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Engaging Practice in Communication Education: Institutional Politics, Knowledge Economy, and State Power

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ENGAGING PRACTICE IN COMMUNICATION EDUCATION:
INSTITUTIONAL POLITICS, KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY, AND STATE POWER

By

Wincharles Coker

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In Rhetoric, Theory and Culture

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2016

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This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in Rhetoric, Theory and Culture.

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A ma mère

Votre prières et votre soutiens

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With an inestimable measure of magnitude
That knowest no bounds
Cos save you I'd have dawdled to hounds.

Let me sing thee a song of gratitude
Thou who glued me unto thyself in the sea of a multitude
And stood by me so close and tall
So I like you will not fall.

Let me sing thee a song of gratitude
For the citadel-like fortitude
The love, the grace, the succor
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And made this tome less dense
Then kindly take this sonnet a vista of thy recompense.

Wincharles Coker "The Epilogue"

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Abstract

A grave concern in communication education scholarship is that research in practice plays second fiddle to theory. Little is known about the phenomenology of practice in communication pedagogy, and how it shapes and is shaped by programmatic assessment in particular. This dissertation attempts to explore the complexity of practice in communication education in a non-Western culture. The project demonstrates that the organizational culture that gives rise to the work of communication program administrators is always filtered and enacted through the interplay of institutional politics, the global knowledge economy, and state power. Using two public universities in Ghana, I argue, based on interpretive ethnographic fieldwork, that communication education is undergoing a shift from an instrumentalist, objectivist paradigm to a humanistic pedagogy of critical awareness. The latter, however, remains, largely unmapped in the field. Using ideas of practice that meet at the intersection of phenomenology and critical theory, I show how discursive practices of communication faculty as well as regimes of control owned by the state shape knowledge work in this epistemic community. The crystallized data, *i.e.*, direct participant observations, in-depth interviews with faculty, minutes, memos, and curricula of two communication departments, accreditation manuals, and legal and policy documents about higher education in Ghana, raise concerns to make communication education in that cultural space more Afrocentric. This move, I argue, is crucial for engendering the strategic partnership of African communication researchers in the web of global scholarship. To this end, I call for a pedagogy of transcultural competence informed by a dialectical calculus between local interests and global exigencies.

Introduction

When we therefore point to a practice, a distinction, an object, or an ideology as having a cultural dimension (notice the adjectival use), we stress the idea of situated difference, that is, difference in relation to something local, embodied, and significant.

— Appadurai, 1996, p. 12

Intellectuals across cultures are defined by one common denominator: our love of knowledge (*noesis*). We seek knowledge *qua* knowledge or for a practical end; we apperceive the forms, and resolve to “liberate” our “bonded” fellows from the shadows of ignorance. Plato (1955) cautioned that our business, in this regard, must be guided by “professional skill, which would effect conversion as easily and effectively as possible,” and “ensure that someone who already had it was turned in the right direction and looking the right way” (p. 283). To meet these objectives, we endeavor to be self-critical of our practices because this is the defining nature of our epistemic communities. For example, we periodically make time to reflect on our professional conduct, and how it affects our work. In the foreword of *The Uses of the University*, Clark Kerr, the first chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley, underscored the mammoth importance of universities in shaping knowledge, which he believed is their invisible product. Kerr (1963) held that knowledge is perhaps “*the most powerful single element in our culture*, affecting the rise and fall of professions and even social classes, of regions, and even of nations” (p. vii, emphasis mine). For him, program administrators and educators must constantly reflect on how their practices shape the knowledge economy in the university or what he termed “the new Ideopolis” because their textual productions have a bearing on the quality of life. For example, the knowledge universities produce is significant for “raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national state ... at facilitating the exercise of political powers, and refining the intercourse of private life” (p. 3).

As a young academic, I have been thrilled by what it means to produce knowledge and under what circumstances it thrives. In my search for answers, I embarked on fieldwork in Ghana, West Africa, as a doctoral candidate, to explore how questions of institutional politics, the power of the state, and the global knowledge economy filter the work

academics such as communication faculty do. As I began to hold interviews with faculty, one of my focal participants, a professor of communication studies, asked me this basic question: “How are you going to represent *us* in your work?” Indeed, this was one of the most challenging questions I had to grapple with throughout the writing of the dissertation. The trepidation in my larynx accompanied by an unusual stuttering affirms the gravitas of his question. For I knew that beyond talking about *Kantian ethics*—informed consent, minimal risks, beneficence, and justice—or *relational ethics*, the question “How are you going to represent *us*?” was rhetorical in nature. I reckoned that the professor had wanted me to reflect on very pertinent issues. In my mind, it meant, first and foremost, how was I going to represent the professional practice of his community? What was I interested in representing? What axiological assumptions were shaping my inquiry, and in what ways would they empower or marginalize my participants?

Second, the accusative case *us* in the professor’s interrogation also addresses concerns about alterity. It reawakened in me the consciousness that fieldworkers entering postcolonial contexts such as Ghana must have in order to be conscientious of the biases and worldviews underlying the conduct of their studies. The question placed demands on me about what paradigm(s) I was employing to study the culture of his institution. It raised in me concerns about the need to be careful in applying Eurocentric models in cultures outside of the West. In other words, my participant wanted me to assure him of how I was dealing with the problem of *situated difference* (Appadurai, 1996). What was it that I was doing in my fieldwork to establish the uniqueness of the cultural space as I was investigating in a way that would not reduce or essentialize it?

Third, concerns about representation also meant that I had to pay special attention to my positionality in the field. This required careful self-reflexivity. Thus I entered my field—public universities in Ghana—as a bundle of personae (Coffey, 1999): (a) a former student of my informants, (b) currently a faculty member on study leave, (c) a graduate student, and (d) an international student for that matter (See Coker, 2015 for an account of my sustained self-reflexivity on the politics of being an international

student). I saw my fieldwork as an embodied activity that required that I located my corporeality alongside those of my informants, as I negotiated the spatial context of the field based upon trust, respect, and personal commitment. Embodiment, in the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, is the essence of being. In his magnum opus, *Phenomenology of Perception*, he agreed with Martin Heidegger that meaning arises out of our *thrownness* in the world. For Merleau-Ponty (1958/2003), knowledge is both an embodied and a situated experience. As he said:

All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless. The whole universe of science is built upon the world as directly experienced, and if we want to subject science itself to rigorous scrutiny and arrive at a precise assessment of its meaning and scope, we must begin by reawakening the basic experience of the world of which science is the second-order expression (p. viii).

This means that researchers can hardly detach ourselves from the things we aim to investigate nor can we conveniently isolate a phenomenon under investigation without actively involving ourselves in the phenomenon. It is because, Merleau-Ponty stressed, “all cognitions are sustained by a ‘ground’ of postulates and finally by our communication with the world as primary embodiment of rationality” (p. xxi). It is his idea of a *phenomenal field*. We understand the phenomenal field of an idea or a concept through our *pre-reflective experience* (PRE). The term has to do with what happens when we lose sight of our experiences prior to constructing a conceptual understanding of a phenomenon. For Merleau-Ponty, PRE manifests itself when we detach ourselves—a certain epoché privileged in scientism in the spirit of achieving non-bias and objectivity— from our immediate experiences. PRE is, in fact, a matter of our living, our essences, our existence. It is this mattering that creates a thingness by which we live through the worldhood of our existence. Our embodiment with a phenomenon thus goes beyond sensory perception; it enables us to be one with the phenomenon itself. Learning to situate my fractured, embodied selves in my field was therefore crucial to the success of my research as I sought to nuance the varying lifeworlds of my participants.

My initial response to the professor's interrogation, "I hope to situate your reflections within poststructural, critical traditions," was thus based on my understanding that practices of epistemic communities are blurring. The discursive walls of academic disciplines, as communication scholars have come to know them, are steadily tumbling. As researchers, we saw, at the dawn of the new millennium, an explosion in the pollination of ideas from across disciplines aimed at enhancing professional practice and knowledge work in the academy. This progress is without doubt one of the manifestations of postmodernity. If, as understood, we are faced by the ineluctable presence of globalization marked by disjunctures and flows, then, it is only proper that we reappraise what shapes our disciplinary practices in this rapturous knowledge economy (Nainby, 2014). This dissertation, *Engaging Practice in Communication Education*, is an attempt to problematize the complex notion of practice as it applies to the communication discipline broadly construed. What is at issue is what happens to our understanding of practice when it is caught up in a web of institutional politics, state power, and the global knowledge economy.

When I sought to nuance this problematic, a wise woman suggested I begin with Robert Craig. A fundamental lesson Craig taught me is that *communication* defies a precise definition because human culture itself is too complex to define. In his groundbreaking essay, "Communication Theory as a Field," Craig (1999) argued that the communication discipline is an amorphous, chaotic field that is marked by sterile fragmentation and productive eclecticism. He mapped the discipline into seven fields, *viz.*, rhetorical, semiotic, phenomenological, cybernetic, sociopsychological, sociocultural, and critical traditions. Each tradition advances special ways of grasping what communication is and what it is not. This dissertation is located between the phenomenological and critical traditions of communication scholarship. A phenomenological understanding of communication, as applied in the dissertation, finds expression in the experiential knowledge of social actors. It valorizes authentic communication as the product of the situatedness and lived experiences of individuals. Its goal is to comprehensively grasp the lifeworld of the Other. A phenomenological viewpoint of communication research thus is dialogically interpretive. As Craig (1999)

rightly noted, “Phenomenology is not only plausible, but also interesting from a practical standpoint because it both upholds dialogue as an ideal form of communication, yet also demonstrates the inherent difficulty in sustaining dialogue” (p. 139). I found this approach particularly useful to the objective of my study: how practices of communication faculty in a non-Western culture are informed by institutional politics, state power, and the global knowledge economy. My use of phenomenology was suitable because it gave agency to my research participants, and enabled me to engage in critical conversations with them about their professional practices. I had a deeper understanding of my research problem by allowing the voices, stories, and lived experiences of my study participants come to life throughout the study.

This also meant that I adopted a critical view of communication. A critical view of communication emphasizes the *discursive* nature of communicative phenomena. It recognizes, in particular, that the many ways individuals tend to narrate their stories, or the artifacts they produce as evidence of their communication skills are not disinterested; they are culturally, ideologically, and politically motivated. This critical perspective was crucial in unmasking formal and informal institutional practices that enable, shape, and constrain the work of communication educators in Ghana, the context of the study. Bringing a critical viewpoint to my research was key to ensuring that my study was not only descriptively thick, but explanatorily persuasive; it enabled me to articulate how cultural, ideological, and hegemonic conditions shape—and are in turn shaped by—institutional practices of communication faculty and program administrators. Earlier, I learned from Craig (1999) that a critical tradition of communication studies must confirm “that reflective discourse and, communication theory itself, have important roles to play in our everyday understanding and practice of communication” (Craig, 1999: 149). Its telos is to bring about change in the local practices of institutions.

My understanding of the term *institution* in this project is cultural. It is shaped mainly by the works of Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Etienne Wenger, and Brian Street. A cultural view of ‘institutions’ treats the subject as more than bricks-and-mortar

organizations or *repressive systems*. It goes beyond an interest in the material properties of institutions such as buildings, laws, traditions, and knowledge making practices (Porter *et al.*, 2000: 611) to include ideas, tools, information, styles, languages, stories, and documents that community members share (Wenger *et al.*, 2002: 29). Unlike sociological and political science discussions that focus mainly on the juridical properties of institutions, a cultural understanding of institutions, on the contrary, examines how mundane practices in an institutional space (at the *micro*, *meso*, and *macro* strata) are shaped by formal and informal properties of institutional power. Foucault's (1995) ideas of governmentality and Panopticism, for example, show that human agents are dominated and controlled not so much because of the omnipresence of the technologies of power, than because of the totalizing effects the mechanisms set in motion by state apparatuses have on the human psyche. To this end, a cultural study of institutions pays particular attention to not just formal rules of norms but also taken-for-granted routines, everyday practices, textual productions, and discursive formations, and how these elements are constrained by capillary power. This focus enables the scholar to understand the symbol systems, cognitive scripts, and moral templates that provide the frames of meaning that guide human action (Bannerman & Haggart, 2015: 3).

It may also be helpful to consider the idea that academic institutions derive their mandates from the state. It is the state that mainly defines how an institution should look like, and what it should do. This is because the state is its main sponsor since it has access to different species of capital (Bourdieu, 1998). These include capital of physical forces (*e.g.*, the army, police), economic capital, cultural capital, informational capital, and symbolic capital. The state uses these resources to grant authority to institutions, and enables it to exercise power over them. Moreover, institutions regulate individual behaviors. According to Bourdieu, individuals are able to act in the institutions of the state because they accumulate *habitus*. This means that the *habitus* is the product of the work of inculcation and appropriation human actors accumulate from the collective history of institutions they belong. These include the objective structures of institutions such as their special 'languages' and economies. The *habitus*

is thus the organizing principle that regulates human agency vis-à-vis institutional structures. Bourdieu, however, noted that the relationship between human agency and institutional structures is not mechanical but dialectical. That is, humans act on institutions, and so do institutions act on humans.

My investment in institutional work was inspired by the goals of poststructuralism. Before explaining the rationale for my choice of philosophy, it is important I distinguish postmodernism from poststructuralism. This is because the two are sometimes discussed as coterminous. Although Agger (1991: 112) early on explained the locus of poststructuralism to be knowledge and language, and described postmodernism as a theory of society, culture, and history, he conceded that it is impossible to separate the two. According to Agger, both poststructuralism and postmodernism overlap in philosophical acuity. Both reject rationality as self-evident, and mistrust positivism's concealment of interest in a studied phenomenon. The two thus resist totalizing claims of knowledge. Denzin's (1997) own way of resolving the problem was to add the adjective *critical* to poststructuralism, thereby repositioning the paradigm to account for not only multiple realities but issues of power, politics, and under-representation. Like Agger, he admitted that both poststructuralism and postmodernism focus on *blurred genres*, although postmodernism first began as a Bauhaus architectural movement in Germany (Harvey, 1989), and as a disillusion with modernity. A consequence of this lack of clarity is that it forces some scholars to lump the two paradigms under one single umbrella, thus suggesting that they address same ontological, epistemological, and methodological concerns. Tracy's (2013: 48) table of four paradigmatic approaches, for instance, presents the two as dealing with fragmented realities, multiple points of view, and the crisis of representation.

Unlike postmodernism, however, poststructuralism is a specific dialectic against the structuralist thesis of *closed, stable systems*. It rejects the neo-classical dictum of singularity, and therefore "examines the social world from multiple perspectives of class, race, gender, and other identifying group affiliations" (Agger, 1991: 116). A poststructural reading of gender, for example, resists the male/female bifurcation in favor of other ways of being. My preference for this worldview is inspired by twentieth

century *l'école française* thinkers such as Foucault, Lyotard, and more recently Deleuze whose writings directly challenge Saussure's or Lévi-Strauss's perspectives on structuralism. Poststructuralism, in this light, contests the idea of a single reality, and contends that singularity makes no room for subjectivity and alternative worldviews. This paradigm, as I understand it, holds that reality cannot be fully apprehended, and that researchers can only see in part and know in part. It understands that representing the world "out there" is far more than a mimetic exercise. It recognizes the world cannot be represented as objectively as possible, however meticulous the fieldworker might be. Arguing on the contrary implies that researchers can strip themselves of their biases and political standpoints. Yet what we see as researchers, or rather what we choose to see, is largely shaped by our philosophical, theoretical, methodological, and political leanings.

Consequently, I conceive of knowledge production in qualitative research as an apprehension of a slice of truth. We cannot know it all. What we aim at is *Verstehen*. After all, all research, Goodall (2000) once said, is partial, partisan, and problematic. These contemplations enabled me to check endlessly my own theoretical assumptions, methodological biases, and politics in examining the dynamics of practice in the cultural milieu and organizational lives of my participants. The following questions aided the process: (a) Had the voices of my informants been captured in a way that they recognize themselves, know themselves, and would like others to know? (b) Did I challenge and resist dominant discourses that marginalized my participants? (c) What needed to be written and/or rewritten? These self-reflexive questions enabled me to conduct fieldwork based on honesty and respect. My ethnographic approach is thus a methodology for the empowerment of the Other. Because the goal of ethnography (*ethnos, graphein*) is to write a people's culture, I ensured that my fieldwork was guided by a greater sense of ethics, self-reflexivity, and inclusivity of marginalized subjects that are studied especially in disenfranchised spaces.

Guided by the critical perspectives discussed above, I proceeded to investigate how the triumvirate, that is, institutional politics, state power, and the knowledge economy, influences communication education, a field cursorily defined by the National

Communication Association as the study of communication in the classroom and other pedagogical contexts¹. The study has led me to develop a transcultural competence theory, based on the LIST acronym (a set of *local*, *interested*, *situated*, and *transcultural* practices), as a framework for understanding the relationship between professional practice and communication education. It is my contribution to existing work in practice theory. I have posited in this dissertation that the work of communication program administrators, educators, and scholars tends to be textually and contextually embedded in organizational expectations and discursive regimes. My understanding of practice is shaped by three basic propositions:

1. The work of communication faculty and administrators is, first and foremost, *local* and *situated*. To understand institutional practice, one needs to recognize that the knowledge, social action, and motives of communication teachers are embedded in their epistemic culture. Local knowledge gives rise to, and at the same time, shapes local identities. But is there truly such a thing as *local knowledge*? In “The Universality of Local Knowledge,” Ngugi (1991) contested the West’s penchant to generalize its knowledge as the universal experience of the world. By reviewing the work of the seasoned anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s work, *Local Knowledge: Fact and Law in Comparative Perspective*, Ngugi maintained that there is no virtue in measuring local knowledge by the degree of its distance from the West. He argued against the idea of generalizing historical particularities into timeless and spaceless universalities, and warned against the sharp dichotomy between what is perceived as local as distinct from the universal. This is because, for him, development within and across cultures or nations is relative; they do not

¹ www.natcom.org/discipline/ Communication education is distinctively marked from composition studies, in particular, for two main reasons. First, it has for a long time being a field that applies communication theory to examine pedagogical practice. Second, the field primarily focuses on the development of pedagogical content knowledge appropriate for teaching communicative competence (Sprague, 2002; Hunt *et al.*, 2014). Composition studies, on the other hand, is concerned with helping students to improve their writing. ‘Good’ writing, Fulkerson (2005) recently explained, is one that is rhetorically effective for audience and situation (p. 655). Issues here include how oral, written, and multimodal texts are rhetorically constructed through considerations of invention, context, style, purpose, and delivery (See chapter 1 for a comprehensive discussion.)

develop “on parallel bars towards parallel ends that never meet, or if they meet, they do so in infinity” (p. 26).

He insisted that a problem arises when we see the local and the universal in mechanical opposition instead of understanding that “The universal is contained in the particular just as the particular is contained in the universal” (p. 26). This also means that local knowledge is not an isogloss. What gets to shape the knowledge of a culture is largely influenced by knowledges from other cultures. As Ngugi pointed out, “Local knowledge is not an island unto itself; it is part of the main, part of the sea. Its limits lie in the boundless universality of our creative potentiality as human beings” (p. 29). The idea of a homogeneous culture untouched by global flows may thus be difficult to accept in the 21st century. Appadurai’s (1996) preferred term to theorize the complexity of locality is *disjuncture*. He cast doubt on the notion of a stable global village, arguing, on the contrary, that cultural flows in “the village” are characterized by chaos and ruptures. He wrote, “The complexity of the current global economy has to do with certain fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture, and politics” (p. 33)². Considerations of the local texture of institutional practices that shape the work of communication educators are thus important for policy formation, institutional recognition, and accreditation. They are also relevant for promoting a strong community of practice within the institution and for seeking inter-university partnership abroad. Clearly, the

² The complexity characterizing global flows, Appadurai maintained, can be analyzed by understanding the relationship among five dimensions or scapes. These are ethnoscap, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes. Ethnoscapes, he said, refer to persons such as tourists, immigrants, refugees, and guest workers, who have no relatively stable communities and networks of work, and leisure, and have a high sense of the imagination, borne chiefly by the mass media. He noted that technoscapes are fluid global configuration of technology, low, high, informational, or mechanical, while financescapes concern the disposition of global capital in the forms of currency markets, national stock exchanges and commodity speculations. Both technoscapes and financescapes move at high speeds across previously impervious boundaries. Mediascapes refer to both the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information to both private and public interests throughout the world. The most important point about mediascapes, he wrote, is that they provide complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscapes to viewers throughout the world, in which world news and politics are mixed. The final dimension, ideoscapes, is a set of political images that present state ideologies and counter ideologies of movements. Ideoscapes often reflect the themes of the Enlightenment—freedom, welfare, rights, sovereignty, representation, and democracy.

tools, ideas, ideals, and values guiding the work of communication educators in a given locale are an expression of how faculty and program designers intend to meet professional, national, and market needs. Local knowledge of professional practice is thus rooted in historical and material processes from mainly within and sometimes without an institution.

We may also have to note that the local knowledge of a culture has special core value boundaries that set it apart from other cultures. For Obeng-Quaidoo (1986), Africans lay emphasis on four core values: (a) the role of the divine; (b) the African concept of time; (c) the African concept of work; and (d) the non-individuality of the African. He intimated that time in African cosmology is not linear. In his view, the African thinks of time as a two-dimensional phenomenon. This is to say that whereas time in Western thought is divided into the past, present, and future, Africans conceive of time as “a symbol for events” (Obeng-Quaidoo, 1986: 92). The future time is absent in African cosmology because, as the author held, “time and events which lie in it have not taken place, and therefore, cannot constitute time” (p. 92, see Gyekye (1989) for a counter-perspective).

There is, however, a tendency to misapply the idea that communication education is both local and situated. My dialogues with focal participants in my research and my own practice as an academic in Ghana suggest that sometimes university administrators and faculty stress the idea of situated difference to the detriment of making gainful progress in their work. The notion of “this is how we do things here” thus sometimes closes the door to openness, creativity, and innovation. Examples are a seeming unchanging emphasis on the lecture method as the preferred strategy for teaching communication in university classrooms, and the use of the sit-down examination method for assessment, despite suggestions from colleagues who may have trained abroad. The excuse, over the years, is blamed on large class sizes.

2. Communication education is *interested* and *strategic*. The set of skills to be mastered, and expected outcomes to be achieved from a field as vast as

communication are not disinterested. Very often, the values are ideologically marked and politically driven. Practice theory provides a researcher with a pair of lenses to see how cultural, ideological, and political elements enable and/or constrain the work of communication educators. Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that institutional critique is crucial for grasping that what goes into the design of communication curricula reflects the interests, ideologies, and core values of program planners and discursive regimes. My case study of the graduate program in communication education in one Ghanaian public university, in particular, shows that preferred skills to be obtained by graduate students are in the domains of academic communication and language studies. These values represent the scholarly interests of faculty, the principal architects of the program. A critical analysis of institutional practice offers scholars the opportunity to interrogate, and, then, propose changes needed for the advance of communication pedagogy. For example, I suggested that the department's curriculum be revised to include core seminars such as rhetorical communication, critical pedagogy, and instructional communication.

3. For communication program administrators to accommodate institutional change, they need to recognize that professional practices are in themselves *transcultural*. I have suggested in this dissertation that because the 21st century will continue to be marked by cultural flows, mobility, and transnationalism, it is important that the institutional practices (*e.g.*, pedagogy, theory, assessment practices, curriculum development) that inform the work of communication administrators be also viewed as transcultural. Communication teachers and their students are increasingly becoming transcultural communicators. This means that their knowledge of transcultural competence always needs to be active. Transcultural communicative competence is key for understanding, for instance, how pedagogical content from other cultures come to play a central role in the communication curriculum of another culture. It is a work of accommodation and adaptation of cultural diversity. Transcultural competence in professional practice writ large is the competence required to make sense of

the implications values from other cultures have on one's own institutional practices. What gets accepted eventually as normative ways of communicating in differing contexts is a function of how they are understood by social agents in specific institutions. One of my participants held that his administrative, pedagogical approach, and communicative practices are Western-centered and democratic because he transplanted these values to his local institution from his training in the United States. Failure of colleagues to make room for and negotiate with such a scholar in their collective practice may result in collegiate friction and tension.

To operationalize the propositions above in detail, I have organized this dissertation into seven chapters. The first chapter, "The missing paradigm in communication education," makes a case why it is urgent to study institutional practices of communication administrators in cultures outside of the Global North. Here I contend that it is important that scholars pay special attention to practice because it plays second fiddle to theory in the field. I argue that the binary between theory and practice in the discipline should instead be viewed as mutually constitutive. I do so by heeding Nainby's (2010) call to embrace the critical turn, and move on to argue that one way scholars can develop discipline-specific communication pedagogy is to take a step backward to examine the institutional practices that give meaning to their field in the first place. The chapter, then, contextualizes the research problem by reviewing literature on communication education in Africa in general, and Ghana, in particular. It also maintains that understanding of noetic, normative, and discursive practices of communication faculty in public universities in Ghana requires a fair understanding of African philosophies and African communication worldviews.

Chapter 2, "Current discourses of practice," delineates the contours of the theoretical framework of this dissertation. Using an interdisciplinary approach, I mesh together important concepts from Wenger's community of practice theory, the New Literacy Studies idea of social practice, and contemporary discussions of practice in the globalization literature. Ultimately, I posit that professional practices that inform the work of communication educators do not take place in a vacuum. They are based on

members' shared values, alignment, identity, and collective history. The chapter explains that values proffered in this epistemic community are not neutral. That is, social practices (*e.g.*, the identity of the professional community and the program it offers) are ideological in nature. It contends that the work of communication faculty is constrained by powerful interests. I conclude this chapter by stressing that institutional work is also transcultural in nature, and that this will be a significant property of the profession insofar as the globalization of the 21st century necessitates an unprecedented flow of ideas, technologies, capital, and systems from other cultures most especially from the West.

In Chapter 3, "Understanding practice through interpretive ethnography," I discuss the rationale for departing from the objectivist epistemology research paradigm in communication education. The chapter shows that because the work of communication educators is not disinterested, a researcher who enters this cultural space must be dutifully self-reflexive. Located in the sixth moment, it discusses in detail the strengths of an interpretive ethnography methodology (following the discussions of Denzin, Goodall, Richardson, and Tracy), and articulates how questions of representation, self, ethics, reflexivity, crystallization, and transcription made my research ethically sound and empirically robust. I employed these concepts to deal with problems that come with doing a study as subjective as this one. The chapter also discusses how strategies such as reconnaissance study, direct participant observation, semi-structured interview sessions, departmental and faculty board meetings enabled me to immerse myself in my field, and to collect data over a period of two years. The chapter concludes by emphasizing that interpretive ethnography is a work of respect, trust, and collaboration with research participants in the search for knowledge.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 of the dissertation analyze and discuss the findings of the research. The fourth chapter, "The governmentality of practice in communication education," troubles the role the state, the chief sponsor of higher education, plays in communication education. Focusing on two public universities in Ghana, I explore how the government, through its regulatory agencies, exercises power over the means of production in the academy in general, and the work of communication program

administrators, in particular. Drawing on Foucault's idea of *Panopticism* and Brandt's concept of *sponsors of literacy*, I interrogate the political economy within which higher education in Ghana works by paying attention to the mandates of two of its bodies: the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) and the National Accreditation Board (NAB). My goal is to demonstrate how these systems of control shape knowledge work in communication training based on the discourses of bureaucratization and corporatization. This governmentality, or the calculated strategies of control put in place by government, I will show, makes undergraduate communication training, in particular, too instrumentalist and media-centric but less critical.

I pursue further the problem of governmentality by unmasking the impact of discursive regimes on the community, identity, meaning, and the global knowledge economy of communication program administrators in chapter 5. I make sense of the lived experiences of six senior communication faculty through a critical analysis of the stories they tell about their profession, community, and worldviews of global knowledge. I will show that the narrative reflections of my informants are useful tokens for understanding that practices that guide communication education in Ghana take place in a discourse community with no formal association. I will demonstrate that this community has yet to explore ways of enriching its professional ethos as the field's agenda is hardly coordinated by a professional body. The chapter also explains why communication scholars in Ghana face daunting challenges in localizing the curricula of their respective institutions, and why they find it difficult to conduct indigenous communication research. The scholars' narratives have implications for inter-university partnership and more research in international communication education.

The sixth chapter, "Institutional politics, communication education, and curriculum design," offers additional evidence of the problem of communication education in Ghanaian public universities. As a case study, it describes, critiques, and proposes changes, using the New Literacy Studies' concept of social practice and Porter *et al.*'s (2000) idea of institutional critique, in the graduate curriculum of a communication department. The analysis will show that although the graduate program of the department is strongly interdisciplinary, the curriculum has some limitations. In

particular, it emphasizes a mimetic mode of communication, one that makes communication pedagogy too utilitarian and less messy. The study will also show that though the curriculum is heavily Western-centered, and that a number of the seminars in the program do not reflect core courses in instructional communication.

The concluding chapter, “Communication education and the 21st century research agenda,” crystallizes concerns raised in the previous chapters. I conclude the dissertation by emphasizing the relevance of practice theory in pursuing discipline-specific theorization, and for conducting meaningful research in non-educational contexts. The chapter invites the scholarly community to critically explore how communication education can help improve societal needs in the corporate, health, legal and parliamentary, crime and policing sectors. Like other scholars in the field, I make an appeal to the community of communication teachers, writers, and administrators to constantly seek ways to promote communicative competence in non-educational contexts as well. My ultimate goal is to make communication education engage more closely issues of social justice. The social justice I am advocating is one that will ensure that communication education is not confined to the four walls of educational institutions. It is my hope that scholars and educators will make available the potential of communication to social agents, other than students, in order that the larger interests of communication education will benefit a few more. There is the need to decolonize education. Scholars need to ensure that the dividends that formal education guarantees are not confined to the classroom but made to respond to the needs of the larger society. We need to make sure we make our intellectual services available to people outside of the academy.

Chapter 1: The missing paradigm in communication education

The gap between theory and pedagogy severely marginalizes our pedagogical work, and often stigmatizes communication education scholars.

— Hunt, Simonds & Wright, 2014, p. 457

The epitaph above ominously describes the landscape of contemporary communication education. It is one of the recent works that show that practice plays second fiddle to theory in the field. For over three decades, a legion of communication education (CE) writers have created an impression that a study of communicative practice must necessarily proceed from the application of theory. General treatments of the subject often have not considered theory and practice as dialectically constitutive. The false dichotomy between the two, Sprague (1993) observed two decades ago in an issue in *Communication Education*, has created a noetic divide between scholars who view themselves as theorists and those who conduct research into how communication and educational practice shape each other. There is also a high proclivity among scholars to borrow theories outside of the discipline. Sprague warned against this continual dependency. She argued that the incessant application of generic models such as Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives or Piagetian phases of development to communication education research and practice negatively affects the field's progress toward developing its own discipline-specific pedagogy and theory.

To Sprague, a generalist approach to teaching and learning communication is inappropriate because it contradicts the discipline's understanding about the nature of communication. She traced this development to three main challenges the field is grappling with: (a) the inability of scholars to keep pace with theoretical advances in the field, (b) the theorization of communication as a medium of transmission, and (c) the reticence of graduate students to conduct research in the teaching and learning of communication education and instructional communication. Sprague urged colleagues to retrieve "the serious discussions and focused inquiries" that are fundamental to the discipline (p. 107). Her proposed guidelines have since then significantly shaped CE

scholarship (Sprague, 1993, 2002). Two are of utmost importance to me in this dissertation: a discipline-specific pedagogy recognizes that communication is *a complex process*, and that it is *tied to cultural and personal identity*. She explained ‘complex process’ to mean that communication is a critical, multilayered process that is situated in the culture of human actors. According to her, communicative competence yields cultural capital and power. In this dissertation, I suggest that one way to understand the complex processes communication entail is to theorize communication as a specific type of practice on its own terms. I hold that this perspective will enable us to trouble the meaning of *communication*. This effort requires that communication education scholars grasp the *Lebenswelt* or phenomenological lifeworld of the concept (Husserl, 1970).

The task of closing the gap between theory and practice in communication education is thus necessary. It is crucial for defining the subject matter, scope, and methods of communication research. It also affords communication educators the chance to reflect on what constitutes *theory* in their discipline. Nainby (2010) has shown that the field has been influenced by three major theoretical movements that did not immediately lie within the communication discipline. These are ancient Greek oratory with a focus on the integration of theory and practice, the theory and practice of speech communication pedagogy mainly by 19th and 20th century scholarship, and the application of theories from the social sciences such as psychology and sociology (See Johnstone, 2001 for a comprehensive discussion on delivery in classical contexts). There is also a fourth movement that draws mainly from cultural studies, critical theory, and postmodern philosophy. This strand, Nainby explained, has not received much attention in the field, although it addresses issues of power, identity, and social justice as they relate to the teaching and learning of communication. She stressed that despite the panoply of theories applied in communication education, a number of scholars have little understanding of what constitutes a discipline-specific pedagogy. Drawing on Sprague’s works, Nainby argued that communication education is characterized by nine basic elements: it is *inherently complex, processual, frequently unconscious or automatic*, and that human communication is *a performative, embodied, usually oral*,

and a *social* enactment, which is *culturally situated in structures of power*. Following this reading, she isolated four basic philosophical assumptions of communication education, which I quote verbatim for the sake of clarity³:

1. Communication acts are principally responsive, through oral/aural interaction or otherwise—meaning that they are direct engagements with other communicators (some physically present, some imagined), and are performed in social contexts.
2. Communicative acts shape both people and the human world.
3. Communication is a process in which participants actively make meaning within dynamic contexts.
4. Communication practices are learned and become habituated over time (p. 14).

One question that arises from examining the assumptions above is why the core of programmatic knowledge in CE has for a long time been based on an *objectivist epistemology* despite the conspicuous presence of humanistic terms such as “meaning,” “performance,” and “contexts” in the discipline. I will argue that though a post/positivist perspective to CE scholarship over the years has shaped theory building in the field, the paradigm, nonetheless, can narrow our understanding of the discipline’s research agenda. For example, scholars have begun to acknowledge the need to ask questions that straddle the objectivity/subjectivity continuum in order to embrace the critical turn. One such proposal was recently made in Fassett and Warren’s (2010) *The Sage Handbook of Communication and Instruction*. In her contribution, Nainby (2010) noted that though the use of hypotheses and operational variables makes research in CE scientific, it is high time scholars recognized “critical, postmodern research in communication education as a significant shift.” (p. 13). The call is well placed because too much reliance on science may render research findings in CE quite exact and yet less nuanced. The “significant shift” is, therefore, I suggest, much more responsive to

³ Nainby (2010) understood that not all CE scholars affirm these entailments. This is understandable because communication itself is a complex human phenomenon. Ways of knowing, teaching, and learning it vary. These include rhetorical, critical, and descriptive approaches on the one hand, and quantitative or predictive methods on the other hand (cf. Morreale & Backlund, 2002).

the needs of a complex postmodern society marked not only by intercultural relations but also by transcultural currents.

Another consequence of heavily scientizing communication education, over the years, is that it has led to ‘the missing paradigm problem’ (Nainby, 2010). In an effort to attain empirical rigor, some CE scholars in a way have placed the cart before the horse. That is, while research has soared in instructional communication (*e.g.*, teacher immediacy, communication apprehension, instructional behaviors, and student and teacher socialization), less attention has been drawn to the core of the field: programmatic research. Here is one observation Friedrich (2002) made in his review of *Communication Education*:

In reviewing our accomplishments, then, we must conclude that our contributions have been much more systematic and thorough when focusing on the communication dimensions of teaching in general (instructional communication) than they have been in addressing the issues of teaching communication specifically (communication education). While I believe our contributions in the former domain are commendable ..., I believe we can and should be doing more in the latter (focusing specifically on the tasks of communication instruction) (p. 373).

