Covid-19 and the Philosophy of Education: Recuperating Africa's Triple Heritage

Charles Prempeh ⓘD

Centre for Cultural and African Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana

✉ charles.prempeh@knust.edu.gh

Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic mandated the closure of all schools globally. E-learning programmes were introduced to promote learning throughout the crisis. This paper, therefore, investigates the impact of Covid-19 e-learning and teaching on students' social life, indexed by their practice of social conviviality after the pandemic. The study employed multiple sampling techniques in selecting students in the second cycle and tertiary institutions in Accra, Ghana for the study. Using data collected from extensive interviews with students, teachers/lecturers and parents, backed by personal observations, the study found out that the social skills of students were negatively impacted by the pandemic, as several of them suffered multidimensionality of social exclusion when schools were re-opened after lockdown rules were liberalised. The e-learning approach that Ghana introduced to stem the debilitating impact of the pandemic yielded some positive results – helping the education sector to retain contact hours. Nevertheless, the outcome of the pandemic had some negative social consequences. Students were unable to effectively recuperate their social skills in fostering social conviviality. Considering the outcome of the study's findings, the paper concludes that Ghana needs to invest in its Triple Heritage – through the synthesisation of human ontological dignity -- embedded in Islam, Christianity, and indigenous worldview. This approach will help the country to restructure its educational curriculum as part of rejuvenating social conviviality among students. The paper contributes to knowledge by providing evidence of the social impact of the pandemic. However, it also recommends a need for further

research to explore how Ghana can broaden the frontiers of its heritage without provincializing or marginalisation emerging minority cultures.

Keywords: *Covid-19; Ghana; Philosophy of Education; Social Skills; Triple Heritage*

INTRODUCTION

The current coronavirus has intensified social exclusion which had progressed since the internet revolution in the 1970s. Morphing into the social media revolution at the turn of the millennium, several social offline activities have migrated online. With this, the idea of "selfie" has aptly captured the near collapse of human sociality – leading to a complex form of human dissatisfaction with online surfing (Turkle, 2012). In Ghana, therefore, long before the coronavirus, youngsters who were savvy in the use of the internet and social had reconfigured their sociality in such a way that they had more comfort with their computers and smartphones than talking to the person sitting next to them. It could be surmised that long before the eruption of the pandemic, "social distancing" was already taking place (Campbell & Lövheim, 2011). But even that, the author has observed that marriages, funerals and festivals were concurrently featured offline and online to broaden the range of options available to participants. But the pandemic safety rules of social distancing and face covering exacerbated human sociality. It disrupted the *unwritten* code of individuals unmasking their faces in public (Prempeh, 2021). Concurrently, the public sphere became an extension of the private sphere where individuals cover their phases, while usually speaking through their noses with all incomprehensible nasal sounds.

Nevertheless, one major aspect of life that the pandemic similarly registered significant impact is in education. Globally, the spread of the Covid-19 made 160 countries or more, mandated provisional school closures. The extended school closures was expected to cause not only loss of learning in short-term, but also further loss in human

capital and diminishes economic opportunities in the long-term (Kundu & Ngalim, 2021). Also, because of the sudden shift to online schooling, concerns were raised about whether education systems were equipped for such a quick scale-up in digital learning (Kundu & Ngalim, 2021, p. xiii). This concern was concretised in the fact that a deficit in technological supply to sustain e-learning and teaching created a huge loss in the learning process and that might continue for a longer period than expected. It may also ruin the gains made in the adoption of e-learning and teaching practice. Millions of children and youth from pre-primary to tertiary may drop out or not have access to schools in the next year or so due to the pandemic's economic slowdown (United Nations, 2020). In Ghana, studies have revealed that several students could not study effectively from the house – undermining the effectiveness of the online system of learning; parents were incapable of assisting their wards on how to access online learning platform and could also not supervise them without complications (Owusu-Fordjour, Koomson & Hanson, 2020). E-learning system was also complicated by skills deficiency on the part of technicians, inadequate infrastructure, and limited electronic readiness – all burdening information communication technologies (ICTs) (Amihere, 2022).

Additionally, the closure of the educational institutions also obstructed the provision of the essential services to children and communities (United Nations, 2020). Millions of children worldwide missed out on early childhood education in their critical pre-school years. They missed a stimulating and enriching environment, learning opportunities, social interaction and in some cases, adequate nutrition through daily snacks and food that is provided in many educational institutions (Kundu & Ngalim, 2021, p. 2). The pandemic-induced interruption of in-person instruction in schools and universities limited opportunities for students to learn, causing disengagement

from schools and, in some cases, school dropouts (Reimers, 2022, p. 2). It further increased existing inequalities: children from private schools and children from higher socioeconomic status households engaged in remote-learning at higher rates and received more support from their schools and caregivers. Children in households that experienced economic hardships during the pandemic engaged in fewer remote learning activities and had lower literacy and numeracy assessment scores (Wolf et al., 2021). Even so, the impact of the pandemic was not entirely gloomy. The Covid-19 is said to have positively and significantly strengthened the adoption of e-learning strategies across higher learning institutions in Ghana; revealed academic innovativeness, technological growth and development (Adzovie & Jibril, 2022).

Again, dealing with the pandemic in Ghana, there was a policy shift by school leaders led to the adoption of multi-track year-round education (MT-YRE) system to promote social distancing (Adarkwah & Agyemang, 2022). Students were provided with personal protective equipment (PPEs), teachers educated students on Covid-19 prevention and fostered good relationships with their students. Students adhered to institutional protocols to study. Parents also provided psychological and financial support. Policymakers in education were task to provide clear guidelines, resources, funds and recognition to school stakeholders as they collectively tackled the virus to ensure economic, health, and education recovery post-Covid-19 (Adarkwah & Agyemang, 2022). The consequent of these measures was that despite the challenges caused by the pandemic, the public higher education institution was able to complete the 2019/2020 academic year fairly well (Tsevi, 2021).

