The Role of Colonial Education in Retrospect: 
The Gold Coast Case in the Era of Imperialism

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Abstract

The present paper illustrates how the adapted education policy implemented in Ghana -- known as the Gold Coast under British rule was neither adapted to local needs nor did it respond to the natives’ wants, thus showing its drastic impact on the traditional fabric. It also shows the British assumption that mental control often precedes conquest by force. The purpose of this work is to explore the authoritarian school, teaching styles, funding, and mainly curriculum and educational organization, which are according to specialists the pillars of any effective educational strategy.

The examination of the whole process of colonial education in Ghana -- known as the Gold Coast under British rule-- shows that Britain’s educational policy was conditioned by the general situation at home. The need for African raw materials which were to fuel the wheel of industry at home; together with the labour force required in the development of these raw materials, in addition to the necessary markets for their manufactured goods had made the British become aware of the importance of providing the natives with Western education. Not only did this lead them to intervene in the field of education, but, most and above all, it caused their colonial education policy to be oriented towards achieving their imperial objectives. In other terms, the objective of colonial education was to give an impulse to economy at home. Besides, the late nineteenth century witnessed the imperialist expansion which occurred in Africa after 1870, and was achieved by the partition of the continent in 1884-85. This coincided with the rise of the USA and Germany as great industrialists on the one hand, and the decline of British economy which started after the 1860s, on the other. It was for all these that the Gold Coast came to the fore of the other British West African colonies as a potentially rich territory, and that Britain had stepped educational developments as well as economic projects for her mise en valeur as early as the close of the nineteenth century. These facts altogether had caused the extensive exploitation of the Gold Coast making it an exception in the history of colonial British West Africa. The present paper illustrates how the adapted education policy implemented in this colony was neither adapted to local needs nor did it
respond to the natives’ wants, thus showing its drastic impact on the traditional fabric. It also shows the British assumption that mental control often precedes conquest by force. The purpose of this work is to explore the authoritarian school, teaching styles, funding, and mainly curriculum and educational organization, which are according to specialists the pillars of any effective educational strategy.

During the whole period of the nineteenth century, the instruction of the natives had been left in the hands of Christian missionaries who had no qualifications, no definite programme, and slender means. Britain was neither ready to invest money on her colonial people, nor was her willing to commit herself in the educational field on the grounds that if any development came to be brought to the colonies, it had to be financed by revenues which had to be raised locally. But starting from the 1880s, the British became aware that native education should have to be undertaken under the control and supervision of the colonial administration. Two ordinances were then passed in 1882 and in 1887. They were the stepping stone to colonial education policy in the Gold Coast, and helped the process of instruction to go many steps forward.

I. Historical Background

British official presence in the Gold Coast dates back as early as 1821, when the British trading forts and settlements were officially made a British Colony. But, it was not until 1874, after the acquisition of the hinterland territories of the Asante, that British rule was consolidated. This effective establishment of British colonial rule was widely justified on different grounds, namely philanthropic motives, economic interests and Britain’s competitive views. In fact, British colonial intervention on the Gold Coast, was widely legitimized by their twin assumptions, which were their pre-eminence in the world, which was attained due to the validity of their institutions, -Britain was seen as a model of industrial success and free constitutional government in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Besides, like the other European countries, the British believed in the universal message that they were assigned for the African people that they viewed as backward. They believed that their institutions were the “most advanced agency”, to quote E. A. Brett terms, which could bring civilization and progress to the Africans. The British had also the strong belief that Africans were unable to govern themselves. Lord Frederick Lugard, former Governor of Nigeria, (1914-1919) stated
that “the African ‘negro’ lacked power of organisation and was conspicuously deficient in the management and control alike of men or business”.

The first Europeans, mainly the businessmen and the missionaries, who had settled on the West African coast, were the first to introduce the rudiments of Western education. Both of them had aimed at providing literacy to particular sections of the population, namely mulatto children, children of chiefs and those of the rising class of local wealthy merchants and traders. Whether these Europeans came to Africa with mercantilist aims or philanthropic motives, they shared the common fallacy of the civilizing mission, even though, on different grounds. Initially the former came to the area with the sole objective to search minerals and other natural commodities, at the same time to secure markets for their manufactured goods. In fact, it was through commerce that they intended to civilize the natives of Africa, and had little interest in educating them. Therefore, they made only a few attempts in this direction, with the view to employing Africans capable of writing and speaking English as well as counting, for the maintenance of their forts and settlements, as well as the administration which the British Government had set up at Cape Coast as early as 1821.

