

## **Towards Social Justice Consciousness in Ghana's Higher Education: Revisiting the Thoughts of Nkrumah and Nyerere**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This article revisits the thoughts of Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere on decolonizing higher education in Africa. Their critique of colonial higher education centers on the notion that it was designed to promote the economic aspirations of the colonial metropolis, making it socially unjust, culturally irrelevant, and developmentally inapt. For redemption, African universities should align with the aspirations of their societies and promote African cultural consciousness. Their value-laden thoughts are classified into themes, discussed and consequently recommended as ideas for policy considerations because they are yet to firmly influence Ghana's higher education policy framework despite their relevance. The themes are: liberating the African mind; nurturing African character; owning the African narrative; and the essence of knowledge.*

**Keywords:** Africa, Decolonization, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Higher Education, Social Justice

## INTRODUCTION

Discourses in anti-colonial theorizations, post-colonial persuasions, and Indigenous education have focused on colonial education's injustices. Their activism and scholarship promote alternative paradigms designed to halt the epistemicide on African knowledge systems and alter the colonially established asymmetrical power relations and privilege systems (see Tamale, 2020; Dlamini, 2018; Walker, 2018). I contend in this article that Ghana's higher education remains a vestige of colonialism in structure, content, and form. Despite the changes witnessed over the decades, it is entrapped in the neo-liberal realities that seek to sustain Eurocentric outlooks as universal and promote Eurocentric individualistic aspirations as opposed to African-centered collectivist worldviews. This paper examines values that can create a social justice consciousness in beneficiaries of Ghana's higher education for them to engage as active citizens within both educational contexts and the broader society. In furtherance of this cause, I present value-laden propositions formed out of the thoughts of the first presidents of Ghana and Tanzania, Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere, respectively, which could shape critical higher education policy in Ghana. As we will see in this discussion, these scholars argued fundamentally that colonial higher education in Africa was unjust and bestowed unjust consequences due to its cultural misfit, enormous economic emphasis, misaligned social outcomes and privileges it grants to a minority in society. And until its redress, the higher education process would continue to perpetuate injustice and create unjust societies with all the associated tensions. To attain a social justice consciousness, African higher education, through African-centered perspectives of history and politics, must seek to liberate the African mind to raise awareness that the prevailing colonial bureaucracies and systems must be changed. Africans must own their narrative; this is important for self-determination. Higher education must help nurture a worthy African character so that people will see knowledge as a tool for empowerment, not exploitation. I do not think these are in any way overstressing the aims of African higher education. As Nkrumah and Nyerere argue, these values' non-fulfillment would continue to make higher education in Africa sustain structural inequalities in society.

I begin by examining in the background section how the concept of social justice has been taken up in academic discourses and how European enslavement of Africans and consequent colonialism in Africa bequeathed unjust institutions. There is also information on colonial higher education and contemporary realities in Africa and how Ghana's educational reforms have

failed to initiate a critical higher education policy. Issues of data and its analysis are captured in the method section. The thematic discussion segment highlights the themes derived from Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere's expositions and how these themes could be used as ideas for critical higher education policy consideration in Ghana. The specific themes are: liberating the African mind, nurturing African character, owning the African narrative, and the essence of knowledge.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Overview of social justice**

While justice may be an old concept, social justice seems to be a relatively new concept emerging in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (United Nations [UN], 2006). It is interrogating justice from social perspectives. Like many social science concepts, there is conceptual plurality – making it ambiguous and thereby drawing criticism. For instance, Miller (1999, p. ix) says, “the term may have emotive force, but no real meaning beyond that.” Nevertheless, the need to uphold equitable relations in societies cannot be overstated. The UN (2006, p. 7) conceives social justice broadly as “the fair and compassionate distribution of the fruits of economic growth.” Despite the multiple conceptions, social justice borders on the fair and non-discriminatory relationships between individuals and society (Thrift & Sugarman, 2019). Social justice has become a multi-disciplinary concept in academia. Discourses on inequities and the need to address different forms of inequalities – income, asset ownership, and distribution of opportunities-are gaining centrality. Accordingly, it is judged in quite definite and inferred terms, for instance, the spread of wealth and avenues for personal, societal, and national advancement.

Consequently, three critical domains seem to manifest in social justice discourses – equality of rights, opportunities, and living conditions. Although socially constructed and enumerated, social justice has assumed economic inclinations. The implementation of numerous poverty alleviation strategies to improve well-being and social justice has yielded insignificant results as the gap between the rich and the poor keep increasing globally. This, according to the UN (2006), is unjust and a reflection of “a general trend that is morally unfair, politically unwise and economically unsound” (p. 7). Furthermore, “injustices at the international level have produced a parallel increase in inequality between affluent and poor countries” (UN, 2006, p. 7).

