

Language and Colonial Educational Policy in Ceylon in the Nineteenth Century

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The role of language in education in any colonial context is necessarily conditioned by the demands of general colonial policy and the passive and active pressures of the colonial situation. On the one hand, the contact of any two cultures leads to the inevitable impact of important components of the expansionist civilization on the receiving culture. On the other hand colonial powers or their auxiliaries are often imbued with a desire to transform the traditional way of life of colonial societies, or at least to promote the adjustment of the local population to colonial needs. Education is conceived as an important agent of such social changes and the problem of the medium of instruction in educational institutions is thus inescapably linked with colonial aims.

The attitude of colonial governments to local languages and the role of the language of the metropolitan country in the educational structure differed from empire to empire. The French and Americans believed in assimilating their subjects through the instrument of language. The French felt that no one could claim to be educated unless he spoke French, while the Americans were led by their experience in their own homeland, during which different European peoples were assimilated into one nation through the English language, to attempt a similar task in their non-European dependencies. In contrast the Dutch preferred to insulate the local culture from foreign influences and were reluctant to share their language with their subjects. The British devised a policy which involved the use of both their own language and the local languages but which envisaged an assimilationist policy with regard to those favoured with an English education.

The policy of assimilation was in the long run a failure in Asia and Africa. However intensive the process, only a very small elite became assimilated and an unhealthy dualism was created by the separation of the westernized minority from the inarticulate masses in colonial societies. In all colonies the colonial language functioned inevitably as an agent of economic and social mobility, and in British and Dutch colonies in particular a two-track system of education based on linguistic divisions further complicated the process of social stratification.

As a British colony for a century and a half Ceylon too underwent this process of language substitution, dualism and conflict. In the nineteenth century the gradual evolution of an articulate language policy

took place in an environment relatively uncomplicated by nationalist pressures and educational theory, and a study of the respective roles of the imperial and local languages during these years serves to illustrate one aspect of an important phase in the colonial relationship.

Colonial educational policy in Ceylon was evolved in the nineteenth century by the officials of the Colonial Office in London and of the colonial government in Ceylon and was largely influenced by their personal predilections and by the immediate socio-economic needs and the strength of pressure groups.

The British attitude to the languages of their colonial subjects stemmed from the image they had of themselves. In the nineteenth century an increasingly affluent and expanding British society moved forward with ebullience and self-confidence to spread their "superior" civilization through Asia and later Africa. In addition, the empire-builders came from the British ruling class who carried overseas with them their patronizing attitude to the general population in their own country.

Through the nineteenth century two forces were at work in the colonies. One of these forces was the Utilitarian philosophy of nineteenth century England which favoured an efficient but cheap administration, which, in turn, needed subordinate local personnel trained in western techniques. Education policy was accordingly geared to the production of a limited pool of manpower proficient in the English language.

Cultural imperialism was another determinant of language policy. A colonial elite moulded by English educational institutions and acting as "intermediaries" between rulers and masses was viewed as a political and cultural necessity in colonial societies. In the early nineteenth century in particular, this cultural imperialism was strongly tinged with Christian evangelicalism. Religious fervour diminished after 1850 but imperialism became an even stronger emotive force in England after 1870 when historians, statesmen, explorers and writers gloried in Kipling's concept of the "White Man's Burden" and preached a secular evangelicalism in which Britain's civilizing mission necessitated the export of British norms and institutions.

In Ceylon, as elsewhere in the empire, a relatively *laissez-faire* approach to education policy permitted the free play of these forces and pressures, notwithstanding the fact that Sinhala, the language of the majority, and Tamil, the language of the minority, had been in use as media of instruction for over two thousand years. The chief agencies involved in policy making—the colonial officials in London and Ceylon—were mostly products of the British Public and grammar schools. They typified the ethos of the British upper and middle classes, and very often, also, its evangelical zeal. The most important pressure group in this sphere, both in London and Ceylon, were the missionaries who served as important agents of acculturation through religion and education.

As far as official attitudes and responses to situations were concerned, language policy in Ceylon can best be studied by tracing its evolution (a) in the early decades of the nineteenth century, (b) in the era after Colebrooke through the mid-years of the century, and (c) during the first phase of the administration of the Department of Public Instruction from 1869 to the end of the century.

(a) 1796-1832

These early decades of British rule were years of military conquest and consolidation of political power over the whole island. As no education policy was laid down by the Colonial Office during these uncertain years, educational activity, such as it was, depended largely on the personal views of the four Governors who were successively responsible for the administration of the Island.

One key factor in educational development was the decision to make English the official language of the country. The first British Governor, Sir Frederick North, was faced with the need for English-educated Ceylonese to function as interpreters and translators, and generally as liaison officers between the colonial government and an alien population. The first English school—the Academy at Wolvendhal—was established by North in 1800 as a measure intended to meet this immediate problem—to produce “a set of well qualified candidates for all the offices which are obtainable by Burghers and by natives.”¹ It provided instruction in both English and the mother tongue to a small number of Burgher, Sinhala and Tamil boys, and four of its students were appointed as interpreters in government departments and the courts as early as the year 1802.