Friedrich held that for communication education to remain a practical discourse its agenda must focus on programmatic research. In his view, programmatic research should be the agenda of the field because it is the knowledge base of teaching (p. 374). Guided by Shulman’s *Harvard Educational Review* article, he intimated that communication education scholars should retrieve the missing paradigm of their discipline by researching three forms of knowledge. The first is *content knowledge*. This refers to the variety of ways in which the basic concepts and principles of the discipline are organized to incorporate facts. Second, they need to explore *pedagogical content knowledge*, or the ways of representing the subject that make it comprehensible to others. The third area, Friedrich suggested, is that communication researchers need to also explore *curricular knowledge* (p. 374). This includes the full range of programs designed for the teaching of particular subjects and topics at a given level, the variety of instructional materials available in relation to those programs, and the set of

characteristics that serve both as the indications and contra-indications for the use of particular curricula or program materials in particular circumstances (p. 374-5).

There is, however, a hurdle to overcome. For scholars to address the missing paradigm problem and adequately research content knowledge, I propose they, first of all, reconsider their approaches to education in the field. There are contentions regarding whether communication education is Aristotelian on the one hand, or Isocratic on the other. Proponents of the first school often carry research in the communication across the curriculum (CXC) movement, while others advance the cause of communication in the disciplines (CID). However, in "Time to Speak Up," Dannels (2001) argued that the distinction between the two is blurry, given that CID is but an extension of CXC. To Dannels, the mission of CID is to provide stakeholders with the opportunity to acquire situated discipline-specific communication skills. A situated communication pedagogy, she wrote, is one committed to context-driven, disciplinary instruction for specific disciplines. She noted that this pedagogy is relevant for obtaining theoretical complexity in the field compared to teaching generic skills such as grammar and basic composition.

Using principles in situated learning, disciplinary knowledge construction, and the social construction of speaking, Dannels specified five principles core to a situated pedagogy. She stressed that oral genres are sites for disciplinary learning that are context-driven, locally negotiated practices. Though I agree with Dannels, it seems to me that her essay tends to essentialize the question of *context*, *situatedness*, and *locality*. Though she clearly demonstrated that values and communication skills are variable across disciplines, the claim creates an impression that disciplinary practices are autochthonous. Her work casts less light on how practices among specific disciplines may be transdisciplinary, or defy disciplinary boundaries. To put it differently, Dannels said little concerning how communication skills privileged in given disciplines become mobile with time. Again, though she argued that oral practices are locally negotiated, much is not said about the fact that negotiation is a political act. This is because it is the most powerful that get to influence decision

making processes, and what defines the normative practices of their disciplines. Sprague (1993), in particular, cautioned that “The politics of curriculum conceal struggles over who gets to shape how people speak,” mainly because, “definitions of competence serve as gatekeeping functions to keep some codes out of the cultural mainstream” (p. 117-118). Studies in the critical aspect of communication education are thus of mammoth importance for CE scholars to make the significant shift Nainby (2010) called for.

Rationale and significance of the study

I write this dissertation as a contribution to making the shift possible. It is my input to ongoing conversations about theory building in communication education research. The effort lies in my attempt to add to research on practice theory by proposing a conceptual framework robust enough to articulate formal and informal practices associated with teaching and learning, administrative work, curriculum design, and policy formation in communication education. Because institutions are rhetorical systems of decision making that exercise power through the design of material and discursive space (Porter *et al.*, 2000: 621), the dissertation will specifically examine the micro-politics within the macro-structures of educational institutions. By locating the research within the “fourth stream” or critical aspect of communication education, I work to explore and critique how institutional practices and communication education shape each other in an international context such as Ghana, a country in West Africa, where English is studied and spoken as a second language (see Owu-Ewie, 2006 and Adika, 2012 for a comprehensive discussion on the history of English and the English-only policy of education in Ghana).

My fieldwork was conducted in Ghana because I have an active insider knowledge of its educational system⁴. To this end, I adopted a humanistic, phenocritical paradigm.

⁴ Elsewhere, I self-reflexively narrate in detail, using the confessional tale, my own journey as a former student of linguistics and education in Ghana and my transition to the humanistic studies in an American university (Coker, 2015). Constant reflexivity was key to the success of this dissertation because I had to keep track of how my own situatedness, cultural, educational, and professional knowledge of my field shaped the forming of my research, and more important, how it impacted on my interpretation of key issues discussed in the study.

This perspective enabled me to employ an interdisciplinary framework drawn from community of practice theory, new literacy studies, and globalization to explore how institutional practice shapes and is shaped by state power and the cultural politics of communication education in two English-medium public universities. Throughout this dissertation, I show that discursive practices of communication education are not disinterested. I will demonstrate that the stories, frameworks, tools, and documents that guide communication practice in educational institutions privilege certain habits of mind, and at the same time marginalize other modes of being and knowing. I will establish that institutional critique is key to enable scholars to critically reflect on the values they place on the teaching and learning of communication. Porter *et al.* (2000) posited that the main agenda of institutional critique is to bring about change through reflection, resistance, and revision. To achieve this objective, I asked: How do communication educators do their professional work? To answer this question, I basically relied on fieldwork conducted between May 2013 and May 2015, using an interpretive, reflexive ethnography methodology. The theoretical and methodological architecture designed for the study led me to answer three specific questions for this dissertation:

1. How do state regulatory bodies shape the work of communication program administrators?
2. What stories do communication educators tell about their field, and what do the stories reveal about their institutional practices⁵?
3. How are communication curricula designed, and what do the content and framework reveal?

Although answers to these research questions are useful for understanding how institutional politics, the global knowledge economy, and regimes of power impact on

⁵ Research in the narrative reflections of communication faculty and program administrators has received less attention. With the exception of the October 1993 special issue of *Communication Education*, “When teaching ‘works: Stories of communication education,” little has been said about narratives of program administrators in contemporary times, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (*e.g.*, Althanases, 1993; Avery, 1993; Fisher, 1993; Strine, 1993; Wulff, 1993) as compared to recent works in technical and professional communication (*e.g.*, Bridgeford *et al.*, 2014).

the practice of communication teachers, this dissertation also satisfies the need to conduct research and build theory grown on African soil. As Nwosu (2014) recently pointed out, “There is a growing discourse in Africa regarding how best to position African scholars as strategic partners and competitors in knowledge production and distribution” (p. 39). My study adds to the growing body of works by Asante (2004), Anerson (2007), Skjerdal (2012) among others who are calling for alternative theories of communication. Specifically, my work calls attention to the importance of cooperative communication in curriculum design, the role of Afrocentric knowledge systems (*e.g.*, the role of the divine, the amphibious corporeality of the individual, and the non-linearity of time), and the value of local languages in communication education. But how truly compelling is the proposal? Taylor *et al.* (2004) say it is:

It seems reasonable to assert therefore that the situational contexts in Africa, the dearth of communication research from an Afrocentric perspective, and the inadequacy of new training curricula compel the need to rethink the nature and direction of communication education in Africa. When fully conceptualized and implemented, the new paradigm would serve to enhance the available pool of communication experts for various societal development needs as well as augment our theoretical knowledge of African communication phenomena (p. 5).

It must be noted that unlike the West, Africa has little to show for its involvement in communication education research. A number of the countries on the continent have for a long time pursued a media-tropic pedagogy. A media-tropic pedagogy considers the core of communication studies to be mass media-oriented. Taylor *et al.* (2004) have blamed this development on four events: (*a*) the colonial experience (*i.e.* print journalism was used as a tool for colonization and liberation); (*b*) the dependence of psychology-based solutions to media uses and effects; (*c*) the idea of mass communication as a means of modernization, and (*d*) the problem of technological determinism (*e.g.*, the role information and communication technologies play in teaching and learning). The authors added that the teaching of introductory classes in human communication in Africa relies on research findings and textbooks that are often unsuitable to explain the African communication experience, and thus called for a shift

in paradigm that will “permit better understanding of the African communication environment” (p. 1).

Apart from being of immediate benefit to communication scholars, I am hopeful that my study addresses concerns of teachers, scholars, and administrators in allied fields such as professional, scientific and technical communication, and writing program administration. My work provides empirical perspectives on how the structures and practices of communication departments shape the teaching and learning of communication in a non-Western context. Drawing on the literature of communication education and professional/technical communication, my research makes the voices of communication educators in an international space audible to their colleagues in the Occident. In so doing, I am certain that this interdisciplinary study will bring to the attention of Western scholars the webs of narratives communication educators, scholars, and program administrators in the Global South construct concerning power regimes, assessment designs, curriculum development as well as problem solving management.

An empirical exploration into these perspectives in an African nation such as Ghana is important in order that the scholarly community may understand, further theorize about, and seek ways to help address the political texture of communication instruction which has undeniably undergone a massive global, or more appropriately, a transcultural transformation. In an ever globalizing work culture, interventions from colleagues from the West cannot be misinterpreted as interference as stakeholders in the educational enterprise seek new ways to make education more responsive to the exigencies of the 21st century. At least, there are questions of new market trends and of international coops to respond to. Technical communicators Brady and José (2009) couldn’t have been more right, “... the globalization of the workplace increasingly requires that students be prepared to work in linguistically and culturally diverse contexts” (p. 41).

I also consider this dissertation as an avenue to continue the conversations about the relationship that exists between communication education and composition studies. What are the boundaries between the two? How similar or different are they as fields

of inquiry, and what are their research commitments? Indeed, I risk reducing or misrepresenting the expanse of the fields. Besides, if there truly is a hard line between communication education and composition studies, the line may be blurry with the advance of interdisciplinarity in the twenty-first century. This means that the two epistemic cultures share a lot in common. They are bonded by a common progenitor, that is, rhetoric (Foster, 2009), and are siblings to linguistics, cognitive psychology, semiotics, critical theory, and educational studies (Nystrand & Wiemelt, 1993; Fulkerson, 2005; Miller, 2009). Nevertheless, I am of the view that the identity of each of these disciplines is deeply rooted in its historical and material productions; professional identity tends to find expression in some kind of institutional politics.

The birth of communication education as a discipline, for example, began with the decisive break away of 17 members of the National Council of Teachers of English in 1914⁶. Darling (2010) narrates that these members were dissatisfied with the lack of support they received from their colleagues in departments of English to pursue research in public speaking. Deliberations among these members led to the establishment of the then National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking (NAATPS), currently the National Communication Association (NCA). Darling makes clear that the need to pursue a research agenda in communication related issues and how they affect pedagogy superseded fears of fiscal or political vulnerability. Members saw the need to pursue scholarly and pedagogical excellence in communication education research and teaching. This, notwithstanding, the discipline is made up of, what Darling describes as, “a million pieces of devoted, exciting, passionate, but disparate, and separated communities of scholars” (p. 4). Essentially, however, the field is organized in three categories, *viz.* communication education, instructional communication, and critical communication pedagogy, albeit with considerable overlap. Clearly, the agenda of communication education scholarship is to explore how communication theory enhances pedagogical strategies

⁶ See www.natcom.org/historyofNCA/ for a comprehensive history of the Association and its pioneers.

to enable learners to acquire communicative competence. Book's (1989) arguments about the centrality of the discipline to pedagogy is still relevant to date:

Communication educators need to be able to justify the worth of the subject area taught in schools whether it takes a rhetorical or communication theory focus. They need to argue for the intrinsic value of the field as well as its value in applying the area of communication to other areas. In addition, they should be able to explain the worth of studying communication as it enhances one's ability to think more logically, develop a stronger self-concept, [and] write more articulately (p. 318).

A clear distinction that exists between communication studies and composition studies, in my view, then, is that the former focuses on the building and application of communication theory to the study of different phenomena. These include electronic/mass media, organizational communication, health communication, political communication, and, of course, communication education⁷.

Composition studies, in contradistinction, is basically devoted to improving students' writing skills. It emerged as a postsecondary research field, Miller (2009) writes, "with the designated responsibility for teaching students to use a culturally approved standard English" (p. xxxv). According to her, composition studies began as an institutional response to a widely perceived literacy crisis following open-wide admissions of students into private universities during the economic upheavals that followed the American Civil War. In order to reverse perceived falling standards, writing teachers and composition scholars began to look closely at the nature of the writing process, and the interaction that exists among reader, writer, and text. They also investigated the nature and structure of composing processes, the context and course of writing development, the indirect effect of readers on writing, and of course, the problem of meaning in discourse (See Nystrand *et al.*, 1993 for a comprehensive discussion). This led to the borrowing of concepts from the social sciences, linguistics, cognitive psychology, semiotics, sociolinguistics, and critical theory. Interestingly, as with developments in communication studies, composition studies has become a less unified

⁷ See www.natcom.org/discipline/ for the full range of areas in communication studies.

and more contentious discipline in the 21st century, than it had appeared around 1990. Today, we no longer speak of composition in terms of writing skills only, but in very complex ways that involve competence in multimodal composition as well. Fulkerson (2005) argues that the field has become much more complex with the significant growth of cultural studies. He also posits that rhetorical approaches in composition studies have split into three: argumentation, genre analysis, and the academic discourse community. Eventually, he invites his colleagues to reconsider whether composition should continue to be taught as a field that prepares students to become successful insiders or articulate critical outsiders (p. 679).

In the next section of this chapter, I show how works by writers of African philosophy can help shape our understanding of communication education research and theory. I suggest that one way of coming to terms with the African way of life is to have a fair idea about its educational systems and the philosophies that guide it.

Communication education in Africa: A snapshot

An exploration of communication education in many parts of Africa must proceed from a look at the nature of mass communication or journalism on the continent. This is because communication education has come to mean journalism in Africa. It is also heavily dependent on Western scholarship. The Norwegian scholar Skjerdal (2012) has argued that “An important issue for any journalism program in Africa is the question of whether journalism should be taught according to an established Western tradition, or in a distinct African way” (p. 24). For Skjerdal, communication education in Africa appears to be in conflict with Africa’s unique ontologies and epistemologies. Two basic elements, in my estimation, are core to our understanding of the history of communication in Africa. These are African scholars’ preference for Western models and the dearth of a pan-Afrocentric framework guiding communication education (For a comprehensive discussion, see chapter 5). Earlier works by Murphy and Scotton (1987), for example, critique a seeming contradiction by African scholars who criticize Western education and yet have been unable to develop their own home-grown models. Murphy and Scotton noted that despite efforts by the African Council on Communication Education (ACCE), the only continental organization of

communication educators founded in 1976, the training of African communication experts continues to face a number of challenges. There are arguments over the form of training, and the non-African domination of the program. By the mid-70s, much of the debate focused on the lack of relevance for and sensibilities to the cause of Africa (Murphy & Scotton, 1987).

A similar story may be told of Ghana's journalism education which began as far back as 1822 (Boafo, 1988). As with the educational systems of its African neighbors, Ghana's communication training is heavily dependent on Anglo-American mass communication taxonomies. Since the establishment of the first School of Communication Studies (now the Department of Communication Studies) at the University of Ghana in 1972, it has to date remained loyal to its core journalistic objectives: to improve the practice and understanding of journalism and mass communication, and to serve both practitioners in mass communication and the public reliant on the media through research. Its curriculum still offers a wide variety of media-related courses, leading to the award of graduate diplomas, Master of Arts and Master of Philosophy degrees. Boafo (1988) stressed that the main policy objective of journalism training in Ghana is "to produce professionally trained personnel to operate and manage the country's mass media" (p. 57). He mapped the history of journalism practice in the country to the colonial era when in 1822, the first British Crown Governor, Sir Charles MacCarthy established the *Royal Gold Coast Gazette*. According to Boafo, journalism in this era served propagandist ends because it was a means to mobilize the masses, regulate public opinion, and control dissidence from the local people (see also Ansu-Kyeremeh, 1992). He also remarked that Ghanaian journalists were subsequently trained to lead the independence struggle from their ex-colonial masters, the British, and noted that because literacy levels were low during the colonial epoch, journalists often underwent on-the-job technical skills, and received short courses abroad.

Foundational to this training in a newly independent Africa was the idea of *developmentalism*. Ghana's first president, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, for example, was committed to developing the country through a robust press education.

This, he felt, was needed in mobilizing the new Ghana toward a singular developmental agenda. Formal journalism, Boafo wrote, started in February 1959, with the establishment of Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ). Its mandate was two-fold: to provide formal and systematic training in journalism, and to foster development of an independent cadre of journalists to play an active role in the emancipation of the African continent (Boafo, 1988). In view of this ideological agenda, GIJ and the then School of Communication Studies (SCS) designed curricula targeted at the Ghanaian élite. Courses included—and still do—print and broadcast journalism, mass communication, communication research methods, public relations/advertising, and social psychology. Today, besides these two training institutions, communication studies in Ghana has experienced what one of my informants termed as “a massive explosion” (see chapter 5 for an inventory of public and private communication institutions in Ghana). One thing, nonetheless, is certain about the curricula of some communication departments in Ghana: they do “not appear to be based on an (*sic*) specially recognized state policy integrated into national development planning” (Boafo, 1988: 70) since the passing of the first president. Boafo concluded that a new curriculum needed to be designed geared toward creating among journalists and teachers awareness and knowledge of the socio-cultural, economic, and political realities of the rural environment (For a comprehensive discussion on the problem of developmentalism in communication curricula in Ghana, see chapter 4). He urged scholars and curriculum designers to revise the content, style, and structure of communication curricula in Ghana. (Boafo’s concerns parallel my own observations which I report in chapters 4, 5, and 6)

Nowhere do I suggest that no efforts have been made at designing a common curriculum. My concern is that scholars have not seen much of these efforts in contemporary times. The earliest, I think, were critical of the ideology of *professionalism*. James (1990), for one, urged colleagues not to blindly imitate the global culture of the journalistic profession because not all training from the West may be useful to the development of the continent. He proposed that rather than simply teach print and broadcast journalism, more effort was required to contextualize these courses

within development communication scholarship, which according to him, should be in touch with the grassroots. He also urged communication educators to reconsider the quality of language education they give to their students. “An examination of the syllabuses of communication schools reveals that much of the language proficiency of journalists,” he regretted, “is invariably left to general studies programs and writing skills and allowed to blossom through the writing of news and feature articles for the schools’ newspapers or magazines which are issued at predetermined intervals” (p. 10). In James’ view, language training must focus on the receptive and expressive skills of learners to improve their communicative competence. This competence, he emphasized, is crucial for communication students to deal with problems of structure, style, register, and tone. He proposed that journalism schools in Africa should encourage local language proficiency. In short, much as general studies in writing skills are necessary, they are, nonetheless, insufficient for developing professional communication competence.

Communication training programs in Africa thus are variable. With the notable exception of South Africa, the syllabi of eastern and southern Africa emphasize the acquisition of skills in print and broadcast journalism, advertising and public relations. Boafo and Wete’s (2002) sponsored work by the United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adds weight to the idea that communication curricula across Africa face serious setbacks. These include a deficit of experienced faculty, low salaries, and inadequacy of teaching and learning resources. In addition, many textbooks are written by foreigners, mostly from Europe and North America, and published by Western printing outlets. The content of these publications, Boafo and Wete observed, bears little impact on the social, political, economic, and cultural reality of many African countries. Concerns to rethink the nature of communication pedagogy in Africa are critical because they have implications for the quality of graduates the educational system turns out. As Boafo and Wete noted, the central concern in curriculum development is the establishment of a consistent relationship between general goals, on the one hand, and specific objectives to guide teaching, on the other. The mode of evaluating content, the authors proposed, should be guided by

the following questions: What is the purpose of knowledge? What should be the aim of communication training? What curriculum design will most effectively implement the fundamental goals of the profession? What content (knowledge) should all students learn? In what activities should students engage as they interact with content, and how should the merit of educational goals, content and learning activities be assessed? (Boafo & Wete, 2002)

Efforts at seeking answers to these questions led to a number of conferences. An example is the workshop organized jointly by UNESCO and ACCE in Cape Town, South Africa, in November 1996. The conference was attended by 80 communication trainers and media professionals from 16 African countries such as Angola, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania (Odhiambo *et al.*, 2002). Non-African participants included experts from Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States. At the end of the workshop, the following communiqué was issued:

1. There is the need to revise curricula, and situate them within the context of African developmental needs;
2. Since curricula cannot function in a pedagogical vacuum, it is necessary that energy, time, and resources be put into developing human resources and facilities for communication training in Africa;
3. Curriculum developers should be cognizant of the social, economic, political, and cultural contexts existing in Africa, as well, as the background of communication trainers, teaching and learning resources; and
4. The curricula of existing training institutions should be expanded to cover the broad areas of communication studies (such as interpersonal, organizational, cross-cultural, and inter-ethnic communication, new communication and information technologies) rather than the narrow focus on journalism and communication which seems to characterize most of the training programs and activities.

Two models of curricula for non-degree and degree communication training programs at the university level have been drawn up, following the Cape Town roadmap

(Odhiambo *et al.*, 2002). The curriculum planners designed modules for (a) formal training in polytechnic, vocational institutes, and other non-degree awarding institutions, and (b) a comprehensive training for university education (from diploma courses through master's studies). The evidence from my research, however, suggests that communication education across Ghanaian public universities tends to be more organic and less organized. Interview sessions with key program administrators and seasoned faculty show an absence of a vibrant community of practice working to close the gap between *techne* and *praxis*.

I end this section by reviewing some current efforts at developing models unique to the African experience. Skjerdal (2012) recently proposed three: journalism for social change, communal journalism, and journalism based on oral discourse. The first, he said, is used in Africa as a vehicle for national unity and a tool for breaking with the colonial past. It is a kind of revolutionary or advocacy journalism. Because of its nation-building ethos, this type of journalism, he posited, “endorses journalistic interventionism and rejects an objectivist epistemology” (p. 643). The second model, communal journalism, is rooted in the community and its core values. To Skjerdal, training based on communal journalism recognizes that journalists are members of the local community, and that their professional identity is second to their communal identity. This model presupposes a specific ontology of being, that is, the community interest is greater than the interest of the individual. The third model, oral discourse journalism, derives its impetus from what, in my estimation, tends to be the romanticization of indigenous African communication practices. These include oral tradition and folk culture (*e.g.*, communal storytellers, musicians, poets, and dancers).

Skjerdal insisted that the differences between the three models and Western theories can be explained by the concepts of interventionism and cultural essentialism. “I argue that interventionism and cultural essentialism,” he stressed, “are key dimensions for understanding the fundamental tensions between the models” (p. 646). He argued that interventionism is useful for letting scholars understand how journalism should take a stand in socio-political issues and set out to work for change. Cultural essentialism, he

said, is a way of understanding how a given journalism model is dependent on assumed core features of a particular society. I add to Skjerdal's work by moving a step backward in the next section to locate the ebb and flow of communication education specifically in the ontologies, epistemologies, and hermeneutics of African philosophies. Here we are dealing with a hodgepodge of worldviews.

African philosophies and African communication worldviews

Any inquiry into the essence of African philosophy, I suggest, must first unsettle the difficulty surrounding the concepts 'Africa' and 'African'. These labels are complex, and have with multiple meanings. Africa is not a single continent with a single identity. There are multiple Africas that have and continue to give rise to a bundle of identities. These identities can be mapped on the basis of race, representation, or history. Two of Mudimbe's (1988; 1994) renowned books, *The Invention of Africa* and *The Idea of Africa*, show that arguments about the histories, representations, and identities of Africa are nuanced than they seem to be cartographic. We, then, need to be clear what we mean when we employ the descriptor *African*. What exactly is an African identity, and what does it entail? For Azenabor (2000), *African* can only mean a specific race which relates to individuals whose identity derives from the African continent. These individuals, Azenabor explained, may be blacks, non-blacks, Carribeans, White, or Arabic, and that despite their cultural diversity they share a relatively common history of colonial experience and tutelage. Writers from these cultures have greatly influenced African philosophical thought from their unique perspectives.

That said, African philosophy is not a homogeneous body of thought. In the first place, it is often confused with African communal thought. African communal thought represents mores, wise sayings, customary laws, folklore. These communal collections have didactic values, and carry the history and identity of the group (Boaduo, 2011). African philosophy, on the other hand, refers to a systematic inquiry into the epistemologies, ontologies, phenomenologies, and hermeneutics of Africans obtained through formal training. The training is normally a product of Western contemplation. The difficulty with this training is that when it does not proceed on reflexivity it

presents African philosophical thought as an extension of Western ideation. For example, there is little to be understood about African logic, using the tools of Cartesian logic (Wiredu, 1998). Another issue is that African philosophy shares some commonalities with other fields such as Black Studies, African-American Studies, Afrocentrism, Cultural Theory, Postcolonial Studies, and Race Theory (Janz, 2007). There also are scholars whose philosophic engagements are a reaction to the colonial obliteration of the African continent, or pre-colonial discourses of utopia, commonly termed as *narratives of return* (e.g., Boaduo, 2011; Gade, 2011). I conceive of such dialectics as a postcolonial agenda in which African philosophers heavily rely on hermeneutics to deal with the *misunderstandings* about/of Africa. Here mention must be made of the works of Outlaw (1998) and Asante (2003; 2007), and their coinage of such terms as Afrocentricity and Afrology.

What, then, is African philosophy, and what is its expanse? It is interesting that pioneering work in this field formally commenced by Father Placide Tempels, a non-African, who in 1945 published *La Philosophie Bantoue* [*Bantu Philosophy*] as a challenge to Western philosophy. Tempels contested the claim that Africans were less capable of engaging in ‘true’ philosophy (see also Outlaw, 1998: 24; Ndaba, 1999: 174-5). For example, he disproved the idea that Africans cannot dissociate the subject from the object, nor time from space. Tempels’ work, however, is criticized for its generalization and inability to articulate nuances of African lived experiences. For instance, the work emphasizes Bantu communal wisdom, and yet says little about Bantu phenomenology and hermeneutics. In other words, Tempels’ work tends to conflate the communal thought of the Bantu and the ability of a Bantu scholar to philosophize. Janz (2007), in my view, makes clear the distinction. According to him, we can arrive at the meaning of the phrase *African philosophy* if and only if we identify two senses of the term: (a) the recent meaning which began to blossom only in the 20th century, and (b) the ancient sense which draws on cultural forms that stretch back in time and space. The distinction between the two is simply theoretical as research in the area shows a level of interdependency.

African philosophy also struggles to establish geographical *versus* intellectual distinctions. Although a legion of scholars have argued that contemporary contemplations in African philosophy theorize the abstract (e.g., Wiredu, 1998; Fayemi, 2011; Metz, 2014), their treatments tend to focus on geographical locations or ethnocultures, which gave birth to the pejorative term *ethnophilosophy* attached to this pursuit (cf. Mbiti, 1971; Gyekye, 1995). Geographical or place philosophical accounts problematize practitioner identity, concepts, and claims, as well as anthropology located within traditional communal wisdom. It was only in the 20th century that African and Africana scholars (the latter being scholars of African descent) took the spatial dimension much more seriously because it offers a phenomenological basis upon which African philosophy articulates an African lifeworld. For Janz (2007), the question, “Where is Africa?” can be answered at two levels: Where is Africa geographically, and intellectually? He insisted that there is no one Africa, but rather many interlacing and conflicting tribes, nations, and linguistic groups, so that it is even probable that most of them have their unique sets of philosophies. For example, is North Africa a part of Africa when it has on many occasions aligned with the Middle East? Below is a rough taxonomy of the field based on the pioneering work of Oruka (1990):

- Ethnophilosophy: This area concerns the collective traditional wisdom or generally ontological assumptions and worldviews of African ethnic groups.
- Sage philosophy: This branch explores repositories of cultural wisdom.
- Nationalistic/Ideological philosophy: This is the critical examination of the philosophical contemplations of emancipation and nation-building of key African political figures such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, and Leopold Senghor.
- Literary/Artistic philosophy: This area articulates concerns raised by literary stalwarts like Wole Soyinka, Ngugi w’a Thiongo, and Chinua Achebe.
- Hermeneutic philosophy: This field first began as the analysis of African languages for the sake of finding African philosophical content, and currently

is understood as the philosophy of interpretation. Examples of scholars here are Kwesi Wiredu, Kwame Gyekye, and Godwin Azenabor.

Upon a careful examination of Oruka's taxonomy, we may hold that if philosophy is construed as the study of the principles underlying conduct, thought, and knowledge, then, African philosophy may be described as "the philosophy that is nourished within an African cultural experience, tradition, and history" (Azenabor, 2000: 321). What makes African philosophy unique, Azenabor argued, is that it has a metaphysical dimension and spiritual orientation which is more of co-existence with nature rather than conquest, more of collectivism rather than individualism, more of holism rather than atomism, more of synthesis rather than analysis. African philosophical thought is, therefore, fundamentally subjectivist. It contemplates the human experience. This understanding is crucial for doing research in communication. Obeng-Quaidoo (1986) argued that in order to propose communication theories and methodologies congruent with the African lived experience, researchers need to understand the African ontology and cosmology. According to him, "any discussion of methodological innovations without considerations for the underlying cultural imperatives is like a mouse gyrating forever" (p. 91). He cautioned researchers to be self-reflexive of their practices because

Our education in the developed countries arms us with necessary logical tools for arriving at certain scientific explanations, but we return to our developing countries and gradually we realize that the logic and rationality we tend to bring to every situation are not shared by other members of our society... It is only then that we begin to think of new theories and methodologies which would fit the African context (p. 97).

He insisted that every culture has special core values that sets it apart from other cultures. The Greeks and French, he said, lay emphasis on their languages, the Chinese on their clan systems, while the Jews uphold their religion. Motivated by these core values, he classified African core value boundaries and their implications for understanding communication in an African context into four: (a) the role of the divine; (b) the African concept of time; (c) the African concept of work; and (d) the non-individuality of the African. He intimated that time in African cosmology is not linear.

In his view, the African thinks of time as a two-dimensional phenomenon. This is to say that whereas time in Western thought is divided into the past, present, and future, Africans conceive of time as “a symbol for events” (Obeng-Quaidoo, 1986: 92). The future time is absent in African cosmology because, as the author held, “time and events which lie in it have not taken place, and therefore, cannot constitute time” (p. 92). This belief is based on the view that time is endless, and that Africans exist in time, and not the other way round. The Harvard trained philosopher Kwame Gyekye, however, disagreed. Gyekye (1995) spoke about the problem of generalizing African thought. His analysis of Akan social thought shows that the Akan have a complex philosophy of future time. My own way of dealing with the problem of time in African consciousness is to be mindful of the fact that Africa is not a monolith. The idea that Africans view time in only present and past forms may not hold in a cosmopolitan Africa. Earlier, I stated that discourses about Africa must address not only its geography but more important its intellectual spaces. Time is culture-specific.

And because philosophy is an enterprise of the culture from which it emerges, communication scholars need to grasp the basic philosophies that shape their discipline. One such tenet is the place of the individual in the social order. For Gyekye, the African identity is largely amphibious, that is, it is neither communalistic nor individualistic. The admission of one does not negate the other; there is no dualism in the Akan idea of the human person. He posited that communalism is the Akan social thought of humanism which ensures the welfare of each member of the society. This means that no one individual is born outside of a community. “Communalism insists that the good of all determines the good of each or, put differently, the welfare of each is dependent on the welfare of all” (p. 156). One’s sense of responsibility, the author stressed, is measured in terms of one’s responsiveness and sensitivity to the needs of the group. In his view, emphasis on community should not be read as whittling away individual identity, initiative, and responsibility. This is because the African, he said, has proverbs and dicta that expressly reflect the values of personal worth, aspiration, interests, and identity. After all, a society is a community of individuals, and individuals are individuals in society (p. 162).

The worldviews I have discussed above have implications for conducting research in communication. I am of the view that non-African scholars, in particular, need to be mindful that many local Africans will, in some cases, find it discomforting to isolate a member of their family or community for interview purposes; in such an instance, group or focus group interviews will be more appropriate because of the communal spirit of Africans. Obeng-Quaidoo (1988) noted that whereas Western communication is persuasive (*meaning giving*), Afrocentric communication tends to be cooperative (*meaning sharing*). The problem of the relationship between an individual and society is a problem of what I term “collective subjectivity.” To be a human subject, I contend, is to be able to understand how to negotiate one’s own agency in the web of structural constraints society has established. I turn to Anthony Giddens from whom we read that subjectivity is the pre-constituted center of experience of culture and history. In his theory of the duality of structure, Giddens (1984) argued that human action, meaning, and subjectivity are always shaped by the duality of individual agency and constraints of structure. These activities, he stressed, shape the conditions that make social practices possible because “actors draw upon the modalities of structuration in the reproduction of systems of interaction” (p. 28).

As I bring this section to an end, I would like to draw our attention to some connections between African philosophies and Africans’ understanding of communication. Just as one of the assumptions of communication education, African philosophies in general recognize that communication is an embodied practice. For example, the African social thought of communalism parallels Heidegger’s (1962) concept of *thrownness* (*Geworfenheit*). This idea explains the idea that humans (*Dasein*) do not choose the material conditions of their existence. On the contrary, it is these conditions that determine human existence. Being ‘thrown’ in the world means learning to deal with life as one knows it. Thrownness explains the perennial conditions of humans with all the attendant frustrations, sufferings, and demands that humans do not get to choose. These include social conventions and kinship ties. A critical view of communication must, therefore, explicate how the perennial conditions of human existence impact on the communication behaviors of social actors. An Afrocentric perspective of embodied

communication, in a similar fashion, expresses the view that communication studies is engaging when it involves the whole gamut of the human person. This means that some African conceptions of communication, as in Continental philosophy, valorize a comprehensive approach to communicating with the other that is not limited in scope. In my estimation, they both focus on how mind and body cohere to give meaning to particular acts. An embodied ritual is filled with a number of meanings to be decoded within specific cultural contexts. In North America, for example, a thumbs up is an expression of cheer and approval, although this may attract outright condemnation because it is considered an insult in many Ghanaian cultures. I also want to believe that African worldviews show that communicative practices are situated. They are understood in the traditions, histories, and lifeworlds of African cultures. I am convinced that any acts of communication that do not recognize the role of the cultural and historical dimensions of a communicative exchange may suffer a breakdown. As cultural beings, humans strive to cooperate with one another in order to make sense of interactions. In a word, African knowledge systems emphasize responsible communication.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have troubled the question of practice in communication education scholarship. I have called attention to the urgency to revisit the idea of developing a discipline-specific pedagogy for theorizing practice in the epistemic community. In joining the conversation by key scholars (*e.g.*, Sprague, Friedrich, Nainby) to embrace the critical turn, I have argued that this perspective is necessary for unmasking the macro-, meso, and micro-politics of institutional practices that shape communication education. I have explained that because institutions such as academe are cultural sites that wield power, what goes into the formulation of their policies, the design of their curricula, and the performances of their practices are not without interest. My goal is to contribute to research on discipline-specific theory for communication research. To this end, I stressed that an effective way to explore institutional practice is to theorize it as such, and not to view it as separate from theory proper. In applying a framework that lies at the intersection of social learning theory, new literacy studies, and

globalization theory, I have articulated the rationale for conducting an interpretive ethnographic fieldwork in a non-Western context; I have argued that the stories of program administrators and the technical documents they produce reveal a great deal about their noetic and discursive practices. I have also explained the reasons why non-Western colleagues must have a bird's eye-view of Africa's educational landscape and its worldviews.

In the next two chapters, I discuss in detail the theoretical and methodological thrusts of the dissertation. Readers familiar with practice theory and interpretive research methods may skip chapters 2 and 3 for a comprehensive discussion of data in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Chapter 2: Current discourses on practice

Practice is a set of frameworks, ideas, tools, information, styles, languages, stories, and documents that community members share.

— Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002, p. 29

Discourses about *practice* play a special role in institutional work. They enable scholars to study social structures. Through practice theory, researchers explore how mind, rationality, and knowledge are constituted in the organization, reproduction, and transformation of social life (Schatzi, Cetina & von Savigny, 2001; Natale & Crowe, 2013). Theories of practice are powerful lenses for closely examining communicative behaviors of individuals, groups of individuals, and/or their organizations. They are also useful for analyzing taken-for-granted institutional practices and not just assumptions of regularized routines or institutional structures. De Certeau (1984) defined *everyday practice* as the representation of society and its mode of behavior. He maintained that to understand the operational logic at work in a culture (such as an academic institution) and observe the hidden, scholars need to confront the everyday. The term ‘practice’ has two analogous senses: *praxis* and *praktik*. Reckwitz (2002) uses the term *praxis* to describe the whole of human action (in contrast to theory and mere thinking), and considers *praktik* as a routinized type of behavior by which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described, and the world is understood. I tend to think that both senses writ large involve our ability to understand the histories, cultures, places, and ideologies associated with specific practices. One way of studying practice, I suggest, is for researchers to identify the frameworks, ideas, tools, information, styles, languages, stories, and documents that members of institutions share.

