

Reframing Civic Education in Ghana: Indigenous Relationality, Teacher Education, and Decolonizing Pedagogies

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Abstract:

This paper explores ways the concept of Indigenous relationality can be used to reframe civic education in Ghanaian teacher education. Although the Ghanaian government has been focusing its policies on participation, democratic principles, and civic duty, civic education in Ghana is still based on Eurocentric epistemologies where abstract and individualistic ideas of citizenship are prioritized. Based on a qualitative interpretive design based on decolonizing methods, data were collected using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with educators and teacher trainees at selected Colleges of Education. Results show that participants imagine civic life based on the principles of interconnectedness, reciprocity, and intergenerational responsibility, by making civic knowledge, civic identity and civic participation relational and social. Although these principles are partially implemented in pedagogical activities, including storytelling, community-based and experiential learning, their combination is not balanced and is mostly reliant on an individual initiative. The systematic integration of Indigenous relationality is inhibited by institutional conditions such as curriculum structures, teacher training, language policy and sparse community partnerships. This paper posits that the problem with civic education is not just the marginalization of Indigenous knowledge, but structural mismatch between epistemology and pedagogy and institutional practice. It progresses an integrated paradigm that situates Indigenous relationality as the epistemological paradigm, decolonial theory as the analytical prism, and critical place-based education as the pedagogical paradigm. Through the interrelations between these dimensions, the research has provided a contextually based methodology to reconsider civic education within Ghanaian teacher education and other postcolonial contexts.

Keywords: Indigenous relationality, civic education, teacher education, decolonizing pedagogy, Ghana, place-based education, Indigenous knowledge systems.

1.0 Introduction

The goals of civic education are to build knowledge and active citizenship although in Ghana the tradition has been heavily skewed towards a western liberalism tradition whereby abstract and individualistic concepts of citizenship are stressed. This results in the disconnect between civic learning and social and cultural realities they live in. Although African scholarship recognizes this tension, it is usually descriptive without much consideration on the ways these dynamics influence classroom practice. Consequently, civic education is often seen as neutral, and not controversial. This work fills this gap by situating Indigenous

relationality as a framework, re-positioning civic knowledge and civic participation as relational and context-based, and a further re-evaluation of civic education epistemology.

1.1 Background to the Study

Across Africa, the education systems continue to reproduce colonial epistemological imbalances, prioritizing Eurocentric knowledge and disregarding Indigenous systems (Dei, 2011; Adzahlie-Mensah and Dunne, 2019). This tension is sharp in Ghana civic education: although the policy is oriented towards participatory citizenship, the curriculum and pedagogy remain based on abstract, state-based conceptualizations of civic life (Boadu, 2021; Bekoe et al., 2013). This leads to a continuing disconnect between the goal of active citizenship and knowledge form stripped of social and cultural contexts of life. This gap is partially attributed by the existing literature. Pedagogical research focuses on teacher-centered teaching and low participatory competency, but teacher education research shows that there is no training on culturally responsive practice (Bekoe et al., 2013; Ntumi et al., 2023). These solutions, however, largely assume the problem to be technical and do not question the underlying epistemological assumptions and allow knowledge hierarchies to exist. The main place of this contradiction is teacher education, which is both the place of reproduction and the place of change. However, pre-service preparation usually focuses more on cognitive knowledge than on civic dispositions and civic participation, which is supported by curriculum, assessment, and language policies, which inhibit the manifestation of Indigenous civic knowledge (Boadu, 2021; Owu-Ewie, 2017).

The Indigenous knowledge is usually added without seeking to challenge the hegemonies even though it is getting increasingly identified (Dei, 2012; Odora Hoppers, 2002). Indigenous relationality is even more radical in offering a path to understanding the cultivation of civic knowledge and the encouragement of active civic engagement, which is closely interwoven with the mechanisms of human relationships and community ties, community, and environment (Wallin and Scribe, 2022; Kulnieks et al., 2016). However, it has not been utilized adequately in teacher education in Africa (Calderón et al., 2021).

The resultant gap is compound: pedagogy and epistemology are no longer linked; Indigenous knowledge is peripheral and there is no clear outline on how to integrate the principles of relationality into teacher education.

1.2 Problem Analysis

There is an inherent conflict between the above objectives of civic engagement with the epistemological premises or knowledge base of Ghanaian teacher education. Though policy emphasizes participation, democratic ideals, and civic responsibility, Eurocentric, individualistic concepts of citizenship (Dei, 2012; Boadu, 2021) are still relied upon to define, educate, and assess civic knowledge. The problem operates on three interrelated levels of epistemological, pedagogical and institutional layers that help each other.

The ecological stewardship, restorative practices, and communal deliberation as indigenous civic practices are treated at the epistemological level as an addition, but not part of civic knowledge (Adzahlie-Mensah and Dunne, 2019), an indication of the hierarchy of Western knowledge. Pedagogical instructional practices are based on imparting facts, rather than involving and engaging in critical thinking and competencies (Bekoe et al., 2013; Boadu, 2021), which favours abstract knowledge over lived knowledge. These trends are reinforced by curriculum designs, institutional assessment systems and language policies: standardized tests encourage memorization and mastery of the English language and the marginalization of Indigenous languages (Owu-Ewie, 2017).

The combination of these dimensions gives rise to a civic education, which, though superficially coherent, has no relation to the real civic life. Even though Indigenous relationality is an alternative that is based on

interconnectedness and responsibility (Wallin & Scribe, 2022), its implementation is still disjointed and lacks institutional support. The following problem statement can therefore be formulated: the absence of a coherent pattern of the way of converting relational principles into curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional practice makes reforms, rather than transformative.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Although there has been increased awareness of the importance of culturally based civic education, the education of teachers in Ghana is still influenced by western-centric epistemologies, which stress abstract and individualistic citizenship. This restricts the adoption of Indigenous knowledge and hinders the training of pre-service teachers to practice in a contextually relevant manner. Despite these weaknesses, as noted by scholarship, few hints at how Indigenous relationality can be systematically implemented are provided. The root of the issue is thus the lack of a cohesive model of incorporating relational principles in civic education in Ghanaian Colleges of Education.

1.4 Research Questions

To address this issue, the following research questions direct the study:

1. What are the principles of Indigenous relationality that are most appropriate to reconsider civic education in Ghanaian teacher education?
2. What are these principles implemented or limited in pedagogical activities in the Social Studies curriculum of Colleges of Education?
3. In what ways are institutional conditions facilitating or constraining the inclusion of Indigenous relationality in civic education in teacher education?

Research Objectives

The primary aim of this work is to discuss how the Indigenous relationality could be used as the basis of reimagining and reworking civic education in Social Studies at Ghanaian Colleges of Education. In particular, the research aims to:

1. Inquire into the epistemological tenets of Indigenous relationality and apply them to teacher education related to civic education;
2. Evaluate the implementation or limitation of these principles in pedagogical activities in the Social Studies curriculum of Ghanaian Colleges of Education; and
3. Explore the institutional context that informs the incorporation of Indigenous relationality in teacher education.

