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Honouring Heritage, Empowering Educators: Pre-Service Social Studies Teachers' Perspectives on Indigenous Cultural Values

Authors

Delma Amenyo Marmon-Halm [1]; Alfred Kuranchie [2]; Clarke Ebow Yalley [3]; Benjamin Takyi [4]

Main author's email: 9261080013@st.uew.edu.gh

(1.2.3.4) University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

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Abstract

This study examined the perceptions and extent of appreciation of indigenous Ghanaian cultural values among pre-service Social Studies teachers at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), and the factors that shape that appreciation. Curriculum decolonisation and Africanisation are central to debates on teacher education in Africa, yet little is known about how far pre-service Social Studies teachers appreciate the indigenous cultural values they are expected to teach. The study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods. Close-ended questionnaires were first administered to 300 respondents, followed by semi-structured interviews with 15 participants. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were employed to analyse the numeric and non-numeric data respectively. From the descriptive analysis, the study revealed that the pre-service teachers' perception of indigenous cultural values was moderate and with a notably high level of cultural appreciation reported on behavioural indicators. The interviews corroborated and extended these findings: participants identified respect, honesty, tolerance, and hospitality as core Ghanaian values, but many reported limited knowledge of them and acknowledged the competing influence of global media and Western cultural norms. The study concludes that pre-service Social Studies teachers are positively inclined towards indigenous values but are not yet adequately prepared to teach them. It recommends that the 'Kasakoa' Pedagogical Framework and the 'Akwaaba' Protocol as ideas for piloting and evaluation. The findings provide context-specific evidence to inform teacher education curricula and professional development in Ghana.

Key terms: Cultural value appreciation, decolonisation, indigenous cultural values, pre-service teachers, Social Studies.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study examined the perceptions and extent of appreciation of indigenous Ghanaian cultural values among pre-service Social Studies teachers at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), and the factors that shape that appreciation. Debates on decolonising school curricula in Africa centre on a persistent educational problem: curricula and teacher preparation inherited from the colonial period continue to privilege Western knowledge systems and European languages, while marginalising indigenous knowledge and values (Dei, 2017; Mignolo, 2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Authentic African development at the national and continental levels therefore requires recovering and integrating indigenous knowledge systems into education (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018), and integrating cultural values into formal teacher education has become imperative. Awoniyi's (2015) and Pinto's (2019) studies reported a pervasive decline in the appreciation, transmission, and practice of indigenous values, especially among youth in Sub-Saharan Africa, due to interconnected historical and contemporary forces that have devalued indigenous knowledge, creating epistemic shame (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986). Post-colonial curricula perpetuate Eurocentric epistemologies, marginalising indigenous ways of knowing (Dei, 2000). Globalisation accelerates Western cultural penetration through media and technology, displacing traditional practices (Appadurai, 1996). Rapid urbanisation fragments community structures responsible for intergenerational cultural transmission (Imbang et al., 2025). Religious influences condemn traditional practices (Meyer, 1999), while language loss severs youth from cultural memory, collectively producing culturally alienated younger generations across Sub-Saharan Africa (Mignolo, 2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Nyamnjoh, 2017).

Cultural values are generally conceptualised as the social standards that define what a society considers desirable in social life (Wallendorf, 2017; Yakovenko et al., 2015). This suggests that societies differ in the ideals that motivate their members' actions and beliefs. From an African ontological perspective, Awoniyi (2015) explains that African cultural values are the attitudes, behaviours, and actions that African communities have adopted and refined over time as standards specifying socially preferred modes of conduct. Building on this, indigenous cultural values in this study refer to the beliefs, norms, and practices that Ghanaian communities have transmitted across generations to guide conduct, relationships, and identity, and that are expressed in everyday behaviour. Studies of Ghanaian values consistently show that kinship systems, respect for elders, communality, hospitality, authority, and obedience form a core part of Ghanaian societies' shared value system (Awoniyi, 2015; Brown, 2019; Kwame, 2019; Osei-Tutu et al., 2023; Sarbah, 2010).

Social Studies Education plays a significant role in protecting and promoting indigenous Ghanaian values. As an integrated subject, Social Studies mainly addresses citizenship, culture, and conceptual problem-solving. This integration can bring indigenous value systems into formal education. (Tamana et al., 2024; NCSS, 2010). Moreover, Social Studies education and its framework recognise the need for cultural studies and research, acknowledging the development of cultural consciousness that Social Studies can offer (Karadeniz, 2020). This means Social Studies education can enhance the value of indigenous Ghanaian ethics and citizenship. In the African context, this is especially significant, since the formal education system's approach to ethics leaves much to be desired, given its detachment from indigenous value systems and traditional African education (Obiagu, 2023). By expressing the value systems of the communities in which they live, Social Studies teachers have the greatest potential to influence children's

value systems. Social Studies teachers' disposition, understanding, and appreciation of indigenous values in Ghana would determine how fully they convey these values to learners (Karadeniz, 2020; Spacey, 2023). Yet growing concerns persist about whether teacher education institutions, including the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), Ghana's foremost teacher training institution, adequately equip pre-service teachers to engage substantively with indigenous knowledge systems in their professional practice.