Against the background of the lessons learned from the pandemic and the assessment therefore, some solutions have been proffered. To forestall the negative impact of the pandemic and pre-

empt future disruptions to the education section, several recommendations have been made. From the financial perspective, recommendation is made that huge financial investments, beyond the scope of the Ghanaian government, are required and multi-stakeholders' collaborations seem to be viable funding options (Amihere, 2022). It is also suggested that students should be introduced to innovative and offline e-learning platforms to supplement classroom teaching and learning and also be of benefit to students who may not have access to internet connectivities (Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020).

At the continental level, it has been suggested that African universities that have experienced the radical shift from face-to-face learning to e-learning should reinforce the building of quality e-learning infrastructures and adequate staff and student capacities on online teaching-learning innovations (Ngwa & Lawyer, 2020). Such measures, it is anticipated, would ensure that institutions are adequately prepared for easy adaption in teaching-learning during future lockdowns or emergencies like the Covid-19 (Ngwa & Lawyer, 2020). Also, others have suggested a need for a culture-driven public health education strategy and the re-creation of a robust educational system that uses blended learning approaches in Ghana (Adom, 2020). Assessing the determinants of students' acceptance of the electronic learning (e-learning) system of education after the Covid-19 emergency indexed several disclosures. It was revealed that students' attitude to e-learning is significantly influenced by perceived usefulness and moderately affected by perceived severity, whereas, students' intention is moderately affected (Amankwa & Asiedu, 2022). In sum, the general recommendation was that future studies should focus on how to establish a crisis-management framework for higher education (Adarkwah & Agyemang, 2022).

Certainly, the effect of pandemic-induced social distancing has been greatly felt in the field of education. Nearly all the recommendations to stem and pre-empt the impact of the pandemic revolved around what I may refer to as the "how" – or technical – answers of life. Undoubtedly, it could be said that e-learning and teaching has come to stay and that more needs to be done to cultivate the benefits associated with it. The need for a technological reform is insightful. Even so, education is also a sociogenic activity which involves close communication between learners and teachers in the sharing of knowledge. Meanwhile, the pandemic-driven social distance has rendered multilayers of social exclusions pervasive on school campuses in Ghana. The author will then reflect critically on the re-formulation of the philosophy of education alongside the recuperation of the country's Triple Heritage. By Africa's Triple Heritage, the author leans on Ali Mazrui's framing of postcolonial multicultural lived reality of Africa as an interplay between Western culture (Christianity), Africanity (traditions of African beliefs) and Islam – the homogenising of multiple perspectives (Mazrui, 1986, p. 21) to reform educational philosophy towards social conviviality. Indeed, Ali Mazrui borrowed and advanced this concept from Nkrumah's philosophy of conscience which is a synthesisation of Euro-Christian, indigenous cultures, and Islam in the construction of African personality. For this reason, Ali Mazrui expanded the idea of Africa's Triple Heritage as the encompassment of the full diversity of African identities and life-styles (Mazrui, 2002, p. 100). The author finds Mazrui's idea of Africa's Triple Heritage an enduring legacy in Africa. For this reason, the author deploys the concept to contribute to the re-structuring of the philosophy of education in Ghana. This motivation comes against the background that the author wants to understand the cross-sectional effect of digitised education on the social skills of pupils and students in these communities.

Considering that the author's goal is to discuss the nexus between human quest for gregariousness (social identification) and the philosophy of education, the author's intention is to recuperate the premodern social orientation of human beings as critical in reformulating educational philosophy to rebuild Ghana's economy. For this reason, the author concludes with a reflection on reformulating the philosophy of education, based on the idea of human ontological dignity – that every human being has worth that must be protected and served by a community. The article will contribute to the broader discussion on the nexus between the pandemic and education.

PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN CONVIVIALITY

Education remains very critical in socialising people to live meaningfully and also contribute to human flourishing (Nucci, 2001). Through education, the older generation passes on the values and virtues as well as skills to the younger generation (Chetan, 2011). Gleaning from Plato's "Allegory of the Cave", I argue that education is very important in transitioning people from a state of ignorance to a state of enlightenment to appreciate the nexus between sociality and sustainable development (Nikolopoulou et al., 2018). An African scholar who has, in my estimation, properly defined the idea of education as reorienting human beings away from hubris and tension is Francis Nyamnjoh. For more than a decade, Nyamnjoh has developed the ground theory of incompleteness and conviviality (Nyamnjoh, 2020). Using this concept, Nyamnjoh argued that human beings are socially incomplete and need to complement and work with others as part of fostering conviviality for the collective good of society.

Historically, therefore, education has been designed to orient people to appreciate social conviviality. Serving as a form of socialisation structured through school culture such as pupils' common use of uniforms and reading similar books, education provided the values, virtues and skills for people to cherish group living and collaboration (Okrah, 2003). Through that, education is expected to help curtail human ontological selfishness, a fact discussed in Charles Darwin's theory of "the survival of the fittest" (Darwin, 2003). From the philosophical perspective of the survival of the fittest, Darwin provided an insight into why human hubris has served as the anchor of their survival. On the contrary, the work of Alexis de Tocqueville, who was also a contemporary of Darwin, both stepping out in the 1830s, stated that society prospered through the deflation of self (de Tocqueville, 2002). Studying the role of religion in the formation of America's civil society, de Tocqueville argued that religion, particularly Judeo-Christian values, helped shape Americans to appreciate selflessness. The idea of selflessness contributed to what succeeding generation of academics, including Robert Putnam, referred to as social capital (Putnam, 2004).

Indeed, long before Darwin and de Tocqueville, Ibn Khaldûn, the great fourteenth-century Arab scholar and philosopher had observed that societies thrive based on collectivism. Ibn Khaldûn referred to the idea of sociality as *asabiyah* (Khaldûn & Lawrence, 2015). As one of the foremost thinkers also in the area of sociology, Ibn Khaldûn argued that selflessness, expressed in group consciousness, a sense of shared purpose morphed into the formation of social solidarity. According to Ibn Khaldûn, the progression of society from desert life to sedentary life also result in a linear progression of society from collectivism to individualism. Life in the desert is largely about individuals satisfying their basic needs, as opposed to the search for luxury. For this reason, life in the desert is

usually not encumbered by selfishness and human hubris. Solidarity helps people to work hard to overcome the various challenges that burden life. Solidarity helps people to ward off internal and external threats.

