

# Virtuous Circle; Education and Economic Growth in Colonial Ghana

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## Abstract:

*Sub-Saharan Africa is often seen in light of poverty, but there is also economic growth that can be seen throughout history. The case study of the British Gold Coast is one that shows such growth. This thesis deals with the question: to what extent did development of education in the British Gold Coast colony impact economic development from 1891 until 1938?*

*By looking at the Gold Coast through institutional frameworks Acemoglu and Robinson, several types of political and economic institutions have been identified. Most of these are mainly extractive, but some inclusive elements were able to coexist. These inclusive institutions can be seen through the virtuous circle, which implies inclusive institutions cause economic growth and this growth reinforces their inclusive nature.*

*Economic growth is also suggested to lead to more widespread and better education, which is also the case for the Gold Coast. More schools opened, and more was asked of teachers. Although there were still limitations on the education system, improvements both the curriculum and the reach improved.*

*GDP estimates from Morten Jerven as well as education data from the annual colonial reports have been used in a linear regression. This has statistically proven a relationship between the two variables, as could be expected from the institutional framework. The inclusive elements in the Gold Coast colony are thus small beginnings of a virtuous circle culminating in the decolonization halfway through the twentieth century.*

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## Introduction:

According to the Worldbank “More than 416 million Africans still live in extreme poverty”.<sup>1</sup> This number, astronomic as it may be, is unfortunately to most people not surprising. In Sub-Saharan Africa, poverty remains a large issue that is widely discussed. The Worldbank mentions education as one of the ways in which poverty might be reduced in the long run.<sup>2</sup>

Kirsten Majgaard and Alain Mingat researched the state of education and its implications in Sub-Saharan Africa for the Worldbank.<sup>3</sup> This led to several different conclusions concerning the current state of education, specifically about the coverage over the continent, the effectiveness as well as differences between girls and boys in this education system.<sup>4</sup> One of the first analyses that is brought forward is an assessment of the connection between education and gross domestic product (GDP). There seems to be a strong relation between these two variables for the entirety of Sub-Saharan Africa when it comes to secondary education.<sup>5</sup> Although in modern times secondary and higher education most impactful, she notes that before the 1990s primary education played a much larger role.<sup>6</sup> It is therefore essential to also study this connection from a historical perspective, because of the larger impact primary education had in the past.

The colonial governments had policies on the organization of education in their territories, the traces of which might still be found in the current education systems.<sup>7</sup> This is also the central topic Cogneau and Moradi have used for their research. They investigated the long-term effects of the colonial education the British Gold Coast as well as the colony of French Togo.<sup>8</sup> These two territories have a very similar ethnic

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<sup>1</sup> “The Worldbank in Africa: Overview,” Worldbank, last modified April 23, 2020 , <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/afr/overview>.

<sup>2</sup> “Learning Poverty,” Worldbank, last modified October 15, 2019, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/learning-poverty>.

<sup>3</sup> Kirsten Majgaard and Alain Mingat, *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Comparative Analysis* (Herndon: World Bank Publications, 2012), 19

<sup>4</sup> Majgaard and Mingat, *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 20-23.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Denis Cogneau and Alexander Moradi, “Borders that Divide: Education and Religion in Ghana and Togo Since Colonial Times,” in *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 74, No. 3 (September 2014): 694.

<sup>8</sup> Cogneau and Moradi, “Borders that Divide,” 694.

and cultural composition, because of the way colonial borders were drawn at the Berlin Conference and redrawn after the First World War. In their research Cogneau and Moradi assessed the disparities between the two colonies in terms of education.<sup>9</sup> They found the divergence in these terms to start after the partition of the German Togoland colony after the First World War, and these differences exist until this day. The difference found is in terms of literacy, as well as religious affiliation of the population, which were both higher in the British colony.<sup>10</sup> The authors attribute this to the missionary movements that were highly prevalent in the Gold Coast, leading to more education and evangelization.<sup>11</sup>

In this thesis I will be looking at education within the framework of institutional economics. According to this theory institutions are the key to economic success, defining whether a region is prosperous or has to deal with poverty.<sup>12</sup> According to Douglass North “Institutions are [...] the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction,” or for short, “the rules of the game”.<sup>13</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson make two distinctions within institutions. Firstly, they distinguish between political and economic institutions. Economic institutions are mainly concerned with the incentives that motivate people to participate in the economy.<sup>14</sup> These economic institutions are in turn, determined by the political institutions present in a society.<sup>15</sup> Both of these types of institutions be seen as either inclusive or extractive. Under inclusive institutions there is the opportunity for an inclusive market to form, as well as a development of technology and education.<sup>16</sup> Extractive institutions on the other hand are designed to extract wealth from a part of society, which thus fail to create incentives.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Cogneau and Moradi, “Borders that Divide,” 706.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 722.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 723.

<sup>12</sup> Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty* (London: Profile Books Ltd., 2013), 73.

<sup>13</sup> Douglas North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3.

<sup>14</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, 73.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 76

This theoretical framework suggests a more educated population might also lead to more economic growth, which seems to be true for Sub-Saharan Africa in recent times according to the research by Majgaard and Minget. This raises the question: to what extent did the development of education in the British Gold Coast Colony impact the economic development?

In order to answer this question, two sources of data will be used. The first of these is the annual colonial report of the Gold Coast colony. These were put together and published by the colonial government of the Gold Coast over the period from 1895 until 1939. In these reports is data on education spanning from 1891 to 1938, with the exclusion of two years. The type of data included in the report differs from year to year. The most consistently reported variables are the amount of government assisted schools, the number of students enrolled in these schools and the different mission denomination of the schools.

The second source of data is the GDP of the Gold Coast, as estimated by Morten Jerven.<sup>18</sup> These estimates were made on the basis of several different types of data mainly from the colonial blue books where each sector has gotten an index to signify the percentage of the GDP it makes up.<sup>19</sup> In using data in historical research there is inevitably some way in which the figures are going to be skewed, but this is even more so the case when working with estimates, like in the case of GDP. The further implications of these issues, as well as the benefits of incorporating these estimates will be discussed in the final chapter.

Linear regression analysis is used as the method to analyze these two sources of data. This methodology is a means of estimating the best possible linear equation to fit with the data in order to assess the correlation. This model allows for a look into the relation between the two, as well as how good the model fits with the data by testing to a level of significance. In this analysis GDP is used as the dependent variable, whereas the number of government-assisted schools is the independent variable. This setup is partially based on the relationship between education and GDP that is

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<sup>18</sup> Morten Jerven, "A West African Experiment: Constructing a GDP series for Colonial Ghana, 1891-1950," *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 67, No. 4 (November 2014): 964.

