# Exploring the power of the media in promoting lifelong learning and popular mobilisation drive against 'Galamsey' in Ghana

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*This paper explores the power of media in promoting lifelong learning in mobilising the citizenry against 'galamsey' activities in Ghana. 'Galamsey' connotes 'an illegal process of gathering mineral resources, especially gold, and selling them'. It is an activity engaged in by young adults resulting in destroying water bodies and posing water-related challenges to the citizenry. This qualitative study sought to ascertain what informed practitioners in the media space to mount a sustained lifelong learning drive against 'galamsey' in Ghana. The study used in-depth interview and focus group discussions to collect data from 15 participants purposively selected. Six male and female participants also shared their experiences on the 'galamsey' menace and the fight against it. Their thought, views and insightful ideas lie at the heart of this study. It emerged that the 'galamsey' activities were complex and engaged in by both Ghanaians and foreigners using heavy earth moving machines destroying forest vegetation cover and water bodies. The players involved bribe their way for protection. This paper recommends that the Government of Ghana and media houses involved*

*in the fight against 'galamsey' sustain the lifelong learning drive to save water bodies, arable lands, and forest vegetation cover in Ghana.*

**Keywords:** *Media, lifelong learning, informal learning, mobilisation, 'galamsey', Ghana*

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## Introduction

The media including radio, television and social media platforms seem powerful tools to promote lifelong and informal learning among the citizenry. Foley (1999) admits that the most interesting and significant learning occur informally, and incidentally, in people's everyday lives. The media possesses the power to promote lifelong, lifewide and life sustaining learning (Jegede, 2018; Stadler, 2007) among the citizenry. It empowers the citizenry to address unemployment and poverty facing them. The informal education provided by over 300 local radio stations, 30 television stations, newspapers, tabloids and social media tools in Ghana (National Media Commission, 2018) could serve as powerful communication tools to educate and empower the citizenry to effect changes in communities for improved quality of life. The provision of such powerful popular education, awareness creation, and conscientisation, thus developing consciousness, but consciousness that is understood to have the power to transform reality (Taylor, 1993, p. 52). It is about creating critical awareness amongst the citizenry to enable them realise their strengths, opportunities, gaps and challenges that they have in their communities. The media then can engender such social movement which could result in positive changes in communities. As the citizenry engage in dialogue, they learn to become critical thinkers, and take action to address their concerns, problems or challenges.

To Freire (1970), the true knowledge of reality, which he terms 'conscientisation', penetrates to what reality is because it is connected with *praxis*—a union of reflection and action. After all, knowledge evolves from continual interaction and cycles of reflection and action, which Freire (1985) refers to as praxis, which occurs 'when human beings participate in a transforming act' (p. 106). Freire adds that human beings are active agents who transform their world. No

wonder, Gertze (2015) opines that 'social movement helps enrich life, stimulating intellectual curiosity, fostering literacy and encouraging an informed citizenry' (p. 60). The questions that arise are: What is lifelong learning? How can it be realised among community members who are seeking social change in their circumstances? What role can media play to aid the citizenry to effect change in their communities? The adoption of critical pedagogy and participatory learning by media in our communities could empower the citizenry to effect a change in their life circumstances. On the contrary, the media practitioners could also be mischievous, and play roles in hindering conscientisation.

The notion of lifelong learning, to Gustavsson (cited in Nafukho, Amutabi, & Otunga, 2005) implies 'a broad approach to knowledge and has a holistic view of education in which informal types of learning can be integrated with one another and considered in one context' (p. 152). The historic roots of lifelong learning relate to the 1960s and Paul Lengrand, a theorist and practitioner in adult education, who introduced *'Education permanente'* in a committee meeting for the advancement of adult education (Carlsen, Holmberg, Neghina, & Boampong, 2016). The ideas of lifelong learning in the 21st century, [however], differ from the thinking behind recurrent education (Carlsen *et al.*, 2016). The vision of lifelong learning has evolved over the past few decades to become a constant feature in 21st century policy discourse (Hanemann, 2016); hence the European Union defines lifelong learning as 'all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills, and competences within a personal, civic, social and/ or employment-related perspective' (Carlsen et al, 2016, p. 51). Lifelong learning put the needs and desires of the individual in central focus at the same time as societal needs, influenced by international knowledge development and globalisation of economies (Carlsen et al, 2016).

It is therefore not surprising that Power and Maclean (2013) opine that the idea of lifelong learning became a central theme in UNESCO's work with the publication of *Learning to be* (UNESCO, 1972); arguing in the report that 'lifelong learning needs to be the keystone for education policies and that the creation of the learning society should become a key strategy for facilitating learning throughout life for individuals and societies' (p. 29). To Brown (2018), lifelong learning returned to the international educational policy stage in the early 1970s when the OECD commissioned Edgar Faure to lead an investigation into the type

of education needed for a future oriented society. In support of these assertions, Hanemann (2016) argues that lifelong learning is becoming increasingly important as a key organising principle for all forms of education and learning in a rapidly changing world. Thus based on emancipatory, humanistic and democratic values, the concept of lifelong learning is rooted in the integration of *learning and living* (UNESCO, 2014). Not surprising, Debyser (2013) admits that entrepreneurship has become a key competence for lifelong learning in the European Union. Lifelong learning, therefore, has a measurable impact on people's lives (Field, 2012); and Beddie (2002) argues that lifelong learning is not something confined to individuals—institutions too need to be explicit in their recognition of the centrality of learning—not just training—for their wellbeing. It was on this basis that Brown (2018) perceives lifelong learning as 'educational efforts in the formal, non-formal and informal sectors to help equip individuals and communities to respond to the pressing challenges of the 21st century' (p. 315).

As the citizenry in Ghana engage in informal learning drive using varied media platforms, they could appreciate their current living conditions; learn informally from it, and take action to better their lot. The increased sensitisation and education of the media strengthened the activism of the citizenry in Ghana. This is evidenced by the citizenry uproar and agitation against the activities of 'galamsey' operators, and the steps they took, together with the Government of Ghana, to restore the polluted water bodies, and the degraded environment, to their former state. After all Laal and Salamati (2012) assert that in the 21st century, we all need to be lifelong learners. Such integrated learning through the media might have aided many Ghanaians, and the Government of Ghana to raise up against the activities of the 'galamsey' operators in Ghana. Although media practitioners could sometimes be sensational, and not help the course of the citizenry in learning to improve themselves and their communities, but the 'galamsey' operations, and the damage caused to water bodies and the environment in Ghana, rather attracted the attention of media practitioners, the citizenry, and the Government of Ghana to wage relentless war to address the problems.

