

Expansion and Consolidation of the Educational Activities of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Mission at Asante Bekwai in Ghana from 1932-1955: Achievements and Challenges

Philip Oti-Agyen (Corresponding author)

Department of Educational Leadership, College of Technology Education, PO Box 1277 Kumasi, University of Education, Winneba

Fredrick Kwaku Sarfo

Faculty of Education and Communication Sciences, College of Technology Education, PO Box 1277, Kumasi, University of Education, Winneba,

Samuel Kofi Assoah,

Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, College of Technology Education
College of Technology Education, PO Box 1277, Kumasi,
University of Education, Winneba

Abstract

The article focuses on the activities of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church at Asante Bekwai, a popular traditional township in Ashanti Region of Ghana. Historical documents such as archival data from Public Records and Archival Administration (PRAAD) Office in Kumasi, files at SDA Educational Unit, Kumasi, log books and board of governors' meeting minutes of some SDA Schools in Ashanti constituted the major sources of information for the study. Secondary sources including books, scholarly writings and oral interviews with persons of considerable knowledge about the early activities of the Mission were also utilised to augment the discussions. The major findings of the study were that the SDA Church at Asante Bekwai utilized the favourable local conditions there to promote theological studies, teacher and secondary education; contingent on the philosophy of idealism, which largely stressed on moral development and character training. However, financial difficulties, which impeded the provision of adequate infrastructure and other educational equipment, were the major obstacles which confronted the educational efforts of the Mission during the period. It was therefore anticipated that the Church from 1955 onwards would take measures to surmount the challenges.

Key Words: Asante Bekwai, SDA Mission, Bekwai SDA Training College, Missionaries, Jesse Clifford.

1. Introduction

The paper generally examines the educational activities of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Mission at Asante Bekwai, Ghana, from 1932 to 1957. It specifically focuses on the factors for the movement of the mission's headquarters from Asante Agona to Asante Bekwai, the SDA Mission and the Asante Bekwai state relations and the initial attempt by the Mission to expand and consolidate its educational and evangelistic activities at Asante Bekwai. Also discussed are the challenges that confronted the Mission during this early period of its educational provision and practice at Asante Bekwai.

2. Background to the Study

Christianity was introduced into modern Ghana in 1471 when Portugal, the first European country on record to have explored the coast of modern Ghana, introduced the Catholic form of Christianity into Elmina, a coastal

town, near Cape Coast in the present Central Region of Ghana (Antwi, 1992). Even though the Portuguese Catholics and their chaplains at Elmina made some attempts to convert the indigenous people into Christianity and established the first school in the country popularly known as the Castle School in 1529, such attempts eventually proved futile (Odamtten, 1978). The British, the Dutch and the Danes who arrived in the country after the Portuguese also tried to popularize Christianity and formal education in their various castles and environs, yet their efforts in both areas, apart from the British who achieved some measure of success, were also generally unsuccessful. This was due to the fact that these early European nationals did not come into the country as missionaries and professional educators but as merchants who virtually devoted all their time and attention particularly to gold and ivory trade. Available records indicate that vigorous evangelistic and educational activities started in the country in the early part of the nineteenth century when the Christian missionaries arrived in the country. The Basel missionaries who arrived in 1828, for the first time, moved away from the coastal region and introduced Christianity and formal education into the interior part of the country, stressing on technical/ vocational education (Foster, 1965). Wesleyans who arrived in the country in 1835 also engaged in vigorous evangelistic and educational activities both at the coast and interior part of the country placing much premium on literary/academic and female education. The Catholics re-emerged in 1880 and enthusiastically pursued their educational and evangelistic objectives throughout the country focussing on both the intellectual and technical/vocational education.

The Seventh-day Adventist church (SDA), one of the pioneer missionary bodies in the country was first introduced to the coast of modern Ghana in 1888 (Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia, 1976). The initial avenues by which the early converts in the country received the Adventist faith in 1888 were tracts and magazines which provided some synopsis of the beliefs of the Church. It is noteworthy that, prior to the introduction of the Adventist Mission into the country, the early converts of the Mission, were already acquainted with Western formal education. Their acquisition of literacy thus became a useful facility in terms of understanding and appreciating the content of the Church's tracts. It is in vein that credit thus goes to the Wesleyan Mission, whose earlier educational efforts along the coast of modern Ghana from 1835 (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975) onwards possibly equipped the new converts with rudimentary skills in literacy. Shortly after the acceptance of the Adventist faith by these early converts, the first missionaries from the Church's headquarters in America, namely, Edward L. Sanford and Karl G. Rudolf arrived at the coast of modern Ghana in 1894 to formalise the activities of the converts by way of church organisation (Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia, 1976).

Records indicate that, in spite of the tireless efforts of the Adventist missionaries and the local converts to popularise the Church along the Ghanaian coast, not much was achieved, and it was not until 1914, when the church was introduced to Asante [Ashanti] region in the interior part of Ghana, that some successes, in terms of Church growth consolidation and educational provision was chalked. (Debruner, 1967). In Asante, the Agona township, a famous traditional centre, served as the first headquarters of the Church in 1914 and its first nationally recognised educational institution was established there in the same year (PRAAD. Arg./1/13/4. Gold Coast Mission of Seventh-day Adventist. G.157/1914). However after consolidating the Church's position of Agona- Asante and its environs for close to two decades, the leadership of the church, by early 1930s, shifted its attention to another important traditional township in Asante, namely, Bekwai. Since then Asante Bekwai

became the strategic location of SDA Mission activities, particularly in terms of education and could therefore be described as the “veritable citadel” for entire educational network of Ghana Adventism. For example, whereas Agona SDA Mission and its environs had only primary/elementary school by early 1960s, the Asante Bekwai had post elementary institutions in the form of theological seminary, teacher training college and a secondary school, apart from numerous elementary schools at the same time. These institutions there really served as pacesetters or “light bearers” for almost all the later educational institutions established in the country by the Mission long after the attainment of independence in the country.

