

# Sixty four years of independence, the status of our Ghanaian Languages

Sampson L.K. Yekple<sup>1</sup>, Iddrisu Alhassan Sibdow<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Languages, Ewe Unit, St. Teresa's College of Education, Hohoe, Ghana*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Languages, Dagbani Unit, Tamale College of Education, Tamale, Ghana*

**Abstract:** The performance of Ghanaian Languages (GHLs) during the post-colonial Ghana has been in the hands of political parties and their ideological orientation. This paper looks at the trend of performance of the GHLs during the colonial era and arguably challenges the efforts of the successive military and democratic governments over the sixty four years of independence. The declaration of independence and freedom from the colonial masters was expected to grant performance rights to the languages. The paper found that governments paid lip services to the promotion of the GHLs as compared with the Guggisberg's colonial era. Participation in the enactment and implementation of language policies has been limited to only government appointed elites. The general society equate success in education, employment, respect and prestige to the ability to speak English hence not giving due credit to the GHLs. The paper concludes that Ghana as a sovereign state has not done much after attaining independence though some improvement has been chalked. The paper hence suggest among others, the passing of a bill in parliament which becomes a legislative instrument for the language policy to put finality to the struggle. This instrument will further enjoin the legislature, the judiciary, the executive and the citizenry to perform various roles to ensure better performance of the GHLs in education and media.

**Key words:** Ghanaian Languages, status, education, performance,

## I. INTRODUCTION

The paper aims to showcase the performance of the indigenous Ghanaian Languages in education and media focusing purposefully on the last sixty-four years of independence of Ghana. We confirm that much work has been done regarding language policy situation in Ghana. However, these studies have concentrated largely on language use in the classroom, language attitude, language policy implementation, debates on L1/L2 use as medium of instruction, the perception of Ghanaian on the use of L1 as medium of instruction (Owu-Ewie, 2017) and how the L2 only MoI violates the human and linguistic rights of Ghanaian children. The story has not been smooth and pleasant though. This paper is arguing that the effort made by successful governments in the development of our local languages alongside the independence journey has not been enough. Data for the paper was elicited from available literature on the subject matter.

It is generally asserted that Ghana is a multilingual nation (Owu-Ewie, 2017). This is due to the presence of the multitude of heritage languages spoken across the length and breadth of the country. Majority of these local languages are spoken indigenously in Ghana only. Indigenous languages

play an important role in transmitting cultures, values and traditional knowledge. Recognition of the value of one's mother tongue help develop a sense of pride in it. The recognition and appreciation of the indigenous language can help promote an attitude of mind of the speech community towards a reciprocal respect for other cultures and tongues. The Ghanaian Languages as is also the case for other African languages have been used for oral communication in commerce, human interaction, entertainment, propaganda, education and many more (Al-Hassan, 2007:1). Constituting an essential part of an ethnic community, mother language is a carrier of values and knowledge, very often used in the practice and transmission of intangible cultural heritage. The spoken word in mother language is important in the enactment and transmission of virtually all intangible heritage, especially in oral traditions and expressions, songs and most rituals. Using their mother tongue, bearers of specific traditions often use highly specialized sets of terms and expressions, which reveal the intrinsic depth oneness between mother tongue and the intangible cultural heritage (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/ich-and-mother-languages-00555>: retrieved on 29/03/2021).

The status of a language is the legal, norm or policy barking a government has given it for specific use. The status of a language may be high when it emanates from government or low when it is controlled by lesser bodies like churches or ministries. It may also be explicit when it is stated and documented or implicit when it is just a norm practiced by people (Al-Hassan, 2007:2). The German colonial administration saw the importance of indigenous languages and assigned it a high status for use in education (Obeng 1997: 71-72, Aboagye Da-Costa & Adade-Yeboah, 2019). Despite the existence of explicit policies in multilingual societies that suggest the specific language that is deemed appropriate for promoting quality education, there appears to be a lack of implementation strategies (UNESCO, 2008). In the case of Ghana many of the policies ever formulated during the years of independence remain at committee report level. The best that was done was only to issue a white paper on the committee report or make public pronouncements.

Languages in the world are estimated at about 6000. Out of these numbers only a few hundreds have genuinely been given a place in education systems and the public domain, and less than a hundred are used in the digital world (<https://www.un.org/en/observances/mother-language-day> on

29/03/2021). The estimated number of Ghanaian indigenous languages has been negligible according to available literature while, Bamgbose (2000) suggested fifty-seven languages, Gordon (2005) indicated eighty-six, Opoku-Amankwa (2009:122), Aboagye Da-Costa & Adade-Yeboah (2019) and others put at seventy-three. Simmons and Fennig (2017) hold a view that there are about eighty-one Ghanaian Languages out of which seventy-three are indigenous and eight are non-indigenous. The variation in the data on the number of languages is due to difficulty in distinguishing between language and dialect. The other is the lack of clear-cut definition between ethnic and linguistic identities. It may also be due to limited and outdated data on many Ghanaian Languages, and human attitude towards the languages (Owu-Ewie, 2013; 2017).

