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Primary and Secondary Education in Senegal and The Gambia
by Bowden Quinn

A five-month study of primary and secondary schools in Senegal and The Gambia showed that these West African nations have failed to correct flaws in the educational systems they inherited from their colonial rulers.

The retention of Western-style school systems has led to a continuation of educational problems that were identified at the beginning of this century. A new approach to schooling is needed, but there is no indication that either of these countries is about to embark on such a course.

The problem, in broad terms, is that schools do not help the majority of the youth in these countries to prepare for a role in adult society. This is not only because most children in these countries do not attend school. Formal education is irrelevant to the lives of most of the young people who participate in it. Worse, the influence of the schools is detrimental to the lives of many of them.

The problem is more acute in rural areas, where the majority of the populations of these countries live. Schools raise the expectations of rural youths so they turn away from their traditional adult roles as farmers to seek employment in the wage economy. The resulting migration of young people from the rural areas to the cities is harmful for the countries in two ways. There are not enough jobs for these youngsters, causing urban unemployment, crime and political instability. The drift away from the farms is also at least partially responsible for the failure of these countries to

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grow enough food to feed all the people in them.

The inherent injustice of the educational systems affects urban as well as rural youths. The school structures in both countries prevent the majority of primary school students from proceeding to secondary school, yet the primary school education is geared solely for those students who will continue their education in secondary school.

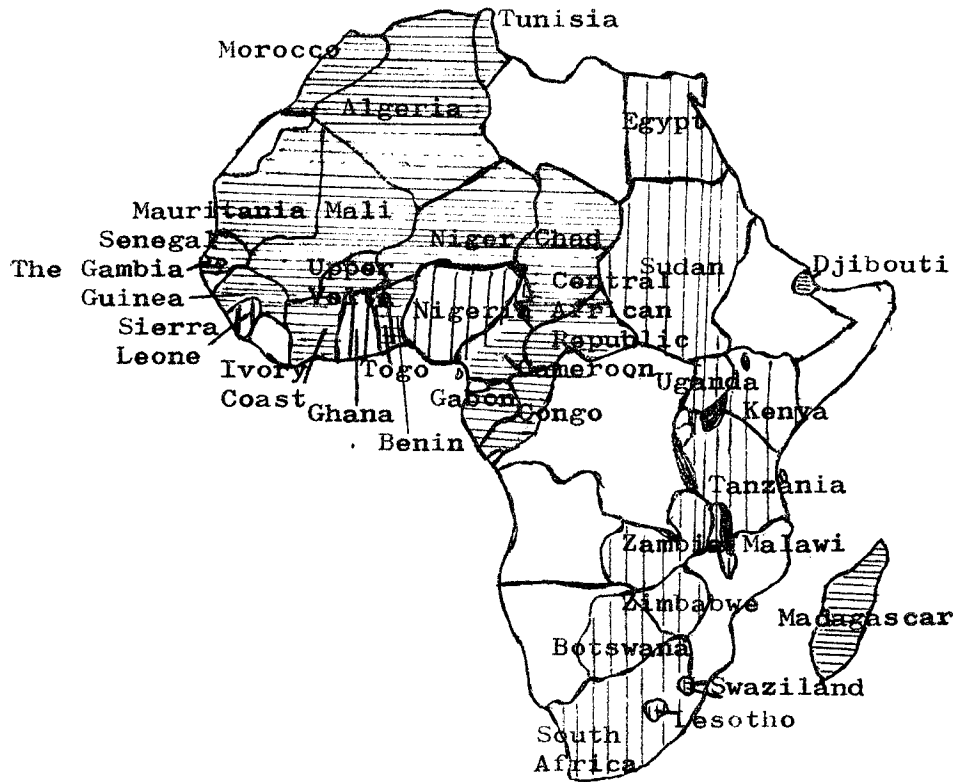
Another major weakness in the school systems is the failure to provide equal opportunities for girls.

These are problems faced by all African countries. This study of school systems in Senegal and The Gambia focuses on the historical background to the current situation. As former French and British colonies, respectively, the example of these countries provides insight on the educational philosophies that shaped the school systems of a majority of African nations during their colonial period (see map 1).

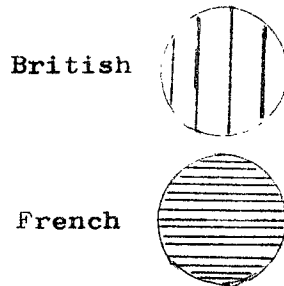
As African nations that have enjoyed stable rule under moderate leadership with close ties to their former colonial rulers, Senegal and The Gambia also provide an example of two attempts to modify Western-style education to suit African needs. The failure of these attempts will show why other countries have adopted more revolutionary approaches to education. On the whole, however, African countries have made few attempts to experiment with novel methods of education. This paper will show that there is an urgent need for such experimentation.

Pre-Colonial Education

The Gambia¹ is a strip of land from seven to 30 miles wide along the sides of the Gambia River at the western tip of Africa. It is surrounded by Senegal except for the stretch of coastline on the Atlantic Ocean (see map 2). Even before the coming of the Europeans, the Gambia River formed a rough dividing line between the Mandinka people in the south and the Wolofs in the north, but these two groups



MAP 1: African countries formerly controlled by Britain or France.



as well as Fulas, Jolas and Serahulis are found in substantial numbers in both countries.

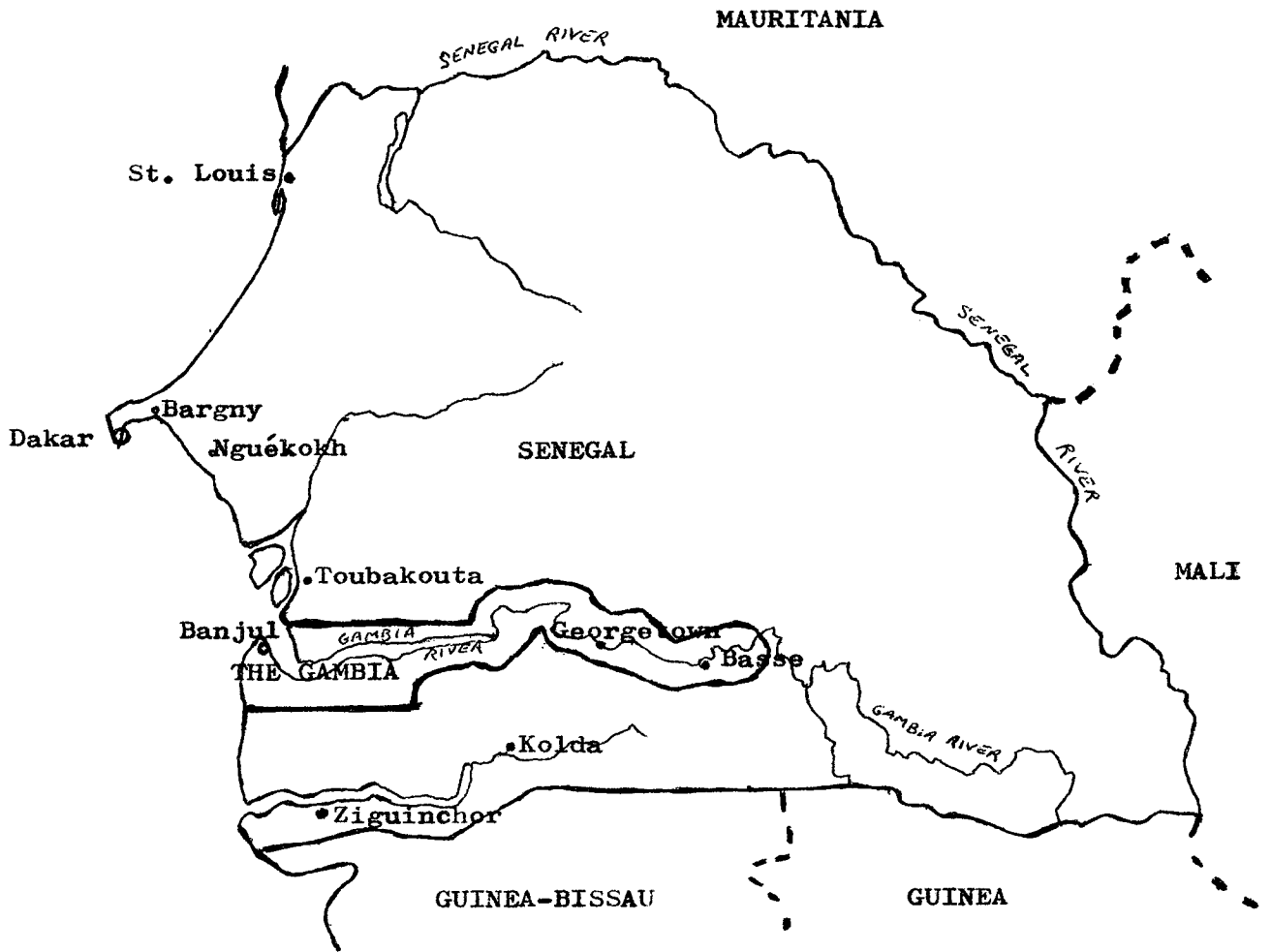
The two countries have large Muslim majorities and, except for their adopted colonial tongues, the same languages are spoken throughout the area. People continue to move freely between the two countries and a sizeable number of citizens of each country live and work in the other. Family ties often cross the national boundary, especially among the Gambians. Only the competition between English and French merchants in the 17th and 18th centuries and later the continuing enmity between their two governments prevented Senegal and The Gambia from evolving into a single nation.

