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Writing International Histories from Ordinary Places: Postcolonial Classrooms, Teachers, and Foreign Policy in Ghana, 1957–83

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Abstract

This article examines the effects of foreign teachers on Ghanaian education during the 1960s and 1970s. It calls attention to the ways that foreign policy articulates with the lives of ordinary people in former colonies, an approach I call 'writing international histories from ordinary places.' At the intersection of globalized archival collections and local sources and scholarship, 'ordinary places' offer us new vantage points from which to approach the extraverted histories of the post-colonial world.

Keywords

decolonization, education, Ghana, international history, postcolonial, teachers

In 1968, Fred Agyeman, a veteran Ghanaian educator, published a short guide to help students and their families adjust to secondary school. The first year, he explained, was a shock. 'To many young boys and girls,' he observed, 'it constitutes a mystery

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tour bordering on the "Twilight Zone."' An important reason behind students' new befuddlement was the variety of English inflections they encountered in the classroom:

> [the student] will have to listen carefully to catch and understand the words of his new teachers who may be English, Scots, Irish, Welsh, Canadian, American, German, Russian, Nigerian, Sierra Leonian, South African, Australian or Ghanaians who may speak English with different accents or intonation. For the first time the poor child may be taught by Ghanaians who speak English with affected Oxford or Cambridge University accents, and he will be bewildered.[1]

Historians might be similarly bewildered to discover how thoroughly international secondary schools in Ghana were during the 1960s. After all, schools are assumed to be in the realm of domestic affairs. Yet such a neat distinction could not possibly hold in a former colony, where ostensibly local institutions were built to be imperially oriented. This article travels to postcolonial classrooms to trace one surprising way in which cosmopolitanism marked local schools: the teaching staff. In the context of African independence, and especially in Ghana, seemingly ordinary schools were a key site of international relations.

Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first Prime Minister (1957–60) and President (1960–6) until his ouster in 1966, was an avowed anticolonial pan-Africanist who embraced non-alignment.[2] A former teacher himself, Nkrumah long understood the central role that education played in buttressing colonial rule.[3] When Ghana achieved independence in 1957, he launched a broad attack on the colonial education system, focusing especially on secondary schools. One way to dilute the influence of the British old guard was to invite a slew of new arrivals.

Nkrumah leveraged Ghana's status as the first country in West Africa to gain its independence, and one of only a handful of African countries represented at the Bandung Conference endorsing non-alignment. In the 1960s, Ghana hired teachers from multiple foreign powers who sought influence in the country, and in Africa more broadly. This plural approach to teacher recruitment fluctuated according to Accra's foreign policy, leading Ghana to rely heavily on short-term inexperienced volunteers. Their lack of a stake in the system contributed to a *culture of volunteerism* in Ghanaian teaching, for local staff as well as foreigners. Later, in the 1970s, when Ghana's economy contracted precipitously, thousands of Ghanaian teachers were poached by a rising Nigeria, who was flush with cash to pay for these itinerant educational professionals. As a result of regional and international recruitment, teaching came to be seen as a temporary mobile occupation in postcolonial Ghana. In retrospect, Ghana's cultivation of a short-term, international

1 F. Agyeman, *School and Career (Some Thoughts on Education in Ghana)* (Accra 1968), 43.

2 F. Gerits, '"When the Bull Elephants Fight": Kwame Nkrumah, Non-Alignment, and Pan-Africanism as an Interventionist Ideology in the Global Cold War (1957–66),' *The International History Review*, 37, 5 (2015), 951–69.

3 F. Nwia-Kofi Nkrumah, 'Education and Nationalism in Africa,' *Educational Outlook*, 18, 1 (1943), 32–40.

teaching staff contributed to an educational culture that outlasted Nkrumah and scrambled much more than English pronunciation in Ghanaian classrooms.

Following scholars' initial jubilation, and subsequent disillusion, surrounding Kwame Nkrumah's pan-African nation-building project in Ghana, over the past decade historians have begun to return to the late 1950s and early 1960s as a key moment of political possibility, 'when no course seemed charted.'[4] As they revisit this period, historians tend towards two approaches: an examination of the Nkrumah years as Ghanaians, for the most part, lived them, or an Nkrumah-in-the-world literature that privileges Ghana's remarkable role in international relations in the era of African independence. In the former, Nkrumah hovers, with differing degrees of presence, at the edges of the story. His policies and vision shape the context of people's lives, but he is not the protagonist of these more social histories.[5] In the latter, Nkrumah emerges as a more central figure, the would-be architect of a new global politics. Such work looks anew at the meanings of Nkrumah's pan-Africanist philosophy, Ghana's key role as a 'non-aligned' player in the global Cold War, and its important contributions to Black transnationalism.[6]

This article sits at the intersection of these two approaches. While Nkrumah's foreign policy clout was fundamental for Ghana's ability to engage hundreds of foreign teachers, my focus is mostly on the ways that this new postcolonial internationalism in secondary schools left a lasting imprint on the country's educational culture. Unusual, therefore, among the Nkrumah-era literature, I focus on the consequences of Nkrumah's foreign policy orientation through to the 1980s. In this, I follow recent monographs, such as Abena Dove Osseo-Asare's *Atomic Junction* and Stephan Miescher's *A Dam for Africa*, that trace signature Nkrumah-era initiatives and their effects well beyond 1966.[7]

If, as Osseo-Asare and Miescher show, 'scientific equity' and the Akosombo Dam were marquee nation-building projects, Nkrumah's rapid expansion of schooling, especially at the secondary level, was its bread and butter. As early as 1948, with his donation of £10 to found the first 'Ghana National College' (which later led to the 'Ghana Educational Trust'), Nkrumah made access to secondary school a key part of his

4 J. Allman, 'Kwame Nkrumah, African Studies, and the Politics of Knowledge Production in the Black Star of Africa,' *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 46, 2 (2013), 183.

5 See, for example, J. Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism: Nation, State and Pan-Africanism in Ghana* (Athens, OH 2017); B. Murillo, *Market Encounters: Consumer Cultures in Twentieth-Century Ghana* (Athens, OH 2017); A. Wiemers, *Village Work: Development and Rural Statecraft in Twentieth-Century Ghana* (Athens, OH 2021).

6 K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill, NC 2005); M. Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism: Ghana's Pan-African Foreign Policy in the Age of Decolonization* (Cham, Switzerland 2018); M. Landricina, *Nkrumah and the West: 'The Ghana Experiment' in the British, American, German and Ghanaian Archives* (Zurich 2018); N. Osei-Opare, 'Uneasy Comrades: Postcolonial Statecraft, Race, and Citizenship. Ghana-Soviet Relations, 1957-1966,' *Journal of West African History* 5, 2 (2019), 85–111; A. Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, NJ 2019); Alessandro Iandolo, *Arrested Development: The Soviet Union in Ghana, Guinea, and Mali, 1955–1968* (Ithaca, NY 2022); Frank Gerits, *The Ideological Scramble for Africa: How the Pursuit of Anticolonial Modernity Shaped a Postcolonial Order, 1945–1966* (Ithaca, NY 2023).

7 A.D. Osseo-Asare, *Atomic Junction: Nuclear Power in Africa after Independence* (Cambridge 2019); S.F. Miescher, *A Dam for Africa: Akosombo Stories from Ghana* (Bloomington, IN 2022).

party's political platform.[8] Indeed, in hindsight, Nkrumah's most enduring domestic legacy was probably his insistence that school should be available to everyone.[9] But that project depended, to a large extent, on foreigners staffing Ghanaian schools. This neglected aspect of Ghana's educational history reflects a larger gap in Ghanaian, and African, historiography on education after independence. While the literature on colonial Europhone education in the Gold Coast and elsewhere is rich, little historical attention has been paid to schools and schooling in postcolonial Africa.[10]

Instead, historians have directed their attention to higher education, especially as read through the lenses of decolonization and the Cold War. Recent studies turn to African universities and scholarship programs for African students abroad to illuminate African agency amid superpower competition while also revealing the complex political landscape of elite postcolonial institutions.[11] This work highlights how deeply politicized academic knowledge production, educational assistance and exchange, and cultural diplomacy indeed were in the context of the Cold War. It also decenters American perspectives and actors, which were prominent in the earliest such historiography that had

8 For more on the little-known Ghana National College history of 1948, see The National Archives (UK), Kew Gardens (hereafter, UKNA) FCO 141/5079, secret letter from J. V. Prendergast, Officer with the Gold Coast Police, Special Branch, to the Director of Education, Gold Coast, 12 August 1948 and B. Timothy, *Kwame Nkrumah: His Rise to Power* (London 1955), 88–93.

