CHALLENGING THE DOMINANT KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS THROUGH CRITICAL CURRICULUM STUDIES EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

There are already dominant ideas that influence our education, policies, and practice. These dominant societal knowledge systems still produce inequalities in our education and society. Using Postcolonial Theory, the study focused on colonial rule's impact on colonized societies, cultures, and identities and explored how colonialism's effects continue to shape the world in contemporary times. This study sought to critique the dominant knowledge narratives perpetuating social injustice. It has amplified the voices and experiences of those often silenced or marginalized by the dominant knowledge narratives. The study has also identified how the dominant knowledge system has produced inequality and marginalization and suggested more inclusive, equitable, and socially just knowledge through a curriculum studies approach.

1. INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is a site for struggle, arguments, and reconstruction of the truth Au (2012). In Au's book *Critical Curriculum Studies Education, Consciousness and the Politics of Knowing,* he used the word "critical" to imply serious deliberations and debates over what a field takes for granted. This book offers a novel framework for thinking about how curriculum relates to students' understanding of the world around them and many concerns surrounding the politics of knowing the curriculum. His basic arguments and analyses are based on the explanatory power of the curriculum and his standpoint for the oppressed in education. It is, therefore, important to engage in curriculum conversation over our education, politics, theories, policies, and practices, looking at the realities of our society today. There are already dominant ideas that influence our education, policies, and practice. This study considers these dominant societal knowledge systems and how they produce inequalities in our education and society. The "Dominant knowledge systems" refers to the prevailing frameworks, ideologies, and methodologies used to understand and interpret the world. These systems largely shape how knowledge is produced, validated, and applied across various disciplines, cultures, and societies.

This study adopts Au's (2012) critical curriculum studies education perspectives to challenge the dominant knowledge systems perpetuating societal inequality. It is important to emphasize that critical curriculum studies in this study will be contextualized within the broader curriculum studies because the field is still evolving, and some long-standing debates and controversies need

scholarly scrutinization. In bringing feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 2001; Longino, 1993) into education, Au suggested an epistemologically strong argument for the justification of standpoint and, by extension, social justice in society and curriculum practice. These theorists (Harding, 2001; Longino, 1993) believe that knowledge is socially situated. Also, marginalized groups are socially situated in ways that make it more possible for them to be aware of things and ask questions than the non-marginalized. Again, they believe that research, mainly focusing on power relations, should begin with the lives of the marginalized. This paper uses a critical curriculum studies standpoint to advance its argument on challenging the dominant knowledge systems that perpetuate inequality in similar ways Au (2012) used the feminist standpoint theory as the socially situated perspective of the oppressed or marginalized group and links it to curriculum studies. As Au 2012 argued, promoting critical consciousness and raising awareness about power dynamics, oppression, and social justice is important.

This study argues that knowledge is shaped by one's social location, influence, experiences, and positionality. Where one resides and what influences the person significantly impacts the person's social, economic, and political life. The study, therefore, seeks to offer a critical critique of the dominant knowledge narratives perpetuating social injustice and promoting the knowledge production of the marginalized in society. It also seeks to amplify the voices and experiences of those often silenced or marginalized to produce more inclusive, equitable, and socially just knowledge through curriculum studies. As argued by Au (2012), the curricular standpoint essentially recognizes that power relations structure the accessibility of educational environments and the pedagogic discourse produced to communicate those relations. This study supports the curricular standpoint that offers a tool for justifying the privileges of marginalized or oppressed groups in our curricula. The curricular standpoints agitate for the understanding of the material and social reality as it exists more truthfully and objectively than what hegemonic perspectives provide us (Au, 2012). The study takes some insights from Ghana's curriculum trajectory to advance its argument on the influence of the dominant knowledge system on Indigenous knowledge.

2. POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

Postcolonial Theory (PT) This study is grounded in Postcolonial Theory (PT), which critically examines colonialism and imperialism's cultural, intellectual, political, and social legacies. The two most prominent scholars widely recognized as central to postcolonial theory are Fanon (2008) and Said (1978). PT focuses on colonial rule's impact on colonized societies, cultures, and identities and explores how colonialism's effects continue to shape the world in contemporary times. Postcolonial theory critiques the dominance of Western ideologies, knowledge systems, and practices, often imposed through colonization, and advocates for reclaiming and validating colonized people's voices, identities, and knowledge. The study adopts PT because it provides a critical framework for understanding and challenging colonialism's enduring legacies in contemporary societies. It critiques Western domination, examines colonization's psychological and cultural impact, and promotes the reclaiming of marginalized voices and knowledge systems. By exploring these themes, postcolonial theory seeks to foster liberation, empowerment, and social justice, advocating for a world where all cultures and knowledge systems are recognized and valued.

Fanon (2008) and Said (1978), widely regarded as the founders of postcolonial studies,used PT to explore how colonial powers have shaped and imposed knowledge systems that undermine indigenous or local knowledge. They have used PT to critique colonialism's legacy and its continuing effects on knowledge, culture, and identity. Postcolonial theorist Fanon explores colonialism's psychological and cultural impacts on the colonized, mainly focusing on how colonization affects identity, self-perception, and the colonized's relationship to the colonizer. In

Fanon's literature *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), he emphasized the psychological effects of colonialism on identity and the internalization of inferiority by colonized peoples. Fanon (2008) argued that colonialism not only exploited colonized people economically but also profoundly harmed their mental health and self-worth. He believed violence was necessary for decolonization, and cultural liberation was critical to the postcolonial struggle. Fanon's work also addresses the complexity of identity and the experience of being treated as an "Other" by the colonizer, which is the emphasis of this study.

In his *Orientalism* work, Edward Said (1978) argues that the West constructed the *Orient* (the East) as a binary opposite to the West, framing Eastern cultures as exotic, backward, and irrational and justifying the need for colonial domination. Said's critique of the West's representations of the East (the Orient) has shaped how postcolonial theorists understand the role of knowledge and power in colonial relationships. Said (1978) has further argued that knowledge and cultural representations were not neutral but were imbued with power. This knowledge reinforced the dominance of Western imperialism, which is a focal point of postcolonial theory. It could, therefore, be inferred that the cultural representations of colonized peoples were distorted and that these representations justified imperialism and the dominant knowledge system.

3. DOMINANT KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS AND SOCIETAL INEQUALITIES

The significance of Indigenous Knowledge to humankind and his environment cannot be overemphasized. Nevertheless, the transmissions of Indigenous knowledge are threatened and overpowered by Western knowledge and ideologies (Malapane, Chanza, & Musakwa, 2024). Studley (1998) has documented that not only is Indigenous knowledge ignored or dismissed by the dominant knowledge, but the nature of the problem of underdevelopment and its solution are defined by reference to this world-ordering knowledge. Until very recently, little or no credence was given by scientists and scholars grounded in the Western tradition to the validity of nonWestern indigenous knowledge (Studley, 1998). Studley further contends that even now, when Western scholars have begun to acknowledge the existence of indigenous knowledge, they have trouble understanding and interpreting what a foreign level of reality is. Malapane, Chanza, and Musakwa (2024) believe that since Indigenous knowledge generation does not use the same methods of data collection, storage, analysis, and interpretation as the scientific tradition, those trained in the scientific tradition will continue to have difficulty in acknowledging the validity of data generated in unfamiliar ways. They further argue that even those who acknowledge Indigenous knowledge's existence generally apply scientific methods to verify and validate Indigenous knowledge. The dominant knowledge proponents seek to recognize their categories in native systems and apply their typologies to what they think Indigenous knowledge systems are (Harala et al., 2005). Studley (1998) has said that few Western scholars can accept Indigenous knowledge as valid in and of itself.