This institution continued to supply administrative personnel at subordinate levels during all the vicissitudes which the next three decades witnessed but the selection of students was governed by the elitist outlook of the British ruling class. From the beginning of his administration North endeavoured to draw the attention of the Colonial Office to the importance of creating a colonial elite, which could assist in disseminating British values. This elite was to be educated in the Academy and the best of them sent abroad to complete their education in British universities so that they could fulfil an important political and social role as “a set of respectable individuals connected with England by education and by office and connected by the ties of blood with the principal native families in the country.”²

AR refers to *Administration Reports*
 S.P. to *Sessional Paper*
 D.P.I. to the Director of Public Instruction.

1. C.O. 54/1, North to Court of Directors, East India Company, 10 of 30th Jan. 1800.
2. C.O. 54/1, North to Court of Directors, East India Company, 9 of 5th October 1799. North made this proposal earlier in despatch 5 of 26th February 1799 and again later in 10 of 30th January 1800.

North was also personally influenced by the evangelical fervour of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century England. As a first step in the task of spreading Christianity among the masses he appointed Rev. J. A. Cordiner as Principal of Schools and from 1800 to 1803 he revived 170 of the Dutch parish schools which had served the same function under the auspices of the Dutch government. These schools were conducted in the local languages or the 'vernaculars' (as they were termed during the colonial period) as the most effective medium of reaching the general population, and their limited curricular provision of teaching, reading, writing and Christianity indicated that they were envisaged mainly as instruments of religious instruction.

Although North thus laid the foundations of an education system which reflected very clearly the aspirations of the rulers, his enthusiasm was not shared by the Colonial Office which rejected in particular his ambitious scheme of educating Ceylonese in Britain. In 1803 the Secretary of State's instruction to reduce educational expenditure in the interests of economy led to the abolition of the parish or 'country' schools, while the English Academy barely survived with diminished prestige. Cordiner was recalled and North himself resigned soon after in 1805 having thus formulated the outline of a language policy which linked the English language with a privileged class.

His successor Sir Thomas Maitland was not sensitive to the educational needs of the island but the powerful evangelical group in London was severely critical of the neglect of Christian education in Ceylon and was successful in pressurizing the Colonial Office to compel Maitland to revive the parish schools in 1809.³

Sir Robert Brownrigg, Maitland's successor in 1812, was also indifferent to the fate of the government parish schools but he was an ardent supporter of the Evangelical Movement and an active patron of the educational and religious activities of the missionary societies. The London Missionary Society had already sent a few ministers to Ceylon in 1805, but under Brownrigg's patronage four important missionary societies—the Baptist Missionary Society (1812), the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (1814), the American Mission (1816), and the Church Missionary Society (1818) laid the foundations of their educational work in Ceylon. As the missionaries had to counter the influence of the Buddhist and Hindu priesthood and reach the villagers they favoured the use of Sinhala and Tamil in their schools. At a time when the state's interest in education, and particularly in mass education, was minimal, the missionaries organized a system of vernacular schools which used the local languages as the media of instruction.

3. C.O. 55/26, Castlereagh to Maitland, 10 of 12th September 1808.

Brownrigg preferred to promote English education in urban areas, and he himself, his wife, his brother-in-law the Archdeacon, and other clergy and officials opened several small English schools from 1813 to 1819. He was also impressed by what he considered to be a general diffusion of a knowledge of the English language among the Sinhala people and the desire of the younger generation of Dutch Burghers to regard English as their mother tongue.⁴

The missionaries also took their cue from his policy, and assessing correctly the political needs of the colonial government, built up a system of elementary English schools in small towns and elite English boarding schools in the more important centres. These were organized to train local preachers, ministers and teachers but the majority of their students found employment in the new government departments which were creating a demand for English education. The American Mission's Batticotta Seminary and the C.M.S. Institute at Kotte provided a western-oriented secondary education for the able and the affluent.

Sir Edward Barnes, the last of the Governors of this period, discouraged educational enterprise, state or private, and all but killed the state schools; the latter were reduced to four English and ninety parish schools by 1830. Missionary educational activity, however, continued despite the absence of official patronage. The Colebrooke Commissioners who inquired into the administration of the island at this time found that educational development had been very limited and the state schools unsatisfactory. Nevertheless it is evident that the dualism in language policy—which helped to create a cleavage between the English educated on the one hand and the Sinhala and the Tamil educated on the other—had been set in motion and the demand created for English education as an agent of economic and social mobility.

