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Cultural Identity and Children's Educational Experiences in Global south Communities: Comparative Sociological Study of Ghana and Argentina

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Abstract

This paper explores the link between cultural identity and children's learning experiences in communities of the Global South by conducting a comparative sociological analysis of two countries: Ghana and Argentina. Education is commonly perceived as a means to knowledge, social mobility and national development but children's experiences of education are also influenced by language, ethnicity, religion, family background, community values, social class and curriculum representation. The paper suggests that children do not arrive at school with a blank slate, but rather with identities shaped by home, community, history, language and social location. The paper compares the cases of Ghana and Argentina to examine the ways in which cultural identity affects children's belonging, participation in class, confidence and education. The multilingualism, ethnic diversity, religious values, community life, rural-urban inequality, and the dominance of the English language in formal education all influence children's schooling in Ghana. Spanish language, national identity, indigenous and migrant identities, regional inequality and social class differences all influence children's educational experiences in Argentina. While they have distinct histories, languages, and cultural systems, both countries illustrate how schools can either foster inclusion or perpetuate inequality based on how they acknowledge children's cultural backgrounds. The paper also emphasizes that language and curriculum are key spaces in which cultural identity is either overlooked or privileged. Children who see their home language(s), history, and community experiences reflected in the school are more likely to feel included and motivated in both Ghana and Argentina. The study therefore highlights the need to implement culturally responsive education as a way of enhancing belonging, participation and social justice. This paper draws on the experiences of the Global South for

childhood and Sociology of education research by comparing an African and a Latin American context. It demonstrates that cultural identity does not exist on the periphery of education, but rather it is a core element that influences children's learning, confidence and future opportunities. The paper argues that an education system that is more inclusive in Ghana and Argentina should respect the languages, cultural history and family experiences of children as learning resources instead of obstacles to achieving academic success.

Keywords: Multilingualism; Decolonial Pedagogy; Curriculum Inclusion; Indigenous Learners; Migration; Social Inequality; School Belonging.

1. Introduction

Education is one of the most significant social institutions that children learn knowledge, values, discipline, social roles and thoughts about belonging (Abebe et al., 2022). But education is not just about reading, writing, exams or grades. It's also a cultural and social event. Children do not arrive at school without identities; they bring with them the identities built by their families, languages, ethnicities, religions, communities, class status, local and traditional cultures, and national cultures. These cultural identities affect children's views of school, their interactions with teachers and peers, their self-confidence in school, and their engagement in learning. Cultural identity is a feeling of belonging, which is acquired through various factors such as language, ethnicity, religion, customs, family practices, community values, history, and social environment (Ahn et al., 2023). Children are particularly at risk as they are a time when thoughts of self, belonging, confidence and social acceptance are forming, with cultural identity being an important aspect of this. Children feel included and valued when their language, culture, community and history are valued in school. When the school ignores and/or misrepresents and/or characterizes their culture as inferior, however, school can be an environment of exclusion, silence, and inequality (Baumert et al., 2024). The link between culture and education is especially complex in many communities in the Global South. This is because there have been many histories of colonialism, foreign languages, social inequality, poverty, rural-urban differences, and national development aspirations that have had an impact on the education systems in the Global South (Buckingham et al., 2023). Schools are expected to promote equality and social mobility, but they can also reinforce inequality through the use of dominant languages, dominant cultures and middle class ways of learning. This can lead children from minority ethnic groups, Indigenous communities, rural areas, migrant families or from households with lower income to have a different school experience to those who are more like the majority school population. This paper will be based on two countries in the Global South, Ghana and Argentina, which have different historical, cultural and educational contexts (Brieant et al., 2025). The country of Ghana in West Africa is multi-lingual and multi-ethnic, the education of children is influenced by local languages, ethnicity, religion, family expectations,

community values, and the use of English as the official language in formal education. In Ghana, a lot of children are raised in local languages at home and in their communities, and have to learn English as a major language of learning, assessment and official communication. This can be a blessing and a challenge. English offers access to higher education and greater social mobility but it can also be a barrier for children whose initial experiences of learning and cultural expression is in local languages (Cortés-Morales et al. 2022).

Argentina is in Latin America, and is a different but no less important context. Spanish colonial history, European immigration, nation-building, Indigenous past, regional variation, and Spanish as the dominant national language have all had an impact on Argentine education. The role of schools in fostering national identity and citizenship in Argentina is significant (Dyll et al., 2024). But it has not always been a national identity that has fully acknowledged Indigenous culture, migrant identity, rural culture, and regional diversity. Children from Indigenous, migrant, or socially disadvantaged backgrounds may as a result experience difficulties if there is a lack of representation of their culture in the curriculum, textbooks, classroom practices or teacher expectations (Fan et al., 2025). A comparative sociological study of Ghana and Argentina is important since it enables the analysis of similarities and differences in the ways in which cultural identity influences children's schooling in the Global South contexts (García Palacios et al., 2022). Ghana and Argentina are far-flung and different cultures but both illuminate the link between education and history, language, identity, inequality and power. Schools can provide opportunities in both countries, but can be spaces where some identities are privileged and others are marginalized (Hutchinson et al., 2021). It is crucial to ask how children experience school when they come from a culture, language or community background that is other than the expectations of the education system. The key premise of this paper is that cultural identity is a major influence on children's educational experiences in Ghana and Argentina (Leavy et al. 2022). Children's sense of belonging, participation, confidence and engagement in school is shaped by their language, ethnicity, religion, class background, family values, community traditions and national identity. Children's cultural identity can be recognized and respected in schools to promote inclusion, motivation and educational success (Nkrumah et al., 2026). Yet, where schools do not pay attention to children's cultures, or where they enforce dominant cultures, they can help to exclude, marginalize and limit participation, which can exacerbate inequality and discrimination (Nelson et al., 2021). This paper seeks to understand the role of cultural identity in children's schooling in Ghana and Argentina. It investigates issues of language, ethnicity, family background, social class, community values and curriculum representation and how these impact upon children's participation and sense of inclusion in school. It also includes a comparison of the way schools in both countries deal with cultural diversity and if they foster or marginalize children from diverse cultures.

Contributions of the Paper

Comparative Global South perspective: The paper is not only comparing Ghana and Argentina, two countries from the Global South, but also includes a comparative approach.

Connecting culture to children's schooling: demonstrates the influence of language, ethnicity, class, family background, and community values on children's educational experiences as well as the impact of school quality and academic ability.

Knowledge of inequality from a sociological perspective: The paper will describe how schools can reinforce inequalities by favoring dominant language, culture, and forms of knowledge while excluding minority or local language, culture, and knowledge.

Support for culturally responsive education: The paper makes practical suggestions about the importance of having an inclusive curriculum, being aware as a teacher, providing multilingual support, and recognizing and validating children's cultures in schools.