Traditional education in Senegambia was informal, non-literate and practical.² There were no assigned teachers; the whole community took upon itself the duty of instructing its young to become a productive part of society.

This instruction could take several forms. Parents would teach children their skills. Sometimes another relative or, especially in the learning of special trades, a person outside the family would assume this role. Much of what a child learned would come simply through imitation. A mother carried her child to the rice fields, and soon the toddler was helping her mother cultivate the rice. Young boys followed their older brothers to tend the herds of cattle or goats, and in a year or two they were going out alone or with another younger brother at their heels.

More formal education would be given through ceremonies marking various transitions in life. Usually these included initiation into adulthood and instruction on the duties of marriage as part of a wedding.

Seen from today's perspective, these traditional methods of education have strengths and weaknesses. By stressing imitation and acceptance of community standards, the education discouraged experimentation and questioning, but it involved the whole community in the teaching process and ensured the usefulness of what was taught by linking learning with the accomplishment of necessary tasks.



MAP 2: Senegal and The Gambia

A type of formal school did come to the Senegambian region before the arrival of Europeans through the introduction of Islam, which began in the northern areas in the 12th century and permeated most of the region by the 18th century. Koranic schools spread literacy as well as knowledge of the precepts of Islam. Surprisingly, considering that in this period the Muslim world was far ahead of Europe in the advancement of knowledge, Koranic schools provided little other instruction.

Senegambia was part of the great West African empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhai whose center of learning, Timbuctoo, was famous even in Europe. Probably Senegambians were among the persons who came from far and wide to this or other cities to learn from the Islamic scholars there. In the village schools, however, the instructors apparently concentrated on teaching verses from the Koran by rote, as they do today. The young pupils learn to write verses from the Muslim holy book on wooden tablets. Literacy is not the major aim of this education, but even today many rural people learn how to write in Arabic script while remaining unfamiliar with the Roman alphabet. Despite the advances Muslim savants made in mathematics during the Middle Ages, numeracy was apparently never taught in these schools.

The Koranic schools reinforced the traditional teaching process in stressing acceptance of authority and discouraging questions. The Koranic teaching perhaps provided the benefits of moral instruction, but there is no indication that the people of Senegambia were living in a state of barbarity before the introduction of Islam.

The Colonial Inheritance

With the coming of the Europeans in the 15th century, the histories of Senegal and The Gambia diverge, but as far as education is concerned, things don't change much until the 19th century.

The colonial histories of these two countries do not

reflect the comparative values of English and French educational policies in Africa. France lavished more attention on Senegal than on any other of its African colonies, while the British largely neglected The Gambia. These extremes are useful in judging the overall effect of the colonial educational policies of these two dominant imperialist countries. The educational histories of Ghana and the Ivory Coast, however, would present a different view of English and French colonial rule.

Thus, while generalizations about the colonial policies of these two European nations may often be misleading, in the instance of Senegal and The Gambia we may accept the following analysis of Lord Hailey in his massive work, An African Survey:³

The French system of education has, in French West Africa at all events, been far less dependent on missionary effort, and it has, as compared with the British, been characterized by a greater precision of objective and unity of method.

In the beginning, colonial administrations in both territories left education up to missionaries, but this was largely true in Europe as well. Government involvement in social and educational services was a 19th century development.⁴

The first Senegalese school was started by a Roman Catholic priest in St. Louis in 1816. By the 1840s, there were four schools, two in St. Louis and two on the island of Goree, just east of the present capital, Dakar. The total enrollment of these schools was under 600. These were primary schools, teaching French and manual skills. A secondary school opened in the 1840s but closed before the end of the decade due to financial and administrative problems.

The first school in The Gambia was established by the Methodist Church in 1826 in Bathurst, the capital, now called Banjul. This school was mostly for freed slaves. Britain, following its abolition of the slave trade in 1807, was recapturing slaves from other nations' ships and settling

them in her West African colonies.

By 1850 the Methodists had another school across the Gambia River at Barra Point and a third on MacCarthy Island, 180 miles up the river, with a combined enrollment for the three schools of 501 children. The Catholic Church had started two schools in Bathurst, one for boys and one for girls, with about 100 pupils.

Most of Britain's efforts in the colony still were to improve the condition of the freed slaves, or as they were called then, "liberated Africans." The governor of the colony in 1850, R.C. MacDonnell, objected to this policy in his report to England, giving an early official opinion on education in the colony.⁵

It is quite certain that the Mandingo Mahometan, in his clothing, his farming, his residence, and his education (for no Mandingo village is without its school) is a being infinitely superior to the naked liberated African treading mud-bricks for the British Government at Laming, or idling over unprofitable tasks either at MacCarthy's Island or St. Mary's....(H)ad the same outlay been incurred in giving the natives a practical knowledge of useful mechanical arts, in enlarging the schools already established, and giving increased efficiency to them, valuable results would have been obtained.

Despite his preference for instructing the "natives," Gov. MacDonnell believed education would have only limited benefits for the Africans. He gave four reasons why students made little progress in school: the lack of a common language between teacher and student, a lack of properly trained teachers, poor attendance by the pupils and the "marked inferiority in the intellectual capacity of the natives, especially those who are found amongst the liberated Africans, as compared with the other races of the human family."

The result is that mercantile men find it extremely difficult to obtain any natives sufficiently instructed to keep the simplest accounts; and the Executive is much embarrassed to find persons competent to fill minor appointments, the holders of which should make any written reports, or possess the simplest knowledge of accounts.

Clerks for government and business—that was the main objective English and French administrators had for education, for both were under pressure from their governments to keep expenditures in the colonies as low as possible.

Still, there were already basic differences in the approach to education by missionaries in the two colonies. A summary of the Methodist mission's educational efforts, which accompanied Gov. MacDonnell's report, reveals the goals of the missionaries in The Gambia were unambitious.⁶

We endeavour to instill into the minds of all our school children a sense of propriety and good behaviour. And, to sanctify all, we labour to teach them their duty to God...and to man...

And, as I know Her Majesty's Government is interested in, and have used means to promote, the teaching of the science of music and the art of singing, it may not be amiss for me to observe, that about 40 of our boys are regularly taught to sing in three parts...and recently they have been taught to sing, in four parts, Handell's Hallelujah Chorus; which they now do with, to me, a surprising correctness.

The summary listed the following courses given in some or all of the schools: plain needlework, fancy needlework, learning the alphabet, easy reading, reading the Holy Script, writing on slate, writing in copy books, arithmetic, select reading, grammar and geography. The head of the mission also gave special classes in astronomy and natural science.

A report written seven years later, in 1857, by a Catholic missionary in French West Africa reveals a much more zealous approach to education.⁷

Our general aim is the religious—and thus, the social—regeneration of the Negroes of Africa; the means to this will be our holy religion, and next to religious knowledge, work. Literacy and scientific work for those who have the capacity to engage in it; manual work supplemented by a certain cultivation of the intelligence for those whose vocation is more humble. Our particular aim is to provide the French possessions with intelligent and loyal servants.