Ghana is endowed with rich mineral resources—gold, diamond, manganese, bauxite, etc, but gold is one rich mineral resource that young adults, in particular, are engaged in mining illegally. They do this because it is lucrative notwithstanding the dangerous nature of the

operations. Parry (2014) argued that when small-scale miners solicit for a licence from the minerals commission to validate their operations, it takes a long time before it is granted. Whatever the case is, the damage caused by illegal mining activities seems bigger today than it used to be (Eshun, 2017). He is of the view that 'galamsey' activities in Ghana have resulted in serious degradation of forest vegetation cover, lands, and polluted major water bodies in the recent years. This is because, in the 1960s and 70s, according to Biney (2009), 'galamsey' activities carried out in the communities were in the form of artisanal or small-scale mining; and the operators used simple tools like shovels and washing bows. The same, however, cannot be said today, because the locals and their foreign partners use excavators and heavy earthmoving machines in their 'galamsey' activities; largely leading to the pollution of water bodies, especially Bia, Pra and Birim rivers in Ghana.

The term 'galamsey' connotes the 'illegal gathering of mineral resources and selling them'; and the activities are common in many communities in Ghana, especially within and along the banks of large water bodies, arable farming lands, and forest vegetation cover. The incalculable damage caused by the locals and foreign partners have attracted the attention of the Government of Ghana and media practitioners operating in the communities. A concerted battle waged by the 'Coalition of Media Practitioners against "Galamsey"' and the Government of Ghana, using the military dubbed: 'Operation Vanguard' with the campaign slogan, 'Stop "Galamsey" now' seem to have achieved some success. This is because the media served as catalyst to change the local people's perspectives from despair to possibility. It galvanised and mobilised the citizenry to rise against the operations and activities of 'galamsey' operators. Yet, the damage caused to the environment and the turbidity of water bodies appears huge with some communities lacking clean and potable water to drink. On the basis of the challenges highlighted above, this study sought to answer the question: How does the adoption of lifelong learning by media practitioners galvanise support to combat 'galamsey' operations in Ghana? The study also explores strategies that promote alternative livelihood programmes (ALPs) amongst the young adults in Ghana.

## Statement of the problem

The illegal 'galamsey' activities are age-old issue in Ghana. Our great grandfathers have been engaging in the 'galamsey' operations; however,

it was on a smaller scale, with primitive tools such as shovels, washing bows among others (Biney, 2009). Even though their activities did not significantly harm the environment and water bodies, they were furiously chased out by the police officers from the mining sites. Today, the effect of 'galamsey' operations have assumed large-scale dimension, leading to the destruction of the environment and water bodies in Ghana. To Agbesi (2017), illegal mining strips some 28 billion tons of material from the earth. 'Galamsey' activities can be explained against the backdrop of chronic poverty and mass unemployment facing young adults in Ghana. The Government of Ghana responded to the difficulties facing the youth with job creation initiatives, including 'Planting for food and jobs'; 'Planting for export and rural development' and 'One district, One factory'. However, some young adults and their foreign partners continue to indulge in 'galamsey' activities.

Ignorance, illiteracy or the deliberate intentions of the young adults could serve as the reasons for their involvement in 'galamsey' activities. According to Biney (2009) most of the young people engaged in 'galamsey' activities are unskilled, with low levels of education; who choose 'galamsey' operations over education. But 'galamsey' activities still persist despite admonitions from law enforcement agencies. According to Stadler (2007), the media can be educational in its own right and, in a broader sense, as it can inform perceptions of attitudes towards education, educators and socio-economic inequality. The major roles of media, especially radio include informing, educating and entertaining. The media can highlight the ills in the society, although some media platforms promote certain political agendas, and are used as propaganda tools. The media in Ghana recently placed a spotlight on 'galamsey' activities in Ghana. Together with the Government of Ghana, they waged a war against the activities of 'galamsey' operators in Ghana. Recalcitrant galamsey operators, and their foreign partners, are under surveillance, and regular arrests are made by the security operatives in the galamsey sites and communities due to the environmental problems 'galamsey' activities are causing. Despite achieving some success, 'galamsey' activities persist in Ghana. It is against this background that this qualitative study is conducted to ascertain whether the adoption of lifelong learning to fight 'galamsey' by media professionals has yielded the desired results or otherwise. The study also sought to find out how the promotion of lifelong learning by the media could contribute to the

creation of ALPs amongst the young adults to counter the effects of 'galamsey' in Ghana.

The main objective of this study is to ascertain whether media practitioners' adoption of lifelong and informal learning to combat 'galamsey' operations in Ghana achieved the desired result. It also sought lifelong learning strategies to promote ALPs—the provision of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values in productive trades, including grass-cutter rearing, fish farming, pomade and cream making, as well as palm oil production and processing to make local people live meaningful lives in their communities (Biney, 2009), particularly amongst the young adults in Ghana. The specific objectives of this study are to:

(1) Isolate 'galamsey' activities and the challenges involved in combating them.

(2) Identify media types in promoting lifelong learning in mobilising support against the 'galamsey' menace.

(3) Establish the benefits of lifelong learning provided by the media to empower young adults with ALPs.

## Literature review

This paper reviewed literature in three areas related to the study, including 'galamsey' activities and challenges involved in combating it; media types used in promoting lifelong learning  towards mobilising against 'galamsey' activities in Ghana; and benefits of lifelong learning programmes empowering the young adults with alternative livelihood programmes (ALPs).