By these purposes, the research will create a coherent, culturally based, and contextually sensitive approach to civic education that goes beyond the western centric models and helps prepare pre-service teachers to be more socially responsive, participatory and ecologically sensitive to civic learning.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This work is important in various aspects. It promotes an Indigenous relationality-based culturally responsive framework in teacher education, providing conceptual and pedagogical guidance in decolonizing Social Studies. Based on Ghanaian Colleges of Education evidence, it creates context-specific information that is relevant outside of Ghana. It makes the status of Indigenous knowledge central and predicts the importance of the community knowledge holders by the way it challenges the established colonial hierarchies. The research is also relevant to the reforms in civic education by showing how

relationality could help create socially and ecologically responsible citizenship, as well as contribute to a higher level of equity based on inclusive and culturally based practices.

1.7 Scope and Delimitations

The current research concentrates on six Ghanaian Colleges of Education namely, St. John Bosco, Evangelical Presbyterian-Bimbilla, Jasikan, Tumu, Offinso and Komenda with empirical emphasis being laid on Ghanaian contexts. Although the study is informed by other international scholarship, the study is the most applicable to teacher education in Ghana and can be applied to the contexts of other West African and postcolonial contexts.

The research looks into the pre-service, degree-level teacher education namely the Social Studies civic education curriculum, but not in-service training or in other subjects. It takes a decolonizing epistemological approach that puts Indigenous knowledge as central, yet notes the constraints to capture the full spectrum of the Indigenous cultures of Ghana.

This qualitative research utilizes semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions using 16 interview participants (7 educators and 9 trainees), and 14 focus group participants (7 educators and 7 trainees) from five Colleges of Education. The study offers contextualized data that is rich but the findings cannot be statistically used as generalized findings. Classroom observation, student work analysis and longitudinal tracking to professional practice are also not included in the study.

2.0 Literature Orientation

This study is contextualized in reference to three cross-cutting strands, namely: Indigenous relationality and land-based education, decolonizing and Indigenizing teacher education, and critical civic education. Despite the challenge that these literatures are throwing to the epistemological hegemony of the West, it is not being properly incorporated. Newer scholarship proposes contextually based and epistemologically diverse methodologies, but pragmatic frameworks to tie together knowledge, pedagogy, and civic outcomes are scarce (Le Grange, 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021). Their similarities and differences are discussed in the review with an aim of identifying a major gap, including the absence of a unified framework that would unite Indigenous epistemology, pedagogy and civic education in the reality of African teacher education. It puts Indigenous relationality as a foundation to restructure civic education in Ghanaian Colleges of Education.

Indigenous Relationality Land-Based Education

The scholarship of indigenous relationality emphasizes the importance of interconnectedness, reciprocity, and responsibility to knowledge systems, rejection of individualism, and the placement of knowledge as relational and emergent through interactions among people, land, and the more-than-human world (Dei, 2011; Kovach, 2021; Wilson, 2008). The theory and application of relationality have variations. It is foreshadowed in African-centered scholarship as a contest to epistemic domination, and the turn toward the recovery of Indigenous knowledge (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, 2021), but has formed by other scholarship into methodological and ethical approaches with relational accountability and kinship (Kovach, 2021; Wallin and Scribe, 20). Although On-land-based education brings relationality to the pedagogy by making land a living and epistemic being and redefining the teacher as experiential and engaged in community learning (Kulnieks et al., 2016; Calderón et al., 2021). Empirical studies show that it can transform teacher identity and practice, most of which is primarily found not within an African setting, and some are skeptical about the generalizability to other settings where land relations and histories are different. Critical place-based education seeks to address this by anticipating the political, historical

and ecological dimension of place (Gruenewald, 2003; Smith, 2002), and more recent scholarship suggests paying attention to local epistemologies (Le Grange, 2016; Mathebula, 2020). But much of this scholarship is extrinsically founded and this inhibits contextual resonance. Collectively, these literatures show good conceptual consistency yet indicate a major weakness; that there are no systematized models of integrating relational and place-based approaches in African teacher education in a manner that is both epistemologically based and institutionally feasible.

Decolonizing and Indigenizing Education Teaching

According to the decolonial scholarship, reforming education is impossible through merely incorporating Indigenous material, rather, it is necessary to reorganize the epistemological orders, and the institutional practice (Schmidt, 2012). African scholarship supports the need to epistemically justify and relocate Indigenous knowledge to a central place (Le Grange, 2016; Mbembe, 2016; Seroto and Higgs, 2024). Major contrast is between decolonizing approaches taken by placing emphasis on the critique and Indigenizing approaches taken by reconstruction. Complementary, the literature is disproportional with criticism further advanced than practical models to apply. Empirical studies have shown that Indigenous knowledge is often added and, as a result, symbolically and not structurally included (Sabzalian, 2019; Tuck and Yang, 2012; Paraskeva, 2021; Stein et al., 2020). In places where more profound transformation takes place, it is associated with long-lasting community involvement, reflexivity, and context-grounded pedagogies (Calderón et al., 2021; Le Grange, 2016). However, these approaches are very resource consuming and they challenge scalability of centralized and resource constrained systems, of which Ghanaian Colleges of Education are. Thus, the literature is theoretically strong, yet it lacks a lot of context- and operational-implementation-specific guidance.

Re-conceptualizing Civic Education in Indigenous Frameworks

Civic education is mostly based on Western liberalism, which deems individual rights, formal involvement, and abstract civic information highly important (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004; Hoskins and Janmaat, 2019). Although these models have been extensively institutionalized, they have been opposed as less culturally responsive. In Ghana, curriculum is democratic but does not emphasize Indigenous civic practices, such as communal deliberation, consensus-building, and moral education embedded in cultures (Adzahlie-Mensah and Dunne, 2019; Boadu, 2021), leading to a gap between formal education and the experience of civic life.

The collective accountability and moral interdependence views of African philosophy are coupled with the relational concept of civic existence. But such views are seldom reflected in systematic curricular or pedagogical approaches. Civic education, Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy are separate areas of empirical research (Boadu, 2021; Quaynor, 2018) and the reforms are therefore fragmented. Overall, the literature reveals one gap: the deficiency of consistent and functioning model that would help to integrate Indigenous relational epistemologies into the pedagogical practice and civic learning. This disaggregation highlights the need to have a holistic system that is able to bridge knowledge, pedagogy and civic outcomes in the Ghanaian teacher education.

2.1 Research Gap

The literature shows that there are three gaps related to each other that limit the reform of civic education in Ghanaian teacher education. First, even though Indigenous relationality is conceptually thoroughly developed in the African literature (Dei, 2011; Wallin and Scribe, 2022), it is not widely practiced in Ghanaian Colleges of Education. The literature is very philosophically grounded and lacks in specifics on

how relational principles can be translated into policy, pedagogy, and institutional practice. Relationality, therefore, is not operationalized in a practical sense but it is more theoretical.

Second, there is a lack of integration in major disciplines. The research on indigenous knowledge, decolonial education, and civic education has been more of parallel development compared to a dialogue. Although epistemological critique is the emphasis in Indigenous knowledge studies, participation and curriculum in civic education, and structural analysis in decolonial scholarship are the foregrounds of analysis (Boadu, 2021; Adzahlie-Mensah and Dunne, 2019; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018) there is little synthesis between these realms. This disintegration leads to conceptually sound but practically unrelated reform initiatives which are inconsistent in epistemology, pedagogy as well as civic education.

Third, Ghana has largely omitted the development of structured, contextually-specific alternatives as existing studies have identified obstacles to implementation, lack of pedagogical innovation, and exclusion of Indigenous knowledge (Bekoe et al., 2013; Ntumi et al., 2023). Simultaneously, the bulk of empirical research on Indigenous and land-based education is placed outside of African contexts, so its relevance to Ghana is unclear.