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical architecture upon which my research for this dissertation is built. I work to show how the theories employed in this project illuminate understanding of communication education, and the work of communication program administrators. To arrive at a robust understanding of practice theory, I engage in a cross-pollination of ideas from social learning theory, new literacy studies, and

globalization studies. This interdisciplinary grounding, I believe, is important for theorizing practice because no singular discipline has all that it takes to comfortably house the complexities of practice in an intricately interconnected global society (See also Kruck & Teer, 2009; Drake, 2012; White & Miller, 2014). Combining academic fields is crucial for producing “new” knowledge. As White and Miller (2014) make clear in the context of nursing education, “An emerging viewpoint in higher education emphasizes that a thorough understanding of today’s real life problems requires interdisciplinary reflection” (p. 52). In this light, my understanding of practice theory is informed by (a) the work of social learning theorist Etienne Wenger and his idea of communities of practice, (b) the New Literacy Studies’ conceptualization of social practice, and (c) contemporary globalization studies. I posit this framework because I am of the view that all practices are learned in social contexts, and that specific communities (*e.g.*, medicine, law, communication studies) live by specific literacies or institutional practices.

I weave these three distinct, though not uniquely different, traditions together to explore the mundaneness of institutional practices. In what follow, I first discuss Wenger’s concept of communities of practice. Key issues I will explore include *community*, *participation*, *identity*, and *meaning*. And because the act of practice in an institution is often shaped by questions of ideology and power asymmetry, I devote the next section of the chapter to discuss further how scholars in New Literacy Studies discuss these phenomena. Here, I will consider practice basically as *a situated act*. This means that all practices are socially located in particular contexts, and are mainly shaped by the forces operational in specific locales. Next, I will turn my attention to the broader picture by situating the literature within globalization discourses because practices are not static nor are they limited to a single context. I will argue that institutional practices may as well be *mobile*, and, thus, can hardly belong to only one single community as they undergo relocalization, appropriation, and hybridization by human actors. The final part of the chapter summarizes this interdisciplinary framework by exploring its relevance for investigating the practices of communication faculty and communication program administrators.

Communities of practice: Participation, identity, and meaning

Community of practice theory is not new to communication scholars. It caught the attention of the community since the late 1980s, following Lave and Wenger's (1991) influential work *Situated Learning*. Scholars were first attracted to the idea of 'communities of practice' (hereafter CoP) because of its explanatory adequacy for theorizing, initially, informal learning strategies found at the workplace. Earlier theorization of CoP primarily focused on the socialization of new-comers through apprenticeship. The basic assumption of the theory is that social participation is key to (in) formal learning, which is itself embedded in the practices and relationships of the workplace. Lave and Wenger defined a community of practice as a group that coheres through sustained mutual engagement on a common enterprise, and creates a common repertoire. In theorizing how such a community is formed, the writers heavily drew on the writings of Vygotsky, Bourdieu, and Giddens to answer the following questions: What are the structuring resources that shape the process and content of learning possibilities and the learner's changing perspective? In what way is the learner's access to knowledge organized, and how does it change in the process from being a newcomer to an old-timer? What types of conflicts and power relations are found in the organization of communities of practice when learning takes place? To answer these questions, Lave and Wenger adopted a constructivist approach. A social constructivist approach valorizes concepts such as "socially constructed knowledge," "situated learning," and "development in context" (Chaiklin & Lave, 1993). This means that for Lave and Wenger all learning needs to be observed *in-situ* in social interactive contexts. The theory is premised on four basic assumptions:

1. Human beings are social beings.
2. Knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to valued enterprises.
3. Knowledge requires the participation or active engagement of members in the social world.
4. Meaning is ultimately what learning produces.

The theory stresses four main elements: *community* (learning as belonging), *practice* (learning as doing), *identity* (learning as becoming), and *meaning* (learning as experience)⁸.

Although the most distinct characteristic of communities of practice is *participation*, participation alone is not a sufficient element for identifying a community of practice. Boud and Middleton's (2003) study of informal learning in an Australian vocational training center teaches us that "Some learning networks manifest features of communities of practice, but others do not strongly build identity and meaning" (p. 202). Not all communities can pass for communities of practice. A community of practice, such as a group of cardiologists or Xerox technicians, can be distinguished from similar groups, on the basis of its structure, complex relationships, self-organization, dynamic boundaries, ongoing negotiation of identity, and cultural meaning (Boud & Middleton, 2003). This notwithstanding, participation creates a social history of learning amongst learners which over time builds what Wenger (2000) termed "a regime of competence." Regime of competence includes (a) understanding what matters, and what the community stands for; (b) engaging productively with other participants in the community; and (c) using appropriately the resources of the community through its history of learning. Wenger explains that over time a history of learning among participants becomes an informal dynamic social structure composed of three main elements. The first is the *domain*, that is, an identity defined by a shared interest (and not necessarily expertise). Domains range from the mundane to highly specialized professional expertise (p. 20). The second is *community*, which Wenger defines as the environment in which people dialogue, learn, and build relationships

⁸ The terms 'community' and 'practice' have, however, been contested by globalization critics. Volkmer (2012) argued that an emphasis on community suggests territorial essentialism. He contends that communities are not existing bounded spaces. Humans live in a world of scapes, networks, and flows and that the relationships that exist amongst communities and their related practices are nuanced and messy (see also Anderson, 1983; Appadurai, 1996). When applied to communities of practice, one would then argue that it is risky to claim that such and such a practice belongs solely to community *x*, *y*, or *z* because practices are potentially mobile. Communities, in Anderson's (1983) own terms, are simply *cultural artefacts*.

based on constant co-participation and interaction (p. 9). Then comes *practice*. It is a set of framework, ideas, tools, and documents community members share, and from which they develop a repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, ways of addressing recurring problems, requests for information *etc.* (p. 29). To put it simply, the knowledge displayed by a group of practitioners, such as communication program administrators and faculty resides in its practices.

Practice in workplace environments, like communication departments, is enhanced through member cooperation and negotiation. Cooperation and negotiation significantly reveal the identity of practitioners. In Wenger's view, identity creates tension between competence and experience in the sense that it adds dynamism to the production of practice as each member struggles to find a place in the community. This struggle requires that members take account of three basic modes: a) *engagement*, *i.e.* partaking in the activities and business of the community, talking, working alone or together, using, and producing artifacts, b) *imagination*, constructing a larger picture of the greater community, and c) *alignment*, *i.e.* making sure that activities are coordinated, laws are followed, and intentions communicated, though this does not mean blind compliance to authority.

The theory, however, has come under serious criticisms. One such commentary is that community of practice theory tends to be too theoretical and less practical. Boud and Middleton (2003), in particular, have contended that Wenger and his colleagues show less concrete situations such as how CoPs actually work in real environments (see also Cox, 2005). *Cultivating Communities of Practice* is a response to such concerns. In this book Wenger *et al.* (2002) offer a practical approach on how to cultivate communities of practice, arguing that CoPs can be the key driver of organizational success. They outline seven basic principles for designing and cultivating communities of practice. The first is design for evolution. This is the idea not to impose a fixed structure on members, but to allow the community to grow organically (p. 51). The second principle allows for open dialogue between inside and outside perspectives. It ensures that the strategic potential of communities is sharpened (p. 54-55). The third principle encourages managers to invite different levels of participation so that all members have

a role to play based on their interests and commitment. Cultivating a CoP means members are ready to develop both public and private spaces (p. 55-58). This is the fourth principle. The principle requires that practitioners remain committed to the organization's values so that the community may stay relevant to the organization throughout its lifetime (p. 58-59). Another principle also urges members to create a rhythm so that the pace of activities becomes suitable to them (p. 59-61). The principles detailed in this book are useful for examining issues of community role, scope of domain and interest, common knowledge needs, and knowledge sharing values.

Before I proceed to a discussion of practice theory in New Literacy Studies, I want to recapitulate the main propositions put forward thus far. Essentially, I have been arguing that three elements stand out in theorizing communities of practice. These are member participation, member knowledge, and member sense making. Taken together, these constructs stress the complex nature of learning among members of communities of practice. I have also hinted at some concerns critics have expressed about the term *community* as discussed by Wenger. I mentioned that scholars are calling for a more complex understanding of the idea of community. Nevertheless, it is important to note that criticisms of Wenger's work need to be situated within the prism of social learning. The criticisms must recognize that Wenger's work is a social learning theory of practice, not a political theory of learning. I am of the view that this is the space where Wenger's work ends and those of his colleagues in the New Literacy Studies camp begin. Scholars in this field hold that no learning ever occurs in a vacuum. A major proponent of this position, Street (1995; 2001; 2003), has shown that learning is ideological, and that powerful elements shape learning outcomes. He insists that it is the sponsors of literacy who determine what is right, and what is wrong, and that it is they who have the authority to reward the learner. Communities of practice, therefore, are not immune from the ideologies, gender trouble, power asymmetry, and class struggle that characterize workplace practice. Studies of communities of practice thus need to engage the *critical*. A foray into New Literacy Studies is one way to deal with the gap.

New literacies studies and the idea of social practice

New Literacy Studies scholars privilege *literacies* over *literacy*. Their emphasis on the plurality of ‘literacies’ signals a shift from a single thing called literacy, as posited in the autonomous model, to a recognition that there are multiple literacies (Collins & Blot, 2003). The turning point of this position is that the autonomous model of literacy bears remarkable limitations. They have argued that the autonomous model of literacy basically assumes that literacy leads to cognitive change, and that it is independent of cultural elements. The autonomous model holds that literacy is a neutral, cognitive skill (Goody, 1977; Ong, 1982). A problem with this model is that it is “in many respects too narrowly focused” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012: 3). It produces compliant learners and passive individuals who accept what is presented to them as correct, without necessarily applying their knowledge in different modes and contexts.

New Literacy Studies researchers, on the other hand, prioritize context. A context-sensitive study of literacy practices valorizes the *emic* because it emphasizes that all literacy practices are situated. In the words of Brandt and Clinton (2002), context “suggests that understanding what literacy is doing with people in a setting is as important as understanding what people are doing with literacy in a setting” (p. 337). Scholars who adopt this view define literacy as the ways people use language in their daily lives to conduct their daily business in order to communicate with others, establish and maintain social relationships, enact rituals, and create meaning (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Sheridan *et al.*, 2000). To put it differently, context-dependent literacies are the building blocks of human identity. Barton and Hamilton’s (2000) social theory, for instance, grounds the study of social literacies in a form of six propositions; these propositions highlight the domains, dominance and power dynamics, cultural and historical embedding of literacies. Barton (2006) adds that the composition of situated literacy practices, such as those found in an academic institution, cannot be separated from issues of identity, authority, and agency. Practices are situated because they are shaped by cultural politics. Freire and Macedo (1987) insisted that all literacies involve a form of cultural politics because they are a set of practices that function to either empower or disempower people. According to them,

literacy reproduces existing social formations, or can serve as a set of cultural practices that promote democratic and emancipatory change.

Even though scholars highlight the importance of context in understanding situated practices, it is only recently that a great deal of light has been shed on *context*. Current debates on the subject include whether context is static, on the one hand, or whether it is enacted, fluid, and is itself created. Brandt and Clinton (2002) have argued that contexts are not monolithic, one-dimensional spaces, and that we need to be mindful of how localizing moves and globalizing connections account for social literacies because individuals who use them have agency; humans by their own choosing resist, or appropriate literacy practices. This means that literacy practices are local ways of utilizing language which people draw upon in their lives, and how they talk about and make sense of them (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). They stress that social literacies are shaped by social rules which regulate the use and distribution of texts; are defiant of the distinction between individual and social worlds; are historically situated; and are patterned by social institutions.

Context-based literacies vary according to literacy events and literacy domains. Literacy practices are drawn upon by individuals during literacy events. Individuals use different literacies in different parts of their lives to reflect the values of the societies that support them. Literacy domains, on the other hand, are structured, social patterns within which literacy is used and learned. Domains show the range available in the construction of literacy practices. In this light, a literacy domain, say an academic department, can produce different literacy or institutional practices, and may vary both within and across specific cultures. A literacy domain could be considered a discourse community insofar as it acts as a community for socialization and member acculturation. Street and Leifstein (2007) have suggested that literacy domains are characterized by specific literacy events such as negotiating a late payment plan, or helping a student search for something on the computer. We can also study literacy domains, as Bartlett and Holland (2002) observed, by focusing on the *figured worlds*, *artifacts*, and *identities in practice* at work in specific domains. So construed, literacy domains and their practices, such as those of a communication department, are

historically contingent, collectively produced, and motive-oriented. In simple terms, domain-based literacies are discourses with a capital D (Gee, 1996). They are wrapped in power structures. If literacies are indeed wrapped in power structures, then they are ideological in nature. Ideologies shape literacy or institutional practices because all literacies are often situated in a locale. Local practices are mediated social activities. More to the point, they are the products of social and cultural activities in which people engage (Pennycook, 2010). Local practices are bundles of activities that are organized into coherent ways of doing.

We must, however, not be too quick to describe every activity as practice. Street warns against the tendency of seeing everything as a practice because it makes “the very thinking about practice contingent on locality” (Street, 2003: 30). The relationship between the local and global should be seen in dialectical terms because the global is itself local. But this understanding raises a fundamental problem to the study of social practices. If local practices are always in flux, how, then, can they be theorized? Or as Pennycook (2010: 116) asks, “How can we account for the regularities in the ways we speak, interact, put texts together and so on?” I attempt a response to this question in the next section. There I return to the broader concerns Brandt and Clinton (2002) addressed in theorizing the local. I will argue that quite apart from understanding this problem as the interplay between *localizing moves* and *globalizing connections*, ongoing discussions in the globalization literature should further enrich our understanding of the dialectic. The literature explains that situated practices should not be seen as neatly self-contained systems, but *inter alia* as mobile practices.

The concept of practice in globalization discourses

In the globalization literature, social practices are viewed beyond cultural boundaries. Some practices defy the logic of locality because they are shaped by the globalizing forces of scapes and cultural flows (Appadurai, 1996). Following Appadurai, we may posit that a contemporary understanding of practice in a globalizing world implies that practices are not watertight compartments, nor are they the cultural inventions of one geographical locale. The practices individuals, groups, or institutions engage in are

shaped by notions of mobility, sedimentation, and contact zones. Earlier Pratt (1991) posited that languages—and by extension the ‘languages’ of institutions—should not be “theorized as discrete, self-defined, coherent entities ... shared identically and equally among all the members” (p. 34). She argued that language and the practices that go with it are transcultural in the sense that the practices are often found in social spaces “where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (p. 34). This was her idea of *contact zones*. The dialectic of contact zones enables us to observe that some practices are privileged over others. As will show in chapters 4, 5, and 6, some practices enjoy high status in some institutions because they are mobile, appropriated, or hybridized to suit the cultures of the host institutions. Mobile practices are capable of turning up in unexpected places. Mobile practices can sometimes blend quite well with, and or even disrupt the culture of the host community. In *Language and Mobility* Pennycook (2012) explains how the back and forth of letters and postcards his family exchanged in Kerala, India, shows how language is indeed truly mobile. Some of the epistolary documents tell how the Hindu *ayah* gained currency in his family even when they had returned to England; the noun *ayah* was used to express how caring local Indian girls were better at babysitting than native English women.

We, however, need to tread cautiously in discussing local practices as mobile. Some practices may simply be sedimentations of long standing cultural activities. They could be a manifestation of several layers of a practice situated in a given locale over a long period of time. They also may have been shaped by a generational gap. Therefore when Pennycook (2012) speaks of local practices as mobile, he is saying that there exist two or more distinct practices that are transported from one locale to another. For example, the practices associated with the use of *ayah* elicited unique emotional attachments and fond memories amongst members of Pennycook’s family than it did among local Indians. A study of the mobility of practices, then, needs to account for what sociocultural processes, for example, occur in between local practices, and how translocal practices are relocalized. We also need to question what happens when a type of practice arrives at a contact zone. I take up this challenge in chapters 4, 5, and 6

where I explore the implications of merging Western theories of communication in the Ghanaian classroom, and investigate the problem of drawing on discursive regimes of educational apparatuses inherited from a colonial project.

Merging is a transcultural practice. Far from being a question of how individuals take up a set of practices available in their own cultures to another culture, the literature suggests that transcultural practices are practices of sense making arising from a common underlying of human understanding (Pratt, 1991), and that they signal communicative, pragmatic, and cultural competence (Canagarajah, 2013). For Canagarajah, it is a mistake to think that languages (and for that matter, social practices) exist side by side (p. 7-11). He says that all speakers are not only multilingual but also translingual. Following Canagarajah, I tend to hold that users of literacy engage in transcultural practices by shuttling in between literacies for the purpose of communicating in contact zones. This “shuttling” is not neutral; it is shaped by competing ideologies and power struggle⁹.

Transcultural practices, therefore, require a great deal of performative competence. It is useful for understanding the complexities of experiences in contact zones such as the work environment. When applied to communication research, it could be a lens for enabling scholars to investigate how weaker members in an institution interact with, and negotiate their ways through the hierarchical structures of their organizations. In seeing an institution as a community of practice whose everyday practices and textual productions are shaped by ideological and globalization dynamics, scholars can more meaningfully examine the cultural politics of specific workplaces. Practice theory is, thus, a type of institutional critique proposed by Porter *et al.* (2000) for two main reasons. First, its focus of analysis is the cultural organization. Second, its mission is to effect positive change in the many ways work is carried out in a particular institution.

⁹ Transcultural studies take their roots from diaspora studies, a field that theorizes the politics of ethnic or cultural dispersion, the aftermath of international migration, and the shifting of state borders across populations. Foci include reasons for, and conditions of, the dispersal, relationships with the host lands, interrelationships within communities of the diaspora, and comparative studies of different diasporas (Butler, 2000: 195; Brubaker, 2005: 1-19). For more on the subject, see the edited collection by Baubock and Faist's (2010) *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories, and Methods*.

I take a step further in this dissertation by positing However, the theory I am positing a theoretical framework that is interdisciplinary in scope that recognizes the affordances of globalization on the workings of institutional cultures.

This leads me to the concluding section of this chapter. In this final strand, I draw three major points of the conversation on *practice*—community of practice, New Literacy Studies, current globalization notions.

Conclusion

The basic assumption of practice theory is that practice is situated. The theory acknowledges that institutions and their practices shape each other, and that member socialization and member participation are the key modes of learning in these cultural spaces. Drawing on the writings of Wenger (1998; 2002), I maintain that practice theory assumes that humans are social beings whose mode of learning is greatly enhanced in communities of practice. This perspective holds that knowledge work among members is based on shared values, active participation, engagement, alignment, and identity (See chapter 5). What is practiced in an institution makes sense to its members. Their work is informed and shaped by institutional structures, complex relationships, interactions, collective agency, and negotiation of identity. Engaging in a community of practice also requires a great deal of imagination given that we live in fluid, transcultural spaces (Kraidy, 2005). Practice theory maintains that members' wealth of knowledge springs from their regimes of competence, an idea that requires that they understand what their community stands for so they may engage productively with colleagues by using appropriately the community's resources guided by its history.

Second, practices are interested. This means that they are not neutral, and, therefore, are a good starting point for interrogating how the cultural politics of institutions influence professional practice. It insists that social practices such as those of faculty are ideological. By focusing on the writings of New Literacy Studies scholars, I will that institutional practices are embedded in power structures, and are deeply rooted in the culture(s) and history(s) of their settings. In this instance, the theory assumes that

members are cognizant of the dominant and marginalized practices in their work environment, and that they make choices, conscious and/or unconscious, of what is worth foregrounding and what needs to be backgrounded (See chapters 4 and 6).

Third, practices are transcultural. A practice-based analysis views institutional practices as fluid and mobile. Social practices defy a rigid workplace logic. A study of the practices of a given institution, therefore, offers a robust framework for examining situated practices in an intricate cosmopolitan world where local citizens are sometimes estranged in their immediate surrounds while others consider themselves as imagined citizens of a global world. This theoretical lens is open to the determinisms of globalization, and yet remains skeptical to its affordances on the local. It does not *satisfice* the local at the expense of the global; instead, it views the relationship existing between the two as constitutive (see chapter 6).

Before I articulate how this theory was employed in my analysis and discussion of institutional politics, state power, and the global knowledge economy, I want to briefly discuss the methodology upon which my fieldwork was conducted. The next chapter is important for addressing questions of ethics and the perennial problem of studying cultures outside of the West.

Chapter 3: Understanding practice through interpretive ethnography

The ethnographic project has changed because the world we live in has changed. Disjuncture and difference define this global, postmodern cultural economy we all live in¹⁰.

—Denzin, 1997, p. xiii

This brief chapter discusses the methodology I employed in doing fieldwork for this dissertation. I detail how my focus on interpretive reflexive ethnography situated within the sixth moment¹¹ shaped my methodological choices. The chapter is organized into two basic parts. The first section deals with three major theoretical issues undergirding my overarching approach. These are (a) the crisis of representation, (b) self, ethics, and reflexivity, and (c) transcription. The second part of the chapter discusses the strategies I employed in collecting data during fieldwork in Ghana between May, 2013 and May, 2015. As the research instrument, I will reflect on my own situatedness and the strategies I developed—reconnaissance study, direct participant observation, semi-structured interview sessions, attending faculty meetings, and member-check—throughout the study to render this project ethically sound and empirically robust.

Conducting fieldwork in a postmodern epoch can be difficult. The task becomes more daunting for fieldworkers who study practices in international spaces. Here they must carefully reflect on how suitable their research paradigms are. This is because research paradigms are like Plato's *pharmakon*: they can remedy, and they can poison. They are political statements that reveal the biases of researchers toward the researched. For research paradigms often privilege special ways of knowing. This is why Geertz (1973) cautioned qualitative researchers to carefully reflect on the weight of their claims

¹⁰ Throughout this work, I use the term “poststructural” in lieu of “postmodern” in order to remain sensitive to the postcolonial context of the study, and to articulate a discourse of complementarity (Denzin, 1997). For more on the subject, see the introduction of the dissertation.

¹¹ The sixth moment rejects the grand narratives of realist ethnographic practice. Unlike the modernist phase characterized by (post)positivist discourse, it is, on the contrary, marked by endless self-referential criticisms (Denzin, 1997). As a postmodern approach, it prioritizes the “messy texts” such as narratives of the self and evocative stories.

because all research is, after all, interpretive. Geertz explained that qualitative researchers who conduct fieldwork fundamentally describe cultural phenomena. He argued that the interpretation of complex phenomena are semiotic because interpretations are products of the subjectivities of researchers. As he noted, “What we call our data are really our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (p. 9). This is the position of the interpretive research paradigm. It is one opposed to positivism. Positivists perceive the world by making little assumptions about the nature of the phenomenon they are investigating. Interpretive researchers, on the other hand, mistrust such claims by contesting core values of quantitative methods such as objectivity, validity, and prediction. They argue that the post/positivist research agenda reduces the social world to patterns of cause and effect. On the contrary, far from being a soft science or a new journalism (Erickson, 2011), interpretive research is a political project committed to effect positive change in society. It is critical, and examines stories of researchers and/or their participants in an attempt to problematize their larger significances.

Interpretive ethnography and the crisis of representation

Because “there is no one way to do interpretive, qualitative inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011: xiii), a major assumption in the field is that there is no single ‘truth.’ Interpretive work reckons that all truths are partial, partisan, and problematic (Goodall, 2000). It is a type of ethnography that explores and critiques cultures. Denzin (1999) observed that it must be a blueprint for cultural criticism because no cultural practices are value-neutral. The interpretive ethnographer needs to recognize that practices performed by a certain culture are ideologically motivated, and that they are rooted in the historical and material conditions of the people they study (see chapters 4, 5, and 6). An interpretive inquiry¹², Denzin noted, should articulate cultural and political issues such as power, race, and gender found in the cultures ethnographers study. The

¹² An interpretive inquiry, to be fair, is thus a hermeneutic contemplation. Its major thesis is that an interpretation of a text cannot be dissociated from the prejudices, viewpoints, and biases of the analyst. Meaning, Gadamer (1975) wrote, is arrived at through the fusion of horizon of the interpreter and the text.

goal of engaging in such critiques is to bring about change, or as Denzin called it, “a politics of hope,” by examining how things are, and by imagining how they could be different.

This means that interpretive ethnographers contest positivist views of reality. Their contention is based on the idea that positivist ethnographic accounts hardly engage the crisis of representation. Interpretivists argue that qualitative researchers can no longer directly capture lived experience. Such experience, Denzin (1997) reiterates, is created in the social text written by the researcher, therefore making the link between experience and text problematic. Interpretive fieldworkers hold that realist criteria for evaluating and interpreting qualitative research are questionable (Denzin, 1997; Tracy, 2010). They interrogate what it means to represent a lived experience, and wonder whether any representation of an experience can be as good as any other. According to them, there hardly can be an accurate representation of an experience. They do so by troubling what it means *to represent* in their own works because they are mindful of the cultural and political significations the verb connotes. Goodall (2000: 12) posited that representation is literally about *re-presenting* a reality. It assumes a correspondence between language used to create the representation and the reality that gets represented. He argued that reality (in my case, constructed by means of fieldwork) is a symbolic social construction. That is, the way ethnographers write and interpret cultures can never be objective. “You can’t observe everything, which means you can’t write down all that occurs,” Denzin (1997: 97) rightly warned. Observations such as these derive from the idea that researchers will know in part and so will report in part insofar as they have human limitations, biases, and subjectivities. He held that reality or human experience is messy, and that the research tools to study the nuanced realities of life can hardly be post/positivist.

Interpretive research, therefore, rejects the immaculate perception of reality which is based on the assumption that the researcher is a detached, dispassionate observer. This position enabled me to present the lived experiences and narratives of my participants and my own critique of official documents from my fieldsite as ways of grasping the

nature of communication education in Ghana. It gave me the space to be open to the interpretations I was making throughout my study. My cultural privilege, however, must not be taken to mean that my subject position as a Ghanaian academic who has worked in the field I investigated gave me insight that other researchers might lack. What it meant to me on a personal level was that I had a deeper immersion and cultural understanding of my field. This claim brings into focus the problem of validity.

Interpretive ethnography contests the positivist notion of *validity*. It posits that validity is an ideology that privileges the power and views of the researcher over the researched. Denzin (1997) maintained that validity is the researcher's mask of authority, and that it is what they hide behind to advance arguments of exclusion and legitimation. He explained that many realist accounts draw on *validity* to imbue their works with epistemological certainty. He prefers *paralogical legitimation*, a term that "foregrounds dissensus, heterogeneity, and multiple discourses that destabilize the researcher's position as the master of truth and knowledge" (Denzin, 1997: 14). Many interpretive scholars also prefer *verisimilitude* to *replication* because replication carries the idea that reality can be objectively captured so that naturalistic generalizations can be made. This is why interpretive ethnographers do not strive to (re)present—or do they re-present?—the world "out there" in a single fashion, as though humans live in a neatly organized world; they, instead, believe in the fractured representation of realities. In a sense, I consider this research as one of the many "truths" about communication education especially so when all empirical studies have their own limitations. We cannot insist on the truth value of our studies. In my own case, I did not employ an objectivist epistemology and so have nothing to say concerning, for example, errors of margin found in my research. Nor am I in the position to lay claim to how my work can be replicated in other contexts because I do not proceed with, say, directional or null hypotheses.

Another claim interpretive scholars make about the research enterprise is that because reality is messy, and cannot be replicated it need not be *triangulated*. Ellingson (2009) was instrumental in this campaign by arguing that triangulation, in the first place, presents a biased view of the research process. In her view, the term only demands that

researchers balance the outcomes of their studies through the use of multiple data that, nonetheless, belong to a single genre. Her preferred term is *crystallization*. Crystallization, she said, depends on multiple genres, and results in the interweaving of more than one genre to express data. The metaphor of the *crystal* when compared to the *triangle*, she argued, represents an authentic portrait of participants and data collected. Crystallization is useful for ensuring multivocality and representation of the marginalized. Besides providing thick descriptions of research phenomena, crystallization is an important methodological design for giving the reader multiple ways of understanding the research subject (Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are my efforts at crystallizing data in my research); they reinforce the same experience(s) in different forms. Crystallization as a methodology has, however, been criticized for lacking peer recognition, and that not all researchers are fluent in multiple genres. Crystallizing data requires *evocative texts*. Evocative texts directly engage the audience, and construct social realities. These include layered narratives of the self, poetry, drama, polyvocal texts, or mixed genres, to achieve specific rhetorical effects (Richardson, 1994). She noted that such writings must be messy to break the heart and belly of their audience. Van Maanen (1988) also urged researchers to be *sensitive* and *creative* in using evocative genres. Using data obtained from narratives, fieldnotes, memos, curricula and course syllabuses, state policies and guidelines, I endeavored to crystallize my data in a way that I could offer different perspectives on the nature of communication education in Ghanaian public universities. The next section discusses conceptual issues that I relied upon to sharpen my ethical awareness in the field.

Self, ethics, and reflexivity

From the foregoing, it is clear that fieldwork is not laboratory work. It involves a great deal of spontaneity and unpredictability in human relations. This is why interpretive ethnographers again and again maintain that it is impossible to detach one's embodied self from the research process. Rather than deny the self in the interest of precision, interpretive ethnographers hold that it is far more productive to be open about how one's corporeal self engages with the study proper. In my own case, I entered my field as a bundle of personae: (a) a former student of my informants (b) now a colleague of

my informants, (c) a graduate student, and (d) an international student for that matter. In Coffey's (1999) view, it was important I understood how fieldwork and textual practices constructed, reproduced, and implicated my multiple selves because fieldwork affects both researcher and researched. She stressed that questions of researcher distance, marginality, and fieldworker roles do not actually help to bring the best in the research process because fieldwork is relational and complicated. Fieldwork, according to her, involves the enactment of social roles and relationship that place the self at the heart of the ethnographic enterprise. This means that rigid field roles are unnatural. They tend to be unresponsive to the complexities the researcher experiences in the field. This is because field roles are not predetermined ways of being. It is hardly possible to stick to one role in the field because different moments in the course of fieldwork require different roles. As Coffey argued, "Our fieldworker selves are fluid, negotiated, and can be meaningful by the temporal and spatial specificities of the field" (p. 28). As with Coffey, I viewed my fieldwork as a kind of facework. It was an exercise in interpersonal communication in which my relationship as a researcher with the researched was negotiated based upon trust, respect, and personal commitment. I saw my fieldwork as an embodied activity. It required that I located my corporeality alongside those of my informants, as I negotiated the spatial context of the field.

The enmeshment in my field was fostered through the ethical process of *reflexivity*. I emphasize *process* because reflexivity is not a summative event; instead, it shapes the entire research activity from start to finish. Lincoln *et al.* (2011: 124) define reflexivity as "the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the research instrument". They posit that reflexivity presents researchers with the opportunity to bring their textured selves to bear on the research, and thereby create new selves in the process. Honest reflexivity seasons ethnographic work with the necessary transparency for forming and sustaining ethical relationships. Ethical researchers are mindful of how their humanness, conduct, and morality negatively or positively affect the sensitivities of their informants.

Reflexive researchers reflect on their own ideologies, and the politics of those they study. To put it differently, self-reflexivity “encourages writers to be frank about their strengths and shortcomings” (Tracy, 2010: 842). Questions about reflexivity need not take into account procedural ethics only, but must deal very decisively with “ethically important moments.” Ethically important moments, Guillemin and Gillam (2004) wrote, are the day-to-day difficult and unusual situations that arise in the course of a study. They are useful in interpretive work because “there is no direct relationship between ethics committee approval of a research project and what actually happens when the research is undertaken” (p. 269). To put it another way, given that Kantian ethics—individual autonomy, informed consent, minimal risks, confidentiality, beneficence, and justice—cannot always be guaranteed by institutional review boards and fieldworkers, a careful resolve to attend to the microethics of a study is as important in dealing with situations where formal ethical principles may be of little help. In this light, being self-reflexive about ethically disturbing moments is necessary for determining what impact the questions researchers pose could have on participants, and how they frame and time up their interview questions (Daly, 2007).

I took particular interest in the way I positioned myself in the field. This is because I am a faculty member in Ghana, and so have a working knowledge of the discursive practices of the academy. For this reason, I constantly reflected on whether my own assumptions and praxis came into conflict with the new pieces of information I was gathering from the field. I also ensured that I thought aloud with other senior colleagues, and discussed thoroughly with them how I felt about, and how I was interpreting the information they furnished me with. The next strand, for example, details what I took into account in transcribing the interviews my informants granted me.

On the politics of transcription

In interpretive research, transcribing data is more than an analysis of discourse makers or oral forms. Nor is it a *prima facie* look at how conventional vis-à-vis non-standard orthography shapes the reading of a transcribed text. Interpretive researchers view

transcription as a political practice. They are particularly interested in how they ethically represent the discourse of their informants either verbatim or cleaned up, and what this choice means for the larger significances of their research. Two major arguments support such views. The first is that transcripts are rhetorical, socially constructed artifacts (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999; Bucholtz, 2000). They are human-made texts that are not an objective representation of an interviewee's worldview. Interpretivists are convinced that there can be no accurate transcripts because transcribed texts are products of the evaluative choices of individual researchers, and how best they wish to capture the 'reality' of a speech. As Bucholtz (2000) noted, transcription has never been a value-neutral practice. Second, because transcription is not neutral, we may say that it is a political practice embedded in relations of power. Bucholtz's own example shows how much power a transcriber made a police officer wield than he made a suspect have during an interrogation session.

Two issues are key in transcribing spoken data. These are interpretive decisions (*i.e.* what to transcribe, or simply the *content*), and interpretive methods (*i.e.* how it is transcribed; the *form*). Bucholtz explained that the need to pay close attention in transcribing a cultural text is necessitated by the desire for theoretical clarity, methodological adequacy, and political responsibility. This is what she termed *reflexive discourse analysis*. Reflexive discourse analysis, she said, is necessary because "the interpretation of a recording cannot be neutral; it always has a point of view" since "transcribers must always make decisions about what to include and exclude" (p. 1441). She argued that a reflexive transcription practice compels researchers to be conscious of what implications their choices bear on the unfolding transcript, and how the transcript may represent or misrepresent speakers whose discourses have been transcribed. This methodological sensitivity requires that researchers admit the limitations of their practices. Transcribing a text, Bucholtz noted, should also involve the inscription of contexts: the transcriber's goals, level of attention to the task, and familiarity with the register of the discourse. Following Bucholtz, we may conclude that transcription is always partial, and that there can be no privileged, objective position from which to transcribe any kind of spoken data.

Bucholz's reflexive approach reminds me of the ethnographic practices of the Ghanaian-American literacy studies scholar Beatrice Quarshie Smith. In her study of gendered literacy practices associated with outsourcing in Ghana, Smith (2012) reflected on how her "herstory" shaped her lived experiences in her field. In my review of her book, I pointed out that she was careful "to clinically situate her multiple identities – a Ghanaian and yet an African American, a woman, and a scholar – and how these enactments weigh heavily on her ways of seeing and interpreting the world given that the business of self-reflexivity is to identify a space of particularity" (Coker, 2014: 430). I commended her for troubling the canons of ethnography in order to capture the complexities her research field presented to her. I wrote:

Her sharp sensitivity to self-reflexivity runs throughout the entire data gathering process. For example, in gaining approval from the Institutional Review Board of her university, she deemed it appropriate to design her project description flexibly with the latitude it deserved. Moreover, such tough questions as 'Are traditional ethnographic strategies adequate in studying these work-spaces even if one does not gain access to the whole web of virtual networks? Under these conditions in which one access is gained, what constitutes a participant observer stance? How does a researcher protect company confidentiality in situations where identifying the country where the research takes place may be enough to lead to company identification?' demand the attention of the research community (Coker, 2014: 431).