(b) 1832-1867

The first official pronouncement relating to language policy in education is to be found in the Colebrooke Report. The public service was to be open to Ceylonese proficient in English, a knowledge of English was to be made compulsory for schoolmasters, an English College was to be established and English education in general to be promoted by the government. Indigenous education was condemned as being unworthy of notice.⁵

The problem of the medium of instruction was also a live issue in contemporary India where the Anglo-Orientalist controversy was settled in 1835 by Macaulay's pronouncement in favour of English education.

4. C.O. 54/70, Brownrigg to Earl of Bathurst, 257 of 17th December 1817.

5. C.O. 54/122, Report of Lt. Col. Colebrooke upon the Administration of the Government of Ceylon.

The Governor-General, Lord Bentinck's Minute gave official sanction to a policy of encouraging English education and of withdrawing state assistance from education in the local languages. Although Lord Auckland's Minute of 1839 promised a more liberal attitude to oriental educational institutions it confirmed the official policy of promoting English education and further stated that state efforts should be directed to the extension of higher education to the upper classes of society whose culture would filter down to the masses.

Such policies could not but have their repercussions on Ceylon. The Secretary of State for the Colonies endorsed the views of the Colebrooke Commission and wrote thus to the Governor. "Since the dissemination of the English language is an object which I cannot but esteem of the greatest importance, as a medium of instruction and as a bond of union with this country, no schoolmaster should be in future employed who does not possess a knowledge of English."⁶ Similar instructions were issued with regard to employment in the public service.

Unlike in the early decades of the nineteenth century vernacular education was completely discouraged, the parish schools disappeared gradually till only five were left in 1839, and English schools were opened by the School Commission which was established in 1834 to organize educational activities in the island. Eleven English elementary schools were opened in 1835 in different towns and these increased in number to 35 in 1837. The rules of the School Commission formulated in 1837 make specific reference to its function of opening only English schools,⁷ and under this rule a petition to open a vernacular school in Colombo was refused.

In 1835, too, in response to a request from a delegation of leading Burgher families in Colombo, the government took over a private English academy successfully managed by Rev. J. Marsh and re-opened it as the Colombo Academy—a state secondary school—under the same head. The Colombo Academy became the school of the colonial elite. Colonial Governors presided at its prize-distribution functions, and the institution flourished as a Classical and High School under government control and patronage.⁸

From 1834, therefore, the colonial government embarked on a policy of using English as the sole medium of instruction—a policy similar to that followed later by the Americans in their dependencies. Nevertheless this policy conflicted with the Evangelical interests which from 1837 to 1848 dominated the educational administration, while practical experience both in Ceylon and India had also served to illustrate

6. C.O. 54/127, Viscount Goderich to Horton, 23 March 1833.

7. C.O. 54/161, Mackenzie to Glenelg, 145 of 4th April 1837.

8. *Ibid.*, Enclosures Nos. 1, 2 and 5.

the futility of attempting the impossible task of educating a large section of the population through an alien language in the absence of a sufficient number of qualified teachers.

Sir Wilmot Horton, who had to implement the Colebrooke recommendations, had a rather negative attitude to education but his successor, Mr. Stewart-Mackenzie, was keenly interested in education as well as in the promotion of Christianity through the education system. Drawing from his experience of the educational activities of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge in the Gaelic areas of the British Isles he felt that in the case of the "heathen, ignorant and wretched population" of Ceylon too, "conversion to Christianity must be preceded by education, after learning to read in their own language."⁹ In pursuance of this policy he suggested the establishment of a Native Normal School to train teachers in the local languages and a Translating Committee to translate the Bible and other books to the local languages. The real author of these proposals was the able Methodist, Rev. William Gogerly,¹⁰ whose service in the missionary field had convinced him of the need to use the local language in any scheme of mass education such as that envisaged by Mackenzie and himself.

Although Stewart-Mackenzie stressed that he was merely proposing the encouragement of general elementary instruction in Sinhala and Tamil as a prelude to English education,¹¹ the Colonial Office was not interested in vernacular education or in mass education. Leading officials were firm adherents of the Macaulay school of thought and the Secretary of State's reply to Mackenzie's proposals in 1840 re-stated the official language policy of the metropolitan government that

It would be unnecessary for the government to direct its attention to devote the funds available for education to instruction in the native languages and that the preferable plan would be to encourage the acquirement of the English language by conveying instruction in that language to the scholars, both male and female, in all the schools conducted by the Government.¹²

The colonial government accordingly adhered to the "English only" policy for a few years more. In 1841 the Governor's Minute reorganizing the School Commission as the Central School Commission enjoined it to "promote the education in the English language of their fellow subjects of all religious opinions" in the colony.¹³ The Central School Commission's

9. C.O. 54/179, Mackenzie to Russell, 42 of 11th March 1840.

10. C.O. 54/181, Mackenzie to Russell, 124 of 10th August 1840.

11. C.O. 54/184, Mackenzie to Russell, 135 of 12th August 1840.

12. C.O. 54/181, Russell to Mackenzie, 162 of 20th December 1840.

13. C.O. 54/188, Campbell to Russell, 14 of 27th May 1841—Enclosure 2, Governor's Minute of 26th May 1841.

Chaplains' Schools and Ministers' Schools were conducted in the English language. Vernacular education was left entirely to the missionaries.