In sum, these gaps can be said to indicate the lack of a coherent, context-sensitive framework between Indigenous relationality, civic education, and teacher education. The marginalization of Indigenous knowledge is thus not the key weakness, but the absence of systematic strategies that would allow making relationality an integral part of pedagogy and institutional practice. This research fills this gap by theorizing through empirically testing an integrated framework that places Indigenous relationality as the epistemological, decolonial theory as the analytical and critical place-based education as the pedagogical orientations to place the point of focus on reconstruction rather than critique.

2.2 Study Rationale

This work is a reaction to the necessity to address the epistemic marginalization in civic education, in which colonial histories still privilege foreign knowledge regimes over local histories, language, and forms of governance, and that curricula remain poorly-rooted in local epistemologies (Boadu, 2021; Seroto & Higgs, 2024). As a result, the pre-service teachers are not well equipped with the multicultural responsive pedagogy, and the curriculum delivery is also not balanced as there is a lack of interpretive capacity and resources (Bekoe et al., 2013; Ntumi et al., 2023). In civic education, it leads to disconnected learning where students learn not in relation to their lived realities and constrained meaningful democratic participation (Adzahlie-Mensah and Dunne, 2019).

Indigenous relationality presents a radical alternative in terms of focusing on shared accountability, ecological care, and intergenerational reciprocity within Ghanaian contexts (Dei, 2011). There are indications that civic education can be more impactful when incorporating Indigenous knowledge systems instead of focusing on Western models (Addae et al., 2025). This research is a part of a larger global and African call to decolonize education that promotes locally based practices and enhanced institutional power in Ghana (Seroto and Higgs, 2024; Ntumi et al., 2023). It eventually leads to educational justice by making Indigenous knowledge a primary resource to reconsider civic education (Seroto & Higgs, 2024; Addae et al., 2025).

3.0 Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Foundations

Three frameworks will inform this research: Indigenous relationality, decolonial theory and critical place-based education which will form the basis of reframing civic education in Ghanaian teacher education. The current literature is not coherent and does not allow the use of Indigenous epistemologies. This paper thus contributes to a cohesive framework where Indigenous relationality is the epistemology, decolonial

theory is the analytical, and critical place-based education is the pedagogical orientation, connecting epistemology, critique, and practice.

2.3.1 Indigenous Relationality as Foundational Epistemology

Indigenous relationality suggests the main theoretical ground of this research, placing relationships as the origin of knowledge, identity, and accountability. It is based on Indigenous worldviews that perceive the knowledge as a result of interactions between people, communities, land, and the more than human world and not as an abstract or individual possession (Dei, 2011; Wallin and Scribe, 2022). It thereby challenges the hegemonic Western epistemologies that favour individualism and abstraction. The keys to this framework are the principles of kinship and reciprocity, which influence the social life, ethics and knowledge production (Wallin & Scribe, 2022). This relational approach fills a major literature gap, in which civic education is framed in decontextualized, individualistic citizenship models. In the context of civic education, Indigenous relationality reconstructs civic knowledge as a form of social responsibility, civic identity as rooted in belonging and place, and civic participation as beyond the formal political organization to its care, stewardship, and intergenerational responsibility (Kulnieks et al., 2016). This would mean a move toward relationship and context-specific learning in teacher education, in accordance with the local cultural and ecological reality.

Decolonial Theory as Analytical Lens.

It is through decolonial theory that the critical lens of analyzing the way the colonial epistemologies still influence education systems in Ghana, even after the political independence, is possible. It notes how Eurocentric knowledge hierarchies continue to be present in curricula, pedagogy, and institutions, and how these knowledge hierarchies relegate Indigenous knowledge to inferiority (Dei, 2012; Odora Hoppers, 2002; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). In this respect, civic education is a disputed domain that is constructed by historical forces that naturalize Western versions of democracy and marginalize Indigenous cultures. It allows a critical questioning of the problems of curriculum inflexibility, teacher training, and language hierarchies as structural, not individual problems. Although the epistemological basis is laid out by Indigenous relationality, decolonial theory equips the analysis of power in teacher education. Nevertheless, since it focuses on critique, its incorporation with the Indigenous relationality enables the framework to shift towards reconstruction and place Indigenous knowledge at the heart of educational change (Smith, 2012).

Pedagogical Orientation of Critical Place-Based Education

Critical place-based education offers the pedagogical aspect of the structure through the translation of the relational and decolonial commitments into the teaching practice. It focuses on local context-based learning, local histories and ecological realities and deals with matters of power and colonial past (Scully, 2020; Calderón et al., 2021). This methodology is a response to the fact that there are no working models of how to incorporate Indigenous knowledge in the classroom. It provides viable relationships to implement relational pedagogy by land-based learning, community partnerships, and reflective engagement by foregrounding land, community, and lived experience. It thus fills the gap between epistemology and practice and instills Indigenous relationality in curriculum, pedagogy, and learning experiences in teacher education.

2.3.2 Integrated Framework: To a Relational Model of Civic Education

Collectively, these frameworks develop a comprehensive model that fills important gaps in the literature. Indigenous relationality determines what is meant by civic knowledge, decolonial theory describes its marginalization and reproduction in institutions, and critical place-based education offers the resources to do pedagogy. This integration redefines civic education in three aspects: civic knowledge as relationality and place-based; civic identity as belonging and collective responsibility; and civic participation as community practices and daily social relations. The framework provides a consistent foundation on which to restructure the civic education in Ghanaian Colleges of Education by aligning the epistemology, analysis, and pedagogy.

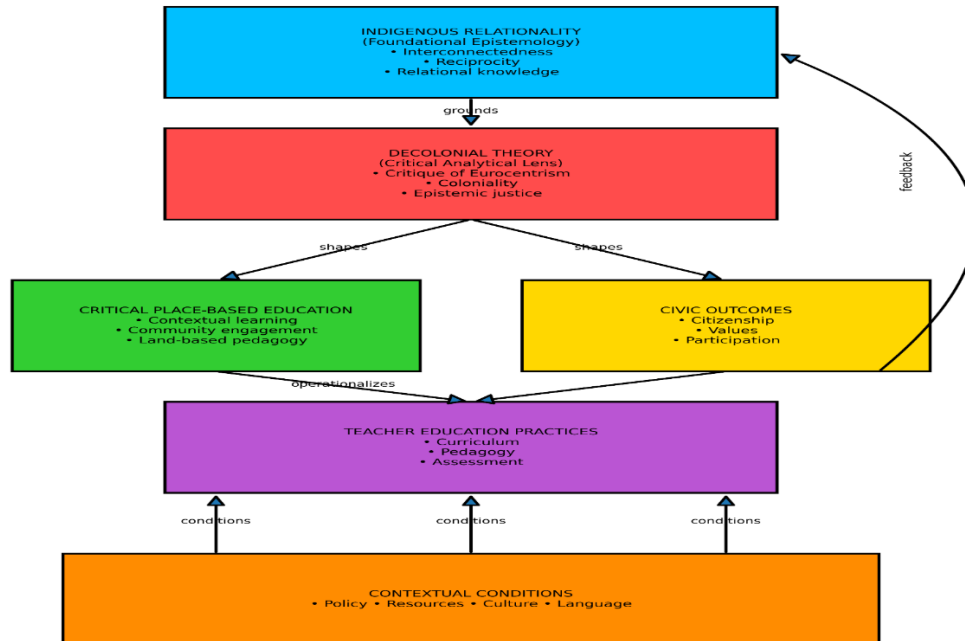
Connection to Research Design and Inquiry

This combined paradigm directly influences the methodological orientation of the research. It facilitates a qualitative, interpretive methodology based on the emphasis of relationality and lived experience wherein the views of the participants and the contextual meanings are central. Simultaneously, the decolonial lens can be used to approach the critical analysis of institutional conditions, whereas the pedagogical orientation helps to concentrate on the practice of how things are done and experienced. The framework thus does not just form what the study aims to know, the epistemological, the pedagogical, and the institutional aspects, but also the way in which this knowledge is produced and construed.