3. Statement of the Problem

The role of Christian missionaries in the development of Western formal education in modern Ghana cannot be overemphasized. Recognizing the pivotal role that education could play in the processes of evangelization and social amelioration, the various Christian missionaries, including the Basel, Wesleyan, Catholic, from 1828 onwards, established schools in respective areas of concentration. Among other things, the schools invariably promoted the acquisition of literacy, inculcation of morality and equipped its beneficiaries with varying degrees of employable skills through their vocational programmes. It is noteworthy that one missionary body which has, since its inception into country contributed significantly towards the development of education in Ghana is the SDA Church, particularly at the early stages (Oti-Agyen & Sarfo, 2014). However the treatment of the Church’s educational activities in the country by writers has been sporadic and largely incoherent. Owusu-Mensa’s (2005) classic volume on Ghana SDA, though makes some references to the early provision of education by the Church, such references could not be said to have typically aimed at providing a detailed and systematic account of the aspects of education provided and the circumstances in which such educational efforts were carried out. Debrunner’s (1965) mentioning of how the SDA educational activities started in Ghana is so scanty and sporadic that any detailed assessment of the rationale, aspects of education promoted and challenges of SDA educational activities cannot be based on it. Other educational historians in Ghana such as Foster (1965); Graham (1971); MacWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1975); Antwi (1992) do not mention anything about the educational activities of the SDA Church. There is therefore the need to engage in some detailed discussions of the educational activities of the Church particularly rationale and aspects of education provided, utilization of cordial church and state relationship and the challenges that confronted it from 1932 to 1955.

4. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study were to:

- a. discuss the factors for the movement of the SDA Mission from Asante Agona to Asante Bekwai;
- b. examine the SDA Mission and the Asante Bekwai State relations;
- c. analyze the aspects of education provided by the SDA Mission at Asante Bekwai; and
- d. examine the challenges to the SDA Mission’s educational activities at Asante Bekwai

5. Significance of the Study

The significance of the study stems from the fact that, it can motivate the SDA Church to critically examine its role in the provision of education in the country, and most importantly take pragmatic measures to deal with challenges that continue to emerge from its educational efforts. The study further underscores the pivotal role

that missionary bodies, the SDA in this context, have played in consolidating and expanding access to formal education in Ghana through the utilization of local conditions. Education policy makers could therefore strengthen linkages with Church and replicate its strategies deemed to be useful in contemporary times. It further elucidates the point that the successful implementation of any educational policy is largely contingent on multiple factors, foremost among which, is the environment/social conditions in which a system of education is provided; underscoring the point that community involvement in successful implementation of an educational policy is indispensable. Fullan (1991) emphasizes this fact, which had already been experienced by the SDA Church half a century before, in this way: “boards and communities, if ignored, can also bring an end to innovations adopted without their informed consent” (p.244).

6. Methodology of the Study

An analytical review of relevant archival materials and documentary evidence on the subject matter was undertaken. The archival materials reviewed throughout the study were derived from Public Records and Archival Administration Department (PRAAD) Ghana, educational records of the Ghana SDA Mission, and some official documents obtained from SDA schools in Asante. Personal interviews were also conducted in 2002 with five people. Those selected for the interviews were experienced members of the SDA Church; most of them were eye-witnesses of events discussed. Experienced pastors and evangelists/teachers of the Church who were present at the time of the events were also consulted. In addition, a sub chief at the Asante Bekwai palace who benefited from the Mission’s educational activities at Asante Bekwai in the 1930s were interviewed. In all five people were interviewed. Information gathered from the interview sessions was used in support of the documentary evidence to enhance thematic analysis of the data.

7. The Propelling Factors for the Movement from Agona Asante to Bekwai Asante

The growing urge to move the headquarters of SDA Church from Agona Asante to Bekwai Asante in 1932 was translated into reality by one of the indefatigable pioneer missionaries of the church in Ghana, Jesse Clifford. Three major propelling factors largely accounted for this historic movement. The first factor which could be described as the most precipitant of all was quite interesting and worthy of critical analysis. Oral tradition has it that between 1931 and 1932, some misunderstanding cropped up between Jesse Clifford, the resident missionary at Agona and some traditionalists at Agona Asante over the felling down of a tree, namely, “Onyina Brempong” by the former to enable him put up a mission building (Asare, 2002). The tree was believed to have possessed some great supernatural and mystical powers and was therefore regarded as a deity by the indigenous people. The name of the tree translated into English means “a mighty tree”. It was highly revered and treated with profound dignity. Its felling by the Adventist missionary was not taken kindly at by some sections of the traditional believers. Even though the conflict was resolved and peace was restored, Clifford was apprehensive of the continued existence of peace at Agona after the incidence and therefore left for Bekwai. This incident was typically a case of conflict of cultures and could have potentially undermined the survival of the church in the country. Clifford’s action at Agona in pulling down the ‘sacred’ tree of the local people could largely be interpreted as a sign of the mistrust that most missionaries at the time held for traditional culture and all that it stood for.

It was also possible that Clifford’s intension was not to downgrade the cultural orientation of the people, but to create space for the development of the mission but nothing could have prevented him from engaging in

comprehensive consultation with the local people to have built a consensus. On the other hand, the traditionalists should have recognised the fact that once the land containing the “Onyina Brempong” was leased to the church by the traditional authority, there was no way anybody, apart from the leadership of the Mission, could have determined the direction of the physical development of the land. Whatever the case, it was clear to Clifford and his entourage that the misunderstanding and the ensuing rift was not going to augur too well for the cordiality that the Mission had enjoyed, all this while, from the Asante Agona state. Strategically, Clifford and his team started looking for some other places in Asante where they could move the headquarters of the Mission. It is however significant that the departure of Clifford and his entourage did not negatively affect the church and the school at Agona. Missionaries like F.L. stoke and J.H Fielding continued to nurture the evangelistic and educational activities of the Mission there.

The second factor which occasioned the movement was the strategic position of Asante Bekwai in terms of “good rail, road and postal communication” (Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia, Revised, 1976, p.513). The rail line from Sekondi-Takoradi in the Western Region of Ghana, through Bekwai to Kumasi made Bekwai easily accessible, either from the coastal past of the country or from the interior, Kumasi (See fig, 1). The missionaries of the Church therefore found it more convenient to stay at Asante Bekwai.

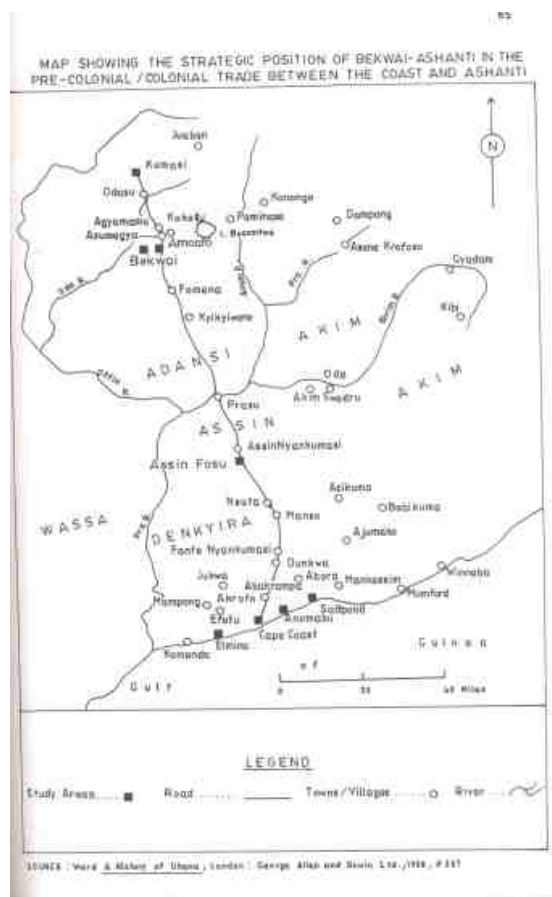


Figure 1: Part of the map of Ghana showing the strategic location of Asante Bekwai in Ghana: connecting the interior part of Ghana to the coastal part.