9 J. Ahlman, *Kwame Nkrumah: Visions of Liberation* (Athens, OH 2021), 122.

10 Two fantastic exceptions to scholars' general inattention to postcolonial education in Ghana concern science education. See J. Zimmerman, ''Money, Materials, and Manpower': Ghanaian In-Service Teacher Education and the Political Economy of Failure, 1961–1971,' *History of Education Quarterly* 51, 1 (2011), 1–27 and A.D. Osseo-Asare, 'Scientific Equity: Experiments in Laboratory Education in Ghana,' *Isis*, 104 (2013), 713–41. Useful overviews of Gold Coast/Ghana Europhone education history include: C.G. Wise, *A History of Education in British West Africa* (London 1956); C.K. Graham, *The History of Education in Ghana: From the Earliest Times to the Declaration of Independence* (London 1971); P. Foster, *Education and Social Change in Ghana* (London 1965); H.O.A. McWilliam and M.A. Kwamena-Poh, *The Development of Education in Ghana: An Outline* (2nd edn, London 1975); .B.S. George, *Education in Ghana* (Washington, DC 1976); M. Antwi, *Education, Society and Development in Ghana* (Accra 1992); H.O. Quist, 'Secondary Education and Nation-Building: A Study of Ghana, 1951–1991,' unpublished PhD thesis, Columbia University (1999). Key works on colonial-era education in the Gold Coast include, S.F. Miescher, *Making Men in Ghana* (Bloomington, IN 2005); C. Coe, *Dilemmas of Culture in African Schools: Youth, Nationalism, and the Transformation of Knowledge* (Chicago, IL 2005); C.A. Boampong, 'Rethinking British Colonial Policy in the Gold Coast: The Language Factor,' *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, new series, 15 (2013), 137–57; S. Yamada, *'Dignity of Labour' for African Leaders: The Formation of Education Policy in the British Colonial Office and Achimota School on the Gold Coast* (Bamenda, Cameroon 2018). For excellent studies of colonial education elsewhere in Africa, see C. Summers, *Colonial Lessons: Africans' Education in Southern Rhodesia, 1918–1940* (Portsmouth, NH 2002) and K.D. Bryant, *Education as Politics: Colonial Schooling and Political Debate in Senegal, 1850s–1914* (Madison, WI 2015). For a continental perspective, consult P. Kallaway and R. Schultz eds, *Empire and Education in Africa: The Shaping of a Comparative Perspective* (New York, NY 2016).

11 J. Allman, 'Kwame Nkrumah'; T. Livsey, *Nigeria's University Age: Reframing Decolonisation and Development* (London 2017); T. Smirnova and O. Rillon, 'Quand des Maliennes regardaient vers l'URSS (1961-1991) Enjeux d'une coopération éducative au féminin,' *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 226 (2017), 331–54; C. Katsakioris, 'Students from Portuguese Africa in the Soviet Union, 1960–74: Anti-colonialism, Education, and the Socialist Alliance,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 56, 1 (2021), 142–65; A. Tarradellas, '"A glorious future" for Africa: development, higher education and the making of African elites in the United States (1961–1971),' *Paedagogica Historica* 57, 3 (2021), 277–93; P. Monaville, *Students of the World: Global 1968 and Decolonization in the Congo* (Durham, NC 2022).

intervened to place the history of education in the realm of foreign policy.[12] Yet the overlap between the history of education and that of international relations need not stop at the ledge of highly restricted university study.[13] Nor do the global circulations that characterize African schooling conclude along with colonial rule, which historians have long recognized as a transnational, trans-imperial endeavor.[14] By examining the cosmopolitan nature of secondary schools following Ghanaian independence, this article highlights the porous relationship between seemingly 'domestic' and 'foreign' policy in former colonies.

I employ two concepts to elucidate this porosity. The first, originally proposed by Jean-François Bayart, is that of extraversion.[15] Bayart uses the term to refer to a long-standing pattern in African history wherein politically powerful actors mobilize their access to external resources to maintain power and attract dependents. Frederick Cooper and Lisa Lindsay have both revisited and refined Bayart's insight to analyze both the postcolonial 'gatekeeper state' and the relationship of extraversion and creolization in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.[16] I use 'extraverted' here to describe the ways in which education in Africa was externally oriented, though not necessarily in corrosive ways. Educational extraversion can be understood as the antithesis of Africanization, but it is more than 'dependency' or 'neo-colonialism.' That Nkrumah, for example, emphasized English as a language of instruction in schools after Primary 3 was, admittedly, partly due to colonial heritage, but it was also a deeply considered foreign policy tool, allowing Ghana to draw on a vast pool of potential teachers from the Anglophone world. As Lindsay argues, extraversion could both produce and perpetuate external dependency while also serving as an arena of powerful agency.

Extraversion, as I use it, is central to any history of Europhone education in Africa (and elsewhere), of which this article is an example. It is common for historians to write about Europhone education, which refers to European-patterned schools, curriculum, examinations, and languages of instruction, as if Europhone schooling were the only educational tradition in Africa. Explicitly labelling such education 'Europhone'

12 E. Cobbs Hoffman, *All You Need Is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA 2000); P. Kramer, 'Is the World Our Campus? International Students and US Global Power in the Long Twentieth Century,' *Diplomatic History* 33, 5 (2009), 775–806.

13 For example, in a recent edited volume devoted partly to postcolonial Africa, the only contributions that deal with post-independence years focus on higher education. D. Matasci, M. Bandeira Jerónimo, and H. Gonçalves Dores (eds.), *Education and Development in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa: Policies, Paradigms, and Entanglements, 1890s–1980s* (Cham, Switzerland 2020), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-27801-4 (accessed 30 September 2022).

14 N. Blyden, *West Indians in West Africa, 1808-1880: The African Diaspora in Reverse* (Rochester, NY 2000); M. Seghers, 'Phelps-Stokes in Congo: Transferring Educational Policy Discourse to Govern Metropole and Colony,' *Paedagogica Historica* 40, 4 (2004), 455–77; P. Kallaway, 'Education, health and social welfare in the late colonial context: the International Missionary Council and educational transition in the interwar years with specific reference to colonial Africa,' *History of Education*, 38, 2 (2009), 217–46; A. Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton, NJ 2010).

15 J.-F. Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (2nd edn, Cambridge 2009 [1993; Fr. 1989]); J.-F. Bayart, 'Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion,' *African Affairs*, 99, 395 (2000), 217–67.

16 F. Cooper, *Africa since 1940: the Past of the Present* (Cambridge 2002); L.A. Lindsay, 'Extraversion, Creolization, and Dependency in the Atlantic Slave Trade,' *Journal of African History,* 55, 2 (2014), 135–45.

draws attention to that hegemonic assumption. I borrow the term from Kwame Anthony Appiah and Ousmane Kane, who highlight the problematic conflation of 'Western' or 'colonial' knowledge/education and knowledge/education full stop.[17] Further, underscoring education as 'Europhone' emphasizes its extraversion, although in this it is not alone. (Much of the contemporary Islamic educational scene in West Africa is similarly extraverted towards North Africa and the Middle East, in its funding, origins and missions.[18]) Here, however, our focus is on the recruitment of teachers for Europhone schools, a surprising implication of extraversion in postcolonial Africa.