Consequently there is a dual objective. On the one hand, to produce well-educated and responsible young men, able to render real and valuable services in the colony and in the trading posts as

employees of the administration, the engineering department, the military and naval establishments; on the other to make honest and competent workmen, who would assist and if necessary even supervise those whom the colonial government already has at its disposal. Hence we have a primary and secondary school, and a trades school.

In the former we study the child, who usually comes to us young, at the age of five or six. If his intellectual qualities permit, his education will be continuous, he will pass in succession from the primary school to the secondary school, where so far as our resources allow he will receive the same education as in a French college. If a pupil's undeveloped intelligence does not allow him to undertake such a heavy curriculum, we content ourselves with giving him some knowledge of the elementary principles of the French language, arithmetic and writing, and we make a workman of him.

These extracts show that there was a similarity in the goals of education but a difference in approach to it in the two colonies. It is important to remember that the methods described by the French priest above were effectively put into practice only in Senegal, and even there only in the cities of St. Louis and Goree-Dakar.

French West Africa, stretching from Cape Verde at the western tip of Senegal to Lake Chad in the middle of the continent, was largely desert and arid grassland inhabited by nomadic and semi-nomadic Muslim tribes who resisted the coming of Christian missionaries. To avoid the expense of protecting the missionaries over such a vast territory, the French government agreed to keep them out.

The British colonies along the coast had smaller Muslim populations, but where the English did meet resistance from Islamic rulers, they followed the same policy. This policy delayed the introduction of Western education into most of Senegal and The Gambia for many years.

In 1857, the same year as the French priest's report, Louis Faidherbe, governor of Senegal, asked a Catholic teaching order, the Brothers of Ploermel, to provide secondary courses for European and mixed-race children. He also established a School for the Sons of Chiefs and Interpreters in St. Louis. He organized a state school system, but the

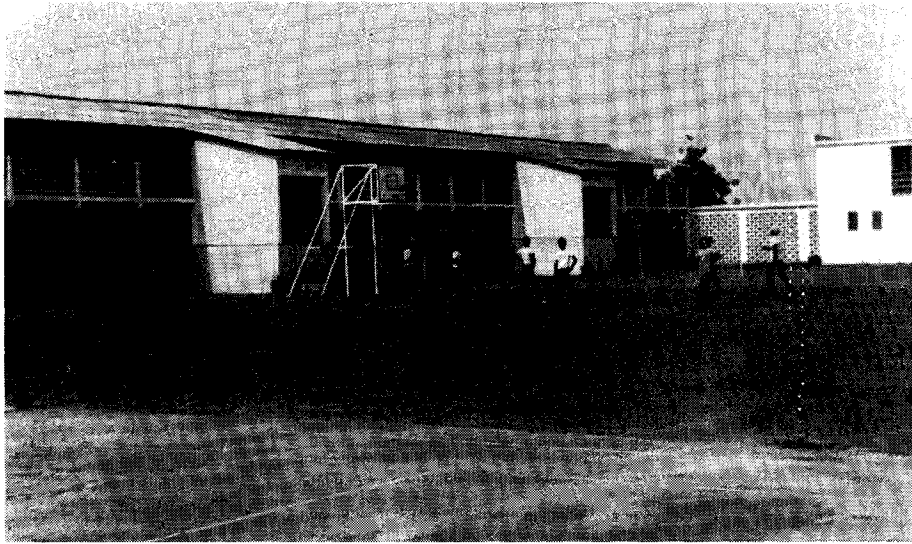
religious orders continued to run the schools until 1901.

Two years later, Ernest Roume, governor-general of French West Africa, organized an educational system for the entire territory, and the Senegalese system was incorporated into it. Roume's official policy was similar to that of the Catholic missionaries. Most education was vocational or agricultural, with literacy in French and elementary computational skills considered basic. The few students selected for secondary and higher education received instruction identical to that provided in France. The showcase of the French West African educational system was the William Ponty School near Dakar. It drew students from throughout the territory, creating an African educational elite of teachers and administrators.

In 1927 the School for Sons of Chiefs and Interpreters was renamed the Blanchot Advanced Primary School. It offered a three-year course to elementary school graduates to train them for clerical positions. The Pinot-Laprade Professional School in Dakar offered a three-year course to train craftsmen. Full secondary education on the French model became available with the establishment of two high schools, Lycée Faidherbe in St. Louis in 1919 and Lycée Van Vollenhoven in Dakar in 1936.⁸

The British were far behind the French West African authorities in providing governmental direction and support to education. Not until the 1920s did the British government admit to a responsibility to promote education in its African colonies. Even then, and for the next 40 years until the colonies achieved their independence, in practice the British government did little more than periodically sponsor commissions to study educational problems in the colonies. These commissions repeatedly found the same problems and made similar recommendations, which the government largely failed to implement because of the expense involved.

In 1920 The Gambia had six elementary schools in Bathurst and two in Georgetown on MacCarthy Island with an enroll-



ABOVE: Playing basketball after classes at St. Augustine's High School, Banjul, The Gambia. BELOW: Leaving class at Lycée Van Vollenhoven, Dakar, Senegal.



ment of 1,345 pupils. These included 637 children in Catholic schools, 595 in Methodist schools and 113 in Anglican schools. The government partially supported these schools at a cost of £1,094. The government also maintained a school for Muslim children at a cost of £151. There was a Methodist secondary school with about 50 pupils. Total government expenditure on education amounted to £1,953. That year the colony reported a surplus in its accounts of £328,657.⁹

The colonial report for that year stated:

It has long been recognised that the provision which is made in the Colony and the Protectorate for education is very far from being what it should be, and measures are now being taken for improving the educational system, such as the provision of more adequate accommodation and of a more highly skilled teaching staff, measures which have long been delayed owing to the Great War. Arrangements have been made for an Educational Expert to visit in 1921 to advise.

In the 1921 report,¹⁰ reference was again made to this expert. He had presented a list of recommendations, the report said, "but its adoption will necessitate an expenditure which cannot be incurred at the moment." That report showed revenue and expenditure figures that gave the colony a £286,396 surplus for the year. The major development project that year had been new barracks for the West African Frontier Force.

The expert's recommendations were quickly forgotten. The 1924 colonial report from The Gambia¹¹ records a growth in elementary enrollment to 1,688 pupils, including 218 in government Muslim schools and 82 in Georgetown. It also refers to enthusiasm for a scholastic football competition, expresses regret over the inability to get good teachers and discusses the problem of absenteeism due to illness and to parents taking their children upcountry to help with the farming. There is no more talk about extensive improvements in education.

A School for Sons of Chiefs was established in Georgetown in 1927, the same year the French administrators in

Senegal transformed their School for Sons of Chiefs and Interpreters into the Blanchot Advanced Primary School. Muslim rulers still resented the intrusion of Western education and household slave children were often sent to these schools instead of chiefs' sons.

Not until 1945 did the colonial government assume responsibility for the Bathurst primary schools. Religious authorities retained 50 percent representation on school supervisory committees that ran the schools. Previously coeducational, the schools were separated by sex and religious affiliation, making a total of six schools with an enrollment of 2,100 pupils. At the secondary level there were four schools, two for boys and two for girls, with an enrollment of 320. The secondary schools were still run by the Catholic and Methodist missions, but the government paid staff salaries.

The missions had begun to establish schools in the Protectorate but met with limited success because of opposition to Christianity. In 1949 the government tried to overcome this problem by starting District Authority Schools in the Protectorate. Chiefs were compelled to send their children to these schools to set an example for their people. Otherwise, attendance wasn't compulsory, but government pressure was strong. Often children from the poorer families were forced to go. The government school in Georgetown began providing secondary courses for primary school graduates in the Protectorate.

The curriculum in the District Authority Schools was the same as in the mission schools, but the government schools emphasized gardening to try to equip children for rural life. Unfortunately, work in the gardens often was used as punishment, reinforcing the students' belief that farming was not proper employment for educated persons.

Thus began the migration of rural youths who had attended primary school to the towns and cities, but chiefly to Bathurst, to look for employment. The ability of these village

youngsters to earn enough money to send some home to their parents overcame the villagers' distrust of Western education and the demand for schools grew in rural areas. Soon the supply of scarcely educated youngsters was much greater than the availability of jobs and urban unemployment became a problem.