### *'Galamsey' activities and challenges combating it in Ghana*

'Galamsey' operations have resulted in the destruction and degradation of vegetation cover, arable lands, and the environment in Ghana (Serfor-Armah cited in Eshun, 2017), and has polluted major water bodies in Ghana. The pollution of water bodies in Ghana is so alarming that it is affecting the availability of potable drinking water for community members in the catchment communities around mining sites (Agbesi, 2017). This destructive illegal mining activity is carried out by both local and foreign illegal miners (Agbesi, 2017). The loss of forests has changed the atmospheric conditions and rain patterns of the affected areas

around the country and has negatively affected our water bodies that are now polluted with harmful chemicals, which has resulted in a paucity of raw filtered water (Agbesi, 2017).

Surface mining has also had a devastating effect on the soil in Ghana largely due to the use of heavy machinery (Agbesi, 2017). Also blasting during mineral extraction destroys soil organisms, and disrupts stable soil aggregates, eventually depriving the soil of organic matter. These soils, or newly created substrates/growth are often inhospitable to vegetation due to combination of physical, chemical and microbiological factors (Serfor-Armah cited in Eshun, 2017). There is also a loss of arable farmlands, leading to reduction of crop production in the country. The illegal 'galamsey' activities contribute in no small measure to hunger being experienced in some farming communities engaged in producing cash crops such as cocoa, oil palm, coconut, and oranges in Ghana (Agbesi, 2017). The top fertile soils are removed and destroyed indiscriminately by the illegal galamsey operators. Meanwhile, the rich top soils are the main sources of nutrients to plants and food crops and even vegetables. It may take several years to regain fertile soil removed. These illegal mining activities are making the arable land infertile or less fertile for production of food and cash crops (Agbesi, 2017).

Deforestation is another 'galamsey' activity that is damaging the environment. It involves the clearing of the forest vegetation and the cutting down of trees to enable miners to extract minerals. Serfor-Armah (cited in Eshun, 2017) assessed the impact of small-scale mining on land in the Western part of Ghana, and revealed that mining removes vegetation and top-soil, and often results in loss of farmland permanently. He adds that surface mining accounts for approximately 58% of the region's deforestation, 45% loss of farmland, as well as the spillover effects from expanding mining activities in reserved forests. 'Galamsey' is also a death trap for miners and unsuspecting farmers within the mining communities, as they sometimes find themselves drawn to huge pits which are often left uncovered, or reclaimed for farming activities (Serfor-Armah cited in Eshun, 2017).

**Media types used in promoting lifelong learning drive against 'Galamsey'**

Media, including radio, television and social media platforms have today become popular education and informal learning tools [in our

communities] (Floyd, 2014; Oduro-Mensah, & Biney 2013; Stadler, 2007). In the case of Ghana, there are over 300 local radio stations, 30 television stations, newspapers, tabloids and social media tools (National Media Commission, 2018). These media outlets constitute powerful educational and mobilisation tools to drive social change in communities and society as a whole. The media platforms in Ghana, if well integrated and utilised, could serve to conscientise, sensitise and educate the citizenry to speak out loudly against the 'galamsey' activities in their communities (Oduro-Mensah, & Biney, 2013). The current citizenry activism and relentless fight against 'galamsey' in Ghana was waged by media practitioners, in partnership with the Government of Ghana, to address the water pollution and environmental degradation due to 'galamsey' activities.

Informal learning is all forms of learning that are intentional, but are not institutionalised, and emanate more from experience that takes place outside formally structured, institutionally sponsored, class-room based activities (Macià, & García, 2016; ISCED, 2011). Since lifelong learning encompasses both formal and non-formal/informal types of education and training, or refers to holistic learning for life and work (Nafukho, Amutabi, & Otunga, 2005), it provides a unique opportunity for change and development. After all, the concept of lifelong is grounded in the four pillars of education expounded by Delors (1998): *learning to know; learning to do; learning to be and learning to live together.* The concept of lifelong learning goes back to the origin of human life in the continent of Africa (Nafukho *et al.*, 2005). For instance, the African traditions encouraged continued learning, hence children learnt from adults how to live and function in a society, and likewise adults learnt from children and fellow adults (Nafukho *et al.*, 2005). Youngman (2001) has stated that 'it is evident that the practice of people learning throughout their lives was characteristic of pre-colonial African societies' (2001, p. 7).

Macià and García's (2016) review of informal learning found that online networks and communities are a good method of professional development. They are less organised and structured than either formal or non-formal education. Informal learning includes learning activities that occur in the family, in the workplace, in the local community, and in daily life, self-directed, family-directed or socially directed basis. This is important because, education, to Wallerstein and Auerbach (2004) is political, and that 'power' and 'empowerment' are central

to the educational process. The point really is that the increased pace of globalisation and technological change, the changing nature of work and the labour market, and the ageing of populations, according to UNESCO (2014) are among the forces emphasising the need for continual upgrading of work and life skills throughout life. Therefore, lifelong learning not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development, but also competitiveness and employability (UNESCO, 2014). More so, since adults learn from experiences and problem solving, they need continuous development of intellect, capability and integrity, which the media can play a role in fostering these qualities in the young adults in our communities. Beddie (2002), citing *'Campaign for Learning'*, a British charity, perceives:

> *Lifelong learning as a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. It may involve an increase in knowledge or understanding, a deepening of values or the capacity to reflect. Effective learning will lead to change, development and a desire to learn more.*

> (Campaign for Lifelong Learning, United Kingdom.)

As observed by Freire (1971), the purpose of education is *human liberation;* yet education either acts to disempower [community members] to accept life situations, or it engages us to challenge difficult conditions in our lives. The thrust of this study is that, popular, informal, lifelong learning and education can represent the latter. The reality is that when education empowers and makes people living in the mining communities in Ghana become conscious of the water-related and environmental challenges facing them, they can become empowered through group learning, and the media, to take action on their own, to improve their lot. A study by the author (Biney, 2003) on local leadership and community development found that communities that learn through groups and strong local leadership with high communal spirit executed more self-help development projects than those with low communal spirit and weak local leadership. The point is that when people learn together in a group, they take the initiative to improve their lot and that of their communities. In all these, however, some successes may be realised when the media comes to the aid of community members. According to Earl (2018, citing Williams, 1989) 'to

be truly radical is to make hope possible, rather than despair convincing' (p. 1). The media in our part of the world should give hope not only to the local, religious and administrative leadership, but to community members as well. This is because, it takes the ordinary citizens to effect change and develop their lives and communities, after all the sermons and directions have been given by the leadership. Since hope can be infectious (Earl, 2018), the media then can help the citizenry garner hope, learn and become empowered, to effect positive changes in their lives and communities.