Importantly, solidarity spurs people toward "civilized" or urban. It is here that *asabiyah* produces its antinomy. Civilized life takes people away from their mere dependence on basic needs to a quest for luxury. Luxury then leads to human hubris where people provincialize themselves as opposed to group solidarity. Apart from Ibn Khaldun, the French anthropologist, Emile Durkheim also made a similar observation. Durkheim in his theory of mechanic solidarity and organic solidarity reflected on the complex nexus between individualism and collectivism in the establishment of the state (Durkheim, 2014).

Mechanic solidarity is the kind of *asabiyah* where individuals just depend on one another in a natural state for subsistence. On the other hand, organic solidarity is a move away from the "primitive" state of interdependence for subsistence to individuals honing their unique acquired skills and idiosyncrasies to complement the other for human flourishing. The balance in both mechanic and organic solidarities is to curb the propensity of individuals from focusing on themselves alone at the expense of society (collectivism/communalism). Indeed, Ibn Khaldûn understood this from the problems that civilized life brings to people. As the rulers search for luxury, they impose taxes and other oppressive measures to achieve their interests (Alrefai & Brun, 1994; Weiss, 1995). Society, as it progresses from simple to complex results in the reconstruction of human relationships on instrumental lines, where human beings are a means to an end, instead of an end in themselves. Without going into details, Karl Marx referred to this as commodity fetishism (Ripstein, 1987; Sherlock, 1997), where the lack of any kind of social relationship between the labour and

consumer results in the elevation of money as more important than human beings. The value of money takes precedence and weighs higher than human beings.

To choreograph society from the challenges of human hubris, a new approach to the philosophy of education needs to be incorporated. My argument is based on the extent to which the coronavirus pandemic has affected the importance of sociogenic activities. Indeed, until the pandemic, much of the human sociogenic activities were gradually moving online, particularly business. Since business, historically the market served as the heartland of group solidarity, the pre-pandemic migration of economic transactions affected human affective relations. The pandemic has rather exacerbated the migration of human activities offline to online. Religious practices, marriages, festivals, and funerals, in the Ghanaian environment have been highly represented online. These days, it is very common for these sociogenic activities that, in the past required no special invitation for people to attend, to have defined boundaries over who could participate. The offline ones are strictly anchored to special invitations. Such special invitations cut off the socially downtrodden, who again in the past would have walked into such organisations to benefit from free foods, from group solidarity.

The impact of degeneration in social life has impacted the philosophy and direction of liberal education. Prior to the modern era, possibly since the 19th Century, liberal education, usually religion, philosophy, and astronomy, were directed at helping individuals to appreciate nature and human conviviality (Marrou, 1982). Often organised by religious institutions, individuals were trained not to develop their own "truths" but rather work along the conventional truth of society for human flourishing. This system may have had its own difficulties, including the imperialistic tendency of mugging individual creativity. But on the whole, it kept society together and

significantly curbed the spill overs of the *sui generis* of individuals that hardly supported sociogenic activities (Pals, 1987; Phelan, 2012).

Nevertheless, since the 19th Century, education has progressed from individuals adapting the conventional truths of society to finding their own truths. Backed by the post-structural and postmodernism theories of western philosophers such as Sartre (2007) and Foucault (1982), social institutions and conventional truths are framed as oppressive. More recently, the emphasis on education has been more about economic enhancement than human development – compelling a justifiable defence of the humanities (Nussbaum, 2010). With all this, as the pandemic-driven online activities have taken human beings further away from offline group activities, my paper will provide an intervention. The intervention will focus on the need for the Ghanaian state to recuperate the indigenous wisdom of Ghana's Triple Heritage to rebuild the nation. But before then, I discuss below the experiences of Ghanaian pupils and students during the pandemic-driven online teachings

METHOD

The author's interest in writing about the impact of the state's introduction of digital technology as a critical intervention to mitigating the impact of the pandemic on education was a result of what the author had observed with the surge in the "selfie" culture in Ghana. By "selfie" culture, the author is referring to the scenario where human beings are becoming more self-centred as they spend time in the virtual world and less in the social world. Given the author's reading of the pre-pandemic social map of Ghana as putting the social orientation of life, especially in Accra in recession, the author picked an interest in finding out how the pandemic is affecting education in some communities in Accra. But because Accra is highly segmented socio-geographically, reflecting social status, the author carefully

selected my respondents to reflect the segmentation of the city. The author, therefore, focused on Maamobi, which is one of the oldest urban slums (inner-Muslim community) in Accra that has been in existence since the early twentieth century. The author also selected respondents from East Legon, one of the middle-income communities in Accra.

As stated above, the motivation for the author's article is to explore another philosophical approach to Ghana's education. Concurrently, the author deploys a phenomenological approach to this study, "bracketing" the author's biases to interview and reflect on approaches Ghana could adopt to restructure its post-Covid-19 philosophy of education. To achieve this aim, the author organised in-depth interviews with pupils and students, their teachers/lecturers and parents/guardians for this paper. The author uses pupils to refer to pre-university individuals, while student refers to those in the university. The author's study was more about eliciting stories about the experiences of these pupils/students than gathering figures. The author wanted to analyse the lived experiences of these students to be able to gauge the needed reforms that Ghana needs to introduce to fashion new teaching approaches and reconfigure the philosophical foundation of education. The author focused on the philosophical approach to learning and technological mediation in education because they have had a double-sided effect on pupils/students – which then tends to impact the worldview of learners. The author, therefore, designed my research qualitatively, with an open-ended interview guide that focused on key thematic areas such as the reason for education, teaching methodology, and a new philosophical foundation of education. With this, the author organised in-depth interviews with the author's respondents. Occasionally, when the author needed to follow up on some interviews over the phone.