This section looks at some knowledge systems that are widely recognized and often shape academic, scientific, political, and cultural discourse that mostly undermine indigenous knowledge and perpetuate inequality in our society. Dominant knowledge systems—rooted in Western, scientific, economic, religious, or other frameworks—can perpetuate societal inequality. These systems often reflect and reinforce existing social, political, and economic structures that benefit specific groups while marginalizing others (Au, 2012). Au has maintained that how knowledge is produced, validated, and disseminated is crucial in maintaining power dynamics and social hierarchies. On the other hand, Indigenous knowledge is a bridge between human beings and their environments (Kincheloe, 2006). Indigenous knowledge is the body of historically constituted knowledge that is instrumental in the long-term adaptation of human groups to the biophysical environment (Purcell, 1998; O'Bryan, 2004). Akena (2012) sees Indigenous knowledge as a "complex accumulation of local context-relevant knowledge that

embraces the essence of ancestral knowing and the legacies of diverse histories and cultures" (p. 601). It could be said that Indigenous knowledge is the traditional knowledge systems, practices, and beliefs developed to deeply understand the local environment, ecology, culture, language, spirituality, and social organization passed down by Indigenous communities over generations. It is important to emphasize that Indigenous knowledge can typically be transmitted orally through stories, rituals, customs, and practices.

Akena (2012) submits that knowledge is shaped as it is continuously interpreted, processed, and reinterpreted in the interactions among instructors and learners in educational settings and through the experiences and understandings from outside schooling. According to Akena (2012), when knowledge is produced by an external actor and imposed on an educational system or society, it becomes biased and negatively influences the Indigenous knowledge of a people; this external imposition is disempowering and colonizing. Similarly, "the production of knowledge, new knowledge and transformed 'old' knowledge by the colonizers" becomes a commodity of colonial exploitation. This negative interaction between Western knowledge imposed on an indigenous cosmology tends to undermine the norms, values, and gendered contexts that maintain morality and harmony" (Smith, 1999, p. 59).

Dominant knowledge systems contribute to societal inequality by excluding alternative/Indigenous knowledge systems. Many dominant knowledge systems, particularly the Western ones, often disregard or marginalize rich Indigenous and local knowledge systems (Datta & Starlight, 2024). For example, Western scientific and academic frameworks dominate academic and policy discourse. At the same time, Indigenous knowledge, rooted in oral traditions or holistic worldviews, is often dismissed because they are regarded as "primitive" or irrelevant (Dare Kolawole, 2022). Dare Kolawole (2022) believes that local knowledge's autochthonous and ambivalent nature appears problematic for finding a methodological coherence for these knowledge systems in the knowledge production frontier; it certainly provides an opportunity to advocate a context-specific approach to addressing development problems. Indigenous knowledge has mainly been constructed based on the assumption that knowledge is intertwined with certain socio-cultural conditions. Since knowledge is connected to one's environment, the environment can determine how knowledge is produced and obtained in any society. According to Hukmi, Risalatul, and Khair (2023), the tenability of knowledge is not measured merely by individual reasoning but through the question of how social context can justify some beliefs. They argue that indigenous knowledge is as valid as scientific knowledge with some conditions, such as its falsification openness. They concluded that the separation between indigenous knowledge and scientific knowledge is irrelevant.

It is important to emphasize that excluding non-Western knowledge systems undermines cultural identities and traditional practices. It discourages the recognition and validation of diverse epistemologies, which can lead to cultural homogenization and the erosion of traditional knowledge. Mulder (2016) opines that one's language is more than a means of communication. The loss of it means the hibernation of a culture - since language is a window to your culture, it is a window to your folklore, it is a window to your parables, to your proverbs, to all the stories that you hear at birth and what you grow up with.

This is one area where Au's (2012) study is critical to this study. Au argues for and then provides a depiction of a more dialectical understanding of consciousness—a key concept in thinking critically about the relationship between knowers and knowledge. Knowledge is best developed from what is known to what is unknown. Undermining Indigenous knowledge means undervaluing the Indigenous people. By drawing on a profound social conception of consciousness, Au tries to reassert more collective understandings of how people construct their realities, how their knowledge is connected to their language and tradition, and what they already

know to make meaning to what they receive or study. Au's Critical Curriculum Studies is a significant conceptual contribution to this study and challenges the exclusion of alternative knowledge systems ideas in our education and society. This promotes our critical consciousness and helps us to think in a truly radical manner about alternative ways of engaging in education.