2.4 Conceptual Framework of Study

Reframing Civic Education in Ghanaian Teacher Education: Conceptual Framework. The epistemological basis is based on indigenous relationality, and the critical lens is decolonial theory, which determines the outcomes of pedagogical transformation as well as civic learning. Critical place-based education extends these by putting them into practice in teacher education. All elements of the framework interact with contextual conditions, which include institutional, socio-cultural, and material conditions and facilitate or restrict implementation. The framework is recursive and the civic learning outcomes ground relational epistemologies and inform pedagogical change. In decolonized logic model: Knowledge to Critique to Pedagogy to Practice to Outcomes. Under all structural and historical circumstances.

Figure1: Reframing Civic Education in Ghanaian Teacher Education Conceptual Framework



2.4.1 Definitions of Variables and Indicators

The four interdependent elements that are the conceptual framework (epistemological foundation, pedagogical practices, learning processes, and civic outcomes) are operationalized using specific indicators.

1. **Cores Variable: Indigenous Relationality.** This is an epistemological basis of the study.

Indicators:

- Emphasis on interconnectedness (human–land–community relations)
- Knowledge systems among the indigenous people.
- Mutual, nurturant, and mutual responsibility phrases.
- Use of cultural practices (proverbs, storytelling, communal norms)

2. **Pedagogical Variable: Critical Place-Based Education.**

This sums up the relational and decolonial principles in operationalizing practices of teaching.

Indicators:

- Blending of local knowledge and community resources.
- Use of land-based or experiential learning activities.
- Classroom dialogic and reflective practices.
- Exposure to local social, cultural and environmental issues.

3. **Mediator Variable: Civic Learning Processes.**

This is indicative of the inner learning experiences in which students understand and internalize civic knowledge.

Indicators:

- Critical awareness

- Ability to relate civic issues to lived experience
- Ethical decision making and thinking
- Belongingness and relational identity

4. Outcome Variable: Civic Outcomes

This is the re-invented functions of civic education in a relational and decolonial mode.

Indicators:

- Civic knowledge (contextual and relational knowledge)
- Civic identity (place and community based)
- Civic (responsibility, care, reciprocity) values.
- Civic engagement (community based and informal practices)

5. Analytical and Contextual Variables.

Decolonial Theory (Analysis Lens):

- Questioning Eurocentric curricular hegemony.
- Understanding of marginalization of Indigenous knowledge.
- Analysis of knowledge production power relations.

Contextual Conditions (Moderators):

- Institutional structures in Colleges of Education.
- Curriculum design and policy structures.
- Professional capacity and preparation of teachers.
- Community factors and socio-cultural factors.

2.3 How the Framework Guided the collection of Data and analysis.

The framework led to the data collection because it framed the interview and focus group protocols on the central elements-relational knowledge, pedagogical practices, learning processes and civic outcomes. The intangible theories such as relationality and decoloniality were converted into measurable variables (e.g., community knowledge, local examples, curriculum relevance), and questions were applied to draw the lived experience of participants in the postulates of the Indigenous methodological approaches. It also informed analysis, in both deductively coding data with framework-derived categories, and inductively identifying context-specific themes. Indigenous relationality informed relational interpretation of meaning, decolonial theory informed study of power and marginalization and place-based education informed study of pedagogical practices. The framework was all that was able to relate the micro level experiences and the structural processes that provided a rational basis on how civic education is produced and can be reorganized using Ghanaian teacher education. The research philosophy and design are based on the following:

3.0 Research Philosophy and Design

This research is informed by an interpretative paradigm that is informed by the relational and decolonial epistemologies. Knowledge is defined as a social construct, context, and co-construction and the reality is grounded in the experiences of the participants (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). It also endorses the Indigenous relational philosophy which is interrelated, reciprocal and responsible and is informed by the decolonizing methodologies (Smith, 2012) that foresee marginalized epistemologies and challenge the Eurocentric assumptions. These render the study interpretive, relational and decolonizing.

3.1 Qualitative Research Design

The research design is a qualitative multisite interpretive case study that will investigate the meanings of civic education and the practices among Colleges of Education (Yin, 2018; Stake, 2006). The colleges are different cases in their socio-cultural background, which allows them to be analyzed in-depth and compared across the cases. The design allows making context-specific insights and comparative cognition, that is why it is appropriate to research Indigenous relationality and how it can be engaged in civic education.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze data, which is a mixture of inductive and deductive analyses. The first round of coding was informed by Indigenous relationality, decolonial theory, and place-based education, but allowed for new patterns to emerge. Data were processed in phase steps of familiarization, coding, refinement and theme development according to the research questions and conceptual framework through constant comparisons across the interviews, focus groups and institutions to encourage depth.

Findings are put in the form of key themes, including conceptualizations of civic education, Indigenous relationality, pedagogy, institutional conditions, which are supported by word-to-letter quotes that represent both similar and divergent perspectives. Descriptive summaries and cross-group comparisons (educators, trainees, institutions) were used to make it clearer, and the bigger institutional and power relations, which affect civic education, were highlighted, such as the role of Indigenous knowledge (Smith, 2012; Chilisa, 2020). Correspondence between the data, themes, and research questions that were facilitated by the cross-case comparison and linking with the theoretical framework also provided rigor.

3.1.2 Implications for Methodological Approach

According to this paradigm, the study relies on a qualitative, interpretive paradigm that allows uncovering the experiences of the participants in their sociocultural and institutional contexts. The methodology of the semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussions fits the relational focus of the study offering the chance of dialogue, reflection and construction of meaning. The frame also informs the process of analysis, sensitive to: the relational nature of the participants in their narrative; the expression of Indigenous knowledge and values; the critique of the existing curricular and institutional organization; and the pedagogical action of the situation.

3.1.3 Research Sites and participants

The research was carried out in six purposely chosen Colleges of Education in Ghana: St. John Bosco, Evangelical Presbyterian (Bimbilla), Tumu, Offinso, Jasikan and Komenda that were selected to capture geographical, cultural, and institutional diversity and to facilitate a fine-grained appreciation of the practice of civic education. The sample consisted of teacher educators and pre-service teachers who are studying social studies. In general, it was conducted with 36 participants (16 in semi-structured interviews and 20 in the focus group discussions) equally distributed with regard to roles and gender.