To incorporate ethical considerations in the research, the author first spoke with the parents of learners under the age of 18 years for their consent. This is because, in Ghana, a child under the age of 18 years is treated as a minor. But depending on mere figures to determine age was also problematic. Because the author interviewed university first-year students who were under the age of 18. So, instead of rigidly applying the quantitative logic of 18 years as a determinant of maturity, the author also relied on social status, in the case of university students to curate my ethical consideration. Thus, because university students were unsure of their safety from the pandemic in the public, and also sought to conceal their perspectives from their parents – part of fostering their socially autonomy as young adults, the author did not have to speak to their parents in collecting data.

Since the author designed my research qualitatively, and informed by interest in stories, the author used multiple non-probability sampling to gather my respondents. This non-probability sampling included snowballing and purposive sampling techniques. With the snowball sampling approach, the author identified persons within the author's circle to reach individuals who were not in the author's immediate social network or reach. Because the author has resided in Maamobi-Accra since 1984, the author readily identified all the categories of my respondents for the paper. For East Legon, the author relied on friends in the community to reach select respondents. Through this approach, the author interviewed 20 respondents – made up of 10 boys and 10 girls at the senior high schools and 10 male and 10 female young people from the tertiary institutions. All the second circle pupils were in the final year of their schooling, while those at the tertiary level were in second and third years. It was difficult getting the final year students, as several of them were preparing for their long essays – a requirement for their undergraduate graduation.

From the perspective of socio-demographical information about respondents, none of them was formally working and none of them was married. Religiously, the respondents were made up of Muslims and Christians, belonging to the different strands of either Pentecostalism, historic churches, or Sunni-Tijaniyya Islam. None of them claimed identified with indigenous religion nor came across as religious *non*. At the East Legon, 7 out of 10 of the respondents were Christians; while the remaining 3 were Muslims. At the Maamobi community, 6 of the respondents were Muslims, while the rest of them were Christians.

The respondents were also actively involved in religious activities with a few of them occupying influential positions in their campus faith-based associations. As people of faith, the respondents shared a non-binary worldview that mainstream life as an interlock between the material and spiritual worlds. This non-binary cosmogony is also a characteristic of indigenous religion (Prempeh, 2022b, pp. 269–291). For this reason, it was not very difficult for the author to explore their responses through the perspective of Ghana's Triple Heritage, minted out of these three religious' traditions. More important, that all the respondents believed in God as the ultimate source of all human beings was important for the author's analysis. They all gave interesting and revealing accounts about the social impact of the pandemic on their social skills. Nevertheless, because of the similarities in the stories respondents shared, the author rather sampled those that speak generally to their collective experiences. The author also sampled a few of the responses from teachers, lecturers and parents. Interviews were recorded and transcribed manually and analysed based on the objective of the study – the social impact of online teaching. The author adopted qualitative thematic analysis, providing thick description and reflections. The author's aim was to establish a seamless correlation between the social impact of the

pandemic, social skills of students and a need for restructuring Ghana's educational reform, based on the country's Triple Heritage.

COVID-19 AND ONLINE TEACHING: THE EXPERIENCES OF GHANAIAN PUPILS/STUDENTS

Following the coronavirus pandemic, the government of Ghana, rightly, introduced online teaching. This was part of the global practice of ensuring that gaps were not created in the educational needs of pupils and students (Reimers, 2022). Leveraging the media, radio and television, Ghana's Ministry of Education provided countrywide education to citizens of the country (Edumadze et al., 2022). Aside from the traditional media of communication, radio and TV, the Ministry also invested in social media handles. This usually involved a merging of the two mediums of teaching where offline teaching in a studio is streamlined currently on social media handles, especially Facebook.

Through the above strategic interventions, several students and pupils readily accessed online teaching without feeling left behind. But a majority of those who accessed online teaching were middle class city and town dwellers, who had smartphones and other electronic gadgets, such as computers (Kwapong, 2022). Several of the pupils in the countryside, who lacked smartphones, hardly had access to online education. The government, however, did well in ensuring that such children did not lag as the Minister is reported to have collaborated with some IT industries to provide alternative means to such pupils (Kwapong, 2022). But on the whole, the Ghanaian state deployed the liberalisation of the media since the country's re-democratisation in the 1990s, to use the radio and TV to reach most of the village dwellers (Adom, 2020).

Since the liberalisation of Covid-19 social distancing and safety protocols by the end of 2021, pupils and students were allowed to go

back to school for in-person classes. But after a few months of lockdown and social immobility, several parents were concerned about their children contracting the virus (Obeng et al., 2022). Given that several Ghanaians had not been vaccinated at the end of 2021, any report of a student contracting the virus results in a spike in panic and anger among parents. An example was the massing up of parents at the Accra Girls' Senior High School built by the country's first president, Kwame Nkrumah in 1953, to take their children home (GhanaWeb, 2020). The media's sensational reporting of such cases increased the anxiety of parents and students.

In all this, the focus of my paper is the social impact of online teaching. Without limiting the psychological impact of the lockdown on pupils, I want to focus on the social aspect. The social aspect is as critical as the psychological because the human sense of gregariousness is needed to reconstruct Ghana's post-Covid economy. The author's study revealed that students converted and practised the social distancing rule as physical distancing -- imperilling conviviality on post-lockdown campus life. The few weeks of lockdown reoriented students away from their sense of social conviviality, which was also borne out of the lingering fear that they may contract the virus should they close social gaps with their friends. The general impact of this was that the social distancing reinforced the implicit practice of socially marginalising persons considered to have some form of physical deformity. As the author shall extensively discuss in the course of this paper, the social distancing rule revitalised the social ostracization of the blind and persons with visibly unique physical outlook. Consequently, when the author interviewed the pupils and students, the author elicited the following as samples:

A female second year Junior High School pupil at the Kotobabi 11 said as follows:

During the lockdown, I felt the world was collapsing on me. That I couldn't see my friends and teachers was not good. There were times I felt the world was coming to an end and my schooling would shortly also end. But after depending on TV and smartphones for my education, there are times I feel I shouldn't go to the class, but rather learn on my own. This is because, with online teaching, we had great teachers with more expertise than several of my teachers.