The expert who visited The Gambia in 1921 was part of a commission that produced the Phelps-Stokes reports on education for the British government. The commission visited West Africa in 1920 and 1921 and East Africa in 1924. Out of its recommendations came the Advisory Committee on Native Education in the British Tropical Dependencies. In 1925 this committee produced a memorandum on British educational policy. It pronounced "the Controlling Power is responsible as trustee for the moral advancement of the native population," and admitted there was a "widely held opinion that the results of education in Africa have not been altogether satisfactory."¹²

Among its recommendations were government control of education, continued religious and character training, use of African languages as well as English, more training of African teachers including women, technical industrial training, vocational training within government departments, improvement of education for females and a comprehensive system of education from pre-primary to adult.

The committee said the government's responsibility for education derived from its increased revenues from the colonies, yet somehow there was never enough money. In 1953 a group studying education in West Africa made the following evaluation of the improvements over the previous 30 years:¹³

These efforts, however, have inevitably had incomplete success. The main difficulties have been economic: shortage of money has meant shortage of staff, not only for routine teaching and administration but also for research and planning.

These protestations of poverty ring hollow. In the 1946 report from The Gambia, public revenue for the pre-

vious year was estimated at £567,000 and public expenditures at £435,000. Direct government expenditures on primary and secondary education were said to be "approximately" £15,162 annually.

Despite its head start in education and an apparent willingness to spend more on education, the colonial administration in Senegal hadn't found a solution to the problems inherent in a school system designed to benefit government and commercial interests and not students. During the 1950s, schools in Senegal expanded, enrollment increased, a scholarship program for study abroad was begun and an institute of higher learning was established, later to become the University of Dakar. When Senegal achieved its independence in 1960, its school system produced a small number of highly educated people and a large number of primary school graduates who could read and speak French but who were unable to find jobs.

Despite its whiny tone, this excerpt from the report of the 1953 British study group gives a good summary of the problems in education that colonial administrations left to the new African governments:¹⁴

Educators in Africa were constantly under criticism. They were criticized for providing too superficial an education, and for providing it to too few children, for being too much bound by external examinations, for being too bookish and unpractical, for producing too many clerks and too few farmers, artisans, technicians and reliable administrators, and for utterly failing to stop the drift to the towns, the decay of agriculture, the break-up of tribal society and the loosening moral standards.

Independence

In the heady atmosphere of independence, African leaders didn't take stock of the situation. In education, as in other areas of development, they wanted to achieve a level of accomplishment equal to that in the countries of their former colonial rulers as quickly as possible. A conference

of African educators in Addis Ababa in 1961 set the unrealistic goal of universal primary education by 1981. Although the conferees called for a reorientation of educational patterns to meet the economic and social needs of the countries, too little thought was given to what this should entail.

In response to the conference recommendations, The Gambia increased its rural elementary enrollment tenfold, from 400 to 4,000 pupils, in five years, but it only worsened the problem of primary school leavers¹⁵ by resorting to an ever higher proportion of unqualified teachers to handle the burgeoning student population. Villagers viewed education as a means of escape from the harsh economic and social conditions of rural life. As primary school enrollment increased, the value of its education, as well as its quality, dropped. The country's fledgling modern economy couldn't handle the flood of primary school leavers looking for jobs.¹⁶

The goal of primary education became entrance into secondary school. With a limited number of secondary school places, more and more students found themselves cheated of the benefits education had promised them. In 1965-66, the first year of Gambian independence, there were 12,624 primary school students and 3,385 secondary school students. Five years later, although the ratio of secondary school to primary school enrollment had improved, in actual numbers the problem had grown worse: 17,140 primary school pupils and 5,178 secondary school students.¹⁷

The situation was more extreme in Senegal. In 1960-61, the country had 128,755 primary school pupils and 10,036 secondary school pupils. Ten years later, the primary figure had doubled to 257,708, while the number of secondary school students had increased to 50,994.¹⁸ Again, though the ratio had improved, in this case markedly, the overall number of primary school leavers who were largely unfit for employment either in the traditional or modern sectors of the economy had increased.

The consequences struck Senegal in 1968, when there were

nationwide protests against the government. Students played a major role in the disturbances, but a subsequent government study revealed that in Dakar, where the worst of the riots took place, unemployed youth from rural areas were a major contributory factor. Most of these young men had at least a partial primary education.

In response, the Senegalese government developed a program called Enseignement Moyen Pratique—middle-level practical education. The aim of the program was to develop rural and urban teaching centers where primary school leavers could learn the skills they needed to earn a living in their home regions. It was hoped that this would stop the drift of rural youths to the cities.

The plan was well prepared and won international recognition. In a paper written in 1976 for a conference of ministers of education of the African member states of UNESCO, EMP Director Samba Dione explained the program's philosophy:¹⁹

The idea behind middle-level practical education is to get the peasants to embark on a voluntary process of change that takes place under their control and is at the same time in conformity with national policy, in other words, directed towards gaining economic and cultural independence through the responsible participation of those concerned. This means that the local community must put its resources to better use and itself devise ways and means of enabling young people to find their place, i.e., must draw on its resources and develop them on the basis of the well-known principle of self-reliance.

The students, Dione said,

...will become producers with a direct knowledge and a critical, comprehensive understanding of the physical, economic, social, political and cultural milieu in which they live, producers with a developed sense of awareness, familiar with production, consumption, trade and marketing processes and capable of launching into money-earning productive activities.

The project began in 1972. When Dione wrote his paper four years later, there were only two experimental centers

in operation. Nevertheless, he predicted nationwide coverage of 800 rural centers and 400 urban centers by 1982.

In 1980, there were 11 centers operating, and the new EMP director, Yaya Konante, who assumed his position in September 1976, admitted that his predecessor had been overly optimistic.²⁰ Konante said he hoped that five to eight new centers would be built a year, up to a maximum of 100 centers in 15 years. Each center would have about 400 students, or about 100 in each class for the four-year program.

This would enable the program to accept 10,000 primary school leavers by 1995. Yet the national education policy says 80 percent of primary school leavers will be directed to the EMP program, the other 20 percent going to secondary school.²¹ In 1980, there were about 60,000 students leaving primary school, with secondary places for 11,000 of them. That left 49,000 students for an EMP program that could take less than 2,000.

The Senegalese government wants to achieve universal primary education by the year 2025. At present levels of growth (5 percent a year since 1974-75), the primary schools will have to accept an average of 21,000 new students a year in the next five years.²² Clearly, the estimated growth of the EMP program is out of sync with the national educational policy. This could be a result of a separation of authority. Schools are run by the Ministry of National Education while the EMP program is under the direction of the Human Promotion division of the Secretary of State's office.

The numbers alone do not reveal the extent of the problems facing the EMP program. Visits to three centers in April 1980 showed that the program is barely surviving.²³ Only one of the centers was successful, with its full quota of 200 students. Another center had only about 50 students, and the third claimed to have 21 students but appeared to have fewer. Directors or teachers at all three centers said their operating budgets were insufficient to buy materials needed for such courses as carpentry and beekeeping. Two schools

were in areas suffering from a lack of water, halting gardening projects. A teacher at the center with the lowest number of students said there weren't enough primary school students in the area to support the program.

More importantly, students at all three centers still viewed the training as a way of getting a job in an urban area. The successful center was in a semi-urban area, but a teacher said the students still wanted to use their skills to find a job in Dakar, 40 miles away. In a rural center, the students wanted to learn how to drive so they could find jobs as taxi drivers in the capital.

The Gambia decided to take a different approach to resolving the problem of primary school leavers. Its Five Year Plan for Economic and Social Development 1975/76-1979/80 called for a restriction in the growth of junior secondary places and a rapid revision of primary school curriculum to prepare students for rural employment.²⁴

A change in the curriculum used is necessary because for over 70% of children formal education will terminate with leaving the primary school, and an even greater proportion will become self-employed outside the modern wage sector. The curriculum envisaged for the future will be designed to meet the learning needs of farmers and rural workers, both the male and the female. It will give special attention to basic literacy and numeracy, and to agriculture and rural environment, including pre-vocational studies, co-operative education, and health and nutrition. School farms or plots of land attached to schools will be used for practical demonstration of some of the ideas taught in the classroom, to introduce children to their environment and to foster a spirit of self-reliance.

By 1980, a new curriculum had been instituted in the first grade, and plans called for the incorporation of the revised curriculum in successive grades over the next five years. Full implementation was envisioned for 1984-85.