Novelty of the Paper

What makes this paper novel is the comparative analysis of two different contexts in the Global South: Ghana and Argentina. Although cultural identity and education studies tend to concentrate on single-country studies or on comparisons between Global North and Global South contexts, this paper draws together an African and Latin American case to explore how children's educational experiences are formed by culture, language, history and inequality. The paper discusses the multilingual and multiethnic educational context in Ghana and compares it with the Spanish-speaking national and multicultural context in Argentina, to provide a new sociological perspective on how schools can include and exclude children's cultural identity.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cultural Identity and Children's Educational Experiences

Cultural identity is a key concept in understanding children's educational experiences as it influences the way children view themselves, relate to others and engage in school life. Cultural identity is defined as language, ethnicity, religion, family values, community traditions, historical memory and belonging to a specific social group. Children's sense of identity is not pre-determined, but formed over time as they interact with their families, friends, educators, communities, and school. In the context of local belonging and wider social contexts, Ross (2025) shows how young people build their identities from social, cultural and global influences. In the same way, Baumert et al. (2024) demonstrate that cultural identity is closely related to the academic, social and psychological adjustment of adolescents, particularly adolescents from immigration backgrounds. Cultural identity has an impact on children's confidence, involvement, social interaction, and belonging in educational environments. Respecting children's cultural backgrounds in the school environment

increases the chances that children will see school as meaningful and inclusive. Where children's language, history or community values are not taken into account, however, the child might feel excluded from the learning process. Buckingham, Schroeder, and Hutchinson (2023) illustrate how culturally responsive programs can provide empowering opportunities and enhance a sense of community among students. The cultural immersion experiences can contribute to the identity transformation (Onosu 2021), and the cross-cultural experiences can enhance intercultural competence of students (Nelson and Luetz 2021).

2.2 Childhood, Culture, and the Global South

It is important to note that in the literature on childhood in the Global South, the importance of not interpreting children's lives exclusively within the frame of Western theories of development, education, or social progress is stressed. Theories and decolonial childhood studies challenge the dominant theories by focusing on children's experiences in the Global South (Abebe, Dar, and Lyså, 2022). This paper is important because their work allows for a sociological approach to understanding children's education that recognizes the importance of local histories, cultures and inequalities. Global South perspectives reject the notion that all children have the same educational experience and reveal that education is influenced by colonial histories, community life, family arrangements, poverty, migration and cultural identity. Rabello de Castro (2020) states that a decolonial approach is necessary when considering childhood because global models of childhood can reproduce unequal power relations. Similarly, Rabello de Castro (2021) challenges approaches that view children in the Global South as incomplete or less than children in the Global North, such as developmental and globalist perspectives. These arguments are relevant to Ghana and Argentina because both societies have educational systems that are colonial and postcolonial. The education of children in these settings is inextricably linked to issues of power, language, cultural recognition and social inequality. Twum-DansoImoh, Rabello de Castro and Naftali (2022) propose an epistemic shift in transnational childhood studies and the production of knowledge about children from the perspectives and realities of the Global South.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Secondary academic and documentary sources were analyzed and the qualitative comparative case-study design was used in this study. The comparative approach was chosen because the study aims to investigate the similarity of sociological processes, such as language hierarchy, cultural representation, family background, community values, social class, and regional inequality in two culturally and historically distinct contexts from the Global South. In contrast, the study does not assess causal effects or provide nationally representative statistical results—it looks to explain the relationship between cultural identity and children's educational belonging, confidence, classroom engagement and learning opportunity. Not primary data was

collected as part of the research. Interviews, surveys, focus groups, experiments and classroom observations were not conducted and no children, parents, teachers nor community members were recruited for participation. The unit of analysis was hence the studies, policy documents, curricula, census reports, newspaper articles, and other publicly available information relating to cultural identity and children's education in Ghana and Argentina.

3.2 Rationale for Selecting Ghana and Argentina

The selection of Ghana and Argentina was done by purposive sampling. Both nations are in the Global South and their education systems have been influenced by their colonial past, building of a nation, cultural diversity, social inequality and unequal regional development. They also offer two contrasting sociological and/or linguistic perspectives that are analytically worthwhile for comparison and contrast. Ghana is a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic setting where English is a dominant language in secondary/tertiary education while many Ghanaian young children speak the Ghanaian languages in their homes and communities. The Ghanaian case, therefore, allows for an analysis of the link between local-language identity, engagement with English-medium schooling, ethnicity, religion, community life and rural-urban inequality. Argentina is a nation with a major Spanish-speaking educational system, and an historical association of cultural and language unification. The nation also has Indigenous population, migrant communities, Afro-descendant histories, rural and significant differences within the region and class. Thus, with consideration of the African and Latin American cases, similarities and differences across the Global South in children's educational experiences of Spanish-language dominance and national identity can be examined, highlighting contextually distinct patterns of cultural inclusion/exclusion. The comparison should not be interpreted as indicative of cultural similarities between Ghana and Argentina. Rather, it takes difference as an analytical tool for the analysis of how children's cultural identity must be recognized, distributed as marginal, or brought to an end by education systems.

3.3 Data Sources and Collection Procedures

Secondary and publicly available documentary sources were used to collect data. These encompassed peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly books and book chapters on theory, government/policy documents, national census reports, curriculum materials, and country specific research related to childhood, culture, identity, and education. Data collection was done in four phases. First, the general concepts of cultural identity, sociology of childhood, decolonial childhood studies, culturally responsive education, multilingual education, Indigenous education, education for migrants, belonging to the community, and educational inequality were identified in literature. Second a local language, English-medium education, ethnicity, religion, family expectations, community values, local curriculum representation, and rural-urban inequality were explored from a local perspective. Third, sources unique to Argentina with respect to Spanish language dominance, national identity,

Indigenous and migrant children, intercultural bilingual education, the representation of curricula in the region, and social class were examined. Fourthly, the evidence was tabulated by the common analytical themes of comparison between the two cases. Where available, more recent scholarship was considered more important, and the previous theoretical work was not included except when it contained concepts that added value to explications of the issues of cultural identity, power, inequality and educational inclusion.

3.4 Documentary Sampling Strategy

A purposive documentary-sampling strategy was used. Sources were selected when they were directly relevant to one or more of these: a discussion of children's cultural identity, a discussion about educational experiences, a description of education in Ghana or Argentina, a discussion of language, ethnicity, migration, Indigenous identity, religion, or community, a discussion of social class, a discussion about curriculum, or a discussion about regional inequality; or a theoretical framework relevant to cultural recognition or educational inclusion. Sources also were excluded if they focused on issues other than education or childhood, were not relevant to the central analytical themes, lacked contextual or methodological details or resources, or provided redundant evidence to that already presented more explicitly in a different source. The resulting document collection was the collection of sources that were selected and used in the analysis and reference list based on the above criteria.

