

*Full Length Research*

# The Power of Globalizing Education: Why It Matters for Black American High School Learners

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Accepted 21 November 2014

In the wake of accelerated globalization countries are experiencing an intensified movement of ideas and practices across national borders, and between continents. While not always comfortable, the impact of such dynamic forces means that ideas from other countries could offer opportunities for looking at things in different ways, or even reassessing local practices. Within a context of globalization, this article made use of data from a qualitative case study conducted in Ghana, West Africa that was grounded in the concept of "borrowing and adapting." Research was located in Ghana because it has a shared history with the United States (U.S.) in varied ways. Additionally, secondary school certificates (or high school diplomas) are historically valued in Ghanaian society. The research study examined global education in contemporary Africa, and how three Ghanaian high schools seek to educate their future generations. The findings offer viewpoints from an African nation that educators, thought leaders, policymakers, teachers and parents in the U.S. could utilize. In particular, some practices derived from the data could reframe national and local conversations to influence the quality of U.S. high school learning experiences, particularly for Black American youth whose *dropout* rates continue to soar. Two *key* findings from the study: (1) Significance of Senior High Schools and (2) Globalizing High School Education have *implications* for addressing these persistent *dropout* rates of Black American high school learners.

**Key words:** Borrowed and Adapted, Co-curricular or Extra-curricular Programs, Globalized Education, Secondary Schools, Senior Secondary Schools, High Schools, and Worldview.

**Cite This Article As:** Thomas LAR (2014). The Power of Globalizing Education: Why It Matters for Black American High School Learners. *Inter. J. Acad. Res. Educ. Rev.* 2(9): 194-205.

## INTRODUCTION

Globalization has been viewed as a multi-faceted process which affects different nations uniquely; it is a force more powerful than industrialization, urbanization or

secularization combined (Holtman, 2005; Nerad, 2008). This means the transfer of information, goods, money, technology, ideas and cultural practice knows no

boundaries. According to the World Bank (2005), globalization has increased the realization that acquiring, applying and sharing knowledge is a driving force across all sectors of life. This reality has added more pressure on nations both large and small to modernize and revamp their secondary education systems, because secondary schools are essential institutions everywhere, including the U.S. and Ghana, West Africa. Secondary education refers to the schooling practices between the end of the primary level and start of the tertiary level of schooling. Secondary education is a common term (Mingat, 2004), yet the structures of secondary education are country specific (Bregman and Bryner, 2003).

While the issue of equal access and matriculation to secondary education for all children is important, it is adapting academic curriculum content and a school's co-curricular programs to align with global societal challenges that is needed (Alvarez, 2003). Furthermore, Alvarez said that, "*the significance of secondary education is too important to ignore because young men and women need the next level of experiences, knowledge and skills to participate productively in the economic, social and political life of their countries, and to become citizens of an ever interdependent world.*"

Scholar-educator, Yong Zhao (2008) has also insisted that, "*there is an urgent need to globalize education learning processes, and give young people in the U.S. and around the world the tools necessary to take on such 21st-century citizenship responsibilities as global warming, famine, poverty, health crises, as well as environment and social-cultural issues.*" The very nature of secondary education is at the core of these demanding circumstances.

### **The Challenge**

The U.S. has been confronted with a continuing challenge, in that, the overall dropout rate for Black American youth, ages 13-18 who attend high school jumped 10% in 2010 following a historic low of 9% in 2007 (Child Trends Data, 2012). Nearly half of Black American youth living in low-resource communities in the U.S. have struggled with staying in high school at dropout rates lingering in the 40-50% range (Balfanz & Letgers, 2006; Children's Defense Fund, 2004), and not much has changed in the past few years. By 2050, the U.S. Census Bureau projects about 50% of the nation's population will be Black, Hispanic or Asian (AEE, 2008). As a result, the education and academic performance of youth in any one of these groups must be a concern for every American, given the fundamental role secondary schools (high schools) play in the continuing growth and development of any nation, and its individual citizens.

In spite of these statistics, research also has noted that when exposed to the 'right opportunities' such as extra-curricular programs Black American youth can be encouraged to stay in school and achieve academic

success (Toldson, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Black and Hispanic American students of color have a general lack of pre-college experiences to make contact with new people and ideas that would influence their decisions to stay in school. A study at the University of Iowa concluded that increased exposure to a variety of interactions did have a positive effect on the individual's self-confidence.