Recent Ghanaian scholarship has made a strong case for positioning Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) within Social Studies teacher education. A study by Atibiya et al. (2025) involving tutors, curriculum officers, teacher trainees, and community elders across five regions identifies indigenous governance, cultural histories, ecological knowledge, belief systems, and human–nature relationships as relevant to Social Studies, while also reporting constraints to integration. A related study by Segkulu et al. (2025) in northern Ghana reports that Social Studies teachers recognise the importance of multicultural perspectives, but that curriculum representation and classroom integration face limitations. However, these studies (Atibiya et al., 2025; Segkulu et al., 2025) do not directly establish pre-service Social Studies teachers' own perceptions of indigenous cultural values or the extent to which they appreciate those values. Research on Ghanaian pre-service teachers' indigenous-knowledge views has focused on science education, where participants expressed support for its educational role and openness to training; those findings cannot be assumed to represent Social Studies trainees or their views of cultural values specifically (Anor, 2024, 2025). Earlier Ghanaian work examined teacher trainees' perceptions of the Social Studies curriculum generally, but it did not specifically assess indigenous cultural values (Kankam, 2010). The gap is therefore both population-specific and construct-specific.

The literature provides limited direct evidence about what Social Studies pre-service teachers understand by indigenous cultural values, how they perceive their relevance and place in Social Studies, and how strongly they appreciate them (Atibiya et al., 2025; Segkulu et al., 2025; Kankam, 2010). In particular, it does not clearly distinguish general endorsement of including Indigenous knowledge in a curriculum from informed, value-specific appreciation. Addressing this gap would build a context-specific evidence base to strengthen culturally responsive Social Studies teacher preparation and curriculum implementation.

Anchored in the institutional mandate to produce professionally grounded, culturally responsive educators, this study sought to investigate pre-service Social Studies teachers' cultural value appreciation at the University of Education, Winneba. This study intends to generate context-specific empirical evidence to inform curriculum review, policy development, and professional development interventions to facilitate the appreciation of cultural values.

The study was guided by the following research questions: What are pre-service Social Studies teachers' perceptions of indigenous cultural values? To what extent do pre-service Social Studies teachers appreciate indigenous cultural values?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Global Perspectives: Pre-Service Teachers and Indigenous Knowledge

Outside Africa, research on pre-service teachers and indigenous knowledge has mostly examined whether deliberately designed teacher education can build cultural competence. Macdonald et al. (2023) reported on a cohort-based pedagogy for developing indigenous cultural competency among pre-service teachers in Australia; McInnes (2017) examines the benefits of an American Indian content and pedagogy course in

the United States; and Pevec-Zimmer et al. (2024) used a mixed-methods design to study how the Identity Project promotes awareness and self-efficacy for culturally responsive teaching in Germany.

Collectively, these studies suggest that carefully designed programmes can strengthen cultural competence, awareness or self-efficacy, and their strength lies in tying outcomes to identifiable pedagogies that teacher educators can adapt (Macdonald et al., 2023; McInnes, 2017; Pevec-Zimmer et al., 2024). Their relevance to the present study is nonetheless partial. The studies also evaluate the effects of an intervention rather than the appreciation of their own communities' cultural values that prospective teachers bring to training. This international evidence, therefore, offers useful models for programme design. Still, they do not show how far pre-service teachers in a postcolonial African setting already appreciate, and feel prepared to teach, indigenous values.

African Perspectives: Indigenous Knowledge, Value Education and the Teacher

African scholarship has mainly argued why indigenous knowledge belongs in education. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018, 2021) frames the issue as one of epistemic freedom and resistance to a 'cognitive empire'; Ezeanya-Esiobu (2019) and Mawere (2015) examine the place of indigenous knowledge in African education systems; Abah et al. (2015) discuss how African indigenous knowledge systems might be integrated into science teaching; and Obiagu (2023) argues for a decolonised moral education. These works are strong on rationale and the case for curriculum change; however, they are largely conceptual or subject-specific and say little about the dispositions of prospective teachers who must implement such curricula (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021; Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). Empirical studies of teachers' practices, attitudes, and obstacles are fewer, and they address multicultural education more generally or teacher educators rather than appreciation of specific cultural values (Anlimachie, 2026; Mensah et al., 2025; Ronoh & Khau, 2018). African literature therefore provides a firm rationale for the present study but offers limited evidence on how prospective teachers relate to indigenous values.

Other studies also point to teachers' dispositions as a condition for successful value education. For instance, Celikkaya and Filoglu (2014) argue that Social Studies teachers' attitudes toward indigenous values shape the extent to which they integrate them into classroom practice. Teachers are also widely regarded as role models for their students (Richards, 2022). From this perspective, Abah et al. (2015) and Mawere (2015) all conclude that formal education should deliberately support and safeguard local cultural values; likewise, Ndaita (2026) recommends that professional development should equip teachers to include those values authentically in their teaching. The common idea among these scholars is that teachers are more likely to convey values they appreciate, making appreciation worth examining before teachers enter the classroom (Abah et al., 2015; Ndaita, 2026; Mawere, 2015). This strand's weakness is that its claims rest largely on argument or on studies from single national settings, so the link between appreciation and classroom practice is plausible rather than firmly demonstrated.