One of the difficulties facing historians of postcolonial Africa is the unevenness, and sometimes fragmentation, of the archive.[19] While such challenges should not dissuade scholars from exploring African archives, as Nana Osei-Opare argues, recourse to transnational source bases can help historians craft fuller narratives.[20] My experience studying a supposedly local history—that of secondary education—has convinced me that local and national archives rarely suffice to trace the globalized dynamics that shaped the postcolony. This is especially true for the international staffing of Ghanaian secondary schools. Accordingly, collections consulted for this research include the national archives in Ghana, but also repositories in England, France, and the United States. Surely, records elsewhere, including in southern Africa and Russia, would yield even more insights.[21]

Globalized historical research, however, must be mindful that dynamics play out locally. Methods of global history have accomplished a great deal in revealing the circulations that knit our worlds together, but in doing so, some historians worry that these methods sacrifice a sense of place for the ether of connection.[22] Global microhistory, as presented recently by John-Paul A. Ghobrial, is one way forward. This article, which crosses globalized archival research and sources rooted in a sense of place, offers another. In what follows, Euro-American repositories work in tandem with Ghanaian collections, oral histories with Ghanaian former educators, memoirs penned by Ghanaian and foreign teachers, and the scholarship of Ghana-based academics like

17 K.A. Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (Oxford 1992), 4; O.O. Kane, *Au-delà de Tombouctou: Érudition islamique et histoire intellectuelle en Afrique Occidentale* (Dakar 2017), 8.
18 L. Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power, and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society* (Bloomington, IN 2000); R.T. Ware III, *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa* (Chapel Hill, NC 2014); D. Owusu-Ansah, A. Iddrisu and M. Sey, *Islamic Learning, the State and the Challenges of Education in Ghana* (Trenton, NJ 2013).
19 J. Allman, 'Phantoms of the Archive: Kwame Nkrumah, a Nazi Pilot Named Hanna, and the Contingencies of Postcolonial History-Writing,' *The American Historical Review*, 118, 1 (2013), 104–29; L. White and G. Mann, eds., 'Writing the History of Africa after 1960,' special issue, *History in Africa*, 42 (2015), 265–318.
20 N. Osei-Opare, '"If you trouble a hungry snake, you will force it to bite you": Rethinking Postcolonial African Archival Pessimism, Worker Discontent, and Petition Writing in Ghana, 1957–66,' *Journal of African History*, 62, 1 (2021), 59–78. For marvellous examples of such scholarship, see J.J. Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (Oxford 2016) and Monaville, *Students of the World.*
21 Rachel Applebaum has made a promising start in this direction. See, R. Applebaum, 'Educators for Export: Soviet teachers in Africa and Asia during the Cold War,' *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 63, 3–4 (2022), 577–98.
22 See J.-P.A. Ghobrial's masterful discussion, especially 4–10. J.-P.A. Ghobrial, 'Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian,' *Past & Present*, 242, Issue Supplement_14 (2019), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtz046 (accessed 30 September 2022).

Moses Antwi and Ivan Addae-Mensah. Globalized archives and localized research reinforce each other to better capture the complexities of postcolonial extraversion.

By examining local institutions like secondary school classrooms that operate far from the diplomatic summit or the international conference, we can shed new light on the ways that foreign policy articulates with the lives of ordinary people in former colonies. Such an approach also allows historians to trace what David Engerman calls the 'price of aid,' that is, the long-term effects of diplomacy that persist after the policy pronouncements have been forgotten.[23] Seemingly ordinary places like classrooms provide powerful sites to help us bridge the gap between 'international' and 'local' histories of postcolonial Africa.

'[I]n Ghana as in most African states,' observed A.J. Duwuona-Hammond, the Ghanaian Minister of Education and Social Welfare in 1961, '[t]he most important limiting factor [on the expansion of the education system] … is teaching staff.'[24] He was speaking at the UNESCO-sponsored conference on African educational development held in 1961 in Addis Ababa. The final communiqué of that conference, which was unanimously adopted by the education ministers of 37 African states or territories, held that economic growth depended on the expansion of schooling, especially at the secondary level.[25] Ghana's government shared the conference's understanding of secondary education as pivotal for national development. Nkrumah himself expressed this view frequently, explaining in 1960 that secondary schools 'have an important contribution to make in ensuring that the economic industrial and technological development of the country proceeds at the highest possible rate.'[26] Yet a 1960 manpower report, which estimated that Ghana's expanding secondary schools would need at least 1800 more teachers over the next decade, flatly stated that '[t]his number is not now in sight from Ghanaian sources.'[27] Without teachers to staff secondary school classrooms, development was a stalled agenda. The dilemma was urgent: how, and from where, would Ghana get her teachers?

The nature of colonial rule made the problem of teacher recruitment for secondary schools an acute one. British education policy, calibrated to maintain authority over colonial subjects, restricted Africans' access to Europhone schooling, particularly at the post-primary level. As an indication, in 1951, the year that the Gold Coast achieved 'Internal Self Governance,' a paltry thirteen secondary schools, enrolling about 2900 students, were in operation—and the Gold Coast was better off than most. Immediately upon

23 D.C. Engerman, *The Price of Aid: The Economic Cold War in India* (Cambridge, MA 2018).

24 Richard Greenough, *Africa Calls … Development of education, the Needs and Problems* (Paris 1961), 25.

25 UNESCO, *Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa, Addis Ababa, 15–25 May 1961: Final Report* (Paris 1961), 10.

26 K. Nkrumah, 'Visit to Sunyani – Sunyani, 13 December 1960,' in S. Obeng (comp.) *Selected Speeches of Kwame Nkrumah vol. 1* (2nd edn, Accra 1997), 242. Left unsaid in that speech, was Nkrumah's lament that Ghana's present lack of expertise in 'technical knowledge' (a consequence of colonial rule) resulted in high costs for the state: '[i]n order to secure even the minimum of well-qualified technicians [from abroad] we are having to offer terms of service which make development for us disproportionately costly.' K. Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite* (New York, NY 1963), 98.

27 Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, NY, Report 000589, Edward D. Hollander, 'Survey of High Level Manpower in Ghana,' August 1960, 7.

taking power, Nkrumah and his Convention People's Party (CPP) launched an assault on the miserly colonial education system. By 1957, the year of independence, secondary school students had more than tripled to about 10,000. Concurrently, Nkrumah's government had instituted the Accelerated Educational Development Plan, which increased the number of primary and middle school students (the potential pool for secondary school enrolment), from 220,000 in 1951 to 570,000 in 1957.[28] However, all this expansion resulted in its own policy headaches. By the end of the 1950s, Nkrumah's expansionary program created a large cohort of primary school students for whom there were no places at the secondary level, aggravating political and economic pressures to address the shortfall of secondary schools.

Secondary education's notable lag was due to its different staffing requirements. The rapid expansion of primary schooling was possible because of 'emergency' teacher training schemes that quickly converted primary school graduates into primary school instructors.[29] Such approaches could not be adapted to the secondary level due to the rarity of secondary graduates. Furthermore, secondary level instruction required subject-specific knowledge and at least two years of additional training that teachers without postprimary education did not possess. Producing them was more time- and cost-intensive than their primary school counterparts. In a vicious cycle, then, Ghana's relative lack of secondary school graduates cruelly limited the possibility of producing them. Despite the Ghana government's determination to break with the colonial past, deliberate failures of British policy perpetuated the bottlenecks of colonial education into the postcolonial era.

If the logic of colonial rule had limited the number of secondary school graduates in Ghana, the logic of independence created tremendous incentives for these same students to look beyond teaching. The elite few in possession of postprimary credentials were highly sought after as the government promoted the indigenization of the public and private sectors. Many hundreds more were whisked off to university, either locally or through scholarships offered abroad. Once overseas, students who were sponsored to study specific courses often changed their specializations, prolonged their stays, and sought to acquire further education. If they returned, rarely did they return to classrooms: between 1956 and 1960, Ghana lost over 4000 certified teachers, three-quarters of whom left for another profession.[30] With positions in government freeing up, parastatal entities booming, the economy in full expansion, and offers for further study aplenty, secondary teaching struggled to attract qualified Ghanaian staff.