The media can also educate the citizenry for social change. Thus, as whistle blowers, the media is always on the look out to bring the ills of society out into the open, as long as they don't sink into the arena of political propaganda. This popular and informal learning promoted in our communities by the media, in this era of advancement of information communication technology (ICT), is more crucial today than ever. This is against the backdrop of large water bodies and vegetation cover in Ghana wantonly destroyed by 'galamsey' activities engaged in by young adults. The reality is that some young adults are deliberately failing to take advantage of a number of initiatives of the Government of Ghana to make a living. They are more focussed on 'becoming rich in the shortest possible time', which is not possible if one wants to make a solid mark in society. Popular education, according Martin and Rahman (2001), is based on a clear analysis of the nature of inequality, exploitation and oppression, and is informed by an equally clear political purpose. To them, this has nothing to do with helping the 'disadvantaged' or the management of poverty; rather, it has everything to do with the struggle for a more just and egalitarian social order. To Braster (2011), popular education is a concept with many meanings, but in the course of the twentieth century, popular education had to do with *education of the oppressed*. As developed by Popular Education Network (PEN), popular education is defined as the 'type of education rooted in the real interest and struggles of ordinary people, [and] is overtly political and critical of the status quo, [and] committed to progressive and social change' (Crowther, Galloway, & Martin, 2005 cited in Earl, 2016, p. 8; Crowther, Martin, & Shaw, 1999). However, popular education is distinct from populist type of education (Crowther *et al.*, 1999).

As component part of community organising, popular education, can serve as a *mobilisation drive* in bringing people together to fight for a

common course. After all, Freire (1972) has made us understand that education is either for 'liberation' or 'domestication'. It is probably on that basis that Cavanagh (cited in Borg & Mayo, 2007) reveals that the processes of popular education are extremely effective for increasing people's capacities to function democratically and their critical mindedness. Paulo Freire's ideas and writings on education for social change have also influenced popular education (Missingham, 2013). Popular education here refers to education that seeks to support *organising* or *activism* for social justice, democracy, and environmental goals (Crowther *et al.* 2005). It is a form of radical adult education, and hence, usually takes place in non-formal education contexts and often draws on Freirian approaches to dialogic education (Kane, 2001; Brookfield, Jeffs, Larkins, Pye, & Smith, 2003). Popular educators regard the community as the key source of knowledge and the starting point for learning (Arnold, Burke, James, Martin, & Thomas, 1991). Popular education sees empowerment and 'transformation' as necessarily a collective process and explicitly encourages learning processes that lead to collective action for social change.

Pioneered by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, popular education is a people-orientated and people-guided approach to education. This is because it centres on participants' life experiences, and as the citizenry mobilise themselves for action, they learn and conscientise [to improve their living conditions in their communities] (Intergroup Resources, 2012). Thus, a combined effort of education, sensitisation and punitive measures instituted by the media and Government of Ghana, could help in addressing the 'galamsey' problem. The point is that the Government of  Ghana, in terms of policy direction, is promoting entrepreneurship, focusing more in the agricultural sector, with numerous initiatives instituted, yet some of the youth are still not participating in the programmes. Maybe, an educational drive involving a multimedia approach should be adopted, in promoting the programmes. Today, in Ghana, farming in all its forms, has been made attractive. Free high yielding seedlings are provided free of charge, and farming equipment and tools are made available in the districts for hiring on credit basis. This step, notwithstanding the 'galamsey' activities, is still visible in the communities of Ghana.

### Benefits of media provision of lifelong learning to empower the young adults with ALPs

Today's 'information super-highway' is powered by ICT. It has really made media a critical and powerful tool in educating, informing, and empowering the citizenry. Social media platforms and software are being used today in mobilising community members to effect change for betterment and improvement in their communities. On creating social change with social media, Timms (2013) posed a simple question: On the heels of Black Friday and Cyber Monday, could we trigger a new day of giving after two days of getting? He responded that people all over the country came together to answer that question [on social and community improvement], with a resounding 'yes', and social media certainly helped us get there. In Ghana, today, many communities have community information centres where people can access information, learn and improve their lot. It is not surprising that the media today constitutes a big part of our lives, hence, it is an effective tool for dissemination, information and educating and empowering community members to learn a skill or trade to improve their lot. In any case, today, almost everybody benefits in one form or another from mass media. This, perhaps, explain the reasons why many people are getting onboard electronic and social media platforms, and using their outlets to learn, and become empowered in their respective endeavours. Radio and television stations in Ghana have phone segments, and the citizenry have been calling, asking questions, and also making their concerns and views points known on issues of national concern, especially in the prime time programmes. This is informal learning process offered by the media.

Lifelong learning can empower the citizenry to start putting skills and trades into practice that could go a long way to control the young adults' involvement in 'galamsey' activities (Biney, 2019; 2018; Baah-Boateng, 2018). This is significant because the youth, according to the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS, 2017), constitutes about 48% of Ghana's population. Ghana, according to The World Bank (cited in Baafi, & Acheampong 2014), needs to create between six to seven million new jobs by 2030 to absorb people entering the world of work. UNESCO (2019) observes that the whole 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is grounded on the principle of *lifelong learning*, and should be made a reality. Lifelong learning is an overarching tool for human development (Jessup, 1969). With the advancement of

information communication technology, teaching and learning tools are aiding learning, and making it more ubiquitous. Field (2012) is of the view that lifelong learning has a measurable impact on people's lives, and Power and Maclean (2011) reveal that providing opportunities to [people to] 'learn throughout life turns out to be a crucial factor in the struggle to eradicate poverty and to educate for sustainable development'.