3.5 Data Analysis

Qualitative thematic analysis was used to analyse the documentary material. The analysis was done in five phases: The sources selected were first read multiple times in order to find statements about children's identities and their educational experiences. Second, material of relevance was coded under preliminary categories, such as language, ethnicity, religion, national identity, family backgrounds, community influences, social class/gender, rural-urban or regional inequality, curriculum representations, belonging, confidence, classroom participation. Third, these categories were given form in the form of broader analytical themes, which were then studied separately for Ghana and Argentina. Fourth, a comparative matrix was prepared to find out their similarities, difference and relationships to each other applying the two cases. Fifth, conclusions were drawn with a sociological lens that foregrounds culturally responsive education, being recognized, cultural capital, power, inequality, belonging, and culture. Each numerical rating in the comparative figures is a qualitative indicator and not a statistical rating. To summarize the consistency and salience of themes reviewed in the literature, a five-point scale ranging from limited to central relevance was utilized, but this one was used only visually. Ratings should not be understood as undergoing a survey, effect rating, or as being in a nationally representative measurement.

3.6 Research: Quality and Trustworthiness

The analysis was strengthened by several procedures to enhance the credibility and consistency of the analysis. Study sites were found in a variety of publications for each theme, not just one per theme. To ensure uniformity in comparability, the same analytic categories were used when analysing Ghana and Argentina. Specific qualitative interpretation was also included in the figures and brought to the attention of the reader in the detailed discussion. Analytical transparency was assisted by identifying documentary evidence from the author's comparison so it is not confused on the job. Particular attention was paid to contradictory evidence and to differences within each country; such differences are based on language, ethnicity, religion, class, migration status or on being rural or urban.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study was based solely on published academic research, policy documents, census data, curriculum material and other publicly accessible sources and, therefore did not include any contact with human participants. Research ethical permission, informed consent, parental consent and child assent was therefore not necessary. However, the work of this study has been done with academic honesty and responsible representation of the students. All sources have been credited, and an effort was made to avoid the language of stigma, deficit, for Indigenous children, migrant families, rural communities, minorities with a different language of communication and children from lower income groups. Everything else subsequent to the interviews and surveys, focus groups and economical data gathering through classroom observation would need to be granted ethical approval, parental/guardian consent, child assent (where appropriate), confidentiality procedures, measures to ensure children's safety, secured data management and opportunity for withdrawal without any disadvantages to either the child, their parents/guardian or the school.

3.8 Methodological Limitations

There are a number of limitations for the study. The findings will rely on the extent and quality of the literature and documentary evidence available. Comparisons at a national level can also mask significant intra-national variations in Ghana and Argentina. Moreover, as no primary data was collected there is no direct depiction of the children's voices and no causal relationship can be made between cultural identity and the educational outcomes. The results are thus to be understood as a comparative sociological synthesis and cannot be used for generalization in a statistical sense. This study should be continued by conducting interviews with children, parents, and teachers, classroom observation, school-based surveys, and conducting participatory research methods with children and communities to illustrate their learning experiences in their own words.

4. Comparative Analysis of Cultural Identity and Children's Education in Ghana and Argentina

4.1 The Role of Language in Identity Formation and School Participation

The spheres of language are among the most distinctly culture-specific where participation in education, location in society and cultural identity converge both in Ghana and Argentina. Every country has one language that is used in the formal educational system to which academic achievement, national participation, employment and social mobility are linked. Meanwhile, a predominate language preference in the institution can reinforce educational disadvantage for children with other home languages and accent. Concurrently, there can be marginalization of children, whose home language or speech patterns are different to those expected by the institution. Many children in Ghana come from families and communities where their first language is one or more Ghanaian languages, but are expected to learn, speak, read, write in and take tests in English. Local languages are both related to home life, storytelling, religion and oral culture and linked to community values and knowledge. English, however, is the one that has so many institutional connections as it is linked to examinations, higher education, government, professional jobs, and international communication. In the early years of schooling Ghanaian languages can assist children to find meaning in new ideas in the curriculum and in their personal experiences. This can also build their confidence and engagement in discussions in the classroom. However, local language education is not being made available with uniformity, as teachers might not speak all local languages, with emphasis on linguistic diversity in multilingual classrooms, in the urban settings. The institutions may also not have books, teaching resources and teachers who can teach effectively in multiple languages. Spanish has a similar institutional function in Argentina. It is the language of the institution, the running, administrative, citizenship and nationhood. Language can help children with different backgrounds to communicate and to be socially cohesive. This, however, can disadvantage Indigenous children, migrant children and children who speak regional and non-standard varieties of Spanish. Indigenous languages include memories, oral histories, values and worldviews, like Mapudungun, Qom, Wichí and Guaraní. Migrant children may also employ various accents, vocabulary, bilingual practices and family languages of countries like Bolivia, Paraguay, Peru and Chile. Children may feel that their identity from their home culture is not so legitimate as the school's identity in relation to these languages and interactions, if they do not match them or are likened to them negatively. The two countries thus show a typical sociologic pattern. In the case of Ghana, for example, English is a linguistic capital and in Argentina, standard Spanish is a linguistic capital. Children who speak the dominant language and/or language variety are more likely to understand expectations in class, engage well with teachers, and can perform well in tests. This may require further linguistic and cultural adaptation for children whose home languages are not the dominant language.

The two cases differ, however, one does. Multilingualism is more visible in other Ghanaian nations, and some is recognized through policies of multilingualism in the early years of education in Ghana. Linguistic diversity is less evident in Argentina

largely due to the fact that Spanish is considered the national language, while Indigenous languages, migrant languages, accents and language varieties are less well represented. Even with this distinction, negative impacts of language hierarchy may manifest in similar ways in both nations—such as a decrease in self-confidence, limited engagement, cultural invisibilization, and educational inequity. This means that language and linguistic differences should be regarded not as a problem but as a resource for schools in both environments. This may involve providing resources in both "home" languages or incorporating multiple languages, acknowledging children's home languages, the use of oral traditions and family stories, sensitivity to different accents, or preparation of teachers for culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.

4.2 Ethnicity, National Identity, Religion, and Community Belonging

Ethnicity, religion, migration, national identity and community serve as markers to influence the educational identities of children in Ghana and Argentina as well. These factors are expressed differently, however, in the two societies. Children's social lives in Ghana is characterised by ethnic and religious identities that are salient. Akan, Mole-Dagbani, Ewe, Ga-Dangme, Guan, Grusi, Gurma, Mande, or other ethnic groups may be one with which children identify. Children's identities impact on languages they use, festivals they celebrate, stories they hear, dynamics of home-school relations, and social values which they bring with them to school. Ghanaian children can arrive at school with background knowledge about proverbs, folktales, music, dance, naming, history of the community, kinship and traditional forms of authority. These types of Cultural Knowledge can aid learning if teachers embed them in their classroom teaching. They can make school knowledge more immediately and personally meaningful and help children to understand that there are legitimate ways of knowing in their communities. In Ghana also, religion plays a significant role. Children's concepts of morality, responsibility, discipline, respect and community life are shaped by Christianity, Islam, the traditional African belief and another belief systems. Religious and Moral Education can foster experiences of tolerance with living in harmony, honesty, responsibility and citizenship. However, present in instances where school prayers, school celebrations, school examples or school practices give undue privilege to one faith tradition over others.