As, it should be noted, it did almost everywhere. The teacher shortage was not limited to Ghana or to Africa; Europe and America confronted the challenge as well. In the rapidly expanding global economy of the 1950s and early 1960s, people with higher education tended to seek more lucrative employment than teaching in government-run secondary schools. The staffing crisis of Ghanaian schools was therefore occurring amidst both a local and a global dearth of educators. Given the overriding imperative to

28 B.S. George, *Education in Ghana* (Washington, DC 1976), Table 11, 202.
29 E.D. Roberts, 'Emergency teacher training in the Gold Coast,' *Oversea Education* 28, 2 (1956), 75–84.
30 K. Nkrumah, 'The Noble Task of Teaching – Parliament House, Accra, 6 December 1960,' in S. Obeng, *Selected Speeches*, 218.

'develop' and the centrality of secondary education to that enterprise, the procurement of secondary school teachers quickly became a pressing question of foreign policy. Caught between the highly localized primary school and the internationalized university, secondary schools expose the postcolonial challenge of creating a national education system while depending heavily on non-nationals.

Upon arriving at her post at the beginning of the 1964 school year, a Peace Corps volunteer teacher in Ghana was stunned to discover the diverse origins of her colleagues. On staff at her secondary school were three Ghanaians, three Americans (herself included), a non-Ghanaian African, a West Indian, a Brit, a Canadian, and a Russian.[31] The international circulations of secondary school teachers in Ghana that so surprised this young American was in fact a return to the deeper history of Europhone education in the Gold Coast, while also being a reflection of the bright new politics of Nkrumah's 'Black Star.'

The territories that in 1957 would become Ghana had, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, been deeply enmeshed in the transatlantic trade in people. Multiple European powers—the English evidently, but also the Iberians, Dutch, Danes, French, and Germans—set up factories along the Gold Coast littoral to traffic in enslaved people. The first Europhone schooling in West Africa is indissociable from this history, for European traders trained Africans, many of whom were mixed race, in accounting and Europhone literacy skills to facilitate commercial bookkeeping. Up through the mid-eighteenth century, Europhone education in West Africa was, as one historian put it, 'a subsidiary function of the Merchant Companies.'[32]

That began to change in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With the spread of religious revivalism in the Anglo-Atlantic, and the related rise of abolitionism and processes of emancipation, these commercially oriented 'schools' were supplanted by missions, whose focus on evangelization required more pedagogical initiative. Emancipated Africans from the Americas were key agents in demanding and expanding Europhone educational opportunities in West Africa. For example, in the early nineteenth century, Africans 'resettled' in Sierra Leone from Nova Scotia joined efforts with other transplants to pressure the English Church Missionary Society to increase its educational efforts in Sierra Leone. Similarly, in the 1840s, 24 West Indians from Jamaica's Moravian congregation permitted the Basel mission to gain a foothold in the Gold Coast.[33] More European missions followed. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Wesleyan and Basel missions had been joined by Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Bremen educators; in 1901, the Gold Coast government recognized 120 mission schools and 7 of its own schools.[34]

In the early twentieth century, as the British eventually succeeded in excluding other European actors from their new Gold Coast 'colony,' they nevertheless collaborated

31 M. Rugh, *Report from Molly: A Peace Corps Volunteer in Ghana, West Africa* (Beirut 1964), 27.
32 C.K. Graham, *The History of Education in Ghana*, 9.
33 For Sierra Leone, see D.J. Paracka, Jr., *The Athens of West Africa: A History of International Education at Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone* (New York, NY 2003). For the Basel Mission, see C.C. Reindorf, *The History of The Gold Coast and Asante, Based on Traditions and Historical Facts, Comprising a Period of More than Three Centuries from About 1500 to 1860*, (2nd edn, Accra 2007 [1895]), 221–4.
34 Wise, *A History of Education in British West Africa*, 49.

actively with Americans in educational matters. In 1902, Gold Coast Governor John Rodger visited the American south to see what he could glean for West Africa. Rodger was enthusiastic; upon his return to the Gold Coast, he 'made manual training compulsory in the schools under his jurisdiction.'[35] British-American collaboration culminated with the notorious Phelps-Stokes report of 1922, in which a panel of experts—British, American, and one Gold Coast African, James Kwegyir Aggrey—concluded that 'adapted education' would best serve Gold Coasters.[36]

Importantly, the cosmopolitanism of the Gold Coast's educational scene ranged beyond well-known Euro-American actors, like the aforementioned missionaries and the Phelps-Stokes Commission. Often overlooked, the West Indian and African American African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) church managed an important network of schools in the Gold Coast. AMEZ schools, like many missions, relied on local teachers, but the foreign mission's presence created possibilities for international educational networks to take hold. For instance, it was Barbados-born AMEZ Bishop John Bryan Small, who visited the Gold Coast on mission in 1897, that facilitated James Kwegyir Aggrey's studies at AMEZ's Livingstone College in North Carolina.[37] Likewise, the Ahmaddiya movement, an Islamic revivalist community founded in India in the late nineteenth century, opened several English-language schools in the Gold Coast in the 1910s.[38]

An important consequence of the Gold Coast's schooling extraversion was the extra-imperial networks that tied West Africans to the larger African diaspora. Nkrumah's personal history is instructive here, for his promotion of a plural recruitment policy for secondary school teachers was in part due to his own experience as a student outside of the British fold. At Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, and subsequently at the University of Pennsylvania, Nkrumah experienced an education system that differed from what he would have been exposed to previously, at British-modelled Achimota. Like his fellow anticolonial nationalist, the Nigerian Nnamdi Azikiwe, Nkrumah's travels outside the standard circuits of colonial higher education broadened his horizons beyond British models.

This deeper past of the Gold Coast, which was embedded in the circulations of the Atlantic world, shows that having a diverse foreign teacher corps in the territory was

35 E.H. Berman, 'Tuskegee-in-Africa,' *The Journal of Negro Education,* 41, 2 (1972), 99. See also Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa*.

36 African Education Committee, *Education in Africa: A Study of West, South, and Equatorial Africa by the African Education Commission, under the Auspices of the Phelps-Stokes Fund and Foreign Mission Societies of North America and Europe; Report Prepared by Thomas Jesse Jones, Chairman of the Commission* (New York, NY 1922). On the further triangulation of British, American, and African influences in Gold Coast educational culture see Yamada, *'Dignity of Labour' for African Leaders.*

37 D.H. Bradley, *A History of the A.M.E. Zion Church, Part II: 1872–1968* (Eugene, OR 1970), 241–4. The connections between the AMEZ church in the Americas and Africa is a topic that merits further research. Useful starting points include, L.L. Berry, *A century of missions of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 1840-1940* (New York, NY 1942) especially chapters V and VIII; F.K. Ofosu, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Public Education in Ghana* (Shippensburg, PA 1996); D.C. Dickerson, *The African Methodist Episcopal Church: A History* (Cambridge 2020).

38 J.H. Hanson, *The Ahmadiyya in the Gold Coast: Muslim Cosmopolitans in the British Empire* (Bloomington, IN 2017).

not a postcolonial innovation. Indeed, the historic presence of multiple players in Gold Coast education, and Nkrumah's own American sojourn, set a precedent for expanding Ghana's foreign teaching pool beyond the former metropole. However, recognizing this continuity should not elide what was new. When Nkrumah turned to a resolutely non-aligned and international staffing strategy, he was also boldly breaking with the colonial past.

Unlike the British, who left such matters up to the missions, under Nkrumah the post-colonial state brokered and managed partnerships with foreign suppliers of teachers. While the British had exerted some control over mission schools by making state funds (grants-in-aid) contingent upon certain requirements, the colonial period missions were by and large independent entities who selected their own personnel. The different role assumed by the state after independence is important because it underscores the new rationale for which foreign teachers were being employed. The goal of postcolonial educational policy was no longer proselytization or the creation of a small managerial elite, but the rapid modernization of Ghana by Ghanaians—an outcome that depended on expanding secondary schooling access as quickly as possible.