<sup>19</sup> Jerven, "West African Experiment," 974.

mentioned by Kirsten Majgaard in her research for the World Bank.<sup>20</sup> One major change that is necessary to accommodate for the historical difference is a focus on a different level of education. Majgaard's findings suggest that before the 1990s, primary education played a larger role in this relationship.<sup>21</sup> This seems to be the better focus for this research, particularly because in the British Gold Coast, access to secondary or higher education was extremely limited.<sup>22</sup>

Another important difference in the data used is that Majgaard uses GDP per capita and education coverage as variables. There are datasets on the population of the colonial gold coast available, which would allow for a calculation of the GDP per capita, but the education coverage proves more difficult as a result of a gap in the data. In order to calculate this, you would need to find the number of students enrolled and calculate it as a percentage of the part of the population that is of school-going age. Such age cohorts within the population data are not available, making this calculation impossible.

The first chapter will look further into the theoretical framework. The aim is twofold: firstly, to further lay out the theoretical framework and secondly to apply this framework to the situation in the Gold Coast, by looking into the political and economic institutions that were present. Chapter 2 assesses the British education policy, as well as the policy of the Gold Coast. These policies will be discussed in the context of other British colonies, where the effects of the general policies differed. The first two chapters provide the necessary information to give an explanation for the results of the regression analysis. The third and final chapter is concerned with a discussion of the data used as well as the regression analysis.

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<sup>20</sup> Majgaard and Minget, *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 48.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>22</sup> University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, "Annual reports on the colonies," Volume 1926,1927, 36-37, [http://hdl.handle.net/10111/UIUCAFRICANA:5530214\\_1926\\_1927](http://hdl.handle.net/10111/UIUCAFRICANA:5530214_1926_1927).

## Chapter 1: The Economy of the British Colonial Gold Coast in an Institutional Framework

Before actually looking into the relationship between the education and the economy, it is important to first gain an understanding of the workings of both. This chapter will firstly go further into the theoretical framework, looking into the differences between extractive and inclusive institutions and how to recognize both types, as well as the way growth can occur under both types. The second section is concerned with both the political and the economic institutions that were present in the Gold Coast. These are assessed for the extractive and inclusive aspects that might be present.

### The institutional framework

Extractive economic institutions are defined by Acemoglu and Robinson as the antithesis of inclusive institutions.<sup>23</sup> This means that all that does not fit with the inclusive institutions are extractive in nature. Inclusive institutions are those that create incentives for people to participate in society. This happens when several conditions are present in the economy. First of all, secure private property creates incentive to participate. Secondly, a system of law that will keep the market inclusive and level is key. Finally allow people to choose a career, which includes the starting of a new business.<sup>24</sup> Thus, if an institution fails to meet one or more of these criteria for inclusivity, it is at least to some degree extractive. Political institutions are similarly defined, as an opposition to inclusive political institutions, which feature centralization and pluralism.<sup>25</sup>

Because in this framework economic institutions are defined by political institutions, inclusive political institutions will lead to inclusive economic institutions.<sup>26</sup> The opposite is also true. In extractive politics, a small circle of people in power will keep power only for themselves. In doing so they will also keep the resources and wealth exclusive to their circle, creating a system of extractive economic institutions.<sup>27</sup> When political institutions allow for pluralism and centralization, they will also allow for more

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<sup>23</sup> Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty* (London: Profile Books Ltd., 2013), 76.

<sup>24</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, 74-75.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

inclusivity in the economic sense where for example, the labor market becomes more readily accessible.<sup>28</sup>

It is important to note that causation goes both ways. This means that not only will institutions lead to growth, but growth of the economy will also lead to more inclusive institutions. This is referred to as the virtuous circle by Acemoglu and Robinson.<sup>29</sup> The role of education in this framework can also be seen in the virtuous circle, as the inclusive institutions and incentives to participate in the economy also create a positive feedback loop with the incentives of the population to get an education.<sup>30</sup> For extractive institutions, the opposite is true. Because the political institutions put the power in the hands of a few, these few also have the ability to shape economic institutions and use these institutions to enrich themselves at the expense of the population. This leads to a vicious circle of poverty for the general population and the enrichment of the elite will give them the means to protect the system that they have built through force.<sup>31</sup> Neither the vicious nor the virtuous circle are without its exceptions so these are general trends, not 'laws'.<sup>32</sup>

According to Acemoglu and Robinson, both extractive and inclusive political institutions can lead to economic growth, albeit in very different ways.<sup>33</sup> Inclusive institutions are seen as the only way in which economic growth can occur sustainably. The key factor causing this growth is incentives. Institutions create these incentives, people within society and economy are motivated to participate in the political process, as well as the market. A free choice of profession will cause people to work in industries that complement their skillset, increasing productivity. The ability to start a company when someone has a creative idea for a business is, again, good for the economy.<sup>34</sup>

Extractive institutions can also generate growth. This type of growth is however, not sustainable like it would be under inclusive institutions. Unsustainable, extractive

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<sup>28</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, 81.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 312.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 343.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 431.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 76-77.



growth can occur in two different ways. Firstly, there is the purely extractive way, in which the “elites can directly allocate resources to high-productivity activities that they themselves control”.<sup>35</sup> When the political elites have stakes in certain sectors that get a lot of revenue because of local or global demand, this elite will most likely use their political and economic influence to allocate resources to those sectors. Generally, this situation is not sustainable since leads to an economy with a specific sector blown out of proportion and when demand fails, the economy does too.

The second occurrence of growth under extractive political institutions is caused by some degree of inclusivity allowed in economic institutions.<sup>36</sup> This type of growth is, like the previous form, unsustainable as it is suggested that these two types of institutions rarely coexist for a long period of time.<sup>37</sup> When this is the case, there can be two outcomes; either the political institutions will become inclusive as well, or the economic institutions will become increasingly extractive.

*Why Nations Fail* has received some criticism, most notably from the Indian economist Arvind Subramian. The main point of critique he has is in the form of two cases that according to him cannot be explained through the model presented by Acemoglu and Robinson.<sup>38</sup> The case China, which displays sustained economic growth for decades on end, while having political institutions that are not inclusive. Another exception he mentions India, which despite the democracy that was instated after independence has not become prosperous to the extent *Why Nations Fail* suggests. Because Acemoglu and Robinson adopt a very “mono-causal explanation of what is clearly a complex relationship between politics and economics,” there is some room for exceptions, but the fact that India and China are so massive and account for a third of the world population makes these exceptions more problematic. Acemoglu and Robinson responded to this review, and argued that the case of China is one of the examples of growth under extractive institutions, by allocating resources to profitable industries.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, as of yet it is not an exception, but if this growth continues it

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<sup>35</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, 91.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>38</sup> Arvind Subramian, “Which Nations Failed?,” *The American Interest*, October 30, 2012, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2012/10/30/which-nations-failed/>.