I stressed that her work is rich in rigor. I maintained that data gathering materials such as interviews (formal and semi-structured), artifacts, field notes, analytic memos, observation commentaries, and photographs are thoroughly discussed and checked with her own reflexive voice. Smith also reflected on the challenges of her identity. In particular, she acknowledged that although being herself a Ghanaian was an added advantage, she nevertheless had to be "cognizant of the danger of drawing on previous knowledge to make decisions about the meaning and significance of behaviors and patterns in the data collected" (p. 87 cited in Coker, 2014: 431). Her sustained reflexivity, according to her, was key to understanding the literacy practices of the communities she studied from the participants' own perspectives and not to draw assumptions *a priori*.

Considerations of representation, ethics, and self-reflexivity discussed above ensured that my strategies for gathering data were flexible and open to changes prior to, during, and after my fieldwork, always reflecting on the implications of my choices. I also tidied up the transcript of any linguistic infelicities to reflect the ethos of my participants who are themselves scholars of language and communication. In the next section of the chapter, I discuss five strategies I employed in collecting data. These are (1) reconnaissance study, (2) direct participant observation, (3) semi-structured interviews, (4) attending faculty meetings, and (5) conducting member-check.

Data gathering strategies

My fieldwork began in May 2013, and formally ended in May 2015. Though I am privileged to have an insider knowledge of my fieldsites because of my bachelor's and master's education in Ghana, I still embarked on a reconnaissance study in the summer of 2013. Because the trip predated the approval of my institutional ethics committee, I ensured that I did not involve any human subjects in my observations. The informal study focused on two elements: (a) locating literature on tertiary education and communication studies in Ghana and Africa, and (b) discussing the rationale of my proposed study with senior colleagues. I also ensured I was in constant contact with faculty of the two universities I was about to study to facilitate access to the sites upon the commencement of fieldwork proper. Formal fieldwork began in April and ended in May 2015 following the approval of my research proposal by my institutional review board (See Appendices A and B).

While in the field, I flexibly assumed the role of a direct participant observer. Having gained consent from the gatekeepers, I immersed myself in my field, expending relatively eight hours on every working day for four weeks. I closely observed discursive patterns of conversations between the non-teaching staff and faculty, among faculty, between faculty and administrative assistants, and between chairs and faculty. My in-situ observations showed that the communication departments I studied were business-minded spaces that performed multiple tasks. They attended to the everyday running of the departments by ensuring that courses, teaching schedules,

student/lecturer complaints were addressed, and at the same time meeting institutional requirements imposed on them by the dean, provost, and the central administration. My fieldnotes indicate that there was harmony among faculty and the chair as well as between the chairs and their administrative assistants in a way that created an open climate for successful administrative work.

I also attended a series of faculty meetings. At one of my sites, faculty met to moderate examination questions for the basic communication course and the bachelor of communication studies. They discussed course allocation for the summer school of graduate programs in communication studies. This meeting was very revealing as I observed that teaching amongst faculty in this department was a negotiated act. Members brainstormed on the strengths and limitations in assigning a seminar to one another. This notwithstanding, power also played a key role in decision making. Some seminars were seemingly seen as the preserve of some senior members, and were not to be negotiated for reallocation. When I later inquired from other members present at the meeting why this was the case, I was told that these members were the architects of the programs. Another meeting was held between faculty in the department and the dean to evaluate the communication department's progress. Two basic things emerged: the dean insisted that the department reviews its program, and that it was high time it reconsidered its structure.

In addition to the field observations, I conducted semi-structured interviews with six focal participants. My informants held key administrative positions in the public universities I studied. Each session lasted not less than one hour. The interviews were held to grasp my participants' lived experiences about communication education in Ghana. I employed the semi-structured interview strategy to make room for my own self-reflexivity in the interview process, and to reflect on my questioning style, cultural sensitivities, ethics, and communication breakdown. I considered this strategy useful so that I could reword questions or statements I realized were somewhat burdensome or problematic to the outcome of the interview. As Tracy (2013) noted, "Such an approach encourages interviews to be creative, adapt to ever-changing circumstances, and cede control of the discussion to the interviewee" (p. 139).

This was quickly followed by member-check of the transcribed interviews. I reckoned that there was the need to present my informants' narrative reflections of their practices as they intended to mean. Though I did not submit the entire transcript to them, I ensured that focal participants went through portions of the transcripts to check whether my politics was favorable to them (cf. Bucholtz, 2000). I also played back their voices to them, and sought to know if they had any questions concerning the interviews in particular. It was on one of these occasions that one of my participants wanted to know how I would represent him in my work proper. I reassured him that I would use only pseudonyms to represent him, his department, and the university as well as all the technical documents (*e.g.*, accreditation manuals, course syllabi and curricula, students' evaluation of faculty, faculty brochures, and institutions' strategic plans) I received from my site. My explanation relieved his fears.

Conclusion

Interpretive ethnography is a political, self-reflexive endeavor. Researchers employ this methodology to remain open to the biases inherent in knowledge work. We cannot know it all. What we aim at is *Verstehen*. After all, all research, Goodall (2000) once said, is partial, partisan, and problematic. And because ethnography usually entails writing the culture of the Other, it is important that fieldworkers constantly reflect on what ethical implications their research questions, theories, and philosophical positions bear on postcolonial subjects. We should be minded to check our own assumptions we enter the fields with by answering some hard questions: (a) Have the voices of the researched been captured in a way that the researched recognize themselves, know themselves, and would like others to know? (b) Who are we writing about: self, others, or both? (c) What needs to be rewritten? Self-reflexivity plays an important role in answering these questions ethically. It also enables fieldworkers working especially in postcolonial spaces to recognize that fieldwork is often the work of respect, trust, and ethics.

Bearing this in mind, I discuss how the conceptual considerations discussed in this chapter translated into my analysis and interpretations of my participants' lived

experiences, stories, and concerns about communication education in Ghana. Here, I work to maintain the agency of my participants to the best of my knowledge. I begin, first and foremost, by exploring how discursive regimes shape practice in communication department.

Chapter 4: The governmentality of practice in communication education

The Panopticon functions as a kind of laboratory of power. Thanks to its mechanisms of observation, it gains in efficiency and in the ability to penetrate into men's behavior; knowledge follows the advances of power, discovering new objects of knowledge over all the surfaces on which power is exercised.

— Foucault, 1995, p. 205

This chapter troubles functions the state as the chief sponsor of higher education plays in shaping communication training. Using Ghana as a case study, I explore how the government (*aban*¹³), through its regimes of control, exercises its authority (*tumi*) over the means of production in the academy. I do so by analyzing the political economy within which higher education in the country operates, focusing on the mandates of two of its bodies: the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) and the National Accreditation Board (NAB). My overarching goal is to demonstrate how these systems of control shape the knowledge economy in tertiary education in general, and communication training, in particular. This governmentality, or the calculated strategies of control put in place by government, I will show, constrains the textual and contextual discourses of professional practices in the academy (Foucault, 1997). To this end, I have organized the chapter into five parts. The first revisits the problem of governmentality in the context of higher education, and makes a case for examining its dynamics in the Global South. I do so by sketching, in the next section, the history of higher education in sub-Saharan Africa, paying special attention to the Ghanaian context. The third strand takes a critical look at the political superstructure, composition, and functions of Ghana's NTCE and NAB, and more importantly, how

¹³ The lexical items *aban* (the castle) and *tumi* (power, authority) derive from Akan, the most widely spoken language of the Akan of Ghana and the eastern belt of Ivory Coast. The 2000 national population census shows that 49.1% of the Ghanaian population is Akan, and that about 44% speak Akan as non-native speakers (Agyekum, 2006). The Akan occupy six of the ten regions in Ghana, viz. Ashanti, Eastern, Western, Central, and Brong Ahafo, and Volta. Among the Fante (the Akan inhabiting in the coastal belt), the term *aban* was disparagingly used to refer to their former British colonial masters, who used the castles as their symbols of authority during the colonial epoch in marked contrast to *oman* (the nation).

contemporary bureaucratization and corporatization constrain the space of learning and the exercise of intellectual freedom. Some have argued that the grand master discourses of economics have led to the crisis of the university, and have compromised its self-critical nature (Bert, 2011). The fourth section explores how the systems of control and accountability supervised mainly by NAB shape the curriculum design of a recently accredited four-year Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Studies of a large public university in Ghana. I will demonstrate that the program is based on instrumentalist and developmentalist philosophies with little attention to critical theory and aesthetics of transculturalism. The final part of the chapter brings attention to two main criticisms of the control systems: discipline-specific quality assurance and transcultural partnership.

Understanding governmentality in higher education

Little has changed in the academy since Larry Veysey first wrote his *magnum opus* half a century ago. In this sweeping history of the emergence of the American academy, he described how the vibrant liberal culture that enabled intellectual discourse and dissent were minimized in the decades after the Cold War. Veysey (1965) explored in detail how the “spirited conflicts” framing institutional practices in American universities at the close and dawn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries came under a degree of control exerted by the leadership of the institutions. The tightening of executive policies of the universities, he wrote, aimed at unifying procedure and ensuring quality assurance in a Jeffersonian democracy. In fact the systems were established to control access to the material production of academics. The goal was, and obviously still is, to promote accountability for productivity, substance, and success of the educational enterprise. To date, these demands require that accreditation agencies periodically assess institutional practices of the academy.

Regulation policies that shape the work of faculty, especially over the last two decades, have thus become rigorous (Ewell, 2013). There is a steady shift from assessment of resources (*e.g.*, academic facilities, library holdings) and processes (*e.g.*, qualifications and activities of faculty) to a concentration on transformed modalities for instructional

delivery and transnational quality assurance. For example, accreditors are beginning to “move beyond inspection of assessment as a process to examining actual levels of student performance” (p. 173). Institutional practices that guide the work of academic program administrators, such as those in communication departments, are, in many ways, periodically reviewed by two main regulatory bodies: external and internal. External assessors are often nationally mandated councils that superintend the activities of institutions of higher learning, and ensure that teaching and learning meet the benchmarks of quality, standards, and national development. These objectives are also aided by internal quality assurance directorates or units within tertiary institutions. Less obvious, nevertheless, is how the organizational cultures of communication departments in universities are influenced by the politics and economics of their states. In particular, less clear is the role state regulatory bodies play in ensuring that quality of norms and standards is met by communication departments. One way to address this problem, I suggest, is to examine the political economies of communication education in cultures outside of the Global North. A study of how the production, distribution, and consumption of communication training is shaped by state power and its apparatus is important for understanding how the work of communication educators, scholars, and program administrators in non-Western cultures is embedded in a web of state regulation, power, and economics.

Clearly, state accreditation agencies are central towers of control in matters of communication education. By deriving their legal mandate from the state, they exercise the power to grant or not to grant accreditation to communication programs. In an article published in *Quality in Higher Education*, Houston and Paewai (2013) argue that the discourse of quality assurance systems is constrained by the relationships between knowledge, power, and meanings that stakeholder groups bring to the design and implementation of the process. The authors explained that this culture of assessments mainly serves “the external accountability purposes of government and agencies outside of the university who are responsible for designing the systems” (p. 261). According to them, academics often are unable to contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning in their own institutions because of the knowledge, power

distance, and differences in meaning between them and accreditation authorities. For instance, accreditors have the final word concerning changes in measurements of improvement, what resources and other conditions of success are or ought to be, who is considered a professional, and what worldview universities should live by (p. 264).

It was Michel Foucault (1995) who termed the capillary power that state regulatory boards wield over universities “a coercive assignment of differential distribution” (p. 199). With Bentham’s idea of the “Panopticon” as his guide, Foucault argued that the primary function of institutions, such as regulatory boards, is to instill discipline, insist on conformity, and alter behavior. Foucault stressed that institutions act as panoptic apparatuses, and do so by performing two main tasks: *(a)* binary division and branding, and *(b)* acting as technologies and laboratories of power. With respect to the former, state regulatory authorities control the granting of accreditation to both public and private tertiary institutions by creating a binary line between accredited colleges and non-accredited colleges. As I will show in this chapter, the mechanism of differentiation and branding ensures that regulatory bodies insist on quality assurance by checking poor standards of educational objectives. They also act as technologies and laboratories of power by acting as systems of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements. Using legal and policy documents, sets of evaluation criteria, and protocol of expectations and outcomes, they punish and/or reward academic institutions that comply or do not comply with their instructions. As seats of authority guiding the functions of academic institutions and reporting them to government all bodies under their supervision are in

a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining power relation independent of the person who exercises it (Foucault, 1995: 201).

The surveillance is totalizing and enduring to the extent that discipline is guaranteed even in the absence of it. Strict observation of disciplinary regimes is kept uninterrupted. There is a greater sense of the effect of sovereign power (*bios*) over bare

life (*zōē*) (Agamben, 1998). This *biopower* ensures that the life of an organization and its textual productions fall in line with the mechanisms of control set in motion by the panoptic apparatus of the state.

States thus have vested interests in the practices of tertiary institutions because they sponsor the literacies of these institutions. Through agents such as commissions of higher education, or national accreditation boards, the state enables, supports, teaches, models, regulates, or suppresses higher education, and gains advantage by it in some ways (Brandt, 1998: 166). Brandt argues that it is the sponsors who underwrite occasions of literacy learning and use, and therefore it is they who set the terms for access to literacy. This power enables them to reward compliance. As she says so lucidly, “Sponsors are a tangible reminder that literacy learning throughout history has always required permission, sanction, assistance, [or] coercion” (p. 167). Obligations toward sponsors of literacy by universities run deep because the sponsors shape, and to a large extent affect what, why, and how, the academy ought to behave. For example, the government of Ghana has currently placed a ban on employment in the nation’s public tertiary institutions in response to conditions placed on her by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), despite constant complaints by university management to lift the ban¹⁴. Often state sponsors insist that the regulatory regimes are useful to check constantly the relationship between higher education and development (Bailey, 2014).

A report in the *Daily Graphic*, Ghana’s premier newspaper, for instance, shows that enrolment in both public and private tertiary institutions in the country during the 2014/2015 academic year rose to 319, 659. It goes on to say that while enrolment in the country’s universities increased by 6.3 per cent during the year under review, that of the polytechnics increased by 8.9 per cent and the colleges of education, by 9.05 per cent^{15,16}. The increases, in a way, reflect Smith’s (2012) observation that education in

¹⁴ <http://graphic.com.gh/news/education/53320-government-must-lift-ban-on-universities-employment-prof-haruna-yakubu.html>

¹⁵ <http://graphic.com.gh/news/education/52951-enrolment-figures-for-tertiary-institutions-319-659-in-2014-15-academic-year.html#sthash.x9he8ljJ.dpuf>

¹⁶ However, this increase of access to quality higher education comes at a cost in view of a shrinking government funding of public tertiary institutions. Current trends on the global scene and in Ghana

Ghana and “literacy learning in particular are now seen as a means for fighting social exclusion and for access to the ‘benefits’ of globalization” (p. 19). According to her, the ability to communicate through reading, writing, and computing are still considered as mechanisms for self-development and employment, or what the Malawian historian Paul Tiyaambe Zeleza (2003) terms “the triple dreams of development, democracy, and self-determination” (p. 66).

Nevertheless, the developmentalist agenda many African states continue to pursue has subjected African universities not only to the vagaries of state politics, but also to the shifting missions of international donor agencies, and the unpredictable demands of civil society. A reason why African states continue to hold a tight leash on their public universities is because they see them as cultural cathedrals of authenticity and local assembly plants of Western modernity (Zeleza, 2003). This is understandable because the post-Second World War premier universities built in Africa were created in the curricular image of Oxbridge and Sorbonne, first instituted mainly as teaching universities (Zeleza, 2003). That is, a legion of African states see their universities as sites and systems of production that should set in motion the pace of nation-building from “tradition” to “modernity,” from the pitfalls of underdevelopment to the possibilities of development, from colonial lack to postcolonial fulfilment, from the stasis of being to the agency of becoming (p. 79). These expectations are equally shared by allies of African states such as their international donor agencies and civil societies. The problem with an emphasis on a utilitarian pedagogy, Zeleza notes, is that it makes universities more as machines or agents of development than sites of critical consciousness for the cultivation of informed national and global citizenry and the aesthetics of tolerance, cultural innovation, and appreciation (p. 95).

suggest that governments’ sponsorship of higher education is waning and may no longer be sustainable (World Bank, 2010). A developing story in Ghana shows that the government wants students in all its funded tertiary institutions to pay for their own utility bills. The directive is to take effect from the 2016/2017 academic year (<http://graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/52760-utility-bills-okudzeto-appeals-to-students-to-calm-down.html>).

An overview of tertiary education in Ghana

Tertiary education in Ghana is mainly financed by the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Trust Fund, funds generated internally by tertiary institutions, and international donors (Somuah, 2008). Over the last decade, the sector has witnessed significant growth in various aspects. These include widening access and participation, expansion of academic facilities, a transformative policy environment, and innovative funding approaches to increase the financial sustainability of institutions (Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013). According to Atuahene and Owusu-Ansah, public universities in Ghana are internationally recognized in terms of the quality of programs offered, teaching, research, and knowledge transfer, and are in partnership with leading institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. Like the introduction of formal education in the British colonies, tertiary education dates back to the early 1940s following the appointment of Mr. Justice Asquith by the British government “to investigate the principles that will guide the establishment of universities in the Colonies in 1943” (p. 1). The premier higher education institution in Ghana was thus established in 1948 as the University College of Gold Coast, and later renamed the University of Ghana, following the country’s independence in 1957. Here is what a local commentator said:

Because the universities were established either just before independence or just after it, they were shaped to follow the British university system. They were all fashioned on the University of London structure. Degrees were awarded from British universities until the Ghanaian universities became independent and autonomous. Even after they became autonomous, they were still run like British universities, focusing mainly on liberal courses and a few technical and professional courses (Edu-Buandoh, 2010: 59-60).

The point raised by Edu-Buandoh is that university education in Ghana began as a foreign intervention. This means that its structure largely remains foreign. What appears to be different in many public universities in Ghana today, than it was in the early years of a post-independent Ghana is the gradual shift from liberal programs to technical education. This new focus required that the government, in its wisdom, make university education a lot more accessible.

In an attempt to make this dream a reality, the government of Ghana issued a white paper in 1991 to reform tertiary education by the University Rationalization Committee (URC). Following the recommendations of the URC and the subsequent government white paper on the report, three regulatory agencies were established. These are the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE), the National Accreditation Board (NAB) and the National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations (NABPTEX) (Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013). By 2012, Ghana has had more than 126 public and private institutions of higher learning under the supervision of the National Accreditation Board (NAB). Currently, the Council superintends sixty-six (66) public tertiary institutions: universities (10), polytechnics (10), colleges of education (38), specialized institutions (2), regulatory bodies (3), and other subverted organizations (3). In addition, there are about 55 accredited private tertiary institutions¹⁷. Universities in Ghana are empowered to set their own priorities for academic programming, curriculum content and structure, teaching philosophy, and research agenda, subject to requirements by the National Accreditation Board (NAB) and the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE). The type and nature of academic programs are, however, restricted by the law establishing the university, NCTE guidelines for program introduction and by accreditation (Gondwe & Walenkamp, 2011). This brings us to a discussion of the NCTE.

The National Council for Tertiary Education: Structure and mandate

The National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) is the brainchild of the Ministry of Education, the government body in charge of tertiary education in Ghana. It was established by Act 454 of 1993 by the Parliament of the fourth republic of Ghana¹⁸. As the sector with a huge portfolio comprising policy, planning, and monitoring, the ministry took prudent steps to empower the NCTE to “deal with specific issues such as salary problems or the use of internally generated funds” (Bailey, 2014: 6) for tertiary

¹⁷ <http://www.ncte.edu.gh/>

¹⁸ <http://www.ncte.edu.gh/>

institutions in the country. Table 1 below gives a total breakdown of the number of institutions under the watch of the Council.

Table 4.1 Tertiary education landscape in Ghana

Institutional types	Total	Student enrolment per institutional type
Private tertiary education institutions that offer degree programs	42	49, 445
Tutorial colleges	6	1, 323
Institutions that offer distance learning programs	5	22, 279
Chartered private tertiary education institutions	3	2, 314
Public specialized institutions	8	7, 715
Public colleges of education	38	27, 906
Publicly funded universities	9	128,326
Polytechnics	10	53, 078
Private nurses' training colleges	3	1, 198
Public nurses' training colleges	8	-
TOTAL	132	273, 584

Source: Bailey (2014)

According to Bailey (2014), the establishment was modelled on the UK University Grants' Committee, a funding agency. She reports that the Council receives 95% of its funding from the government, all of which is allocated to the Secretariat, and the remaining 5% of its operational costs is covered by contributions from tertiary institutions. NCTE also has the responsibility to act as a “buffer” between the government and tertiary education institutions, especially in respect of academic freedom and autonomy of institutions (p. 10). Table 2 specifies the core functions the Council performs in supervising the activities of funded public tertiary institutions under its watch.

Table 4.2 Core functions of the National Council for Tertiary Education

Regulatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determines norms and standards for higher education institutions, the equivalence of qualifications between institutions, credit accumulation, and transfer procedures. • Registers, licenses and/or accredits new and existing public/private tertiary institutions. • Accredits new and/or existing academic programs of public and/or private institutions.
Distributive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determines budget allocations for tertiary institutions and/or the sector as a whole. • Distributes financial resources from the state to institutions, units, or individuals in the sector. • Monitors expenditure at both institutional and sector levels.
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collects and analyzes system and institutional level data, including the development of performance indicators. • Tracks developments and trends in the system, as well as performance quality of institutions, against the norms and standards set for the sector or against stated national goals or system targets.
Advisory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides expert and research based advice to policy-makers and other tertiary education leadership in government and institutions, either proactively or reactively in response to specific requests. • Comments on or formulates draft policies on behalf of the ministry responsible for tertiary education. • Provides advice/ recommendations to the relevant body on the licensing and accreditation of tertiary institutions and that of their programs.
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables interactions between key stakeholders and policy spheres. • Promotes the objectives of tertiary institutions or the sector to the market and within government itself. • Plans strategically the financing of tertiary education. • Develops data and knowledge flows between different system-level governance roles.

Source: Bailey (2014)

As I will show, norms, standards, and national goals put in place by the Council are too general, and insufficiently context-specific. This notwithstanding, it is important to note that the Council grapples with funding for conducting research, and has difficulties sometimes in asserting its autonomy and independence (freedom from political interference by the state) (Bailey 2014: 26)

The authority of the National Accreditation Board

The National Accreditation Board of Ghana was established by the Provisional National Defense Council Law (PNDC) 317 of 1993. It was later replaced by the National Accreditation Board Act 744 of 2007 (Bailey, 2014: 7). The mission of the Board, according to its official website, is to provide the best basis for establishing, measuring, and improving standards in Tertiary Education in Ghana. To do this, the Board seeks:

- To provide a systematic and rationale basis for establishing, monitoring and improving standards in tertiary education through developing benchmarks for accreditation and quality assurance, and ensuring proper operations in tertiary institutions.
- To facilitate the development of accredited public and private tertiary institutions toward the attainment of Presidential Charter.
- To determine the equivalences of both local and foreign tertiary and professional qualifications¹⁹.

The Board also maintains that its operations for service delivery are guided by the values of professionalism, accountability, responsiveness, integrity, and transparency²⁰. For example, in awarding accreditation to a new institution, the Board insists that any person or organisation applying to establish a tertiary institution shall be required to follow the procedures set out in its policy documents in order to facilitate the process of accreditation and the operation of the institution. It also insists that “the applicant institution shall first seek and obtain affiliation to operate under the supervision of a recognized mentoring institution which shall award its certificates before accreditation is granted”²¹. Table 4.3 shows three specific requirements set up by NAB for granting accreditation to an applicant institution. These cover authorization, institutional accreditation, and program accreditation.

¹⁹ <http://www.nab.gov.gh/about-us/vision-and-mission>

²⁰ Visit <http://www.nab.gov.gh/2014-08-13-14-37-14/quality-assurance-documents> for a comprehensive review of assessment criteria about accountability, responsiveness, and transparency.

²¹ <http://www.nab.gov.gh/2014-08-13-14-37-14/quality-assurance-documents>

Table 4.3 Requirements for tertiary accreditation by the National Accreditation Board

Authorization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A letter of application to the National Accreditation Board (NAB). • Response from NAB, including definition of the various categories of tertiary educational institutions, within two weeks of receipt of application. • Choice of name of institution based on 2 above shall be in consultation with NAB. • Registration of the institution at the Registrar General's Department; • Purchase, completion and submission of Authorization Questionnaire (NAB/INFO A.1). • Payment of an appropriate fee. • Institutional visit by the relevant NAB Committee where facilities are in place at the institution, within 30 days after receipt of payment. • Decision by NAB. • Communication of decision within 30 days of institutional visit. • Application for review of decision, if any, within 30 days of communication. • Communication of Board's decision on the review application within 14 days after the next immediate Accreditation Committee meeting acting on behalf of the Board.
Institutional accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of affiliation to be provided before further processing for accreditation. • Purchase, completion, and submission of institutional accreditation questionnaire (NAB/INFO A.2) • Payment of an appropriate fee. • Institutional visit by the relevant NAB Committee within 30 days after receipt of an application the Board considers complete. • Visit by NAB experts on physical facilities, library, and finance within 30 days after the Committee's visit. • Communication of NAB's decision within 90 days of the Committee's visit and proof of affiliation (<i>See NAB Guidelines for Affiliation</i>). • Application for review, if any, within 30 days of communication. • Communication of Board's decision on review application within 14 days after the next immediate Board meeting.
Program accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase, completion, and submission of relevant NAB questionnaire on program accreditation (NAB/INFO A.3). • Payment of an appropriate fee. • Composition of program accreditation panel by the Board and assessment of program(s) offered/to be offered within 60 days

	<p>on receipt of an application the Board considers complete including payment of an application fee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission of panel assessment reports to NAB within 14 days of panel visit. • Submission of panel report(s) to the institution for comments within 14 days upon receipt of report(s). • Response to panel report(s) by the institution to NAB. • Reaction of panel chairperson to the comments on the report by the institution within 30 days on receipt of institution's comments. • Recommendation of accreditation committee to the Board at its next immediate meeting upon receipt of panel chairperson's reaction to institution's comments. • Decision by Board on the recommendation of the accreditation committee at the next immediate Board meeting. • Communication of decision within 14 days after the Board's decision. • Application for review, if any, within 30 days of communication of the Board's decision. • Review and communication of decision within 90 days on receipt of application for review.
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Source: National Accreditation Board quality assurance documents (2014)

In ensuring that all accredited institutions meet normative standards set up by the Board, NAB undertakes a review of the institutions at least once every five years. This requirement, according to the Board, provides an opportunity for both the institution and the Board to evaluate the performance of a particular institution with respect to meeting threshold quality standards and growth²². The Board does so by ensuring that an accredited institution submits a self-evaluation report detailing the institution's vision and mission statements, organization and governing bodies, academic and non-academic staff, number of colleges/faculties/schools, programs of study and program details. For example, with respect to program details, the Board requires that an institution seeking reaccreditation must submit the following items:

- Program accreditation and re-accreditation history;
- Students' enrolment history (for the past five (5) years or since last accreditation);

²² <http://www.nab.gov.gh/2014-08-13-14-37-14/quality-assurance-documents>

- Number of academic staff (emphasizing full-time, part-time, and visiting by ranks for the past five (5) years or since last accreditation);
- Staff/Student Ratio (SSR) history (for the past five (5) years or since last accreditation);
- Students' Performance Range history (for the past five (5) years or since last accreditation);
- Student learning outcomes, and how they are measured;
- Different sessions/mode for the running of programs (*e.g.*, evening sessions, weekend sessions, distance learning option, sandwich sessions, regular sessions).

Faculty evaluation takes into account the mode of employment (full/part time), highest qualification and year obtained, area of specialization, rank (tutor/lecturer/senior lecturer/associate professor/professor) as well as years of experience in teaching and research. For example, each faculty member is required to provide details of published work in the last five (5) years including research publications, books, technical reports, and international conference presentations/papers. Pendell (2012) notes that faculty evaluation process has serious professional and personal outcomes for the faculty member as well as serious legal ramifications for the university if not done properly. She suggests that best practices in faculty evaluation are important for protecting communication faculty, department chairs, and their universities. Her seven-point recommendation points to the need for the evaluation of communication faculty to be clearly defined and specific, systematic, regular, and goal-driven.

The Board also requires that all funded institutions provide detail of student and academic affairs. It obliges institutions to make available statistics about student populations, admission procedures and requirements, and mandatory courses. It is important to note that the National Accreditation Board also ensures that institutions seeking reaccreditations welcome students' participation, dissent and/or complaints, as well as make room for engagement in co-curricular/extra-curricular activities (see the World Bank report for a comprehensive discussion on higher education in Africa in Materu, 2007; cf. Sanya, 2013). My observation over the last decade (as both a student

and faculty member) indicates that students' investment in extra-curricular activities rarely add up to their credits. Activities such as sports, dance competition, and debates are often difficult to evaluate by faculty as part of general assessment in many public universities in Ghana. It must also be noted that some students do not participate in extra-curricular activities for narrow reasons. In short, there is no agreed upon framework for assessing extra-curricular activities students engage in in a number of public universities in Ghana. In the next section, I turn my attention to the fiscal policies that govern the administration of funded universities in the country.

Keeping an eye on the fiscal architecture of tertiary institutions

The National Accreditation Board also keeps its panoptic gaze on the finances of accredited public tertiary institutions in Ghana. It enjoins funded institutions to furnish the Board with the following detail: (1) financial information, (2) structure of finance, (3) audit and assurance, (4) evidence of financial independence, and (5) funding requirements²³. The Board considers financial information as a necessary requirement for monitoring how academic departments keep proper records of their financial positions, changes, and cash flows in terms of how they account for all property acquired by them²⁴. For example, the Board insists that the records are kept in such a form as to enable financial statements which show true and fair view to be prepared in accordance with the Companies Act, 1963 Act 179 and the International Financial Reporting Standards. To this end, it requires academic institutions, such as communication departments, to prepare budgets, state how often budgets are prepared, as well as specify what they are used for. Budget preparation is usually done by the departments.

The Board also goes at length to ascertain whether institutions under its watch have independent (external) auditors and an internal auditing department. In the case of the latter, the accreditor requires the accredited institution to show, where possible, whether the internal auditing department had a written Charter of Audit. Institutions

²³ <http://www.nab.gov.gh/2014-08-13-14-37-14/quality-assurance-documents>

²⁴ <http://www.nab.gov.gh/2014-08-13-14-37-14/quality-assurance-documents>

that do not have an internal auditing department, according to the regulatory body, must state the reason and the efforts which are being made to establish one²⁵. The rigorous process also involves institutions disclosing whether they maintain separate bank accounts from those of the owners/shareholders, and should state the particulars of the institutions' bankers (name, the branch and the type of accounts kept). They must also state the signatories to the institutions' bank accounts (name and position within the institution), and be diligent to specify how often they prepare bank reconciliation statements²⁶.

This technology of monitoring also involves the disclosure of the revenue and expenditure balance sheet. The state accreditor expects that accredited institutions periodically inform it about their various sources of revenue. This includes stating the percentage contribution of each source to the projected total revenue to be generated during the last three years, excluding projected contributions by owners/shareholders by completing the table below²⁷:

Table 4.4 Revenue earned during the last three years by sources

Year	20.....		20.....		20.....	
	Amt. Gh¢	% of Total Amt.	Amt. Gh¢	% of Total Amt.	Amt. Gh¢	% of Total Amt.
Tuition fees						
Students User Fees						
Hostel Fees						
Government Grants						
Donations						
Interest on Endowment Fund						
External/Foreign Grants						
Others (attach details)						
Total						

Source: National Accreditation Board (2014)

²⁵ <http://www.nab.gov.gh/2014-08-13-14-37-14/quality-assurance-documents>

²⁶ <http://www.nab.gov.gh/2014-08-13-14-37-14/quality-assurance-documents>

²⁷ <http://www.nab.gov.gh/2014-08-13-14-37-14/quality-assurance-documents>

Total expenditure incurred during the last three years and the form of expenditure must also be stated. According to the authority, these fiscal policies are to enable it to determine the pattern of expenditure and allocation of financial resources an institution requires. Table 5 below gives a detailed picture of the content of the requirement.

Table 4.5 Expenditure incurred during the last three years

Form of Incurred Expenditure	20.... Gh¢	20.... Gh¢	20.... Gh¢
Land and Buildings			
Premium paid on Sovereign Guarantee			
Plant and Equipment e.g. generating set, laboratory equipment			
Furniture and Fittings (including offices, lecture rooms and library furniture, computers)			
Library Books, Journals			
Motor Vehicles			
Employment Cost			
Recurrent Academic Expenditure			
Recurrent Administrative Expenditure			
Recurrent Health, Sanitation and Environment Expenditure			
Recurrent Hostel Facility Expenditure			
Others (attach details)			
Total			

Source: National Accreditation Board (2014)

The Board also reckons that academic institutions seek sources of external funding separate from the traditional sources from the state. Though institutions do so to achieve financial independence, it is the Board's conviction that this process be done within the affordances of the law. In this light, the National Accreditation Board expects that accredited academic institutions state their total assets (current and non-current), total liabilities (current and non-current) as per the latest audited financial statement. The monitoring also takes into account whether the equity (stated capital and surplus) attributable to the owners of the institutions as per the latest audited

financial statements has been fully stated²⁸. The total contribution (plus projected total contributions expected) made by the owners/shareholders during the last three years must also be specified. Academic institutions, the Board insists, must take one more step to ensure that they establish an endowment fund, and disclose the securities in which the fund has been invested. This, the Board is convinced, will foster transparency of the financial architecture of the institutions.

In the next section, I now turn my attention to explore how the systems of control discussed above impact on the design of communication programs. More important, I unmask hidden ideologies and values embedded in a four-year Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Studies of a Ghanaian public university that was awarded accreditation by the National Accreditation Board in 2010.

A look at the design of a recently accredited communication program

The undergraduate communication program of this university was drawn by faculty to improve and expand the university's range of disciplines. Initially conceived as a mass communication program, it specializes in print and broadcast journalism as well as public relations and advertising. The program is the result of the input by the Academic Board of the university, recommendations from media practitioners and other competent institutions, key among which is the National Accreditation Board (NAB), the final arbiter. As I have already noted, accreditation of new programs is a difficult task. To be sure, it involves a great deal of rhetorical aptitude. The designers of the program I am about to examine had to persuade NAB about the rationale, employment prospects, as well as the target group of the program (*e.g.*, personnel from the Ghana Education Service, polytechnics, and colleges of education). As I have already discussed, these requirements are important for determining whether the goals set by the department meet the development agenda of the state.

Planners of the program argued for accreditation on two grounds: the need to train more skilled media practitioners and students' job prospects. They held that a rigorous

²⁸ <http://www.nab.gov.gh/2014-08-13-14-37-14/quality-assurance-documents>

training in communication in contemporary Ghana was urgent to reflect changing trends in the media landscape. Faculty maintained that it was important to augment the numerical strength of media personnel in the country because of the deregulation of the airwaves and the consequent proliferation of FM radio stations and privately-owned television outlets (Field Data, 2015). According to them, there has arisen the need for a training opportunity for persons who have drifted into journalism more out of enthusiasm and the pressure to find a means of living than anything else. They argued that the envisaged program would enable practicing media professionals to go for regular refresher courses. This effort, they said, was important to keep media practitioners informed of the continually changing trends on the media landscape. The training was thus envisaged to create employment opportunities for students and media professionals to take up positions in the media and raise media practice in Ghana to acceptable standards that can compare with best practices around the world (Field Data, 2015). For these reasons, the program seeks to meet four main objectives:

1. To train human resource in communication studies.
2. To equip students with knowledge of current trends in communication studies.
3. To equip students with theoretical resources and skills for doing self-reflection of their practices as communication practitioners, and
4. To equip students with skills that will enable them to engage in research in communication studies.

Even though the intentions of the designers of the newly accredited program were noble as they sought ways to create job opportunities for their students and enhance communication systems in the country, it may be helpful to note that this effort, nonetheless, satisfies the developmentalist agenda (Zezeza, 2003). A closer look at the four-pronged objective above reveals that the focus of the program is on the acquisition of skills which, the designers hope, can “equip” graduates to attain self-development and help in the process of nation-building. In other words, the emphasis of the program from its early conception, it seems to me, was utilitarian in scope. Table 4. 6 below gives a clear picture of my assertion. It is a sample of the first two years the

undergraduate communication program in the university under review (see Appendix E for the whole curriculum).

