

SYNOPSIS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

PUBLIC LECTURE SERIES, 2025

THEME: *"Empowering Minds, Shaping Futures for the 21st Century*

Education in Ghana"

The University of Education, Winneba, Public Lecture Series, 2025, with the theme “*Empowering Minds Shaping Futures for 21st Century Education in Ghana,*” was an intriguing topic in this age since it provided the platform for dialogue and policy transformation in the nation’s education sector. The talk not only reminisced about the nostalgic feelings of Africanising our educational systems and activities but also took an innovative approach to meeting global educational standards.

The Public lecture, which was well attended, saw many stakeholders, including policymakers, chiefs, lecturers, Professors, and students come together to deliberate on strategies to enhance learning outcomes. The talks also sought to bridge educational gaps by equipping students and other stakeholders with the requisite knowledge for global standards that meet 21st-century abilities to thrive in this rapidly evolving global environment.

Through engaging discussions and expert-led presentations, the lectures explore pressing topics as digital learning, inclusive education, teacher development, curriculum reforms, and the role of technology in modern pedagogical instruction. By emphasising empowerment, the series seeks to inspire transformative approaches to improving education that nurture creativity, critical thinking, and adaptability among learners.

Ultimately, the Public Lecture Series is intended to shape a progressive and inclusive future education in Ghana, ensuring that the next generation is well prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

The talks’ highlight reveals three major themes for thought:

1. The Mental Colonization of Our Students

That our educational systems foster reimaging Africa’s history by rethinking her path. This will help shape future destinies.

The educational system needs to move away from romanticising the past. To decolonise our minds from the colonial ideologies and rebrand our education for change, starting with the youth. Through transformative education, the youth can be empowered to be the architects of Africa’s next transformation. Thus, education should be the vehicle for self-discovery, yet in Ghana, it often serves as an instrument of cultural erasure. The curriculum glorifies foreign heroes and knowledge systems while sidelining Africans’ own intellectual and creative giants. Students can readily quote Shakespeare but struggle to name African literary greats like Ayi Kwei Armah or Chinua Achebe. They learn about Newton and Einstein but remain unaware of Ghana’s scientific

pioneers like Thomas Mensah and Prof. Francis Allotey. Similarly, the education system celebrates Western classical composers but fails to honour Ghanaian musical legends who shaped national identity.

This disconnect fosters a mentality in which African students think, write, and dream through borrowed lenses, reinforcing mental colonization. To break free, education must shift from outdated Western models to an Afrocentric approach that is relevant, globally competitive, and deeply rooted in Ghanaian identity. Again, schools must move beyond the traditional classroom setting to equip students with monetizable skills and entrepreneurial thinking, ensuring graduation becomes a launchpad rather than an endpoint.

It was clear from the talk that “our craving for foreign goods and souvenirs must end. [That], changing our mindset is the first step towards true freedom and prosperity” (P.L.O. Lumumba). He stressed, "Education has been corrupted, feeding us the lie that speaking in our local dialect makes us unintelligent.”

There is a need to practicalise the theoretical perspectives in the classroom for ‘theory without practice is fiction’

One of the major concerns of the talk was that “the education system is silencing minds and that classrooms have become graveyards for thought, instead of awakening potential. Thus, until we teach in our own stories, we will continue to live in someone else’s future (S.K. Pipim). To him, ‘an empowered mind is a dangerous thing. This is because it helps break poverty bonds and oppression. In this case, students will call for demand for growth and not just progress. He reiterated that ‘education is more than an institution’. It's a social construct that shapes minds, values, and the soul of a nation. And that we must empower our minds and live bodily.

2. Education as Mind-Liberation and Empowerment

Education, at its core, is the empowerment of the mind force that cultivates critical thinking, resilience, and innovation. It is more than academic instruction; a powerful tool for liberation and transformation. So, as we navigate the complexities of 21st-century education, learning must catalyze freedom from poverty, ignorance, prejudice, and dependency. True education empowers minds, equipping individuals with the skills, knowledge, and critical thinking necessary to shape their futures and drive national progress.

Despite formidable challenges, Ghana’s resilience and ingenuity offer hope for meaningful reforms. This responsibility of education reform is collective, requiring commitment from government officials, educators, parents, and students alike. Drawing from the wisdom of great thinkers like Albert Einstein, Martin Luther King Jr. and Ghana’s own Dr. J. E. Kwegyir Aggrey, education is not just seen as academic knowledge, but a holistic development of the head, hand, and heart.