<sup>39</sup> Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, “China, India and All That,” *Why Nations Fail* blog, November 2, 2012, <http://whynationsfail.com/blog/2012/11/2/china-india-and-all-that.html>.

could very well become one. India on the other hand, while having a democracy, the system is flawed to the extent that it would be difficult to call the political institutions inclusive, which explains the low per capita income of the country. They conclude their response by saying “[a]ll of this is not to say that the extractive-inclusive distinction captures the richness of politics and economics in China and India,” which is an important aspect of nuance that will allow for a better analysis.<sup>40</sup> In the following section, the British Gold Coast will be looked at in more depth, not in terms of an exact distinction between extractive and inclusive institutions, but rather by looking at the nuance that can be found.

## Institutions in the Gold Coast Colony

### Political institutions

Before European intervention in the region, there was trade occurring between several ethnic groups, starting from the thirteenth century.<sup>41</sup> A major group in the region was the Akan people, who had several states “located on the trade route to the goldfields”.<sup>42</sup> A subgroup of this ethnic group, the Ashanti, gained dominance in the seventeenth century, as their kingdom centralized.<sup>43</sup> The territories that were added to the Ashanti confederation were allowed to keep their customs, and the local chiefs were added to the council of the state.<sup>44</sup> This political institution, although being authoritarian in nature, does allow for local chiefs having some influence leading to a more pluralist system, making it mostly extractive, but not entirely as some inclusive elements exist within the state. The Ashanti state was incorporated into the colony in 1902.<sup>45</sup>

The fifteenth century marked the first interaction with Portuguese merchants as they initiated the trade in gold, ivory and pepper and starting in the early sixteenth century slave trade gained prominence.<sup>46</sup> They built their first trading post, and later Dutch, Danish and English trading posts followed suit.<sup>47</sup> These European powers struggled

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<sup>40</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson, “China, India and all that”.

<sup>41</sup> Irving Kaplan, James McLaughlin, Barbara Marvin, Philip Moeller, Harold Nelson and Donald Whitaker, *Ghana: A Country Study* (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, 1981), 50.

<sup>42</sup> Kaplan et al., *Ghana*, 50.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

for each other's trading posts and dominance in the area.<sup>48</sup> When the Danish and later the Dutch left the area and sold their trading posts to the British, most of the Gold Coast was incorporated into the new colony.<sup>49</sup> This colony became a crown colony in 1874, which meant that the local population was now, in its entirety, a subject to the British crown.<sup>50</sup> In practice the rule was still in the hands of a single British governor, who answered to the monarch.

How extractive colonialism in and of itself differs from a case to case basis according to Frederick Cooper. Some works "treat [...] colonialism abstractly, generically, as something to be juxtaposed with an equally flat vision of European 'modernity.'"<sup>51</sup> In the conclusion, he argues that "[h]ow one writes about colonialism shapes how one thinks about the kinds of politics that challenged colonial rulers," which makes it important to assess how the colonial regime of the Gold Coast will be framed for this research.<sup>52</sup> The nature of colonialism is not set in stone, but by adopting the institutional framework, there are some stools provided to assess its' impact. The British government appointed a single governor who in charge of the colony, there is little to no pluralism.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, the Gold Coast colonial government can be seen as an extractive institution.

By looking at the specifics of governance under colonial rule there is some nuance to be found within this ultimately extractive regime. Any form of pluralism was practically absent until 1900, when there was an addition of several locals into the legislative council.<sup>54</sup> These were three "prominent individuals from the Europeanized communities," who possibly advocated mostly for trade benefits for themselves and the British authorities.<sup>55</sup> On top of that, three traditional chiefs were included.<sup>56</sup> Pluralism was very limited despite the addition of some Africans to the council.

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<sup>48</sup> Kaplan et al., *Ghana*, 54.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>51</sup> Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>52</sup> Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 231.

<sup>53</sup> Cyrelene Amoah Boampong, "Rethinking British Colonial Policy in the Gold Coast: The Language Factor," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, New Series*, No. 15 (2013), 144.

<sup>54</sup> Kaplan et al., *Ghana*, 61.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

Another institution that did gain a lot more power in the colony are local traditional forms of government. After 1902 these gained more rights of existence within the colony as the British implemented 'indirect rule' as their way of organizing the territory.<sup>57</sup> A well-documented form of this local self-governance is found in the Ga population of the colony, who had a "system of formal chieftainship".<sup>58</sup> This form of chieftainship was not entirely traditional, but rather a mix of their own traditional influences, influences from Europeans as well as other peoples like the Ashanti.<sup>59</sup> In the nineteenth century this system featured a chief for every town, as well as a body of elected officials with judicial power.<sup>60</sup> This local form of governance allowed for more pluralism and was thus more inclusive in nature.

The political institutions of the Gold Coast became severely more extractive with the introduction of the British colonial rule. After 1902, however, there came more room for slightly more pluralism and the opportunity for more traditional forms of government leading to a more inclusive way of government, even within the extractive institution of colonial rule.

### Economic institutions

Early trade in the Gold coast was dominated by gold, ivory and other high value goods.<sup>61</sup> These items which were highly valued by Europeans. This type of trade might be characterized as relatively inclusive when compared to the consecutive emergence of slavery.

In the early sixteenth century, there was a move where instead of gold and ivory, mainly slaves were being traded to answer the demand in the Americas.<sup>62</sup> This Atlantic slave trade lasted until halfway through the nineteenth century when the British moved towards abolition. In practice it took longer to completely outlaw all slave trade, as at

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<sup>57</sup> Kaplan et al., *Ghana*, 61-62.

<sup>58</sup> Naaborko Sackeyfio-Lenoch, *The Politics of Chieftaincy: Authority and Property in Colonial Ghana, 1920-1950* (Martlesham: Boydell & Brewer, 2014), 4.

<sup>59</sup> Sackeyfio-Lenoch, *Chieftaincy*, 24.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>61</sup> Kaplan et al. *Ghana*, 53.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

this time there was still debate over how to compensate the owners of these now to be free slaves. At the end of the day, they would have to work to free themselves.<sup>63</sup>

From the partially inclusive trade in commodities to the trade in slavery meant that the economic institutions became a lot more extractive than before.<sup>64</sup> With slavery, no free labor market exists for the local population, and these people were not allowed the right to private property, but rather they were private property. Slavery is possibly as extractive as economic institutions can be.<sup>65</sup>

After the 1884 Berlin conference, when these territories were divided up into colonies, and the British set up a colonial government, they became more able to put limits to the unauthorized continuation of slavery in the colony. Trade reverted back to mainly high-value commodities, of which cocoa was now a very influential one.<sup>66</sup> This meant that agriculture was a large sector for employment in the colony, although the cocoa agriculture took a lot of time to become more and more based on wage labor.<sup>67</sup>

Although it took some time, in the post-slavery era of the colony there was an obvious move towards a freer labor market. This was not a complete move, as the British government did try to keep the skilled labor market relatively closed to the indigenous population. This was mainly done by only supporting a handful of secondary schools in the colony.<sup>68</sup> As a result, the highly profitable cocoa sector remained one of the largest employers in the region.

