 1970). Teaching and learning derive from authority where interactions take the form of depositing. Freire's (1970) analysis of this kind of educational system focuses on the effects of improper communication between teachers and learners, or what he calls "narration sickness" in the education process. He argues that the limited roles that learners are called upon to play in a system that is characterized by narration inhibit the functions of education and the learning of students. He asserts that in such systems not only is information stored but also the agency of learners is stored. This preempts his emphasis on the transformative roles of education which I take up in later discussions. Freire's analysis reveals the import of interactive environments and individual action in change processes. In the discussion that follows, I examine the characteristics of the banking system in terms of its narrative nature, its emphasis on communiqués rather than communication, and its ramifications in the educational process.

**Narration.** Freire (1970) describes banking education in terms of its narrative character and its effects on education. He explains the narrative character of banking systems in terms of the role of teachers and learners. He explains that the teacher serves as the narrating "Subject", pupils are the patient listening "objects"; content, whether values or empirical dimensions of reality, becomes lifeless and petrified in the process of narration. I do not wish to go into detailed analysis of the subject-object dichotomy that Freire presents; however, I wish to point out that putting the teacher in the subject position while learners are in an object position shows who is at the center of

instruction. The subject is the living acting person while the object is the lifeless component that is insensitive to conditions around it unless aided by the subject. In such a position students can not be expected to affect their environments. Teachers are the only ones who can affect learners by narrating to them what they know. Teachers become the only active persons. Pupils are passive recipients in the interactions. The result is that education does not affect learners in ways that are transforming. In fact, under such circumstances creativity is killed.

Freire (1970) points out that creativity and transformation are not promoted in this system which limits learner roles to receiving, filing, and storing of information. He argues that in the banking system:

the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But in the last analysis, it is the people themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. (p. 53)

The process is misguided insofar as it does not promote creativity and transformation but also that it affects the performance of learners. He points out that learners are stored away with information. Being stored away, I believe, constitutes inability to act to improve one's conditions.

In systems where narration is the norm, learners miss out on the development of their innate abilities to explore and encounter novel situations. Narration does not

challenge learner abilities and capacities and hence such qualities are sublimated. In fact, teaching and learning arrangements can be characterized as non-interactive. The non-interactive nature of the banking system is reinforced in the nature of communicative practices employed during teaching and learning.

**Communiqué.** Communication in banking systems is one-sided, from teacher to learner most of the time. Instruction and education become boring as learners have to be content with what teachers feed them. Freire (1970) argues that what goes on during instruction is the issuing of communiqués and not communication. He explains these in light of the depository nature of education. Freire writes:

education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize and repeat. (p. 52)

In a transmissive educational system, then, learners' abilities are measured by the extent to which they are able to recall what has been stored or passed down to them. Their utmost duty is to receive information, and insofar as processing goes to store it in such a manner as will ease recall. Learners are expected to be able to reproduce what has been stored on demand. Since learners are not required to turn information/facts into new knowledge (i.e. to construct meanings) memorization and rote learning make learning easier.

**Implications.** Under such teaching and learning conditions, as already pointed out, education can not transform (Freire, 1970) or promote growth (Dewey, 1966). This



is so because such systems do not foster personal participation and construction of meaning in interactions. I argue that it is only through the actions of learners that qualities that promote change and lead to transformation can be developed. Limiting learner participation, then, means limiting the development of those qualities and the capacity to change and transform. I argue that systems that do not promote personal participation and construction of meaning are inimical to the goals of the Ghanaian reforms. I premise my argument on the fact that such systems do not tolerate uncertainty and flexibility.

The adoption of dictatorial (i.e. uni-directional) practices do not allow for the flexibility that is needed for growth. Flexibility is required for learners to interact with texts, teachers and one another in their diverse worlds. In flexible interactions individuality and diversity are recognized and fostered as necessary for the construction of meaning. Within such interactions, opportunities are availed for the diverse characteristics of learners and their varying purposes. In planning change, then, not only are these diversities taken into consideration but also spaces are opened for the determination of diverse purposes in meaningful ways. Beyond learners, there is need to recognize similar diversities in teachers in their approaches to educational processes and, for parents, in their expectations from educational systems and the roles they can play in them. It becomes imperative, therefore, to create spaces for all these diversities and allow for meaning to arise from interactions instead of imposing meaning on such actors. I believe that the more involved system actors are in the determination of purposes the better prepared they will be for negotiating those purposes and achieving

them.

Uncertainty also is needed to whip up curiosity, stir imagination and intuition and make room for diverse viewpoints. Systems that do not provide for uncertainty and only seek to enforce standards or dictate actions according to standards miss the *excitement of the unknown and the tendency to seek meaning by the adoption of novel approaches*. The arousal of curiosity results in the search for ways that depend on insights (i.e. intuition and imagination) and promote creative productions. In systems where learners' every move is dictated by authority it becomes almost impossible for them to explore and discover their environment, to sharpen their skills, enrich their knowledge, or prepare themselves for further exploration.

When such authority lies in syllabi, examinations and policy, not only do they limit the functions of learners but also teachers and parents. Parents and teachers are forced to conform to set standards in the education of learners instead of being able to adopt novel means that arise from emerging events and the characteristics of learners. System actors are compelled to succumb to external pressures instead of internal factors.

Instead of seeking new ways to make meanings, learners, teachers and parents are concerned about maintaining standards. The irony, however, is that the standards that are sought are set by people other than learners, teachers, and parents whom I consider to be essential in the education process. The standards often turn out to be those of dominant groups. Education becomes the means for the reinforcement of dominant values (Illich, 1989). In the end those values are not useful to ordinary people because they do not reflect their socio-economic conditions. Their education becomes

dysfunctional as it does not enable them to confront their worlds and make meaning of them.

In order to ensure that education is beneficial and useful to those participating in it, the education that is provided must reflect the socio-economic conditions of the participants. Such an education must foster interactions which enable participants to confront with their realities and conditions so that they can construct their own meanings. Transformative systems encourage these types of interactions and even go further to emphasize the significance of consciousness, intuition and imagination in interactions (Miller, 1993; Freire, 1970; Dewey, 1966).

### **Transformative education**

The transformative educational alternative envisaged by Ghanaian reformers is opposed to transmission. This type of education calls on learners to construct knowledge from facts and confront situations. It leans on the characteristics of individuals and works around those characteristics instead of prescribed standards. It emphasizes active interactions, effective communication, and personal and social agency in the meaning making process. The act of educating becomes a creative process. It is worth noting that these conjectures are embodied in the policies and goals envisaged in the Ghanaian reforms. In practice, however, as already pointed out, the situation is different since reformers resorted to the use of undemocratic means to achieve their goals and failed to achieve them.

Transformative systems are democratic because they provide interactive spaces for participants to engage with and act on a situation, condition, or problem and, in the

process, identify with and make meaning of it. Participants are neither *worked for* nor *worked on*, as implied in transmissive systems. Freire (1973/1970) and Miller (1993) provide useful analyses of what is expected of transformative education systems. Their analyses point to personal agency in interactions and shared experience in meaning making. They stress communication through dialogue as learners share meanings in interactions. These meanings, constructed from lived and shared experiences, reflect the existing conditions and the realities of actors. Learners are challenged to exercise their intuitions and imagination in the process. The discussion that follows focuses on such constructions and how participation in educational processes facilitates such constructions.

#### **John P. Miller**

Miller's (1993) analysis of transformative educational positions focuses on the change function of education. He lays emphasis on active engagements by either learners or schools in a change process. According to Miller, the unique quality of transformative education systems, distinct from other interactive systems, is the guiding role of intuitions and imaginations in interactions. Intuitions and imaginations are meant to provide the impetus for initiating actions. In the ensuing discussion I examine how he presents his arguments and show how agency becomes essential in the process.

Miller (1993) identifies two strands in transformative education systems, the individual and the social. The individual category focuses on the pivotal position of learners in the educational process while the social strand stresses the social change role of education in society. In the discussion of both strands Miller emphasizes role

expectations in change processes. He explains:

one strand has focused on the individual. At the extreme, this focus is found in Summerhill (1960), where its founder A. S. Neil felt that the school must fit the child rather than making the child fit the school. Certain elements of the progressive education and humanistic education in the 1960's are also part of this strand. The other strand involves social change orientation, which argues that educators must take a more critical view of the role of schools in society so that schools do not just mirror dominant economic interests, and that schools must be on the cutting edge of social and political change. (p. 62)

Three essential characteristics can be identified in Miller's projection of transformative systems. They include: first, that transformative education systems are committed to change. Education is seen as a change agent. Its function in society is to initiate and lead change. The second is that change is inherent in the educational system, that is to say, it originates from the system. Indeed, it is in the nature of educational systems to improve existing conditions and to foster progress. What this implies is that change is not imposed externally or dictated. Education by nature presents possibilities for change. Systems that reinforce these possibilities promote change while those that do not inhibit change. The third, is that learners are at the center of change. It is in the act of educating *learners* that they develop the qualities that enable them to evoke change. It is neither education per se nor activities and materials that result in change; rather, it is learners' actions that result in change. Here, even teachers and parents can

not bring change in the lives of learners. At best they facilitate it. These characteristics draw attention to some essential issues which are central to my thesis and which I examine in the discussions that follow. The discussions draw attention to agency (i.e. action on the part of participants) in the educational process and how agency results in a need to pay attention to the learners and their environment and necessitates resistance to external control.

**Agency.** It is argued that change occurs only when participants in an educational process act to exact it. Education enables participants to develop the necessary qualities for change and provide conditions for these qualities to be put into use. Unless participants act there is no way change can occur. For the purposes of this thesis, unless teachers and parents, as educators, adopt practices that can result in change and the young ones who they educate act in concert with the meanings they create in the process of their education, change can not happen. Agency becomes significant. The emphasis is on individual and social agency.

At the individual level, persons who are affected by change must be involved actively in the processes each step of the way. They should be involved in the initiation and negotiation of policies and decisions in which educational purposes are determined, for, it is their individual actions that can result in change. This is not to say that an entire country should be brought to a round table conference for each and everyone to engage in discussions. Rather, I argue that instead of imposing change on system actors, change should be discussed at various levels and places where all actors are given the opportunity to come up with ideas on what needs to be done, how it can be done and

what they can do to foster it. Also, in the establishment of national policy, there should be effective decentralization of policy. In particular, decentralized offices such as exist in Ghana should become information generation points and not just dissemination points only. Fora also should be opened for such information generation. Reform campaigns will have to become information generation sessions where people can freely and openly express themselves, share and exchange ideas and build consensus. Agency then, will have to move from just the individual to include the social. At the social level not only is dialogue necessary but also the provision of conducive environment becomes essential.

**Conducive environment.** A conducive environment will be one that invites inclusive student participation and enables flexible interactions. Such an environment does not privilege any opinions but values all opinions. It emphasizes dialogue so that opinions can be expressed and negotiated. This requires an absence of intimidation and a respect for all persons. In fact as will be seen in the next chapter it will demand making an extra effort to include the shy and reticent. A discussion on conducive environments is taken up in a later section.

**Sensitivity to conditions.** The discussion also shows that in the process of creating meaning, learners have to confront their realities. Depending on their characteristics and the realities they confront, learners interact with their environment in order to create meaning. Under such circumstances, education reflects not only learner characteristics but also environmental conditions. In the end education becomes functional and useful to learners and society as it reflects their real worlds and not

persons other than the actual participants. To act for learners, as seen in discussions on transmissive systems, is to take away from them the ability to change their world. Change that arises from the system and is initiated by system actors becomes a better alternative.

**Intrinsic change.** The discussion, thus far, shows my preference for change that is intrinsic to education, evolves from educational processes and is initiated by the people with the support of all interested parties. This component also shows abhorrence to domination, external impositions and authority. Transmissive systems, argue Freire (1970) and President Rawlings (cited in Fobi, Koomson & Godwyll, 1995), are oppressive, stress conformity and suppress creative development. The emphasis of transformative systems, then, is to derive meaning from within the education system, allow participant action and flexible interactions in the meaning making process. In the analysis of a Freirean position on transformation, I focus on the way he illuminates the question of dominance. In transformative systems, as will be seen presently, the goal is to rid the system of external pressure and allow change to evolve so that people can confront their realities and change their lives and society.

Change from within, that emphasizes participant action and reflects learners' realities, enables learners to reach unique experiences that enable them to initiate change and transform their lives and society. The challenges that learners meet as they confront their realities enables them to rely on their imaginations and intuitions to come up with novel ways of counteracting and surmounting difficulties and re-defining those realities. Under controlled situations, student centered learning is limited by the standard rules



that learners work within. Change becomes almost impossible.

As suggested by Miller (1993), education as a change agent must involve constant attempts at shaping society. When education shapes society it allows individuals in society to perceive the need for change and act to bring change. Learners in such systems are aided to develop skills that enable them to perceive change and work to bring about change. On the other hand when society shapes education, the tendency is to impose the values of those who wield power on education and the underprivileged. Such people (i.e. the underprivileged) lose their freedom to decide and act for themselves. Their education makes them conform to what some others find fitting. The latter does not promote change as it stresses conformity rather than diversity, difference and novelty.

*Transformative education systems encourage diversity and promote differences in opinion. Through interactions individuals develop new ideas, nurture them, and adopt them in their own lives. That is when change takes place. Schools do not wait for change to happen; rather they work for the change (Miller, 1993). This means that schools are neither dictated to nor made to conform to the status quo. The only standards are those that emerge from the education system, reflect existing conditions, and lead to the improvement of the system. Schools and/or education systems become focal points for change and persons who work or participate directly in these systems become the agents of change. These participants will include teachers, learners and parents. Change becomes intrinsic to, and arises from, interactions within the systems and the meanings, intuitions, and imaginations that avail in the circumstance.*

**Reliance on intuitions and imaginations.** Miller (1993) asserts that in the confrontation with these realities learners rely on their intuitions and imaginations. Indeed intuition and imagination provide foresight for reaching into the uncertainties ahead and enable actors to come up with novel ways to confront and make meaning out of what they are confronting. This element of the transformative process is distinct from systems that are guided by well defined standards against which learners are measured. Transformative systems deal with uncertainties rather than standards and as such rely on instincts, imaginations and experience to propel change. The use of intuitions and imaginations distinguishes transformative systems from problem-solving rationalist systems. The contrast that Freire makes of problematization and problem-solving systems which illuminates the distinction between rationalist and transformative systems is taken up in the discussion on his transformative position that follows.

### **Paulo Freire**

My discussion of Freirean analysis focuses on dialogic education and his problematization process as a transforming method. Freire's (1973/1970) dialogic education, opposed to banking education, emphasizes effective communication, participant action in social interactions and the liberatory role of education in the transforming process. I emphasize, here, a need for effective communication among actors in change processes and interactions through dialogue where Freire's problematization process is discussed and counterposed with problem-solving. The discussions emphasize personal and social agency while discounting external pressures. The central focus of communication and interactions in dialogic education is toward the

development of critical consciousness for liberatory practice. In the analysis of Freire's position that follows I also draw on the works of Illich (1989), Goulet (1973), Cuban (1990), Schipani (1984) and hooks (1994) to illuminate my analysis. In addition, the works of Simpson and Jackson (1997) and Noddings (1995) are used to provide a link between Freire's (1970/3) work and that of Dewey (1966).

For Friere (1970), transformative education systems are those systems that open spaces for effective communication among all participants to interact among themselves and their worlds and in the process name and change these worlds. This viewpoint is opposed to attempts to dictate or impose values on people for, according to Freire, it is only through naming that we can change our worlds. Such naming is an individual affair though it is enhanced in shared situations. His argument for dialogic education rather than a banking education stems from the possibilities that, he asserts, dialogic systems provide for individuals in social settings to negotiate, come to name and transform their worlds.

Dialogic education is meant to humanize those who have been robbed of their humanity (i.e. those who have lost their ability to transform their worlds) by creating the necessary environments for active engagements. This educational alternative liberates oppressed people by engaging them in critical dialogues through which they develop awareness and the capacity to act on their own behalf. As Freire (1970) puts it, it is the ontological vocation of all humans to be humanized. The goal of education, for those who have been robbed of this vocation, is to equip and reinforce this tendency. Education should develop in them a consciousness of the possibility of, and a thirst for

liberating themselves. Freire (1970) argues that this is possible through effective communication in the form of critical dialogues.

For Freire (1970), critical dialogue is a consciousness-raising process that leads to individual and social liberation. He asserts that dialogue is “an existential necessity” (p. 69). It is a fact of human existence and as such calls on all beings to engage in it. It is an experience, unique and personal, through which humans come to terms with their world. Through dialogue humans achieve their significance, assert themselves and then name their worlds. Dialogue is therefore an encounter between humans and is mediated by their worlds. To deprive any one of the opportunity for this encounter is to deprive them of the opportunity to exercise their capacities to transform their worlds (Freire, 1970). Such deprivation means the forfeiture of the ability to name the world and subsequently the ability to change it. Freire explains his position as follows:

since dialogue is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanized, this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person’s “depositing” ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be “consumed” by the discussants. Nor yet is it a hostile, polemical argument between those who are committed neither to the naming of the world, nor to the search for truth, but rather to the imposition of their own truth. (p. 70)

Here, Freire expresses a notion I want to make central to my thesis. He questions change that is imposed from without and which encourages passive actions on the part

of learners. For Freire education is a transforming process. Its central focus is to provide opportunities for the liberation of people. To impose ideas and limit the performance of some actors is, thus, not being supportive of the transformative process. He suggests active involvement of participants and a need to allow change to evolve from the system as people encounter their realities. This notion enables me to question attempts at educational reform that claim to be democratic and yet continue to impose change on people and limit the participation of some actors (i.e. teacher, learners and parents). I argue that change that is intended to be transformative has to make room for the active engagement of all actors in the processes that are intended to transform. This requires the adoption of democratic procedures rather than dictatorial procedures.