Social justice operates within socio-political, economic, geographic, and even cultural spaces. It becomes important to situate any analysis within

these contexts both at the micro and macro levels (local and global levels). It is within these frameworks that meaning could be sought and understanding and judgment made. This does not overshadow possible universalities embedded in the conception and promotion of social justice.

To bring this home, the African continent and its people have experienced treacherous times. The infamous Berlin conference of 1884 and 1885 divided the continent among European groups ushering Africa and Africans into a unique realm in human history; items of trade (enslavement) and subsequent colonization. Without belaboring discourses on colonialism, when considered with the conception of social justice as a non-discriminatory relationship between individuals and society, I contend that the colonial enterprise was socially unjust to Africa and Africans. Furthermore, considering that dominant persuasions tend to shape education, exploitative colonial dispositions influenced colonial higher education in Africa (see Asante, 2006a; Heleta, 2016), and further established bureaucracies that reward people who help it function. Asante (2006b), therefore, says that colonialism's influence was not solely to capture human and natural resources but information and knowledge; hence "it is essential that the resistance must interrogate issues related to education, information and intellectual transformations" (p. ix). In Ghana and across Africa, the contemporary school system has become a powerful socialization agent, although its structure, content, and form remain colonial relics. The need to interrogate justice from a social perspective necessitates examining the agents of socialization – in this case, higher education.

### **Colonial higher education and contemporary realities in Africa**

While higher education is not new to Africa, its historicity has always generated some controversy. Higgs (2008) argues that, as part of the bigger European colonial agenda and the witting desire to capture the minds of non-white people, it was expedient for European missionaries and colonialists to propagate that Africa had no educational institutions. This false propaganda paved the way for introducing Eurocentric education (schooling) bereft of any African philosophy. The colonial agenda succeeded due to a confluence of military strength, control over media, and academic space to offer scientific or pseudo-scientific justifications for the enterprise. The history of the emergence of replica European universities (both in substance and form) in West Africa is well documented. It started in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in Sierra Leone until various university colleges emerged across West African (see Ashby, 1964, 1966; Agbodeka, 1998; Amuzu, 2019).

In Ghana, the first university college was established in 1948 after many years of agitation. In line with the colonial agenda of territorial and cultural dominance, resource exploitation, and the colonized minds' ultimate capture, the institution was positioned to nurture human resources to run the colonial bureaucratic systems—the process of education created caricature Europeans. Fanon (2004, p. 11) calls them “colonized intellectuals”, Amuzu (2017, p. 7) says they are “indigenous colonizers”, while Nkrumah (1970) refers to them as a “comprador class” (p. 11). The nature of colonial higher education tended to instill a lack of knowledge of self, narcissism, individualism, consumerism, and the inculcation of westernized desires for status, power, and wealth (see Fanon, 2004).

Developing an understanding of the colonial enterprise is not linear because it comes in waves and is subject to constant realignment. Nkrumah (1970) categorizes people in African societies into a binary of privileged and oppressed classes. The former consists of the “bureaucratic bourgeoisie, officers of the armed forces and police, intelligentsia, professional class, and compradors.” The latter were the “workers, peasants, small farmers and traders” (p. 11). The distinction between these groups at the time was the acquisition of western education. Although this classification has become quite complex and complicated due to factors like massification of higher education, unemployment, underemployment etc., it still aligns with contemporary realities across the continent. In fact, I was going to argue that it has changed, but I have shelved that thought upon reflection. Let me attempt an explanation for my stance. It has not changed much because the oppressed class remains “workers, peasants, small farmers and traders” – they largely do not understand the colonial bureaucratic system they have been trapped into and expected to survive in. They are the least paid, face the rough end of the law enforcement, judicial and penal systems, and have extremely low chances of social mobility.