Moreover, when Black and Hispanic American students of color have globalized learning opportunities, it strengthens their academic studies, sparks personal development, and expands their relationship building, networking options and career interests (Salisbury et al, 2008). This research also indicated that Black American students have a desire to participate in education abroad, but generally lack the financial resources to do so. It is this lack of resources that causes major barriers and shapes their expectations about going abroad.

For purposes of this article, globalized education is defined as those academic and experiential learning opportunities offered for youth of high school age in diverse international settings, which permit the individual to develop the values, knowledge, skills and understanding of how to live, work and function in a multi-cultural and interdependent world. Several globalized learning options include: (a) study abroad for credit or non-credit, (b) summer language and leadership or sports camps, (c) paid or volunteer internships, (d) co-op or summer jobs, (e) eco-travel, (f) service learning, (g) Model United Nations, and (h) the traditional student exchange programs.

### **A Way Forward**

Given the state of education for a high percentage of Black American youth, with the exception of isolated examples of academic successes in states across the U.S., a fresh perspective with an *international* slant could stimulate for the better a change in perspectives and learning approaches. Black American high school youth in the U.S. like young people in Ghana and everywhere, need to develop their knowledge, values, understanding of global communities, and keep their skills updated in order to participate productively in their countries, and navigate confidently during these times of worldwide transformations.

The concept of linking global ideas of schooling with local schooling practices is not new, and presumes that both the global and local are constantly changing. In developing and developed nations alike, educational practices including curricular and co-curricular (non-classroom) strategies have been globally 'borrowed and adapted' over time to fit local challenges and cultural contexts (Quist, 2003b; Meyer et al, 1992).

As a consequence, in the spirit of "borrowing and adapting," the results from the case study in Ghana are offered in this article as *critical factors* that U.S. decision-

makers can consider and utilize to assess high school educational practices with an eye for improvement. The results examine what globalized education in one African nation looks like, and discuss what *implications* such approaches to learning could have on educational attainment and graduation from high school for Black American young people. But, first an understanding of why the research study was situated in Ghana, West Africa.

### **Why Ghana?**

Formerly known as the Gold Coast, Ghana has a shared history with the United States in myriad ways, and was initially linked to the Transatlantic Slave Trade beginning in the mid-15th century through the end of the 19th century. Of the 1.1 million people exported from the Gold Coast, more than 500,000 were imported to North America (Lovejoy, 2000). President of the new Republic of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, forged strong relationships with U.S. leaders following independence, and since then the education and economic bonds between the U.S. and Ghana have remained strong. The first U.S. Peace Corps participants were teachers based in Accra, Ghana over 60 years ago (1961), and today the U.S. remains among Ghana's principal trading partners. Ghana is among several African nations whose public high school graduates obtain admission to U.S. colleges and universities (Ghana-U.S. Embassy, 2012).

Since independence from Britain on March 6, 1957, Ghana has introduced education sector reforms an average of every *five* years. During the 1980s, the highly structured British system of education was brought closer to the U.S. education model (Wright, 2010). Ghanaian education reforms of 2007 ushered in a modern computerized system to ensure that students have access to the more popular high schools, and at least one high school of their choice (DGN, 2009). High school education in Ghana refers to the schooling practices between the end of the primary level (pre-Kindergarten, elementary and middle school) and the start of tertiary or higher education levels (including universities, community colleges, and vocational/ technical institutes). Secondary schools or high schools in the U.S. also play an articulating role, as they do in Ghana, between higher levels of learning at colleges or universities and the labor market.

Organizationally, secondary schools in Ghana show similar characteristics to U.S. high schools in distinctively *parallel* ways: a) public and private, b) day or boarding, c) urban or rural locations, d) coed or single gender, and e) grade or age structured. High schools use either the Ghanaian national curriculum or specific schools have received approval from the government to use British, French or American curricula. Likewise, in Ghana the primary school education levels are similar to U.S.

grades: [pre-K, Kindergarten through 6] ages 4-11; Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) are grades [7, 8 and 9] and ages 12-14. The Senior Secondary School (SSS) or Senior High School (SHS) represent high school levels (10, 11, 12 and 13) and ages 15-18/19, which gives one more year for those who need it (President's Report, 2002).