Dialogue, however, is not just an individual affair; it happens among people as they interact among themselves. Consensus building is the norm rather than the exception. Account, therefore, must be taken of personal and social agency in interactions. The interactions should be such that individuality is not subsumed under the social, nor the social under the personal. In such interactions actors share experiences, support one another and improve their understanding of their worlds.

Also, these interactions are directed toward the confrontation of the realities of participants for the construction of meaning. These realities which Freire identifies as socio-economic comprise the living realities of the individuals and the forces that impinge on their daily lives and define them. Since education is intended to transform lives and society, it becomes incumbent on educators to enable learners to confront these realities rather than some reality outside of their experiences. This means

education must reflect existing and emerging conditions. More importantly, educational purposes must be derived from these conditions. Change that comes from without and does not reflect and emerge from these conditions becomes problematic. For Freire (1970) there is no excuse to act on behalf of people. In fact, he argues against benevolence that does not put the actual actors at the forefront.

Freire (1970) doubts the genuineness of acts that are purported to be in the interest of all. He labels such acts the false generosity of paternalism. He believes that the so called generosity on the part of oppressors is only a smokescreen. They are acts that "cloak" their vested interests. What actually happens, he asserts, is that oppressors impose their values on the oppressed under false pretenses. Illich (1989) corroborates Freire's position by arguing against the claim that schools are grounds for equalizing opportunities. In actuality, Illich says, schools are places for reinforcing dominant views.

These contentions allow me to question the tendency to act on behalf of people and the tendency to adopt top-down approaches to policy and decision making in the disguise of acting in the interest of all when those others could have been involved in negotiations. Freire (1970) emphasizes participation because he believes people have to be given the opportunity to experience life as it is and the opportunity to discern meanings from their realities for themselves. Through problematization of these realities, he argues, participants get to experience their worlds, name and change it.

**Problematization.** Problematization is Freire's (1973) method of transformation. It is contrasted with problem-solving. Problematization is meant to lead

to the development of critical consciousness and result in the liberation of the oppressed. Its emphasis on participant action in interactions is opposed to problem-solving processes that emphasize strategies. In the following discussion, Freire's analysis is supported by Goulet's (1973) interpretations of the problematization process and Cuban's (1990) analysis of rationalist systems. I engage in a detailed analysis of Cuban's analysis because of its similarity to the change process in Ghana. I believe that the adoption of strategic planning has resulted in the lack of regard for system actors who are regarded as lacking in expert knowledge.

For Freire (1970) education should make it possible for individuals to confront their worlds. His strategy for such confrontation is what he termed problematization, distinct from problem-solving; which (i.e. problem-solving), he argues, is the technocrat's tool to maintain dominance and which Cuban (1990) argues does not lead to any meaningful change anyway. Goulet (1973), explains Freire's problematization process in an introduction to *Education for Critical Consciousness*. He writes:

Paulo Freire's central message is that one can know only to the extent that one "problematizes" the natural, cultural and historical reality in which s/he is immersed. ... to "problematize" in his sense is to associate an entire population to the task of codifying total reality into symbols which can generate critical consciousness and empower them to alter their relations with nature and social forces. This reflective group exercise is rescued from narcissism or psychologism only if it thrusts all participants into dialogue with others whose historical "vocation" is to

become transforming agents of their social reality. Only thus do people become subjects, instead of objects, of their own history. (p. ix)

To Freire, then, the claim to knowledge is through an active engagement with one's realities. It is not passed on but constructed actively by the individuals in social settings. Through problematization humans fulfill their historical vocation as transforming agents and move themselves from an object position to a subject position. This is possible because the problematization process enables actors to confront their realities, and out of this confrontation, they generate critical consciousness (conscienticization), and liberate themselves from bondage as they are empowered to alter their relations with nature and social forces.

Goulet (1973) distinguishes the problematizing process from problem-solving. He argues that problematizing is the antithesis of the technocrat's problem-solving stance (Freire, 1973, introduction). The former is transforming and stems from actions that lead to critical consciousness and liberation. It emphasizes dialogue and the interactions that go on in relationships as they negotiate discourse. The latter focuses on finding solutions to problems without a consideration of the persons involved and the network of negotiations that go on within the interactions.

Cuban's (1990) analysis of rationalist approaches to educational reforms problematizes the problem-solving approach. His analysis throws light on the import of initiating change among people and elaborates on the problem of relying on expert knowledge without networking with system actors. Since my ultimate interest is to promote educational reforms in Ghana that are based on negotiations among all



parties and that derive from the education system, I find Cuban's analysis very fascinating for questioning the dominance of reforms by a select few.

Cuban (1990), in his analysis of the reasons why "Reform return again, again and again", identifies the problem-solving approach to reforms as belonging to the rationalist model. He finds it problematic because it rules out the effects of relationships or interactions. He observes that the approach is based on the belief that reforms return because policy makers fail to diagnose problems and promote correct solutions. If policy makers pursued a rational course of analysis and decision making, this model assumes, there would be no need for the same solutions to re-enter the policy arena. Cuban finds the model compelling but flawed. The problem, as he sees it, is that such reform processes are explained in terms of political cycles and pendulum swings.

Cuban (1990) argues that rationalist approaches to reforms assume that reforms return in the same way without any changes. He explains that rationalists defend their position by arguing that reforms have taken the form of interchanges between periods when reforms are learner-centered or teacher-centered. They believe it is possible to predict the next cycle or direction based on evidence of existing and past reforms. Going by such predictions, then, reformers can forecast and anticipate reform trends.

Furthermore, Cuban (1990) argues, rationalists believe that reforms require a powerful external force beyond the control of policy makers and practitioners to set them in motion. By implication, reforms can not be the work of the ordinary people

who are involved in ground level educational work. This means that teachers, learners and parents can not initiate reforms, since they do not have the 'magical powers' that propel reforms. Perhaps, reform requires fundamental rethinking of education in ways that will involve an entire new philosophy or ideology or even a new paradigm.

In the case of Ghana, where reforms have been spearheaded by ruling governments and their collaborators (i.e. bureaucrats, financiers and leaders from recognized institutions), it can be speculated that only such categories of people have access to the 'knowledge' and 'wisdom' that is necessary for reforms to happen. The irony, however, is that it is not these same categories of people (i.e. politicians, bureaucrats, and financiers), whose work produces reforms. Rather, it is the work of ground and system level workers such as teachers, parents and learners whose action in the process of change results in actual change. Top level personnel may continue to make policies and take decisions, but if those policies and decisions are not meaningful to the ground workers and if the ground level workers refuse to be a part of those policies and decisions, they will come to nothing. What this means is that there must be cooperation among all actors and that all actors must be engaged actively in the change process.

Cuban (1990) argues that rationalist approaches do not reflect the complex network of relationships that are negotiated in change processes. Rationalists are pre-occupied with identifying and predicting future trends without sufficient regard for the factors that have propelled those trends and dictated the change. This argument is

commensurate with Freire's argument for sensitizing education to the realities of actors. Cuban disagrees with rationalist predictions because he does not think reforms return in the same form. He argues that reform means more than problem identification and solutions. Rather, he believes that reforms also are a factor of the complex network of relationships that occur among people as they interact with their environment and the education system. Here, the significance of participant action is intimated.

Problematization, in contrast to problem-solving, emphasizes the significance of participant action in the change processes. Transforming systems which are intended to affect the lives of people can not afford the luxury of problem-solving. The unique role of problematizing in the development of critical consciousness and liberatory practice marks off any attempts to adopt problem-solving approaches to transform as inadequate. The significance of participant action in Freire's transformative (i.e. dialogue) process is given meaning in his discussions on conscientization and liberatory practice.

**Conscientization.** Conscientization is defined as the process by which people achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality that shapes their lives and their capacity to transform these realities (Freire, 1973). It involves coming to terms with that reality by understanding and developing the ability to make meaning of it. It is an awakening to which otherwise silenced (oppressed) people come when they extricate themselves from the yokes or bonds that subjugate their interests under false pretenses. The oppressed, in this awakening, speak up and take up the mantle of action.

They reassert themselves and confront their realities. In the analysis that follows, I also use Schipani's (1984) analysis on critical consciousness to elaborate Freire's position.

Freire (1973) points out that it is the historical vocation of people to be critical. Under the mantle of oppression; however, it demands a critical (i.e. transformative) education to get the oppressed back on track. The type of education requisite for this type of awakening, he asserts, must enable "the people to reflect on themselves, their responsibilities, and their role in a new cultural climate - indeed to reflect on their power of reflection" (p. 16). Such an education is intended to increase the capacity of choice by opening possibilities other than the traditional ones that have subjugated some actors and protected the interests of the privileged.

Freire (1973) examines two levels of consciousness in the transition to liberation: naive and critical. In the naive state of consciousness capacity for dialogue is fragile and distorted. Individuals can be convinced easily to accept values other than what their consciousness makes available. They are still vulnerable to external manipulation. At the higher level, however, where critical consciousness is attained there is in-depth interpretation of problems. Interactions at this stage, he argues, are characterized by "authentically democratic regimes and [correspond] to permeable, interrogative, restless and dialogical forms of life - in contrast to silence and inaction" (p. 18 - 19). Within democratic engagements, then, people are able to overturn silence and inaction. This is possible because they are equipped with critical tools to resist external pressure. Hence, it is only when one reaches the critical stage that one can actually liberate oneself from oppressive forces. Schipani (1984) explains the effect of

critical consciousness on the actions of actors in the dialogic process. His explanation points to a relationship between action and reflection, bedfellows, in the transformative dialogic process.

Schipani (1984) writes that critical consciousness "implies a critical self-insertion and 'praxis' understood as the dialectic relationship of action - reflection" (p. 100). I believe the role of reflection in the dialectic relationship is to lead to critical awareness of the conditions confronted so that actions taken to deal with these conditions are not just impulsive but are based on personal convictions of the implications of such actions. The import of reflection for action and vice versa is expressed in the relationship that Freire (1973) establishes between the two concepts.

In a footnote to *Education for critical consciousness*, Freire (1973), claims that a sacrifice of action equals verbalism, and that a sacrifice of reflection equals activism. I take verbalism for empty words and activism for misguided action. In his analysis of dialogues he asserts that word is the essence of dialogue. He argues that word is not just an instrument which makes dialogue possible, true word is praxis. To speak a true word is to transform the world. The transformative power of word, however, lies in the radical interaction between its two dimensions: reflection and action. He writes: "an unauthentic word, one which is unable to transform reality, results when dichotomy is imposed upon its constitutive elements" (p. 68). I believe Freire was interested in showing that one can neither transform the world by merely thinking about situations without backing the thought with action nor can one take actions without giving a critical thought to the actions. Here, there is the need to think critically about issues and

understand them before taking active steps to realize the content of thought. In effect actions must be guided by critical awareness of their implications and intensity. It also means that policies (i.e. expression of thought) without practice can not result in any meaningful change.

Freire (1970) asserts that true dialogue cannot exist unless participants engage in critical thinking. He defines critical thinking as:

thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people and admits of no dichotomy between them - thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity - thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of risks involved.

(p. 73)

Thinking becomes an active engaging aspect of the change process. It does not assert knowledge but involves a preparedness to take risks. It is, however, the impact of thought on action that gives it its authenticity. For Freire (1973), authentic thought, thought that arises from an awareness of the position of the self in the world, is thought that enables one to liberate the self from oppressive forces and to break silence and inaction. A transformative education system must therefore lead to actions by persons to liberate themselves and one another. Critical consciousness is thus not an end in itself. It is contingent upon its capacity to liberate.

**Education as the practice of freedom.** In Freirean theory, transformative education is a practice of freedom which is opposed to education that is oppressive (i.e.

transmissive). This type of freedom is neither liberty to do what one wants nor does it sanction action taken regardless of consequences. It is, rather, freedom that is guided by reflection and action. These two concepts, reflection and action, define liberatory practice. For Freire (1973) the liberatory process requires participation and commitment as one reflects and acts. He stresses:

as they [learners] attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. In this way, the presence of the oppressed in the struggle for their liberation will be what it should be: not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement. (p. 51)

What is implied here is that no one acts in lieu of the other; neither are views to be imposed on some others. What Freire (1973) urged was an engaged construction of reality, not an imposition of dominant views, be they those of politicians or policy makers, bureaucrats, practitioners, texts, or even teachers and parents. As already indicated the actions that follow reflections are meant to liberate the individual. In transformative systems the emphasis is on praxis. Education is meant to affect not just perceptions (i.e. conscientize) but also to enable people to change their conditions, to improve upon them and transform their lives for the better.

Participation becomes a very important part of the liberatory process. Freire (1970) advocates working with all and not for some and appeals to dialogue to arrive at such involvement. He is opposed to change from without because such change does not engage participants in dialogue where they problematize their conditions and act on

them. He explains the significance of participation in a comparison between what he called systematic education and educational projects. In an answer to a question about the implementation of liberatory education, Freire asserts:

One aspect of the reply is to be found in the distinction between *systematic education*, which can only be changed by political power, and *educational projects*, which should be carried out with the oppressed in the process of organizing them. (p. 36, emphasis in original)

Though Freire does not explain in specific terms what he means by that distinction, he uses it to explain his position on top-down approaches to change. This distinction counterposes change that is intrinsic to education and comes from within the system and involves the people (system actors), with change that is determined externally and comes as packaged instructions. The significance of this distinction, for me, is that attempts to impose change on people, from the example of Ghana, do not necessarily lead to expected results. The impact of such imposed change is effective as long as the external force is physically present. In the absence of external force people are more likely to act the way they want. They may act as humans whose vocation is to be truly human and free (Freire, 1970). An alternative approach, for me, would, be to engage actors in the processes of change rather than impose change on them.

This position resonates with Cuban's (1990) argument that rationalist approaches assume that change requires external force in order to happen. Both Cuban and Freire discount this position. What I gather from the two of them is that it is crucial to embark on change with the people, to negotiate and discuss change with them, and



provide spaces for interaction. Through such interactions change becomes a function of the totality of participant actions and reflections and as such they can commit to and play their roles effectively.

Although Freirean analyses urge participant action, Freire (1970), does not rule out the leadership of experts. Rather, he requires experts to serve as facilitators. They are expected to work with the people on the ground in the codification of reality. As facilitators they engage participants in active dialogue, in sharing relationships, where everyone is an active learner and teacher at the same time. Such facilitators could be policy-makers, financiers, technocrats, teachers and even parents. Cooperation becomes essential as participants share in experiences and confront their worlds. Cooperation demands that conducive environments be established for interactions.

*Within a dialogic model of teaching and learning, then, policy-makers, teachers, and parents are called upon to provide these conducive environments where learners can interact freely among themselves and their conditions and support one another as they move from an oppressive transmissive system through a healing that can enable them to assert themselves in and out of class. Education within such conducive environments, according to Freire (1973), promotes the practice of freedom and fosters critical consciousness. Freire can trust individuals with the search for their own improvements. He believes that individuals are capable of working for themselves if given the opportunity. The liberatory process is, thus, intended to allow individuals to assume responsibility of their own growth and development and to depend on themselves and one another to improve themselves. Approaching change under such conditions, he*

argues, ensures commitment to change. The essential thing is to create the environments for interactions and participants will do what they do best, that is, transform their world. The interactive element of the dialogue process moves Freire's concern for active participation beyond the individual level.

Although Freire (1973/1970) advocates personal agency he also presses for social agency. He advocates a co-intentional education which enables teachers and students (leadership and people) to reflect together on reality as Subjects not only in the task of unveiling that reality and thereby come to know it critically but also in the task of re-creating that reality. This search for reality is not only the individual in search of his/her personal identity and fulfillment. In fact individual search must reflect the social milieu as part of the search for social progress. Interpretations of the world must be colored by individual interpretations as well as the group. Emphasis on the social is in recognition of humans as social beings.

In summary, Freirean transformative education is rooted in the need to conscientize and liberate people as they interact among themselves and problematize their socio-economic realities. It involves the creation of conducive environments for individual action within the group, as well as, personal identification with their realities. In the process individuals are empowered to transform their situation and improve their own lives depending on the actions and reflections that they engage in and not what interpretations some others provide. It is a co-intentional activity and requires the involvement of all participants. This means that teachers, parents, policy makers, financiers and bureaucrats must cooperate among themselves if education is to be

transformative. It also requires that the process of change itself be democratized and not just educational processes and/or avenues for such education only.

This implies that teachers and parents as educators, must seek their own liberation as well as that of learners. When the actions of teachers and parents do not reach the consciousness and liberation that they need to guide learners, their own functions in the education process is limited. Dewey's arguments against authority in which he asserts that under such authoritative systems, teachers lose the liberty to reason with learners and texts, provide further explanations for the need for the liberation of educators. In fact educators are called upon to adopt democratic procedures themselves and to practice democracy. As democratic agents, in homes and schools, they will have to reason together with learners, rather than impose themselves on learners. They must help learners to experience and acquire democratic attitudes. These demands are meant to prepare all parties, especially learners, to participate in transformative processes by developing in each party the necessary critical awareness for problematizing their realities so that they can contribute to their personal and social transformation. By so doing they liberate themselves from those forces that have rendered them helpless and incapable of fulfilling themselves. Liberatory practice is thus a consequence of the conscientization process. bell hooks (1994) makes this connection in her own search for an empowering education which she termed "engaged pedagogy".

In hooks' (1994) analysis of engaged pedagogy she throws light on Freire's conception of conscientization, particularly, its implications for her as a teacher. She writes:

it was Freire's insistence that education could be the practice of freedom that encouraged me to create strategies for what he called "conscientization" in the classroom. Translating the term to critical awareness and engagement, I entered the classrooms with the conviction that it was crucial for me and every other student to be an active participant, not a passive consumer" (p. 14).

For hooks (1994), the concern to liberate propels a need to develop critical awareness and engagement. This is, however, possible because there is respect for individual participants and their involvement in the process. Actually, the process rests on the actions of the participants themselves. Apart from the connection between conscientization and liberation, hooks, reinforces my own argument for the active participation of actors in the process of change especially when change is meant to democratize and transform. Transformative processes are, thus, processes in which agency is essential.