Brown (2018), and Ehlers (2017) provide rich information on lifelong learning policy, and critiques thereof. To Brown (2018), when it comes to the international policy on lifelong learning, the first post-World War II developments of lifelong education (or *education permanente*) as a response to early onset economic crises of the late 1960s, and the critical assessments of rigid education systems being made by writers such as Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich [set the pace]. Field (2001, p. 4) traces 'the genesis of the concept (of lifelong education) back to the intellectual crucible of the late 1960s'. It was Edgar Faure's groundbreaking 1972 *Learning to Be* report, grounded in the critiques of the authoritarian, uniform, monolithic and unequal education systems of the time that re-launched interest in lifelong learning. But more than just critique, it looked to the future as its sub-title, 'The world of education today and tomorrow' suggested. The report, to Brown (2018), proposed lifelong education as an organising principle for educational reform and a means of producing the kind of 'complete person' needed to construct a learning society. *UNESCO's Learning: The treasure within* coincided with the European Year of Lifelong Learning in 1996, and stimulated international policy developments and actions to support lifelong learning. Delors' report argued that economic prosperity and social cohesion were both enhanced by lifelong learning, and created four pillars to support a future society – learning to know; learning to do; learning to be and learning to live together. These pillars imagined: the mastery of learning tools (learning to know); education to equip people to do the work of the future, including innovation and adaptation of learning to future work environments (learning to do); education that contributes to a person's complete development: mind and body, intelligence, sensitivity, aesthetic appreciation and spirituality (learning to be); and education to avoid conflict or peacefully resolve it, and to discover other people and their cultures (learning to live together).

Brown (2018) adds that in response to the UNESCO report, the OECD Education Ministers set themselves a task to rethink the roles

and responsibilities of all partners – including governments – in implementing and financing the organisation of lifelong learning for all. The EU's lifelong learning policy that emerged was an 'overarching educational reform policy intended to address a wide range of issues, including education, employment and competitiveness' (Lee, Thayer, & Madyun, 2008). In 1997, Britain's new Labour government under Tony Blair launched a *'Learning Revolution'*, underpinned by a number of national inquiries (Brown, 2018). The *Learning Age* released by the Education Minister, David Blunkett, ushered in a great flowering of policy initiatives, including individual learning accounts; neighbourhood learning development and a national literacy, numeracy and ESOL strategy, which were broad and inclusive (Blunkett 1998). Places not traditionally associated with education programmes such as local libraries, museums and galleries, faith centres, and community and health centres were specifically funded because they were the sites where people who had been reluctant to attend formal education institutions were more likely to go (Brown, 2018).

According to Ehlers (2017), a recent UNESCO report (UNESCO, 2016) shows that, although considerable efforts can be identified to create lifelong learning policies on national, regional and institutional level we are still only beginning to understand how best to support continuous learning for individuals, organisations and regions. To Ehlers (2017), specifically, in the field of higher education, a lifelong learning turn has not yet taken place nor has it even begun to take shape. He adds that it is, therefore, an important question how we can turn the big tanker of academia globally into revolutionary leaders of this field—how we can rethink higher education. He concludes that 'in societies in which the majority of a cohort of young persons will soon be choosing some kind of higher education, they are the gatekeepers who are leading graduates into lifelong learning careers' (p. 1).

### Alternative livelihood programmes (ALP)

To sufficiently comprehend programmes christened alternative livelihood programmes (ALPs), the maiden question any reader of this paper would ask is: what are alternative livelihood programmes? The answer is that alternative livelihood programmes are programmes which involve the provision of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values in livelihood and productive trades. These trades include: grass-

cutter rearing; snail rearing; gari processing; fish farming; seri-
culture; batik tie and dye; bee-keeping, pomade and cream making;
oil palm production and processing. These programmes have been
instituted by the mining companies as part of their corporate social
responsibilities that they provide for community members in the
catchment communities in which they undertake their operations. If
the above is the intention of the corporate mining companies, then,
the next probable question one may ask is: why alternative livelihood
programmes? The answer is that the corporate mining companies
instituted these programmes against the backdrop that many of the
community members in their catchment areas lack the requisite skills
to be employed in the mining operations where most of the jobs are
skills-oriented and are specialised (Biney, 2009). More so, the mining
companies agree that mining is a 'robber' industry, and like human
beings, has a definite life-span. It is also a fact that mining companies
take so much from the land which the community members earn their
livelihoods from. The impoverished land, however, would take much
longer time to replenish itself. The best option for mining companies to
avoid unnecessary confrontations with members of the communities is
to balance their profit concerns with their corporate social responsibility
to them (Biney, 2009). On that basis, almost all the mining companies
operating in Ghana have one form of trade, or skill that constitutes
ALPs they provide to the community members in their catchment
communities (Biney, 2009). There are a number of business reasons,
aside from external pressure, why mining companies decide to invest
in communities through their corporate social responsibility (CSR)
programmes, including trying to gain competitive advantage (Yankson,
2010). He adds that community investment programmes such as ALPs
are used to facilitate the awarding of concessions, because companies
appearing to be socially responsible are often favoured in this process.
It is, therefore, a means to securing a stable working environment, and
also used for public relations purposes. This is probably because the
local communities are key stakeholders for all mining companies, and
therefore a strong focus for their CSR initiatives, including ALPs.

One may as well ask another mind-boggling question: Alternative
livelihood programmes for what? A short response is that the
programmes are to make the community members financially
independent and economically self-reliant. The programmes are also
meant to help create and bring about congenial and peaceful climate

in the communities in which the mining companies undertake their operations. The business climate in the communities would, then, become one that can best be described as brisk and thriving mining towns, including that of Johannesburg in South Africa (Biney, 2009). They are cities full of life and zest. The programmes are also hoped to secure for the community members in the mining communities that credible and reliable social security that will last them a life time. After all, the corporate mining companies earn millions of dollars from gold dust mined from the lands owned by the community members (Biney, 2009). Thus, with little imagination and creativity, the community members can learn to establish and manage small-scale businesses from the productive trades and skills that they would have acquired by participating in the ALPs (Biney, 2009).