### **METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative research study used a multiple-case approach. The study focused on high schools (or secondary schools) because they are looked upon as *pivotal* institutions that serve multiple purposes in the education systems of both Western and developing (democratic) nations (Alvarez, 2003). These case high schools were selected for the study because they have above average college admission rates of graduates that range between 70 – 98%, and their graduates attend four-year universities either in Ghana or around the world (Thomas, 2010). All three schools are designated by the government as Category A high schools, based in part on the number of facilities and academic programs available.

Their *aims* are similar: to groom young adults for life, leadership and living in a global community, even though each case school uses different curricula and emphasizes certain subjects (e.g., liberal arts courses vs. business), and follows different visions and missions. They all have a rich history, which is aligned with the emergence of Ghana from its British colonial authority to independence, and there continues a great pride in the preparation and successes of their high school graduates.

The demographics of the three urban, high performing high schools are depicted in Table 1. All of the high schools are located in a different section of the Greater Accra metropolitan area, within seven to ten miles from city center. Accra is the capital, Ghana's largest city with a population of about 1.7 million people.

Two of the schools, Public High School A and Public High School B, are defined as "traditional schools" for the purposes of the case study because they are funded by the government, use the Ghanaian national curriculum, and have a predominantly Ghanaian Black student population. Public High School A, founded in 1937, has cultivated a fierce insistence on excellence in all things.

Regardless of its ongoing economic challenges, this drive among faculty, administrators, alumni and students for academic and personal excellence, has consistently ranked it as the 7th or 8th best high school on the African continent (AA, 2003). Public High School B, considered the most highly endowed school complex in Ghana, is located on 1,300 acres of prime forest property. It is the first coed, non-denominational, boarding school founded in 1927, and still has the largest Senior High School enrollment in the country today.

**Table 1.** Demographics of the Ghanaian Case High Schools

Case Schools	School Type	Gender Specific	Enrollment Total	Type of Curriculum	Schooling Age Levels	Vision, Mission Statements
<b>Public High School A</b>	Boarding Day	Boys	1,523 523/Boarding 1,000/Day	Ghana National Curriculum	Grades 10-13 Ages 15-19	Education for life and selfless service based on truth and honesty; prepare students for a pursuit of excellence
<b>Public High School B</b>	Boarding Day	Co-Ed	1,600 816/Girls 784/Boys	Ghana National Curriculum	Grades 10-13 Ages 15-19	Founding ideals are to build character through academic, co-curricular and on campus life; preparing students for leadership (excerpt)
<b>Private High School C</b>	Day Only	Co-Ed	1,215 291/Senior High School attendees	British National Curriculum	Grades 9-12 Ages 14-18	To create and maintain a school that offers the highest quality education, life experiences, and a foundation to become citizens of the world

**Figure 1.** Private High School C, a new Science Laboratory

Private High School C, as pictured in Figure 1, is one of eight private international high schools in Ghana, founded in 1955 by Ghanaian educators two years prior to the nation's independence. The school continues to serve the education needs of both international residents living and working in Ghana, and the local Ghanaian community. A well-equipped computer lab, library, counseling and career center are actively used by their students.

### Research Strategy

The case sample included a total of thirty-seven [N=37] participants, with prior permission given by high school principals to conduct interviews with administrators,

teachers and students on their respective campuses; parental consent was also obtained for students. Parents and alumni from the case schools were interviewed as well. Principals also provided ready access to primary research documents, as well as campus facilities including classrooms, science, computer labs, libraries, art rooms, and other spaces.

The research approach involved in-person interviews, direct observations and data collected within a Ghanaian cultural context in actual school settings, rather than relying solely on secondary sources such as government statistics. Although all interviews were conducted in English (the national language), a Ghanaian research assistant was there to translate or clarify interpretations

**Table 2.** Significance of Senior High Schools

Essential Purposes	Public High School A	Public High School B	Private International School C
1. SSS are <i>pivotal</i> institutions and a “stepping-stone” to higher education and professional training.	■	■	■
2. SHS provide transitional experiences or are perceived as a “turning-point” in the lives of adolescents.	■	■	■
3. SSS are a foundation for life and address adolescent socialization through self-discipline and leadership.	■	■	■
4. SHS provide opportunities for personal growth, inspiration, and the motivation to succeed.	■	■	■
5. SSS provide academic training along with morality teachings, and ethical guidance.	■	■	■

of concepts or phrases to avoid bias or misunderstanding on the interviewer’s part.