The discussion so far about transmissive and transformative systems, for me, presents two opposing ideas, one conservative, the other radical. The shift from the use of transmissive practices to the use of transformative systems is quite a radical one urging the adoption of a completely opposing system. No doubt that attempts to transform do not come easy. The question, then, is how to get transmissive education systems to respond to the transformative goals of education. This, I believe, will require not just a mere change of goals (ends) of education but also the means for reaching those goals such as will reflect the goals.

Both Freire (1973/1970) and Miller (1993) emphasize this need with a focus on interactions and the role of participants in interactions. They show that it is in actions that one develops the relevant characteristics that result eventually in transformation. These actions are facilitated by the adoption of procedures which emphasize effective communication through dialogue, participant involvement (personal and social), confrontation with socio-economic realities and a commitment to change. In the search for change, then, we do not just think about goals but also the processes that can result in one's attaining those goals.

Simpson and Jackson (1997) assert that thinking about educational reform ultimately entails thinking, on one hand, about education and on the other hand, about means and ends. Thinking about ends and means is, therefore, contingent to thinking about education. Noddings (1995) takes the argument further by pointing out that in thinking about change the question is not just the matching of ends and means but also the reconsideration of aims such as will match its two components, ends and means. This assertion propels my call for the reconceptualization of educational aims in the Ghanaian reforms.

In Noddings' (1996) discussions of Deweyan conception of aims, she asserts that aims function in means-ends planning. In this case, she argues, when aims are conceived as ends in view, when means do not seem likely to culminate in a desired end, the means have to be reconsidered and in some cases the aim itself has to be reconsidered. Aims, then, become the central focus for reconsidering both ends and means, rather than dealing with each component, ends or means, separately.

Dewey (1966) provides explanations that illuminate such conceptions and enhance the building of bonds between ends and means. Dewey's pre-occupation with democratic negotiations and growth-oriented education, the key elements in his analysis of aims, leads him to emphasize communication, shared meanings and the active involvement of all actors in the pursuit of educational purposes. In educational reform, then, all actors would be called upon to engage actively in the process. Education, for Dewey, has democratic ends and the means to those ends must be transformative. In the discussions that follow I explore the democratic and transformation qualities of education and their implications for aims in change processes.

#### **Deweyan analysis of educational aims**

My adoption of Deweyan analysis of aims, as an integral analysis of the examination of transformative oriented educational reforms, is due mainly to its focus on ends and means in a continuum, where aims are intrinsic to and evolve from education. I find Deweyan analysis useful for three main reasons. First, the analysis helps in the effective negotiation of reforms that are intended to be transformative by emphasizing an essential quality of transformative education, democracy. Second, the emphasis on democracy rules out procedures that are dictatorial, such as the adoption of top-down approaches to policy and decision making and the exclusion of some voices in reform discourse and, in the process, establishes new and dynamic arrangements that locate reform initiation and negotiations in the hands of all interested parties. Third, Dewey's (1966) analysis of aims, when applied to reform discourse, moves it beyond conceptual analysis and the mere setting of goals (ends); it directs attention to the

adoption of appropriate actions or processes (means) for reaching those ends. This resonates with Freirean thinking on the complementary role of reflection and action. In the analysis of Dewey's position that follows, I also draw on the works of Simpson and Jackson (1997), Noddings (1996), Garrison (1996), Suppes (1995), Boisvert (1995), Pekarsky (1990), Woods (1990), Callan (1982), Peters (1973) and Schofield (1972). I turn now to Dewey's analysis of growth and democracy as the objects of education.

Dewey's (1966) pre-occupation with growth and democratic socialization, as the objects of education, underpin his analysis of educational aims where ends and means are matched. Democratic ends are, thus, matched with democratic means. Growth is equated to education while democracy serves as the object of education. Garrison (1996) asserts that "Dewey believed that democracy is the social structure that [contributes] to freeing intelligence to grow" (p. 429). In the discussions that follow, I look at how Deweyan analysis of education and educational aims interconnects the concepts, "growth" and "democracy" and results in a connection between ends and means.

### **Education**

Dewey (1966), anticipates education in democratic societies in which the social goals of education are development/growth and democracy. He argues that "life is development, and that developing, growing, is life" (p. 49). Life, development, and growth become synonymous. Applying this interpretation to education, it means that the educational process has no end beyond itself; it is its own end, and the educational process is one of continual reorganizing, reconstructing, and transforming. Education

then, for him, is one with growth, and growth with development. A criterion of the value of school education is, therefore, the extent to which it creates a desire for continued growth and supplies means for making this desire effective. Growth becomes the compelling force for education, and this is more so within democratic systems. In the analyses on growth and democracy that follows, the works of Pekarsky (1990) and Callan (1982) provide background for the assertion that Dewey conceives growth as an educational end. Also, the works of Garrison (1996), Boisvert (1995), Simpson and Jackson (1997) and Woods (1990) are helpful in understanding Dewey's conception of democracy. It is to Dewey's conception of growth that I now turn.

**Growth.** Both Callan (1982) and Pekarsky (1990) stress the significant role of growth in Deweyan philosophy. Callan asserts that Dewey conceives of education as the process of growth. Pekarsky, on his part, asserts that Dewey configures growth as the criterion for judging whether an experience is educative or not. These assertions are confirmed in *Democracy and Education*, in which Dewey (1966) defines growth as a "cumulative movement of action toward a later result" (p. 41). Its primary condition is immaturity. Growth, for him, means the ability to develop.

Dewey (1966), discusses growth in terms of immaturity which, he points out, makes it possible to talk about issues intrinsic to development rather than issues that arise from external determinants. He argues that when immaturity is seen as a mere lack, and growth as "something that fills the gap between the immature and the mature", childhood is treated comparatively instead of intrinsically (p. 42). The result is that standards are set against which individuals must progress and the fulfillment of growing



becomes accomplished growth without any possibilities for further growth. When growth is intrinsic, according to Dewey (1966), it connotes a "positive force, - the power to grow. ... Growth is not something done to them [children, beings]; it is something they do" (p.42). For him, growth is present where there is life. All living beings, then, have the capacity and power to grow and their education should enhance that capacity. Education should make it possible for them to practice their intrinsic capacities as they seek their own growth and development.

Dewey (1966), argues that education is a "fostering, a nurturing, a cultivating, process". All of these words mean that education implies attention to the conditions of growth" (p. 10). Growth is to be fostered, Dewey says, by providing opportunities for learners to engage with their environment in an interactive way. Environment is defined as denoting more than surroundings which encompass an individual (Dewey, 1966). It denotes the specific continuity of the surroundings with one's own active tendencies. He details this process in his discussion of what he termed the technical definition of education. He asserts that "it [education] is that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases [one's] ability to direct the course of subsequent action" (p. 76). He explains that the increment in meaning corresponds to the increased perception of the connections and continuities of the activities engaged. Activities begin as impulses and connections are imperceptible; however, educative activities lead to an awareness of the hitherto imperceptible. It is through action that such awareness is developed. The course of learning is not pre-determined. Through actions connections are revealed, meaning is made, wider

awareness or perception is attained, and consequences can then be intended.

To say that one can intend consequences, Dewey (1966) argues, is to say that one can better anticipate what is going to happen and, therefore, one can prepare in advance so as to secure beneficial consequences and avert undesirable ones. Thus, from an initial groping in the dark one develops a foresight in advance of subsequent activity. Education becomes a directed and purposeful activity. The process assumes directionality in the course of action and not before it. It occurs as meaning is refined and actions become purposeful. Dewey's connection of growth with foresight, a connection not of logic but through action, is significant when the means of achieving a transformative education system are considered.

Education that is purposive, for Dewey (1938), refines an initial impulse, which may be vague, ill-defined or blinded, into a consciously thought-out considered purpose. In *Experience and Education*, he asserts that "a purpose is an end-view. That is, it involves foresight of the consequences which will result from acting upon impulse" (p. 67). Also, a purpose is a "plan and a method of action based upon foresight of the consequences of acting under given observed conditions in a certain way" (p. 69). Dewey's discussion of education as growth, thus, does not argue merely for any actions, for instance, impulsive actions; rather it refers to refined actions. For Dewey, education aims to nurture action guided by foresight which he sees to be a function of active inquiry.

Dewey's (1966) argument for education as growth enables him to discount the tendency to impose standards or pre-determined actions that is prominent in some forms

of transmissive education. An emphasis on growth allows him to affirm the intrinsic quality of education instead of external determination. He writes:

A genuinely educative experience, then, is one in which instruction is conveyed and ability increased, is contradistinguished from a routine activity on one hand, and a capricious activity on the other. (a) In the latter one "does not care what happens"; one just lets go and avoids connecting the consequences of one's act (the evidences of its connections with other things) with the act. ... *Individuals act capriciously whenever they act under external dictation, or from being told, without having a purpose of their own or perceiving the bearing of the deed upon other acts.* ... (b) Routine action, action which is automatic, may increase skill to do a particular thing. In so far, it might be said to have an educative effect. But it does not lead to new perceptions of bearings and connections; it limits rather than widens the meaning horizons. And since the environment changes and our way of acting has to be modified in order successfully to keep a balanced connection with things, an *isolated uniform way of acting* becomes disastrous at some critical point. (pp. 77 - 78, my emphasis)

For Dewey, like Freire, individuals must be engaged actively in making meanings for themselves rather than having meanings imposed on them, for it is when the former is practiced that learners develop the foresight and the ability to adapt, necessary for sustainable growth. For Dewey, then, it is the freedom to maneuver around

situations, the flexible interactions and the ability to do things spontaneously that make experiences transformative as well as educative.

Active learning of the sort Dewey (1966) is describing requires that considerable attention be paid to the learning *environment* if the goal is “transforming of the quality of experience till it partakes in the interests, purposes, and ideas current in the social group”. Dewey says, “the problem is evidently not one of mere physical forming” (pp. 10 - 11). The problem requires an environment that calls out certain responses. He explains:

the required beliefs cannot be hammered in; the needed attitudes cannot be plastered on. But the particular medium in which an individual exists leads him/her to see and feel one thing rather than another, it leads him/her to have certain plans in order that s/he may act successfully with others, it strengthens some beliefs and weakens others as a condition of winning approval (p. 11).

Dewey's (1966) emphasis on environment shows his concerns for both individual and social agency as well as interactions between the two. In his democratic society individuals have an opportunity to contribute to the success of others' projects and to feel a responsibility towards others (Dewey, 1938). At the same time individual lives are not to be subsumed in social prescriptions nor are they engulfed in the kind of individual search for meaning, that President Rawlings (cited in Fobi et al., 1995) called self interest, which can imperil social progress. Deweyan individuals are socialized individuals and their education is as much a social as it is an individual necessity.

Dewey (1966) uses “growth” as a metaphor for education that aims to develop learners’ capacities to learn by nurturing their ability to perceive connections, to generate progress, to *act* with foresight and to work collaboratively. Deweyan learners are active learners. They generate and construct their own meanings. If such learners are to contribute meaningfully to society as well as to their own growth, however, they must partake in the educational activities that facilitate democracy as well as growth. It is to Dewey’s ideas on democracy and education, then, that I now turn attention.

**Democracy.** For Dewey (1966), democracy, is crucial because of the very nature of school organizations (Simpson & Jackson, 1997; Ratner, 1939). As institutions that form character, schools can function both positively and negatively. Schools can promote qualities of character that are inimical to or foster social progress. In his arguments against the old conservative and the new progressive education systems, Dewey (1938), shows his aversion for undemocratic systems. Like Freire, he detests any tendency to impose ideas on learners. Yet he does not reject the influence of external sources outright; rather, he seeks a connection between individuals and their actions and external pressures. He wants schools to demonstrate democracy in practice. These analyses are given further meaning in the interpretations by Boisvert (1995), Garrison (1996), Simpson and Jackson (1997) and Woods (1990).

Boisvert (1995), for instance, points out that, for Dewey, “democracy [is] an ongoing experiment, open always to the possibility of amelioration” (p. 165). Democracy is a way of life for Dewey. It happens through experience and is constructed socially not a given. His emphasis on agency and dialogue as necessary functions of

democratic living are crucial for present day educational discourse. He asserts these functions in his discussion on logic. In these discussions agency is asserted as a complement of the dialogic process and dialogue becomes the criterion for measuring the potency of logic.

Garrison (1996) affirms the significance of dialogue in his own analysis of Dewey's theory of democratic listening. He cites the following passage from Dewey:

the final actuality is accomplished in face-to-face relationships by means of direct give and take. Logic in its fulfillment recurs to the primitive sense of the word: dialogue. Ideas which are not communicated, shared, and reborn in expression are but (monological) soliloquy, and soliloquy is but broken and imperfect thought. (p. 430)

Like Freire, Dewey believes that dialogue is crucial for democracy. For Dewey, then, even thought must be democratized. It must be subjected to scrutiny. It is only through such surveillance that thought can be perfected and authenticated. Dialogue provides the avenue for such scrutiny and for the refinement of thought. These occur because people engage in active interactions where ideas are exchanged and in the process refined.

Simpson and Jackson (1997), commenting on Dewey's conception of democracy as an educational end, assert that democracy is needed for education as much as education is needed for democracy. Children and adults cannot learn democratic living without experiencing it. Democracy depends upon education for its survival. By implication, since Dewey believes strongly in the effects of environment, providing a

democratic environment is a necessary means for instilling democratic ideals in learners. A positive and democratic environment is one that enables learners to engage effectively in activities that enhance their performance and subsequent constructions of knowledge. Such constructions are possible within a cooperative setting. According to Simpson and Jackson "Dewey believe[s] that 'the democratic ideal itself demands that thinking and activity proceed cooperatively'" (p. 83). It happens as people interact and build networks. It is a communal activity.

Dewey (1966) defines democracy in terms of a shared communal experience which is capable of breaking individual and/or social barriers. He asserts:

the extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity. (p. 87)

In democratic systems, then, people engage in dialogue until they reach consensus. Decisions and policies are negotiated; they are not imposed. Such negotiations require that people move beyond themselves and reach out to others. As seen previously, for Freire, communication, cooperation and interactions become very important in the democratizing process.

In schools, this will mean the provision of conducive environments for learners to interact among themselves and with teachers. The superordinate-subordinate

relationships that characterize traditional classrooms will have to give way to free interactions as teachers and learners cooperate and coordinate learning. It also will mean that parents and teachers see each other as people with a common purpose of facilitating the learning of children. Working in the spirit of an educative community, the contributions of both teachers and parents are coordinated rather than isolated (Dewey, 1966). Also, school work is linked to life in the larger society. Schools do not stay out of community life and neither do communities stay out of school life. Schools become communities in which democratic values are promoted for living in school and in the larger community.

Dewey's conceptualization of democratic education emphasizes two elements: interactive consensus building and the development of social habits. The first signifies not only more numerous and more varied points of shared common interest but also greater reliance upon the recognition of mutual interests as a factor in control. The democratic ideal, then, is not a matter of collating *some* views but *shared* views. The extent to which views are shared among people in a group determines the level of democratic interactions. The second, means the development of habits that enable one to interact with others in a group. It requires readjustment of habits and interactions as new situations are produced through varied discourse. It recognizes one's imperfection and as such provides for the development of those habits in interactions. Also, since the interactions are not fixed individuals have to readjust their behaviors as they meet with new situations and new groups. In both cases all individuals are treated equitably.

Dewey(1966) argues that a society is democratic to the extent that it makes



provision for participation in the good of all its members on equal terms and that it secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life. Such a society must have education that gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and governance as well as the habits of mind that secure social changes.

Garrison (1996), speaking about Dewey's pluralistic conception of democracy in his explorations of Deweyan theory of democratic listening, argues that:

the governmental structure assumed by a democracy is of secondary concern. It does not matter as long as it promotes communication. Conversation, for Dewey, was about creating and sharing meaning, it was about growth. We may secure and continue the conversation in many ways and diversity is the key to creative conversation. (p. 430)

Bound to relationships among people and promoting self expression, consensus building and active negotiations among all parties, democracy in education is presented as a means to create community. It is within an educative community that democracy flourishes. Boisvert's (1995) analysis of the characteristics of a Deweyan conception of democracy explicates how democracy fosters the development of a sense of community in negotiations.

Boisvert (1995) identifies three main characteristics of a Deweyan conception of democracy as a social ideal: individuality, freedom and equality, and fluid social relations. Examining his analysis helps me to flesh out this connection between democracy and community. Boisvert asserts that Dewey encourages individuality as

against individualism. Individualism means assertion of the self apart from others and can be equated to self-improvement. Individuality by contrast, is focused on the way a person contributes to shared undertakings. Dewey argues that individuality must be cultivated as a democratic value in the attempt to structure the optimal mode of living in association with others instead of without them.

Boisvert (1995) also asserts that democratic societies are committed to freedom and equality. He explains that freedom, for Dewey, refers not simply to an absence of constraint; rather, it signifies the capacity; that is, the ability to carry out projects in practice. Effective freedom is the concrete capacity to engage in projects; it represents a possibility that can be developed and enhanced. Leaving people alone does not lead automatically to the enhancement of freedom. People must be engaged in a project of freedom. This resonates with Freire's (1970) argument for the adoption of educational projects instead of systematic change in education. To ensure freedom, equality is presented as a positive precondition; however, equality does not mean "identity" or "homogeneity" (Boisvert, 1995). That is to say, equality does not mean being one with everybody else or being subsumed under a general category. Instead, equality calls for recognition of the uniqueness and the irreplaceability of each human being. Boisvert writes, "what Dewey was saying was that the principle of equality results from the awareness that no such universal measure exists" (p. 334). In other words, there are multiple identities and realities with no single standard measure of assessing them. It is important, therefore, to provide for the differences rather than the universals or generalities. The interpretation of equality as discussed, I believe, can be expressed in

terms of equity.