On the other hand, however, drained their privileges may be (see Amuzu, 2019). The privileged class still wields some power, influence and participate (consciously or unconsciously) in exploiting the masses and their commonwealth. One may also argue that a superstructure political class is the ‘Indigenous colonizers’ co-opting the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, officers of the armed forces and police, intelligentsia, and professional class to advance and achieve their exploitative schemes. In all these, I must add that the former colonists who have a constant eye on Africa’s raw materials remain the “Big Brothers” behind the scenes profiteering from the colonial arrangements they established centuries ago. As aforementioned, higher education is a springboard into these realms, and a worthy degree facilitates

or propels a person into these webs. We will see in subsequent sessions how Nkrumah and Nyerere encourage Africans to blame the institutions that offer such people to society. Even though resistances have been mounted against these colonial machinations, there is still enormous work to be done. To this end, there is the need for an alternate consciousness to propel a more humanized culture for an egalitarian society. Culture, on the other hand, is formed through a fusion of values, and since education fundamentally is a value transmission system, there is the need to discard the colonial values embedded in higher education. The need for an alternative consciousness influences the works of many anti-colonial, post-colonial, African centered and Indigenous scholars like Dei (2012), Asante (2006a, 2020a, 2020b), and Minga (2021), amongst others.

### **Critical higher education policy gap**

Despite the successes of the liberation struggles that led to political independence across Africa, education generally and higher education specifically has not witnessed enough radical variations. The nature of Eurocentrism creates divisions due to its inclination for supremacy. Eurocentric perspectives dominate disparaged African viewpoints creating a clash of worldviews and knowledge systems, invariably programming the highly schooled African to seek European validation while demeaning African worldviews (Amuzu, 2020). Critical education policy analysis focuses on discussions ranging from Marxist and Leftist analysis of education. It is a framework that reveals how power relations (social, economic, and cultural) in their complexities and amalgamations influence education (see Giroux, 2010; Apple, Au, & Gandin, 2009). From an African perspective, I conceive critical higher education policy as a framework that seeks to awaken the schooled African consciousness to the factors that situate Africa and Africans within an unfavorable position in global relations. This can be achieved through discussions and critique of global capitalism and the inequalities of the global economic system, neoliberalism, colonialism, white supremacy, anti-colonialism, racist histories and ideologies, and cultural hegemonies that demean the African. The essence is to address and redress colonial privilege issues, social injustices, racism, and global exploitation schemes that subjugate the African into perpetual servitude. Ultimately, it is to offer an Afrocentric focus and an empowering consciousness to Africans.

While African governments have attempted to improve higher education, the human capital theory remains the most seductive basis. Neoliberalism has commercialized universities, and academic programs have become marketable commodities, posing an existential threat

to many liberal arts programs. Certainly, this is a vestige of imperialism and colonialism's never-ending economic machinations (see Gyamera & Burke, 2018; Tight, 2019; Giroux, 2019). Nevertheless, the need to decolonize education remains a social justice cause. Even an European scholar like Barnett (2017) suggests a reconceptualization of higher education where “the task of an adequate philosophy of higher education...is not merely to understand the university or even to defend it but to change it” (p. 10). This change is bound to differ across societies, and for Africans captured and relishing in the imaginations of colonists, there is the need for a critical rethink of higher education.

While Ghana has had at least seven education policies post-independence, they lacked coherence and consistency (Opoku Agyemang, 2019). Whereas access to and quality of higher education have gained attention amongst policy initiators, funding remains a challenge. Crucially, issues to do with philosophy, theory, and content have received tokenism. The need for higher education in Ghana to bequeath realities contrary to the prevailing regurgitation of colonial Eurocentric worldviews gives credence to the need to revisit the propositions of sages like Nkrumah and Nyerere. I must say that notions of critical education policy gained some prominence in the post-independence era in Africa when the vibe for decolonization was high, but this momentum has not been sustained. Fanon (2004) argues that decolonization is a historical process and understood “insofar as we can discern the history-making movement which gives it form and substance” (p. 2). To alter the kind of products Ghana’s higher education institutions bequeath to society, the need to identify past actions creating contemporary realities becomes uncompromising.

Furthermore, anyone desirous to engage in this form of liberation should know that decolonization is political and conceivably violent because “it is the colonist who fabricated and continues to fabricate the colonized subject” (Fanon, 2004, p. 2). The privileged colonized subject strives consciously or unconsciously to ensure the sustenance of the colonial structures because he or she derives “validity, i.e., his wealth, from the colonial system” (Fanon, 2004, p. 2). The need for decolonization becomes unwelcomed as it threatens the structures that privilege and create wealth for the highly schooled, though socially just. These tensions manifested in Nkrumah’s quest to decolonize Ghana’s higher education in the late 1950s and early 1960s (see Agbodeka, 1998; Poe, 2003). Nevertheless, the need to decolonize Ghana’s higher education cannot be overstated; indeed, it is in the greater interest of the privileged because they tend to lose greatly in the event

of a social revolt. Nyerere and Nkrumah's advocacy for egalitarianism must be a consciousness bequeathed through Ghana's higher education process.