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrines the right to freedom of opinion and expression. UN Resolution A/RES/61/266 called upon its Member States to promote, preserve and protect all languages used by people in the world. This resolution has particular relevance for mother tongue so vital to self-expression. Language is primarily a spoken medium. However many of the heritage languages are often ascribed low status (De Luca, 2017:161). Article 26 Section 1 of the 1992 Constitution (Ghana, 1992) declares that "Every person is entitled to enjoy, practice, profess, maintain and promote any culture, language, tradition or religion subject to the provisions of the Constitution". In total compliance to the constitution at the local government level, District Assemblies are also allowed to conduct their business in a Ghanaian language common to the communities in the District (Local Government Ministry, 2016). The Standing Orders of the Parliament of Ghana (Parliament of Ghana, 2000, p.29-30) also allows for debates to be conducted in Ghanaian Languages if a member so desired. Aboagye Da-Costa and Adade-Yeboah (2019:144) laments that in the parliament of Ghana in 2017, a Member of Parliament expresses herself in the indigenous Ghanaian heritage language and was unfortunately morked not only by her colleague parliamentarians but the general public. It is also of public notice that before 1957 only eleven Ghanaian Languages was approved by the colonial masters for use in education (Aboagye Da-Costa & Adade-Yeboah, 2019; Opoku-Amankwa, 2009:122). Owu-Ewie(2006:77) mourns the indegenous language situation when he said that Ghana has been a strong advocate of the African personality since Nkrumah's era but could not improve the performance of the GHLs beyond the colonial efforts. He argued that the promulgation of the use of English as the medium of instruction in education and the abandoning of her indigenous languages in education is therefore in opposition to this ideology. In terms of radio and television broadcast, the indigenous languages are fairly promoted. Discussions with regard to defining official and national languages and ultimately to develop a National Language Policy have been on the drawing table since independence but is yet to see the light of day. It may essentially be because of the various

views expressed by political parties, Ghanaian elites and the lack of consensus among stakeholders in language, education and media (Aboagye Da-Costa and Adade-Yeboah, 2019:142; Mpofu & Mutasa, 2014:226; Opore-Henaku, 2016).

## II. PERFORMANCE OF THE GHANAIAN LANGUAGES IN THE COLONIAL ERA

The Ghanaian Languages were given an official explicit high status during this era. The languages performed fairly well in terms of speech and text. Colonial governors before 1920 did not support the use of the heritage languages for education in the country. The cultural discontinuity theory operated highly in schools. Al-Hassan, (2007:15) reported that schools and educational bodies at the time who did not comply with English only medium of education were sanctioned. They were declared not qualified to receive grants to run affairs of their schools. Before 1920, there was no recognized language policy in the country. The situation changed after the World War II from 1919 when Gordon Guggisberg assumed the throne of governorship.

The intention of the governor at the time was assumed to be that in an attempt to educate the Ghanaian his cultural identity should not be ignored. This would allow him the opportunity to function appropriately in his society. Guggisberg remarked: ... our aim must not be to denationalize them, but to graft skillfully on to their national characteristics the best attributes of modern civilization. For without preserving his national characteristics and sympathy to touch with the great illiterate masses of his own people, no man can ever become a leader in progress, whatever other sort of leader he may become (Graham, 1976).

Guggisberg was interested in helping to resolve the language dilemma in the Gold Coast. He invited prominent people, commissions and set up committees to advise him directly on his decision to resolve the language issues. He constituted and inaugurated the Education Committee on 5th March, 1920 chaired by Mr. D.J. Oman. The African rep was Mr. Josiah Spio-Garbrah, Headmaster of Government Boys School in Cape Coast. The committee made fifty-two recommendations and fifty-three suggestions. The committee recommended that the Ghanaian Languages should be used for education. Upon receiving the committee report, the governor remarked that: This is probably the most important of the committee's recommendations. How can these infants learn a foreign language an adult might?(Al-Hassan, 2007:17). The governor sanctioned the production of vernacular books for use in schools. Later came the Guggisberg's sixteen principles of education. The twelfth principle was down to earth for the promotion of the indigenous languages. While an English education must be given it must be based solidly on the vernacular. The Education Committee 1937-1941 recommended the compulsory introduction of Ghanaian language in the elementary schools to Teacher Training Colleges.

It was in this regime that the Ghanaian Languages became a

subject of study at University of London Matriculation Examination. By 1930s Ghanaian Languages became a subject of study at secondary schools and examinable up to O' Level by Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (CLES) equivalent to other recognized languages. It was also a requirement for the award of teachers "Certificate A". For consideration for appointment as a school supervisor one had to pass and be able to speak one Ghanaian language. Notable in the regime was the compulsory pass of a test in a Ghanaian Language for civil servants as a requirement for promotion (Al-Hassan, 2007). This recognition of the Ghanaian Languages gave it a high status and respect in education and social interaction. Both the Ghanaian Languages and English language were given a fair recognition and status during the colonial regime. This harmony functioned in the domains of the cultural responsive theory of respecting the home culture and school culture of the learners. Unfortunately however, there was a strong wave of mixed feeling among a cross section of Ghanaian elites that the recognition the British were giving to the Ghanaian Languages was a calculated approach to give inferior education to Ghanaians (Nyamekye & Baffour-Koduah, 2021).