With entirely different motives, the Christian missionaries were sent out all over the world, principally to Africa, in order to fight the savage practices, like slavery and slave trade that were exerted on humanity. Their objective was to enable the natives to read the Bible to make them Christian converts. The British were the first to undertake this enterprise. Their motivation was greatly derived from the role they had assigned to themselves as the advance guards of civilization. Not only did these missionaries have no respect for the local indigenous aspects on which the natives based their life, but they looked at them with an utter contempt.

The humanitarians sought for an alternative for slave trade and had used the Bible and the plough for this purpose. As they saw that the seizure of slaves and the blockade imposed on the carriers was not enough for the effective abolition of this practice, they thought it was necessary to cut the middlemen off from their sources of supply. They argued that the Africans had to be given alternative means of earnings that enabled them to purchase the

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2. Yet, these local aspects – the economic activities, the social organization that governed the political life of the traditional society together with the traditions, customs and the tribal laws-, were so dearly preserved by the Gold Coasters.
European goods they wanted. In this way, The Africans were converted to Christianity and encouraged to grow agricultural products that Britain required for her growing industry.

Yet, it was not always easy for these humanitarians to achieve their work owing to the tribal wars that frequently broke out between the coastal Fanti tribes and the Asanti in the hinterland. These clashes did also cause the interruption of the trading activities on the coast. This made the British administrators of the forts interfere by fighting the hinterland people in several wars until they defeated them leading to the acquisition of their territories; and to the establishment of law and order that had paved the way for the development of cash-crops, and also for a great rush towards the gold mining areas in the hinterland. Both minerals and cash-crops were oriented towards the international market, given that the Government became convinced that the needed money for the self-supporting colony could only be generated by trade allowing more educational development in these areas.

In the early 1880s, colonial education started to become one of the colonial administration’s major concerns, and the Government began to look at the issue with greater interest than it used to do before, and expected native education to hold more diversified objectives, far from the missionaries’ sole objective that of preparing good churchmen. However, in order to attain these objectives the colonial government had to be more involved in the field.

This change in Britain’s position towards colonial education came after the British Government had officially started its involvement in the field of education at home resulting in the issue of the Education Act of 1870. This was mostly due to the reports, which were written by Matthew Arnold who worked as Inspector of elementary schools from 1851 to 1856, criticising the State’s indifferent position towards the field. The Education Act of 1870 set a system of co-operation between voluntary and government schools. It aimed to build schools in the areas lacking educational facilities, and to provide assistance to poor children. It was also intended to enable the greatest number of children in the country to be acquainted with elementary education. The Act provided for the establishment of boards of education. The latter had to consist of elected members and had to be set up in districts. They were changed to supply financial assistance to the missions on the condition that the latter would drop their religious tendencies in instruction. To this end, the boards had to set up a system of inspection to ensure the missions should be working on the foregone condition to receive grants-in-aid.
In addition to this, the inspectors held annual and individual examinations for the pupils, in Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.³

In the Gold Coast, this interest was actually encouraged by the increasing local revenues which had resulted from the pacification of the area. Indeed, evidence shows that the lack of money had impeded the development of different social services, and had prevented the colony from any effective progress in the field of education.

It seems that by that time, British officials and businessmen, like their other European counterparts took it for granted that the African continent had become their permanent home. This period also witnessed the rise of a set of thoughts and beliefs that advocated the interdependence and the complimentarity of the two continents, Europe and Africa, in the way that Europe benefited from Africa’s raw materials and markets, while Africa was to take advantage from the capital and technology of Europe. This ideology, which became to be known as Euroafrica, came to justify the aliens’ political domination, economic exploitation and cultural subjugation of the African populations. In other terms, this Europeans’ ideology came to defend their imperial interests.⁴ In the Gold Coast, the British not only expanded their political and economic activities over the territory, but also kept the door open for more and more expatriates who were needed to share in the growing Government’s responsibilities and in the economic life of the Colony.

The trouble was that the European staff, which both the administration and the trading firms was employing, was highly expensive. The cost of a European working in Africa was four times that of an African. This was probably due to the hard local conditions of the climate and the risks of the widespread diseases. However, knowing that in that period, the financial situation of the colony could not afford such expenses, the colonial administration became aware that it was urgent to find cheap African personnel to help to maintain its growing administrative and economic involvement. In fact, the importance of employing natives by the Government and the commercial companies as clerks, accountants and artisans lies not only in saving money, which was to be invested locally, but also in guaranteeing

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   see also C. K. Graham, *The History of Education in Ghana*, Frank Cass and Co Ltd., 1971

continuity that was often hampered by the European employees who were frequently on leave. These altogether made the Government realize that native education was by far the field which deserved the greatest interest and assistance. It was on these grounds that the Government began its involvement in the enterprise of native education and issued the Ordinance of 1882.