The three organisations involved in the skill training and education of the community members on the implementation of ALPs are the Centre for Biodiversity Utilisation and Development (CBUD) at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), the Opportunities Industrialisation Centres International (OICI), and Empretec Ghana. For instance, Goldfields Ghana Limited that operates both Tarkwa and Aboso/Damang Mines, has more than ten modules of trades and skills that beneficiaries are taught, including: livestock rearing; oil palm nursery, production and processing; cassava cultivation; cassava processing; bee-keeping; aquaculture; soap/pomade making; batik (tie and dye) making, bakery; vegetable farming; and cocoa farming. Goldfields Ghana Limited has about 16 catchment communities that benefited from its ALPs, christened Sustainable Community Empowerment and Economic Development (SEED). The SEED programme started in 2005 was a 5-year programme which came to an end by 2010. Goldfields Ghana Limited implemented on pilot basis pig farming; poultry farming and fish farming modules of the ALPs before the SEED programme. There were 1,336 beneficiaries of the various modules of the ALPs instituted by Goldfields Ghana Limited for community members living in its 16 catchment communities (GGL/OICI, 2007 cited in Biney, 2009). In addition to the livelihood skills training given to the participants on various modules of the programmes, management and entrepreneurial skills were also offered. Training in book-keeping, costing and pricing, accounting, customer relationship, time management, management of small-scale businesses,

financial management and marketing were provided to the participants. Inputs in the form of seedlings, fingerlings, chicks, tools, equipment were also provided to aid participants in their work.

It is significant that corporate mining companies integrated ALPs in their core values and daily activities; however, to Batten (1975a), good intentions are not enough. This is because, the purpose and objectives of instituting ALPs cannot be realised by good intentions alone. In any event, many other corporate organisations established one form of programme or the other but some of such programmes could not be sustained. Thus, good intentions can only become meaningful if they are translated into actions. More so, an approach of development based on what people want to do is more positive than an approach based on needs decided by a single group or an organisation. Thus, moving from needs arrived at by a single group to intentions or decisions arrived at by all the relevant stakeholders in the community is like moving from an input model of development to an empowerment model of development (Biney, 2009). The effectiveness of CSR, including ALPs, in mining has been questioned (Frynas, 2005), as well as the risk of communities' dependency on mining companies (Jenkins & Obara, 2006). Participation in ALPs, especially in the mining communities is low because of a number of other reasons, including fear of price insecurity of the products produced, and the citizenry were also not involved in designing, planning, managing and evaluating the ALPs. Lack of respect for community members, values of communities, as well as cultural difference also influenced participation in ALPs. Inadequate consultation of the local leadership in the communities in the implementation of ALPs emerged (Biney, 2009). These challenges, combined with current state of unemployment in Ghana, probably informed the Government of Ghana to come up with policy strategies of 'One-district one-factory', 'Planting for food and jobs' and 'Planting for export and rural development' to address unemployment and poverty facing the young adults.

## Methods

Media practitioners formed the population for this study. The study adopted a qualitative approach to decipher how the informal and lifelong learning popularised by the media practitioners galvanise support towards combating 'galamsey' operations in Ghana. Qualitative

design was chosen primarily to collect in-depth information from the media practitioners on media types used in promoting lifelong and informal learning in combating 'galamsey'; benefits of lifelong learning in promoting ALPs amongst the young adults; and 'galamsey' activities and challenges posed to the citizenry and the Government of Ghana. This study is important because getting to know what informed the media practitioners to come together to conscientise the citizenry to raise a fight against 'galamsey is laudable. This is because the damage and devastation the 'galamsey' activities are inflicting on human life, and the environment, are incalculable. Descriptive and evaluative qualitative research approaches were adopted at every stage throughout the study. In terms of description, the study sought to provide a detailed account of the phenomenon under study, since this approach is useful in presenting basic information about areas of education where little research has been conducted. As to the evaluative aspect of the case study, this study involves description, explanation and judgement (Tagoe, 2009).

Purposive sampling procedures, with the approaches of getting all possible cases that fit particular criteria using various methods, according to Neuman (2004), were adopted. It uses the judgement of an expert in selecting cases, or it selects cases with a specific method in mind (Neuman, 2004). These approaches were sought in selecting the sample for the study. Purposive sampling procedures were adopted by the investigator simply to discover, understand, explain, gain deeper insight and draw judgement on the experiences so far garnered by media practitioners for waging war against 'galamsey' operations in Ghana. Purposively, the study was conducted in Accra, the national capital, where the media practitioners first started waging war against the 'galamsey' menace in Ghana. Having discussed with the media practitioners about my intention and content of the study, a target population of 50 media practitioners contacted, voluntarily expressed their willingness to participate in the study. As a researcher with the intention to select unique cases of media practitioners with rich information on 'galamsey', and also reach as many media practitioners to secure in-depth knowledge on 'galamsey' and its devastating effects, I first contacted five journalists who are adult learners at Accra Learning Centre, on my intention. Thus, using snowball sampling—getting cases using referrals from one or a few cases—the researcher was able to reach 50 media practitioners, who showed interest in the study.

However, the researcher selected a sample size of fifteen (15), having reached a saturated point—a situation where the pattern of responses gathered appears similar during the interview (Marshall, & Rossman, 2011). Along the line of the interviewing, I observed that the pattern of responses gathered were similar, hence, I came to conclusion that I could learn much more from the participants' experiences. In broad terms, Saunders, Sim, Kingstone, Baker, Waterfield, Bartlam, Burroughs, and Jinks (2017) indicate that saturation is used in qualitative research as a criterion for discontinuing data collection and/or analysis. Fusch and Ness (2015) claim categorically that 'failure to reach saturation has an impact on the quality of the research conducted' (p. 1408). This is because I find the topic investigated as an information-rich case for an in-depth study.

In-depth interview with fifteen media practitioners, and six male and female media practitioners selected outside the participants involved in the in-depth interview, formed the main source of information for the study. Six male and female media practitioners engaged in a fight against 'galamsey' were purposively selected to participate in the focus group discussions. The researcher served as the moderator in the focus group discussions sessions. Three research assistants were recruited and trained to record the proceedings and keep watch of time of the proceedings. Two hours each were spent in organising two rounds of focus group discussions for participants in the study. The researcher was interested in learning about media practitioners experiences in the fight against 'galamsey'. The questions posed to the media practitioners were mainly open-ended. All interviews were informal, conversational and dialogical, which made it much possible for the researcher to inquire, probe and provoke the participants further when their responses called for follow-up interrogation. This approach made it possible for the researcher and media practitioners to co-construct the narrative. This position taken by the researcher and participants helped avoid the ethical problems associated with revealing more than the participants care to have revealed. Visual evidence was also captured to illustrate the extent of damage 'galamsey' activities have done to the environment, water bodies, and arable fertile lands in Ghana. Visual method of research, according to Spencer (2011), aid in building convincing case studies using a mix of visual forms, including: archive images, videos, media, maps and still images. Such a method draws the attention of not only the policy makers

and the media practitioners, but the citizenry on the devastating nature of 'galamsey', and step up the activism to get the problems addressed.