The distribution of funds of the government's *Second Development Plan 1959–64* and the *Seven Year Plan for National Reconstruction and Development 1963/64–1969/70* underscores the importance of secondary education in Ghana's development vision. The former earmarked 51.7 per cent of the central government's *total* spending on education for the secondary level, while the latter allocated 47.6 per cent. (These sums represent between two to three times the amounts allocated to higher education.) As a result, secondary enrollments more than tripled in five years, rising from about 11,000 in 1959 to 42,000 in 1965–6.[39] Such figures were inconceivable in the colonial period, and probably impossible without the importation of diverse foreign teachers. It is therefore the speed, scale, and level of educational expansion under the aegis of the state distinguishes the postcolonial internationalism that Nkrumah cultivated in Ghanaian classrooms from the missionary circuits discussed above. Foreign teachers were imported to accelerate Ghanaian modernization beyond the constraints of colonial legacies, not within their confines.

Ghana's reputation at independence made possible its ambitious teacher recruitment strategy. In addition to Nkrumah's celebrity, Ghana enjoyed the significant first-mover advantage of being sub-Saharan Africa's first independent nation. In a reflection of Ghana's popularity, in 1962 Accra hosted 44 foreign legations (twice that of any other African capital, excepting Cairo).[40] Its global prominence attracted foreign governments who were eager to show their commitment to—and gain a foothold in—the African modernity that Ghana so compelling symbolized in its early independence years.

Being Anglophone helped. Ghana could look beyond its former metropole to the broad base of Commonwealth countries and the United States to recruit teachers,

39 For expenditure figures, see George, *Education in Ghana*, 44–6. For student enrollment numbers, see George, *Education in Ghana*, 50.

40 Z. Levey, 'Israel's Strategy in Africa, 1961–67,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 36, 1 (2004), 74.

while its Anglophone African peers trailed by a few years in acquiring formal independence. In line with its foreign policy orientation more generally, Ghana sought to diversify its predominantly British instructors by drawing on multiple sources. To that end, Ghana changed its schooling calendar. Previously, the school year had begun in January and ended at Christmas, with holidays spaced to accommodate the rainy season. But this rhythm did not accord well with the school year as it was timed in Western nations, with their autumn start and summer holidays. A school year that got underway in January forced foreign teachers to interrupt their work mid-year, or to remain unemployed for six months as they awaited departure. So, in 1960, Ghanaian students crammed in a hurried January to June school year, only to begin a new one in August.[41] Its calendar now aligned, Ghana was ready to begin foreign teacher recruitment in earnest.

Both Ghana's attempt to diversify its teaching sources and the foreign policy clout it wielded are evident in its prominent relationship with the United States' Peace Corps program. In April 1961, Ghana requested 270 math and science teachers from the US. In August, a plane bearing seventy American volunteers, one quarter of the number requested, touched down in Accra.[42] Two years later, 108 Peace Corps teachers were working in Ghana.[43] By 1969, their numbers had doubled to 214.[44] Over time, the presence of Peace Corps teachers in Ghanaian schools would prove significant: between 1961 and 1991, roughly 5 per cent of all Ghanaians had a Peace Corps teacher.[45]

Peace Corps teachers worked side-by-side with other foreign volunteers in Ghanaian schools during the 1960s and 1970s. They were preceded by British volunteers (Volunteer Service Overseas, or VSOs), who first arrived in 1958. In 1961, Canadian volunteers (Canadian University Service Overseas, or CUSOs) joined their American counterparts. Over the course of the 1960s the 'Commonwealth' volunteer teachers increased, so that in 1968, 123 CUSOs and 96 VSOs were serving in Ghana. In that year, fully one-third of public secondary school teachers in Ghana were expatriates.[46]

Whether volunteers or on contract in Ghana, the major advantage of foreign teachers was their willingness to staff the posts in rural Ghana that local teachers avoided.[47] The headmaster of a school in southwestern Ghana lamented the fact that 'this school is so far removed from the main centers that African graduates are not willing to come here.'[48] For schools in remote areas, the lack of European-style accommodation to

41 Phone interview with a former teacher who wishes to remain anonymous, 4 August 2016, Accra. See also, George, *Education in Ghana*, 51n1.

42 Centre d'Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes (hereafter, CADN) 7PO/1/29, letter from the French Ambassador to Ghana to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 'Enseignants américains au Ghana,' 21 July 1961.

43 Cobbs Hoffman, *All you need is love*, 162.

44 J.W. Hanson, *Report on the Supply of Secondary Level Teachers in English-Speaking Africa, vol. 12, Secondary Level Teachers: Supply and Demand in Ghana* (East Lansing, MI 1974), 86.

45 Cobbs Hoffman, *All you need is love*, 179–80.

46 George, *Education in Ghana*, 148.

47 Hanson, *Secondary Level Teachers*, 71–2. See also the interview with K.B. Asante, by Elizabeth Cobbs, 19 January 1995, Accra. I am grateful to Elizabeth Cobbs for sharing her interviews with me.

48 Public Records Administration and Archive Department, Accra (hereafter, PRAAD) RG 3/1/410, response of the Headmaster of Half-Assini Secondary School to a Ministry of Education Inquiry, 'Teaching of Foreign Languages in Ghana,' 27 October 1961, 73.

house expatriates was an urgent matter of survival; without such accommodation, they couldn't recruit suitable staff.[49] In the north of the country, the problem was even more acute. At Navrongo Secondary School (near the Burkina Faso border), the teachers in 1964 were 'nearly all expatriates, [with] three Americans, and about seven English people.'[50] Still unable to attract Ghanaian teachers, in the mid-1960s Navrongo made do with 'two dozen teachers, mostly from Britain and North America.'[51] A high-level 1963 report, the Committee of Pre-University Education, bluntly admitted Ghana's staffing difficulties: 'the teaching profession fails to attract highly qualified Ghanaians, and those who enter it sooner or later desert for more lucrative jobs.' As a 'temporary measure,' it concluded, the 'country must look elsewhere for teachers.'[52]

Ghana's prowess at attracting foreign aid from plural sources for its educational development—evident in both the foreign teachers in service in Ghanaian secondary schools and in the number of Ghanaian graduates of these schools studying abroad—was a function of its foreign policy orientation. In 1961, true to his stated non-alignment in the Cold War schism, Nkrumah had both been welcomed as US President John Kennedy's first visiting head of state at the White House *and* vacationed at the Crimean dacha of Nikita Khrushchev, the leader of the USSR.[53] Indeed, the committee that authored the report mentioned above included, on ministerial orders, a Soviet representative and an American representative.[54] However, as Nkrumah increasingly warmed to the Soviets, his enthusiasm for Peace Corps teachers in Ghanaian classrooms cooled.[55] Nkrumah soon directed the Ministry of Education to turn elsewhere for teachers.

Ghanaian officials first attempted to increase teachers from Commonwealth countries. In addition to seeking more CUSO and VSO volunteers, Ghana mounted a Commonwealth-oriented recruitment drive. The initiative yielded unexpected results. Rather than encouraging more British, Canadian, and Australian candidates, the favorable teaching contracts appeared to be attracting 'a large influx' of South Asian applicants.[56] As Table 1 demonstrates, in the 1963–4 school year, the 40 per cent of foreign-born secondary school teachers working in Ghana came from a variety of backgrounds.

To further reduce Ghana's reliance on American teachers, Nkrumah turned to Soviet sources. In May 1963, Ghana decided to limit the number of Peace Corps volunteers teaching in Ghana to only math and science graduates, its most critical shortage.

49 PRAAD RG 3/1/410, response of the Headmaster of West Africa Secondary School to a Ministry of Education Inquiry, 'Teaching of Foreign Languages in Ghana,' 13 October 1961, 51.
50 Rugh, *Report from Molly*, 84.
51 UKNA OD 8/534, Navrongo Secondary School, 'Notes for Prospective Teachers,' April 1967.
52 PRAAD RG 11/1/30, *Report of the Committee of Pre-University Education*, May–June 1963 (The Amissah Committee), 30.
53 P.E. Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans: John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders* (New York, NY 2012), 79 and 82.
54 PRAAD RG 11/1/30, Cabinet Memorandum by the Minister of Education, 'Committee to Review the Educational System in Ghana,' May 1963, para 4, p2.
55 For more on Nkrumah's relationship with the Soviet Union, see Iandolo, *Arrested Development*, 97–105.
56 PRAAD RG 11/1/379, letter from E.C. Quist-Therson to E.K. Okoh, 'Appointment in the Law Faculty – Legon – Professor R.B. Seidman,' 21 October 1965, 3.