3.2 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The information-rich participants that were selected through a purposive sampling strategy had a firsthand experience in civic education. The sampling was conducted in three phases; selection of six Colleges of Education that represent the degree of diversity, identification of pertinent educators and trainees and recruitment of the sampled was done on the basis of participation in social studies and knowledge of civic education. Sub-sampling purposive factors were used to guarantee equal representation among groups and institutions. The 36 sample size was adequate to saturate data and is in line with the qualitative case study expectations of depth and not generalization. Out of the people contacted, 30 agreed to take part (83 percent response rate), the rest did not do so because of time. In general, the sample was diverse in terms of positions, experience, and gender, offering plausible and contextually rich information.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

With the traditions of interpretive, relational, and decolonizing, this paper followed ethical principles as an ongoing and reflexive responsibility. The subjects were told of the aim of the study, the study procedures, and their rights, such as the voluntary nature of the study, and the right to leave the study without punishment, and coercion was avoided as much as possible in institutional settings. The protection of identities was done using pseudonyms. The study was guided by principles of respect and reciprocity, ensuring authentic represent of Indigenous perspectives without resorting to extractive or tokenistic approaches. Institutional permissions and ethical clearance were achieved and all procedures followed standard guidelines of conducting research with human subjects.

3.3.1 Methods and Instrumentation of Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted to generate data, allowing both the individual and the collective meaning-making. The conceptual framework and research questions were used to develop instruments based on the practices of instruction, student engagement and reflection, civic outcomes and contextual factors. Instruments were also pilot tested in a similar College of Education (2 educators, 3 trainees) with some minor refinements made regarding clarity and sequencing. Expert review, theoretical, and triangulation of methods improved credibility, and reliable procedures and code iteration assured reliability. The internal consistency was measured by Cronbach alpha (≥ 0.70) where necessary in order to have a rigorous and consistent data collection process.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data were processed with the help of the thematic analysis, which is a combination of inductive and deductive methods (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2021). Indigenous relationality, decolonial theory and place-based education were used to guide initial coding, but the coding was open to new patterns. The analysis took place in iterative phases of familiarization, coding, refinement and theme development in association with the research questions and conceptual framework and constant comparison across interviews, focus groups and institutions to add depth.

Results are framed by major themes, such as civic education conceptualizations, Indigenous relationality, pedagogy, and institutional conditions, and are backed by direct quotes which reflect common and contradictory views. Descriptive overviews and cross-group analyses (educators, trainees, institutions) contributed to the increased clarity, and the broader institutional and power dynamics defining the civic education were considered (especially the role of positioning Indigenous knowledge) (Smith, 2012; Chilisa, 2020). The rigor was achieved by matching the data, themes, and research questions and facilitated by means of cross-case comparison and correspondence to the theoretical framework.

3.4.1 Strategy and Methodological Coherence of Data Integration

The study is entirely qualitative, but a two-level integration strategy is used. The method level included the analysis of interview and focus group data when compared to each other, which provided an opportunity to integrate the insights. On the analytical plane, the themes were crafted in a cyclical manner, across the groups of participants, data streams, and institutional backgrounds, and explained using the complex system of Indigenous relationality, decolonial theory, and critical place-based education. The research design, methods, and the analysis are in general very close. The qualitative case study design, dialogic data collection, and integrative thematic analysis are informed by the interpretive and relational orientation, whereas the decolonizing perspective makes sure that power, representation, and epistemic inclusion are addressed.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section will display results concerning the three research questions, as well as the differences between what participants understood about Indigenous relationality, what they describe in terms of pedagogical practices and outcomes, and the institutional circumstances that influence implementation. It makes comparisons between the patterns within the groups of participants, as well as between educators and trainees, between rural and urban colleges. Through this, the analysis will not just describe but illustrate that Indigenous relationality is another perspective that can be used to rethink civic education within Ghanaian teacher education.

4.1 Research Question 1: *Which principles of Indigenous relationality are best suited to reconsider civic education in Ghanaian teacher education?*

4.1.1 perceptions of Foundational Relational Principles of the participants.

In interviews and focus group discussions, Indigenous relationality principles most applicable to civic education were interconnectedness, reciprocity, and intergenerational responsibility. These principles were introduced as experienced lives within the daily social affairs, cultural practices, and the connections with the land and ancestors. As the most regularly highlighted principle,

Interconnectedness was found as the most commonly emphasized. Participants defined personhood as a relationship-based social phenomenon, which is composed of family, community, ancestors, and the natural world, and not an individual quality. According to one teacher educator:

“We belong to a web. we are affiliated with family, community, land, even animals and plants”.

Civic education should be able to capture this, not only individual rights. This framing is important in that it re-position civic life as relational, morally embedded and socially constituted, and thus criticizes dominant curricular models, which emphasize individual rights and institutional knowledge which is formal and positivistic. This reinforces scholarship which places relationality at the centre of Indigenous knowledge systems (Dei, 2011; Wallin and Scribe, 2022), but the current study adds to this by demonstrating how such principles of relationality are not just philosophically resonant with Indigenous knowledge systems, but they are also practically deployed by participants to challenge the conceptual boundaries of existing civic education in Colleges of Education.

The concept of reciprocity was articulated as a core value through the application of the communal responsibility, moral obligation and mutual accountability terms. The respondents emphasized that civic life is not just about what people derive out of the society but also what they can contribute to it. The use of proverbs and cultural phrases was often used to explain this principle as it helped to encourage the notion that civic responsibility was based on ethical relationships, not just formal obligations. This is in line with the definitions of knowledge as being ethical and social (Dei, 2011; Odora Hoppers, 2002). The finding also suggests that reciprocity is not only a cultural value but also a critique of the current civic education that emphasizes more on civic rights than civic responsibilities. The value of this work, then, is in showing how Indigenous relationality provides a normative redress to civic education and not just as a cultural addition to it.

Intergenerational responsibility enhanced the logic of relationality in a temporal context. The participants emphasized the responsibilities to the ancestors and future generations and characterized civic life as a continuity, rather than an interaction in the present. A comment of one of the trainees was:

“We should thank our ancestors that they brought us knowledge..... we must hand it on to the future generations”.

This demonstrates that the respondents consider civic life as an issue that diffuses with time linking the past to the generations of the present and the future. Such a temporal orientation renders difficult present-

centered models of civic education which mostly focus on instantaneous involvement in formal institutions. The result can be related to the land-based and Indigenous pedagogical literature that puts an accent on continuity, stewardship, and responsibility beyond the current moment (Kulnieks et al., 2016; Calderón et al., 2021). The paper has contributed by establishing intergenerational responsibility as a civic principle to be studied on Ghanaian context which could be not necessarily a cultural or ethical principle.

4.1.2 Comparative Patterns between Groups of participants and contexts

Despite the generally accepted applicability of these principles, it began to have considerable differences between groups of participants and institutional settings. Teacher educators tended to explain principles of relational principles more abstractly and analytically, even stating them directly in terms of curriculum criticism and teacher education. Conversely, more often trainees defined relationality in terms of lived experience, emphasizing conflicts between home-based socialization and school-based civic education. This implies that there is a difference between conceptual articulation and experiential knowledge and therefore the way the relationality can be taught and internalized.

Inequality was also manifest in the institutional settings. The participants of less urbanized colleges described land as a civic education place easily as they cited farming activities, environmental conservation, and community activities as places of knowledge. In less rural areas such references were less certain, and were generally characterized as either fading out or inaccessible. This demonstrates that geography, institutional culture and proximity to community-based practices mediate and influence access to relational knowledge.