The Dominant knowledge systems again reinforce power imbalances in our society (Woroniecki et al., 2020). The authors argue that the dominance of specific knowledge systems inherently involves power dynamics, where those who control knowledge production (typically Western, capitalist, and colonial institutions) hold power over defining what is considered legitimate knowledge. These systems can perpetuate power imbalances by projecting Western knowledge systems as superior (Datta & Starlight, 2024) and excluding marginalized groups, such as the indigenous people, from knowledge creation and decision-making. Fanon (2008) posits that the main reason the colonial government prioritized learning English was to uphold it as the language of civilization, modernization, and civility. This agenda undermined the Indigenous languages to the present day. Fanon (2008) has further contended that the colonial legacy in Western knowledge systems often emphasizes that Western civilization and its ways of knowing are superior to other cultures, reinforcing notions of racial and cultural superiority. This mindset continues to marginalize non-Western communities and perpetuate systemic racism and cultural oppression.

There is inequitable access to education as the education system is structured around Eurocentric and capitalist values in many societies, particularly those with a strong Western influence. Bleazby (2015) argues that curriculum prioritization of English, science, mathematics, and economics— where Western knowledge frameworks dominate—while overlooking or undervaluing other areas like ethnobotany, traditional arts, cultural studies, and local governance systems is a dominant narrative. Bleazby believes it is a pervasive and problematic idea to maintain that supposedly abstract school subjects, like mathematics and natural sciences, are more valuable than subjects associated with Indigenous concrete experience, practicality, and the body, such as physical education, cultural studies, and vocational subjects. The challenge here is that students, mostly from marginalized communities, are taught through curricula that do not reflect their cultural experiences or local knowledge systems, making education feel disconnected and irrelevant to their lives. This further reinforces social stratification, as these students are less likely to succeed or access high-quality education and opportunities. This practice denies the marginalized people/communities their identities, separates their knowing from their being, and impedes their potential to be culturally conscious people, which ultimately makes them vulnerable to exploitation and exposes them to eventual extermination (Woodson as quoted in Au 2012, p. 73).

The Feminist standpoint theory adopted by Au is critical to this argument because it seeks to disrupt the dominant narratives and social injustice and stands for the voices and experiences of those often silenced or marginalized in society. To emphasize the influence of Eurocentric and capitalist values in many marginalized societies, Ansah (2014) avers those historical and contemporary textbooks in Ghana, for example, portray White English in a heavily positive light that possesses a good sense of knowledge and attitude while constructing the Ghanaian enslaved human beings as robust, aggressive, and lacking humanity. Even though the colonial master has left, its curriculum dominance persists in Ghana's education system (Bonney, 2022). According to Táíwò (2022), "We should identify blind spots in present policies and scholarship to draw attention to addressing them and show how and why these alternative knowledge ways may yield more insights than the present dominant narrative where almost everything, especially education, is Eurocentric" (p. 8).

Furthermore, the economic knowledge systems, particularly neoliberal economics, a dominant ideology, often prioritize market-driven solutions, individual responsibility, and profit maximization. This can exacerbate inequality by justifying policies that reduce government support, public welfare programs, and social safety nets, thus leaving vulnerable populations without adequate resources or protection. The belief in economic efficiency, the dominant ideology, can justify austerity measures, privatization, and focusing on economic growth at the expense of equity (Arrieta, 2022). In Arrieta's study on "Austerity in the United Kingdom and its legacy: Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic," the author explored how the implementation of austerity programs exacerbated the disastrous consequences of the pandemic as an extension of a neoliberal ideology, supported the development of the market at the expense of reducing the welfare state of the vulnerable. Arrieta's (2022) assessment of the four 'Ds' reinforced during austerity—Disinvestment, Decentralization, De-collectivization, and Disintegration (p. 141) disadvantaged the vulnerable and the minority, worsening their plight in the UK. It should be noted that policies primarily based on neoliberal economic principles mainly result in cuts to public services, such as healthcare and education, disproportionately affecting low-income communities, minorities, and women.