### III. PERFORMANCE OF GHANAIAN LANGUAGES IN POST-COLONIAL ERA (1951- DATE)

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah took over the leadership of government business from the colonial masters after he had won the first legislative election on the ticket of the CPP. He appointed Mr. Kojo Botsio the first minister responsible for the implementation of education policies. They continued the implementation of the language policy of the colonial regime. The CPP government quickly launched the Accelerated Development Plan for Education aimed at providing universal education to the citizenry. As part of its implementation was the roll out of night schools for adults. The intention was to train all Ghanaian adults to be literate in at least one Ghanaian Language. It was also a move to facilitate the achievement of faster dissemination of government plans and ideologies and for also to achieve a wider coverage. The masses were taught to read and write in in some of the government sponsored Ghanaian Languages across the country. The Ministry of Social Welfare and Community Development was responsible for the implementation of this project. Five Ghanaian Languages were introduced on National Radio and Television. They include Akan, Dagbani, Ewe, Ga and Nzema (Al-Hassan, 2007).

The Vernacular Literature Bureau (Now the Bureau of Ghana Languages) was established in 1951 for the purposes of developing and publishing basic educational materials in the Ghanaian languages for schools. The linguistic prides of the Ghanaian languages were accorded a very high status and motivation during these early years of indigenous governance. One would have been expecting more programmes and policies to intensify and increase the number of Ghanaian languages in education and National media.

However in 1956, the orientation of the Ghanaian elites who thought the use of the Ghanaian Languages was encouraging inferior education staged a move. This resulted in the constitution of the Barnard Committee 1956. This committee was to investigate to ascertain whether the use of the English Language to teach throughout the primary education was feasible intrinsically sound and educationally desirable. If so, what should be the mode of change and on what date should the changes take effect. The committee decision was surprisingly divisive. The majority report recommended the continuation of the Accelerated Development Plan for Education to the latter.

A one member (from a product of English only education in the pre-Guggisbeg era) minority report, however, recommended the use of English Language as medium of instruction throughout primary education from 1957. The government received this report but never produced a white paper on any of them. In 1957 to the surprise of all, the government made English Language a medium of instruction from Primary Two. Experimental schools were established where English was used as MoI from Primary one. A credit pass in a Ghanaian Language as a requirement for admission into Teacher Training Colleges was no more enforced. Ghanaian Languages were no more taught in the middle schools even if done, with a reduced lesson periods. In some cases, it was reported that the periods were used for other subjects. Al-Hassan (2007) reported that parents became happy to hear their children speak English. Parents encouraged their children to learn and speak more English at home than the mother tongue. International schools were quickly springing up where the English MoI was used from as early as Kindergarten or Primary One. He again reported, however, a gradual poor performance at the GCE O' Level as a result of the language situation.

There was a sequential low performance from 51% in 1960 to 24.5% in 1968. In 1957, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah made the great declaration to launch the independence of Ghana that Ghana, *our beloved country is free forever*. One would have anticipated from the intention of this declaration that the government was poised to propel the Ghanaian language situation to a higher pedestal. It was also expected that localization of the independence to foster the projection of the GHLs. Unfortunately in 1963 the Bannerman Committee was constituted. Their duty was to review the pre-Tertiary education in the country. The committee recommended the use of the GHLs in pre-upper primary school. In implementing the recommendations of the committee, the bullet on the use of the GHLs was ignored. The government surprisingly and ironically encouraged the Mass Education of adults in the Ghanaian Languages.

The National Liberation Commission also set up the Kwarpong Committee in 1966 to conduct a comprehensive exploration into the challenges affecting the entire education system in the country (Andoh-Kumi, 2002). The committee recommended the use of the GHLs as a MoI at the lower

primary while the switch to English starts from primary four. However, the change to English may start earlier than primary four in the metropolis and other urban areas. It added that the GHLS should continue to be studied as a subject. Upon receipt of the committee report, government ruled that the recommendation on GHLS should be flexible. They ensured that the GHLS became a MoI only at primary one. They, however, allowed its study as a subject in the school curriculum. Teachers of the Ghanaian Languages organized a conference to compose their grievances into a resolution to government. The Commissioner of Education attended the opening ceremony and gave positive assurances. His presence alone at the opening ceremony suggested some level of green light and motivated participants of the conference. All that the NLC government did was to shelve the resolutions presented to it from the conference.

The Progress Party also through a policy allowed the use of the GHLS as a MoI up to year three of school life. They ensured that all public and private schools respect the policy directives. All regional directors of education were empowered to fully implement the language policy. This was the time Language Coordinators were appointed at the regional level to ensure and monitor the implementation strategies. The Curriculum Research Development Division of the Ghana Education Service at Saltpond supported by the Institute of African Studies and the Department of Linguistics at the University of Ghana reviewed the existing curriculum to ensure successful implementation of the policy. The Minister of Education in his announcement indicated the readiness of the University of Cape Coast to introduce an undergraduate program in Ghanaian Languages to train qualified graduate teachers to teach Ghanaian Languages in the secondary schools and Teacher training Colleges. The Ghanaian Languages were also made a compulsory subject at the lower level of secondary school and as a requirement for admission into Six Form. The government's plan for the Ghanaian languages was very beautiful, motivating and projected a fruitful operational future. The government was overthrown in a coup in 1972.