Once interviews were transcribed, themes were identified, coded and quotes were referenced for the analysis process. A senior research fellow at the University of Ghana was available to further cross-check historical or contextual data. Interview participants across the three case schools were asked the same set of semi-structured questions to learn: (1) How these high schools prepare young men and women for responsibilities in life, (2) What it means to be a global citizen, and (3) What a globalized education looks like. Of the thirty-seven [37] interviews, six [6] were held with national education policymakers in the government as well as former Ministers of Education. These *non-school interviews* with policymakers bridged the gap in knowledge of how global education perspectives have been folded into the national education policies, and implemented both historically and presently in local Senior High Schools.

## RESULTS

Two key findings from the case study draw on the critical factors that shape the worldview of Ghanaian high school students: (1) the Significance of Senior High Schools, and (2) the Globalizing of High School Education. The first key finding indicated that Senior High Schools are *significant* in Ghana because they are viewed as the ‘launch point’ from which graduates become contributing citizens of their country. Case interview participants across the three high schools described in Table 2, what purposes Senior High Schools serve in Ghanaian society. Admission to one of the top 50 SHS/SSS (there are 500 public and private high schools in the country) is highly competitive, and parents work diligently to give children

the best high school education possible for their personal development during the pre-college years.

A closer look at two of the ‘essential purposes’ of Senior High Schools enabled a further examination of the first key finding, the Significance of Senior High Schools.

### Essential Purpose 1:

SSS are pivotal institutions and a stepping-stone to high education and professional training.

These Senior Secondary Schools and Senior High Schools institutions serve an essential purpose in the Ghanaian education pipeline because they prepare young people for work, vocational training, or higher education and the professions. Student 1, an elected student leader at Private High School C, the international school believed that, “*her SHS was the place to obtain knowledge that would jump-start her career. It prepares us for university work, technical institutes and polytechnics, and offers an advanced level of understanding of subjects more specific in detail.*” SSS and SHS are the foundation and building blocks for a young adult’s future and deciding careers for life.

In fact, SSS and SHS continue the historical focus on formal educational attainment, and if a student earns a high school certificate (diploma), he or she can attend a university or participate in other training options that are available. Student 2, a graduating senior from Public High School B, a traditional school, explained that a high school education also gives young people social status and opportunities for higher learning in Ghana or elsewhere around the world.

*“SSS are important because they are stepping-stones to go to the University, and without a SSS*

*certificate a student cannot attend universities here. Students are nobody, trust me. In this country you are nothing without a SSS certificate.” (Student 2)*

Graduation from a *top* high school has social significance in Ghanaian society. A deeply held cultural core value understood by students and their families is that without a high school diploma individuals are not considered an ‘educated’ person; a person who has both academic knowledge, values and personal skills to interact comfortably with people of diverse cultures and opinions. Students are intensely aware of the ‘social capital’ that comes from the social connections associated with being a Senior High School graduate. One’s standing in society for life is greatly measured by the fact that he or she is part of the local and worldwide networks that exist if you are a graduate of a top Ghanaian Senior High School.

#### Essential Purpose 4:

SHS provide opportunities for personal growth, inspiration and the motivation to succeed.

Senior High Schools are valued in society because they encourage faculty and administrators, parents, students, and even alumni to keep a high level of expectations among the students for academic achievement and personal growth. *Student 3*, a Junior (or 11<sup>th</sup> grade) at Public High School A, a traditional school explained the pressure he has felt to be successful.