The third factor and the most significant factor had to do with the 'crusading' zeal of the church. Having concentrated the mission's activities at the northern part of Asante (Agona area) for close to two decades, moving downward to the southern part of the region was considered more strategic and feasible, in terms of the expansion of evangelistic and educational endeavours of the Mission. The Asante Bekwai township, being the traditional capital of Amansie district, became the convenient choice for the spread of the Adventist faith (Asare, 2002).

8. The SDA Mission and Asante Bekwai State Relations

The settlement of a group of people on an entirely different location generally elicits initial reactions which, could be aptly described as cultural shock and cultural ethnocentrism. According to Neubeck and Glasberg (1996) "when our unconscious expectations for behaviour are suddenly violated, we experience cultural shock"(p.106). The above authors also define ethnocentrism as a phenomenon "in which one's own culture is held to be the standard against which all other cultures are evaluated" (p. 107). A group of people in a foreign land, for whatever reasons, could experience cultural shock when their expectations of the behaviour and actions of the local people are not readily met. In the same vein, the local people could also be disappointed and go through utter frustration about the unexpected behaviour of a visiting group and both situations could be reflective of cultural ethnocentrism may create antagonistic feelings between the local people (indigenes) and the visiting group (foreigners). Thus, the phenomena of cultural shock and cultural ethnocentrism, when not properly controlled, could threaten mutual co-existence and hamper positive rapport between two culturally distinct groups of people living in the same environment.

The arrival of the Adventist Missionaries at Asante Bekwai, however was not greeted with the hostility associated with the phenomena of cultural shock and cultural ethnocentrism. Available information indicate that when the Adventist missionaries under the leadership of Clifford arrived at Asante Bekwai in 1932, they were warmly received by the chief, Nana Kwame Opoku (Osei-Kwadwo, 2002) and it appeared that the excesses of cultural shock and cultural ethnocentrism did not resurrect because the people of Asante Bekwai were already acquainted with the activities of missionaries in the locality particularly the Wesleyans whose work preceded the Adventists. Debrunner (1967) has explained that during this period, "Agona was an important S.D.A station, and so was Bekwae[Bekwai], where the Methodists were also strong and where later the Presbyterians had a pastor's station also" (p.312). The Wesleyan Mission, for example had established an elementary school there, which had become famous in the locality (Kyei, 2002).

The Asante Bekwai community might have recognized the positive contributions of the Methodists educational enterprise there and felt that the presence of SDA was also bound to expand the community's educational activities. The chief, Nana Kwame Poku temporarily accommodated Clifford and his people at a cocoa shed at "Pramso", a section of the town (Nana Dabehene, 2002). After the peaceful settlement, Clifford and his entourage were faced with the onerous responsibility of spreading the Adventist faith at Asante Bekwai and its environs (See fig.2) and at the same, time expanding the educational activities of the mission, which had already started at Asante Agona.

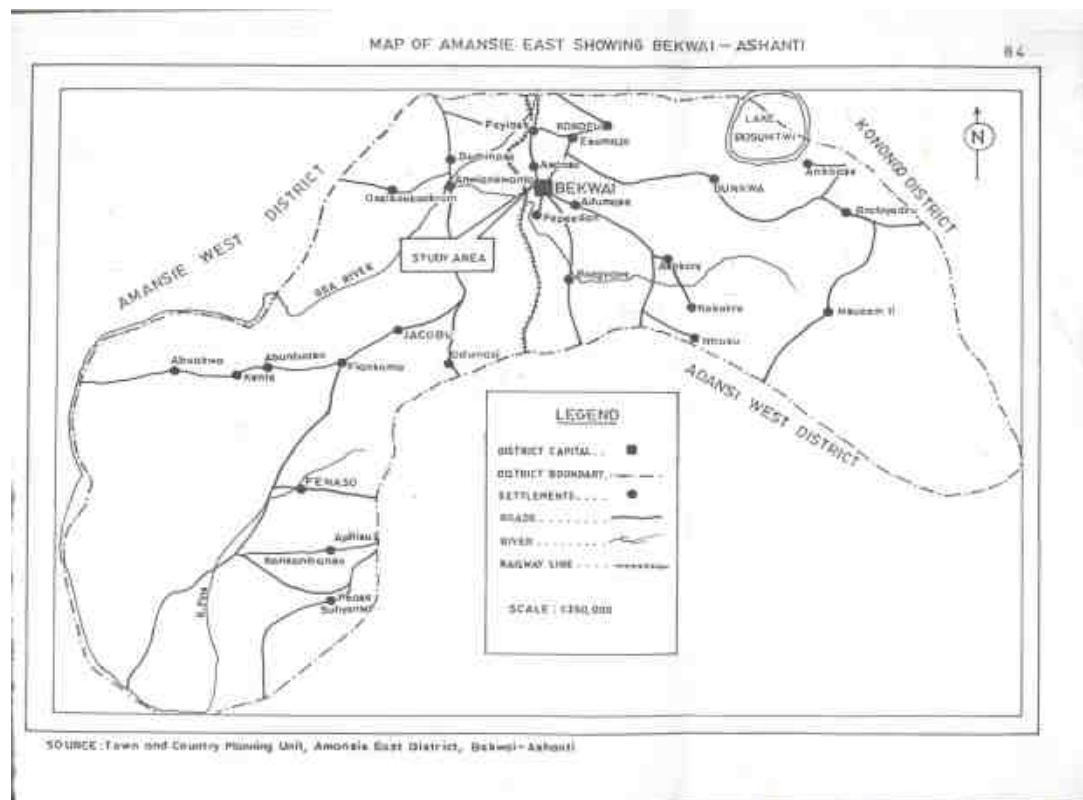


Figure 2: Map showing Asante Bekwai and its environs (District):