Table 1. Ghana Public Secondary School Teachers by Origin (1963–4).

Origin	Number of teachers	Per cent of total teachers
Ghana	911	59.5
Other African Countries	39	2.5
India	45	2.9
Other Asian Countries	21	1.4
United Kingdom and Ireland	256	16.7
USSR	14	0.9
Other European Countries	15	1.0
United States	163	10.7
Canada	52	3.4
Other American, West Indies, and Australia	13	0.8
Not Stated	1	0.0
Total	*1530*	*100*

Source: Government of Ghana, *Educational Statistics 1963–4: Secondary Schools, Teacher Training Colleges, Commercial/Technical Institutes* (Accra 1968), 70.

Alarmed, the Minister of Education drafted a memo to the Cabinet pointing out that withdrawing Peace Corps teachers would create a 'serious vacuum … which if not forestalled will result in a complete arrest of progress in the field of secondary education.'[57] One week later, Nkrumah directed the Minister to arrange the recruitment of Soviet science and math teachers with the Russian ambassador.[58] The first batch of 'Iron Curtain' teachers—15 of them—arrived in 1963. The following year, their numbers increased to 98.

The brief sojourn of these Eastern European teachers in Ghana exposes the bind that teacher-strapped governments in Africa faced. On the one hand, their presence was vital: in 1963, the government had reported two hundred vacancies for secondary-level math and science teachers.[59] In many schools, the Soviet-bloc arrivals constituted the entire staff of the math and science departments.[60] Yet their English left so much to be desired that even the French ambassador to Ghana got wind of student complaints.[61] In early 1966, when Nkrumah's regime was toppled by a military coup, the new government moved quickly to expel the 'Iron Curtain' teachers. Summarily repatriated in early 1966, 'their departure has caused havoc.' A British Government-commissioned report on Ghanaian education noted that:

57 PRAAD RG 11/1/324, letter from the Secretary to the Cabinet to the Secretary to the Minister of Education, 'Provision of teachers for elementary and secondary schools,' 8 May 1963, 63.

58 PRAAD RG 11/1/324, 'Extract from the minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet,' 14 May 1963, 66.

59 PRAAD RG 11/1/30, J. Yanney-Wilson, 'Report submitted to the Chairman of the National Council of Higher Education regarding the supply of science graduates required to meet the needs of Ghana's Seven Year Development Plan,' 14 June 1963, 4.

60 UKNA CO 1045/1465, N.B.J. Huijsman, 'Confidential: Educational Recruitment Ghana – Report on a Visit 12th–17th May, 1966,' 23 May 1966, para. 20.

61 CADN 7PO/1/28, letter from the French Ambassador to Ghana to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 'Peace Corps,' 12 February 1964, 2. *The Ghanaian Times*, 'U.S. Peace Corps Man Sees Osagyefo,' 25 April 1961 (Figure 1).


TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 1961

The GHANAIAN TIMES

U.S. PEACE CORPS MAN SEES OSAGYEFO

MR. R. S. Shriver (left), Director of the United States Peace Corps, pictured with the Osagyefo when he paid a courtesy call on him at Flagstaff House, Accra, yesterday. With the two men is Mr. F. Russell, American Ambassador.

Figure 1. US Peace Corps Man Sees Osagyefo, 1961.

In Accra Girls High School, for example, science teaching was in the hands of three Russians. One ex-VSO, untrained, now teaches biology, and one part-time teacher teaches chemistry. There is no one to teach physics. All the headmasters, with whom I discussed this problem were full of praise of the Russians' dedication, but it seems that in many cases dedication was not enough to give them a comprehensible English intonation.

> However that may be, the state of science teaching in Ghana is to-day chaotic, and in mathematics the position is hardly better.[62]

Like the numerous Anglophone inflections to which they were exposed, Ghanaian students were also subjected to the differing educational backgrounds and expectations of their teachers. Although testament to Ghana's relative popularity, the diversity and relative inexperience of Ghana's secondary school teaching corps produced its own unintended effects.

Ghana's embrace of plural sources of short-term teachers resulted in a volunteerization of the teaching force, initially expatriate and then Ghanaian, during the 1960s and 1970s. The government was ambivalent about volunteer teachers' role. On the one hand, the cost of volunteers was lower than the cost of trained expatriate teachers (but not trained Ghanaian teachers). As Ghana's economic situation deteriorated throughout the 1960s, the financial benefit of volunteers outweighed other considerations. Their very presence allowed the government to respond to strong demand for secondary education despite overall financial stringency. On the other hand, however, a strictly financial calculation missed a full accounting of their cost.

Foreigners differed in their backgrounds and preparation for the job. North American volunteers caused particular concern due to their perceived lack of subject mastery. In 1960, the director of a program to prepare American volunteers for teaching in Africa cautioned against sending candidates who possessed only a bachelor's degree: '[s]ince preparation for subject-matter examinations is a compelling consideration for African students, American teachers who strike them as relatively weak in subject-matter will … suffer severe handicaps.…'[63] This observation, made at the dawn of the Peace Corps era, proved unnervingly accurate. A quarter century later, in an interview with a Ghanaian headmistress about American volunteer teachers, Mrs. Ampomah underhandedly assessed their quality by observing that 'the standard of education is pretty high here [in Ghana] as compared to that of America.'[64] Like the Americans, Canadians, too, fell short of Ghanaian needs. A survey of 35 Ghanaian schools employing CUSO volunteers unanimously urged 'that a more critical view be taken of the selection and academic standard of the applicants.'[65]

Beyond academic preparedness, the real difficulty with short-term, foreign teachers was the time needed to adjust to their new roles. A report for the Fourth Commonwealth Education Conference of 1968 prepared by the Ghanaian government lamented how long it took for foreigners to get 'acclimatized … to local conditions … and the curricula.'[66] In the survey cited above, headmasters pointed out that teachers'

62 UKNA CO 1045/1465, N.B.J. Huijsman, 'Confidential: Educational Recruitment Ghana,' para. 20.
63 Institute of Education, London COL/19/5, Karl W. Bigelow, 'Criteria for the Selection of American Teachers for Service in Africa,' 29 November 1960, 1.
64 Undated interview (likely early-1980s) with Mrs. Ampomah, Headmistress of Holy Child School, by Yvonne M. Young. Y.M. Young, 'Effect of expatriate volunteer teachers on secondary education in Ghana,' unpublished EdD thesis, Teacher's College, Columbia University (2000), 112.
65 M.K. Antwi, 'Canadian University Service Overseas: An Evaluation of the Voluntary Programme in Ghana,' unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University (1969), 114.
66 Quoted in Antwi, 'Canadian University Service Overseas,' 104.

lack of familiarity with the country resulted in poor class discipline, mistakes regarding local examinations, and general difficulty in understanding their students.[67] One headmaster's response stated plainly the shortcomings of foreign staff:

> it takes time for any expatriate teacher to understand the attitudes and shortcomings of Ghanaian children. Whilst doing this, the children get the upper hand. This does not happen in the case of Ghanaian teachers.[68]

It is no wonder that students like Cynthia Amoo openly 'respected the teaching of the Ghanaian teachers more.'[69] Yet, during the 1960s, these volunteer teachers composed between one and two-fifths of the Ghanaian teaching corps.