*“In SSS you are treated like adults and you are expected to go deeper with your studies, you are expected to do research [using the Internet] and you learn time management. SSS helped me learn a lot and understand how to be independent and on my own. I used to put myself down a lot before we had a visit from an Old Boy [alumnus] who spoke to me and inspired me. He said, there isn’t anything I can’t do, and from then on my thoughts have changed.” (Student 3)*

At this traditional high school, students are encouraged by school staff to push themselves and stretch their limits, and they are mentored by alumni to do their best. Even though the pressure is overwhelming for some students, there is a pride of ‘personal achievement’ that most often wins out. This ‘direct and intentional’ involvement from adults associated with the school is the foundation of the students’ successes.

Expectations for students’ learning and development are exacting at all levels of the school environment. High schools are the place in society where students are catapulted into life and motivated toward greater achievement. *Student 4*, a student leader at Public High School B, a traditional school, described the benefits of

‘flexible learning schedules’ at his boarding school.

*“At this school, young persons have a chance to learn in the morning, afternoons and evenings. We are fortunate to have a school like this – we have learning that can take place anytime. We have special classes organized for students who think they need more attention in certain subjects like Math and Science. This assistance really helps—believe me. Those with Cs start getting Bs, and those with Bs get As. It’s a very good thing because getting Cs and Ds is not acceptable at this School.” (Student 4)*

The *second* key finding identified by the case participants was Globalizing High School Education. Evidence from the study consistently revealed that *all* of the participants highly valued secondary education as a *critical factor* for preparing high school graduates to live in the world, both in and outside of Ghana. Teachers, administrators, students, parents and alumni alike, believed that globalizing high school learning was important because world populations today are so interdependent. Interview participants suggested that individuals across global communities by interacting more, could bring about understanding and respect for one another. Case participants further agreed that globalized learning is demonstrated in high schools through these learning modalities:

- (1) Academic curriculum (explicit) content
- (2) Co-curricular or Extra-curricular (implicit) program offerings

#### **Academic Curriculum**

Teachers and administrators at the international Private High School C indicated that their curriculum’s key strength is the ‘integration’ of global issues and information across different course topics. Both acknowledged that ‘critical thinking’ is incorporated into the desired curriculum outcomes. Students are taught to be independent minded, and they must learn to include ‘an example’ when they analyze an issue. A teacher at this high school stated that, *“critical thinking is a valued skill, which also includes being confident and feeling free enough to speak one’s own mind.” (Teacher 1)*

Teaching staff at Public High Schools A, B and the Private High School C, noted that explicit knowledge, in addition to the core subjects (e.g., Math, Sciences, Social Studies, and History), is necessary for graduates headed to an outside world external to school life and Ghana. Typically, this knowledge is taught in such subjects as Geography, Economics and Language courses. All three case schools require Geography courses, and Ghanaian high school graduates are expected to learn at least one



**Figure 2.** Public High School B, a new German language building.

foreign language, usually French or German, other than English and their indigenous languages. See Figure 2, Public High School B re-introduced German language courses, and built a new facility for faculty and student use.

A variety of electives are available to students including Health Education, Information Technology, Art, Music and the Performing Arts, Journalism, Business, and Communications. Students at the three case schools have access to Science and Computer Labs, even though the use of electronic devices like iPads and cell phones are prohibited during the school day. A review follows of the importance *co-curricular* (implicit learning) has in the three case school environments.

### Co-Curricular Learning

Table 3, is a composite display of some extra-curricular offerings at the three case high schools. There was a consensus among the teachers, administrators, parents and students, and alumni across the three high schools, that one of the best ways to globalize SSS or SHS students' education are co-curricular experiences to expand their horizons. Such engagements expose students to the breadth of issues both inside and outside of their country, and to people and ideas that shape their worldview.

Interview participants at all three schools did acknowledge that traditional schools and international schools have varying degrees of globalized education options. These opportunities are often available based on the financial resources of the school or parents' ability to pay, or both. Alumni networks at the three schools were found to be a support group that can financially donate to upgrade school equipment, labs and other learning

materials, and provide international education abroad programs.

*Student 5*, a student body elected officer at Public High School B, a traditional school, strongly believed that co-curricular activities like study abroad enhance the academic subjects taught in the classroom. They also help bridge the gaps between 'theoretical and practical' applications, and broaden a student's abilities to think analytically.