From 1843, however, for five years, a strong Commission, under the leadership of Gogerly, which worked in co-operation with the Governor Sir Colin Campbell and the Colonial Secretary Sir Emerson Tennent, carried out several constructive educational schemes. Three English Central Schools and three English Superior Girls' schools extended facilities for the education of the well-to-do social classes. At the same time, the dual policy of English education for a limited number and vernacular education for the general population was once again put into operation without the prior sanction of the Colonial Office despite the opposition expressed earlier to the promotion of vernacular education.

In 1843 a Central School Commission resolution permitted the provision of vernacular instruction in elementary schools as a prelude to English education. In 1845 Gogerly's scheme for a Native Normal Institution was implemented and two years later 30 vernacular schools were opened. These were the first vernacular schools to be established by the government since the Dutch parish schools had been revived almost forty years earlier.

Official statements indicate that the language policy had been reviewed by the colonial government though not by the Colonial Office. Sir Colin Campbell questioned the neglect of mass education in favour of "a liberal education almost entirely at the public expense, for no more than a very limited number of scholars."¹⁴ Tennent, when acting Governor, wrote to the Secretary of State that "there is too good reason to apprehend that at present English education can scarcely be carried with advantage much beyond its present extent." Referring to the new vernacular schools he wrote,

I trust the result may be such as to justify the opinion which is gaining ground among thinking people, that education in the vernacular, especially of females, is likely to do more for the improvement of the character and usefulness of the natives than attempts to impart a knowledge of English in places where there is no demand for it, and where the little that is learned at school is soon forgotten on learning it.¹⁵

Despite such statements this interest in vernacular education proved to be ephemeral. A financial crisis in 1848 reduced expenditure on education and the self-supporting principle favoured by the colonial administration after 1848 was a barrier to the promotion of mass education in particular. Even after the financial situation had improved and the island

14. C.O. 54/226, Campbell to Stanley, 46 of 14th April 1846.

15. C.O. 54/235, Tennent to Grey, 19 of 10th May 1847.

had moved into an era of prosperity based on the rising fortunes of the coffee industry, the lethargy that overcame the educational administration resulted in the almost complete neglect of educational activities till 1865.

In India the Wood Despatch of 1854 initiated several educational changes including the promotion of mass vernacular education. But in Ceylon the impetus which had directed educational development in the forties seemed to have died completely. The heyday of Evangelicalism was over and the local influence of missionaries like Gogerly in the Commission was considerably reduced. The Governors of the time, Sir George Anderson, Sir Henry Ward and Sir Charles Macarthy, were indifferent to both state education and missionary enterprise. The Legislative Council was dominated by merchants and planters who were busy promoting their economic interests. The Commission itself had lost many of its powers and was largely an effete body during this period. In such a situation the school system which had been taking shape in the previous fifteen years was an inevitable casualty.

The indecisive approach to language policy during this period was typical of this negative attitude of the administration. Lack of interest and restricted finances checked the expansion of English Central, Superior and Elementary schools. Vernacular education suffered in its turn from a vacillating policy. It seems as though the Central School Commission could not quite make up its mind as to what should be done with the vernacular schools opened after 1845. In 1851 the Commission stressed the important role of these schools in rural areas. In 1853 it proposed that State funds should be restricted to the maintenance of English schools. In 1857 it recommended the extension of free vernacular education where no other education was available.¹⁶

One major result of the official thinking of these years was the closing in 1858 of the very useful Native Normal Institution which had been the mainstay of the vernacular schools. The schools themselves were not abolished and the demand for education led to their increase in number, but their quality deteriorated after 1860 due to the shortage of qualified teachers.

The category of 'Mixed Schools' created in 1849 reflected very clearly this conflict in language policy. They were intended to provide instruction in the local languages in the early stages and subsequently instruction through English. In fact their organization illustrated the language policy favoured by most administrators—that English should be the principal but not sole medium of instruction, while vernacular education should be clearly subordinate to English education. In actual practice the Mixed Schools tended to function exclusively in English and to neglect almost completely the local languages.¹⁷

16. Report of the Central School Commission 1851-52, 1853-54, 1857-58.

17. Twenty fifth Report of the Central School Commission 1868-69.

Missionary enterprise continued in the fields of both English and vernacular education—English education to meet political needs and social demand on the one hand, and vernacular education for religious purposes on the other—but the missionaries too had their own financial problems and were embroiled in the sixties in a conflict with the colonial government over the question of grants.

Nevertheless the trend set in motion in the forties was to persist in these barren years and the Sinhala and Tamil schools alone showed any increase in number (Table I). These schools, however, provided very rudimentary instruction and were analogous to the Charity Schools of nineteenth century England. English schools continued to cater to the small Burgher population and to the upper and middle class sections of the Sinhala and Tamil population. The move to promote universal English through education was never revived even though the tendency to treat the local languages as poor relations and the absence of any interest in the education of the general population left the language question still unsolved.