## METHOD

This is a conceptual article. Therefore, I adopted a desk review of existing articles, books, and speeches of Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere. Also, government reports, policy documents, and other relevant documentation on the need to decolonize education generally and higher education specifically were consulted. Both peer-reviewed and gray literature were accessed. Based on these reviews, content and discourse analysis, and my understanding of decolonizing higher education, I offer these critical perspectives on how social justice consciousness can be infused into Ghana's higher education process. Content analysis is a tool in research employed to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts in texts. I utilize this tool to determine words like higher education, colonialism, liberation, and African culture, amongst others in Nyerere and Nkrumah's writing, to create the themes that I developed to present their ideas. Being leaders of Africa's anti-colonial movements, they offer not only theoretical perspectives but also praxis in dealing with the colonial enterprise. They were both trained educators hence had a deeper understanding of what it takes to undertake a meaningful education (see Schreier, 2012). I used discourse analysis to study the written works [including transcribed speeches] of Nkrumah and Nyerere in relation to the arguments, narrations, descriptions, expositions, and actions they offer in specific social contexts. In this instance, they were directed at Africans trapped in European colonization. These works aim to help understand the colonial enterprise, its effects, and its purposes on both the colonized and the colonizer (see Abell, Gruber, Mautner & Myers, 2008).

I selected these leaders because of their profound advocacy for higher education to serve society's greater good. Their thoughts are witty and timeless. Overall, they held that higher education designed to promote social justice must focus on African realities and values. This would make education meaningful and, to this end, liberate the African mind. Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere were the first presidents of Ghana and Tanzania, respectively. Their elicited thoughts are discussed in these thematic areas: liberating the African mind, nurturing African character, owning the African narrative, and the essence of knowledge. The thematic areas discussed are relevant, value-laden, and wield immense significance to instigate social justice consciousness to Ghana's higher education

beneficiaries. African listeners of the British Broadcasting Corporation's World Service voted for Kwame Nkrumah as the "Man of the Millennium" (BBC, 2000).

## THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS

### **Liberating the African mind**

As aforementioned, the colonial enterprise was designed to insidiously capture the mind of the colonized into the cultures and dictates of the colonizer. The need to liberate the colonized mind has gained consistent traction over the decades across the colonized world. Hayford's (1911) "Ethiopia Unbound" through Achebe's (1958) "Things Fall Apart" to contemporary works of Goldson (2020) "liberating the mind: Rastafari and the theorization of Maroonage as epistemological (Dis) engagement", Nyamnjoh's (2019) decolonizing the university in Africa, and Asante's (2020a) "Africology, Afrocentricity, and what remains to be done" remain scholarly endeavors seeking to help to liberate the African mind.

To begin Nyerere and Nkrumah's journey to liberate the African mind, Nkrumah faults the philosophical foundations of European established universities in Ghana and Africa. They were established to confer Eurocentric exploitative consciousness to a privileged minority. He argues that the aims of a university in an independent state should not re-echo colonial aspirations. In the past, they were planned toward colonial edict and its beneficiaries reflecting the "...values and ideals of the colonial powers. Consequently, colonial institutions of higher learning, however good intentioned, were unable to assess the needs and aspirations of the societies for which they were instituted" (Nkrumah, 1997b, p. 138). Therefore, higher education in Ghana and Africa must nurture Pan-African agency and extinguish the deep-rooted colonial attitudes and practices because they are unfair, disenfranchise the masses, and initiate unjust relations between individuals and society (Nkrumah, 1997b). To help achieve the liberated mentality, Nkrumah established the Institute of African Studies (IAS) at the University of Ghana (Agbodeka, 1998; Poe, 2003). The institute was to advance African-centered perspectives, project the African identity and further mitigate vestiges of colonialism. Nkrumah hoped IAS in the immediate future "...will have a firm basis of African scholarship and that it will become an internationally recognized center for the advanced study of African history, language, sociology and culture and of contemporary African institutions" (Nkrumah, 1997b, p.138). This goal was vital to the unification and synergy (politically, economically, and intellectually) required among Africans separated by false

demarcations and boundaries to defeat colonialism and capitalism. To Nkrumah, incorporating African worldviews would help create a just society due to fundamental ideas like community, interdependency, and respect.