The new curriculum, however, is nothing more than a revision of texts and teaching methods in the basic subjects



ABOVE: Students building a fence to surround the new, World Bank-funded EMP center at Nguékokh, Senegal.
BELOW: Posing in the garden of the EMP program in Bargny, Senegal.



of English, arithmetic, science and social studies. Teaching children about the world they live in is an improvement over colonial curricula imported from Britain or France, but merely counting mangoes instead of apples, or studying about native chiefs instead of European kings, doesn't make primary education more useful for future farmers.

School Structures

Gambian and Senegalese authorities have retained the basic school structures they inherited at independence. The school systems are modeled on those in the colonizing countries. They are much alike, although the Senegalese system is more elaborate than the Gambian system.

Senegal has a six-year primary school program. Instruction is provided in French, mathematics, history, geography, observational science, music, drawing and physical education. At present, all classes are taught in French, but the government has recently called for the use of six national languages in the primary schools. How the government will enact this policy is unclear. In 1979-80, instruction in a national language was being given in only one school on an experimental basis.

At the end of primary school, students take a national examination to gain admission into secondary school. This entrée en sixième is a concours, or competitive examination. Thus, it doesn't matter how well a student does, but how many students do better. As many students pass the concours as there are available places in secondary school. In June 1980, there were 61,316 candidates for between 11,000 and 11,200 places.²⁵

The examination tests the students only on French and mathematics. These two subjects are supposed to give the best indication of a student's aptitude. In the words of one primary school principal, "History-geography is not a question of intelligence but memorization."²⁶ Also, skill in French and mathematics is considered essential for studies

at the secondary level. The other courses are regarded as largely irrelevant. Secondary teachers don't build on what is taught at the primary level in history or science. Secondary instruction assumes that students come into the classes knowing nothing in these areas.

Since the examination covers only French and mathematics, primary school teachers concentrate on these two subjects. Other courses are considered a sidelight. Students are tested on all subjects for their certificate of primary studies at the end of the sixth grade, but these certificates are of little value. The 40 to 50 percent of primary school students who receive them but don't get into secondary school are entitled to few benefits that students who don't get the certificate cannot enjoy. Some of these students go to private secondary schools, but if a parent is willing to pay the tuition it is doubtful that a private school will insist on a primary certificate.

Other options open to primary school leavers include various public service jobs or private employment. Most of the public service jobs available to them are in areas of law enforcement: police, customs, gendarmerie. For these services, a candidate must first serve in the army, an option open to a person whether he has a primary certificate or not. The usual method of finding employment in the private market is by becoming an apprentice in some trade. Apprenticeships may last eight years or more, during which time the apprentice usually does most or all of the work involved while receiving little or no pay.

There is also the EMP program. It is noteworthy that primary school principals I talked with in St. Louis and Kolda²⁷ didn't mention the EMP program as an option for their students, despite the national policy. Neither did they cite farming as a possibility, even though both towns are in agricultural areas. Primary schools in Senegal make little if any attempt to prepare their students for anything except the entrée en sixième. The role of the primary school, these

principals said, is to try to get their students into secondary school. Students are allowed to repeat the sixth year of primary school once to retake the exam.

Although the philosophy is different in The Gambia, in practice the system is the same. After the sixth grade, primary school students take the Common Entrance Examination for admission to secondary school. Only English and math are tested, so the majority of class time is devoted to them. One fourth-grade teacher estimated she spends half her time on these two subjects, and the emphasis is even more pronounced in the final year of primary school. The principal of one of the country's largest primary schools, in Georgetown, admitted that despite the government's policy his school concentrates on preparing students for the CEE, because this is what the parents want and expect.²⁸

Parents don't send their children to school to learn how to be farmers. They can learn that at home. If life was easier and farming more rewarding, many of these children would probably still be kept away from school. Fathers send their children, particularly their sons, to school to gain access to the modern sector of the economy. The children are expected to support their families with the wages they earn.

Many such parents, however, are still torn between the old ways and the new, between their mistrust of Western education and their poverty, between their fear of losing their sons to a modern world they don't understand and their desire to give their sons a better life than the one they have known.

Senegal and The Gambia still provide education to less than half of their primary school-aged population.²⁹ This is not just because the governments don't have enough money to build schools for every village. In some rural areas in The Gambia, schools have only a dozen or fewer pupils in a class because parents won't send their children to school.

In 1978-79, Senegal had 370,412 primary school students, 31.5 percent of the country's 6- to 13-year-olds. This per-

centage varies from 60 percent of the children in the urbanized Cape Verde region to 13.5 and 12.5 percent in the rural regions of Sénégal Oriental and Louga.

The Gambia had 37,644 primary school students in 1979-80. This is about 25 percent of primary school-aged children. The percentage in the Banjul area is more than 55 percent, while in rural areas it is probably about 20 percent. Still, the number of parents seeking education for their children appears to be beyond the government's expectations. In the five-year development plan, the government called for an increase of 8,500 places in the primary system. Most of the growth was to be in the rural areas to correct the imbalance in educational opportunities. At the time of the plan's creation, only 12 percent of the children in rural areas attended school.

School growth exceeded the plan's projection. Instead of the 31,000 primary school pupils predicted for 1980, there were 37,644. Most of the growth was in rural areas. Enrollment in the capital increased by about 30 percent in five years, while the rural school population almost doubled.

Secondary Schools

The Gambian government decided in 1975 to restrict the growth of the secondary school population. The curtailment was to come in the number of students in what were then called junior secondary schools. Many of these students were finding it difficult to get jobs even with a secondary education, as the plan explained.³⁰

A recent manpower study has indicated, however, that the present supply of Junior Secondary School-leavers is heavily in excess of present and projected manpower requirements. Only a small proportion of future output is likely to obtain the type of employment for which they are being educated.

The plan called for an increase of only 1,200 students in these schools. The schools were to change from four- to

five-year programs with the new name of secondary technical schools. The curriculum was to be "reoriented to include commercial, sectorial, scientific and technical subjects."³¹

In 1979-80, there were 5,274 secondary technical students, about 125 fewer than the plan allowed. Visits to two secondary technical schools in 1980³² indicated that the main problem these schools faced was shortage of operating funds. Supplies were low, facilities inadequate. The secondary technical program basically has the same purpose as Senegal's EMP program and suffers from the same kind of problems. The Gambian students, however, benefit from their continued inclusion in the school system. Students who do well academically may enter the third year of high school after the four-year secondary technical program. (The length of the program was not extended as envisioned in the five-year plan.) In 1978-79, 84 students transferred to high school from the secondary technical schools. The following year 107 students transferred. The government provides about 20 scholarships for transfer students.³³ Other educational opportunities for secondary technical school graduates are provided by the government's Vocational Training Center and by the Gambia Industrial Opportunities Center, an American-aided agricultural training center. There are relatively few openings at these schools, however, and most secondary technical students join the job market after graduation.

The other type of secondary education in The Gambia is in the high schools. These offer a five-year program, although some schools, either presently or in the past, have split a grade level into two, allowing a six-year program for slower students. One of the seven high schools in the country also has a two-year Sixth Form for advanced studies. In 1980, there were 3,040 high school students, exceeding the development plan's projected enrollment by almost 300 students.

The goal of a high school student is not a diploma but a General Certificate of Education. To get this, the student

must pass an examination provided and corrected under the supervision of the West African Examinations Council. The council is comprised of representatives from the four former British territories in West Africa: Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and The Gambia. Tests given in each country are identical. Fifth-year students take these examinations at the "ordinary (O) level"; those students who go on to the sixth-form after their O-level examinations will take "advanced (A) level" examinations at the end of two years.

Tests cover almost every conceivable high school subject. Gambian students in June 1979 took GCE tests in the following subjects at the O level: English, English literature, French, history, geography, Bible knowledge, Islamic religious knowledge, economics, mathematics, statistics, physics, chemistry, biology, agricultural science, health science, accounts, business methods, commerce, woodwork, metalwork, technical drawing, food and nutrition, clothing/textiles, home management and art.

Of the 323 students who took those exams, only five failed. However, 173 of the students received a simple GCE pass, which isn't usually considered sufficient for admission to a foreign university. The results were poorer in the June 1979 A-level examinations. None of the 39 students who took the examinations received passes in four subjects and only five received passes in three subjects. A third of the students got two passes, six got one pass, eight received "subsidiary" passes and seven had no passes.