Table 4.6 A sample of a four-year Bachelor of Arts in communication studies

First Year

	SEMESTER I				SEMESTER II		
Course Code	Course Title		Credits	Course Code	Course Title		Credit
CMS 101	Introduction to Mass Communication	Core	3	CMS 102	History of the Ghanaian Mass Media	Core	3
CMS 105	New Communication Technologies	Core	3	CMS 104	Introduction to Writing for the Mass Media	Core	3
CMS 105A	Communicative Skills	Core	3	ENG 105B	Communication Studies	Core	3
AFS	African Studies	Core	2	ASP	African Studies	Core	1
IRC 101	Information Retrieval	Core	1	LED\LES S\LSC	Liberals		2
Subject B		Core	3	Subject B			3
Subject C		Core	3	Subject C			3
Total							

Second Year

SEMESTER I				SEMESTER II			
Course Code	Course Title		Credit	Course Code	Course Title		Credit
CMS 202	Theories of Comm.	Core	3	CMS 210	Foundations of Comm. Research	Core	3
CMS 203	Feature Writing (Print)	Core	3	CMS 209	Editing and Graphics of Comm.	Elective	3
CMS 204	Foundations of Broadcasting (R/TV)	Elective	3	CMS 215	Radio Program Writing Prod.	Elective	3
CMS 208	Introduction to advertising (PRAD)	Elective	3	CMS 206	Marketing Foundations for Public Relations and Advertising	Elective	3

Subject B		Core	3	Subject B		Core	3
Subject B		Core	3	Subject B		Core	3
Subject C		Core	3	Subject B		Core	3
Subject C		Core	3	Subject C		Core	3
Total			18	Total			18

Source: Field Data (2015)

The heavy emphasis on skill in the structure of this communication program is indicative of the crisis many universities across cultures are grappling with. It is a crisis that betrays the self-critical nature of university education as universities are coerced by the panoptic apparatuses of the state to produce human labor in the service of the economy. In “Truth, Power, Intellectuals, and Universities,” the South African philosopher Oliver Bert (2011) cautioned that university programs are currently controlled by the master discourse of economics, corporatization, and bureaucratization. What this means for program administrators and faculty of communication departments is that they can offer little resistance as their practices (*e.g.*, roles, pedagogy, terms and conditions of service, and grading schemes) are monitored by regimes of power. The essence, Berth notes, is to determine whether their professional conduct is in tandem with development objectives. For example, save seminars in African Studies and Liberals, all the courses in the first and years of the communication program of this university in Ghana expose students to a somewhat skill-based education. A similar claim can be made of the third and final years of the program except that the curriculum recognizes that an exposure to the geopolitics of media systems in Africa and media law, for example, are crucial for students to develop critical awareness of their field of study. This state of affair, in my view, is the result of the systems of control set in place by state regulatory agencies to ensure that students are given “employable” skills.

It may, however, be helpful to note that a fixation on skills makes communication training somewhat instrumentalist in scope. A consequence of this focus is that often both faculty and students see communication education as a means to an end. This is perhaps the result of a century-old pedagogy of quantitative functionalist sociology championed by Paul F. Lazarsfeld. In his account of *The Invention of Communication*, the French sociologist Armand Mattelart warns us of a pedagogy that is putatively media-tropic. According to Mattelart (1996), a media-centered education “engenders a reductive vision of the history of communication” (p. x) because it blinds us from seeing that communication is much more than the study of media systems as a close look at the communication program I have been studying suggests. He goes further to argue that communication pedagogy must arise in students the idea that communication is an ideology and “a system of thought and power and as a mode of government” (p. xi). His book is a classic articulation of how systems of technologies such as telecommunications, railway systems, and time were used and controlled by the world’s powerful nations like the United States, France, and England to maintain hegemony and dominance during the first and second world wars.

The idea that a technical education serves the telos of modernity may thus be a chimera. For while it guarantees conquest over the conditions of human existence, an instrumentalist view of communication education alone is inadequate. According to Heidegger (1993), too much focus on technology as doing (*techné*) rather than as revealing (*alētheia*) or enframing (*Gestell*), for instance, can lead humanity to disastrous consequences. Technology could make individuals become uncritical of technology itself, and what it does or makes (*Gegenstand*). Technology, Heidegger suggested, is, therefore, in a lofty sense ambiguous. It can be a good servant, and yet a bad master. The internet has wrought such a positive influence on trade and industry, transportation (maritime, rail, aviation *etc.*), medicine, education, and almost all sectors of interpersonal relationships. Yet we cannot discount how the technology is being abused in the hands of the wily for personal gains. So on the one hand technology is a saving power; on the other hand, it is a leviathan. Excessive emphasis on the technical perspective of communication education could make it lose its critical luster. I join

Before I conclude my discussion, I would like to devote some space to fiscal regimes. This expectation, as I have explained copiously thus far, requires that academic chairs and program administrators disclose the pecuniary strength of their programs. Below is the financial breakdown of the communication department submitted to the National Accreditation Board. The disclosure covers three key areas: annual running cost, capital expenditure, and sources of funding.

- Contribution from Income generation activities –Money from issuing of letters of proficiency.
- Endowment fund Not Applicable
- Fees: Students are expected to pay (GH¢ 1700.00) per semester and it is renewable
- Grant and donation Not Applicable
- Government of Ghana funding Through the University

Source: Field Data (2015)

The information above shows that knowledge work is capital-intensive. This necessity, I have said over and over again, is met by the state through the university's management. In particular, it settles the salary of faculty and non-faculty staff as well as assists in maintaining infrastructure. Requirement of capital expenditure (*e.g.*, civil works, furniture, and teaching resources) is a requirement of accountability while sources of funding represent an effort by the administrators of the communication department to brief the National Accreditation Board about processes they have put in place to generate external funds. My observation shows that student tuition has been subsidized by the government of Ghana over the years. Grants, donations, and endowment funds were not readily available to the department as the program, at the time of my study, was less than five years old.

Conclusion

As I reflect on my early years of service in the academy and the textual productions of state accreditation agencies, I tend to think that quality assurance systems in Ghanaian higher education are fraught with a number of challenges. One of the obvious challenges facing the efficiency of quality assurance systems in higher education in Ghana is that it is not discipline- and context-specific. Because national councils and state regulatory boards that superintend professional practices in the academy focus more on accountability to government than on the disciplines, I contend that the requirement takes away attention from the fact that quality assurance of the many

professional communities constituting the academy needs to be discipline-specific. To be sure, this is a daunting task because quality assurance protocols are a tedium to stakeholders. However, my insistence on the development of context-specific and discipline-based quality assurance processes derives from the idea that academic communities, the epistemologies that shape their work, and the texts they produce can be best “measured” within their own material modes of production. It will not be productive to use empiricist modes of observation and systems of accountability such as institution’s accreditation history including its financial standing valorized, say, in the physical sciences to assess the work of communication teachers and program administrators. In theory, the emphasis on the latter is to develop in students a nuanced sense of subjectivity, alternative worldviews, and criticality. Enhanced engagements with professional associations is a way to achieve this objective. The African Council for Communication Education (ACCE), for instance, can be consulted with by the regulatory bodies of member states to map out standards specific to the field.

Second, quality assurance in Ghana is insufficiently transcultural. In view of the increasing relevance of globalization, global outsourcing of labor (Smith, 2012), and growing graduate mobility (Brady & José, 2009), an emergence of a set of global standards for understanding professional practices and students’ capabilities is desirable. In the context of communication education, what standards, norms, and criteria will reflect the quality of an internal communication education discipline? Though the National Council for Tertiary Education has also established several links with institutions across the globe such as Association of African Universities; Carnegie Corporation of New York; Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA); Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education (NUFFIC) and The World Bank, increased partnerships among organizations such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and Association of African Universities (AAU), or Association of West African Universities (AWAU) will be more useful. For example, how will ACCE partner the International Communication Association (ICA) and the National Communication Association (NCA), the Association of Communication Administrators (ACA), and Writing

Program Administration (WPA) to achieve the goal of global education, citizenship, and development?

Only time will tell how the panoptic gaze of state apparatuses will be reconfigured. As public universities in Africa, and Ghana specifically have begun to adopt a market model, it is becoming clear that governments are renegotiating the terms of institutional control. The government of Ghana, for example, “has charged the universities to come out with strategies that would make the universities generate their own funds to supplement what the government offers for running the universities, and also place the universities on par with businesses on the world market” (Edu-Buandoh, 2010: 59). Edu-Buandoh notes that this marketization discourse has led public funded universities in the country to come out with individual documents entitled *Corporate Strategic Plans* (CSPs). This development, I believe, is a direct response to the World Bank’s (2010) blue-print for improving on the financing of higher education in Africa. In addition to requiring that universities in Africa mobilize private resources and promote the private sector, the World Bank enjoins African universities to manage trends in student affairs, develop distance education, and adopt innovative ways to fund research on the continent. However, Edu-Buandoh argues that the corporatization of university education in Africa can lead to an unhealthy competition among universities. The context shaping communication education in Ghana is thus clear: it is instrumentalist. Zeleza (2003), on the other hand, dreams of an African pedagogy that is “truly decolonized, democratized, and decentralized ... autonomous yet accountable, committed to the pursuit of intellectual excellence yet rooted” in its community the values and epistemologies of which are “capable of competing globally, contributing to the global pool of knowledge, and responding quickly and effectively to global changes and emerging local needs..” (p. 113).

This dream is the reality the next chapter explores. It further nuances the nature of communication education by examining the lived experiences of communication faculty and program administrators. The goal is to articulate an alternative discourse focused on criticality.

Chapter 5: Community, identity, and sense making in the global knowledge economy

The knowledge economy is associated heavily with brain power, creativity, and other so-called human capital. It is also associated with processes of learning, communication, and social networking, and always technology enhanced.

— Brandt, 2005, p. 167

This chapter explores the question of identity, sense making, and the knowledge economy in communication education. It seeks to understand how the narratives of senior communication program administrators in two public universities in Ghana shed light on professional practice in this community. This is because knowledge work is a shared human endeavor which is embedded within organizational structures and routines (Brandt, 2005). An inquiry into the knowledge economy at work in communication departments is useful for understanding how faculty create, manage, and transmit knowledge, and, more important, under what circumstances this mode of production occurs (167-8). I weave the discussion in this chapter around the narratives of three professors, whose teaching experiences span between 10 and 28 years. In doing so, I enter into conversation with scholars in professional communication, and situate the analysis within the interdisciplinary theory of practice outlined in this dissertation. Here I unearth how concerns of *community*, *identity*, *meaning*, *literacies*, and *hybridity* trouble our understanding of communication education in an international context.

Using fieldnotes from direct participant observations at my field sites, minutes from departmental meetings, and in-depth interviews with faculty, I examine the landscape of communication education in Ghana, the nature of communication curricula in Ghanaian universities, and challenges my informants face in localizing curricula. Participants also reflected on local practices that shape knowledge work, how a communication curriculum is designed, and how they ensure that their practices meet students' needs in a local and globally competitive society (see Appendix C for the interview guide). Because the narratives are political in nature, I have assigned pseudonyms to my interviewees and the institutions they work with to maintain

anonymity. I have also “tidied” up the interviews to best represent my participants’ reflections devoid of *lingua lapsus* (Bucholtz, 2000). The reflections in this chapter serve as a response to St. Amant’s (2014) invitation to communication scholars to “collect and share both their own stories and the narratives of others so the greater field might be explored in meaningful and important ways” (p. viii).

The chapter is organized into four parts. First, I review literature on the importance of narratives in professional communication, and argue that not much is known about the stories communication program administrators from sub-Saharan Africa share about their work. Next, I discuss the lived experiences of my interviewees. Where possible, I ask follow-up questions to further interrogate their practices and habits of mind. Third, I offer a nuanced theoretical articulation of the narratives of my participants by pulling together major threads gathered from the narratives. These are (1) the absence of a vibrant community of practice, (2) challenges in localizing the curriculum, (3) the absence of a vigorous research agenda in language education, and (4) an increasingly onerous quality assurance control system. The final strand of the chapter discusses three major implications of the findings for research and theory building in international communication education and intercultural professional communication for both scholars and students in the West and sub-Saharan Africa.

The value of narratives in communication communities of practice

We are the stories we tell. The many ways we choose to tell our stories say a lot about our values. Narratives of tourists about their traveling experiences, for instance, reveal special truths and assumptions about the places they visited. So too stories told by professionals, such as communication educators, are tokens of their personal observations, convictions, and concerns about their profession. Their ‘tales’ can help us to interrogate the values of their professional practice. In the preface to the April 1993 special issue of *Communication Education*, Editor Rosenfeld stressed the importance of stories to communication scholarship. According to him, “if we wish our work to be faithful to our own lived experiences, if we wish for a union between poetics and science, if we wish to empower ourselves, then we should value our stories.”

(Rosenfeld, 1993: 277). To be sure, professional narratives such as the ones told by communication program administrators offer the discipline a moment of self-reflexivity. The narratives serve as the foundations of our professional culture (St. Amant, 2014: vi). They enable us to delve into the past with the hopes of shaping the present.

This is why in the foreword to Bridgeford, Kitalong, and Williamson's edited volume *Sharing Our Intellectual Traces*, St. Amant (2014) explained that "... the stories we tell and how we tell them shape our understanding of what took place at various points in time" (p. v). According to St. Amant, carefully told stories are important scholarly materials because they enable scholars to learn from the experiences of their peers. However, the stories that are told in professional circles are not usually considered intellectually rewarding or theoretically robust. One reason Bridgeford *et al.* (2014) gave for the under-theorization is that "the community has contented itself with stories of how it does work rather than demanding careful, disciplined examination of the forces that influence that work" (p. 2). The reality of this truth is that it presents the work of communication program administrators as a kind of random and an unguided practice. I am, however, convinced that an inquiry into narratives of communication faculty is, nonetheless, crucial because it presents scholars in communication-related disciplines with a broad-spectrum examination of the intellectual and institutional challenges they face, and give them the opportunity to construct for themselves and for others a context for (re)defining their roles as program leaders (Bridgeford *et al.*, 2014).

Not surprisingly, research into narratives shaping the work of communication program administrators in the West and other cultures is gaining recognition. Recent studies have explored how such forces as pedagogy, technology, globalization, budgets, and market demands need to be taken into account when communication administrators tell stories about their work (Andrews *et al.*, 2014). Other studies have also taken a close look at program assessment by exploring, *inter alia*, questions concerning faculty resistance to change, lack of a systematic paradigm, problems with localizing the curriculum (Coppola, 2014), and challenges in designing curriculum that is compatible with institutional contexts (Kitalong, 2014). Some scholars have also raised concerns

about the palpable nature of the job market and changing priorities of administrators (Raju, 2014).

One way to deal with these challenges, Brady and Kitalong (2014) posit, is to focus on budget management, instructor performance evaluation, and material resources tracking. They suggest that in order to arrive at identifying workable solutions in dealing with program assessment, it is important that program administrators employ what they call “an emergent problem solving approach” (p. 34) in a way that allows stakeholders (faculty and students especially) to participate in activities by sharing their problems as part of the solution. Meloncon (2014) makes us understand that sometimes program evaluation can indeed be “painful assessments” (p. 192). Focusing on emphasis degrees in technical and professional communication, she noted that it is often difficult for program administrators to be most productive in a shrinking economic climate.

As I will show shortly, the concerns above are not so different from those in the Ghanaian public universities I studied, though research in programmatic assessment in many African countries is sketchy. In chapter 1, I indicated that though communication education is over six decades old, not much has been done in exploring the nature of the program on the continent. One of the recent workshops sponsored by United Nations Educational Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is commendable as it, in my view, gave African communication scholars the platform to review their curricula, and to reflect on the theoretical and practical issues involved in communication education in West, Central, and Southern Africa (Boafo & Wete, 2002, see chapter 1 for a comprehensive discussion). It is, therefore, sad that stories that shape communication education in countries south of the Sahara are often not told. Part of this challenge, as I showed earlier, is because such narratives are considered less academically engaging.

Understanding the knowledge economy of communication education

In this section, I present the textured lives of my key informants and their narratives concerning communication education in Ghana. In particular, I stress their narrations

about communal identity, and how they negotiate the problem of the global knowledge economy.

Jojo Frimpong

Dr. Jojo Frimpong is the chair of a communication department with a focus on graduate studies. He joined faculty in June 2010 upon his return from a university in the Midwest United States where he obtained a master's degree in international affairs and a doctorate degree in media arts studies. He has been chair since 2011, and believes that his appointment will be renewed because of his exceptional administrative capabilities. Besides being the chair, Dr. Frimpong teaches four courses: communication theories, qualitative research methods, development communication, and new media technologies. When I asked him why he chose to be a communication scholar, he flatly admitted that he had no idea he wanted to be in communication. "My idea was to do law. I had admission to do law in Ghana, and had the chance to travel outside to study international affairs. Like any other person, I took the opportunity to further my education in the US. After my first year in the program, I had a lot of prompts from my professors that I had to do a PhD. So I felt it was going to be useful if I read communication because it was becoming a booming area," he told me. According to him, communication studies is an interesting program because it investigates the cause and effect of communication on human life. Dr. Frimpong believes that he is a successful communication program administrator because his approach toward administration is participatory. He told me that his administrative practice has been welcome among faculty because it is progressive. He says he opens his doors to everyone all the time, and filters unnecessary bureaucracies in order to make channels of communication less burdensome.

When I sought to know his experience about the communication landscape in Ghana, he indicated that it is a fast emerging one. He opined that communication education is fast spreading in the country, and that this growth, nonetheless, needs to be checked not because the field has to be policed, but because "communication is the lifeblood of society, and that everything that society does is dependent on the way it

communicates.” He noted that the last four years have seen an explosion of communication education in the country. He said that initially it was the department of communication studies of the University of Ghana that ran diploma, post-diploma, and master degree programs in communication, that there was no bachelor program in communication, and that Ghana Institute of Journalism ran only diplomas. Table 4.1 is an up-to-date inventory of communication institutions in Ghana.

Table 5.1 An inventory of communication institutions in Ghana

Institution	Ownership	Locus	Location
African University College of Communication	Private	Undergraduate	Accra
Blue Crest College	Private	Undergraduate	Accra
Central University College	Private	Undergraduate	Accra
Christian Service University	Private	Undergraduate	Kumasi
Ghana Institute of Journalism	State	Undergraduate & Graduate	Accra
Jayee University	Private	Undergraduate	Accra
Sikkim Manipal University	Private	Undergraduate	Accra
University of Cape Coast	State	Undergraduate & Graduate	Cape Coast
University of Education, Winneba	State	Graduate	Winneba
University of Ghana, Legon	State	Graduate	Accra

Source: Field Data (2015)

Dr. Frimpong attributed this growth to the twin forces of globalization and technology. He explained that because of globalization and the growth of technology there has been a growing demand of human resources to feed the market. Using radio as an example, he stressed that the technology has grown from a few stations to over a hundred in the last decade in Ghana. He also pointed out that corporate organizations have also seen the need for communication experts as their organizational lifeblood, and observed that gone are the days when communication needs were left in the hands of anyone who could speak, read, and write good English.

Another reason he gave is the job market. In his view, though communication education in Ghana officially began as far back as 1972 with the opening of the then School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, it remains a new field in the country. He noted that Ghanaian universities are now grabbing the opportunity that has been offered by business related programs to model communication studies into yet another marketable career option. There are now many job opportunities for communication students, especially with the boom of the radio industry and social media, he stressed. In fact, his reflections mirror similar concerns raised by his colleagues in communication-related disciplines in North America. However, while teachers, scholars, and program administrators in the United States, for example, raise concerns about the changing nature of the job market (Brady & José, 2009; Andrews *et al.*, 2014; Brady & Kitalong, 2014; Raju, 2014), Dr. Frimpong sees it as a welcoming prospect in Ghana. This may be because “communication education in Ghana is still a work in progress,” he observed.

I also interviewed him on the relationship between the curriculum and the job market in Ghana. Dr. Frimpong’s response indicates that the curriculum of his department is heavily Western-centered. This development was, however, not surprising to him because, according to him, communication studies, like formal education, is a Western product. When I probed further into the merits and demerits of this development for scholarship in Ghana, he took great pain to explain that since his return to Ghana, he and his colleagues have been looking for ways to localize the curriculum although, he admitted, doing so has been very difficult. He attributed the difficulty to lack of a *change of mindset*. In his view, faculty in Ghana are used to *received wisdom*. In other words, the identity of many Ghanaian communication faculty is, often, enacted, shaped, and constructed by the language, traditional norms, and practices of Western communication scholarship.

According to him, it is difficult to change the curriculum as a result of structural constraints, a view Coppola (2014) holds. He maintained that because Western communication education is powerful, there is always the need to consider it as an international program so that faculty can learn from best practices. He opined that

communication is a human endeavor so that whether its theories are from the West or from Africa, the fundamental idea is to communicate. He was, however, quick to point out that the general sense of communication in Ghana is mass communication. This sense, in his view, is unfortunate because the West looks at communication from both the mass media and interpersonal perspectives. He added that though there is a fixation on mass communication in Ghana, attention is now being paid to indigenous ways of communication, and, therefore, urged scholars in Africa to conduct their research by taking time to investigate happenings in their local contexts. The importance of such a proposal, he posited, is to create an identity for the community of African scholars in communication studies that can challenge or run as an alternative to conventional communication scholarship. This effort is crucial to “permit a better understanding of the African communication environment” (Taylor *et al.*, 2004: 1)

In his own way, he tries to localize major theoretical ideas whenever he teaches, and insists that his students do the same. Using reception studies as an example, Dr. Frimpong told me that he always insists that his students analyze the content of local Ghanaian films. According to him, though reception theories may be Western, he always attempts to apply them to the local context. He noted that one way of localizing Western-based communication theories is to hybridize them with African knowledge systems. “Hybridity creates ownership,” he stressed. In his view, hybridity creates new identities because it blends Western theories with the Ghanaian situation. He insisted that he has never applied Western ideas without localizing them even though he uses textbooks written by Western scholars. “How do the ideas I read from this scholar fit in my local context? How do our indigenous forms of communication subvert or challenge the norm?” He inquired. He calls indigenous forms of communication *bodies of subversion*. In fact, Dr. Frimpong’s narrative merits a few more comments. In *Hybridity*, Kraidy (2005) argued that the act of hybridizing a product is a unique political practice. He maintained that hybridity grants users active agency as it is they who select what needs to be appropriated and what needs to be rejected. This, however, does not mean that hybridity is free from *friction* as social agents may sometimes find it difficult to reconcile the local and the global. Dr. Frimpong may be right about the

afore-mentioned point because in his view “some ideas may be thought to be universal and yet may not be applicable to one’s local context.” Thompson’s (1999) commentary on media use, for example, is worth repeating verbatim:

The appropriation of media products is always a localized phenomenon, in the sense that it always involves specific individuals who are situated in particular social-historical contexts, and who draw on the resources available to them in order to make sense of media messages and incorporate them in their lives. And messages are often transformed in the process of appropriation as individuals adapt them to the practical contexts of everyday life (p. 174).

Thompson cautioned that discussions about appropriation or hybridity of media products must consider two key issues: structured patterns of global communication on the one hand and the local conditions under which media products are hybridized on the other. According to him, though communication and media products are diffused continually on a global scale, these symbolic materials “are always received by individuals who are situated in particular social-historical contexts, and who draw on the resources available to them” (p. 174). This appropriation, he stressed, enables communication and information consumers to make sense of the media messages they draw receive and localize them in their lives.

To place the discussion into perspective, I asked Dr. Frimpong what he thought about the major theoretical paradigm that influences communication education in Ghana. He told me that the curriculum orients itself mainly towards the sociocultural tradition. It focuses on, he said, symbols, cultures, and meaning. He asserted that Ghanaian communication scholars often use this approach because the Ghanaian society is a very conservative society. He nonetheless explained that it is important that his colleagues begin to introduce the critical tradition in their pedagogy. The critical tradition, he said, presents scholars in communication with the opportunity to investigate codes of oppressive tendencies that characterize communicative practices in African cultures.

The discussions above led him to conclude that curriculum design and implementation is a daunting task. He expressed worry that unlike in a number of Western countries where course syllabi are developed and managed by individual faculty, in Ghana course

design is moderated and supervised both by faculty and chair. He was not happy about the legion of processes the curriculum of his department had to go through to gain institutional approval, and lamented that the approach, though ensures quality assurance, is too rigid. It stifles progress, he remarked, and argued that ever since he became the chair he has embarked on pragmatic initiatives to reposition his department, and make its program competitive and marketable. He noted with enthusiasm how the review of his department's program led to an increase in the credit load from 36 to a minimum of 45 and a maximum of 57. According to him, faculty travelled abroad to study best practices, and put together their findings in redesigning the program as far back as 2011, though the new program is yet to be implemented. When I asked him why it is taking so long to implement their proposed program, he told me that the proposal had to be first submitted to the university's faculty board, and lamented that it was rejected because it was beyond what the Graduate School could approve. Five basic steps are involved in the assurance process: (a) departmental self-assessment; (b) faculty board review; (c) academic board appraisal; (d) National Council for Tertiary Education assessment; and (e) National Accreditation Board valuation.

In addition to the five stages, the curriculum must contain the following elements: a title, date of commencement, rationale, faculty, target group, and equipment/logistics. Given these institutional requirements, Dr. Frimpong was of the view that the program review process is overly burdensome because it could take up to two years to gain approval. He noted that some academic institutions, including his own, attempt to go round this bureaucracy. For example, he reconceived the Instructional Technology seminar as New Media Technology in order to interrogate "every aspect of technology" including social media. What he did together with faculty was simply to change the content of the course except the course title. He also did the same thing with the Media and Society seminar. As he boasted, "We didn't inform anybody. We did that so that we could expose our students to best practices they need to know so that they may perform better on the job market." He quickly added that the communication curriculum, like other professional curricula, is designed by taking into account three main factors based on the requirements of Ghana's National Council for Tertiary

Education and the National Accreditation Board: national needs, market needs, and the transformative nature of the communication landscape, a view almost all the participants share (See chapter 4 for a comprehensive discussion on the role of the two supervisory authorities, and also Andrews *et al.*, 2014; José, 2014; Raju, 2014). This brings me to a discussion on Dr. Frimpong's reflections on the impact of his department's curriculum on Ghana's developmental agenda.

It is difficult to assess the impact of communication education on Ghana's development, he confessed. Quite apart from the fact that there is little formal investigation on the subject, a number of my interviewees argued that their programs are still "toddlers" as it is difficult for them to empirically assess their program's impact on national development. In his own words, "the truth is that we have not gone out to see how the program is impacting." He, however, insisted that though his departmental program is less than a decade old, its graduates are working in many sectors of the Ghanaian economy including Ghana News Agency, the United Nations, and academia. He also stated that recognition is now being given to faculty to go on national assignments. For example, he was recently a member of the training team for the Electoral Commission, has participated in the United Nations World Radio Day, and has recently appeared on Ghana Television to speak about gender, advocacy, and order. He explained that despite the absence of formal evaluation, faculty ensure that they annually check on placement of alumni and informally appraise how much impact their graduates are making in society.

When I requested to find out what recommendations he would make to improve upon communication education in Ghana, Dr. Frimpong made three major suggestions. First, he suggested that communication scholars in Ghana should train for terminal degrees. He bemoaned the lack of trainers in this community of practice, and decried the idea of adjunct professors teaching in more than one institution because "the same people moving around is not good since they reproduce the same ideas everywhere they go." He also recommended that faculty embark on vigorous research in indigenous communication. He was extremely sad that "up until now there is not a single textbook

on communication that has been localized even in Africa.” He said the educational system is overly dependent on Western books, and that it negatively affects the conduct of research in endogenous forms of communication. He emphasized that research in Africa must not only be theoretically rich but must also be praxis-driven in order to make students self-employed. His third recommendation focused on the quality of the community of Ghanaian communication scholars. “We need to come together as communication scholars,” he urged because, “There is no communication association in Ghana.” According to him, the educational system cannot boast of a single scholarly journal, and insisted that if the community wants professional identity and international recognition, then, it needs to strengthen its mandate by coming together as a professional body. He explained that this professional body is important for creating a united front needed to interrogate the required pedagogy and research for communication education in Ghana: what books are needed, and what research ought to be conducted. He concluded by saying that communication scholarship in Ghana appears close-ended. In his view, it hardly gives room for new courses and programs. “We need to think outside the box,” he said. Interestingly, his colleague, Dr. Belinda Anderson, from another university, totally agrees. Her scope of communication education is broader and interdisciplinary.

Belinda Anderson

Dr. Belinda Anderson is an associate professor of language, culture, and literacy. She is the dean of the Faculty of Arts in a public university in Ghana. She has over fifteen years of teaching as a professor. She holds bachelor and master’s degrees in English, and a postgraduate diploma in education from the university, and a doctorate degree in literacy, language, and culture from a university in the Midwest United States. Dr. Anderson is the main architect of the university’s communication program when she was its coordinator. According to her, communication education in Ghana is not well known because until recently many institutions had little to do with communication. In her opinion, communication education in the country is fixated on the mass media. She said that this position of the field makes the teaching of communication pedagogy difficult and less interesting. She blamed the development on the lack of experts in the

field, and recounted that emphasis on communication education is a new phenomenon across cultures because the focus has for a long time been on mass communication.

Dr. Anderson was delighted that the communication program in her university delivers two distinct but related types of communication education: Basic communication course and communication studies. The basic communication course (BCS), she explained, is a general course designed to sharpen the literacies—reading and writing—of all freshmen in the university. The course, she said, is tailored toward getting high school graduates making the transition to college to acquire the norms of communicative skills and tricks of persuasion needed to thrive in the academic community. The BCS course, Dr. Anderson told me, is structured on the principle that there is a wide gap between the knowledge high school students entering university have and what undergraduates should know. The first semester of the first year emphasizes remediation in using language. This includes the teaching of such language items as tense, concord, ambiguity, and dangling modifiers as well as study skills such as note taking and note making, skimming, scanning, and summary. The second semester focuses on production skills, where students are exposed to the writing of different genres such as narrative, argumentative, and expository discourses as well as the writing of resumés (For more on the nature of BCS, see Afful, 2007). The professor noted with pride that most of the communicative skills programs in other tertiary institutions in Ghana are based on her institution’s model.

Table 5.2 A summary of the basic communication course in a public university in Ghana

Literacies	Remediation	Study Skills	Writing Skills
	Conventions of usage (spelling, grammar, punctuation, referencing)	Note taking, note making (from lectures, outlining) Reading (skimming, scanning, summarizing)	Sentence/clausal patterns, paragraph development, types of essay (narrative, expository, argumentative), formal writing (resumé, job application)

Source: Field Data (2015)

For Dr. Anderson, although her university's model is well acknowledged in Ghana, it is about time the structure of the program underwent a massive review. She noted that the program needs to be rolled out to two sets of students: (1) students who come from educated homes and so may be proficient in language use and academic discourse, and (2) students who have little exposure to the English language such that the university should find a way to help them become successful in the course. She proposed that the more proficient group do only one semester of BCS while the other group does two semesters, and that they need not go through the same syllabus. She said she was on the verge of planning and proposing it to the faculty and academic boards. She lamented that the current structure of CS hardly meets students' communicative needs (See chapter 5 for an analysis of the graduate program in communication education). In her view, there was the need to revisit the structure of the program because some students expend too much time gaining too little from the course.

Turning her attention to the media aspect of communication studies, Prof. Belinda Anderson conceded that the program was introduced at her university rather too late (*i.e.* in 2010) as the department was yet to graduate its first cohort. She said it was difficult to evaluate the impact of the program because, as Dr. Frimpong, my first participant observed, the program is still at its early stage. Dr. Anderson added that the name of the program was altered from mass communication to communication studies to reflect new trends. A focus on mass communication, she pointed out, was limiting in the sense that it constrained how much knowledge could be imparted to students, and what faculty could specialize in or teach.

In discussing the problem of theory dependency, Dr. Anderson maintained that African scholars are a step behind the West. She conceded it was not a bad thing to follow scholars who have taken the lead because they may have had some challenges on the way so that their experiences could be of valuable lessons to those learning from them. Dr. Anderson, however, insisted that what is important is to understand that there are different contexts, and that communication is about people, their languages, and their cultures: it should not be assumed that because the academic community is following

the West everything should be as it is done in the West. “A lot of theories that we employ emanate from the West but there is the need to find ways to fine-tune them in our contexts, and that is what we have not been able to do so well,” she lamented. When I urged her to reflect on what major communication theories shape the practice, she said that much communication research in Ghana borrows from discourse, ethnolinguistic, and rhetorical studies rather than communication theories. Dr. Anderson’s narrative, in fact, re-echoes the position of Craig (1999) concerning the incessant borrowing of and dependence on other theories in communication scholarship. This development, Craig posited, is regrettable because it leads to two basic dangers: sterile eclecticism and productive fragmentation.

I sought to find out more about the nature of the curriculum, this time, from the perspective of how it keeps a local flavor and yet remains global in scope. I was not surprised that Dr. Anderson noted that it was a difficult task to perform. She attributed this difficulty to the geopolitics of knowledge production and dissemination. She explained that universities in Africa are always faced with the challenge of the world’s universities’ ranking, which in her view, does not favor them. “The person who ranks has their criteria so that one ought to meet the criteria in order to be ranked. If the criteria are based on Western principles, then obviously because we all want to be ranked then we are going to move toward those principles.” The corollary is that it makes the effort to pursue vigorous research about one’s own local context arduous to publish in “global” journals because it limits international readership. As she said trouble-mindedly, “But we all want to be seen out there, and to be seen out there, then you must play to the rules of the global journals. Sadly, because we are very keen in getting ranked we are not strengthening the journals we have here.” (See Canagarajah, 2002 for a comprehensive discussion on the geopolitics of knowledge production and distribution). Dr. Anderson remarked that one major effect of geopolitics on Ghanaian scholarship is that research that focuses on national development tends not to appear in “global” journals. She stressed that if senior colleagues (senior lecturers, associate professors, and professors) see the need to publish in local journals, the younger ones

would do the same so that “our local journals would gain much traction and high impact factors.”

I requested that Dr. Anderson explain further the impact of the above challenges on curriculum design. She noted that the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) makes sure that the curriculum is tailored toward the needs of the nation, the development of the individual, and the global job market. She stressed that curricula are developed based on specific philosophies and competencies expected of students. She was of the view that it is one thing to know how to teach and another to be able to design a curriculum. “Are faculty interested in students getting information as people who are fed all the way, or faculty are committed to letting students fish information by themselves?” she asked. She, however, noted that *institutional control* usually makes it difficult to implement noble ideas. She cited an example that some months ago, her office (she is the dean of the Faculty of Arts) forwarded documents from the Center for African and International Studies to the academic board for the approval of a new proposal. Dr. Anderson was sad that the proposal was delayed because the academic board had little understanding of the philosophy of the humanities. As she spoke quite copiously:

We understood what we had sent because when it came to our faculty board, we looked at it, we asked questions, we asked them to take the program back and review it. Then at a point in time we realized that this was good. And when it went to Academic Board, people were asking why every course was tailored toward African development. But the whole point was that it was a program designed for African development. This was the philosophy in designing this curriculum. Sadly, institutional control makes it difficult to implement what one has in mind. In the case of the Center for African and International Studies, the claim was that we are in a global world so all the courses need not be tailored toward African development. The Academic Board, therefore, insisted that some of the courses be changed to meet global exigencies.

I was curious to find out what faculty did in such circumstances to meet students’ needs. The dean proposed a two-year internship for students. According to her, internships are important for letting students have a good idea of what their programs are really about. It is also to give them a practical edge, and make them evaluate how much they

themselves have learned on the field. She also said that internships are good for enabling faculty to assess the quality of their work in the department. “If we do serious internships and departmental evaluation, we will know whether we are meeting the needs of our students. For undergraduates we can do this and we will be fine. For graduates, we need to do needs assessment before we even start the program,” she observed. For Dr. Anderson, the assumption that students need to be taught everything on the course syllabus is a false one because it does not enable faculty to concentrate on the peculiar needs of their students.