9. Initial Settlement of the SDA Mission at Asante Bekwai

Clifford and his team started their missionary/evangelistic work at Asante Bekwai, by engaging in 'house-to-house visitations', using picture rolls and other teaching materials to explain the Adventist form of Christianity to the people. What particularly promoted their activities were the free basic medical and sanitary services provided by the wife of Clifford to the community (Nana Dabehene, 2002). As a result, the Adventist faith became popular and upon a request by Clifford for a piece of land to put up a mission station, a vast stretch of land, traditionally known as "Asoeso" on the eastern part of the town was released to them by the chief, Nana Opoku (Nana Dabehene, 2002). It is noteworthy that, by this time, the importance of formal education had become so obvious to the people, and they were more willing to assist in any attempt to provide such an education. With financial support from the General Conference of the SDA Church in the United States of America, Clifford put up a mission station and a theological/ teacher training school at Asante Bekwai during the period. Evidently the kind gesture shown to the Adventists missionaries by the chief and his people was bound to contribute greatly to the socio-economic development of the Asante Bekwai township and its environs. The tireless services rendered by Clifford in particular and the missionaries who come after him accounted greatly for the initial success of the Mission's premier institution at Asante Bekwai. Clifford might have learnt his lessons from the Agona incidence and was ready to employ diplomacy and tact as basis of his relationship with the people. His wife's free medical services also endeared the Adventist workers to the hearts of many at Asante Bekwai.

10. Aspects of Education Promoted by the SDA at Asante Bekwai

It is also worthy to note that the SDA Mission, throughout the period of study, was consistent in following the established educational principles it set for itself. These principles have been summarized in the following words:

True educational means more than a pursuance certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that is now. It is the harmonious development of the physical, mental and spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and the higher joy of wider service in the world (White, 1903.p.13).

The Church's position on what constituted the best form of educational instruction has been summarized as follows:

The true teacher is not satisfied with second-rate work. He cannot be content with imparting to them only technical knowledge, with making them clever accountants, skilful artisans, successful tradesmen. It is his ambition to inspire them with the principles of truth, obedience, honour, integrity and purity- principles that will make them a positive force for the stability of society (White, 1903. pp. 29-30).

The principles inherent in the above passages were directly in consonance with the philosophy of idealism which stresses on intellectual/spiritual development, character training and strict adherence to moral values such as truth, obedience, honour, integrity and purity. The idealist always looks beyond the physical and the material self and places premium the transcendental, metaphysical and ethereal world of ideas, thoughts and consciousness (Akinpelu, 1972). Man's life therefore is an upward striving to imitate the perfect and impeccable nature of God or the supernatural order. The ancient Greek philosopher and educator, Plato, who could be described as the father of idealism insisted on the training of the mind more than any other human faculty. Plato advocated for education which concentrated on the development of the mind, realization of self and formation of worthwhile human characteristics. According to Rusk (1967), Plato's position that "nothing must be admitted in education which does not conduce to the promotion of virtue" (p.15) is a strong indication of his idealistic form of education. To give practical expression to these idealistic principles at Asante Bekwai, the SDA Mission highly promoted religious and moral education as discussed below:

10.1 The Adventist Theological Seminary and Teacher-Training Centre at Asante Bekwai.

One nagging problem that hampered the smooth development of the Asante Agona-area schools of the Adventist Mission was the lack of adequate number of trained teachers to handle the basic schools of the Church; and because Clifford had stayed at Asante Agona for some time, it appeared that he appreciated the enormity of the challenge and took pragmatic measures to deal with it. At Asante Bekwai, therefore, Clifford decided to concentrate on evangelist/teacher education. Consequently, the first educational institution he put up at Asante

Bekwai “began as a six to nine months’ basic evangelistic training for capable national workers” (Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, 1976. P.1333). These anticipated “national workers” of the Church were also expected to serve as teachers for the schools of the Mission already in Agona Asante and its environs. As a result, some general methods of teaching particularly at the primary level were taught at the school. The establishment of the theological seminary to train evangelists and teachers for the SDA Mission’s educational efforts at Asante Bekwai was not the first of its kind in the country. It is significant that the first recognized teacher training institution in the country was established by the Basel Mission at Akuapim Akropong in 1848 to train evangelists and teachers for the Mission (Foster, 1965). Six years before the Wesleyan Mission under Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman had established similar institution in Accra with Rev. Shipman as the first Principal but had an ephemeral life-span (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975). The SDA Mission’s attempt therefore could be said to be a replication of what had existed before.

Undoubtedly, the establishment of the theological seminary by the SDA Mission was strategically used to pursue its objectives of spreading the Adventist faith in an area where the Wesleyans had had quite a large following and then move to other parts of the country. It could be said that the concentration on evangelistic training was no doubt aimed at producing highly motivated and morally upright people, who could effectively engage in teaching activities and spreading of the Adventist Message in the country based on the Mission’s idealistic philosophy as explained above. It is reported, for example, that students from the seminary department often woke up at 4.00 am to conduct evangelistic campaigns in the nearby villages (Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, 1976). Kyeremeh (2002) has also emphasised that:

all students, at the time were required to attend Sunday Evening Bible Studies, Wednesday Evening Prayer sessions, Friday Bible Studies programme, Saturday Morning worship and Saturday Afternoon religious programmes. These programmes were offered to promote moral uprightness among the students. Some of the students were even allowed to lead in some of these religious activities to serve as role models to their colleagues.

He further explained that:

various groups in the SDA church, such as Choir, Missionary Volunteer (now Adventist Youth Society), Temperance Society, Stewardship Society and Lay Activities Society were formed in the SDA institutional churches at Asante Bekwai to prepare the students for effective adult lives. In addition, strict supervision of students’ behaviour were also put in place to control the excesses and generally, it worked well.

Undoubtedly, the Mission’s accentuation on moral education could be said to be a significant development in the Adventist Mission’s educational endeavours and could be a shining example for other stakeholders in educational provision to emulate especially in contemporary times. Training people to acquire good and decent habits, and to eschew immoral behaviours could be said to be the foundation of social cohesion and increased prosperity.

It must be mentioned that the timely arrival of Charles A. Bartlett in 1939 from the United Kingdom as the Principal and a teacher further contributed to the steady development of the institution (Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, 1976) which was later transformed to the first nationally recognised teacher training institution by the Adventist Mission in the country as a consequent upon new developments in the training of teachers in the country.

10.2 The 1937 National Education Committee and the Establishment of Asante Bekwai SDA Training College

It is important to note that it was at this period of the School's existence that the British colonial administration in the country set up a National Education Committee in 1937 to recommend proper ways of funding education without causing harm to the provision of other services. (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975). Furthermore, the Committee was further tasked "to hold a general review of the country's educational policy" (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975. p.71) and to this Committee, this task was entrusted. Even though the report of the Committee delayed, it was eventually submitted in 1941 (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975). In all, three main recommendations were made in the report of the Committee. The first one dealt with teacher training. The second one considered the setting up of a permanent Central Advisory Committee (C.A.C) to plan educational policy in the country, and the third one concentrated on the setting up of District Education Committees under the chairmanship of District Commissioners. For the purpose of this write up, the first recommendation would be further analyzed.