The economic institutions also became more inclusive when looking at property rights. The aforementioned traditional system of chieftaincy that was allowed to survive in several parts of the colony not only allowed for political pluralism, but also for a system of property rights that was inclusive.<sup>69</sup> In this system, people could clear a piece of land by cutting down trees, removing anything and everything on the soil. The laws

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<sup>63</sup> Kaplan et al., *Ghana*, 54

<sup>64</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, 178.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>66</sup> Gareth Austin, *Labour, Land and Capital in Ghana: From Slavery to Free Labour in Asante, 1807-1956*, (Martlesham: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), 215.

<sup>67</sup> Austin, *Labour, Land and Capital*, 219.

<sup>68</sup> Aaron Windel, "British Colonial Education in Africa: Policy and Practice in the Era of Trusteeship," *History Compass*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2009): 4.

<sup>69</sup> Sackeyfio-Lenoch, *Chieftaincy*, 24.

stipulated that the person who cleared the land was also the owner of the land.<sup>70</sup> This allowed anyone who was willing to put in the work to own land and farm for themselves, making it a highly inclusive form of property rights. These were not, however, the official government policies, but rather parts of old governance that was allowed to continue.

From the assessment of the economic institutions in the colony it has become clear that for the Gold Coast, both types of growth under extractive institutions has taken place. The purely extractive growth, where the elite allocates resources to the industries, they profit from is clearly at work in the cocoa industry. The main export is being supported by policies that keep this system in place. The fact that inclusive aspects do exist points to the fact that part of this growth has been caused by the inclusive institutions. This is the start of a virtuous circle, which as the economy grew, allowed for more inclusivity in the economy.

In conclusion, there were a plethora of institutions present in the Gold Coast colony. These were mainly extractive as the colonial government was mainly in the hands of one governor who mainly focused on profits instead of inclusive economic structures. The institutions were thus both politically and economically mainly extractive. These institutions were, however, not static and not entirely extractive in nature. The abolition of slavery is a large step towards a slightly more inclusive labor market and the traditional forms of politics that were still allowed to exist caused more pluralism in the colony as well as private property rights. These traditional institutions could be one explanatory factor for possible sustained economic growth in Gold Coast.

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<sup>70</sup> Sackeyfio-Lenoch, *Chieftaincy*, 4.

## Chapter 2: Gold Coast education policy in context

The previous chapter has given an outline of the institutions in the Gold Coast colony and discussed how they fit within the institutional framework. This chapter looks into the policy the British employed in the Gold Coast. The focus is firstly on the British colonial education policy in general, and after that the specifics of the policy of the Gold Coast will be taken into account. The final section of this chapter is looking at how the education policy played out in several other British colonies in order to place the state of the education in the Gold Coast in its context.

### British colonial education policy in Africa

As a result of the immense territory that formed the British empire, there were large differences in the way education was organized among all of the colonies. In the African territories alone, the result varied, but there are also commonalities to be found between these colonies as the main policy and trajectory was similar.

In practice, the colonial governments were often reluctant to open schools themselves. Money was made available for education, which was used in part to open schools, but more often than not it was invested in schools owned by other organizations. This meant that the education in the African colonies was rather decentralized and organization of education was not very hands-on.<sup>71</sup>

The American historian Aaron Windel identified three phases in the trajectory of education policy in colonial Africa. The first phase he identifies lasts until the First World War and is characterized by the relative lack of government intervention in the education. Instead education was mainly organized by missionary movements.<sup>72</sup>

For these missions, education was an attractive way of achieving this goal for two main reasons. Firstly, because education was “a vehicle to attract and convert people”.<sup>73</sup> A second reason for choosing education to do this is because, “the missionaries saw education as useful for training Africans to help the missionaries”

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<sup>71</sup> Cogneau and Moradi, “Borders that Divide,” 695.

<sup>72</sup> Aaron Windel, “British Colonial Education in Africa: Policy and Practice in the Era of Trusteeship,” *History Compass*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2009): 2.

<sup>73</sup> Cogneau and Moradi, “Borders that Divide,” 695

making furthering their cause by having locals evangelize<sup>74</sup>. In order to achieve high rates of conversion to Christianity, the education had elements of the native traditions incorporated in order to make sure that the students would keep ties and a good relationship with their family. This meant that the influence of education went beyond those enrolled.<sup>75</sup> In the midst of this evangelizing effort, these schools did add to literacy rates.<sup>76</sup> In the period before the First World War, this meant that there was little to no attention to the traditional religion and language in school.

The second phase of colonial education, which was mostly in the interwar period, there was a lot more control from government on curriculum. The governments attempted to add more traditional elements to the education and encouraged this, often through financial assistance if schools were able to meet certain criteria. This more traditional approach was not always welcomed by the local population, because the white settler population displayed that English was the language of wealth and power. In other words, being fluent in English was an important step towards a better socio-economic standing in the colonial society.<sup>77</sup>

In this period the influence on education was not only from the British colonizers, but also from American influence in the continent. This was mainly by philanthropic organizations promoting their forms of education for colonies as well.<sup>78</sup> This growing budget allowed for a broader implementation of education in the colonies but has a major negative impact as well. The American influence seeping through into the education system led to a similar segregated system of teaching. In the curriculum this meant that there was a focus on manual labor and was actually designed to “keep the negro in his place”.<sup>79</sup>

Mark Malisa and Thelma Missedja have argued that the general aim of the British colonial education policy was to get a subservient, British oriented population.<sup>80</sup> The

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<sup>74</sup> Boampong, “Rethinking British Colonial Policy,” 137.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>76</sup> Cogneau and Moradi, “Borders that divide,” 719.

<sup>77</sup> Windel, “British Colonial Education,” 5.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>80</sup> Mark Malisa and Thelma Quardey Missedja, “Schooled for Servitude: The Education of African Children in British Colonies, 1910-1990,” *Genealogy*, No. 3 (2019), 40, 3.



education system and policy was thus designed, not to help the locals improve their socio-economic situation, but rather to increase the profitability of the colony, as well as firmly establish the British dominance over the labor market.<sup>81</sup> This was established by a focus on primary education, rather than secondary, as secondary education would allow for a larger part of the local population to participate in the skilled-labor market.<sup>82</sup> The few secondary schools present in the colonies later turned into the main breeding grounds for nationalist and anti-colonial sentiments, which later led to decolonialization.<sup>83</sup> This is the characteristic that is linked to the third phase of African colonial education that Windel identifies.<sup>84</sup>

Even though the education that the British colonial subjects received was often very limited and hindered by the colonizers' goals to keep their subjects subservient, some the knowledge gained was very useful for several reasons. They were better able to participate in the economy, albeit still very limited.