I then linked the idea of meeting students’ needs to the specific impact her institution’s communication curriculum was making on Ghana’s development. Dr. Anderson, like Dr. Frimpong, noted that the program has chalked some successes. She explained that communication education has deepened freedom of expression since it was once characterized by media control under various military regimes. She, however, lamented that the growth of the media industry is rather more quantitative and less qualitative because of the seeming lack of communication etiquette and decorum. Looking at the landscape she described, Dr. Anderson recommended the training of experts in communication studies. She proposed that the training lay emphasis on corporate and technical communication. As she noted quite sadly, “In our own university, I sometimes receive letters from other offices, and I ask myself did this person really understand what they were communicating? This is because they do not have the authority or the felicity conditions to get me to do something! They write with a threat, but they do not know what they are communicating. To them, they have to write a letter.” Another associate professor who shares in the idea that language education should be given careful consideration in designing communication curriculum needs is Dr. Stephen Yamson, a former dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Research in the university where Dr. Belinda Anderson works.

Steve Yamson

Dr. Stephen Yamson has been teaching for the past 27 years since 1984. He holds a doctorate degree in English and Linguistics from a European university and a post-

graduate diploma in education from his present university. Dr. Yamson expressed that he has always been interested in the many ways people communicate, and put forth ideas as arguments. According to him, language and communication are key elements for the avoidance of conflicts in the world. “I believe strongly that next to God, language is the thing that we all should be interested in,” he noted. He said language is the primary means of communication for all humans, and that a lot of misunderstandings arise simply because people are not communicating well; they do not speak, listen, or write well.

Dr. Yamson also categorized communication education into two main blocks: communication studies and communication education. Just as Dr. Anderson, Dr. Yamson explained that the basic communication course was introduced at his university because program administrators felt that undergraduate students were not communicating well. “Every generation seems to believe that their communicative abilities are better than the present one,” he said jokingly. Faculty in general and language educators, in particular, felt that academic standards had slipped to a point that some interventions were deemed necessary. He regretted that in the process the curriculum has privileged writing at the expense of speaking literacies. He explained that over the years, the focus of academic communication has become a little blurred because it has narrowly been defined to mean the achievement of grammatical accuracy. The seminar focuses on the teaching of tenses, dangling modifiers, concord, and ambiguity with the hope that these topics will improve students’ writing skills (*cf.* Coker & Abude, 2012). Turning his attention to mass communication, Dr. Yamson remarked that mass communication is a sub-discipline that explores the capacity to reach wider audiences either in writing or other electronic forms of communication. He said that mass communication played a key role in the formation of nation-states. It ensured information dissemination, mass control, and propaganda (Taylor *et al.*, 2004).

Dr. Yamson was not too happy about the nature of his institution’s communication curriculum. He observed that it is structurally rich but poor in practice. “On paper it looks solid but really in practice it isn’t at all,” he lamented. He remarked that it is

difficult, for example, to ascertain the impact of the program on the academic behavior of students in other subject-disciplines:

We don't see that their [students'] writing of essays has improved, their referencing has improved, and so on. If as defined by the earliest documents, the idea was to improve academic writing, then it has not improved at all. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that it has further slipped down the slope.

This, he noted with disappointment. To him, even though Ghanaian students are second language speakers, the emphasis on the teaching of expression, grammar, and mechanics need not affect efforts at improving upon students' productive skills. He also indicated that over the last few years there has been a perceptible fall in the use of the English language in the mass media either because of the rush in getting the news out there in the public, or because newsmen have not been well trained in the use of English. Two decades ago, James (1990) made similar remarks that the syllabi of many communication institutions do not engage in a vigorous pursuit of language education (For more on this, see chapter 6). As a philosophy committed to the understanding and interpretation of texts broadly construed, hermeneutics can be viewed as a type of phenomenology. Gadamer says that it “ must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a bond to the subject matter that comes into language through the traditionary text and has, or acquires, a connection with the tradition from which it speaks” (1960/1998: p. 295). Following the writings of Husserl and Heidegger, Gadamer casts doubt on the methodological rigor of “science”. In *Truth and Method*, he exposes the problems associated with focusing on the scientization of methods as though they were sufficient in and of themselves to lead us to truth. His work is therefore a corrective to the Enlightenment project and the massive influence of Descartes. In Gadamerian hermeneutics, truth, or rather Truthing, is an *event*. This perspective enables us to distinguish what he means by truth vis-à-vis propositional truth as in that which is valiative, judgmental, or ideational. For Gadamer, truthing is far more complex than a true or false statement, as in the sense that the valiative index of truth is what has been for long thought to divide the world. Philosophers such as Descartes have theorized that it is the nature of truth that connects the world to us. In

other words, the quality of language we use could be said to be directly proportional to the quality of worldhood we live in. Both Vygotsky (1978) and Levinas (1989) wrote that it is language which conditions rational thought. Truth has therefore for a long time been conceived of as the relationship between language and the world. In contradistinction, Gadamer posits that Truth is an event because it is something that we experience. It does not exist independent of us. In Heideggerian terms, we would say that truth is our disclosure to the world, the manner of the revealing (*alètheia*) of the world to us which is not esoteric to our comprehension. In fact, it is that which enhances our being.

These ideas were contested in the light of theory building. When I asked Dr. Yamson about his experiences concerning using and applying theories from the West, he, like the other participants, noted that Western theories are very attractive and powerful. He expressed worry that cultures outside of the West have not been able to offer alternatives, and observed, for example, that academic writing is mainly based on the Aristotelian model. By this, he meant that academic essays are often structured linearly with topic sentences followed by major and minor support sentences. For him, the Aristotelian model is a deductive paradigm, one that begins by stating what the writer wants to do and that goes on to provide support for the claim. Some setbacks he identified with this model is that sometimes it mirrors a lack of creativity and imagination. Below are two examples of tests I obtained from the department's assessment unit that clearly reflect the truth in Dr. Yamson's reflections. The first example is a general quiz administered to all freshmen as part of their continuous assessment on March 24, 2015, and the second another quiz given by an instructor to his class (no date).

Example 1: Write one of the body paragraphs of an essay on the topic: "How to Promote Peace in Ghana." The paragraph should be about 120 words.

Example 2: Read the following paragraph carefully, and analyze it into topic sentence, major supporting, minor supporting, and concluding sentences. Use the sentence numbers in your analysis; do not write the entire sentence.

¹Two main categories of people exist in the world—trouble makers and trouble-shooters. ²The former are people who mastermind all the chaos and atrocities in this world. ³Talk of the two world wars, and you will have them around their remote and immediate causes. ⁴All the things in this world which are anti-human are the works of their hands, heads, and hearts. ⁵Examples of these ungodly activities are human trafficking, child abuse, cybercrimes, armed robbery, and the likes. ⁶It is surprising that even though these people are God’s creations, they rather do not have the loving spirit of God in them. ⁷But thank God for the existence of the other category of people who aim at transforming what the troublemakers have deformed. ⁸For instance, when the troublemakers created the virus, they manufactured the anti-virus. ⁹They help create a home for refugees who, due to the nefarious activities of the troublemakers, are homeless. ¹⁰Without trouble-shooters, there will be no ‘heavens’ for those who have been made victims in the ‘hells’ created by the trouble-makers. Really, they make bitter life better to people. ¹¹Indeed, it is always good to have an eraser wherever there are pencils.

A close look at the objective of the instructions contained in the two tests above shows that they are formalistic in principle. Formalism valorizes directness. A formalist mode of communication emphasizes clarity and simplicity of expression. The instructions enjoin students to reproduce the form constitutive of the expository essay by being mindful of length (as in Example 1), and by identifying the main and supporting ideas that typify the text in Example 2. In other words, instructions in Example 2 make less room for students to, for example, discover such fallacies as dualism, reductionism, and essentialism inherent in the text. What the instructor tested, on the other hand, was the students’ ability to discover the structural patterns of the text. This effort, although has its place in academic communication, is problematic because it makes learners privilege form over critical reflection. It also makes learning become, in the words of Bartholomae (1984), “a matter of imitation or parody than a matter of invention or discovery” (p. 408). Often such essays are graded based on the COEMA principle. This is explained below in Table 4. 3.

Table 5. 3 The general rubric of academic communication in a Ghanaian public university

Item	Brief Description	Value
Content	The quality of a student's arguments, and the way they are appropriate to the subject matter, context, and purpose	10
Organization	The attempt by a student to attend to issues of cohesion, coherence, and unity of thought (<i>i.e.</i> paragraph development)	5
Expression	The quality of register, lexis, and diction employed by a student for specific genres and audiences	10
Mechanical Accuracy	The effort by a student to address issues of grammatical correctness (e.g. concord, dangling modification, spelling)	5

Source: Field Data (2015)

Dr. Yamson, thus, was of the view that academic writing in the Ghanaian context needs to consider theories that constitute good communication based on indigenous theories (a point three of my participants also made). He said there is lack of research in this area:

If you don't write the way a Westerner writes, you are not a good writer. And yet we know that at least thought patterns are different from culture to culture, and why there is no attempt to domesticate these things I don't know. I know that in Ghana as far as local literacies are concerned, the hallmarks of good communication are different. We look for other things, and so why is it that we have not been able to get some of these things across in our practice?

Dr. Yamson was touching on the thorny subject of Afrocentricity which Asante (2008), Taylor *et al.* (2004), Anerson (2007), and Skjerdal (2012) have been championing for quite some time now. Though there have been numerous calls to “rethink the nature and direction of communication education in Africa ... in order to enhance the available pool of communication experts for various social developmental needs,” (Taylor *et al.*, 2004: 5) such calls have often not attracted the response needed to embark on vigorous research in the theoretical knowledge of African communicative practices. The scenery that is being painted on the continent is that African scholars in a number of African universities and colleges are making little effort to de-Westernize their curricula, even

though this may not actually be the case. In responding to how the curriculum remains local and yet in sync with global exigencies, Dr. Yamson admitted that doing so was a major challenge. Arguing in the manner of Pennycook (2010), he pointed out that it is not healthy to create a dualism between the local and the global because “a lot of what we do or what we call indigenous or local communication can be found in other cultures as well.” He explained that what is today considered the dominant literacy of Western communication scholarship first started as a local practice and as an accretion of cultures spanning the early forms of Greek civilization. In his view, local practices are simply mobile because they appear in other cultures as well.

Dr. Yamson made four major recommendations to improve the quality of communication education in Ghana. As with Dr. Anderson, Dr. Yamson, first of all, noted that the design of communication studies curriculum should pay more attention to the development of experiential learning. According to him, discovery learning bridges the gap between good and bad students. He confessed that curricula in Ghana tend to be apprentice-like in the sense that they silence students in the acquisition and transfer of knowledge. “They watch and learn and seldom participate in the learning process so upon graduation they get to know little than their masters,” he remarked. He also urged his colleagues to focus on speech communication. According to him, there are more opportunities in the world to speak than to write. With respect to academic communication, he mentioned that students be made to give more oral presentations.

The third suggestion he made touched on local literacy research. He said that it is unacceptable that many Ghanaians are not literate in their own local languages (*cf.* Edu-Buandoh, *in press*). For him, local literacies and Ghanaian languages create a multicultural and multilingual situation in the country that needs to be examined empirically. As he lamented, “Instead of allowing that to be a challenge, we can very well convert that into an advantage. It’s a resource that we’re not using, and that it is a shame.” He attributed this problem to the power and allure of English as a global language. He narrated the story of a parent who threatened to withdraw her ward from a public school simply because she felt that teachers in the school allowed students to

speak local languages on the school compound instead of English. He also noted that most educated Ghanaians cannot even say a simple greeting in their local languages if they have to communicate with an audience, for example, at a funeral gathering. He also remarked that a lot of Ghanaians do not speak English well. One may speculate that there is a growing trend of mesolectal communication in Ghana, where speakers straddle between non-standard communication practices and accepted forms of the languages they speak. He concluded thus:

The whole philosophy, therefore, should be to encourage people to appreciate the use of good language. Good language should be as pure as possible in the sense of very few mixtures from other languages as possible. I am not talking about purity in the sense of traditional purity. Languages change all the time, but those of us whose business it is to teach language should be a little more conservative and not rush to teach new found ways of communicating because that constitutes corruption of the language.

A critical reading of the comment above reflects the problem many language scholars have expressed about the place of Standard English in the global world of contact. First contemporary applied linguists have argued that the idea of a pure Standard English (SE) is elusive because SE is one of the many varieties of the English language (Canagarajah, 2013). The idea of a good, pure, and incorruptible language suggests that languages are monoliths that exist side by side, and that speakers who are competent in more than one language are multilingual. This assumption, it is argued, presupposes that speakers use one language at a time. This posture frowns on notions of codeswitching. Yet speakers are capable of shuttling between languages, and negotiate diverse linguistic resources for situated construction of meaning (Canagarajah, 2013: 1). This is what he called *translingualism*, a term he uses to express that communicative competence is not restricted to predefined meanings of individual languages, but the ability to merge different language resources in situated interactions for new meaning construction. Second, what constitutes language corruption in English? In an age of increasing mobility and cultural and material flows to what extent can any language be said to be pure and non-corrupt? In the case of Ghana, I have constantly seen and heard educated Ghanaians who shuttle between Standard English and/or sub-varieties of the

languages including their local languages, not as a result of linguistic competence. Speakers engage in translingual practices for many communicative purposes such as to maintain cultural identity, camaraderie, and politeness,

In short, Dr. Yamson's reflections and those of his colleagues point to four main findings. These are (1) the absence of a vibrant community of practice, (2) challenges in localizing the curriculum, (3) a dearth of vigorous research in language and local language education, and (4) an arduous institutional quality assurance protocol.

Theoretical discussion of key findings

Absence of a vibrant community of practice

One of the main findings of my interview sessions with communication scholars in Ghana is that their community of practice is not robust. The community tends to be more *organic* and less *organized*. My analysis shows that the existing community is constituted around two major goals: (a) *legitimate peripheral participation* and (b) *basic practice*. In terms of the former, I realized that the communication departments in my study create a sense of member socialization for their learners. They teach learners cultural artefacts of the field. It is fair to note that the curricula of these institutions aim at promoting among students what Wenger (2000) terms 'a regime of competence.' The corollary is to deepen practice, the ability to learn by doing. What is not clear about this practice is the extent students of this community are immersed in this domain. In other words, the analysis of my participants' narratives reveals that communication scholarship in Ghana is still forming. It is possible to assert that the community of communication scholars in Ghana is passive. Efforts at promoting growth in this community must concentrate on two main ingredients: *professional identity* and *meaning*. As Dr. Frimpong remarked, "We need to come together as communication scholars." A number of my participants bemoaned the absence of a professional national organization and its flagship journal in the country. According to them, this absence smothers progress and inter-institutional engagement. Wenger (2000) posits that communal identity promotes alignment, that is, the coordination of activities and the enforcement of regulations, as well as enhances the work of the

imagination. In fact, the fragile nature of the community of communication scholars in Ghana has implications for the nature of the curriculum it designs, and the type of research it conducts.

With regards to meaning, my analysis shows that it is increasingly difficult to determine what the goals, aspirations, and prospects of the communication studies community in Ghanaian universities and colleges are. This may be due to the absence of a strong national association, which may have been conditioned by the level of competition that exists among public universities in the country. Considered as semi-autonomous institutions, Ghanaian public universities, it seems to me, find it difficult to collaborate on academic projects. This is an unfortunate development because despite their original mandates, the public universities in Ghana run a number of similar academic programs. Thankfully, efforts are being made to deal with the problem. One such attempt was the launching of the first national conference on academic writing/communication skills program in Ghana on June 12 and 13, 2015. Themed, “Doing More Than Getting By: Rethinking Academic Writing/Communication Skills Programs in Ghanaian Higher Education,” the conference was organized under the joint-auspices of a non-profit organization and the University of Cape Coast (UCC). Though I had left Ghana and so could not attend the conference, documents and feedback on proceedings I received from senior colleagues show that the event was organized to bring together stakeholders across the nation. The objective of the workshop was three-fold:

1. To bring together program coordinators, instructors, and scholars to critically assess current practice of academic writing instruction in Ghana in the light of contemporary research, and to make recommendations for improving the programs;
2. To identify research issues and options for advancing the field of academic writing instruction in Ghana, and;
3. To consider the formation of a national association of academic writing teachers for advancing research and practice.

Challenges in localizing the curriculum

Communication education in Ghana is also fraught with challenges in localizing the curriculum. As a result of the absence of an active community of practice in Ghana, each university emphasizes different literacies and competencies. My key informants noted that it is difficult to localize communication curricula because of a number of factors. These include (a) colleagues' avid preference for and dependence on Western theories, (b) the geopolitics of knowledge production, and (c) reticence to engage the local. Although some participants proposed and proffered the idea of theory hybridization, my analysis shows that this idea remains an ideal. I realized that concerns about localization and hybridization are difficult to manifest in the Ghanaian educational system because of the lack of a coordinated research agenda. First, a number of scholars in Ghana, my analysis shows, have not thoroughly considered the issue of hybridizing curricula. Because it is not useful to create a bifurcation between the local and the global (Pennycook, 2010, Canagarajah, 2013), it is important to note that a number of literacies taught in communication departments in Ghana (academic communication, broadcast journalism, advertising, public relations, *etc.*) writ large are becoming mobile. It must be pointed out that though the West will remain for a long time the center of knowledge production and distribution, one cannot deny that some of its practices have mostly been influenced by scholarly and professional practices from non-Western cultures. Take, for instance, the theoretical relevance of the Ghanaian concept of *Sankofa* in Asante's (2008) notion of Afrocentricity, a principle that admonishes scholars to dig deep into the recesses of African knowledge systems in order to guide their path into the future. My analysis of the narratives show a number of theoretical lineages that have, thus, far shaped the curriculum.

Table 5.4 Major theoretical paradigms of communication education in two public universities in Ghana

Sub-field	Major Paradigm	Brief Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
Academic Comm.	Aristotelian logic	Writing as a linear process	Encourages clarity of thought.	Stifles creativity and imagination.
	Process-based writing	Writing as progressively evaluative	Ideas are well developed over a period of time.	Is time consuming; not suitable for large classes.
	Product-based writing	Writing as summative	Is economical to instructors; makes students more responsible.	Can make slow learners poor students; there is less time for revision.
Comm. Studies	Sociocultural tradition	Explores how humans make meaning in everyday interaction.	Sees communication as symbolic and socially constructed.	Can be difficult to explore from a social science perspective.
	Agenda setting/Framing	Examines the role of the media in influencing public relations messages.	May be useful for students' internships and case studies.	Has become commonplace .
	Discourse studies	Analyzes language use and its effects in society.	Emphasizes the role of language in communication.	Can be quite difficult to teach in view of various strands.
	Rhetoric	Examines the strategic use of communication targeted at specific audiences, contexts, and purposes.	Is useful for expanding the field of communication.	Can be reduced to academic and political communication.

Source: Field Data (2015)

Questions of localizing or blending the local curriculum with Western principles are, therefore, political. What elements need to be localized? In what ways can an endogenous thought be coterminous with foreign intellectual insights? (cf. Kraidy, 2005; Volkmer, 2012). I attempt to answer these questions in chapter 7.

Lack of a coordinated research agenda in local language education

Little interest in indigenous communication has also laid its grip on research in local literacies and local languages. Less emphasis on promoting Ghanaian languages as part of efforts at enriching the communication curriculum frustrates attempts to make students understand the norms and practices involved in indigenous communication. James (1990) urged scholars to place importance on local literacies to promote local language proficiency. Edu-Buandoh (*in press*), however, cautions that this is not going to be an easy prospect. She explains with empirical data obtained from interviews with policy makers, teachers, parents, and undergraduate students that although local languages are worth studying, the evidence suggests that these stakeholders see fewer returns accruing from their pursuit as academic disciplines. She argues that while a number of Ghanaians speak favorably about local language education as a marker of identity, the majority doubt the cultural capital these languages generate in a globally competitive world. Looking at this development, I would suggest that efforts to introduce local literacies and/or Ghanaian languages into the curricula of communication institutions should focus on exposing students to dominant functional literacies. I mean to say that the attempt must be progressive so as to make learners understand the reasons underlying the need for becoming literate in their own local languages.

An onerous quality assurance control mechanism

The narratives of my participants show that it is difficult to constantly determine institutional quality. My analysis reveals that quality assurance often takes the form of departmental audit and self-evaluation which are internal in scope vis-à-vis the mandated, snail-paced processes of institutional and program accreditation. Part of the difficulty, I tend to think, obtains from the passive nature of the scholarly community

of practice in Ghana. Even though there is little information that regulates the nature of quality in communication education in many African countries, communication experts in Ghana can no longer shy away from investigating issues concerning how to improve upon practice, what is needed to implement collective initiatives, and what their priorities are for building capacity (*cf.* Materu, 2007). A World Bank sponsored study of 220 public universities across 52 countries in Africa, for example, evidently shows that barring the twin challenges of cost and human capacity, there is a growing sense of a pan-African benchmark for measuring the quality of higher education. Materu cites issues of mission and vision, physical and technological resources, number of students, and qualification of staff as key determinants. Other factors include quality of learning opportunities, managerial effectiveness, quality enhancement research, community involvement including partnership with industry, and future plans (Sanya, 2013).

Conclusion

The findings in this chapter bear a number of implications for communication education. I address only three here. First, the discussions emphasize the need for international and professional partnership between universities in the West and those in Africa. The analysis in this chapter, I hope, will expose the international community to the stories, lived experiences, and values scholars in a non-Western culture, such as Ghana, place on program administration in general, and communication education, to be specific. The narratives are useful for calling for inter-university collaboration, and for sharing expertise among colleagues from diverse cultures. One such active partnership could be fostered with the International Communication and National Communication Association (NCA). NCA, for instance, publishes 11 academic journals, and provides its members with a wealth of data about the communication discipline. The Association also organizes programs that serve to disseminate relevant information about communication to public audiences, and disseminates communication scholarship broadly through regular media outreach, and a robust social media presence³⁰. Such an effort must carefully reflect on the local needs of

³⁰ www.natcom.org/about/

faculty and students. Another good example is the Council for Programs in Scientific and Technical Communication (CPTSC)³¹, especially as communication scholars in Africa and North America seek ways of expanding their respective fields beyond their continents.

Second, the reflections are important for promoting intercultural, academic and professional communication. The need to learn from other cultures in an interconnected society is of utmost importance. Such a move is in recognition of attempts to globalize professional and technical communication (José, 2014), and to create job opportunities abroad. Or as Brady and José (2009) rightly pointed out, “If the globalization of the workplace increasingly requires that students be prepared to work in linguistically and culturally diverse contexts, US curricula in technical communication often do not meet these new demands” (p. 41). The more scholars and students from the West become accustomed to the contextual cues necessary for appreciating the values and practices of other cultures, the more they will be able to conduct informed research, and design culturally sensitive deliverables (Brady & José, 2009).

Third, the chapter provides further evidence to challenges that beset program administrators of professional, technical, and scientific communication. Like Coppola (2014), Raju (2014), and Brady and Kitalong (2014) have shown in the context of North America, faculty administrators in Ghana intimated that communication education grapples with problems of institutional control, low budgets, and challenges of meeting new market trends. The main difference between the work of North American and Ghanaian administrators, I hold, may be that while communication education in North America has grown in leaps and bounds, it is yet to sprout in sub-Saharan Africa. What this brings to light is that problems facing program administration and communication education tend to be global in scope. It is for this reason that scholars need to turn to other contexts, and explore how these difficulties are dealt with.

Restraint in discussing the findings and implications in this chapter is, however, of mammoth importance. The analysis of data in this chapter made little reference to the

³¹ www.cptsc.org

curricula of the departments studied. For that matter, understanding of the structures of the programs from the perspective of narratives only is limiting. Interestingly, at a meeting of a communication department with the dean of the Faculty of Arts at one of the public universities used in my research, it was strongly recommended that the department embarked on a retreat to thoroughly review its program. Is the structure of this program really formidable, but poor in practice, as Dr. Yamson argued? The next chapter answers this question.

Chapter 6: Institutional politics, communication education, and curriculum design

The politics of curriculum conceal struggles over who gets to shape how people speak. Definitions of competence serve as gatekeeping functions to keep some codes out of the cultural mainstream.

— Sprague, 1993, p. 117-118

Designing a curriculum is a complex engagement. As a socially constructed document detailing pedagogical content, a good curriculum confronts the paradox of consistency and change. The more a program's curriculum is presented as an institution's official document spelling out outcomes and expectations to be met, the less responsive it becomes to change. This means that curriculum design is a political act. What goes into selecting a program's content, its structures, and processes are not disinterested. Usually, these elements are shaped by the ideologies, power differentials, habits of mind, values, and traditions of program designers and administrators. Curricula thus tend to be negotiated deliverables. The forces that shape the design of a program's content, such as those developed by communication education scholars, make the idea of a perfect curriculum elusive. This is why Hunt *et al.* (2014) recently remarked that the design of communication syllabi still represents a major challenge for the field. According to them, the diverse nature of communication scholarship and its preferences for disparate methods of inquiry require systematic investigations in communication pedagogy to excavate a discipline-specific approach to the field. I am of the view that efforts at examining the pedagogical content of communication are crucial for revisiting, in particular, the "missing paradigm problem" (Nainby, 2010). This chapter contributes to efforts at developing disciplinary knowledge. Because concerns in communication education spanning course orientation and enrolment, instruction and pedagogy, technology and distance education, to assessment and evaluation (Morreale *et al.*, 2006; Emanuel, 2008), the chapter will focus on curriculum design and program structure only by employing a critical perspective.

The rationale of the study

Using the idea of literacy as a social practice espoused by Street and his colleagues in the New Literacy Studies movement and Porter *et al.*'s (2000) idea of institutional critique, I describe and critique the curriculum of a graduate program in communication education at a large public university in Ghana. I will show that as a text, the program's curriculum privileges basic skills or communicative practices that reflect a set of values that are motivated, collectively produced, and historically situated in the institutional traditions of the designers (*cf.* Bartlett & Holland, 2002). I will argue that the dominant values encoded in this curriculum have implications for interrogating the overall quality of the program. My aim is to urge program administrators to reflect on their policy choices and to think about institutional change. In doing so, I will focus not only on macro-level critique because this emphasis can lead to institutional determinism. Institutional determinism assumes that institutions constrain individual behavior, and that the only way forward is to reject the institution or to work for revolutionary change from outside. (Porter *et al.*, 2000) While I agree with this view, I also think that revolutionary changes can be effected from within. For if an institution is sustained in part through the work of people interpreting and implementing policies and objectives, then, revolutionary changes could naturally come about as people go about their quotidian business, albeit by engaging in acts of self-reflexivity and informed inquiry.

The objective of this case study is two-pronged. I work to describe the structure of a recently accredited graduate program in communication education, its curriculum, and core expectations. Next, I critique the program's content in order to bring to light its strengths and possible limitations. I contend that the graduate program in communication education of the university I studied is interdisciplinary and fairly praxis-driven, although its approach to academic communication is too formulaic and mimetic, employs few critical approaches to pedagogy, and is heavily dependent on Western scholarship. I focus on the graduate program in communication education of this Ghanaian university for three main reasons. The foremost is that the program is

targeted at training students to be teachers of the basic communication course³². The basic communication course is the “front porch” to many communication departments and programs (Valenzano *et al.*, 2014). Potential communication majors as well as students from other disciplines, take their first, and sometimes, only look at the complex phenomenon of communication from the perspective of the basic communication course. To this end, the program is, as Dance (2002) termed it, the “bread and butter” of general education. According to Morreale *et al.* (2006), it is “the most fertile recruiting ground for communication majors and minors” (p. 416). The course is crucial to general education because the academic and professional success of undergraduates heavily depends on it. Hunt and his colleagues (2014) noted that the role of communication education should be carefully assessed in the 21st century because it is “central to the development of the whole person, improvement of the educational enterprise, being a responsible citizen of the world, and succeeding in one’s career” (p. 450). The program therefore offers a huge number of graduate teaching instructors and newly appointed faculty in communication departments the opportunity to hone their teaching skills, and to explore new instructional practices.

Second, a programmatic assessment of this graduate program is an effort to study the nature of communication education in Ghanaian universities. The program is core to the design of the basic communication course syllabi of other public and private universities, the ten polytechnics, the 38 colleges of teacher education, and specialized colleges in the country (Edu-Buandoh, 2015, personal communication). Because the university I studied is the premier teacher training university in Ghana and the university that houses the Institute of Education that superintends all the colleges of education in the country, I am of the view that many program administrators from other institutions find it convenient to rely on this university for guidance in the development

³² Morreale *et al.* (2006) defined the basic communication course as a course either required or recommended for a significant number of undergraduates. In the context of this study, the basic communication course is a two-semester communication seminar for all freshmen. Not passing this course may lead to the termination of a student’s university education, following a remedial examination.

of the basic communication course, which has proven to be a challenge for many first year students (cf. Coker & Abude, 2012).

Third, I examine the pedagogical content of graduate education in communication pedagogy in sub-Saharan Africa because it has received less scholarly attention. Prior attempts in Ghana have been directed at the undergraduate program (*e.g.*, Afful, 2007, Gyasi *et al.*, 2011; Coker & Abude, 2012), or have looked at the curricula of allied fields such as development communication in, say, East Africa (*e.g.*, Makungu, 2009; White, 2009; Skjerdal, 2012). However, the Cape Town round table discussion in 2002 urged African scholars and program administrators to broaden the scope of their curricula by including courses such as interpersonal organization, cross cultural communication, and information and communication technologies (Odhiambo *et al.*, 2002). This case study thus is an effort to broaden the scope of research in communication pedagogy, especially in a non-Western culture.

In addressing this concern, I perform five tasks in the remainder of this chapter. First, I sketch the literature on communication curriculum in North America and sub-Saharan Africa. I then go on to present the architectural narrative of my case study's communication program, its mission, vision, and description of its curriculum. The third section confronts the curriculum by examining its strengths and challenges. The fourth part of the essay outlines a set of alternative seminars for enriching the curriculum of communication education in sub-Saharan Africa. Key considerations include courses in critical communication and pedagogy, speech communication, new media and globalization theory, social justice, and organizational communication education. The proposal reflects concerns to address special needs in communication education scholarship as the field positions itself to deal with the exigencies of a transcultural 21st century (Hunt *et al.*, 2014). The final strand summarizes findings of the case study, and makes two recommendations—introduction of 'new' seminars and the pursuit of communication education research—geared at enhancing communication education in Ghana, in particular, and communication education scholarship, in general.

Communication curriculum scholarship: What we know so far

The history of the basic communication course in North America is often told from its beginning in classical Greek sophistry. Tracing the field to classical Greek rhetoric underscores the importance of oral communication in the course (Valenzano *et al.*, 2014). Not all scholars, however, agree on what the content of the course should entail. While the old tradition prefers an education based primarily on Greek oratorical training, logic, and persuasive argumentation, the new school has combined the earlier concerns with literary criticisms. In fact, the confusion these positions exerted on the general education approach, first proposed at Harvard University by Abbot Lowell, led many teachers and administrators to describe this epoch as the “disaster era” (Valenzano *et al.*, 2014: 360).

Clearly, avowed allegiances to theories, disciplinary politics, and discrepancies in modes of training have for long affected the design of the basic communication course curriculum. In their 2002 study, Morreale and Backlund remarked that even though communication scholars are generally agreed on a number of courses that tend to be basic to the program (*e.g.*, public speaking, communication theory, and interpersonal communication), the majority do not “agree about what courses should be offered, what courses should be required, or what should be contained in our basic, gateway courses” (Morreale & Backlund, 2002: 2). The researchers traced this difficulty to the diffuse nature of the field. The authors posited that because human communication is a complex phenomenon, communication scholarship will be structurally diverse since it employs different methods of inquiry. These include rhetorical/critical, qualitative/descriptive, and quantitative/predictive approaches. The disparate approaches, Morreale and Backlund stressed, lead faculty to teach and emphasize different skills, competencies, and expectations. It is for this reason that Morreale and Backlund stressed that designers of the communication curriculum need to be creative, and should do so based on (1) their departmental mission, (2) their department’s responsibility to their institutional mission, and (3) the strengths of the department’s

faculty. According to them, a good way to develop a curriculum for communication is to ascertain “the most current consensus of what constitutes the field itself” (p. 6).

Such an inquiry, they argued, is useful for determining what to include in the curriculum, what courses to include for communication majors, and what to require as part of general education. Earlier calls in the special issue of *Communication Education* made similar remarks (e.g., Allen, 2002; Backlund, 2002; Hunt *et al.*, 2002; Olsen *et al.*, 2002). These scholars stressed that the curriculum must be clear on whether it aims to offer a liberal, vocational, or specialist education to its learners. Using data obtained from the National Communication Association, Morreale and Backlund (2002) intimated that a communication curriculum needs to emphasize two basic components: basic skills and advanced skills. Basic skills, they explained, are minimal expectations necessary for effective functioning in society and in the workplace. The outcomes of basic skills, they emphasized, must be appropriate to (a) specific audiences, (b) the context enacted, and (c) specific purposes. Advanced skills, on the other hand, should lead students to engage in careful reasoning and competence. Examples include the ability to exhibit inter-personal, inter-group, or inter-cultural communication skills, and the capacity to adapt messages to meet situational needs. I will add that advanced communication skills require the ability to apply, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize disparate kinds of information to suit specific contexts and purposes. In a more democratic educational space, such considerations need to include students’ own inputs (For a comprehensive discussion on this subject, see chapter 7). In the case of teaching freshmen, advanced skills are necessary for providing them with the opportunity for early enculturation in their academic communities (Bovill *et al.*, 2011). Little is, however, known about this concern in the literature.

It is thus noteworthy that some writers have insisted that critical analyses of the pedagogical content be given special attention (e.g., Morreale *et al.*, 2006; Thompson, 2007; Dannels *et al.*, 2014; Valenzano *et al.*, 2014). Echoing Book’s (1989) earliest call to explore pedagogical content for communication courses, Hunt and colleagues (2014) stressed that communication education research is broad, and encompasses

instructional communication, communication pedagogy, and communication studies. Using K-12 students as a case study, Hunt *et al.* argued that communication education scholars need to pursue a vigorous research agenda, more than ever, because “communication knowledge and skills are critical to the citizenry and workforce of the 21st century” (p. 453). In their view, strategies for moving the field forward should include pushing state boards of education to adopt endorsements in communication, and should be committed to develop doctoral programs in communication education. As they pointed out, “We as a discipline need to place higher value on the field of communication as a whole by supporting efforts to establish more PhD programs that advance instructional communication and communication pedagogy” (p. 458).

Studies in curriculum assessment are also useful for determining the impact of a program in the global society. Brady and José’s (2009) study of Michigan Tech’s scientific and technical communication (STC) program, for example, shows that the program does not adequately prepare its students to work in linguistically and culturally diverse cultures. This challenge, according to them, needs to be squarely confronted so that students will “develop a more sophisticated knowledge of their own communication practices,” as well as “perceive the movement from local to global as a transition enabling the creation of knowledge and of new learning processes” (p. 42). They maintained that even though the STC program provides opportunities for foreign language literacy, it was optional to students, and that those who studied foreign languages (Spanish, German, Chinese, and French) had few opportunities to make the necessary connections between these languages and their fields of specialization. The results of this frustration, the authors noted, is that students find it difficult to work and compete in international contexts. In resolving this problem, Brady and José proposed a number of solutions. The first is that instructors should carefully describe assignments on international communication and the methodologies that go with them.

Second, there should be emphasis on developing communication across borders that should elicit concerns such as what kind of knowledge outsiders will need in order to join a local STC community, and how cultural and linguistic differences impact the content and organization of a document aimed at providing instructions for performing

tasks within a specific cultural setting (Brady & José, 2009: 53). The scholars also explained that given the complexity of international and intercultural communication, instructors should engage in a multi-step design process. This interactive process should, they intimated, begin, first and foremost, with user-analysis, followed by task analysis, prototyping, and finally by usability testing. Designing documents for international audiences using this set of tasks, they posited, has the potential of increasing “students’ sensitivities to the complexities of audience and engages them in communicative practices that correspond to the contingencies of global workplace communication processes” (p. 58). Other scholars have also suggested that the syllabus be studied not only as an instructional document, but as a socially constructed deliverable whose presentation to students portrays teachers as individuals who are sensitive to students, and are mindful of the power and authority they wield in the class (*e.g.*, Maars, 2006; Thompson, 2007).