The *othering* of persons who physically looked different proved quite difficult for the visually challenged. Already, the Ghanaian community, with a certain of "wholeness" of person have selected socially marginalised the visually impaired. The pandemic deepened the anxiety and social *othering* of the blind. As the author gathered from the study, the *othering* of the blind was quite challenging that it re-structured the social interactions between visually impaired persons and those with no such challenge. A case of this was expressly articulated by a third year visually impaired student at the University of Ghana. He said as follows:

The lockdown wasn't easy at all. Our lecturers migrated several of our courses online. But the challenges for me were basically two: First, the frequent power outages and second, the irregular internet supply. The erratic supply of energy and the internet were a challenge to me. But more importantly, I missed the company of my friends, including those who are not visually impaired. In school, finding myself in a gathering of people who shared my attribute or empathise with me and offered unsolicited but needed help made life more exciting. But now, even when we are back to school, the fear of a surge in Covid-19 has strained all social relations. People are rather more careful, so unlike pre-pandemic days when people were willing to help, these days, even when I am running into a ditch, because of taking a wrong step, I notice people only speak in giving instructions, instead of holding me.

Beyond the social altercation that the pandemic and its attending social distancing rules mandated, the author's observed mixed impact of the pandemic. The schools' incorporation of e-learning and teaching methods broadened the base of students who participated in academic work. Nevertheless, in terms of approaches to teaching, the online teaching and learning practice undermined the social dimension of teaching, which often involves a dialogical, face-to-face interactions. Consequently, e-learning and teaching temporarily reversed the significance of education as student-teacher-centred approach to teacher-centred approach. This development obviously frustrated teaching as it also potentially impeded teachers' objective of teaching as a means of stimulating critical thinking in students and social conviviality. A lecturer at the University of Ghana, who pleaded anonymity said about his experiences as follows:

With the coming introduction of online teaching, the university succeeded in reducing the deficit that students would have suffered. Nevertheless, online teaching had its own impact. It is either students who could not join because they had no smart gadgets or erratic energy and internet supply. But for me, that I couldn't see the face of my students was worse. It was always as if I was speaking to a room of an empty audience. Sometimes, I ask questions or seek their opinion to be sure my students were following. But usually, for 5 minutes, I get no response. When I take the initiative to mention names, I realised that several of them had joined for formality's sake and left to do their own thing. The issue was also complicated by the fact that students couldn't put on their video without disrupting the strength of their internet connectivity.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

As the author has previously said, the author collected several similar responses from respondents, but upon transcription, the

author sampled the above for space. Meanwhile, the author will be referring to a few other respondents that are specific to a specific comment the author makes. We could glean a few social impacts of the pandemic-induced online teaching on a student. First, social cohesion among students suffered during the pandemic. As the visually impaired student said, because of the global and local imposition of lockdown rules, students returned to school with a new understanding of bodily contact. A lot of students have become more aware of the extent to which they got close to their friends than ever before.

Indeed, in the Ghanaian social landscape, social distancing is very crucial; it is gendered and also based on age and social class (Salm & Falola, 2002). Men and women who are not kin members are expected to keep a reasonable distance when talking (Koduah, 2010). A distance is also expected to be kept between those in authority and followers; similarly, distance is kept among students, usually between seniors and juniors. For all this reason, moral issues are usually judged on social distancing. For example, the author has observed that a young man who keeps touching a young lady deliberately is considered immoral and sexually lustful. Two men who walk holding hands in public; or male and female adults who openly kiss in public provoke the moral concerns of several onlookers. Often, they are profiled as sexually perverse.

Nevertheless, a social relationship is also based on distance. Shaking hands, as opposed to hugging, is a common practice among Ghanaians (Naylor, 2000). Among students, both men and women shake hands and snip when they meet or when driven into an exciting mood because of an ongoing conversation. Hugging, which is becoming more common, is treated as an elitist practice among students and middle-class constituencies. All of this points to the issue

of touching and social distance as part of the cultural practices of human beings (Simmel & Levine, 1972).

Regrettably, as the study discovered the public conflated physical distancing social distancing, which created problems for a visually impaired student. In Ghana, the idea of a "whole" person is embodied in the person of a chief (Busia, 1951). As the representative of ancestors, the chief is expected to be physically and mentally sound and impeccable (Busia, 1951). Any person who is blind, for example, can hardly be considered for chieftaincy. While the logic of physical and mental impeccability may have been informed by the role of premodern chiefs as warriors, the idea of physical "wholeness" has persisted in 21st century Ghana.

In 2013, the government of Ghana, under Mr John Dramani Mahama appointed Dr Henry Seidu Daanaa as the country's first visually impaired Minister to mediate the affairs of chiefs (GhanaWeb, 2017). Unfortunately, some chiefs made recourse to the primordial idea of a "whole" person as a leader to protest the appointment of Dr Daanaa. The issue nearly divided the chieftaincy front. This was a sad incident, but following the social impact of the pandemic, the experience of a visually impaired student, who feels socially isolated needs a relook at Ghana's philosophy of education.

Next is the issue of students exercising conviviality in learning. The basic school pupil, referred to above, said she is losing interest in group learning. This issue needs to be taken seriously by the education sector. Historically and traditionally, children often learn in a group, sharing ideas and critiquing one another. In traditional societies, education was oriented along sociogenic pathways such that children observed and participate in learning the basic values of social life (Prempeh, 2022a). Often, gathered around the fire when the full moon appeared, children participate in the communal activity of folklore, including storytelling. The social structure of folklore was such that an

elderly person tells a story to the children, or the children engage in the social practice of benign form insults, called "*mess mess*" or playful invectives – when the author was growing up in the 1980s in Accra. While insult has a complex and arbitrary role in social cohesion, among children, trading insults at one another as part of folklore was healthy for building social resilience and tolerance (Nii-Dortey & Nanbigne, 2020).