### Education in the Gold Coast Colony

The amount of government owned and organized schools in the colony was rather low, never being more than 21. This number is far overshadowed by the amount of schools that are not government-owned, but government-assisted. This meant that a school was given a grant if it could meet specific criteria. At first these criteria were in terms of bookkeeping and daily attendance rates, but after 1925 several additional criteria were set, which included teacher qualifications.<sup>85</sup> These government assisted schools were organized by missionary movements, most of which were of a Christian denomination but there were also a few Islamic and Zionist missionary schools.<sup>86</sup> Approximately ninety percent of all students in the Gold Coast colony was enrolled in a mission school.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Michael Omolewa, "Educating the 'Native': A Study of the Education Adaptation Strategy in British Colonial Africa, 1910-1936," *The Journal of African American History* 91, No. 3 (2006): 280.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Malisa and Missedja, "Schooled for Servitude," 8.

<sup>84</sup> Windel, "British Colonial Education," 14.

<sup>85</sup> Cogenau and moradi, "Borders that Divide," 700.

<sup>86</sup> University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, "Annual reports on the colonies," Volume 1926,1927, 36-37, [http://hdl.handle.net/10111/UIUCAFRICANA:5530214\\_1926\\_1927](http://hdl.handle.net/10111/UIUCAFRICANA:5530214_1926_1927).

<sup>87</sup> Cogneau and moradi, "Borders that Divide," 700.

The French colony of Togo was organized differently from the Gold coast in terms of education. The French were much more protective of their education and wanted to keep a firm grip on the curriculum and teachers' credentials. They also made French the only language allowed in education.<sup>88</sup> Another key difference between these two colonies is the level of government spending on education, as the British were able to spend a lot more due to the profitability of the cocoa exports.<sup>89</sup> The British model for education proved a lot more effective in terms of literacy rates, since not only the spending on education was higher, their model of subsidizing was very cost effective and allowed for a larger reach of the education program.<sup>90</sup>

During the first phase of colonial education, the British left a lot of the organization to the missionary movements in the Gold Coast. Still they strongly encouraged schools to use English as main language of instruction.<sup>91</sup> The missionary movements on the other hand opted for teaching in the vernacular, because this would them to reach a larger part of the population. Students would be more rooted in their local communities, increasing their reach.<sup>92</sup>

The lack of secondary schools, as well as the focus on unskilled labor that can be seen throughout the British territories in Africa, was also the case in the Gold Coast.<sup>93</sup> Education is also argued to be a central part of the race relations in the colony, mainly through the curriculum. The available education as seen as a way up, but the limits were very clear, and clearly placed on the system by the British colonizers.<sup>94</sup>

The time after the First World War was also in the Gold Coast an important moment for education as American influences particularly from the Phelps-Stokes foundation, grew throughout Africa.<sup>95</sup> Later education reforms starting in 1925, marked a more institutional continuation of this second phase. The government changed their position

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<sup>88</sup> Cogneau and Moradi, "Borders that Divide," 695.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 702.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 725.

<sup>91</sup> Cyrelene Amoah Boampong, "Rethinking British Colonial Policy in the Gold Coast: The Language Factor," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, New Series*, No. 15 (2013), 137.

<sup>92</sup> Boampong, "Rethinking British Colonial Policy," 137.

<sup>93</sup> University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, "Annual reports on the colonies," Volume 1926,1927, 36-37, [http://hdl.handle.net/10111/UIUCAFRICANA:5530214\\_1926\\_1927](http://hdl.handle.net/10111/UIUCAFRICANA:5530214_1926_1927).

<sup>94</sup> Malisa and Missedja, "Schooled for Servitude," 6-7.

<sup>95</sup> Windel, "British Colonial Education," 7-8.

and the language of instruction was changed towards the vernacular.<sup>96</sup> The most famous governor of the colony, Guggisberg initiated the policy of indirect rule, where there would no longer be an attempt to put British institutions into place in every aspect of the colony, which included education.<sup>97</sup> The vernacular was not always what the local population desired from education, because English had become the language of status and power.<sup>98</sup> In practice both English and local languages were continually used side by side.<sup>99</sup>

This means that the success of the education in this case is partially defined according to the British standards, and by the ability for the graduates to participate in the economy as it was created by the colonizers.

### Education in other British colonies in Africa

After assessing the education in Gold Coast in practice, it is key to put this into context. Other British colonies in Africa, who were operating under similar policies had partially the same system of education, but some important differences can also be seen.

One case that is of interest when looking at the different effects of the education policy in colonies is South Africa. The system of 'apartheid' is one key aspect of twentieth century history of South Africa, which some has traces to the colonial education system. Malisa and Missedja argue that this system is, not just according to the British policy, but also inspired by the American system.<sup>100</sup> This is in accordance with the second phase that Windel identified. In the case of South Africa, the effects of this American influence were much larger than in the Gold Coast as a result of the large settler population. The result was a highly segregated education system, which was a reflection of society at large.

The case of Nigeria is also interesting because both the Gold Coast and Nigeria were put under the governance of a single administration.<sup>101</sup> The policy and the impact of

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<sup>96</sup> Boampong, "Rethinking British Colonial Policy," 149

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>98</sup> Windel, "British Colonial Education," 8.

<sup>99</sup> Boampong, "Rethinking British Colonial Policy," 152-153.

<sup>100</sup> Malisa and Missedja, "Schooled for Servitude," 3.

<sup>101</sup> Boampong, "Rethinking British Colonial Policy," 144.

education on the population was very similar at first. In later years, as Nigeria and the Gold Coast each had their own colonial government, there was more divergence in policy. The main difference with the Gold Coast is that the changes of the education system, specifically the increased government involvement, occurred a lot later.<sup>102</sup>

Education in British African colonies can be seen in roughly three distinct phases. These phases can all be seen in the history of education in the Gold Coast. Firstly, missionary movements were the key factor in determining the curriculum, because they opened most schools. In the 1920s, education changed because of a change to a more involved government policy. The final phase can be seen in the ramp up to decolonization, as schools were the main grounds for anti-colonial sentiments. Another West-African British colony, Nigeria, followed a fairly similar pattern, although some of these changes were a bit later than in the Gold Coast, specifically the move towards vernacular in education. South Africa was in the second phase, more extreme and this segregation lasted a lot longer. On a more general note, the aims of education were ambiguous, because the British government first wanted a subservient population. The missionary movements were motivated by the prospect of evangelization. Despite questionable aims, there were positive effects like the spread of literacy. Both the slow increase of inclusivity in the institutions, as well as the expansion of education imply that there was economic growth in the colony during this period. The final chapter further assesses the data of both economic growth and education.

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<sup>102</sup> Omolewa, "Educating the 'Native'," 271.

## Chapter 3: Analysis of Education and Economic Data

The previous chapters have looked into the economic and political organization of Gold Coast, as well as the education system throughout British Africa. With this theoretical and historical background on both aspects of the argument, it is time to turn to the regression analysis. In this chapter there is first some discussion on the data used. After that some timeseries of the data will be displayed and discussed, in order to get a better idea of the progression of the education, as well as GDP over the course of the time period. Finally, the correlation between these two variables will be analyzed using linear regression analysis, which can be linked to the arguments made in the previous two chapters.