TABLE I
Govt. Schools (1851 & 1868)

	1851	1868
English Schools	17	18
Mixed Schools	44	41
Vernacular Schools	25	63
Total	86	122

By 1865 interest in education was once again manifest among officials and influential Ceylonese. A new Governor, Sir Hercules Robinson, was responsive to the demand for educational reform and the Morgan Report, prepared by a sub-committee of the Legislative Council appointed to inquire into the education system, opened a more definitive phase in language policy.

(c) 1867-1900

The publication and implementation of the Morgan Report in 1868 marked the end of an era of indecision and lethargy in education and two principles affecting language policy now received official recognition in Ceylon. Colonial governments accepted the obligation to foster mass elementary education instead of confining themselves merely to moulding a western-oriented colonial elite and the local languages were to be the media of these elementary educational institutions.

The sub-committee of the Legislative Council—the Morgan Committee—which recommended these policies seems to have been influenced less by local opinion than by current trends in England and India which

favoured some form of state responsibility for education. The officials, clergy and Ceylonese elite consulted by the Committee were in agreement in their views regarding English, but were divided in their attitude to the status of the local languages in education. While influential education officials like W. S. Sendall and G. Steward, important British civil servants like Macready, and no less a personage than the Bishop of Colombo, in their evidence considered vernacular education a waste of time and resources, missionaries, members of the clergy and many local witnesses (such as James Alwis) advocated the use of the local languages as vehicles of a minimal form of mass instruction, leaving English education entrenched in its prestigious position.¹⁸

The Wood Despatch had initiated the latter policy in India almost fifteen years earlier and the Morgan Report which repeated, with one or two exceptions, the main provisions of this despatch, now introduced in Ceylon a similar policy of promoting vernacular elementary education as the most economical form of education possible under the colony's financial circumstances. Implicit in the policy statements of the time was the assumption that vernacular education was inherently inferior and destined to remain so indefinitely if not permanently:

And by the term vernacular education it is here intended to imply only elementary education whereby the rudiments of knowledge should be conveyed to the masses of the people in their own tongue. It is not the wish of the sub-committee to promote the cultivation of the classics in the vernacular. The object aimed at in the vernacular education recommended by the Sub-Committee is a very simple one. It is to impart *Primary Education*, and nothing beyond this, in the Sinhala and Tamil languages.¹⁹

English education was to be restricted to a small elite, and the Anglo-Vernacular schools, the English Central Schools and the Colombo Academy were to form a hierarchical structure corresponding to a socio-economic-cum-linguistic social pyramid. In order to limit the supply of English education, government would withdraw as much as possible from this sphere and leave it mainly to private enterprise to meet the need on a demand and supply basis.²⁰

In contemporary England, educational controversy had culminated in the Forster Elementary Education Act of 1870 which marked the beginning of state elementary education in that country, and in two

18. *Sessional Paper VIII of 1867*, Report of a Sub-Committee of the Legislative Council to inquire and report on the state and prospects of education in the Island, Legislative Council, Ceylon.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

20. Governor's Addresses to the Legislative Council, 12th January 1870 and 4th October 1871, *S.P.* 1870 & 1871.

respects at least policies in the metropolitan country seem to have influenced the implementation of the Morgan proposals. The subsidiary role played by the State in England in supplementing denominational enterprise in educational provision was emulated by the colonial administration in Ceylon to such an extent that the promotion of State vernacular education received less official patronage than did the growth of the grant-in-aid school system organized on the English model.

The other British tradition which affected language policy in Ceylon was the social class bias which dominated English education policy in the nineteenth century. The Forster Elementary Education Act was specifically concerned with mass education and the report of the Newcastle Commission (1861) as well as Lowe's Revised Code of 1862 had been directed towards providing a cheap elementary education for the masses in England. The education of the middle and upper classes was left to private enterprise and the Taunton Report (1868) further classified the school system in accordance with the hierarchic social structure of nineteenth century England.

The echoes of these social distinctions are to be found in the statements of colonial administrators in Ceylon and the situation was aggravated here by the invidious association of language and social structure. The vernacular schools in Ceylon were to be copies of the Board schools in England, providing a cheap, inferior education to the lowest socio-economic strata. English education, like secondary education in England, was to be restricted to the privileged who could afford to buy it, and was to be left largely to private enterprise. In 1873 Helps, Inspector of Schools, even urged the classification of schools on the basis of social class as in England and the place of English in the curriculum was a key factor in his proposed system of classification.²¹ Statements repeated by administrators from decade to decade stressed the policy of retaining Royal College (the former Colombo Academy) as a select institution for the colonial elite.²²

Apart from these religious and social nuances in colonial education policy, language policy in Ceylon was also affected by the conflicting theories held by educational administrators regarding the respective roles of the local languages and English. There was agreement that vernacular education should be confined to the masses and that English schools were to provide an exclusively English education, divorced from all local traditions and influences, for future administrators and social elite. Each type of school would operate in its own medium to the complete exclusion of other languages.