*"A girl in my class went to the U.S. on study abroad. She says in the U.S. subjects like Science are more practical application not just theory from a book approach like that taught in Ghana. She combines the two and it makes Science and Math easy for her because she has experienced the best of both approaches. The theory part is taught in Ghana very well and the practical is applied in the U.S."* (Student 5)

In summary, the case study results demonstrated that secondary schools (Senior Secondary Schools or Senior High Schools) in Ghana are influential institutions that play a necessary function in the preparation of their young people for a globalized world, testing their ability as individuals and citizens to resolve issues of the day. And since pre-independence, it has been the boarding and day secondary schools (both public and private), that have been the 'anointed' places for shaping young adults to be educated and trained for life as citizens of a growing nation and the world.

A *discussion* follows of the case study and what the findings further reveal that could be guideposts to address the challenges in educational attainment and graduation completion for U.S. Black American high

**Table 3.** Globalized Extra-Curricular Learning

Student Clubs	Service Learning	School Exchanges	Self-Funded
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model United Nations</li> <li>• Yearbook, School Newsletter</li> <li>• Wildlife, conservation</li> <li>• Local, international debate</li> <li>• Drama, performing arts</li> <li>• Pan-African club</li> <li>• School choir, band</li> <li>• Swimming, table tennis</li> <li>• Faith-based groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local government hospitals, children's homes</li> <li>• Youth Action Poverty Project (YAPP)</li> <li>• School for Learning Disabilities Project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students visit other "sister schools" in Ghana</li> <li>• Visits between students in Ghana, U.K., and U.S.</li> <li>• Sports, physical education (soccer, cricket) matches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-funded summer, school breaks, and holiday education abroad programs, includes Gap Year</li> </ul>

school learners.

## DISCUSSION

Just as Ghanaian leaders, decision-makers and citizens have learned from the U.S., we in the U.S. in the spirit of borrowing and adapting can learn from Ghanaian educators about the value of a quality high school education. Further evidence from the study also affirmed that high school education in Ghana regardless of school type (traditional or international), has had as its purpose the goal of developing the 'whole person' and shaping students' understanding of the world and their role in it.

Table 4, is a composite of what a 'whole person' must aspire to, as described by the case study's interview participants across the three high schools. Engaging seriously in the development of the 'whole person' is a process that could be applied to the educational attainment of Black American high school youth given the dramatic improvements needed in their graduation completion rates.

Shining a spotlight on the significance of high schools in the U.S. is necessary for all students, in particular Black American youth whose high school dropout rates persist disproportionately, and because high schools are *pivotal* institutions, which means they are a critical link in America's education pipeline.

These educational institutions are the transition-place that prepares students for post-secondary options: higher education (e.g., four-year colleges and universities, community colleges, vocational or technical institutes), leadership and management careers across work

sectors, and non-school options like military service careers. High schools can serve as a 'bridge to adulthood' for young people.

Amidst world transformations that are unfolding every day, it is more important than ever to create a framework for preparing U.S. Black American young people to graduate from high school ready for a global workforce and life.

Two *implications* emerged from the study results that could address schooling practices for Black American high school students:

- (1) Reinvigorate the Value of High School Education
- (2) Globalize Curricular and Co-curricular practices

True, there are long-standing racial and socio-economic inequities that stubbornly continue for Black American citizens, and as a result too many of U.S. public high schools have failed their mission to educate and train Black American graduates for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century. By examining the philosophies and practices in international education settings, new alternative strategies could emerge.

### Implication I: Reinvigorate the Value of High Schools

Educational attainment and high school graduation are essential to the survival and success in today's world. Research has shown that a high school diploma is a



**Table 4.** A Toolkit for Global Living

The 'Whole' Person	What it Means
<b>Academically Prepared</b>	Well-versed in core subjects like Science, Math, Social Studies, Economics and History, but also schooled in Geography, History, Philosophy (e.g., Ethics) and a second language other than English. Being exposed to an ample dose of such electives as health education, art and music appreciation, literature, debate or public speaking, basic research and study skills, and life management skills.
<b>Self-Awareness and Respect</b>	Knowledgeable of self and who you want to be in the world; seeing the self in a new way in relation to others in the world. A capacity to respect self and other people, cultures, opinions and ideas; to be tolerant and understanding.
<b>Technologically Adept</b>	Skilled with computers and other technologies that would be used for efficient communications in any social or work setting worldwide.
<b>Ready to Assume Leadership</b>	Acquired academic knowledge and training, interpersonal skills, analytical thinking, a willingness to take on leadership roles anywhere it is necessary, locally and globally.

minimum prerequisite for economic and social mobility in the U.S., and throughout the world. Without a diploma (or its equivalent), young adults are ill-equipped for a modern workforce (Davis and Ajzen et al, 2002). It has been argued in this article that high schools are highly valuable educational entities for young adults in global settings such as Ghana. Conversely, in the U.S., the persistent high dropout rates of Black American students signals the need to *prioritize* the importance of receiving a quality high school education.