### The dataset

In this section I will be discussing the three different variables that have been included in the dataset. The first variable to look at is the GDP of the Gold Coast. As mentioned before, these originate from the estimates as done by Morten Jerven. Using several sources of data, which were mainly the colonial blue books, Jerven made estimates of the values of several different sectors of the colonial economy.<sup>103</sup> This method is based on an earlier work on the Gold Coast GDP by Szereszewski, who calculated these values for the years 1891, 1901 and 1911. Jerven was able to calculate the GDP for the entire period from 1892 until 1950. The key difference in approach is that these sectors are not calculated in absolute numbers, but in growth rates based on a physical indicator, for example enrollment rates for education. In order to turn these growth rates into GDP numbers, the initial Szereszewski estimate for 1891 was used as a starting point. All data after that is based on the growth rates. Generally, estimates are difficult and have several points of uncertainty in it. Firstly, the raw historical data used is often incomplete, or possibly skewed. This is an inaccuracy that is inevitable, but important to mention. Another issue is in the methodology, as there is no way to have a method to make perfect estimates.

A third issue that is worth addressing for the case of this research is the fact that education is also included in the estimates as a part of the GDP. Sector 4 is comprised of data on education and health care. This makes it seem like the following regression

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<sup>103</sup> Morten Jerven, "A West African Experiment: Constructing a GDP series for Colonial Ghana, 1891-1950," *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 67, No. 4 (November 2014): 974.

analysis will 'prove the obvious', because it will compare education data to a variable partially comprised of education data. By looking at the growth rates it becomes clear that other sectors, especially export and domestic consumption have a lot more impact on the estimates. Although the effects are minute, for the sake of the regression analysis it will yield more representative results if this is excluded from the GDP. This is done by using the growth estimates per sector.

The second variable is the population data from the colony. This data is also derived from estimates and is done for the entirety of colonial Africa by Ewout Frankema and Morten Jerven.<sup>104</sup> These estimates are subject to issues similar to those of the GDP, but in this case a specific data-source is particularly interesting. Census data is the starting point for most population data, but in the case of colonial population estimates there is a lot more doubt that could be placed on the data. The authors have used two ways of determining the quality of census data, and then adjusted accordingly.

Finally, there is the education data, derived from the annual colonial reports. This data is likely the most accurate, as it is based on the records of the colonial office. The education data included in these reports differs from year to year, making it difficult to acquire a continuous timeseries. The most consistent variable included in these reports is the amount of government-assisted schools in the colony. The reports for 1925 and 1926 are missing due to the reform in the colony, especially in terms of education.<sup>105</sup> After 1921 there is also a change in the labelling of the reports, as these now show two years. The reports were written about the first year in the title, after the year had finished. For example, the report for 1922-1923 was written in 1923, about the situation in 1922. These reports are therefore used as the first year mentioned in the title. The census report for 1933/1934 was also missing, and therefore extrapolated from the year before and after.

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<sup>104</sup> Ewout Frankema and Morten Jerven, "Writing History Backwards and Sideways: Towards a Consensus on African Population, 1850-present," *Economic History Review*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (2014):907-931.

<sup>105</sup> Cyrelene Amoah Boampong, "Rethinking British Colonial Policy in the Gold Coast: The Language Factor," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, New Series*, No. 15 (2013), 149-150.

## Timeseries

Before turning to regression analysis, it is important to take a closer look at the data. The GDP was calculated from the growth rates from Jerven and displayed in Figure 1, alongside the number of government-assisted schools over time.

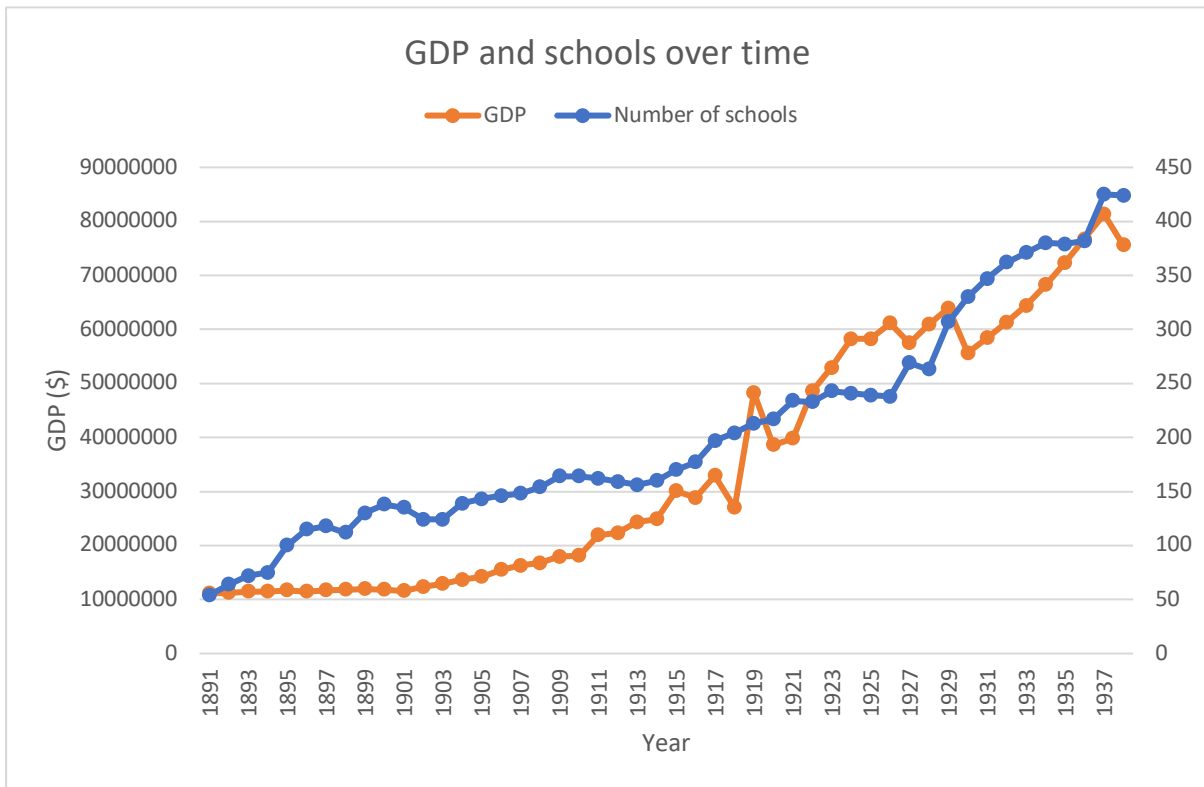


Figure 1: GDP and Number of schools timeseries

The GDP estimates are displayed in orange on the primary axis and show a near constant growth of the Gold Coast economy. There are two main points where the GDP was more irregular. The first of these points is right around the First World War. This might be explained by the colony's long involvement in the war, fighting against German colonies.<sup>106</sup> The second time there was some decline in the economy was in the 1930, which coincides with the Great Depression. The Great Depression in the Gold Coast resulted in plummeting cocoa prices, which was the main export for the colony.<sup>107</sup>

The number of schools in the colony is displayed on the secondary axis, in blue. Like the GDP, this shows a rather constant growth over the entirety of the timeframe. One

<sup>106</sup> Irving Kaplan, James McLaughlin, Barbara Marvin, Philip Moeller, Harold Nelson and Donald Whitaker, *Ghana: A Country Study* (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, 1981), 64-65.