The concept of cultural difference is more prevalent in Argentina as a reference to the national identity, Indigenous identity, migration, and regional belonging. The Argentina-language classes, national history, civic responsibility, national symbols and mutual knowledge of citizenship taught in schools have always played a pivotal role in contributing to the development of a common Argentine identity. This process has contributed to the social cohesion, but also biased an image of the nation attached to the Spanish language, the city life and the European culture. In some cases, there is the danger that an Indigenous child may feel culturally marginalized when there is a focus on presenting an Indigenous people as historical rather than presenting them as a living people with a living language, identity, knowledge system, cultural rights

and concerns. When the family past, traditions, accents, or national backgrounds of migrant children are neglected or ignored in the official narrative of Argentine identity, migrant children may experience the same challenges. The comparison shows that the schools in both countries are involved in the definition of legitimate belonging. Negotiating belonging in Ghana with a number of ethnic-cultural, linguistic, religious and community identities. Belonging is negotiated in Argentina between a dominant national identity and cultural identities which are Indigenous, migrant, regional, Afro-descendant, etc. While there are differences, children in both countries can feel pressured to diminish, hide and modify segments of their identities to meet school and society's expectations. Ghanaian children might associate an academic usefulness with English language or urban identity as opposed to the local language or rural identity. Conforming to a Spanish speaking and culturally homogeneous conception of national identity may be seen as a necessary aspect of successful participation for indigenous and migrant children in Argentina. There should be no choice in inclusive education between success in school and at the same time part of a culture. Ghanaian children should be able to relate with ethnic, religious, local and national communities at the same time. Children, likewise, should be able to feel Argentine, and maintain their Indigenous, migrant, regional, linguistic, familial identity. This recognition of cultural diversity, an avoidance of stereotypes, and the provision of opportunities for children to share community experiences and histories could be a school's contribution to this multidimensional belonging.

4.3 Family Background, Cultural Capital, and Educational Expectations

In both countries, family environment has a significant impact on children's education. Children's attendance, confidence, academic preparation, and educational goals are influenced by parental education, household income, occupation, language, family responsibilities, and household learning resources. Education can be considered an individual achievement and also a family investment, most of the times in Ghana. Children are expected to achieve success in school to enhance their future working opportunities, their family's social position and their own ability to look after parents and brothers and sisters. Extended family members, grandparents, aunts, uncles and older siblings, can make a contribution to school-related costs, school accommodation, school supervision and/or school academic support. The collective expectations can be influential in terms of driving kids to do better, but can also be emotionally challenging. Those children who do poorly in school might feel that their school's performance is lacking, and they feel they're failing their family and community. They might also have to drop out of school due to family duties. Children can work in farming, fishing, trading, domestic work, caring for others, collect water, or be involved with the family business. These responsibilities can provide this practical knowledge and sense of responsibility, but can also cut down on homework, attendance and rest times. Family income and parental education also influence children's access to books, usage of digital technology, family transport, private tutoring, quiet study areas, and educational guidance in Argentina. School

expectations and interactions with the teacher/assistance with exams may be more familiar to the middle class family or allow for enhanced communication. Poorly resourced children may live in crowded environments, with limited access to the Internet, perform household chores and/or face some form of economic burden which impacts focus and attendance. However, in both, parent education is not a reflection of the importance that parents place on education. Parents who are not highly educated may offer significant emotional, cultural and moral support even if they are not able to directly help with academics. What's central is that there are some kinds of cultural capital that are privileged in schools and others that are not.

Children whose families speak English or who have a higher education in school may be more at ease with English and norms associated with formal schooling as this might be the language they mastered at school and originated at their home, Ghana, for instance. The family may also influence children's school culture, and for children raised in the cities, middle-class, and speaking Spanish as their native language, that influence may be strong. Children from households speaking a local language, living in rural communities or her child working in employment, coming from migrant families or Indigenous families may have a rich attachment to culture, which might not always be recognised by schools. The comparison then shows that each dimension – material resources and cultural cognition – has a role in the development of family's impact on schooling outcomes. Inequality in education cannot be reduced solely to ability and/or parental interest. It also is a consequence of unequal resource access, and socially dominant groups are more likely to value the languages, knowledge, behaviours and expectations they have.

4.4 Rural–Urban and Regional Disparities

Another commonality of the children's education in Ghana and Argentina is geographical inequality. Access of children to trained teachers, schools, mobile phones and electronic tools, educational books, transport and future educational opportunities is also dependent on their location in both countries. Rural children in the country Ghana may have to go long distances to school, and go to schools that are only equipped with a few classrooms, no electricity, no library, no laboratory, no textbooks, no useful Internet and no specialist teachers. They might also have reduced opportunities to use English outside the classroom, and more duties for farming, fishing, home duties, looking after other members of the family, chores, or community. At the same time, however, rural Ghanaian children might also have a strong command of the local language, practice, experience of continuity and extensive connections to extended family, elders, religious leaders, chiefs, and community institutions. They can be vital social and educational supports which may not be acknowledged as part of the formal curriculum. In general, children living in urban Ghana have improved access to information, higher education and professional careers, trained teachers, examination materials, private tuition, and school. However, the situation of urban schools is not consistent. Academic pressures, class overload, inequity in social status and services, poverty, and stark disparities in

private and public education are all likely to be faced by children. There is a comparable, but area-specific pattern in Argentina. In certain regions and areas of major cities, children might have an advantage to attend better equipped schools, libraries, have better access to digital technologies, access to extra-curricular activities, to universities and to career guidance services. Rural children, children in Northern provinces, children in Indigenous territories, children in peripheral areas, and children from economically deprived and marginal areas may suffer from a lack of trained teachers, school resources, languages, Internet access, and educational opportunities. Like children in rural areas and Indigenous communities in Ghana, children in Argentina can have a great deal to share about the terrain, cultivation, ecological ties, family work, community stories, and customs of their region. But school curricula and textbooks can favour experiences full of urban context or standardized across the nation. This can create a material, and cultural disadvantage. So, the rural-urban inequality is similarly playing in Ghana and the inequality between the regions in Argentina. Home-grown knowledge and experiences might be less visible in the school curriculum for children living in marginalized communities and have access to fewer institutional resources in their homes. The outcome is two inequalities: educational access and cultural recognition.

Geography relates to ethnicity, language, migration flows as well as social class. Children in rural Ghana may struggle learning in the majority language (English) in the school classroom, and Indigenous children in remote communities may lack resources and/or support for intercultural bilingual education. Migrant children in Argentina's urban and peri-urban communities may be physically able to attend school but also are exposed to poverty, discrimination, lack of stable housing, or may be culturally excluded. It is this that makes the need for educational policy to make a difference in both countries beyond merely school places a worthy subject. These include providing equipment, infrastructure, teacher training, technology, transportation and/or bilingual resources, as well as locally relevant learning materials for purposes of equal educational opportunity. It also involves understanding what the existing knowledge, skills and cultural identities are in rural, remote, Indigenous and economically disadvantaged communities.