Dr. James Emmanuel Kwegyir Aggrey's words, "Only the best is good enough for Africa", must inspire Ghana to demand excellence, ensuring that every learner receives an education worthy of their potential. As a tool for societal advancement, education must move beyond theoretical instruction to active leadership, innovation, and problem-solving. Quoting Malala Yousafzai, "One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the world" the essay calls upon all stakeholders to ensure Ghana's education system is equipped to empower minds and shape the future.

3. Prospects for Ghana's 21st Century Education

Ghana stands at a critical juncture in reshaping its education system to meet the demands of the 21st century. Two key prospects, Digital Transformation and Curriculum Renewal have offer opportunities for meaningful change.

The first prospect, Digital Transformation, emphasizes the need for technology-driven learning, ensuring that students are equipped with digital literacy and STEM-based skills. As Ghana navigates the global digital economy, integrating artificial intelligence, agritech, and advanced computing into education will be essential.

The second prospect, Curriculum Renewal, calls for an education system that is not just globally competitive but also deeply relevant to African socioeconomic realities. The shift from rote learning to competency-based education, initiated in 2019, is a promising step toward fostering creativity, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship. By embedding STEM, STEAM, and TVET pathways, the curriculum can bridge the gap between academic training and employability. Additionally, aligning educational objectives with the African Union's Agenda 2063, such as AfCFTA and African Virtual Universities, will prepare students for emerging opportunities across the continent.

Moreover, policies such as Free Senior High School (FSHS) have expanded access to education, reducing financial barriers and improving female enrolment. Efforts to enhance education for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) further contribute to inclusivity education. However, continued reforms are necessary to ensure that Ghanaian students are not just academically qualified but also equipped with the practical skills to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Ghana's education system must evolve beyond traditional models, embracing digital innovation and culturally relevant curricula to empower future generations. With Strategic investment and reform, education can become the cornerstone of national progress, preparing students for both local impact and global competitiveness. Prospects for Ghana's 21st Century Education: Teacher Development & Industry-Education Partnerships Ghana's ability to transform its education system hinges on two critical areas: teacher development and industry-education partnerships.

Teacher Development

The strength of any education system is rooted in the quality of its educators. Ghana's commitment to elevating teacher education, through institutions like the University of Education, Winneba

(UEW), and the transformation of Colleges of Education into degree-awarding institutions, signals a progressive shift toward professionalizing teaching. The Teacher Professional Development framework ensures continuous growth for educators by enhancing their digital literacy, pedagogical expertise, and assessment skills. By prioritizing teacher training, Ghana can build a responsive, innovative, and globally competitive teaching workforce capable of guiding students into the future. Industry-Education Partnerships: Bridging the gap between education and employment requires strategic collaboration with industries. Organizations like COTVET have made strides in competency-based training and industry attachments, ensuring that graduates leave school with practical experience. Universities such as KNUST, UGBS, AAMUSTED, and UENR have embraced innovation hubs that connect students with industry mentors, funding opportunities, and entrepreneurial ecosystems. Ghana can further accelerate educational relevance by fostering Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for curriculum development, infrastructure enhancement, and workforce training. Singapore's successful model highlights how industry collaborations can drive excellence in education. By replicating such efforts, Ghana can create a system where students graduate not just with degrees but with employable skills and entrepreneurial capacity. Finally, these prospects strengthen teachers and industry connections, positioning Ghana's education system for transformation, ensuring that learners are equipped to thrive in a dynamic and competitive world.

Call to Action

This is a defining moment in Ghana's educational journey. Policymakers must prioritize ideas over bureaucracy, educators must liberate minds rather than merely deliver curricula. Students must seek growth over grades, and industries must invest in human capital beyond profits. Education should therefore be seen as the launchpad for transformation, not the burial ground for dreams. The decisive question remains, 'Will Ghana unleash its minds or continue to silence them?'

The conclusion was drawn to the fact that, as educators, we have to 'empower our minds to move beyond outdated beliefs. To truly pass our rich Ghanaian culture to the next generation. This will help us prioritise mother tongue education for our children, at home and in school. To Agyeman Badu Akosa, 'to shape our future as a nation, we must first empower individual minds through the essential act of reading. The time to act is now, and the world is watching.