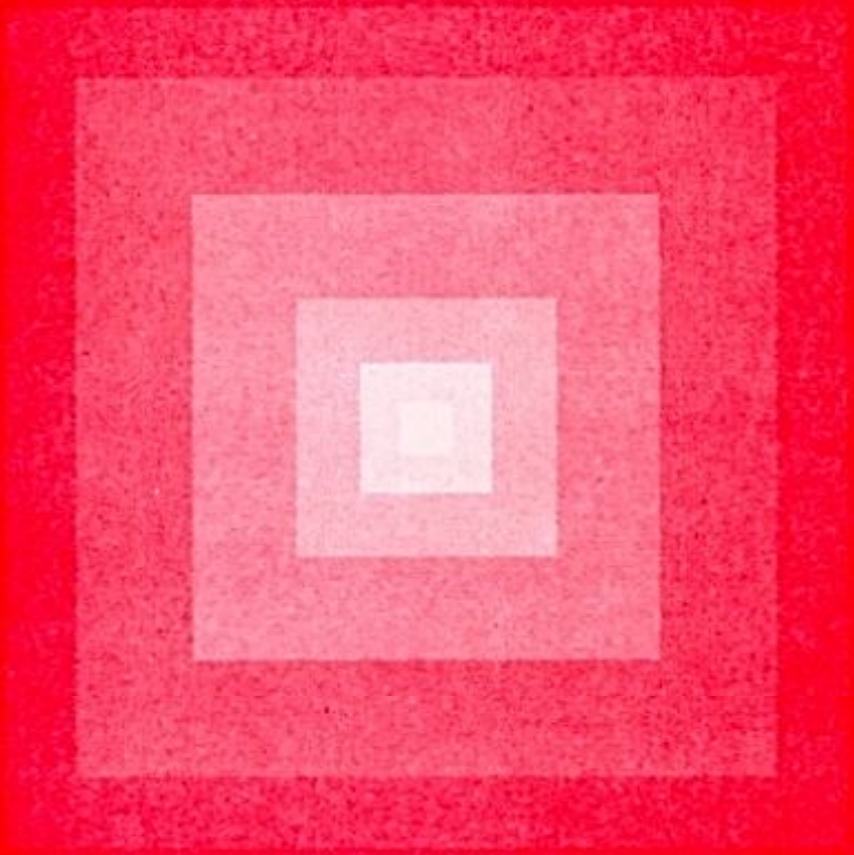
CDD/FNF 2nd Annual Liberal Lecture



Reflections on Liberalism and Education in Ghana

E. Gyimah-Boadi

The Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) is an independent research think tank based in Accra, Ghana. CDD-Ghana is dedicated to the promotion of democracy, good governance and the development of a liberal political and economic environment in Ghana in particular and Africa in general. In so doing, CDD-Ghana seeks to enhance the democratic content of public policy and to advance the cause of constitutionalism, individual liberty, the rule of law, and integrity in public life.

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Reflections on Liberalism and Education in Ghana

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FOREWORD

The aim of Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF), a German liberal political foundation established in 1958 can be summarised in three words: "promoting freedom worldwide" through political, economic, social and science. Whilst seeking to strengthen liberal political partners and institutions and to propagate liberal principles, it intends to transfer liberal solutions abroad into the German debate.

In Ghana, programs are developed jointly with specific partners in these areas and in line with the four pillars of liberalism- human rights, rule of law, free market economy, and liberal democracy with freedom being the foundation.

In promoting human rights and rule of law, FNF seeks to contribute to the ideal concept that every human being has the right to human dignity.

With respect to developing a socially and ecologically sustained free market economy, the Foundation believes that free trade and personal freedom are inseparably linked. Wherever protectionism prevails, people are restricted in their freedom to develop their lives. This is why we seek to promote open markets, which, of course, have to be based on institutionally anchored legal and economic framework.

Generally, in promoting liberal democracy and liberalism, emphasis is laid on: training for freedom and responsibility of the individual. FNF therefore seeks to assert the fact that people assume responsibility for themselves, their communities, and their society as a whole. A civil society built on liberal principles makes state involvement unnecessary.

Hence, the institutionalized annual lecture has the aim of disseminating the core values of liberalism through liberal think tanks.

This year's liberal lecture is the second in the series organized by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana). Participants comprising education experts and consultants from higher institutions of learning and educational policy formulation, FNF alumni and partners, the liberal fraternity,

religious groups, academia, student and youth groups took part in the lecture with the topic *Reflections on Liberalism and Education in Ghana.*

It is gratifying to note that participants received the event with great satisfaction as they contributed enthusiastically to the debate on the topic of education. The call for a needs based educational system in Ghana cannot be over-emphasized.

Equally, the call for civic education at all levels of learning is overdue. If this call is heeded, it will not only promote the Foundation's aim of liberal education but will also anchor and endorse its current topic: *No education - No Freedom, No Opportunity* for the years to come.

In the liberal parlance, *freedom goes with responsibility*. How can certain individuals, religious or cultural adherents expect the state or society to provide, protect, and respect their rights and basic needs provided for by the constitution and yet refuse to honour their obligations; refuse to respect the national anthem and pledge; or attempt to tear a national flag in the name of parochial dogmas?

The Foundation takes this opportunity to thank CDD-Ghana for its quantitative work over the years and renew the ever-strengthening collaboration between the two establishments.

Ernst Specht
West Africa Director
Friedrich Naumann Foundation

Stephen Nibebale Bemile
Senior Program Officer
Friedrich Naumann Foundation

Salutations

It is privilege and an honor to be given this opportunity to share with you some thoughts on issues of liberalism and education. As you will see shortly, I know a bit about liberalism, liberal ideas and practices because I am engaged with those issues in my research, professional activities, and in my politics. But I know very little about education except as a university teacher and a consumer of education services in Ghana. So as an amateur, it is best to begin my talk with a few anecdotes about the Ghanaian education system and some of its recent outcomes.

My nephew in JSS boarding school in Kumasi travels from the village to collect from me his school fees for the new school term. He arrives at my house without bothering to bring the bill from the school, or finding out from his mother in the village or the school authorities how much he is supposed to collect from me.

Level 300 Legon social science undergraduates come to be interviewed for a paid CDD Democracy and Governance 2005 long vacation internship. The majority of them come without bothering to inform themselves of basic facts about CDD such as what CDD does.

And while in the middle of preparing this lecture, the nation was horrified by media reports of the blood-licking incident in which a teacher, Yao Yiboukou, at the Mother Mary's Preparatory School at South Odorkor is alleged to have cut himself, extracted blood, rubbed it on a black stone and subjected his pupils to a "trial by ordeal."

These anecdotes highlight some of the shortcomings of formal education in Ghana today in terms of quality and outcomes.

The lecture is about liberalism and education in general and how liberal principles may assist in redressing some of the deficits in Ghanaian education reflected in the above anecdotes. The lecture begins with an outline of the key principles of liberalism and liberal ideas and their implicit prescriptions for education. The latter sections of the lecture are devoted to a discussion of the crisis in Ghanaian education and how its policies and outcomes may benefit from the application of liberal principles.

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