II. The Gold Coast Education Ordinance of 1882

It was the general situation which was prevailing at that time that made the Legislative Council under the chairmanship of Governor Rowe pass the first Education Ordinance of 1882 for the promotion and Assistance of Education in the Gold Coast Colony. The Ordinance concerned Lagos too because the latter was jointly governed with the Gold Coast, till 1886, when Lagos was made separate Colony and Protectorate. The other British West African colonies, namely, Sierra Leone and the Gambia were provided with similar ordinances. These ordinances marked the first official involvement of the Colonial Government in the field. They were the starting point of a defined relationship between the Colonial Government and the Missionaries, though in the Gold Coast, this relationship was believed to be warm, unlike in Nigeria, for example, where they were always in conflict.

By providing the Ordinance of 1882, the Colonial Government aimed above all at preparing the young natives for their new role in the colonial administration. The ultimate objectives were, actually, to overcome the shortcomings of the period, in terms of personnel in the growing administration and in the developing commercial activities. In other terms, the colonial administration in that period saw for the increase of the ‘production’ of African English-speaking servants to work as clerks in the central government, in the native councils and to work as technicians in the commercial houses, as Walter Rodney has stated:

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The main purpose of the colonial school system was to train Africans to man the local administration at the lowest ranks and to staff the private capitalist firms owned by Europeans.

By then, it appears clear that the officials’ new interest in the field of colonial education could in no way be for altruistic motives, as it was claimed in the early period of colonial rule. But, the supply of much education for the natives was not always welcomed by British policymakers, who considered it as a threat for their colonial policy, as Offiong had put it: “Literate Africans were useful in many ways although too much literacy was considered dangerous and undesirable.”

These policy-makers feared that too much education of the natives would make the latter seek their place in the traditional society, and look with contempt at their traditional rulers who were not educated. In addition, they insured that the education of the Africans would give them possibilities to take up jobs in the high ranks of the Civil Service that would make them demand for equal rights with the Europeans in the same posts. Therefore, they saw that it was for this reason that the educational system had to provide for the supervision of the educational activities. These altogether made them state that one of the concerns that colonial education should work for, was to teach the African child that he was inferior to the Europeans, and for this reason, he had to obey them. In this connexion, it was stated that:

Whatever Africans were taught about themselves was designed to enable them to internalise their inferiority and to recognise the white man as their saviour.

Thus, in their civilising mission through the spread of Western education among the Africans, the British adopted the missionaries’ educational strategy, which stressed two elements, namely, curriculum and educational organization i.e. school administrative organization and management, according to G. N. Brown. The latter considers these two elements as the pillars of any educational strategy for the achievement of its objectives. It was for this reason that the colonial officials approved of the adoption of such a strategy, and

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9. Ibid.
this reflected their intentions at that time, to isolate the young natives from their past and to provide them with European values in order to ‘produce’ a group of allies.

Considering the colonial syllabus, evidence shows that colonial education in Africa was largely literary. The curriculum consisted of the 3Rs, which were obligatory, in addition to optional subjects, such as History, geography, Literature and Health Science, which benefited the aided-schools with supplementary Government assistance.\textsuperscript{11} The trouble was that, although the pupils were Africans, none of these subjects dealt with Africa. In fact, colonial education consisted of themes that reflected the situation in the home country, while it was intentionally emptied from the African content, which the Europeans considered as pagan and evil. In this respect, beside Jesus life and the religious notion, the African children were taught the British Constitution, the Geography of Britain, and English literature. For instance literary works were presented by the teachers as the greatest literary achievements in the world, and were taught in such a way that they caused the Africans’ admiration for English values and their alienation from their own oral tradition.

The African children were also taught the history of the British Empire on the basis of the European belief that Africa was a primitive and a barbarous continent without history. Professor Hugh Trevor Roger advanced in 1962, that there was no African history to teach, and that there was only the history of the Europeans in Africa. He claimed that the rest was darkness and that the latter was not the subject of history.\textsuperscript{12} This view was also shared by Margery Perham when she wrote in 1951:

\begin{quote}
Until very recent penetration of Europe the greater part of the continent was without the wheel, the plough or the transport animal; without some stone houses or clothes except skins; without writing and so without history.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

Likewise, the curriculum did not include any technical subjects. In this connexion, M. Crowder asserts that even the trading companies did almost nothing to provide their African employees with mechanical and managerial training. It could be understood that the expatriate businessmen did not want the Africans to widen their knowledge in these skills, and to learn more than what they were expected to learn. This shows how Britain wanted to keep the Africans in an inferior position vis-à-vis their masters.