Finally, Boisvert (1995) states that the principle of fluid social relations in Dewey's work on democracy, centers on the presence or absence of porous boundaries between the various social groupings that make up a society. Democratic practice requires the constant struggle to emphasize social fluidity. The higher the possibility for shared interests between differing social strata the more democratic the society becomes. Such a vision of shared interests rests, however, on the practice of each of the other elements: individuality, freedom and equality. Democracy, then, is judged by the extent to which there is ample interaction and movement between social strata. As Dewey (1966), says, it is necessary to ask: "How numerous and varied are the interests which are consciously shared? How full and free is the interplay with other forms of association?" (p. 83).

Deweyan democratic ideals present challenges to the educational system. It is through education that the democratic ideals can be reached but such an achievement is only possible through the exemplary practice of democratic community in schools. Woods(1990), writes in support of the need to practice democratic living in schools by pointing out that "we take for granted that our schools are communities when in fact, they are merely institutions that can become communities only when we work at it" (p. 34). He argues, further, that schools are laboratories where democracy is experienced, not museums where it is observed. For him, then, democracy is practice, practice for present living and for life after school. Woods' assertions call for a need to engage in systems that can facilitate and promote democratic living. In light of current discussions,

I argue that practice means not only democratic participation in education but also practicing democratic participation in the reform process in the setting of goals, determination of purposes and the mapping of plans.

In line with the three principles of individuality, freedom and equality, and fluidity, Boisvert (1995) identifies three implications for educational reform. First, that education in a democratic society must develop the habits of taking account of others prior to making decisions. Taking account of others involves considering the consequences of decisions and how they impact *beyond* the decision maker. It also means being considerate and respectful of others (Ayim, 1997). Ayim's position is illuminated in the next chapter in discussions about aims talk. Democracy demands that all persons be given equal opportunities to participate in matters that affect them.

Second, the education system must work toward the growth of freedom and equality. It should foster the selection and accomplishment of life-projects as well as open opportunities for the diverse characteristics of learners. Education must provide learners with the diverse tools to confront their realities in critical engagements as well as instill in them the love for freedom and equality.

Finally, the scope of education should be widened. It should provide for shared interests among learners and must not privilege any forms of learning or reinforce any particular set(s) of values to the exclusion of others. Attempts to privilege or reinforce particular values, particularly if those values are sectarian constitutes a negation of Dewey's democratic ideals. In fact what democratic educational systems should be doing is to provide opportunities for the development of the diverse characteristics of

learners and allow learners to share their experiences and in the process generate new meanings and transform their lives. Change becomes a function of the interactions in which learners engage, their characteristics and the conditions that they encounter during interactions. Such change is not imposed.

The discussions above show the central roles of growth and democracy in Dewey's conception of education. Education is defined by its ability to promote growth and ensure democratic living. In his conception of educational aims, which he asserts is more education, we find similar preoccupation with the two concepts: growth and democracy. In the discussion that follows, I examine Dewey's conception of educational aims. The analyses of Dewey's conception of educational aims by Simpson and Jackson (1997), Noddings (1996), Suppes (1995), Peters (1973), and Schofield (1972), on which I draw, are invaluable for my analysis.

### **Educational aims**

Dewey (1966) approaches the discussion of educational aims with detailed analyses of aims in general where growth and democracy are emphasized. The distinguishing character of this analysis is the purposiveness and foresight that growth and democracy bring to his conception of aims. The discussion of aims depicts an ongoing struggle to provide for diverse and shared interests, to address the intrinsic qualities of educational projects, to promote growth, and to establish goals that are democratic. Noddings (1996) supports these assertions by pointing out that, for Dewey, the aim of education must be embedded in education itself, and the primary aim of education is more education. Since education is growth-oriented and democratic in

focus its aims must possess the same qualities. Dewey is adamant in his assertion that the aim of education will not lie outside of education but within it. To talk about aims as if they were entities in their own right is to distance aims from education. Dewey's (1966) says:

in the search for aims in education, we are not concerned, therefore, with finding an end outside of the educative process to which education is subordinate. Our whole conception forbids. We are rather concerned with the contrast which exists when aims belong within the process in which they operate and when they are set up from without (p. 100)

His discussions of aims, therefore, point to a reconciliation of intrinsic and extrinsic determinants of aims. The intrinsic quality of education makes it possible for deriving ends from the process of education, but as a directed and purposeful activity. It reaches beyond intrinsic factors to reflect existing conditions. In the following discussions, I examine first, his conception of aims in general and, then, its application to education.

**Aims.** In the discussion of aims, Dewey (1966) focuses on the intrinsic quality of aims. He emphasizes a need to establish dynamic aims that are flexible and reflect learner characteristics and conditions, that permit the connection between ends and means and that are purposive. Such aims are guided by foresight and are couched in the need to provide democratic interactions and to promote growth.

In a summary to his analysis of aims, Dewey (1966) asserts that "an aim denotes the result of any natural process brought to consciousness and made a factor in

determining present observation and choice of ways of acting” (p.110). This summary depicts his attempt to connect ends and means in the aims-making process. The result which lies at the completion of the activity in aims-making is brought into the process of completing the end. The result does not lie isolated from the means but is in constant connection to the means and remains a conscious and active part of the entire process. He argues that “there is no basis upon which to select an earlier state of affairs as beginning, a later as an end, and to consider what intervenes as the transformation and realization process” (p. 101). All these stages must be seen in a continuum supporting and enabling one another. He argues that the completion of one end becomes a means to another end. He stresses a need to talk about aims in terms of varying alternatives in both ends and the means that are adopted to reach the ends. In aims-making, then, Dewey looks into the system for aims so that the necessary connections and variety can be made.

Dewey (1966) describes aims as follows:

given an activity having a time span and cumulative growth within the time succession, an aim means foresight in advance of the end or possible termination. If bees anticipated the consequences of their activity, if they perceived their end in imaginative foresight, they would have the primary element of aim. Hence it is nonsense to talk about the aim of education - or any other undertaking - where conditions do not permit of foresight of results, and do not stimulate a person to look ahead to see what the outcome of a given activity is to be. (p. 102)

This analysis of an aim brings up a number of issues that need consideration. First, Dewey emphasizes some key characteristics of aims. Aims are not fixed, they are flexible, evolving, and forward looking which is to say they are growth-oriented. Education is about growth and so must be its aims. Unless ends lead to further ends they can not satisfy the criterion of growth. Such ends must be dynamic, that is, flexible and interactive. Every goal, objective, purpose, or end must be connected to some other goals, purposes or ends. Consequently, they can not be spoken of as if they are separate stand-alone entities. They must be reflexive and recursive. Also, to say that aims are forward looking is to say they give direction to the end. In Dewey's words, they serve as "foresight". Dewey reiterates: an "aim as a foreseen end gives direction to the activity; it is not an idle view of a mere spectator, but influences the steps taken to reach the end"(p. 102). Thus an aim compels action on the part of whoever is/are engaged in the process. It is, therefore, action oriented and, as such, involves participation or performance by the actors.

The second issue that Dewey's (1966) conception of aims raises is that aims-making is not just about ends. It is about ends and means. If it were about ends only, Dewey would not be considering the steps to be taken to achieve them. For Dewey, however, the ends are as important as the means. It is the means that enable the ends to be fulfilled *qua* ends. Every end when achieved becomes a means to further ends. Thus democratic ends, expressed as aims, require democratic means. He asserts that the means are the transforming stage in the aims-making process. He points out that it is in the process as one works through ends that change occurs. That is to say, we can be



transformed only when we act to bring our goals to fruition and in the process change our conditions. This does not involve a mere thought about change but also the adoption of deliberate and conscious steps to bring thought into fruition. This resonates with Freire's assertion about the inseparability of reflection from action in transformative dialogic systems. Hence, in the search for new meaning in education where transformation is the goal, there is need to pay attention to ends as well as the means to the ends. Dewey expresses this concern in the discussion of aims in education.

Dewey (1966) expresses a certain distaste for discussions about the concept "the aim of education". He prefers to talk about "aims in education". Schofield (1972) provides an avenue for understanding the differences in meaning. For Schofield the concept "aim of education" is prescriptive and dogmatic. It suggests that there is only one way to succeed and implies that aims are external to education. He asserts that when aims are external they suggest the very end of a process, also, it disengages ends from means. Such a conception of aims, he explains, is prescriptive and can result in over-directed, over-determined and an overly narrow view of education.

A Deweyan conception of aims differs considerably. The notion of direction which aims are to provide refers to purposiveness; the ability to anticipate, which is to say, the capacity to possess foresight. Where Dewey uses the concept, 'the aim of education', he adopts it in its most general sense such as "the aim of education is to enable individuals to continue their education"(Dewey, 1966, p. 100). This formulation remains open to several possibilities. Such aims are not rigid, absolute or dogmatic; rather, they refine steps that can be taken to reach an end and to establish connections

between the past, the present, and the future. Education becomes an open possibility allowing individuals to come into it from various perspectives and to interact with the system in ways that are meaningful to them. Educational aims do not demand compliance to set standards, rather they enable individuals to participate in the meaning making process and to develop their own standards in anticipation of their own future action.

According to Dewey (1966) aims provide direction for an activity in three ways. First, they call observation of the existing conditions to see what means are available for reaching an end. Aims imply possibility for actions. Such actions are based on existing conditions, which include individuals as they interact with their environment. Second, a consideration of an aim of an activity suggests the proper sequence in which the means should be arranged in order to reach the end. Finally, knowledge of the aim (purposiveness and foresight) guides the choice of alternative courses of action available. Aims are thus a very important part of the socialization process as they provide the foresight for action. They involve consideration of means when addressing ends. Aims become the guide posts in the education process.

It is against this backdrop of the guiding role of aims that Dewey (1966) examines the criteria of good aims. He asserts that good aims must be, first, an outgrowth of existing conditions. Such ends do not lie outside their spheres of activities. Related to the first, the second criterion stipulates that good aims be formed in the process of realizing them. They do not originate fully formed but begin as hunches and tentative sketches. As the situation develops they become defined and clarified. They

are neither fixed nor imposed ends but are worked on and, in the process, given shape. Third, a good aim always will present a freeing of activities. Though Dewey does not clarify the concept of freeing of activities or what he termed free-wheeling, Suppes (1995), makes an attempt to explain the concept based on the illustrations Dewey gives in his discussions. Suppes writes that Dewey “seems to mean the review of the different functions that follow one another as part of the activity” (p. 114). Suppes points out that the process of generating aims involves the complex set of activities, one following the other, that is to be thought of as freeing of activities. That is to say, an aim should have the characteristic of setting in motion a series of acts or decisions. This points to the ability of aims to lead to growth. Their flexible nature makes growth possible.

Suppes (1995) explains further that it is this dynamic quality of ‘free-wheeling’ that Dewey contrasts with the overly static character of ends as something to be attained and possessed. Simpson and Jackson (1997) reiterate Dewey’s position on dynamic aims by indicating that Dewey talks in terms of forming, formulating and constructing ends rather than finding, discovering or identifying them. Simpson and Jackson add that the challenge for education is to “prepare people who can form or construct ends, who can imagine ends in this manner, and who can act on this conception and live with the uncertainty that the position entails” (p. 29). Dynamic ends are thus emergent and, as such, evolve as individuals interact among themselves and confront their realities. More importantly such ends stay in view of the process and are not separated from it.

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1966) asserts that “every means is a temporary end until we have obtained it. Every end becomes a means of carrying

activity further as soon as it is achieved" (p.106). Ends and means reflect each other. There is a continual relationship between the two and as such they can not be separated from each other. Ends must be kept in view of the process (means) and vice versa. The connection, however, as Dewey points out time and again, is not fixed but tentative and temporary. It is in the interactive process that individuals engage as they negotiate action. The environment plays a leading role in both aims-making and educational processes. Simpson and Jackson (1997) point out that the resources found in the culture and the traditions of a community can be empowering. They provide the means for projecting individuality, promotion of freedom and equality and, as such, facilitate democratic practice. The goal of schools is to facilitate the development of these characteristics for democratic practice.

Dewey (1966) notes that:

the aim of education is to enable individuals to continue their education - or that the object and reward of learning is continued capacity for growth. Now this idea cannot be applied to all the members of a society except where intercourse of [man with man] is mutual, except where there is adequate provision for the reconstruction of social habits and institutions by means of wide stimulation from equitably distributed interests. And this means a democratic society" (p. 100).

For Dewey (1966), then, educational aims that promote growth require a democratic atmosphere to materialize. That atmosphere must facilitate sharing among members in an equitable manner. This means aims must be negotiated among

participants. He sets forth a chain reaction based on the principle that education implies growth such that aims, too, must be growth-oriented. That being the case, aims must be guided by those actions that promote growth, which is to say, democratic actions. In the making of aims, then, he argues, one need to be guided by such criteria. My focus on aims as an alternate discourse is couched in this possibility for democratic actions. Dewey's discussion of educational aims depicts these criteria.

**Aims in education.** Choosing to name his analysis of educational aims, application to education, as he held the view that aims are applicable everywhere, Dewey (1966) presents the following criteria of good educational aims:

- a. educational aims must be founded upon the intrinsic activities and needs, including original habits and acquired habits, of the given individual to be educated. Aims makers and educators are called upon to look inside the system and conditions surrounding it in order to initiate education. Between the education system and existing conditions is the individual who occupies the pivotal position. Educational aims must enable effective interactions between them. Educational aims must direct effective interactions among people in all these locations;
- b. an aim must be reconcilable to the aspirations, desires and goals of learners. Indeed, Dewey argues that not only teachers should have aims but also learners. He anticipates a situation where learners are engaged actively in the determination of educational purposes and learning-teaching objectives. Educational aims, therefore, must be meaningful to learners. This is possible only when learners are involved actively in initiating and negotiating aims. In this case, aims become their own and not those of

teachers, parents, society, or politicians. I believe that such identification can lead to personal commitment to work toward the aims so identified; and

c. an educational aim is neither general nor ultimate. This cautions against overarching aims and the prioritization of some prescribed aims. Good educational aims, then, are open and flexible, they reflect diversity and differences. They arise from the education system and are shaped in encounters during the educational process. They are fluid and change according to the nature or interactions they derive from.

The choice for Dewey (1966), also for Peters (1973), is to talk about the process and functions of aims rather than the assertion of some specific aims. It is in this spirit that I pursue my own goals. Not intending to prescribe standards of practice I engage in speculations about what Deweyan and Freirean analyses avail for talking about aims in the context of educational reforms that are meant to be democratic and transformative.

Dewey (1966) argues that ultimate aims which are based on what, I call, sweeping criteria are, generally speaking, determined externally. Such aims tend to be prescriptive and to enforce conformity. They neither reflect the diverse purposes and characteristics of learners nor reflect local conditions. Rather, they provide strait-jacket goals for everyone to follow. They serve as standards against which every learner is measured. Those who do not conform to the standards become the deviants. In the attempt to meet standards individuality is compromised and creativity denied. Intrinsically derived aims on the other hand, are those aims that are sensitive to the diverse purposes and characteristics of learners and existing conditions. They tend to be flexible and reflect the dynamics of emerging and existing conditions. They are often

descriptive, respect individuality and foster creativity. In the end such ends enable individuals to pursue self-determined paths.

The emphasis on democratic practice makes it possible to adopt democratic means during the educational process and the aims-making process. The assertion that education has democratic ends presupposes the setting of ends that are democratic; however, in order to achieve and fulfill these ends democratic means must be adopted in the pursuit of the ends. The setting of democratic ends, then, entails the adoption of democratic means if they are to be reached.

The discussions above, especially with regard to Freire and Dewey's reflections, point to some major tenets that could guide educational reformers, especially when reforms are to be transformative. First, education is a process by which individuals interact among themselves and their environment to define themselves. It entails engagement and activity. It does not happen to people, rather, people make education happen. More importantly it is not a one-time only happening, it is continuous and life-long. It requires, therefore, that individuals be equipped with the skills for studying their environments rather than given information. Such skills have to be acquired through practice. We need, therefore, to adopt those processes that reinforce the active participation of learners in the education process.

Second, education by definition aims at transformation; however, this quality is not a given. Rather, it has to be achieved. This means that an environment conducive to transformation must be provided. For both Freire and Dewey an environment conducive to transformation is a democratic environment. Such an environment must promote

dialogue among participants, and reflect the characteristics and conditions of learners.

Third, individuals engaged in interactions are to show responsible behavior; their actions must not be based on mere impulses but be guided by foresight or reflection. The role of the education system, then, is to make it possible for learners to acquire such consciousness and skills. Through interactions experiences are shared, new meanings negotiated and impulses refined. Such refined impulses in turn provide direction for further actions.

Finally, the apparent concentration of attention on the individual does not suggest neglect of the social; neither does a concern for the intrinsic rule out a study of extrinsic factors. The reasonable thing to do, as suggested by Dewey and Freire, is to be sensitive to existing conditions, through a project that maximizes democratic participation of all actors.

#### **Summary and implications for the reform process in Ghana**

The work of this chapter has involved the analyses of three key concepts, transmissive education systems, transformative education systems and educational aims, with the view of showing that a democratic educational concern that fosters participant action of the sorts implied in transformative educational positions promotes growth and change. The analysis of transmissive systems reveals their conformist, authoritarian, non-interactive and externally-controlled nature. Their exclusive nature inhibit growth and change. On the other hand, the analysis of transformative systems reveals their inclusive, interactive, and intrinsically-derived character. These transformative characteristics democratize the education process by ensuring the active participation of



actors in effective interactions and negotiations through dialogue; hence, they promote and facilitate change and growth. The discussion also reveals the import of paying attention to means as transformative goals are pursued, necessitating connections between ends and means. This discussion was concluded by directing attention to educational aims, which I argue, enable one to pay attention to ends and means. The emphasis on growth and democratic ideals in the discussion of aims, it was argued, makes consideration of aims amenable to educational transformation and facilitates the matching of democratic ends with democratic means.