<sup>107</sup> David Thackeray, *Forging a British World of Trade: Culture Ethnicity and Market in the Empire-Commonwealth, 1880-1975*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) 83.

point of interest in the data is at the end of the 1920s. There is a bit of fluctuation in the amount of schools that are assisted by the government, which could be explained by the change in the colonial policy at that time. The aims, contents and requirements of education in the colony changed, so an evaluation of the grants was the result.<sup>108</sup> After these changes there is a fast increase in government support for schools.

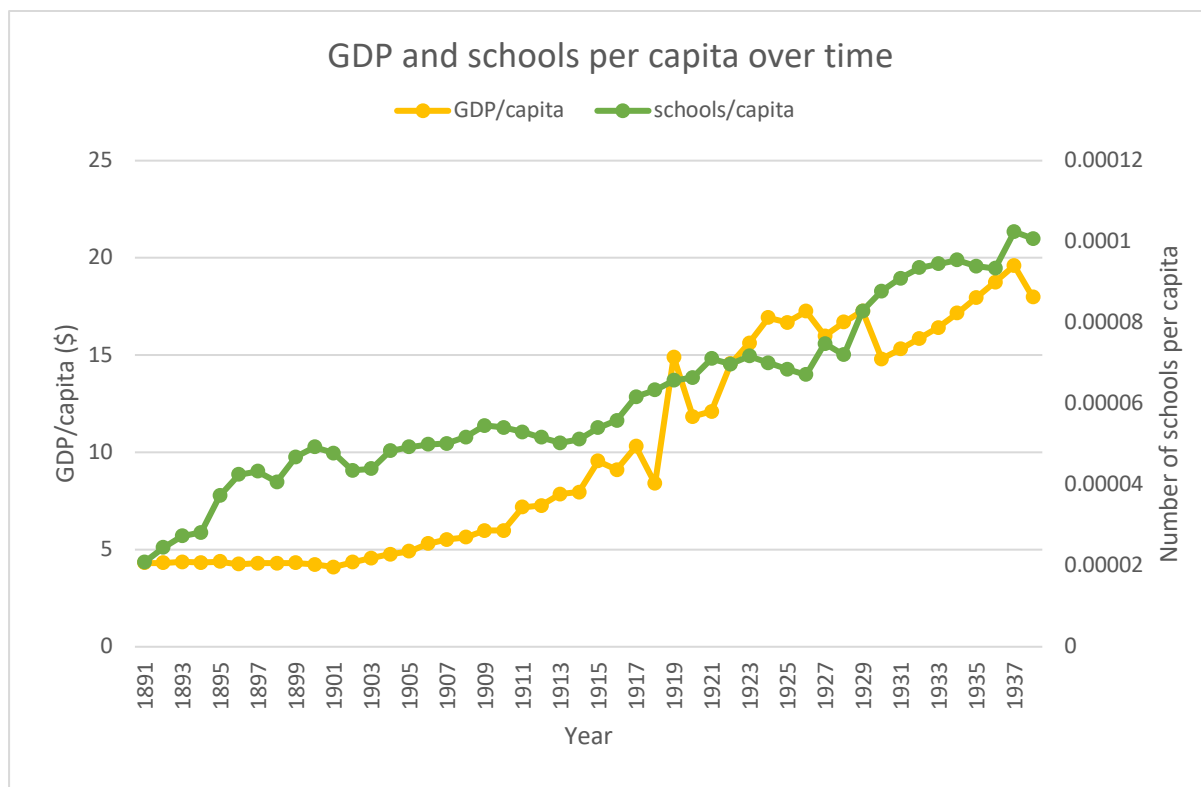


Figure 2: GDP and number of schools per capita timeseries

The growth of both GDP and the number of schools in the colony is clear, but how influential all of this is, depends on the development of the population. Over this period of time, the population of the gold coast has grown from approximately 2.6 million to 4.2 million inhabitants, according to the estimates made by Frankema and Jerven.<sup>109</sup> In order to assess whether the growth of both variables actually occurred relative to the population growth, Figure 2 shows both variables relative to the population. Figure 1 and Figure 2 look very similar. This is the result of the population data, which displays

<sup>108</sup> Denis Cogneau and Alexander Moradi, "Borders that Divide: Education and Religion in Ghana and Togo Since Colonial Times," in *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 74, No. 3 (September 2014): 700.

<sup>109</sup> Ewout Frankema and Morten Jerven, "Writing History Backwards and Sideways: Towards a Consensus on African Population, 1850-present," *Economic History Review*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (2014).



a very regular, slow and steady growth. The graphs look nearly identical, with the exception that Figure 2 is very slightly flattened.

GDP per capita has grown over the course of this time period. In fact, in 1938, it was over four times as high as it was at the end of the nineteenth century. The number of schools has also grown in relation to the population. It is also important to note that although there is definitely growth in the GDP per capita, the values are very low throughout the entirety of the timeframe. With just under \$5 per capita in 1891 there was a growth to just over \$21 per capita in 1938, all of these values are relatively low compared to European nations at the time.<sup>110</sup> The amount of schools per capita over this time period has grown five times as big.

### Regression analysis

The linear regression model for the population, for this case is as follows:

$$GDP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot Ns + \varepsilon$$

In this case GDP is the dependent variable that is resulted from Ns (number of schools).  $\beta_0$  is the constant in the model,  $\beta_1$  is the coefficient and  $\varepsilon$  is the error term. Turning this model into a sample model results in the equation below.

$$gdp = b_0 + b_1 \cdot ns + e$$

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<sup>110</sup> Jutta Bolt, Robert Inklaar, Herman de Jong and Jan Luiten van Zanden, "Rebasing 'Maddison': new income comparisons and the shape of long-run economic development," *Maddison Project Database*, 2018, <https://www.rug.nl/ggdc/historicaldevelopment/maddison/releases/maddison-project-database-2018>.