Also, it is not only the neoliberal economic system that marginalizes minorities and women in our society but also patriarchal structures do. The dominant knowledge systems, especially within the Western tradition, have been built on patriarchal values, which inherently position men as the primary producers and validators of knowledge and power (Farias et al., 2023). This has led to the marginalization of women's voices, particularly in academic and social fields, and has resulted in the underrepresentation of women in positions of power and influence. These feminist scholars and activists have long argued that traditional knowledge systems often neglect gendered experiences and social justice issues. These scholars contend that the lack of a feminist perspective in mainstream knowledge systems reinforces gender inequality by perpetuating traditional roles and stereotypes that limit women's opportunities for economic independence, political power, and social mobility (Farias et al., 2023; Biermann, 2023; Einspahr, 2010; Ligneul, 2021).

Finally, the dominance of English and other Western languages in academia, science, and global discourse limits the participation of non-native speakers in knowledge production. Owu-Ewie (2017) contends that using English as the primary medium of instruction can hinder comprehension and academic performance for students whose first language is not English, contributing to inequities in educational achievement. Essentially, those who do not speak these languages have less access to higher education or global academic discussions, exacerbating social and intellectual inequalities. It is important to note that colonialism played a significant role in the imposition of European languages, which continue to marginalize Indigenous languages. For instance, English's dominant narrative has been and still drives Ghana's education system over 60 years after independence (Owu-Ewie, 2017). Owu-Ewie believes that the dominance persists because Ghanaian educational leaders continue reinforcing the hegemony of English as the only official language in education. The dominance of these languages in knowledge production often results in the displacement or loss of Indigenous languages and culture (Mulder, 2016), further marginalizing those who rely on them for cultural identity, social cohesion, and knowledge transmission. Mulder's (2016) analysis of the effects of colonized education mentioned that "the ability to speak the colonial language has become a status symbol, while at the same time, the local language has become associated with inferiority" (p.15).

Again, the dominance of Western knowledge systems leads to the global homogenization of knowledge, undermining diverse cultural understandings of concepts like health, development, education, and justice (Hagi, 2021). This process can result in losing local knowledge and alternative worldviews, reducing global diversity. From the discussions, it could be emphasized

that dominant knowledge systems often perpetuate inequality by excluding marginalized voices, reinforcing power structures, and privileging specific epistemologies over others. Dominant knowledge systems reproduce social, economic, and political inequalities by framing knowledge as objective, universal, and rooted in specific cultural contexts (such as the Western scientific method or capitalist economic models). Addressing these inequalities requires recognizing and validating diverse forms of knowledge, promoting inclusive education, and fostering interdisciplinary and cross-cultural dialogue that challenges the dominance of any single knowledge system.

4. CRITICAL CURRICULUM STUDIES AT THE CENTER OF DOMINANT KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS AND THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

According to Au (2012), the political, cultural, environmental, and economic stakes of the struggles against rising conservatism, inequality, and neoliberalism happening in the United States and worldwide is a radical imperative that we use critique to expose the inequalities that constitute our material existence (p. 27). Most curriculum scholars involved in this conversation maintained their stands on material reality, such as Apple (1995), and the complexity of social and material reality for multiple groups and communities (Fraser, 1995). Au (2012) used material reality to mean the lived experiences and conditions of people's lives shaped by the social, economic, and political contexts in which they exist. Au's (2012) material reality includes political power dynamics— oppression, privilege, resistance, social relationships—race, gender, sexuality, and ability (p. 69); environmental conditions—access to social institutions and resources, pollution, and climate change. Au's material reality grounds itself on our understanding of social justice, education, and political struggle in the concrete experiences of people's lives rather than abstract ideologies that are difficult to materialize. Relating to this study, material reality means tangible and intangible aspects of people's lives that affect them in any way. This material reality is manifested in the dominant knowledge systems where actual experiences and conditions of Indigenous knowledge and experiences are undermined, primarily affecting their social (academic) life. Dewey (1916) believes that education must be humane and professional. Dewey (1916) further contends that a curriculum designed with purely inherited knowledge dear to and approved by those in power needs continuous inspection, criticism, and revision to make it a curriculum that tackles problems relevant to the growth and development of people living together.