In brief, while scholars are well exposed to the literature of communication education in the Global North, I believe that inquiries of the discipline in the Global South will also be insightful. It is clear from the review that less attention has been paid to the curricula of graduate programs in communication education in cultures south of the Sahara. This case study addresses this gap by examining the hidden values in the Master of Arts communication education program of a public university in Ghana.

Describing the program

The graduate program in communication education at this university commenced in June 2013, following approval from the National Accreditation Board (NAB)³³ of Ghana. A two-year summer program, it is one of the graduate programs designed to train human resources in communication competence. The program was birthed out of the need to provide an enabling environment for effective teaching and learning of various aspects of communication, and to engage students in research related to

³³ For a comprehensive discussion on the role of NAB, see chapter 4.

communication at different levels and in a variety of modes³⁴. The program is an effort by faculty to meet the needs of society by bridging the gap between current realities and future demands. It is a response to calls to train faculty for the basic communication course targeted at freshmen. The program was designed to train teachers of post-secondary education (*i.e.* polytechnics, teacher colleges of education, specialized colleges) to depart from thinking about communication education as English language education. The training emphasizes that communication is a complex human process that traverses the borders of language. It does so by exposing students to theories and pedagogical approaches underpinning current trends in the basic communication course and praxis of contemporary communication skills. The program is open to graduates with first degrees in communication studies, language-related programs such as English, French, or any Ghanaian languages, and/or those with bachelor's degrees in education. The program's students are assessed like any other university programs through quizzes, take-home assignments, class tests, group presentations, and end-of-semester examinations. The end-of-semester examinations with input from faculty are internally organized. Continuous assessment makes up 40% of students' grades and end-of-semester examination is 60%.

The structure of the curriculum

The two-year program is organized in two semesters only, each semester representing an academic year. The program comprises cornerstone and capstones modules. As basic skills, the cornerstones represent the foundational seminars in theoretical concepts, appropriate pedagogies, and research methodologies underlying the study and practice of communication education. They are the "minimal expectations" necessary for achieving competence in teaching the basic communication course. The capstones, or advanced skills, are seminars run to further develop and explore students' interests in specific sub-fields of communication pedagogy. As Morreale and Backlund (2002) pointed out, advanced skills are demanding in the sense that they require high

³⁴ My consultations with the chair of the department revealed that students' intake has increased from a low of six in 2013 to about 30 in 2015. The increase was attributed to the growing popularity of the program in the country.

mental learning order capabilities. They require students to analyze, synthesize, and apply concepts in very basic and useful ways to solve practical problems that arise in teaching communication.

Students are required to take four cornerstone seminars and one capstone course for a total of 15 credits for the first semester, and three core courses and two elective courses for a total of 15 credits in the following semester. Though still young, the program has trained its students using a number of strategies such as lecture methods, group discussions, field trips, seminar presentations, and co-ops. Tables 6. 1 and 6.2 below give a summary of the modules of the program for both first and second years (See Appendix D for the program design)

Table 6.1 A summary of the cornerstones

Year	Module	Course Description	Credit
1	Theory & Practice of Curriculum Design and Development	Exposes students to the theoretical background of curriculum design and development. Provides students with practical skills necessary to design and critique an effective curriculum in the basic communication course. Helps students to review contemporary practices in curriculum design.	3
	Teaching Foundations of Communication Education	Equips students with skills, knowledge, approaches, and methodologies needed in teaching the foundations of basic communication. Course content includes study skills, reading, and composition pedagogies, oral, and public presentation skills, general English language use, and documentation.	3
	Research Methods	Endows students with the resources to conduct their research. Introduces them to the preparation and presentation of the research proposal, the different research designs and approaches, research instruments, the use of data analysis software such as SPSS, and how to develop an analytical framework for research, referencing styles, and thesis writing.	3
2	Philosophical and Psychological Foundations	Provides students with a general overview of the history of curriculum conceptualization and development, and an understanding of the larger forces that influence the process. Analyzes philosophical positions on the nature of knowledge, the function of the school and the content of the curriculum. Examines and critiques principles of organizing instruction, derived from psychological theories of learning, such as behavioral, cognitive, and social cognitive theories.	3
	Communication in Contexts:	Equips students with skills necessary to identify and compose good writing and speech. Covers the basics of communication at meeting, oral presentation, the art of persuasion, and negotiation discourse.	3

	Writing and Speech		
	Practicum and Seminar	Tasks students to teach the basic communication course under supervision on campus. Students are required to apply appropriate teaching methods and theories to reflect on their practice, and produce a written report.	3

Source: Field Data (2015)

Table 6.2 A summary of the capstones

Year	Module	Course Description	Credit
1	Academic Communication	Focuses on the use of language in academic discourse communities. Involves an engagement with various forms and genres of communication, and making meaningful contributions in several academic settings.	3
	Language Use in Communication	Exposes students to the knowledge, use, and practices of English in both academic and non-academic communicative events. Areas of concentration include grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, discourse, and pragmatics.	3
	Theories of Human Communication	Surveys major theories in human communication in relation to its history, philosophy, and applications. Focuses on mechanistic, psychological, social constructionist, systemic, and critical theories to provide a conceptual basis for understanding interpersonal, group, organizational, intercultural, and linguistic communication.	3
2	Interpersonal and Intercultural Communication	Explores communication issues related to interpersonal contexts such as acquaintanceship, courtship, and friendship. Highlights how cultural elements (gender, power, age, status, <i>etc.</i>) influence the communication process, and strategies for managing intercultural communication.	3
	Business Communication	Discusses principles and practices of corporate culture and communicational styles. Examines how management and staff, businesses, non-profit organizations, and the media communicate with one another.	3
	Scientific Communication	Exposes students to major skills in scientific communication. Focuses on information retrieval, scientific reading and writing, listening and observing, scientific data interpretation and representation, scientific argumentation, and presentation of technical reports.	3

Source: Field Data (2015)

Analysis of the 60-ish books on the program's reading list shows that academic communication is the most dominant literacy privileged; this is closely followed by readings in teaching foundations of communication pedagogy. Scientific communication and business communication also received considerable attention. Subject areas that are not allocated much reading on the list are research methods and theories of human communication. This observation is worrying because the research

methods seminar is considered a core seminar of the program, and theories of human communication one of the key capstone courses. The following tables (6.3., 6.4, and 6.5) catalog the reading list based on subject areas.

Table 6.3 Basic texts for academic communication and foundations of the basic communication course

Author	Book	Date	Publisher
Biber, D.	Variation across speech and writing	1998	Cambridge University Press
Bizell, P.	Academic discourse and critical consciousness	1992	University of Pittsburg
Campbell, C.	Teaching second-language writing: Interacting with text	1998	Heinle & Heinle
Canagarajah, A.S.	A geopolitics of academic writing	2002	University of Pittsburgh
Crystal, D. & Davy, D.	Investigating English style	1969	Indiana University of Press
Ferris, D. & Hedgecock, J. S.	Teaching ESL composition: purpose, process, and practice	1998	Lawrence Erlbaum
Flowerdew, J. & Peacock, M.	Research perspectives on English for academic purposes	2001	Cambridge University Press
Hyland, K.	Disciplinary discourse: Social interactions in academic writing	2000	Longman
Jordan, R. R.	English for academic purpose: A guide and resource book for teachers	1997	Cambridge University Press
Johnson, K.	Understanding language teaching: Reasoning in action	1999	Heinle & Heinle
Mackey, A. & Gass, S.M	Second language research methods and design	2005	Lawrence Erlbaum
Mauranen, A.	Cultural differences in academic rhetoric	1993	Peter Laing
Swales, J.M.	Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings	1990	Cambridge University Press

Swales, J.M. & Feak, C.B	Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills	1994	University of Michigan Press
Swales, J.M. & Feak, C.B	English in today's research world: A writing guide	2000	University of Michigan Press

Source: Field Data (2015)

Clearly, analysis of the reading list shows that the fulcrum of this communication program is language. The designers of the program have broadened competencies in this area to cover five main concentrations in applied linguistics. These are text linguistics (*e.g.*, Biber, Campbell, Crystal & Davy), discipline-specific writing (*e.g.*, Hyland), critical academic writing (*e.g.*, Bizell, Canagarajah, Mauren), genre analysis (*e.g.*, Swales, Swales & Feak), and English as a Second Language/English for Academic Purposes (*e.g.*, Ferris & Hedgecock, Flowerdew & Peacock, Jordan, Johnson, and Mackey & Gass). The heavy emphasis on language is justifiable because the basic communication course, over the years, has been considered as a remedial course in the English language though there have been suggestions to move beyond this fixation (Dzameshie, 1997; Fukerson, 2005; Afful, 2007).

From a critical perspective, one realizes that the graduate program in communication pedagogy privileges core competencies in language studies because a significant number of the program's designers are scholars with language background. Yet while language education plays a very important role in communication pedagogy, it is necessary to point out that the language ideology could, however, lead the graduate student to believe that in order to be an effective teacher in the basic communication course, they have to master the field of applied linguistics. The implication of this assumption is that literacies and competencies in instructional communication, critical communication pedagogy, and rhetorical approaches critical in communication pedagogy may, in the process, be marginalized. The story is, however, different with the expectations of texts on curriculum design and human communication. Besides the fact that the texts need to be updated, they are fairly basic and core to a comprehensive understanding of the theories of curriculum design and development (*e.g.*, Grundy, Ross, Tannen & Tannen, Wiles & Bondi), and also expose students to the basic concept

of human communication (*e.g.*, Heath, Littlejohn, Scollon & Scollon) as can be seen in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 Basic texts for curriculum design and human communication

Author	Book	Date	Publisher
Grundy, S.	Curriculum: Product or praxis	1987	Falmer Press
Ross, A.	Curriculum: Construction and critique	2000	Falmer Press
Tannen, D. & Tannen, L.	Curriculum development: Theory into practice (4 th ed.)	2007	Allyn & Bacon
Wiles, J. & Bondi, J.	Curriculum development: A guide to practice	1993	Macmillan
Wilmot, S.W.	The Allyn & Bacon teaching assistants' handbook: A guide for graduate instructors of writing and literature	2003	Longman
Heath, R.L.	Human communication: Theory and research concept, context and challenges	2000	Lawrence Erlbaum
Littlejohn, S.W. & Foss, K.A.	Theories of human communication (9 th ed.)	2008	Thomson Wadsworth
Scollon, R. & Scollon, S.	Intercultural communication	1995	Blackwell

Source: Field Data (2015)

The capstone seminars in business communication and scientific communication are also commendable. They satisfy calls to make the basic communication course applicable to the business work environment (Morreale & Backlund, 2002; Hunt *et al.*, 2014). As the global community is increasingly a technoculture, it is important that the graduate program also exposes students to the complexities involved in communicating in business and scientific contexts.

Table 6.5 Basic texts for business and scientific communication

Author	Book	Date	Publisher
Guffey, M.E.	Business communication: process and product (4 th ed.)	2003	South-Western Thomson Learning
Lehman, C. M. & Debbie, D.	Business communication (13 th ed.)	2002	South-Western Thomson Learning
Rouse, M J. & Rouse, S.	Business communications: A cultural and strategic approach	2002	South-Western Thomson Learning
Thill, J. V. & Bovee, C. L.	Excellence in business communication (4 th ed.)	1999	Prentice Hall
Gregory, J. & Miller, S.	Science in public communication, culture and credibility	1998	Plenum Press
Martin, J. R. & Veel, R.	Reading science: Critical and functional perspectives on discourse of science	1998	Routledge
Prelli, L.	A rhetoric of science: Inventing scientific discourse	1989	Univ. of South Carolina Press

Source: Field Data (2015)

In the next section, I turn my attention to an analysis of the curriculum of the program. This will involve identifying the strengths of the curriculum and establishing its potential limitations.

Critiquing the program

Strengths

The graduate program in communication education of the university is anchored on three major pillars. It is interdisciplinary, cognitivist, and practice-driven. The program, first and foremost, was designed based on the competencies of faculty from three departments: language, communication, and education. My observation of the curriculum's structure shows that the program emphasizes, in the first year, competencies in theories and concepts of educational foundations, followed by knowledge and practice in applied linguistics. The final year exposes students to major

fields in communication education to encourage them to specialize in any of the branches.

The interdisciplinary structure of the program is commendable because faculty teach and can teach best what they have studied. Or as Morreale and Backlund (2002) said, the design of a program must be cognizant of faculty's strengths in the context of the institutional mission and vision. In this light, the cornerstones and capstones of the program are structurally social science-based and language-oriented respectively. The first year of the program offers graduate students a robust foundation on Hilda Taba's models³⁵ of curriculum design and development and the postpositivist paradigm. The second seminar, Teaching Foundations of Communication Education, also treats communication education as academic literacy. This focus, in my view, is *emic* and context-sensitive because it accounts for the communicative needs of tertiary students as second language speakers. The seminar exposes graduate students to theoretical and pedagogical implications underlying the teaching and learning of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in general, and academic communication. Using a number of approaches from grammatical and communicative competence theories, needs analysis, discourse analysis, and error analysis, faculty equip communication teacher-trainees to critically assess fundamental concepts—remediation, foundationalism, generalist vs. disciplinary writing—involved in the teaching of the basic communication course to undergraduate students.

Because of the demands placed on students of the program, we may suggest that the curriculum is *cognitivist* in nature. It assumes, *ab initio*, that to train good teachers of the basic communication course, teacher-trainees need to be thoroughly taught theories of learning and memory work. In this regard, emphasis has been placed on how to design and develop a curriculum and the forces that shape it. The planners of the program have also ensured that students gain basic skills in the theory and praxis of

³⁵ Taba's model is commonly used by administrators to develop curricula. In her 1962 book, *Curriculum Development, Theory and Practice*, Taba argued that curriculum design should be guided by seven basic rationales or steps: 1. Diagnosis of needs; 2. Formulation of objectives; 3. Selection of content; 4. Organization of content; 5. Selection of learning experiences; 6. Organization of learning experience, and 7. Determination of what to evaluate and how (Taba, 1962:12).

communication education in an environment where English is learnt as a second language. Interestingly, the pedagogical content of the first year of the program is not disinterested. As a matter of fact, it is an accretion of knowledge systems, assumptions, and ideologies of the designers themselves. Given that literacies are usually context-dependent (Barton, 2001; Bartlett & Holland, 2002; Street, 2003), it comes as no surprise that faculty from education and language backgrounds who are the architects of the program considered the core content of the formative year to be education- and language-based. When seen as workplace practices of the faculty involved, we realize that these practices are, indeed, wrapped in power structures; they are rooted in the cultures, traditions, and histories of their institutional settings. It is on the basis of the privileged positions the designers of the program enjoyed that they elected to draw up the curriculum the way they did, although they may have considered what Brandt and Clinton (2002) termed *localizing moves* and *globalizing connections*. That is, they may have ensured that they satisfied local conditions that give rise to the relevance of the program, and yet they may have also taken into account the nature of the program on the international scene. The latter assumption, unfortunately, was not always the case, as I will show shortly.

A similar argument may be made about the capstones of the program. With the exception of seminars in theories of human communication, business communication, and scientific communication, much space, again, is allotted to students with strong backgrounds in applied linguistics. The designers of the program, however, made efforts to allow for specialization. Analysis of the capstones shows that students could specialize in one of the three concentrations: (a) academic communication, (b) business communication, and (c) scientific communication. Though it is not clear how the seminars in language use in communication and interpersonal/intercultural communication fall under these sub-fields, it can be said that they serve more or less as theoretical explorations into any of the identified subject areas. However, with the exception of academic communication that looks like a sequel to the first year, seminars in teaching foundations of communication education, business communication, scientific communication, and interpersonal or intercultural communication do not.

Their introduction in the second year thus may be useful for specialization purposes, though the effort fairly compromises the principle of continuity in curriculum development.

The theoretical weight of the program is tested in practice as well. It has a slot for teaching practice and demonstrations. When I was first consulted to design this three-hour credit seminar in May 2013 as part of my reconnaissance field trip to Ghana, I designed the course on the assumption that knowledge for effective teaching is strategic. In making this conceptual assumption a reality, I exposed the pioneering students of the program to basic theories of argumentation to equip them with skills needed in presenting their subject matter to their prospective students. The seminar also covered the relevance of basic teaching strategies such as the lecture, Socratic, discovery, and discussion methods. I encouraged the graduate class to make oral presentation using Prezi, Power-point, and extempore modes. Besides the seminar on practice, the program makes room for learner acculturation. And because the department hosts the basic communication course as a university-wide requirement for all freshmen, it offers interested graduate students the opportunity to observe and participate in the quality assurance system of the basic communication course. This includes but not limited to the following:

1. Graduate teaching instructorship
2. Periodic meeting of instructors to peer-review a common course syllabus
3. Peer-review of a common assessment rubric
4. Administration of a common mid-semester general quiz
5. Administration of a common end-of-semester examination
6. Team-based grading

As I now turn my attention to what I consider possible limitations of the program, mention must be made of some of the institutional constraints facing the university and the communication department housing the program. An analysis of the department's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) by the administrators of the

program clearly shows that although it has a dedicated staff that enjoys a good interpersonal relationship, has a reasonable number of teaching and learning equipment, and attracts a high student enrolment, the department is, nonetheless, confronted with inadequate lecture room facilities and office space for faculty. The mission of the department is also frustrated by a dwindling budget support and inadequate number of faculty with expertise in various sub-fields of the communication program (For more on the SWOT analysis and strategic plan of the communication department, see Appendix E).

Possible limitations

Four main challenges confront the program. First, the department's writing model tends to be *formalistic* and *mimetic*. My analysis of the program's curriculum indicates that there is heavy emphasis on formalism. As was confirmed by two of my focal participants during the interview sessions, I realized that the language components of the program draw inspirations mainly from form-based writing. Because a formalistic philosophy of communication or writing is one that privileges *form as a major characteristic of text* (Fulkerson, 1979), it explains why the program places much emphasis on the type of genre analysis that stresses the rhetorical canon of arrangement or structure.

This type of genre analysis identifies the communicative functions specific to a genre by focusing mainly on the form or structure that typifies the genre. However, too much emphasis on form as the marker of directness and clarity of thought could render instructors' approach to the basic communication course overtly *mimetic*. Mimetic communication or writing is one that holds that there is a clear connection between good writing and good thinking. As one of my interviewees noted, this kind of writing hardly promotes creativity and imagination (See chapter 5 for a comprehensive discussion). Mimeticism makes communication formulaic. It enjoins writers to follow a rigid structure by first announcing their intent and by meticulously supporting it with evidence. In the case of the department I studied, this philosophy requires that students first begin their productions (usually expository essays) with a thesis statement, and

then develop the thesis in manageable chunks of organized paragraphs. At the paragraph level, they are equally expected to manage the organizational flow of their thoughts by arranging their arguments according to a topic sentence, major support, and minor support sentences. The problem with this process is that it makes communication mechanical, and envelops its inherent messiness. My direct participant observations of the department's pedagogical approaches over the last decade and my own analysis of its assessment documents show that the basic communication course valorizes a five-paragraph essay composed in the manner described above. Figure 6.2 below gives a graphic representation of the formalistic and mimetic philosophy of academic writing employed in the basic communication course in this university.

Argumentative, narrative, and descriptive genres in the basic communication course are taught from this formalistic principle. This choice may have been privileged because it is believed to be economical to both faculty and students. Because the course is taught in over 50 sessions by a dwindling faculty force due to reduced administrative support, faculty often explain that the large class sizes—usually not less than 40 students—make the adoption of other approaches burdensome in terms of grading. My observation shows that less emphasis is laid on the strategic or rhetorical relevance of communication in the program. For instance, the program does not teach the basic PACT (purpose, audience, context, text) principles (See Fulkerson, 2005). Given that the designers have placed too much emphasis on form, other skills such as speaking play second fiddle to writing. The only seminar in speech in the curriculum is also taught from a comparative perspective with writing. Here again, the seminar employs a genre analysis approach by which instructors compare the features and modes of writing and speech.

Second, the impact of the graduate program on the basic communication course of freshmen is not direct. One may dare ask, is there a seeming disconnect between what is taught at the graduate level and what is actually practiced in the basic communication course syllabus? For example, one of the key ingredients on the basic communication syllabus at the university I studied is grammar (See Chapter 5). And yet descriptive grammar is not a core subject in the graduate program. Another core element on the

university's basic communication course syllabus is the four basic forms of writing (expository, narrative, argumentative, and descriptive) as well as other genres of business writing (résumé, job application, and permission letters). Yet composition theory does not make the list of seminars in the graduate curriculum. This omission may be attributed to challenges by the communication department to periodically conduct needs analysis or usability studies among its students (cf. Morreale *et al.*, 2006). I suggest that constant research into the needs of students of the basic communication course is of mammoth importance because it has the potential of providing faculty, program administrators, and curriculum designers with relevant information necessary to understand the learning requirements of students. Such an approach, I believe, democratizes the learning process, and makes it much more learner-centered. As a Ghanaian curriculum scholar noted:

Not until the teacher knows the needs of his/her students, he/she cannot plan a teachable lesson. The difficulty of the material to be covered, and the amount of material to be learned must be determined by the teacher in relation to the abilities of the individuals to be taught or reached (Ababio, 2009: 2).

A report submitted to the communication department in 2011 summarizes the results of a survey conducted among 240 students of the basic communication course. Even though the majority of the respondents felt that oral communication is an indispensable skill in communication, such a need is yet to be included in the syllabus (Gborsong *et al.*, 2015). However, oral communication is considered the backbone of the basic communication course in North America (Morreale & Backlund, 2002; Hunt *et al.*, 2014; Valenzano *et al.*, 2014), and a separate basic course in composition addresses the written component.

Third, the curriculum has little space for critical communication theory and critical pedagogy. Though the program equips students with skills for reflecting on their own practices as student-teachers, it is difficult to determine how this objective is successfully met. In view of the absence of studies in critical communication and critical pedagogy, we may wonder how graduate students of the program are made to

reflect on the implications of their pedagogical choices. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, knowledge construction, and how it is communicated to students is not value-neutral. As a practice situated in the classroom, teaching basic communication to freshmen cannot escape questions of power asymmetry, ideology, and gender. The classroom is a contact zone where different cultures grapple with each other (Pratt, 1991). Issues of power in this space constantly need to be negotiated on horizontal and vertical planes. Gary Olson reminds us that the classroom is a contact zone where some students are marginalized. Such critical theories as postcolonial theory, for example, can provide us with a useful lens to illuminate how colonial impulses come into play between teachers and students; comprehend how epistemic violence operates in the classroom on both political and psychological levels, and deconstruct systems of domination among students and how teacher talk and choices can reinforce the colonization and marginalization of subaltern/minority students.

Critical theories can expose the communication teacher to how the subaltern student copes with the 'imperialist' teacher in order to gain legitimacy and acceptance. For Olson (19998), the focus should not be the mere promotion of multivocality but instead how the voices of the marginalized are ideologically represented. It should not be a mere intellectual tourism, as he puts it. Olson's article raises some concerns for me as both a faculty member and doctoral student. To be sure, it has sharpened my consciousness and personal experiences of classroom politics with respect to contact zones and postcolonial theory. And yet a radical position is that the application of postcolonial theory to the classroom can embolden students to be rebellious, express signs of anarchy, and pose a threat to teacher authority. When I was an international student, I observed in the seminars I sat in that long before international students would make contributions in class as African students, professors seemed to place us to a subaltern position. I observed, in some instances, that their posture was condescending as if to say that "You know what? These theories and concepts are about us; they're ours, and so shut up and listen!"

Teachers thus need to manage their authority and power in a manner that they do not stand in the way of students' active participation in the learning process. This resolve

includes dealing with sensitive or potentially embarrassing topics, assigning tasks fairly, asking appropriate questions, ensuring a balance in students' engagement and gender, as well as knowing when and how to give rewards and punishment. Thompson (2007) reminds us that often teachers worry that a more flexible, democratic, open climate can undermine their authority. At the same time, instructors would have to ensure that students do not burden one another or show dominance over less powerful ones. Chory and Goodboy (2010) draw our attention to different issues in student resistance and compliance as well the bases of instructors' power in the classroom. These include coercive power, legitimate power, reward power, expert power, and referent power. Thus seminars that expose graduate students to the underlying currents of their choices in the classroom should be encouraged in the curriculum.

The content of the curriculum is also heavily dependent on Western scholarship and not so well anchored on indigenous knowledge systems. As I have learnt from my focal participants, reliance on international systems of knowledge is very important. It gives teachers and program administrators in Ghana the opportunity to learn from best practices. However, the ideology of best practices upheld by the curriculum developers has the potential of slowing the pace of research in Afrocentric communication and pedagogy. Teaching graduate students the practice of communication pedagogy from an Afrocentric perspective is not only important for asserting the distinctiveness of communication education in Africa. It is an attempt, in my view, to emphasize how teaching should be context-bound. This envisaged educational system acknowledges the values of how knowledge is imparted to its people. Here I am restating one of the resolutions of the Cape Town conference of African communication scholars which stressed that curriculum developers should be cognizant of the social and cultural contexts existing on the African continent (Odhiambo *et al.*, 2002). The proposal is a call to ensure that the goal of rolling out a pan-African coordination of education lead to a broader understanding of social and cultural contexts shaping communication education on the continent. And yet while it is not desirable to promote a model of communication solely based on African epistemologies, I will argue that an attempt to, however, draw from the rich pedagogical traditions of Africa in developing the

communication curriculum will be a move toward hybridizing the program. The more such proposals are accepted the easier it will be for African communication scholars to position themselves, Nwosu (2014) noted, “as strategic partners and competitors in knowledge production and distribution” (p. 11).

Proposing a “new” curriculum

As the designers and developers of the program seek ways to review the curriculum, I suggest that they pay attention to two main issues. These are (1) the introduction of foundational seminars and (2) the pursuit of communication pedagogy research. It is important that seminars such as introduction to rhetorical communication, critical pedagogy, instructional communication, and new media and globalization studies, speech communication, and organizational communication education be included in the curriculum. I am of the view that studies into rhetorical communication can replace the seminar in academic communication. Waldeck, Plax, and Kearney’s (2010) systematic review of instructional communication research published from 1970 to 2010 explains that concentrations in this field have been on theories such as student comprehension apprehension, student motivation, on the one hand, and instructor confirmation and instructor misbehaviors, on the other hand. Research in rhetorical communication, critical pedagogy, instructional communication, and speech communication may enable graduate students of communication pedagogy to be better placed to teach the core of the syllabus: communication competence. Because this skill is taught based on the formalist principle, a rhetorical approach to academic writing, I believe, will expose students to ways of enriching their writing and make it imaginative and audience-specific.

Further, courses in critical pedagogy and instructional communication can replace the seminars in assessment of communication skills and practicum respectively. This is important for exposing students to the cultural politics of teaching in the classroom as a contested site. The seminars should enable students to draw on pedagogical methods appropriate for teaching the basic communication course. Thompson (2007), in particular, speaks of welcoming strategies, tension balancing strategies, and

presentational strategies that are needed to present the basic communication course syllabus to freshmen. A seminar on oral communication should be useful in making freshmen not only skillful in writing but also strategic in speaking and listening. As oral communication is the backbone of the basic communication course in many American universities (Allen, 2002; Valenzano *et al.*, 2014), an addition of this course to the syllabus in African universities and colleges will be desirable as society has become intricately global. Based on the analysis above, I propose below a two-year curriculum for developing communication education in sub-Saharan Africa in general, and Ghana, in particular.

Table 6.6 A proposed two-year Master of Arts in Communication Education Program Structure

Year 1		
Foundational Courses		
Course Code	Course	Credit
MCE 501	Theory and Practice of Communication Education	3
MCE 502	Teaching Foundations of Instructional Communication	3
MCE 503	Interdisciplinary Research Strategies	3
MCE 502	Critical Communication and Pedagogy	3
Special Courses		
MCE 503	Advanced Composition Theory and Practice	3
CMS 504	Introduction to Speech Communication	3
CMS 505	New Media Theory	3
CMS 506	Communication Education for Social Justice	3

Students will be required to take three (3) core courses and one (1) elective course for a total of twelve (12) credits for the semester.

Year 2 Foundational Courses

Code	Course	Credit
CME 507	International Communication and Globalization Studies	3
CME 508	Critical Approaches to Practicum & Seminar	3
CME 509	Humanistic Assessment in Communicative Education	3

Special Courses

CME 510	Organizational Communication Education	3
CME 512	Advanced Communication Theory	3
CME 513	Critical Rhetorical Studies	3
CME 514	Afrocentric Communication Theory & Pedagogy	3
CME 515	Introduction to International Communication Education	3
CME 516	The Art of Public Speaking	3

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have maintained that the design and development of a program's curriculum is not value-free. I have argued and demonstrated that the graduate program in instructional communication at one Ghanaian public university is not disinterested. My analysis showed that the curriculum as a textual material promotes preferred literacies that reflect the ideologies and core values of its designers. I observed that the basic skills to be mastered by graduate students of the program are in the domain of language studies and applied linguistics. This value represents the interest of faculty-administrators drawn from key fields of the linguistic discipline because they are the principal architects of the program. My analysis also showed that the program is, nonetheless, interdisciplinary; it draws expertise from language, education, and communication faculty. Besides the emphasis on applied linguistics, the curriculum embraces knowledge systems from the social sciences (*e.g.*, theory of curriculum design, psychological foundations of curriculum) and communication studies (*e.g.*, theories of human communication, interpersonal/intercultural communication). The program is also based on knowledge acquisition, and makes room for praxis. Students

are given the opportunity to practice what they have learnt in class during oral presentations, and are also made to practice teaching first year students as part of their training.

The case study shows that the graduate program is confronted with three main challenges. In the first place, its approach to communication is formulaic. Its approach to writing, in particular, makes students not so imaginative in their productions. Too much emphasis on writing thus takes attention away from other literacies and competencies such as public speaking, reading, and listening. Second, there is a seeming disconnect between what is taught at the graduate level, and what is practically taught in the basic communication course at the undergraduate level. Some of my interviewees informed me that the hiatus may be due to difficulties in conducting usability studies or impact assessment research. Third, the program's content is intensively Western-centered. Efforts at introducing epistemologies that hail from the African continent are yet to be seen.

The complexities of communication pedagogy thus call for a concerted research agenda. If graduate education in this field is to make the needed impact, then, teachers, scholars, and program administrators, I suggest, should embark on vigorous studies on the nature of communication education. Hunt *et al.* (2014) suggested that such efforts should seek ways to address the best methods for addressing specific communication-related instructional strategies such as collaborative, discussion, experiential activities, and group work. They also recommended the need to integrate communication theory and pedagogy. I am, however, of the view that such efforts need to begin with formal needs assessments studies of stakeholders such as students and their prospective employers. Such studies may be guided by questions Morreale and her colleagues (2006) posed a decade ago: Does the basic course meet students' needs professionally and personally? What about surveying employers? Does the basic course satisfy what employers expect in college graduates? How does the basic course need to change to meet academic, theoretical, and skills needs identified by various stakeholders? One way of answering some of these questions is to situate them within the global knowledge economy.

In the next chapter, the final chapter, I discuss the broader implications and significances of my research for promoting a discipline-specific pedagogy and communication education scholarship within the affordances of globalization. The discussions also detail limitations of the dissertation and some directions for future engagements.

Chapter 7: Communication education and the 21st century research agenda

A renewed effort to ground our pedagogy in the best theoretical work of the communication discipline would go a long way toward reducing the stigma associated with communication...

— Hunt, Wright & Simonds, 2014, p. 457

How are communication education scholars pursuing the field's agenda in the 21st century? How is programmatic research being carried out in this transcultural age? At a time when there is intense pressure on college administrators and faculty to be more innovative amid heavy budget cuts³⁶, it is necessary that communication educators remain focused on what matters to their professional practice: the advance of pedagogical content knowledge (Book, 1989; Sprague, 2002; Hunt *et al.*, 2014). Thankfully, the essence of the discipline to the centrality of educational goals is not in doubt. Communication education is key to the development of the whole person, improvement of the educational enterprise, and an individual's success in the workplace (Morreale & Pearson, 2008: 228). Writers such as Hunt and his colleagues have lately shed more light on the matter, stressing that "Recent trends in educational reform support the notion that communication knowledge and skills are critical to the citizenry and workforce in the 21st century" (Hunt *et al.*, 2014: 453). In their recent essay, "Securing the Future of Communication Education," the authors argued that for the discipline to make the needed impact in the twenty first century it must not drift away from developing discipline-specific pedagogical content knowledge. They suggested that peers need to support the development of a strong communication pedagogy research agenda that will, *inter alia*, explore how to integrate communication theory into pedagogy, and cautioned that "A renewed effort to ground our pedagogy in

³⁶ See, for example, articles written by Jennifer Ruark, "Senator Demands Explanations from Humanities Endowment" published on 03/29/2011, and Jennifer Howard, "Defenders of the Humanities Look for New Ways to Explain their Value" posted on 05/08/2011, in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

the best theoretical work of the communication discipline would go a long way toward reducing the stigma associated with communication” (Hunt *et al.*, 2014: 457).

This final chapter revisits the claims I have been making throughout this dissertation concerning the usefulness of practice theory in communication education. In positing an interdisciplinary theory of practice, I have attempted to explain how communication educators and program administrators go about the business of teaching communication. I explored how mundane practices associated with teaching and learning, administrative work, curriculum design, and policy formation in two Ghanaian public universities are situated in cultural, ideological, and political considerations. The findings of this research, obtained from my two-year ethnographic fieldwork, show that practice theory is critical to the success of theory building and the research agenda of communication pedagogy. In the next section, I address three main implications of practice theory to the centrality of communication education research, using what I would term the LIST propositions: L stands for *local*, I for *interested*, S for *situated*, and T for *transcultural*. I suggest that the LIST acronym be considered as a heuristic for shaping the professional practice of communication educators, scholars, and program administration in the 21st century.

Implications of practice theory for disciplinary pedagogy

The first proposition is that practices of communication teachers are primarily *local* and *situated*. Practice theory enables us to understand that the knowledge, social action, and motives of the community of communication scholars and program administrators are embedded in their epistemic culture. Local knowledge gives rise to, and at the same time, shapes local identities (Edwards & Danniels, 2012). A community of communication teachers is directly responsible for determining how the content of its field suits its immediate context. The communication departments I studied in my research show that institutional practices are local to their missions. For example, the graduate program of one communication department focuses more on academic communication than on communication education in the broadest sense of the term. This is because the majority of the faculty have expertise in linguistics, applied

linguistics, and social sciences. Training of communication educators in this department requires a strong background in English language education and linguistics as well as an appreciable understanding of measurement, evaluation, and assessment in education.

The graduate program of the other communication department in my study, on the other hand, is media-centric. It specializes in training high level competencies in mass communication, journalism, public relations, and advertising. I observed that the curricula of the two departments I studied were designed and developed based on the visions and missions of their mother institutions (cf. Morreale & Backlund, 2002). Considerations of the local texture of the institutional practices shaping the work of communication educators are at the heart of policy formation, institutional recognition, and accreditation. They are also relevant for promoting a strong community of practice within the institution and for seeking inter-university partnership abroad. As scholars raise concerns about the vast nature of the communication discipline (Craig, 1999; Paroske & Rosaen, 2012), it is important that the practices faculty and program administrators engage in are collectively negotiated. This is because practices and approaches communication educators employ have implications for the quality of pedagogical content they produce. There is a second sense we can say that institutional practices in communication pedagogy ought to be situated. That is, they must be exigent. The tools, ideas, and ideals as well as values and frameworks guiding the work of communication educators in a given locale must directly address the needs of students in the locale. It is only then that we can truly say that students have received a responsible education.