It is noteworthy that the training of adequate number of teachers in this country, right from the early stages of the missionary educational endeavours, till the early 1940's was not all that smooth, as there were inadequate teacher-training facilities throughout the country. Even though the establishment of Akropong Training College by the Basel missionaries in 1948 at Akuapim Akropong, (Foster, 1965) Accra Training Institution by the colonial government in 1909, Wesley College in Kumasi by the Colonial Government in 1924 and Achimota College in Accra by the Colonial government in 1924 (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh,1975, Foster,1965) somehow mitigated the challenge, there was still a lack of adequately trained teachers to handle the rising number of primary schools in the country by the 1930s. Consequently, the Education Committee of 1937 made a strong recommendation that, "a two-year course leading to a Teacher's Certificate B should be introduced, in addition to the existing four-year course, which was to lead to a Certificate A" (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975). Apart from the production of more teachers in a relatively short period, the recommendation was also aimed at meeting "the demands of efficiency and finance" (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975.p.71). Eventually, the recommendation received the approval of the government and all stakeholders of the educational enterprise in the country were consequently, encouraged to implement the new policy. The SDA Mission, which had already begun the teacher/evangelist training process at Asante Bekwai, strategically, utilized the advantages inherent in the recommendations of the Committee and transformed the theological institution into a nationally recognized two-year Certificate B Teacher-Training Course in 1945. It is on record that, it was one of the first Teacher Training colleges in the country to have started this programme (Odamtten, 1976).

The first batch of students who started this course on January 26, 1945 in the College was composed of 15 males (Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, 1976). Two years later, that is, 1947, three female students were admitted into the College. In 1948, the colonial government authorized the College to provide a further two-year training

course leading to Certificate A for those who had already received their Certificate B (Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, 1976). By these policies of the colonial government (approval for two-year Certificate B course and authorization on another two-year Certificate A course), the Asante Bekwai SDA teacher training college was fully recognized as one of the government assisted colleges in the country. Significantly, whilst the College was undergoing all these changes and modifications, the leadership of the Adventist Mission did not abandon the notion of training national workers for the missionary and evangelistic activities of the church. It is noteworthy that the evangelistic (seminary) department of the school was not discarded but continued to exist side by side with the Teacher-training department.

10.2.1 Expansion of the Curriculum of the Training College

It seemed that the conditions at Asante Bekwai were so propitious that, the mission considered it an opportunity to entrench its activities by expanding the curricula of the College to ensure its continuous survival. Consequently, technical education in the form of printing was started in 1950 at the College. (Office of the Regional Manager of SDA Educational Unit, Kumasi, File No.135.TC.2/SDA/Vol. June, 1972). Two main objectives were provided for the establishment of the printing department. Firstly, it was to equip the beneficiary students (who were not necessarily in the training-college department or in the seminary but devoted Adventists) with employable skills in order to live meaningful and economically independent lives after training. Secondly, it was aimed at helping the church to print religious material in the local language for the benefit of church members (Kyeremeh, 2002) respectively. The inclusion of the Printing Department and its two-fold benefit to the College's curricula could be said to be in tune with pragmatist educational philosophy, which stresses on practical effects of intelligence and utilization of ideas to solve socio-economic challenges (Stumpf, 1994). Apart from Printing the Mission's literature at a possibly lower cost and on time to facilitate the quick spread of the Adventist message to other parts of the country, it also had the capacity of creating employment opportunities in the country, as some of the beneficiary students could be employed in the services of the Mission and other organizations in other parts of the country.

Undoubtedly, the Asante Bekwai college was by 1950 playing an important role in the growth and development of the Church especially within the locality. It was producing teachers and church workers for the steady development of the Agona-area schools and the new ones founded within the Asante Bekwai community.

In addition, one main advantage derived from the teacher-training department was that most of its products were employed to teach in the elementary schools of the Church. The Agona and Asamang S.D.A schools were the most important beneficiaries. On the 24th July, 1947, six teacher-trainees were, for example, sent to the Agona S.D.A Mission Infant/Junior School to do their teaching practice there. The names of the teachers and their respective classes they handled are listed below:

- (1) Emmanuel K. Boamah (T.2 - Standard III
- (2) Edmund K. Ansong (T.1) - Standard II
- (3) Nathaniel K. Gyimah (T.1) - Standard I
- (4) James K. Asare (T.1) - Class III
- (5) Peter Ofori Amoako (T.1) - Class II
- (6) Isaiah F. Agyei (T.1) - Class I

Source: Log Book. Agona-Asante Seventh-day Adventist Primary School, January, 1947

By 1957/58 academic year, available records indicate that about ten elementary schools had been established by the Adventist Mission, in the Bekwai locality. Some of these schools were Bekwai S.D.A Primary and Middle Schools, Fereso III (Korkyekrom) S.D.A Primary, Nsutem S.D.A. Primary, Edubia United (S.D.A and Methodist) Primary, Dominase S.D.A Primary. (SDA Educational Unit, Kumasi. File No.230- Constituency and Workers. Bekwai District Report, 1962/63. Ghana Mission Constituency Meeting. Techiman B/A). There is no doubt that effective functioning of these schools was highly attributable to the regular supply of teachers by the Training College. In addition to the Training College, a secondary school was also established by the SDA Church at Asante Bekwai and subsequent discussions would focus on the rationale and circumstances that led to the establishment of the School..

10.3 The establishment of a Secondary School by the Adventist Mission at Asante Bekwai

Having established a nationally recognized teacher training college to augment the Church's educational efforts, the SDA Mission now under the leadership of A. J. Mustard, turned its attention to the provision of a secondary school, at Asante Bekwai. But before examining the circumstances leading to the establishment of the Secondary School, it would be appropriate to describe, briefly, the national scenario with regards to the provision secondary school education.

It is significant that secondary education in the country, during the period before independence, was at its foundational level. One would even say that national consciousness had started awakening. Even though, the history of secondary education in the country is traceable to 1876, when the Wesleyan Mission started a boy's secondary school by name, Mfantsipim, at Cape Coast in the Central Region of Ghana, followed by Adisadel school by the Anglican in 1910 still at Cape Coast (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975, Foster, 1965), it was somehow unfortunate that by the early 1940s and 50s, no phenomenal expansion of secondary education had taken place particularly in the interior part of the country.