\textsuperscript{11} In Mc William and Kwamena-Poh, op. cit., p. 40
\textsuperscript{12} In M. Crowder, West Africa under Colonial Rule, London, Longman Group LTD 1968, p. 10
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
African subjugation was also achieved through the use of the English language in the process of instruction. The English language seemed to be deliberately used as the only means of instruction in the different educational institutions, except in the schools that were under the Basel denomination, where the vernaculars were mostly encouraged. Moreover, the English language was taught as the language of power and technology. In this way, the Whites’ superiority became evident to the Africans, and developed in them a feeling of admiration for the Europeans’ achievements. This made the African children and their parents realize that the knowledge of skills of their ‘saviour’ was necessary for them, and began to claim an instruction in the English language. In fact, for the Africans, the ability to speak English was an educational achievement. The Gold Coasters, for instance, considered a person who was able to handle the English language, as an intellectual or a “scholar”, while other Africans, such as Ngugui W. Thiong’O hold opposite views in relation to their counterparts of the colonial period. Thiong’O calls the British policy of spreading their values through their language, the *cultural bomb*. He warned that there were several effects of this bomb. For him, the young Africans became suspicious about their names, their languages, their environment, and about their unity. Hence, the young became doubtful about their capacities and lost their self-confidence.

The policy of English language teaching in the colony was linked to the colonial policy of thrift which did not permit training teachers in the vernaculars, but rather stressed the rapid production of cheap English-speaking personnel for the low ranks of the colonial administration. There was also a tendency for the *Europeanization* of all the civil servants, including education. This had resulted in the appointment of expatriate teachers who had neither the knowledge about the African environment nor respect for it.

Still in their policy of alienating the young natives from their environment, the British colonial officials saw about putting the African pupils in boarding schools from an early age. Girls and boys were then put in separate boarding schools which were kept by mission men and women in their majority. The adoption of the boarding school system in colonial

15. The Basel Mission was a German Society settled at Basel in Switzerland. Its first missionaries were sent out to work in areas that were Danish sphere. They first landed at Christianborg in 1828 then moved to Akropong in 1835.
16. Ibid.
education had to achieve two objectives: to subjugate the African culture which the Europeans considered as ‘pagan’ and sinful, and also to replace it with features of European culture. In this connexion, Rev. A. L. Kitchen had recommended:

... if they are to be woven into character, isolation from degrading influences, so far as is possible, is essential during the early hours. For this purpose the boarding schools are the most efficient instruments.17

Actually, morality and discipline were essential in religious teaching which the African children were given in these schools.

These were mainly the points which were stressed in the Ordinance of 1882, under the terms of which the Government was to regulate the educational efforts of the various denominational and Government schools. The management of these schools had to be standardized following a general agreement which had to consist of grants-in-aids and supervision. The Ordinance provided for the establishment of a General Board for Education, for the first time in British history in West Africa. This board included the Governor, the members of the executive council and not more than four nominated members. The foremost functions of this board were to control and to supervise the educational process. It was as well empowered to set up local boards whose role was to advise the General Board in matter of starting new schools and granting financial assistance when necessary. This necessity was attached to conditions which compelled the missionaries to respect the rules that the government laid down for the educational enterprise.

Among other things, the Ordinance set up rules for opening new schools, in a way that the latter should be built in areas where the missionaries had failed to reach during their educational venture because of the tribal disturbances which were caused by the Asante invasions. The government also urged the building of Industrial schools. The Ordinance also stipulated that the pupils had to sit for annual examinations individually in Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, and girls had to be assessed in Needlework. It also encouraged the introduction of other subjects which were to be optional such as Geography, History and Physical education into the curriculum. At this stage, the notion of the 3Rs had become too

limited for the advancing African societies. Moreover, the Missionaries were brought to respect the wishes of the pupils’ parents as far as religious teaching was concerned. In addition to this, the Ordinance brought rules for granting certificates for teachers on the English pattern, and insisted that the latter’s salaries should be based on criteria, such as the organization of their work, their ability to manage their class, and a great number of passes.

To ensure that the rules stipulated by the Ordinance were respected by the missions, the Government provided for the establishment of an inspectorate that was to be shared between all the British West African colonies. For this purpose, not only did the government appoint a chief inspector, who was known as Her Majesty’s Inspector of Schools for the West African Colonies (H.M.I.), but they also appointed three African Sub Inspectors of Schools: one for Sierra Leone, one for the Gambia and another one for the Gold Coast and Lagos which were still jointly governed at that time. It was Rev. Metcalfe Sunter, the principal of Fourah Bey College who was chosen for the post of H.M.I. The African sub inspectors had to work under the charge of the Chief Inspector. They had to assure that the schools were set up on the recommendations of the Ordinance in terms of location, necessity, adequacy and accounts. They had as well to enquire about the efficiency and the competence of the teachers, who were to be responsible for the training of the natives.