To achieve this objective, communication administrators and faculty need to acknowledge that their institutional practices are *interested*. This is the second proposition. Clearly, the set of skills to be mastered, expected outcomes to be achieved from a field as nebulous as communication cannot be disinterested. Often, these skills are shaped by deep, hidden ideological, and political values. Practice theory is, therefore, crucial for understanding how cultural, ideological, and political elements enhance or constrain the work of communication educators. It should enable

communication researchers to grasp, for example, the idea that what goes into the design of a communication program reflects the ideologies and core values of its designers. My case study of the graduate program in communication education reveals, as I have mentioned in chapter 6, that the basic skills to be mastered by graduate students of the program are in the domain of language studies and applied linguistics. These values represent the interest of faculty administrators drawn from the linguistic discipline because they are the principal architects of the program. Understanding the values of this program can enable us to suggest that communication education in this university can be repositioned to address the core of the field. In particular, what is practiced in this university could be revised to include foundational seminars such as communication education theory, critical pedagogy, instructional communication, and oral communication.

Third, communication education thrives on transcultural competence. To be sure, intercultural or cross-cultural communicative competence has its place in guiding the work of communication educators. Both perspectives promote a pedagogy of tolerance of the Other. As Morreale and Pearson (2008) cautioned, “Teachers of communication must teach students *how* to cope with, and communicate in ... increasingly complex and diverse global communities” (p. 231-2, emphasis mine). However, while a number of authors have written on how intercultural and cross-cultural phenomena such as adaptation, anxiety, and adaptation shape communicative outcomes among students of different cultures (*e.g.*, Martin & Davis, 2001; Keshibian, 2005; Hsu, 2007; Opt, 2014), only few have looked at how transcultural competence shapes communication pedagogy (*e.g.*, Husband, 2000; Canagarajah, 2013).

I propose that an emphasis on transcultural competence, the competence required by an individual to shuttle between two or more cultural habits of mind, is one other way of understanding institutional work. I suggest that in an age marked by cultural flows, mobility, and transnationalism, it is important that the institutional practices that shape the work of communication educators, scholars, and administrators be also viewed as transcultural. We may agree that there are many individuals—teachers and students—who tend to be transcultural communicators. How the large number of international

students in American universities and colleges learn to communicate and communicate to learn should also be understood from a transcultural perspective in a way that an intercultural or cross-cultural approach may not. We need to understand that international students, in particular, always come in their host cultures along with a prior set of worldviews and knowledge systems, often qualitatively unique from those of the cultures where they study. So too, their worldviews may be significantly shaped by the cultures of the countries they study in when they return to their home countries. Their preference for theory or approach to pedagogy may be significantly influenced by their studies abroad. Transcultural competence thus needs to be critically considered in the work of communication educators. It is a dialectic that needs constant reflexivity.

Because transcultural competence is a work of accommodation, tolerance of communication styles and diversity of cultural views, it is often political in nature. It is marked by value systems (Canagarajah, 2013). What gets to be accepted eventually as normative ways of communicating in differing contexts is a function of how they are perceived by institutions. In this light, a theory that seeks to articulate the work of communication educators and program administrators should make room for individuals to express how their transcultural practices influence the conduct of their work in the educational enterprise. Lessons I learned from one of my participants, a chair of a communication department in a large public university in Ghana, are worth sharing once more. As a PhD holder from a university in the United States, this administrator takes pride in the idea that his knowledge and practice of communication education is uniquely transcultural. While he acknowledges the role of local cultures on his practice, Dr. Frimpong argues that some American practices are more responsive to progress than are Ghanaian practices. For example, he believes his approach to pedagogy and administrative work is democratic and participatory, ideals he learnt from the United States. According to him, these values do not make channels of communication burdensome, and do away with unnecessary bureaucracies.

One other way of understanding the politics of transcultural communication is to question how communication educators and program administrators come to design curricula. What is it that informs their choice of pedagogical content drawn from

different cultures? For example, in what ways do communication educators in Africa justify the teaching of communication based on Western models? Transcultural communication thus is always a question of balancing value systems. For Canagarajah (2013), the question will often be informed by the dynamics of contact zones, hegemony, ideology, and power shift. It is only when communication administrators and faculty fully embrace the weight transcultural competence wields on their professional practices that they may be fully aware of what, when, and how to design their curricula.

In fairness, speaking about the relevance of my study to the advance of communication pedagogy also means acknowledging its limitations. I discuss three of these in the next section.

Limitations of the study

The foremost limitation of the dissertation is that it excluded narratives of stakeholders particularly students, their prospective employers, accreditors, and alumni. Because I focused on understanding the institutional culture that shapes the work of communication educators and program administrators from their own perspectives, I was not able to bring to bear students' voices, lived experiences, and personal narratives on the subject. While this was a decision I took *ab initio* in conducting the research, it could be argued that the effort may have presented a narrow picture of communication education. In other words, my inability to articulate the perspectives of students as important stakeholders may have limited my phenomenological grasp of the research. For example, it would be useful to come to terms with students' own narratives, lived experiences, and reactions concerning the structure of various communication curricula, and the overall quality of the education they are getting. What kind of education would they prefer: Afrocentric, global, or a hybrid? Neither did I include the narratives of prospective employers in the research. Such a limitation needs to be overcome in future research in order that the scholarly community may appreciate stories employers tell about the communicative competence of graduates or prospective employees. Employers' narratives are all the more crucial for bringing to light what

they expect from students learning to go on the job market. Their narratives on how a communication curriculum should look could have added to the quality of this research. In particular, it could have explained what employers consider as a more responsive communication education characteristic of the 21st century global knowledge economy. Interviews with alumni about what they took from the curriculum into the everyday work life could also have been informative in the writing of this dissertation.

Second, though the research explored practices that shape communication education, little was said about instructional communication. That is, I did not observe in-situ the complexity of communicative exchanges (*e.g.*, welcoming strategies, tension balancing strategies, presentational strategies) between faculty and students. My study focused more on mundane practices that give rise to the institutional work of communication faculty and administrators, more than it investigated pedagogical practices of faculty in the classroom. While my focus was directly informed by the current research agenda of communication education scholarship (Sprague, 2002; Hunt *et al.*, 2014), I submit that further explorations into faculty instructional communicative practices could clearly have shown how they transmit, confront, and deal with pedagogical content of the communication curriculum. Are pedagogical strategies of communication faculty generic or discipline-specific? What values do faculty emphasize in the classroom, and which ones do they tend to marginalize? How does communication apprehension, tension, or miscommunication influence the instructional process? In what ways do communication in the disciplines (CID) and communication across the curriculum (CXC) vary with respect to instructional strategies and practices in sub-Saharan African universities? These are important research questions worth conducting, using theories of practice of CID and CXC.

A third limitation of my research is that it is not particularly diachronic in perspective. As an exploratory study focused on examining how the micro-politics of institutional practices impact on the work of communication faculty and their administrators, not much could be done from a diachronic point of view. A close diachronic study of technical documents (such as course syllabi, curricula, memos, departmental meetings,

and faculty board meetings) of the communication departments from their inception could shed more light on what informs pedagogical practice. Though I made efforts at mapping the histories of the departments I studied, I could not perform a detailed year by year analysis of the documents. There is, therefore, the need to pursue further studies to deal with the limitations identified in this research.

Directions for future research

I join scholars such as Sprague (1993; 2002) and Hunt *et al.* (2014) to underscore the importance to conduct further studies in discipline-specific communication pedagogy. This task is important for achieving two main objectives: (a) to determine what matters as theory in communication education scholarship, and (b) to present a coherent front as a community of practice. These objectives are worth pursuing because the communication discipline is a rough field that always needs to be well ploughed. In the context of communication pedagogy and instructional communication, there is the need for scholars to consistently reflect on what constitutes communication theory in their discipline. For example, scholars know that the linear or transmission model of communication cannot easily apply in the instructional process. Communication education scholars acknowledge that the nature of instructor-learner interactional dynamics is much more complex to comprehend by this model. Researchers need to develop theories robust enough to articulate what communication is, what, how, and more importantly why it does what it does in the context of pedagogy. As Hunt *et al.* (2014: 457) acknowledge, “The gap between theory and pedagogy severely marginalizes our pedagogical work, and often stigmatizes communication education scholars.”

Reflecting on theories that shape the discipline is also central to pursue research in international communication education. As scholars develop ways of enhancing communication education in the 21st century, we also must begin to think about how the field can develop pedagogical content appropriate for international communication education. I am convinced that if there is one thing that distinguishes this present century from the previous ones, perhaps it is the unimaginable increases in international travels, mobility, cross-border outsourcing, and overseas job search. Clearly, the forces

of globalization and technology have implications for the type and quality of communication curriculum scholars and program administrators need to design. Will scholars begin to think of designing course syllabi targeted at specific international cultures where global flows are most remarkable? How will a curriculum designed to meet the needs of communication students who desire to work in China or sub-Saharan African states, for instance, look like? To what extent can research in intercultural or cross-cultural communication address these concerns? In what ways do the political economies of developed states shape the designs of the communication curricula of less developed nations? One useful way communication scholars can answer these questions is to carefully consider the role of assessment in the field.

Theory building specific to communication education must ultimately make an impact on discipline-specific assessment practices. Like theories and concepts that shape work in communication pedagogy, measurement and assessment criteria are equally generic and mainly borrowed tools from social science disciplines. However, unlike the social sciences, the communication field is a largely amorphous discipline difficult to define and consequently difficult to evaluate. At least, it comprises traditions such as composition, rhetoric, media and journalism, literacy, and critical studies (Craig, 1999; Morreale & Backlund, 2002; Paroske & Rosaen, 2012). This means that the use of evaluation methods such as Bloom's taxonomy of educational outcomes—knowledge, synthesis, application, evaluation, and creativity—as applying to the entire field should be adequately reconsidered. I suggest that students' needs could better be served if specific assessment protocols were designed to meet specific educational objectives in specific sub-fields. Mino (2012) has identified clarity, objectivity, credibility, consistency, adaptability, scalability, and efficiency as key evaluation criteria for assessing student presentations in the basic public speaking courses.

In an article published in the *Journal of the Association of Communication Administration*, Paroske and Rosaen (2012) argued that efforts by communication scholars to focus on developing discipline-specific program assessment tools present them with an opportunity to demonstrate the unique contributions they make to academia, and to insist on the relevance of their programs. Indeed, if assessment is

important for ascertaining whether students attain selected learning outcomes, then, “it is imperative that communication faculty and administrators adapt to the peculiar nature of the field” (p. 104). The blue-print laid by Paroske and Rosaen indicate that assessment discussions should also be student-centered. Scholars need to explore to what ends (*e.g.* appropriate employability, graduate education, public service) students put their knowledge of communication.

Achieving the objectives above also means that communication scholars would have to look beyond the four walls of the classroom. There as well must be renewed interest in exploring the complexity of communication in non-educational contexts. According to Sprague (2002), many instructional venues are still awaiting to be studied. Yet the agenda of the discipline over the last five decades has focused exclusively on communication pedagogy and less on instructional communication in non-educational contexts. These include industrial organizations and the corporate world, the health sector, legal, crisis, and crime and policing aspects of society. Vigorous research is needed in these sectors to determine how communication education can help improve the quality of communication in these quarters. Researchers must work to explain what is it that is considered dominant communicative practices in, say, health communication (between doctors and nurses on the one hand, and doctors or nurses and their clients, on the other hand). What values shape health communication, and how should public speaking or communicative strategies in this sector be designed and taught? Interventions such as these may help facilitate the achievement of broader societal goals. They are important for the development of the whole person and for making graduates responsible participants in the global society. In the words of Morreale and Pearson (2006), “In the world of commerce in the 21st century, good communication skills, added to understanding cultural differences, will help individuals to participate effectively in complex and diverse global organizations and multidisciplinary environments” (p. 231). Our students will need to be taught how to communicate persuasively to land jobs in an increasingly competitive business climate. We can achieve this objective, I posit, by conducting meaningful studies in non-educational spaces.

Conclusion

In a word, the success of communication education in the twenty first century and beyond, I have suggested, will involve two major entailments: the pursuit of discipline-specific theorization and instructive research in non-educational contexts. It is not enough to isolate the markers of a robust pedagogical content. Efforts must also be under way to theorize how institutional practices shape communication in work-related environments. It is only then that we can truly say that we have indeed developed a robust theory of practice specific for the purposes of communication pedagogy and international communication education. In doing so, we need to be guided by Appadurai's (1996) edict not to privilege the global over the local; after all, the global is also local. It is my hope that I have represented my research participants and their concerns in the best light possible in this project. I hope I have sufficiently articulated the lived experiences, stories, frustrations, and angst of my research participants, and have equally detailed challenges confronting the development of disciplinary pedagogical content knowledge of their epistemic community. As I end the discussion in this dissertation, I realize that the label "conclusion" is a disturbing way to end this research. The dissertation, on the contrary, raises critical issues that need to be explored further.

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Appendix A: Institutional Approval

Michigan Technological University Institutional Review Board Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee Institutional Biosafety Committee New Project Application Coversheet

Last edited by: Wincharles Coker IRB Last edited on: February 20, 2015 IACUC Review now Review closer to: 04/23/2015 IBC

[722267-1] Communication Education in Ghana: Structure and Practice in a Public University Completion of this form is the first step in seeking the institution approval that is required for all educational and research projects whether or not they are funded. Answer all questions on this form completely, include attachments, and obtain all signatures prior to final submission on IRBNet. The Office of Compliance, Integrity, and Safety (CIS) will process your application, coordinate review by the appropriate committee(s), and notify you of their determination. Research activity may not begin until you receive notification of APPROVAL from the CIS Office. Submissions to the CIS Office that are incomplete will be returned and not forwarded to the Review Committee for action.

I. Principal Investigator: The PI is responsible for ALL aspects of the project. The PI may delegate certain tasks to others but maintains responsibility. The PI is responsible to assure that all investigators have completed CITI training. Name: Karla S. Kitalong Status: Michigan Tech faculty/staff Department: College of Sciences and Arts - Humanities Email: kitalong@mtu.edu Phone: (906) 487-3254

II. Co-Investigators and Other Personnel N/A All students listed as co-investigators or other personnel listed who will interact or intervene with participants in this research project must have their CITI training completion report linked within this study package, and you must share the study package at the appropriate level with them. All investigators granted FULL level access, including yourself, must electronically sign this package and will be included in receiving all messages and alerts regarding this

study. Name: Wincharles Coker Status: Michigan Tech graduate student. Role of Co-Investigator/Other Personnel in this Project:

The co-investigator intends to gather data in Ghana from April to May, 2015.

Department: College of Sciences and Arts - Humanities Email: wcoker@mtu.edu

Phone: 9063703057 Start Date: 04/23/2014 End: 05/23/2015

- 2 - Generated on IRBNet

III. Research Funding Funding required for this research? No internal or external funds required, review now Funding dependent, review now for preliminary work Funding dependent, review closer to start date indicated

Start Date: 04/23/2015 End Date: 05/23/2015

Funding Agency/Sponsor Name Funding Status

Appendix B: Consent to Participate in Research Study

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Wincharles Coker as part of his dissertation project under the supervision of Dr. Karla Saari Kitalong, Michigan Technological University. Your participation is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand before the research is conducted.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study is a response to a recent issue in *Communication Education* which called for innovative approaches to teaching communication in the 21st century. Using the West African state of Ghana as a case study, the research aims to explore basic philosophies that shape communication education in colleges and universities. Specifically, the study will investigate how the structures and practices of a communication studies department enhance the teaching and learning of communication in general. Using a critical interpretive ethnographic methodology, the study will examine how communication education is administered by both faculty and non-faculty in a non-Western culture. The research contributes directly to studies in communication philosophy, writing program administration, and international communication.

PROCEDURES

I will observe you at your workplace for 5 hours a day for a period of 6 weeks during the months of April and May, 2015. I will take hand-written notes on site and then write field notes after I leave the site. I will also interview you for 60 minutes. I will take notes and ask both prepared and spontaneous questions. I will audio-record the interview, and preserve your confidentiality. I may ask you to review excerpts from the interview transcript to discuss your thoughts about the interactions. A report on the interview will be submitted to my advisor within two weeks of your review of the transcript excerpts. If you would like to have the full transcript and/or the final interview report, please contact me any time prior to June, 2015.

ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained through the observation and interview will remain confidential, and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of a pseudonym. I will not use your name in any of the information I get from this study, or in any of the research reports. Information that can identify you individually will not be released to anyone outside the study. I will, however, use the information collected in conference presentations, other publications, and as part of my dissertation project. Any information I use for publication will not identify you individually. The audio recording will be transferred to a password-protected computer account within one week after the interview and erased from the recorder. The digital file and transcription will be maintained on a password-protected computer account accessible only by me. This consent form will be kept in a secure file in the locked office of the Principal Investigator until one year following the completion of the dissertation. In accordance with federal regulations, I plan to maintain the coded (de-identified) information for 3 years in the event that I use it for a follow-up research on communication education.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

You may not benefit directly from participating in this interview although you may feel some satisfaction about expressing your views. Your participation will help me to learn more about the structures and practices that go in making communication pedagogy successful.

POTENTIAL RISK

There is no risk involved.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether or not to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse

to answer any questions you do not want to answer. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

RESEARCHER/ADVISOR IDENTIFICATION

If you have any questions or concerns about this interview, please contact either of the following:

Wincharles Coker, Department of Humanities, Michigan Technological University,

Houghton MI 49931-1295; Telephone: 906-370-3057; email: wcoker@mtu.edu

Dr. Karla S. Kitalong, Department of Humanities, Michigan Technological University,

Houghton MI 49931-1295; telephone 906-487-3264; email kitlaong@mtu.edu

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

The MTU Institutional Review Board has reviewed the researcher's request to conduct this assignment. If you have any concerns about your rights in this interview, please contact Joanne Polzien of the MTU Office of Research Integrity and Compliance at 906-487-2902 or email jpolzien@mtu.edu.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this interview. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Subject

_____ I agree to participate and grant you permission to audio record this interview

_____ I agree to participate, however I do not wish to be audio recorded

Signature of Subject

Date

Please initial your permission to audio record this interview: _____

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Rationale

This interview explores the lived experiences of program administrators and faculty about the nature of communication education in colleges. It examines how theoretical, structural, and political constraints shape the practices of communication education in some Ghanaian universities and around the globe.

A. Demographic Information

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your educational background?
2. What reasons do you have for being a communications program administrator or scholar?

B. Fundamentals of Communication Education in Ghana

3. How would you describe the landscape of communication education in Ghana?
4. In your own view, what forces may have led to this development?
5. What kind of education does your curriculum deliver? What are the reasons for that?
6. In what ways would you think that communication education in Ghana is overly dependent on the West, mainly the United States?
7. Can you give one example of a major theoretical paradigm that you or curriculum developers heavily rely on?
8. What are the advantages and disadvantages of drawing on Western models to train communication students in Ghana?
9. Can you give me one instance of such in your teaching career?
10. In what ways do you ensure that the curriculum remains relevant to the local context, and yet in sync with global exigencies?

C. Institutional Structures and Mundane Practices

11. What do you take into account in designing your curriculum?
12. How is your curriculum structured, and why?

13. In what ways do faculty feed into the vision and mission of your institution?

14. What challenges do you face in designing your curriculum?

15. Can you please share with me some of the practices you put in place in ensuring the smooth running of your program?

16. Please share with me steps that go into course design and implementation.

17. What practices go into ensuring that the needs of students in your program are catered for?

18. How do you evaluate the impact of your curriculum on national development?

D. Conclusion

19. What recommendations would you make to further enhance communication education in Ghana?

20. May I know if you have any questions for me? On this note I would like to express my gratitude to you for making this interview possible.

Thank you.

Appendix D: A Master of Arts Curriculum in Communication Education at a Ghanaian Public University

Background of Program:

Rationale

Communication is crucial in all human endeavors. It is important in forging interpersonal and transactional needs. In recent years, the need for communication practitioners in the education sector, as well as other sectors of the economy, has necessitated the revision of existing programs and the development of new programs such as this master's program. Given the fact that Communicative Skills (CS) is taught not only in the universities, but also in the polytechnics, there is the need to train lecturers for the Communicative Skills programs at the undergraduate level. Considering that CS is not only about English language, but also communication as a subject area, there is the need to provide the opportunity for potential Communicative Skills lecturers in post-secondary institutions and colleges of education to upgrade their knowledge in the teaching and methodologies to meet contemporary communication needs. This program will also be very beneficial to communication practitioners, because they can take the opportunity to enroll in this program while they are still at post in their various institutions.

Goal and Objectives

Goal

The program should equip students with skills to demonstrate an understanding of theories and pedagogical approaches underpinning current trends in the teaching of Communicative Skills, and reflect on their practice as facilitators in the teaching and learning of Communicative Skills as a subject.

Objectives

The program seeks to:

1. Train human resource in Teaching Communicative Skills.

2. Equip students with knowledge of current trends in the teaching of Communicative Skills.
3. Equip students with theoretical resources and skills for doing self-reflection of their practices as facilitators.
4. Equip students with skills that will enable them to engage in research in Communicative Skills.

Students' Admission, Progression and Graduation:

Admission Requirements / Target group

Candidates seeking admission to this program must have a good first degree (at least, a second class) from a recognized University/Analogous Institution in the following areas:

Admission Requirements

- (a) B.Ed. (Arts) with English
- (b) B. A. (Arts) in English
- (c) Bachelor's Degree in Communication Studies
- (d) A Bachelor's Degree in other appropriate fields of study

Candidates must also pass a selection interview.

Progression

Prospective students are to do a minimum of 36 credit hours on the program which is two semesters. It is supposed to be run during long vacations of the university.

Graduation

Prospective students are supposed to graduate at the end of the second semester of the academic year after satisfying the graduation academic requirements of the University. Students have to pass in each course with a minimum of grade 'D' in both semesters

Target Groups

The proposed program targets personnel from Ghana Education Service, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, and other analogous institutions.

Employment Prospects of Students to be enrolled:

The program is designed towards sharpening the pedagogical skills of personnel from Ghana Education Service, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, and other analogous institutions in teaching Communicative Skills.

Details of Syllabus and Teaching:

Table D. 1: Program structure of year 1

Year 1	Semester 1	Core Courses
Course Code	Course	Credits
CMS 501	Theory and Practice of Curriculum Design and Development	3
CMS 502	Teaching Foundations of Communicative Skills	3
CMS 503	Research Methods	3
ESS 502	Philosophical and Psychological Foundations	3

Table D.2: Elective courses

CMS 507	Academic Communication	3
CMS 509	Language Use in Communication	3
CMS 510	Theories of Human Communication	3

Students will be required to take three (3) core courses and one (1) elective course for a total of twelve (12) credits for the semester.

Table D. 3: Program structure of year 2

Year 2	Semester 2	Core Courses
Code	Course	Credits
CMS 504	Communication in Different Contexts: Writing and Speech	3
CMS 505	Practicum and Seminar	3
CMS 506	Assessment in Communicative Skills	3

Table D. 4: Elective courses

CMS 508	Interpersonal and Intercultural Communication	3
CMS 511	Business Communication	3
CMS 512	Scientific Communication	3

Students will be required to take three (3) core courses, and one (1) elective course for a total of twelve (12) credits for the semester.

Course Description

CMS 501: Theory and Practice of Curriculum Design and Development

3 Credits

This course exposes students to the theoretical background of curriculum design and development. It also provides students with practice-based information and skills

necessary to design and critique an appropriate and effective curriculum in CS. The course also helps students to review contemporary practices in curriculum design.

CMS 502: Teaching Foundations of Communicative Skills

3 Credits

This course equips students with skills, knowledge, approaches and methodologies needed in teaching the foundations of Communicative Skills. Course content will include study skills, reading and composition pedagogies, oral and public presentations skills, general English language use and documentation.

ESS 502: Philosophical and Psychological Foundations of Curriculum

3 Credits

This course seeks to provide students with a general overview of the history of curriculum conceptualization and development, and an understanding of the larger forces that influence the process. Firstly, the course analyses various philosophical positions on the nature of knowledge, the function of the school and the content of the curriculum. Secondly, it examines various principles of organizing instruction, derived from psychological theories of learning, including behavioral, cognitive and social cognitive theories. Students are made to analyze, critique, and reflect on the assumptions and positions of the different theories of learning, and explore their applications in curriculum and teaching.

CMS 503: Research Methods

3 Credits

This course endows students with the resources to conduct their research. Students will be introduced to the preparation and presentation of the research proposal, the different research designs and approaches, research instruments, the use of data analysis software such as SPSS, how to develop a practical and analytical framework for research, referencing styles, and thesis writing.

CMS 504: Communication in Different Contexts: Writing and Speech**3****Credits**

This course equips students with skills necessary to differentiate between features of written and spoken discourse, and also to compose good writing and speech. The course has theoretical and practical components and covers the basics of communication at meeting, oral presentation, the art of persuasion and negotiation discourse.

CMS 505: Practicum and Seminar**3 Credits**

This course tasks students to teach an undergraduate course in Communicative Skills under supervision on campus. Students will be required to apply appropriate teaching methodologies and theories in this practicum, reflect on their practice and write a report which will be presented at a departmental seminar.

CMS 506: Assessment in Communicative Skills**3 Credits**

This course takes students through the processes of classroom measurement and testing, test writing, scoring and evaluation. The course also exposes students to issues related to language specific assessment and testing tools development. Students would be exposed to international language testing programs such as ACTFL, TOEFL, and IELTS.

CMS 507: Academic Communication**3 Credits**

The course focuses on the use of language in academic discourse communities. This involves engaging with various forms of communication, and making meaningful contributions in several interactive encounters in academic settings. It equips students with knowledge of genres in academic discourse, and skills for preparing manuscripts for publication as well as making conference presentations.

CMS 508: Interpersonal and Intercultural Communication

3 Credits

This course explores communication issues related to interpersonal contexts such as acquaintanceship, courtship and friendship. It examines factors (gender, power, age, status, position etc.) that affect interaction in relationships in nuclear and extended families, conflict management and resolution. The course also highlights cultural variables that influence the communication process, and strategies for managing intercultural communication

CMS 509: Language Use in Communication

3 Credits

This course exposes students to the body of literature on the use of English language in communication. Students will be equipped with knowledge and practices that will enable them to effectively use English in both academic and non-academic communicative events. Areas of concentration include grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, discourse and pragmatics.

CMS 510: Theories of Human Communication

3 Credits

This course is a survey of major theories in human communication in relation to its, history, philosophy and applications. The course takes students through Mechanistic, Psychological, Social Constructionist, Systemic and Critical theories, among others. This is to provide a conceptual basis for understanding interpersonal, group, organizational, intercultural and linguistic communication.

CMS 511: Business Communication

3 Credits

This course exposes students to the principles and practices in corporate and organizational communication, organizational culture and communicational styles. The course also acquaints students with how management and staff communicate with one

another, how businesses and non-profit organizations communicate with the media, and how to advertise and market to potential consumers and donors.

CMS 512: Scientific Communication

3

Credits

Students are exposed to the major skills needed for scientific communication. The course focuses on information retrieval, scientific reading and writing, listening and observing, scientific data interpretation and representation, scientific argumentation, presentation of technical reports, among others.

Teaching strategies that would be employed in the delivery of subject matter of the program are; lectures, group discussions, group presentations, field trips, seminar presentations, holiday attachments etc.

Assessment of Students' Performance and Achievements:

The program is be assessed like any other university program through quizzes, take-home assignments, class tests, group presentations, and end-of-semester examinations. The end-of-semester examinations with input from lecturers will be centrally organized and controlled. Students' assessment will comprise 40% continuous assessment and 60% of end-of-semester examination, making a total of 100%. Quizzes/assignments are supposed to be presented on time vis-à-vis marked scripts.

Appendix E: A Bachelor of Arts Curriculum in Communication Studies at a Ghanaian Public University

Table E. 1: Program structure of year 1

First Year

	SEMESTER I				SEMESTER II		
Course Code	Course Title		Credit	Course Code	Course Title		Credit
CMS 101	Introduction to Mass Comm.	Core	3	CMS 102	History of the Ghanaian Mass Media	Core	3
CMS 105	New Comm. Technologies	Core	3	CMS 104	Introduction to Writing for the Mass Media	Core	3
CMS 105A	Comm. Skills	Core	3	ENG 105B	Comm. Studies	Core	3
AFS	African Studies	Core	2	ASP	African Studies	Core	1
IRC 101	Information Retrieval	Core	1	LED/L ESS/L SC	Liberals		2
Subject B		Core	3	Subject B			3
Subject C		Core	3	Subject C			3
Total							

NB: Students will be required to select two ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS DESIGNATED as 'Subject A' and 'Subject B' from among the following at first and second years, in line with the requirements of the Faculty of Arts of this University:

English

French

Ghanaian Language (Akan, Ewe or Ga)

History

Classics/Philosophy

Religious Studies and

Sociology

Table E. 2: **Program structure of year 2**

Second Year

SEMESTER I				SEMESTER II			
Cour se Code	Course Title		Credit	Course Code	Course Title		Credit
CMS 202	Theories of Comm.	Core	3	CMS 210	Foundation s of Comm. Research	Core	3
CMS 203	Feature Writing (Print)	Core	3	CMS 209	Editing and Graphics of Comm.	Elect	3
CMS 204	(R/TV)	Elective	3	CMS 215	Radio Programme Writing Prod.	Elect	3
CMS 208	Intro to advertising (PRAD)	Elective	3	CMS 206	Marketing Foundation for Public Relations and Advertising	Elect	3
Subje ct B		Core	3	Subject B		Core	3
Subje ct B		Core	3	Subject B		Core	3
Subje ct C		Core	3	Subject B		Core	3
Subje ct C		Core	3	Subject C		Core	3
Total			18	Total			18

In the second year, students will be required to select one elective course according to the track they are pursuing i.e.

Print Journalism (Print)

Radio and TV Production (R/TV)

Public Relations and Advertising (PRAD)

Table E. 3: **Program structure of year 3**

Third Year

SEMESTER I				SEMESTER II			
Course Code	Course Title		Credit	Course Code	Course Title		Credit
CMS 302	Issues in Ghanaian Media History	Core	3	CMS 311	Comm. & Society	Core	3
CMS 303	Essential of Industrial Psychology and Sociology	Core	3	CMS 313	Comparative Media Systems	Core	3
CMS 304	Newspaper Management & Prog. (R/TV)	Elect	3	CMS 321	Community Relations	Core	3
CMS 306	Broadcast Mgt. & Programming (R/TV)	Elect	3	CMS 314	Magazine Management and Production (Print)	Elect	3
CMS 309	Consumer Affairs (PRAD)	Elect	3	CMS 320	Advertising & Public Relation Research (PRAD)	Elect	3
CMS 312	Specialised Reporting (Print)	Elect	3	CMS 317	Broadcasting & Critical Writing (R/TV)	Elect	3
CMS 308	TV Programmes Writing and Production (R/TV)	Elect	3	CMS 322	Advertising & PR Campaign (PRAD)	Elect	3
CMS 310	Advertising Media Planning (PRAD)	Elect	3	CMS 315	Community Media	Elect	3
CMS 399	Research Methods	Core	3	CMS 316	Television	Elect	3
					Writing & Production (T/TV)		

Total			15	Total			15
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Students in their year will be required to take **two** elective courses from their respective tracks i.e. Print, R/TV or PRAD.

Table E. 4: **Program structure of year 4**

Final Year

SEMESTER I				SEMESTER II			
Code	Course		Credit	Code	Course		Credit
CMS 401	Comm. for Development	Core	3	CMS	Ghana and the Geopolitics of Africa	Core	3
CMS 402	Ethics in Mass Comm.	Core	3	CMS 412	Mass Media Law	Core	3
CMS 404	Media Attachment	Core	3	CMS 417	English in the Mass Media	Core	3
CMS 405	Editorial Writing (Print)	Elect	3	CMS 414	Critical Reviewing and Writing (Print)	Elect	3
CMS 406	Drama & Documentary Production (R/TV)	Elect	3	CMS 416	Station Management and Organisation (R/TV)	Elect	3
CMS 409	International Public Relations (PRAD)	Elect	3	CMS 418	Special Topics in Public Relations and Advertising (PRAD)	Elect	3
CMS 413	Foreign Print Media	Elect	3	CMS 499	Project Work	Core	3
CMS 408	Community Broadcasting (R/TV)	Elect	3				
CMS 410	Consumer Behaviour (PRAD)	Elect	3				

Students in their final year will be required to select **two** elective courses in addition to three core courses in the first semester, and **one** elective course together with four compulsory courses including project work in the second semester.

Appendix F: Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT Analysis)

Table F. 1: A SWOT analysis of a communication department

Strengths	Required Strengths
1.Dedicated staff 2.Good interpersonal relationship among staff 3.Dedicated and youthful staff strength 4.Reasonable quality of teaching and learning equipment 5.High student enrolment	1.Adequate infrastructure 2.Adequate staff development programs 3.Strong internet connectivity 4.Availability of ICT -based teaching resources 5.Skills in ICT teaching resource
Key Opportunities	Threats
1.Increasing national and global interest in media studies 2.Demand for certification of media practitioners 3.Availability of media houses for internal Collaborators	1.Inadequate lecture room facilities 2.Unreliable power supply 3. Inadequate office space for faculty 4.Inadequate number of faculty with expertise in various area in media studies 5.Dwindling budget for tertiary institutions

Table F. 2: **Key Thrust 1: Create an Environment that Seeks to Improve Student Life, Foster Focused Learning and Graduate Students with Strong Ethics and Commitment to Society**

No .	Key Action	Primary Responsibility	Secondary Implementers	Indicators	Time Frame
1.	Establish a rapid response system to address student grievances	HOD	Academic Advisors COMSA Academic Counsellors	1. Form consultative committee and organize consultative meeting at least once a semester 2. Sensitize students on the effective use of academic counselling system	1.Consultative committee formed by the end of September, 2013 2.Sensitisation forum for students organized once a semester
2.	Support the Centre for International Education (CIE) to attract foreign students and expand exchange programmes and activities	HOD	CIE	1. Negotiate with the University/ICT to get an officer responsible for ICT-related issues 2. Develop a weekly template for updating departmental information on University website	1. ICT personnel appointed to support the Department by December, 2014 2. Departmental information on the University website updated regularly

3.	Establish internship relationships with industries and media houses	HOD	Coordinator for internships	1. Appoint a coordinator for internships 2. Develop internship schedule 3. Establish internship as a Departmental requirement for graduation.	1. Coordinator of internship appointed by the end of September, 2013 2. Organize periodic meetings for students and supervisors 3. Internship will contribute towards overall assessment for graduation
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Table F. 3: **Key Thrust 2: Create a Conducive Working Environment which recognises Equal Opportunities for Faculties, Staff and Students**

1	Key Action	Primary Responsibility	Secondary Implementers	Indicators	Time Frame
1	Establish a rapid response system to address staff grievances	Chair	Committee for staff welfare issues UTAG, TEWU, FUSSAG	1. Formation of committee for staff welfare issues 2. Organize regular meetings between teaching and non-teaching staff.	1. Staff welfare committee formed by end of December, 2013 2. At least, one meeting held every semester between teaching and

					non-teaching staff
2	Promote the image of the University as an equal opportunity institution	Chair	Departmental consultative committee	Increase the employment ratio of female and younger faculty	Employ additional female and young lecturer(s) by the end of 2014/2015 academic year.

Table F. 4: Key Thrust 3: *Recruit, Select, Develop and Retain High Calibre and Motivated Teaching and Administrative Staff*

N o	Key Action	Primary Responsibility	Secondary Implementers	Indicators	Time Frame
1.	Review and develop new Departmental Programs	Chair	Senior Faculty Members in the Department	1. Review existing Departmental Programs 2. Develop Departmental teaching staff support schemes 3. Design a structure for funding and sponsoring publication,	1. Departmental Programs reviewed by December, 2013 2. Departmental teaching staff support scheme developed by December, 2013

				conferences, seminars and workshops	3.A structure for funding and sponsoring publication, conferences, seminars and workshops designed by December, 2013
2.	Establish a newspaper	Chair	All other faculty members, Dean, COMSA	1.Design a structure for running a student newspaper 2. Form an editorial Board 3. Operationalize newspaper	1. Proposed structure for newspaper submitted to Faculty Board by July, 2014. 2. Editorial Board formed by July, 2014 3. Newspaper launched and running by January, 2015
3.	Undertake staff Audit	Chair/Dean	Faculty Officer		
4.	Institutionalize staff training	Chair	T & D		