21. A.R., Director of Public Instruction 1873, Report of E. A. Helps, Inspector of Schools.

22. A.R., D.P.I. 1833 and 1884.

The area of controversy lay in the organization of the transitional stages of education which was to provide those who could afford it with a stepping stone to English education. The administrators' answer was to reorganize the Mixed Schools of the previous phase as Anglo-Vernacular schools which would use the local languages in the initial stages and English subsequently and which would suffice to meet the demand for English in small towns and rural areas. These Anglo-Vernacular schools were the chief victims of the conflicting views of successive administrators, views which often veered from demands for their abolition to policies of active encouragement. Policy makers were not always agreed on the efficacy of this three-tier education structure based on linguistic classification and their decisions sometimes swung between the desire to restrict English education to a minimum number and the ambition to teach English to as many as possible. At the same time the educational history of this period shows that language policies cannot operate effectively in a vacuum or in an environment determined by diametrically opposing pressures created by general colonial policies.

The decade immediately following the acceptance of the Morgan Report by the Colonial Office were years of economic prosperity and educational activity spearheaded by the newly created Department of Public Instruction and its successive Directors appointed from England. The first Director, J. S. Laurie, was one of those who did not subscribe to the policy of an exclusively English education even for the elite. He suggested that all schools should use Sinhala or Tamil as the medium of instruction to Grade Three after which those parents who could afford it could send their children to English schools²³—a view not shared by the majority of educationists and administrators who believed that the efficacy of an English school depended on its complete alienation from the local languages and culture. Laurie, however, barely survived a year in office as a result of an acrimonious conflict with the Governor and his views made little impression on the direction of colonial policy.

The Morgan proposals regarding vernacular and English education were implemented under Laurie's successor, Sendall, and the administration reiterated its intention of giving priority to the promotion of vernacular elementary education. Government Vernacular schools increased in number from 64 in 1869 to 347 in 1881, and in 1879 it was estimated that 85% of all schools were conducted in Sinhala or Tamil.²⁴

In actual practice, however, both financial policy and general colonial policy worked in favour of the promotion of English education and against the progress of vernacular education. Although the Governor informed the Legislative Council "that the policy of the Government

23. *S.P. V of 1869*, Special Report on Public Instruction—J. S. Laurie.

24. C.O. 54/566 Longden to Kimberley, 513 of 30th October 1879.

should be to devote as large a portion as possible of funds voted for Public Instruction to vernacular education leaving English and Anglo-Vernacular instruction mainly, though not altogether, to private enterprise",²⁵ the proportion of the education vote expended on grants to aided schools increased from 6.8% in 1869 to 46% in 1899. The Governors

TABLE II
Expenditure on Education

			Total expenditure	Expenditure on grants
			Rs.	Rs.
1871	..	..	253,222.66	52,431.44
1881	..	..	454,799.21	186,947.81
1891	..	..	508,361.43	220,663.55
1899	..	..	778,133.85	357,284.17

of the time and their officials were very appreciative of the contribution made by the missionaries and were ever willing to meet their needs.²⁶ In addition, grants were allocated on a system of payment by results according to differential rates which discriminated against Vernacular schools.²⁷ It was natural, therefore, that grant-school managers should opt to earn a larger grant by opening English schools in urban centres in preference to establishing Vernacular schools in remote rural areas. Although the vernacular schools opened by denominational agencies were numerically greater they suffered financially and socially in comparison with their English schools.

At the same time the policy of giving priority to the establishment of Vernacular schools was subject to several qualifications which militated against the success of this policy. Apart from avoiding encroachments on missionary preserves the Department also pursued the policy of opening Vernacular schools only in areas where the community was willing to provide the necessary buildings, thereby making the expansion of vernacular education dependent on the limited economic resources of the less well-to-do sections of the population.

The result of such policies was to limit the expansion of both government and aided Vernacular schools in areas which were greatly in need of such facilities. The curriculum prescribed for vernacular schools was such as to render them both unattractive and useless as educational institutions. The colonial framework which made English education the only avenue to remunerative employment and social prestige robbed the Vernacular school of any utilitarian or social value and applied a permanent brake on its development.