At universities, students form study groups to help one another. The transition from senior high school to the tertiary level could be very disruptive for several students. This is because, until the government of Ghana's introduction of the junior secondary school concept in 1987 (Thompson & Casely-Hayford, 2008), several people went to university, relatively in their late adult lives. This implied that most of them may have had a stint in the world of work and formed a complex understanding of conviviality and social ties. They had also acquired enough experience to live as quasi-autonomous persons on university campuses. But since the late 1980s and more recently the turn of the millennium, several students pursue tertiary education while they are still in their early days of young adult life. Many of them, therefore, struggle with both the independence they enjoy on university campuses and the pressures associated with academic work. At the University of Cape Coast (UCC) and the University of Ghana where the author both schooled and worked as a teaching assistant, the author observed that several students from the secondary schools who moved to the universities had enormous challenges adapting to those who had had pre-university work experience. The author also observed that at the UCC in particular students who are often dismissed for non-academic performance are those directly from secondary schools, as opposed to those who had gone through the college of education.

Consequently, study groups are one of the key avenues for students to survive both the academic and the stressful life on campus. So, with students reorienting themselves away from study group practices, the consequences could be challenging for not just academic performance but nation-building. Given the endemic problem of ethnocentric and religious fanaticism that continue to burden Ghana's development (Faanu & Graham, 2017), the collapse of social cohesion and conviviality would certainly deepen nepotism and worsen the already social canker of corruption.

Already, the eruption of social media in Ghana and the concurrent pervasiveness of smartphones since the turn of the millennium had undermined sociality. Social media has had multiple benefits to the Ghanaian and global human constituency. Young people have mobilised online to challenge political corruption and misgovernance (Agana & Prempeh, 2022). As to whether such online activities which sometimes translocate to offline street demonstrations have had the desire of altering systemic injustice does not take away social media as broadening the frontiers of communication. But the social media regime has contributed to the progressive evolution of human beings from Ibn Khaldûn's "desert" life to the virtual world of cyborgs. In the cyborg world, the language is "selfie" where Durkheim's organic solidarity has progressed into extreme forms of self-sufficiency, self-determination, and self-motivation. The result has been the near collapse of temperance and measured tolerance in the world of imperfections. More so, it has deepened a cancel culture or extreme intolerance where persons who disagree with others are cancelled and reduced to pariahs.

Parents are lecturers are all complaining about extreme forms of social exclusion and tension on the campuses. At the time of writing, male students at the campuses of the University of Ghana and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology had taken

student rivalry to the point of extreme violence. In 2021, a senior high pupil who felt discontented with an examination he had written recorded himself in a video, brazenly berating the president of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufu-Addo. While insulting leadership is not new, social media has given visibility and wide broadcasting of what would have otherwise been limited to a particular space.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion, the author argues that the responses elicited from the study point to the need for recuperating human society through re-working the philosophy of education. The author's argument stems from the fact that students developed several deficits in their social skills. The result of which was the complex multidimensionality of social exclusion. Meanwhile, education, as the author has established is sociogenic that is highly significant in a social context of interpersonal exchange of ideas. That sociogenic disposition of education implies that, both indigenous and western, it is the basic means of socialisation. Concurrently, much as the technical answers to reforming education is very important, a complement of it would be the philosophy of education that emphasises social conviviality to affirm human dignity. I mention education as the basic unit of recent socialisation in Ghana because, as part of the breaking down of gendered roles, several families have outsourced the early nurturing and socialising of their children to schools. As a result of the modern regime of work, urbanisation and short maternity leaves, several parents send their babies to school, soon after six months of birth of babies. For this reason, schools and the state have become key institutions for socialising people. Indeed, religious institutions are also playing a role, but the schools are by far more influential, in my estimation, following the growing trend in boarding houses for even children of less than 18 years.

The impact of outsourcing of early childhood care to institutions rather than parents, almost a necessary "evil" in the neoliberal economic world has arguably robbed children of affective relationship between them and their parents. This situation, as the author surmises, has been exacerbated by the dislocation of social relationship among students that the pandemic has engineered. It is against this background that the author recommends a need for retooling the philosophy of Ghana's education to upset the impact of pandemic-driven social exclusion. It is also to enforce the idea of human ontological dignity. Considering that the author's goal is to complement to the "how" answers with the "why" answers, the author incorporated Ghana's Triple Heritage as a response. Ghana's Triple Heritage was part of the state formation strategies that the nationalists, particularly Kwame Nkrumah, cultivated to enjoin the idea of African personality. As part of constructing Ghana's nationalism and patriotism for nation-building, the country's first leader, Kwame Nkrumah (1964) developed the philosophy of consciencism. *Consciencism* is a complex philosophy that would require a separate paper to elucidate (Boadi, 2000; Nkrumah, 2016). But for this purpose, I align with Nkrumah's *consciencism* as the creative synthesis of Africa's heritage, indigenous cultures, Islam and Christianity, for social cohesion.

Ali Mazrui has referred to Nkrumah's *consciencism* as Africa's Triple Heritage. Deploying the Triple Heritage, the author argues that the various religious traditions in Ghana enforce human dignity. The author has already discussed Ibn Khaldun to significantly represent the Islamic position (though not theological). So, instead of repeating anything about Islam here, the author discusses indigenous cultures and Christianity.

The indigenous cultures in Ghana, focusing on the Akan for convenience's sake, are oriented towards the oneness of the human community. The Akan axiom says that "Every human being is a child of God." With this, the Akan society has a nationwide shared philosophy that endorses the evolution of culture towards communalism and a sense of social cohesion. This was captured by the Ghanaian philosopher, Kwame Gyekey as follows:

Culture, thus, comes into being as a result of people looking for ways of dealing with the various problems that arise out of human beings living together in a society. The problem of how to survive collectively, and relate to and help one another leads to the formation of a communal way of life. The problem of regulating the behaviour of the members of society and bringing order, social harmony, stability and peace to society leads to the establishment of legal and moral codes. The desire to express their creative talents and communicate their feelings leads to the creation of such art forms as music and dance forms. The way people look at the universe may lead to questions about its origin and beliefs in some ultimate being (or beings) beyond the universe as worthy of reverence and worship: herein lies the beginning of religion, or religious practice. The ideas or beliefs of the people concerning death and the hereafter lead to the kind of ceremonial practices or funerals that are instituted for the dead (Gyekye, 2013, p. 141).