The establishment of two female secondary educational institutions, Wesley Girls High (1935) by the Wesleyan Mission and Holy Child (1946) by the Catholic Church, all in Cape Coast, was a bold attempt to further expand secondary education in the country but with a focus on girls and concentration, still at Cape Coast. Quist (1999) describes the situation, during the period, in this way. "No quota system was instituted throughout the colonial era for the benefit of educationally neglected areas such as the northern part of the colony" (p.427). He further intimates that "gender, class, ethnic and geographical imbalances also remained" in the provision of secondary schools in the country (p.427). It is noteworthy that, it was not until 1949, that the two most reputable Secondary Schools in Asante (situated in the northern part of the colony), namely, Prempeh College and Opoku Ware School, both in Kumasi and sponsored by the Methodist/Presbyterian churches and the Catholic Church respectively, became government assisted and their facilities enlarged (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975).

Under the national leadership of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (1951-1966) positive steps were taken to address the challenge, through the building of more secondary schools across the entire country via the Ghana Educational Trust (GET) Programme (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975). It is on record that between 1951 and 1957 the numbers of secondary schools in the country rose from 12 to 38. In the midst of these national efforts to expand secondary education in the country, the SDA Mission at Asante Bekwai, from 1950 onwards, also felt the need to focus on the provision of a co-educational second-cycle institution in the country. This need was occasioned

by certain factors worth considering. In the first place, it was felt by the Mission that secondary education was crucial to both national development and the aspirations of the Church. The versatile nature of the secondary school curricula, which comprised the Liberal Arts, Science and Vocational training, was considered as the most vital ingredient for middle level manpower needs of the country. Secondly, it was also considered that secondary education was the most convenient and easiest gateway to higher (university) education. In particular, it was felt that this type of education was very essential for the provision of high calibre of leadership personnel for the Mission, who could effectively manage the prevailing challenges of the time (Mustard, 1952).

Thus, the President of the Adventist Mission in colonial Ghana, the (Gold Coast) in the late 1952, Pastor Gibson wrote a letter to the Department of Education in Accra stating the Mission's intention to start a Secondary School project on the same campus with the training institutions, at Bekwai Asante (PRAAD, Ghana. ARG/13/1/31(4053/1732). Proposed Seventh-day Adventist Secondary School, Bekwai. p.4). In a reply, the Assistant Director of Education for Asante, agreed in principle with the proposed secondary school project but objected to the proposed location of the school, insisting that the school should be established on a neutral ground or better still in a different town.

A meeting between the representatives of the SDA Mission and the personnel from the Education Department was convened to discuss, inter alia, a suitable site or location for the proposed secondary school project. At the meeting, the Assistant Director reiterated his earlier position that the proposed secondary school should be sited or located somewhere else, preferably, Agona or Asamang where, according to him, the Mission "already has a sphere of influence" (PRAAD. Ghana, ARG/13/1/31(4053/1732). Proposed Seventh-day Adventist Secondary School, Bekwai. p.4). The main argument of the Assistant Director was that, putting both secondary school students and training college students together on one campus was bound to have negative effects on the maintenance of discipline and stability. He stressed further that, secondary school "pupils" have to be treated as boys and training college students as men. He emphasized that "to attempt to do this in one and the same institution is extremely different if not impossible" (PRAAD.Ghana, ARG/13/1/31(4053/1732). Proposed Seventh-day Adventist Secondary School, Bekwai. p.5)

In spite of these arguments, the leadership of the Church insisted on establishing the secondary school at Asante Bekwai on the same campus with the training college. It was possible that the Mission took a cue from the establishment of Achimota college by the colonial governor, Sir Gordon Guggisberg in 1924 which for the first two decades in its operation, "comprised a number of departments from kindergarten to secondary, and including teacher training and university classes", (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975, p.61) and wanted to replicate it in a way. Again, it was possible that the generally stable atmosphere at Asante Bekwai at the time coupled with cordial state-church relations accounted for the insistence of the Church to establish the secondary School there. It would be recalled that a vast stretch of land had already been acquired by the Mission at Bekwai, which was also going to facilitate the unimpeded progress of the school. As a result of the disagreement, the Assistant Director informed the Mission not to anticipate government's financial assistance for the proposed school in the near future and further advised that the Mission should not undertake "any premature, ill-advised or ill-organized venture into secondary school." (PRAAD.Ghana, ARG/13/1/31(4053/1732). Proposed Seventh-day Adventist Secondary School, Bekwai. p.5).

In as much as the Assistance Director's arguments were sound, in terms of difficulty in maintaining discipline over two different age groups of students under the same roof, his rigid stance on the different location of the proposed secondary school, without which the project, in his own estimation, would be "pre matured", "ill-advised" and "ill-organized", was most unfortunate, especially, when he intimated that, the Mission should not anticipate government's financial assistance for the project. After all, successful maintenance of discipline in educational institutions does not wholly rest on the uniformity of students' ages. It is possible to have a class full of students with wide-age-disparities but then they can be controlled. Maintenance of discipline in all facets of human life largely depends on tactfulness and dynamism of the ruling/administrative body. Secondly, as pointed out already, the Seventh-day Adventist Mission was not the first to have started the phenomenon; Achimota College practised it for over twenty years, and it worked well. The Mission was therefore in a critical situation as to the way forward particularly with regards to mobilizing sufficient funds for the establishment of the Secondary School at Asante Bekwai.

10.3.1 Fund-raising Activities by the members of SDA Mission in aid of the Establishment of the Asante Bekwai SDA Secondary School

At the beginning of 1952, a Constituency Meeting comprising delegates from all SDA churches in the country, with majority of them coming from Asante was convened at Asante Bekwai under the leadership of Pastor Mustard. The main agenda of this meeting was the proposed secondary school project at Asante Bekwai and its funding. In a circular issued after this historic meeting, it was stated that delegates at the meeting unanimously agreed on the need for a secondary school, noting its pivotal role in the future development of the Church. Delegates further endorsed the decision of the leadership of the Church to situate the school at Bekwai. (Agona-Afamanaso SDA Primary School File, 1952.)

On the issue of funding the project, it was disclosed that the General Conference of the Church in the United States of America had already provided some gift of money to the West African Union Mission of the Church to build a secondary school in Nigeria, and that after negotiations with the Nigerian Mission of the Church, an agreement was reached to divide the money into two equal parts for the two proposed secondary schools in Nigeria and colonial Ghana (the Gold Coast). On the strength of this external financial assistance, it was resolved at the meeting that an arrangement for mobilizing more financial resources locally should be put in place. Consequently, a fund-raising committee comprising 19 members, twelve (12) of whom, were lay members of the Church was constituted.