25. Governor's Addresses to the Legislative Council, 30th July 1873, S.P. 1873.

26. Governor's Addresses to the Legislative Council, 25th September 1872, S.P. 1872.

27. S.P. VII of 1870, Rules for grant-in-aid.

The only serious effort to restrict English education was made in the eighties when the coffee crash temporarily crippled the financial resources of the government and retrenchment and economy in government expenditure led to a drastic reduction of the education vote. During this decade the government restricted its activities in the field of English education to a minimum, and it was estimated in 1889 that the portion of the total vote for education expended on the teaching of English was reduced by over half in five years.²⁸

Even before the financial crisis the Department had followed a policy of closing down Government English schools where missionary provision could meet the demand for English education. The Colombo Female Seminary was closed in 1879, the Kandy Superior Girls' School in 1880 and the Kandy Central School in 1881. These were three of the leading government schools and their places were taken by English missionary schools for the elite. Influenced by the important role played by local bodies in England and India, the Director of Public Instruction, C. Bruce formulated a scheme by which all government English schools, with the exception of the Royal College and the Normal School, could be transformed to the status of grant-in-aid schools.²⁹ Missionary objections to the use of local rates to support these schools ruined this scheme and legislation introduced in 1884³⁰ to effect this transfer proved to be abortive. Nineteen Government English schools were finally closed down and the majority taken over by the missionaries and run as denominational English schools.

Bruce had hoped to use the funds saved by the closure of these for the expansion of vernacular education, but the Vernacular schools improved neither in quality nor in quantity during these years. Curriculum improvement was limited by the decision to permit secondary school subjects only in English schools. General retrenchment policies affected the expansion of these schools. The grant-in-aid scheme swallowed up the reduced education vote and left hardly any provision for opening new vernacular schools.³¹

This economy decade also coincided with the term of office of H. W. Green, Director of Public Instruction (1883-1889) whose personal views on the teaching of English in the colonies seem to have had a greater impact on the education situation than any retrenchment measures. Green believed in diminishing the quantity of English taught in Ceylon and improving its quality. The 1884 Bill had reduced the government English

28. *S.P. XLIII of 1889, Supply Bill 1890.*

29. Director of Public Instruction to Col. Sec., No. 373 of 13th December 1882.

30. *S.P. XVI of 1884, Bill to Transfer Schools to Municipalities, and Ordinance No. 33 of 1884.*

31. *A.R., D.P.I., 1884 and 1886.*

schools to two but Green was also very critical of the quality of English instruction in the grant aided English schools in the rural and small urban areas and in the government and aided Vernacular schools. Although the vote for grants had been reduced and very little money was now available for new schools, the higher grant paid to English schools from the inception of the grant system had tempted managers to open English schools outside large urban centres. In the Revised Code for Aided Schools for 1885 Green reduced the grants for English schools to the same rate as that for Vernacular schools despite vehement protests from managers.³² As a result no new English schools were registered for grants from 1886 to 1890.

The Anglo-Vernacular schools were his next target for attack. Sendall had permitted them to teach English and the local languages from Grade Two but Bruce had reorganized them in 1880 to provide instruction in the local languages to Grade Four and in English in the higher grades. Most Anglo-Vernacular schools aspired to become English schools and failed to function effectively because they hung midway between two worlds. Green introduced a new scheme³³ in 1889 whereby Anglo-Vernacular schools were abolished and Primary and Middle English schools were recognized "on a vernacular basis", using the local languages as media and teaching English as a subject. Those who wished to pursue a liberal English education could attend the government or aided English High Schools which he proposed to limit in number and which would prepare students for English University examinations and for the professions.

Apart from centralizing the teaching of English in the chief towns Green had another aim which he refers to in his reports. "In short, I wish the class of natives who learn English to know both English and their own language thoroughly and neither to exclusion of the other."³⁴ He even contemplated organizing the English High School from Grade Four so as to ensure that every child received a basic instruction in his own language, but the English High School had become too strong a vested interest for one individual to challenge, and the scheme finally left this institution intact as an exclusive English school moulding a western-oriented elite. Green went so far as to brush aside the protests voiced on behalf of the Burghers on the grounds that they could patronize the English High Schools, and if they could not afford to do so, receive instruction in the local languages in the Primary English and Middle Schools. "An Englishman born and bred in France or Germany will be

32. D.P.I. to C.S., No. 490 of 4th October 1884.

33. The details of this scheme are described and discussed in the *Administration Reports* of the Director of Public Instruction 1833, 1884, 1885 and 1886.

34. *A.R.*, D.P.I. 1887.

ashamed not to know French or German and I think it is an equal shame that a Burgher or other Eurasian born or bred in Ceylon should ignore the languages of the people of Ceylon."³⁵

Green's scheme did not affect the Vernacular schools or the English High Schools which continued to function in their disparate cultural worlds. It only served to check for a brief period the spread of inferior English medium schools in small town and rural areas which divorced children from their own languages without giving them an adequate mastery of the English language. In fact the policy followed since 1880 attempted to restrict the elite to an even smaller group who were, in effect, exposed to a more intensive process of Anglicization as a result of the introduction of the Cambridge and London University examinations. But the employment structure enhanced the value of English education as an agent of mobility and the demand for English could not be contained for long within the narrow limits enforced in the eighties.