These analyses reveal meaning construction as a central issue that educational reformers, such as those in Ghana who seek to promote a democratic and transformative education, need to consider. It is apparent from the analyses that democratic and transformative systems emphasize interaction, communication, and personal agency in this construction of meaning. There also is opposition to conformist, externally-dictated and authoritative systems. This suggests that democratic and transformative systems must be free of such practices. In place, change that is meant to be democratic and transformative must reflect strategies that are democratic and promote transformation. At the center of such educational systems is the emphasis on the pivotal roles of participants in the process of change rather than imposition by some outside authority.

The implication for Ghanaian reformers, who have tended to adopt undemocratic procedures in the pursuit of democratic and transformative reforms, is to reconsider their interpretation of the goals they envisage. Indeed, it behooves Ghanaian reformers to eschew the use of undemocratic procedures in educational reform processes. In place,

if the goal to democratize and transform education in Ghana is to succeed, Ghanaian reformers will have to adopt democratic procedures in the reform process. Particularly, they must redirect their attention to participant action in the process of change rather than encourage sectional dominance. They will have to promote dialogue among all actors and encourage democratic negotiation of educational purposes.

In the Ghanaian educational reform where a section of the Ghanaian public (i.e. politicians, financiers, bureaucrats and members of recognized groups) continue to dominate and dictate reforms, it becomes difficult to see as possible any meaningful change, such as the reforms envisage. For instance, participant involvement, rather than external domination, is very important in ensuring democratic negotiations in meaning making. Deweyan analysis reveals the crucial nature of individuality, freedom, equality and social fluidity in the development of democratic systems. Yet, the reforms in Ghana have concentrated largely on equality. To be more specific, Ghanaian reformers have concentrated on the equalization of educational opportunities. They have concentrated on equality only in terms of increasing access and diversifying programs in a bid to democratize education. Individuality and fluidity are missing conspicuously in reform interpretations.

From the analyses so far, however, one finds that all three components are complementary. Individuality will re-focus the Ghanaian reforms on individual and social agency, while fluidity will rid it of rigid controls and authoritarianism. The limited notion or weak version of democracy does not address concerns about individuality and fluidity. It is against this background that I call for an expanded notion

or strong version of democracy which emphasizes the active participation of all actors in dialogue. In the process space must be opened to allow fluid negotiation of reforms and classroom interactions.

In the analysis of transformative education systems, participant action plays a prominent role. For instance, Freire (1970/3) adopts a problematization process rather than a problem-solving process and advocates the adoption of educational projects rather than systematic education in the process of change. Ghanaian reformers need to pay attention to education as a problematization process and the reform process as an educational project rather than continue to adopt problem-solving and systematic education which encourages democratic reform procedures. In addition, in the discussion of educational aims, Dewey's (1966) emphasis on the connection between ends and means and, more importantly, his emphasis on means as the transforming stage directs attention to actions that must be taken to reach ends. These points of emphases affirm my focus on the significant role of participants in the process of change. It enables me to call on Ghanaian reformers to adopt democratic means to match the democratic ends that they envisage if they want policy to affect practice.

In both Freirean and Deweyan analyses, interaction is prominent and crucial for change. They assert that dialogue which makes it possible for actors to relate with one another, confront their realities and construct meanings, enables actors to transform their lives and society. During such interactions, negotiations reflect actor characteristics and conditions as well as necessitate the provision of a conducive environment, qualities which are based on democratic principles. In addition, to foster effective negotiations,

**democratic and transformative education systems enjoin effective communication.**

**Furthermore, some actors are not dominated by a few others; rather, all actors are given the opportunity to construct their own meanings. In the search for a democratic and transformative education in Ghana, then, the option for me, is to adopt strategies that are interactive and promote dialogue. I believe it is through such interactions that participants can confront their realities, name and change their worlds. Within such conducive environments, where democratic negotiations and participant action are stressed, actors are empowered to act in ways that can result in change. In the concluding chapter, I explore the possibilities for such democratic negotiations and show how such negotiations are possible through aims talk.**

## CHAPTER FOUR

### AIMS TALK

#### Introduction

The discussion so far points to a number of arguments that are central to the conception of aims talk and its role in the Ghanaian reform process. To open this chapter, I review these arguments in preparation for my analysis of aims talk. In Chapter Two, I argue that the Ghanaian reforms articulate a concern to democratize and transform education. This first argument is premised on President Rawlings' exhortations to the Education Commission (EC) (cited in Fobi, Koomson and Godwyll, 1995), the interpretation of these exhortations in the EC's 1986 report, and the subsequent sector reforms, such as the Basic Sector Improvement Programme (FCUBE). All of the three reforms studied have centered on equalizing educational opportunities (democracy) by increasing access to education and improving the nature of classroom interactions to reflect more learner-centered methods (transformation).

I also argue in Chapter Two that the reforms in Ghana fail to democratize and transform education. Two lines of this argument were developed. One line centers on evidence of dissatisfaction with educational results, and the other line focuses on implementation strategies. The former is depicted in the 1995 Presidential address on the state of the nation's education in which President Rawlings laments the inability of reform efforts to meet educational targets. Rawlings' complaint indicates that even the attempt to equalize opportunities has not been successful. In *Basic education a right* (Ghana, 1994a) and in Fobi et al. (1995), it is asserted that the reforms have not been

able to transform teaching and learning.

In terms of implementation strategies, the literature reveals that while reform policy and goals seek to democratize and transform educational practice, Ghanaian reformers have encouraged dictatorial administration and have failed to alter traditional transmissive practices. These implementation strategies include: top-down approaches to policy and decision making; exclusion of some key actors, negative attitudes towards popular resistance; resistance and sensitivity to external pressure (especially funding). As a result, reformers fail to match the democratic ends that they advocate with democratic means which, I argue, are essential for transformation.

In the concluding section of Chapter Two, I suggest that the Ghanaian educational reforms failed because reformers adopted a weak version of democracy. Indeed, what Ghanaian reformers offered, was democracy as "equalization of educational opportunities" only. Due to the adoption of this weak version of democracy, even the goal to transform which reformers so well defined could not be materialized as reformers downplayed the role of participant action in both democratic and transformative processes. Indeed, the lack of "genuine" participation by first line actors and the resistance that followed the reforms, for instance as teachers compromised the goals of reforms and communities stayed detached from actual school work, it seems to me, demonstrate that such system actors did not perceive themselves to have the ownership that they required to engage actively in the reform process.

Consequently, I suggest this Ghanaian reformers need to adopt a strong version of democracy. I investigate that concept further in Chapter Three by exploring Freirean

analysis of transformation and Deweyan analysis of democratic educational aims. My review demonstrates that a strong sense of democracy requires that all actors are engaged meaningfully in the initiation and negotiation of reforms, that environmental conditions encourage the active participation of all actors, that education reflects (i.e. is sensitive to) learner characteristics and local conditions, and that growth is fostered.

In addition, a strong sense of democracy would mean that the democratization drive is not exclusive to policy (ends) but, also, is incorporated into the processes (means) adopted to reach those ends. In line with these assertions, I argue that educational reforms should become "educational projects" where there is "meaningful" participation of system actors toward change rather than "systematic education" where political power dictates change (Freire, 1970).

An educational reform that is truly democratic and transformative because it emphasizes genuine participation, then, would be that which encourages the democratic negotiation of educational aims, defined as ends and means (Dewey, 1966). In such educational systems "the aim of education" is to promote growth; in Deweyan terms, it would foster, nurture, and cultivate learner characteristics in the educational process. Such educational aims also are geared toward providing foresight, which is to say, they give purpose and direction and maintain a persistent focus on both the ends and means of education (Dewey, 1966). The result is the promotion of transformative practice.

Finally, the negotiation of educational aims is guided by a need to promote dialogue and foster participation while ensuring that all engagements reflect the characteristics and conditions of the actual actors. Educational reform processes must,

therefore, be guided by these principles and affect both the process of educational change and classroom practices. The central goal is to reconceive reform process in such a way that democratic means are adopted in the pursuit of the reform goals such that all actors are given the opportunity to participate and actually are engaged in the education and reform process.

The strong version of democracy advocated by Dewey (1966) and Freire (1970/3) requires that all system actors be given the opportunity to interact with one another in the negotiation of reforms. Teachers, parents, learners, financiers, politicians, and administrators must view one another not as separate entities but as active members of an educational community. This kind of community and networking is not accessible unless deliberate attempts are made to promote dialogue among all actors.

Dialogue, based on a sense and recognition of "individuality", becomes the key for promoting such negotiations (Boisvert, 1996). In the promotion of such dialogue, there is the need to ensure that conducive spaces are provided and that actors can and actually will make use of such spaces. Some kind of security has to be provided for all actors, particularly those who have been otherwise ignored in past negotiations. That is to say, all actors should be free to express themselves and negotiate meanings in morally acceptable ways. Also, the interactions that actors engage in must be relevant to the conditions and characteristics of the actual actors in order to sustain and commit them to participate. Within such dialogue, it is possible to provide a truly democratic and transformative education, one that fosters critical consciousness and results in liberatory practice.



It is in line with these arguments and the need to promote “genuine” participation by focusing on the process of educational reform that I seek to interpret educational aims in light of talk and, specifically, to encourage the paying of attention to “aims talk” in the Ghanaian educational reform process. In the discussions that follow, I examine the origins, interpretations and implications of aims talk with respect to the analysis of educational reform. The discussion on aims that reflect democratic and transformative practice is bound by Deweyan and Freirean analysis, while talk, couched in moral considerations, is given meaning by Maryann Ayim (1997) and Sheila Mullet (1993). I begin with an analysis of aims talk and then examine its implications for educational reforms in Ghana. The chapter concludes with a review of work accomplished in the thesis.

#### **Toward a definition of aims talk**

Three key parameters define aims talk. These three parameters focus on each of the three components of aims talk. The first focuses on aims analysis, the second on transformative practice and the third on the moral context of aims talk. First, aims talk is defined as a function of Deweyan analysis of aims in which ends stay in view of the process. In this case aims are not viewed essentially as targets or exit points but as a continuous process of perceiving, defining and refining educational purposes, a process which requires that ends are present in the means for reaching them. The process itself is guided by democratic principles because “the aim of education is to promote growth” (Dewey, 1966), and growth necessitates the adoption of processes that open possibilities for self directed actions and that reflect the characteristics and conditions of learners.

Also, educational aims are conceived as consisting of a connection between ends and means, in which the two components are given equal emphasis. The significance of the emphasis on the connection between ends and means, from a Deweyan perspective, is the crucial role that means play in the process of reaching ends. The analysis of educational aims, I believe, has been exhausted in the previous chapter; hence I do not dwell on such analysis here. I turn now to the second parameter.

Secondly, aims talk of the sort that I advocate, is guided by a need to engage in procedures that lead to the transformation of the lives of participants. This transformative goal calls for embarking on democratic negotiations rather than dictatorial actions. Such negotiations must foster genuine participation by opening avenues for individuals to negotiate their own aims rather than have some external authority impose actions on them. This democratic concern requires the promotion of effective communication among all actors in order to enable participants to initiate actions and construct their own meanings. The goal is to enable actors to problematize their socio-economic conditions in a shared relationship so that they can reach the critical consciousness requisite for liberatory practice (Freire, 1973). This second parameter also was detailed in the analysis of transformative educational systems in the previous chapter.

The third parameter, that which also provides the contextual security for actors of diverse backgrounds as they engage in the process of initiating and negotiating educational aims, is a moral obligation. This moral obligation reinforces the democratic principle and fosters transformative practice in that it involves respect for persons and

consideration of others as they engage in democratic negotiations (Ayim, 1997). A moral obligation provides for active respect on the part of those who would otherwise limit moral accountability to constitutional rights such as freedom of speech. Ayim argues, I think compellingly, that a positive moral obligation to talk so as not to damage others and not to silence people, can be demonstrated. Her focus, however, is on the effect of hate talk against those affected by it. My own concern is more the silencing effects that results as some sections of society dominate discourse.

In the context of aims talk and reform discourse in Ghana, I draw on this moral respect for persons to counteract attempts that seek to democratize education yet do not promote genuine participation. This third parameter of aims talk though implied in previous analysis of educational aims and transformative educational system, has not been explicated. The focus of this chapter, then, is to detail this moral concern, which, I argue, provides contextual security for otherwise excluded persons to be engaged actively in the determination of educational purposes as well as promote democratic negotiations.

#### **A moral context for aims talk**

Interactions in which persons of diverse characteristics and backgrounds are involved in the determination of educational purposes, require assurance that all persons will be given opportunities to participate effectively in the process. Indeed, there is need to ensure not only that opportunities are opened for negotiations but also that participants can and are able to make use of those opportunities. My argument for moral considerations during such interactions is, thus, meant to provide a contextual security

for all persons, particularly those otherwise excluded, to be integrated genuinely in reform processes.

My interest in talk, as an alternative analysis of educational reforms in Ghana lies in the nature of engagements that it makes possible. Drawn from discussions about aims as having democratic and transformative goals (Dewey, 1966; Freire 1970, 1973) as well as an analysis of talk as dialogue, and as a form of moral interaction (Ayim, 1997; Mullet, 1993), aims talk is intended to promote genuine participation by all actors in the initiation and negotiation of educational reforms. Aims talk signifies the promotion of democratic interactions through dialogue and the provision of conducive environments that enhance genuine participation, that reflect participant characteristics and conditions, and that provide a process by which participants are able to reconsider the present with ends in view.

In the analysis that follows I explore this moral context by examining talk as a transformative engagement, exploring the contextual security that talk promotes, and discussing the conception of moral talk. The analysis is informed by the works of Ayim (1997) and Mullet (1993) on moral talk. Before I embark on this journey, I trace my reading of aims talk to the works of Nel Noddings (1996) and Jane Roland Martin (1995).

The concept, aims talk, is not a new concept but a re-interpretation of a concept in use. Noddings (1996), uses the term aims talk casually, in her paper, "Response to Suppes", to refer to discourse about educational aims. In her critique of Suppes' analysis of educational aims, Noddings makes some representations of Deweyan conception of aims that center on the assertion that the "aim of education must

be embedded in education ... because the primary aim is education” (p. 127). Martin (1995), on her part, used the concept in reference to R. S. Peters’ analysis of educational aims. Both use the terminology to discuss the conceptual interpretation of aims.

I am interested, however, in putting a different spin on it which, I hope, points to the *active* sense of the concepts, aim and talk. I stress the talk component of the concept in the conception of aims in order to focus attention on the process of negotiating educational aims, specifically, in educational reform situations. Since my concerns about reforms center on reform processes, my interest in aims talk is focused on shifting discussions about aims from mere conceptual analysis to draw attention to the *practice* of aims-making. Indeed, aims talk is meant to reflect both the conceptual and the performative connotations of aims and talk. Drawing inspiration from Freire (1973) that authentic “word” involves reflection and action, I argue that in setting aims we have to reach beyond conceptual frameworks to look at the practical ramifications of aims and how those affected by the aims set function within the context of the aims. That is to say the effectiveness of aims should be measured by the criterion of whether or not, and/or to what extent, those affected by it are engaged in the process. In my analysis, therefore, I am in constant struggle to show the practical relevance of aims analysis to educational reforms in Ghana. Before turning to Ghana, however, I discuss the meaning of the concept talk as a transformative engagement and explore talk that is guided by moral considerations.

### **Talk as a transformative engagement**

My interest in talk as an integral part of the discussions about aims in

educational reform lies in the environments that it creates for effective engagements. I choose talk over other forms of interactions because of the diverse opportunities that it makes possible for negotiations. Wary of the possibility of talk being used, negatively or positively, I advocate talk that promotes growth because such talk focuses on improving the conditions of participants in negotiations. Also, I argue for talk that is guided by foresight because it is not impulsive and does not lack purpose. Instead, it enables participants to bring the hitherto imperceptible into view, and as such, provides direction for future action. In addition, I advocate talk as it facilitates the transformation of the conditions of those engaged in it. Its main goal is to equip participants with relevant knowledge and skills for changing their conditions by allowing them to reflect on the content of talk and, guided by their intuitions and imaginations, to act to change their situations.

An essential element of this goal to transform is that it rules out external control and other forms of impositions. Instead, it recognizes the diversity of human characteristics and experiences and as such seeks to promote democratic negotiations among all participants so that their diverse experiences are harnessed and shared. The goal is to promote consensus building through dialogue as participants share and exchange ideas. It anticipates conflicts, disagreements and resistance; however, conflict, disagreement and resistance are recognized as normal in human engagements. Instead of being viewed as a threat to democratic negotiations and consensus building, they are viewed as opportunities for exercising true democratic practice in interactions that are bound by moral considerations.

In matters of conflict, disagreement and resistance, the transformative goal of talk requires that individuals trust their instincts, intuitions and imaginations to reach decisions that are beneficial to them and yet not harmful to society. Consensus building, like equality, is not about homogeneity or a common identity but, as asserted by Boisvert (1995), is a recognition of the uniqueness and irreplaceability of each participant, hence, the need to tolerate diversity and co-existence of diverse opinions. The essence of dialogue, in Freirean sense and the emphasis on problematization rather than problem-solving, is to develop critical consciousness for liberatory practice. My assertions are based on the nature and characteristics of talk, which I examine in the following analysis.

In my interpretation of talk, I concentrate on its relatively general meanings. The goal of this analysis is to explore the avenues that talk creates for negotiations rather than the linguistic implications of talk. Talk serves, here, as a forum for genuine participation in democratic negotiations. In its most general sense, I use talk to refer to any discussion in which individuals engage with one another, express themselves, exchange ideas and construct meanings from their interactions. I examine how this general categorization of talk enables me to focus on talk as a transformative engagement by unpacking its elements.

**Talk as a dialogic engagement.** As a form of engagement, talk brings individuals together in one on one negotiations. In the context in which I explore talk it involves critical dialogue of the sort advocated by Freire (1970). Unlike other forms of communicative media it is interactive and, at its best, values the contributions of all

discussants in the engagement. It does not privilege any participants, values or experiences over others. Rather, its goal is to bring all experiences together in a shared setting so that all participants can take advantage of the variety of experiences availed willingly and without any overt or covert coercion.