The government of The National Redemption Council (NRC) also promoted the performance of the GHLS. Though their initial policy statement suggested some form of discrimination and compulsion, they demonstrated seriousness in the implementations strategies. As stated by Al-Hassan (2007) they released a circular letter to regional directors of education in the middle of the school year. The circular instructed the directors to take some immediate steps regarding the use of the GHLS. The circular as captured in Min, of Educ.Cir.1973NoE439/TV2 has the following;

- i. Where is an urban school there is a reasonably large number of pupils with a common mother tongue, such pupils should be grouped together during L1 period and be taught their mother tongue, if it is a government sponsored language, instead of their indigenous language of the urban area.

- ii. Regional Education Officers should instruct District Education Officers to carry out a quick survey to find out the main language groupings in the urban schools and to take this into consideration when stationing teachers the following year.
- iii. Head teachers are advised to place requisitions for the different titles of GHLS books they needed for teaching the different L1 groups in their school.

Ghanaian Language Organizers are to involve themselves in the whole exercise by providing the assistance needed to make the teaching of GHLS active. Other commendable efforts of the government towards the performance of the GHLS included the establishment of The School of Ghana Languages at Ajumako in 1973 (Nyamekye & Baffour-Koduah, 2021).

This school trained qualified teachers in the Ghanaian Languages who intend taught same in the schools. They were awarded Teachers Diploma in Ghanaian Languages. Some of the products of this school are still seasoned English and Literature teachers in some of our schools today. They also made the Post of Ghanaian Languages Organizer a substantive position in GES. Ghanaian Languages were accepted at Advance (A) level and became externally examinable at the General Certificate Examination. By 1974, Ghanaian Languages became an undergraduate course in the University of Cape Coast.

To speed up the printing of basic teaching and learning resources for the GHLS, manuscripts were sent to Honkong for printing. A sub-committee within the National Advisory Committee on Curriculum was set up to be responsible for assessment issues. The sub-committee was tasked to prepare test items to be used to assess GHLS. They were also expected to advice government on Ghanaian Language policies in education. The Dzobo Committee 1974 was formed to review the structure of education in the country. Their report was dubbed New Structure and Content of Education in Ghana. The recommendations again added value to the GHLS. They maintained the GHLS as MoI in the first three years. At the Junior Secondary schools the GHLS shall be a subject of study.

They shall also be a core subject in the Senior Secondary Schools. The manifestation of this recommendation was effected in 1987 and 1991 respectively for the two levels of education. To ensure the teaching and learning of the GHLS at the basic level of education the GHLS became a subject at the Teacher Training College. Pre-service teachers were also expected to learn an additional GHLS to his own. Some Teacher Training Colleges were selected and grouped in A, B and C. Group B colleges trained pre-service teachers who would come back to teach GHLS, English and French in the JSS.

The Peoples National Party took over administration and silently rejected all the policies of NRC. This government discredited the idea of New Structure and Content of

Education and started implementing the CPP agenda. Fortunately they did not last long in power. The Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) came to power through coup d'etat on 31st December, 1981 whilst NDC I & II were in power through the ballot box in 1992 and 1996 respectively. A few years into the PNDC's administration, they adopted the Language Policy by the Dzobo Committee 1974. They initially implemented the recommendations of Dzobo Committee Report partially until 1987/88 academic year when it was fully implemented.

This government also instituted a major curriculum review, the Evans Anfom Committee to review the entire curriculum. Ghanaian languages again became the MoI for Primary 1-3 and a compulsory subject in the primary school, Junior Secondary School (JSS), Senior Secondary School (SSS) and Teacher Training Colleges. They introduced the Cultural Policy. Production of GHL programmes were encouraged in both the print and electronic media. They encouraged the publication of children's magazines for promoting Ghanaian values.

In 1988, they launched the Functional Literacy Program similar to CPP's Mass Education Campaign. This program was placed under the Non-Formal Education Division (NFED) of the Ministry of Education. Regional and District Coordinators were appointed and facilitators were trained to teach adult learners. Fifteen GHLs were officially recognized to be taught in schools and instructional materials prepared in these GHLs. This is the first time the coverage of the GHLs was expanded in any activity since 1951. The government encouraged the use of GHL during political rallies and Unit level as well as District Assembly meetings.

On assumption of power under the NDC in 1992, they continued the Language Policy of the PNDC. School of Ghana Languages at Ajumako was moved to the newly established University College of Education, Winneba as a department so GHL could be offered as diploma and degree courses. The four units that constituted the Department of Ghanaian Languages later grew into four departments as Departments of Akan-Nzema Education, Department of Ewe Education, Department of Ga-Dangme Education and Department of Gur-Gonja Education.

Currently these departments constitute a Faculty of Ghanaian Languages Education in the College of Ghanaian Languages which offers up to MPhil. Plans are far advanced to start Ph.D programmes in Ghanaian languages in the college. In 1994, the Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Medium of Instruction (MTB-BMoI) was relaxed and GHLs were no more a compulsory subject in SSS as a result of an announcement made by the then Minister for Education due to the mass failure in the English language SSSCE result. This led to English-only MoI from the onset of education during this period. The government not satisfied with the MoI that was being practiced after the announcement, set up the Educational Reforms Review Committee the following year.