Meanwhile, the Ghana government discouraged senior expatriate teachers who had served from the 1940s onwards from staying on in Ghana. Older teachers, with both a stake in the system and highly developed ideas of what (colonial) education was supposed to be, posed a threat to Ghana's postcolonial vision. In 1963, a group of senior teachers, whose salaries had essentially been frozen a decade prior, wrote multiple times to the Ghana government, entreating it to recognize the pensionable component of their salary or to provide comparable compensation so that they could afford to remain in the country. Despite their collective 'thirty-nine years' of teaching in the country, their requests were summarily denied.[70] Forced attrition persisted throughout the 1960s. The 'corps of experienced teachers has been steadily eroded over the past few years,' observed a British report, and '[t]hose who come out on contract nowadays rarely stay more than one tour (rather like their young Ghanaian colleagues), with the result that there is less and less continuity in teaching.'[71] Such turnover, observed a government Commission, had 'unsettling effects on both students and schools.'[72]

Already in 1965, an astute observer of African educational trends was flagging the 'counter-developmental' effects of volunteer teaching programs that 'needlessly' reinforced 'tendencies to regard teaching as a waystation to other employment.'[73] In 1965–6, the average length of stay in the same school for a Ghanaian graduate was 1.1 years—slightly less than the expatriate teacher.[74] On an institutional level, these abbreviated teaching 'careers' produced significant instability. In 1966, Achimota—arguably Ghana's most prestigious secondary school—recorded a 100 per cent turnover of staff every three years, a statistic it shared with the similarly well-established Cape Coast secondary schools. Elsewhere in the country, teaching staff was almost completely renewed

67 See individual responses in Antwi, 'Canadian University Service Overseas,' 105, 108, 110, 111.
68 Antwi, 'Canadian University Service Overseas,' 116–7.
69 Undated interview (likely early 1980s) with Cynthia Amoo, Ghanaian secondary student, by Yvonne M. Young. Young, 'Effect of expatriate volunteer teachers,' 125.
70 UKNA DO153/65, letter from the Acting headmaster of Achimota to the British High Commissioner in Ghana, 22 May 1963.
71 UKNA CO 1045/1465, N.B.J. Huijsman, 'Confidential: Educational Recruitment Ghana,' para. 28.
72 Education Review Committee, *Report to the National Liberation Council, June 1966–7* (Accra 1967), 73.
73 J.W. Hanson, *Imagination and Hallucination in African Education* (East Lansing, MI 1965), 29–30.
74 Education Review Committee, *Report to the National Liberation Council, June 1966–7*, 73.

every two years.[75] The reservoir of institutional memory upon which schools depend to function effectively was being plundered by the short terms of their personnel.

Ghanaian educators fretted over the lack of experienced teachers in their ranks: absent good teaching, how was poor teaching to right itself? In the late 1960s, the ratio of students to trained teachers in Ghanaian schools (primary, middle, and secondary) exceeded an astounding 80 to 1.[76] And, despite the addition of foreign volunteers, in the 1965–6 school year, more than half of the teachers in secondary institutions lacked graduate qualifications. Fewer than one in ten Ghanaian teachers were graduates.[77] By the time of Nkrumah's ouster, most secondary teachers in Ghana lacked either experience, formal training, or higher education—and, in some cases, all three.

In February 1966, a military coup ended Nkrumah's regime and its policy of East–West educational extraversion. The new government, steadfastly pro-Western, summarily removed the 'Iron Curtain' educators from their posts. It then sent an urgent request to the British government for assistance with the recruitment of contract teachers for Ghanaian secondary schools. The Overseas Development bureau was tasked with finding one hundred teachers within 18 months of 1 October 1966.[78] The challenge was enormous; teacher scarcity continued to plague recruitment efforts. There was 'so much competition for candidates' that Ghanaian officers in London could not even afford to wait for Accra's response before losing the applicant to another offer. By November, Accra agreed to leave decision making up to London officers lest they hemorrhage more potential recruits.[79]

Clearly, the only sustainable solution was to have Ghanaian graduates themselves stand at the front of the classrooms. Yet the Ministry of Education's Planning Unit estimated that the attrition rate of Ghanaian graduate teachers hovered at about 15 per cent for the 1966–7 and 1967–8 school years.[80] As an incentive, teachers' salaries were raised considerably in April 1969 following the Mills-Odoi Commission, which found that graduate teachers earned less than their peers working for the government. This salary raise, in tandem with the shrinking of career alternatives, had some effect. Consider that in 1967–8, only 21.7 per cent of secondary school teachers were Ghanaian graduates. Two academic years later, in 1969–70, they made up 33 per cent of the total—a jump, in absolute terms, from 551 to 931.[81] Classroom teaching increasingly attracted Ghanaian graduates, but their numbers were not sufficient to staff the near-doubling (from 112 to 205) of secondary schools over the course of the 1970s.[82]

75 UKNA CO 1045/1465, N. B. J. Huijsman, 'Confidential: Educational Recruitment Ghana,' para. 28.
76 Hanson, *Secondary Level Teachers*, 17.
77 Education Review Committee, *Report to the National Liberation Council, June 1966–7*, 73.
78 UKNA OD 8/207, Ministry of Overseas Development, 'British Teachers in Ghana Supplementation Scheme – Recruitment of New Teachers,' October 1966 and 'Teachers for Ghana,' advertisement proof for *The Times Educational Supplement*, January 1967.
79 UKNA OD 8/207, 'Teachers for Ghana Scheme,' 12 October 1966 and 'Recruitment of Teachers through the Ministry for Overseas Development,' 22 November 1966.
80 Antwi, *Education, Society and Development in Ghana*, 119.
81 Hanson, *Secondary Level Teachers*, 50.
82 Antwi, *Education, Society and Development in Ghana*, 99.

In 1973, the volunteerization of Ghanaian teaching was fully institutionalized. Faced with an unresolved teacher shortage and advocating a strategy of 'self-reliance,' Colonel Ignatius Kutu Acheampong (Ghana's head of state from 1972 to 1978) established the National Service, which still operates today. Acheampong's decree compelled Ghanaian graduates of local universities and diploma colleges to devote one year of service to national development. In the first decade of the National Service, about 70 per cent of graduates worked as secondary school teachers. Of these, fewer than 10 per cent continued teaching after their year was up.[83] Only in the 1973–4 school year did Ghanaian graduates finally comprise a majority (51.4 per cent) of public secondary school teachers.[84]

Ghana's early prioritization of educational expansion paradoxically hampered the nationalization of secondary school staff through the late-1960s, as degree-holding Ghanaians sought alternative avenues of employment or continued their studies abroad. Ghana's early celebrity and Nkrumah's global stature permitted his new state to attract significant numbers of foreign teachers from diverse countries. However, the impermanence and the variety of these teachers' preparation, experiences, and origins hampered the establishment of a stable coherent educational system, contributing to a culture of volunteerization in Ghanaian teaching. The ardors of economic crisis in the 1970s assisted in indigenizing the nation's secondary schools, temporarily drawing local graduates into the teaching profession. That is, until Nigeria, a resurgent regional heavyweight, also suffering teacher scarcity, would encroach upon Ghana's newly qualified corps of local secondary instructors.

Ghana, who had imported hundreds of foreign teachers during the 1960s, discovered to its chagrin that its own teachers could be mobile in the reverse direction. Ghana's vanguard investment in education during the 1950s and 1960s yielded a trained teacher corps earlier than its neighbors. When the political and economic balance in the region shifted, graduate teachers, still in short supply everywhere in West Africa, were poached by the highest regional bidder. Thus, as Ghana's economic situation deteriorated during the 1970s, and Nigeria, recovering from its civil war and reaping the rewards of oil exports following the 1973 OPEC embargo, seemed to be on rise, the effects of shifting regional politics were made manifest in classrooms. Like tens of thousands of Ghanaians in the professional class, teachers saw an opportunity.[85] Leveraging their reputation for excellence, teachers sought greener professional pastures abroad.

From 1977 to 1980, between two and four thousand Ghanaian teachers left the service to work abroad, mostly in Nigeria and, to a lesser extent, in Libya.[86] A Ghanaian teacher of the era estimates that, between 1978 and 1984, fully one-third of the Ghanaian teaching

83 I. Addae-Mensah, 'The Causes and Effects of the Exodus of Ghanaian Graduate Science Teachers,' *The Legon Observer* 11, 2 (19 January 1979), 34.

84 Antwi, *Education, Society and Development in Ghana*, 133.

85 S.F.C. Daly, 'Ghana Must Go: Nativism and the Politics of Expulsion in West Africa, 1969–85,' *Past and Present*, 259, 1 (2023), 246.