Theoretical Framework

The study was grounded in decolonial thought. Decoloniality seeks to disrupt the colonial hierarchies of knowing and being that privilege Western forms of knowledge and push indigenous forms to the margins; the study accordingly treats appreciation of cultural values as a site of active epistemic struggle rather than a neutral position.

Five theorists supply specific interpretive concepts: Mignolo (2011), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018), Santos (2014), and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986). Mignolo (2011) contributes the colonial matrix of power and the decolonial option, used to interpret why only moderately high appreciation persists after formal independence. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) contributes the coloniality of knowledge and epistemic freedom, used to interpret the knowledge gap and the call to recognise African knowledge frameworks. Santos (2014) contributes epistemicide, the systematic elimination of non-Western ways of knowing, used to explain why naming a value is not the same as commanding it epistemically. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) contributes the idea that colonial education produces 'intellectually colonised subjects' by privileging the coloniser's language and world, which is used to interpret participants' ambivalence. Smith (2012) argues that including indigenous knowledge within colonial institutions does not, by itself, amount to decolonisation, which is used to assess the culture-related curriculum. Quijano (2000, 2007) and Maldonado-Torres (2007) are drawn on for the coloniality of power and of being. This shapes the study's focus on teacher education.

Relational ontology in African philosophies prioritises community and respect for elders. This, along with unique greeting patterns, should be considered a theoretical framework rather than merely cultural content. Maldonado-Torres (2007) argues that being in coloniality means indigenous social realities are continuously negotiated in relation to global structures. Pre-service teachers who can do this are what Mignolo and Walsh (2018) call the decolonial option, which seeks to advocate the negotiations of modernity for the sake of epistemic plurality. In this context, identifying a major reflexive tension is important. This study does not seek to resolve this reflexive tension. Rather, this reflexive tension warrants further study. This reflexive tension is partially addressed by integrating quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews. Additionally, the intervention balances the breadth of statistics with the depth of interpretation, while prioritising participants' voices. Decolonial epistemic frameworks are also reflected in a potential study of this intervention, particularly if it incorporates ethnographic and participatory methods.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

A sequential explanatory mixed methods design was adopted in which the first phase used a quantitative strand, and the second, an explanatory qualitative strand beyond the quantitative findings. This design was based on the dominant-less-dominant framework of Creswell and Creswell (2023). The scope and subjective dimensions of pre-service teachers' appreciation of cultural values required a mixed-method orientation. In line with a reflexive position, the researchers recognised that while the quantitative strand relied on psychometric tools of Western origin, the qualitative strand was designed to provide in-depth understanding that addresses the limitations of the former. The quantitative strand came first, and its results were then used to design and focus the qualitative strand. The two sets of findings are integrated in the discussion of the findings for each research question.

The target population consisted of 2,718 pre-service Social Studies teachers from the University of Education, Winneba, a pioneering teacher education university in Ghana. From this population, an accessible population of 852 Level 300 students was targeted, as they had undertaken the institution-specific culture-related courses, making them the most appropriate respondents.

Participation in these courses is expected to have significantly increased students' exposure to key aspects of profound Ghanaian indigenous cultural values. The quantitative phase of this study indicated that the

minimum required sample would be 265, as set out in Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table.

To improve statistical representativeness and reduce anticipated non-response, the study adopted a sample size of 300, a common practice in survey-based educational research (Silverwood et al., 2024). The study implemented simple random sampling, so all individuals in the accessible population had the same chance of being selected (Noor et al., 2022; Kuranchie, 2021). The department provided a list of 852 Level 300 students, which was numbered, and 300 numbers were drawn without replacement using a random-number generator.

In the qualitative phase, 16 participants were selected from 67 volunteer subjects based on ethnicity and gender. This selection was necessary to reflect variation in the university's student population. One participant withdrew before the first interview. The semi-structured interviews were conducted (max. 17th interview) to prompt data saturation. The interview pool of 9-17 was based on previous research that suggested data saturation was reached with that number of interviews. This was especially true for homogeneous population groups (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Regarding data saturation, the 14th and 15th interviews were used to apply the research rule of precaution and ensure no variation in the data was missed (Guest et al., 2020). The 15th participant also met the stipulated guideline of 12 participants to capture the varied conceptual themes resulting from the study (Guest et al., 2020).