The committee submitted their report the same year recommending that GHLs should no longer be a Core subject but rather an Elective at the SSS. They met the displeasure of the GHL experts and some stakeholders in education and so GHL was restored as a core subject at the Teacher Training Colleges in 1998/99 academic year and a MoI in the first three years of schooling. This led to the review of the GL curriculum/syllabi. NGO's, individuals and publishing companies were encouraged to publish GHL books and other teaching and learning resources for Basic schools.

Due to change in government, the publication of the GHL books and Teaching Learning Resources did not materialize in their era. NPP I & II (2001-2008) pursued the Language Policy of the NDC I & II partially for the first few years. The relaxed attitude towards the MTB-BMoI led to EMoI in most basic schools with GHL as an optional subject of study. Several alterations were made to the language in education policy since 1951. However, one prominent and recent changes which raised a great debate among educationists in Ghana was the change initiated by the NPP government without public consultation in the year 2002.

This policy abolished the use of Ghanaian languages as the LOI. The government argues that teachers, especially those in the rural areas were not using the English language even at the upper levels. It was also mentioned by the then Minister of Education Professor Ameyaw-Akumfi, that the English proficiency of the students was being compromised (Nyamekye & Baffour-Koduah, 2021). The change was met with the displeasure of many linguists, Ghanaian Language experts and some chiefs. Through persistent appeals by some linguists and educationists, the Education Review Committee chaired by Prof. Jophus Anamua-Mensah (then VC of the University of Education, Winneba) was set up in 2002. The committee submitted their report in October the same year. As usual, the recommendation on LoI was that GHLs be used as MoI in the lower primary (KG 1- P3) but before it is implemented, there should be adequate TLMs and personnel. At the later part of their second term in office, all countries were mandated to achieve the MDG of which quality education was included. Therefore, early literacy acquisition became a priority.

This gave birth to the National Literacy Acceleration Programme (NALAP) concept which was used to implement the MTB-BMoI in Ghanaian public schools. It was developed by National Literacy Task Force (NLTF) which was set up by the Ghana Education Service (GES) to investigate the low literacy skills identified as the major factor undermining quality education (Anyidoho, 2018). It was envisaged that by primary 3, learners would acquire enough vocabulary to help them become familiar with the English language. With the support from USAID and EQUALL, teaching and learning resources were prepared and a pilot study was done.

The NDC took the MTB-BMoI mantle from the NPP from 2009 to 2016 and continued with the implementation of the

NALAP programme. The NALAP was the programme that was used to implement the MTB-BMoI language policy in Ghana. They implemented the NALAP nationally during the 2009/2010 academic year. Prior to the national roll out, they organized a week workshop for all Early Childhood Education teachers on the appropriate use of the bilingual MoI and its associated teaching and learning materials or resources (TLRs) as well as equipping the teachers with the appropriate instructional strategies for the implementation. This era welcomed other MTB-BMoI interventions like the “Sabre Education” and *Learning*.

The learning project was a reading intervention aimed at introducing pupils to reading first in their indigenous language. It was dubbed Early Grade Reading Project. The project ended in 2018/2019 academic year. Learning handed over materials including Pupil Readers and Teacher Guides to the GES. In an attempt to use best approaches to teaching literacy in the basic schools, Director General of Ghana Education in August 2017 directed all Metro/Municipal and District Directors of Education to compile and submit the list of individuals, NGOs and other agencies using phonics or any literacy activity in all forms in their respective districts to his outfit. This list was meant to guide the GES to assess and select the appropriate and effective phonic method to be adopted by the curriculum reviewers. The instruction was carried in a letter with reference number EP2765/X/73 dated 27/08/2017. The dilemma of the letter is that it is not all phonic approaches that focus on mother tongue literacy development, at least jolly phonics can exemplify. The NPP again took over government administration from 2017. They are continuing the NALAP programme used to implement the current language policy they initiated. Even though the NALAP has not had its full implementation in schools, it is being used to encourage MTB-BMoI intervention in the country.

The current language policy though not different from that of the colonial era has demonstrated its resilience to survive the test of the various governments and is still in operation. This can be summarized as

- 1951 and 1956, it was used only for the first year.
- 1957 to 1966 a Ghanaian language was not used at all.
- 1967-1969 it was used only for the first year.
- 1970 and 1974 a Ghanaian language was used for the first three years and where possible beyond (to the sixth year).
- 1974-2002 a Ghanaian language was used for the first three years.

In October 2004 government issued a white paper on the report of the Education Reform Review Committee and stated that:

*“government accept the recommendation that the children’s first home language and Ghana’s official language should be used as the medium of instruction at*

*the kindergarten and primary level”* (Ministry of Education, 2004:27).

Government acknowledged the volume of research that supports and projects scientific basis for the early introduction of the mother language in school but ironically distance herself from that and put it so optional. That where teachers and teaching and learning resources are available and the linguistic composition of the classes is fairly uniform the children’s first language should be used as the dominant MoI in kindergarten and lower primary school. Government promised her readiness to invest in the production of teaching and learning resources to promote the study of the GHLS but did virtually nothing in that direction. This complicated situation is what the nation is managing till the introduction of the Standard Based Curriculum in September, 2021 and its follow up Common Core Program (CCP) for secondary education which allows the study of the GHLS as a core subject up to Senior School year one.

#### IV. PERFORMANCE OF GHLS IN MEDIA SPHERE

Radio broadcasting started in Ghana with the establishment of an electronic mass communication medium in 1927 as an alternative to traditional forms of mass communication. By the time, communication function through talking drums other traditional forms.