Julius Kambarage Nyerere, an ardent crusader of African liberation and dignity, also advocate for educational policies pinned on African ideologies. His views, in many ways, reflect Nkrumah's. According to Kassam (2000), Nyerere's passion for education earned him the title *Mwalimu* (*teacher*, in Swahili). Nyerere's fundamental thesis is that education should liberate the mind – anything else is worthless (Nyerere, 1975). However, unfortunately, higher education in Tanzania was detached from society and malfunctioning due to its colonial heritage. It privileged a minority and threatened social cohesion. Nyerere (1975), in attempting to deconstruct the word liberate, offers a layered approach where he says “to “liberate” means to “set free,” and to “set free from something.” It implies impediments to freedom having been thrown off; it can therefore be a matter of degree and of a process” (p. 7). Moving away from the dictionary looking definition, he says that a person who can untie her/his wrist can further proceed to unshackle their feet. However, a person “can be physically free from restraint and still be unfree if his mind is restricted by habits and attitudes which limit his humanity” (Nyerere, 1975, p. 4). Nyerere brings to the fore the complexities embedded in the phenomenon of liberation. While physical disentanglement can be simple and quite straightforward, mental liberation can be more intricate and difficult to achieve, mainly because it is a product of socialization and is sometimes subliminal. It is in this regard that Nyerere and Nkrumah engaged the higher education processes of their countries. Nyerere (1975) says his conception of liberation does not abnormally overextend the elasticity of the word ‘liberate’ – it is freeing one’s humanity.

The need to liberate the African mind remains valuable in the course to decolonize higher education in Ghana. The mind is central to human actions hence Steve Biko's famous phrase, “the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed” (Biko, 1978, p. 68). Universities in this regard must strive to abandon the remnants of the colonial ivory tower mentality and its associated sense of exclusivity by associating with the aspirations of their societies. Furthermore, the notions of exclusivity, superiority and exoticism attached to European knowledge constructs do not empower the African and fails to offer any meaningful competitive advantage in the global knowledge space.

## **Nurturing African character**

The need to nurture worthy character has shaped African education since antiquity. For instance, Ma'at was the foremost ethical principle in Kemit (ancient Egypt) and shaped education at all levels, especially in higher education. Ma'at, which translates into English as truth, justice, reciprocity, balance, order, harmony, and righteousness, is the foundation principle of human relations and interactions (see Karenga, 2003). It, therefore, does not come as a surprise that this prominent feature in African education permeates Nyerere's erudition. To him, nurturing worthy character enhances a person's humanity. Higher education must prepare people for life, help them function effectively, and serve their society, but, inopportunately, it deviates from these realities and expectations in Africa. Its detachment from society impedes the synthesis of social activities and academic undertakings hence the need to query the essence of schooling. It lacks the atmosphere to cultivate an egalitarian society (Nyerere, 1975). Touching on the purpose of education, Nyerere (1975) argues that it is not for "the development of objects – whether they be pyramids or irrigation ditches, railways or palaces" (p. 6). The development of objects can be wedded with the development of humanity because the primary essence of education is not to "turn out technicians who can be used as instruments in the expansion of the economy. It is to turn out men who have the technical knowledge and ability to expand the economy for the benefit of man in society" (Nyerere, 1975, p. 6).

The pursuit of academic, technical, or vocational knowledge must operate in an atmosphere that promotes altruism because equating education to training tends to breed selfish inclinations that keep societies unbalanced and unfair. Competitive schemes that privilege a few and emphasize materialism are hopeless and disingenuous. Despite the importance of work, an appreciation of the primary purpose of specific arts and striving to achieve them is most essential. Higher education should thus transcend employment. However, should work assume primacy for higher education, then humanity is reduced to mechanical items, which threatens their social nature.

Moreover, the colonial material focus of higher education makes the liberation of the mind elusive because, as [Bob] Marley (1979) says, the strategy is to "keep us hungry, and when you gonna get some food, your brother got to be your enemy." Nyerere (1975) continues to argue that "it is certainly true that Africa has great need of men with technical knowledge, and that our freedom is restricted by the absence of such men" (p. 6). Nyerere seems to be attempting to illustrate a critical "distinction between a system of education which makes liberated men and women into skillful users of tools

and a system of education which turns men and women into tools” (Nyerere, 1975, p. 6). To this end, he contends that technical and practical education should be education “for creators not for creatures” so that institutions of learning do not end “turning out marketable commodities” (Nyerere, 1975, p. 6). On the contrary, education enlarges human beings without converting them into “efficient instruments for the production of modern gadgets” (Nyerere, 1975, p. 6).