This study is aligned with the idea of Au's (2012) book–*Critical Curriculum Studies, Education, Consciousness, and the Politics of Knowing* because looking at the conservative modernization that has taken place socially and educationally (Apple, 2006) and the increasing institutional inequalities both nationally and internationally associated with neoliberal globalization (Lipman, 2004), the critical argument in curriculum studies seems more than appropriate. Practically, a critical curriculum should mainly be rooted in the school's system to meet the concrete needs of students. In order words, it should focus on the relationship between theory and practice in ways that would meet the needs and aspirations of students and members of society. Anything less will alienate the students from everything in their lives, especially when the curriculum falls within the hegemonic forms of oppressive consciousness. To better understand our world and its existence, we must prioritize the knowledge and understanding of marginalized and oppressed groups in our curriculum (Au, 2009). The marginalized and oppressed groups in educational curricula are those that face systemic disadvantages, exclusion, and discrimination within education systems and in society. These groups are often underrepresented, misrepresented, or excluded from mainstream educational content, leading to inequitable access to knowledge, resources, and opportunities. This contravenes the postcolonial theorist's ideology, which seeks to foster liberation, empowerment, and social justice, advocating for a world where all cultures and

knowledge systems are recognized and valued. The dominant knowledge systems often lead to the marginalization and oppression of these groups, which can perpetuate social, cultural, and economic disparities in society. These groups may include racial and ethnic minorities (African Americans, Indigenous peoples, Latino/Hispanic), rural and remote communities, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, low-income students, women and gender minorities, immigrant and refugee populations, language minorities, and older learners or non-traditional students who return to education later in life.

It is important to emphasize that curriculum is central to what goes on in our schools and community. To ensure the school curriculum is just, relevant, and practical, its contents should relate to students' contexts, consciousness, experiences, identities, and material realities (Ladson Billings, 1997). For instance, a curriculum intended for Ghana but teaches nothing about its culture and history is oppressive in its contents and constitutes a dominant knowledge imposition. Dewey (1916) argued that a relevant curriculum must consider the historical, cultural, educational, and democratic needs of the existing community life in its contents. This aligns with Marx (1956), who believes that a curriculum designed through the lenses of those who have experienced exploitation and marginalization produces a better account of the world than those from the dominant groups.

Au's (2012) noble curricular standpoint argument essentially recognizes that power relations structure the accessibility of educational environments and the pedagogic discourse produced to communicate those relations (p. 89). Au's curricular standpoint offers a tool for justifying the privileging of marginalized or oppressed groups in our curricula—an appeal to understanding the material and social reality as it exists in more truthful and objective ways than what hegemonic perspectives provide us. One undisputable point of Au's (2012) argument is that the social location of the marginalized or oppressed can be used as the starting point for engaging with knowledge and effectively working to make knowledge accessible to students. These vis-a-vis educational environments potentially validate the social, economic, cultural, and political experiences of the same marginalized or oppressed communities (p. 89).

It is essential to emphasize that specific critical perspectives and conditions of our world— social, economic, political, religious, and cultural, have directly or indirectly impacted the student before formal education or during formal schooling. The curriculum must build those perspectives and conditions to make education meaningful to the learner. Education should be seen as a liberating agent tailored towards the learner's originality. In the same way, a curriculum should act like a guide to provide an antidote to learners' background perspectives. It is crucial not to see curriculum as what Freire (1974, p. 7) termed "a pedagogy of the oppressed." As Au (2012) put forward, "The curriculum should use students' social locations, lived experiences, and material realities as a means for them to critically engage with both the world and academic knowledge and skills" (p. 20). Since students' existence centers on a high-quality curriculum, the curriculum should develop students' social being and skills to understand better the systematic relationships between their world of academics and social life for them to become what they want to be and as agents of social change and transformation. That is to say, the curriculum should be academiccentered and focus on other segments of a student's life.