The government stipulated a financial assistance in the form of grants-in-aids, which were to be drawn from public funds and were principally based on the requirements that were put up by the Ordinance. Alan Burns, former Governor of Nigeria (1942-43) stated that this financial assistance was to consist of 3s. for pupil’s average attendance, 3s. for each pupil who had succeeded at the annual examination in each of the 3Rs (Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic) as well as for each of the optional subjects. Another sum of 3s. was to be supplied for the school organization and the teachers’ efficiency.\footnote{18} The system of grants-in-aids also comprised the supply of salaries of the teachers who held certificates. In England, a qualified teacher i. e., a certificated teacher was granted 4s. 6d. to 6s. 0d. a head. There were additional sums in relation to the number of pupil-teachers and the assistant teachers.

Although this system of grants-in-aid was seen as one of the important provisions that were issued in the Gold Coast by the Education Ordinance of 1882, almost none of the

recommendations of the ordinance saw the daylight, except the supply of the sum of £425; The latter was voted for the missions, and had to be shared between the Wesleyan, the Basel and the Bremen Missions. The delay in implementing the recommendations of the Ordinance—concerning financial assistance—had even been raised by the local newspapers. As late as 1885, the _Gold Coast News_ wrote complaining that the people were still expecting the institution of the Ordinance.19

The failure of the Ordinance could be partly due to the refusal of the missionaries to have their activities controlled by another body, for the reason that they had always worked on independent grounds. Besides, the scarcity of staff made it difficult to implement the ordinance rules effectively. This can be seen in Rev. Sunter’s negative attitude towards the Education Ordinance describing it as being “unworkable ... its machinery was never completed, so far as even the government was concerned.” Rev. Sunter was critical of the Ordinance and found that none of the existing schools fulfilled the conditions, and thus failed to qualify for a grant.20 One inspector couldn’t achieve his work efficiently because of the large area covered by the four British West African colonies, and thus, according to Burns’ records, very little work could be accomplished by this appointment.21 Nevertheless, a few amendments were brought to the educational system under the terms of a new Ordinance which was passed five years later.

**II. The Passing of the Education Ordinance of 1887**

In 1887 a new ordinance was proclaimed when Lagos was separated from the Gold Coast Colony in 1886, and was given its own Education Ordinance. The new Gold Coast Ordinance gave a definite _coup de pousse_ to the educational system with the amendments it brought. The major ones concerned the missionaries’ role in the management of the administration of all non-Government schools, in the sense that the mission men had become the managers of these schools. They had to replace the local school boards, set up by the previous Ordinance. The Board of Education was not only maintained, but it was also charged to set forth the inspection of school, and to provide certificates to teachers as well. The Board was also empowered to lay down rules for grants-in-aids, in this respect, great details were

20. In McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh, op. cit., p. 39
21. Burns op. cit., p. 94
provided about the conditions on which financial assistance was to be supplied to the schools, which applied for it, and which had to register in the ‘Assisted List’.

Among other things, the Ordinance stipulated that schools should be set up for all children, regardless of race or religion. In addition, the Ordinance did not impose any rule on the opening of new schools. The latter, however, had to comply with the education rules. Besides, the system of grants-in-aids was not only based on the average attendance of at least twenty pupils, but also on the curriculum that was intended for each standard. The Ordinance insisted that some differences should be made in the provision of these grants to infants, primary and secondary schools. Six Shillings were supplied to each pupil who would pass in the 3Rs. but they would lose two shillings every time they failed in one subject. The schools could get grants for optional subjects such as Elementary Science, Bookkeeping and Singing. They could also add other subjects to the curriculum, such as Drawing and Physical Exercises. The schools could as well supply additional subjects for which they could be granted Government-aids, provided that they had the efficient staff. Special encouragements were given to industrial training as well. The new ordinance provided for Industrial Schools where ten hours a week had to be devoted to manual work which consisted of handicrafts, manufacturing process agricultural work, or household work for girls. Yet, it was only with the approval of the Board for the course of teaching that these schools could benefit from Government’s assistance. Moreover, the grants which the scholars received for industrial subjects were higher than those given for the other subjects. They reached the amount of 10s. for each senior pupil and 5s. for the junior ones.