The first radio station was established during the colonial era on 31st July, 1935, Station Zoy in Accra with satellite stations in Kumasi, Sekondi and Koforidua (Boateng, 2009). Although broadcasting was used for nation building, it came under heavy control from 1757 when Ghana attained self-rule status. Being a medium of disseminating ideas and information successive governments exploited it until in the 1990s when a change in broadcasting practice in Ghana evolved to accommodate private participation in the media sphere.

Radio Eye, a private radio station was established in 1994 by Dr. Ives Wreko Brobbey. His action resulted in the change in official broadcasting policy. He unilaterally began test transmission without obtaining authorization from the government. His argument of defense was that a provision of the 1992 Ghanaian Constitution that states: “There shall be no impediments to the establishment of private press or media; and in particular, there shall be no law requiring any person to obtain a license as a prerequisite to the establishment or operation of a newspaper, journal or other media for mass communication or information. (Chapter 12, Article 162, sub-section 3).”

As a result, the government of Ghana regulated her media laws and started issuing radio frequencies to private broadcasters. The Decree of Telecommunications (Frequency Registration and Control) enacted by the Supreme Military Council (S. M. C.) in 1977 which regulated the establishment of media stations was repealed in 1996. The decree was restrictive limiting participation in the broadcasting industry and elevated the operation of Ghana Broadcasting Corporation

(GBC) as a government monopoly. Following the repeal the National Media Communications Act was enacted (Act 524) was to regulate, control, monitor the participation of both government and private practitioners in the media landscape of the country (Boateng, 2009).

This freedom encouraged many private individuals to establish FM and TV stations. The criminal libel law that had been used to incarcerate many journalists in Ghana was historically repealed in by the parliament of Ghana in July 2001 (Acheampong, 2017). The resultant manifestation of these reforms since 1996 is the proliferation of several print and electronic media houses. The Ghanaian Languages feature favourably in the programs in their various speech communities where the media house is established.

#### V. FINDINGS

The exposure of literature to this paper suggests that the performance of the GHLS has generated a lot of debate and conflict among Ghanaian elites and political figures even before independence. Some Ghanaian elites were of the view that the colonial masters were in the process of providing inferior education to the local society through the GHLS. This led to the inability of successive governments to promulgate any stable LP till date. When in 1963 the Ghana Institute of languages was formed, courses in the GHLS do have space to occupy on the course list to be studied till date.

World Bank report on education in Sub-Saharan African (2019) cited in Yekple, Vinyo and Kumah, (2021) estimates that by 2030 about 43% of children at age ten will still exhibit a high level of learning deficiency. The report laments that teachers in many countries are not providing the types, sequences, and amounts of instruction students need to acquire literacy skills. The report further suggest that children improve their literacy proficiency when taught first in the language they speak. We highlight the findings in few thematic areas.

##### *Factors affecting Participation in Language Policy issues*

The level of participation in language policy formulation and implementation has been met with a lot of challenges. One issue of concern is the lack of Political will on the part of successful governments. Governments' reluctance in giving full legal support to the LP in education has highly affected its implementation. They pay leap services to the LP over the years. A case of interest is the public announcement by the president on 9th October, 2020 that Gurune was becoming an examinable subject at Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and West African Secondary School Examination (WASSCE). A letter from The Ministry of Education to National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NaCCA) was chanced on social media. The letter with reference number EA116/140/01 dated 23rd November, 2020 states, "We write to convey to you the policy directive of government to adopt Gurune as an official language to be developed and taught in schools as part of the officially

adopted languages. Kindly take the necessary steps to develop the standard based curriculum in line with your guidelines for the appropriate levels of education." The content of the letter assuming it is official triggers few questions some of which may include the following;

- i. What level of consultation and engagement ensued between the education minister, GES and UEW within the one and half month period to warrant the instruction in the letter?
- ii. The standard-based curriculum being referred in the letter is already being implemented since September, 2019. Which curriculum is NaCCA being directed to develop?
- iii. How can Gurune, a mother tongue yet to be recognized by government become an official language in Ghana?
- iv. Which government policy was being referenced in this letter?

When government demonstrates such double standards, it affects, monitoring and supervision of the implementation strategies. Support for material production, review and training of teachers to be well equipped with pedagogical and content knowledge has been a major national implementation challenge. There has always been inadequate public education on language use in education. Governments fail to educate the public on existing LP and its prospects. The public is hence left unaware of the existing LP or any change or review.

##### *Donor Suppression*

Conditions from Donor Agencies affect the selection of a language for use for a particular purpose. Countries that support education may require the use of a particular LP as a condition. This would mandate the receiving nation to review her LP to qualify to access the support funding.

##### *Attachment of preference to one language over the other*

Another factor worth noting is the preference for a language of education demonstrated by stakeholders. Key stakeholders including parents, students, teachers and educational administrators prefer using the L2 to the L1 at the early stages. They usually fail to validate the mother tongue based bilingual LP in education hence work to thwart its enforcement (Bronteng, Berson & Berson, 2019). Most stakeholder associate education of their wards to success, prestige, civil service employment etc. but usually failed to check on the language in which same children are taught. A clear case is the position of J.T.N. Yankah who served on the Barnard Committee 1957 and produced a unilateral recommendation for English only as a MoI against the majority recommendation in favour of the GHLS. Also is the phasing out of GHLS from the Senior Secondary School and Teacher Training Colleges as a core subject in 1994.