Two complementary instruments were designed to gather the data needed for both the qualitative and quantitative segments. The quantitative instrument consisted of a two-part closed-ended structured questionnaire. The first part contained demographic questions. The second part measured study participants' perceptions of, and level of appreciation for, Ghanaian indigenous cultural values using items on a Likert-type scale. Unlike other measurement scales, Likert-type scale results can be easily quantified and statistically analysed, making them especially useful for capturing respondents' subjective perceptions (Gay et al., 2009). Items in the second part were rated on a five-point scale (1 = Very Low, 2 = Low, 3 = Moderate, 4 = High, 5 = Very High), with higher scores indicating greater perceived value and appreciation of indigenous cultural values. To pre-test the proposed questionnaire, several respondents were drawn from the same department from which the sample for the main study was drawn. These respondents were then excluded from the main study. Items that were perceived to be ambiguous were modified and/or eliminated after the preliminary testing. The pre-test yielded a Cronbach alpha of .893, which was considered ideal for the study.

For the qualitative part, a pre-designed flexible interview schedule was developed. This helped the researchers probe participants to gather their experiences in the order and manner they preferred. The semi-structured interview format was chosen to allow the researcher flexibility to ask follow-up questions while providing enough structure to ensure comparability across interviews (Kuranchie, 2021). All interviews were recorded and transcribed in full after receiving participants' consent.

Quantitative data were entered into IBM SPSS Version 26 after coding. Respondents' appreciation for indigenous cultural values and the data were summarised mainly using descriptive statistics: frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation. Quantitative results shaped the qualitative phase in two ways. First, the interview schedule was built around the questionnaire findings that needed explanation: the moderately high overall scores and the large neutral and negative responses, the lower self-assessed

knowledge of indigenous values, and the values participants appreciated most. Second, participants were drawn from volunteers to reflect the ethnic and gender variation in the student population, so explanations came from varied groups of respondents.

The qualitative data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-phase thematic analysis framework. This analysis included familiarising myself with the data, generating initial unstructured codes, assembling codes into candidate themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming the themes, and producing a report that included the integrated themes. Transcripts were analysed individually before identifying cross-case thematic patterns. During the analysis, each participant was assigned a pseudonym (PT1-P15) to protect their identity. Transcription conventions were used throughout the 15 interviews, and speech markers were captured to maintain an authentic representation of the expression.

To establish both face and content validity, two Social Studies education and curriculum studies experts and one general faculty member were consulted. The expert feedback on revising the wording of each research instrument item was incorporated. The qualitative findings were deemed credible, dependable, and confirmable through multiple methods. To validate the accuracy of the interpretations, member checking was employed. Participants received their interview transcripts and were asked to confirm or correct them; the comments received were used to clarify wording. Reflexive journaling was implemented throughout fieldwork and analysis to improve researcher reflexivity. In addition, an extended audit trail was documented to provide a clear, verifiable account of the analytical decisions made (Ahmed, 2024).

Ethical Considerations

The University of Education, Winneba's Ethical Review Board approved the study, enabling data collection. Participants were provided information about the study and were asked for their consent. Participants maintained the right to withdraw participation from the study even after providing consent. The request for audio recordings was well received by participants as an indication of their consent. Throughout the study, participants were assured of their right to confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were referred to by pseudonyms, as suggested by Flick (2014). Participants were not given misleading information about the study and were not coerced.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings by research question. For each research question, the results are reported first and then interpreted together with the interview data through the decolonial framework.

Social Studies Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of Indigenous Cultural Values

Table 1 presents the 300 respondents' ratings of eleven statements on perceptions of indigenous Ghanaian cultural values. For each statement, it gives the percentage of respondents choosing each response category, followed by the item mean and standard deviation.

Table 1: Pre-Service Social Studies Teachers' Perceptions of Indigenous Cultural Values (N = 300)

Statement	VL (f/%)	L (f/%)	M (f/%)	H (f/%)	VH (f/%)	Mean	SD
Indigenous Ghanaian shared values are well known among pre-service SST teachers.	83(27.7)	39(13.0)	18(6.0)	60(20.0)	100(33.3)	3.18	1.65
Indigenous Ghanaian shared values inform people's choices of what is good or bad.	16(5.3)	88(29.3)	35(11.7)	107(35.7)	54(18.0)	3.32	1.22
Indigenous Ghanaian shared values encourage honesty in people.	46(15.3)	44(14.7)	56(18.7)	57(19.0)	97(32.3)	3.38	1.45
Indigenous Ghanaian shared values encourage people to respect the elderly in society.	23(7.7)	58(19.3)	41(13.7)	100(33.3)	78(26.0)	3.51	1.27
Indigenous Ghanaian shared values encourage communal living.	34(11.3)	47(15.7)	57(19.0)	82(27.3)	80(26.7)	3.42	1.33
Indigenous Ghanaian shared values help to entrench hospitality.	25(8.3)	53(17.7)	53(17.7)	100(33.3)	69(23.0)	3.45	1.25
Indigenous Ghanaian shared values emphasise morality.	38(12.7)	29(9.7)	57(19.0)	87(29.0)	89(29.7)	3.53	1.34
Indigenous Ghanaian shared	17(5.7)	55(18.3)	56(18.7)	98(32.7)	74(24.7)	3.52	1.20
The component of culture in the Social Studies curriculum helps students develop problem-solving competencies.	29(9.7)	39(13.0)	65(21.7)	87(29.0)	80(26.7)	3.50	1.27
The component of culture in the Social Studies curriculum helps students develop an appreciation for our heritage.	21(7.0)	44(14.7)	64(21.3)	88(29.3)	83(27.7)	3.56	1.23
Indigenous Ghanaian shared values can form the content of liberal education.	25(8.3)	34(11.3)	71(23.7)	90(30.0)	80(26.6)	3.55	1.23
Total Mean / Standard Deviation						**3.45**	**1.31**

VL = Very Low, L = Low, M = Moderate, H = High, VH = Very High.
Mean interpretation: 1.00–1.80 = Very Low; 1.81–2.60 = Low; 2.61–3.40 = Moderate; 3.41–4.20 = High; 4.21–5.00 = Very High.