4.1.3 Analytical Discussion: Extension of Theory

Collectively, the results demonstrate that Indigenous relationality is not merely a collection of cultural values that are parallel to the existing systems of civic education, but a radically different approach to understanding civic life. First, the concept of relationality functions as a civic ontology, i.e. it is not only what is regarded as civic knowledge that gets created, but also the notion of personhood, responsibility and participation itself. This builds on current literature that situates relationality as an epistemological basis (Dei, 2011; Wallin and Scribe, 2022) by showing how it applies to the essential concepts of civic education.

Second, relational principles are evaluative critical lenses as a result of which the participants can evaluate the shortcomings of the existing civic education. The participants were involved in relationality in order to contest the individualism and abstractness of knowledge in the curriculum rather than just absorbing the cultural expectations. This means that indigenous relationality is both descriptive and analytically generative and provides a language of critique and reorientation.

Third, the findings show that the applicability and availability of relationality are not consistent across the environment particularly at the rural-urban divide. This challenges the belief in the homogeneity of availability or integration of Indigenous knowledge, and the need to implement it in context-sensitive ways. The study, as a whole, goes beyond establishing the significance of relational values to show that Indigenous relationality provides a reconstructive base of civic education one that redefines civic knowledge as relational responsibility, civic identity as the socially embedded belonging, and civic participation as going beyond the formal political participation to include daily practices of care, stewardship, and intergenerational accountability.

4.2 Research Question 2: *What are the ways in which ideas of Indigenous relationality are practiced or limited by pedagogical practices in the Social Studies curriculum of Colleges of Education?*

4.2.1. Respondents' Perceived Reframing of Civic Knowledge, Identity, and Participation

The relationality of Indigenous people in changing the meaning of three key constructs of civic education, such as civic knowledge, civic identity and civic participation, were repeated by the respondents. Firstly, civic knowledge was not only regarded as knowledge of the governmental systems, rights and obligations but also knowledge of how to be responsible in relations and how to sustain community and how to take care of mutual resources.

One teacher educator said:

“Formal civic education is all about government, constitution, and rights, but does not include how people actually co-exist in their communities. Civic knowledge in our communities is: How to resolve conflicts, show respect to others, and prevent community property loss.”

The participants highlighted the curriculum that favored western political knowledge at the expense of these relational aspects of civic life. One of the teacher trainees expressed this worry:

“Branches of government we can explain, many of us are not taught how to handle life conflicts in actual life, how to contribute to community life, that is lacking.”

Respondents emphasized that the current models of curriculum pay excessive attention to formal political knowledge and fail to cover such relational sides of civic life. This suggests the restriction of civic education has not only been in the non-teaching of civic education in the curriculum but also in the conceptual restriction where civic knowledge is defined in terms that prohibit all social and ecological practices that are part of everyday life. This finding agrees with Ghanaian studies that reported that formal and state-focused civic content dominated the curricula in the Social Studies (Adzahlie-Mensah and Dunne, 2019; Boadu, 2021).

Second, the civic identity traditionally was perceived as a relational and not an individual isolated personal attribute. The respondents conceptualized identity as comprised of the sense of belonging to family, community, and place and not an individual feature. A participant noted:

“You cannot understand who you are outside your community. Your responsibilities and behavior emanate from your relationships with other..... Students must be taught that their rights as individuals exist within responsibilities to others.”

By this statement participants pointed to an imbalance in the current civic education in the social studies curriculum that emphasizes individualism. In this way, individual rights were not denied by the respondents but indicated the lack of balance in the current civil educational practice that prefigures individualism without being considerate of social embeddedness. This reverberates more significant struggles over African and decolonial studies between the individualist and relational conceptions of citizenship (Dei, 2011; Odora Hoppers, 2002).

Third, civic engagement was also seen to be more extensive than formal political participation. The most accepted forms of civic action, as defined by the participants, were the storytelling, communal labour, environmental care, traditional mediation and cultural conformity to the norms as legitimate forms of civic action. One participant explained:

“Participation is limited to only voting or joining political groups in the current curriculum. But in our communities, participation includes; everyday helping, contributing, being present as well as taking part in communal work, helping to resolve disputes, and caring for the environment.”

These practices were regarded as being at the center of the learning and implementation of civic responsibility in everyday life although they are often still unknown in the formal curriculum frameworks.

This encourages the scholarship that requires more culturally based and practice-oriented ideas of citizenship (Calderón et al., 2021; Scully, 2020).

4.2.2 Reported Pedagogical enactments and outcomes

Respondents detected a number of pedagogical practices that implemented relational principles, though often in partial or informal forms. The most utilized practices which were used to express moral reasoning, cooperation and social responsibility was storytelling and the use of proverbs. Two participants in commented:

“...that using stories of our communities, classroom interaction are made real and students identify themselves with the situation, not because they are memorizing concepts... Also, cooperation or responsibility can be explained by a proverb better than a long lecture”.

The approaches were appreciated due to their knowledge of the cultures and the capacity to bring abstract civic ideas to the lived experience. This is in line with the literature of the Indigenous and African-based pedagogies that is oral and relational oriented learning (Dei, 2011; Odora Hoppers, 2002).

The other practice which gained eminence was community-based learning. The respondents explained how they had been involved in community service with the local communities, how they interacted with the Elders, how they are involved in the traditional governance and how they are involved in communal activities. One participant explained:

“The students will learn about civic life better when they discuss the issues with the elders in the community and observe ways of resolving conflicts... This will promote long lasting lived experiences”.

Their experiences made civic learning more tangible, interpersonal, and context-centered, which aligns with place-based and community-engaged pedagogies (Calderón et al., 2021). In the other settings and more so in the rural institutions, the respondents recorded the land-based and experiential learning processes where students were taken through first-hand experience of the practices and livelihoods of the environment.

These working practices were ascribed to learning responsibility, sustainability and interdependence and they contribute to the work on land-based education as a place of relational knowledge production (Kulnieks et al., 2016). Critical dialogue and reflective discussion were also highlighted by other respondents as being extremely important in difficult colonial legacies and posing the question why certain forms of knowledge are given precedence in formal education. In this regard, pedagogy was not merely relational but also critical, which is indicative of decolonial practices and anticipates epistemic critique in the foreground (Dei, 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018).

The results documented were mainly perceptual and orientation based instead of in a strict sense measurable. The respondents said they had expanded their ideas of civic education, had become more aware of the deficiencies of the formal curriculum, and that some of them were now more willing to incorporate examples of cultural practices in their teaching. This is consistent with the research that demonstrates that culturally responsive pedagogies tend to generate a change in orientation and perception prior to the accumulation of institutionalized results to become evident (Sabzalian, 2019).

4.2.3 Contradictions and Uneven Enactment

Among the key findings is the difference between the high scores of the support of relational pedagogies among participants and their disproportional application in practice. Storytelling, community engagement, and experiential learning were also rated highly by many participants, but were often reported as not regularly done, informal, or voluntary, and not formally incorporated into the curriculum. This is indicative of more generalized results about curriculum intent and pedagogical practice discrepancies in Ghanaian teacher education (Bekoe et al., 2013; Ntumi et al., 2023).