Au's (2012) study aligns with this study because it seeks to enter this ongoing scholarly debate within curriculum studies and social justice to offer one potential conceptual resolution to the selfdescribed crisis in curriculum studies and education. Au (2012) contests that the curriculum should be "critical" to engage in such debates over our politics, theories, policies, and practices (p. 16). It is important to add that deliberations, debates, and decisions in the field of curriculum should not be taken for granted as mere political and social talks. Instead, more profound reflections on the future and its impacts should be employed so as not to jeopardize students'

culture, aspirations, and future. This aligns with Au's (2012) assertion, "Suppose we want students to understand the world fully. Then, we have to offer a curricular standpoint that surfaces the issues of people and communities that are either regularly pushed to the margin of the school knowledge, actively misconstrued within the curriculum, or left out entirely." (p. 89)

The epistemological weaknesses of disconnection from material reality and pretenses to objectivity and non-ideology in the educational curriculum, as postulated by Au (2012), are, to some extent, an objective reality in contemporary education, especially in Ghana's education system. The literature of Ahadzi et al. (2015) has shown how the dominant use of English in Ghanaian education harms students and hampers their educational advancement. They argue that students mostly fail to understand the content if they have difficulty understanding the communication medium. Using Collison (1974) as a brief case study, Collison (1974) researched whether the scientific concepts taught in English to Primary five and six were well grasped and understood in Ghanaian schools. It appeared that students who studied in English did poorly grasp and explain scientific concepts taught in English. Collison again did the same experiment with the same Primary five and six students, but this time, it was done in the Ghanaian languages they understand. These students who used Indigenous languages understood the lesson and could explain it to the researcher in their Ghanaian languages. Interestingly, they could use more complex language and illustrations to explain the scientific process learned in the classroom compared to the English-only group. This confirms Casely-Hayford & Hartwell's (2010) assertion that intensive instruction in a Ghanaian language, even briefly, improves learning outcomes at the basic levels of education. Again, this is where critical curriculum studies are needed to neutralize the dominant knowledge system of English hegemony that perpetuates injustices and the neglect of the Indigenous language. I confirm Collison's (1974) result as a geography teacher at a Senior High School in Ghana for decades. I realized that teaching geography to students in the Ghanaian language was mainly helpful. Illustrating abstract features such as desert landforms, weather, climate, and oceanic and continental shelves, among others, is challenging for the student to grasp, especially its associated geographical terminologies. However, students get more understanding when it is explained in the language they understand. This resulted in high scores, mainly in the subject, when they translated their knowledge into writing in English.

One significant effect of English hegemony, especially at the basic level of education, is that it compels students to adopt rote learning. Since students do not understand what is taught due to the language barrier, they have no option but to memorize the content without an in-depth understanding. Memorized information can easily be forgotten due to learning interference. It is important to mention that rote learning typically does not encourage critical thinking or problemsolving. This lack of critical thinking may hinder students' ability to evaluate, synthesize, or critique information, which are essential skills in learning as one progresses and navigates the complexities of the real world.

Research has shown that non-English speaking students, year after year, continue to struggle (Edu-Buandoh & Otchere, 2012; Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2011; Bonney, 2022). These authors further argue that despite this challenge, school leaders insist on students passing exams in English or speaking only English in schools because they see that as the only way, students can progress in the system they oversee. I see this as oppression and social injustice classified as a "contemporary legacy of colonialism" in the Ghanaian education system. Even though there are available policies that have recommended that Ghanaian languages be used where possible to support teaching and learning in schools, school leaders have sidelined the idea due to colonial mentality and the dominant knowledge system that has enveloped the society. I argue to support the assertion of Bonney (2022) that even after the cessation of colonization, Ghanaian languages and literacies are still silenced, devalued, and marginalized in the curriculum. This English language hegemony hinders students' "familial/kin capital" acquisition (Yosso, 2005, p. 89).

Familial/kin capital is the cultural knowledge nurtured among familial (kin) people with a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition. This is in line with Ansah (2014), Bening (1976), and Bonney (2020) that the place of Ghanaian languages and culture, for example, remains obscure and decentered in Ghanaian education today as it was in the colonial era due to English language hegemony. This is where Au's critical consciousness concept comes into play. Au's concept of critical consciousness talks about the ability to analyze and understand the relationships between power, inequality, and knowledge. It involves recognizing how social, political, and economic structures shape our experiences and perceptions. Being critical in our reflection is central to developing consciousness, and such reflection creates the potential to challenge existing, unequal social relations and work towards more equitable and just social change (Freire, 1974). This study pushes for the critical consciousness of educators and policymakers to work towards dismantling the dominant ideologies that continue to marginalize the indigenous knowledge of knowing. One of the ways to resist unequal social relations is by having the proper education for oneself.