Also, unlike other forms of interactions, and within the contexts that I explore talk (i.e. aims analysis), it does not necessarily need to be done in the presence of all participating parties as long as there is trust, genuineness and commitment to the task at hand. Trust, genuineness and commitment are crucial because of certain barriers that inhibit talk. Trust, genuineness and commitment are thus meant to ensure that engagements are negotiated in the interest of all and not only a section of the people under various disguises. It calls on those at the helm of affairs to make extra efforts to provide diverse situations for negotiations to take place. Unlike the historical practice in Ghana, it will not limit participation to official representation, formal invitation and location at the capital city only. Rather it will extend invitations beyond these already established boundaries to include otherwise not considered groups and areas. The moral obligations of talk, which I advocate later in the discussion, necessitate such extra efforts.

In fact, talk of the sorts in which I am interested, must make it possible for diverse interactions. It must make possible two-way negotiations between the top and the bottom as well as foster effective communication among them. Talk, here, is opposed to what Freire (1973) termed *communiqués*. This means that interaction can start from the ground level unit and grow into the larger group as participants reach out



to those otherwise not included and vice versa. It must also make it possible for interactions to happen not only in the cities but also in the rural areas and among all peoples. The views, needs and conditions of the diverse backgrounds of Ghanaians have to be brought to the fore and, in fact, the resulting discourse must reflect and make room for the integration of all the diversities. Most of all, policies that are drawn as national policy for education must be capable of translation into the diverse backgrounds and characteristics of all participants.

In addition, my interest in talk is that it is not just a one-time only event; it can go on as long as participants are motivated to do so. Apart from official level discussions it can go on in homes, in schools, on playgrounds, at market places, and even on farms. The key for such continuous discussions is to ensure that all persons see themselves as crucial for the determination of the course of education and that change belongs to them and not to some outside authority.

Furthermore, apart from face to face negotiations talk can happen through other communicative media such as telephone, tele-conference and other chat situations; however, in such cases, the important thing is to ensure that talk is not one-sided. Talk must not be allowed to result in one person or group monopolizing the platform. For instance lectures, story telling, broadcast and other narrative sessions in which one person takes the platform while all the others serve as passive listeners, are ruled out in the kind of talk that I advocate. Such uni-directional talk, when applied to education, I think, can only result in transmission, a practice which current Ghanaian reform policies discount.

**Talk as a medium of expression.** As a medium for the expression of ideas, talk provides people with opportunities to express their feelings and thought. Talk makes it possible to make available to others what was hitherto personal. However, in the contexts in which I advocate talk, I emphasize talk in which the content of talk is not potentially harmful to others. Like Ayim (1997) I discount talk as an opportunity to express oneself without regard to the feelings and thoughts of other people. A major part of my analysis addresses the ways some actors are excluded from expressing themselves because other actors have taken all the opportunities available and, as such, deprive these others from expressing themselves. My advocacy is, thus, to facilitate the participation of all actors in negotiations, particularly those who have been denied the opportunity to express themselves in the past, especially as educational aims are negotiated. This advocacy requires the creation of secure environments for democratic negotiations.

Talk within such contexts requires that a conducive or permissive atmosphere exists for airing one's feelings, asserting one's thoughts and even opposing other thoughts within reasonable limits. Through talk, thought becomes real and available to some listening others. Care, however, must be taken to ensure that in the process of talk some listeners are not hurt unduly; instead, it must be beneficial to all. As one expresses oneself one reaches beyond one's talk to actually verbalize thought and in fact avail it to others. The crucial part of verbalization is not just saying the words but also being able to communicate and make sense to those listening so that one can be understood and actually trade off ideas. It entails making an effort to reach the listening others by

ensuring that one's ideas are actually communicated. At this point talk assumes its role of enabling exchange.

This democratic concern requires that deliberate efforts be made to reach those listening, to allow time for reflection so that people can make sense of the content of talk and, above all, that space be opened for these listening others in turn, to express themselves. Ayim (1997) points out that those who are shy and reticent should not be met with dead silence when they speak. She suggests that listeners should show signs of genuine interest in their talk. I would add that such interests should not be patronizing. Talk situations should not be turned into avenues for projecting dominant views. Talk must facilitate equitable exchange.

**Talk as an exchange.** Talk involves the exchange of ideas insofar as it facilitates "give and take". That is to say, participants share their thoughts by first expressing them and then soliciting opinions from other discussants. When the content of talk is meaningful it generates thought among listeners and in the process generates attention. Under such conditions, one allows time for reflection by fellow discussants and space for them to respond if necessary. During reflections individual participants can compare ideas availed to them with their own beliefs, thought, needs and conditions and, in the process, make decisions and choices based on the available information. Decisions and choices so made result in informed educational practices instead of imposed educational practices.

Domination and patronization in interactions do not auger well for this exchange role of talk. They obstruct the opportunity for actors to develop the kinds of critical

consciousness that are necessary in order to act to change their conditions. It only turns actors into stooges as they reproduce what has been imposed or dictated to them. Indeed, it does not enable actors to engage in real projects of the sorts advocated by Dewey (1966) and Freire (1970). For both Dewey and Freire change that is imposed externally is undemocratic and as such not transformative, as it is not negotiated through dialogue. Hence, talk that is transformative must not be allowed to be dominated by one or some persons but should open space for all. It must be a sharing relationship in order to foster exchange.

**Talk as a forum for constructing meaning.** Talk as a transformative engagement must be affective. It must result in the construction of new meanings. That is to say, in an atmosphere of sharing where discussants engage with each other, express themselves and exchange ideas, it is expected that this relationship will affect them both as individuals and as members of a group. As individuals they each are able to access thought which otherwise might not be available to them but which could be very useful to their understanding and confronting of their realities. In group settings, as interactions are done in the spirit of democratic negotiations, individuals can reach consensus by letting go of self-centered individualistic tendencies in order to assert a form of individuality in which the individual is considerate of the group in which he or she belongs (Boisvert, 1995). In the construction of meaning, then, talk becomes a combined individual and group struggle to confront diverse realities, to name and change them if need be. The meanings that result from such interpretations are, thus, a function of individual and group effort.

In the context of talk, when individual concerns dominate discourse, there is the danger of compromising the views of the majority of the people and taking to the views of one or a few others. In such a case those who are able to assert themselves dominate discourse and impose their ideas on the rest. This situation is exemplified in the Ghanaian reforms in which, I suspect, a concern for national progress has resulted in the concentration of decision making in the hands of those who are viewed as the custodians of the state and/or those who have arrogated such roles to themselves. These categories of people, as already pointed out, have included politicians, bureaucrats, financiers and other members of recognized institutions. When the goals of education are to democratize and transform education, however, it becomes imperative to promote talk that is beneficial to all discussants. The talk situation must be democratized in order for it to be able to transform the lives of participants. That is to say, talk as a transformative engagement must foster genuine participation in democratic negotiations.

Talk, as an avenue for democratic negotiations, explores the possibilities for genuine participation by advocating effective interactions that open diverse avenues for all parties to participate in diverse engagements in the determination of educational aims. Guided by moral standards, talk enables reformers to pay attention to those affected by reforms and the conditions under which they are brought into negotiations (Ayim, 1997). Talk rules out procedures that involve the extension of formal invitations only but includes deliberate efforts to bring all actors, particularly first line actors, into active initiation and negotiation of educational purposes. During such negotiations facilitators must go the proverbial "extra mile" to get participants involved in

discussions. Here, talk becomes an avenue for embarking on democratic negotiations in the determination of educational aims in reform situations. Its significance in this analysis, thus, lies in the environments that it creates for such interactions.

Ayim (1997) and Mullet (1993) allow me to do this kind of analysis, though both Ayim and Mullet use talk in contexts very different from mine. They engage in feminist analyses of talk, and while the kinds of power dynamics they examine are not necessarily my concerns, their analyses provide a very crucial framework for my work. Indeed, my analysis centers on the kinds of power dynamics invoked during educational reform initiation and negotiation in Ghana. My focus, thus, only touches on class issues. Mullet and Ayim, but more so Ayim, are interested in these dynamics in their analysis of race, class and gender. Their analysis of the dynamics of talk, however, opens an avenue for me to explore the relevance of such dynamics to educational reform processes in Ghana. In the discussions that follow I examine and interpret their views on talk that is couched in moral considerations.

### **Moral talk**

Good talk, says Ayim (1997), occurs when talk is guided by ethical or moral procedures and when efforts are made to ensure that all participants get to express themselves without hurting anyone unduly. When discussions are geared toward the promotion of good talk a moral responsibility is placed on all participants to ensure that every participating member is involved actively in talk and is committed to the process (Ayim, 1997; Mullet, 1993). Ayim's analysis of moral talk is centered on ensuring such participation by requiring consideration and respect for others during talk. Mullet, on

her part, urges collaboration in the construction of meaning. In the discussions that follow, I examine both their perspectives.

**Dynamics of moral talk.** In the introduction to her book, *The moral parameters of Good Talk*, Ayim (1997), argues for the treatment of people with consideration and respect in linguistic as well as in other interactions. She implies that when attention is paid to moral concerns during talk, the views of "others" are not interrupted or overridden, they are listened to as well as solicited. For Ayim, this moral precept goes so far as to require an extra effort to ensure that those who are shy and reticent feel comfortable enough to contribute to the conversation. Ayim will not accept as adequate talk interactions in which there are only formal opportunities to participate, calls for memoranda or other open invitations, as has been the case in Ghana. Rather, she requires that further steps be taken to ensure that all affected persons are participating actively. Based on Ayim's argument, I suggest that good talk also means more than mere information giving sessions, as has been the case in Ghana (Fobi et al., 1995). It behooves all participants to engage actively in the issues of discussion. Ensuring that all participants are involved actively in talk can minimize the tendency for a few others to usurp the negotiations and impose their will. It requires making extra efforts to ensure that every participant is given a turn in the interactions, that they are given the chance and encouraged to make use of their turns.

Taking further steps to ensure that people actually get to participate involves providing a conducive environment that minimizes and/or precludes the chances for pressures of any kind. It involves listening to others when they speak, urging them on

when necessary and reaching out to encourage them to express themselves and interact with other people. For those who have had the privilege to participate in public speech this is no big deal, but for those who have been excluded, perhaps oppressed in Freirean terms, making the move to engage in such new arrangements can be intimidating. The need, therefore, to reassure such people of their historical vocation to assert themselves and also encourage them to do so (Freire, 1973) must be recognized. Moral talk facilitates interactions free of pressures by promoting dialogue and urging active participation among actors within conducive environments of the sort advocated by Dewey (1966).

Conducive environments are devoid of external pressure. They promote actions that are intrinsic to the activities, needs, characteristics and conditions of learners. Hence, they support risk-taking and questioning. In such environments actors can engage with one another, express themselves, exchange ideas and construct their own meanings. Mullet's (1993) analysis of moral talk, which I examine next, shows how such negotiations become possible.

Mullet (1993) asserts that in moral talk we collaborate with one another in the construction of interpretations of situations and in the elaboration of concepts. She argues that during such collaboration we make sense of our experiences as we encounter the realities of life. Mullet explains her position further in her definition of moral talk. She writes:

By "moral talk" I mean any use of language that contributes to the creation, maintenance, or alteration of [the] ways of making sense of our



situations and ourselves. Through moral talk we express our understanding of, and commitment to, certain values (conceptions of what is good, of worth), and our understanding of and commitment to specific ways of instantiating [them]. Through moral talk we come to a fuller appreciation of the goods "internal to our practices", we develop moral sensitivity and come to discern new possibilities of action. (p. 31)

Thus, moral talk improves meaning making by promoting understanding, commitment, and above all, opening up otherwise inaccessible possibilities. In fact, it helps in the creation of new meanings. These new meanings enable one to reach beyond the individual self to connect with others in society. As advocated by Dewey (1966), individuality rather than individualism must be the emphasis in democratic systems. Moral talk, as implied by Mullet (1993), then, becomes an active process of recreating one's world by interacting actively with others as well as confronting one's realities.

Like Deweyan and Freirean dialogue, moral talk enjoins participants in a reform negotiation to commit to a democratic process of meaning making while recognizing the possible destructiveness of talk that is ill-used. The goal is to ensure that all participants can participate equitably; however, there is a recognition of differences in human characteristics and, as such, an extra effort is made to go beyond a mere invitation to participate to ensure that everybody is participating actively. Talk presupposes engagement in groups but moral talk, as presented by Ayim (1997) and Mullet (1993) requires even more. It requires effective communication. This includes sensitivity to differing needs, and collaborative interactions in group situations as meaning is

constructed.

**Beneficial and harmful talk.** Within democratic systems, and especially when the goals of educational reform are to democratize and transform education, it becomes imperative to promote talk that is beneficial to all discussants because it promotes dialogue within democratic interactions by ensuring consideration and respect for all participants. Ayim (1997) provides useful analysis in this regard and also discusses the opposite, that is talk which is harmful. Her own analysis focuses on the latter. My interest, however, evokes the former. In the meantime I examine both effects of talk.

According to Ayim (1997), talk can be either beneficial or harmful. Good talk is beneficial but bad talk is harmful. Talk is beneficial when it encourages and fosters open negotiations and interactions. Beneficial talk makes it possible for all participants, even the shy and reticent, to engage effectively in talk. In such cases a conducive atmosphere is created for all actors to participate by not only inviting them to talk but also listening and urging speakers on as they speak as a demonstration of genuine interest.

Talk is beneficial when it improves participation and enhances communication. Such talk permits active interactions, encourages self expression, and facilitates amicable exchanges among discussants. It also improves meaning and fosters exchange. That is to say, through interactions individuals generate fresh interpretations of their realities in order to confront their worlds and change it. Talk, also, provides a medium for defining one's thoughts and assessing them against other ideas so that new configurations can be developed. Such talk can foster both personal and social progress as it is done in a democratic atmosphere and is based on consensus building. This is

commensurate with Dewey's argument for dialogue in democratic interactions (cited in Garrison, 1995) and Freire's dialogue as a problematizing process. Beneficial talk, then, can lead to meaningful change and can result in individual and social transformation.

On the other hand, talk is harmful when it involves the adoption of strategies that can be dangerous to discourse. Such talk can involve the domination of dialogue by a privileged few. During these kinds of interactions genuine participation exists only in the province of only a dominant few. For the majority of the people, the only roles that they are called upon to play is to be the listening "others". This condition can be dangerous because of its potential for excluding and silencing these listening "others". Under such conditions talk can become dictatorial and result in the imposition of ideas and values on those dominated.

As already indicated, Ayim (1997) discusses harmful talk in the light of hate talk in interactions; however, in terms of my discussions I focus on the effect of talk when educational purposes are initiated and negotiated. In particular, I speak against the harmful effect of talk that deprives some discussants of the opportunity to express themselves; the harmful effect of talk that encourages the domination and imposition of dominant ideas and values; talk that perpetuates dominant ideology and suppresses opposing or alternate views. Talk in such contexts is harmful and as such does not lead to any meaningful change. In fact, it impedes progress and is potentially dangerous.

These potential dangers of talk can be nullified by enjoining moral obligations on all participants. When moral obligations are placed on all participants to ensure that what they say is beneficial rather than harmful, talk can be useful in promoting

meaningful exchanges, facilitate self expression, enhance engagement and promote the construction of personal meanings. In such a case, talk can promote growth and lead to transformation. The above analysis of moral talk has important ramifications for the reform process in Ghana. I turn now to a discussion on such implications.

**Implications of moral talk for Ghanaian reform.** A major concern for moral talk in the determination of educational purposes in Ghana is the environment that it makes possible for democratic negotiations. Respect and consideration for others in interactions requires that there be effective communication among all actors and that conditions in which negotiations are held are favorable to all participants.

In the context of the Ghanaian reforms, effective communication entails, in the spirit of moral talk, making sure that all participants are involved actively in reform discourse. It means emphasizing dialogue by embarking on one on one exchanges. Participants must be given the opportunity to air their views and such views must be listened to keenly. In this case educational campaigns must involve the soliciting of views from the group and the opening of spaces for participants to express their views and contribute to the process. It also requires that facilitators of talk involve all participants in effective and amicable discussion of issues. For instance, politicians, financiers and bureaucrats must engage system actors in active negotiations to arrive at reform policies and decisions.

Within the educational system and in educational institutions, Ghanaian administrators must create fora such as parent teacher associations, which hitherto have been used for levy collection, to serve as avenues for meaningful dialogue that is

intended to improve the performance of learners. In classrooms, teachers must engage learners in dialogue and allow self directed learning, as well as enable learners to interact among themselves and with teaching learning materials. Under such circumstances, those who have traditionally held authority positions become facilitators only. Indeed, all parties must be viewed as members of the educative community whose main goal is to improve the performance of learners. Their roles, then, will be to cooperate with one another for the creation of a conducive atmosphere for negotiations.

A conducive atmosphere will require the minimization of all barriers or impediments that block democratic practice and inhibit genuine participation by any interested person(s). Reform will have to be initiated and negotiated in the spirit of a Deweyan educational community where all actors work towards a common goal and yet within their individual spheres of operation. Actors do not act out to contradict one another; instead, they promote, compensate and complement one another's roles.

Furthermore, it implies that learners, teachers and parents must be involved in actual projects that allow them to assert themselves and interact with one another. Classroom interactions will have to be those that empower learners to initiate their own actions, negotiate and build consensus among themselves, with their teachers, and construct their own meanings. Parents and teachers, as educators, must be given the opportunities to participate in reform processes. In fact all participants, particularly first line actors, must be engaged in actual democratic and transformative practices, either in the process of reform or educating. These implications call for the removal of obstacles to democratic and transformative practice. I turn now to an analysis of some of the

barriers to democratic and transformative practice in Ghana which, I argue, impede aims talk.