At its first meeting, the Committee assessed the total cost of the project and an estimated amount of thirty-eight thousand pounds (£38,000.00) was earmarked for the project (Agona-Afamanaso SDA Primary School File, 1952). Of this amount, the General Conference of the Church in the United States agreed to donate eight thousand pounds (£8,000.00) annually for two consecutive times (Agona-Afamanaso SDA Primary School File, 1952.). This meant that by the end of 1953, the General Conference would have contributed an amount of sixteen thousand pounds (16,000.00) leaving an amount of twenty-two thousand pounds (22,000.00) (Agona-Afamanaso SDA Primary School File. 1952.)

This amount was agreed to be paid by the individual members of the colonial Ghana Mission of the Church. The Committee therefore recommended that each member paid an amount of £5.10.0 (pounds) over a period of three years to take care of the remaining twenty-two thousand pounds (£22,000.00) (Agona-Afamanaso SDA Primary

School File, 1952). It was further recommended that not less than eight thousand pounds, (£8,000.00) be raised by the end of 1953 (Agona-Afamanaso SDA Primary School File, 1952). Consequently, all the districts of the Mission throughout the country were tasked to organize “working bands” and “concerts” to raise funds in addition to the contributions of individuals of the individual members of the church. (Mustard, 1952). The Committee further recommended that the President of the Adventist Mission in colonial Ghana, Pastor Mustard should take personal responsibility for the promotion of the Fund.

10.3.2 Formal Opening of the Asante Bekwai SDA Secondary School in 1953 and its Initial Curricula

The opening of the school took place on the same campus with the teacher-training college in 1953 under the leadership of the Principal of the Training College. A substantive headmaster, in the person of N.C. Maberly a Briton was appointed in 1956 to take over the administration of the school (Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, 1976). The initial student population was twenty, comprising 19 boys and one girl (Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, 1976). The curriculum of the school consisted of Liberal Arts (English, History, and Geography), Bible knowledge, Domestic science, Technical drawing, Art and Craft and Agricultural Science (Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, 1976). It must be mentioned that during this time, the Printing Department and the Evangelistic Training sections were all actively functioning and it was not until 1963/64 academic year when these two departments were abandoned (Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, 1976). In 1954, a concrete storey-building housing five classrooms and an assembly hall and administration was put up. While the school was progressing, a plan of adding one classroom every year was adopted, and it was hoped that the implementation of the plan would result in the phenomenal expansion of the school.

10.3.3 The Philosophical Undergirding of the Bekwai SDA Secondary School Curriculum

It is significant to emphasize that whereas the theological/Teacher Training College was focussed on producing evangelists for the spread of the Adventist faith in Ghana and concurrently training professional teachers for the Church’s basic schools at the time, the objective of the secondary school was train local young people to acquire a versatile form of education to provide more effective training for the promotion of evangelization and teacher development in the Church (Mustard, 1952). Thus, the initial curriculum of the School comprising Liberal Arts and Science/Technical Education was aimed at training high calibre of leadership and missionary personnel to be in charge of the general activities of the Adventist Mission in the country. It is notable that the type of spiritual and moral education which characterised the theological/teacher training institution also featured prominently in the Secondary School’s co- curricular activities during the period. The weekly spiritual activities of the School which were composed of daily morning devotion, Sunday evening Bible Studies, Mid-Week prayer sessions on Wednesdays, Youth religious activities on Fridays, Saturday Church Services were compulsory for all students and in most of the programmes, students were encouraged to lead and take active roles. Kyeremeh (2002) noted that these religious activities promoted peace and tranquillity in the school as students were largely obedient, tolerant and law-abiding. These idealistic values promoted alongside the academic and vocational training at the Secondary School could be described as the type holistic education that SDA Mission’s education policy endorses; a judicious combination of idealist and pragmatist educational philosophies..

11. Challenges to the Adventist Mission's Educational Activities at Asante Bekwai

The educational activities of the SDA Mission in the Asante Bekwai township and its environs though largely successful, were not without challenges and obstacles. The first challenge to the Mission on arriving at Bekwai was how to popularize its doctrines and to convince the people to accept their version of Christianity and their type of educational programmes. What might have possibly compounded this challenge was the fact that by the time the Adventist missionaries arrived at Bekwai in 1932, other missionary bodies particularly the Wesleyan had already taken the lead and were firmly established there; implementing their educational policies (Debrunner,1967). Though the chief of Bekwai, Nana Kwame Poku, gave the Adventist missionaries a warm reception, the onus was on them to prove beyond all doubts that they were interested in the welfare of the people particularly in the area of educational development. Indeed, Clifford and his family and the subsequent missionaries worked assiduously to meet this expectation and by the late 1950s, the Adventist Mission at Asante Bekwai had proven itself to be the pace-setters of educational development in the Asante Bekwai locality using the Bekwai S.D.A. complex school as the hub of its educational programmes.

However, in the course of the Church's evangelistic and educational endeavours, another obstacle of funding emerged. In spite of the financial assistance offered to Clifford for the establishment of the Mission station and a school at Asante Bekwai in 1932, and more so, the amount of money donated to the Secondary School Project by the General Conference, the mission's educational activities were saddled with financial difficulties thereby affecting the provision of infrastructural facilities. It is said that due to an accommodation shortage, the first batch of students admitted into the teacher-training college for the two-year Certificate 'B' course had to complete the whole two-year course before another batch of students was admitted to start the course (Agyei, 2002).

In addition, it is recorded that about three years after establishing the secondary school department, the problem of staff accommodation still lingered on. Because of this, it "proved difficult to attract qualified teachers and debarred some who might otherwise (have) accepted appointment to teach in the school" (Bekwai SDA Secondary School Secondary School Log Book.1954. p.2). Still on inadequate infrastructure, the Headmaster of the Secondary School in 1954 lamented thus: "there was a severe reverse caused by pupils learning for want of a science graduate and lack of science teaching facilities" (SDA Secondary School. Secondary School Log Book. 1954. p.2.).

Recognizing the damaging effects of the infrastructural deficit on the Secondary School, the Acting President of the Adventist Mission, now resident in Kumasi, James C. Vetter, made a solemn appeal in 1954 to all members, pastors, evangelists, teachers and colporteurs (literature evangelists) of the Church to come to the financial aid of the school. He wrote:

It is true we have fine classroom block for our secondary school but we have a very great need of dormitory space. Our facilities for feeding students are very inadequate also. There are nearly enough staff houses either. Our greatest need, however is dormitory space for the next year (SDA Secondary School. Secondary School Log Book, 1954. p. 2.).

The concluding part of his letter greatly underscored the magnitude of the problem. He remarked, “You see the classroom block is now finished, but the big question is WHERE WILL THE STUDENTS SLEEP?”(SDA Secondary School. Secondary School Log Book. 1954. p. 2.)