##### *The National Language (NL) Factor*

The existence of a National Language (NL) fosters strong LP.

The non-existence of a NL in Ghana heavily affects the LP planning and implementation. In Tanzania, English has been deinstitutionalized altogether and is now taught as a course in the Department of Foreign Languages at the University of Dar-es-Salaam (Sukumane, 2000). Tanzania, Botswana and Ethiopia are the only countries on the African continent to boast of the use of national languages rather than colonial ones throughout the primary school system (Alidou, 2004). Tanzania gained independence six years after Ghana in 1963. Without a NL African languages tend to have little or no official status in their own countries. However, the adoption of a single official European language, in multilingual societies like implemented for Ghana in the CPP era, depoliticizes the heritage languages. Ironically these languages are declared to be the symbols of the nations. Resistance to the official language is seen as opposition to national unity and modernization, yet participation in the language is always limited to the so called educated individuals speaking the official language. In this way, language is a factor in restricting access to political and economic power, thus creating and sustaining socio-economic differences (Sukumane, 2000).

We assume that constructing a NL out of the tens of dozens of GHLs may face linguistic, social, economic and political challenges. The issue however, is how to legally support the heritage and official languages to function symbiotically to bolster the acquisition and learning of both.

#### *Inclusion of more GHLs in education*

The College of Ghanaian Languages Education in the University of Education, Winneba, runs a undergraduate degree and Master degree Programs in a Ghanaian Languages that has not been government approved language either in education or on national radio and television. Gurune has been studied since the time the School of Ghana Languages was moved to UEW (Owu-Ewie, 2006). Kusaal may also become an undergraduate course in due course. The orthography of Likpakpaanl is also being developed.

On the demand for improving the performance of indigenous languages (ib id) encouraged government to provide funds for the corpus development to incorporate technical and scientific terms into the various Ghanaian languages and also develop the written forms of the less developed ones. In January, 2015 the Association of Bolgatanga, Nangodi, Bongo and Tongo (BONABOTO) in the Upper East Region who are speakers of Gurune, staged a demonstration against the government delay in adding their language to the list of government approved languages used in education. They presented their grievance statement to the then minister of education through the Upper East Regional Minister. They mentioned that the language was being studied in five colleges of education in addition to UEW (Awuni, 2015).

On the 9th of October, 2020, The President Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo Addo, announced that Gurune will soon become examinable at BECE and WASSCE. He stated that he

had tasked the Minister of Education to work with the Ghana Education Service and the University of Education, Winneba to ensure that the processes are completed for Gurune to become examinable as soon as practicable. The language is also expected to become a medium of instruction in schools in its speech community. The President of BONABOTO hinted that both human and material resources needed for the smooth take off of the teaching of the language was readily available (Asankinaba, 2020). Following this announcement, schools in the Gurune speech communities have started the teaching of the language in schools. While the Frafras are fighting for the inclusion of their language in education because they have trained teachers and other academic resources to teach the language but not getting the approval, the Ga people are lamenting and pressing against the phasing out of the Ga language in schools in Greater Accra region. The worry is that there are only few teachers to teach the Ga language in the schools in its speech geography (graphiconline.com, 2021). The current trend of encouraging the promotion of the GHLs is to embrace multilingual education. The Mother Tongue Day celebration in 2021 was focused on multilingualism for inclusion in education.

#### VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Though the performance of the GHLs is recording some successes in the recent times, it is observed from the literature that the colonial era gave a stable performing platform to the languages than the self-rule era. The performance history after colonial era has been very rocky, checkered and demotivating. Mother tongue based bilingualism intervention projects have not been sustained by the successive governments. The sustainability of such projects die off after the project implementation years with the funding organization. The recent Early Grade Reading project by USAID *Learning* is evidence. Successive indigenous governments are divided on the language issue due to their party ideology and individualistic orientation about mother language use. What is usual about the various post-colonial regimes is to shelve the reports from commissions and committees they have constituted. The proliferation of community FM and private Television Stations in the country in recent years give rise to the use of the Ghanaian Languages for news broadcast, panel discussions, advertisement and entertainment. In same vein increasing number of churches also is increasing the use of the Ghanaian Languages for evangelism. The paper has proposed the following suggestions regarding the subject matter.

The role of teachers should not be underestimated since they are the major functionaries in what actually happens in the schools. In that regard, teacher proficiency in the indigenous languages should be taken into account in the process of teacher posting.

It is observed that the Early Childhood Education teachers are the basis of the first language use in the classroom. However, in the B.Ed program in the colleges of education has only one course of study in the GHLs in the four years. The paper



propose that the various universities mentoring the colleges of education should consider reviewing their curricular to meet this shortfall.