Furthermore, Nyerere (1975; 1978; 1985) claims that the lack of worthy character and materialistic concentrations of colonial education produces professionals who have an unworthy sense of entitlement. They eke glamorously from society and contribute mediocrity to the aspirations of the masses. People with such worldviews are not liberated, as self-centeredness cannot be liberation. The uniqueness of every human being presents a potentially distinctive contribution to the effective functioning of any society, hence the need to liberate as many people as possible. An isolated human being is incapable of being liberated or educated because “the words are meaningless in relation to an abandoned child brought up by wolves” (Nyerere, 1975, p. 6). Human beings are primarily social beings, so is education and its purpose because the ultimate intention is to nurture “human beings who are part of mankind” (Nyerere, 1975, p. 7) striving for the general good of society. In Ghana, a road safety operation initiated by a local media house, CITI FM, and CITI TV in 2019 was sabotaged after a few months by “unseen hands” because prominent people like parliamentarians, police and military officers, as well top civil servants were caught on camera breaking traffic rules. Many were seen driving on the opposite lanes to avoid being in traffic. This is the sense of superiority and level of impunity some people in leadership positions in Ghana desire to live (Citinewsroom, 2019). This further illustrates the disrespect the highly schooled in positions of authority show to the populace. Nyerere notes that a liberated person should not feel a sense of superiority and difference but act and work together for the common good. A liberated person is conscious of their humanity and can influence positively. Therefore, people should halt in celebrating higher education in Tanzania and Africa as it deviates from producing liberated minds. It must produce leaders desiring the opportunity to serve, not the reverse. Beneficiaries of higher education in Africa need to assume and show leadership in every facet of life and not mere production tools. I share in Nyerere’s (1975) supposition that:

The antithesis of education...is the kind of learning which teaches an individual to regard himself as a commodity, whose value is

determined by certificates, degrees, or other professional qualifications. Yet this antithesis of education is still too often the effect of what we call education in Africa – and in Tanzania. There are professional men who say: “My market value is higher than the salary I am receiving in Tanzania.” But no human being has a market value except a slave. (p. 7)

### **Owning the African narrative**

*“The media is the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power. Because they control the minds of the masses” Malcolm X*

Controlling the narrative in many aspects of life grants enormous power. Notwithstanding the enormous military strength of European colonists, they needed the media and even academia to propagate and achieve their aim. This form of control was beneficial for the colonizers because they created disparaging images and imaginations that are still associated with Africa and Africans. The colonizers gave the world what to think and perceive about Africa and Africans, how to relate with the continent and its people, and often justified the need to treat Africans with disdain. The police brutalities against Africans [Blacks] in America (see Chaney & Robertson, 2013) and the self-hatred and self-defeat (see Jamison, 2020) among African people are symptomatic of the negative narratives promoted against Africa and Africans and its consequent internalization. Indeed, if Black lives ever mattered in the western consciousness, Africans would not be fighting for their humanity in the year 2020. This reality is equally present even on the continent (see Uwazuruike, 2020; Boateng, Makin, Abess, & Wu, 2019).

Africa's quest to control its narrative is crucially imperative to redress, restore, project and promote the African standpoint so annihilated in western consciousness. Simply, to unapologetically tell the African story the African way. In this regard, Nkrumah encourages Africans to own the African narrative to present alternative views from those designed to promote and justify European colonialism and capitalism. To foreign scholars desiring to work in Ghana, there was a caution to acknowledge that their cognitive formations have “been largely influenced by their system of education and the fact of their society and environment. For this reason, they must endeavor to adjust and reorientate their attitudes and thought to our African conditions and aspirations” (Nkrumah, 1997c, p. 129). On their part, universities in Ghana must “study the history, culture, and institutions, languages and arts of Ghana and of Africa in new African-centered ways – in

entire freedom from the propositions and presuppositions of the colonial epoch” (Nkrumah, 1997c, p. 128). The Institute of African Studies should be preoccupied with the reclamation and reaffirmation of Africa’s great antiquity due to their propensity to inspire and motivate successive generations. The institute was tasked to explore and reorganize scholarly literature on Africa through collaboration with likeminded institutions across the African world to establish the foundation for African-centered education. To Nkrumah, “it is only in conditions of total freedom and independence from foreign rule and interferences that the aspirations of our people will see real fulfillment and the African genius find his best expression” (Nkrumah, 1997c, p. 131).

At a university dinner at the seat of government on February 24, 1963, Nkrumah stated that European grammar education would not liberate Africans and initiate the social justices needed for collective action towards development. A harmony should exist between universities and national life and empower the populace because “A university is supported by society, and without the sustenance which it receives from society, it will cease to exist” (Nkrumah, 1997c, p. 11).