Across the eleven statements, the overall mean was M = 3.45 (SD = 1.3), which falls in the 'High' band (3.41–4.20) of the scale in Table 1 but only just above its boundary with the 'Moderate' band (2.61–3.40). Item means ranged from 3.18 (that indigenous Ghanaian shared values are well known among pre-service Social Studies teachers) to 3.56 (that the culture component of the Social Studies curriculum helps students develop an appreciation for their heritage). Respondents were most positive about the

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curriculum's role in developing appreciation for heritage (M = 3.56), the place of indigenous values in liberal education (M = 3.55) and their emphasis on morality (M = 3.53), and least convinced that the values are well known among pre-service teachers (M = 3.18). This does not indicate a lack of consensus. Rather, it shows a statistically mixed distribution, with large numbers of respondents agreeing (H and VH), others disagreeing (VL and L), and a sizeable group giving a neutral (M) response; the perceptions are therefore best described as moderately high rather than strongly positive.

From a decolonial perspective, this uncertainty matters. Quijano (2000) argues that colonialism shaped ways of thinking, systems of rationality, and how the colonised understand and represent the world. Even after gaining formal independence, the effects of colonialism remained embedded in the identity of the colonised and in the institutions and curricula. Therefore, the moderately high, widely dispersed appreciation that is shown by the pre-service teachers is not a simple preference for neutral epistemic engagement, but is more likely to be the result of what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) articulates as the disorder of the world's unequal structures, which is an effect of the surviving colonial structures and control of the global order, in relation to knowledge and pedagogy, leaving the systematic negation and uncertainty of indigenous knowledge, even for its bearers. The moderate-category responses could represent not indifference, but what decolonial scholars call internalised epistemic uncertainty. This is the result of educational systems that uphold Western knowledge supremacy while sidelining the cultural values that are being evaluated in this study.

According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018), coloniality describes the unrelenting nature of colonialism as a power structure that remains after the formal end of colonial rule. Coloniality describes how contemporary colonialism, even without formal colonial rule, continues to shape culture and ways of being and, importantly, how individuals understand themselves. Coloniality describes the contemporary ways of knowing that exist. It is even a coloniality of education, in which the affirmation of cultural values in a given social space is an effect of coloniality because individuals learn through the education system which opinions and beliefs are socially acceptable to express in that space, even if they do not internalise those beliefs and opinions.

Using a decolonial approach to data analysis reveals both the epistemological conditions and the constraining contextual conditions that shape participants' understanding and the values they relationally strive to strengthen. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018, 2021) advocates for what he calls 'epistemic freedom.' This calls for recognition of the multiplicity of African knowledge frameworks. Peoples of the colonised world have had their African knowledge frameworks eclipsed and, through colonisation, have been forced to use European frameworks in their engagements with the world. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) and Mignolo (2011) argue that decoloniality means dismantling coloniality. The frameworks of being of the peoples of the colonised world were made to accommodate the Colonial Empire's system of belief. In this colonial situation, participants' responses are located. The responses are shaped by the constraining colonial situation the participants find themselves in. Mignolo (2011), building on Quijano (2000), conceptualises what he calls the colonial matrix of power: a system of thought that describes the colonial control of social order and the knowledge that facilitates and orders social control. Coloniality continues to maintain a Eurocentric social order and an inequitable order of knowledge after formal decolonisation processes have been completed.

Different perspectives on knowledge and its authority are captured. Most respondents leaned toward agreement, suggesting a potentially weak association with indigenous values. However, an overall mean only just inside the 'High' band, with standard deviations above 1.2, suggests that this association is positive but not strong. The complex and often conflicting emotions participants expressed about knowing and appreciating some core values of indigenous culture presented a real challenge. This contradiction, rather than indicating a lack of understanding, needs to be understood in a wider context. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) argues that a colonial education system creates a form of mental colonialism by privileging the coloniser's language and worldview. In this way, the children of the colonised are alienated from their culture and become internally colonised and inferior. The post-colonial education system remains entrenched in the largely Western systems of the pre-service teachers. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1998) assertion that genuine and sustainable development can occur only after the mind has been decolonised shifts the focus to whether these pre-service teachers are prepared to make the personal and ideological effort to 'unlearn', 'relearn', and 'reform' their values and beliefs.