Secondary technical students take a Secondary Technical School Leaving Certificate examination. In 1980, The Gambia used West African Examinations Council examinations for its secondary technical students. Previously, the country's education department had made up the examinations for the secondary technical students. In June 1979, just over half of the candidates passed the STSLC examination.

Senegal has a more complex system following primary

school. Successful candidates in the entrée en sixième may go into a lycée, which is a seven-year high school, or a collège, which is similar to an American junior high school or middle school. For purposes of analysis, however, Senegalese officials divide these students horizontally. Students in the first four years of post-primary education, whether in a collège or a lycée, are said to be in middle education. The final three years at the lycées are secondary education.

Middle education is divided into general studies and technical studies. The goal of middle education is to obtain the Diplome de Fin d'Etudes Moyennes (DFEM). This diploma is earned by passing a national written and oral examination after troisième, the fourth year of middle education. This examination tests all of the subjects taught in middle education. In general studies, these are French, English, mathematics, history, geography and physical science or another language, depending upon the type of program a student takes. Almost all students who get their diplomas go into secondary education of one type or another. Unlike the national examination after primary school, which determines the number of successful candidates by the number of available places in the middle level, all students who pass the DFEM oral and written tests get their diploma. In 1979, however, of about 19,000 candidates, less than 20 percent got their diplomas.

Although fourth-year lycée students are supposed to get their diploma before they continue their education, high school principals admit that most students in the lycées stay in school whether they pass the DFEM test or not.

In 1978-79, there were 66,662 students in middle-level education. The Cape Verde region accounted for 47 percent of these students. In 1960-61, Senegal had 8,873 middle-level students.

Secondary education in Senegal is divided into three types: general, technical and professional. The government is trying to emphasize technical education to aid its development plans, but in 1978-79 more than 73 percent of secon-

dary students, 12,699 of them, were in general education. In the technical schools there were 3,059 students, and in the 12 professional schools there were 1,457 students.

Students in the general education and technical schools choose one of seven séries that determine what kinds of courses they will take. There are three types of séries for science, technical studies for business and for industry, and séries for economics and for literature.

The degree for secondary education is the baccalauréat. The test for the baccalauréat is given in two parts, in the second and third years of secondary education. In 1979, 3,632 students received their baccalauréats, up from a mere 161 in 1965. Of the 1979 degrees, almost 48 percent were in literature, 38 percent in the sciences and 14 percent in technical subjects. However, the proportion of literature students in general education has dropped from 50 percent in 1970 to 30 percent in 1979. In the technical fields, about 60 percent of the students are in the business section and 40 percent in the industrial program.

The 12 professional schools offer two- or three-year courses for degrees leading to jobs in the private sector (shipping, for example) or in the public sector (e.g., agriculture). Students in the professional schools are not always diploma-holders.

In all, there were 17,215 students in secondary education in 1978-79, up from 1,163 students in general secondary education at independence.

Quality of Education

The Gambia's membership in the West African Examinations Council insures that its schools will be recognized internationally and its best students will be able to gain access to foreign universities. The country's only facility for higher education is Gambia College, which trains teachers, nurses, public health workers and agricultural specialists.

A potential problem with The Gambia's participation in

the council is a divergence of educational objectives among the four member states. To take the extreme example, Nigeria's rapid industrial growth due to oil revenues may make its educational needs quite different from The Gambia's. It is doubtful whether a common examination will continue to serve these two countries.

Senegal's educational system is recognized as one of the best in francophone Africa. Its institute of higher education, the University of Dakar, gives degrees that are considered on a par with those of French universities. The secondary system that feeds the university must also be of high caliber. A major problem Senegal encounters in its secondary system, which is shared by a number of African countries, is student and teacher unrest. Strikes are an almost annual event. In 1980, students staged a strike in January, and some teachers walked out for one day in May. Members of one of the two national teachers' unions also participated in a job action aimed at disrupting the end-of-year examinations to support demands for more pay.

The education in both countries is still largely regulated by standards set by their former colonial rulers. For example, Shakespeare is still required reading for the GCE examinations. A comparison of the 1980 entrée en sixième and Common Entrance Examination for primary school graduates, and of the DFEM and baccalauréat tests and the GCE examinations syllabus revealed no glaring imbalance in the demands made on students in the two countries.

In one area affecting the quality of education, that of teacher training, Senegal appears to be well ahead of The Gambia.

The percentage of qualified teachers at the primary level in Senegal increased from 26.5 in 1963 to 41 in 1979. In The Gambia, 38.5 percent of the primary school teachers had teaching certificates. In the coming years, the situation should improve rapidly in Senegal but deteriorate in The Gambia.

Senegal has eight normal schools or teacher training centers for primary school teachers. In 1979 they had 1,223 teacher trainees and produced 604 qualified teachers. Even with an annual increase of about 21,000 pupils, the percentage of uncertified teachers should be reduced significantly over the next few years.

The only training facility for primary school teachers in The Gambia is Gambia College. In 1979-80, the college had 186 students in its teacher-training program and produced 60 graduates. With an increase in primary school enrollment of 5,448 pupils in that year, the percentage of certified teachers will get worse instead of better.

The situation is the same at the secondary level. Senegal has a school training technical and professional teachers, with 66 students in 1979, and a women's technical normal school with 133 students. I was unable to obtain statistics on the teaching staffs in the middle and secondary levels, but since the country provides teachers to other francophone African countries, there appears to be no shortage of qualified teachers.

In The Gambia, the secondary technical schools had 116 qualified teachers in 1979-80, while 137 teachers were unqualified. The prospect of increasing the number of qualified secondary technical teachers is bleak, at least as far as the sciences are concerned. Andrew Jarvis, Science Education Adviser for the British Council in The Gambia, came to this conclusion in a 1980 report:³⁴

In the last section I showed that shortage of suitably qualified teachers was a major problem in science teaching in the Secondary Technical Schools. It is difficult to see how the position can soon be altered: for it is clear that the problem of training is not that there are no opportunities for study abroad, but that suitably qualified applicants are in short supply. This would mean that even if a training course were set up at Gambia College, it might be unable to improve the position much.

In the high schools, both countries rely on expatriate and foreign volunteer teachers, especially for the sciences and mathematics. The Gambia had 93 foreign teachers in 1979-80 and 86 nationals. Ten of the Gambian high school teachers were unqualified, as were four of the foreigners. These last were probably Peace Corps and VSO (Britain) volunteers who have college degrees but not teaching certificates.

To give an indication of the number of foreign teachers, mostly French, in Senegalese high schools, in 1980 at Lycée Van Vollenhoven in Dakar only 63 of 172 teachers were Senegalese. Lycée Faidherbe in St. Louis had 49 Senegalese teachers, 25 French teachers, four Russians, a German and an American. The last three nationalities are all language teachers.³⁵

The disparity in training facilities can partially be attributed to wealth. Senegal is a far richer country than The Gambia. According to statistics in the 1979 report of the World Bank, Senegal in 1977 had a per capita gross national product of \$430, second only to the Ivory Coast's \$690 among West African nations. The Gambia had a per capita GNP of \$200, sixth from the bottom among the 14 West African nations. Nevertheless, investments in education as a percentage of national budgets indicate a continuation of colonial practices. Senegal spends heavily on education, while The Gambia relatively neglects it.

Senegal in 1978-79 spent a total of 14.67 billion CFA francs or \$74.4 million in areas controlled by the Ministry of National Education. This represented 16.1 percent of total state expenditures on recurrent budgets. In its fifth development plan, for 1977-81, the government expects to spend 57 billion CFA francs (\$289 million) on education.³⁶ This would represent about 19.9 percent of projected capital investment by the government in this period.

In its 1975-80 development plan, the Gambian government anticipated spending 4.5 million dalasis (\$2.6 million) on education, which was only 3.3 percent of planned investment.

Projections for recurrent expenditures over the six-year period from 1974 to 1980 gave 24.5 million dalasis (\$14.2 million) to the Ministry of Education, about 11 percent of the total budget.³⁷

However, the education department puts expenditures for 1978-79 at D3.5 million (\$2 million) on capital investment and D9 million (\$5.2 million) on recurrent items.³⁸ This is well above the projections of the five-year plan, but I was unable to determine whether the increase reflected a change of policy or simply the effect of inflation on spending.