4.5 Curriculum and Cultural Representation

The curriculum plays a major focal point role in recognising or silencing children's identities. It circumscribes the histories that are taught, the languages that define the curriculum, the communities who are included, and the values and forms of knowledge that are respected. Curriculum representation in both Ghana and Argentina is strongly linked to belonging, confidence and participation of children. Social studies, citizenship education, history, language instruction, Religious and Moral Education in Ghana offer opportunities for presents from local festivals, traditional leadership, family system, religious diversity, proverbs, folktales, music and dance, various jobs within the community and national history. These components provide the opportunity for children to link what they are learning in the

classroom with the family and community. But the national diversity of culture is not always seen equally in Ghana. The dominant ethnicity, language in which language courses are conducted, and urban lifestyles or generic national stories might be the emphasis of textbooks and classroom experience. Children of minority language, smaller ethnic, and rural communities may then be left without experiences or with lesser experiences. The curriculum of Argentina has also contributed significantly to the cultivation of national history, citizenship, the Spanish language and literature, geography, the national symbols, and the civic values of the nation. Shared citizenship and collective belonging can be forged from these subjects. But, the problem occurs when the national narrative is being told as a "culturally uniform" or "mainly" European, Spanish-speaking and urban. Indigenous peoples might only be referred to if they are referred to comparatively, that is, in the context of the 'past' rather than being considered as living communities. The contributions of migrants from neighbouring Latin American countries might be more ignored today than contributions from migration movements of the past from Europe would. There can also be instances of Afro-descendant history being more of a footnote in textbooks and in classrooms, as well as other regional cultures, rural knowledge, Indigenous languages and migrant experiences. Thus, power differentials, too, are manifested in curriculum representation in both countries. The curriculum tells the difference between formal knowledge and local, secondary, informal or invisible knowledge. Children whose family culture fits in with the dominant curriculum, may be more able to engage in parts of it, whilst for those who do not, they may find they need to change the way they use, silence or separate from their identities.

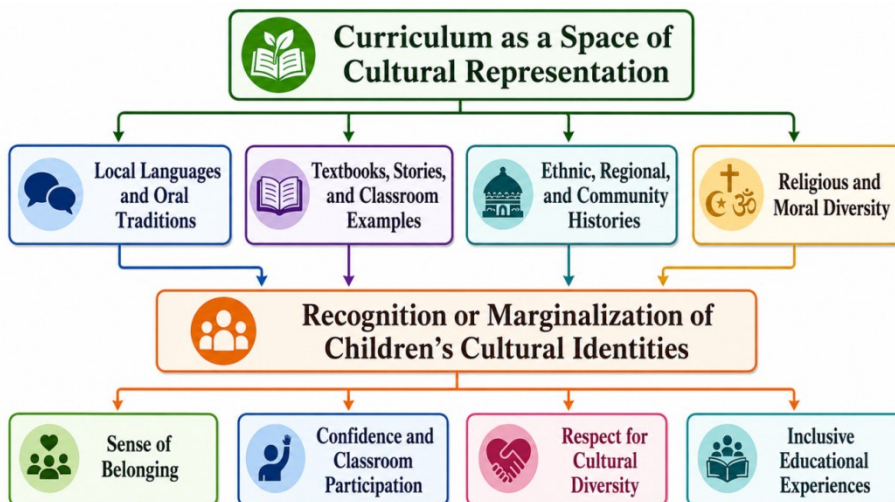


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework of Cultural Representation in Ghanaian Curriculum

Teachers have an important mediating role in this process. Teachers can include examples relevant to their own communities, have kids share their family's stories, rely on local oral traditions, talk about community problems, honor variations in

language or accent, and debunk stereotypes. But a successful culturally responsive classroom demands proper training, institutional help, sufficient resources in multiple languages, and time and flexibility as part of the curriculum. The Ghanaian curriculum needs to be made more inclusive to reflect diversity in the local languages, ethnic histories, religious practices, rural and urban experiences, community livelihoods and local knowledge of the different groups of people within Ghana. The reform of the Educational Policy in Argentina must aim to give greater visibility to the existence of the Indigenous Peoples as real people who live today, the experience of migration, Local histories, Africa-descendants' apports, linguists diversity and knowledge from inside the territory. Nationalism and national language don't have to be excluded in order to be included. Instead, national identity must take cultural pluralism as its understanding. Children should be able to build their sense of belonging to the nation without having to sacrifice their local, ethnic, religious, Indigenous, migrant or linguistic identities to work in order to obtain a good education.

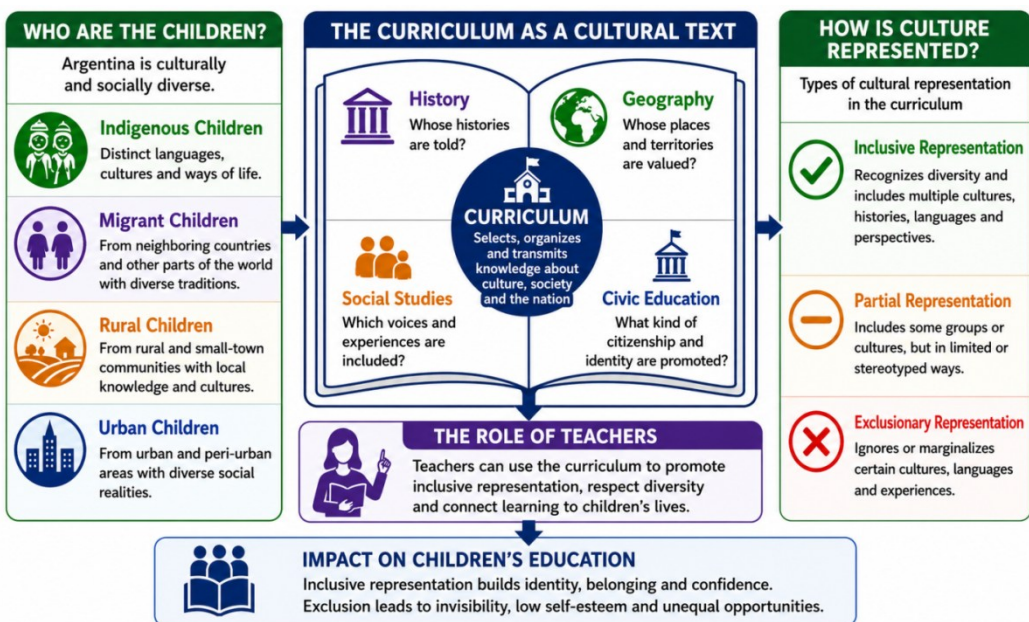


Fig 2: Curriculum, Cultural Inclusion, and Children's Educational Experiences in Argentina

Table 1. Thematic Comparison of Cultural Identity and Education in Ghana and Argentina