According to Mignolo (2011) and Quijano (2007), decoloniality seeks to break from coloniality by recognising pluriversality, which values more than one valid way of knowing and understanding that does not rely solely on the Western way. In teacher education, this pluriversality goes beyond simply including indigenous issues in the curriculum. It requires a major shift in what we consider valid knowledge in teaching and learning. The ambivalence captured by the quantitative and qualitative data in this study highlights how far this transformation remains from full realisation. Mignolo and Walsh (2018) argue that to prepare future teachers for the decolonial movement, we must challenge university teaching practices that reinforce colonial legacies, which in turn dominate school practices. This study suggests that this has not been accomplished in the teacher education context examined. The participants' qualitative feedback in this study indicates that the indigenous values of the responders remain conflicting and inconsistent. In other words, there is no strong commitment to asserting Indigenous epistemologies.

PT7: I do have knowledge about the core indigenous values, but I am not sure it is adequate.

PT4: I won't say it is inadequate or totally adequate.

PT11: Oh no. Not that much. I have little knowledge about the core indigenous values.

These responses point to lived epistemic uncertainty consistent with the modest overall mean and wide dispersion in Table 1. They are not reducible to social desirability effects, given that participants expressed these doubts directly in the interviews.

Participants did, however, consistently identify respect, honesty, tolerance, and hospitality as core indigenous values practised across ethnic groups:

PT13: I will talk about respect for the elderly. This value runs through all the ethnic groups in the country.

Young people are expected to give their seats to elderly people. This is supported by all the ethnic groups, and it is very good and important.

PT12: In our society, tolerance has been one of the things we cherish most. The nation is calm because of tolerance. So, I think that is one of the cultural values we cherish.

These qualitative responses supplement the quantitative data. These values align with Osei-Tutu et al. (2023), who highlight respect and hospitality as among the most prominent values in Ghanaian culture. The decolonial perspective, however, advises against viewing such responses as straightforward. Santos (2014) argues that most dominant orders of epistemology sustain themselves through epistemicide, the systematic destruction of non-Western ways of knowing. In this regard, the ability to name and recognise indigenous values should not be seen as having a substantial relational epistemology. Naming a value is not the same as articulating it in its full complexity and/or conceptualising and teaching it in a way that, in effect, challenges the colonial order of epistemology and knowledge.

A key aspect of this analysis is the significant knowledge gap identified. Many respondents indicated they lacked sufficient knowledge of the basic indigenous values. This may be because many participants appreciated shared Indigenous Ghanaian values but did not know them. This observation is aligned with the study done by Karadeniz (2020), in which he identifies the same gaps among Turkish teacher candidates, and with Celikkaya and Filoglu (2014) and the gaps they identified among Social Studies teachers and their indigenous cultural frameworks. Mignolo and Walsh's (2018) decolonial theory provides an interpretive approach to this gap. They explain that colonial education was not merely additive; it was fundamentally subtractive, systematically displacing Indigenous ways of knowing and rendering them either invisible or illegitimate. The knowledge gap identified in the case of the pre-service teachers cannot be understood as merely the result of personal negligence. Quite the contrary, this gap is the result of the colonial legacies of education that have systematically marginalised indigenous ways of knowing in favour of Eurocentrism. This colonial legacy is, without a doubt, rooted in Ghana's educational systems.

In the Ghanaian Culture and National Identity course, participants agreed that curricula helped build cultural awareness (Borrero et al., 2016; Alsubaie, 2015). However, participants mainly focused on curriculum content and teaching methods. This is concerning, as content and teaching methods may prioritise legitimising indigenous values. Pinto (2019) cautioned against a narrow curricular framing. Without intentional decolonial alignment and curriculum design, indigenous epistemologies may be absent, even if they appear in syllabus documents. Similarly, Smith (2012) argues that the mere presence of indigenous knowledge in the teaching and content design of colonial institutions does not indicate decolonisation. In the same spirit as Smith (2012), restructuring teaching and content methods alongside dominant colonial methods is required.

In summary, the questionnaire and interview data show that pre-service Social Studies teachers in this study hold moderately high perceptions of indigenous Ghanaian cultural values and can name core values, yet are unsure of the adequacy of their own knowledge. The prominence of respect and hospitality aligns with Osei-Tutu et al. (2023), and the knowledge gap aligns with Karadeniz (2020) and Celikkaya and Filoglu (2014) on teacher candidates elsewhere. Unlike the intervention studies (Macdonald et al., 2023; McInnes, 2017; Pevec-Zimmer et al., 2024), the present findings describe teachers' dispositions before any targeted intervention. Interpreted through the framework, the mixed distribution and the gap between naming a value and commanding it align with the coloniality of knowledge (Mignolo, 2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018) and epistemicide (Santos, 2014) rather than indifference to indigenous values.

Extent of Indigenous Cultural Value Appreciation among Pre-Service Social Studies Teachers

Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage of respondents (N = 300) at the Low, Medium, and High levels of appreciation for ten statements on personal appreciation of indigenous values, along with the mean and standard deviation for each statement.