On these grounds, in 1888 for example, the missions were granted an amount of £687 3s. 6d. which was distributed between the missions. The Basel schools got £351 18s. 0d., the Wesleyan schools £229 13s. 0d., the Catholic schools £77 5s. 0d. and the Bremen schools received £28 7s. 6d. Further and more considerable grants were made by the Ordinance in the next years, reaching the sums of £1,673 in 1891-92, £3,400 in 1895-96, £3,581 in 1896-97 and £3,511 in 1898.22 Two reasons made the Government raise its aid to the schools in that period: firstly, the parents were not so often willing to pay the school fees, which were not abolished in spite of the Government assistance. It was stated, for instance, that the fees had constituted only 13 per cent of the total sum of £3,654 spent on Wesleyan schools in the late

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22 Graham op. cit., pp. 114-115
nineteenth century, while Government grants and Church sources amounted about 50 per cent and 49 per cent respectively. Secondly, the close of the century witnesses an increasing population rush towards instruction. Indeed, the growing number of pupils in schools of different denominations was more than remarkable, as it be clearly seen in the following figures which show the average number of pupils of each sex attending both primary and secondary Government and Assisted schools in 1888, 1889 and 1890:

Table 1: The average number of pupils of each sex in primary and Secondary Government and Assisted schools in 1888, 1889 and 1890

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denominations</th>
<th>1888</th>
<th>1889</th>
<th>1890</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesleyan</td>
<td>1,067</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>1,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German Mission</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,774</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>2,988</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: C. K. Graham, ibid., p. 116

According to observers, the Education Ordinance of 1887 was more successful than that of 1882, in a way that its recommendations were more workable. Besides, the system of grants-in-aids was not limited to the Cape Coast area in the south but it benefited other parts of the Colony, and the inspectors were said to be flexible in their dealings and the examinations were said to be affordable. The new ordinance gave birth to the rise of two categories of primary schools: Government schools and ‘Assisted schools’. The former were started and maintained from public funds. This responsibility was sometimes shared by the local chiefs, who helped in building and repairing the schools, and also in providing accommodation for the school teacher. On the other hand, the ‘Assisted schools’ were those schools which were granted financial assistance on condition that they conformed to government regulations. There was a third category of schools, which included the private schools which either did not accept the Government control over their activities, or failed to comply with the Government conditions. The Government continued supplying assistance to the missions in the following years rising from £350 in 1888 to £916 in 1889 reaching £2,167 in 1892.

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23. Ibid.
24. Graham, op 115
25. Ibid., p. 160
As a result of the growing Government interest from 1881 to the close of the century, the missions saw remarkable improvements, as it was shown on table 1, and the area witnessed a mushrooming number of schools. The Education Report of 1888 noted that:

The Report of the Inspectors of Schools shows a decided progress during the years, and there can be no doubt that the action of the Government in introducing the system of making grants to the various schools in accordance with the result of the examinations held has had a most beneficial effect.  

In spite of these Government efforts to participate in and to improve the educational system in the Gold Coast, the latter was still showing several defects, mainly in teaching. These shortcomings did not leave the Government unconcerned by the matter. Governor Branford Griffith decided to appoint an Inspector for the Colony, claiming that this had to improve the staff of teachers in the sense that they “would be better supervised and structured.” In this way, in 1890 the Governor appointed the first Director of Education Mr George Macdonald (1893-97), for the Gold Coast alone, (while one was not appointed in its neighbouring colony of Sierra Leone, where education was far more advanced, until 1911). Mr Macdonald was said to be the first who effectively established the Education Department there. But, the Report supplied in 1892 by the Acting Director of Education, recognised that the schools were in fact still suffering from inefficiencies. The Report denounced the bad quality of teachers and laid stress on the urgent necessity of more adult and competent masters to take these African children in charge.

Actually, this system, which was known as Payment by Results, brought several defects to the educational enterprise. On the one hand, the methods used in the examinations incited the teachers to encourage their pupils to learn by heart, instead of developing their ability by comprehension. On the other hand, it made the school managers introduce other subjects than the 3Rs., even if they were badly taught, only for the sake of more grants. Moreover, it developed a kind of responsibility in the pupils, who became aware that their teachers’ salaries were related to their success in each examination. Furthermore, the system created an atmosphere of hatred between educational groups, which should be working in co-operation, namely the teachers on the one side and the inspectors on the other one.

26. Ibid., p. 116
27. Ibid., p. 39
28. Mc William and Kwamena-Poh, op. cit., chapter five, note 9
According to Lugard, these shortcomings were mostly due to the Government’s neglect to its responsibilities towards the education of the natives, and to the lack of an effective co-operation between the Government and the missions.  

This led to several deficiencies such as lack of conformity in the syllabus, the textbooks, the school hours and the examination system, in addition to the absence of a proper financial support and the control of the expenses which were intended for the building of schools, teachers, pupils, etc. These shortcomings were to find their remedy in the following century.

