

UNEQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Title: A HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN NORTHERN GHANA 1907 - 1976

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Of the books¹ written on the development of formal Western education in Ghana, Northern Region has only been mentioned in passing. Professor Bening's book to all intents and purposes is the first detailed account of the development of education in Northern Ghana, a book which would be of immense help to researchers on Northern Ghana.

"A History of Education in Northern Ghana" is divided into six parts of eleven chapters, each dealing with the development of education within a certain time limit.

In Part I, the author traces the development of formal western education from the *School* established by Amadu Sambo in 1908 to the establishment of the Krachi Roman Catholic (Trans-Volta) Mission Primary School seventeen years later. The problems encountered by both the Colonial government and the Missionary bodies in establishing the Schools are well treated.

Part II traces the evolution of Teacher Training College with the opening of the Achimota College to the establishment of a Training College at Pusiga instead of Wa *in view of the impending plebiscite to determine the future of the British trust territory of Togoland* (p. 128).

Parts III, IV and V which are the crust of the book deal with the emergence of British Education policy in Tropical Africa, the emergence of nationalistic activities and the eventual regaining of independence by Ghana. Here the author examines the failure of the Colonial government to establish many schools in Northern Ghana (pp. 175 - 184). Only a few talented children were to be encouraged to attain the level of Standard VII (what used to be Middle Form Four), *for to give these primitive children a more advanced education would be a doubtful blessing and make them discontented with their lot.*

In the final part titled Contemporary Scene, the author discusses issues such as the state of University education in Northern Ghana between 1949 and 1966 and more importantly the need for a University of the North.

Although divided into six parts, they have been neatly woven into each other. This makes the book readily understandable; moreover, the author uses simple and straightforward language. Yet another strength which commends the book to the reader is that the author adopts the periodic rather than the thematic approach and this enables the reader to follow the sequence of events which contributed to the development of education in Northern Ghana. Then again is the fact that the author uses Statistical data (26 tables) to illustrate the disparity between the development of education in Northern Ghana and the rest of the

country, a phenomenon which regrettably still persists. Professor Bening also relied on a variety of sources such as those in the National Archives of Ghana in Tamale and Accra, Navrongo Mission Records (NMR), the White Fathers' Mission Files and most importantly Colonial Office Records (unavailable in Ghana).

What is not very clear from the book is the overall impact of colonial education policy on nationalist politics in Northern Ghana during the 1950's. Again, while the author touches on the nature of the pressures mounted on the Convention People's Party government to open more schools, he does not dilate on them. Lastly, the author did not delve much into the overall influence western education has exerted on the culture of the people.

Notwithstanding these omissions, the book is highly recommended to all people interested in Ghana's educational development. If as the author says *education should develop the latent powers of the people and fit them for the task of living upright and useful economic productive lives*, then there is the need to know how this education started and how we can improve upon it. It is a book to be read, nay, made a compulsory textbook for all teachers in training because every chapter is prefaced with a discussion of what existed in the rest of the country.

Footnotes

Forster, Philip J. (1965) *Education and Social Change in Ghana*, Frank Cass Ltd.

Graham, C.K. (1966) *History of Education in Ghana* Frank Cass Ltd.

McWilliam, H.O.A. and

M.A. Kwamena-Poh (1975) *The Development of Education in Ghana*, London, Longmans.