The questions were grouped into three sections based on the three specific objectives raised. Section 1 was on 'galamsey' activities and the challenges involved in combating it, and the questions posed were: What is your view on the 'galamsey' activities? Are the rewards of 'galamsey' to the youth worth the damage caused to the citizenry? Would you say the educational drive waged against 'galamsey' has succeeded? If yes, provide reasons. Section 2 was on media types used in promoting informal and lifelong learning programmes. The respondents were asked some of the following questions: What media types were involved in the fight against 'galamsey'? What were the reasons for this fight? Would you say this fight against 'galamsey' has received the support of the citizenry? If yes, have you leveraged this support to carry through the informal education? Section 3 stressed the benefits of lifelong learning provided by the media to empower young adults with ALPs asked the media participants: Did you integrate ALPs into your lifelong learning drive? Did the education on ALPs receive the attention of the young adults? What were some of the trades and skills promoted to the young adults? Descriptive, narrative evaluative analyses steps, as recommended by Creswell (2012, 2013), Mills (2011), and Chilisa and

Preece (2005), were followed, and performed on the data. The results of the study are presented next.

## Results and discussions

This part of the paper is divided into three sections. The first section isolates 'galamsey' activities and the challenges in combating it. It also identifies media types used in promoting a lifelong learning drive towards support against the 'galamsey' menace; and finally establishes benefits of lifelong learning provided by the media to empower young adults with ALPs. All the fifteen (15) media practitioners, and six (6) male and female others involved in the focus group discussions respectively, participated in the study.

### *'Galamsey' activities and the challenges in combating it in Ghana*

Asked about their views on 'galamsey' operations in Ghana, the participants said that in its present form, the 'galamsey' venture is an enemy to the economy of Ghana. This supports the President of Ghana's observation that corruption and 'galamsey' remain key national challenges (GNA, 2017). When probed further to elaborate, the participants indicated that the destruction of the forest vegetation cover, pollution of water-bodies, and damage to the environment are incalculable. These are two apt ways some participants put it.

> *'Galamsey' has not only led to the destruction of water bodies, arable lands and the overall damage of the environment, but has contributed to a large measure to destroying human lives.'*

> *'Galamsey' has led to the destruction of families, because sometimes a whole family members involved in it are trapped in a pit and died.'*

As to whether the rewards from 'galamsey' activities are worth the damage done to the environment, the participants responded in emphatic 'no'. When asked to provide reasons for the response, the participants intimated that the effects of 'galamsey' operations are still being felt in Ghana, especially in terms of the water quality that they drink, the cocoa farms destroyed, and arable lands for farming are immeasurable. A participant expressed it like this:

> *'The benefit the youth who engage in "galamsey" gains are just for their parochial interest, but generally, "galamsey" does not help the entire citizenry of Ghana.'*

On whether the war waged by media practitioners has succeeded, the participants were in the affirmative 'yes'. Probing further, the participants were of the view that the 'galamsey' activities have reduced somehow, because the citizenry supported the media to fight the 'galamsey' operators and the 'money bags' behind their operations in Ghana.

### Media types and lifelong learning drive mobilised against 'galamsey'

On media types involved in the fight against 'galamsey', the participants mentioned print, electronic and social media as the main tools against 'galamsey'. This finding confirms the author's (2019) and Stadler's (2007) observation that radio, television and the Internet are critical in educating the citizenry on livelihood programmes. This is important because the media possesses the power to 'move our emotions', 'challenge our intellects', define us, and 'shape our realities' (Biney, 2019). These types of media maximally impact our learning in our communities, and stimulate the local community members to act and improve their living conditions. Media practitioners, as professionals, keep bringing to the fore issues of national concerns for discussion. They also serve as empowering agents providing educational programmes, and also provoking the citizenry into conversations. The citizenry follow through some of such conversations, and learn from them. Such media platforms are interactive, and allow citizenry voices to be heard. Both formal and informal education provided by the media deepens learning, and create critical awareness amongst the citizenry, to make themselves useful and their communities sustainable. As to the reasons to initiate the fight against the 'galamsey' operators, the participants said the preservation of the environment and water bodies are keys to their survival. These are the apt ways some of the participants expressed it:

> *'To save arable land for farming, especially cash crops cultivation. We find ourselves in an era where the Government of Ghana is encouraging and calling on people to go into farming, and I think the environment and water bodies are important to us and must be saved now.'*

> *'The 'galamsey' activities were complex, one engaged in by both Ghanaians and foreigners using heavy earth moving machines destroying forest vegetation cover and water bodies. As rich business, the players involved keep bribing their way for protection, and their activities must be stopped now.'*

> *'To help streamline mining operations in more sustainable manner, thus, proper regulatory measures should be instituted in mining activities in Ghana.'*

> *'The 'galamsey' activities are destroying many of the large water bodies in our communities, and affecting the quality of water we drink in our communities.'*

The participants engaged in the focus group discussions (FGD) expressed similar sentiments, indicating that chemicals, including mercury, which were used to extract gold from the ore, end up seeping into the water bodies, and are affecting their health. This confirms Cochrane and Gunderson (2012) observation that health is one way to describe our capacity to be alive and to play our roles as members of families and, indeed, as citizens. On whether the fight against 'galamsey' has received the support of the citizenry, the response was in the affirmative. The media practitioners interviewed said that they have leveraged on the support they received from the citizenry to push further the *informal education* they initiated against 'galamsey' operations. After all Schugurensky (2006) has made us understand that much of the relevant learning acquired throughout our lives occurs in the area of informal education. Good observation, yet formal education which seeks to make us knowledgeable cannot necessarily be separated from informal education. They both work in tandem to make us better. The mass media, electronic and social media, today, continue to empower us in whatever spaces we find ourselves in. On the motivation for pushing further informal and lifelong learning to the citizenry, the participants said that their sole motivation is to save the environment to ensure their survival; and as the adage goes 'when the last tree dies, the last man dies' were true yesterday, so it is today.