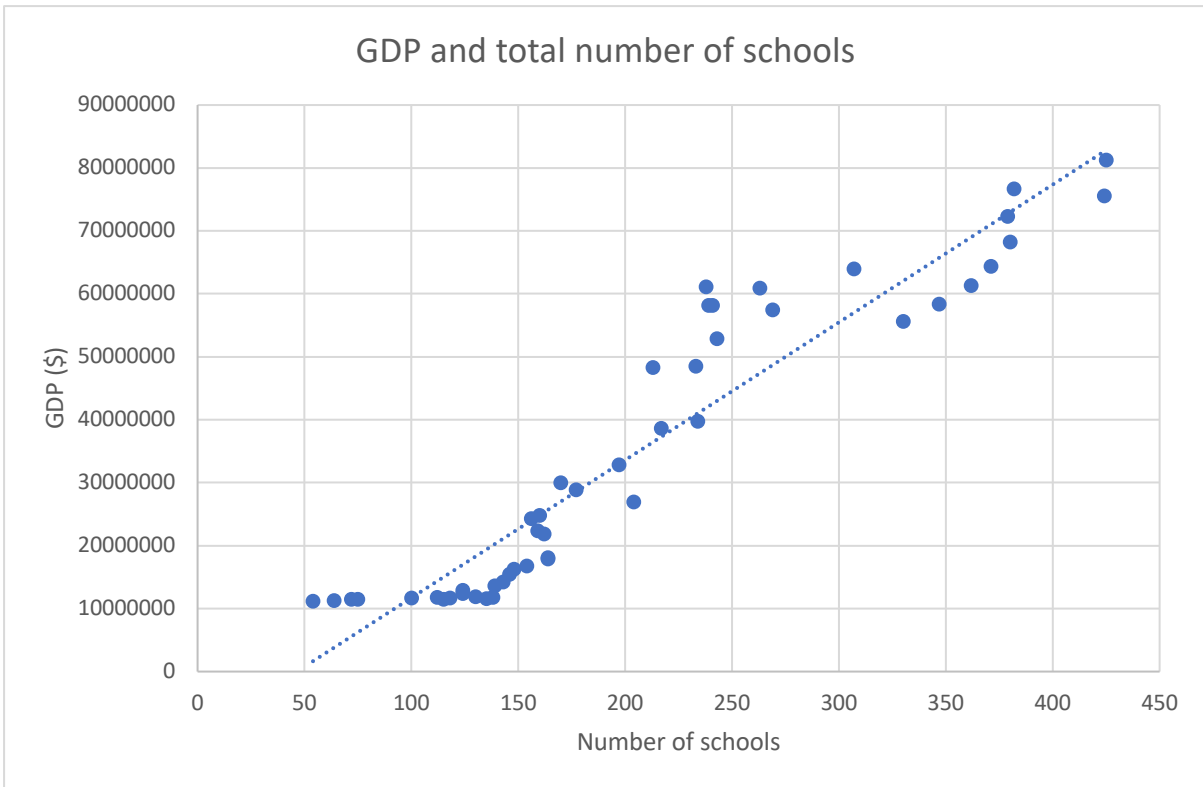


Figure 3: GDP and number of schools scatterplot with trendline

Figure 3 shows the data points, as well as the model that has resulted from the linear regression. The values of the results are further displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Regression results, GDP and number of schools

$R^2$	0.90
$b_1$	218,816.25
$b_0$	-10,168,070.34
$p$	2.87E-24

$R^2$  is a first indication of the correlation between the two. This value shows 'goodness of fit' and thus tells us how well the aforementioned model fits with the data series, on a scale from 0 to 1 (or -1 to 0 for a negative coefficient). In this case, this value is 0.90 which means that the model that is estimated is a rather good fit for the dataset, and that there is a positive relationship.

The  $R^2$  does not show the actual significance of the relation. This is displayed by the p-value, which for this case is very close to 0. This suggests that the correlation between GDP and the number of schools is proven at a 1% significance level. The p-value for this correlation is extremely low, which seems odd for historical data. The

reason for this is twofold. Firstly, there are many observations ( $n=48$ ) in this data series, which makes the model more accurate. Secondly, there are no extreme outliers in the series, which further decreases the deviation in the model.

The final values displayed in Table 1 are  $b_0$  and  $b_1$ . This value is directly from the model and is the coefficient. A  $b_1$  value of 218,816, is the result of this regression analysis, which means that for every school that gains government assistance in the Gold Coast, the GDP is expected to increase by \$218,816. It is obviously not as clear cut in reality, but this average impact of the schools in the colony on the gross domestic product does give an indication of the relation between the two variables. The  $b_0$  value the y-intercept and represents the hypothetical GDP in the case of zero schools in the colony.

The regression analysis has shown a strong correlation between the GDP and the amount of schools with government assistance in the Gold Coast colony. This correlation works out to a hypothetical growth in GDP of about a million dollars for every extra five schools supported. The model can make some good claims to correlation, but causation is something else entirely. The previous chapters on institutions and education policy do add to arguments for causation.

## Conclusion:

This thesis is concerned with the question: to what extent did the development of education in the British Gold Coast Colony impact the economic development from 1891 until 1938? The final chapter has statistically established a correlation between education and GDP, which implies that this connection is there. The nature and specifics of this connection can be explained by the institutional framework laid out in the first chapter.

Institutional economics suggest that inclusive institutions are the cause of economic growth. By looking at the situation in the Gold Coast, several different types of institutions can be seen, which were working alongside each other. In terms of political institutions, there was little pluralism, as power was in the hands of a single governor. Under this rather extractive form of politics, there is still room for other institutions like the traditional chieftaincy which has elected officials, as well as a small but increasing number of locals in advisory positions.

In terms of economic institutions, a similar set of institutions can be seen. The colony was mainly of interest for the high profits from cocoa export, but underneath this extractive political system, other institutions have been able to exist. Private property was available under some traditional forms of economy, and the labor market became increasingly less restricted throughout this time period.

Acemoglu and Robinson have argued for the existence of a virtuous circle, meaning a mechanism in which inclusive political institutions causes inclusive economic institutions generates economic growth. The economic growth in turn reinforces the inclusive economic institutions, creating a positive feedback loop. This mechanism is one that can be seen in the Gold Coast, as inclusive elements in the political and economic systems are gaining prominence while the economy kept growing throughout.

Economic growth is in this framework also connected with increasing and improving education. The increased coverage of education has also been seen in the dataset. Education was in some ways still very limited in order to restrict the labor market slightly. Focus was on primary education, literacy and according to some scholars a

subservient population. On the other hand, literacy increased, and schools were later required to have qualified teachers.

Both the economy and the education in the Gold Coast can be seen as the small beginnings of a virtuous circle. Education in the Gold Coast did have an impact on economic growth, but as the virtuous circle suggests, the causation goes both ways. This mechanism of increasing economic and political inclusivity as well as education contributed to the few secondary schools becoming breeding grounds for Ghanaian nationalist and anti-colonial ideas which culminated halfway through the century.

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