The above shape the Akan idea of communalism which according to Kwame Gyekye "immediately sees the human as inherently (intrinsically) a communal being, embedded in a context of social relationships and interdependence, never as an isolated, atomic individual" (Wiredu & Gyekye, 1992, p. 104). Reducing all this to Christianity, the Christian idea of God creating human beings in His image is also important for the philosophy of education. Since the 19th Century, racism or W.E.B. Du Bois' colour line, which he identified as

the problem of the 20th century ([Du Bois, 2015](#)), – has undermined and battered the human family. Africans are considered ontologically and genetically inferior to whites, while in Ghana some ethnic groups have looked at others as inferior. Consequently, the issue of how to live with differences remains a major challenge. For this reason, the philosophizes the Christian idea of God creating human beings in His image as an endorsement of the ontological dignity of every human being. While human beings may have different abilities, none is naturally superior to the other.

In conclusion, the author argues that the incorporation of Ghana's Triple Heritage into the country's philosophy of education will help overcome the debilitating effect of pandemic-driven social exclusion that could be a major and disruptive pandemic in mediating social relations. But the author also admits that the recommendation has major limitations. One of these challenges is the resources it would take to develop an appropriate curriculum that would investigate further to invest in the nuggets of wisdom embedded in Ghana's multiculturalism. Another challenge is how to ensure that one particular worldview does not swamp other perspective in Ghana's overwhelming Christian demographical reality. As a suggestion, the author recommends extensive research to explore the strategies that the state and other stakeholders could adopt to recuperate the importance of Ghana's Triple Heritage to formulate a socially convivial philosophy of education.

REFERENCES

Adarkwah, M. A., & Agyemang, E. (2022). Forgotten frontline workers in higher education: Aiding Ghana in the Covid-19 recovery process. *Physics and Chemistry of the Earth, Parts A/B/C*, *127*, 103202. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pce.2022.103202

Adom, D. (2020). The Covid-19 global pandemic: Socio-cultural, economic and educational implications from Ghana. *International*

and *Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences*, *9*(3), 202–229. https://doi.org/10.17583/rimcis.2020.5416

Adzovie, D. E., & Jibril, A. B. (2022). Assessment of the effects of Covid-19 pandemic on the prospects of e-learning in higher learning institutions: The mediating role of academic innovativeness and technological growth. *Cogent Education*, *9*(1), 2041222. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2022.2041222

Agana, A.-N., & Prempeh, C. (2022). Of farms, legends, and fools: Re-engaging Ghana's development narrative through social media. *Media, Culture & Society*, *44*(7), 1290–1306. https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437221111918

Alrefai, A., & Brun, M. (1994). Ibn Khaldun: Dynastic change and its economic consequences. *Arab Studies Quarterly*, *16*(2), 73–86. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41858090

Amankwa, E., & Asiedu, E. K. (2022). Emergency e-learning acceptance in second-cycle institutions in Ghana: A conditional mediation analysis. *SN Social Sciences*, *2*(4), Article number: 42. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-022-00338-3

Amihere, A. (2022). Appropriate technology for teaching and learning in Ghanaian higher educational institutions during and post Covid-19 era. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, *11*(2), 74–81. https://doi.org/10.24940/ijird/2022/v11/i2/FEB22036

Boadi, K. N. (2000). The ontology of Kwame Nkrumah's consciencism and the democratic theory and pratice in Africa: A diopian perspective. *Journal of Black Studies*, *30*(4), 475–501. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2645900

Busia, K. A. (1951). *The position of the chief in the modern political system of Ashanti: A study of the influence of contemporary social changes on Ashanti political institutions*. International African Institute, Oxford University Press.

Campbell, H. A., & Lövheim, M. (2011). Introduction: Rethinking the online–offline connection in the study of religion online.

Information, Communication & Society, *14*(8), 1083–1096. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2011.597416

Chetan, G. (2011). Schools adrift. In J. Casewit (Ed.), & E. Lohja (Trans.), *Education in the light of tradition: Studies in comparative religion* (pp. 119–129). World Wisdom.

Darwin, C. (2003). *The origin of species* (150th Anniversary edition). Signet; Original work published 1859.

de Tocqueville, A. (2002). *Democracy in America* (H. C. Mansfield & D. Winthrop, Trans.; 1st edition). University of Chicago Press.

Du Bois, W.E.B. (2015). *The problem of the color line at the turn of the twentieth century: The essential earl essays* (N.D. Chandler, ed.). New York: Fordham University Press.

Durkheim, E. (2014). *The division of labor in society* (S. Lukes, Trans.). Free Press; Original work published 1984.

Edumadze, J. K. E., Barfi, K. A., Arkorful, V., & Baffour Jnr, N. O. (2022). Undergraduate student's perception of using video conferencing tools under lockdown amidst Covid-19 pandemic in Ghana. *Interactive Learning Environments*, *Latest Articles*. https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2021.2018618

Faanu, P., & Graham, E. (2017). The politics of ethnocentrism: A viability test of Ghana's democracy? *Insight on Africa*, *9*(2), 141–158. https://doi.org/10.1177/0975087817715534

Foucault, M. (1982). *The archaeology of knowledge: And the discourse on language* (3988th edition). Vintage.

Ghanaweb. (2020, July 7). *Parents demand immediate vacation of wards form Accra Girls SHS following coronavirus outbreak* [HTML]. Ghanaweb. https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Parents-demand-immediate-vacation-of-wards-from-Accra-Girls-SHS-following-coronavirus-outbreak-1000672

GhanaWeb. (2017, July 13). *First visually impaired Minister presents award to Mahama* [HTML]. GhanaWeb. https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/F

irst-visually-impaired-Minister-presents-award-to-Mahama-558269

Gyekye, K. (2013). *Philosophy culture and vision: African perspectives. Selected essays* (Illustrated edition). Sub-Saharan Publishers.

Khaldûn, I. I., & Lawrence, B. B. (2015). *The muqaddimah: An introduction to history* (N. J. Dawood, Ed.; F. Rosenthal, Trans.; Abridged edition). Princeton University Press.

Koduah, A. (2010). *The woman's head-covering in church: Controversies surrounding the issue*. Excellent Printing Press.