### Benefits of media provision of lifelong learning to empower the young adults in ALPs

On integrating ALPs into the lifelong learning initiated by media practitioners to break the back of 'galamsey', the participants indicated 'yes'. On the intention of the media, they said, it is to promote ALPs because it holds future prospects more than that of 'galamsey' to the young adults. This is because they find the 'galamsey' operations more dangerous and harmful to their health. These are the best ways some participants expressed them:

> *'Skills in snail rearing, grass-cutter rearing, batik tie and dye, pomade and cream making and bee-making were promoted to the young adults.'*

> *'Although, corporate mining companies started the ALPs and in the 2000s, and implemented it to some extent at their catchment communities. This important programme could not be transformed to assume the national scale or dimension. The initiative of the programme, planning, implementation and evaluation were in the hands of the mining companies. However, consultation and input of local leadership were not sought.'*

> *'It transformed lives of some people, but many others were not captured on the ALPs, to acquire the required skills and have a trade of their own.'*

> *'The Government of Ghana embarked on ALPs in 2017, which was meant to sustain the livelihoods of communities that have been hit by "galamsey" activities, to make the young adults useful.'*

> *'The initiatives of Government of Ghana in the agriculture sector such as "planting for food and jobs' planting for export and rural development" were also promoted to the young adults to take advantage of them.'*

> *'Many opportunities in the agriculture value-chain were also promoted to the young adults to get involved.'*

> *'The idea of self-employment and entrepreneurship were also promoted to the young to take advantage of them.'*

> *'The Government of Ghana has created enabling environment for small-scale enterprises through skill development fund, popularly referred to as "skilling Ghana" revolving fund.'*

Asked whether the young adults are taking advantage of the ALPs, the participants said:

> *'Some have taken advantage of the numerous ALPs, but others are not.'*

When the participants were probed further, the reasons why young adults are not taking advantage of ALPs advanced include the following:

> *'Many more young adults cannot access the funds to start micro or small-scale businesses of their own. This is because, those supported with the revolving fund fail to pay back the money, and on time, too, to enable others to access it.'*

> *'Even when the young adults make themselves available to acquire one skill or the other, the initial fund to kick-start the trade or business becomes a challenge, thus dumping the spirit and motivation of many more youth, to get onboard the ALP.'*

> *'That notwithstanding, some young daring adults have ventured into the ALPs, and are doing well in their small-businesses.'*

Although the participants admitted that it was because of lack of job opportunities as to why they got involved in 'galamsey' activities, yet many others do not want to take advantage of the ALPs based on the reasons aforementioned. Agbesi (2017) observes that the huge sums of money young adults get from 'galamsey' activities serves as a bait to their participation, notwithstanding the dangers involved in 'galamsey' activities. It could also mean that a lot more education is to be offered to the young adults to realise the essence of investing their investible time, energies and resources in acquiring skills or trades. The FGP participants expressed similar sentiment, but added that notwithstanding the regular accidents which occur at 'galamsey' mining sites, 'we woke up in the morning to see the young adults going to work at 'galamsey' sites' (FGD).

## Conclusions

The paper attempted to decipher whether media practitioners adoption of an informal and lifelong learning drive to fight 'galamsey' is yielding the desired results or otherwise. The study looked at 'galamsey' activities and challenges involved in combating it. It also explored media promotion of informal education and lifelong learning programmes in galvanising support against the 'galamsey' menace, and finally, establishes benefits of lifelong learning provided by the media to empower young adults with ALPs. It emerged that radio, television, newspapers, and social media platforms were essentially used by media practitioners to fight 'galamsey'.

Some of the young adults have taken to ALPs, and are acquiring all the relevant skills and trades, as well as building an enterprising mindset. However, many more young adults are not taking advantage of the marketable skills to make themselves relevant in their communities. It means that more informal education and lifelong learning integrated with ALPs should be vigorously promoted by the media and relevant governmental agencies in Ghana to young adults. Indeed, the media in particular, should be relentless in leading the conversation on 'galamsey' and ALPs, and in providing an important educational drive. This is because adopting this approach is a good way to shape and improve the lives of the young adults in our communities. This is important because, as future leaders, if they are properly positioned with relevant skills in their communities, they would not only improve their quality of life, but also ensure the betterment and sustainability of their communities.

The sustainability of ALPs in our communities, and the development of new components of ALPs and successful implementation should be properly discussed, and implemented. But the ALPs can only make progress when the media takes up the challenge of deepening the educational drive on ALPs and progressing the national agenda. Sottie (2019) opines that Ghana would earn a lot of foreign exchange if it developed its *bee-keeping industry*; for bee-keeping can create jobs for many young people who are unemployed in Ghana. Hence, more lifelong learning and informal education can serve as key to empowering our young people in the communities.

Much success can be realised in attracting the young adults signing on to ALPs, granted that a sustainable revolving fund, and its effective

management, is instituted. This is necessary today, because the existing revolving fund cannot cater for the numbers of young adults who solicit their support. More so, there should be an end to the situation where people solicit for funding of their trades and start-ups and end up refusing to pay back the credit granted them. Instituting *group lending* or *funding* with the instruction that individual's liability is the group members' liability, would make the individuals in the group do the right thing, or else group pressure would be applied on the defaulting group member. Instituting such a strategy would make group members more responsible in their trades and small-businesses that they establish for themselves.

To conclude, even though the Government of Ghana has tackled illegal mining activities through a collaborative approach; thus establishing a 'Joint Taskforce of Inter-ministerial Committee of Illegal Mining,' to fight 'galamsey, this strategy can only succeed if it is sufficiently implemented. When that is done, it will effectively elicit total support of the citizenry to ensure meaningful and sustainable change in the mining communities of Ghana.

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## About the author

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