Similarly, teachers need to be educated to understand the policy and be provided with clear guidelines for effective implementation. An act of parliament need to be enacted on the Ghanaian language use in education. This act will enjoin both the legislature, the judiciary, the executive and the citizenry to collectively perform their roles to ensure equal and appropriate performance of the languages. It is essential for the Ministry of Education to draw up a plan through which it would gradually endorse most of the indigenous languages for use in schools. We also want to encourage individuals to venture into supporting activities that that are aimed at rekindling the promotion of mother tongue in our societies. Example of such efforts is an online platform, *Nayram Language Centre in Accra* focusing on teaching the GHLS to young children to acquire foundational literacy skills.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Aboagye Da-Costa, C. & Adade-Yeboah, A. (2019). Language Practice and the Dilemma of a National Language Policy in Ghana: International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 9(3), 142-149.
- [2] Acheampong, R. (2017). Repeal of the criminal libel law in Ghana; challenges and prospects for journalism. International Journal of Management and Scientific Research, 1(4), 79-89.
- [3] Al-Hassan, I. (2007). History of Language policies of Ghana. Winneba: E.F Printing Press.
- [4] Alidou, H. (2004). Medium of Instruction in Post-Colonial Africa. Medium of Instruction Policies. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- [5] Andoh-Kumi, K. (2002). Language of instruction in Ghana (Theory, Research, and Practice). Accra: Legon Language Centre, IEQ-Ghana.
- [6] Anyidoho, A. (2018). Shifting Sands: Language Policies in Education in Ghana and Implementation challenges. Legon Journal of Linguistics, 7(2), 225-243.
- [7] Asankinaba, E. (2020, October 9). Gurune to become examinable soon. Retrieved from dremsfmonline.com: dreamzfmonline.com/news/gurune-to--made-an-examinable-subject-soon-president-akufu-addo-assures-chiefs/index.html
- [8] Awuni, F. (2015, January 2). Make Gurune language examinable in BECE- BONABOTO. Retrieved from citifmonline.com: citifmonline.com/2015/01/make-gurune-language-examinable-in-bece-bonaboto/
- [9] Bamgbose, A. L. (2000). Language and exclusion. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- [10] Boateng, K. (2009). Radio in Accra: Communicating among Linguistically and Ethnically Diverse Audiences. Intercultural Communication Studies, 60-75.
- [11] Bronteng, J. E., Berson, I. R., & Berson, M. J. (2019). Public perception of early childhood language policy in Ghana: an exploratory study. Early Years., 39(3), 310–325.
- [12] De Luca, C. (2017:161). Mother tongue as a universal human right. International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, 161-165.
- [13] Ghana. (1992). Ghana.. Constitution of the Republic of Ghana. Accra: Government Printer.
- [14] Gordon, R. G. (2005). Ethnologue: Languages of the world. (15th ed.) (15 ed.). Dallas, TX: SIL International.
- [15] Graham, C. (1976). The history of education in Ghana. Accra: Frank Cass & Co Ltd.
- [16] Graphiconline.com. (2021, 2 11). Don't phade out Ga Language in Greater Accra Schools - Oyibi Chief. Retrieved from peacefmonline.com: peacefmonline.com/page/local/social/202102/438619.php
- [17] Local Government Ministry. (2016). Local Governance Act. Accra: Government Printer.
- [18] Mpofu, P. & Mutasa, D. E. . (2014). Language policy, linguistic hegemony and exclusion in the Zimbabwean print and broadcasting media. South African Journal of African Languages, 34(2), 225-233.
- [19] Nyamekye, E, & Baffour-Koduah, D. (2021). The Language of Instruction Dilemma in Ghana: Making a Case for the Various Ghanaian Languages . International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS) V(I), 146-150.
- [20] Obeng, S. G. (1997). An analysis of the linguistic situation in Ghana. African Languages and Culture, 10(1), 63-81.
- [21] Opere-Henaku, J. ( 2016). An exploratory study of news room routines of local and English language radio stations: the case of Adom FM and Joy FM . Accra: University of Ghana, M.Phil dissertation.
- [22] Opoku-Amankwa, K. (2009). English-only language-in-education policy in multilingual classrooms in Ghana. Language, Culture and Curriculum, , 22(2), 121-135.
- [23] Owu-Ewie, C. (2006). The Language Policy of Education in Ghana: A Critical Look at the English-Only Language Policy of Education. In J. M. al (Ed.), Selected Proceedings of the 35th Annual Conference on African Linguistics (pp. 76-85). Somerville: MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- [24] Owu-Ewie, C. (2013). The language policy of education in Ghana in perspectives: The past, present and the future. Languages and Linguistics, 32, 39-58.
- [25] Owu-Ewie, C. (2017). Language, Education and Linguistic Human Rights in Ghana. Legon Journal of Humanities, 28(2), 151-172.
- [26] Simmons, G. F., & Fennig, C. D. (2017). (Eds.) . Ethnologue: Languages of the world (20 ed.). Dallas, TX: SIL International.
- [27] Sukumane, J. B. (2000). Issues in language policy and planning: the case of Namibia. Studies in the Linguistic Sciences, 30(2), 200-208.
- [28] UNESCO. (2008). First Meeting of the Working Group of IBC and First Public Hearings on Human Cloning and International Governance. Paris: UNESCO.
- [29] World, B. (2019). Ending Learning Poverty: What will it take? Washington DC: World Bank.
- [30] Yekple, S.L.K., Vinyo, I. Y. and Kumah M.S. (2021). Developing Literacy And Numeracy In Early Childhood Education in Ghana: The role of traditional Ewe play games. International Journal of Progressive Sciences and Technologies (IJPSAT), 215-226.