Kundu, N. D., & Ngalim, A. N. (2021). *Covid-19 impact on education and beyond*. VIJ Books (India) PVT Ltd. http://public.eblib.com/choice/PublicFullRecord.aspx?p=6631846

Kwapong, O. A. T. F. (2022). Online learning experiences of adult applicants to a university in Ghana during the Covid-19 outbreak. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, *OnlineFirst*, 20427530221125856. https://doi.org/10.1177/20427530221125858

Marrou, H. I. (1982). *A history of education in antiquity* (G. Lamb, Trans.; Later print edition). University of Wisconsin Press.

Mazrui, A. A. (1986). *The Africans: A triple heritage*. Little, Brown and Companay.

Mazrui, A. A. (2002). *Africanity Redefined: Collected essays of Ali A. Mazrui* (UK ed. edition, Vol. 1). Africa World Press.

Naylor, R. (2000). *Ghana*. Oxfam EPP Books Services.

Ngwa, S. E., & Lawyer, B. (2020). The competency-based approach in public universities in Anglophone Cameroon: Implications for the Tuning Africa Project. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, *10*(4), 38–59. https://doi.org/10.9734/AJESS/2020/v10i430274

Nii-Dortey, M., & Nanbigne, E. (2020). Tabooing insults: Why the ambivalence? *Journal of Philosophy and Culture*, *8*(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.5897/JPC2019.0039

Nikolopoulou, A., Mirbagheri, F., & Abraham, T. (2018). Introduction. In A. Nikolopoulou, T. Abraham, & F. Mirbagheri (Eds.), *Education for sustainable development: Challenges, strategies and practices in a globalizing world* (First edition, pp. xi–xxxii). SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd.

Nkrumah, K. (2016). Consciencism (1964). In F. L. Hord, Mzee Lasana Okpara, & J. S. Lee (Eds.), *I Am Because We Are* (Revised edition, pp. 65–74). University of Massachusetts Press; JSTOR. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1hd18x6.11

Nucci, L. P. (2001). *Education in the moral domain* (1st edition). Cambridge University Press.

Nussbaum, C.M. (2010). *Not for profit: Why democracy needs the humanities* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2010).

Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2020). *Decolonising the academy: A case for convivial scholarship*. Basler Afrika Bibliographien.

Obeng, C., Amissah-Essel, S., Jackson, F., & Obeng-Gyasi, E. (2022). Preschool environment: Teacher experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic in Ghana. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *19*(12), 7286. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19127286

Okrah, K. A. (2003). *Nyansapo (the wisdom knot): Toward an African philosophy of education* (1st edition). Routledge.

Owusu-Fordjour, C., Koomson, C. K., & Hanson, D. (2020). The impact of Covid-19 on learning—The perspective of the Ghanaian student. *European Journal of Education Studies*, *7*(3), 88–101. https://doi.org/10.46827/ejes.v0i0.3000

Pals, D. L. (1987). Is religion a *sui generis* phenomenon? *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *55*(2), 259–282. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1464494

Phelan, W. (2012). What is *sui generis* about the european union? Costly international cooperation in a self-contained regime. *International Studies Review*, *14*(3), 367–385. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23280306

Prempeh, C. (2021). Religion and the state in an episodic moment of Covid-19 in Ghana. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, *4*(1), 100141. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2021.100141

Prempeh, C. (2022a). Polishing the pearls of indigenous knowledge for inclusive social education in Ghana. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, *5*(1), 100248. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2022.100248

Prempeh, C. (2022b). Decolonising African Divine Episteme: A Critical Analysis of the Akan Divine Name of God (Twereduampon Kwame). *Journal of Religion in Africa*, *52*(3–4), 269–291. https://doi.org/10.1163/15700666-12340231

Putnam, R. D. (2004). *Democracies in flux: The evolution of social capital in contemporary society* (Illustrated edition). Oxford University Press.

Reimers, F. M. (Ed.). (2022). *Primary and secondary education during Covid-19: Disruptions to educational opportunity during a pandemic*. Springer International Publishing. https://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-030-81500-4

Ripstein, A. (1987). Commodity fetishism. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, *17*(4), 733–748. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40231565

Salm, S. J., & Falola, T. (2002). *Culture and customs of Ghana*. Greenwood Press.

Sartre, J.-P. (2007). *Existentialism is a humanism* (C. Macomber, Trans.; Annotated edition). Yale University Press.

Sherlock, S. (1997). The future of commodity fetishism. *Sociological Focus*, *30*(1), 61–78. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20831808

Simmel, G., & Levine, D. N. (Eds.). (1972). *Georg simmel on individuality and social forms*. University of Chicago Press. https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/G/bo3622859.html

Thompson, N., & Casely-Hayford, L. (2008). *The Financing and outcomes of education in Ghana* (RECOUP Working Paper No. 16). Research Consortium on Educational Outcomes and Poverty. https://ceid.educ.cam.ac.uk/publications/WP16.pdf

Tsevi, L. (2021). Covid-19 and higher education in Ghana: The case of a public higher education institution. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Perspectives in Higher Education*, *6*(1), 150–155. https://doi.org/10.32674/jimphe.v6i1

Turkle, S. (2012). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other* (1st edition). Basic Books.

United Nations. (2020, August). *Policy brief: Education during covid-19 and beyond* [HTML]. United Nations Sustainable Development Group. https://unsdg.un.org/resources/policy-brief-education-during-covid-19-and-beyond, https://unsdg.un.org/resources/policy-brief-education-during-covid-19-and-beyond

Weiss, D. (1995). Ibn Khaldun on economic transformation. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, *27*(1), 29–37. https://www.jstor.org/stable/176185

Wiredu, K., & Gyekye, K. (1992). *Person and community: Ghanaian philosophical studies I*. Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.

Wolf, S., Aurino, E., Suntheimer, N., Avornyo, E., Tsinigo, E., Jordan, J., Samanhyia, S., Aber, J. L., & Behrman, J. R. (2021). *Learning in the time of a pandemic and implications for returning to school: Effects of Covid-19 in Ghana* [CPRE Working Papers]. University of Pennsylvania.
https://repository.upenn.edu/cpre_workingpapers/28/