86 Estimates vary. Antwi, *Education, Society and Development in Ghana*, 122 and Addae-Mensah, 'Exodus of Ghanaian Graduate Science Teachers,' 34.

corps emigrated to work in Nigeria and Libya.[87] The exodus hollowed out entire departments, forcing the few teachers who remained to shoulder an impossible workload. In 1979, for example, Labone Secondary in Accra was operating with only four of the twelve math and science teachers it required.[88] Aggravating the exodus was its uneven nature: transplanted Ghanaian teachers would write to colleagues at their former schools, urging them, too, to make the move abroad.[89] The same school could thus lose multiple staff in the same year, as happened in 1983 at Keta Secondary School, when fully six of its qualified teachers left for Nigeria.[90]

Nigeria's oil boom economy contrasted sharply with Ghana's difficult 1970s. Flush with cash, the Nigerian government sought to invest in its educational system, establishing universities and polytechnics in each state and expanding access to secondary school. Echoing a pattern we saw previously in Ghana, Nigerian graduates, enticed by more lucrative opportunities, eschewed teaching, obliging the State Schools Management Board to turn to Ghanaian teachers to help staff the expansion.[91] Ghanaian teachers sought to take advantage of their proximity to a newly affluent regional power, where the average monthly take-home pay of most secondary school teachers was five to six times higher than that of a teacher working in Ghana, even as the cost of living was lower.[92] Teachers who stayed behind in Ghana heard about their former colleagues 'making it' in Nigeria, buying cars and boom boxes.[93]

The Ghanaian teachers who went to Nigeria to teach in the 1970s and 1980s played a role akin to that of the foreign teachers who helped buttress Ghana's educational system during the 1960s. However, where Ghana imported often inexperienced volunteers, Nigeria hired experienced educators, particularly the generation who had most benefitted from the Ghanaian state's tremendous educational investments in the 1960s. Leonard Sorkpor, for example, who was born in 1948, left to teach in Nigeria in 1980 'due to economic hardship.' By then he was a veteran. In the mid-1960s, Sorkpor had trained as a teacher, beginning his classroom career in 1967, which he supplemented during the 1970s with university study.[94] Indeed, the Ghanaians who went abroad had a reputation as effective educators; Nigerians knew that they 'didn't joke with you.' Ghanaian teachers were so coveted that Nigerian schools employing them would advertise the fact to attract students.[95]

By 1983, however, the exodus of Ghanaian teachers to Nigeria began to reverse itself. In that year, hundreds of thousands of Ghanaian and other West African migrants were summarily expelled by Nigeria in a brutal event, remembered today as 'Ghana Must

87 C.S. Obeng, *'Home was Uncomfortable; School was Hell': a confessionalist-ethnographic account of belief systems and socio-educational crises in the schooling of Ghanaian rural girls* (New York, NY 2002), 21.
88 Addae-Mensah, 'Exodus of Ghanaian Graduate Science Teachers,' 34.
89 Interview with a senior education official who wishes to remain anonymous, 25 August 2016, Takoradi.
90 Interview with James Yao Deku, 29 July 2016, Keta.
91 D. Gary-Tounkara, 'A Reappraisal of the Expulsion of Illegal Immigrants from Nigeria in 1983,' *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 9, 1 (2015), 30.
92 Antwi, *Education, Society and Development in Ghana*, 122.
93 Interview with Leonard Kwasi Sorkpor and Theodore Sallah, 28 July 2016, Keta.
94 Interview with Leonard Kwasi Sorkpor, 28 July 2016, Keta.
95 Interview with a senior education official who wishes to remain anonymous, 25 August 2016, Takoradi.

Go.' Ghanaian teachers, as registered aliens under the Federal Ministry of Education, were exempt from the expulsion but the tides were clearly turning. The rise of politically instrumentalized xenophobia in Nigeria and the country's concurrent economic decline combined to disincentivize Ghanaian teachers from staying on. Thus, teacher mobility, while at times offering opportunities for enterprising individuals, over the long term undermined the stability of local institutions everywhere.

In a local context of economic hardship, Ghana's teachers were prepared to be regionally mobile, as was the larger professional class in uncertain times. The consequences of this teacherly 'brain drain' hit the Ghanaian students left behind the hardest. As their most experienced educators migrated elsewhere, the numbers of untrained teachers quickly increased to pick up the slack. In the mid-1970s Ghanaian graduates had risen to more than half of all public secondary school teachers, but teacher emigration eroded their numbers, so that by 1984–5, graduates again declined to only about one-third of the teaching force.[96] Teacher mobility was a double-edged sword amid changing economic fortunes. Ghana's ability to attract foreign teachers to develop its education system during the heady cocoa boom had turned against it in the lean years.

This article opened by noting the Anglophone cacophony of Ghanaian classrooms in the 1960s. By the mid-1980s, that babble had died down. Now, Ghanaian English, mostly free of Oxbridge affectations, floated out through the schoolroom windows. Whereas in the early 1980s, a teenage student could baldly state that 'ever since I went to school, I have had expatriate teachers,' she belonged to the last generation of Ghanaians (of indeed a great many) who could make such a claim.[97]

As we have seen, foreigners, whether Euro-American, of the African diaspora, or hailing from other imperial corners, had for more than a century taught in the Gold Coast/Ghana. Nkrumah, whose American sojourn and anticolonial politics rejected strictly British education models, leveraged Ghana's celebrity to recruit urgently needed secondary teachers from plural sources beyond the former metropole. American and Canadian volunteers worked alongside British, Soviet, and African teachers from abroad (the future Zimbabwean dictator, Robert Mugabe, famously among them). French and West Indian instructors nodded hello to South Asian counterparts during lunch hour. At its height, Nkrumah's government's approach to teacher recruitment yielded a secondary school staff of which fully two-fifths were foreigners. Given the important role secondary education was assumed to play in Ghanaian development, foreign teacher recruitment was a crucial element of Ghana's international relations. That historians have, tacitly or explicitly, subsumed postcolonial schooling under the rubric of the 'national' is a fiction. For in a former colony, the Europhone education system, whose origins lay in trans-Atlantic trade, was as extraverted as the state that managed it.

Far from merely a site of domestic policy, for the first two decades of independence, Ghanaian secondary schools were arenas of high-wire diplomacy. Shifts in teacher origins—a pan-African appeal to continental and diasporic educators, the sudden

96 Antwi, *Education, Society and Development in Ghana*, 133.

97 Undated interview (likely early 1980s) with Cynthia Amoo, Ghanaian secondary student, by Yvonne Young. Young, 'Effect of Expatriate Volunteer Teachers,' 125.

repatriation of Soviet instructors, renewed closeness with the British Colonial Office following Nkrumah's ouster, begrudging reliance on short-term volunteers—spoke to the 'possibilities and constraints' of Ghana's room for international maneuver.[98] By pursuing this story beyond Nkrumah's tenure, this article, unlike much Nkrumah literature, traces the consequences of his anticolonial non-aligned foreign policy. Diversifying the teaching corps surely diluted British colonial influence, but, to follow David Engerman, the price of this aid was steep. The general inexperience and turnover of foreign teachers undercut the stability of Ghana's educational system, contributed to a culture of short-termism in Ghanaian teaching, and set a precedent of mobility that Ghanaian educators followed when opportunities in Nigeria and Libya presented themselves. In secondary schools, the overriding consequence of non-alignment was instability, which ultimately undercut the creation of locally accountable educational institutions.

Over the past decade or so, scholars have begun to join histories of higher education and cultural diplomacy to the history of the Cold War. This article calls for a more sustained analysis of what such foreign policy pursuits mean to ordinary people and local institutions in the postcolonial world, an approach I call 'writing international histories from ordinary places.' On the surface unassuming, postcolonial classrooms provide rich insights into the ways Ghanaians experienced the diplomatic swings of early independence. Such insights rely on maintaining a sense of place while also cultivating multi-sited research. At the intersection of globalized archival collections and local sources and scholarship, 'ordinary places' offer us new vantage points from which to approach the extraverted histories of the postcolonial world.

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98 F. Cooper, 'Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective,' *Journal of African History*, 49, 2 (2008), 167–96.