Although Nkrumah emphasizes African centeredness, he was open to a synthesis of the best of any world (Sherwood, 1996). Nkrumah encouraged African students to “...maintain links with the African scene, and thus understand the great cause of African unity to which we are committed” (Nkrumah, 1997b, p. 138). To study Africa extensively, Nkrumah established an exchange program at the University of Ghana in 1964, enrolling nearly two hundred students from Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanganyika (Tanzania), USA, and Europe (Nkrumah, 1997c). This was to develop a culture of mutual interdependence among Africans while maintaining their Africanness. Nkrumah advocated for restructuring Africa based on its classical civilizations after centuries of subjugation because there is the need for “Africa’s regeneration – politically, socially and economically – within the milieu of a social system suited to the traditions, history, environment and communal pattern of African society” (Nkrumah, 1997c, p. 145). He argues further that, despite the European influences, Africa “still remains to a large degree unchanged. In the vast rural areas of Africa, the people hold land in common and work it on the principal [sic] of self-help and co-operation” (Nkrumah, 1997c, p. 145). Nkrumah urged students and scholars to hold high “the freedom and development and unity of Africa and the moral, cultural and scientific contribution of the continent to the total world civilization and peace” (p.146).

To this end, a Pan-Africanist approach to higher education through emphasis on classical African civilizations and African knowledge systems across the

globe is suggested to help nurture self-esteem and value on African effects. Exchange programs among scholars and students are also encouraged in this regard.

### **The essence of knowledge**

The politics of knowledge and knowing and its essence generate debates within the academe. Ayi Kwei Armah, in his novel 'the beautiful ones are not yet born' talks about how knowledge during an era in Africa's antiquity was not commoditized and largely utilized for the greater good of society. On the contrary, colonial education commoditizes knowledge, making it a tool for exploitation. The colonial enterprise and its relics; neocolonialism and the current neoliberal hegemony has inundated the academe and programs now need to compete in a market space. Higher learning institutions have become appendages of corporations and the corporate world (see Gyamera & Burke, 2018; Tight, 2019). However, Nyerere (1975) states that higher education should not make people consider their knowledge as an instrument of abuse as it creates dysfunctional relationships. I have observed a growing trend in Ghana where some people in politics and those with political ambitions are gunning either to read law or pursue doctorate degrees. While this may appear laudable on the face of it, a few I have talked to indicate that they want those qualifications to garner political influence and power. Simply, they want these academic credentials to maintain colonial power. In a country where politicians seek to live beyond reproach and impunity, I cannot help but worry about this development. Another example would suffice; at the University of Ghana, irrespective of the time a student is offered accommodation within a semester, they are required to pay the rate for the entire semester instead of a prorated amount. This is unfair and does not help nurture a social justice consciousness.

Nkrumah (1997c), in his quest to cause a rethink of the discord between Ghana's higher education and society, was accused of usurping academic freedom. He denied, insisting academic freedom was not absolute as some academics could use it to parochial ends. Universities ought to respect and hold allegiance "to the community or to the country in which it exists and purports to serve. The university has a clear duty to the community which maintains it and which has the right to express concern for its pressing needs" (Nkrumah, 1997c, pp. 12–13). He held that colonialism's evolving nature and the lack of awareness of its schemas among the highly schooled would eventually lead to Africa's physical re-colonization. The defeat of European colonialism does not mean the extinction of colonialism, so it is

vital for Africans to realize the covert schemes of colonialists because to them, “Africa needs to be recolonized” (Nkrumah, 1969, p. 18). At the inauguration of the students’ chapter of the Convention People’s Party (CPP-SU) at the University of Ghana, Nkrumah stated that CPP-SU was created to contribute towards the nurture of conscientious, confident and nationalistic people. Also, it was to help dispel the growing notion that Nkrumah’s government was “anti-intellectual and contemptuous of knowledge” (Nkrumah, 1997a, p. 78). He explained that knowledge should be rated per its usage, not just its acquisition. Society should be impressed only when “the knowledge acquired is applied to achieve positive and practical results for the upliftment of the people [and] ...to find truth” (Nkrumah, 1997a, p. 78). There was the need to bridge the gap between academics and society as the Eurocentric cloak around universities in Ghana isolated several intellectuals in national affairs. Universities bask and live in a world alien to local realities hence unable to contribute meaningfully to society.