The effects of the different levels of investment can be seen in the primary schools. One of the major complaints of Gambian education officials is the lack of desks and chairs in the classrooms, to say nothing about such school supplies as textbooks, notebooks and chalk. The shortage of supplies doesn't only affect the mud-brick village schools. At Georgetown Methodist School, one of the largest elementary schools in the country, several classrooms were without furniture when I visited in May 1980.

In the 1979-80 annual report of the education department, an acting regional education officer gave this summary of the situation:³⁹

One of the biggest problems that schools had to face was the lack of furniture. This perennial problem proved so grave that some pupils sat on the floor while others brought chairs to school. An attempt was made to remedy the situation by employing an itinerant carpenter who repaired broken chairs and desks in the schools. In spite of this, the situation is still desperate, even with the supplying of furniture to Primary One classes in a few schools. Inadequacy of blackboards is also a problem.

In contrast, Senegalese National Education Minister Abdel Kader Fall said in a June 1980 newspaper interview,⁴⁰ "Our students work in normal conditions, in normal classrooms; they sit at desks and not on mats; they have supplies that the state can give them while asking parents to make it up."

On the other hand, in one area bearing on the quality of education, The Gambia is well ahead of Senegal at the primary level. The average primary school class size for The Gambia in 1979-80 was 36.6. In Senegal, a year earlier, it was 51.5. At the middle level, Senegal had an average of 44.9 students per class. At the secondary level, Senegal's averages were 36.5 students per class in general education and 31.5 in technical education. For The Gambia, the average class size in secondary technical schools was 41.1 students and in the high schools it was 38.5 students.

Schools at the secondary level do not seem to have the disparity in supplies and facilities that one notices at the primary level. Senegal appears to provide more financial aid to high school students, though. At Lycée Van Vollenhoven, 900 of the 3,000 students got some kind of financial assistance from the government. Other high schools report similar high percentages of their students on aid. Scholarships are given in sevenths: 1/7 representing aid of 2,000 CFA francs (\$10) a trimester, 2/7 representing 4,000 CFA francs, etc. A full scholarship, however, provides complete support, including room and board at the schools. Of the 900 scholarship students at Van Vollenhoven, 150 were boarding students completely supported by the state. Lycée Faidherbe in St. Louis had 124 boarding students out of a student population of 1,258.

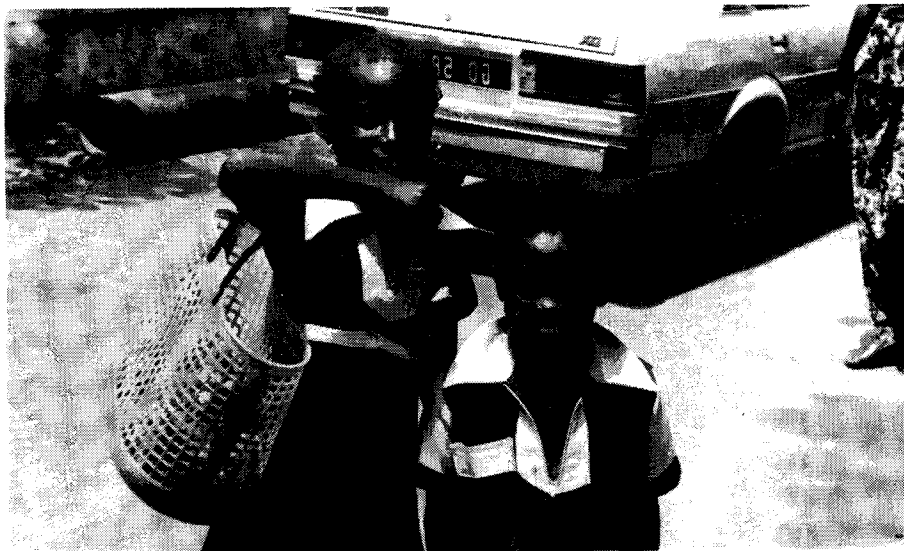
In The Gambia, of the 3,040 high school students in 1979-80 there were 335 scholarship students. This included 76 scholarships for the sixth form out of 91 students. The Gambia's only boarding school is Armitage High School in Georgetown, which has 375 students.

Female Education

No analysis of education in an African country would be complete without consideration of the availability of education to females. The sensitivity of the Gambian and Senegalese governments to this issue is shown by the regularity



Primary school children in uniforms going to school (above) and coming home in Banjul, The Gambia.



with which they include statistics on female participation in their school statistics. Still, the two countries have a long way to go in achieving balance between the sexes.

Senegal has raised the number of girls in primary school from 32.5 percent of total enrollment in 1960-61 to 39.8 percent in 1978-79. At the middle level, the percentage of females has gone from 25.4 to 33.7. In secondary general education, the percentage has dropped from 31.6 at independence to 26.8 in 1978-79. In secondary technical schools, the percentage has risen from 16.2 in 1970-71 (earlier statistics unavailable) to 27.3 in 1978-79.

In The Gambia, 33 percent of primary enrollment was female in 1979-80, only a slight increase from the 30.6 percent in 1970-71. Female students made up 30.6 percent of the secondary technical school population in 1979-80; ten years earlier, the figure was 23.5 percent. In the high schools, only 29 percent of the enrollment was female, a rise of slightly more than one percentage point in ten years. At the advanced level, only 16.4 percent of the class was female in 1979-80.

Attempts to increase female participation in the schools are as old as Western education in West Africa. The 1850 report on the Methodist missionary schools in The Gambia shows how little education has changed in this aspect. Of 501 students in four primary schools, 180, or almost 36 percent, were girls. The head of the mission made the following remarks about female education:

It will be interesting to your Excellency to know that considerable pains have been taken to improve the education of girls, and to make them equal to the male sex, a matter essential to the well-being of society everywhere, but especially necessary to the improvement of the African race, amongst whom woman has been treated as an inferior being. Besides reading, writing, etc., the girls are taught useful and plain needlework, and also to work in Berlin wool and fancy needlework.

Needlework, in the form of knitting and sewing, is still taught to girls in the EMP programs of Senegal, while the boys are learning woodworking and electrical engineering.

Such divisions of labor may raise the hackles of Western feminists, but it will be a long time before African society is ready to accept absolute equality of the sexes. The headmistress of Lycée John F. Kennedy, a girls' high school in Dakar, said in an interview⁴¹ that although there is little job discrimination against educated women in Senegal, the attitude persists among men and women that the man's profession comes first and the woman's role is complementary.

The headmistress, Marguerite Ba, said she was trying to get permission from the government to start a class for pregnant students. The law prohibited pregnant students from attending regular classes, but women who had had their babies could return to classes.

Parents still often force a daughter to get married against her wishes. "It's not so rare that we have dramas between daughters who want to continue their studies and a family which wants them to get married," Mrs. Ba said.

Education Officer Adeline Sosseh, who is in charge of women's education in The Gambia, made similar comments.⁴² Once a Gambian woman has achieved an education, she is unlikely to encounter discrimination in the job market or in society. The problem is achieving the education. Not only may parents force their daughters to leave school to get married, but they often don't take their daughters' studies as seriously as their sons'. Girls are expected to help with household chores when they are not in school, while boys are free to do their homework. This is one reason, in Mrs. Sosseh's opinion, that high school principals complain that female students don't do as well as the boys. The high schools accept lower standards for girl entrants in recognition of the need to increase female participation. "They do just as well in the end," Mrs. Sosseh asserted.

It is difficult for a government of any country to overcome the prejudices of its people. Still, the lack of progress in balancing the participation of males and females in education makes me believe the governments have not fully

accepted the gravity of the situation.

It takes only a brief visit to the rural areas to recognize that the domination of women in traditional African society is as exploitative as the European domination of its African colonies. In southern Senegal at the beginning of the rainy season, a visitor sees the women returning to the village from the rice fields at dusk, hoes over their shoulders and babies on their backs. In the village, the men sit talking in the shade, where they have been all day.

In some Third World countries, women do 80 percent of the agricultural work. In The Gambia, women are responsible for the rice fields while the men grow the peanut crop. Even if this represents an equitable distribution of the agricultural work, the women's tasks don't end when they return from the fields. They are responsible for the cooking, which in Africa is a strenuous activity. They must draw water from the wells, pound the millet or rice with heavy wooden pestles, sometimes even split the firewood, while the men relax.