A *re-tooling* of U.S. high school education that would position Black American students at the *center* of the process is necessary, especially if the nation wants to utilize all of its human capital. Intentional re-tooling strategies would create a decidedly focused 'culture of achievement' in high schools, much like the intentional practices found in the three Ghanaian high performing high schools. Faculty and administrators in re-tooled U.S. high schools would be driven to assure that Black American students stay in school, achieve academic success, and actively engage in goal setting.

At the core of this intentional school culture would be an inspiring learning environment for those who attend, and it would utilize a 'guiding philosophy' of creating the whole person, an individual who also contributes positively to his or her community, and to the world. Table 5, depicts the elements needed to re-tool U.S. high schools to create an optimal learning experience that would benefit Black American students. Likely, these enhancements would upgrade and transform the entire school environment for everyone.

High schools in the U.S. whether *integrated or not*, would need to reinvigorate and make intentional their goal of educating and training Black American students,

not just in academics, but in opening their minds and expanding their worldview. Bringing back the plethora of co-curricular activities that were typically found in public U.S. high schools twenty, thirty or forty years ago would go far to stimulate a better understanding of the connections between what is taught in the classroom (theory) and what exists outside it (application). Re-tooled high schools in the U.S. would have higher expectations for Black American students, and insist on a higher level of dedication from the learning community's school staff, parents and alumni.

All three high performing case schools in Ghana have had a long tradition of adult involvement on behalf of the students in attendance. Assistance includes financial support to the schools and individual students, and mentoring students through the rigorous academic demands faced during their matriculation. Adult participation in the learning environment is fundamental to creating a culture of achievement.

By supporting a belief in the capabilities of Black American students through a reinvigorated mindset among high school learning communities, all those who enter the learning environment would nurture and guide students. Students would be intentional about staying in school, which Davis and Ajzen et al (2002) further noted is a factor that predicts the likelihood they will get their diploma.

#### **Implication II: Globalizing Education Does Matter**

We have learned from research that the right

**Table 5.** Re-tooling U.S. High Schools for Success

Creating a Culture of Achievement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutual respect and understanding</li> <li>• High expectations and accountability for student success</li> <li>• Extended days for more learning time, and longer school year to aid knowledge retention</li> <li>• Experiential learning options, hands-on application of theoretical concepts</li> <li>• Well-equipped Science, Math and Language labs</li> <li>• Enhanced electives (e.g. Arts and Music, Debate, Health Education, Ethics and Leadership Development)</li> <li>• A complete Wi-Fi environment, state-of-the-art learning technologies</li> <li>• An active, fully engaged network of parents, alumni and mentors</li> </ul>

opportunities (e.g., co-curricular or extra-curricular programs) could expand Black American students' learning, inspire and encourage their desire to stay in school, and to achieve academic success. The Ghana study further emphasized the value of globalizing educational experiences for high school students, particularly since they are of age to participate in programs that would expand their perspectives.

As the study also illustrated, experiential learning options can be organized through student clubs, service learning both domestic and international, and education abroad programs. These would widen students' social and knowledge networks that support building relationships necessary for success in the global workforce, and life in general.

Black American young people in U.S. high schools need to be intentionally directed by teachers, administrators, counselors, and parents to actively participate in co-curricular programs. They would gain from the challenges of being an 'international student' who studies, volunteers or works abroad. In addition, monetary resources need to be made readily available for Black American students, particularly from low-resource backgrounds, to encourage their participation with minimum barriers.