Looking at the infrastructural situation of the secondary school, the question that comes to mind was whether the Fund Raising Committee established for the school in 1952 functioned effectively or somewhere along the line, there was failure on the part of church members to contribute their quota financially towards the project. The government too, at this time, was not committed to assisting the school because it remained as a private institution until 1958. Whatever the case was, it remained that, the church had challenges to surmount, in terms of providing adequate accommodation and decent residential facilities for the staff of the Secondary School, if it was to make remarkable progress in the years ahead.

12. Conclusion

The eventual settlement of the SDA Mission at Asante Bekwai, in 1932 could be said to be the real foundation of the educational and evangelistic endeavours of the Mission in modern Ghana. Clearly such endeavours by the Mission, as described above, were based on systematic planning and tenacity of purpose and the judicious utilization of idealistic and pragmatic educational principles to translate the vision of the Mission into practice. Undoubtedly, the warm reception given to SDA missionaries at Asante Bekwai by the traditional authority and the indigenous people was also accountable for the successes chalked by the Mission there.

The aspects of education promoted by the SDA Church at Asante Bekwai, particularly moral and teacher education at the initial stages and the secondary education with its versatile curricula were attractive to the people. Apart from the fact that, the institutions equipped the beneficiaries with moral and occupational skills, they profoundly enhanced the status of the Asante Bekwai township and its environs. It was one of the few places in the country which was privileged of having teachers trained on its soil, and at the same time, having secondary school students trained there. However, the challenge of inadequate classrooms, dormitories and laboratories as well as shortage of residential facilities for teachers lingered on by the late 1950s. The SDA Mission therefore had to urgently surmount the challenges in order to effectively realize its educational goals. A study to throw light on what was done to overcome the difficulties in the subsequent years could be very useful and thus recommended.

References

PRIMARY SOURCES

a. Archival Documents

PRAAD. Ghana, ARG/13/1/31(4053/1732). Proposed Seventh-day Adventist Secondary School, Bekwai.0

PRAAD. Ghana ARG.1/13/11. *Minutes of the board of education meeting, Gold Coast Colony*. March 1934. Item No. 4.

PRAAD. Ghana ARG.1/13/4. *Gold Coast mission of Seventh-day Adventist. Letter, 21st October, 1914*.

PRAAD. Ghana. ARG.1/13/4. *Gold Coast mission of Seventh-day Adventist. Letter, Arthur J. Philbrick, Acting Chief Commissioner, Western Province, Sekondee, 29th June, 1916*.

PRAAD. Ghana. ARG.1/13/4. *Gold Coast mission of Seventh-day Adventist. Opening of school and mission in Asante.* G. 157/1914.

b. Office/School Files/ Log Books

Agona-Afamaso SDA Primary School File: Circulars from SDA Mission Office, Kumasi: *Circular to all Seventh-day Adventists in Gold Coast mission, A.J. Mustard, Mission President, 20th May, 1952.*

Log Book, Agona – *Asante Seventh Day Adventist Primary School*, January 1947.

Office of the Regional Manager of SDA Educational Unit, Kumasi, (1972) *File No.135.TC.2/SDA/Vol. June, 1972.* Kumasi.

SDA Secondary School, Bekwai (1954). *Secondary School log book*, Asante Bekwai

c. Oral Interviews (Field Notes)

Interview with C.Y. Kyeremeh. A retired educationist, first Ghanaian Principal, Asokore, koforidua SDA Teacher-Training College (1962-62), first Principal/headmaster, Bekwai SDA Teacher-Training College and Secondary School(1967-68) Kumasi, 12th February,2002

Interview with Pastor P.K. Asare. A retired Pastor of the SDA Church, Ghana.

Former President of the Central Ghana Conference of SDA Church, Kumasi

(1984-1985) and West African Union Mission of SDA Church (1980-90).

Kokofu-Bekwai, 6th June,2002

Interview with Nana Dabehene: Bekwai Traditional Palace, Bekwai, 6th June, 2002

Interview with A.K Kyei. Founding member of the Asante Bekwai SDA Church and a product of Bewai SDA Training Institution, Typing Department, 1951. Asante Bekwai, 6th February, 2002.

Interview with I.F. Agyei, a pioneer of the Bekwai SDA Training College Certificate 'B' course.(1947-48), Agona-Bipoah. 12th June, 2002).

SECONDARY SOURCES

a. Pamphlets

Africa-Indian Ocean Division Department of Education.(1988). *Philosophy, objectives and selected concepts of Adventist Christian education.* Cote d'Ivoire.

Youth Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. (2001.) *Youth ministry accent: the resource for Adventist youth leader.* (2nd Quarter), 12501 Old Columbia Spikes, Silver Springs, MD. 20904.

b. Brochures

Bureau of Public Relations, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist fact book – A reference notebook.* (1967). Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association,

Home Missionary Department of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists. (1976). *Training light bearers* (1976). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

c. Encyclopaedia

Newfield, D.F. & Neuffer, J. (1976). *Seventh-day Adventist encyclopaedia*. Revised. Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

d. Books

Akinpelu, J. A. (1972). *An introduction to philosophy of education*: London: Macmillan Education Ltd.

Antwi, M. (1992) *Education, society and development in Ghana*. Accra: Unimax Publishers.

Boahen, A.A. (1966). *Topics in West African history*. London: Longmans

Dickson, K. B. (1969). *A historical geography of Ghana*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Debrunner, H.W. (1967). *A history of Christianity in Ghana*. Accra: Waterville Publishing House.

Foster, P. (1965). *Education and social change in Ghana*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Fullan, M. G. (1999). *The new meaning of Educational Change*. (2nd ed.). England: Wellington House.

Graham, C. K. (1970). *The history of education in Ghana*. Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation.

McWilliam, H.O.A. & Kwamena-Poh, M.A.(1975). *The development of education in Ghana*. London: Longman Group Ltd.

Odamtten, S.K. (1978). *The missionary factor in Ghana's development up to 1880s*. Accra: Waterville Publishing House.

Osei, K.(2002) *An outline of Asante history (part 2. Vol.1)* Agona: O.K Enterprise

Rusk, R.K. (1967). *The doctrines of great educators*. London: Macmillan.

Stumpf, S.E. (1994). *Elements of philosophy: an introduction*. New York: McGraw Hill Inc.

Stride, G.T.& Ifeka,C. (1971). *Peoples and empires of West Africa: West Africa in history-1000-1800*. Kenya: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.

Ward, W.E .F. (1958). *A history of Ghana*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

White, E.G. (1923). *Fundamentals of Christian education*. Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association.