Providing women with an equal education will eventually destroy this unjust arrangement, which may be part of the reason governments haven't moved quicker to increase female attendance in schools. Male government officials benefit as much as other men from the subjugation of women. A government that was truly committed to creating a just society would do more to aid its most downtrodden citizens. If affirmative action and quotas are acceptable means to improve the lives of blacks in the United States who suffer from hundreds of years of discrimination, why should they not also be used to improve the condition of black women in Africa?

Conclusion

Education should prepare youngsters for a productive role in adult society. Conversely, it should provide society with persons who have the skills the community needs to function and to grow.

On both these counts, the Western-style educational sys-

tems of Senegal and The Gambia are failures. In Senegal, only 20 percent of primary school students go on to middle-level education, and only about 20 percent of these students reach the secondary level. In The Gambia, almost 40 percent of primary school students continue to the secondary level, but only a quarter of these enter the high schools. Yet primary school principals in both countries admit their schools' function is solely to prepare children for the next step on the educational ladder. Similarly, directors of the middle-level collèges in Senegal say the purpose of their schools is to get as many of their students as possible into the lycées.

So, for a majority of the primary school population, school is a bitter experience. The basic literacy and numeracy they acquire could be a gain for them and for their country, but it is overridden by their sense of failure and their determination to continue to seek the kind of life education had promised them. In large numbers they leave the farms and come to the cities for work that isn't available.

The two countries' attempts to modify the systems haven't changed anything. Senegal added the EMP program to train primary school leavers for rural employment, but even where the program is successful it hasn't changed students' attitudes. They still hope to use their skills to find a job in the city. The Gambia has tried to revise its primary curriculum to make it useful to students in rural areas who do not continue their education. Parental pressure and the limitations of the system, however, have kept the emphasis on academic advancement.

At the root of the problem are the harsh conditions of rural life in Africa. Officials have long realized that if farmers received more for their products, they would be less willing to send their sons into the cities to earn money. A 1952 conference on educational policy in British African colonies came to this conclusion:⁴³

The school alone can do comparatively little; such difficulties as faulty systems of land tenure, shortage of capital, uncertainties of weather and world prices, and the absence of amenities in vil-

lage life are far more serious deterrents to an agricultural career than a misdirected type of education and educational improvements will do little to counteract them.

This reasoning is attractive to educators frustrated by their inability to find solutions to the pressing problems of underdevelopment. Instead of taking the blame for not solving the problems, they complain that they are victims of the same forces.

Certainly, if African economic and societal structures resembled those of the West more closely, Western-style education would be more effective. If with rural development plans, governments succeed in making village life more rewarding and more attractive, youngsters will feel less compelled to leave their homes and look for work in the cities.

Yet to leave the educational systems as they are in hopes that economic progress will make them less inappropriate is like sitting in a leaking boat hoping to reach land instead of plugging the leak. Society should not have to change to fit its education; education should serve the needs of society.

Some educationalists have called for drastic changes in schooling in the Third World. Manuel Zymelman, in an article entitled "Labour, Education and Development," put it this way:⁴⁴

In view of the grave problems associated with (a) providing education to respond to an increased popular clamor for more general education, (b) the changes that must be introduced in the content of training in order to satisfy technological requirements and (c) the particular conditions of the labour markets in developing nations, it might be more profitable for these countries to think of new approaches to educational problems rather than to copy the old moulds of the developed countries.... The old forms of elementary, secondary and tertiary education, and the traditional dichotomy between the world of work and the world of school require careful critical examination.

One of the obstacles to change in the school system is the sensitivity of African leaders to outside experts telling

them what to do. They look with understandable suspicion on suggestions that what has helped make the West rich is somehow not right for the Third World.

Yet African leaders also are eager to cut loose from their dependency on the West and to return to traditional African values and practices. Nowhere could such feelings be put into more effective action than in the area of education. The "traditional dichotomy between the world of work and the world of school" referred to by Zymelman is traditional only in Western civilization. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, one of the strengths of traditional African education was that it linked learning with the accomplishment of necessary tasks.

As Saim Kinteh, a Gambian educational officer, points out in a 1978 dissertation entitled The Role of Primary Education in Rural Development in The Gambia,⁴⁵ many of the improvements people are calling for in American schools were the strengths of traditional African education. Educators want more community involvement; in the African village the whole community had a role in teaching the young. Parents object to the constraints of the classroom; education went on throughout the village and throughout the day in traditional African society.

African nations cannot go back to their traditional methods of education, but by re-examining these methods and applying them in new ways, these nations may not only improve their school systems but develop innovative educational structures that the West may want to use.

Notes

1. The country's official name is The Gambia. In the colonial period it was called Gambia or the Gambia. For consistency, The Gambia will be used throughout this paper.
2. The author is indebted to Gambian Education Officer S.M.L. Kinteh for the privilege of reading his unpublished dissertation, The Role of Primary Education in Rural Development in The Gambia, from which this analysis of traditional African and Islamic education in the Senegambian region is derived. Mr. Kinteh also first drew the author's attention to the relationship between traditional African teaching methods and modern educational problems.
3. Lord Hailey, An African Survey, Revised 1956 (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p.1135.
4. see E. Jefferson Murphy, History of African Civilization (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1972), p.355.
5. "Copy of Despatch from Gov. MacDonnell to Earl Grey, July 29, 1850," Parliamentary Papers, XXXVI, 271-282, Public Records Office, London.
6. "Report of the Wesleyan Mission Educational Operations in the Gambia," Parliamentary Papers, XXXVI, 283-284, Public Records Office, London.
7. "Notes of the Establishment of the Missionaries of the Holy Ghost and the Sacred Heart of Mary (West Coast of Africa)," Jacques Charpy, Le Fondation de Dakar, 1958, in John D. Hargreaves, ed., France and West Africa (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1969), p.103.
8. The summary of the development of education in Senegal draws largely on the Area Handbook for Senegal, The American University, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974.
9. Colonial Reports, 1920, Public Records Office, London.
10. Colonial Reports, 1921, Public Records Office, London.
11. Colonial Reports, 1924, Public Records Office, London.
12. quoted in Nuffield Foundation and The Colonial Office, African Education; A Study of Educational Policy and Practice in British Tropical Africa (Oxford: University Press, 1953), p.3.
13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., p.5.
15. Primary school leavers is the term used to describe students who discontinued formal education after attending primary school. Similarly, secondary school leavers are students who don't go on to higher education.
16. S.M.L. Kinteh, The Role of Primary Education in Rural Development in The Gambia.
17. Republic of The Gambia, Five Year Plan for Economic and Social Development, 1975/76-1979/80 (Banjul: Government Printing Office, 1975), p.19.
18. Republique du Senegal, Ministere de l'Education Nationale, Direction de la Recherche et de la Planification, Division de la Planification, Le Ministere de l'Education Nationale Bilan et Perspectives, March, 1980. All enrollment figures reflect attendance in public and private schools.
19. Samba Dione, "Middle-level practical education in Senegal," Studies prepared for the Conference of Ministers of Education of African Member States of Unesco (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1976).
20. Personal interview, April 22, 1980, Dakar.
21. Senegal, Ministere de l'Education Nationale, Bilan et Perspectives, p.6.
22. Ibid.
23. Personal visits to EMP centers in Bargny, Nguékókh and Toubakouta, Senegal, made April 23-25, 1980.
24. The Gambia, Five Year Plan, p.134.
25. "Les Examens Commencent ce Matin," Le Soleil, June 23, 1980, p.1.
26. Personal interview, Samba Fall, St. Louis, June 13, 1980.
27. Visit to Kolda, Senegal, June 24-26, 1980.
28. Personal interview, Njagga M. Secka, Georgetown Methodist School, May 25, 1980.
29. Senegal, Ministere de l'Education Nationale, Bilan et Perspectives, p.10; The Gambia, Five Year Plan, p.134, and Education Department, 1979-1980, Annual Report and Statistics (Banjul: Book Production and Material Resources Unit, 1980), p.82.

30. The Gambia, Five Year Plan, p.136.
31. Ibid.
32. Crab Island, Box Bar Road, Banjul; St. George's, Basse.
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34. Ibid., p.10.
35. Personal interview, Moussa Ba, principal, Lycée Faidherbe, St. Louis, June 12, 1980.
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37. The Gambia, Five Year Plan, p.5, 53.
38. The Gambia, Education Department Annual Report 1979-1980, p.118.
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40. Le Soleil, June 9, 1980, p.6.
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42. Personal interview, Banjul, May 1980.
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45. see note 2.