Universities must nurture people who “exemplify the excellence of knowledge by the intellectual humility which academic eminence breathes” (Nkrumah, 1997a, p. 79). They should eschew what he describes as “intellectual pomposity,” “that arrogance which is the hall-mark of half-baked intellectualism” (Nkrumah, 1997a, p. 79). Part of Nkrumah’s (1997a, p. 79) plan was to get students “to work in the offices, shops, the fields, the farms and in other workplaces” at some point in their long vacations to make them come to terms with the everyday realities of the masses. Through this, students would acquire relevant knowledge to provide beneficial services to the citizenry – the basis for public funding. For an optimistic future, Nkrumah suggests a modest and service-based approach where the academe would help nurture people who will “stand shoulder to shoulder with their countrymen in finding the solutions to these problems” (Nkrumah, 1997a, p. 80).

To Nyerere, the colonial heritage's realities and social constructs left dire consequences on the African continent. For the highly schooled, the inability to meet the colonially structured system of privilege generated discontent and animosity. In Tanzania, he observed that the highly schooled in leadership positions at different levels would nag that “I am an educated person but I am not being treated according to my qualifications – I must have a better house, or a better salary, or a better status, than some other man” (Nyerere, 1975, p. 7). But, Nyerere thinks the value of humanity should extend beyond these materialistic dispositions to helping improve the lives of the vulnerable and less privileged in society. Furthermore, those who proffer the ‘qualification sentiment’ often justify such thoughts based on entitlements

they think their qualifications confer on them. Higher education has become a system that reduces individuals into marketable commodities like bauxite, manganese, or teak. The highly schooled quintessence resides in materialism and is akin to the material worth of commodities in an open market. The need to liberate has been lost. Higher education in Tanzania and Africa tends to ‘upgrade’ its recipients' humanity above those without it. To this sense of superiority, Nyerere cautions that “they are not claiming – or not usually claiming – that they are superior human beings, only that they are superior commodities” (Nyerere, 1975, p. 7). This notion, coupled with a sense of superiority, instigated the growing plague of individualism and greed across Africa. According to Ouedraogo and Sy (2020), Africa loses over fifty billion dollars (US\$50b) annually to illicit financial flows mainly through tax evasions. The highly schooled life in a world of ‘me, myself, and I,’ desirous of plundering their societies' wealth for their personal and cronies' benefit. They demand excessively, and although the state feeds, clothes, and houses them as rewards for their education, they return the gesture by providing justifications of why circumstances cannot change. Nyerere says such dispositions must be pitied. Moreover, the highly schooled are products of a malfunctioning education system, and institutions that bequeath this shame as gifts to society must be queried:

For it is the education we are now giving in Africa, and the social values on which it is based, which is creating the people we condemn. It is our education system which is instilling into our young boys and girls the idea that their education confers a price tag on them, and which makes them concentrate on this price tag. It is our educational system that ignores the infinite and priceless value of liberated human being, who is cooperating with others in building a civilization worthy of creators made in the image of God. (Nyerere, 1975, p. 8)

## CONCLUSION

This article has challenged Ghana’s higher education’s lack of engagement on radically altering its unjust colonial foundation. Its philosophical, theoretical frameworks and outcomes are steeped in Eurocentric “dominant ideas and thought...that regard our culture and traditions as barbarous and primitive” (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 49). Ghana’s higher education continues to be co-opted into these hegemonic practices, preventing it from realizing its goal of empowering Africans to self-determine, facilitate development and change. Tokenistic considerations are

offered to alternative perspectives while the established inequities continue to extend their tentacles. As Nkrumah and Nyerere espouse, Africans were educated as inferior copies of Europeans who keep embarrassing themselves trying to live on Europeans' margins. Africans have been dislocated through an education that denies us “knowledge of our African past and informed that we had no present. What future could there be for us?” (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 49). Ghana’s higher education’s lack of self-critique or openness to Indigenous African outlooks may result in it becoming irrelevant, superficial, and incapable of addressing the core socio-cultural and politico-economic currents that dictate nation building. The skewed focus towards the falsities of Eurocentric universality of knowledge and monetary interests continues to bequeath unjust consequences due to the abandonment of African education's humanitarian roots. This state of affairs necessitates new ways of pursuing higher education in Ghana and Africa to make it more critical, inclusive, and responsible. As Nyerere and Nkrumah would want us to know, the school system, especially higher education, remains the engine propelling, sustaining and perpetuating the colonial status-quo. Their advocacy for Africa’s higher education to achieve mental liberation, altruism, and African agency's advancement remains a germane paths to social justice consciousness in Ghana’s higher education process.

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