An intentional learning environment would also set higher standards with the expectation that Black American students would take subjects in Geography, History and Social Studies, Philosophy including Ethics, and at least one foreign language other than English to enable interaction across multiple cultures. Unless Black American students have a chance to stretch and do something different, it is difficult to expand their worldview or build the self-esteem that comes with being able to comfortably engage people regardless of culture or language.

Meeting new people in other places allows students to learn different perspectives, and experience such daily activities as owning a passport, exchanging money in foreign airports, going through U.S. Customs, crossing

borders, and moving through multiple global time zones. These and the many globalized experiences that others take for granted because they have access to resources, would teach Black American students more about who they are and what they are capable of achieving, as they prepare to make career decisions and life choices after high school.

## CONCLUSION

The U.S. as a developed nation is in a position to measure its progress and success given the quality of education experienced by the citizens who need it the most. One critical benchmark would be the number of Black American high school students staying in school and graduating. If education systems in the U.S. can institute 'zero tolerance' policies around guns and violence in schools as they have done across this country, then why can they not mandate a 'zero tolerance policy' against Black American youth dropping out of high school? The right opportunities and guidance can raise graduation rates, and encourage graduates to pursue higher levels of education and training to meet a variety of job demands, according to the U.S. Department of Labor (2014), jobs that will require more than a high school diploma by the end of this decade.

Both educational attainment and graduation from high school are necessary to the survival and success in today's world. Research has told us that a high school diploma is a minimum prerequisite for economic and social mobility in the U.S., and without a diploma or an equivalent, young people are ill-prepared for a modern workforce.

Engaging the future requires an 'all hands on deck' strategy that intentionally nurtures the creative talents of all young adults, including today's Black American students, so they do not become 50% of the high school dropouts of tomorrow. Time is long overdue to reverse a trend in America fueled by a long history of social,

economic and political actions that are wasting the nation's human capital to its detriment.

Delamarter (2012), has said that education allows us to rethink our places in the cosmos, by imagining a future free from the ideas and misconceptions that have held us captive, so we can move beyond them. In his own words:

*“Thus, training whether in Science, Art, Language, or any other discipline, is not an end in and of itself; it is a platform from which to see the world differently and to be different in response. Training provides the tools, but education provides the vision.”*

Even so, high schools in the U.S. have much catching up to do because far too many Black American youth are not graduating from high school. Or, they are not being prepared to live, work or thrive in a society that has gone global, if they do manage to receive a high school diploma.

What about restoring basic U.S. high school graduation requirements that would include two years or more of a language other than English? This would prepare all graduates to converse adroitly within U.S. borders and with our global neighbors. What happened to high school Debate and Public Speaking courses? Skills learned in these classes are necessary for analytical thinking and effective communications. Adding courses in Geography as a graduation requirement for everyone, would go far to jump start high school youths' understanding of who they are in the world scheme of things. High quality *co-curricular* opportunities like Model United Nations, which engages students to address vital issues from world government points of view, would be an ideal experience for *all* students to participate in as a *core* course, rather than being an *elective* for a 'choice few' who are selected to travel with the MUN student teams.

Young people in the U.S., like their counterparts in Ghana and throughout the world, need a worldview which fully embraces the personal and professional values, knowledge, understanding and skills, to function in a time of rapid social, economic and political transformations, both here and abroad. The case study results have established that high schools are a place where a worldview can be cultivated and explored. High schools in the U.S. ought to offer paid summer exchange or travel abroad programs, language, science, math and music workshops, and leadership or sports camps held in other countries. These *co-curricular* experiences could be the very life-changing incentives needed to avert Black American students from leaving school before graduation.

The complexities of globalization have prompted U.S. scholars for over three decades to call for the inclusion of global education practices in school curricula. Young adults need to know what it means to be a global citizen, someone who can comfortably live and work in a multicultural world that is socially and economically

interdependent, and politically inter-connected (Banks, 2004). The 2005 U.S. Lincoln Commission reported that, *“making study abroad the norm and not the exception would position present and future generations of Americans for success in the world.”* The Commission also stated that education abroad opportunities should be a realistic opportunity for every student regardless of race, gender, financial ability or academic interests.

For Black American youth in U.S. high schools, globalizing educational experiences could shift their worldview, open innovative pathways for academic success and self-confidence, personal growth and a renewed sense of purpose in the world.

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