Comparative theme	Ghana	Argentina
Dominant language	English dominates formal education, examinations, and professional mobility.	Spanish dominates schooling, citizenship, and national identity.
Linguistic diversity	Multiple Ghanaian languages are widely used in homes and communities.	Indigenous languages, migrant languages, accents, and regional varieties exist but may receive limited recognition.
Cultural identities	Ethnic, religious, linguistic, and community identities are highly visible.	Indigenous, migrant, regional, Afro-descendant, and national identities shape belonging.
Family influence	Extended family, collective expectations, community responsibilities, and family livelihoods shape schooling.	Household income, parental education, social class, and home learning resources strongly affect educational access.
Geographical inequality	Rural–urban differences affect resources, English exposure, teachers, transport, and technology.	Regional, rural, Indigenous, and urban-peripheral inequalities affect resources and educational pathways.
Curriculum representation	Local languages, ethnic histories, religious diversity, and rural knowledge may be unevenly represented.	Indigenous, migrant, Afro-descendant, rural, and regional histories may be subordinated to a unified national narrative.
Main risk	English-dominant and urban-oriented schooling may undervalue local identities and knowledge.	Spanish-dominant and culturally uniform national schooling may marginalize non-dominant identities.
Inclusive response	Multilingual education, community-based knowledge, religious pluralism, and culturally responsive teaching.	Intercultural bilingual education, inclusive national history, migrant recognition, and regional representation.

5. Thematic Comparative Discussion

5.1 Language, Identity, and Educational Power

One clear difference between Ghana and Argentina is language. In Ghana, many children are entering school who speak one or more Ghanaian languages, and finding that their primary language of instruction, exams and higher education is English, as is the language of social mobility and employment. Likewise, in Argentina, Spanish also has an institutional function, although the multilingual language context is not as prominent in mainstream school. Standard Spanish may be more recognized than other forms of the language, including indigenous languages, migrant languages and regional accents or non-standard accents. The similarity, then, lies not in possessing the same language systems but in the fact that a dominant school language is a manifestation of the cultural and educational power. In children who are speaking their home languages in a similar way as most of the other children in school, participation and lesson comprehension can be more fluid and confident. Children whose first language is not the main language of the school might also need to acquire subject matter knowledge whilst adjusting to a new language and its associated expectations. Children who have a first language that differs from the language used for the education offered in the main language of the school will need to learn the academic content while also adjusting to a different language and language expectations. This process could lead to a lower participation in the classroom and give the impression that home languages are not as valuable. This finding aligns with the international research evidence that cultural and linguistic recognition impacts children's academic, social and psychological adjustment (Baumert et al. 2024).

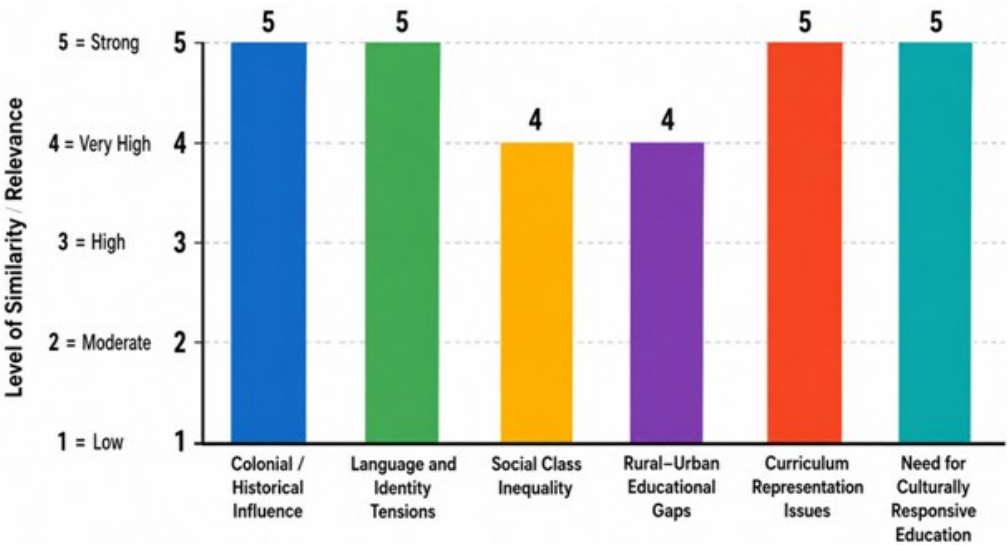


Fig 3: Similarities Between Ghana and Argentina in Children’s Educational Experiences

The figure compares the relative importance of six major factors shaping children's educational experiences in Ghana and Argentina. Colonial and historical influence, language and identity tensions, curriculum representation, and the need for culturally responsive education receive the highest relevance score of 5, indicating that these issues are central to both national contexts.

5.2 Curriculum, Cultural Representation, and Belonging

The second comparative theme relates to the function of the curriculum as the basis for determining what kind of cultures, history or experiences are considered as legitimate knowledge. National History, Citizenship, Religion, Moral education and cultural traditions are aspects of Ghanaians curricula. But local languages, minorities ethnic history, oral history, rural livelihoods and community knowledge might not be equally represented. Curricula have historically played a role in fostering a national identity — especially the concept of a shared nation, as reflected in the Spanish language, civic education, the national history, and national symbols — in Argentina. This focus can exclude minority, migrant, Afro-descendant, regional, and current rural perspectives and experiences. In both countries, the curriculum representation influences children's belongingness as it sends the message on whose knowledge is valued. The more students see the topics of their languages and their own communities, family practices, and histories as reflected in the textbooks and classes, the more they will feel that it has a relationship to their experiences. However, if their identities are not mentioned, over generalized, or referred to only in relation to the past, they can feel part of a culture only when they are looking back on it. This is especially important for children of races, Indigenous, migrant and minority languages, and low income families. The results align with the research on culturally sensitive learning environments as spaces that engender feelings of belonging and empowerment (Buckingham, Schroeder, and Hutchinson, 2023). They also collaborate with research that demonstrates how cultural heritage can retain its relevance in current and digital education without being considered a "relic" (Orphanidou, Efthymiou, and Panayiotou, 2024). The comparison implies a move beyond 'cultural celebration' in the inclusive curriculum to a more systematic and well-thought-out approach. Incorporate cultural diversity into curriculum history, language and geography, citizenship, literature, science, and social studies on a regular basis.