Table 2: Extent of Appreciation of Indigenous Ghanaian Cultural Values (N = 300)

Statement	L (f/%)	M (f/%)	H (f/%)	Mean	SD
I appreciate greetings as an indigenous Ghanaian cultural value.	21(7.0)	35(11.7)	244(81.4)	4.3	1.1
I believe in respect for the elderly as part of Ghanaian culture.	28(9.3)	38(12.7)	234(78.0)	3.9	0.9
I am hospitable because it is a Ghanaian cultural value.	29(9.7)	71(23.7)	200(66.6)	3.8	1.1
I apply Ghanaian values of conservation in my daily activities.	30(10.0)	60(20.0)	210(70.0)	3.8	1.0
I appreciate communal ways of existence in Ghana.	33(11.0)	87(29.0)	180(60.0)	3.7	1.0
I am willing to teach Ghanaian indigenous cultural values.	38(12.7)	67(22.3)	195(65.0)	3.7	1.0
I make choices based on indigenous Ghanaian cultural values.	45(15.0)	79(26.3)	176(58.7)	3.6	1.1
I uphold moral values based on the influence of indigenous Ghanaian values.	54(18.0)	74(24.7)	172(57.3)	3.5	1.2
I feel comfortable showing my appreciation of indigenous values.	54(18.0)	81(27.0)	165(55.0)	3.5	1.2
I possess adequate knowledge of indigenous Ghanaian values.	64(21.4)	79(26.3)	157(52.3)	3.4	1.1

L = Low; M = Medium; H = High; F = frequency; % = percentage of respondents. Mean interpretation: 1.00–2.49 = Low; 2.50–3.49 = Medium; 3.50–5.00 = High. SD = standard deviation.

The findings reveal a high level of appreciation for indigenous cultural values among pre-service Social Studies teachers, with a mean of M = 3.7 (SD = 1.1). This scale uses a different scoring threshold from Table 1. The mean of 3.7 on this scale falls within the 'High' appreciation band (3.50–5.00), indicating that participants reported substantively positive behavioural orientations towards indigenous values. For specific values, greetings had the highest mean (M = 4.3, SD = 1.1). This was followed by valuing the elderly (M = 3.9, SD = 0.9) and hospitality (M = 3.8, SD = 1.1).

Adukpo et al. (2019) and Kwame (2020) show that greetings in Ghana are not social norms, but a duty and are closely woven with the community and relationships of the Ghanaian people. Additionally, this reflects a different understanding of personhood than the individualism that dominates much liberal Western thought. Appreciating greetings may signal an engagement, even if untheorized, with African philosophical ideas of self and social existence. Quijano (2000) argues that the coloniality of power operates not only through state systems, but also through the colonisation of subjectivity and how the colonised view themselves and their relationships. The continued practice of offering greetings among

pre-service teachers, despite modern cultural pressures, is a form of decolonising practice that reflects a relational ontology.

An emphasis on respect for elders (M = 3.9) is well supported in the scholarship (Ayentimi et al. 2018). From a decolonial lens, respect for elders is beyond a social obligation. It is a decolonial approach to knowledge systems that, through intergenerational pedagogy, acknowledges that knowledge systems that include wisdom and communal knowledge are not solely found in the written texts or in the ivory towers of academia, but exist in the lived experiences and memories of community elders (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). The colonial education system inverted that hierarchy by placing unreasonable value on credentialed, literate knowledge at the expense of oral, experiential, and communal knowledge (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Mignolo, 2011). Pre-service teachers' continued respect for elders indicates an informal retention of indigenous epistemological commitments that formal training has not sufficiently addressed.

Participants also showed a willingness to teach indigenous cultural values (M = 3.7), as they see themselves as bearers of cultural heritage. Regarding the indigenous values they appreciate most, participants listed:

PT3: I appreciate respect the most. Respect should be the hallmark in everybody's life. I feel very inferior when I am disrespected—that is why I value respect so much.

PT11: I appreciate respect, hard work, honesty, and trustworthiness. When you are hardworking, you learn to be content with what you earn. If you are honest, people can trust you, and if you are respectful, people will feel comfortable around you.

Smith (2012) notes that decolonial movements are not limited to intellectual or curricular decolonial movements. They also involve individual and ethical engagements with Indigenous presence in one's professional practice. Because pre-service teachers have expressed concerns about their instruction in Indigenous values, appropriate institutional and theoretical resources will need to be in place to support the development of a decolonial orientation that facilitates real change. Ajani and Govender (2026) state that pre-service teachers should be supported to integrate African indigenous knowledge and values of social justice in substantive, epistemologically grounded ways rather than in superficial, performative ways.

Obiagu (2023) argues that, despite good intentions, teaching values within Western pedagogical frameworks and indigenous epistemologies will remain ineffective. Collectively, the Table 2 results and interview extracts show high self-reported appreciation on behavioural indicators (M = 3.7) alongside the lowest rating for self-assessed knowledge (M = 3.4, 'Medium'). In this study, then, values are endorsed and practised more strongly than they are formally known, which fits Ezeanya-Esiobu's (2019) argument that indigenous knowledge survives mainly in informal settings and Smith's (2012) caution that practice alone does not amount to decolonisation.