There were evident subgroup differences. There was also an inclination towards teacher educators to concentrate on pedagogical intent and criticism of curriculum and structures and the trainees to discuss whether learning was relevant to their live experience. Equally, respondents in rural settings said that they were more directly involved with land-based and community-based practices, whereas respondents in less rural settings said that they were aspirational or declining. This affirms the literature that the accessibility to Indigenous knowledge is not equal and context-dependent (Wallin and Scribe, 2022).

One additional crucial contradiction is connected to the treatment of the Indigenous knowledge per se. Even though it was valued by the participants, internal tensions of selective inclusion and idealization of tradition were also noted by the participants. This means that the integration of Indigenous relationality should be done critically-rationally, following the scholarship of cautioning the assumption that Indigenous knowledge systems are essentialized (Sabzalian, 2019).

4.2.4 Analysis Discussion: Addition to the existing literature

The findings have several important implications on the current literature. First of all, they demonstrate that Indigenous relationality is not only bringing the civic education new culturally important information; it is transforming the conceptual frameworks of civic knowledge, civic identity and civic engagement. This links relational scholarship with the demonstration of its use to civic constructs (Dei, 2011; Wallin & Scribe, 2022).

Second, the research indicates that the enactment of pedagogy already assumes the relational practice and the epistemic questioning of epistemic hierarchies, which supports the arguments in the field of decolonial pedagogy that pedagogy should be receptive to cultural anchoring and epistemic questioning (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Third, the results demonstrate that there is a continuing discrepancy between pedagogical possibility and institutionalization. Although the relational practices are there, they are still disjointed and focused on individual educators as opposed to being mediated by the curriculum design, assessment mechanisms and institutional policy. It is consistent with more general studies of structural limitations to teacher education reform (Bekoe et al., 2013; Ntumi et al., 2023). On the whole, the work is valuable, in that it demonstrates that implementing Indigenous relationality in civic education can be successful, when it goes beyond the single invention of pedagogy, and towards more institutionalized means of integrating epistemology, pedagogy, and curriculum.

4.3 Research Question 3: *In what ways do institutional conditions enable or hinder the application of Indigenous relationality in civic education in teacher education?*

4.3.1 Perceived Institutional Constraints

The institutional obstacles to the realization of Indigenous relationality mentioned by respondents included: curriculum design, teacher training, language policy, resource access, and poor school-community relationships. The most significant impediment was the persistence of curricula that was designed to accommodate colonies where national systems, assessment systems and teaching resources promoted Western civic concepts at the cost of the Indigenous knowledge systems. One teacher educator argues that,

“The curriculum remains colonial in nature; there is no time to learn and practice Indigenous ways of knowing”.

The pre-service teacher also mentioned that training is placed more on formal political systems and very little is done with regards to community-based practices. These stories suggest a structural bias and not an omission whereby the priorities in assessment define what gets taught, enhancing externally developed curricular forms and limiting contextual relevance (Adzhalie-Mensah and Dunne, 2019; Boadu, 2021).

This, in deco-colonial terms, means the re-establishment of epistemic inequalities in the formal education (Dei, 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018).

The second main constraint was that teacher educators were not prepared to use Indigenous and decolonial pedagogies. Participants also highlighted that teachers are seldom trained to understand curriculums in culturally responsive manner. As one noted,

“We are not conditioned to teach in an Indigenous manner. It is not always obvious how to teach it according to the curriculum”.

Another one added that it is not that people would like to do it but it is systemic preparation. This transforms the problem of capacity of an individual teacher to the problem of institutional constraints to teacher education that is in line with broader findings of teacher preparedness within Ghana (Ntumi et al., 2023).

One of the language policies was also a structural tension. Local languages, proverbs and other cultural expressions are likely to contain much of the indigenous knowledge but they are expected to be taught in English. One of the teachers remarked,

“There are ideas which are not explainable in English. they lose their meaning”.

This also supports the peripheralization of Indigenous epistemology, in which language is a pedagogic tool, as well as a gatekeeping tool to legitimize knowledge (Owu-Ewie, 2017). Lastly, opportunities to have experiential and community-based learning are restricted by resource constraints such as funding, time, transport, and teaching materials. Collaborations with Indigenous peoples and elders are never institutionalized and rather mostly informal and driven by personal initiative; constraining the sustainability and growth of relational pedagogies.

4.3.2 Signs of agency and institutional Possibilities

Despite these restrictions, participants identified some useful enabling opportunities in the existing institutional settings. The other teachers purported to use proverbs, storytelling, local examples and community engagement in instruction, which meant that relational styles are not completely absent but, instead, local ways of engaging in innovation. The practices depict part of the modes of pedagogical agency that operate within limited systems and are congruent with scholarship that focuses on the educator as a mediator of curriculum (Dei, 2011).

There is however an extremely significant difference between the personal initiative and the organizational assistance. Although these practices show that it is possible that they are under-organized and informal. This implies that, it is not the lack of relational pedagogy, but is the lack of structural support and formalization in teacher education as the problem that has not been adequately understood. Another road the participants considered taking to bring the Indigenous knowledge that much closer to teacher education was the prospect of closer community liaisons, such as participation in the community knowledge holders and Elders. These approaches are consistent with place-based and community-based approaches to learning (Calderón et al., 2021), although they are not all equally applied.

4.3.3 Comparative and Contextual Differences

There were significant differences in institutional conditions experienced in various contexts. The students of rural institutions were more likely to report increased access to community knowledge and land-based practices, and culturally-based civic learning. But they too were characterized by the more dramatic lack of resources and the lack of the institutional support. On the contrary, the respondents living in less rural or urban regions reported a comparatively better access to formal resources, but a weaker sense of community-based knowledge and land-based learning. This implicates an imbalance of structure: stronger relational resource contexts have a higher probability of being deprived of material support whereas stronger institutional infrastructure contexts have a higher probability of being deprived of lived

Indigenous knowledge. Such results support the notion that the incorporation of Indigenous relationality is not just an issue of goodwill or policy orientation, but it is mediated by geography, institutional culture and socio-material circumstances (Wallin and Scribe, 2022). The other paradox is that the institutions of teacher education are meant to equip teachers to become culturally responsive, but are placed in systems that restrict their responsiveness. This shows a more general institutional incoherence that the purposes of civic education do not entirely correspond to the terms of its implementation.

4.3.4 Analytical Discussion: Contribution to Theory and Practice

The findings have a number of implications to existing literature. Firstly, they prove that institutional constraints are at intersecting levels, including epistemological, pedagogical and organizational ones. Curriculum, language, teacher preparation, resources and partnerships do not exist independently, they are the context in which Indigenous relationality should or should not be exercised. This reinforces and enhances systemic constraint analyses of education by decolonizing (Dei, 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Second, the paper demonstrates that coloniality in teacher education is reproduced not just as a content area of the curriculum, but also through the institutional practices, including the assessment regimes, and language policy, and knowledge validation practices. This provides empirical specificity to more general theoretical critiques of epistemic dominance.

Third, the findings may be an important working remark: without not only an ideological commitment, but redesigning institutions, effective embedding of Indigenous relationality remains impossible. Relational approaches are not transformative but are symbolic or episodic unless curriculum structures, teacher education programmes, language practices and community relations change.

In general, the contribution made by the study is that it changes the emphasis of defining the constraints to the comprehension of how institutional arrangements organizational the possibilities of civic education. It shows that the problem is not only pedagogical, but systemic- it requires the alignment of the epistemology, pedagogy and institutional conditions.