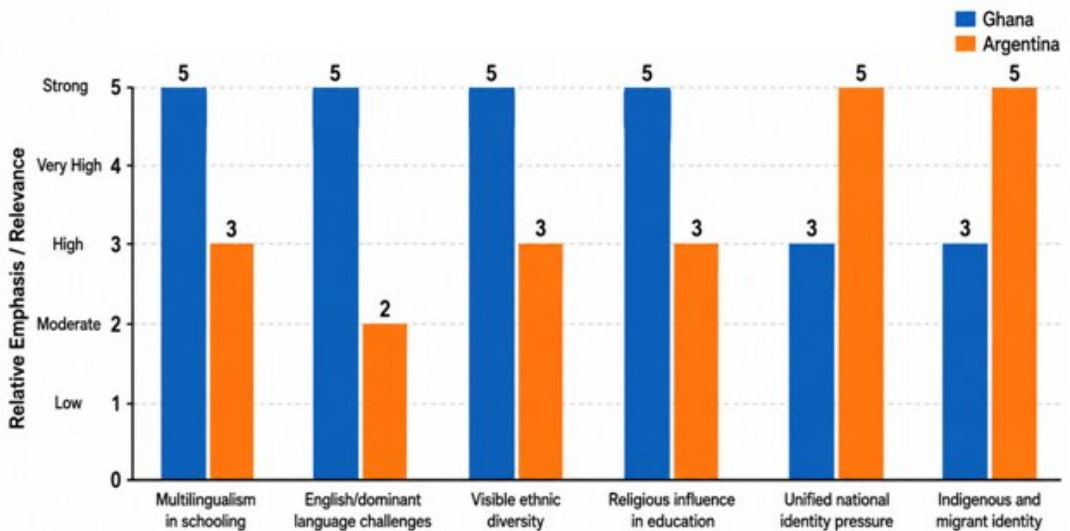


Fig 4: Differences Between Ghana and Argentina in Children's Educational Experiences

The figure highlights the differing educational emphasis of cultural identity factors in Ghana and Argentina. Ghana shows the strongest relevance for multilingualism, English or dominant-language challenges, visible ethnic diversity, and religious influence, reflecting its highly multilingual, multiethnic, and religiously diverse educational context.

5.3 Social Class, Regional Inequality, and Cultural Capital

There is also a history of material inequality where cultural identity is involved, as seen in the Ghanaian and Argentine cases. Cultural exclusion for children occurs in addition to poverty, social class, geographic location, and unequal school resource. Ghanaian children in the rural areas may have to walk for a long distance to school, access to less school facilities, limited teacher personnel, access to technology is not very available and limited exposure to English outside the school premises. In Argentina, children can have different educational experiences in various provinces, being urban or rural, residing in a poor or richer neighbourhood, being migrants, or being indigenous. The urban and middle class children in both countries are more likely to have better school resources, private tuition, educated family members and books. These differences can be explained using the sociological term 'cultural capital'. Specific speech, behaviour, learning and ways of expressing knowledge are valued and rewarded in school. Children who have values and beliefs similar to the dominant values within the school may thus be more likely to succeed academically because they are considered to be naturally equipped. Out-of-home children may have capacities and knowledge of the community, practice, language, environment

and culture that are hardly recognized or appreciated by formal education. Schooling has a double nature as demonstrated by the comparison. It can give knowledge, qualification and social mobility, but can also be a source of inequality when children come to school unequal and when such institutions favour dominant cultural practices.

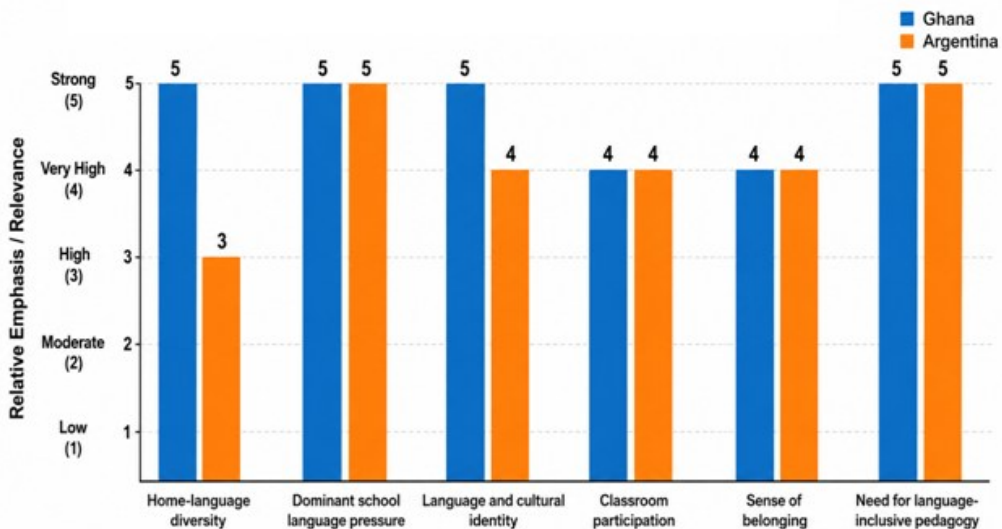


Fig 5: Language, Identity, and Belonging in Ghana and Argentina

The figure compares the relative importance of language-related educational dimensions in Ghana and Argentina. Home-language diversity and the relationship between language and cultural identity are more strongly emphasized in Ghana, reflecting its multilingual schooling context, whereas both countries experience equally strong pressure from the dominant school language.

5.4 Family, Community, and Children's Educational Experiences

Education and the family and community are connected closely, but in different ways, on both sides. The role of extended family, elders, religious leaders, chiefs and community organizations can impact on discipline, educational goals, values, and responsibilities of children in Ghana. Families could be taking a partnership approach to raising their children's learning success that helps advance the learning success of their family and community. In Argentina, family context, migration histories, Indigenous community status, regional identity, caregiving arrangements, as well as social class are key factors affecting the resources available to and relationship of children to school. Children's education systems can't be looked at without considering classrooms. The connections between child attendance, homework, child confidence, child language and child aspirations, with relation to aspects of community relationship and the family livelihoods are linked. The family and

community environment can impart to children practical skills, moral knowledge, social belonging and collective identity. Formal study time, however, may be used for other activities like motherhood and family duties, domestic work, labor in farms or joining family businesses. This also aligns with international research which suggests that enhancing social integration and engagement in the community is beneficial for young people's sense of belonging and wellbeing (Ahn et al., 2023; Briant and Burt, 2025).