This study contributes significantly to our understanding of the impact of dominant knowledge narratives, critical curriculum, and social justice on society. It advocates for a critical reconceptualization of the curriculum to challenge the dominance of Eurocentric and hegemonic knowledge systems in education, especially in colonized states. The study uses Postcolonial Theory to show how educational content can reinforce or dismantle systemic inequalities. This study, therefore, invites academics to rethink the role of curriculum not merely as a means of structuring knowledge acquisition and transmission but as a tool for social justice and equity. It calls for a curriculum that empowers marginalized groups and allows their cultural narratives and epistemologies to shape the educational landscape.

Another significant contribution of this study to knowledge is its focus on decolonizing education within the colonized states. It criticizes the colonial legacy of Western-dominated knowledge systems, pointing out how these systems have been imposed on non-Western, indigenous, and marginalized communities through schooling practices. The study has broadened the scope of curriculum studies by proposing methods of decolonizing the curriculum. This includes integrating indigenous languages, knowledge, histories, and diverse cultural perspectives into the curriculum, thus offering a more inclusive and accurate representation of global knowledge systems. This will improve learning at the basic levels of education.

The study further highlights that education is not neutral; it significantly reinforces or challenges existing power structures. By examining how curriculum is shaped by social, political, and economic forces, the study demonstrates the potential of education to either perpetuate inequality or promote equity and justice. This highlight shifts the focus of educational studies to consider how curricula function as instruments of power. Curriculum can make and unmake learners. It urges researchers to study how educational systems serve the interests of dominant groups and how they might be transformed to serve the interests of marginalized communities.

5. CONCLUSION

Using postcolonial theory, the study focused on colonial rule's impact on colonized societies, cultures, and identities. The study explored how colonialism's effects continue to shape the world in contemporary times. This study is important to the value of critical educational curriculum and consciousness. It has also revealed the effects of hegemonic forces and injustices in the educational system and society. Critical consciousness is essential for students to participate actively in democracy, social justice, and human liberation. Education can empower students to challenge inequality and work towards a more just and equitable society by fostering critical consciousness.

A Transformative Learning (TL) approach would be the best strategy for dealing with dominant knowledge narratives that have sidelined Indigenous knowledge and have resulted in inequality and social injustices. TL guides and challenges how we receive and interrogate issues regarding Indigenous people and their ways of knowing. It empowers them to critically analyze issues of pertinent concern to Indigenous people. It also empowers indigenous people to resist oppression and domination by strengthening the individual holistically. Indigenous people, therefore, need to develop "resistant capital" (pieces of knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality) (Yosso, 2005, p. 80; Freire, 1970) to resist oppression. A critical understanding of transformative learning is that education should be able to resist oppression and domination by strengthening the individual self and the collective soul to deal with the continued reproduction of dominant knowledge and re-colonial relations in the academy, as pinpointed by Dei (2002a). Dei's view links transformative learning to holistic education, which is meant to create a holistic individual equipped with the genes of maturity to detect and resist the treatment of inequality in society. It should be noted that a global and multicultural world needs a curriculum that opens intellectual opportunities and values, celebrates diversity, and allows the voices and experiences of marginalized parents, students, and communities to be heard.

It is also important to emphasize that a critical educational curriculum determines academic success. Students can quickly meet their aims and aspirations if the educational curriculum is tailored to suit such aims and aspirations of life. A curriculum should be able to evaluate and reflect on the school and the community values that align with the state and national learning standards and can project the learner's future. In discussing the need for a critical curriculum for all, it is important to emphasize that there is some relationship between what knowledge we access in our educational environments and our critical consciousness. Therefore, the curriculum should focus on the knowledge we access in our educational environments and develop our critical consciousness. Finally, factoring Indigenous knowledge into the educational curriculum will not only neutralize the dominant knowledge system in our society but also it will create inner joy and a sense of belonging for the Indigenous people concerning education, especially learners in the early levels of education.

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