### **Barriers to aims talk in Ghana**

Arguing for the inclusion of all discussants in talk and in opposition to harmful talk, Ayim (1997), claims that:

practices and institutions in which the already privileged garner ever increasing levels of social goals at the expense of those who can least afford to lose what little they have could not be sanctioned by any defensible moral theory. (p. 1)

Indeed, in systems as in Ghana, in which educational reform processes have been dominated by an elite few who continue to struggle for more space without considering people other than themselves, I argue that, it becomes a moral responsibility to advocate a different course of action. This is, especially the case, when education is intended to be democratized so that avenues can be opened for the underprivileged and teaching and learning transformed to become more interactive. It becomes necessary to demolish the barriers to democratic negotiations.

In the case of Ghana where, I argue, reformers have adopted undemocratic methods in the initiation and negotiation of reforms and blocked genuine participation on the part of some actors while promoting participation of a few others (i.e. elite), there is the need to identify methods and adopt counter strategies to neutralize their harmful effects on the reform process. These barriers which I identify as external control, intimidation, manipulation and premature foreclosure on outcomes, are reviewed in the

following analysis. I examine these barriers and their origins in order to prepare the way for seeking an alternative to traditional reform discourse in Ghana.

### **External Control**

Control in the Ghanaian reforms comes in the form of the centralized administrative machinery and the machinations of the World Bank, as a major sponsor of the reforms. The centralized Ghanaian educational administrative machinery which places power in the hands of the Minister of Education and his/her staff and the Ghana Education Service (GES) with its decentralized departments has impeded democratic practice. The concentration of decision and policy making in the hands of these two departments (i.e. Ministry of Education (MOE) and GES) and the subsequent adoption of top-down approaches to change has not fostered effective negotiation. Policies are passed down ready made to be implemented. This has not made room for aims talk because it precludes the interactions that talk enjoins. Actors who are out of the sphere of the established administrative machinery have been given hardly any room to discuss and participate in negotiations beyond obeying the rules and regulations that are issued and passed down by these authorities. As argued previously, under such circumstances, the excluded actors do not get the opportunity to engage in meaningful interactions that reflect their conditions and characteristics in order to change their worlds.

External control also can be observed in the pressures that financial institutions put on Ghanaian governments to reform and in the extent to which they control the direction of education. A discussion of this aspect of external control is examined under manipulation.

**Intimidation**

Intimidation, evident in the Ghanaian reforms, is another barrier to talk. I examine it as a barrier to talk in terms of the negative attitudes that ruling governments display towards dissent and the consequent silencing of dissent. When people can not express their feelings openly or feel threatened when they do, the possibility of engaging effectively in talk is rather slim. When intimidated, people often do one of two things. They either withdraw into themselves and refuse to participate though they might be present or they participate only to please the intimidating authority and stay out of trouble. In the case of the former where voices of dissent were silenced, the option taken by Ghanaian teachers was to compromise the goals of the reforms (Ghana, 1996d). The latter case occurred as people participated only to please; democracy is compromised as respect for authority rules. Though, I can not substantiate this latter effect in the Ghanaian reform, what beats my imagination is that the President's famous speech on oppression anticipated this effect yet it was ignored in the process of reform. What is clear, however, is that in both cases change is imposed and determined externally, and as such, does not foster democratic negotiations.

**Manipulation**

Talk is subject to manipulation especially when some actors can cunningly impose their views on others by confounding the issues under discussions. This is more so the case when these individuals make claims that put them ahead of others and that entitle them to act on the behalf of all. Through such manipulation dominant forces are able to lure the dominated to submit to their "inferior" position and accept dominance. In the case of Ghana, we find manipulation arising from the arguments for national



development, financial obligations as well as expert or informed knowledge.

The argument for national development has centered on a need to promote education for national progress; this position has been taken to justify state control of education as ruling governments clamor for greater control of education. In Ghana, where the majority of the people can not afford the cost of education and the state has to bear the burden of educational funding, it is not out of place for the state to take control of education. However, when the state's responsibility of providing education is used to score political points there is cause to worry. Antwi (1992a) and Fobi and his associates (1995) make claims that support this argument by pointing out that ruling governments have used educational reform to legitimize and foster their unpopular rule.

The financial argument has centered on the need for efficiency and administrative discipline. Ghanaian governments and other financiers, especially the World Bank, have used this argument to deny people at the grassroots level their roles in negotiations. They have silenced their voices by supporting the centralized top-down machinery in the name of building a better supervisory machinery. The result is greater control of education from the top and the exclusion of voices and visions from below. In place of those from below, ruling governments and financiers elect themselves and those deemed fit by them to represent the rest of the society in decision and policy making. Those elected have included politicians, bureaucrats, financiers and members of recognized institutions. In the particular case of this thesis, these categories of people are the ones who get to participate in reform initiation and negotiation and as such dictate the pace and trend of reforms (Fobi et. al., 1995; World Bank, 1995; Education

Commission, 1987). For instance, the World Bank, as a major financier of the 1987 and current reforms, has dictated the direction of the reform process (Fobi et al., 1995; Antwi, 1992a), a feat which is not admirable for those Ghanaians who care about internal autonomy. Yet, because the bank provides the education dollars, very little can be done. The result is that politicians press reform, neglect the voices of the citizens and, in some cases, view dissent as a threat (Fobi, et al., 1995; Antwi, 1992a).

In the argument for expert knowledge, it is asserted that participants require some particular "cultural tools" (i.e. expert knowledge and perhaps a position in the higher echelons of society) that will enable them to engage in the kind of negotiations that change demands. Those who are elected, then, are those who possess these "cultural tools". Those not equipped with these "cultural tools" resign to their faith with the hope that "those who know" will make the right decisions on their behalf. This is evident in the fact that no recorded dissent about the Ghanaian reforms has come from such sources. Official forms of dissent have come from elitist groups only (Fobi et al., 1995). In addition, for Fobi and his associates, grassroots concerns are not important as they do not consider system actors in the revised policy that they examine. Rather, they praise the use of expert knowledge only, thus privileging such knowledge.

What is disturbing about these trends is that, as argued by Freire (1970) and Illich (1989), these seemingly benevolent people, the elite, act only in their own interest. Thus what they do in such negotiations perpetuates their own values and promote their ideas and not those of grassroots people whom the Ghanaian reforms seek to include in education (EC, 1986; EAC, 1972). I argue that all actors including parents, teachers and

learners as human and knowing subjects should be enabled to negotiate their own educational purposes, perhaps under the guidance of skilled facilitators, instead of being subjected to the manipulation of the elite of Ghanaian society.

### **Premature foreclosure of outcomes**

Premature foreclosure of outcomes refers to the tendency to preset goals and predetermine or preconceive educational purposes leaving compliance as the only way and choice for system actors. Such foreclosure is a barrier to talk, because the goals and purposes are already determined; negotiations become unnecessary. The tendency to engage in what I call "packaged" reform depicts this tendency. In the Ghanaian reform predetermined foreclosure also is depicted in the situation where an elite few determine educational purposes that are, subsequently, handed over to institutions without further negotiations. Such predetermined and exclusive outcomes do not reflect or respond to regional and cultural diversity and do not make room for grassroots negotiations. The result is that first line actors are called upon to exact reform by following prescribed standards and instructions. Premature foreclosure, thus, denies system or first line actors the opportunities to negotiate reforms that reflects local conditions and learners characteristics.

The problem with all four barriers discussed centers on the fact that they exclude some actors (i.e. system or line actors) and perpetuate dominance. The result is that change is imposed externally instead of negotiated internally, an approach which has been rejected by both Freire (1970/3) and Dewey (1966) as inimical to democratic and transformative systems. In the promotion of democratic and transformative systems, it

would be more appropriate to advocate talk that encourages negotiations and as such fosters democracy and transformation. In the search for a truly democratic and transformative system, Ghanaian reformers, I suggest, must remove these barriers to democratic and transformation practice. In the discussions that follow, I examine the potential of aims talk for surmounting these barriers.

### **Potential of aims talk for Ghanaian educational reform**

Thus far, I have established a framework for reconsidering educational reform in Ghana which, I believe, does three key things to the education system. First, and in fact a crucial element of my analysis, is the reconception to educational aims as ends in view, thus, connecting ends and means. This connection makes possible the adoption of democratic procedures that match the democratic goals of the Ghanaian reforms and, results, for instance, in the creation of conducive environments for the adoption of processes that facilitate educational transformation. This is possible because educational reform concerns become not just concerns about the ends of education but also about the means to those ends (Noddings, 1996). In the case of Ghana, reformers will not be talking about what the goals of education should be; instead, they will be concerned about how to bring those goals to realization. In the circumstance, the question changes from what must be the goals of education for a developing Ghanaian society to how can the education system be transformed in order to promote growth and development among individuals and society as a whole. Reconceiving aims to reflect the means and ends, thus, becomes crucial.

As already pointed out, it is the processes by which one embarks in negotiating

educational ends that result in transformation (Dewey, 1966). For the purposes of this thesis I argue that it is when Ghanaian reformers begin to pay a closer attention to the process, by addressing the question of how the reforms can be pursued to reflect set goals, that the goals they envisage can be brought to fruition. Hence, in my own analysis, I focus on the reform process as a way of directing attention to ways that could enhance the democratic and transformative goals of education. This leads me to the second issue of my analysis.

The second element of my argument involves the adoption of strongly democratic means in the process of reforms. As already established the adoption of democratic procedures that focus on the active participation of all actors is a crucial element of transformative educational systems. The significance of a democratic concern, then, is to make it possible for all actors to engage in activities that are meaningful to them because they reflect their conditions and engage their personal characteristics in the process. Central to such engagements is the possibility for actors to confront their own socio-economic realities in order to name and change their conditions.

The third element requires the creation of the necessary conditions for actors to engage in such democratic interactions. The creation of conducive environments that do not just reflect the characteristics and conditions of learners but also actually promote genuine participation is enjoined. Such an environment is bound by moral ideals that require that all participants are respected as acting and knowing beings and, whose feelings matter in negotiations. It also necessitates the provision of some form of

security for otherwise excluded voices to feel comfortable to participate in negotiations. A moral requirement for democratic negotiation ensures that negotiations are not dominated by a section of the public. Instead, it requires that extra efforts are made to include all parties in negotiations.

Insofar as the Ghanaian reforms are concerned, aims talk tackles the crucial problem of overturning forces that have hindered democratic practice during reform initiation and negotiations. The central concern is to create fresh avenues for surmounting the barriers to democratic practice. In the discussions that follow, I examine the ways in which the four barriers already discussed can be overturned, thus creating conditions for democratic means to be adopted to match the Ghanaian democratic goals.

### **Surmounting the barriers to talk**

In Chapter Two, the dismal performance of the Ghanaian reforms was attributed to the manner in which the reform process was handled. It was argued that the adoption of undemocratic procedures in the process of reforms had hindered success. It also was asserted that democracy was crucial for transformative education processes, and that for Ghana to reach its transformative goal there is need to adopt democratic means to match its democratic goals. Earlier in this chapter I reviewed the barriers to talk, seen also as impediments to democratic negotiations. In this section I review these barriers or impediments by pointing out their effects on the Ghanaian reform efforts and show how aims talk helps in surmounting these impediments.

**External control.** External control as an impediment to the democratization and

transformation of education in Ghana can be observed in three main effects. First of all, those excluded from reform initiation and negotiations, particularly system actors, view the reforms as belonging to the promulgators and not to them (i.e. system actors). Educational aims, thus, become alien to these system actors who have been excluded in the process. The analysis of transformative and democratic systems in the previous chapter, however, suggests that in such systems educational goals belong to the actual actors and not to some outside source.

Secondly, excessive external control leaves no room for ground level negotiations. The reforms are received as instructions with preset goals and objectives to be implemented, instead of being perceived as broad guidelines for personal and system level negotiations which reflect the characteristics and conditions of the actors. In the circumstance, the only option for such actors is compliance. In previous discussions, however, it was observed that compliance is inimical to democratic and transformative educational systems. In fact, democratic and transformative systems thrive on uncertainty and flexibility. They require the opening of diverse and varying opportunities for actors to engage their diverse characteristics and realities as they construct their own meanings.

Finally, due to the exclusion of actors and the demands by the higher authority to have the reforms implemented as directed, the educational process becomes one of transmitting pre-determined values and standards with which learners must be fitted. In the end learners are not given the opportunity to confront their realities and to construct their own meanings with the assistance of parents and teachers. In fact teachers and

parents are reduced to the position of ensuring that the preset goals and values dictated by authority are followed to the letter. Their duty as educators, perhaps instructors, then, becomes one of maintaining standards. However, as argued in the previous chapter, change that is imposed externally and conformist is inimical to growth, democracy and transformation (Freire, 1970; Dewey, 1966). Such control encourages the use of transmissive and authoritative practices.

The net result of all three factors is the pursuit of goals and values that do not reflect the conditions of the learners, their needs, characteristics and goals. The education that they acquire becomes dysfunctional as it is of no use to them. In fact, learners are prevented from reaching the critical awareness that is requisite for confronting their socio-economic realities, naming their worlds and constructing meanings in order to change their conditions (Freire, 1973).

The role of aims talk in this event is to foster problematization as a mode of education and change instead of problem-solving. Problematization which is based on dialogue and effective communication among actors as they confront their realities equips people with the requisite skills and engages them in projects that can result in critical awareness. The process empowers them to name and change their worlds. Problem-solving which presents preset strategies, compels learners to work within the standards so set and as such encourages conformity. Finally, a problematizing process requires that opportunities are opened for teachers and parents, as suggested by Dewey (1966), to reason with learners and teaching materials in contexts that enhance individual meaning making in group settings.



**Intimidation.** As an impediment to democratic negotiation and genuine participation, as already pointed out, intimidation, like external control, silences people and turns them into passive bystanders. Passivity, as pointed out before, contradicts a crucial tenet of democratic and transformative systems. In fact it is in the actions of all actors as they determine educational purposes, confront their worlds and name them that they are able to transform their lives. When actors can not express themselves openly and freely and, when they compromise the goals of reforms as happened in Ghana, then, it can be expected that the reforms will not be successful. For Ghana, however, it is very important to remove this barrier and create the necessary conditions for democratic negotiations and genuine participation.

What aims talk offers is a model of community in which people respect one another as having a common goal to improve the performance of learners. In such circumstances, reform initiatives become avenues for all parties, with their varying interests and characteristics, to cooperate to work towards a common purpose and, at the same time, satisfy their varying interests and characteristics (Dewey, 1966). As members of a community, all actors are bound by democratic ideals and, as such, do not seek to suppress any person(s) or their views. Rather, they understand and accept their diverse characteristics and interests. The goal is to build consensus. In the event of conflict and disagreement, individual need becomes the resolution point. This need, however, must not be based on a self-centered desire. Rather, it is defined by the extent to which the issues at stake and the points of conflict and disagreement present, can be incorporated into individual activities that would be beneficial to the individual as a

member of the group. As pointed out by Boisvert (1995), individuality rather than individualism is stressed in Deweyan democracy. Also, equality is accomplished in the recognition of heterogeneity rather than the imposition of homogeneity while freedom is meant to promote democratic practice. Within democratic systems people must be enabled to struggle with actual projects so that they can assert themselves rather than be left alone. Indeed, it is in dealing with disagreements and conflicts as one struggles to resolve issues that democratic systems facilitate transformative practice.

**Manipulation.** The problem of manipulation as a barrier to democratic negotiation, like intimidation, inhibits genuine participation when those manipulated are coaxed to resign to their faith and accept prescriptions from without. Under the circumstance such actors (i.e. those manipulated) are denied the opportunity to search for their own self fulfillment. Instead, they rely on the manipulators as the knowledgeable ones to fill them up. They become what Freire (1973) called depositories. These “depositories” become dependent on their manipulators who they look up to for genuine support yet, as Freire and Illich (1989) argue, the generosity of these manipulators is only a smokescreen. Freire argues that such dependency reduces the effectiveness of the dependents, and thus their inability to name and change their worlds. The passivity that results from manipulation denies those manipulated from engaging in activities that are empowering, especially, as educational aims are determined.

Aims as foresight, as argued Dewey (1966), entail acting to bring goals into fruition. Foresight does not mean idle watch; rather, it means perceiving steps to come,

as well as using imagination to reach ends. Passive participants are not challenged to reflect, or to employ their intuitions, imaginations and instincts; critical qualities for transformative liberatory practice. Such passive participants, thus, lack the necessary investments to play their roles as knowing subjects who are capable of intelligent and democratic engagements in the construction of meaning.

Aims talk addresses this problem from a democratic viewpoint. Instead of manipulating others it calls for consensus building. Consensus building here focuses on opening opportunities for the sharing of experiences and ensuring that all actors can benefit from interactions. The goal is to respect all views and moderate negotiations in such a way that expert knowledge is availed to all actors, not by imposition but in discussions that help those lacking in such knowledge to benefit from interactions. A key reminder here is that all actors come to the negotiations as concerned people who are interested in improving their conditions and believe that each actor has an experience, knowledge or even a concern to share. With such understanding no one assumes any special positions that can be potentially intimidating to others. Instead all actors are treated with respect and their opinions valued. Teachers, parents and other experts come to the table as learners and facilitators at the same time. The solid boundaries that existed between those at the top and those at the bottom are liquefied to make way for flexible democratic interactions. This is possible, however, only when all actors, particularly those at the top, realize that the dominant and privilege positions they occupy do not benefit others, and that if educational reform is to be beneficial to all participants then there is the need to broaden the net for participation in reform initiation

and negotiation.

It is only when those who have been at the helm of Ghanaian reform discourse realize that the policies they prescribe have not reflected the goals they envisaged and, as such, can not yield anticipated results that genuine change can happen. It is only when they recognize that effective change requires the input of all actors, and initiate steps to facilitate the genuine involvement of all interested parties in negotiation, that any headway can be made towards fulfilling the reform goals. When such understanding is reached and the one-way mode of communication with its top-down approaches to decision and policy making is revised to reflect a two-way communication, and when bottom-up policy and decision making, as prescribed in aims talk, are included, policy will more effectively shape practice and the goals of reforms can be fulfilled.