III. The Expansion of Colonial Education from 1900 to 1918

The educational system, which the colonial officials had effectively set up in the Gold Coast under the terms of the Education Ordinance of 1887, was carried out until 1925. Even so, a couple of changes were brought over to the educational enterprise by the then Governor of the Gold Coast, Sir John P. Rodger (1902-1910), who took advantage of the betterment of the economic release of the colony, and started to bring reforms to the enterprise. These reforms were in fact, intended to achieve the objectives that were expected by the colonial education policy stated above. He began by setting up a committee in 1908, and started a Teacher Training College and a Technical School in 1909, both of them were in Accra.

III-a The Setting of an Educational committee in 1908

The members of Educational Committee began by criticizing the educational system of the period. They not only saw that this system encouraged the production of more pen-pushers among the natives, but they also blamed it for its negligence of training for land work. In addition, they set forth rules that viewed training as a means for the development of the African character building. The Committee also insisted that some ‘Industrial and Agricultural Training’ should be made compulsory, and urged the government to take care of technical education. It also stressed the interest that should be given to teacher training. Furthermore, the Committee recommended that the system of ‘Payment by Result’ should be

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30. By then, cocoa industry had begun to develop. The percentage of the early major production of the Dependency, namely palm oil, palm kernels, rubber and timber, had started to drop after 1905 and carried on declining until they disappeared by 1915. This led to to the rise of cocoa as the only agricultural export product. See R. Howard, op. cit., p. 69
banned. For the members of the Committee, the Government grants should no longer be provided only after the pupils’ success at the inspector’s annual examination, but rather on the quality of teaching. These recommendations were submitted to the Secretary of State who welcomed them and encouraged their adoption. Subsequently, Governor Rodger took measures which were to help to achieve them locally.

In 1909, on the Committee’s recommendations and also because of the insisting missions’ demand for a teacher training college, Governor Rodger opened the Accra Teacher-Training College and appointed Mr W.H. Barker as its first Principal. Barker admitted that his task would be so hard owing to the lack of government experience in the domain of teacher-training, and the students were generally teachers, pupil-teachers and pupils, who had passed standard VII in a primary school. The training course was based on one general instruction that was given to the Principal by Governor Rodger. The latter insisted on the development and the preservation of aspects of the African life. For this, the Principal of the College, Mr W. H. Barker, who shared his view, said that:

... _not merely that they should be able to read and write the English language, but that they should develop the best in African custom and character for the enrichment of definitely African culture._ 31

W. H. Barker recognised that the Europeans’ efforts in educating the Africans on the coast were only temporary. According to him, colonial education did not take up its real form until Booker T. Washington had emerged with fundamental principles about education to be adopted in Africa. Washington’s educational views encouraged practical training for Blacks at the expense of the literary one. 32 What should be stressed here is that these views and recommendations, which were developed in the Gold Coast were taken up later on by Sir F. Lugard, who saw that they were the bases for what he considered colonial education should be in British West Africa. 33

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31. Mc William and Kwamena-Poh, op. cit., p. 50
32. In fact, Booker T. Washington (1856-1915), was an educator, who urged the Blacks to develop themselves through educational achievements and economic advancement. He urged the blacks to accept their inferior social position for the present and to strive to raise themselves through vocational training and economic self-reliance. He was also the founder of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in 1881, as a school for Black students, at that time.
33. F. Lugard, op. cit. pp. 444-54
The setting up of the college seemed advantageous for the field since it provided professional training to trainees far from religious instruction. Indeed, until the college was founded, it was the home of the mission which supplied the so-called would-be teachers with training. Their main skills were confined to moral training and preaching the gospel. Notwithstanding, with their lack of pedagogical training, they used to sit for the examinations for teacher’s certificate of the Department of Education.

The reforms of 1909 concerning teacher-training had also brought increasing government grants, which were intended to pay teachers’ salaries. In this respect, whether the teachers were working in Government Schools or in the Assisted-schools, they were earning about £20-£30. The Government also granted them a small additional sum of about £1, 10s. and £20 yearly. That was probably to motivate them and make the teaching job more attractive. It was advanced that, until then no salary scale was fixed in the mission schools. Government schools teachers were paid on scales between £36 and £210, bearing in mind that their counterparts with similar qualifications had better salaries in other jobs. It seemed that at that time teaching as a profession was not motivating because it did not offer opportunities for progress, and lacked security and status. In this period, the teaching profession was even described as being a *dull and humdrum job*. Therefore, the young Africans undertook the teaching experience mostly for being prepared for future clerical posts. Nevertheless, Barker considered the opening of the institution of Accra a stepping stone to further educational achievements that would offer the natives to acquire education and knowledge. He also shared the Governor’s view of establishing a West African university with constituent colleges in the other British West African colonies, namely Sierra Leone and Nigeria.