Economic conditions improved in the eighteen nineties with the growth of the tea industry but the outlook for educational expansion continued to be gloomy as a result of the cheeseparating policy of the colonial administration. Government Vernacular schools which had suffered under financial restrictions in the previous decade gained little from the era of prosperity, and from 1895 to 1897 economy in financial management was carried to such an extent that the vote for new schools was deleted from the estimates.³⁶ The aided schools, however, flourished as additional grants were voted annually for their support by a very sympathetic and co-operative colonial government.

Green's departure from the Department of Public Instruction improved the prospects of the grant-aided English schools. This was the period when the export of English civilization was considered an integral part of Britain's colonial mission and colonial governors, as well as Green's successors, felt that the government should not discourage the growth of English High Schools which were the best instruments of westernization in Ceylon.³⁷ The colonial administration now thought it also necessary to revive the Anglo-Vernacular school jettisoned by Green in order to extend the influence of English beyond the limits of large urban centres. The 1894 Code therefore provided for Anglo-Vernacular schools which would use English as the medium of instruction after Grade Three. These schools were "to become the focus of higher culture"³⁸ in the villages, and in the process of promoting this aim, the earlier policy was completely reversed so that several Vernacular schools in populous areas were converted into Anglo-Vernacular schools.³⁹

35. *A.R.*, D.P.I. 1885.

36. D.P.I. to Col. Sec., No. 290 of 31st July 1897.

37. D.P.I. to Col. Sec., No. 48 of 16th February 1891.

38. D.P.I. to Col. Sec., No. 484 of 4th December 1896 and *A.R.*, D.P.I. 1898.

39. *A.R.*, D.P.I. 1899.

Government enterprise however was mainly limited to the expansion of Anglo-Vernacular and Vernacular schools and to the provision of financial support to aided schools, and despite pressure from the middle class a proposal in 1895 for the establishment of a Government Girls' High School, presumably of the same status as Royal College, was rejected by the government on the grounds that denominational effort was adequate to meet the needs of this social group.⁴⁰ Royal College itself was the object of missionary rivalry and hostility but was able to survive in its role as a privileged colonial institution equivalent to many such colleges in different parts of the Empire.

Conclusion

The end of the nineteenth century therefore left the situation very much as it had been in the 'seventies. A limited number of English High Schools, a small number of Anglo-Vernacular schools and a large number of ill-equipped Vernacular schools provided educational opportunities for the different levels of the socio-economic structure.

TABLE III
Govt. & Aided Schools 1871-1900

	1871	1881	1891	1900
Govt. English Schools ..	17	26	3	4
Govt. Anglo-Vernacular Schools ..	34	25	13	12
Govt. Vernacular Schools ..	129	347	422	484
Aided English Schools ..	37	77	51	144
Aided Anglo-Vernacular Schools ..	40	82	66	16
Aided Vernacular Schools ..	237	680	854	1,168
Total ..	494	1,237	1,409	1,828

Vernacular schools were numerically the largest group but they were throughout the century the underprivileged poor relations of the education system. The English schools were well-favoured by all education agencies—even by the Buddhist and Hindu organisations which entered the field in the late nineteenth century and had to compete with the missionaries. They received from the Government higher *per capita* grants than the Vernacular schools. They were also richly endowed with educational incentives such as prestigious British university examinations and university scholarships, and the economic and social incentives engendered by job opportunities in the public service and in the new capitalist economy dominated by British interests.

The size of the elite emerging from these schools was a vexed problem for policy-makers especially in view of the leadership given by this group to the national movement and to political agitation. They therefore

40. *S.P. XVIII of 1895*, College of Higher Education for Girls.

endeavoured to fix arbitrary limits to the output of these schools but their policies were always in conflict with the pressures created by the status and role given to the English language in the colonial structure. Much of the confusion in the minds of educational administrators as well as the difference between policies and their actual outcomes was the result of the greater force exerted by general colonial policy which created a demand for English education of any quality.

Educational policy, particularly in respect to language, had educational, social and psychological consequences which increased in intensity in the twentieth century. Even at the end of the nineteenth century language policy had already created an under-privileged and largely inarticulate majority whose position in the community vis-a-vis the small English educated elite (which even in 1946 at the end of colonial rule formed only 6.3% of the population) was fraught with grave consequences for the future. Equally unfortunate was the fact that the English schools were already creating a nucleus of denationalized Ceylonese, divorced from their traditions, isolated from the majority of the population, and like all other victims of assimilationist policies, forming a marginal group on the fringe of colonial society.

New forces appeared on the educational horizons in the twentieth century, thereby complicating the situation and subjecting the education system to fresh pressures, but without bridging the gulf between the 'two nations' created by nineteenth century policy. Cultural imperialism had been so in-built into the English schools by 1900 that such twentieth century concepts as compulsory education and such pressures as nationalism failed to deflect the language policy of the colonial administration from its nineteenth century direction. The English schools had already become a vested interest in language policy and turned out articulate protagonists of the status quo.