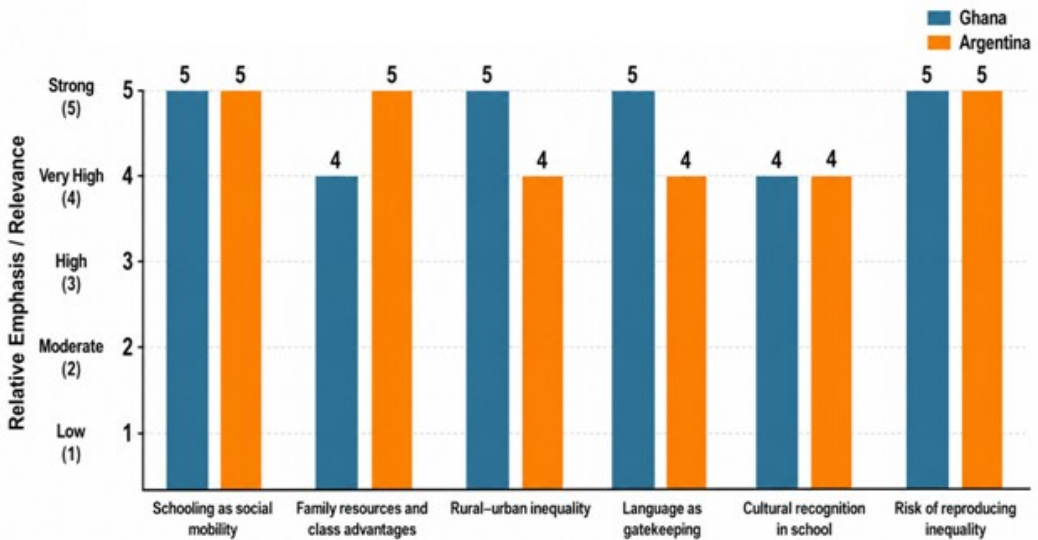


Fig 6: Schooling, Inequality, and Social Mobility in Ghana and Argentina

The figure compares the relative importance of major social and equity factors affecting children's education in Ghana and Argentina. Schooling as a pathway to social mobility and the risk of education reproducing inequality receive the highest relevance in both countries, showing the dual role of schools in creating opportunities while also reinforcing existing disadvantages.

5.5 Teachers as Mediators of Inclusion and Exclusion

Teachers play a pivotal role between formal curricula and children's experiences. Teachers in Ghana can link lessons to local languages, proverbs, oral traditions, religious diversity, etc., and to rural occupations and histories of their communities. Evidence from cultural pedagogical and cooperative learning research points to a host of gains to culturally connected teaching, including in improved engagement, increased respect for the diversity in classrooms, and increased participation in education (Nkrumah et al., 2026; Zhou and Colomer, 2024). Teacher preparation in both countries should therefore prepare preservice instructors to be aware of the importance of multilingualism, as well as to work against discrimination, to be culturally responsive, and to connect the national curriculum to local experiences.

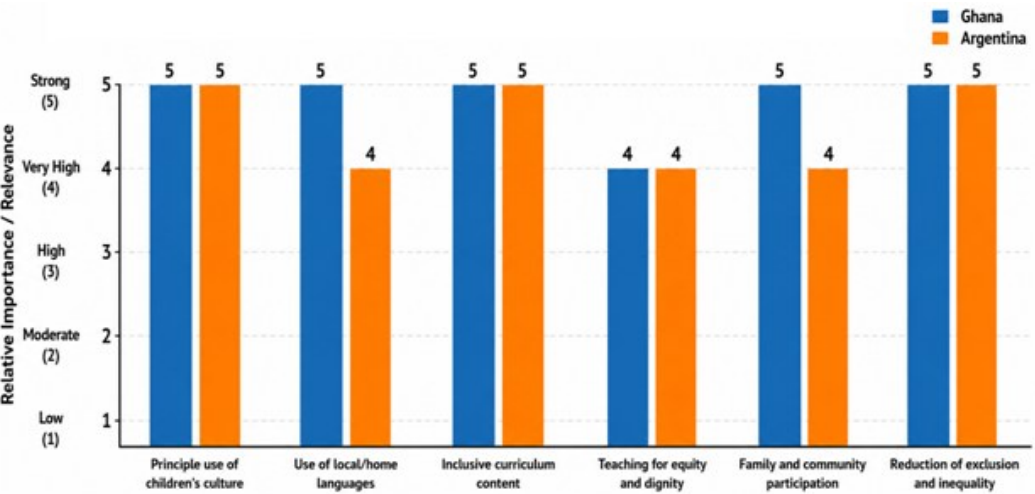


Fig 7: Culturally Responsive Education in Ghana and Argentina

The figure compares the importance of major children's rights and social justice dimensions in education across Ghana and Argentina. Recognition of children's culture, inclusive curriculum content, and the reduction of exclusion and inequality receive the highest relevance in both countries, indicating a shared need for education systems that respect cultural identity and promote fairness.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to explore the role of cultural identity in educational experiences in two contexts of the Global South: Ghana and Argentina. It was found from the discussion that education is not just an academic process, but also a social and cultural process. Children come to school with identities defined by language, ethnicity, religion, family culture, social class, region, migration and national history. These identities affect children's engagement in classroom activities, interactions with teachers and peers, sense of confidence and belonging in school. The comparison showed that there are some key similarities, but also key differences between Ghana and Argentina. Multilingualism, ethnic diversity, religious values, community life, the rural-urban divide, and English as a powerful language of education and social mobility all have a significant impact on children's education in Ghana. In Argentina, educational experiences for children are influenced by the Spanish language dominance, national identity, Indigenous and migrant identities, social class, regional inequality, and curriculum representation. The balance between local languages/cultural diversity and English-based formal education is Ghana's primary challenge, whereas the recognition of Indigenous, migrant, rural and regional identities in a Spanish-dominant national school system is Argentina's primary challenge. The paper also stated that schools have the power to either reinforce inequality or inclusion. Incorporating children's languages, histories and culture into

the curriculum and classroom environment is likely to make children feel respected, confident and motivated to learn. Where schools prioritize the dominant languages, dominant experiences, middle-class values, or narrow national stories, however, the children of lower-income, rural, Indigenous, migrant, and minority communities can feel excluded. The overall findings of the study indicate that culturally-responsive education is needed in both Ghana and Argentina.

Future Scope

This study can be extended in the future by following the same process with empirical field research in schools and communities in Ghana and Argentina. Interviews with children, parents, teachers and school leaders would give greater insight into children's lived experience of cultural identity within the everyday of the classroom. Observations in the classroom may also provide insights into children's participation and belonging based on the language, curriculum, teacher attitudes and relationships with peers. Future research could also be more specific, e.g., on children in rural areas of Ghana, Indigenous children from Argentina, migrant children in cities in Argentina, or children in multilingual Ghanaian classrooms. These targeted investigations would yield greater insights into the interplay of culture, class, language and region in children's learning. Comparative research across more countries in the Global South is another key pathway for the future. Research on Ghana and Argentina could be compared to other African, Latin American or Asian contexts to shed light on broader patterns of culturally responsive education, language policy, and curriculum inclusion.

Ethics Statement

This study was based exclusively on secondary analysis of published academic literature, policy documents, census reports, curriculum materials, and other publicly available documentary sources. No children, parents, teachers, or community members were recruited or directly involved in the research, and no interviews, surveys, focus groups, classroom observations, experiments, or collection of personal or identifiable information were conducted. Therefore, institutional ethical approval, parental or guardian consent, and child assent were not required. Nevertheless, the study followed principles of academic integrity, responsible citation, cultural sensitivity, and respectful representation. Particular care was taken to avoid stigmatizing or deficit-based descriptions of children from Indigenous, migrant, rural, minority-language, and low-income communities. Any future research involving direct participation by children would require prior approval from an appropriate institutional ethics committee, informed consent from parents or legal guardians, age-appropriate assent from the children, confidentiality and data-protection procedures, safeguarding measures, and the participants' right to withdraw without disadvantage.

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