**III-b The Opening of the Accra Technical School in 1909**

As far as the field of technical training was concerned, it was on the Education Committee’s recommendations and in response to the increasing demand for technical education that a technical school was founded in Accra in 1909. Several recommendations for the introduction of practical training in the curriculum of the existing primary schools had been made throughout the nineteenth century. The major ones were similar to those brought, by Dr Madden’s instructions in the early 1840s, by the Privy Council’s memorandum about

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34. Mc William and Kwamena-Poh, op. cit., p. 52
35. Ibid.
Industrial Schools in 1847, and by the most recent two Education Ordinances of the 1880s. As it was seen above, the government had even supplied grants for that purpose. But these recommendations were almost never fully implemented. Since then, the only manual training that the pupils were receiving was in agriculture. This did not concern the Gold Coast alone, but it affected the other British West African colonies too. Yet, by 1909, the Gold Coast could boast of the establishment of the Accra Technical School because it was the first effective attempt of its kind in all British West Africa.\footnote{Mc William and Kwamena-Poh, op. cit.}

It was Governor Roger who opened the Accra Technical School on 19\textsuperscript{th} August, 1909. The general feeling was that there was an urgent need for people, who would take up the charge of the workshops which the government had already opened. The school was mainly intended to train artisans for the major services of the Gold Coast, namely in transport and communication, Public Works, and Electrical Supply Commission. Its foremost objective was to provide the students with practical training in engineering and craftsmanship. This shows the divergence of the objective of Colonial Education which became so much evident in the Gold Coast.

The first Principal of the Technical School was Mr. H. A. Wright, who served from 1909 until his retirement in 1916 when he handed over to Mr. Pickles. The latter was replaced in November 1919 by Mr. M. McLaren who served as principal until 1913 when the school was transferred to Takoradi. When the school was first opened, it had enrolled nineteen students whose number grew to twenty five by the end of the first term, and reached forty five by 1913. in this school, the students were required to have reached Standard V or upwards in a primary school. The course covered metal work and wood work. Initially, the school provided classroom theory work, but starting from 1912 the students began to attend workshop practical work, first in Railways, then with the Public Works Department. The students had to achieve a three years course to qualify in engineering and craftsmanship.

In this way, the first products of the Accra Technical School were presented for examination in May 1912. Among the twenty eight candidates, there were eighteen in metal work and ten in wood work. After their qualification, they were appointed into government departments mainly in public works, waterworks and railways. Moreover, the government
efforts in education in the early twentieth century focused mainly on setting up primary schools in the areas where the missionaries’ attempts did not achieve a great deal of success, partly because of a hard financial situation and partly because of the nineteenth century tribal wars. For instance, in 1911, a primary school was started at Kumasi, and other ones were set up in the Northern territories. This made the number of Government Schools reach nine by 1914. Thus, the enrolment of the Gold Coasters’ children had witnessed a steady growth as it is shown on the following table.

Table 2: The Number of Government and Assisted Schools and the Total Enrolment and Average Attendance of the pupils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Government and Assisted Schools</th>
<th>Total Enrolment</th>
<th>Average Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>13,955</td>
<td>10,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>16,711</td>
<td>11,968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>20,246</td>
<td>15,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>27,318</td>
<td>21,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>34,690</td>
<td>30,456</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Graham, op. cit., p. 152

Likewise, in the non-assisted schools the enrolled pupils reached 12,000 boys and 1,500 girls at that time. This steady growth in the educational field was due to the Gold Coasters increasing interest in the field. Actually, by that time both the African parents and their children had become more and more aware of the benefits of literacy. They were mainly attracted by the social status that their Westernised educated counterparts had reached thanks to their acquisition of Western civilisation.

VI. Conclusion

In this way, it has been demonstrated that British Colonial Education Policy which was supposed to serve the well-being of the Gold Coast community had, in fact, been intentionally worked out in order to serve the British greedy interests. Put differently, evidence has shown that the interest that the British officials had for native education in the Gold Coast was not for moral reasons as it was initially pretended because the British had other views for the natives who were to become the major agents in their imperialistic activities into distinctive
ways: Firstly, the Gold Coasters had to be provided with jobs to earn money that would enable them to pay for the excessively expensive manufactured commodities brought for them by the British merchants. Secondly, the natives had to be educated enough to be able to appreciate the benefits of these goods. To these ends, literacy had become the issue in the hands of the British.