The interview data addressed this question, pointing to competing influences from global media and to the informal contexts through which indigenous values were acquired. The interview results also pointed to another influence and, to an extent, a limitation on indigenous frameworks that has emerged among most participants due to prolonged engagement with foreign content on social media and other digital platforms.

PT8: Most of my actions are influenced by Ghanaian cultural values, but I am also influenced by some other liberal ones. I have formulated my own set that balances my cultural values.

PT10: I will say yes. If I'm exposed to online content like fashion videos or pictures, it sometimes influences my appreciation for foreign cultural values.

PT5: Yes, something else influences my actions. I am influenced by Western culture. Most social media applications are produced and controlled by people outside the country, and the content there has personally influenced how I dress, think, and see things.

This tension is crucial for the decolonial analysis. According to Fanon (1963), the psychological colonisation of the colonised subject entails internalising and reproducing the coloniser's values. Digital media and global cultural flows can be understood as new forms of this phenomenon. According to Nwobodo (2021), this is neo-colonialism. It treats Westernisation as synonymous with development and modernisation, in contrast to indigenous ways, which are relegated to the primitive and retrogressive.

Customarily, this phenomenon has been interpreted as erosion of indigenous cultures. However, a decolonial perspective is essential for this situation. Tensions between the old and new value systems can yield layered cultural identities (Qumseya, 2018). Maldonado-Torres (2007) calls this the condition of living with coloniality. This condition is neither purely subjective for pre-service Social Studies teachers nor a burden; it is instrumental. According to Mignolo and Walsh (2018), the decolonial option requires accepting modernity and rejecting pre-modern and colonial ways. Thus, pre-service Social Studies teachers who can confront and articulate neo-colonial and global cultural flows alongside indigenous value systems can provide multiple epistemologies to their learners.

Based on the data, pre-service teachers' appreciation for indigenous values has developed primarily through informal, out-of-school contexts, i.e., family, community, and peer socialisation (rather than through formal constructs in teacher education programs). Ezeanya-Esiobu (2019) asserts that the absence of indigenous knowledge in formal African educational institutions has, of necessity, pushed it into private and informal (domestic and communal) contexts and pre-professional settings. When indigenous knowledge resides in informal contexts, the structures that support its transmission become globalised, with all the risks and implications that this entails. In the context of the decolonisation of teacher education, legitimising and transmitting knowledge requires placing it in formal structures for indigenous content to be part of formal programmes. To accomplish this, a complete transformation of the formal structures is necessary. Dei (2017) calls this a "transformation of the educational structures and the foundations of informal education."

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The study concludes that a favourable attitude towards indigenous values is a valuable starting point for teacher preparation. Still, it is not the same as being ready to teach those values. Pre-service Social Studies teachers come to their training with goodwill towards Ghanaian cultural heritage. That goodwill is a resource worth building on, and building on it will likely require more deliberate attention to knowledge and pedagogy than may currently be the case. The findings revealed a critical distinction between surface-level cultural appreciation and deep cultural internalisation, suggesting that pre-service teachers can intellectually acknowledge and verbally affirm indigenous Ghanaian values

without necessarily embodying, practising, and consciously transmitting those values in their daily personal and professional lives. The findings identified a curriculum gap in Social Studies teacher education programs: current curriculum structures adequately develop pre-service teachers' intellectual awareness of indigenous cultural values but insufficiently develop their capacity for deep cultural internalisation, confident value expression, and deliberate professional transmission of indigenous Ghanaian values to future learners.

Recommendations: The study recommends that the Department of Social Studies Education at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) undertakes a comprehensive and deliberate review of the content, pedagogical approaches and epistemological orientations of its culture-related courses to ensure that indigenous Ghanaian values are explicitly taught with genuine epistemic depth to ensure meaningful instructional engagement. Teacher educators should also deliberately and systematically integrate community-based indigenous knowledge into formal instructional practices, given that participants consistently identified community and elder engagement as the most transformative contexts for their indigenous value appreciation and cultural identity development. Furthermore, pre-service teachers should be intentionally guided through structured critical reflection processes that enable them to examine, interrogate, and consciously navigate the pervasive influence of global media, digital cultures, and Western epistemological frameworks on their personal value systems, cultural identities, and future pedagogical orientations, thereby equipping them with the critical cultural consciousness necessary for authentically transmitting indigenous Ghanaian values to future generations of learners.

It also recommends developing a 'Kasakoa' Pedagogical Framework that integrates civic ideals with indigenous Ghanaian moral philosophies through Translanguaging Circles and Values-in-Practice Portfolios. This culturally responsive instructional model would systematically document pre-service teachers' progressive internalisation and practical application of indigenous values within authentic Social Studies educational contexts. An 'Akwaaba' Protocol should also be embedded within Social Studies educator preparation practices, incorporating local-language conversation circles, proverb-based case studies, and community issue-centred role-plays. This would authentically bridge formal academic knowledge with rich indigenous wisdom traditions that pre-service teachers already possess from their own cultural communities.

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