**Premature foreclosure of outcomes.** Premature foreclosure inhibits democratic negotiations and genuine participation by reducing the opportunities for the adaptation of policies to local and individual conditions. It also does not enable educational aims to grow out of the activities, characteristics and needs of actors. In addition, it presents rigid and static (package) lines of action to be followed. Like all three impediments before, the minimization of the role of system actors, as authority rules and dictates actions, is inimical to democratic and transformative reforms. Aims talk as an avenue for democratic interactions, defined by Deweyan analysis of aims, Freirean conception of transformative processes, and Ayim's (1997) call for moral considerations in negotiations, requires that set aims serve only as tentative projections that are capable of translation into the varying situations, circumstances and conditions of actors as they

confront their worlds. As aims that result from democratic interactions within the group, their effectiveness is measured by the extent to which they make meaning available to individual actors. The only adequate educational aims are those that grow out of the activities of learners and are reconcilable to their capacities, desires, and goals. Ends so set and the means for reaching those ends must be intrinsic to the activities and needs of those being educated.

In addition such aims must reflect present conditions and future goals. Educational aims must reflect short term objectives as participants interact among themselves and yet provide for long term goals. Such aims must be flexible enough to reflect present and future goals of both the individual and society. When aims are viewed as entities they are static and fixed, as is the case in the Ghanaian reforms. The tendency is to force participants to conform to standards; however as revealed in the analysis of transmissive education systems, such rigidity does not promote growth.

What aims talk offers, is foresight. Here, foresight becomes useful for keeping participants focused so that they do not lose sight of their goals. Aims as foresight reflect the dynamics of aims-making. Such aims are growth-oriented and, as such, are not fixed but flexible, evolving and forward looking (Dewey, 1966). Every goal, objective, purpose or end is, thus, connected to some other and not perceived as a separate entity. This connection is possible because aims denote the result of a natural process brought to consciousness and made a factor in determining present observation and choice of ways of acting. In acting, therefore, one does not lose sight of what is ahead. Aims as ends in view demand that one maintains a constant focus of the present

and the future as well as ends and means.

In addition, aims talk requires that the process of educational reform be seen as an educational project where actual actors in education systems, together with all others who have vested interests in education, collaborate and cooperate to make education meaningful and useful to those undergoing (i.e. learners) it as well as to those providing (i.e. teachers and parents) it. All actors must see themselves and one another as active members of one big group. Each group and individual plays a different, unique and yet significant role that is directed toward the improvement of the conditions and performance of learners. In the spirit of an educative community they complement and supplement one another's efforts instead of substituting one for another.

The goal for all actors, working in the context of aims talk is to foster genuine participation in democratic negotiations. The emphasis on genuine participation in democratic negotiation is to ensure that a truly democratic atmosphere is created for transformative practice. In the event, authoritarian practices are eschewed and transmissive practices discouraged. Aims talk advocacy, then, is intended to prepare the grounds for reaching the goals that the Ghanaian reforms envisaged by redefining those very reform goals (i.e. democracy and transformation) in ways that reflect their true meanings and strong sense instead of the reductionism and weak sense that Ghanaian reformers tend to adopt.

### **Conclusion**

This thesis journey has involved a search for an alternative ground for viewing

educational reform processes in Ghana. It has sought to shift away from traditional rationalist approaches to reform discourse, and toward an alternate process in which the roles of actors in the process of reforms are pivotal. This alternate process would engage all actors in democratic negotiations. It would facilitate the adoption of democratic means to match the democratic goals of education as Ghana searches for a truly transformative education system. The goal is to approach educational reform in ways that can affect practice. The central theme is to reconceive educational aims in such a way that ends and means are connected and that, guided by democratic ideals, education can promote transformative practice.

In Chapter Two of this thesis, I pointed out that the Ghanaian reforms articulated democratic and transformative goals; however, the adoption of undemocratic procedures resulted in a dismal performance. The gap that resulted from the incommensurability between reform policy and practice and the subsequent need to reconcile the situation by filling this gap, became central to this thesis. I suggested that an expanded notion or strong version of democracy that reflects the active role of all actors in the reform process is crucial to resolve this conflict.

In Chapter Three, the suggestion of an expanded notion of democracy was clarified in the analyses of three key concepts: transmission, transformation and educational aims. Freirean and Deweyan analyses were adopted as models. In their analyses it became clear that democracy aimed at fostering genuine participation of actors provides avenues for all actors to negotiate and confront their socio-economic realities, name their worlds and change their conditions. The analysis also revealed that

a strong democratic educational practice was crucial for transformative practice. Hence, for a strongly democratic and transformative education there is the need for Ghanaian reform processes to become real educational projects. An educational project is defined as involving actions by the people and not by political power and as such fosters genuine participation in critical dialogues (Freire, 1970).

To facilitate genuine participation for democratic and transformative practice, it was suggested in Chapter Four, that Ghanaian reformers need to consider an alternate discourse for which I have expanded Ayim's (1997) conception of good talk. Defined by Deweyan interpretation of educational aims, Freirean analysis of transformative systems and situated in Ayim's call for moral considerations in interactions, aims talk as a metaphor, depicts a process and provides an avenue for embarking on democratic negotiations. The democratic interactions that it fosters take place in environments that reflect the characteristics and conditions of all actors. They ensure genuine participation by being considerate and respectful of the varying viewpoints of all actors and by actually seeing to it that those hitherto excluded are given the opportunity to participate fully. Finally, a strong democracy ensures that actors engage in actual projects where the practice of democracy is called into use. These conditions rule out all kinds of domination and external impositions. Instead, aims talk focuses on activities that are intrinsic to the education system and to those undergoing education.

In brief, what was accomplished in this thesis journey was the introduction of an alternate discourse that has the potential to transform Ghanaian educational reform initiatives into educational projects by redirecting the focus of reform to the actual



**actors in educational systems and their roles in educational reform processes. The result is a new perspective on Ghanaian educational reform in which policy and practice as well as ends and means become equally important.**

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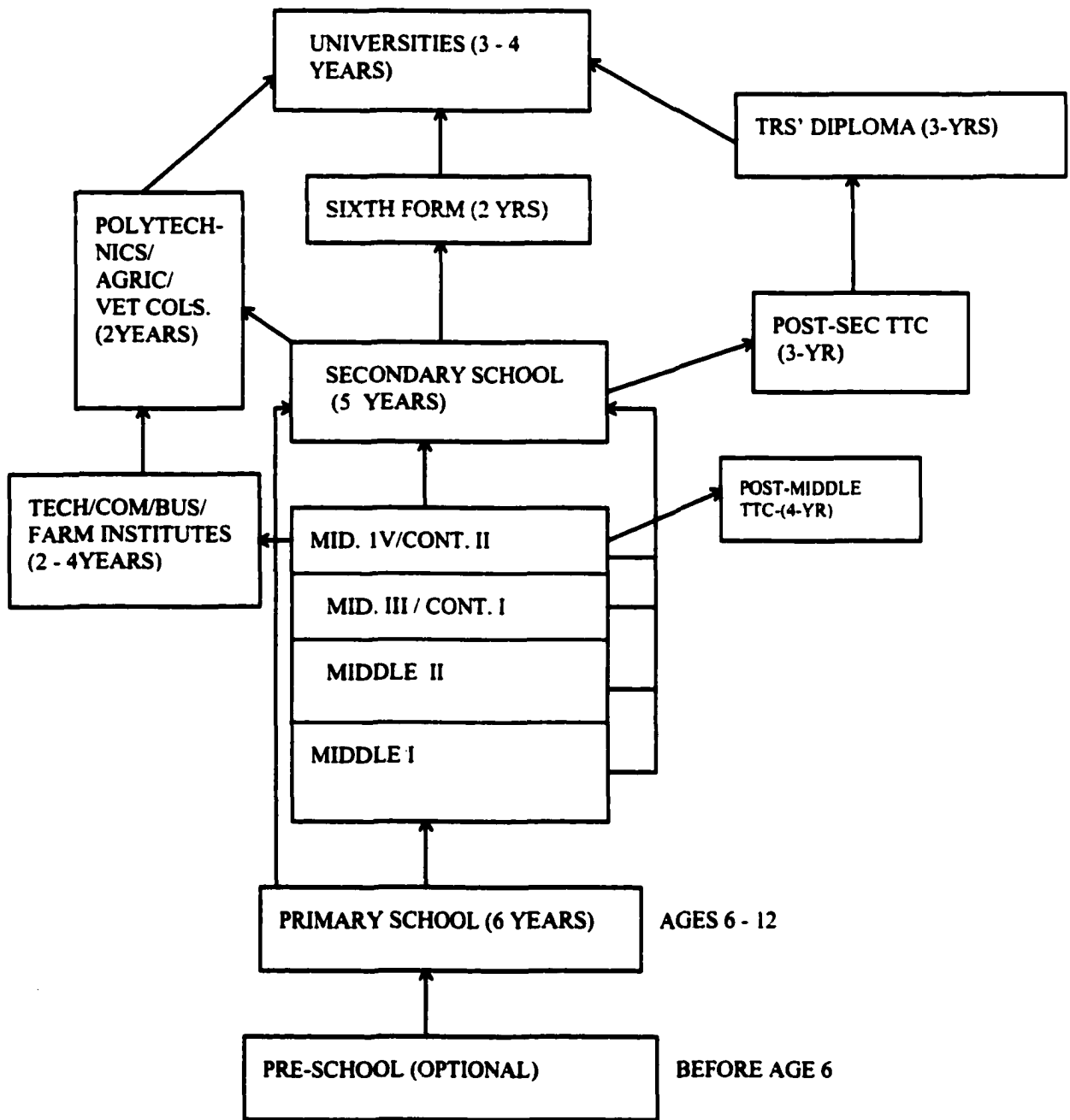
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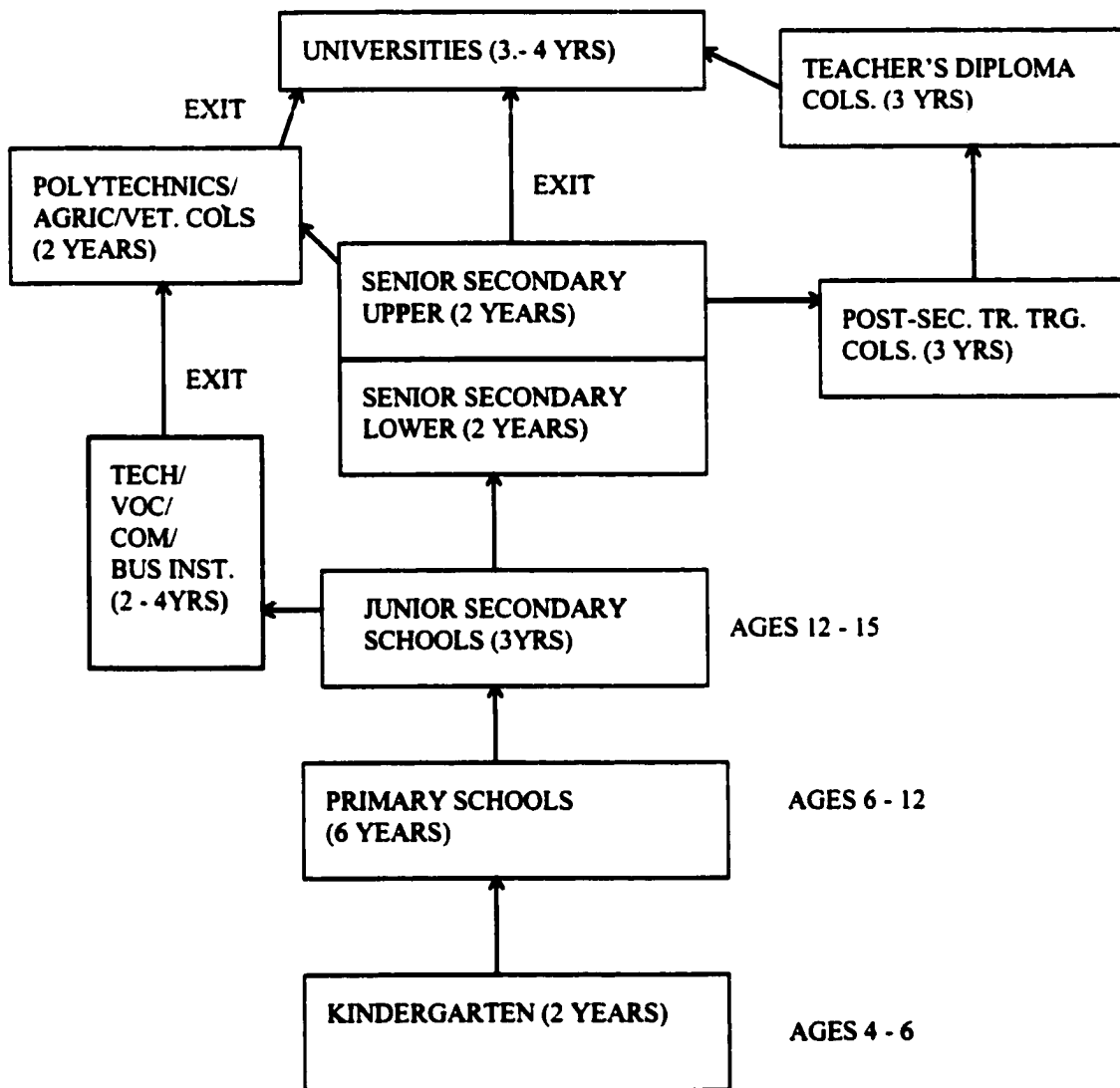
## **APPENDICES**



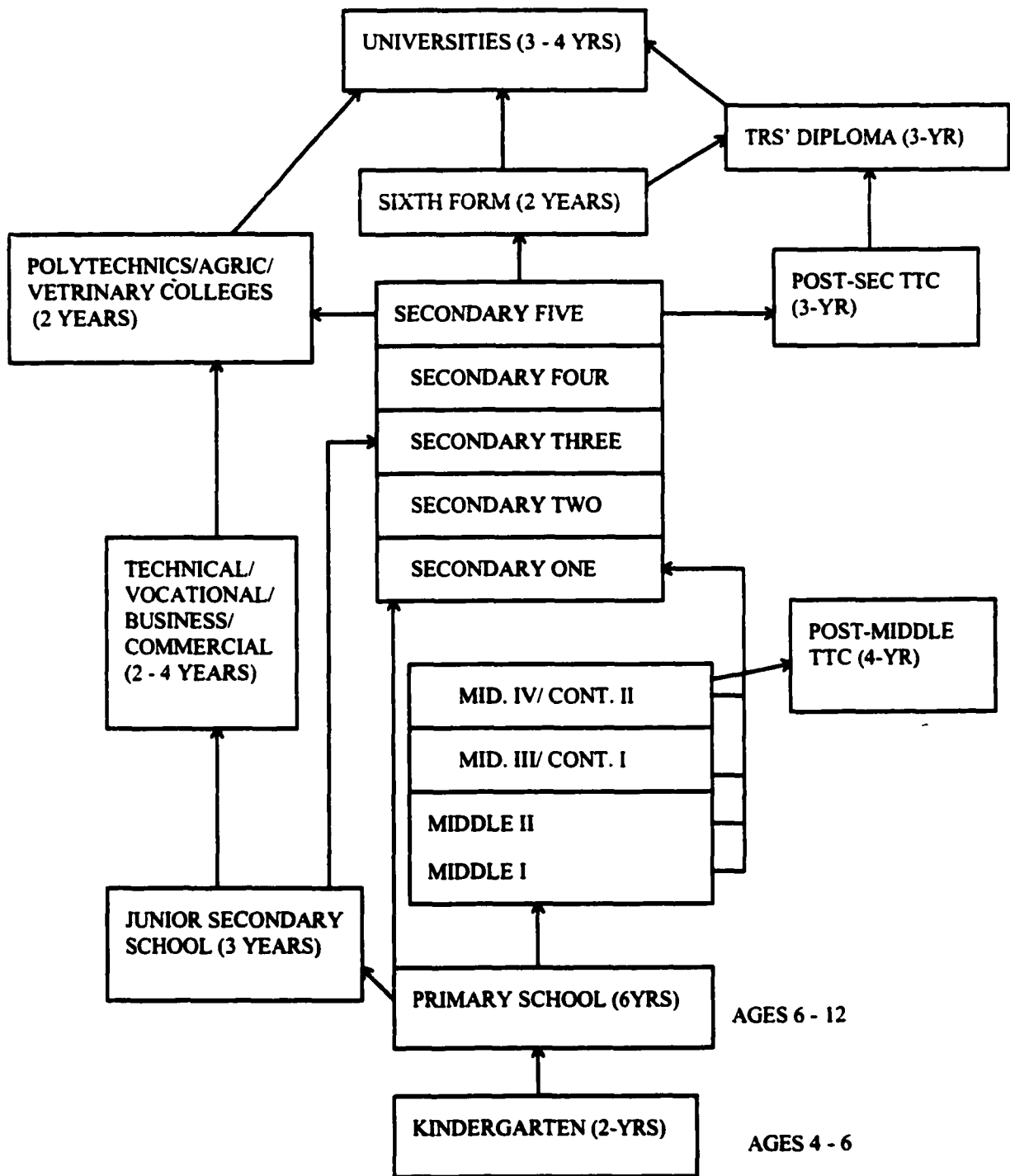
**Appendix I : Ghanaian educational structure before the 1975 reforms**



**Appendix II: EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE PRESCRIBED BY THE 1975 REFORMS**



**Appendix III: GHANAIAN EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE BETWEEN 1975 AND 1987**



**Appendix IV: EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE PRESCRIBED BY THE 1987 REFORM  
(CURRENT GHANAIAN EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE)**