4.4 Cross-Cutting Discussion: Contradictions, Theoretical Extension, and General Contribution.

In all the three research questions, a common trend is evident: participants are highly aware of the relevance and transformative possibilities of Indigenous relationality, and there are observable, albeit limited, attempts to implement it pedagogically. Nevertheless, all these attempts are limited by unfavorable institutional factors. The main conflict of the work is thus in the discontinuity between recognition, partial performance, and structure.

At the perception level (RQ1), Indigenous relationality is conceived as a consistent framework that is based on interconnectedness, reciprocity, and intergenerational responsibility. These are not abstract cultural values but orientations of civic life that are treated by the participants. This reinforces previous work (Dei, 2011; Wallin and Scribe, 2022) and expands it by demonstrating relationality as a civic ontology that defines even the meaning of citizenship.

In the pedagogical level (RQ2), relational principles are carried out in the form of storytelling, community engagement, land-based learning, and dialogue. These strategies re-constitute civic knowledge, identity, and engagement in relational ways, which resonates with the scholarship of Indigenous and place-based education (Calderón et al., 2021; Kulnieks et al., 2016). Notably, the results indicate that it is not simply a matter of introducing culturally relevant practices, but rather the problem of restructuring the conceptual basis of civic education and disrupting the hegemonic epistemic structures.

These possibilities are highly limited at the institutional level (RQ3), however. The curriculum, system of assessment, teacher training, and language policies remain biased to Western epistemologies, which restricts any serious integration. These interdependent limitations support the conclusion on the topic of

coloniality in education (Dei, 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018) and offers empirical evidence on the role of institutional structures on pedagogical practice in Ghanaian teacher education.

The aggregate of the results suggest that the issue is not only one of inclusion but also structural misalignment. Despite being acknowledged and implemented to some degree, Indigenous relationality is marginalized in curriculum, policy, and system-level practice, leading to inconsistent actions that do not have the coherence and support needed to effect lasting change.

4.5 Contribution to Knowledge

The paper has three theoretical contributions that are interrelated. To begin with, it transforms the conceptualization of Indigenous relationality into a civic structure that determines knowledge, identity, and engagement (Dei, 2011; Wallin and Scribe, 2022). Second, it builds upon the work of decolonial theory by demonstrating how coloniality can be institutionalized in the form of curriculum, language policy, assessment, and teacher preparation (Dei, 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Third, it constructs a combined model of Indigenous relationality, decolonial theory, and critical place-based education, thus bridging the epistemological, critical, and pedagogical perspectives of reevaluating civic education within the context of Ghanaian teacher education.

The study gives empirical evidence in the form of context-specific evidence in Ghanaian Colleges of Education, demonstrating the ways educators and trainees practice and implement relational principles. It shows a continuing conflict between the institutional restrictions and relational pedagogies, the gap between decolonial desires and practice.

At practice and policy level, the research highlights the necessity of systematic alignment at the curriculum, teacher education, language policy, and community engagement. In the absence of such coherence, the Indigenous relational approaches will be more of a symbol as opposed to becoming transformative.

The study methodologically illustrates the usefulness of an interpretive qualitative design which relies on decolonizing methods. The thematic analysis relates the experiences of participants to larger epistemological issues, and it adds to the discussions on civic education and decolonization in the context of African teacher education.

4.6 Overall Synthesis

In general, this paper is arguing that civic education in Ghana is structured in a manner that it cannot be changed. The Indigenous relationality makes it possible to reconsider the ground of indigenous relationality, interrelating epistemology, pedagogy and institutional conditions. Thus, the work becomes more than critique, and calls out a more culturally informed and contextual civic education, an outline.

5. Teacher Education Implications.

The implications of the findings on teacher education, policy on curriculum and institutional practice are identified. They mention that the Indigenous relationality must be integrated into the content and pedagogy and the professional development should underpin it when it comes to teacher education.

With curriculum policy, the study highlights the importance of not merely thinking of Indigenous knowledge as an appendix to systems whereby culturally based knowledge, like language and situational context, is included.

In the case of the institutional practice, it lingers on the significance of structured interaction with communities and provision of pertinent teaching resources. On a bigger level, the paper adds to the

curiosity to the epistemic gaps and lapses that cannot be filled and the necessity to possess contextually and socially relevant civic education.

Conclusion

The paper has indicated the possibility of applying Indigenous relationality to transform the Ghanaian teacher education civic education in order to address the contradictions between Eurocentric values and participatory objectives. The results indicate that this tension is structural in nature, defining civic knowledge, its teaching and experience in Colleges of Education.

The ideas of interconnectedness, reciprocity and intergenerational responsibility induced the creation of indigenous relationality, which re-altered the notions of civic knowledge as relational responsibility, social grounded belonging as identity, and participation as going beyond formal politics. However, it is not yet used equally, and the limitation of rigid curricula, teacher education, language bias, and ineffective institutional practice. This brings out a paradox between the objectives of civic education and systems of civic education.

The research does not focus on the lack of the Indigenous knowledge anymore, but on the circumstances of its marginalization, demonstrating that the issue is not only epistemological and institutional, but also pedagogical. It is heading towards the whole system of relationship between Indigenous relationality, decolonial theory and critical place-based education to close the gap between knowledge, critique and practice in the Ghanaian context.

The empirical investigation of the research demonstrates that there is a fluctuation of the institutions and it indicates that reform is context-specific. Meaningful change requires systemic alignment of curriculum, assessment, teacher development, language use and engagement with the community.

Lastly, the study finds that civic education in Ghana must be re-framed and Indigenous relationality offered a path forward towards more relational and contextualized model.

7. Recommendations

The recommendations are aligned with the study's findings and distinguish clearly between policy, practice, and system-level actions.

Policy-Level Recommendations:

1. Curriculum reform is required to address the finding that Indigenous knowledge is treated as supplementary. Policy actors such as the Ministry of Education Ghana and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment should reposition Indigenous relationality as a core framework by embedding interconnectedness, reciprocity, and community responsibility in learning outcomes and integrating locally grounded examples across topics.
2. In response to the constraint posed by current assessment systems, policy should shift from recall-based evaluation to competency-based approaches. This includes assessing community-based projects, reflective work, and collaboration, while aligning teacher education frameworks with applied civic competencies.
3. Given that civic participation is shaped by context and language, policy should more explicitly support contextualized pedagogy by promoting the use of local languages and culturally relevant examples, supported by clear implementation guidelines.

Practice-Level Recommendations:

1. At the practice level, the limited preparation of teachers—despite strong interest—calls for sustained professional development. Colleges of Education should provide ongoing training, collaborative lesson design, and peer learning opportunities to translate Indigenous relationality into practice.
2. The weak integration of community knowledge further requires institutions to formalize partnerships through co-teaching, field-based learning, and structured community engagement within coursework.
3. In addition, resource constraints necessitate the development of contextually relevant materials. Institutions should support the co-creation and dissemination of locally grounded teaching resources that reflect Indigenous civic perspectives.

System-Level Recommendation:

Finally, the persistence of epistemic imbalance highlights the need for systemic reform. Policy and institutional actors should review curriculum approval and accreditation processes, diversify knowledge validation structures, and embed equity criteria to ensure that Indigenous knowledge systems are meaningfully included in teacher education.

In sum, these recommendations link directly to empirical findings while clarifying responsibilities and prioritizing actionable steps across levels.

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